

# I WILL HONOUR CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART, AND TRY TO KEEP IT ALL THE YEAR.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

**A**s I honour Christmas 2004 in my heart, I think fondly of friends like you and the personality traits you possess that qualify you to receive the alternative Inglis newsletter.

*austincitylofts.com*

The big news this year is that in April we moved into a downtown, high-rise 'loft' (really a flat). It's the biggest lifestyle improvement ever. The 12-foot ceilings allow spaces for big art, and the glass south walls bring in a terrific view of the sky, sunrises, sunsets, storms, downtown, freight and passenger trains as they meander over the Colorado River and fireworks on the fourth of July. It's a joy to come home to and hard to leave.



Getting here, though, has been a Herculean effort — getting the old house ready to sell, having three garage sales to get rid of junk we didn't need, the house not selling till the last minute. But it was all worth it — especially living without clutter.

The coolest part is walking most places. Ian is six minutes by foot away from his office, and I now take the bus to work at the hospital. The Whole Foods world headquarters is next door, and there's plenty of retail around. We're even down to one car!

In June the *Austin American-Statesman* did a feature story on downtown living — a relatively new phenomenon in Austin. The article said, "In April, Ian Inglis a defense lawyer, and his wife, Toni, a nurse, moved into an eighth-floor condo in the Austin City Lofts after selling their house in Tarrytown, where they raised three children. Ian walks to work, and Toni takes the bus to her job at Seton Medical Center....Although their home was closer to her job, Toni Inglis says she was often late for 25 years. With the bus, she arrives 10 minutes early....Self-described 'old hippies', the couple says they still can't quite believe their good fortune to live the high-rise life."



That's all true. My co-workers are still shocked that I show up for work on time. And every day for the first few months after we moved in, Ian and I would drop to our knees [photo at left], bowing, saying, "We're not worthy! We're not worthy!" (Think Wayne and Garth in *Wayne's World* when they went backstage to see Aerosmith.)

## ANIMAL TALES

In last year's letter I was angsting over how Snowy, 8, and Catticus Finch, 11, were going to adjust to high-rise living, i.e., how they were going to relieve themselves. Recall that I was contemplating lowering them in a basket down to the ground, like the crazy lady in the movie *Rear Window*.



Happily that hasn't been necessary. After the Great Outdoors serving as the only toilet Catticus has ever known, when we moved in, he went on strike. Yes, he valiantly held on for 30 hours, then finally let loose in his new electric litter box, much to our (and his) great relief. While he probably misses killing the occasional hapless rodent, we think he's enjoying his retirement from patrolling a yard. He mainly lounges around a lot — on our bed and the balcony — and is thus my new role model.

Snowy probably misses the yard, but with three walks a day, she gets more attention than ever. And she gets to take several long walks per week on the Town Lake trail. She likes the balcony, too.

## IAN

He's still practicing criminal defense law, and has truly worked his [rhymes with bass] off the past year and a half with the move. The big news is he got rid of his beloved "Grey Ghost" (the 1987 Dodge Dakota pickup).

Expecting his jalopy to run like a purring kitten, the last time he took it in for repair, the poor mechanic became visibly agitated, dropped to his knees at Ian's feet and begged him to PLEASE let the truck die with dignity, for Christ's sake. That got Ian's attention. The last time he drove it was with Erin to the east Austin taco dive, *Juan In A Million*. Fittingly, there it sat for days until it was towed to its Eternal Resting Place.

Since this downtown living thing is pretty new here in Austin, people are curious, and we've entertained a lot. Since John quit baseball several years ago, Ian took up cooking. [Note kitchen at right.] Using herbs grown on our balcony, he's gotten pretty darn good, even pairing food with wine. (Translation: Toni scores, *big time*.)



On occasion he'll bring a left-over awesome dish to work for the guys to sample. One of them called him "a real chef", but was promptly corrected by Leon Grizzard who pointed out that, "Actually, he's more of a Mad Scientist." Unfortunately Ian took an intense liking to the label and has since been trying all sorts of bizarre things in the kitchen, many of which suck. For example, at left he is searching for edible fish from amongst the glass shards of the exploded Pyrex baking dish. But I have faith that the madness will subside — perhaps with medication.

## TONI

That's me below with my twin, Barbara — she's on the right. This year I threw away crap; moved; still work in NICU; sill write the occasional newspaper commentary. That's about it. No humorous anecdotes in this section because, as all of you who know me can attest, everything I do and say is a) normal, b) perfect and c) appropriate. That is, aside from telling a *Statesman* reporter that I'd been late to work for 25 years.

Oh wait, there's the Playboy bunny episode.... This year Austin City Lofts invited one homeowner couple (me and Ian) to an "Arts" event at the governor's mansion. No fan of our governor, who is somewhat to the right of Genghis Kahn, we agreed to go nonetheless.

To my horror we were seated at a table of five couples, all of whom were in their 20s, looking like they just stepped out of a *Vanity Fair* photo shoot — dripping with good looks, chic and expensive clothes and jewelry, and strategically placed large body parts. In this milieu I looked a bit like Ma Clampett with my 57 years "experience", 5-year-old \$6 tank top from Academy and Gap skirt purchased on sale in 1998. I was seated next to "Echo Johnson". (See her Web site, and have your credit card ready.)

Looking for sympathy, when I told Dr. David Wermer at work about this, he shouted with widened eyes, "WOW! I've never seen a real Playboy bunny in the wild!"



#### BURTON, MELISSA & TALULA (KNIGHT)

This year I took the liberty of asking Burton and Melissa to send me a report of their past year for the holiday letter.

Melissa responsibly answered, "We'll spend our first Thanksgiving and Christmas in our house after nine months of remodeling HELL. Talula is two and a half and into everything! Vacationed in Colorado [photo at right]. Work is well, *work* for both of us!" (Melissa is a perioperative nurse, and Burton still the arboriculturalist in Dallas.)

Burton (Mr. Appropriate) responded with, "For starters, Talula has successfully transferred her mysterious crack dependency to highly caffeinated sodas or sweet

coffee. We are not just proud of her, we are saving \$thousands\$ every week! I wish I could report similar success with methadone for Melissa and me. But never mind all that bummeralia — it's chrimas time!! Melissa is still babysitting and sewing those sock-llamas. She is even learning the computer!

She's been trying to get her security guard training at night for a couple of years now, but is having trouble with the exams. We watch a lot of TV as a family, and sometimes we even walk around. Oh, I learned to make our own hamburgers from scratch! The trick is letting everything thaw all the way."



#### ERIN

Erin still lives in her little house in East Austin with a roommate, a bike and no car. After developing an interest in mental health in medical school, she is working as a psych tech in the ICU of Austin's only private psychiatric hospital. The patients and staff appreciate her a lot, and she enjoys her work. That is, except for the Cheshire cat incident.

She works the evening shift, and one night about 30 minutes after the "bedtime" meds had been given, Erin looked out the window of the dayroom where the patients were chilling out. She saw a beautiful crescent moon and innocently and spontaneously remarked, "Look! It's the Cheshire cat!" (Think *Alice in Wonderland*.) BIG mistake. All of the patients became agitated with several becoming actively psychotic, putting off bedtime for at least an hour. She said, "It's maybe not a great idea for staff to make paranoid or delusional statements in the psych ICU." [At right she's reading the *Times* at the Capitol.]

She's been hanging out with a delightful person who she knew in high school. He's studying Geography at UT and is a terrific skate-boarder. [See photo above left, and do a 'Google' on Jon-Erik Palmer.]



#### JOHN

John's a junior at Texas A&M and declared a major this year: History. He's working at A&M's large special events center doing odd jobs such as parking, stage building, etc. He gets around on his bike (no car) and still plays the guitar. [At right is his room here when he's home from school.]

Like father, like son. This year John took up cooking, as he moved off campus into an apartment with a roommate. And he doesn't just cook food — no, underwear, too.

John realized that he had to be at work in 45 minutes and was out of clean socks. Actually he was down to socks that had been worn so many times that they were unbearably disgusting.

He quickly washed a pair with bar soap, and placed them in the oven at 200 degrees F. for 20 minutes. After showering and dressing, he checked on the socks and found them ... still wet. No problem, he upped the temp to 350 degrees F., and took them out 10 minutes later when he noticed a burning, synthetic smell pervading the apartment. Good news: they were dry. Bad news: they were very, very scratchy. But he wore them anyway. [Note striped, baked right sock in photo at right.]



*We will honour Christmas in our hearts and try to keep it all the year.*

*Love,  
the Inglistex*

P.S. If you are interested in contacting the painter of the large-wall art, contact (Uncle) Rick Frederick at 512-346-3944.

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