

Saturday December 11th

2004

Dear Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

So here it is, the end of 2004, and I still do not have a personal blog on the internet.

If I had one life would be so much simpler. Just before Thanksgiving this year I received phone calls from three of you asking, "*Is the letter is done yet?*" No, the letter is not done yet. Then, while driving home from Palm Springs just after Thanksgiving, I get a call on my cell from David and Paul informing me that their letter is done and going out the next day. "*How's your letter coming?*" David asks, mostly just to torture me I'm sure. This year David and (eeeeeks, two different Davids in the first paragraph - don't be confused!) David and I got a wild hair and decided to send out Christmas cards. This created concern and caused even more phone calls: "*I just got your guys Christmas card! Does this mean you aren't doing the letter this year?*" And when I say of course we're still doing the letter the next inevitable question is, "*Have you started it yet?*" quickly followed by, "*Am I mentioned in it?*" If I had a blog I could just refer people there and stop this tradition. I am getting, believe it or not, ready to stop this tradition. My feelings about it vary from day-to-day these days.

Anyway it's Saturday. David's upstairs cooking. He's been upstairs cooking for hours now. We are having our "holiday dinner" tonight and the guests arrive in about three hours. I haven't helped David at all. He planned this event, he shopped for this event, and now he's doing all the work. I'm gonna type this for awhile - its got to get started! - and then go shave my head and take a shower. After that I'll go set the table and get organized to distract the dog and offer martinis to our guests as they walk in the door. David and I were very selfish this year. We're good at indulging ourselves. This year, bucking years of tradition, we bailed on our traditional Thanksgiving fest. We notified Greg and Larry, our co-hosts and co-planners for the last 18 or 19 years, and did nothing the week leading up to Thanksgiving, a week we'd normally be doing so much. Instead we packed for a road trip and took off on the 20th. Thus we missed Thanksgiving.

Fun at the time, but later the guilt set in. So David is cooking. He's invited the usual Thanksgiving gang (Greg, Larry, John, Michael and Rick) and, with us, we are seven for dinner at seven. We're doing it midway between the two major holidays as we're indulging ourselves for Christmas as well; we won't be here then either. So it's not Thanksgiving, and it isn't quite Christmas dinner either. But it is "our holiday family" and the getting together continues. We've promised all the boys red meat and red wine. Really good red wine. We can keep *this* promise because John Dickson has cases and cases of really old, high quality red wine stored in our wine cellar. John's wine has been in our cellar for years - I'm guessing about 8 or 10 years now - I'm old and I remember less now. I know when he sold his house and moved to a condo we offered to store his wine. And his port. And it is never touched. Except when we have our annual dinner and John and David head to the cellar and come back with bottles of wine. It's always a thrill to drink wine we could never afford to order in any restaurant. Having just seen the movie *Sideways* I'm certain this will be even more fun tonight. And it seems easier since it's happening on a regular old Saturday - it's not an actual holiday and the pressure seems off. Of course I haven't lifted a finger to help so perhaps I shouldn't be commenting on how easy it all seems.

Instead of lifting a finger to help today, this is what I've done: I've sat at my desk. I sit at my desk a great deal when I'm home. I'm surrounded by my books, my office supplies, tall piles of paper stacked high so long ago I've forgotten what's in each pile, and knickknacks and art. I have speakers built in the ceiling over my desk and a small, 12" Sony TV on it. CNN is on constantly, muted when I'm listening to music so I can still read the crawl. My iPod sits here, I have amazing noise canceling headphones that I plug into my laptop when David is watching DVDs or listening to Bjork's strident imitations of Yoko Ono's early work. No matter what I'm doing when I'm sitting here, I'm usually simultaneously playing in iTunes making playlists. And I have really good desktop speakers when I tire of the headphones. Claire, the moody female cat, has a bed at my feet and Inga sleeps near the bookshelves. (Calvin, the affectionate male cat, rarely comes to this area.) Truly, more than any other part of this apartment, this is my nest. And here I've sat all day. Today I've been answering e-mails from my agents and writing some personal e-mails to friends that I then blind copy to multiple other friends causing them great confusion. And I've been paying bills. Quicken is my life. And, thanks to Surrey Tribble, now my life is also online banking through Bank of America. I'd never attempted online banking before - it seemed so complicated and unnecessary - till one day Surrey said he was paying most of his bills online and loved it. And, not to in anyway diminish Surrey, I thought, given how much time I spend on my computer and online, that if Surrey could figure this out, I could too. And I have. I paid my first bill on line in August. Since then the number of bills I have figured out how to pay online has grown each month. Online banking - its changed a great part of my life this year. Since I'm the guy who manages this fourplex we live in, and the guy who used to write all the checks, this has freed up a lot of my time - time I can now spend on iTunes downloading songs from Apple's online music store. My use of stamps has drastically declined - I hardly buy them anymore - and the monthly bank statement we get in the mail now comes in an envelope 1/4 inch thick instead of 1 inch thick. B of A sends us our canceled checks each month - but now there are so few check written. And now I balance online daily - it takes less than one minute each day - so I no longer open the statements. Mail I don't have to open = another time saver!

But I digress

So today, instead of helping, after a very busy morning of bill paying e-mail writing, and while feeling tons of pressure from this letter not yet started and paper stacked all around me, and with all the usual holiday angst associated with a growing To Do List and overlapping social commitments, I decided to calm myself by going to Office Depot. And today, for extra soothing calmness, I went to Office Max right after Office Depot. Then I followed those up with a stroll through Home Depot and a quick stop for caffeine at Starbucks really SoDo has it all, at least all that this boy ever needs. (It also has a Krispy Kreme, but I've never been there.) My mission: to seek out and purchase the mother of all home paper shredders. I was at Office Max a few weeks ago with Tim Allen (who has moved back to Seattle from Palm Springs) while he purchased a new shredder. I had one, but the one I had annoyed me. So while with Tim I checked out what's new for the neurotics of the world. And there it was. The mother of all paper shredders. But I didn't buy it on the spot. My new thing is to see something I covet and then wait weeks to get it while convincing myself that I really do need it, deserve it, have to have it, whatever. I find the longing for things better than the having of things. Plus I want to be sure. So I saw it that day with Tim, I remembered it was there, and then I came home and continued to be annoyed by the one I owned for several more weeks. Yesterday my reward came. I went to both places, examined every shedder they each had, and then bought the very one I saw weeks ago.

I know home use shredders now. This is the fourth one I've owned. If you want to know the subtle differences just e-mail me! I had a shredder years ago that I gave to Surrey one day. I don't know why I owned it back then as that's when I was still mocking the identity theft worry warts of the world. A bunch of crazies I thought - just tear it in small pieces (so satisfying) and throw it away. Then I got a shredder at the office - I get monthly reports that must be made into mulch after I analyze them. And it became sorta soothing to shred. Then I bought my second home use shredder. I used it for a year or so but it made strips of paper instead of bits of confetti. I had to keep emptying it. I was annoyed. And I seek reasons to go to Office Depot so I gave it to one of our tenants and rushed back to SoDo for my third home use shredder. This one made crisscross (as they call it) confetti and it took more sheets of paper at a time and it could dice up credit cards - THAT was fun. But I get it home and I was immediately annoyed me because you had to push a button to turn it on each time you wanted to use it. Who has the time for that? Every other shredder I'd ever seen (or owned) was always on, on just waiting for something to be dropped into it. Now I own my fourth shredder, and I think it's a keeper, and yet another tenant here at the ever wonderful DuBois Apartments has a perfectly good shredder. Too bad for the last apartment that I have purchased so wisely this time. My new one takes 15 sheets of paper at a time, it takes DVDs and CDs and credit cards in their own special slot, and it is on. It's on now. And it makes tiny confetti. *Little Gloria... Happy At Last.*

My gawd, halfway through page three and I'm talking about my obsessive need to go to Office Depot. And shredders. It's like that famous *Seinfeld* episode when they pitch the pilot for the TV series and it's about nothing. I could write about nothing. I could go on about nothing for quite awhile. Many of you know this to be true. For instance I could continue for a few paragraphs about the very latest thing at Office Depot: RETRACTABLE SHARPIE PENS. Merritt was the first one to find out about these. Merritt called me immediately upon learning of this new innovation - *she* also appreciates office supplies and she shares my love of Sharpie pens, now in many fun colors. I thought she'd beat me to 'em, but she didn't. I called her from Office Max (aren't cell phones a glorious thing?) as I was putting an 8 pack of RETRACTABLE Sharpies into my cart (always get a cart at these places . . . you never know what you'll convince yourself you need). Much like Scott Peterson, the jury is out on the RETRACTABLE Sharpie pens. I'm not sure they're going to change my life like my new shredder will, but they did create the need for another comforting pen cup on my cluttered desk.

[I'm listening to Beth Orton as I write all this.]

Hmmmm dinner fast approaches and I have a head to shave. Gotta run. Soon the house will be filled with holiday cheer. And soon I'll be having olives soaked in gin. My favorite thing at this time of the day.

More tomorrow.

Sunday December 12th 2004

It turned out to be five bottles of really nice red wine last night. And that caused me to stay in bed much later than I normally would on a weekend - I didn't haul myself out until nearly 8:15 AM today. When David and John returned from the wine cellar I thought that was too many bottles. We ended up only drinking four of them (John is so nice, he left us one for later), but that was after the first

round of opening cocktails. David's dinner was perfect. Absolutely perfect. After the cocktails and cheese platter, Michael Stewart started us out with a foie gras appetizer and then a lovely light salad. We then launched into the main event: potatoes and red meat and red wine. The potatoes were a baked scalloped affair and our red meat came in the form of a perfectly cooked standing rib roast. The seven of us ate everything David made - there were no leftovers. David followed all of this with a wonderful chocolate cake that he made with Guinness as one of the ingredients. The espresso machine was in full operation and there were many glasses of milk ('cause with a cake this rich and this chocolate-y there must be milk). A grand holiday evening. David announced this morning that we should have this same dinner once year year. I'm for that - all I did was enjoy it.

And then sleep in. Usually I don't. Usually on Sunday mornings we are both up by 7:00 or 7:30 at the latest. We're upstairs in the kitchen with the New York Times and the two local papers, and there is espresso, in the form of cappuccinos, being repeatedly made. After an hour of this one of two things happen. But it's always one of two things. We have routines, oh yes, we have routines.

Routine one: David leaves the house at 8:30 AM to go to his gym in the market and do whatever he does there. I stay home and do laundry and start cleaning the house. Usually there is a dinner from the night before left to clean up after. Then, at 9:45 AM on the dot, David returns home and I make a frittata. I am the master of frittata making. I make breakfast and we finish the papers and take them to the recycle bin. Then we go about our days. This means, as a rule, he goes to an open house and I go to either Lowes or Home Depot or my desk.

Routine two: David leaves the house at 8:30 AM to go to his gym in the market and do whatever he does there. I stay home and start some laundry and then get dressed and organized to leave the house. I dress Inga in her special Sunday collar (oh yes, she has one) and then she and I walk from our house downtown to the Pike Place Market. Inga and I always leave at 9:10 AM. She loves this - a walk through an urban landscape where every bus stop we pass holds the possibility of, for instance from last week's walk, an open, quart-sized container of plain white yogurt that for some reason has been thrown against the wall of the bus stop and is now dripping down the glass wall to the sidewalk where, because she lives for this, she will spot it before I do and start licking it. So I fight her eating crap off the sidewalk all the way downtown, we arrive at the door to David's gym at 9:30 AM sharp (who says I don't go to the gym each week?), David comes out, we put Inga in his car, and then David and I find a new place to have breakfast each week. Sometimes I bring the morning papers (when I'm not fighting an umbrella and a leash) sometimes I don't. After breakfast we explore the market a bit and talk about how much we wished we living in a condo downtown. We debate which location is best, which building is best, and wonder which buildings allow sweet, beautiful, gentle 50 pound weimaraners. Sometimes we shop (last week it was Sur La Table). Sometimes we just walk.

Both of these routines end about noon so that we can each start our day. And every Sunday evening is the same. We reconnect here at the apartment around five. We have tea and an apple and discuss what's for dinner even tho' 85% of the time it's the same thing: nachos. (The other 15% of the time it's tacos. Beans are served 100% of the time.) The nachos are timed to come out of the oven when **60 Minutes** comes on. We sit up in the kitchen, watch **60 Minutes**, and then break at 8:00 PM. At 9:20 PM we reconnect in the living room and start watching **Desperate Housewives**. Thanks to TIVO, another life changing device (like online banking) we miss all the commercials in this one hour show. It thus ends at nine which is when **Huff** starts on Showtime. David often bails after **Huff**

but for me there is always *Boston Legal*. Then, if I have the energy, I either return to my desk and do more planning for the week ahead, and send more e-mails to my agents and office staff, or I stay put and watch *Epert and Roeper* review movies I likely won't go see. I love Sundays. We don't see people. And they are always the same. The only variation is frittata at home or breakfast in the market. Other than that for me they are set in stone. I never make plans for Sundays because I already have plans for every Sunday coming up. For instance right now I have plans for every Sunday in 2005.

Today is Sunday. Due to last night's red wine, a later than usual start to the day, and the fact that this letter is unfinished, we opted for the frittata at home option. David is now gone - he's off touring houses on Mercer Island today. Really, Mercer Island. Should I digress again? We went to this island recently for a party and we had to drive and drive to get to the exit onto West Mercer Way. We were told (by Lance) that it was 4 miles (about, he wasn't exact) from that exit to the lane the house was on. So we're driving and driving and after what seems like miles I ask David, "Hasn't it been 4 miles yet?" He informs me it has been less than 2 miles. But it's dark and spooky over there and the road winds and winds and winds and it seems like every mile there equals ten in the Pike Pine Corridor. So we're driving and driving and now its been 3 miles and I realize how spoiled I am: I commute exactly 2.3 miles from my door to my office and I never have to merge onto a freeway to do it. At 4.7 miles the drive from this house to the freeway entrance is twice that. And that's just to the freeway entrance! I realize my perception is all out of whack. I would like to keep it that way. If we lived in Belltown I think my commute would be even less. Anyway David has a client coming to town this week from the east coast and so he's out previewing all their options well in advance like a good agent should. And he's a really good agent.

Me, I'm home doing this. I've nothing on my schedule all day except for this. And at 7:00 PM the TV watching begins.

Today I'm up in the kitchen = the joys of a laptop. Another thing I did this year was replace two computers with one. Merritt was the beneficiary of my old laptop. It was exactly two years old when she bought it from me. She was using a laptop we gave her years ago that was so old I couldn't believe it was still working (working, but with age problems, that's why she needed a newer one). It was an old old Macintosh laptop that was about 3 inches thick and weighed a ton. I sold her a much newer one at a great price. Lance coveted a huge monitor I had connected to my desktop. And me, well I wanted one computer more powerful than either two I had. So Lance became the beneficiary of my old tower G4 and the monitor. I remember how expensive that monitor was when I bought it in 2000 (after our Capitol Hill house sold and we thought we were rich rich rich). Now huge monitors are less than half what I paid for that one then and I sold it to Lance for pennies on the dollar. He only wanted the monitor (for design work) but it had to come with the tower. He's using the tower as a music server at Hydrologie, his fiefdom. Now I have an Apple PowerBook G4 with a better hinge, better ports, a 17" screen (On a laptop! Remember when a 17" screen was a big deal even on a desktop?) and it's really fast. I am never without it. I take it everywhere with me and I see no need for a hand held device. I *wish* I had a need for a hand held device, but alas I don't. If I did I could shop and see what's new in that arena.

[I'm listening to XM Radio as I write all this.]

Speaking of things that'll change your life (I have been: online banking, great shredders, TIVO, a Mackintosh computer) let me add this: XM Satellite Radio. Another amazing advance in technology, radio you have to pay for! Seriously, remember when XM Radio first came out and they had that annoying commercial playing prior to movies at theaters wherein musical instruments fell from the sky? (Well that's not fair - ALL commercials at the movies are annoying!) Remember thinking, "I'm so sure, who needs that? And who would be dumb enough to pay for it?" Hello! It took me years to get here, but all I can say is I'm a believer now. I have one little device that I take to work and listen to in my office, I bring home and listen to throughout our house via our stereo, and I take to Palm Springs and listen to there. It fits in my pocket. The choices are amazing, the quality is great, and it's the same wherever I go. I haven't bothered hooking it up in either car yet because other wonderful technology has eliminated the need for that.

Our Apartment

We haven't moved yet. We still own (hah! - with interest only payments we'll never own it) the four unit apartment building on Capitol Hill and we still live in the apartment we renovated in it to suit us. Its been 3 years and 3 months now that we've lived in the same spot and, well, we battle wander lust and restlessness on a daily basis. David is over the neighborhood. And we both enjoy a new project. David sold a great lot in Wallingford, a wonderful street-to-street lot, to a client of his a year or so ago. She tore the house down, had a house very much to our liking designed, and then had JAS Design Build build it. It wasn't even ours and still we visited the construction site several times. David wishes we had done that ourselves and is slyly looking for lots or tear downs to drag me to. And when he's not taking me to tear downs he's showing me the latest new highrise condo listing down on First Avenue. All condos are examined and he tries to tempt me with each one.

Me, I'm just not ready to go yet. I've decided I'm not finished here yet.

First of all, I don't dislike the neighborhood as much as David does, I do still find joy in Broadway and the Pike Pine Corridor, and I love being able to walk downtown or, my latest thing, call a cab. (I have determined that from where we live you can cab down and back, even with two tips, for less than parking would be in most lots. And it's easier. And you don't have to count your martinis when you cab. Plus taking a cab reminds me of Manhattan - and I like that.)

And second, I'm not done here. This place isn't perfect. And I'm no where near organized enough to move again. So I've set some goals: Get rid of things we don't need, organize all the stuff we have, finish unpacking (yes) my crap and then purge it, make things better, make them the best they can be. And then, when I really feel done here, if we're still restless then, start looking for the next thing, most likely a condo in the market or on First Avenue. But I'm thinking that's years away now.

In the meantime we've started redoing things here to keep us interested. (Projects are important.) Last year (was it?) we got rid of all of our dining room furniture, painted the room a completely different color, built in a banquette, had a new table made, and bought some cheap plastic chairs down on First Avenue. It's a whole new look. That was the dining room.

This fall we turned on the kitchen. We made a mistake with the kitchen window. It was cool looking, but it was stupid because it wrecked most of the skyline view. And for me, at my height, it blocked out the Space Needle completely. I knew the Space Needle was right there in front of our kitchen

sink, but I never saw it. It annoyed me for 3 years and 3 months and I tried to overlook it, tried to make excuses for it, and almost convinced myself that it couldn't be changed. One day I snapped and decided to investigate if it could be changed and if we could afford to do it. And yes, it could be done. And it was within reach money wise. So we had it changed out. It was a lot of effort, and we now have a new window with no guarantee since it had to be dismantled and rebuilt in place (as with most things that voids the factory warranty), but it was immediately worth it. Why did I let that window annoy me for 3 plus years? Life is too short (especially when you're in your fiftieth year).

One day last summer the deck was getting me down. The plants were all either dying or not doing well. I got on a tear, and with the help of Frank (he's baaaaaaack), I got new pots for the deck and new patio furniture. All in one day thanks to Frank Kennard, personal shopper. I was trying to make the deck look faaaaabulous. This didn't quite happen. I ran out of steam mid project and when I called landscape designers and container garden specialists I quickly found something that was out of reach money wise. I found and interviewed two of them, and they seemed eager to take it on at first, but bids were high and the project fizzled. Perhaps they sensed my lack of spirit and overall deck exhaustion. Three plus years of attempting container gardening has beat me down. Or perhaps it was the lack of parking here followed by 50 stairs from the street to the roof. Between those two obstacles, and bids we couldn't afford, and my lack of spirit, it's no wonder the project fizzled. Now we have nice furniture up there surrounded by dead wet sad waterlogged plants. Something to tackle in March I'd say. And I will. I think I've found a guy now who we can afford and who will stick it out and I'm gonna have at it again in March.

Our latest wild hair here is our living room. Specifically our stereo set up and the furniture that flanks our oversized tacky TV. Remember that long drive on Mercer Island a paragraph or so ago? We were going to a party at Mike and Klio's, a couple we know via Lance and Marcia. It's a new house, custom built - they had it designed and built, all very nice. There's a TV room. My jaw dropped. Now we can't have that TV, but not only was the TV great, what was around it fit the TV and the feel of the room. Sadly that has never been the case here since day one. It didn't take much talking on my part for David to agree to make changes to this room. We're still rethinking our stereo equipment, and how changes to that will change the two flanking cabinets. I want to ditch the VCR for good (we haven't used it in 3 plus years) and the record player once and for all (we thought it might be retro but actually it's just taking up space). We'd like to work in a computer to manage music on, but perhaps we'll settle for an iPod instead. And we need to get the XM Radio in there. Once we decide on that stuff we're moving ahead on cabinet replacement. Again 3 years and 3 months of being annoyed is quite enough.

So we're still here but now we've started "tweaking" the place even tho' we thought we did it to our specifications the first time around. Perhaps these small obsessions will quench the moving / new project / new frontiers thirst. When we're done here, or should I say when I'm done here 'cause I think David already is, it will be time to go. Sadly for him, he has to wait for me.

Our Pets

Inga the five year old flawless dog and Calvin and Claire, the fourteen year old brother and sister cat team. All are well. Inga isn't quite as flawless as she once was. On Election Day this year she had a weird fatty tumor thing on her skin removed. It was the size of a quarter and felt like a small

ravioli. Prior to Election Day there was testing and worry. After Election Day there were constant and futile attempts to keep her teeth away from the stitches. At first we couldn't do the cone thing - *we are weak*. Then she ate all the stitches one night and we woke up to a gaping wound. David freaked out. Back to the vet. Next they try staples - metal staples that they stapled the wound closed with while she was awake, how they did that I don't know. Then, still avoiding the cone, we made new attempts at a body bandage made with old t-shirts and that easily removed blue painter's tape. This failed too. One morning we wake up and she has eaten through the blue painter's tape and the t-shirt and all of the staples are gone. Making matters worse the staples are no where to be found - she ate them. David becomes somewhat hysterical. (I'm being kind here.)

Back to the vet. This time she's put under again and gets a double dose of stitches, first in the wound (the dissolving kind) and then outside (looking like a black version of that white nylon weed wacker thread, very thick rigid stuff). After all that the cone went on and stayed on 24 hours a day till the stitches could be removed (we found our strength at last). I removed the stitches myself a week later and the vile cone was thrown in the dumpster across the street. Now she has a scar, a real scar, and that's a minor flaw. Now she has one minor flaw. But she's still the sweetest dog in the world. And we seriously think she was ripping the wound open repeatedly just to take our mind off the election results - she senses when we are upset.

Calvin and Claire aren't much of a team anymore. They have less patience for each other as they grow older. Fourteen years ago, when they were kittens, they would cuddle when sleeping and play with each other when awake. Now they have nothing to do with each other, unless I'm letting the water trickle in the bathtub (which I can only do when David is out of the house as he thinks it's bad for some reason to do this). But Calvin and Claire are fine. Occasionally they think outside of the box. Not far out of the box, like they think just next to the box. This drives David crazy. He tries to figure out why, tries to analyze the situation, but in the end it just gives him fits.

Our Jobs

We both still love our jobs. We're lucky in that, and don't think we don't know it. We know it and we are grateful daily for the choices we made (or should I say risks we took?) sixteen years ago. We seem to know plenty of people who are lukewarm about their jobs, or who say they hate their jobs, or, worse yet, who don't have jobs.

For my part I'm still managing the Eastlake Branch of Windermere Real Estate. I've assembled a great group of people, agents and staff, and the office is doing extremely well. I've grown the place to 77 agents who all take the high road in business, have a great reputation in the market place and treat the staff well. I hire everyone, I train everyone, and I deal with everyone's problems. I troubleshoot and run interference with other offices, deal with unhappy clients, their often angry agents, and occasionally deal with attorneys when things really go south. People think it's easy to become a real estate agent but these days it is not. It's not that the procedure for getting a license from the state is difficult; it's not. And it's not that it cost a fortune from start to finish; as far as careers go it is cheap and quick. The hard part is what happens after you get license from the state. The good offices in the greater Seattle area are full. FULL. No more space, no empty desks, no room to take on one more person. The not so good offices always have room for agents; the not so good offices always have empty desks. No, I won't name names here - that would be just tacky.

But the potential applicants calling around know which is which. I will say every that Windermere office I know of in the city is completely full. That being said one of the things I like best about my job is giving a new agent an chance - when I can fit them in. As a rule if you hire them, give them the chance no one else could, and train them well they will be loyal forever. They imprint like ducks. I like that, I like loyalty. And I really like real estate agents. I know what makes them tick and I like being around them as a rule. Plus we're interested in the same things: Places people live.

In that light my goal for 2005 is a new office. It's complicated but a space reportedly 15,000 square feet might be coming available in the same building where my crew currently occupies about 7,000 square feet. The owners of my office also own the building we're in. I'm advocating that my office should move into the other space when the other tenant moves out. I see us getting new space, twice the space we now have, and better space. I see a remodel, I see a much better working environment for my agents and staff, and I see a new challenge for me: growing this office to the next level and then managing 105 agents (I'm guessing). I think this will occupy most of 2005 - if it happens - and I'm really hoping it will. I see us moving for my 50th birthday in October.

As for David's part - he's still going strong.

Tuesday December 14th 2004

I missed a full day there. Mondays can be tough at work, so much happens in real estate over the weekend and thus there's so much to do on a Monday, so many questions to answer, so many problems to solve. Plus I run our weekly meeting on Monday mornings. Anyway, where was I when I left off . . .

Ah yes, David's part. Well some big changes on this front, but changes that are only happening now, even as I write this. And, we both think, changes for the better. Up until a few weeks ago his year went just as planned. He's had another fine year in the business. Sales were definitely slower and fewer for him this year than last. Less people moving in his sphere this year it would seem. This is not to say it was a bad year . . . it was not. It was just fine, just slightly off from the year before. Of course the year before was phenomenal for David so really it shouldn't be any sort of benchmark. He's always more aware of this sort of thing than I am. I see this every day because I monitor what 78 different agents are doing on a year-to-year basis. I see David down in some years when other agents are up up up. And the reverse. A slower year than the one prior does not constitute a trend. It means nothing. Already 2005 is shaping up to be another great year - David has about 13 deals already lined up, more than half of those new construction houses being built now that he will list for sale in 2005 sometime. I lose track - he knows the exact numbers on this stuff. I track other things now. All I know is it sounds good to me. Today he's out with the clients from the east coast (which is great for me because I can play Christmas music at home).

So the shift for David, the change . . . As you may recall (if you've been paying close attention) in the late fall of 2002 David decided he needed a new partner in real estate. I could no longer be counted on. Plus we vacation together - that aspect of it never really made sense anyway. So . . . he sought out a better partner than I could be. He found one who claimed he was motivated to make real estate his life's plan. David and, as we now jokingly call him, "he's dead to us now" partner began forming a partnership agreement. Meetings were held, things were discussed and debated, and in the end David helped "he's dead to us now" get started in many many ways. They worked together as a full team for all of 2003, the phenomenal year. Each of them had an amazing year, but the first

year partner had the most amazing year I've ever seen any new agent ever have. Ever. And I'm in a position to know these things. It was made all the more amazing by his age (too young to be selling real estate) (in my opinion) and his length of time in the business. Move on to 2004 and things are still going well. They worked together for almost ten months of this year, everything fine. Then, on October 26th, we get a phone call and on October 27th an e-mail goes out to everyone at our office announcing the departure of the partner. He is now off traveling the world, or at least the United States. The call came in on a Wednesday and by the following Monday *poof* the partner was gone.

So the change for David is he that is now a **SOLO ACT** again.

Of course the moment other agents found this out some started to call David while others just began to drop big hints. For now David is taking it slow. He sorta feels burned by his first partner experience and thus more thought than usual is going into his next step. Next year we have a big trip planned, about a 17 day trip, and having this worked out by then sure would be nice. When you are self employed every vacation, no matter how short, is a great chance to lose clients and income.

And he's self employed. On the other hand, I have a job and I get a W-2 statement every January just like most of you. Anyway stay tuned. For now all is well. David has some plans, fairly big ones, for his career in 2005 that he has already put into play. Things take time, but he is making plans. You'll be kept abreast of things by postcards in the mail (at the very least) I'm sure. And me, you can find me behind a desk at 1500 Eastlake Avenue East for at least the next 8 to 10 years I'm sure.

[I'm listening to Christmas CDs as I write all this. Right now the BEST Christmas CD ever made is playing: *A Charlie Brown Christmas* by the Vince Guaraldi Trio. I hate jazz, *unless* this counts. It is one of our favorite albums to play.]

Our Health

Well I've touched on our home, our home life, and our pets. And I've wrapped up the jobs for 2004. I guess our health would be next on the list. Some would say this should be first, but we are still young enough to take this topic for granted whereas we're still so surprised by and grateful for our home and jobs and pets. Quickly then: We're fine. David is firmly 48 and in great shape. Of course he goes to a gym or runs six days a week without fail. Me I'm 49 now, but not so firmly. I keep telling people I'm 50. Anyone who asks I immediately say 50. And when I refer to myself in any context it's with the phrase "50 year old man" included in a sentence somewhere along the way. I'm always trying to make it sound so much worse than it is. It comes in handy. Say you're at a party or out with friends and you really just want to be home in your living room with a cat in your lap having a cup of tea and watching *LOST* which you know you have TIVOed. It's so great to be able to say, "So sorry, we have to go now. It's heck being a 50 year old man, I tire so quickly." Or words to that effect. And when people point out I'm not 50 yet (blah, blah, blah) I point out that a child who is 7 months old is "in their *first* year" until they become one and then they are one *BUT* in their *second* year. I'm in my 50th year and I'm making the most of it for the next two years, one year in each direction of the actual event.

(By the way TIVO is one of my new favorite words, It's a verb: **I TIVO, You TIVO, I have TIVOED, They're going to TIVO**, and so on. I use this word often. I seldom say "taping" anymore.)

So we are fine. Going strong. Going to see various doctors more frequently than we did when we were 32 as well - but that's to be expected we hear. In 2003 I lost a bunch of weight; in 2004 I found it all again. Apparently I left it in Istanbul at some point in 2003 (tho' I'd never been there before) because on vacation there this year I started to find it all again. By the end of our three week vacation I had found most of it. The rest of it was in Seattle here and there and once we came home I continued to find it. I think I have found all of it again.

Palm Springs

Rounding out the list would be the time we spend in Palm Springs. I'm never happier than when I am there. Alone, or with David, or with other friends, or with David and other friends, whatever the combination, I love it there. We didn't do much to our little house there last year. Actually we did nothing but replace the front door after it was kicked in in February or March. I don't remember the month, but I remember the Palm Springs Police Department calling me from inside our house. I saw the number come up on my cell phone's caller ID - *our house phone number* that is (I guess we paid for the call as well as the damage done.) I have my work and cell phone numbers posted on the fridge large as life for contractor emergencies. Even tho' no work was happening in 2004 I left the numbers stuck to the fridge with magnets. The police found this very handy. So they called me from the phone in the kitchen. This was the second time our house was broken into there. This time we lost every DVD we had and every CD we had. Nothing else. But . . . it's a vacation home where often all we do is sit and watch DVDs until it's time to get in the pool again. There were plenty of them to steal. So annoying.

The door was kicked in in February or March. Our contractor finished installing the new front door in mid October. I'm not kidding - he was my second phone call after the police called me. First I called Tim, who used to live there (in Palm Springs that is, but at our house as well now that I think of it) and then I called our contractor. I was clear: We need a new door and frame and new locks. The work was finished in October after I arrived, with guests in tow, for Windermere's annual convention and educational conference (which was thankfully held in the desert this year). In between these two events there was great frustration. And there was an alarm system. That I got done quickly. I called Mark Anton who has a place there, he recommended a firm, and bingo - an appointment was set. My next trip they were there and the system was up and running in a day. Well most of it. Since the front door wasn't in yet it couldn't be alarmed. But the alarm company worked around that and came back out in October to finish the install. It's all done now, but it took the better part of a year to get two doors and new locks in, a security system, and repair sheetrock and paint what needed to be painted and so on. We all call it "desert time" down there.

I'm supposed to mention Roy Rigsby here I think. He thinks I was supposed to mention him on page one. But then I think he's supposed to write his own letter now that he's in real estate so he can send it out with his own calendars. He's got some things to get straight still. Anyway, here's his plug. Roy's our agent in Palm Springs. So far this year he has written, I hope I don't get this wrong, about six offers for us. We want to buy a vacant lot. This would fulfill David's building dream, and, to be fair, mine too. I'm less excited about building in Seattle (I prefer the condo option), but down there I want this very much - we both do. And this wouldn't be now . . . this would be in about in ten years. We just want to plan. We just want to buy the lot so we can make payments on it till the time comes. And dream. It's more the wanting of the thing, the planning, than it is the having of it. Have I said that before? It's so true . . .

Anyway, first there was a lot across the street from our house. It wasn't for sale. But we used Roy as our agent and wrote an offer on it anyway. I think that offer was ignored. Then a lot came on the market a few blocks away and we wrote a full price offer it. Mind you it was for sale and we offered full price. Even so, the sellers wouldn't sell it. Then we went back to the first lot, still not for sale, and wrote another offer or two. Clever Roy had actually tracked down the owner - the tax records showed him living in another state but Roy somehow found him at another place in Palm Springs - so we kept upping the ante and submitting new offers. Three total I think. No luck. Months passed. One day we get a call from Roy about another lot. Stupid us hear it just came on the market and so we offered \$15,000 less than asking. Never do this - it's stupid. Unless you really don't care. We didn't care the day we did it but by time we got down there and saw the lot and heard there were going to be 3 or 4 offers total, well by then we cared. We didn't get it. Since then we're torturing Roy a bit more by having him write offers on vacant lots and sending them by registered mail to unsuspecting owners in other cities or by tracking them down in Palm Springs and handing them to them. I think that at this very moment David and I have two purchase and sale agreements floating around down there. So far no luck. Roy seems to think that being mentioned in this letter is some big deal, that all of you are going to want to move to Palm Springs and will call him or something. It doesn't always work that way for us, why would it for him? Should I disillusion him? No? Okay we'll let him think this matter.

Alrighty-then here's the deal: "**ROY RIGSBY**" will be the first two words of next year's annual Nelson + Updike Christmas Newsletter IF Roy manages to secure us a lot by the time I start typing next year. Do we have a deal Roy???

David just walked in. Time to stop for a bit. We need to trade details about our day. He had clients! I love hearing where they went and what they saw and what they thought. I think it's time for our afternoon green tea and apples. I'll be back.

Okay then . . . back again for the final push. This letter **will** be completed in this sitting and this **will** go the 24 hour Kinkos on Broadway tonight and many copies will be made. Tomorrow this **will** be stuffed inside of calendars. And Thursday this will be mailed out. Ho ho ho ho. Hey, did I tell you? If you are still getting this letter you are one of a chosen few. I'm not kidding. In the past year I have fussed and fussed my mailing list and I have axed many many many entries. And then, in the car on the way home from Palm Springs on November 30th, and December 1st and 2nd, I discovered the joys of me in the back seat with the dog with the laptop in my lap. David drove 100% of the way home. I worked 100% of the time. My new car has an electrical outlet, just like at home. A normal outlet. I could plug in an appliance. Instead I plugged in my laptop and worked for all of the 18 hour drive. With my cell phone ringing at my side and me typing, and then getting a bit stressed, much like I would at work, David said it was just like looking into my office at Windermere. Anyway in that time I reviewed and purged many many more names from this list. It was fun! I'd see a name and think "**Hmmmmmm?**" and then I call the name out to David and we'd say "**Delete!**" or "**Keep**" as events of the past year (or so) warranted. Some we'd debate, some one of us would rule on, but you? **YOU** we kept. **Some people were naughty; YOU were nice.** Seriously David and I are mailing out calendars, with "the" letter stuffed in them in a number equal to 56% of what we sent out last year. I did the math in the car right after I proudly proclaimed to David, "**I'm done!**" It feels good to have finally fussed this list. I should find a CD and back this up now. Really I should. I should back it up. I tell myself that a lot. I seldom reach for the CD however. They're right behind me. I know 'cause I'm burning playlists to CDs all the time and taking them to my car. One is fun. One is a bore.

Well I've rambled, in an organized fashion, for 13 pages and haven't officially gone through the year yet as one would expect. Let's see what I can skip past and what I remember from 2004 and then let's go read something else, a book let's say.

January

I TIVO the *Ellen* show each day and only watch the 2 or 3 minutes after her monologue when she says "*There's Tony*" or "*Tony make me dance!*" and Tony starts the music and Ellen dances from where she is to her interview chair. She dances and we smile. We pretty much watch only these 3 minutes of her show every day. George Bush's minions discover donkey carts of mass destruction in Iraq.

February

I don't watch *The Apprentice*. To this day I have never seen even 10 seconds of this show. I live this show in the daytime. During the nighttime I want fiction in the form of *Alias* or *24*. Never any "reality show" - ever. Janet Jackson's breast is exposed. We go see Bette Midler in concert where no breasts are exposed. I decide I no longer want to marry David. In February, while David is away without me on a one week trip to Palm Springs with his mother and stepfather, I realize that I actually want to marry Gavin Newsom. He's handsome. He's smart. I love Gavin Newsom! And I loved loved loved this past February - a whole month about love. Massachusetts, New Paltz, New York, and Gavin Newsom's San Francisco love, love, love . . . love, love, love, all you need is love. You could sing that. February, a joy to wake up each day and grab the 3 papers and head up to the roof and make espresso and read about the national spotlight, focused with laser beam intensity, on gay marriage (that is when it wasn't focused on Janet Jackson's right breast). February has special days in it . . . it has Valentine's Day and it has February 12th the day David and I met for the first time. Nineteen years ago, when we met, I could never have guessed that in my lifetime I'd be reading about the events of last February. I was happy and thrilled and excited the whole month.

March

Impending doom around the approach of April 15th. Real doom - doom based upon having spent all of our money in 2003 on a pool and a trellis and palm trees and other landscaping items down in Palm Springs. There is no money. We spent all the money. We doubt showing an IRS agent numerous photos of our new pool and stunning back yard, along with the promise of working hard to catch up will fly.

What's a hardworking couple to do? Why get the money back of course! Enter a sweet flyer from Citi Bank stuck in with our monthly mortgage statement. Ah yes, the promise of easy money! A **HELOC** (aka a home equity line of credit for those of you not in the biz) with no fees and no hassle. Just call this 1-800 number. Yeah, right. Did you see the segment on 60 Minutes in January about how 95% of all customer service phone lines, and 92% of tax return preparation, and 98% of tech support - how anything with a telephone call attached to it - is now being farmed out to India? We say it. We thought it was fascinating. We also thought it would never affect anything we do . . . we know our CPA is firmly ensconced in San Francisco - where we are supposed to be overnighting our tax return data to! Instead I find myself explaining why we have 3 addresses to an Indian national who speaks the Queen's English perfectly but who doesn't know what a post office is.

I find myself saying things like:

"In our country the government has buildings where mail can be delivered and you can rent a box there for your mail."

"No, we don't live in a government building."

"Yes I can fax you our drivers' licenses."

"Yes, I realize our utility bills have the post office box address on them, but I assure you we are not paying utilities for the post office building."

"No we don't live there."

And so on. I am making NONE of that up. The people working the phones speak English better than I do but they don't understand so many odd little things that we take for granted. It took a lot longer than promised, and it was a lot more difficult than promised, but we finally got the HELOC on the Palm Springs house. And in the nick of time. We signed for the loan on April 2nd, we got the checks for the HELOC in the mail on April 12th, and we turned right around and paid our respective tax bills to the IRS on April 15th. We sent them all the money that we spent in 2003 on the pool and stunning back yard with 20 palm trees - money that was supposed to go to them have quarterly in the first place, Juggle, juggle, juggle.

Friday March 26th . . . CNN . . . watching it in the closet as I get ready for work. Our President is in New Mexico speaking to a group of people involved in the housing industry. I'm in the closet getting dressed for my day, my day IN the housing industry, so I think I should listen and hear what my main man has to say. He is touting an increase in home sales and home ownership as proof that he is doing a good job as President. Gee I thought that was due to David's doing a good job - I must be confused. And never mind that hundreds of Americans are dying in his war, hundreds of Americans who will never be buying a house, and never mind that huge chunks of jobs that could be done in the United States are now being done in, ah . . . say India for instance, never mind all that. Anyway I listen. I find it hard to listen to him, but I do. At one point my President was making a point meant to justify his war in Iraq. And what he said was so stunning I had to write it down (we keep a pad of paper in the closet near the phone) so I wouldn't forget it. He was saying that long ago we used to think that oceans could protect us from threats abroad but we couldn't count on that anymore. He then used the phrase: **"YOU USED TO COULD."** I am not making this up. Even after 4 martinis I couldn't mangle the language that badly. Even the 43 *different* loan processors I dealt with in New Delhi couldn't mangle the language that badly. I had to turn the TV off.

April

We changed the clocks forward or back and spent the month adjusting to that. We had Mark and Dirk over and watched *Imitation of Life*. I went to Palm Springs alone for four days at the end of the month.

May

I have a great connection and through this connection (who shall remain nameless) I score six great seats to see Dido at The Paramount. So we do. The next night we see Eartha Kitt at Jazz Alley. I remember that either David or Mark had to keep his phone on vibrate waiting for a call to come in on an offer that had been presented that day. The call came and someone sold a house. I don't remember which one of them it was. But I remember Eartha Kitt. This was the fourth time I've

seen Eartha Kitt perform. I'd go see her perform again if given the chance. At the end of the month I go to Palm Springs for five day (due to the 3 day weekend) but I don't remember if anyone went with me/us. I lose track. I go so often (I try to go once a month) that it blurs for me.

June

We attend some fancy John Kerry fundraiser. Looking back on that . . . ah, never mind. I fly to Palm Springs twice this month. Once to have the aforementioned security system installed, a quick two day visit, and then for my usual end of the month trip, which was also the 4th of July trip - it all ran together. In June and July it can be 110° F there and I just don't mind. Actually I just love it. Air conditioned matinees always at 3:00 PM and lots of pool time in the morning and after dinner.

July

I Robot opens this month and I take all the agents who work at my office to the opening day matinee and I pay their way in. I try to do this at least once a year - but it needs to be a blockbuster movie, not *Closer*.

Oh, oh, oh . . . here's something: On July 23rd I have my first colonoscopy! I'm very old and I keep hearing about the need for this and everyone says after 50 but I say why wait? I could think of no good reason. I know of too many people a few years past my age who have them and bad things are found. I figure those bad things don't just wait till you're 52 to appear. Why wait? I pushed ahead and had it. Having it was absolutely no problem. It's the 12 hours before you have it that are gross and vile and difficult. You know I'm stopping right here on this. Anyone near 50 who wants to know about this, call me. Here's the good news . . . once you have a colonoscopy you don't need to have another one for at least ten years if you get a clean bill of health. And I did. So I'm waiting till 60 for the next one . . . that'll be eleven years from now. I'm glad that's behind me. (Was that a pun?)

Some guy is making a movie about marriage and relationships. We are interviewed in early July to see if we are interesting enough (I guess) and then asked to be a part of this project. We are told our filming time will be high noon on the 28th. We go the Sandpoint Navel Base to a "studio" set up in an old bunker - having to arrive early for makeup, hair (that part was easy) and wardrobe. We are put on a stage set, with makeup, under hot lights in July in a metal bunker on a sunny hot day at high noon and we are interviewed. It's hot. We sweat. We are interviewed for over two hours. We have never heard a peep from these people again. We don't know what has become of this project.

August

Summer in Seattle. Bar-b-ques and dinners on our deck, visiting friends, hanging out. I got to Palm Springs for four days in the middle of this month. I think I went alone, I don't know.

September

I go to Palm Springs for Labor Day (I go every holiday, those "Monday" ones that make for a 3 day weekend) alone. I get to go more often than David does because he has clients and I do not. I have agents and those can be handled so many other ways besides "in person" whereas shopping clients cannot.

On September 14th David and I fly - using FREE first class tickets that we got via our charge card and frequent flyer programs - on British Air to London. Once there we change planes and fly to Istanbul. We spend 3 days in Istanbul exploring and not buying rugs. Our hotel is amazing, the nicest we have ever stayed in and we both agree on this. The pool is a thing to behold. The weather is perfect. This city is wonderful. On day 4 we get on a cruise ship - with sails, a "small one" and we sail for 7 days from places in Turkey to islands in Greece. (If you ever lose a bunch of weight you can find it again on a cruise ship.) We hit a different island each day. We are loving this. We are sitting in little cafes in, ah, say Mykonos and have these wonderful lunches complete with entire bottles of wine - the the daytime - we never do this! We shop, we sight see, we rent a car, etc. On Day 12 we get off the boat in Athens. That sporting thing that happened last summer is over. We see the city, we eat more food. The next day, Day 13, we fly back to London. I have been in the airport in London many times but I have never been to London - I've never left the airport. Now we spend 4 great days there. I loved it. We ate way too much every day. We fly home 16 days after we left Seattle. In sixteen days we saw so much, did so much, had such a great time. London is on our radar again for next year in honor of my 50th birthday - and our 20th anniversary - two very big numbers worthy of a the trip of my dreams. And it leaves from London. So we're going back.

October

We get back from "the Istanbul" trip on the 29th of September. Our trip was planned (you have to redeem those frequent flyer miles months and months in advance) PRIOR to the powers that be at Windermere deciding that our annual convention for managers, and the following education retreat for agents, should start on October 4th in Palm Springs. I was home for all of 3 days! That really was weird. I never really unpacked or got settled. I came, I opened the mail, and I turned around and flew to Palm Springs for another 12 days. I was barely home - in Seattle - this fall. I had to fly down early for manager events and then later Dirk and Mark and David joined me down there. Dirk got to play the whole time; Mark and David went to a special two day course, a course that comes with CERTIFICATION, called: **Senior Housing Specialist**. It was all about helping seniors with their real estate needs. First the colonoscopy, now this = we're old! The Windermere stuff ended on the 8th but since my birthday was the 11th we all stayed on using my 49th as an excuse.

Came home from there and hooked up with the window guy and spend a day changing out the bad window in our kitchen. Oh, covered that already. Moving on . . .

November

Well nothing happened this month - we were so over being away for most of the previous two months we just hung low and hung out here. As I said way back when, we bailed on our usual Thanksgiving plans. On November 5th I got a new car. I got a FORD. A car made in Michigan, an American car. Yes *I* bought an American made car. I am all about buying American as you know. I am all about keeping jobs here, buying American first, and supporting my home state. And I bought an electric car (which is why there is an electrical outlet in it). I am all about saving precious resources so you and your children can have more oil and gas later on. Oh yes, I am all about these things. Think GREEN and think AMERICAN I always say. So . . . I have the first ever Ford Escape Hybrid. It's like a baby SUV kinda thing, kinda like a Honda CRV only it is electric and American. I love it. It's green. I think green. I stop at a light and I hear NO ENGINE running and I realize I am saving the environment. I love this little car. And so does Inga. It's a cheap car - it has no "options" - no seat

warmers, not sunroof, no built in garage door openers, nothing fancy. The inside is gray plastic. But I like it. The only problem is that now strangers want to talk to me about it. I as a rule don't want to talk to strangers. Like when I'm having lunch and some guy walks into the restaurant and says, "***Does anyone in here own this green Escape out front?***" and I think my new car has been hit or broken into. So I say it's mine and the guy comes over to my table, where I am reading and eating alone, and he SITS DOWN and starts to interview me about the car, its performance, gas use, and so on. I was stunned. Since that time (that was the first time) this has happened about 7 other times. Not in restaurants, but often. I'll be coming to my car or leaving it and I will be approached. I was at a rest stop walking Inga on the way to Palm Springs and some guy follows along as Inga poops and interviews me about the car as I'm bagging up dog poop. I am over this. I like the car, but I'm over it. Evidently Lance and Marcia think it is funny that I have this car. Over dinner the other night they start asking me all the same questions as the dog poop guy or the restaurant guy. I get testy. They sense anger and inform me that they are placing bets as to how long I'll have this dumbed down car. They think my annoyance is due to my realization that I made a mistake - they think their bet is about to be won. I tell them the restaurant and dog poop stories.

The very next day, just this past Saturday, I am driving home from my Office Depot run. I am stopped at a light. I am in front of the police station at 12th and Pine heading north on 12th. I see something in my side view mirror. Next thing I know a guy is at my driver's side window motioning me to roll the window down. I hesitate. He implores me to roll the window down. He's kinda good looking so I go. He says, and again I do not make things up for this letter, "How's your car?" And it goes on from there. I look in my rear view mirror and see that his car is stopped behind mine and his driver's side door is open. This man has stopped behind me, see the HYBRID symbol on rear hatch door, and he has decided it would be okay to come to my window at a red light and interview me. Eventually the people behind him start honking, as the light has changed, and I get to go.

This is why I am testy about my new car - I love the car. I just want to love it alone, thank you.

Our decision to drive to Palm Springs for Thanksgiving was based on this car and Inga mainly. Yes we wanted a change of pace, yes we wanted to be in Palm Springs, but mainly we wanted a good old fashioned road trip and to be with Inga every moment of every day for 12 straight days. She never left our side. Cherese and Rebecca flew down to hook up with us the day after Thanksgiving. They were there with us for four and half days. We saw movies and relaxed and played in the pool and took Inga swimming and looked for more of the weight I had lost the year before. Amazingly we found more of it - evidently I had lost some in Palm Springs as well.

December

And now it's December. Everyone we have ever met is having a Christmas party either on this Friday night, the 17th or on the following night, the 18th. There are so many invitations we can't accept any of them. On Friday it's the annual fest at the home of my bosses and on Saturday we have tickets with Cherese and Rebecca to see ***Noises Off*** at the Seattle Rep. So . . . that's the way it goes this holiday season. It's a busy month. We had our office's Christmas party at the Triple Door on the 3rd - that was a great event in a great venue. I'm glad I took a cab there - the drinking was worthy of any office party ever. Tomorrow night we see Frank and Gary, the weekend is booked as I said, and on Tuesday the 21st we are doing something I have never done but have always wanted to do: We are flying to Manhattan to spend the Christmas holiday in New York. I want to go to see

the huge Christmas tree at Rockefeller Plaza, I want to go to all of the fancy old hotels and see how they have decorated their lobbies for the holidays, I want to soak up the streets of New York at Christmas. It's a simple thing, but we've never had the chance to do it. This is the year. Everyone asks if we have tickets to any shows. Nope. It's about the holidays. And eating. We are going to be there seven days and David has three meals, "event meals" as he calls them, already set up. So it's going to be seven days of walking and viewing and eating and nice hotels (two different ones, we're changing mid week just for the fun of it).


I'm done. That was 2004 at the Nelson Updike household. Now, as promised, I'm off to Kinkos and then off to read my book. The book I'm currently reading is titled: *the curious incident of the dog in the night-time*. Just like that, all lower case. The book David is currently reading is called: *The Devil in the White City*. His is about Chicago, Chicago in 1893. I don't think it is fiction, not sure. I do think a serial killer is involved in his, again not sure. Cherese recommended he buy this book when we were all hanging out at Barnes and Noble in Palm Springs (another thing we tend to do a lot while there). Mine is about autism, as far as I can tell. Mine is actually a detective story wherein the mystery is who killed the neighbor's dog as told through the mind of a 15 year old autistic boy. So far it is fascinating.

As I hope this letter has been for you. Sorry there wasn't a contest this year. Sorry David and I didn't alternate typing to give it different "voices." And, well I'm just always generally sorry when I do this. Last year's contest was won by Celia Castle and Brenda Bauer by the way. They won by finding a imbedded sentence in last year's letter that I have since forgotten. What they won was a lovely dinner at the Dahlia Lounge. After they dined they sent the most clever e-mail to David and me wherein they described a very grown up dinner, just the two of them, on a night out without their kids. It cracked me up. I wish I had done another contest this year now just thinking about this. Ah well . . . time is running out. I also wished I had that e-mail to reprint here in this letter. But space is running out too. You know I just realized I skipped my whole diatribe about the election in November? I had ALL these things I was going to say. Probably just as well. It really upsets me and now, having finished this, I'm in a very good mood. I feel calm now.

Find a way to wind this year down in a relaxed, calm, happy and peaceful way. I just did, my way. You should see a some movies, drink heavily, visit friends, whatever works for you. Your 2005 calendar is enclosed. Make every effort to fill in the little squares with lunches and coffee dates with friends, a concert or two, a few plays and lots of movies dates. Plan some trips, throw a party, get some fun scheduled!

By time you get this (bulk mail, SO SO SO slow) David and I will likely be wandering around Soho in the snow with jolly Christmas lights everywhere. I'm dreaming of that. Happy holidays!

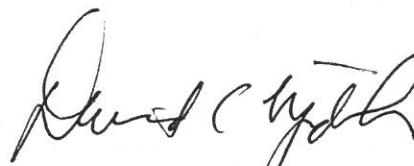
Keep in touch,



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