

Dear Reader,

As most of you know, years ago I brushed off the perpetual tardiness of my "Christmas" letter by rededicating it to the 3 most important saints of all: Saint Nicholas, Saint Valentine and Saint Patrick. In addition to celebrating Life, Love and Laughter, (or, depending on your inclination: Gifts, Sex, and Guinness) it allows me until March to actually deliver the letter.



RULES:

1. Only first names are used to allow an opportunity for you to "emotionally connect" with the person you think I'm writing about.
2. The exception is when, as with **Jessyn**, the last name is something you **need** to remember.
3. No whining at the length. I only send it out every couple of years so you have tons of time to read it before being accosted with another. Plus, I promise never to do one this long again!
4. ANOTHER PLUS, this edition has a special Twitter Version which condenses the entire 7 pages down to 10 Tweets. Sweet.

Contents: Best stories of my last 3 years. Mostly it's the recent stuff because I can still remember it. For that reason, alas, it doesn't include the phenomenal 2012 public health conference I attended with **Geri** in San Francisco. (FREE because of her emeritus status!) Or the grand time I had with **Dino & Marty** celebrating Halloween in San Francisco after that conference and then with **Arlene** debriefing it all. (At least you 4 got your names in.) P.S. Vaguely related photos are scattered for artistic effect. See below:



A Cartridge in a Bare Tree

3 Saints: Twitter Version #hurry

- Apples 2 Oranges **#Going a little soft on love?**
- The Hip Bone is Connected to the Knee Bone. The Back Bone has the nerve to connect to all **#old song-NOT!**
- Keeping My Brain Alive **#TheFuture**
- A Flasher & a clean a glove compartment — together? **#Ferry-come-lately**
- Jessyn Farrell — A Name to Remember! A Vote to Cast! **#WASate Rep**
- The root of evil wears a crown - Henri Duyzend/Bernie Madoff of Dentists! **#Paid4KitchenRemodel**
- I receive a necklace w/ a sinking feeling **#Great Gift**
- New Mexico **#Garden Party** & Creative **#Camp for Grown-ups**
- Catting About - Ph.D. level Theory of Pet Attraction **#Rescue Cat**
- Brilliant/Inventive way to **#Make a Difference**

Apples 2 Oranges

I was in the University Village Apple store getting tech help with my iPad when my techie's mind wandered.

She mentioned finding herself in the parking garage elevator with a cute guy that morning. Like her, he was obviously coming to work.

After a brief flirtation, he asked where she worked. She told him.

He sighed.

The elevator stopped. He said "Good-bye."

She turned left to go to the Apple Store.

He turned right and walked across the parking lot to the Microsoft store.

I gasped and said, "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" She nodded.

Obviously, it's the plot for the next Romeo and Juliet / West Side story remake!



The Hip Bone's Connected to the Knee Bone

If you've been anywhere near me in the last 8 years you know I can slip into a monolog about knee pain with the slightest encouragement. (Some insist "encouragement" isn't necessary!)

March 27, 2013, I gave up and had my right knee replaced. Meeting with my surgeon before the operation, he asked what I was doing to prepare for it. I said: "lots of PT, I lost 25 pounds and am trying to loose more." He stared at me and announced, "You don't need to loose weight."

I stared back and declared, "In my entire life no man or woman has ever said that sentence to me. Does your wife know you talk to other women this way?" He looked perplexed. Laughing, his nurse said, "Don't worry. I'll explain it to him."

We all laughed. We bonded. It was good

The Healers

A heretofore unrealized advantage of getting old, is having friends with closets full of walkers, raised toilet seats, shower seats, grabbers, and ice machines. I bought nothing. Things materialized as I needed them! As did several wonderful home cooked meals! **Nancy** and **Fran** actually rose to Sainthood by moving in and playing caregiver roles.

Nancy showed up *between* consulting trips to Mauritius, an island nation just off the coast of east Africa. I felt privileged just to hang out with such a worldly person!

Fran, my best friend in high school and college, came up from CA. In addition to caregiving, she taught me valuable things, like how to properly seal a partially eaten loaf of bread. Every time I have toast, I send grateful thoughts her way!

Another healing incentive was that two cute, and ever so buff, guys showed up at 10 AM every day for a week. **Matt & Marty** were actually here to remodel my kitchen, but their presence inspired me to get up, dressed and beautified every day!

I appear to have a low threshold for pain and a high one for drugs. This means that after a handful of oxycontin and some kind of morphine mix, I'm tired but have too much pain and too many leg spasms to sleep. There is however, an upside to the leg spasms: I'm the PT poster child for knee flexibility!

Another plus of tossing and turning all night is that I've continued to lose more weight. I now weigh 2 pounds less than I did in the 8th grade. (I remember that weight because that's when I started my first diet.) It's pathetic to think that after all these years of dieting I've only lost 2 pounds!

Addendum:

After my Knee replacement, Medical Creep slipped in. They first said the continuing pain meant that I needed my hip replaced. After testing, they said the hip was OK, the problem was with my back. I told them they couldn't replace my back because I was already spineless. Currently we are at a stand-off. (Luckily, I can still stand.)

Keeping My Brain Alive #TheFuture

It's easy for any brain go to mush if put on pain meds and left unstimulated too long. It's even easier when that brain's "ON" position regularly deals with rubber chickens.

Just in time, I met **Jim Ware!** A futurist, **Jim** conducts a monthly teleconference called Talking About Tomorrow. There are 15-20 of us on each call, including HR & Project Managers, consultants, researchers, speakers, grad students and authors.

Most call the US home, others hail from Australia, England, India, & So. Africa. We discuss the future of work and the workplace. It's heady talk requiring an occasional comeuppance. Case in point:

Once **Jim** gave us the discussion prompt: *What is the single most dramatic difference in the way you work today from the way you worked 10 yrs. ago? How did that difference arise? Was it expected, or surprising? Could you have anticipated then what your life at work would be like today?*

We sagaciously pontificated on life without "third places," smart phones, LinkedIn and Facebook. Then Cornell grad student, **Pranav Gupta**, spoke up. "To tell you the truth," he said, "Ten years ago I was in the eighth grade!"

It kinda put the rest of us in our place!



Following NASA and Taking Rubber Chickens into Space and from thence to the Future!

My Encounter with a Flasher

OK, so I leave **Gwen** and **Mike's** home after a great holiday party. I'm headed for the 11:20 PM ferry. I'm in a hurry, but it's late, no one's on the road, so what's to worry about?

Suddenly I see a line of cars coming my way. "Ye Gads!" say I, "that means the ferry's arrived." I speed up. As I come down the home stretch, a bank of lights come on behind me. I pull over to let the officer pass.

Unfortunately he doesn't. He's obviously lonely and wants to chat. I pour on the charm, suggesting, among other things, that the flames on the side of my car



(Cool unrelated photo)

have misled him into thinking I was going faster than I really was. He assures me that's not so.

NOTE: I don't do tickets. Yes, I drive fast, but I don't get caught. I am unprepared. I present my driver's license. The glove compartment, however, is awash in registration and insurance cards dating to 2003. I finally find a 2011 card (Note: It's Nov. 2012). He accepts it and retreats to his car.

He returns with a ticket for going 40 MPH in a 30 mile zone. "Before I say more about the ticket," he explains, "had I written you up for going 70 MPH in the 30 mile zone (a speed we both know I was doing), it would have cost you \$475. This ticket is just for \$124."

I grovel my thank-you. He then directs me in 2 illegal left turns so that I can get to the toll booth. He leaves saying, "Thanks for being so entertaining!"

Addendum: I drive sheepishly to the tollbooth, knowing they watched the whole show. "I was just trying to make the 11:20 ferry," says I.

"There wasn't one tonight." say they. "That last ferry unloaded and docked for the night. There was no need to speed. The next ferry to Seattle isn't until midnight!"

Well . . .

At least I got my glove compartment cleaned out.

Jessyn Farrell — A Name to Remember! A Vote to Cast!

I worked on the campaign of my local State Representative, **Jessyn Farrell**. I was her very first boss when she was a student at the UW. Back then, I was looking for a name for my company and it was her idea to take a rubber chicken to all the parties she attended. A born mediator and organizer, she solicited

names from the student attendees, held a vote, gave the winner the chicken and me all the suggestions. That was how I found **FUNDamentally Speaking: Putting the "Fun" before "da mental."**

Somehow **Jessyn** managed to finish law school, marry, have two kids, do mediation for the Olympia transportation crowd and appear at my door this fall not looking any older than when I last saw her 20 years ago!

Smitten, I waved signs for her on street corners, got the neighbors to support her and . . . she won in a landslide!

Remember her name because she is going places — and not just in Washington State. AND, you heard about it here first!

The Bernie Madoff of Dentists!



"I have metal filings in my teeth. My refrigerator magnets keep pulling me into the kitchen. That's why I can't lose weight!"

(My dentist didn't give a hoot about my weight. His interest was in lightening the weight of my wallet.)

Raise your hand if you've ever shown a friend a crown or root canal in your mouth. OK, I see a couple hands for crowns — but only ones on front teeth. I see none whatsoever for root canals. With wisdom born of great expense, let me encourage you to talk to your friends about such things. You may find, as I did, that the average person does not have the 15-20 root canals I have and has not put 9 crowns on the same 3 teeth. (All be it, over 20 years)

Henri Duyzend was my dentist for 25 years; I socialized with him and his wife; I spoke at her women's club; when I was on TV in Holland, **Henri**, Dutch by birth, translated the subtitles to see if they got the gist of what I was trying to say. I considered him a good friend and an excellent dentist.

Turns out **Henri** had a habit of doing lots of unnecessary crowns and root canals -- and doing them so that they had a good chance of getting infected and needing to be re-done!

When he retired and sold his practice, the new dentist, **Good Guy, David To**, found himself awash in patients with incredibly similar dental problems. He accused Henri of fraud. **Henri's** response? "Ah, if you get your patients to love you, they'll never sue you!" Hearing that, I, too, lined up with the other 200+ patients and staff suing him.

Thanks to my lawyer, **Ann Rosato**, to date I've collected the biggest award. Ann, however, just won a \$6,000,000 + judgement for a large group of Henri's patients. Hopefully they'll collect before he goes broke. Then, hopefully, he'll go broke.

A Sink Beautiful Enough to Wear!

In July, 2 old pals from my UC, Irvine days wandered through. **Jean**, the woman responsible for publishing my very first article, was traveling from her home in Princeton NJ, through Canada and on down to see her daughter in San Francisco. She lined up friends and relatives to travel various legs of her journey with her. When she got to Vancouver, Canada, another old Irvine pal, **Chris**, joined her. He lives in Vancouver WA and it seemed appropriate that he convey **Jean** between the two Vancouvers. They paused in Seattle for dinner with me. Turned out 30 years of catch-up took more than a dinner. They spent the nite.

The more astute of you have picked up on oblique references to a kitchen remodel sprinkled throughout this letter. Thanks to **Henri**, it's true.

Jean and **Chris** were appropriately in awe at the cobalt flecks sparkling out of my granite countertops. Two weeks after they left I received a beautiful pendant made of that very cobalt! Enclosed was a note from Chris saying that anyone with semiprecious gems in her countertop should be wearing a piece of her sink!

Now, how cool is that!

Albuquerque Garden Party and Creative Camp for Grown-ups

After 30 years hosting an annual garden party, my inventive friend **Jane** decided the group should go on a field trip. In 2012, seven of us spent a long March weekend at the Albuquerque home of **Kathy Chilton**, artist, and sister to one of us (**Ann**). We painted and fired ceramics, created art trading cards, and photographed a wedding under a dinosaur in the sculpture garden on our way to a Japanese Art Deco exhibit. We viewed Native American galleries, were visited by a leprechaun on St. Pat's Day, saw a remarkable film on Monarch butterflies, got interviewed for TV, and watched Native American singing & dancing in Old Town.

A highlight was going to the Albuquerque County Building to see the fantastic community building exhibit **Kathy** designed for her neighborhood. She photographed the hands of neighbors holding "something of value" to them. Items ranged from a pet, a garden trowel, money, the hand of a loved one, etc. It's totally remarkable and needs to go viral. Everyone should have a chance to participate in something like this! (See sample at right.)

Throughout the entire trip, we frequently burst into song, found serendipitous connections between ourselves, told wonderful life stories and laughed more than I ever have in a four day time period.

Addendum

So successful was our adventure that 2014 finds us at ex-Seattleite, **Ruby Montana**'s motel in Palm Springs for another artsy trip. This one has the bonus of us being able to put our ever-so-artistic bodies into the swimming pool with no other guests seeing us.

Yep. We bought the place out.
All six rooms!



Catting About: A Theory

As a Ph.D., I'm allowed theories and one of mine is about Pets & People. My theory is that men like dogs because they act the way men wish women acted: they can be trained to sit and stay, they're always glad to see you and more than willing to take the blame for stuff. They don't care who you're with, or if you're late, dirty or smelly. They love you unconditionally.

Women like cats because cats help them get used to how men really do act: cats vastly prefer to come and go on their own, they get all cuddly when they want something and ignore you the rest of the time.

Never did this prove to be more true than with **Maurice**, the yellow tabby I inherited from **Wayne** and **Chris**, and about whom I wrote in my last Three Saints Letter. Initially, I "cat sat" him while **Wayne** and **Chris** were adventuring. I wouldn't let him outside, for fear he'd get lost. He was furious. . . Yet. . . I brought him food. What's a cat to do?

Then He Became My Cat.

He got to go outside, and like many a man in my life, started scouting the area for better prospects. He settled on a neighbor couple, **Patty and Dwayne**. After 20 years of togetherness, they had hit a rocky patch. Sensing this, **Maurice**, now renamed "**Meowrice**," would knock on their window, they'd let him in, and he'd conscientiously attend to their relationship by alternately cuddling with each of them. **Dwayne**, who, until now, had been allergic to cats, bonded deeply with **Meowrice** over episodes of The Cat Whisperer.

What's a Gal to Do?

There's no use chasing after an old love who's moved on. **Dwayne** & I shook hands, **Meowrice** flicked his tail, the transfer was made.

True to his "cool dude" nature, however, once every week or so **Meowrice** meanders by my backdoor to see if I'm hanging with anyone new or if any food might be around.

About a year later I found someone.

Abhorring a vacuum, Nature sent me **Gombi** — Hungarian for "Little Dumpling." Unfortunately, he initially looked more like he should be named **Csirke Nyakát** (Hungarian for "Little Chicken Neck!")



His tail and back legs were covered in poop, he'd lost a lot of hair on his back, weighed 5 pounds instead of the 11 he should have, had ear mites and lice, a huge tongue, smelled to high heaven and drooled — a lot.



Meowrice, came in, smelled him under the door and promptly left!

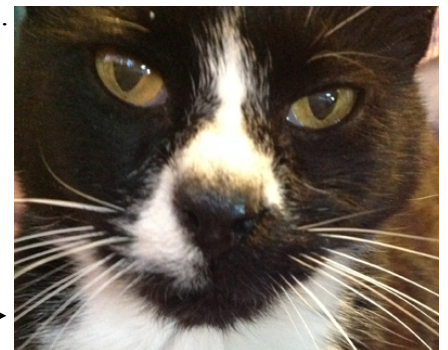
I was to keep him for 2 days until a friend of the friend who dropped him off, took him. I couldn't bear it. The next day we went to my vet at Ravenna Animal Hospital. There I learned his gums were rotten, his tongue was so long because it was detached from his mouth on one side, 10 teeth had fallen out and the rest needed to be removed.

So, of course, I kept him.

Two years later, he's doubled in weight and emerged as a shy, sweet, but very persistent, companion. True to my original theory, he only gets cuddly when he wants something, but, since he always wants to eat, it's working out well.

My new motto:
"Saving the world, one cat at a time."

Gombi's motto:
"If you're awake enough to see this, you're awake enough to feed me."





Put Some Pizazz in Your Life & Make a Difference!

My pal **Carol Landau** is dying of colorectal cancer. But then, so are a lot of people. **Carol**, however, is literally, having the time of her life doing so. She is living proof that regardless of how sick you are, (she's had an ileostomy bag for 20 years) it's never too late to put some pizazz on your bucket list.

Along the way, she's inspiring childless baby boomers to rethink the rotating charities they tack on to the end of their wills. I think you should know about her.

Carol invested her money to live to be 90. She's clearly not going to make it. She has no kids, the rest of her family is financially okay. So...what to do with the money? Give it to a college? Leave it to a cat? **Carol** had a different idea.

In 2011, at age 60, she retired as a Florida municipal clerk and headed her camper across the USA to work on her bucket list. (& to visit me at the Western end!)

As she drove she visited small towns and quietly donated to animal and wildlife rehab centers, a children's corner in a public library and a homeless shelter. Twenty-three weeks and 11,608 miles later she was home. Rather than deplete her strength, the trip energized her. She made another trip in 2012.

Carol was struck with the impact a relatively small donation could have on an entire community, and how good it felt to give this way. When illness cut a third trip short in 2013, she decided to amp up her giving.

Volunteer fire depts. became a special focus. Most need simple things: helmets, hoses, jaws of life, even boots! She bought them. When a child died in a home fire because the local dept. lacked the gear to go into a burning building. **Carol** bought them 6 sets of gear.

Living in Seattle, I was clueless about how little money the volunteer depts in small towns have. At one point **Carol** gave a fire chief a check for \$8,000.

He teared up, telling her it more than quadrupled his annual budget!

Small towns talk. Suddenly **Carol** found herself in the local news. Two of us have promoted her to the Ellen DeGeneres Show (Keep your fingers crossed!). Since other folks want to get involved, **Carol** and some pals are setting up a website matching donors & projects. 4 details, check her blog www.Carolsadventures.com

What stands out is that this is not big stuff. This is useful, practical, pretty easy stuff . . . that makes a big difference. She's certainly making me rethink end of life giving!

In addition to her gift-giving, Carol's been checking off a bucket list including such items as:

- Participating in a Native American canoe paddle with 51 tribes and 98 canoes.
- Doing wildlife rehab with Capuchin monkeys, lemurs, deer, and a host of other animals.
- Crewing at the Albuquerque Hot Air Balloon Fiesta.
- Riding in the Goodyear blimp—twice!

Yep, she's dying, but she's going out with pizazz! Let that be your inspiration!

Truth is:

As Humor Pal **Don Nilsen's** photo shows, these days are so hectic that we often don't know whether we're coming or going.



The best part about having friends like you is that it doesn't matter. My life is enriched by you, no matter in what direction we're traveling!

Patt