

1998

Saturday, December 12th

Dear Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

What would we do without Chia Pet commercials?

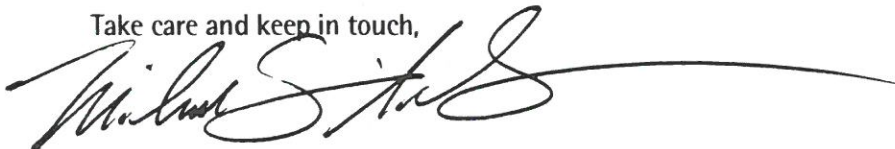
Locally the news is a wash of gloom and doom (exploding oil refineries, shot bus drivers careening off bridges with bus loads of passengers, much admired school superintendents dying, and massive Boeing layoffs) and nationally things really are not that much better (mega mergers resulting thousands losing their jobs, impeachment hearings that seemingly have no end, and a nasty stain on a blue dress). CNN has us locked in a terrible trance of tragedy. Then, all of a sudden and without warning, a Chia Pet commercial punctuates the dark cloud and we remember: it's the holiday season, and, therefore, it's time to write and send our annual holiday letter!

Now where did we leave off last year. . . . ? Just kidding! We wouldn't want to bore you with that kind of detailed running commentary. As a matter of fact, we've decided on a whole new approach to this task this year, the, as true word processors call it, "bullet" approach! After all, it *is* the busy holiday season. We've got places to go and things to do. And so do you. So let's just cut to the chase *this* is what happened this year:

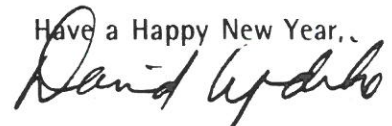
- One of our dogs died,
- We spent a weekend in Palm Springs,
- We put a deck on our house,
- We visited Michigan,
- We sold our rental condo,
- We got a (try not to laugh too hard) hot tub,
- We went in halvesies with some friends on an island home,
- We remodeled our kitchen,
- We each completed enough real estate classes to earn our GRI designations,
- David sold one heck of a lot of real estate in one of the hottest markets Seattle's ever known, and
- Michael found a new calling: the recruiting, training, and retention of real estate agents.

Yiiiiikes. Since just reading that list makes us tired, recounting all the details would surely wipe us out for days, so we won't! Suffice it to say it has been a busy and productive year, one of the best we've had since we met 14 years ago. We hope all is well with you and yours. We hope you'll call us if you need to buy or sell real estate. We hope you'll call us if you need a referral for a professional whatever to help you out - a plumber, electrician, accountant, contractor, designer, hauler, inspector, whatever! After three remodels, and all the real estate biz, and all the things we've learned from our clients, we've got a connection for you.

Take care and keep in touch,



Have a Happy New Year, . . .



P. S.

You didn't really think *that* was it, did you? You knew better, right? We realize that wasn't very much fun, but we had to do it. It's a long and tiresome story, but in a nutshell there is a small vocal minority who rag on us all year long about this letter. Granted it is a very small minority, but they are very vocal. And very close to us. One member of this vocal minority referred to these missives as "an egotistical bloated puff piece" last January. (Michael was shocked!) In an attempt to prove a point or educate us, they send us newspaper clippings of Ann Landers wherein people with low self esteem write in to Ann, or was it Abby, and whine about being average, having average children (that should be a clue right there: *what kinda parent would say that about their child?*) and go on and on to Ann about their sad perception that annual Christmas letters are a ghastly form of bragging. The vocal minority also complains that it is too long to read and takes too much time. Huh? It's always shorter than your average magazine article (except maybe People - now *those* are short articles!) Or they wonder how we can write so much, in such detail, about ourselves. That's an easy one: **practice!** Years and years of practice. I've been writing letters to friends since I was eighteen. First by hand, then with a typewriter (remember those?), later with word processing computers and printers, and finally with the culmination of a dream: **e-mail.**

It's never our impression when we read the annual letters of others that mean-spirited ghastly people write them to brag (and we *do* read them, both of us, each and every one we get, every word - we don't skim). And we sincerely hope that is not your impression when (if) you read ours. That is never our intention. We honestly just want people to know two things: 1) we are still here, and 2) what we've been up to. For those who don't give a rip there's always the Yuletide fire. And for the vocal minority this year there's just the first page. See, we have received the message and we have taken it to heart. We have spared them the annoyance of getting the entire letter. We have put a stop to their pain. They don't get the post script!

But you do! Is it a Christmas miracle? **Is it a wonderful life?** Will it be the start of a grand new year?

If you haven't guessed already, this is Michael at the keyboard to start. David is off with clients showing houses in the Wedgwood area. That pretty much sums up our work year: David is off showing houses and I am at a desk of some sort. More on that division of labor later! For now I'm going to just launch into this and see where it goes till he returns. I could go to the **talking points** (now there's a new phrase made popular in 1998 that I'll always remember) on page one, but first let me jump around a bit.

David turned 42 this year. I turned 43. I often find that when we meet someone who is 35 or 38, a new friend perhaps, or a new client or co-worker, and later in conversation someone asks, "How old were they?" we often answer with something to the effect of "Oh I don't know, about our age." This puzzles me after it happens. Can I possibly be that bad a judge of age or do I forget that I'm not 38 anymore? Just today this happened again. I was talking to some of my agents in general terms about some other agents who may decide to come to work for my office and I was asked how old they were. Thankfully no names were mentioned (they *never* are in these recruiting situations). These agents, now that I think about it, are probably under 35 and might not be so thrilled about having aged ten years in less than a day! The telling thing is that I seldom (okay, okay, never) make this sort of mistake when I'm asked about someone ten years older than I am. When I was in college I read an interview with Joni Mitchell wherein she was asked what was the most important thing to her at this point (remember I was in college a long time ago) in her career. I've always remembered her two word answer: "**Ageing gracefully.**"

Let me jump to another topic: real estate rentals! David and I have figured out, after well over ten years in the business, that we are not cut out for them. I know we are real estate agents and we should not be saying this, but we have always been truthful in this letter and so we must. (I wonder if the IRS would

question the deductibility - can't wait till spell check gets hold of that one! - of a real estate related mailing to clients wherein the agents advocate against one of the most cherished real estate strongholds? Perhaps we won't send them a copy. And if they find out about it we'll send them just the first page!) As you may or may not remember (or even know in the first place for that matter - all depends on when we met you and when you started getting our annual letter) David and I have tried owning a rental twice now. The first time it was a house in the late 80's slash early 90's and it was one of the biggest disasters we have ever been involved in. **I won't recount the gory details.** (Tho' some of you may remember the part about the hot tub that doubled as a bath tub because one of the slovenly tenants couldn't fit in the regular bath tub or in the shower stall). After we decided, along with our partners (see, we didn't even do it alone, we had help, and still it made the movie *Pacific Heights* seem like a feel good Disney flick) . . . where was I?, oh yeah . . . we decided to sell that nightmare David and I took our half of the equity and decided to try a rental condo.

For years this was not a hassle. Why? Because we had it rented for well below market value to a good friend of ours who was stable and steadfast. Granted we were actually losing money on the rental each year. And I don't mean that "pretend" losing money wherein landlords actually make money each month but, because of great accountants and minor repairs and devious depreciation, they somehow "lose" money on April 15th (not that there's anything wrong with that). I mean actually losing real cash each month - the rent comin' in being well below the payment, taxes, and homeowner's dues goin' out - *that* kind of losing money. **Real negative cash flows.** But we had this half baked plan that someday we'd sell our house, buy a home in the San Juans, and stay in that condo when we were in town. You know, when we were older, after we phased out of real estate and life in the big city. We had some sort of justification. Of course we were nuts. We bought this condo *when we really were 35 or 36.* It was a 1929 walk up for Pete's sake. No elevator. We don't feel so bad because we notice our clients who are 35 or 36 seldom think about aging gracefully with four flights of stairs between them and their La-Z-Boys either. Anyway we weren't thinking too clearly. Or, we were thinking as clearly as possible for 35 or 36.

Anyway we lost money each month for years till finally one day our steadfast and wonderful friend decided it was time to move on. It was probably the stairs. This was May of 1997. Till then we were happy and hassle free. So now we have a vacant unit that we really never had done much to. We decide to fix it up a bit and rent it for way more. Sounded like a wise and simple plan. We were self-employed with no set schedule, **how hard could this be?** It ended up being vacant for months. We ran into trouble with the bathroom floor. We got busy with clients and couldn't get over there as often as we planned. And so on. Renting it, or trying to, was nothing but annoying. Prospective tenants who don't show, tenants who want to see it three times and who don't rent it, and other tenants who do want it with bad credit or two large dogs. Finally we find a woman we like. And she likes the unit, us, and she has good credit. Yes she has a dog, but so do we. It was a nice dog, fine, OK. She will be a grad student at the U and will be in town for at least two years. This was what sold me. I liked the "at least two years" part. Why? Cause basically we've got too many other things to do, and too many clients to help, to be screwing around with rentals. So she moves in August 1st at market rate rent and we are now making, after about five years, \$28 dollars a month. We move on.

Fast forward to May of this year. Out of the blue she calls and says she's changed her mind about grad school and is headed back to California two months prior to the end of her lease. Could we rent it and rebate the last month's rent? (Thankfully prepaid.) This was the last rental straw. The market in Seattle this year was the hottest and fastest growing that anyone can remember. For condos too. And it didn't have an elevator. These factors finally ended our rental career. For a brief while we debated a 1031 Tax Exchange, selling this one and getting one downtown with an elevator. But all that island stuff seemed so highly unlikely and our completely gutted kitchen was getting old, very very old, after six years in this house. Who can see where we're going with this?

So we listed our condo for sale. First we fussed it quite a bit, as all good sellers should do, and then put it

on the open market in June. We thought this would be a snap! The market was hot, charming old 1929 red brick apartments (see how we've gone from bitching about the stairs to how charming it was?) were in very short supply, and we are trained professionals. **How hard could this be?** We ended up thinking a tad too much like sellers from our past who could have been more reasonable ("I just want it sold now with no hassles and B.S.") and getting to experience things sellers should never have to experience but sometimes sadly do ("What do you mean he's strung us along for ten days and is now walking away from the sale?") The condo sold on the first day it was on the market for several thousand dollars over full price. We signed an offer and happily went on vacation. We returned a week later to find our condo *not* firmly sold and a buyer who was walking in the eleventh hour. We could have been more gracious but we were blinded by the annoyance factor. So back on the market it goes, damaged goods by now, and it sits for a week or so. It does sell again. And the transaction goes along just fine, very smoothly, and it finally closes.

That was our last rental property. Yeah, yeah it did go up in value over the five or six years we had it, but all in all I would have rather owned stock. A place to live is one thing, managing rentals is quite another. I'd rather read a book. Or walk my dog. Or sit and stare at a large body of water. Or cook in a fabulous kitchen. I want to avoid things that take me away from those activities from here on out. And I think David agrees. He's much more into learning about stocks these days - a direct offshoot of his years in the Oz Stock Club - and I'm much more into hearing about it. That's a level of involvement I'm suited for!

Should I jump back to the page one list now? I would, but random thoughts keep popping into my head. In August my computer on my desk at my work crashed. I have no idea why or what I did. I was just using it and then it froze up. It was probably human error, but for the life of me I couldn't tell you what. It's not like I ever do complicated things on a computer. I write memos, agendas, lists, and letters and I send e-mail. That is basically it. I seldom have time to "surf" the net. If I had that kind of time all of my photos would be in albums and I'd have read more books and have more to say at cocktail parties. So I went a month without being able to use my computer at work. I tried to repair it myself doing everything I was capable of. I'm so busy running that office that I don't often have free blocks of time to fuss matters such as this. And I'm too damn busy to call or find professional help. Finally through my smart and dear friend Michael Kuntz, my own personal computer for dummies author, I was able to get referrals to people who might be able to help me. David and I love referrals - making them for others and getting them from others. There's nothing quite like it. **Nothing makes me happier than knowing who to call.** Anyway I call this place that specializes in Macintoshes and they send a kid out to my office to save my data and get my Mac running again. When I say "kid" I mean it. He could not have been older than 25; I felt old. He got my computer running within 45 minutes; I felt stupid. But the best part, and the point of this paragraph, was what it cost. Over the phone I wasn't quite clear about what he charged but as always I was in a rush and just said, "Yeah, fine, when can you come out?" When he arrived at my office he was pleasant, a real nice guy, and moved quickly to get down to business with the computer. As I was leaving him to it I asked again to clear up what the charge was. It was \$135 per hour. I asked, in the nicest way possible, if he were kidding. He assured me he was not. He was nice enough that I could joke with him - I pointed out that we were embarking on a major remodel at our house and not one of the designers, contractors, plumbers, electricians - no one! - charged \$135 per hour. In fact most were like \$45 to 55 an hour, not even close to \$135 an hour. I thought about it some more and realized most attorneys and C.P.A.s charge not much more than that per hour (at least the ones we're familiar with). In the end the bill wasn't that bad. He was gone in less than an hour and I haven't had a lick of trouble since. And now I know who to call. And I know the moral of this story: we all should have gone into computers fifteen years ago. Or at the very least we all should have bought Microsoft stock ten years ago or Amazon.com stock five years ago.

**"Regrets?, I have a few, but then again, too few to mention.
I did what I had to do, and saw it through"**

Sadly ol' blue eyes left the building this year.

Speaking of computers, both David and I are about to upgrade. To laptops. The big news however is that David is going over to the dark side; David is getting a Dell P.C. instead of a Mac.. David's current computer, his first, is a Macintosh PowerBook, one of the early versions. After much debate we bought the ONE software program we need that isn't supported for Macs and we went to Dell's web site and ordered. All of our current software programs are made for Macs . . . but this one real estate application that we need required a P.C. Bummer. But a legitimate IRS business deduction. It should be here any day now and David will become Darth Vader. I am sticking with the Mac. Isn't that just like me? I am going to give my current computer to David's father so that he can get on the Internet and AOL using one of our five screen names (I think that will work even from another city and I am going to get the new Mac G-3 PowerBook. We've decided we need to be more mobile. We need to be able to get to our e-mail account from wherever we are and we need to be able to log on to the great real estate computer from client's homes. Having not shopped for computers in over three years it is absolutely astounding what has changed and how out-of-date what it feels like we just got is now.

This letter needs to be finished today. Tomorrow I hope to take our only dog and head out of town for a day trip to the island. I don't know if David is going to appear in print this year or not. I just went downstairs looking for him (I heard him come in from his showings a few paragraphs ago) and found him in the basement (T.V. Lounge) watching the TNT station. Evidently they're having "**Fifteen Days of Bond**" and he's finding it hard to tear himself away! One of our cheap date thrills has always been James Bond movies on T.V. Not that we haven't seen them all - we have! - but we seem unable to resist. I forced myself back to this letter once I found out what he was up to . . . time for the the first page list yet? Nah.

Two nights ago David and I hosted our office's Christmas party. We woke up on Thursday to a house torn apart and completely messed up. The main room - the dining room - had saw horses, drop clothes, paint cans, and tools everywhere. There was still trim around from the kitchen remodel that wasn't up yet. Piles of real estate papers everywhere. The kitchen was a mess. And we hadn't cleaned in about two weeks. In one day, prior to the first guests arriving at 5:00 PM (one of those after work/early evening drop in if you can affairs), we completely transformed this place. David did all the QFC shopping. David went to the liquor store. David got flowers and arranged and place them. And David made a vat of his wonderful chocolate chicken chili to feed forty. I picked things up and frantically put them in other rooms. I hid, cleaned, and fussed. I placed chairs and candles. Food arrived (we had help in the food department) and I placed that. David made Chex-mix! At ten to five I dimmed all the lights as far down as they would go and lit a lot of candles. (**Darkness is very comforting when you're hosting here:** it hides the dirt, hides the fact that most walls aren't smooth yet, hides the fact that most trim is not back up, etc.) Within an hour over 40 people appeared. This was *the* test run on having people into our new kitchen. It worked well. At times we counted up to 18 people just in the kitchen and it seemed to be OK. It was more of an "open-house-come-see-this-damn-kitchen" event than it was an actual Christmas party. We had no tree, no lights, no decorations of any kind. We did have many Christmas C.D.s and all of you who have sent us Christmas cards should know your cards were proudly on display! Thank you! (This is your card by the way.) All summer long David or I would get a phone call at the office and jump up and make some kitchen excuse and dash out the door. Thankfully we only live 2.3 miles, about 6 minutes, from our office. When we returned to the office we would tell anyone who would listen the tale of the latest sub-contractor no show or the latest last minute decision that had to be made at *that* moment. We're sure they all felt as if *they* lived through this remodel so it seemed only right that they should be the first big kitchen event.

Hey! Seattle got a new symphony hall this year. It is beautiful. We bought tickets to six events, three evening concerts and three afternoon concerts. Friday afternoons - kind of a treat for us to skip half a day's work and spend a day downtown three time a year. Anyway this is one of our nights. I just realized I must stop this narrative now to get ready for tonight's performance of the Canadian Brass Ensemble doing Sounds of the Holidays. How appropriate! Our last concert was Burt Bacharach. He was there and I got all misty and choked up. That too was appropriate - appropriate for aging gracefully! Gotta run.

Back again, post concert. Time to flesh out that list and wrap this up.

Ever hear that old phrase "Those who can do; those who can't teach?" I used to hate that. I used to be a school teacher (many lives ago) and I always thought that phrase was mean-spirited. Now, after twelve years of selling real estate full time, I've once again moved into teaching so to speak. Recently David and I went to Spokane to take a series of four classes, eight hours a day for four days, four different classes. (We passed them all - these were the final classes in a twelve class series - soon we can put G.R.I. on our business cards if we want to. Graduate of the Realtor's Institute. We haven't decided to do it or not yet.)

While in one of these classes that phrase popped into my mind again as I thought about the teaching I've done this year. I've done a great deal less in the way of selling real estate, and a great deal more in the management arena: recruiting agents, new ones and experienced ones from other companies; training newer agents; retaining experienced agents by helping them with their careers and keeping them happy; and training staff. All this plus attend management meetings. Since I answer to others I wonder if, ala Dilbert, I am what is known as middle management. I'm still showing property to buyers now and then, I like to keep a hand in it all and keep current with the market, and I still do quite a bit of listing and marketing houses for sellers. (Sadly I don't have as much opportunity to go out shopping with buyers now that I have a desk tied to me.) But what I'm really getting a charge out of lately is **explaining real estate careers** to people who want to become, or think they want to become, real estate agents. So many people think this looks like a great life from the outside. My job is to temper that with reality: the hard cash costs of starting in this business, the hard cash costs of running a real estate business each month, and an honest appraisal of the long learning curve and the earnings potential. Then, if people get past all that, and the six to seven full weeks of full time classroom hours, the training begins. And I love it. Sometimes the meetings get me down, but I love my job. It's now been one full year of management at Windermere and I couldn't be any happier.

Nor could David. He had a great year, the best he's ever had in real estate. Anyone remember a movie called *Personal Best* that came out about 15 years ago? David had his personal best in 1998. He started his year out by once again setting a record for the most expensive house he's ever sold. It wasn't a million, but it was well over three quarters of the way there. And he managed to be the one offer selected out of eight or eleven - I don't remember exactly how many, but up in that range. Then, throughout the year as our previous clients, buyers and sellers, called again to buy and sell, or as they referred their friends to us, we shifted more and more of the work to David. And believe me he was more than up to the task. Since he's not here for this writing, and since I may get to send this out without his reading it, and since I *never* allow myself to do this at the office for obvious reasons, let me take a moment here to brag about him. I am so lucky and so proud of him. Lucky for all the obvious relationship reasons, and proud of what a top notch agent he's become. He's completely on top of the market, he's checking hourly for new listings, his clients are always informed and up on what's happening, and he knows and understands these contracts in and out. And the best part: he seldom loses in a multiple offer situation. I honestly don't think he lost even once in a multiple offer mess this year. He knows what it takes to win, he can convince his clients *to do what it takes* to win, and when he gets there everyone likes him. The other agents like him. The sellers like him. He hunts and gathers well. (We used to joke that I was the hunter-gatherer, but since my aforementioned new job my days of hunting and gathering are over.)

The next night - Sunday the 13th, 9:35 PM

We just got in from a Christmas party. We should thank the host, one of three, we know best, Tom Carroll. Thanks Tom! It was wonderful party. (For those of you who've wondered *that's* how you get your name in the Christmas letter: you *happen* to invite us to a party on a day when we're still typing it!) Actually several people have asked (I'm not kidding) to be mentioned and since we want to keep everyone happy and be all things to all people, here goes: Frank Kennard, Chereese Campo and Rebecca Evans.

Let's see . . . Frank thinks he is responsible for our kitchen remodel. While we are not certain that is the case exactly, we will agree he was a vocal critic, in the nicest of ways, of the previous kitchen. More to the point he was a critic of the choices we made prior to undertaking this kitchen remodel. Chereese and Rebecca were only *referred to* in last year's Christmas letter (Oh! The horror!) and Chereese took exception to that (. . . after the last of the housemates left . . .) after figuring prominently in the letter for several years prior. We didn't tell her to give up that fabulous job touring the country with Broadway shows that required us to visit many cities and see many shows and thank them annually in this letter! This is what happens when you buy a house a block away. You fade into the fabric of our daily lives and perhaps don't get mentioned.

This is the last page. Back to the list. I've covered most of it. You certainly don't want to hear about all of the steps involved in transforming the back half of our main floor into the fabulous entertainment center that it is today. We have a kitchen. It has a huge curving greenstone bar in it that would seat six (it did just the other night) easily. We have concrete countertops. We actually have some cabinets and drawers. We sheetrocked, painted, designed, and had others design more and build and install. David decided on all the colors and materials and selected and shopped for all the appliances. We have huge sliding doors that lead from the kitchen out to a new deck. The deck, 100% designed by Michael, spans the entire back of the house and has two seating areas for tables and chairs in addition to a large bench and a huge pot. All the posts are 6 X 6's. It is over built. You could drive a truck on it. No spring to any of the boards.

We spent the first weekend in March in Palm Springs with my cousin Marsha and her partner Lori. Lori had business there and Marsha arranged for a large two bedroom suite at a B & B and down we went. We hiked. We walked. We ate. It was hot. It is the desert. There isn't much to do there. I don't get it. But then I hate hot weather. So why then did I agree to go to Michigan in July? We did. David and I spent the 4th of July week in hot muggy mosquito and flying bug infested Michigan. Actually it wasn't so bad, I just like to complain about Michigan. Marsha and Lori live on a lake and have a cute dog. We saw my entire family, nephews, sister, parents, cousins, and aunt and spouses of same. We went to a place called Saugatuck, billed as the "Fire Island" or the "Key West" of the Midwest. Get it?

Only two things from this year left and then it is goodbye 1998! One thing is happy:

David and I went in halves on a home on an island about 85 miles north of Seattle. The island is near the San Juans, for all I know it may be a San Juan or part of that chain, and is called Guemes Island. We bought it with our friends David Wertheimer and Paul Beaudet. It was not planned. We were not shopping for a home. None of us had ever looked at a vacation home. None of us had ever discussed how to pay for a vacation home. Heck, none of us had ever even been to Guemes Island before that fateful day - Saturday, August 22nd. We were just taking a drive, four friends checking out the Pacific Northwest. When we arrived on the island we hooked up with another Windermere agent from up there to get a map. She met us at the ferry. She said she had this one house we could look at that was just a minute or two away if we wanted to. Sure, why not. We followed her to this house, which didn't look like much from the street, and walked inside. And saw the view. Now we have attorneys drawing up partnership agreements, we're shopping for sheets, opening a P. O. Box, setting up utilities, getting a phone, and devising a set of house rules. We first saw it on the 22nd. We made our offer on the 25th. We knew we wanted it immediately, but it took several days to figure out what was possible and what to do. Our offer beat out another offer on the 26th. On the 27th, knowing this was all a done deal, David and I flew to San Francisco for his birthday. On his birthday, the 28th, the stock market CRASHED. And a few days later it crashed some more. Anyone remember any of this? We sure do. David and David, each partners now in this house, are also each members of a stock club. Remember that stock club I've mentioned in years past? The plan we came up with was to see if the seller would carry a note on the house since he owned it free and clear (he would) and get our down payment by having David & David each quite the club and pull their money out. The market was doing so well all year long! Each couple (often referred to as Couple # 1 and Couple # 2 ala The Newlywed Game) figured this was our payoff for years and years - 10 years - of being in that club.

(This was one helluva post script, doncha think?)

Plan B anyone?

So the market crashed and we had a signed deal and no plan B. But we did have a long long long closing date. The seller had lived in this house for about 20 years and was in no hurry to leave the island. So when we asked for an escrow just shy of four months, he said fine. So we had four months to come up with a plan B. We closed on Wednesday the 9th of December, just last week, and we got possession of the house yesterday. Couple # 1 went up immediately and spent the night; Couple # 2 had tickets for the Canadian Brass with the Seattle Symphony so they stayed behind. Next week is a busy one. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we prepare and send out our Christmas cards (that would be this letter you are now holding). On Thursday we pick up a 26' U-Haul truck and visit our many friends picking up their cast off furniture and we pack up tons of garage sale stuff we've acquired since we made our offer. We've been in high second house prep mode. Thank god we remodeled our kitchen - all of the old stuff is packed for the island home

Our favorite part of all of this, the most amusing to us: after our offer on this island house was accepted and signed and we started telling our other friends, many of them said things like, "*You did this with who?*" or "*Why didn't you ask us?*" or "*If they are such good friends of yours why haven't we met them yet?*" or "*You never talk about these people! Why haven't we heard about them before this?*" I believe Couple # 1 heard comments similar to these from some of their friends. Different circles. Soon the circles will overlap.

And now the one very sad thing.

My dog Libby died early this year. This letter is dedicated to her and shall act as her final farewell. She was born in October of 1982 and thus was well into her 16th year when she had to be put to sleep. David and I sort of saw this coming a year or two back. David knew the decision needed to be mine and I knew I didn't want to think about it. We made as many accommodations here in the house as we could, but in the end, try as we might, life was pretty hard for her. Her hind legs were going. Her eye sight was going. Her hearing was completely gone. She couldn't control any of her bathroom functions. But the worse for me was that she would fall down. One day she fell down a flight of stairs and was dazed afterwards. That was the day I knew. Still it was months between when I knew and when I acted. We notified friends who knew her in her glory days. Finally I made the appointment.

On her last day I came home from work early at noon. I spent the afternoon with her alone. I took her to the park where she used to love to run and I took her for a ride in the pickup truck which she always loved. Finally we went to Dick's on Broadway. Libby would eat and eat and eat and would fall down and hurt herself trying to get to food right up to the last. Her appetite never failed. So we went to Dick's. For the last year of her life she was only given certain dry dog food because though she wanted to eat everything she would either throw it up or worse if she ate anything other than this certain dry dull dog food. So I got her a Dick's Deluxe and an order of fries. We went back to the park and sat on a bench and I fed her all of it. She was so happy. Afterwards we went home and David and I walked her to the vet. She died on Tuesday February 24th 1998. I hope that I can spend my last day in a similar fashion with someone I have loved for 16 or more years. I hope the same for you.

e-mail us!

Michael Nelson
michael@whyrentbuy.com
206.660.8252

David Updike
david@whyrentbuy.com
206.660.8253