



Hello one and all..

Well, here we are, the end of yet another year, yet as I type this part of the letter, it is September 8, and 112° outside.

2013 was another year filled with exciting things. It was a pretty quiet year, really, in the way of things “gone wrong”. Nothing really did.

Scott turned 35 in March (ah yes, those years when he was a kid and me tearing my hair out as to what happens from day to day). He and Sonja are still living in Fairfield, between Sacramento and San Francisco. She is still practicing at the air force base there as an interventional radiologist, and Scott is still teaching. How proud a dad am I that my two children and their spouses have such wonderfully responsible jobs and lives.



Kate and Matt are doing well; Matt accepted a supervisory position with the county but that meant he had to relocate his office about 25 miles away...down the 405 freeway...and is trying to get back into the valley. I hope so. I've driven that route before when I worked down by the airport. Not pretty. Kate is still with the county, and works about 8 miles from home. Both are doing well and raising Julianna...who by the way is now 3. She is such a pretty girl but I really wish she would give me a kiss and hug when I ask for one...perhaps I scare her. Kristina is now 15 and as you see...quite the beauty.

Mom turned 92 in June and is slowing down (who wouldn't at 92...) and I am doing my best to keep her out of hospitals and nursing homes. So far, so good.

June found us driving to San Francisco to see Scott being presented with his Master's Degree in Education. What a proud moment for the entire family.

Also in June, as I am sure you know, the supreme court made the decision to repeal DOMA, and also to refer California's Proposition 8 back to California. California had previously ruled that the ban on same sex marriages is unconstitutional, so when it was referred back, the state Supreme Court ruling stood.

Carlos and I, together 15 years, decided to take advantage of that ruling, and we were married on July 24 in a quiet ceremony at the courthouse. 12 of our closest friends and our family attended the marriage and the lunch afterwards. It's a wonderful feeling that two people who love each other...regardless of gender...are now permitted to have equal rights. We motored to San Diego for a couple days in our new car, then in August went to Ft. Lauderdale for a week.



In August, Scott and Sonja announced their plans to become parents in January. We found out that it will be a boy, and they are, as we, ridiculously excited for this new addition to the Dardenelle family. Frankly, I don't see how I am old enough to have 3 grandchildren.



So as most of you know, I get this bug up my butt every now and then and in July I was infected with that bug, and bought my dream car, after all these years. I traded in my 2012 Buick for a 2013 Cadillac XT5. I have never named a car in my life, but this one I named "Irene" in honor and memory of my grandmother who always told me, "You need to have a Cadillac! Don't buy a Pontiac. You need a Cadillac!" So...Grandma, this one's for you. It's a gorgeous machine and I thought that Carlos was the only one I could fall in love with, but even being an inanimate object as a car, I fell in love all over again.

Carlos has been doing a ton of volunteer work for the Hollywood Bowl and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and for their gratitude to the volunteers, they issue vouchers to the Bowl, so we have been going to MANY concerts this year. Since I use a walker on these long uphill walks, we sit in the handicapped section, usually center stage, in the middle of the Bowl. In September, we got to see Blue Man Group with a spectacular fireworks show afterwards. We had never seen BMG so didn't know what to expect...but WOW...what a show. A few weeks before, we also saw John Williams "At The Movies" with Julie Andrews as host. It was unbelievable.

We recently had new sod placed in the back yard, and of course, new lawn has to be watered constantly, and water attracts grubworms. Grubworms attract raccoons. Need I go on??? The raccoons have demolished my new lawn with their digging up the grass in an effort to get their meals. I am compelled to share with you how I hopefully am repelling the raccoons. I read on the internet that coyote urine is a good repellent because raccoons think there has been a coyote around, and they are deathly afraid of coyotes.

So, I ordered some coyote urine pellets from Amazon, overnight delivery, for about \$16. What I received instead of the coyote pellets was a brand new MacBook Pro laptop computer!! OK....lets go back and read that again. A MACBOOK PRO LAPTOP COMPUTER....In place of coyote pee! First off, I don't do Macs. I do PC's. Second, I wanted the pellets!! The thought ran through my mind, as it would most, to say, "hey, I can use the computer somehow..." but my integrity got the better of me and after a weekend of phone calls to various places (Amazon said they couldn't take it back because they didn't sell it to me...how lame...) I was finally able to convince Amazon that they need to take it back because basically, I received the wrong item. Finally I convinced them to send me a shipping label, and back it went.

A computer instead of pee pellets. Seriously.

Mom's brother Bob turned 90 this year and my cousin hosted a wonderful 90th birthday party for him, including cousins my mom and uncle have not seen in many years. It was a wonderful day and one he will remember forever. So glad we were able to be there. I mean, how many times does someone turn 90? 2, 3 times tops?

September 27 found us at Dodger Stadium in the first LGBT night in the 51 year history of Dodger Stadium, singing the National Anthem with the chorus. Bucket list: Check. As you know I've stopped singing because of some health issues, but tonight I was back, standing next to my new husband, and it felt wonderful!!! Once again, we were part of American history! Pictured here are the tenors...but we had nearly 150 men on the field. It was amazing to be escorted out to center field where some of the biggest stars in history have performed.



I think for the last 5 years or so I have told you of my plans to record again; an album called "Inspired by Love". I haven't recorded for over 15 years so this was another "bucket list" item for me. With the help of my friend Kirk, I began about a month ago. I had hoped to have it ready by Christmas but because of unforeseen events around the Dardenelle household, it looks like it won't be ready until after the first of the year. But I DID go into the studio, and I DID record. It's just in it's final stages of mixing and post production. Art isn't easy, that's for sure!

That about wraps it up for 2013. So much that goes on in our lives, true that. But I love my life, I love it's ups and downs, and I love my myriad of friends and family.

Have a wonderful season, a warm New Year, and health and happiness that we all deserve.

Love,

Mike and Carlos
Christmas, 2013