

December 2005

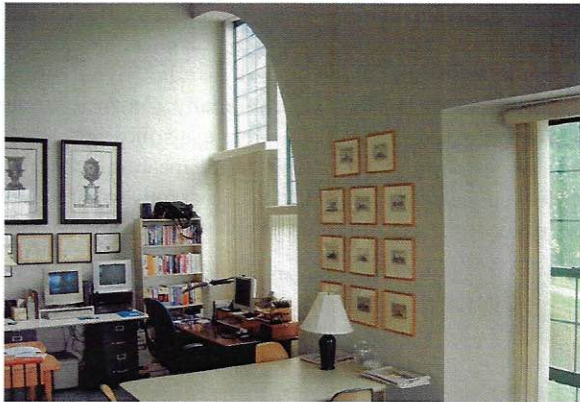
Greetings from the Hoekemas

(albeit fewer of them than previously)

My apologies for missing last year in the holiday letter department, but we had just concluded that the next adventure in our storied marriage should be its summary conclusion. That did not seem a great lead-in to a message of annual cheer, yet one could hardly blather on about the kids and pets without mentioning it. Unfortunately, the unpleasantness since then provides even less suitable material. On the other hand, I'd like to stay in touch, so herewith please accept (or toss) another year's rambling recollections and good wishes.

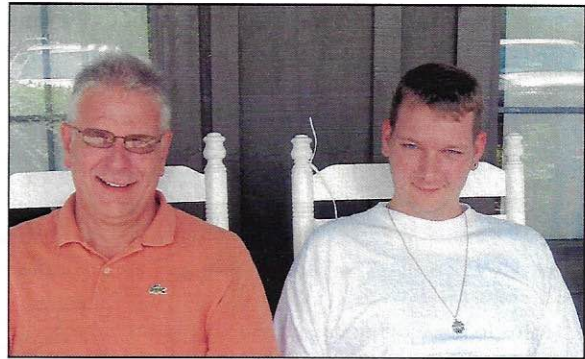
I could (and have) filled pages on the dissolution of my 13-year marriage. But countless novels and self-help books address the theme more eloquently, so let it suffice here to say that it feels good to put the conflict behind and move on to an open future.

In April I moved into a nifty condo in a converted factory building in the City of Newburgh (not be confused with the suburban Town of Newburgh, where our Balmville house is for sale). My unit has three floors and a main living space with a 15-foot ceiling and a delightful view across the grounds of Washington's Headquarters (a local landmark) to the Hudson River. It's a pleasure to spend time here. I'm renting now and hoping to buy, but that depends on no one else purchasing it before our Balmville house is sold.



As a newly minted single, my life has become a riotous orgy of indulgence. I often bring ketchup and mustard to the table without first decanting them into ramekins; I fold towels in halves instead of thirds; and when making the bed I don't even attempt "hospital corners" (though I must admit the sheets don't stay put as well). Sometimes I take a swig of eggnog directly from the carton!

Still, years of training have left their imprint - after all, I do make the bed! I eat lunch on a lunch plate and dinner on a dinner plate, regardless of the number of Twinkies. And I continue to lower the toilet seat in the interest of preserving civilization as we know it.



Colin, 23, recently experienced a miraculous awakening! After years of waiting for offers of prosperity to descend upon him via forces unknown, he suddenly concluded that the quality of his life bears a direct correlation with the effort he puts into it. The bartending course he took last January led to a job at a biker bar, which wasn't his style. He has also put on hold, at least temporarily, his plan to make a living as professional poker player. Instead, he has regained his job at the auto parts store, which he supplements by delivering pizza some nights and weekends. Other signs of maturity: He purchased an alarm clock! Also, he has taken himself to the barber without external provocation! After living in his girlfriend's parents' house for a couple of years, he has now moved into the condo with me.

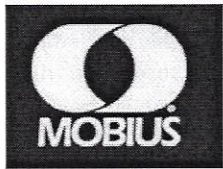


Sanford, 22, has had an eventful couple of years. After joining the Air Force two years ago, he collapsed during training in preparation for assignment in Iraq. Eventually he was diagnosed with MS and received a medical discharge. He has some numbness in his left arm and leg but is otherwise not impaired, at least for now. Sanford initially moved to Los Angeles but didn't like it there, and he surprised us all when he reappeared in Newburgh in September. He is taking courses at a community college and working at "Diesel," a clothing store at the Woodbury Commons outlet shopping mall. Sanford is encamped in the empty Balmville house, which contains little beyond his guitar collection and the two cats! He's thinking about going back to school full-time next fall.



Emily, 18, has started college full-time in Los Angeles at FIDM, the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising -- the Los Angeles counterpart to New York's Fashion Institute of Design, where she took classes while still in high school. (It escapes me why "Fashion" modifies "Institute" in both places, instead of the thing they are institutes of.) Judging by her blog, she

seems to be enjoying herself. As it happens, Emma is not far from Wendy, who moved to the San Fernando Valley.



On the work front, I started in July of last year as a technical writer at Mobius Management Systems in Rye, New York. The job is 60 miles away, but I'm able to work from home 1 or 2 days each week, and for the rest I

carpool with three highly companionable nuts from the testing department. The work is a bit dull, but the job is comfortable, with pleasant colleagues, good benefits, a private office, and schedule flexibility. Actually, this sort of job is just the ticket for a time of turmoil.



For more creative satisfaction, I continue to work on the restoration of the 1835 landmark Dutch Reformed Church (www.newburghdrc.org). This year, the World Monuments Foundation put the building on its list of "100 Most Endangered Sites" in the world -- a dubious distinction, you might think, but useful for drawing attention to the cause. Also, my application to a local foundation yielded a grant for a planning study to recommend a financially self-sustaining mix of uses for the restored building.

I continue to do web design work -- for the nonprofits, the Foundry condo development, a friend's B&B, a local political candidate, and the local government, the City of Newburgh (www.cityofnewburgh-ny.gov).



On the personal front, my time seems to fill up quickly with concerts, openings, and exhibits -- there is so much to do in the Hudson Valley. I am also fortunate to have many old friends who live in the area and others -- and family -- who have visited. I've learned that entertaining is an excellent way to discover which implements and staples you are still missing!



For the summer holiday weekends I was able to make architectural-touristic forays with friends to the area around Cooperstown, the Hudson River mansions, Pennsylvania and the Jersey shore -- not to mention a pleasant cruise on the Hudson on the 4th of the July!

It's a time of transition, as most times are, but I'm looking forward to the house sale and the conclusion of the divorce in the early part of next year. I'm giving serious consideration to all offers of company, romance, dinner, concert tickets, villas that need house-sitting, jobs in foreign countries -- whatever! In the meantime, I'm feeling reasonably optimistic, at least much as anyone can in a country still being run by what's-his-name.

Wishing the best for you, and a healthy, interesting and growth-filled year to come...

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