

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

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

As I honour Christmas 1998 in my heart, I think fondly of friends like you and the personality traits which you possess that qualify you to receive this alternative Inglis newsletter. And it occurs to me that...what? Okay, nothing profound occurs to me — maybe by the end of the letter.

SNOWY

Snowy's favorite activities this year have been rough-housing with the cat and licking. Despite consistent negative feedback, she takes very seriously her self-appointed job of bounding onto the bed every morning at the crack of dawn for a merciless lickfest covering every square millimeter of exposed flesh — the palms and face being the delicacies. Unfortunately, the lickfest recommences when any of us returns home, even if having been gone for mere nanoseconds; participation for several minutes in the elaborate welcoming ritual is mandatory — or Precious will pout.



Snowy was the only family member whose schedule allowed a week-long backpacking trip in April with Ian to the Capitán Mountains in New Mexico. They had a grand old time. Ian loved the adventure and the majesty of the High Plains between the Capitán and Sierra Blanca mountains. Snowy lived up to her name by tirelessly romping and playing in the snow.



CATTICUS FINCH



Nothing new to report here except for the official name change this year from "Kitty Cow-Cow", the name Burton, as original owner, gave him in college. Kitty Cow-Cow was a mouthful, so we've called him "Catticus" ever since we inherited him. We added "Finch" because he reminds us of the stately Atticus Finch (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), that is, when he's not engaged in undignified behaviors such as throwing up small animal body parts on the rug.

IAN

Ian's still practicing criminal defense law, and this year he continues his retirement from life's pesky activities, such as fixing things around the house. Yet, good news. Realizing the futility of the occasional pleasant reminder, I happily discovered that if I become The Relentless Shrew from Hell for days on end, I can actually get results. For example:

The knob on our bathroom door broke in '95. The former Ian would have replaced the doorknob even before determining that the original was in fact actually broken. But after several days:

Toni: "Ian, it would really be nice to be able to close the bathroom door. I know you're very busy, I'll just call the carpenter to come fix it." [The carpenter being the Fabulous Dan Barton.]

Ian: "Danny?! Don't be silly! I can fix that door in 5 minutes!"

Toni: [unable to overcome the obvious temptation] "Then...why don't you?" [And every 3 months...] "Ian, dear, do you think you could possibly find 5 minutes to replace the knob?"

Finally, in September (3 years later, but who's counting?) Danny and I purchased one. I laid out the tools, and in shrew-like fashion physically dragged Ian to the door and commenced the threats in a scary voice. It really did take him only 5 minutes, and he didn't even use duct tape. My psychologist, a male, says not to worry, that Ian's change is part of the normal and healthy developmental process. A female psychologist would assure me, "Not a jury in the world would convict you if..."

In other news, Ian took a backpacking trip in January to Big Bend with, as he says, "3 other



4 lawyers and "3 normal people"

lawyers and 3 normal people." Two of the normal people were offspring (including John) of 2 of the lawyers. A mass mutiny was threatened on the second night with a 13-degree snow-storm. But the weather improved, and the breathtaking view from the South Rim rendered the entire trip worthwhile.

No other lan news other than his new and offensive habit of wandering into various parts of the house while



John and Ian on the South Rim

brushing his teeth (which makes me wish Danny and I had bought a knob with a lock on the outside.)

TONI

Still practicing neonatal intensive care nursing, editing the healthcare network nursing newsletter, and writing sundry newspaper commentaries. My last term on Austin's Ryan White HIV Planning Council expired, only to be promptly appointed by the City Council to the Mental Health Mental Retardation Board of Trustees. My co-workers get a big laugh speculating on the reasons for my particular sensitivity to this population.

Recall my mentioning in last year's letter that I had started competing in triathlons. Well, the good news is that after the '97 races, I was nationally ranked! The bad news is that I was ranked LAST in my category — female 50-54 — that's L.A.S.T. A USA Triathlon official assured me that my time did beat one woman in the 75-plus age group.



Tri-Buddies: Sheila, Sally, me, and Paula

After last year's races, a buff triathlete friend who looked like she was explaining a complex mathematical formula to an oyster, informed me that I could improve my time by jogging rather than walking during the part called "The Run". I took her advice, and in the '98 races I kicked butt, undoubtedly moving up in the rankings (announced in February). Besides getting in shape, these triathlons have been a source of great fun and friendship.

BURTON AND MELISSA

EXTRA! EXTRA! BURTON WEDDING MARRIES MELISSA ARMS! Yes, it's true. In a beautiful setting on a ranch outside Austin in May, we rocked from noon until 10 pm with a great ceremony, good food, good drink, good music, good DJs, and above all, great company.

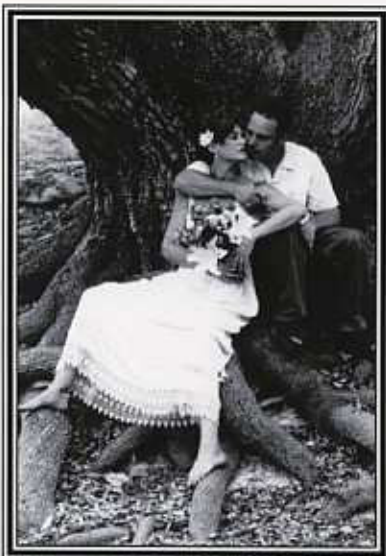
They wrote their own vows, and I can't say it better than this part: "Burton and Melissa know that their talents combine well to help them achieve whatever it is they want out of life, that they share dreams and goals, that they love each other endlessly, that they have crossed paths at a time in their lives when they possess the maturity and the confidence to take this step."

Melissa, a nurse, still scrubs for a group of neurosurgeons at Baylor Hospital in Dallas. And Burton still





[Wedding photos by the Incomparable Susan Sigmon]



eye and on the temple, severing the temporal artery. Fortunately for cell phones and Melissa, he lived to tell about it. After 70 stitches he looks a little different, but those useful facial features — like nose, eyes, mouth, and ears — are still intact.

has a waiting list for his unique, awesome, and artful tree sculpting. He's totally in his element in his grand natural cathedrals of wood with their roots so, so deep in the earth — maybe a little too comfortable.

This year he hit a knot with his chainsaw while in a tree, working alone, about a month after the wedding. The chainsaw kicked back and got him twice in the face — above an

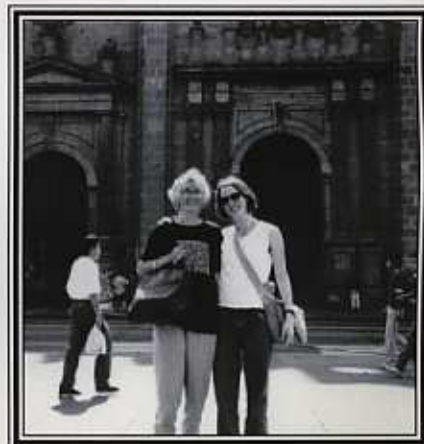


Notice the chickens atop the cake.

ERIN

Erin and her cat Maya are fine. She's a sophomore here at UT majoring in Biology and in the Dean's Scholars Program. She too had a brush with near disaster this year...[drumroll]...yes, she made a B on a History essay which threatened her 4.0 [audible collective gasp]. But she managed to pull out an A, and alas maintained her GPA. She still waitresses at Threadgill's and is a clinical assistant on a hospital med-surg floor.

Erin and her grandmother, the Fabulous Roberta Inglis, went to Guadalajara, Mexico. Unfortunately, Guadalajara's in a valley, and they went in May at precisely the peak of the Mexican fires. Despite the smoke, they had a wonderful time sight-seeing, shopping in the markets, and just being together. Erin recounts their going on a "benign-sounding" tour one evening that ended with the entire tour party (a large group of French Marine sailors) and both tour guides dancing *emborrachados* on tabletops. Her grandmother sitting straight up at the table drinking coffee provided comic relief against the bacchanalia.



JOHN

Being 14, John started high school this year. Hello! Did you hear me? I SAID my baby started high school — clearly the beginning of the end. After he graduates in 4 short years, I'm sure I'll be fine as soon as they uncurl me from the fetal position and surgically remove the thumb from my mouth.

In Texas you can work at age 14. Like his brother and sister before him, he got his first job within a week of his birthday. Yes, he's a sacker at Randall's Food Store and has been introduced to the joys of being Low Man on the Totem Pole. On his fire-engine red Randall's shirt he must wear a 3-inch in diameter button reading, "I'm a Remarkable NEW Associate!" That's not all.

His second day at work a valued elderly shopper failed to make it to the restroom in time and had a very unfortunate accident on the floor involving a bodily waste product rhyming with the word "fit". Guess who had to clean it up? You got it: Randall's Remarkable NEW Associate!

John's shooting up...height-wise, of course. At this writing he's 5'11" and growing. You alert readers of course realize the significance of this. I'm 5'4" and shrinking, and the only 2 people I live with are John and Ian, who's 6'4". It's not easy looking into people's navels when you talk to them. Trying to sound authoritative from that angle is not only pointless, but also, I'm told, appears ridiculous.

John still loves baseball and hopes to make the Freshman team in the spring. Again this year he and Ian talk sports constantly (when they're not watching games), never tiring. They go to big games together, like the Astros game against the Cardinals. Normally I tune this stuff out, but this year with the Mark McGwire/Sammy Sosa homerun race, Randy Johnson pitching for the Astros, and our precious, dreadlocked Heisman winner Ricky Williams, even I paid attention.



John, Erin, and Erin's best friend
(the Fabulous) Ella Connolly

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND A BRIGHT NEW YEAR!

After this writing it occurs to me that...you deserve to get everything you want for Christmas: world peace, cures for horrific diseases, places for everyone to live, health care for all, clean air and water, spare time, and maybe just a few little trinkets.

Love,
Touie & Ian

