



*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 2012 in our hearts, we think fondly of friends like you and the personality traits you possess that qualify you to receive the alternative Inglis newsletter – The Greatest Gift of All.

POP QUIZ

This being the 20th anniversary issue of the Inglis Annual Report, something special for you: a pop quiz! Look at the photograph below and see if you can tell what about it drove Ian nearly crazy.



The photo is a frame from a segment on the *PBS NewsHour*, which ran probably 20 interviews with legal experts during the months after the Trayvon Martin shooting. Every single interview was shot at this same desk in the same legal conference room in Florida. If you can find what in the background drove Ian totally bonkers, then that says something about you. (I never got it until Ian told me.) The answer is at the end, but **DO NOT CHEAT** and go there now.

TRAIN TRIP

It's not easy getting from Austin to Syracuse, yet our nephew **NONETHELESS** insisted on getting married in the town where he's lived and worked his entire adult life. That's just how considerate he is.

Ian has meticulously and beautifully planned every trip we've ever taken, so, I've never had to worry about it. This year ... not so much. My first clue was when it took him nearly a week to come up with the route.

Toni (a few days before the trip): Ian, I'm trying to figure out what to wear on the flight there. What's the temperature going to be?

Ian (casually): It's actually more than a flight. We'll fly to New York JFK, catch the AirTrain to Jamaica Station, catch the Long Island Rail Road to Penn Station, then catch Amtrak to Syracuse.

Toni (furious): What?? How many times did you use the word "catch" in that sentence?? How much time will we have to do all this catching?

Ian: Don't worry, dear. We'll have two hours.

Toni: Two hours?! Well, no problem since we're both marathon runners and trains are never late. I'm having a beer.

We made it, though; I think converting to carry-on luggage was the key. The wedding was wonderful.



Nephew's wedding in the piney woods

Ian had the brilliant idea of going to Montreal after the wedding. "I've always wanted to go there," he said. "Won't it be nice to cross the border on a train instead of some [expletive] airplane?"

"We are approaching the Canadian border," the Amtrak conductor announced. "It is important to remain in your seats until we pass through customs." That was 6 p.m.

Perky Canadian customs officials in insufficient numbers passed through the full train asking to see papers and questioning every single passenger. We were Texans, yet not carrying guns. A man sitting next to us had the proper papers ... for rules that expired two years ago. The Ecuadorian woman in front of him didn't have papers at all.

Papers at an international crossing? Who knew??

Every one of the offending parties



what the Canadian customs officers expected us Texans to look like

had a convincing excuse, except us. Thankfully we were allowed to remain on the train, even though the idea of a traveling Texan without a gun was implausible.

One by one, sometimes two by two, around 15 folks were escorted off the train, with their luggage, to the customs house for investigation. They looked scared s___less.

Schadenfreude soon gave way to boredom. "Please remain in your seats until we have passed through customs," we were reminded intermittently.

One by one, they ALL returned to the train with their bags, each met by thunderous applause and cheers erupting from everyone. Not so much that we were happy for them – just that we might be getting closer to the time we could either hit the restroom or the snack car for beer, or both. Turns out, each case was resolved miraculously for \$200 (U.S.) per person.

We rolled out of the station at 8:30 p.m., 2.5 hours after arriving. "Hey, Ian, wasn't that sooo much better than crossing the border on an [expletive] airplane??"

It was sundown, but what we saw from then until dark made it all worthwhile: farm after pristine Québécois farm ... the greenest grass, well-trimmed trees and shrubs, neatly kept sparkling, white, simple farmhouses. It was like a magical children's book.



Didn't take photos, but the farms kind of looked like this.

Friends who had been to Montreal unanimously raved how nice it was, always followed with a very deliberate "It's very cosmopolitan." Silly me, I thought they were referring to a worldly outlook. Turns out, they were talking about ... clothes.

EVERYone in Montreal looked like they stepped out of the pages of *Vogue* or *GQ*; Ian and I, the pages of the *L.L.Bean Sale Catalogue*. That's not all. We were, by FAR, the oldest people in Montreal.

Didn't take long to figure out why. You'd get off their incredibly fabulous subway system only to face mountains of stairs up to street level – no escalator, elevator or ramp. I guess they haven't gotten around to passing a Canadians with Disabilities Act. Pity. Fortunately, stairs aren't a big problem yet, but given the choice I'll go for the alternative.

If you're into microbreweries or brewpubs, Montreal is not your destination. If you're into spending (or saving) money as opposed to burning it, Montreal is not your spot.

Ian decided he needed some clothes washed. He tipped the bellhop to take away a small bag with four 10-year-old T-shirts and four pair each of five-year-old underwear and SmartWool® sox.

Later that day, the bellhop arrived with a bell cart. When he started to give Ian a basket and hanging clothes, Ian told him he had the wrong room. Turns out, it was pressed T-shirts, covered

and on hangers. Neatly wrapped in fine tissue paper in an elegant basket were the rolled-up sox and holey underwear ... and a bill for \$91 (U.S.)



Montreal wasn't a total wash. We did like the beautiful Basilica Notre-Dame and Mount Royal. Next year, while we're visiting friends in the Northwest, we're going to Sydney and Victoria. I think we'll fit in better there.



On top of Mount Royal, doing what we do best on vacation: Toni eating, Ian looking at maps

IAN

Ian is still doing criminal defense and listening to reggae constantly. At this writing, he's camping with a buddy in Big Bend, a holiday tradition. The big news this year is he remodeled his office in the 1881 Victorian "remodeled ruin" (as he calls it) that he and two other lawyers bought in 1991. The fireplace and mantle turned out great!



Note tiny item on his desk.



Yet he is still the undisputed King of Inelegant Home Fixes. That tiny item on his desk is a folded, taped piece of packing paper that he labeled "COASTER." (I know what I'm getting him for Christmas.)

That's not all. This year, he got sick of paying for cable service, ditched it and

bought a Tivo®. He fashioned rabbit-ear antennae to make it work. Although interesting, alas, they did not work, so John surprised us with a digital passive TV antenna. A Christmas miracle!



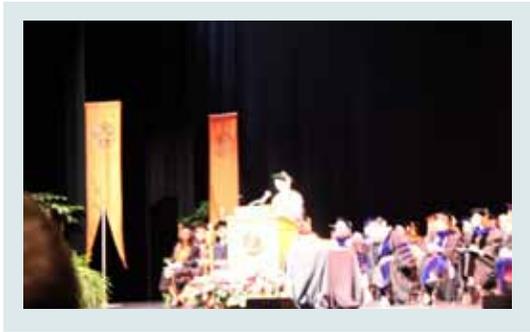
Ian's rabbit ears ...



TV antenna (attached to side of shelf)

TONI

At the end of last year, I retired from a rewarding and wonderful career in neonatal ICU after 32 years. I still write the nursing publication for the hospital system where I work, so I'm working half-time and have health benefits for me and Precious (Ian.) And I'm still doing the monthly opinion article for the *Austin American-Statesman*.



Hey, I'm comfortable writing a column, so when the dean of the UT nursing school asked me to give the commencement address, I said, "Sure!"

Umm. I've never appreciated Nancy Reagan until now. "Just say 'no'." The first draft said, after maybe 65 hours of soul-searching and hand-wringing, "Good luck."

I know the best commencement speeches are short, but that was probably too short. So, after another 65 hours I came up with a speech that was so trite it could have been given by Ann Romney. It didn't sound like me.

The next 65 hours I spent writing stuff that sounded like me, but didn't have a point.

A visit to the counselor and 65 hours later, it finally hit me to write a speech about what it is that I LIKE talking about ... which is health policy ... which is undoubtedly why she asked me to give the speech in the FIRST place!

Ian (coming home from work, curious yet sweet tone): "Are you still working on that speech?"

Toni (snarl) ...

Ian: Just remember, no one ever remembers a commencement speech, and the best ones are short.



I finally nailed what I wanted to say, so actually giving the speech was fun. No one booed. The biggest applause, though, came when I finished.

In last year's newsletter, I commented how nauseating it was for people to brag about their freakin' offspring — just before I announced that John had been accepted into the Austin Fire Department. He completed the physically and mentally intense 6.5-month academy, changed his diet, lost 20 pounds and is now legally classified as construction equipment.



Tobin visited his neighborhood fire station, then wrote Mr. Inglis a note.



We met up with Erin in Syracuse for the wedding.

Erin's still enjoying Portland, nursing and dancing a little reggae with Ian at a coffee shop.





Burton, still an arborist in Dallas, cycles with his friend, Maja.



Burton's daughter, Talula, on the first day of fifth grade



Tina, fascinated by slow drip in the shower



shy kitty



Christmas kitty on favorite perch

Here's wishing you
A 2013
full of views of
pristine farmhouses,
COFFEE SHOPS, CYCLING,
REGGAE DANCING,
fleurs-de-lis,
LOTS OF APPLAUSE
AND NO BOOS.

*Love,
the Inglis's*

.....
Upside down. God forbid.
fleurs-de-lis ... the second one from the left is
Answer: Those books on the left with the
.....

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