

Saturday December 14th

2002

Dear Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

David and I have been so busy this past week that I haven't bothered each day to open our mail. I collect it each day. I go to our post office box and bring it back; I open the tiny little box here at our apartment and bring it in. But I haven't been opening it. So how ironic is this: Today, the very day I've set aside to write our annual holiday letter, I decide to take ten minutes out of the day, make a pot of coffee and read our mail prior to devoting the remainder of my day to this task. Mind you I have been putting this off. Big time. Each year I think I am going to write a little bit each month as things happen and then save entries up "diary like" till I put it all together in December. But I never do. Then I tell myself I'm gonna start working on it in early November, but I never do. Then I swear to David that I'll write it the three days immediately after Thanksgiving. Hah! This year we flew on a float plane from Lake Union to Lopez Island (with our dog on the seat next to us) to visit Kim and Joe's farm the days immediately after Thanksgiving. So I procrastinate for most of the year, and then, when it is upon us, I procrastinate some more.

So minutes ago I open our mail for the week. Christmas cards and bills, and a few holiday letters. As you know I am an avid reader of holiday letters, ever more so on the very day I need to write one. I open the letter from Susan Delude and Mark Flo and it is a photo of them with six words, all in caps, in big bold print below the pic: "**SAME JOB, SAME HOUSE, SAME SPOUSE.**" Now *that* I really like. Why can't I do that? Can I steal it and just not send them a letter this year so they won't know I stole their idea? At the very least the irony of it all deserves a mention and credit here as I embark on this day of free form unfettered flowing typing. It is time once again.

So let me set the stage. WAIT - before I get into this too much I should, I *really should*, say two things: **Frank Kennard** and **Lance Hood**. Whoooow. Good. Got that. Didn't forget. Good. Ok, where was I? Oh yes, setting the stage

First of all it is a Saturday. Specifically 11:13 AM on the 14th (see date above!). I've noticed that most holiday letters don't give you the date, much less the time. This, like the TV show **24** (rave) is happening in real time baby! Think back, what were you doing last Saturday? Think back and know I was doing this all day. For you. It is our Christmas card, and it is all for you.

More stage setting . . . it is raining. It is grey grey grey outside, and it is cold, but not cold enough for snow (it seldom is here). It has been dark and grey here all week. We have some minor work going on at our house in Palm Springs (a set of sliding doors going in and some windows going out) and our good friends, and permanent Palm Springs residents, separately lest we cause any confusion, Tim Allen and Surrey Tribble have been stopping by the house and giving me updates off and on. So Tim calls with a construction update the other day and I say, "Wait, before you tell me, what's it like there? Describe it to me!" He goes on to say that it is 79° and very very sunny. The sky is blue, there isn't a cloud to be seen, and the mountain range is making a glorious backdrop. He's wearing

shorts and a t-shirt ('cause don't you always ask, "What are you wearing?" these days? - I know I do!). I then take great pleasure in describing it here to him (just in case he ever questions the wisdom of selling his house here and buying one there, which I helped him do earlier this year, and Surrey the year before that). I tell Tim it is noon and I'm at my desk at work and when I look out the window it seems like it's dusk. It's so dark and so grey that you would think the sun is setting. I add in the parts about the rain and the cold, but mostly it's about it being noon here and dark as it can be and it being noon there and sunny and 79°. I can't wait to be there again. Palm trees, hummingbirds, swimming pools. One more week till palm trees, hummingbirds and swimming pools!

And our friends wonder about our lack of Christmas spirit. We have no tree. We have no decoration. We send no cards. (We mean to send cards each year, we love mail, we love your cards and letters, but we just weren't organized enough this year - too many changes in December.) We have all of that stuff . . . boxes and boxes of Christmas stuff down in the garage, but I can't make myself haul it out when all I want to do is be in the desert this time of the year. Perhaps if we had a child?

David is leaving for the desert next Tuesday. I am following him next Friday. We'll be gone till the new year. Why decorate? I'm struggling with *even having* the boxes and boxes of Christmas stuff down there as I can't imagine ever being here for the last week of the year again. The real estate industry *really* takes a holiday for Christmas and New Years so it is an easy time to break away, especially for me now that I have what is known as a "desk job." On the other hand I can't bring myself to part with all the porcelain Christmas tchotchkes I collected prior to what I like to call "our desert period." What to do? Don't know. But I do know I walk around Seattle in a constant state of dusk changing:

"I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled."
to
"I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I'm growing really sick of this dark, wet, cold."

(Name that tune! - Especially if you are one of the people under 25 getting this missive, it's a test!)

So last year we proved once and for all that many of you don't read this letter. That's fine since it's more about us writing and sending it than it is a requirement that you actually read it. It's about us ending our year and looking ahead, it's a process. We like to process. In addition to finding out that some of you don't even read the letter, we have proven that many of you *skim* it. I can't tell you how many people sent us a card, e-mailed us, or called us to ask about the child we were adopting. Some people didn't write or call but bumped into us on the streets months later, like downtown in June when we had long forgotten the hook on page one, and asked us if we were really adopting or where the kid was (we were tempted to turn to each other and shriek "I thought he was with YOU!" but we know that's not a laughing matter). David and I long ago assessed the situation (and each other) and came to the conclusion that we are too selfish to make good parents. We know what good parenting takes - we've seen it - and we are wise enough to know we are not up to the task. We're still trying to master sharing with each other and it's been 18 years. So, we're not selfless enough, and now, David having turned 46 in August and me flipping to 47 in October, we're too old!

Anyway **Destiny's Child** did disband, we were only joking about adopting, and many of you skim our letter! Tsk, tsk tsk, tsk. Here's a hook for this year however: I have a dirty little secret that I

may share with you in a page or seven. It dawned on me Thanksgiving morning, while roasting shiitake and portobello mushrooms on the roof of our building and enjoying my dirty little secret, that many of you would be shocked and appalled to know of it. I wondered if I dare bring it out of the closet and into the open? There's the hook. Read on, find out.

Uh, oh! I seem to have somehow gone a full page without mentioning either **Lance Hood** or **Frank Kennard**. Another thing we learned from last year's letter, beyond the whole skimming thing, is that *that* is just wrong. I'm gonna make up for it this year. (Note: their names will always appear in **bold** type and I'm going to try to always alternate their names so as to not play favorites with one over the other. I now know how to make everyone happy. I have learned.)

I don't remember who called first last year, could have been **Frank Kennard**, could have been **Lance Hood**, but boy did they call. Evidently the moment they finished reading their letter they called. I remember **Frank's** call the best (sorry **Lance**) as **Frank** outlined all the ways our lives touched each other in 2001 wherein a mention could have *naturally occurred* (and granted there were many as he and Gary are major threads in the very fabric of our lives). **Lance** didn't have as compelling an argument as **Frank** did, but he made up for that by calling repeatedly and mentioning it each and every time David and I went out with **Lance** and Marcia. It took *months* for **Lance** to let go of this. I'm not sure if **Lance** and Marcia know Gary and **Frank** well, I'm sure they've met here once or twice (and so many of our friends are now meeting here and then getting together other places later without us so it is hard to know really what's going on and who knows who anymore). I offered to introduce **Frank** and **Lance** and supply them with a list of all the people David and I know so they could compare the list of names to the letter, call everyone else not mentioned in the letter, and then set up a support group, say on a Tuesday night, perhaps meeting weekly at first and then moving to once a month as they worked through the pain of not being cited. I even offered to be a guest speaker at the group, after they had a few months worth of meetings, so I could be confronted and grilled.

Sadly this Tuesday night ***I Wasn't In The Nelson + Updike Holiday Letter Support Group*** never got off the ground. I suggested it to **Lance** each time he started to go off about this, but he didn't take me seriously. Then I offered to help him start his own holiday letter that could be all about him. No interest, but still much sadness on his part. I have vowed to change my ways this year. See we mistakenly thought this letter was about *US*. We were wrong. This letter is about how other people *impact us*. David and I hope that you, gentle reader, are mentioned this year too (it's random chance - it just comes out as I type). If not it's purely an oversight - *we meant to mention you*, really we did. And remember if we have failed you, you can always call and complain and then *you* could be a featured player in next year's letter.

Oh good lord, the bottom half of page 3 already and not a word about our year yet

Let's see 2002 was a year that David and I will be glad to see gone. Just go away. 2003 *has to be* a better year. 2001 *was* a better year. As a matter of fact neither of us can remember a year we liked less than 2002. Even years when bad things happened, things like surprise dry rot or the loss of a pet, or years without travel, were better overall than this year, were looked back on more fondly. The best part about this letter is that it is the **OFFICIAL END OF 2002 FOR US**.

Pretty much everything about 2002 was a downer. The news of the world was bad and seems to just keep getting worse. The stock market and economy was bad and kept getting worse. The Catholic Church was very bad and making it worse. Even Martha Stewart was bad, and like the Catholic Church, just kept making it worse. Everyday we open the papers - and we get 3 a day here - and someone somewhere is losing their job. In large groups it seems. School districts are laying off. Boeing, when they're not abandoning Seattle, the city that made them what they are, by moving their world headquarters to Chicago, is laying off. Everyone seems to be laying off. Retail and supermarket chains are laying off. Lots of big companies that used to work seem to be not working anymore. Friends are out of work. CNN is all gloom all the time. Things fall apart.

So in a climate of unrest and unhappiness in most world and national and local arenas we have tried to have a year here. It wasn't the best one we've ever had. Not that any thing really bad or tragic happened to us or our home this year, no huge disasters we can point to specifically, just that the year moved very slowly for us and was mostly a painful struggle to get through to boot.

Work was difficult in many ways. For both of us the whole real estate thing was off this year. The world economic news was bad and gloom and doom YET in Seattle housing prices continued to rise and real estate sales continued to be brisk. Does that make any sense? As a matter of fact, despite all logic given world events, in some cases multiple offers continued to happen. (Or what buyers and sellers often like to refer to as a "bidding war," a term David and I won't use and don't like to hear because it implies there is "bidding" going on, like at an auction house, and that is never the case. It is simply that two or more offers, sometimes more like 7 or 8 offers, happen at the same time and one ends up being the best - and NOT necessarily just because of the price, which is what everyone always assumes, and is often true, but is definitely NOT always true. Price is not always what makes one offer the "best" over the others.) (Don't let me get going or I'll start to sound like Real Estate in Seattle 101.)

Granted the higher end housing market, condos and homes say above the 500k or 600k mark, slowed down a bit . . . but, well maybe I mean much higher high end than that 'cause as I type this I can think of several homes David sold between \$600,000 and \$700,000 around town that had multiple buyers circling or, in some cases, competing with his offer. Maybe by high end I mean like 800k and up from there, certainly a great deal of the "one point blank" stuff sat and sat. The lower end stuff, where most of our social circle shops, kept moving briskly and increasing in price. Most of our clients got what they wanted when buying or selling, if a bit slower than in say 1999 or early 2000, and we did OK tho' there were more bumps along the road than usual to say the least.

So how was that "difficult in many ways" you might wonder? It was just "off" and weird. It was hard to explain to clients that making lower offers would not likely work when they read the same papers and they too feel the mood of the land. Gloom and doom is all around yet some agent is saying, "It seems well priced and will likely sell for asking price or darn close," or "I just talked to the listing agent and she says there will be three offers at five today." Statements like this, while still true this year in Seattle, didn't jive with the news and mood. Clients are worried about keeping their jobs, about the value of their stock portfolios, about their two friends who were just laid off from work and their agents are delivering a different message. Back in late 1999 everyone was on the same train barreling down the same track and, while it was crazy at times, it seemed more "right" than this year.

In my role as the Managing Broker of an entire Windermere office, the one on Eastlake in case you could have somehow missed that, it was client stories like the ones David had times 61. My job, a large part of it, is to listen to my agents and hear these stories, to learn the details of their clients and their transactions, and advise and counsel. I have 61 agents as of today. They each have at least one (I always hope) or as many as ten deals going on at a time . . . do the math, it is a lot of stories, a lot of details to know, a lot of players to monitor. It is like a "living poll" or market survey. I hear what's happening and give legal advise and ethical counsel and come away from it "feeling" what the market feels. It's hard to describe but it is involvement at a level I never anticipated when I took this job. The "living poll" has spoken however and I think pretty much everyone in the real estate biz will be happy to move on to 2003.

Lookie here . . . another page and a half have gone by with no mention of **Frank Kennard** or **Lance Hood**. Now we know that's sick and wrong. Can I just say that my friendships with, no, **OUR** friendships, David and I both, with **Lance Hood** and **Frank Kennard** are mostly what got us through 2002? I'm not just saying that. I mean it. They, along with our many other friends, and the most wonderful dog in the world (Inga!), carried us through. Oh, and our cats. We still adore our cats, Calvin and Claire.

Hey I'm back. **Remember this is real time baby!** I just had lunch. In case you're wondering I started this at 11:13 AM or so and now it's 2:20 PM. If you factor in lunch, a few phone calls, a few e-mails, *and* how distracting the tenant's music is below my desk (they are having a Christmas party today and I don't want to be Scrooge) you could look at that time spread and figure out how many words per minute I type. Or how fast I can remember. Anyway I was up stairs in the kitchen, which is on the roof remember, and it is absolutely **POURING** outside. It's two in the afternoon and it might as well be midnight. The rain was so loud on the skylight it kept pulling me out of my paper. It was louder than I have ever heard it be in the past year. And it is dark outside. I read the New York Times over a bowl of soup and now I'm back at this. Where's my calendar for 2002? . . . What did we actually **DO** in 2002?

One of the things we did not do in 2002, and I secretly think this accounts for most of **my** loathing of 2002, is any home improvement projects or construction. Anywhere. The house on Guemes Island is gone. The house in Palm Springs is there but there was no money to do anything of substance (like a pool). And we moved into finished space here in October of last year. We've now lived in finished space for 14 months. This is foreign to me. And not really to my liking. I have come to realize that I need to always have construction projects, preferably heavy construction, going on around me to be fully realized. I miss it so much.

There were times this year when I just drove to a construction site to see tractors and piles of dirt and new concrete foundations dotting the site. Later I'd drive back to see walls of just 2 X 4s so I could envision what it would look like, or *could* look like, later. Good thing for me that we have a client, heck I'd better say his name lest I get in trouble again this year on a different front, Dan Duffus, building six houses in West Seattle that we will be listing next year (6 in west Seattle that is, plus 2 David just found land for on Capitol Hill, so 8 total to watch and be near). There are times when I wonder what it would be like to just leave real estate and try to get a job at JAS Design Build so I could be around construction all the time. I could manage (I'd kinda have to since I only know how to use a limited number of tools, mostly tools of destruction). I could micro manage

even. Or I could be an office minion. Just to be around construction. All the time.

Even more scary than leaving my job, sometimes I think maybe we should sell the apartment building and find a new project. But I can't imagine what that project would be (nor can I imagine ever finding space like this again that we could afford). I often think this about landscaping and that business too, when I'm not fantasizing about being a lawyer that is. Then I snap out of it and go back to work. I try to stifle these urges by dreaming of the day we can afford to start a pool in Palm Springs. That will be the ultimate project for me, the one I have been waiting for. I will have to learn so many things about something I know nothing about (pools) and I will have to deal with construction in a foreign land with foreign codes (California). The pool project will involve moving power wires and gas lines and removing part of the house, thus forcing a kitchen remodel, to satisfy my construction needs *and* big equipment to remove dirt and shape a pool and then concrete trucks and more palm trees to satisfy my landscaping needs. I can't wait. David knows this, he knows how I am. He can't understand why I haven't found a way to take us to new and exciting levels of debt. ("Surely there is a 2nd mortgage out there we haven't managed to abuse yet," he asks).

How I am containing myself is a mystery to David. He knows me, but what he doesn't understand is it really *isn't* about the pool for me! It is about longing for the pool, dreaming of the pool, saving up money for the pool, the steps to getting the pool, the many contractors I'll have to deal with to accomplish the pool, and flying down there as often as possible for a day or two at a time during the project so I can pretend I am managing the pool project. For me it is about desire and planning.

Sadly for David it *is* about the pool.

Back to Seattle . . . so we are living in finished space in Seattle. Though the construction is all done and the space is technically finished, thankfully we moved in here without any furniture to speak of. So while it is finished space it really isn't. This has allowed us to do two things: 1) Shop for new furniture and things and, 2) Delay having the money to put a pool in our backyard in Palm Springs, thus letting me long longer. Things cost a lot of money. We tapped out our only credit card (we only have ONE credit card - I'm pretty proud of that as when we were in thirties we had no less than 15 of them, all maxed out at once) and our only line of credit trying to fill this place up. It gave us something to do to fill the construction void (perhaps if we had a child?), but it eliminated the possibility of a pool in 2002, and possibly 2003 as well.

Could I blame this on a local magazine called *Seattle Homes and Lifestyles*? Not really, but try to follow this logic and let me know what you think. When we moved in here the interior space was finished but the exterior space, our roof top city view deck, was nonexistent. So we sold our half of the house on Guemes Island to our wonderful ex-island partners David and Paul and literally took our equity in that and paid for a deck and trellis on the roof here. Once that was done word got back to the editor of *Seattle Homes and Lifestyles*, Fred Albert, coincidentally someone I've known for about 22 years, almost as long as I've been in Seattle, that we were in and the space was done. So one day Fred calls and says can I come see it? (Fred had seen it about a year before when it was torn apart during the heavy construction phase and made a note to check back with us, which he did.) Well we had no furniture the day he called. Really. We had a dresser, a bed, and a couch. That was it. No desks, no lamps, no chairs, none of the stuff to fill the place out. Stuff was on the floor and in boxes waiting for new homes. So we stalled Fred (by telling him the truth, we had no stuff) and then we got serious about shopping. Had we gone to Ikea or Sears we might be closer to a

pool in Palm Springs today. We did not. *Ikea* feels like a stage set to us, and not Broadway either. Perhaps a high school production of *Mousetrap* or *You Can't Take It With You*, something along those lines. *Ikea* is great for colanders and lamps, possibly a curtain rod. But not so good for chairs shelves and desks. It's a big landfill; someone has to fill it with particle board.

So we went to catalogues, our favorite being *Design Within Reach* (our joke as we turn most of the pages being *within whose reach* exactly?) and *Current* and places like that. And those "urban garden" stores that seem to be popping up everywhere. Pots, huge pots, for the roof top deck were purchased, dirt and plants. And chairs and lamps and rugs and stuff. We spent almost the first half of 2002 "outfitting" this place, and that was fun when we allowed it to be.

One of my favorite quotes of the year happens to be a quote from **Frank Kennard**. True story. I'm not just telling it to work his name in here either. One day Gary and **Frank** were over just 'cause and we were seeking **Frank's** opinion on something in the living room. Mind you after the office we take **Frank's** opinion very seriously. The office here used to be dreadful. I had a desk and David had a desk and we had them placed all wrong. **Frank**, who is (or was, but will be again) in design for a living, saw the error of our ways and said you should turn this desk this way and that desk the other way, ways which happened to be away from the windows and away from the view. I was at first aghast and then merely confused. We didn't do it. At first. Days later, alone and in a funk, I knew, as I think I always had, something was wrong in the office. I had the day free (had to have been a Saturday then) and I started unloading my desk and then David's desk (which at the time was an \$89 folding table from Office Depot). I moved the desks to the positions that **Frank** suggested and **BINGO** it all dawned on me: **Frank** was a genius. I spent the rest of the day fussing the office, fussing the desks, the cables, the computers, etc. It has made such a difference in how the place feels. I can't believe my desk ever faced the window full on and I can't imagine it any other way than the way it is now - the **Frank Kennard** way.

So now all furniture and goo-ga placement is run by **Frank**. So we are back in the living room, me and David and **Frank** and Gary. We are asking **Frank's** opinion on something, I think a lamp we were placing or a shelf system we were considering buying. I thought the decisions were made and the discussion was over and **Frank** says, "I know you think you're done in this room, but you're not done." Gary and I just burst out laughing. This is probably one of those you had to be there stories, perhaps it was his tone, but it was a moment I'll never forget. And, now when I sit in the living room on Sunday nights to watch 60 Minutes, Alias (major rave), The Sopranos, Sex and the City, and The Practice, as I sit there all that time, I wonder during commercial breaks if the room is ready for us yet. Is it done? I'm never sure anymore. (Sunday is a big TV night in our household b-t-w!)

Ok that was perhaps a little too much Frank so I'd better quickly say: **Lance Hood**. Hmmmm, that might not be enough . . . I think we need a precious "**Lance** moment" here to balance things out. Here's one: one of the frequent and most pleasurable memories we have of 2002 is time at the dog park with **Lance** and Marcia and their dog Emma combined with our angelic dog Inga. Often this happens with just David as I'm too much with "the weight of the world on my shoulders" routine and won't go on the spur of the moment. But I get my share of very precious moments early in the morning on a random yet frequent basis. Like us, Marcia and **Lance** know the joys of Vivace at Broadway and Denny and frequent it daily, on foot with their dog Emma. I frequent it often twice a day, the first time ALWAYS within 8 minutes of getting out of bed each day (4 minutes to find

what I was wearing last night, 1 minute to put the leash on Inga, 3 minutes to walk from our front door to Vivace's). It's random, but I can't tell you how nice it is to round the corner and either see Emma sitting there while Lance and Marcia are in line, or in the reverse, to leave Inga at the door (she sits and waits un-tethered because she is an angel) and all of a sudden to have Lance and Marcia appear. She - Inga - gets so excited to see them. Emma is thrilled to see me. The dogs love each other. It's all good, followed by some of the best espresso I've had anywhere. Sometimes there is time to visit, sometimes not. Sometimes we sit at a table and read the papers while the dogs watch, other times we rush in and out. Sometimes we will have just seen each other the night before (we double date a lot, sadly sans dogs) and still it's fun.

Another highlight for me for 2002 was the first week of 2002. Actually I'm cheating here a bit, it was the last week of 2001 and the start of 2002, but very specific parts of those weeks, the parts where I was alone in my car on I-5. I started the year off on the road, alone, with my dog. Looking back on it twelve months later this still registers as the highest point of 2002 for me. It's about 18 to 20 hours from our driveway here to our pool-less little house there. Last year Merritt Green and Tom Martin and me and 3 dogs made the drive. Not all of it together, but we started out together, me and Merritt and Inga in my car and Tom and his two dogs, big dogs, in his car. We followed each other stopping for meals and dog walks and stuff. We stayed at the same dive hotel night one and midway through day two we split up. I dropped Merritt somewhere in California where her father collected her for the holidays and Tom and I split off in Fresno to see family. Inga and I were FREE to drive and listen to Dido's *No Angel* CD over and over and over and over (I think back on this as my "Dido Trip").

Not that having a driving companion was a bad thing. Merritt and I don't see much of each other somehow (both too busy, the will is there but it often fails to work out) so concentrated time in a car to visit was really good. Plus I had an agenda she knew nothing about. I brought a little pad of paper. We made lists. It was fun. Love a good list. Mostly it was about our goals for 2002, our goals beyond that (the infamous 5 year plan), and just stuff. We broke the goals down into specific categories (financial, medical, personal growth, things to do around the house, etc), adding in lots of joking and music, and the next thing we knew we were in California. Tom was in his car alone! Now I feel bad thinking back on how much fun Merritt and I had while he was alone!

Coming back home alone - all alone - was even better. David flew down and joined Inga and me there. On the day we were both leaving he said "Are you sure you don't want me to drive back with you" and I acted as sad yet as brave as I could as I dropped him off at the Palm Springs airport at 6:00 AM for his 7:00 AM flight. By 6:15 AM I was on the open freeway in the dark heading into LA with the compact discs going and just having the time of my life. I watched the sun come up, wondered how far I'd get before David got home, and just was alone. Alone. I am not alone enough. I loved stopping and eating and reading alone, I loved walking the dog alone in a field in the middle of nowhere, I loved staying alone in dive hotels, the kind where you drive your car up to the door of your room around back where an asphalt parking lot disappears into a barren field along side a freeway. I loved sneaking my dog into the dive hotels (just this one that was obviously confused and thought it was perhaps not a dive hotel and actually had a no dog policy) and I loved watching VH1 count down the best songs of the year that had just passed with Inga in the room. Mountains, plains, searching for decent junk food on the road, bad cell phone reception, no people able to call or find me, no problems to iron out, just me alone thinking. And the best dog in the world watching me think.

And without a doubt the very best part of this solitary road trip was the moment somewhere in Oregon when I decided I'd had enough of dive hotels and I needed a good shower in a plush, stylish bathroom followed by a martini in a nice bar. I called ahead to **The Heathman Hotel** in Portland and asked if they allowed dogs. They said yes, sure, small dogs are OK. I said look I'm not gonna lie to you, this is a 55 pound dog, but a stunning one who will look sharp in your lobby. They laughed and said fine. I got into Portland around 4:00 PM. Now obviously I could have made it to Seattle that night, but who wants to push it? Not me. Not when my other option is a night at **The Heathman**. I checked in, taught Inga all about elevators (she'd had some advance training from David and Paul when she stays at their highrise condo with Monty) and turned many heads in the bar, which is directly across from the elevators. The elevator doors would open and everyone in the bar would point at Inga just sitting there waiting to for her walk around downtown Portland.

Checked in, had a long shower followed by a martini in the bar and then an amazing meal (they have a great restaurant there). Since I had last been there they took a gift shop out of the lobby and put a mini Starbucks in its place. What could be better? The next morning I didn't have to have hotel coffee! They brought my car round, Inga jumped in, I got coffee and a roll for the road, and I was off for another wonderful day of driving. Alone. A boy and his dog. Alone.

Real time reminder! OK, now it is 11:25 PM, which is late for us to be getting home. Just got back from Manray where David's new business partner (more on that later) is celebrating his birthday. I wont say which birthday for fear of instilling a lack of confidence in our future clients reading this letter, but let me just say that either one of us could be his father. Do the math. I could make all the "perhaps if we had a child" jokes here but David tells me I should stop doing that (for several reasons) and I that I might offend Ryan. As if. He, Ryan, will never make it to page 9 of this letter. He continually tells me that his generation can't read. Or doesn't read. Or won't read. I'm not sure which he means, can't, won't, doesn't, but I do know he tells me they like pictures and visual things. And computers. Whatever my job then will be to instill a love of words.

Anyway it is late now and I'm a bit, ah, well let's just say typing is surprisingly difficult right now. We hit three parties tonight. First at some friends named Mark and Tuyen who were combining a holiday party with their official housewarming. David found them a very cool house on the Ship Canal in Seattle so there were boats with lights. We went there and I had several glasses of champagne. Gary and Frank, who are the only reason we even know Mark and Tuyen, were there and they knew how I had spent my day - writing this letter. Frank started early this year; the letter isn't even in the mail and he wants to know who's mentioned, *specifically is he mentioned?* After an hour or so there (great party!) we moved on to a brief appearance at a holiday party in our building, but not in our home. One of our tenant's (you remember, the noise through the floor earlier today) invited us. After that we went to Ryan's birthday celebration at Manray where I had a martini, well mine and the last half of David's. We mingled as much as we could with the twenty somethings and enjoyed the videos (we love that bar, it changes colors and has lots of screens - rave!) and then we got to leave early, because we're old - that's always my excuse when I'm leaving, I just say, "**I'm old and I get to go home now,**" to the host. And now, since it is well past midnight and I'm still old, I'm going to bed. More tomorrow.

Sunday the 15th, 11:42 AM - real time - and this letter goes out tomorrow no matter what so I'd best get crackin' here. It's gonna be a full day. It started, as it always does, with Inga and I walking

and Vivace. It started a tad later than I had hoped for given all I have to do today, but several glasses of champagne and two martinis the night prior will do that. We just got home from a lovely breakfast at El Greco on Broadway, again walking distance for us. We met up with Gary Tucker and his friends Mark and Alan (I'm assuming the spelling on that) who will all be joining us in Palm Springs next week. I've got about an hour now - get crackin' - and then we're off to two open houses, one held by Ryan where he will get his birthday gift from us, and then to see Gary and Frank's tree (Gary made a special request!). Then off to Tacoma for a holiday dinner with David's Tacoma parents. (As opposed to his Spokane parents that is.) (I only have Detroit parents.)

Back to it in January, over the MLK Holiday weekend, David and I traveled to Manhattan with Frank and Gary. We stayed at the Hotel W on Park Avenue at 17th and we crammed as much into our time there as we could. The first night we had a frightfully expensive meal at Jean Georges near Columbus Circle (the experience was worth it). Sting was eating there the same night; Frank got up to go the bathroom and Sting was coming in or going out and held the door for Frank. After dinner that night we walked 5th Avenue to Rockefeller Center and Times Square. The next day it was the Guggenheim for a Norman Rockwell exhibit (better than you'd think), lunch on the Upper East Side, a Jacob Lawrence exhibit at the Whitney (as good as you'd think), and then all the shops along Madison Avenue. In Barney's we saw Mary Tyler Moore in the flesh (Frank is a star spotting magnet). Then off to the 1/2 price ticket booth in Times Square where we froze in line getting tickets to see *The Allergist's Wife* (starring Valerie Harper - you do realize that's Rhoda and Mary in the same day). Before the play Frank took us to a cool restaurant at 12th and 2nd Ave called John's. It was charming Italian, evidently so charming it was used as an interior in the movie *A Beautiful Mind* (something I had no interest in seeing so didn't, but I take his word for it). Soho was Saturday - all day Saturday - and it snowed! Could it be more picturesque than Manhattan, Soho, in the snow? I don't think so. I remember *Kate's Paperie* the most. I want to go back. We had lunch at a place called *Jerry's* and Frank, who will talk to anyone, stuck up a conversation with the two women crammed into the table next to ours. The woman who said she was "born on this island" (and caused me to have a pang of regret for having not been) had a small black dog in her purse named "Nestle." We didn't know this (Nestle was very well behaved) till they got up to leave.

One of the theme's of this trip, at least for Gary and me, and Frank will surely not be happy to see this in print as he wasn't happy when Gary and I even discussed it while there, was, ah, well . . . you know how when you travel sometimes your body clock gets out of whack and things don't, ah, flow as they normally do? Once Gary and I discovered we were having the same problem we would check in around it each day and wouldn't drop it. This really drove Frank nuts. One day, when direction were being debated, Gary said something like, "I think the uptown subway entrance is over there but don't listen to me cause I'm full of shit," and we broke up laughing, well Gary and I did. Frank was clearly raised better than we were.

We all stayed in Manhattan for six nights. It was the best of times. One of the highlights was a Gary pick, the Museum of Television and Radio. Anything you want to see that has ever been on the air is there . . . you look it up on computers, you request it, they direct you to a TV with headphones and BINGO you are watching anything. The historical value of this was amazing. And it was fun. David and I watched a very old *60 Minutes* with a very young Mike Wallace interviewing gay men who were behind plants and in the shadows; Gary and Frank watched Rosemary Clooney specials. Each day we'd start at Starbucks with the *New York Times* and, when the coffee was gone, we made lists

of the possibilities and headed out for our day. Grand Central Station, the ABC store (not the network, house stuff), Dean and DeLuca's, the MOMA Design Store, compact disc stores that have amazing show tune sections, Greenwich Village, Chelsea, Conran's and on - we all love it there and we did all this and more, mostly on foot. There's nothing quite like just walking in Manhattan. And there is nothing like the site of the World Trade Center, and the viewing platform, which of course the four of us paid our respects at. David and I had the added interest of seeing as many hotel lobbies as possible and Washington Park where one of our favorite dog parks in the world is located.

But what of **Lance Hood** you might ask? Well miracle of miracles, **Lance** and **Marcia** were in New York the same time we were! It's true. They were working a trade show (**Lance** is the hot shot CEO of a company, well not just "a" company, "his" company, that designs bathroom widgets). So really how cool is this? One night we broke away from **Frank** and **Gary** and found our way to a restaurant on the East Side where we hooked up with two of our best friends from Seattle, **Lance** and **Marcia** (and two vendors they picked up at the trade show who we're dying to run into again). It was the perfect complement to the perfect trip.

And on the last day of our trip the phone rings (you gotta love cell phones) and it's two people we hadn't met yet, **Mark** and **Tuyen**, who were referred to us by the very people we were in New York with, and they want to shop for a house. We returned home to new clients!

And how did I remember all of this you might wonder? It was eleven months ago. Simple: I am my mother's child; I took notes. The same little notebook that **Merritt** and I used on the road trip mere weeks before went to Manhattan as well because I wanted to record it all and make more lists.

Back home

In early April **Fred Albert** (going back to the *Seattle Homes and Lifestyles* story now) walked through our house. Oooooops, I think I mean townhome. Or apartment. Whatever it's called, the place where we live. Enough furniture was finally in place to allow this to happen. **Fred** liked it and thus a chain of activities was set in motion. More plants on the deck were called for (oh goodie an excuse for me to get more pots, plants and dirt), but the inside was evidently just fine. Months later a photographer and art director showed up (surprisingly early) and spent the day (staying quite late). Art direction happened, things moved this way and that, elaborate shots were painstakingly set up, and photos were taken. Then everyone disappears and months go by again and just when you forgot this might be happening a reporter calls and wants to come by for a few hours and chat and tour. Then months go by again and then, again when you almost forgot this was going to happen, you get a call saying, "You're on the cover, the magazine hits the stands tomorrow, but we have some copies on hold for you that you can pick up at our offices now." So **David** rushed over and got those, and when it hit the newsstands he bought about 25 more. **David** mailed copies to our out of state family and friends and saved a few for us to look back on when we're 85. The article was nice (though when you read what you said later you always cringe a wee bit) and the photos glorious. **Calvin** must have bonded with the photographer as that cat was in most of the shots. Our place looked better in the magazine than it does when we're living in it, but I guess that's to be expected. We were on the cover, which is fun, especially when you're waiting in line at the grocery store and you look up and there's your dining room. You forget and then there it is. Our 15 minutes of fame lasted for the month of October and was one of the nicest things that happened to us in all of 2002. In November, when the next issue came out, we were gone. Someone else's home was on the cover.

If David were writing this letter it would be two pages long, *if that*, and the only thing featured in it would be the trip we made to Italy in late April of this year. We left on the 17th (my only request was that he plan it so I could be here to file our tax returns on the 15th) and were gone for 17 days. I'd never been to Italy. David had. I actually had two requests. My second was that we only go to one country even tho' we were going to be away 17 days. David did everything, and he did it all flawlessly. Charging as much of the remodel in the year 2001 as we could (carpets, blinds, appliances, you name it) and the "house stuff" in early 2002 not only got us there for free, it got us there on British Air flying business class in these funny seats that are more like "pods" that recline. David keeps correcting me when I say we went first class ("business class" he says over and over), but it felt like first class to me. I'm used to little seats rod straight and tight, three to a row, in the back of the plane. There was real service and we each had a little TV attached to our seat. So free travel to Rome, which was good 'cause hotels aren't free and when you travel with David you stay in nicer hotels strategically located. No out of the way dives. In Rome we were at the top of the Spanish Steps. In Florence we were steps from the Ponte Vecchio in one direction and the Uffizi Gallery in the other. And in Venice we were on the top floor of a well placed, lovely pension on a canal between the Accademia and Peggy Guggenheim's home (now a museum).

Rome was especially crowded and not because of all of the tourists either. We arrived in Rome the day after the Pope called all the bad Bishops, Cardinals, and Priests back there for a "you've been very naughty" summit. As you can imagine with *that* added population Rome was bustin' at the seams.

The absolute best part of this trip were the three days and two nights we spent on the Isle of Capri. It was planned for only one night, but the moment I got there I didn't want to leave. The main draw, well it's two fold for me, is the stunning beauty and charm of the place **and the fact that there is nothing to do there**. Nothing to do there. This is what I am looking for on a vacation, nothing to do. David exhausted me in Rome. Do you know how many things there are to see in Rome? I do now. And trust me, if it's even a slight tourist attraction in Rome he took me there. One day, dead tired, I tried to take a nap. I actually fell asleep on a "pit stop" to our room (I think I 'd climbed the Spanish Steps one too many times that day) and he got all wiggled out. "How can I come to Italy and sleep?" "Look at how much of the day we've wasted." "Come on we've got to get across the city to this obscure museum before they close at six." Things like that. Capri? Nothing there but lush landscaping and quite beauty. (And no scooters! Rome = scooters and traffic like I've never seen before, and all of it quite loud, horns a plenty, on tight little streets.) And the hotel there, *The Grand Hotel Quisisana* on the Isle of Capri, was amazing. Walking through town (no cars, streets about five feet wide with the coolest little shops along them - to die for!) to get to the *Quisisana* I was melting into this place. When I saw the hotel lobby I immediately regretted how many days we spent in Rome. My first question was "We're only here for one night???" and my first action was to call ahead to Florence and make up an excuse as to why we would be a day late that sounded reasonable and would not cause us to lose either our deposit or our room.

So David and I had two full days, and two nights, on Capri. The pool at the hotel was a thing of big beauty whereas the super small sizes of the streets (paths really) and shops was quaint. We hired a boat for a few hours, with a driver native to Capri, and slowly circled the island stopping at the *Green Grotto*, the *White Grotto*, and, of course, the famous *Blue Grotto*. But mainly we enjoyed our five star hotel and let waiters bring us drinks by the pool. We ate and I got to relax and read for two out of seventeen days.

Loved the Euro. Loved the Sistine Chapel. There's no bad food in Italy. Without a doubt the Piazza San Marco in Venice makes a trip to Italy worth it! We went there daily. Just sitting there (a form of relaxing when you travel with David) with 3 competing bands in real band shells, having espresso and gelato and watching the crowds was like a scene from a movie. Loved the tourists! (We are all tourists when we're there so learn to love 'em and don't trash 'em - get off your high horse and face reality I say!) We had so many fun tourist encounters but I think the best one was this: By chance the Museo Correr in the Piazza San Marco was having a huge Jackson Pollock exhibit. From here, it traveled there. Not the art you expect to see when you travel 20 hours to Italy but what the heck. We entered the exhibit directly behind two American women, two loud American women. As you enter they had history story boards about Pollock and full size photos of him standing, circa 1945. One woman shouts out to the other "My he looks a lot like Ed Harris."

It took exactly 21 hours for David and me to get from our hotel in Venice, leaving at 6:00 AM in the dark in a boat and heading out to sea hoping for the best, to Seattle. We left there on May 3rd and we arrived home on May 3rd, early in the day I might add - I liked that! Once we were home, that was it, we were home. The rest of the year was work. That vacation seems like so long ago after 8 months of somewhat dissatisfying work (and no construction projects to distract me!).

Yes, since May there have been a few mini-trips to Palm Springs, but not for more than 3 or 4 days at a time (well maybe 5 one time). And since it's only a 2 hour flight and we work by cell phone, fax and e-mail the entire time we are going, coming back, and there, it doesn't seem like a vacation really, you know a "real vacation," the foreign land kind where you cross several time zones and have limited communications home.

I did go to Idaho for five days in September for a large Windermere conference. While I was there David lost his wallet at the movies one night. We started canceling our debit and charge cards, making paying the hotel bill for me a bit of a trick, but then the contents of his wallet were tossed in a mailbox and returned to him within days (postage due) by the United States Postal Service. Whoever found the wallet kept the wallet - this was David's remember, it was a fancy one - and his cash. My, my we got off easy, or so we thought. Two months later I open the phone bill, something I don't often do since they are set up for auto pay and the money is just sucked out of our checking account, and it's for \$1,455. David and I have never had a phone bill over \$60 ever, the whole time we've been together never, ever. Whoever found his wallet wrote down the calling card info. AT&T cards contain, for some reason, the PIN along with your phone number. Our brush with identity theft! AT&T never questioned reversing the charges; they could see we have no history of calling West Somoa for hours on end.

Thanksgiving, our favorite holiday of the year, was spent in Seattle once again - I think this makes 17 years running - with Greg and Larry. This year it was a their condo with each guest, Gary Tucker, Michael Stewart, John Dickson, and David and me, each bringing something. We got together at four and parted at ten. It was a soup to nuts experience (since I roasted spicy nuts and made mushroom soup) (while listening to Eminem's latest CD - I have two of his now, and I think he's not only talented but very clever with words, and that goes a long way with me) (b-t-w Eminem's the aforementioned dirty little secret).

Those were the highlights of our year. And now it is December 15th. Off to Kinkos with this!

The year's over! David drives to Palm Springs on Tuesday (with Inga and Gary Tucker) and I join them at the end of the week. We'll be back in Seattle on December 30th to start the New Year. We know we can't see the 4th of July fireworks from our roof - not at all - but we have high hopes for the Space Needle fireworks on the 31st.

Before we go, before we leave this year behind us, David and I would like to thank the following people: Justin Moore, Steve Chapman and David Copley, Michael Kuntz and Nathan Sobers (repeatedly), Fred Korn, Dan Duffus (repeatedly), Eliza Truitt, Susan Slocum and Eric Jensen, Tim Allen, Samara Adler and Chris Villasenor, Mark Evans and Tuyen Hoang, Jack Talerico, Matt Gable, and Janice Gable, Mary Rezek, Rick Rasmussen, Jake Oshins and Anne Phillips (repeatedly), Jena Scott and Eric Weaver, Mark Silbey, Scott Dunn and David Greninger, Gary and Erika Timpe and all of the sellers out there who saw fit to take our client's offer over another. David would like to thank Rebecca Evans for pulling him in on all her million dollar plus listings and I'd like to thank Tracie, Ryan and Andrea, and Katie and Jeff (the best staff in the city) for helping me make our office run smoothly while growing and being top in production for the second year in a row! Thanks!

We'd also like to thank Joe Schneider, Kim Clements and the entire gang at JAS who made a wonderful home for us, Fred Albert for publishing it, and our tenants for helping us keep it afloat. Thanks must be given to Helen Livingston for making each of Inga's exciting and for caring for Calvin and Claire when we are warming ourselves in sunnier climes, and to David Wertheimer and Paul Beudet, and of course Monty, for all of Inga's weekends on Guemes and the dog sitting exchange we have going. Speaking of being away, thanks to Mark Besta and Dirk Miller for actually wanting to house sit. Thanks to Tim Allen and Surrey Tribble for making us less neurotic about a vacant house 1200 miles away.

Thanks to our families and many, many friends - ESPECIALLY our friends whose names for whatever reason aren't in the previous 13 pages. You know who you are and you know you're our friends and who needs to be associated with this folly anyway? Plus there's always next year - traveling with us is a sure paragraph or two!

Thanks to Frank Kennard for making us feel comfortable in our home office. And getting Cher tickets, along with Cherese - thanks Cherese for standing in line!!!

Oh, and thanks to Lance "I'm pumped!" Hood for just being you, you big lug!

That's it. Happy holidays. Your calendar is enclosed - try to fill the little squares with lunch and coffee dates with friends, some adventures, some concerts, and a party we're invited to in 2003!

Please stay in contact! e-mail us! or call!



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