

Christmas, 2001

Greetings, as the year comes to a quiet close. I didn't know if I should get a holiday letter out or not, but knowing most of you, I'd hear about it if I didn't because I missed last year.

It was a wonderful year for me. A few episodes in the hospital, nothing serious, hand surgery and a back procedure. The issue I am dealing with now is that I lost the hearing in my left ear in April, and suffer tremendously from "tinnitus" which is a constant ringing in the ear. It is with me 24 hours a day, and because of that and the hearing loss, I have had to give up my singing with the chorus. It is a dramatic and drastic change in my life, and I wish I could say I haven't lost sleep over this...but...I can't begin to tell you what this has done to me. The doctor thinks I may have had a stroke that caused this, but it is not diabetically related, so as devastating as it is, that's a plus.

Carlos and I have been together for nearly 3 years now and for once in my life, I have found peace and happiness. That is not to say I wasn't happy married...but I am, for once, comfortable and content with myself, and I think that is every human's right; to be happy with themselves for who they are as a person.

We travel frequently, as he has earned MANY miles on his Delta Sky Miles, so it doesn't cost us anything to go places every now and again and to get away for an extended weekend. He travels for his work as an educator / consultant for a software firm, dealing with schools and children. When he has the opportunity to get away for pleasure, it's a welcomed change. He is very protective of me, and with my disability progressing, I have to take it very easy on what I do, and he is there with me making sure I am ok. I couldn't ask for a better man...a better person...in my life.

January found us in Ft Lauderdale for my birthday, just relaxing in the warm winter Florida sun, and seeing things I have not seen before. It's always nice to get to see "how the other half lives....." And oh, all those old people in Florida...you know, the ones with the orange hair and jewelry, the snowbirds from the cold north.

We visit Florida often; its like a 2nd home to me. Our friends who live there, welcome us with opened arms, and they own a hotel there, so we have a place to stay. We were in Honolulu for a few days, Arizona and Chicago. Thanksgiving saw us in Seattle, where I had never been before, then a week after that, it was back to Honolulu. New Years will be spent once again in London as we did last year, where we have reservations to go to Bath and Stonehenge on one of the outings. It will be a fast trip, but a welcomed one.

God, I'm tired just WRITING about them!

The children are wonderful. Katie just turned 22, Scott will be 24 in March, Georgia and I are best friends, and Kristy, our baby, just turned 3, and is such a joy in our lives. I still live with my mom and Art, and the three of us get along very well with no problems at all. I am very grateful for their love and their support and for giving me a home...not just a house...to live in.

May the warmth of this holiday season be yours now, and into the New Year. I think back through all the years and am so humbly grateful for all I have...for all I am...and I wish the same for each and every one of you.

Merry Christmas

Michael