

Sunday December 16th 2001

2001

Dear Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

The past twelve months have been a period of remarkable change for David and me. You wouldn't necessarily notice these changes, even if you were around us all the time. Some of them we've kept quiet - till now - things being revealed for the first time here in this letter - oh boy! We'd say they're more shifts of focus and direction, subterranean stuff more than surface stuff. We've done some things, experienced some things, allowed some things to happen, and seen things we never thought we'd do, experience, allow or see in our lives. In the past twelve months things have happened that we simply never thought would. And we're not referring to the very first thing that comes to all of our minds this year when we read a sentence like that. Neither of us is wise enough to address the events of September 11th (and even if we were, certainly not here). Minds greater than ours have been writing about that day, the fallout from it and what lead up to it, for over 90 days now and they will surely continue for years to come; our voices would add nothing to the fray.

No, we're talking about small, insignificant things in the face of current world events, but things that have rocked our lives and the way we live 'em none-the-less. Remember this isn't *The New York Times* - heck this isn't even *USA Today* - perspective is required to read this. (And to write it - on September 12th, and during the stubborn sadness that engulfed me for weeks afterwards, I was absolutely certain I would not write or send a year end letter this year).

**So what experiences caught us by such surprise in 2001?**

Let's start with the one thing that most affected our year, an obvious shocker (it shocked us anyway): We bought another house. We could never have imagined that we - little ol' us - would own three houses, and thus make three mortgage payments, at one time. (Well one of them isn't a house, it's a small apartment building, but that only makes it worse in every way and more over the top.)

We could have never have guessed how difficult it is to move three times in a 15 month period. This experience alone has completely altered our view of *things*, as in *stuff* you own and have to move.

We've been constantly and simultaneously living in and happily remodeling the various houses we've owned over the the past 17 years. We could never, therefore, have guessed how difficult this last (and trust us, it is the last) remodel was going to be. On us. Or how long it would take.

On a positive note I could never have imagined how much I could like a simple bathroom, how much sheer joy and absolute pleasure I could get from it each time I go in there.

Back to hard things, I never would have thought that I'd be hiring an eviction attorney, trying to read and understand reams of court papers (all sorts of notices, a Writ for Restitution, summons, and so on), and making appointments with the Sheriff to move someone's belongings to the street.

Then again, we never thought we'd see our home (it may be a four unit apartment building that looks like mediocre rental property, but *it is our home*) used as a hygiene center for homeless and disaffected Broadway street kids (about 4 or 5 each night) by a probable heroin user who hadn't paid his rent in three months.

Remember January 2001? Our national election? Well we never thought, we could never have imagined, that we'd *feel the need* to listen to, to actually pay attention to, President Bush, to follow what he says and does. And for 46 years (46 for me, 45 years for David) it never once crossed our minds to own an American flag. We still don't own one, *but it crossed our minds*. This year we've thought about, and talked about with each other, things we never thought we would. We came of age in the 70's remember - we're still getting used to all this patriotism and following the leader.

We never thought we'd allow ourselves to own a king sized bed. Then again we never really thought that a dog would be allowed to sleep in our bed, under a down comforter, fully stretched out with its head on one of the pillows. That never occurred to us before this year.

We never thought we'd sell - yes sell, relinquish ownership of - our lovely island home. We owned waterfront property and probably never will again. A major shift and another 2001 event we never saw coming.

Speaking of things we never saw coming - and we bet you didn't either - are you sitting down? - we never thought about adopting a child prior to this year. Stay tuned! Details in this letter!

**And who amongst us could have ever possibly predicted the break up of Destiny's Child?**

Now that rocked my world. Sad, but true. Four years, four albums (not one of which we own) and now off to solo careers. In a parting comment one of them said, "You know how the Beatles broke off, they all did their solo projects and they came back together and were even stronger." I loved this. Let's see, Destiny's Child comparing themselves to the Beatles. And with absolutely no awareness of musical history - the Beatles *never* got back together once they split up. Sadly George is now joining John in spinning in his grave as he contemplates being compared to Destiny's Child.

You know it's hard to sit here in December and remember January. And then write about it. It's even harder when behind you there are stacks of boxes that are still unpacked from your move 70 days ago - they're a giant distraction sitting there calling out to me. All the stuff we *need* to live is *unpacked*, so what treasures that I haven't seen in 19 months are hiding in those boxes? And there's new stuff around to enjoy and play with. We just got a leather chair and ottoman yesterday that I haven't had the chance to sit in and read in yet. And what of the home theatre system? Two DVDs from netflix.com just arrived in the mail and are sitting there unopened. Urge to not type!

We are both sick this week. In four hours some friends who haven't yet seen this place are coming over for wine and cheese and to watch the sunset. What a joke since it is pouring rain, horribly windy and stormy today. It seemed like a good idea when we planned it a week ago - of course that day the sun *was* setting (even in December it sets on some days) and we didn't each have the flu. It's all too much and the letter isn't started. But it must be time to start it because, again, people are sending us cards and e-mails asking when they will get their copy. So here I sit fighting all sorts

of urges to do otherwise. Fortunately THIS YEAR I took some notes. I am not kidding. Here we go! So how did the year 2001 start? On a very high note as I recall.

(Hey, before I start for real, were you paying attention up there? One of those last two "we never could have guessed" items wasn't real! I was just trying to grab your attention - and keep myself amused. Did it work? Which one do you think was the false item, our child or Destiny's Child?)

#### **Who was naughty and who was nice?**

Last year Santa brought Michael his first (at age 45 remember) new car while David got a litter box. Which had a greater impact on our lives? Which merits most mention in the annual holiday wrap up letter? As it turns out, the litter box! The car is just a car; it does the exact same thing the last car did. It's a bit smaller (it's a SAV not a SUV - *what's the difference?*), a bit lighter, and uses up a bit less gas. We picked it up at the dealer the day after Christmas and before the new plates even arrived I had already scratched the paint on the passenger side by running into a wall in our very small, very tight garage. But it is (was) my first new car and it still smells and feels new. I had it detailed for the first time last Friday (in preparation for a three day cross county road trip that starts next Friday, the 21st, and now it smells really new again. But other than having to adjust to a huge car payment (the Rover was old but owned f & c), it didn't change our lives a bit.

On the other hand the new litter box rocked our world. Mostly David's world was rocked as *that* falls on his chore list, but mine as well since it cut having to listening to complaints about that chore by 75% at least. It was one of those fancy motorized litter boxes! Self cleaning! And guess what? They work! In our small circle of cat lovers we had debated and joked about this litter box for years . . . who would pay almost \$200 for a litter box? On spec? What if it didn't work? Who would be the first fool to gamble on this? Turns out it was me. It started out as a gag gift, but who knew? It worked perfectly and the cats were simply fascinated by it. However each time it did its thing it sounded like a drill very slowly putting a long screw into hard wood. Or a long visit to the dentist. Half the time we think the cats just jumped in and out of it to set it off and watch it work. After six months of listening to it it drove us crazy and we didn't trust it to not jam up when we went away for a few days. In the end it just made us nervous. We gave it to another cat lover, Nicole, our most amazing finish contractor who built our most amazing stair railing in our townhome.

#### **What else do we remember about January of last year?**

I remember preparing to fly to Palm Springs for a lovely mid winter break and continuing to hear about the politics of personal destruction while glued to CNN and our new President's confirmation hearings. I liked the phrase and wondered if there was a way to employ it more in our daily lives.

On the plane I listened to the woman in the seat next to me sob during most of the flight down while I debated whether or not we should ask to see our housekeeper's green card and whether or not we could say when I run for office, that she wasn't vacuuming for money, that she vacuumed 'cause she liked us, and that later, in an unrelated event, we gave her money 'cause we liked her. Hmmmm . . . this is probably a dark path best not to go down. Good thing this stuff doesn't come up during listing presentations. What if *Century 21* got hold of this information while competing with us for a listing? Would it soon become, to rework a phrase from Ross Perot, "gotcha real estate" ???

(Remember Ross Perot? I miss him. Not only did he say the damndest things, he made for such great material on *Saturday Night Live*.)

**Something happened in Palm Springs. Something big.**

It rained. It rained every day we were there. It rained all the way there. The plane landed in the pouring rain. During take off and landing the woman next to me elevated the sobbing to full on moaning and cries. Was it because it was Alaska Airlines? Was it the storm? Or, since she had the window seat, did she know something I didn't? I tried extra hard to be calm and still and read and act like the storm turbulence was normal in an attempt to reassure her. It didn't work. And I don't even feel comfortable on planes. I always end up thinking bad thoughts and worrying about things, I've been that way for years, well before the images of planes from this year, and I doubt I'll ever change. But still I fly because, if nothing else, it's practical and I think of myself as a practical man. But still there was a great irony to me trying to act calm and reassuring for the benefit of a stranger. But she was sorta freaking me out and I certainly didn't want to react in anyway to make matters worse (for either of us). Whoever she was, I'll bet she's stopped flying now altogether.

David and I had been to Palm Springs exactly six times before this fateful, rain soaked trip. Usually we go down over the long weekend around the MLK holiday in January and it's 75° and stunning and we walk around in shorts and wear hats to keep the sun off us so we don't get, as David lovingly calls it, "old man head." This time it was cold and wet - Seattle with less to do. We were staying this time with our new friends Rick and Tom who, as a matter of fact, we had met there exactly a year ago this trip. We had absolutely no intention of buying a house there. It was raining and cold. Usually we walk in the sun or play in the pool. This trip we couldn't do that. Wanting to be good guests, we tried to give Rick and Tom a break from us so we got in the car and drove around one day. There were open houses. We went to many of them just cause, well, it is what we do - we are real estate junkies and we can't resist an open house. Most of the houses we went into were priced in the 300's, 400's, and 500's. There was no possibility we could afford any of them so it was a safe exercise in value comparison in a city we hardly know. Then, as we were headed back to Tom and Rick's, there was that "last open of the day, getting dark, pouring rain, should we even bother going in 'cause it looks like a dump and it's awfully small" house. Can you tell where I'm going with this?

Of course we go in. We separate and look around. We pass each other once in one of the rooms and we catch each other's eye and we're both smiling and we look at each other and we kinda know what's about to happen. It probably didn't help that Tom is a loan officer in Seattle who can do loans in other states and that Rick is an architect who can see redemption in almost any property. And that their Palm Springs house, where we were staying, was less than three blocks away. Needless to say our friends didn't try to point out all the reasons why, knowing we owned two other properties and had a huge remodel going on to one of them, and a new car payment to adjust to, we shouldn't do this.

No, in fact they egged us on. Tom convinced us our down payment only need be equivalent to the cost of a major kitchen appliance and that surely we qualified. Rick sees good lines, many possibilities and is certain a pool, its tragic flaw - it doesn't have one, will fit in the small backyard. Rick starts drawing sketches and Tom is running numbers with a calculator. David and I keep thinking about the other five times we've been to Palm Springs (when the weather was stunning), how much we like it there ("it" being the pace), and being 60 in Seattle versus being 60 in Palm Springs. (We plan ahead.)

That was Sunday, day four of our six day vacation. We agonize over this for the rest of our trip. We visit the house again several times over the next few days as we plot out all sorts of crazy offer ideas. The house was for sale by the owner - yikes, the dreaded FSBO - for just under 200. Tom is encouraging crazy offers of like 150. They knew it had been on the market for over four months, since well before Thanksgiving the year before, at various prices much higher than 200.

We decide to make an offer for well less than asking wherein the seller plays the bank and carries back a note for some of the down. We have no agent. We're not licensed to write real estate contracts anywhere but Washington state. We decide - yiiiiikeeees again - to have the seller, who is also a real estate agent in Palm Springs (she's an agent who doesn't have her house officially "listed," trying to sell it, evidently unsuccessfully for months, as a FSBO - swell!) to represent us. Agency be damned - we think we know what we're doing! After all this is what we do. On the last day of our trip we meet with the seller at 9:00 AM. Our flight is at noon. We present an offer she scoffs at. We volley back and forth. We agree somewhere in the middle but closer to where she was than where we hoped. The party who wants it the most always loses! But she does agree to carry back 15% of the purchase price making our small 5% down more like 20% down and helping us avoid PMI and higher loan fees and closing costs. We sign a bunch of foreign looking papers and rush to the airport and fly home. Now we're sobbing on the plane! Just kidding. Actually we just keep laughing at each other and asking each other over and over and over, "Are we crazy or what?"

**We return home from Palm Springs simply spinning.**

We can't believe what we have done; we think we are at best foolishly impetuous but more likely completely insane. We realize we haven't even made our first car payment yet and now we are taking on a new huge obligation. We worry and question ourselves. The demands of the remodel on our townhome were at a fever pitch with 24 page documents, pages with lots of big numbers on them, flying back and forth between the project manager and us. It was at this point we made the decision to keep this Palm Springs purchase a secret. We decided to tell no one, especially JAS. We didn't want the contractors to think we had any discretionary income. And we didn't want our friends to think we had lost our minds. It all seemed so unreal, so why talk about it?

Meanwhile David had a back log (thankfully) of clients (who were being expertly assisted by another agent in our office while we were away) all needing immediate attention and catching up with. David picks up deals in process, completes inspections, writes new deals, and reconnects with buyers who hadn't yet found their dream home. In the days following our return he puts in 12 hour days tying up loose ends and organizing client needs for the coming months. He's a great agent and he's had another busy, fulfilling, great year.

Over at my desk I'm on line trying to find cheap airfares and budget rental cars 'cause within 14 days I have to fly back down to Palm Springs to attend our house inspection. Of course I didn't really have to go - the inspection could have been done with neither of us there and the report faxed or Fed Ex'd to us, but I decided to take the advice we always give our clients: "Be there!" It drives us crazy when clients come up with reasons why they can't be at their inspections - too busy at work, important meeting, won't be in town - it's a *big* decision, a 30 year loan, so clear your calendar, make it happen, be there! I figured if this was worth doing, if we were committed to this, it was worth doing it right.

From my notes: January 20th, 4:00 AM: Inga couldn't sleep. Woke me at 4:00 AM. Then I couldn't sleep. Turned on CNN - ah! - oh oh - It is inauguration day! No wonder I couldn't sleep. It wasn't too much business! It wasn't the ever expanding remodel of our new home! It wasn't the Palm Springs craziness! It wasn't our pending financial doom. It *was* inauguration day. Once I knew what was upsetting me I gave in to it wholly. I turned on the TVs, CNN, and cleaned my office. I watched it all. The speeches! The pomp! The circumstance! The vacant, stupid look on our new President's face! (Yeah, yeah, yeah, there's a small chance he may not be vacant and stupid, but look at him! - it does not inspire confidence.)

**We have people coming over in a few hours . . . . I'm still typing.**

In addition to the remodel, the inspection, our clients, our worry, and all the other things going on, we were then 20 days out from the Grand Opening of a condo project we were putting on the market on Capitol Hill. Only nine units in the complex, but still that's nine listing agreements, nine sets of ads to write, nine more files to set up. We needed to get signs designed and posted, caterers arranged, flowers ordered, and an open house schedule cemented. Most of this work had been started over the year the condos were being built, but there's always those last minute details on any project. Since this was our first "whole building" project we wanted to fuss it until it was perfect and ready to launch. We launched it the first weekend in February with public opens every Saturday and Sunday for the whole month. We had a lot going on.

That's how our year started and pretty much how spring turned into summer for us, with a lot going on. I'm flipping the pages of our calendar now and that pretty much covers January, February, March and April. I see the names of many friends with the word "dinner" scrawled next to their name dotting the pages. I see the words "open house" with a name or some address penned below them on virtually every weekend through April. I see that we had our 16th anniversary on February 12th (we dined alone at Campagne). And I see an endless number of days with JAS written on them meaning a day with a meeting with someone - a designer, a cabinet maker, the lead carpenter, the big boss, the money people, the project manager . . . they have 55 employees and I think we met with 37 of them in the spring, at least it felt like. David says he aged ten years this year.

**I need to find a good 12 step program for my particular sickness.**

Somewhere in the middle of March Tim Allen rented a big truck and he and I drove around Seattle hitting Merritt's estate sales looking for the perfect mid-century modern couch and chairs. We went to Guemes and grabbed some stuff. We went to 126th and Aurora to visit our storage lockers (remember all our stuff was in four plywood "storage to go" lockers) and collected odds and ends. We bought two new queen sized beds with frames and loaded those on last. On March 19th Tim left Seattle for Palm Springs with our new house key, a crude map I had drawn and our new address on North Hermosa Drive. On the 21st we closed on the purchase (long distance, we signed in Seattle days before) and on the 22nd David and I hit the airport early in the morning and less than two hours later we were at our new house in Palm Springs unloading that truck. It's a small two bedroom house - that truck filled it - presto instant home! The next thing you know we've hooked up with a contractor down there and a block wall is being built to create a "compound" effect. Plants are being ripped out, walls are going up. We meet a landscaper and palm trees, soil and grass are being brought in. But wait, don't we need a whole new water line and sprinkler system? By George, I think we do!

Before you know it a full-scale exterior remodel is going on . . . we reaffirm our decision to NOT tell our Seattle contractors about this. We didn't think they'd be so understanding next time we questioned a line item expense or delayed a payment if they knew. *It was like having an affair!* We were cheating on one set of contractors with another set of contractors! We were being bad, very very bad. And we knew it. But I just can't stop myself. David suffers from this too. We gotta be making things better always. It is a sickness.

**Remember I said I took notes?** I'm typing this now based upon a few notes I jotted down on May 17th. I just want to stop here and take a moment to give you an idea of where David and I now call home. Compare this story, if you will, to what you experience as you walk around your neighborhood.

**Street vignette, May 17th, 7:40 AM:**

I am coming out of Vivace with my cappuccino heading back to our apartment. Coming towards me on the sidewalk are two of what I like to call "my neighbors." They are two guys, mid to late 20's perhaps, with mean looking tattoos (as opposed to nice looking, attractive, artistic tattoos), completely covered in dirty leather and filthy, torn clothes. One has his blond hair, hair that looks like it hasn't been washed in months, in dreadlocks. The other guy is just nasty looking. One is, of course, smoking and the other carries, of course, a beat up skateboard. This is what I overhear as we pass each other on the sidewalk:

**Nasty looking one:** ". . . sitting in his kitchen with 200 tabs and he won't give her any."

**Dreadlocks:** "That's a f#@ing lot of acid man."

The sun is shining and it is a beautiful spring day. I smile at my new neighborhood and walk home to enjoy my coffee and the New York Times. I just wanted to share that moment with you.

**A marketing strategy for agents they don't teach at Windermere or on late night cable TV.**

We returned to Palm Springs once each month from that point on. How we managed to do this and keep our careers alive and keep our contractors in the dark I'll never know. We went down with Cherese and Rebecca in April to try and sell them on retiring with us pool side with a gin and tonic. We went down again in May. Somewhere in all of this our dear friend Surrey Tribble visited us there. He had never been there before - his first visit! The weather was stunning while he was there. And he hated his job in Seattle. He returned to Seattle and I put his house up for sale. It sold in four days, he quit his job, and rented a big truck. We told him he could live at our house there - free - since it was just sitting vacant anyway until he found the Palm Springs house of his dreams. So Surrey loaded up the truck while David took my car and folded the seat down and made a special place for Inga, our dog (the absolute light of our lives). David and Surrey and Gary Tucker and I have a final four friends breakfast at Cafe Flora on Saturday the 23rd of June. It was the last time the four of us were together. After breakfast Gary and I stood and waved goodbye as David, in my new car with Inga, and Surrey, in a huge truck with his two pugs and all his stuff, drove off. (This is by the way our new marketing plan: we con our Seattle friends into moving to Palm Springs by tempting them with free use of our vacant house as a transition point. Once they're sold on the idea we list and sell their Seattle home! So far this has worked once. **Who's next?**)

But it's a dry heat . . . .

On June 28th yet another flight to Palm Springs - this time me alone and I managed to get upgraded to first class with miles that were racing up on our Alaska Air Visa card (we were charging many costs of the townhome remodel). David and Surrey pick me up at the airport and we're off for lunch in stunning sunshine. Then it's more open houses - this time for Surrey! Remember David is there with my car and our dog. We drive around, head to the most wonderful city operated dog park we've ever seen, and we play for several days. Then we jump in the car, say goodbye to Surrey, and drive to Oregon to stay at Cannon Beach for the 4th of July holiday. Road trip! I actually still like those. This time, for the first time, we have books on . . . not tape! New cars don't come with cassette tape players anymore. But we found a bunch of books on CD at Barnes and Nobles in the desert. Between talking (even after 17 years we still find stuff to talk about), music, and David Sedaris reading his books to us the drive flies by. David and I leave weather in Palm Springs that is high 90's or low 100's (but it's a "dry heat" so it isn't really uncomfortable - we love saying that - it's some kinda local joke down there) and two days later we are freezing in July on the Pacific Ocean. It was exactly half the temperature in Oregon as it was in Palm Springs a mere two days before, 52° verses 104°. We don't have the right clothes for this - who knew it could be this cold on July 4th - but we do the best we can. We hike around and see the sights. Inga loves the beach. Luckily she loves the desert as well as our days of beach and waterfront turned out to be numbered.

July and August flew by. I asked David the other day if he'd be writing anything for this letter this year and he said the only two things that really counted were the shift of focus to Palm Springs and our surviving this townhome remodel in Seattle. **David e-mailed me these thoughts:**

This year finds me penning these words from my desk in our newly finished townhome space as alluded to in last year's letter. After fourteen months of construction, we finally moved in (on October 2nd) and attempted to expand back in to 2100 square feet. I had many bad moments when living next door in 900 square feet especially towards the end. Competing for space with two cats, a lively dog and a compulsively neat boy friend was beginning to send me over the edge. Living through a summer in our new neighborhood also contributed to my increasingly sour mood. The slumlords next door, the building to the north, allowed two particularly obnoxious groups of tenants who liked to sleep during the day and frolic all night to continue living there. Their drug-addled, nonstop chatter and music caused me to call the police on five different occasions. Michael, much more confrontational, cornered the "manager" on several occasions and one summer night at 4:00 AM escorted the police (wearing only his boxer shorts) right to the door of the worst offenders. Sometime in early August they must have been given their notice to get out because they had one big final blowout party on August 29th which culminated in one of them throwing several gallons of purple paint out into the middle of Harvard Avenue between their slummy building and ours. When we woke up the next morning there it was - purple paint splattered on parked cars and tracked all up and down Harvard Avenue. In addition broken furniture was scattered all over the area. I guess what they didn't want to move they just smashed. Four months later the paint is just beginning to wear away as is my frustration with having to put up with neighbors who have no common sense!

It's been over a year now since we lived in our house on a nice quiet street on Capitol Hill. Now we live in a neighborhood of apartment buildings where we are the oldest and probably the only owner occupants. I don't think I will ever fully adjust to this change. I am instead trying to focus on how wonderful the home that we have created for ourselves here is. In many ways we feel that we have created a completely new home from the ground up. We also became landlords and now have three spacious rental units, two downstairs and one next door to us. Added responsibility and sharing space is difficult at time but it often (but not always) equals rental income to offset monthly housing payments!



Michael keeps pointing out the difference between the rents - once we actually have all the apartments rented - and the mortgage payment. I try to focus on how smart a transition this was for us to make. We have a great home, it amazing really - at least to us, and three income units. Because it's an apartment we can just walk out of it and lock the door and not worry about it in the same way we did our house. I feel we can take a long weekend to Guemes or Palm Springs and know that our responsible and caring tenants can keep an eye on things. It all works pretty well and I almost have myself convinced . . . then I walk by Michael's desk and see a water bill for \$408 (and that's for one month - since we're an apartment they bill all utilities monthly) or a gas bill for \$535 for the two hot water tanks and the 97 year old boiler that heats water for the radiators and is big and old and ugly and could explode at any moment and I start to wonder what we've done all over again.

**From my notes: July 21st, 4:00 AM:**

David has gone to Guemes with Inga so that I might be alone to work on our 2000 tax returns, that which cannot be delayed any longer. I am alone for three days. I revel in that, yet I work diligently. Took a break tonight to watch *The Towering Inferno* on DVD while enjoying a bowl of ice cream and raspberries. You know *everyone* was in that movie! I thought *everyone* had been in *The Poseidon Adventure* which came out two years prior (1972 versus 1974), but I was wrong. David and I have seen *The Poseidon Adventure* numerous times; it seems to always be on TV when we're bored and channel surfing. But it had been 27 years since I last saw *The Towering Inferno* and I had forgotten most of it. Including that one of its stars was O. J. Simpson. He plays a good, kind, smart security officer who saves a deaf woman from the fire and then rushes back in to save her cat. As the credits play I wonder if he hummed the movie's theme song, *We May Never Love Like This Again*, the last time he saw Nicole.

I should probably let that go, huh? I can't seem to. Perhaps I should see a therapist. Where was I?

I can see by the clock on my MAC that company will be here within 40 minutes now. I need to stop, shower, walk and feed the dog, and then fuss the apartment that we are trying to show off. David is much sicker than I am - tho' we're both going to rise to this occasion and entertain for a few hours anyway - and I told him I would do all the work for this if he let me have a few people over. I think he's upstairs throwing some champagne on ice anyway. Gotta run. I hope to wrap this up later today after the event.

That night - all the company is gone now. I cleaned up, we had a quick dinner and now I'm back at my trusty computer. I kinda feel like just stopping now - you probably do to (of course you can, just throw it away and do something else) but you know I can't. Once I start this I just have to see it to the end. I think I just like to "purge" the year and then take a final vacation and then start over.

The year. **What a year this was.** Ever stop and really think about this year? Let's review: We start with Patty Hearst getting a Presidential pardon, Jessie Jackson having a love child, and the aftermath of a shady election as we move into our first President ever appointed by the Supreme Court. This is followed (we know now) by a nation wide financial slump which is immediately followed by an energy crisis that caused David's cheap assed gym (the Seattle Club) to add a \$3.00 energy surcharge to his already high monthly bill. Even after the "crisis" passes this surcharge does not stop till I call and complain. Seattle gets an earthquake (Feb 28th) that does a great deal of damage and nicely follows up on the riots in Pioneer Square earlier that month. Chaos downtown! Chaos in our apartment (one of my poodle TV lamps flew off the TV and smashed to bits). Then my personal

favorite of 2001 - several months of NONSTOP Gary Condit. I was reading an article in the New Yorker the other day and they pointed out that the week of July 16th Gary Condit was the topic on Larry King's 6:00 PM show for five consecutive nights. The article went on to say how often he "lead" on the nightly news on each station this summer. (You may have missed this but earlier this month he filed for re-election.) It's hard to believe now, but the Chandra Levy/Gary Condit story once passed as serious news. Sadly we now all know exactly what serious news is. Massive and horrific terrorist attacks in Manhattan and Washington stop everyone in their tracks. But not for long - within weeks a war is waged. The war is followed by questionable attempted attacks on some civil liberties. This is followed by anthrax. Somewhere in there American flags and patriotism surge as an answer along with very young boys with very big guns standing around at the airport. All the TV news shows develop logos and titles and sound tracks for the war: on CNN it's *America's New War* while on CBS (I think, they all run together after awhile) it's *America Strikes Back*. There's a woman named Amma who travels around hugging people. The people get interviewed and describe the hug. On VH1 I learn that Depeche Mode has been making albums for 20 years. I am awestruck. O.J Simpson's house is searched because he just might be fencing stolen satellite equipment and laundering drug money from an Ecstasy ring. I don't even blink. Three women who made the world a more interesting place passed away: Mary Kay, Carrie Donovan, and Eudora Wetly. I read each and every obituary and vowed to never change my e-mail application: I use Eudora. Speaking of passing, Juan Valdez and his mule are going away. Who's bright idea was that? As if canned coffee stands a chance now. And in December I learn that a man from Phoenix is arrested for stalking hosts from QVC's home shopping channel.

That's what I remember from 2001. That plus the absolute demise of Infospace. Three years ago I bought David 75 shares of Infospace stock as a Christmas gift. Just for the fun of it. And it was fun. It split shot up in value then to 150 shares. Those shares shot up in value and split to 300. We were giddy. The 300 shares shot up even higher and then - poof - they were 600 shares. We really didn't pay attention, but at one point I think those 600 shares were selling over \$100 a share. We never sold - we just watched. When it started to fall we never thought of selling because how low could it go? It certainly couldn't go all the way down again - things like that don't happen. It kept falling. I told David, "Hey it only cost me about \$2600 to buy in the first place . . . it will never go that low. Don't worry." We stopped checking the papers for the stock price when it got down to about \$1.06 a share. Yes, it can drop all the way. Yes, it can be worth less than you paid for it. That's our dot com story! We like houses. Houses on land. That we understand.

Filed our income tax returns as late as a person possibly can in one year without going to jail. Once I actually mailed the returns in I became OBSESSED with the \$300 my President promised me as my immediate tax relief. Would we get it? I rushed to the post office each day to check my box. Finally one day four pieces of mail! Two for David and two for me! We each got our \$300 in one envelope and a lovely letter in the other that was basically an advertisement. I kept my letter. It started out, "Dear Taxpayer:"

It's late. This could be replete with typos. I can spell. And I can proof read. But not on a holiday mailing deadline and not at this hour. Also - everyone don't be offended if your lover's name, your spouse's name, or your roommate's name disappeared from the mailing label. We aren't assuming divorce or trying to suggest anything. One day while "synching" two databases into one and then "synching" that one into our Palm Pilots, all second name fields were deleted. Ooops, sorry. 'nite.

Okay then. It's Monday night and I'm back and this is my last typing session. From here to Kinkos and probably without a lot of proofing. I've pretty much covered it all. Let me try to tie up a few loose ends and end it.

In August my mom and dad came from Michigan to Seattle on a plane. They were here for two weeks, flying back on August 31st. We were still living in the 900 square foot apartment at that point so they stayed in a nearby hotel - walking distance from here. We ate out, did the town, saw some movies, went to Guemes and took a cruise from Vancouver, BC through Alaska's inside passage. But the best part of their visit for me was the chance for them to see our townhome mid-remodel. It was nowhere close to put together then, but it was in the final two month stage and the spaces at least made a little sense. The weather was good and the view from the roof was often perfect so they saw that.

Since they left, since September 1st, it has all been about our new home. In September color was going on the walls and the spaces were finishing up and the final touches were being applied. David and I were shopping for accessories and planning our move. The day came on October 2nd - we slept here for the first time that night. Of course the move dragged on for weeks after that, but at least we were in the space. Finally. And what great space it is. No more houses. No more hallways and closets and landings and spaces like that. This is 2147 interior square feet that flows in a way no place we've ever lived has flowed. It is only two bedrooms, ours and a guest room, but it does have a "closet" that is actually a full sized room of its own. It is not part of a master suite or attached to any room. It is just a room that is just a closet. People thought we were nuts to give up a third bedroom for this but *oh* we don't think so. The main room of our apartment is 52 feet long and I think about 17 feet wide. Think about that. We have few doors in this place (only 6 total) and not many tight spaces. It's all sorta one room at this end with bedrooms at the other end. It is an 'L' shaped apartment with both parts of the 'L' being about 52 feet long and 17 feet wide. One end is one open room and the other end is divided into three rooms. The kitchen is on the roof. The bathroom is simply perfect. The speakers in the bathroom and the tile on the walls makes for the most amazing sound.

We have a TV the size of an upright piano in the living room which really isn't a living room - it is a home theatre. We never "live" there. We only watch DVDs there. We "live" when people come for dinner and that only happens on the roof. The kitchen and dining areas are actually small - I think less than 500 square feet total - but because of the way JAS designed the space, 10 foot ceilings at one end rising to (I'm guessing) 15 feet at the other end - you'd never know it was small. Well until you put 10 people in there. But we had an office party here and 72 people flowed through the spaces and it was just fine. And that was 72 people without the roof top terrace that is under construction this week. That terrace will be 52 (the footprint of the building is 52 X 50 I think) wide and between 16 and 24 feet deep depending on where you are out there. A big trellis is coming. Add some pots, plants, hoses, gardening benches, a bar-b-que, tables and chairs along with the wicked out door speakers and JAS's excellent choices for outdoor lighting and it is going to be where we will live come March. summer entertaining is going to be hot. And it will be hot as it all faces west. Straw hats are going to be required - just like in Palm Springs.

David made 100% of the plumbing and kitchen decisions and 90% of the finish decisions. I got to choose only two colors - BROWN and BLUE - but I had a lot to say about the use of the spaces. We

are here now, reinventing ourselves. We had a 4000 square foot house and a lot of stuff. Here we have half that space, a much smaller kitchen and dining area, less cupboards, no closets and lots of open space where you just leave it open - you can't really fill it like house spaces. We kept nothing. Actually we kept two things. We have a chest of drawers in our closet that we had in our last house and we have an armoire in our guest room that we had before. Everything else went away. I mean it, every last thing. Except for the all the books and the "stuff" that goes in and on the furniture we no longer have. Our President said get out and spend. We're furnishing a new home with new things to do our part.

I'm winding down. I guess I won't go into detail about our eviction; I'll just skip all the landlord stories. We're landlords - think of all the reasons you wouldn't want to be one and assume that's true about us too. I could also go on and on about our decision to sell Guemes to our partners - the best partners we've ever had - David and Paul - but really can't I just say. "Three houses???" and let it go at that? We never thought we'd part with it, we love it, Inga really loves it, but we had to rank the places we could go and make a cut.

Okay time to stop. I'm sick and getting sicker. I could stay up and proof this for errors or I could just hope you'll understand and overlook. I could try to end this with heartfelt comments about this year, it's tragic events, and how David and I feel about the state of the world. But I just don't think I have that in me this year. Suffice it to say I am grateful to be able to sit here and type this with so little strife in my life. And I'm grateful for David who just walked over and kissed me on the head and said, "Is it long enough yet?" and then, "Goodnight." And I'm sure if you got this far you are grateful to, well to be at the end of this mess obviously, but also grateful to be around at the end of this year when things just seemed so random.

This has been a stressful year in oh so many ways for David and me. I really have to say we are looking forward to 2002. We're looking forward mainly to having our time back - so much time was invested this year in reorganizing our lives. That reorganization is definitely complete now and we see calm relaxing times ahead. We see our cats and Inga and us sitting on the roof top terrace sipping iced tea and not rushing around anymore.

**e-mail us!**

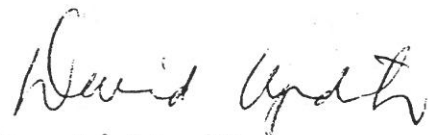
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