

I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

As we honour Christmas 2008 in our hearts, we think fondly of friends like you and the personality traits that you possess which qualify you to receive the alternative Ingliis newsletter — the Greatest Gift of All.

Discovery: Holbox

Every second weekend in June, tens of thousands of Harleys roll into Austin from all over for the Republic of Texas Biker Rally. We live in a downtown loft on 5th St., and a little further east on 6th St. is Austin's version of Bourbon St. Naturally, all 40,000 Harleys roar up and down our street, all day and most of the night from Thursday until Sunday.

To make matters worse, a stoplight sits on the corner not 100 feet away from our balcony. While the big guys on Harleys wait for the light to change, they pass the time by roaring their engines. Then, when the light changes, it's a contest to see who can make the most noise taking off.

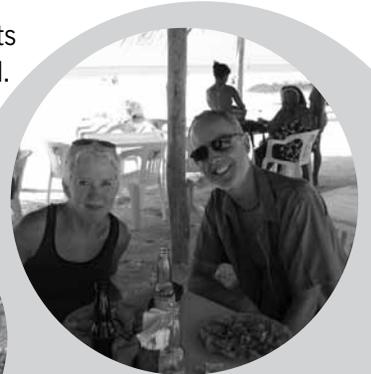
After suffering through this in 2004, our first year downtown, I decided the best solution was to purchase a high-powered assault rifle to mount on a tripod from our balcony on the eighth floor. Ian, the criminal defense lawyer, suggested we simply schedule our annual vacation for that time.

This year, Ian decided destination by first choosing the approximate area he wanted to visit — Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. He then Googled an aerial search to find someplace interesting.

A tiny fishing village named "Holbox," a Mayan name, caught his eye. A favorite spot among European travelers, it has plumbing (septic tank) and electricity, but no fancy restaurants, cars, trucks or paved streets — only a few golf carts. The clincher was a *New York Times Magazine* article showing a guy on a bicycle selling Mexican beer from an ice chest.

After a three-hour bus trip from Cancún, a 30-minute ferry ride got us to the 30-mile barrier island, only a mile and a half of which is developed.

Ian's and my lives are so ridiculously overbooked that this laidback island was just what we needed. I actually started and finished a 400-page book; we watched the fishing boats come in with the morning's catch, lunched on ceviche made from fish just caught, and took a bird tour, meeting new folks. Heaven. Absolute heaven.



above: fresh ceviche in Holbox
left: leaving Cancún



Ian

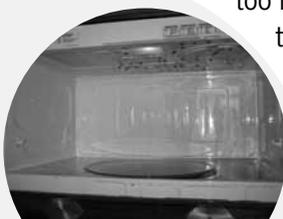
Ian's still defending criminals, presiding over the homeowners association where we live and living up to Dave Barry's definition of spouse: teeming flaw colony.

Think the bizarre sight of John McCain wandering all over the stage during the third presidential debate as Barack Obama sat stoically on a stool. That's Ian with his Sonicare (McCain, not Obama.) Evidently, the two minutes it takes to clean his teeth (at 31,000 strokes per minute) is far too long to stand still. Tiny white spots of dried tooth paste sprout daily all over the leather furniture, glass doors/windows, cabinetry, counters and floors.

There's more. This year, Ian has taken to enjoying his morning coffee on the balcony while reading the paper. When he comes in, he warms his coffee by exploding it in the microwave. This has happened

at the end of his annual December Big Bend backpacking trip

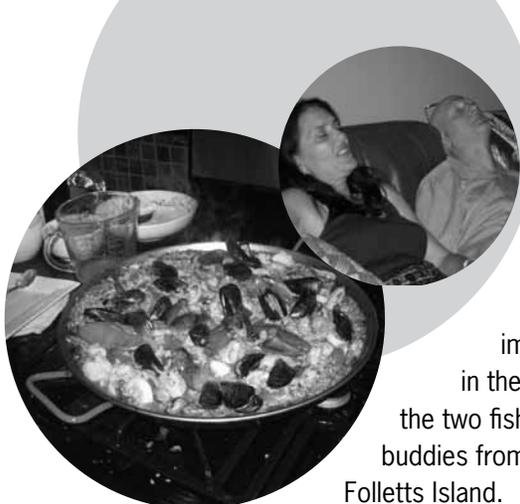
Ian has taken to exploding his coffee in the microwave this year.



Liz and Hans cleverly disguise their fascination with Ian and Toni's after-dinner conversation.

three times already this year, and counting.

Despite the occasional flaw, Ian remains an endearing, kind, funny, laidback and fair bloke. More important, he makes the best paella in the world, which came in handy on the two fishing trips he took this year with his buddies from high school to Orcas Island and Folletts Island.



Ian makes the best paella in the world.

Toni with LBJ School Healthcare Finance Professor David Warner in an article in Austin Monthly about teachers who had something to say and students who got the message. In 1992, Warner advised Toni to reach more people by switching from writing journal articles to newspaper commentaries.



Toni

Still doing neonatal nursing, writing and chairing the local MHMR Board. And I'm still taking Amtrak to Dallas once a month to see Talula, Burton and Melissa. On the train, I spend a lot of time with people who value the little things in life, like teeth.

The big news this year: MY IDENTICAL TWIN IS ... drumroll ... MY IDENTICAL TWIN! When Barbara and I were born, the doc told our mom we were fraternal, which is what we grew up believing. But in 1980, when I went to work in neonatal intensive care, all the neonatologists told us that we were identical, that it was statistically impossible for us to look so much alike and not be identical.



cleaning toothpaste off the balcony door

In short, I have known for 28 years that we're identical, but Barbara was never convinced. She suggested that for this year's birthday I purchase a DNA test. My paying \$100 to find out what all my co-workers and I already knew is a dependable and frequent source of humor/ridicule at work. The docs at work volunteered to give us a medical opinion on twin zygosity for a mere \$50.

slanted the cookie tin ever so slightly, sliding the parchment paper right off the tin dumping 20 soft cookies all over the 400-degree racks, door and bottom of the oven.

becoming asphyxiated by the misnomer "Easy-Off"





Within a nanosecond, the sounds from the kitchen morphed from the sweet whistling of a happy tune to a deafening cacophony of obscenities, "Who ever [bleep-ing] heard of baking [bleep] cookies on [bleep-ing] parchment paper [bleep-ing] anyway?!"

To make matters worse, being the day before Thanksgiving, the oven had to be cleaned immediately lest essence of cookie be baked into the turkey.

Toni shouting obscenities after cookies slid onto the inside of 400-degree oven.

Burton, Melissa & Talula Knight (by Burton)

In truck news, I sold my '94 Chevy pickup which I bought new and drove just short of 300,000 miles. Sure, it had some crumple areas, no AC, power NOTHING, a little trouble getting into first, AM and FM radio out of three speakers, one leather seat that had been replaced twice, a charming patina of work-related dings, a gleaming polish on the metal floor and clutch pedal where the rubber had worn away, dog hair from two dogs, hand-stitched upholstery improvements, great tires and most of all, history.

I had driven that truck nearly to Guatemala on three different occasions and slept in it many times. It had been with me through three different women, two dogs and was a veritable goldmine of loose change, lost tools and forgotten contraband. Take a moment to put on "Like a Rock" by Bob Seger, shed a tear, and remember the good times had in a true American classic. Sniff.... Anyway, I sold the piece of shit for \$800 and bought a Toyota Tundra which is so awesome by comparison I don't know where to begin.

Melissa and I have been married for 10 years now! Unfortunately, I am seeing many marriages fail around me within my peer group this past year — people not nearly as screwed up as we are. This leads me to believe that the key is low expectations. Melissa told me that for this letter, in reference to her I need only mention "nothing but cleaning and laundry and going to stores" which has to be a joke because she has been working a lot, too.

Talula is six now and in the first grade. This year she lost a front tooth, held a shark, won a karate trophy and learned to read. She also takes gymnastics and yoga and loves to draw and paint and walk in the woods with me.

Frankie, the dog we got last year, has turned out to be bright new chapter in our lives. I have no desire to live in a world without dogs; I go everywhere with my dog — to the store, to work. I am pleased to find that the loving bond I had with Keisha has been formed with another amazing creature. Frankie, like Keisha, is an unusually handsome mutt, but the similarity stops there. Frankie is a super athletic, talkative, action hound. He groans loudly when he lies down, catches Frisbees, chases balls and enjoys a good howl, which we get around to daily.

Azrial the grimalkin is doing fine. She still disappears for days at a time, only to return, eat a can of food, and mortar herself into her plush bed atop the piano for up to ten hours of immobility. She learned from the best, me.

Whether it's trucks or dogs, have faith that love is a renewable resource in our lives. *Merry Christmas!*



monster Golden Trout from Wind River Wyoming trip



Burton and Frankie at work



Talula holding shark



Azrial, mortared in





on her way to see Björk

Erin

This year Erin completed her basic nursing education and became licensed to practice as an RN. She works at the Austin State Hospital with the aggressively mentally ill, many of whom have arrived from jail. She plans to enroll in a mental health nurse practitioner program this fall or the next.

visiting Sae Jae (center) with her mom, Jan, in California



at play with friends Ella (left) and Juli



Lauren (left) and Kelly Shugart with Inglises

John

John's still driving a city bus and just completed the Basic Emergency Medical Training program. In the spring, he's quitting work to enter the firefighter academy and hopes to become one this summer.

shift handoff between previous driver and John



John and Erin at Coachella music festival



In short, the Inglises are a full-service family. Toni cares for your sick/premature infant; Ian gets you out of jail; Erin cares for you when you've been in jail but now need inpatient psychiatric care; John carts you around town on the city bus; Burton does your tree work; Melissa cares for you during your orthopedic surgery; and Snowy licks your face when you need it.

When Snowy eats her bone, a fun game for Pouncy (Erin's cat) is to see how close she can get to the bone before Snowy "snaps."



Here's wishing you a 2009 with plenty of fresh ceviche, time to start and finish a good book, great sunsets and lots of applause.



Love,
the Inglises