

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 2015** IN OUR HEARTS, WE THINK FONDLY OF FRIENDS LIKE YOU AND THE PERSONALITY TRAITS YOU POSSESS THAT QUALIFY YOU TO RECEIVE THE 23RD ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE INGLIS NEWSLETTER. BUT ENOUGH ABOUT YOU.

Ian

As you know, Dave Barry defined spouses as teeming flaw colonies. That may be true in middle age, but as we age, spouses are more accurately defined as fulminating flaw colonies. Fortunately for Ian, his spouse is the one exception to the rule.

This year, Ian continues to become even more Ian, you know, dressing homeless for the walk to the office and back every day (continuing to be offered free food); practicing criminal defense; spraying the house with toothpaste from the Sonicare®; camping in Big Bend; exploding coffee in the microwave; conducting mad-scientist experiments with *dinner*; and attaching labels to **clear** kitchen food containers.

I suppose you could argue that it is prudent to stick a label atop a **clear** container to protect against recklessly grabbing what *appears* to be pinto beans from the cabinet and cooking them only to find out, tragically, that you had mistakenly cooked a pot of owl pellets that *looked* like pintos.

But I guess large labels made with black marker on blue painter's tape attached to **clear** containers are a small price to pay for being married to the most wonderful guy in the world whose good qualities far redeem perceived flaws.

Speaking of flaws, Ian maintains his penchant for using weird words in casual conversation. For example:

Toni: Ian, why is there an orange traffic cone in your parking lot?

Ian: My office has a plethora of purloined traffic cones.

Toni: (*snarl*)

Toni: Ian, you've been packing for your camping trip for 2 weeks. What are you packing now??

Ian: Victuals.

Toni: (*snarl*)

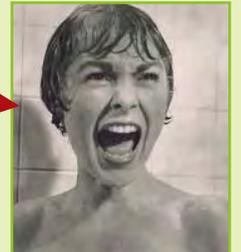


Nothing says "Merry Christmas!" like getting mauled by a grizzly bear.

This year, Ian's sister's husband's cousin's son (got that?), Chase Dellwo, was bow hunting for elk with his brother in Montana when he accidentally came upon a grizzly. They

proceeded to get into a brawl (Chase and the bear, not Chase and his brother). The bear bit his head, let go, grabbed him by the leg and swung him around. He saved himself by ... never mind, you read the [People magazine story](#).

Chase reflected that he forced himself to remain calm and not panic. Not panic?! While in the jaws of a pissed-off 400-pound grizzly?! This would have been the last look on my face before becoming a human Cheez-It®:



"I want everyone to know that it wasn't the bear's fault," Chase said, demonstrating that he is as nice as he is resourceful and cool-headed. "He was as scared as I was."

Toni: I'm so proud of you for converting to all electronic files for your business! What prompted you?

Ian: I was dying of congestive paper failure.

Toni: (*snarl*)

This year, Ian made his second annual pilgrimage to the Sierra Nevada World Music Festival to revel with fellow reggae-worshippers. Check out the [video of his campsite](#). His is the tent with the Royal Flag of Scotland (used without permission) draped over it. Note the video ends with the red, green and gold Rasta Lion of Judah flag waving in the California sunlight. It's adventures such as these that feed Ian's soul and make him such a joy to live with.

While Ian was off gallivanting with Rastafarians, I stayed home to write [the last issue of NursingNews](#). (Don't miss the story on the back page.) Yes, after 20 years of monthly production and more than 200 issues, I called it quits in June. Since I retired from the NICU three years ago, that's it for Seton. A bitter-sweet ¡Adiós!

Boston in September seemed like the place to go to celebrate my birthday and retirement. We trekked to a Red Sox game, which we didn't get to see and visited many attractions we had already seen. A highlight, though, was walking into the Kimpton hotel room and seeing a lens cleaner rag and coffee filter hanging on the wall:

The other highlight was eating at Neptune Oyster Bar:



Still writing the monthly opinion column for the Austin American-Statesman, which keeps me in beer (I can buy four

6-packs per column.) Sometimes other [newspapers](#) pick them up.

In other news, I think I'm getting shorter. [Am I right?](#) Look at these pictures of me with Ian in Big Bend and our master caver nephew, Bryce Smith:



Big Bend National Park

Remember last year's letter where I described the road, the park's Old Ore Road, which we traversed in our Subaru Forester to get to our campsite? "There were so many steep drop-offs in the road that we stopped several times to gauge if the car would roll over on its side," I wrote. "Normally you don't associate white knuckles with going 4 mph, but there I was, certain we'd have a flat tire or a rock would impale some vital organ under the car. More than once I wondered aloud in a curious, yet furious manner why it was that two elderly people were in the middle of nowhere on the deserted road from hell with no cell service, no 4-wheel drive and no special tires."

Having survived that trip, we had total amnesia of the hardships and remembered only the succulent pork chop cooked over the illegal fire and the fact that the Subaru made it. So, in February, we set out again on the Old Ore Road — in our Subaru. Hey, if it did it once, it can do it again. [Am I right?](#)

We came upon a drop-off in the road that looked impossible to traverse. I got out to navigate and direct Ian, who promptly impaled the car onto a rock. In the middle of nowhere. The hood buckled up, but fortunately still latched. The underside of the car looked like wadded up paper, but fortunately didn't leak. I think we have a guardian angel as we age. It turned out to be another glorious trip with our own clear Milky Way and shooting stars, blooming cactus flowers and great hikes.

Ian always returns to Big Bend in December with fellow desert rat Erik Goodman (I don't go, too cold). Due to the Subaru wreck, this time they rented a three-quarter ton truck, which was major overkill and rode like a Sherman tank, but hey, it took the Old Ore Road like a sled on snow. Erik kept saying, "You took your Subaru out *here*??"

John and AJ also made the trip. Since I wasn't there to force Ian to turn down the during-all-waking-hours reggae, I fear Erik, John and AJ may have suffered like the Branch Davidians when the FBI tried to force them from their lair by blasting extremely loud Christmas carols. (Barry Manilow was deemed excessive force.) At one point AJ asked, "Ian, can you give us a Rasta break?"

wildlife

- 2015 was the year for the Inglis/Dellwo clan to encounter wild animals. First, there's Young Chase Dellwo and the **Grizzly** (great name for a band!), then some **crazy dog** with nystagmus mistook my arm for a chew toy, thus resulting in my developing a rewarding relationship with the Seton ER staff who gave me weekly rabies injections.
- You work like a **beaver** on speed for 30-40 years, then the minute you retire you turn into a **three-toed sloth**. [Am I right?](#) I still have not cleared my desk or cleaned out my closet.

Wildlife (cont.)

- This year, John (still an Austin firefighter) and AJ introduced ... [drumroll] ... *Darrell!* — the adorable **screech owl** who moved into the owl house John built after only two months. John used his [search-and-rescue skills to hang it](#).
- Don't you hate it when people brag about their *Pedilanthus macrocarpus*? Me, too!! On the [balcony](#), we've got the most spectacular Lady Slipper (common name) the world has ever known. It's so spectacular that it attracted **hummingbirds** this year! You can see the little darlings [here](#). The birds have been a terrific source of entertainment for Tina, [who "chatters" when she sees them](#).
- Speaking of the **cat**, with all this year's racial tensions, it came as a real blow to realize that our beloved Tina is a racist. Behold:

Note that of *all* her **mice**, the white one is the only one with the tail and both eyes missing. Why? Because it's the **ONLY** one Tina, in all of her royal orangeness, will play with. Despite her idiosyncrasies, she is still lovable and in fact this year got her very own plant, her favorite: a grass.



Downtown

The thing is, we really, really love our condo with its efficient layout and beautiful view, location and a million other neat things. But two problems have arisen this year.

First, noise beyond bar noise. As you may know, we live on (face) West Fifth Street, a main artery to [downtown](#). Within the last year or so, every male in Austin with the intelligence quotient of plankton (that's a lot) has altered the pipes of their Harley and/or muscle car to roar up and down 5th and 6th streets for hours on end, the sound reverberating between the highrises. This is a problem. I know how those Branch Davidians must have felt.

Second, construction. Like Germany after World War II, downtown Austin is being rebuilt. Across the (side) street from us, directly across from our parking garage, construction began this year on a 450-foot condo tower with 154 units. And in 2016, one block from our house, construction will begin on this, "The Independent" (at right):

At 58 stories and 685 feet (and Dubai money), this will be the tallest residential tower west of the Mississippi. It'll have 370 units; that's nearly 500 new units that will have cars coming and going on the street our parking garage empties into, and it's already tough to exit.



Dubbed the "Jenga Tower," the design of the new building has not gone over well with everyone. Behold this comment from a Statesman reader:

"I just hope and pray that in return for their investment, CIM Group insists the design shown for lo these many months has to be scrapped. After the new design is accepted, all copies of the old tower rendering should be collected, burned and the ashes encased in concrete before dropping them into the Mariana Trench. Unfortunately, that will still leave the image burned into the minds of all who read the articles on the project. Hopefully time would heal those memories."

Stay tuned to next year's report. We may bolt like the folks who ran screaming from the Branch Davidian complex.

Erin

Erin still loves her nursing job and the temperate rain forest that is Portland. She loves Oregon with its eclectic places such as Dufur, which hosts wonderful events and in fact this year recruited her to serve as the undercover judge of the lighted Christmas Tractor Parade!



With Talula at Multnomah Falls

Soaking up vitamin D and sun in Guadalajara



Waiting for Björk at Carnegie Hall



Icelandic turf house



AJ earned a master's degree in social work from UT-Austin.



John turns 31.



The Fabulous AJ!



Ian with his mom, The Fabulous Roberta Inglis (aka Mrs. Jack Inglis) on her 93rd birthday



Burton's yard



SPROCKETS!

With a retirement account and responsibilities, John has taken an active interest in money. At an informal one-on-one seminar held at a public house, they talked about boring stuff like stocks, bonds, commodities, currencies, etc. I kept trying to interject a discussion about harmonicas, but they wouldn't listen.



Tina has a rough life.



Burton still doing amazing treework.



Taken from our balcony on Memorial Day, looking down onto 5th Street. Arrow points to Shoal Creek.



When Talula visits, we do yoga.



Maja and Burton enjoying British Columbia

Here's wishing you a **2016** FULL OF REGGAE, the stars and the moon, hummingbirds, a campfire, peace and quiet, VICTUALS and lots of APPLAUSE.

Love,
The Inglises

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