



2021

November 16th

Holiday Greetings !

To Our Family, Friends, Georgetown Neighbors, and Valued Clients:

Well, I've made a decision. I'm going to tell you what the decision is right here and right now and I'll probably repeat it two or three more times for emphasis in the course of writing this letter today. Plus, at my advanced age, I find that you can't repeat things too many times. You'd be surprised what I can forget in the course of a year. Here is the decision: Next year will be the last year I produce this holiday letter. Next year will be my final Christmas letter. For several years now I've been wondering when I was going to stop writing it and about a week ago it came to me: I'm going to stop writing it next year. So this is the second to last annual holiday letter and year and wrap up from the mind of Michael Nelson. I thought about ending it this year but that would've been too abrupt and there are far too many things that are going to happen next year that are fairly major in my and David's life and I want to document those major changes when they happen.

Of course there's going to be speculation as to what those changes might be. I assure you it's nothing as mundane as retiring. Everybody's going to jump in the conclusion that I'm retiring and I am not planning on that this or next year. David and will I not be divorcing, you can take that off the list of possibilities. Neither will either of us be changing our pronouns. All you need to know for now is that next year is going to be a very significant year for us. And there will be one final Christmas letter to talk about those changes.

Let's move on.

#### Visitors

We've had lots of houseguests of late. Brianne the owner of Coco, Opal's sister, recently stayed in our ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit for those of you not up on the real estate lingo) when she was "back home" from Hawaii for a few weeks. Our friends Mark and Dirk recently stayed when they came down from Sequim to Seattle to have dinner with us. It's a two hour plus ride back to Sequim that involves ferry boats. For those of you trying to keep up Mark and Dirk used to live

in Palm Springs but relocated to Sequim. I don't understand this, but I try to be very supportive, and that includes lodging after dinner.

Cherese and Rebecca were in town from Austin and they stayed in the ADU as well. Cherese had a trade show for Amazon for a week and they put her up in a downtown hotel on the days she was working. On the days she wasn't working she stayed up in the ADU with Rebecca.

Our good friends Greg and Shaun sold their condominium on top of The Harvard Market back in the summer but they had a four month rent back from the new owners. All of their belongings, mostly art, was picked up on November 5<sup>th</sup> and shipped to France where they bought a full on castle with Greg's former partner (and current husband) Larry (speaking of trying to keep up). The three of them are not a thurple (or is that "thurple" – spell check is letting me down on this one, at least they still have garden variety pronouns). The main take away here is that I've known Greg Kucera for about as long as I've known David, 37 years, and now he's leaving me for "castles in the air" as the old song goes (1970, 52 years ago).

And yesterday (getting back to the non-ending stream of ADU guests) David and I drove my cousin Marsha to the airport for her flight back to Michigan. She stayed in the ADU for six days. It rained. It really rained. Al Roker said on the Today Show today said that Seattle had the wettest month ever. Still we had some sun breaks and managed to go down to the waterfront and ride the ferris wheel, aka the Big Wheel, and take a cheesy tourist ride called Wings Over Washington. And we got to have lunch at the Crab Pot. The Crab Pot is a place where they come to the table with a bucket of seafood and dump it on the table and let you dig in. David and I find it to be kind of gross yet kind of intriguing at the same time. Our first experience with both of these things, Wings Over Washington and The Crab Pot, was with our friends Curtis and Gary. It was Gary Tucker's birthday and that's what he wanted to do: The cheesy Wings Over Washington ride and The Crab Pot. David and I remain aloof, critical participants. Marsha was neither aloof nor critical. And when the bucket of seafood arrived she dug in.

One night we stayed home and had our friend Merritt Green over. Marsha, David Merritt, and I played a game called SAYINGS that was made by Marsha's older sister Susan (more on that in a moment). Another night we went over to Frank's house and we had a lovely dinner made by Frank and just visited. All-in-all we had a great visit with my cousin Marsha and I really appreciated her coming to Seattle to see me. Since both of my parents passed away (Mom in 2018 and Dad in 2019) I have very little desire, . . . well . . . let's be honest here, I have no desire to ever return to Michigan again. That was an awkward sentence. Too bad my editor, my great editor and friend Lisa Walters, is attending her son's wedding in Michigan this week. Her son's wedding has been planned and canceled twice. Covid spoils everything.

### Susan's Game

So Susan, Marsha's older sister, developed a game. It's called Sayings. It's really quite clever. It involves common things that people say:

Misery loves company

Money doesn't grow on trees

Variety is the spice of life

Never say never  
Put your money where your mouth is  
Is the Pope Catholic?  
Fresh as a daisy

Susan cataloged 1,800 of these trite things that people say, made cards with the Sayings on them, packaged it all up, and had 1,000 made. Now she is selling them on eBay. If you go to eBay all you have to do is type in the word "Sayings" and the game will come up. Merritt and David and I sure enjoyed our evening goofing around with this. Lots of laughs.

### Palm Springs Bound

If everything goes according to plan, David and I will be getting in the car with our two dogs and driving to Palm Springs on Sunday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, a mere six days from now. We will spend three days on the road, thus two nights in motels with the dogs, over the 1,263 mile trip. (I measured it, that's a driveway to driveway distance.) I'm so looking forward to this, to all of this, to the drive down, to being in a car with two dogs for hours on end, to NPR and Marc Maron podcasts, to the motels, to the dive diners along the way.

And finally to arriving at our home in Palm Springs which is becoming better and better every year. On January 15<sup>th</sup> of next year we will have owned this house for seven years. In that time we've completely landscaped the front and back yards, we've put in a brand new pool and spa with all the decking around it, and we put up an outdoor trellis for sun protection, and we had the entire exterior of the house painted including the concrete tiles on the roof. That was on the exterior of the house.

On the interior of the house we've almost touched every surface. The house has four bedrooms and three bathrooms. Every bedroom has been fussed (one became an office so now there are three bedrooms and an office / TV room). The guestroom bath was completely remodeled a year ago during a big push to get things buttoned up. And by buttoned up I mean every door and every window in the house was taken out, sizes were changed, and brand new doors and windows were installed. That was the summer of 2020. This past summer, 2021, we tackled largest project of them all: We finally made a decision and purchased 2,600 square feet of floor tiles, enough to do the whole house and have plenty left over. The tiles are 32 inches square and have the appearance of concrete. They went down this summer and they were a game changer. They are stunning, expertly installed, and finally make the house look finished.

### White On White

In order to install tile on the floors of the house all of the furniture in the house, and believe me the house was filled with furniture, had to be moved. What better time to paint the interior of the house? So Edy had quite the task assigned to him for the summer. Tile the entire interior of the house and paint the entire interior of the house. No small task. Now might be a good time to remind you that I'm still quite worthless when it comes to doing anything due to the stroke. My arm still has no muscle control. I can't do anything, I can't lift anything, I can't hang a picture on the wall, nothing. So I could be of no help to Edy or any of his workers. I would just be in the

way and I thought it best for me to get out of there and not come back until the end of summer, which is what I did.

When I did go back the place looked great. The tile looked perfect, the walls were all perfectly white, everything really looked dialed in and done. But the most impressive thing was that Edy took his cell phone and photographed all of my shit, all the furniture, all the books, everything in the house. He took pictures of it all and then his crew moved it all from room to room just ahead of whatever room they were painting at the time. When they were done painting they referred to the photos Edy had taken and put it all back into place. I was impressed and so happy to see the place so close to finished. We still have one bathroom and the kitchen to go but I really feel like we will get those done within the twelve months of 2022 and then the house will be completely renovated.

This next trip down we will be there for the entire month of December. The master bathroom is supposed to be finished. We've seen it all tiled and we were just waiting for the brand new cabinet from kerf design in Seattle to arrive (which it has). I have an appointment with California Closets to do the closets in each of the guest rooms. We had to rip out the old closet systems that were there when we had the entire interior painted. I just didn't want to put the old shit back in. I wanted new to match the new floors and paint. Do you realize how far out California Closets is booked? Maybe it's the time of Covid with people just home staring at their old closets, but I had to fly down there in October for one day, design it and pay for it, in order to have a very simple closet system installed in December. At least it's another thing I can check off my list and say is done. I used to wear a t-shirt that said, "Get shit done" but since the stroke I have not put that shirt on. It makes me too sad.

### Our Year In Brief

Just as we're going to Palm Springs for the month of December of this year, we did the same thing last year. This is the second year in a row that we've spent the entire month of December in Palm Springs. Certainly we went to Palm Springs in December in the past, but never for the entire month. Then came Covid. We couldn't work in the office anyway, we all had to social distance and work from home, so it didn't really matter whether home was in Seattle or in the desert. I work on the telephone and my laptop anyway and I can always pause Colombo as easily in the desert as in Seattle when I need to take a call from one of my brokers. So, while it's very true that Covid spoils everything, in one way it opened up a new way of living and working to me. I really don't think I would've ever taken a full month and gone to Palm Springs were it not for Covid. Now I can't imagine not being in Palm Springs for the month of December.

### Covid Spoils Everything

So, what was 2021 like with the specter of Covid hanging over everything? Well things kept being canceled. Weddings were canceled, symposiums in Hawaii were canceled, concerts were canceled performances, plays, all canceled, holidays were either canceled or cut back so severely they didn't resemble holidays anymore. Not to mention how Covid impacted dinner parties and travel, two things David and I loved to do prior to the plague. Having another couple over for dinner seemed like a radical event of defiance. Having four people over for dinner, well that was

just crazy. Some people didn't want to come to dinner, other people would come to dinner only if they could sit outside. Fortunately we designed this house with a great courtyard in front of it with a table that seats eight easily and up to 16 people with extensions. There is a gate that leads to the front courtyard from the street so you don't have to go through the house. So dinner for six people was a no brainer providing you could find four brave souls willing to risk it all to hang out.

### Doing Laundry Prior To Our Drive To Palm Springs And Trying To Finish This Letter

There are two kind of men in this world: One kind checks all four pockets in his pants by putting his hand inside of them just before he takes them off to make sure all four pockets are empty. The other kind just drops his pants on the floor wherever with pockets full of coins and cash and receipts and tissues and what not from the day. Guess which kind of man I am. Go ahead, guess.

### Covid Spoils Everything, Part Two

I'm sick of talking about Covid. I just want to move on. Suffice it to say 2021 was a year of greatly curtailed activity on almost all fronts. Curiously real estate was not one of the fronts affected by Covid. My office, Windermere's Eastlake office, is rocking full steam ahead. When the pandemic hit in 2020 we thought it was gonna be the end of real estate as we knew it. But no. In 2020 my office processed 693 purchase and sale agreement files. That was more than we'd ever done on an annual basis in the 24 years I've managed the office. Well guess what? As of a week ago, so not the end of the year but year to date, my office has done 700 files so far in 2021. And no one comes in anymore! And we still have two months to go before the end of the year! I think the public at large might think the real estate market is softening or slowing down but I see no evidence of that. Whenever I take a phone call from a broker and they're asking me about a strategy or something about a pending deal I always ask, "How many offers are there?" The answer to that question is rarely one or two or three. Generally that question is answered with the numbers like 7 or 12 or 16 or 40. The market is not slowing down in the Seattle area.

### New York, New York, What A Wonderful Town

We did travel once this year. About 2 ½ years ago David and I thought we were going to Hawaii for a Windermere convention and we bought first class round-trip tickets so we could go in style and earn massive award miles (you earn twice as many miles when flying first class). Covid canceled the trip and the tickets were saved for a year. Fast forward to 2021, same convention in Hawaii, made all the lodging and travel arrangements, and, wait for it . . . canceled. David and I were really wanting to travel and we were eager to use these tickets we'd been sitting on for what seemed like forever. Manhattan seemed like the perfect solution.

So we booked three days in a Manhattan hotel, made the travel arrangements again with the airlines, and we were off. You know it might seem far to go for only the three nights but as it turns out three nights in New York can be perfect. We stayed at the Standard Hotel right on the Highline, we saw one Broadway show (and it was a commitment, 3 ½ hours about a financial institution called The Lehman Trilogy), we went up to the Edge (very touristy but I was, after all, a tourist) and we had three GREAT meals out: The Gramercy Tavern, Indochine, and a high-end

Korean place in the theater district that I don't remember the name of. And we walked. We walked and walked and walked all around New York City which is one of my greatest joys.

We already have a return trip to Manhattan planned for April of 2022. Next time there will be six of us there: Cherese Rebecca, Donna, and Lorelei (all the girls from Austin, Texas) and we already have theater tickets for three major Broadway shows.

### Our House Is A Very Very Very Fine House

We absolutely love our house. We love it in the summer when we can use the exceedingly well planned outdoor spaces. We love it in the winter when it rains nonstop and we're inside cozy and warm listening to the rain on the metal roof. We love the solar panels which causes us to have an electric bill of \$5.30 a month year round. We love the ADU which we do not have on Airbnb or any other online rental platform because those are super annoying to me (it turns out that while I like money I don't want to be annoyed even a wee bit to get it). We love our neighbors. And it turns out I really enjoy living in a smaller space – 1813 square feet is plenty for two guys and two dogs.

1,813 Square Feet Our House + 469 Square Feet The ADU + 530 Square Feet The Garage = 2,812 Total Size

### Okay, Some Things Don't Need To Be Repeated

I just took some time out to call and make a doctor appointment. It's a new doctor for me, one who evidently has magnets that he might be able to put in my throat to make my throat function better. But that's not the point of this rant. Here's something I never need to hear again: If you're having a medical emergency please hang up and call 911. I would much rather hear this: If you're having a medical emergency and you were stupid enough to call this number perhaps your time is up. Another thing I do not need to hear ever again is this: Please listen closely as our menu options have changed. I call bullshit on that. I don't think the menu options have changed. I really don't. I think the menu has changed in years and they just leave that recording on there to drive us crazy. And finally, this is my medical rant trifecta, I don't ever need to hear: Please don't take this drug if you're allergic to this drug. I mean come on, do people really need to be told not to take a drug they're allergic to?

### Daisy, Daisy, Give Me Your Answer Do, I'm Half Crazy Over The Love Of You

On October 16<sup>th</sup> David and I drove into Oregon to meet a breeder in a casino parking lot. The breeder was the same breeder we got Opal from 11 years ago. And the dog was another Weimaraner, a female, just like Opal but, happy surprise, a darker grey. On the drive back home we named her Daisy. She was born on August 19<sup>th</sup> and when we picked her up she was eight weeks old. Now she's 12 weeks old and I think we can start counting her time in months, she's 3 months this week.

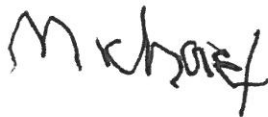
Have you ever raised a puppy? We last did it 11 years ago and we're trying to remember things like how long does it take before she stops piddling on the floor? How long does it take before

she stops using my forearm as a chew stick? Basic questions like that. But she makes us smile and I eagerly await a perfect 2 year old dog.

And finally on a somewhat sad note, we discovered about a week before we went to pick Daisy up that Opal has some form of dog cancer. (People always ask me what kind of cancer it is and I respond by saying doggy cancer.) First off let me make it clear that we did not know this when contracted to get the puppy. We put a deposit down on the puppy year ago and waited for three litters of puppies to be born and distributed until it was our turn to get one. There is no correlation between the new puppy and Opal having cancer. We actually thought we would have two dogs for three or four years. Opal's going to be 11 on January 2nd and we figured she would live to 14 or 15 years old. Or I should say we were hoping she would. Perhaps that was crazy considering that Inga, our first Weimaraner, died when she was 11 years old of a stroke.

Opal is having the best life right now. She has no idea she has cancer but all of a sudden she's getting really expensive dog food that David buys on the Internet (it's backed by Jane Lynch, the actress, the company is called Ollie) and she sees an acupuncturist weekly. She is never left alone. She goes with us literally everywhere and she waits in the car while we're shopping or on an appointment. She's had a great life and now we ramped it up and she's having an even better life. If we hadn't brought his puppy home she'd be in bliss 24/7. Daisy continually tries to engage with Opal in roughhousing play. Opal is having none of it. There is much barking, some snapping, and some shrieks of shock and then whimpering from Daisy when she pushes Opal too far. Our house is a very very fine house.

Happy Holidays!



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[ And, for now at least, we both can be found on Facebook ]

[ Or do I need to say META now? ]

[ Remember next year's letter will be the last !!! ]