

2000**Dear Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:**

Well it is Saturday night, December 16th, about 10:30 PM. I just got in from the annual holiday party at our contractors. I had three stiff drinks and very little to eat. Topsy can't be a good start to this endeavor. David is in Spokane visiting parts of his family (*he is a good person*), so I'm having what we call "alone time" this weekend. I cherish alone time. I just took Inga, a.k.a., the light of my life, for a walk around several blocks. We played with a stick - she lives to eat and pick up large sticks. I thought the walk would alleviate the effect of the three stiff drinks, but no. There's one hour till the opening of *Saturday Night Live* (I watch regularly) and I want to see how they are going to treat the settling of the election. I type at a pretty good clip (though the three stiff drinks are making for interesting typos here - I hope I catch them all) so let's see how far I can get tonight. My plan is to mail this on Monday the 18th and spend the remainder of the week before Christmas meeting friends for lunch, goofing off, and working as little as I can. Real estate activity usually slows down a great deal this time of the year - and with the market the way it is this month it's almost a real estate ghost town here - so goofing off and taking long lunches should be easy to manage. As a rule I don't buy Christmas gifts and go in for all the holiday trappings, (though I try to attend every party I am invited to), so the week before Christmas is pretty laid back for me.

David thinks my lack of interest in Christmas means I'm dead inside. He says that a lot. If we go to a movie, some harmless charming thing with no chase scenes or explosions, and I don't gush over it afterwards he says, "You're dead inside." To prove that I am not dead inside I allowed myself to stop, and then linger, in the Christmas section of Lowe's today. I went because David is out of town and nothing makes me happier than a hardware store when David's not around. I go when I don't even need things just to slowly walk *each* isle and see if perhaps there is something there I am unaware of that I do in fact need. David will simply not *slowly* walk each isle with me. Today I decided I needed many sets of plastic shelves to line the walls of our new basement with. It ended up being the perfect day: several hours alone in a large hardware store followed by shelf assembly with a rubber mallet as Inga chewed a new bone by my side followed by tool and basement crap organization. Then off to a party. Now if only I could sit on the couch with Inga and watch a DVD rather than type.

Anyway won't David be surprised on his return home to find a little bit of Christmas in the living room? He certainly won't be expecting it. Granted it is sorta lame, very Charlie Brown Christmas like, but I had fun doing it. At first I was just aghast at all the cheap crap sold at Lowe's and, as I stood there, I wondered, "Who buys this stuff?" Then I thought it might be fun to buy some of it to make a cheap campy Christmas display to open gifts around. Mind you there is no tree. I bought a metal garden cone thingie wrapped in dried twigs and vines. It's about four feet tall. Got some white lights, two of the finest biggest red bows that Lowe's had to offer, some green felt for the table top, and 24 little silver ball ornaments. More assembly and presto it is Christmas!

Preamble

I was supposed to be working on this letter today. Instead I cleaned our apartment, did laundry, ran errands (previewed two vacant houses in the rain, bought bones for Inga, shelves for me and yet the dry cleaning hasn't been picked up in three weeks - I think it's a domestic stand off). I did manage to get and wrap David's big Christmas surprise and place it under our "tree" today. And fuss in the basement. But writing, till now, didn't happen. Heck, I even managed the entire tree and all our holiday decorations today - and we weren't even planning on that - anything to avoid what I should be doing! Every year for the past - is it 12 now? - is this the 13th installment? - I end up writing this at the very last minute. Either I want it to be as fresh as possible or I work better under pressure.

Before David flew to Spokane he wrote a few paragraphs (*watch for the change in font*) about our year. Prior to his effort he asked me what I was going to put in the letter this year. As if I know before I do it - people, including David, start asking me in November what will be in the letter this year - I never know till the word processing mood strikes me. We discussed it and both agreed on two things: **ONE** that all of 2000 really boiled down to only two things (not that that will stop me from ending up with a 13 page letter), and **TWO** that this was the most significant year of the 16 we've been together, the year certain to have the biggest, most dramatic, impact on our lives for years to come.

So the "tree" is up, there are several gifts under it, and even though all I can think about is playing till January 8th, it's time for *Y2K Revisited*. (Remember all those Y2K computer concerns? I'm so glad I pooh-poohed all that year end millennium apocalypse crap!) So, back to the beginning of 2000.

We're not talking about the flu here . . .

Although David and I were both perfectly healthy, we spent the better part of **January** going to clinics, talking to medical professionals, swallowing a series of large pills, and getting shots. Many, many shots, most in the arm, but some elsewhere. One day, even though I warned the very nice woman with all the needles that it was best to not talk about the shots and the diseases that made them necessary, she did. I got all clammy, turned white and, well . . . basically passed out right in front of her. I had to go lie down till I had the stomach to take another round. She seemed very concerned even though I told her this was a likely event given the extent of the medical trappings around us. To know me is to know I avoid all things medical in nature. I simply don't do, discuss, or think about anything medical. To know me is to know that even tho' I love TV (*a chicken in every pot and a TV in every room!*) I have never seen a single episode of *St. Elsewhere*, *Chicago Hope*, or *E.R.*, (tho' I do love to run around the house, sometimes naked, screaming "STAT! STAT!" if David tries to watch the latter when I'm within earshot.)

History will soon repeat itself

It seems that we have a new plan for Martin Luther King Junior's birthday weekend. On January 11th (the one coming up, 2001) we're going to do the exact same thing we did last January over MLK's birthday weekend - spend it in Palm Springs. Last year's trip was delightful, but only three days long. This year we are going for six. Two hours on a plane and you leave behind the gray, cold, damp, Seattle winter and enter a warm, sunny playground designed for gay men and overdressed, wealthy, leathery senior citizens (and the various combinations possible when you blend the two

camps). There is nothing to do there. I think that is the appeal, that and taking note of the local fashion sensibility. There is no water (well pools, but no real water). It's a desert with some restaurants and shops. There's a killer outlet mall, a bit of a drive, but well worth it.

Last year we made two new friends as we were trying to fly back to Seattle. (Oh god . . . here's the part of the letter where I get in trouble each year, naming names. It's not that the people named object to being named, it's that everyone not named calls to ask why they weren't featured. At the party this evening Fred Birchman specifically asked if he would be featured. *He just was!* In the past I have had people complain that only their first name was in, not their full name, first *and* last. Was Fran Lebowitz plagued with these problems?) (And what does she do for a living now? She's always photographed at a party talking to *someone*, but, am I missing something, or did she last work in the early 80s? There were only two books, right? Late 70s, early 80s? I want her life!)

Anyway we were at the ever so cute Palm Springs airport finding our flight delayed for hours. Some guys we didn't know at all invited us to share a cab back to town where we hung out on the patio of a Mexican restaurant for hours. So there we are meeting Tom, Rick, and John, eating chips and drinking drinking drinks and finding the delayed flight to be rather a good thing. Tom and Rick ended up having several connections to us, sorta knowing who we were. Seems that years ago Rick was the roommate of a guy in San Francisco who once had a condo in Kirkland listed with me. That guy was referred to me by Roy Rigsby, who now lives in Manhattan, but who used to live, along with the SF seller, in Seattle. The condo was vacant, the seller was living in SF, and I added him to our mailing list. The condo never sold, but it takes a lot more than that to be taken off "the list." This was the early 90s I think, about ten years ago. So for years this letter goes to SF where the seller is no longer Rick's roommate. But the calendar and letter keeps on coming (people should tell us when they move!) and Rick, this is the best part, actually reads the letters. Of course years later, when he and Tom moved to Seattle, they couldn't remember our names and ended up buying a house without us. Still these little connections around this letter amaze and amuse us . . . odd things like this happen all the time. Back to the Mexican restaurant. . . . Tom, it turns out, is a loan officer doing mortgages in Seattle. Rick is an architect and remodeling, which is always happening somewhere, is one of our favorite topics. More connections, more things to talk about. So here we are a year later about to fly to Palm Springs *with* them and stay at their home there for six days!

And the best part of that story is that, even in your mid 40s, you can still meet new people and make new friends. Good thing too 'cause you can lose friends in your mid 40s as well. Just after the letter came out last year we, ah, lost two friends. But I shouldn't go into *that* story . . . David prefers to never speak of or revisit unpleasant things in life. He'd rather avoid and pretend problems don't exist. Me? I love to dig in, pick at, probe, analyze and debate. With no end in sight. And I love a good confrontation. But David really dislikes it when I visit unhappy places in the holiday letter (sweep it under the green felt around the Christmas tree, cheery, cheery, ho, ho, ho) and I know if I went there he'd be annoyed with me. And I never want that.

Well it is later than I thought it would be tonight. This is taking longer than it should because tipsy typos are rampant (thank god for spell check) and I am now only typing during commercials in *Saturday Night Live*. I have the hots for Tina Fey. Don 't panic, I also have the hots for Jimmy Fallon. They both do Weekend Update. I still remember being in college and watching Jane Curtin and Dan Ackroyd doing Weekend Update. Some days I feel very old. Tonight I'm not feeling old, just altered and tired. And I still haven't hit the **TWO** big events in 2000. More tomorrow. 'Nite.

Good Morning!

God I slept till 10:00 AM. David is my alarm clock. Walked out for espresso and a roll with Inga this morning, as I do seven days a week. We ran into a white Great Dane with black spots. It was the size of a pony. The streets were empty so the woman with the Great Dane and I took of the leashes and let them play with each other. I'm home, coffeed up, and ready to finish this letter. As I made the bed and tidied up around here I discovered VH1 was featuring "The 60s Revolution" on *Behind The Music*. Doncha just love *Behind The Music*? It is the butt of so many jokes, but still David and I both find ourselves drawn to it. It's Sunday the 17th. And this is supposed to go out tomorrow. I'm gonna just jump back into it.

David and Michael's Most Excellent Jungle Adventure

So what was all that medical stuff in January for? The Amazon. When? Most of the month of **February**. Why? Well, David's generous sister Mary and her Delta flyin' husband Dave, gave us family passes to go anywhere Delta flew. We held the passes for nearly a year (because I really hate to leave home) before I finally said to David, "So how far can we get with these?" He researched it and said "Bombay or Rio de Janeiro." For me that was a no brainer, not even a real choice. Let's see: Latin culture, Latin food, Latin beaches with, ah . . . "Latin visuals." Or, Bombay? Compare: Latin food or chicken dyed red in a clay oven designed to dry out meat? Anyone need a lifeline on that one? (B-T-W, I may know the lingo, but *that's* another show I have never seen a single time slot of - it's not medical, just annoying!)

So South America was my choice. And even tho' I hate to leave home, I kinda got behind this vacation. It took seven weeks of solid planning, all of it done expertly by David and our travel agent. (The only thing I hate more than traveling is planning to travel - David lives to do both.) This was a complicated trip lasting almost a full month (granted it was the shortest month, February, but we did get that extra leap year day in 2000). It involved three different airlines (two of them Brazilian - each time I saw how the airports were run, or saw the planes themselves, I was certain we were going to die). There were car services, two hotels and a big surprise (read on) and it all came off without a hitch and we survived six Brazilian take offs and landings David's arrangements were flawless, from visas and passports to our new rolling Tumi luggage and not over packing.

I like vacations that involve water, have always liked looking at rivers, and have always wanted to see how big the Amazon River really is. We were going to be in Rio, which is a full day away from Seattle on a plane. How likely was it we were going to be back in that part of the world in our lifetime? (Since I hate to leave home, it's not that likely.) I figured if we were going to be that close we had to get to the Amazon. I asked David to research this. Turns out it is not easy to see the Amazon. You can't drive there. You can't really fly there, only to one city near the very end of it named Manaus. For awhile it looked as if we were going to see South America, but not the Amazon.

Ever want to be the youngest and hottest person in the room?

We now can tell you how to be the youngest, cutest, hottest, most attractive and most fit person in the room **AND** how to see the Amazon River. All in three words: **THE LOVE BOAT**. Maybe that should be five words, let's add two more: **PRINCESS CRUISES**. We discovered that some cruise lines sail the Amazon. So here's how the trip went: After several wonderful days seeing all the

sights in Rio de Janeiro (Christ the Redeemer, Sugarloaf, Ipanema Beach) and staying at the absolutely wonderful Copacabana Hotel (an amazing pool, two great restaurants, view of the beach from our 7th floor room - this was the hotel featured in the old black and white classic movie *Flyin' Down To Rio* - back then it was the ONLY hotel) we flew to Buenos Aires. After several days realizing that Evita was right (Buenos Aires is the hottest, coolest, most cosmopolitan place we've ever been to other than Manhattan), we took a cab to the pier and boarded **The Royal Princess** (a.k.a. **The Love Boat**) for a three hour cruise. Hah! Would you believe for a 15 day cruise? It is, after all, the Amazon. And the mouth of the Amazon is a long long way from the southern tip of South America. This is where the trip really became a vacation for me. My first **REAL** vacation.

When we boarded the ship David was 43 and I was 44. (We're older now.) We were high sea sailing virgins, both new to the laid back faux luxury lifestyle found on these floating cities. We were on board for 15 days; it takes about five days to get used to the rhythm of life at sea. You sail for a few days and then you dock in a city with a port big enough to handle on of these ships. Once in a port everyone has the option of signing up for a tour sponsored by the cruise line or going it on their own. In some cities David and I hailed a cab and took off on our own; in others we got on the bus and saw what they wanted us to see. The tours actually were not bad. The cruise line hired different local tour guides in each port, the sights selected were things you'd want to see even if your were on your own, and, since it was all timed to meet the needs ("*abilities*" might be the better word here) of the average cruise ship passenger, David and I had ample time to wander a bit here, linger a bit there, and still catch up to the bus before the day was out. On this vacation it dawned on me: I used to look up at, or should I say look down upon?, all the old people on those large tour busses. Now I had become one of the old people on the large tour bus. Each night it was back to the ship for dinner (two seatings, five and eight sharp) and all the entertainment you could stand (live musical revues nightly). You always sleep on the ship (the *best* sleep - even these big boats gently rock).

So we sailed out of Buenos Aires and began to hop, skip and jump our way up the eastern coast of South America. (Each time they set sail from a new port they have a "sailing party" where the drinks are free - usually you pay - and they play, from every loudspeaker on the ship and at the highest volume possible, the theme from the television show *The Love Boat*. Oh yes, they do. And not just once - oh no - they have it on an endless loop. They play it and play it and play it till the ship is away from the dock. The first time this happened, in Buenos Aires, we found it amusing. Anyway we hit Montevideo, returned to Rio for a day, and continued up the coast to the mouth of the Amazon.

We loved this vacation. Our cabin (the cheapest one possible on the lowest deck possible, just above the crew quarters) was 168 square feet total. That's 10 feet by 16.8 feet. (I was *enthralled* with this small space. I measured it twice! This, as it turns out, laid the ground work for the second big event of 2000, but more on *that* later.) Somehow in 168 square feet, which seems like a very small amount of space, they fit a bathroom with a shower and tub, a desk, a TV, two chairs, two closets, a table, and two single beds that become couches in the daytime. We of course turned these into one larger bed and never put them back as couches or single beds the entire trip. Our cabin crew seemed perfectly at ease with this. I had my laptop with me, they provided electricity and room service. I couldn't have been happier. The space was tight, but we organized it well and hadn't over packed for a change (even if we did each have two suits - one a black dinner coat - and several pairs of dress shoes with us - you **DRESS** for dinner on these cruise ships!) It turns out I can love a vacation if I get to settle in **ONE SPOT** for two full weeks. My nesting instinct is unstoppable. It

knows no limits and cannot be controlled. It's a strong force that no one, not even David, can or should stand in the way of. And it's all so closely related to real estate for me. Together they are my true calling and only real talent.

David's Corner:

Going to South America was an inspired idea. Incorporating a cruise into this trip seemed like an ideal compromise of a long distance journey for me and a cushy cruise boat experience for Michael. Besides I couldn't find another way to get us to the Amazon, and Michael really wanted to go. It is unusual for him to really want to go anywhere, so I thought I should make it happen. I am the one who yearns to travel and Michael is the one who yearns to stay home.

I had a wonderful time on this trip. Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires were fascinating, colorful cities. Sadly we only had two days to explore each of these cities. I think you would need at least one week to quickly see the highlights of each city.

The cruise was too sedentary and insulated an experience for me. You have a cushy stateroom with four or five TV channels including CNN (Michael was delighted!), a porthole style window, a desk, a queen size bed and a full size bathroom. The ship had all of the features that one would expect on a full size cruise ship. There were enough diversions to distract you from the fact that you were now some 5000 miles away from home. The stops we made from the boat were short day trips into port cities where we could visit a church, shop in a "native" market or visit a small Amazon village. Sharing experiences like these with 1000 plus other tourists tempered my enthusiasm to say the least. Yet it was a new experience for me and I enjoyed that aspect of it.

Well that was short and sweet

And so not in my nature! One last thing about the trip. While it was happening we thought that surely it was the most adventurous, most significant thing we would ever do. Here we were sailing up the Amazon River seeing things and going places (like inside the homes/huts of the people who lived in the villages) we never thought we'd would. I had my laptop with me and David kept saying, "Let's write this down" or "I don't want to forget that!" One day as the huge honking Love Boat pulled away from a village, hundreds of Amazonians in canoes surrounded the ship, sorta begging from canoes seven stories or eight below the upper decks of the ship. What happened next was, like a car wreck, in turns fascinating and revolting. The senior citizen passengers on board began tossing things into the water to see if they would really paddle over and pick it up. Which they did. This became a great sport to them. I saw 70 and 80 year old women raiding the maid's carts in the halls, grabbing a bunch of soap, plastic cups, or pencils and tossing this stuff at the canoes. David and I found it difficult enough to reconcile the opulence of this cruise ship sailing past dirt villages and straw huts, something we discussed between ourselves often and a few of our more sensitive dinner companions once in awhile - but to see this behavior. At least we can say the ship was not solely occupied by Americans - so that Ugly American concept can and does cross international boundaries. We saw so many things! And we wrote it all down. It was the start of the 2000 Christmas letter

and it was pages and pages long (it was fresh, it was happening, it was filled details and daily stories). We each wrote - really! Unlike this it was a 50/50 effort, I think because David was bored on the boat. And we lost it somehow. Sometime in July, when setting up my new computer (a beauty) I realized that file was gone. I don't know how. It made us very sad. But you have been spared!

People may make fun of cruise ships, but I gotta tell you I'd do it again in a flash. If the real point of a vacation is to relax (people say it is and then they go on vacation and race around like crazy trying to fit in one more sight or one more museum - my usual travels with David exactly!) I read nine books on that boat. Nine! Cover to cover. We traveled with about six books and they had a reading library on board. The food was good (not great, but certainly better than we would have anticipated), constantly available at one of several restaurants on board, and all you can eat. We saw about ten movies on board, either in our stateroom or in the ship's movie theater. Every film Julia Roberts ever made was shown on this cruise. Since time is NOT of the essence of a cruise ship; we saw them all. Actually they did not show *Pelican Brief* for obvious reasons - consider their audience. The films of Hugh Grant were also popular. Once, while waiting for the curtain to go up on *The Ideal Husband*, or is that *The Perfect Husband*, don't remember, maybe it was *An Ideal Husband*, it was just us and three white-haired Jewish women, say late 70s, dressed to the nines for the seven o'clock showing. Their pre show conversation revolved around Rupert Everett who would be starring in the featured film. One of the women was trying to explain to the other two that he was "a gay." At first the other two were not to be convinced. They had seen him the night before as the bad guy in *Inspector Gadget* (as had we) and they just couldn't believe he was "a gay." They all agreed there was nothing wrong with that, but was she certain he was "a gay?" Their conversation lasted till the lights dimmed. We thought it was so cute. We were, by the way, not only the youngest, hottest, most fit passengers on the Love Boat, we were, other than a few crew members and some of the wait staff, oh, and all the guys in the all singin', all dancin' floor shows, the only "a gays" on the ship.

Jesus H. Christ! Seven pages and we're still on that boat? Will this ever end?

Time to get back on dry land and move on. While **January** was all about getting ready to go, and **February** was all about being there, not here, **March** turned out to be all about shock. Shock and, as it turned out, change. The biggest change we could have possibly made. (Bigger changes I guess are possible, but not for us. We could have packed up upon our return and moved to Buenos Aires - yeah *that* change would have been bigger, but not really possible for us.) The shocking part of coming home, and maybe this only applies to people fully self employed, is what happens to your career, your stream of business (i.e., income), when you are essentially away for two months. Yes we were only gone for one month, but we spent a full month prior not starting things we knew we wouldn't be here to finish, not focusing on, what many in this business refer to as, "our pipeline." (I have one agent in my office who refers to it as her bucket.) So we came home to find little cash reserves (we spent the nest egg on the trip), that two of our planned sellers listed their homes for sale with others while we were away, and that basically we had no pending business, no new business and nothing to do.

(Side story - the ugly side of our business at times: One of the sellers who sold while were gone was a couple who bought my listing ten years ago and who I had helped faithfully on and off since with many different matters, refinances, legal issues, etc. In August of 1999 they decided they wanted to sell. We got ready. They delayed. I found them laborers to help prep the house for sale. We geared up for October instead. We got ready. They delayed. Then they'd call and say next week, we'd get ready, they'd end up saying they just weren't ready yet, how about next week? This goes on

and on. In early January I call to tell them about our pending trip . They basically say, "Not a problem, we are in no hurry to sell and you guys have been so great to work with. Call us when you get back on March 1st." The day before we fly to Brazil I drive by their house and see a for sale sign from another company in front of it house. **Bon Voyage!**)

Anyway we come home to little to no business (just for us, the rest of the Seattle market was completely **on fire** the first four months of this year), and we have that fuzzy mental state, perhaps a surreal attitude, that you often return to work with after too a long time away. It took us awhile to get our bearings again and to figure out what was important (like paying for health insurance, buying groceries, and keeping the house and not living in a straw hut in a village made of dirt, or, as we like to say, "in a van down by the river" - totally stolen from *SNL* we freely admit!)

Who could tell it was time for the really big change, the main event of 2000?

In the middle of March our good friends (and *Guemes Island* co-owners and housemates) David and Paul figured out we had nothing to do, took pity on us and decided to toss us some business. It all started out innocently enough. They decided they wanted to spend more time on *Guemes* sitting on our deck staring at the water and walking the beach with Monty their wonder dog. Who wouldn't? They owned a small apartment building on Capitol Hill that I found and sold to David back in 1995. It was, at the time they listed it for sale, five, six or seven units. Seven people were paying rent to them for seven spaces, but if you count the bathrooms it was really only five units, six if you are from England. I established a price for the building, got my marketing materials together, and put it out there on the open market.

What happened next we could have never predicted. And it consumes the next five months of the year. We've told the tale so many times I have the dates burned in my mind let's see how fast I can get through this. The building sells for full price to a buyer who I had doubts about from the get go. He has a ten day inspection period. During those ten days David and I go to the building for showings and inspections several times. After several visits to the building, David - **this is key, and despite what he ever may say, know that this is true, that this is how it unfolded, that it was his idea, and that I was dead set against it** - DAVID started saying that WE should have bought the building. He started asking why WE didn't make an offer on it. I couldn't believe it. I looked at him as if he were an insane person on the street (like the many in our new neighborhood).

I know what was going on in his mind - I know him very well - he was still on vacation *in his mind*. He was traveling. He was in Palm Springs where it is always wonderful. He was thinking if we owned rental property and dumped the house we would be more free to travel. We know others who have done this. Also I am certain he thought if we didn't have a house to worry about and fuss over I might be more inclined to pick up and leave town on a moment's notice - very appealing to his wander lust I am sure. He saw the real estate market in Seattle shooting higher and higher, with no end in sight, as the dot com money around here was making everyone and everything fast, loose and crazy. (Those were the days my friend, we thought they'd never end . . .) And he liked this building.

I told him - this is mid March now - that I would never consider selling our house. I told him you'd have to drag my dead body out of it. My Koi pond! Our new kitchen! The perfect street in the perfect neighborhood! Was he on drugs? **SNAP OUT OF IT**. But he did not. He mentioned this over and over and over despite the fact the building had that offer on it making it a moot point.

About two hours before the end of the tenth day, to no one's great surprise - certainly not mine - the buyer with the ten day inspection contingency walked. The building needed a lot of work, too much in the eyes of that buyer. So now David's dream that was once moot was back. I continued to say, "No way." And I kept insisting there was no way till Wednesday March 29th. That morning, while taking a shower, I was struck by a remodeling idea involving the units in this building. (We live here now, you can see where this is headed, right? My tenses may skip around now.) I got out of the shower, tried to shake off the idea along with the water, but couldn't. I drove by the building to see if I could live here (this is **NOT** our old neighborhood) and called David Wertheimer (the seller David) and ran a few ideas past him. He was not only receptive, he sorta made us an offer we would never have expected considering I priced the building. On a lark I called Tom (loan officer, see page 3) to see what the payments would look like on something like this. Then I drove to the work and walked into the inner office David shared with our dear friend Rebecca. They were both there chatting when I burst in and announced that I'd had an epiphany, I'd made some calls, and that I was ready to do it. Rebecca thought I was absolutely crazy (she always thinks I am crazy and rash, be it dinner plans, Guemes, or this) and David, though excited, began his waffling dance, which has many steps and revisions, and continues to this day. That was March 29th. Between waking up dead set against this and being totally on board was about three hours for me. Things can turn on a dime.

The next day, on March 30th, David and I presented our offer to purchase to David and Paul. Not that there was any mystery to that seller David and I had already worked out all the details over the phone. Agent David and I were already shirking our duties as agents of the sellers by not encouraging other offers that were starting to float around as we rushed around getting our ducks in a row. A mere 32 hours after my shower it was a done deal. The next day, Friday, March 31st, we had, and approved of on the spot, our inspection. It was not a real inspection and is **NOT** the kind of inspection we would suggest for our clients. It consisted of having Joe and Kim, our only contractors, walk through the basement garage and half the building with us (we were only concerned with the top floor) and tell us what we wanted to hear (which is turning out to be very untrue): that it was possible to make it livable for a number we tossed out there. Away we go, pumped and excited (with less than 20% of the information we need) and half cocked as is our way!

David's Corner:

This was the year that we sold our incredible home which we had vowed we would never do. We had worked so hard to bring it back to its former glory and, having almost finished it, could not resist the urge to embark on another investment remodel challenge. The practical allure of rental income called to us and broke down our resistance to staying put. Now we find ourselves living in a five unit building living next door to ongoing construction five days a week. We have condensed our belongings and surroundings to about 900 square feet until Spring (?????) of 2001 when our very own custom apartment will be finished. We can then unpack our four storage lockers and collect the things we didn't sell or give away that are now stored in other people's homes. We'll finally have more of a normal life back. Best yet we'll be able to psychologically spread out! Michael, I, Inga, Calvin and Claire will go from a tight, small space all on one level (you can stand in one spot and see it all) into 2200 square feet of space on two levels! The apartment that we are in, which will become a rental unit when we move out, is sunny and sweet, but not what the five of us are used to or need to remain loving! I'm so eager for our new digs!

until then it's an interesting challenge for me to make and I admit I am not always up to it. I can be a cranky, petulant, thoroughly unlikeable person. Michael has been good about ignoring my moody moments. His enthusiasm for this project seemingly knows no bounds. His whole purpose for being is now wrapped up in this project as he will gladly tell you as he shuttles you through the work site for the umpteenth time. I can only stand to go over there once, maybe twice a week; he is over there literally two to three times a day (I'm sure much to the chagrin of the workers). All other energy in the world seems to dim in the presence of Michael's spinning world of remodel - ing, landlord - ing and real estate - ing. By turns it is entertaining and infuriating and is always a complete reflection of what Michael is like to live with on a day to day basis. Those of you who know Michael will already understand this phenomenon.

So life continues in much the same way for us as it has before. Michael says, "Let's go!" while I say, "where are we going?" or "why would we want to go there?"

Michael is the exclamation point and I am the question mark.

In between surviving the present and dreaming about the future there are our wonderful friends, family, pets, and clients to consider. Our lives are better, fuller, more complete because of the turmoil, joy, and responsibilities you share with us.

All our best to you and yours,

I guess he's outta here! I'm not quite done yet however . . .

One of our tenants just rang our doorbell. Whenever the doorbell rings here your first reaction is always "Now what?" with a clear and definite sense of dread. In many ways I know why David and Paul sold this place! This time however it was two of our tenants presenting us with fresh baked Christmas cookies and a card. How sweet. How could we possibly ever raise their rents?

And now, a few words from Laura Nyro (or should I say Carole King?) (or the Drifters?):

When this old world starts getting me down,
And people are much too much for me to take,
I climb way up to the top of the stairs
And all my cares just drift right into space.
On the roof, the only place I know,
Where you just have to wish to make it so,
Up on the roof.

You'll never know how often I find myself singing this song when I'm alone. One of the two big appeals of this project for me was the roof. (The other appeal is to test our relationship to see if we can survive the biggest most expensive remodel we'll ever be in a position to do - sure 16 years of being together 16 *sounds* impressive, but can it withstand this???) I have this fantasy, albeit a nesting fantasy, about Manhattan and tight spaces and hidden courtyards and rooftop terraces. Now I get to live it out. To cheer David up when this is all getting to him (and don't even ask why I

try since it was, from the very start, HIS idea to do this) I tell him this is as close as we're ever going to come to real urban, in city, gritty living (something we both share a desire for). He follows up by saying it wouldn't be so bad if when he walked out he door he was in SoHo.

We slept in this building for the first time on July 5th. (Actually I think I slept not only in this building, but in the exact same unit we are going to be living for one night back in the early 80s - it was right around the time that the press got hold of the fact that the then new First Lady, Nancy Reagan, had a small gun - I'm having these very solid flashbacks, but that's another story and just we don't have time to go there now.) Between our inspection (March 31st) and our move date (July 5th) we sold our beloved house and dealt with the many layers of qualifying for and getting a huge construction / purchase loan.

The sale of our house was a gratifying dream come true. David and I have never been lucky in real estate, truly lucky, in the past. Yes we have purchased worthy projects, and yes we have sold them and walked away with just barely more than we had in them. We've been smart enough to at least get back what we had in one, but we never really gained and we never tried to plan our moves based on what the market was doing. This time we got lucky. We rushed our unfinished house to the market in 13 days. Once we made the firm decision to purchase this building it was the 31st. Our house was not ready for the public to see. In 13 days we filled four storage lockers, did several dump runs and fussed and fussed and fussed. Agents were interviewed for price opinions (never let a seller price their own house!) and marketing materials were prepared. Ads were placed. The four storage lockers were taken away the same day the for sale sign was posted in the front yard. Those 13 days flew by.

We listed our house on Wednesday April 12th. It was held open for local brokers on Thursday the 13th. On Friday the 14th the stock market took its first huge dive of the year. We woke up on Saturday the 15th to dire headlines and lots of local (the dot com shivers) hysteria. None-the-less we had been set in motion and on Sunday the 16th we held an open house. We were nervous sellers (all real estate agents should do this once in awhile to stay in touch, really in touch, with their clients angst!). By Monday the 17th we knew we would be OK. Already two agents had materialized with buyers and pre offer inspections (a sure sign you are OK) were being scheduled. On Tuesday the 18th an inspector hired by a buyer fell off the roof of our new front porch house and, needless to say, hurt himself. At three o'clock that day we were looking at offers. It was a stressful time. In the end there were three offers. The prospective buyers, all single men ranging in age from 29 to I think 37, all worked at, or had in the past worked at, Microsoft. Two were still at Microsoft and the third had moved on to Amazon.com when it was having its heyday. All three buyers offered cash. All three buyers offered, by some weird coincidence, to close on April 28th, a mere 10 days away. All three buyers were making firm offers having already waived their inspection contingencies. And all three tried to out do the others in the one area that matters most.

That night, not knowing what this friggin' remodel was really going to cost, David and I dined alone at Canlis and could not stop smiling at each other. There was champagne and talks of trips to Italy and flat screen plasma TVs. It's December now. The money has come in and either gone out, been allocated, or given to our new mortgage holder. We dine at the Vietnamese noodle house down the block now and argue about whether or not we can afford tile over vinyl and whether or not our contractors are the most expensive in Seattle or on the entire west coast. Things can turn on a dime. And the dimes are slip slidin' away these days, and the turns are getting tighter and tighter.

Eeeeeeks. Now I'm getting all depressed and worried again. Time for more Laura Nyro:

When I get home feelin' tired and beat
I go up where the air is fresh and sweet.
I get away from the hustling crowds,
And all that rat race noise down in the street.
At night the stars put on a show for free,
Darlin' you can share it all with me.
Let's go, I keep tellin' you,
Right smack dab in the middle of town
I found a paradise that's trouble proof.
And if this world starts getting you down
There's room enough for two
Up on the roof. Up on the roof. Come on baby, Come on baby. Up on the roof.

That's so much better. Let's banish and deny those worried thoughts. It is Christmas! We have a new President! I can feel the love tonight!

Geeeeze, page 12. I was only joking earlier when I said 13 pages, but . . . hmmm, I guess I wasn't. I really think I need to stop now. There's not much else to tell. Well over half of our year was consumed by this move and getting settled again. And, as David pointed out, we really aren't settled and won't be till probably next summer. But by time we finished moving our stuff it was July 7th.

My cousin Marsha and her partner Lori came to visit us over the 4th of July holiday, so they were here for the move week. (I almost forgot that *as I am sure I am forgetting* other things like that and will unknowingly offend someone out there somehow even tho' I surely don't mean to!) We didn't make them help us move and they didn't make us entertain them non stop. On moving day they took our truck and drove off to the mountains or something to, I don't know, what do girls do? Hike? Camp? Before the move we took Marsha and Lori up to Guemes for a lovely weekend and showed them some sights in Seattle. One night we dined downtown with our good friends Frank and Gary and Marsha and I ordered a whole fried fish that kinda freaked some at the table out. We loved it, the fish that is.

In August David's niece, one of them, turned 21. I like to point out to her that when I first saw her she was completely naked dancing around the living room of a house in Fremont while trying to sing some song. She was 5 then. So now she's 21 and we drove over to the "wine country" of Washington State to tour wineries for her birthday. Her father arranged for quite the event . . . many people with matching wine (red) colored shirts that all said "Elisa's Entourage." Great fun, but tasting wine before 6:00 PM is just not a good thing. We were at wineries at 11:00 AM. This is too much.

September's big event was sorta over the top. Barbra Streisand announced (again, I think she's done this before) that she was performing her final four concerts. Cherese has this thing for Streisand. David has to a degree as well. At first we joked about it, then, somehow it moved to Cherese and I on line trying to buy tickets (online each in our own offices). No luck. Then Cherese through one of her infinite connections secured four tickets. Even tho' there were four price points for her tickets, and even tho' we went for the third lowest point, the tickets to the concert cost more than the round trip airfare to LA. But at this point we still didn't know what this remodel was really going to cost and we were livin' large baby! We took four days, flew to LA, stayed in Santa Monica, enjoyed a concert that was so much better than I could have hoped for, and then rented a

Ford Explorer with four FIRESTONE tires and drove, at high speeds, to Palm Springs. The four of us, David, me, Cherese and Rebecca, checked into a charming resort that David had stayed at on one of his solo trips (I refused to leave home) and liked enough to return to. For three days we sat by the pool, read magazines and dined outdoors. Then we raced back to LA, stopping in route at the outlet mall where David didn't follow clear instructions about what time to meet back at the car. At the agreed upon time three of us were there. Thus we had to drive extra extra fast to LAX. We got lucky, our tires did not explode. Thus we were rushed and, well . . . this almost caused a divorce the first time around, probably another place I should not go. As I said, David hates it when I revisit bad parts of the year. It's a great story however (Rebecca loved it). It ends with me arriving home with no cell phone and involves the time stamp that cash registers sometimes put on receipts when you make a purchase. My Columbo skills are finely honed. That's all I'm gonna say.

Finally dragged Gary Tucker (there are so many Gary's) up to Guemes in **October**. Surrey came along again and the four of us had a lovely island weekend. Currently the four of us have a standing Sunday night, 10:00 PM date going. We have Showtime (digital cable - amazing!) and they come over to watch the "ground breaking" new series *Queer As Folk*. It is actually quite late on Sunday now (I've been stopping and starting all day on this) and they just left after watching this week's episode. Mostly we question whether anyone would behave as the guys in this series do. Everyone's a critic.

It has been a year of me saying, "I'll NEVER do that!" and then doing it anyway. In late October I sold our truck to our friends Karen and Margie. They sold their house in the spring (good timing girls!) and moved to an 80 acre chestnut farm in the sticks. We mean to go there, haven't had the time yet. David wanted to sell the truck. (As, I am sure, part of some harebrained plan to buy something different. He's currently working my last nerve over my car, which used to be his till he tired of it. He wants me to dump it. I was opposed to buying it - a Range Rover that had 92,000 miles on the day we bought it USED - but now I like it. Now it has 125,000 miles on it. I bond with a car when it passes 100,000 miles. I like REALLY used cars the best!) I did not want to part with the truck (I needed it yesterday at the hardware store for instance). But we have no where to park it - there is no parking in this "neighborhood" and we only have two spaces in our garage. And Margie really wanted it. I tried to get someone (and there were SO many to choose from, Cherese being the main target) in town who used to borrow it all the time to buy it so I could borrow it from them for awhile. No luck (what a surprise, everyone wanted to BORROW it, but no one wanted to help own it).

On **November 3rd**, the opening day of the movie *Charlie's Angels* I paid for my entire office to attend the first matinee. It was trashy fun, but not a great movie. But I remember living on Lake Ortonville (???) in Michigan, 1976 or 1977, don't remember which, and seeing the first episode when the series premiered. Anyway it was great to shut down an entire office for this - I'm a fun boss!

Thanksgiving, as it has been for the past 14 or 15 years, was held with Greg and Larry. This year it was at their home (for obvious reasons). Next year I am certain it will be at ours. One good part about this neighborhood is that we now live less than three blocks from Greg and Larry again. We used to when we were on 17th and they were at 16th and Mercer. They moved. Now we've moved. Yet we've been so swamped with this remodel (endless plans and meetings and materials selection) and work has picked up so much for us (oddly enough as the local market slows around us - we're experiencing the Seattle real estate market in reverse this year) that we have barely seen them of late. I'm sure once we get settled again that will change back to how it was when we all lived on the other side of the hill. (David and I can now safely say we live "on the other side of the tracks!")

The last page. Are you still with me?

So it is December. The holidays - whatever one you celebrate (see I can be politically correct), if you do (I mostly don't) - are in full swing. Now it is late on Sunday the 17th (oops, it is just past midnight now so I didn't finish this on the 17th as planned). If you are holding this on Tuesday or Wednesday of this week I may have actually gotten it out on the 18th (now today) as I had hoped. Remember it is bulk mail.

I'm looking forward to our New Year's Eve celebration. We are dining at our favorite restaurant in the whole wide world which happens to be in Vancouver, BC. I could tell you who we are going there with, or I could tell you who they voted for for President, but I can't tell you both. Let's see . . . I'll go for the shocker: They are friends of our yet they voted for our new President. I keep telling them they sold us (David and me) down the river. **Spirited debates will ring in 2001.** (I love a good confrontation.)

This has been a great year for David and me. An exciting year, a year when so many dramatic, life altering changes have taken place. There were the obvious physical changes (the move) and there were the less obvious, but **much more meaningful changes**, in the way we think about ourselves, our state as a couple, and our lives. Parting with *the* house, parting with that part of our past, learning that at 45 we can still move on and make huge changes - those are the things you can't see that we are living with and that are affecting us on a daily basis here at **The DuBois Apartments** (did I tell you the name of the building? Someone wanted us to take the addresses off each unit and just refer to them "Stanley" "Stella" "Blanche" and "Gentleman Caller" but I can't remember who just now.

More good things this year: All our pets are healthy and happy and we just love them. Calvin is David's clear favorite. Inga is, have I told you, the light of my life. Claire is around, waiting for that roof top terrace (they have all been so good about being INDOOR in 900 square feet pets).

We met many many wonderful people selling houses this year - more people we'd love to include in our limitless social circle.

All this AND we were upgraded to **FIRST CLASS** on the leg of our journey from Atlanta to Brazil.

e-mail us!

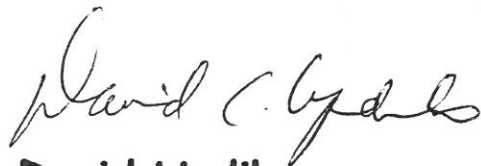
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