



**IN MEMORY OF  
SUSAN BARNETT RECH  
1949-2017**



# **INTRODUCTION**

As most, if not all, of the recipients of this book know, Susan lost a 2-year battle with cancer in July of 2017. Our family and friends all suffered a great loss. I lost my wife and best friend, and there is a large hole in my life.

She was first diagnosed with an auto-immune disease in the fall of 2014. A year later, she was diagnosed with cancer. Her strong spirit and chemotherapy treatment from the Knight Cancer Institute here in Portland helped make her final two years on this earth as good as any could have hoped. She never lost her spirit or her smile and did not show to others her increasing fatigue and pain. That was the way she was.

It has been a very difficult time for the family without her. She was our guiding light, the glue that kept us together, and the one who always worked to keep us united as a family.

During the Christmas holidays of 2017, she would have been writing letters, sending cards, and e-mailing many friends, as well as entertaining and putting together very happy holidays for all of us. But she is no longer here to do this, so we have compiled the contents of this book to honor her, and remind everyone how creative and humorous she was over the years in writing “Christmas Letters”.

For the first 30 years of our marriage, she sent out what I describe as wonderful, but “normal”, Christmas letters and cards. But she decided in 2000 to begin a series of Christmas Letters she titled: “Life with Father Wreck”, taking liberty with the spelling of our last name, but pronounced the same.

She often wanted to add the comment: “Life in a Dysfunctional Family”, much to the dismay of her mom and mine, amongst many others.....like Woody, Katie and me. But this was her way of using her humor and facetiousness to entertain people. She never considered us dysfunctional, just normal, and wanted to bring out both the positive and negative aspects of our behavior during the year. She particularly delighted in exaggeration and being (seemingly) “tough” on us, but we always knew that she did it with love for us, and we never lost our love for her.

This book is a compilation of those Christmas Letters. Many have read some or all over the years. We wanted you to enjoy hearing her “voice” again. It is lengthy, so we do not expect anyone to read it avidly or even completely. We are just happy to pull the letters together in one place as a tribute to her writing....and deep love for all of us and all of you.

We’ve included some pictures that show her over the years at some very happy times in her life. We hope these bring a smile and fond memories.

Editor’s note: Over the years, many people commented that these letters were written by me, Father Wreck, since they were so sarcastic. That is not true: she wrote them all. She asked for my input at times, accepted some of my punctuation and grammar suggestions, but rejected every one of my suggestions about “content”. Regrettably, although there may be some exaggerations about my antics, she knew me well and always seemed capable of remembering my buffoonery.

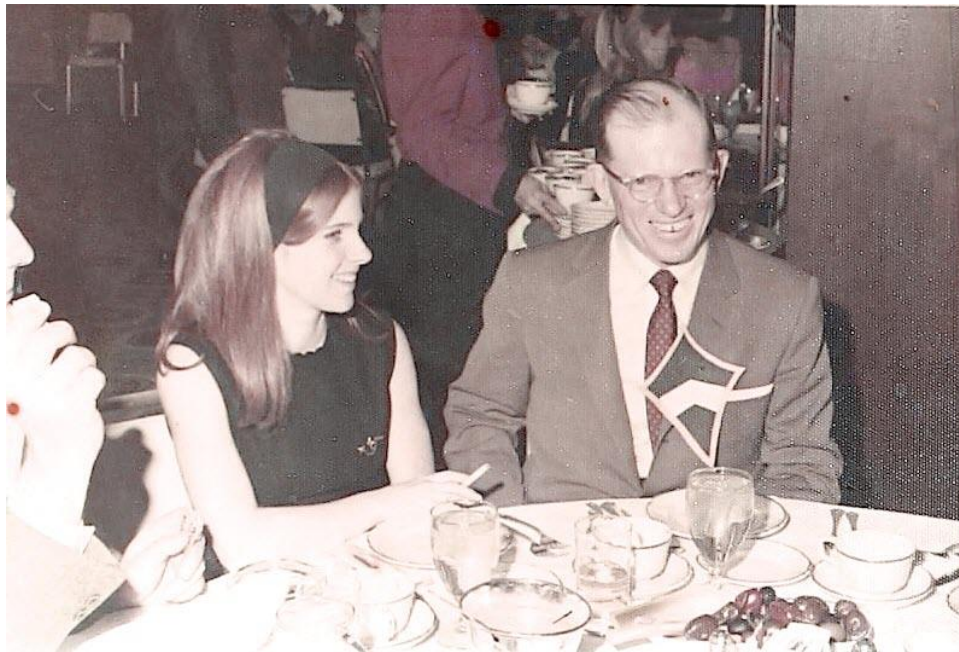
Jim Rech  
Aka “Father Wreck”



She was born in Milwaukie Wisconsin, and had three siblings, Bob, Leecy and Bill, whom she always loved.



She idolized her dad.



And her Mom



She was captain of the cheerleaders in High School.



We met at Northwestern University in 1969.



She graduated from Northwestern University in 1971





We were married in 1971 shortly after she graduated.



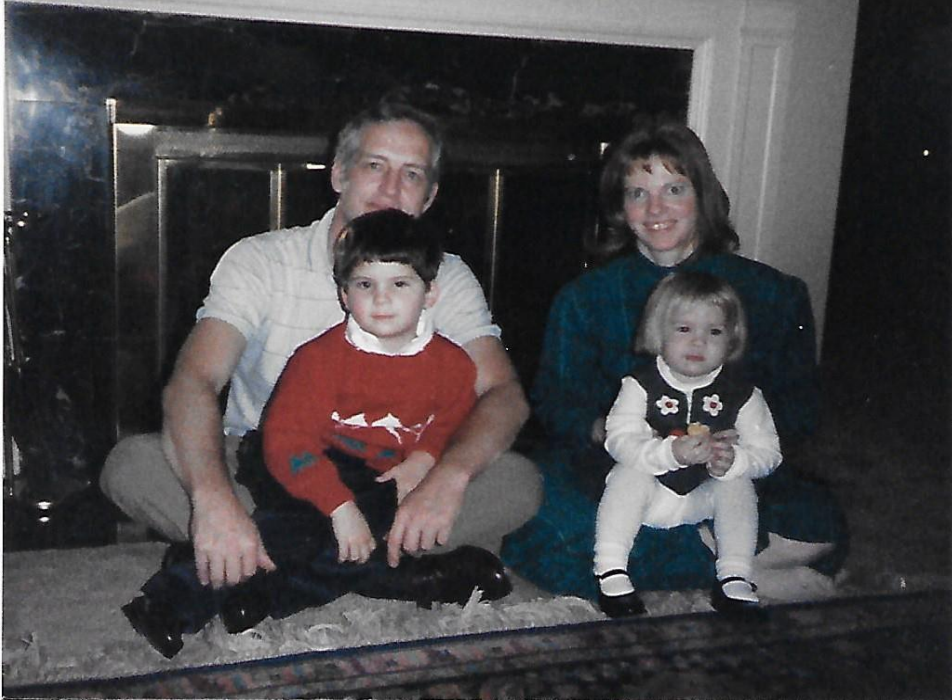
We were blessed with Woody (“Hamilton”) in 1982



And then Katie (“Katherine”) in 1985



And we grew as a family.









And she fell in love with Portland and many friends.

















# **HER CHRISTMAS LETTERS**

**Life With Father Wreck**

**Christmas 2000**





**January** – Millennium madness takes toll on Jim before clock strikes twelve. Jim freaks out when discovers Woody has taken a road trip to Seattle. Woody informs us ex post facto: a) purpose of trip to visit “Hooters” and b) value of speeding ticket received en route home in excess of credit limit still remaining on Visa card.

**February** – Illness lingers through Valentine’s Day as evidenced by fact that Jim takes Susan to romantic lunch at Town Club. This is a last-ditch effort to save collapsing marriage, on rocky ground since remodel groundbreaking. Tries to impress Susan by telling contractor to shape up or ship out. While possibly an effective management style with Navy seamen, has no apparent impact on construction types.

**March** – Escape Oregon rain and remodel dust for spring training baseball trip to Phoenix with Woody’s baseball team. Katie thrilled to go, as all older guys are “hot”. Woody more

determined to woo Betsy (staying nearby) than to share room with four other guys, hot or not. Jim, assistant trip planner, tries to curry favor with team by arranging team dinner at “Hooters”. All moms totally disgusted, including Susan.

**April** – Easter Bunny attempts delivery of eggs but fails due to mudslide crossing driveway. Contractor assures us that landscaping design is working; just need to be patient ‘til job finished. As requested, Susan developed a punch list: Item #1 - punch contractor.

**May** – Susan runs away from home. Goes to Italy with sister, Leecy. Jim now in big trouble as will have to spend quality time with his own mother for Mother’s Day. Tries to get Woody & Katie to intervene on his behalf. They tell him in no uncertain terms that since their mother is nowhere to be found, therefore have no responsibilities for this holiday.

**June** – Susan and Katie decide they need a personal trainer to shape them up for swim season. This a totally ludicrous endeavor from start as Susan would certainly not be caught dead in the suit with a little skirt she bought to hide hanging flesh. Cost of trainer and fitness club membership: approx. \$500. Amortized cost spent in training: \$175.50 per hour. Number of calories burned off from improved training regimen: Katie: 25,889; Susan: 376.

**July** – Woody, Katie and Susan take trip back East to check out colleges. Woody has expanded his criteria for selecting a university: in addition to snowboarding, must include gorgeous girls, and exciting living arrangements. Accordingly, McGill in Montreal scored high on his list. He was most impressed, however, to discover that the University of Vermont actually has a fraternity housed in a barn. Katie definitely ruled out Colgate when she heard that students had to plan bus trips to the mall in

Syracuse one hour away. Jim stayed home to earn money to pay for trip, looming college tuition bills and Katie's wardrobe necessities.

**August** - Since family was functioning as such a high level, determined that could share some of familial bliss with a new member. Jack, a senior in high school, needed a place to crash for the school year. So we put him in the newly remodeled, hot pink guest bedroom. He felt this would certainly be a challenge for his masculinity, but he was up for it. Katie and Woody all for this idea as figured would give Susan someone else to "mother". Had been over the top trying to make up for MIA Mother's Day. Woody at one point said he refused to come home unless she stopped talking about colleges. Jim saw opportunity for someone new to listen to him as most other family members tuned him out regularly.

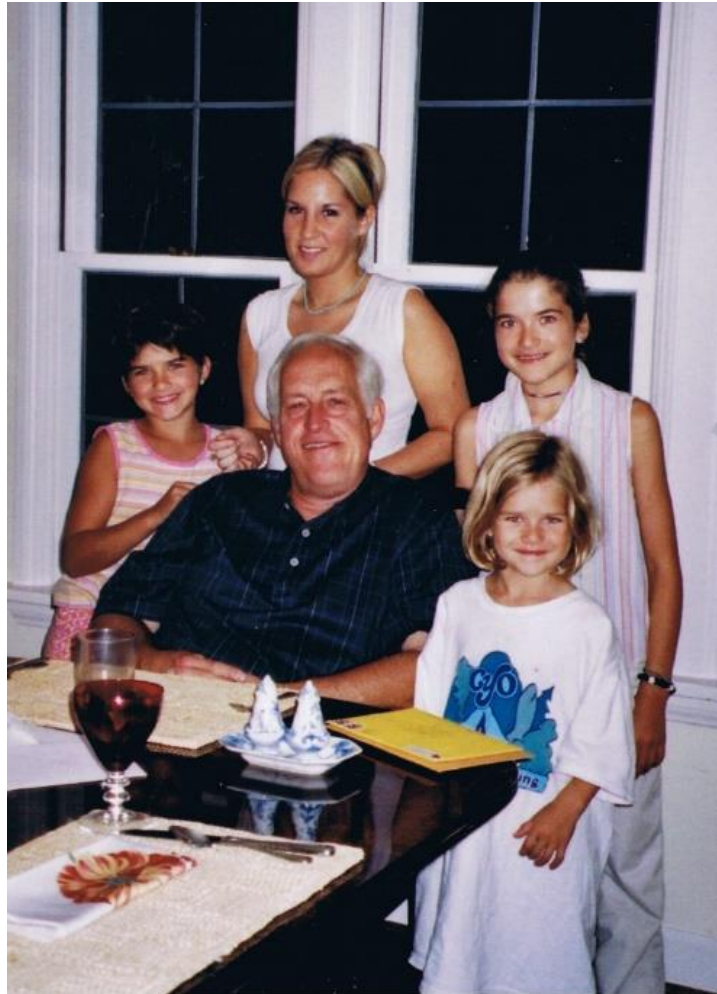
**September** – Realization: Jack needed not only to crash house, but also Susan's new BMW. USAA totals car. Jim, in a valiant effort to stave off cancellation by USAA, writes them a letter detailing why they should take pity on him. Presents family members with a copy of this letter and a spreadsheet enumerating the skyrocketing cost of insurance over the past five years: 1996: \$1,567; 1998: \$3,119; 1999: \$5,613; 2000: \$10,865; 2001 Estimated Cost: \$25,558. Says he needs help. Help, we assure him, is on the way.

**October** – Katie gives up shopping for Halloween. Woody defers buying new snowboard jacket. Susan, despite the fact that for the last year the only thing that has kept her sanity is envisioning, a la Architectural Digest, what the house will look like with new furniture - keeps the coffee table made from Spindleflex, that Jim built the first month of marriage. Jim sees light at end of tunnel. Celebrates by drinking 5<sup>th</sup> of Scotch,



smoking pack of cigarettes and spending most of night lying awake from indigestion. Says he's definitely turning over new leaf before holidays.

**November** - Thanksgiving great with all Jim's cousins here. Mother much better than last year: makes it all the way to dessert course and remembers at least half of relatives. Confuses Jim with Santa Claus but that totally understandable. Jim celebrates by drinking 5<sup>th</sup> of Scotch, smoking undetermined number of cigarettes and spending night in family room sleeping upright in chair.





**December** – Glorious month. Much family bonding. Jack's first ever outing to chop down a Christmas tree. Said he's learned two things after joining our expedition: first, he is never going to have kids, and secondly, he is converting to Judaism. House now festooned with all Christmas decorations. Jim very proud to have added icicle lights to house. Wonder if neighbors think whole house and light display better before? Susan heard a lecture about avoiding stress at the holidays. Lady said: "Just remember...it doesn't matter". Do you think all neighbors attended same lecture? Going to Costa Rica to ponder this and other life altering philosophies.

**Love to all!!!**

# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2002



**January** – 2002 off to great start: throw Recession Party so all Oregon friends in similar financial misery will love company. Luckily, Jim has kept job as Visa bills from exuberant holiday fete come due. Cannot divulge amount of bills due to proper upbringing that doesn't allow talking about anything relevant to real life. Susan and Katie assure Jim that they have listened and learned from his astute financial advice: average markdown for items purchased at after Christmas sales: 73%. Cannot help fact that were so many sales due to looming Depression. Jim refinances house to pay bills. Pays \$7,500 to buy down interest rate, as this lowest interest rates will ever be. Woody returns to UW. All sad to see him go.

**February** - Beloved family dog, Boomer, age 14, passes away after a prolonged illness. Jim had issued ultimatum 13 years ago that either the dog had to go or he did. Jim long over the hurt that family voted unanimously in support of dog. Jim holds own private wake in garage in honor of Boomer's passing. Tries to call dogs over as they walk by, but canines clearly leery of smell of scotch. Grieving Jim consoles himself with thought that this is a positive move for his cash flow since cost of end of life care for dog approximately \$1,345. Vet did, however, send nice sympathy card.



**March** – Cannot believe that time has already come to start thinking of colleges for Katie. Wonder if academic record will look good to admissions: number of days missed due to doctor's appointments: 3; catching up on sleep, 8; critical illnesses, 13; family crises, 37. All excuse slips written during school hours while Katie taking break at Boyd's Coffee Shop. Katie feels only schools in a sunny climate (clearly problem with Oregon high

school) will suit her delicate sensibilities, so Susan and Katie make a Spring Break trip to California. Katie loves weather but feels colleges not in close enough proximity to beach. Will consider Arizona schools because, even though not near beach, are near Mexico and therefore in proximity of “hot Hispanic guys”. Hire college counselor to find perfect fit school. Jim thinks perfect fit is nunnery, since Katie still madly in love with Freydi, “hot” boyfriend of last year.

**April** – With advent of spring and the annual return of the salmon spawning in the front yard comes renewed sense of purpose for tackling the long -postponed drainage project. Jim determines that all last year’s bids from contractors are way out of line for the actual work required. Average contractor bid: \$6,000. Jim’s estimated actual cost: \$323. He, Jim, will show them a thing or two by doing all work himself. This has added benefit of getting him out of earshot of Susan. No matter that he doesn’t hear any more out of one ear, clearly sees this as means of escape. Jim makes huge discovery that neighbor has 12” pipe emptying water directly onto property line. Requires Susan to document offense in 30, 8x10” glossy photos. Jim revises his cost estimate upward to \$675.

**May** – Since Susan can’t seem to get a life, will live vicariously through past lives of dead relatives. Susan, sister Leecy and mother Helen all go on a search for dead ancestors in Virginia. Find old Goodloe homestead still standing and, indeed, still has basement slave jail photographed by ABC news when “Roots” first aired. As a result, conclude that relative depicted in Alex Hailey’s story was not in our direct line, thus absolving us of all guilt. Search continuing for ancestors with more politically correct lifestyles and better pedigrees.

**June** – Woody survives first year of college. We don't really know this, however, as UW only sends grades to parents if student agrees to share them. Some things we must take on faith. Woody concludes that summer school would be in his best academic interest. Fact that girls subletting rooms in fraternity house only mildly influential in his decision. Woody's summer schedule: sleep 'til 4 p.m., class at 7 p.m., party 'til dawn. Number of hours spent in class, 32, number of hours asleep, presumably in his own room, 900. Plans to find a part time job as ice cream truck driver thwarted when company checked driving record. Also would have to buy ice cream inventory from company and this would pose grave financial risk. Decides to party instead: number of hours, 1,001. Woody's room chosen as "The Ghetto" for fraternity "Round the World" party.

**July** – Life was boring. Jim spends entire month outside, either working on project or smoking cigarettes in garage to relax from taxing physical labor. Susan tries to get Katie to go to a movie with her. Katie asks: doesn't she have any friends of her own? Susan's friend encourages her to consider getting another dog because: think of the prospect of next year with only Jim to keep her company. . . . .

**August** – Katie also attends summer school. This we know as we pay her daily. Jim wonders what has gone wrong with family work ethic, as only he seems to have it. Jim gets well deserved break from daily grind when make annual trek to Wisconsin for R & R. Woody and two fraternity brothers drive from Seattle cross country to join us. Itinerary: E-mail parents at 4 a.m. day due to leave Seattle, depart Seattle 5 p.m., arrive in Missoula in time to party at U of Montana with friends. Drive straight on to Minneapolis where sleep in car in parking lot cause too hard to put up tent. Arrive on time in Boulder Junction. Jim is thrilled to have male bonding experience with son and friends. Really

wants to be one of the guys. But fish cannot wait until 4 p.m. for breakfast so time lost there. Jim's time spent in fishing boat, 70 hours; time spent with boys, 2 hours; time spent with wife, 0.

**September** – Susan decides to adopt a “if you can't beat them join them” attitude. Figures must have some shared activities with Jim when the nest is empty next year. Attends women's fly fishing school on the Deschutes River. Told this is a very exclusive private fishing resort. Invites friends to join her. Friend packs Lilly Pulitzer outfit to dress for dinner. This big mistake as learn that men do not feel hot water, indoor plumbing, heat or lack of mouse droppings on mattresses essential to quality fly fishing experience. Susan realizes too late likelihood of fly fishing as means to solidify marriage post kids, 0%.



**October** – Jim finally finishes drainage/wall project. Total time spent digging in dirt, 323 hours; cash outlay, \$9,700. Feels macho thrill of using backhoe, and physical exercise benefit totally compensates for fact that arms are now numb 24/7. Jim,



for the second time in same year, refinances house to pay construction costs. Pays \$8,500 to buy down interest rate, as surely this lowest interest rates will ever be.

**November** – Sadly but blessedly, Jim’s Mom passes away after battling Alzheimer’s disease for many years. Only trouble: we must get her back to Cincinnati for burial. Jim determines that Susan can better handle picking up the cremains. Susan decides that if she married Jim for better or worse, this is the worst. Cremains remain in car as neither Susan nor Jim can figure out a good place to keep them inside. Jim suggests perhaps Mom would like to go to movie with Susan. On trip back to Ohio, Susan manages to get Mom through airport security without getting stopped. Jim pretends he is flying unaccompanied.

**December** – Have survived totally exhausting December ritual of social activities. Number of parties enjoyed by wives, 24, number enjoyed by husbands, 0. Wives sure husbands are lying and would really miss parties if didn’t have them next year. Jim totally worthless at parties because cannot hear anything anyone says to him, but keeps talking like he knows exactly what they said anyway.

Jim manages to ease his pain by partaking in much yuletide cheer and dressing in ridiculously old Santa suit that someone noted appeared to have marijuana stuck to the sleeve. Number of neighbors’ homes broken into by Santa Jim during caroling party, 2; numbers of school aged girls horrified by Santa Jim, 12; number of children now aware that Santa drinks and smokes, 35; number of parties Santa Jim likely to be invited to next year, 0. Maybe, just maybe, he’s not so dumb after all.



**Best wishes from our family to yours.**

# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2003



**January** – Have rechecked calendar for 2003 to see what exciting events occurred in past year. First entry for any activity – social or business, for any member of family - dated January 18. This is pathetic indication that Susan failed to get a life despite declaring this need years ago. Perhaps also a reflection of un-popularity of Jim after Christmas 2002 “Bad Santa” performance. Susan contemplates a life without Jim so that she can once again be invited out socially. Jim tells Susan he feels her new life should be income producing. Susan begins to wonder what planet Jim is living on, as her job skills are circa 1975 when computers were run by key punch cards. Jim suggests perhaps a career in abstinence counseling would utilize the skills she’s developed over the past few years. Jim begins project to redo basement though no member of the family ever ventures down to that wetland. Marital bonding suffers accordingly but “Jimmy Fix-It” is happy camper.

**February** – Great news! Katie gets accepted to many colleges. Now must begin arduous task of choosing right school for her. Right school must provide single dorm room, close proximity to quality shopping experiences, hair, tanning and nail salons. Access to tattoo parlor also desirable, just in case Susan changes her mind regarding this form of art. Susan volunteers to visit campuses with Katie, but Katie feels input of Freydi – hot Hispanic boyfriend of past two years – much more important. Jim completes basement project: now have great exercise room though no member of the family ever chooses to burn off accumulated fat rolls by using costly equipment installed by Jim.

**March** – Rains return - a rite of spring in Oregon. Jim discovers that forgot to put water barrier in rock wall constructed last summer. Small waterfalls emerging through rocks and

channeling new gullies toward house foundation. Jim rationalizes that rebuilding the wall provides a great opportunity to add stone pathway through the bog now created next to house. Additional \$6,503 needed for repairs and pathway. Katie back ends a pickup truck with the Landrover when brakes “freeze up”. Both Susan and Katie remark that the “little red brake light on the dash kept coming on” during the preceding few weeks. Katie refuses to drive car again because now feels Landrover “has issues”. Susan trades cars with Katie. Jim has major issues with Katie and Susan’s reasoning abilities.

**April** – Heard from Woody for the first time in 2003. Good to know he’s so happy up in Seattle. Tried to point out that would be nice if he would answer his cell phone from time to time, as we sometimes wonder what’s up with him. Also, mentioned the fact that year-to-date Susan has forwarded 563 humorous messages and Jim 444 pornographic emails none of which Woody felt warranted reply. Enquired about his grades and got the response that they were “way better” than he had expected.

**May** – The week before Susan’s 54<sup>th</sup> birthday, the neighborhood women hold a “Princess Party” as a school fundraiser where the ladies come dressed as princesses. Susan in distraught mental state as can no longer visualize herself as princess material. This could be due to the added 40 lbs. that living the stressful life with Jim has forced upon her. Jim, in an attempt to be sensitive, suggests that perhaps she could go as the Queen Mom. Susan and Jim celebrate 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary only after Jim atones for total lack of understanding of the female psyche.

**June** – Are truly exuberant as watch Katie handed her high school diploma. She looks lovely as she walks across the stage. Cost of new shoes \$150, cost of hair coloring, ditto. Additional expenses associated with graduation: nails, \$50; eyebrow

waxing, \$35; series of tanning appointments, \$130; new dress which was only worn for pre-graduation dinner and then covered by gown, \$200. Outfit for post grad all night party (\$100 admission) of undetermined cost as we never got to see what she wore as we were not allowed to volunteer to chaperone. Katie pleased that she's been educated at a liberal establishment, is a down to earth person, who doesn't have a lot of material needs. The University of Arizona will suit her perfectly she determines after orientation in Tucson. Have wonderful trip to Maryland to attend wedding and visit old friends. Jim embarrasses himself/Susan with lengthy roast at reception dinner after multiple cocktails. Friends think speech is hysterical; Susan becomes hysterical.

**July** – Woody on remote island in Alaska for six-week archaeological dig through UW. In this way he deftly avoids getting a summer job that pays money, while dig requires full tuition and board for Summer Quarter. Total communication from Woody during sojourn: one pre-addressed (by Susan), stamped postcard. It read “Sorry I didn't call. Having a blast. Only one bear so far.” Jim also remote as works on project to design and build custom window well covers in effort to keep unused exercise equipment dry. Susan remarks that it looks like “you built the window well covers yourself”. Jim takes this as complement. Timing of project coincides with arrival of Susan's Mom and sister Leecy. Katie, desiring of a more functional family structure, decides to travel to Maryland to meet her birth mother. Luckily for Katie, the birth mom also kept in touch with Katie's' birth father (twice divorced) who “really loosened up after a few beers”, has a hot tub that fits 12, and a motorcycle, wants her to come back and “hang out” and be part of her life. Jim refuses to discuss this with Susan but secretly



ponders, as he sips scotch in the garage, if his 1991 Volvo, complete with tape deck, offers Katie the same appeal. After a few scotches Jim determines that if this guy wants to be part of Katie's life he can start by paying college tuition. Jim feels better after the 15<sup>th</sup> scotch.

**August** - Woody returns from Alaska in one piece, with 2 unused postcards and huge quantities of soggy, moldy belongings. Total showers taken during six weeks: 0. Total haircut and/or shaving: 0. Total alcohol consumed: 0. Makes up for alcohol withdrawal by having wild orgy upon return to civilization of Kodiak. Susan proud when sees photos from the party that Woody has matching Jim Beam bottle and t-shirt, since fashion lectures clearly have taken root. Woody determines to continue to grow hair 'til can sport a mullet and goatee. Susan rationalizes that Ben Affleck also has facial hair now, so that Woody is clearly fashion forward. Jim, Susan and Katie spend five days setting up Katie's Arizona dorm room to her exacting specifications. Time used shopping at Target and Home Depot: 9 hours. Hours spent by Jim hooking up computer and building desk: 14. Hours consumed by Katie at pool trying to de-stress from ordeal with parents: 17. Jim and Susan return home August 25 and send out invitations for their "Empty Nest" party scheduled for Sept. 13.

**September** – Five days after leaving Katie in Tucson, Katie decides to surprise Jim for his birthday and "mails" herself home for the Labor Day weekend. Tells Jim she so appreciates all he does for her. Jim totally falls for this line of flattery. Time Katie spends with Dad during 3-day visit: 2 hours. Time spent with Freydi: 2 days, 22 hours. After a record short college career of 8 days, Katie determines that Tucson is way too hot, way too far away and calls the U of Oregon. Miraculously they re-accept her and even give her a single dorm room. Katie returns to Portland

in time to attend the “Empty Nest” party with Jim and Susan before heading to Eugene.



**October** – Jim and Susan make trek to northern Wisconsin and luck out with great friends and great weather. Jim and friend Greg each claim to catch a 45-inch Musky, but no pictures, despite availability of digital camera in boat. “Fish were too big, and their teeth were too sharp to get them in the boat”. After Wisconsin, Susan continues on to Georgia for a vacation with Mom while Jim returns to Portland. Upon arriving in Atlanta, Susan discovers that Jim took her bag to Portland and sent her to Atlanta with his bag full of dirty fishing clothes. Tears followed by anger followed by profanity. This costs Jim big bucks, as he has to concede his error and agrees to pay for Susan’s shopping. Fortunately, however, interest rates did not go up as Jim predicted last year so could afford shopping by refinancing. Mortgage broker rewards best customer, Jim, with two courtside tickets to Blazer game. Cost of tickets in points and fees paid over three refinancings: \$12,009 each. This great deal, though, as Blazers so popular.



**November** – Susan, really scared after suitcase episode that Jim is losing it mentally, decides that duplicate bridge will help her keep her mind sharp, so she can stay alert and nurse Jim in his dotage. Spends numerous days learning the new “weak two” system, attending Bridge Camp at the coast. This great escape from marital bonding and partially empty nest – Katie in residence most weekends so that romance can blossom, and Woody entertains girlfriend, Sarah, for Thanksgiving. Jim clearly jealous that Katie and Woody seem to be getting “lucky” while Jim just getting decrepit. Jim declares romance for those under 30 immoral. This clear indication of Alzheimer’s onset, as not at all what he told Susan at Northwestern.



**December** –Bad Santa Jim on parole at all Christmas parties this season. Behavior was exemplary as all, or most neighbors, will



attest. Number of Diet Cokes drunk by Jim: 195, number of scotches, 162, number of cigarettes smoked, undetermined, number of husbands disgusted that Jim is no longer setting the scale for “D-group” antics, 56. Is there a glimmer of hope for 2004? Will Jim continue with his self-improvement program? Will Susan realize that bridge is neither a life nor even a good way to lose weight? Will Susan and Jim ever have an empty nest? Will Woody ever call? Only time will tell . . .

**Love to all!!!**

# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2004



**January** - New Year's resolutions: never again stay with whole family in Oregon for whole Christmas vacation. Never again believe Jim when he says: "trust me". Jim will give up alcohol for entire month of January. Jim panics when learns month of January actually has five weekends. Searches Internet to download fine points of Oregon's medical marijuana law. Woody, returning to UW, rear-ends an RV when braking on icy I-5. Repair bill, \$800. Jim suggests irresponsibility involved. Katie rear-ended on snowy street. No real damage, but Jim suggests irresponsibility involved. Jim's pool equipment freezes again for second year in row due to lack of his winter maintenance. Cost: \$1,100. Jim suggests act of God.



**February** – Jim avoids working on Susan’s list of fix-it projects for fifth consecutive year. Instead feels time is better spent playing solitaire on the computer while simultaneously watching TV. Multitasking demonstration of Jim’s continued mental acuity which is indeed better after liver recovery regimen. However, Alzheimer’s an ever-present danger as most nights Jim cannot seem to remember that Susan lives in the house with him. Witness the fact that no clear memory exists of what we did on Valentine’s Day. Could that have been wildly passionate night? Jim fails to notice when Susan flies to Florida to celebrate Mom’s 85<sup>th</sup> birthday with siblings. Mom seems glad that no spouses are included as says it’s the best birthday ever.

**March** - Return of Spring stirs Jim from hibernation. Jim awakes to find Oregon environment is in grave peril from uncontrolled growth of evil plant, ivy. Jim undertakes one-man crusade to eradicate contaminate from planet. Starts with our back yard. Dollars spent on Round Up, \$230, time spent on knees pulling ivy, 57 hours, 22 mins.; cost of numerous Manly-Man pieces of equipment from Home Depot to assist in clearing, \$788; area cleared of ivy, 9 sq. ft. Progress slowed by torrential rains that wash cleared topsoil into neighbor’s yard. Tries to get Susan to help by saying will be good bonding experience. Susan works for 15 mins. Susan and Katie fly to San Diego in search of sunshine, but wind up in Tijuana. Katie, who’s worn her best black ensemble for the visit, immediately gets offers: “Hey, beautiful, hey, Barbie, hey, Britney. For you, free! Susan concludes Hispanic men must have visual challenges, as she gets no similar offers of marriage or even a free margarita. When one savvy salesman offers Katie something “for you and your sister” Susan is thrilled.



**April** – Susan’s mother having viewed “The Passion of Christ” determines that she will die on Good Friday. But, no problem, here, as she will be resurrected on Easter. Susan flies to Florida to assist sister Leecy in urging Mom to take medication. Mom determines that both daughters are demon possessed. Mom calls Jim to inform him of this and also to say that he’s been a saint to put up with Susan all these years as she’s impossibly controlling and bossy. And now Mom totally understands why Jim drinks so much. None of this is a surprise to Jim. Mom writes letter to George W. offering him advice on international affairs and mentions that he probably knows Jim from HBS. She affirms to president what a good son-in-law Jim is.

**May** – Jim has first golf hole in one. Elated. Golphorama buddies stunned by this event. Demand photographic evidence. Here’s the account from Tony Isaac, a Marriott golfing buddy of many years: “Last week, our own Golphorama executive, Jim

Rech, blasted a perfect 8-iron on the 9th hole of the famous Waverley Country Club in front of Tone no Bone, his business partner Rick Durrett and good friend Jim Eddy. The boys saw it go in the hole (Jim could not) and after celebrating, Jim Eddy and Rick debated whether to finish the 18 with the two of us. They knew what our boy Jimmy was capable of.”

**June** - Jim’s Quicken program reveals horrific evidence of impending fiscal catastrophe. In consequence of this and ensuing Father’s Day marital meltdown, friends urge us to attend a Non-Violent Compassionate Communication seminar, so can learn to understand partner’s unspoken needs. After workshop Jim verbalizes his need for austerity in all endeavors. This is the fifth consecutive year Susan has heard this lecture, so feels she is justified ignoring Jim’s needs until he addresses her redecorating needs. Marriage impasse breached when chair in living room gets reupholstered. Susan agrees to stop spending disposable income on one important Quicken category “Clothing – Jim.”

**July** - Woody decides summer trip to Portugal for anthropological dig with side trip to Sweden to visit girlfriend Sarah seems reasonable use of time off between fraternity parties in Seattle. Jim perplexed about why no one else in family is working. Katie decides to stay in Eugene all summer at luxurious new apartment with pool to take summer courses at University of Oregon. None of the decor from dorm room seems to suit this new apartment. Katie requests to use Visa for “just a few” items that she and Freydi will need. (Remember Freydi? Hot Hispanic guy?) Jim thinks he needs a shotgun, but settles for a shot of scotch. Susan returns to Bridge Camp at beach so can learn finer points of bidding. Jim convinced familial conspiracy exists to drive him into lunacy or bankruptcy or both.

**August** – Landscaping project beginning to turn ugly. Total time spent digging roots out of dirt, 231 hours, 43 mins. Total square footage cleared to date: 77. Topsoil eroded during rainstorms: 255 cubic feet. Jim declares project “success” despite 4/5 of yard still ivy laden at end of August.

**September** - Jim throws birthday party for himself and golfing buddies at country club. Jim invites Woody to the party so can teach son the fine points of male bonding: drinking Tequila shooters and playing Texas Hold ‘Em. Woody catches on quickly. Stakes Woody loses to card shark friends: \$180. Size of tip from Jim at midnight apparently makes Jim most popular member of club to wait-staff. Clearly male bonding has been great success.

**October** - Great vacation to Jackson Hole with life-long friends, Karen and Peter. Jim has "just peachy" time being odd man out amongst group of 5 intelligent, well-read, thoughtful Democrats. Susan confounded that Jim, who marched to “make George (McGovern) your bosom buddy” is now voting for George W. Could this be yet another sign of dementia? Much fly-fishing from boats and in waders. Susan catches first trout FROM Snake River. Jim falls INTO Snake River. "It didn't look that deep to me!" becomes catch phrase during trip. Jim very busy at office. Travels to Seattle for meeting with client but forgets wallet, can't stay over for morning meeting and must return by car with partner on same day rather than next day by plane or train. Susan somewhat worried about how this oversight looks to client.



**November** – Thanksgiving spent with Jim's relatives. Number increasing exponentially. Wonderful time, but Jim often nowhere to be found: Wednesday night: Jim too tired from hard day at work to socialize. Thanksgiving Day: too worn out from morning golf game to help with dishes or socialize after dinner.



Friday morning: leaves at 4:30 a.m. to make roundtrip drive to Seattle to get emergency issuance of expired passport. Too stressed from road trip ordeal to go shopping with relatives. Also too exhausted to stay up late. Says must go to bed. Susan suspects not quite asleep when hears TV in bedroom still going hours later. Monday morning: Jim required to fly to Belgium for client meeting. Jim leaves on time, but suitcase does not. Apparently bag never checked and without personal nametag. Jim's claims both impossible, but no bag arrives in Brussels. Having traveled without sleep for first 27 hours, Jim determines the exchange rate is not favorable to him, so concludes will wear same shirt to business meeting. The following morning Jim slips on wet towel, lands in bathtub and cracks his ankle.

At morning meeting, attorney for other side remarks in Flemish something Jim interprets as "Pleased to meet you" but might be "Please move over". After wearing same clothes for three days, even stewardess on returning flight makes sarcastic remark. Susan worries how sleep deprived, limping, smelly investment banker with expired passport looks to same client involved in missing wallet episode. Susan fears she will have to give up bridge, get life as income stream may be decreasing shortly.

**December** – Jim again refuses to pay to have outside lights put up, despite 30-foot heights of peaks. Blown fuses, bad bulbs, etc. require four trips to borrow partner's ladder and many harrowing climbs up to full length of ladder with still maimed ankle in rainy weather. Susan disgusted with lack of intelligence this behavior evidences. Jim assures her he has life insurance, however, so not that worried after all. Jim considers result a masterpiece of "exterior illumination". New neighbor across the street says it's like looking at a fairyland. Wonder if she really means fruitcake factory. Katie, Woody and Jim threaten to leave home if have to attend one more Christmas Open House. Susan going alone

tonight. Didn't want them anyway: Woody's hair looks like a homeless person, Katie's outfits always show off her belly button piercing and Jim refuses to wear the attire of the evening, choosing instead his well-worn, cigar smoke laden, Bad Santa outfit. Planning trip to Oahu for whole family after Christmas. Hope this happens as Mexico trip last Christmas was canceled due to lack of familial harmony.



**Love to all!!! P.S. Happy Valentine's Day!!!**

# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2005



**January** – Epiphany on Epiphany: At 3 a.m. Woody and buddy Brent return to Marriott Hotel on Waikiki beach. Brent, son of good Mormon friends who are vacationing with us, knows he always stays at Marriott. However, both he and Woody missed the religious teaching about the body being the temple of the soul. Quantity of devil brew consumed by early morning: Red Volcano Ale, 12 bottles; Mehana Mauna Kea Pale Ale, undetermined quantity; Tsunami Lager, can't remember about this one either. Boys discover that this, in fact, not their hotel, but a sister hotel. Woody, as a defense, said later that he never knew where he was staying to begin with. While Brent argues with bell captain that should have a shuttle between properties, Woody, still sporting the homeless person hairdo of December and his signature thrift store style ensemble, attracts the attention of a Good Samaritan who gives him a \$20 bill for taxi fare. Shocked by this act of Christian charity, Woody realizes that appearance might possibly connote impression of financial impoverishment. Woody gets hair cut on following evening when he wakes up. Susan elated but she and friend Shirley spend rest of the vacation sermonizing on the evils of alcohol. Jim tunes Susan and Shirley out as has heard this before.

**February** – In fact, Jim not hearing or listening to or heeding much of what Susan says at all. Lectures on abstinence ignored, 13; words of wisdom regarding social etiquette, 1,024; advice on how to improve himself, two conversations per week; suggestions for appropriate Valentine gift, 17.

**March** – Susan determines that if cannot mold Jim into husband of her dreams, will try to improve self. This difficult task as has let body go for many years. Susan joins Weight Watchers and local gym. Switches from Grande to Short latte, a huge sacrifice for the sake of beauty. Susan points out to Jim this downsizing also very helpful in reducing cash outflow. Jim appalled by



Susan's total inability to grasp the magnitude of their financial dilemma. Money spent per month attending Weight Watchers and buying product: \$60; gym dues and training fees \$90; money spent buying work out outfits: \$357; purchasing new "small body" clothes, incalculable.

**April** – Katie's Land Rover inexplicably starts to billow smoke. Katie totally traumatized by experience. Concludes that car has way "too many issues" for her to drive. Jim recognizes seriousness of Katie's resolve when she says she will even trade him for his 1991 Volvo. This a car that Katie would never have been caught dead in during high school. Jim thrilled that daughter now mature. Rewards Katie with new car that he found advertised in newspaper. Slight miscalculation occurs when learns that Katie cannot or will not drive a stick shift. After less than 24 hours Jim must sell this now "used" car back to dealer for upgraded model. Cost of repair of Land Rover: \$750. Cost of first Mazda Tribute \$16,000. Trade in value of this car owned less than 24 hours: \$14,000. Cost of second new Mazda Tribute: \$22,000. Jim rationalizes that upgraded model has saved a lot of money on insurance because of better safety features.

**May** – April showers bring unwanted biomasses: Roof sprouts bright green moss rug. Huge weeds overtake land cleared last year from Jim's ivy removal project. Jim sets out for Home Depot for remedies: gallons of Round-up, 9; Moss Out, 11; sq. feet of weed barrier; 5,440. Covers entire shrub beds in shroud of black plastic. Garden takes on appearance of being encased in large black condoms. Clearly bark dust needed. Jim, now paranoid about hasty decisions such as the car episode, begins an internet search of all possible bark alternatives.



**June** - Wonderful news! Woody graduates from the University of Washington. Parents very proud as most of his fraternity brothers who join us for a festive graduation dinner in Seattle are on the 7-year Animal House graduation schedule. All brothers and Sarah, Woody's girlfriend, spend night in same hotel room. This clearly shows Woody's fiscal prudence to Jim. Contemplating an appropriate graduation gift, Jim feels he must make things right for Woody who has paid his expenses all along while Katie has managed to charm her way through by guile. Jim, reverting back to his liberal training at Northwestern, concludes that there must be equality of the sexes. Refunds Woody big bucks to use as nest egg for grad school. Jim and

Woody have a great father/son fishing trip to Dairymen's in Wisconsin. Jim welcomes opportunity to share all his fatherly advice on life, love and job hunting techniques while Woody a captive audience for 8 hours/day in small boat. Jim concludes he has successfully bonded and aimed Woody in the right direction as he launches him into manhood.

**July** - Jim must face fact that he's aging when returns to Cincinnati for 40<sup>th</sup> high school reunion. Can't remember anything about Friday night's gathering on Saturday morning. Nor can his fraternity brother, Troy. Each begins conversations they had the previous night only to be told by their respective, totally disgusted wives, that they'd already talked about that last night. Clearly years of clean living have not occurred for these Delts and brain cell loss a result. Plus at the softball game all guys in his class appear to have gray hair, saggy physiques and cannot run faster than an armadillo. Friend Gary appears to be the rare exception. Susan assures Jim that Gary could have had cosmetic surgery, so Jim feels much better. Horrible revelation though at class party: Jim can't hear Susan or high school sweetheart. Doesn't care about the former, but assumes old flame must be telling him what a stud he still is. Desiring not to miss additional admiration from the opposite sex, upon return to Portland Jim forks out huge amount to outfit himself with hearing aid.

**August** – All yard areas surrounded by black prophylactic shield totally weed free during summer dry season. Moss on roof turning brown. Susan worries when new shrub bushes also dead but Jim ecstatic with success of eradication. Jim finally orders bark dust. Determines that will need “a shitload” of the stuff. So enormous pile of 7 units (the bulk of 2 large SUVs) delivered right in front of house on driveway. In money saving effort Jim vows to spread dust by hand. Emails Woody who has yet to find

job, if he's interested. Woody says he would most likely be interested but first must make cross country road trip with buddy then another excursion to Las Vegas to see friend in Marines who's being shipped out to Iraq.

**September** – Leaving Las Vegas, Woody bypasses Portland and potential parental probing about job search. Jim hires Katie and boyfriend, Freydi, to do dirty work of spreading of bark dust. Katie works one day before advising her father that she's "just not cut out" for that kind of manual labor. Jim totally understands. Luckily Freydi more diligent and at least half the pile dispersed by month end. Nevertheless, neighbors start to complain about dung heap affecting property values.



**October** – Dysfunction in family evident weekend of Oregon/Washington football game in Eugene. Woody and Sarah drive down from Seattle and leave ailing SUV in driveway. Take Susan's car to start partying in Eugene Friday night. Freydi



borrowed Land Rover with issues to start partying at UO with Katie Friday night. Susan and Jim drive halfway to game on Saturday when 1991 Volvo starts to make strange sound. Game great, but Katie and Freydi don't show at all and Woody and Sarah spend the second half in the Stadium Beer Garden. After a command performance family dinner attended by numerous friends, Susan realizes that her plan to spend the night in Eugene not operative as Freydi already occupying all room at Katie's inn. Susan and Jim limp back to Portland in noisy Volvo. Next day Susan recruits Freydi's brother to drive her back to Eugene so can get Land Rover with issues and have dinner with long time high school friends living there. Woody and Sarah bypass Portland again taking Susan Infiniti back to Seattle, thus avoiding any parental probing regarding job search. Cost of weekend: gasoline \$210; football tickets, \$400; dinner, \$350; car repair to Woody's SUV \$5,000. Cost of family bonding experience: priceless.

**November** – Jim, no longer hearing impaired, gets message from Susan that this year must pull his weight helping with Thanksgiving dinner or else. However, garbage disposing of potato peels clogs drain just before company arrives. Jimmy-fix-it snakes pipe but at conclusion of procedure sink still clogged and now significant leak begins under sink. Jim helps by dumping all contents under sink onto kitchen floor. Susan does dishes alone days later after Rotor Rooter repairman visits. Woody claims he would have helped.

**December** – As year ends can look back with joy at having survived another year of familial bliss. If we make it 'til May, that will bring the total number of married years to 35. Out of that, number of years when our cash inflows surpassed cash outflows, 2; years when our kids thought we were great, 6; years when we didn't have family counseling 33; years when we

should have had family counseling, 34; years we would not repeat; 0.



**Love to all!!!**

# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2006



**January** – Nature of New Year’s Eve portends dubious quality of year to come. Jim and business partner, Rick, celebrate success of firm by throwing mega gala bash attended by few and catered by their respective wives. Other two couples fail to show. At 11:06 p.m. wild game of Catchphrase interrupted by Rick’s married daughter calling from hiding place in her closet. Confides that party going on outside broom room a total bust: one couples’ baby is asleep and parents demand all must remain hushed. Party animal to the rescue!!! Jim, usually disguised as mild-mannered investment banker, dons superhero festive hat and noisemakers. Catapults himself into the gathering of people

half his age. Jim clears house of all babies in record 4 minutes 25 seconds. Jim feels he's hugely popular with the 27-year-old set. Jim at home, in bed, and snoring loudly by 1:12 p.m. Susan, totally sober, and wide-awake fears that 2006 might be the Year of the Slug. Jim gives up alcohol, exercise and any pretext of marital bonding for month of January.

**February** - After much soul searching – approximate time spent in reflection – 1 minute, 37 seconds – Susan determines that she can go to Arizona with women friends for Valentine's Day. Has great time playing cards, laying by the pool and eating lots. Upon further reflection – 19 seconds - decides this much preferable to being with Jim at home, in bed and snoring loudly. Jim complains mightily about missing Susan while forced to stay in Portland and work to pay for her vacations. But is secretly pleased being off the hook for buying a Valentine gift and can bond with computer with no possible spousal interruption. During Susan's absence: number of games of computer bridge played, 1,589; time spent updating Quicken and analyzing pathetic state of net worth, 17 hours, 42 minutes; number of calories burned, 14.

**March** – Katie, having viewed "In Her Shoes", thinks Spring Break at Gramma's retirement community in Florida might be fun. Katie learns hard way that Hollywood is not real life. Highlights of the trip: average age of people sunning by the pool, 78; latest reservation for dinner, 6:00 at Appleby's; temperature for last four hours of Disneyworld visit, 32 degrees; number of nights spent watching "Jeopardy", 5; conversations about Gramma's Georgia ancestors, 3 per day. Jim complains mightily that yet again he's a slave to work while Katie and Susan fritter away all his hard-earned assets. But secretly is pleased that he has avoided all Susan's relatives and ancestors. Also, glad to have avoided conversation regarding own questionable past.

Part of that dark past is associated with Golphorama, Jim's annual spring golf trip with the guys - this year to Palm Desert. Over past 25 years of male bonding, number of golf holes played by Jim: 1,350; cigarettes smoked: 2,090; double scotch and waters consumed: 707; liver and brain cells lost: beyond calculation.



**April** - Shock waves rock house. Jim fears long predicted shifting of Juan de Fuca tectonic plate. Instead, violent vibrations identified as new next-door neighbors clear cutting garden formerly known as "Seven Oaks". Denuded of trees, sunlight sifts into our house for the first time in decades. Now discover that Jim's multi-year drain system project has not prevented soil underlying foundation of our own newly remodeled addition from liquefying. Huge cracks now apparent in walls. But, as neighbors pave over paradise next door, all April sun blocked again - this time by 10,000 sq. foot addition to house and new two-story garage overlooking our pool. Jim tries



to point out to Multnomah County authorities that 10-foot set back is not proper, but they assure him they are in control and he is not. This evidence to Jim that Oregon teetering on brink of communism. Jim redoubles efforts to get friend elected governor.

**May**- Susan fantasizes about romantic 35th wedding anniversary trips with which Jim might surprise her. But when friend Henry invites Jim back to NYC to reconnect with HBS friends, Jim seizes on this as the perfect anniversary trip. In fact, he concludes the only better idea might be fishing in Wisconsin with his brother. In Newport, RI. we search for house lived in our first year of marriage. Jim asserts that he knows exactly where to look, and, thanks to the GPS system, we find it miles from Jim's predicted location. Size of honeymoon home resembling sugar shack: 720 sq. ft. Jim suggests could repurchase for retirement. Susan doubts will have any additional anniversaries.

**June** - Woody's college graduation celebration now in second year. Jim all for Woody finding self, but can't understand how he ever got so lost. Susan tells Woody that would be nice if he could see Jim on Father's Day. Woody says he must check his busy schedule. Katie thinks a great gift for Dad would be we all go camping together, as Jim always says how much he loves camping. Susan has not camped in 30 years and feels strongly that there must be a reason for that. Woody says he'll try to make it, must check to see if free. Likely chance for scheduling conflicts: spending time with girlfriend, 30%; drinking with guy friends, 45%, watching important sporting contests such as fight nights on ESPN, 20%, working, 5%.

**July** - Family camping trip to Mt. Rainier gets off to bad start when Woody rear ends truck on way to work. Clearly cannot make it now as car in questionable condition. Neglects to inform

parents that also received a ticket for unlicensed vehicle. This minor oversight in Woody's opinion. But Katie and Freydi (remember hot Freydi?) are all gung ho and have their own new tent with inflatable mattress. Susan tells Jim not to pack the musty, mildewed, circa 1971 tent or else. Instead Jim picks out a pup tent. Discover when erected that big enough for only one midget sized person to sleep on a diagonal. Jim sleeps under the stars and near the river. This good because running water drowns out Jim's snoring; bad because water triggers bladder control issues.

**August** - Jim manages to avoid all possible forms of exercise. Gives up yard work for golf career. However, only walks course when shamed into it by more macho golfers. Weekly routine of taking out garbage and recycling only noticeable activity expending calories. Jim determines must cut caloric intake accordingly. Quits eating dinner entirely. Susan thrilled not to have to cook, but now Jim only sees Susan when passing from the garage smoking parlor to the upstairs computer den of inequity.

**September** - On anniversary/birthday fishing trip with Brother Joe, Jim catches both 45" Muskie and middle finger with same treble hook. Fish does not want to share, or perhaps feels Jim is flipping him off and rips hook out of Jim's digit. Friend Greg said he never heard such creative use of the English language out of Jim before, even after innumerable drinks. Jim, abhorring the sight of blood, particularly his own, goes to emergency room, gets DPT shot, but alarmed that doctor would rather discuss giving him a colonoscopy than his mortal wound. Jim has first near-death experience of 2006 when wound refuses to heal to his satisfaction. Tells partners that may have to draw up a succession plan. Goes to doctor in Portland. Doctor tells him to take off bandage and get over it.



**October** - Annual Oregon/Washington football game a great family time. Have learned to lower expectations, so things much better. For example, no longer expect Katie or Freydi to attend gridiron spectacle. No longer expect expensive game ticket to be used more than one half by Woody. Expect it to be cold and rainy. Expect both kids to have better offers for after dinner. Woody hung over from Friday night so was on best behavior at family dinner. Katie, unaccustomed to tequila, manages to laugh hilariously all through the meal. Susan and Jim return home alone.



**November** - Republican friend beaten in Democratic rout. Jim totally disheartened and distraught over socialist state, bungling bureaucrats and taxes that he could never have imagined paying, even in worst nightmare. Susan just sad that not invited to Governor's Inaugural Ball. Jim determines must fight for his homestead. Calls in architect to assess structural damage, landscape architect to design total privacy plantings and informs Susan that all spending on Christmas must be downsized. Jim gets flu and suffers second near death experience of 2006. Calls doctor in Portland who tells him to sleep it off. No sooner has he returned to the living than strange pains circle his armpit. Jim hallucinates a strange and deadly disease now causing his certain death. Makes appointment with Portland doctor who enquires about his stress level at work. Jim admits that he has given up drinking for month of November in anticipation of liver stress caused by Bad Santa's busy December social season. Doctor advises him to go back to drinking. Susan determines not worth

her time listening to Jim about maladies or money. Proceeds to research buying Jim a BMW for a surprise Christmas present. All Susan's friends in total agreement that Jim needs to jettison 1991 Volvo to improve his image in the community.

**December** - December 1 Jim drinks his entire Christmas season's scotch allotment in one night.

On morning of December 2 family heads out for gay outing to buy tree. Jim very cheery at first but as previous nights' buzz wears off, tells Katie that perhaps he and she should wait in the car "until Mom makes up her mind". Realizing the error of his ways, Jim quickly measures the tree Susan's considering and assures her the tree will fit in stand. In reality the diameter of the trunk would better suit a garbage can. Susan ventures forth to Ace Hardware, purchases the biggest tree stand and gets home to find it missing one lug bolt. Lug bolts not being her forte, Jim returns to Ace Hardware. Jim deciphers the directions, and hoists the tree of undetermined tonnage into the now complete stand. The next thing Susan knows the tree is lying in the driveway, the remaining parts of the now demolished tree stand clinging to the tree trunk. Jim not speaking to Susan at this point, so Susan takes the pieces back to Ace Hardware and sets out in search of the "divorce proof" Christmas tree stand she heard about from friend. Apparently, only happily married people shop at Home Depot since they have no such stands, nor even ones large enough to handle trees bought in the heat of battle. As twilight setting in, Susan returns to the Christmas tree lot to see if they could offer any counseling. Sure enough for only \$50 more can buy a stand that they assure her is fool proof. Is that supposed to allay her fears of the tree crashing through the front window she wonders? Susan listens carefully to the instructions proffered by the



attendant and heads home with iron stand of ingenious engineering design.

Bright and early Sunday morning when should have been in church - clearly retribution of some sort going on - Jim recommences the tree setting up work. All goes well since Jim has engineering degree and has recruited his 6"4" former KU football player business partner to help him get the tree into the house. Rick, also an engineer by training, comments on the great design of the stand and assures Susan that the tree is there to stay, and he leaves. It's at this time that Jim realizes that the tree is not straight - in fact so crooked that even he would be embarrassed if it stayed leaning at such a tilt. Susan dumbstruck as Jim has never been embarrassed to her knowledge. But Susan recites the directions for what to do if the tree is not straight. Jim listens and determines that Susan doesn't have a clue what she's saying because the operation she's suggesting would put too much stress on the frame, resulting in the stand giving way and the inevitable destruction of the universe as we know it. Jim notes that he and only he has a B.S. in engineering from Northwestern. At this point, Susan determines she can live with the tree as it is, but maybe not Jim. After attempting to phone the tree lot so that Jim can hear the instructions from someone with more credibility than wife, Jim says should both get in the car, return to the lot and discuss the stress patterns of iron with someone who knows more than Susan, i.e., any male. Susan tells Jim she's done her part, and so he departs alone. Upon returning Jim pushes the tree to upright, stomps on the iron frame - clearly a very scientific procedure - and the titan Tannenbaum miraculously stands straight up. Jim feels he's vindicated, though same procedure described by Susan hours earlier.

Days later Jim discovers Susan's attempt to spend money on fancy car when BMW salesman calls home. Jim tells Susan such an important decision should be discussed, so Susan fantasizes that he's really planning to surprise her with the car on Christmas morning. Instead Santa brings Susan a size 6, bright blue Speedo bathing suit displayed on a clear plastic molded mannequin. Costco cost: \$19.99. Jim assures Susan change is possible in the New Year. Could 2007 be the Year of the Chameleon?



**Love to all!!!**

**P.S. Happy Ground Hog Day!**

## Life With Father Wreck

### Christmas 2007



**January** – Writing of Xmas letter delayed due to massive memory failure. Cannot recall how year started. First memory Jim has of 2007 is missing BCS championship game so can bond with Susan at Barry Manilow concert. This, coupled with annual January liver drying out regimen, sets Jim on a course of surly behavior. Mood not elevated when Woody announces is moving back home from Seattle to jumpstart life. Jim, clearly a baby-boomer mentally, never envisioned a boomerang kid. Susan and Jim assist Woody with apartment vacating: number of garbage

bags filled: 23; 3 with beer cans. Discover unopened bills 9; overdue parking tickets, 13; clean pairs of underwear, 0.

**February** –Returning with Woody are cats Bruce and Tuna. Jim, who loves cats, agreed could move in as well. Susan totally amazed at this act of lunacy on Jim's part. As Tuna has litter box issues, cats take up residence in basement with rest of Woody's possessions. Woody considers moving in with his friend, but friend has pit bull, so "no way" could he expose his cats to that kind of torture. Determine rules for peaceful coexistence which all agree upon. All getting along well since Susan returns from Palm Springs just as Jim leaves for annual golf / gluttony trip. From what he can recall, Jim has great time. Jim not as cheerful at Barnett family reunion in Florida. Family consists of tea totaling evangelicals. Jim thinks highlight of trip will be deep sea fishing, but manages to lose two sailfish since refuses to listen to advice of ship captain regarding keeping tension in line. Jim, after all, is seasoned sailor and fisherman and needn't be told what to do. Susan's 89-year-old uncle easily lands huge fish.

**March** – Spring showers strip remaining paint from house trim. Jim forced to hire painter. Cost estimate: \$5K. Painter discovers major dry rot around dining room windows and Woody's bedroom windows. Jim hires contractor and window repair company to fix rot: estimate rises to \$15K. Woody forced to live in room with boarded up windows, but he has "no problem" with this. Susan does see problem, however with state of cleanliness of said room. Suggests that Woody will feel better is in an orderly area and buys him "push pins" to help systematize his life. Push pins remain in laundry basket with Woody's clothes which Susan has neatly folded for him.



**April** – It dawns on Katie, due to graduate from the University of Oregon come June, that she needs to find a life. She informs us that she'll be living at home "just until, maybe, August" when she finds a job. And since she believes in equality of the sexes, she buys a 9-week-old cat. She surprises Susan by bringing kitten in the house one morning - says it was fate as "Oreo", born on her birthday, reminds her of Reece, our departed feline. Susan holds Jim responsible for this additional incursion of her space. Susan suggests that Oreo can bond in basement with Bruce and Tuna. Both Woody and Katie think this would not "be right" for their respective cats, so Oreo commutes back and forth to UO with Katie until Katie finds that her cat not morphing into a "Duck" and just leaves Oreo home in her room.

**May** – Jim asks Susan if would like to go to Vancouver, BC for her birthday. Susan thrilled Jim remembers she's always wanted to visit there. Susan somewhat deflated when learns that Jim has



ulterior business motive, but books really nice hotel room to compensate. Back home, next door neighbors complete building of McMansion and 2 story garage, 10 feet from fence line. Since need all 10 feet to park horse trailer alongside garage, start excavating land for driveway. Our ivy laden, 40-year-old fence starts to sag. Susan totally distraught as ivy only green thing now between two houses. Neighbors insist that fence must go. Jim flips out. Hires lawyer, surveyor and architect to address fence issues. Determines will build Great Wall of China on exact property line. Also concludes that he can do work around yard to save money. Tries trimming trees near pool at 1 a.m. after celebrating friend's birthday. Stops to admire handiwork and trips over branches. Injures thumb and pride. Susan tells him it's a miracle he didn't drown. Jim retorts that, had he been in the garage smoking as he might have preferred, this never would have happened. Thus, all Susan's fault.



**June** – Life is never fair, and June proves this in spades. We lose both Jim’s brother, Joe and Brother Bill and Paige’s son, Thomas, to untimely deaths. Jim flies to Cincinnati for funeral arrangements and stays up 36 straight hours. After spending all evening drinking with old high school friends, Jim thinks he’s well qualified to offer career counseling to friend’s 24-year-old son, who’s also arrived home after a boy’s night out. It dawns on Jim, as sun comes up that he might be in trouble with Susan for failing to call home, but thinks Evan now set on great course for rest of life. Returning home Jim has revelation that we, too, need a little help. Hires friend to offer family counseling. Jim flabbergasted that friend wants to meet with him before talking to Susan or Woody.

On happy note, we all troop to Eugene to see Katie graduate from college. Our accomplished young woman - thanks to her liberal institute of learning - now knows that women don’t need men to be fulfilled; Nike is the font of all evil; and George Bush is the Anti-Christ. Jim elated he’s paid last tuition check.



Susan, Jim and friends embark on fun fishing trip to CA. Cabins and wonderful cook/guide supplied by California Trout make this camping trip first rate in Susan's opinion. Jim refuses to listen to guide regarding techniques for fishing Upper Sacramento River. After all, Jim is seasoned outdoorsmen and fly fisherman. Jim catches no fish. Susan easily lands huge trout.



**July** - Katie, with help of Freydi, her longtime and most patient boyfriend, moves entire contents of college apartment back home. Fills guest bedroom with junk as Oreo needs space in her room, and Woody's belongings and cats have basement full already. Susan begins to get anxious as her OCD tendency to orderliness now being tested. Not wanting to rush into the job search, Katie goes on trip with Susan to Mexico for R&R. Katie with her tanned body and bikini, gets much attention from the Marriott poolside waiters. Susan continually asked "Is this your daughter? She's muy bonita." Katie totally impressed with

Marriott's customer service training. Susan proffers that she never received such treatment when Jim working for Marriott. Both happy that Jim not along to offer advice on shopping in Puerta Vallarta. Meanwhile, back in Oregon Jim and Woody organize father/son fishing trip on the Mackenzie River. Since Jim really respects owner of drift boats, Jim does as he's told and catches lots of fish. Woody happy to catch fish and drink beer: does life get any better than this? Plus, neither have to listen to Susan regarding proper way to mend a fly-line. Things with family thus peaceful, if not coexistent.

**August** – Bid for Great Wall comes in at \$63K. Jim decides will settle for 7ft. cedar fence with giant trees. Identifies cost saving move and digs up big trees in front yard to transplant. Hours spent uncovering roots 22; dollars paid to gardeners to replant \$100; in daily watering of roots \$55. Since contractor already here, Jim decides to replace patio cover missing since last renovation. Has taken Susan six years to get Jim to agree to architect's drawing instead of his own design. Cost of fence and patio overage increase home expenditure estimate to \$50K. Highlight of month for Susan's is 40<sup>th</sup> Shorewood High School reunion in Milwaukee. Long hours of work pay off at party time: days spent emailing and phoning classmates 210; hours printing and assembling invitations, 44; learning how to play private investigator on the internet to find long lost graduates; 89. As one real P.I. friend in LA commented, "You remember 1984? It's now." Susan thinks ancillary benefit of social organizing is now qualified to track Jim's every move. Despite torrential rain the reunion weekend, all had a blast dancing to music of great musicians, reliving old memories and reviving old friendships.

**September** – Susan's suggestion of celebrating Jim's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in romantic Italy ignored. Jim opts to throw himself big bash in Portland: The Recher's Ball. Thanks to all who



attend from far and near, Jim has great party and Labor Day weekend of activities.





Shortly after guests depart, Susan notices water dripping from light fixture when Woody taking usual hour-long shower upstairs. Both Jim and Susan, now adept at denial, figure this could be normal. However, when water begins oozing from drywall ceiling, both admit that something amiss. New contractor determines shower pan has failed and totally rips up Woody's tiled shower, estimated repair cost: 10K. Woody forced to take shower in guest bathroom downstairs. This "no problem" for him, just crawls over Katie's apartment furnishings on way to shower. Susan's OCD now really causing stress. Just in time to save Susan's sanity, Katie's gets a job teaching preschool and Katie and Oreo, again with the help of fearless Freydi, move all of Katie's crap to her new abode.

**October** – Friends feel sorry for Jim that Baptist born Susan has never allowed him to go to Las Vegas. Plan group getaway to the city of sin. Jim ecstatic and starts to gamble at first opportunity. In a true fortuitous move, he actually asks our veteran Vegas friend how to play the slot machines. Following her flawless advice, Jim rakes in \$283 on his second bet! That was end of Jim as we've known him. Even the friend commented, "we've created a monster". For the rest of the weekend time Jim spent eating, 55 minutes; watching Cirque Du Soleil, 1 hour 47 minutes; smoking, drinking and stuffing the one-armed bandit: 22 hours, 47 minutes; arguing with Susan about his behavior; constant.



**November** – Jim elected president of local school foundation and member of country club board. Susan aghast that Recher’s Ball bash did not disqualify Jim from consideration. Susan vows to discuss standard of conduct called for by new positions with spouse. However, Jim unavailable for any serious discussions most of time. Evenings regularly consumed with garage remodel project: cabinets retooled and moved to other side of garage: five weeks; ceiling and wall insulation installed so warm in winter for smoking; three weeks. Noticeable improvement in appearance of garage space: zero. Deterioration of marital communication: appreciable. Susan contemplates whether family counselor friend, being native of Cincinnati as Jim and possessing same sick sense of humor, might be impediment to therapy progress.

**December** – New tile for Woody’s shower finally arrives. Just as work about to commence on fixing shower, first contractor says that doesn’t believe the other guys have properly dealt with mold and water problems. In fact, when he inspects, finds water leaking below window, roof plywood and insulation waterlogged from roof leak, and the black suspicious mold spot still right where it was in September. Susan totally loses it. This seems to have some impact as the errant contractors arrive next day to test for mold. Progress to date: no mold test results received; roofer says leak fault of defective shingles; stucco man has “no idea” how water could be getting in but will come on “the first dry day” to put a bead of sealant around the window. Estimated increase to project cost: incalculable at the time. Escape to Houston to reunite with friends from Exxon days. Friends great as always, and Jim gains valuable insight into correctness of his decision to quit Exxon. Learns that Exxon now forbids any employee buying alcohol and bringing it on company property. Decides that working for own company has clear benefits. Good dental coverage, however, not one of them. For Christmas, Jim gives self a present: pays for three gum disease loosened teeth to be pulled. Still numb from Novocain, Jim worries. Would turning sixty signal beginning of his downhill slide into physical and mental mush? Would there be peace on earth or even in his house in the New Year?

And all that had heard of Jim’s trials wondered at those things that were told to them. But Jim kept all these things and pondered them in his aging heart.

**Love to all!!!**

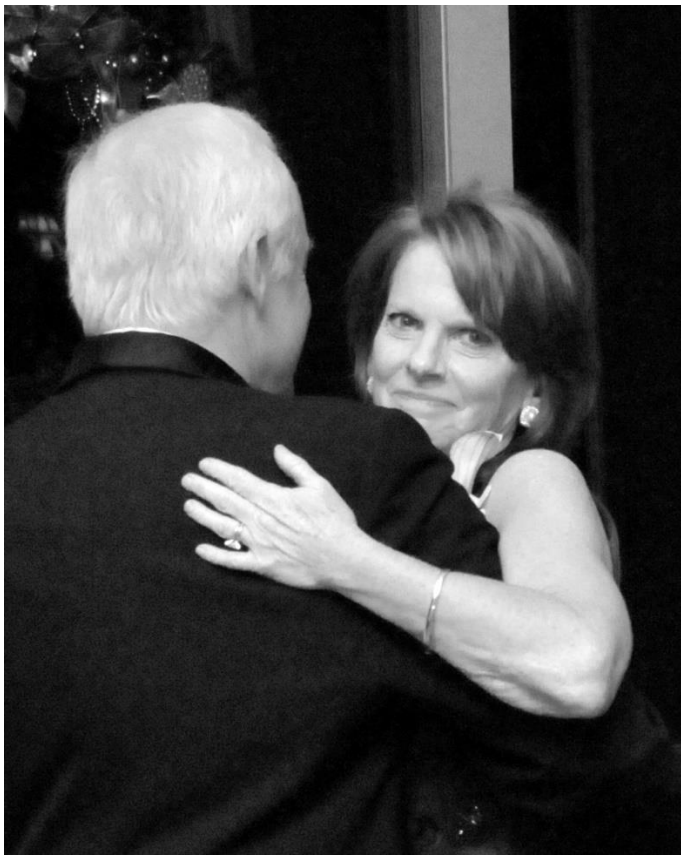
**P.S. Happy Ground Hog Day!**

# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2008

**2008 - The Lost Year - Recap: Jim avoids divorce; Katie and Freydi marry December 28, 2008!!!**









**December** - Susan totally wiped out after trying to get Jim to fulfill role of Father of the Bride in socially acceptable fashion. Susan realizes has failed midway through December when Jim, a.k.a Bad Santa, announces to Christmas party crowd that the Rech family along with the rest of the world is on the brink of financial collapse. Jim, a.k.a. Scrooge, declaims would like to

retire but that will never happen as Susan continues to spend his hard-earned resources on frivolous things like weddings. Susan despondent, but realizes can just blow Jim off until after the holidays and continues party planning with Katie and friends in usual fashion. Celebrate great wedding despite mounting odds: days prior to wedding Portland airport closed: 3; hours prior to rehearsal Land Rover containing Susan and wedding dress gives up the ghost on frozen Lake Oswego street: 1; minutes prior to ceremony Susan has a nervous breakdown: 9. Katie and Freydi, oblivious to parents' failings, are relaxed and charming throughout nuptial nightmare.



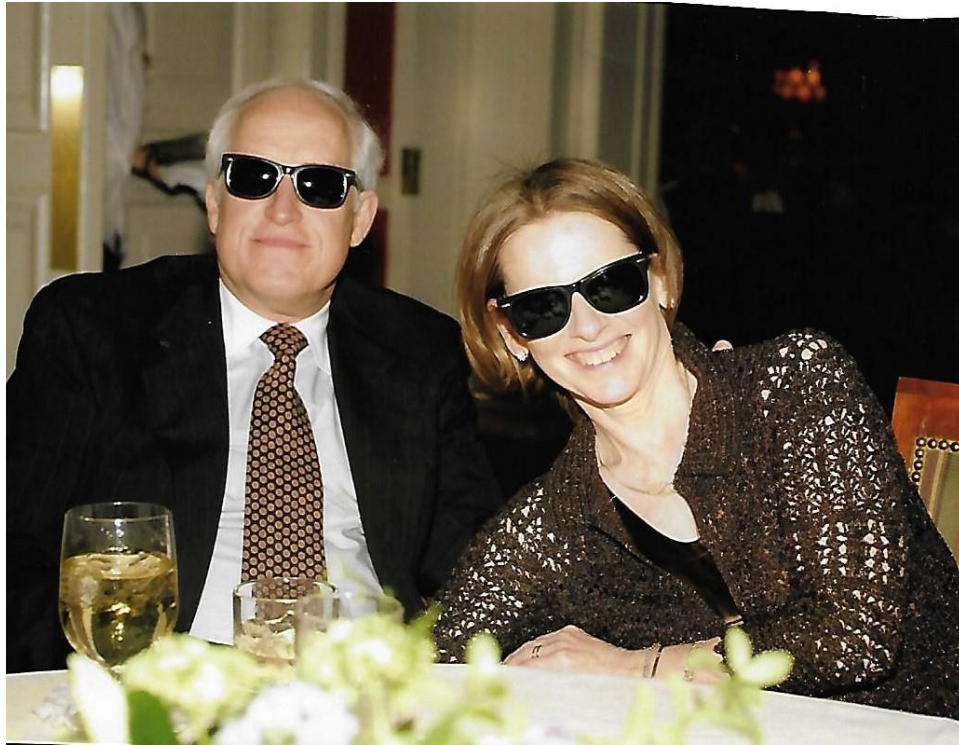


**Love to all!**



## Life With Father Wreck

### Christmas 2009



**January** – Writing of 2008 Xmas letter ditched due to post wedding bell blues. Susan spends rest of month recouping strength to deal with Jim. Jim begins 2009 with dermatology operation demanded by golfing buddies. Apparently, golfers distracted during putting process when catch sight of tumor like growth growing on Jim's back. Price balloons from \$400 to \$1,300 when pathology labs realize they have a unique specimen and send it all over the country to their compatriots for second opinions. Jim flips out and refuses to pay for incremental bills.

**February** – Under great duress, Susan agrees to new budgeting regime for household: Susan will track and be accountable for discretionary spending. Monthly items Susan feels fall into non-discretionary categories but forced by Jim to classify as non-essential: extra reduced fat lattes, 30; lunches out with friends, 15; bridge lessons and tournament fees; 4; movie tickets including buttered popcorn and diet soda, 5. Susan concludes will cut down on latte consumption in extreme cost saving measure. Susan also concludes that service of counselor friend of Jim’s is now discretionary expense as has demonstrated incompetence by agreeing with Jim on necessity of budgetary reform movement. Susan refuses to pay for him out of her meager budget. End of month brings great celebration of Susan’s Mom’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in Florida. Helen announces she’s thrilled that all children present to commemorate grand occasion; also notes Jim is there. Jim thrilled that octogenarians think he’s hot – only one comments on resemblance to Dick Cheney.





**March** – Unbeknownst to Mom, relatives, siblings and self, brother Bob brings influenza bug to birthday bash. All get sick but Mom sadly contracts pneumonia and dies. Susan rationalizes loss saying that Mom was in great shape for 90: still living in own condo, driving car and playing a great game of bridge even if too deaf to hear bids correctly. Concludes Helen had great life. Jim takes to calling brother “Typhoid Bob”. After recovering themselves, all siblings return for memorial service. Discover no planning for service necessary as mother – ever the Southern Belle - has pre-planned entire ceremony and social gathering to follow. Hymns to be sung by soloist 2; readings performed by her adoring children, 4, message on death she authored read to congregation, 1; mentions by Susan of issues regarding her wackiness, 0; alcoholic drinks to be served at reception, also 0. Upon hearing will of Mother-in-law regarding latter, Jim skips funeral.

**April** – After avoiding spring cleaning of basement for 23 years, Jim decides must be done tomorrow. Forces Susan to come down to disgusting dungeon habitat of Bruce and Tuna, Woody’s two cats in residence, to sort through moldy trunks of mildewed material saved in 38 years of marriage: Christmas cards, 3,943; letters/thank you notes, 2,652; birthday greetings, 1,555; social invitations and other memorabilia dating back from grade school, 6,176. Susan – clearly undiagnosed OCD sufferer - believes all to have historic import, so apoplectic at prospect of discarding primary sources for future historians. Make historic discovery herself: all Susan’s past birthday cards to Jim include loving poetry describing Jim’s stellar attributes; all cards Jim sent to Susan include phrases such as “The dog and I wish you Happy Birthday! Go buy a little something for yourself.” Or “Didn’t get a chance to get you something, but Happy Birthday, Mother’s Day and Anniversary!” Susan now sorry that they are no longer

seeing counselor friend of Jim's as could have presented this collection of Jim's correspondence as prima facie evidence of lack of romance problem with Jim. Susan determines only items that can be eliminated: 722 yellowed with age, never used recipes snipped from Milwaukee newspapers circa 1962 when Susan envisioned herself as Betty Crocker clone.



**May** – Effects of economic distress prompts planning of Depression Party where guests must sing for their supper. Jim has brilliant idea to salvage sex life: Can make up for years of nuptial neglect by performing sensual song for Susan’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Does do admirable job of singing “Happy Birthday Sweet Sixty” in front of Susan’s friends. Friends shocked at outpouring of passion. Pleased with himself Jim feels song sufficient for birthday gift. Horrified to discover that Susan actually wants trip to Australia as additional present instead of romantic romp at home. Susan also concludes celebrating joint 60<sup>th</sup> birthday with SHS girlfriends preferable to staying in Portland. Has great trip to Boulder, CO. All high school friends glad that women know true meaning of bonding.



**June** – Wonderful news for Woody: gets into graduate program for Behavioral Counseling at SIU in Carbondale, IL! Can’t wait to get out from under parents’ roof and regime, so packs up

possessions 8 weeks early and commences cross country Oregon Trail road trip in reverse. Claims cats not of pioneer stock so cannot make trip with him. Leaves cats high and dry in low subterranean wetland. Bruce and Tuna get desperate for affection and begin to bond with Jim. Jim very excited that they actually like him, tells Susan how smart they are. Jim invites cats to join him in smoking/drinking garage den of inequity. Cats think clearly moving up in world. Susan feels felines and husband deserve each other.

**July**-Halfway through first year of Obama's term and her marriage, Katie vows to help out new President: she and Freydi will do their part to stimulate economy. All along Katie has been using Macy's employee discount for that purpose, but realizes will never be able to take advantage of new homeowner's tax credit unless can save more money. Doting dad agrees that saving money is intelligent idea especially since Katie mostly using Jim's funds to advance economy. Jim tells Katie thinks her idea of moving back home to save on rent is great plan. Susan thunderstruck but MIA at family reunion. (Jim invited to Wisconsin Barnett clan gathering but declines since his genes not in sync with Duddleston clan.) Katie, Freydi and Oreo, their psycho cat, move into spaces just vacated by Woody. Katie and Woody feel their cats should have separate living quarters, thus Oreo becomes upstairs cat. Having listened to Co-dependent No More book on tape, Susan sets boundaries for newly returned couple. Katie furious. Tells Jim Susan totally screwed up. Jim readily agrees. Katie defriends Susan on Facebook and posts to remaining friends, including Susan's sister, that mother is driving her nuts and she can't wait to move out. Jim really happy now as daughter clearly thinks he's reasonable.







**August** – Jim totally disgusted with democratic administration for giving away ranch, but Woody not too proud to take handout: settles happily into new home that taxpayers helped fund. Susan seizes on opportunity to downsize number of animals in residence by insisting Woody give her a date to deliver cats to Carbondale. Cost of pet travel: vet fees for health certificates, \$135, FAA approved travel kennels, \$100; special cargo handling tickets so can fly during summer hot weather, \$335, ticket for Susan to chaperon Bruce and Tuna, \$400, smile on Woody's face when sees cats arrive safely, priceless. Susan happy to see Woody's new digs and pleased to be away from home, so continues trip for another week. Jim hardly notices Susan gone, but misses Bruce and Tuna terribly.

**September** – Susan returns to co-dependent behavior and starts helping Katie and Freydi look for affordable housing. Enlists aid of angelic real estate friend to assist in search. Friend asks Mr. and Mrs. Gomez what they want for their dream house. Katie, having given this subject considerable thought, delineates desires as follows: Essential elements for home, 2 bedrooms, 2 baths. Highly desirable and probably home without these features a very hard sell: room that can be converted to a closet so can handle all her clothes, kitchen with stainless steel appliances, bath with double sink and Jacuzzi bathtub, additional room for Freydi to house his collection of electronic gaming equipment, brand new carpets and paint throughout, deck that can be transformed into outdoor living area. Freydi, ever the diplomat and having learned from first months of marriage, says nothing. Susan, glad that Katie now speaking to her also says nothing. Jim points out to Katie that has yet to save any money since returning home so might be tricky finding home with all features in her price range. Homes viewed to date: 151. Homes rejected to date, 151.

**October** – Wonderful friend, Shirley, dies of pancreatic cancer. Nothing about this is funny, except our fond memories. We thought the world of her. And Shirley was one of Jim’s biggest supporters. Who would think a Mormon could see so much good in a whisky guzzling Gentile? Truly a mutual admiration society. Jim realizes life is short and attempts to quit smoking after 44 years. Jim sure that lungs will be in great shape in short order if only he can succeed in stopping. Lawyer friend tells Jim most important not to try to give up too much at once: thus should drink scotch in lieu of nicotine. This first legal opinion with which Jim can concur. Since Jim now skips dinner due to hiatal hernia, starts drinking in garage Friday night at 6 p.m. By 9:37 p.m. has imbibed copious quantity of Dewar’s but no cigarettes; by 10:30 has tried to lure Susan to bitter cold garage to listen to favorite tunes blaring into night. Susan, already in bed, totally alienated. By 12:42 a.m., Jim raids refrigerator devouring everything within except few items clearly evidencing mold, topping off feast with a hot fudge sundae. Victory over nicotine complete but cost to good health in calories consumed in scotch and foodstuffs cannot be determined at this time. Weight gained by Jim at last measure: 17 lbs.

**November** – Jim, a.k.a. Mr. Piggy, returns from golf trip in Phoenix with swine flu. At first Jim thinks it’s just a hangover, but after several days in bed concludes this worse than usual post revelry “touch of the flu”. Susan, unconcerned except for fact that trip to Australia to begin soon, tries her best to nurse Jim back to health to no avail. Jim successfully stifles sniffles and cough long enough to fool TSA personnel into thinking he’s not carrying germs of mass destruction. Boards first leg of flight to Sydney. Since flying on mileage tickets Susan arranged in attempt to be frugal, now have six-hour layover in LA. Susan’s sympathy runs out when Jim tells her for umpteenth time that he

thinks he's dying. Susan sure Clara Barton never had to listen to such whining. 13 additional hours in economy seats listening to Jim's snoring interrupted by fits of wheezing and repeated death whines enough to convince Susan that Florence Nightingale must have been a nutcase, masochist or both. Upon arrival in Australia, meet old friends from Exxon days. Aussies totally roll out red carpet for us and we have grand time – all except Jim who continues to moan about his medical travails. Mantra "Nobody cares, Jim" repeated by all convince Susan she's not alone in thinking Jim a total weenie. Friends suggest Jim might try stronger drugs. Susan wonders if laudanum legal in land of kangaroos as have 36-hour return journey and fears she might smother Jim with pillow midway across Pacific Ocean.





**December** – Jim’s lack of sartorial splendor evident to all at Christmas gatherings: Someone mentions to Jim that Bad Santa costume appears not to have been washed this decade. People at formal dance comment that Jim’s tux appears to have shrunk since last year. Members at country club wonder why Jim in drab grey sweater and green coat instead of preferred tie attire. Due to Dewar’s buzz, Jim oblivious to all fashion failings. Susan, still struggling against co-dependency, tries to believe that Jim not reflection of self, but fears otherwise. Wonders if Katie could possibly use Macy’s discount and buy whole new wardrobe for Jim and Susan not pay her back until next year when new budget cycle will begin? Best part of season when Woody arrives home for 3-day visit. Jim loves bonding with son. Late night sessions in garage take on new twist as Woody no longer drinking and Jim no longer smoking. Blessedly can still have a blast telling

tales and listening to tunes broadcast into the otherwise silent December night . . .while Katie, Freydi, Oreo and Susan remain nestled all snug in their beds and visions of houses dance in their heads.

**Love to all!!!**

**P.S. Happy Ground Hog Day!**



# Life With Father Wreck

## Christmas 2010



**January** – Ring in New Year with great happiness at wedding in San Francisco. Groom very smart. Knows, when bride says he can go see Oregon play in the Rose Bowl instead of attending his own rehearsal, this is a test. Jim and father of groom not sure was really a test. Try to counsel groom on ways to handle a woman. Mother of groom and Susan – who share exact same birthday – share exact same opinion of spouses’ sensitivities. Disheartened, men watch game on wide screen TV. After celebration, Susan continues trip to Florida. Mom’s estate must be settled, and all items disbursed. Susan and sister Leecy try to get brothers and wives to see wonder in family heirlooms. Sister-

in-laws say have enough of Mom's stuff and that they'd rather have the cash. Cash in short supply as sold condominium for song. Real estate agent says lucky to sell at any price. Leecy, having watched numerous episodes of "Sell This House" on HGTV, thinks has done admirable job of staging home: red, yellow and blue rooster wallpaper removed from kitchen, leaving only matching valance, chiming bird clock silenced, boxes of bunnies, limited edition china plates, fake flowers and family photos collected. Susan's hoarding OCD kicks in big time. Summation of Susan's share of estate: cash distribution, less amount paid for too-precious-to-part-with inventory bought out of estate, less shipping costs to Oregon: net negligible.



**February** – Moving van carrying all indispensable items arrives from Florida. Susan so happy even lets Jim voice an opinion as to how furniture might be arranged. This huge concession on Susan's part as Jim's decorating taste dubious, e.g., always loved

Gramma's cock-a-doodle-doo decor. For his part Jim incredulous that Susan could choose Steinway piano instead of cash because Susan a) already has a perfectly fine piano, b) cannot play like Liberace and most importantly, c) should comprehend that flow of cash in Rech household rapidly flowing downhill. After stuffing Grammas' antique gold bedroom set in hot pink guest bedroom, taking up every inch of available floor space, Jim tells Susan they must talk. This always a frightening occurrence as Jim usually prefers computer card games over conversation. Jim says must review progress on budget begun last year at this time. Results of financial summit: income in line with projection, non-discretionary expenses exploding upward, controllable expenses out of control. Susan renews vows to do better about buying things. After all, just read a NY Times article that said most happiness not derived from material goods but from good memories, like trips, so shouldn't be a problem.

**March** – Impending expiration of home buying tax credit inspires Susan to intensify search for perfect home for Katie and Freydi. Katie all up for viewing more homes. Freydi and real estate friend Christi both potential sainthood nominees. Jim will not qualify for saintly nod as continues to espouse devilish demotivational details: housing prices projected to decline 9% in Portland, price per square foot of homes meeting Katie's approval, \$357; average size lot of new construction homes, 1 x 1 ½" postage stamp; amount of money Katie has saved since moving home to economize, near zero. Katie sees program on TV about how to live green in 700 sq. feet. Since good U of Oregon graduate, all into green. Tells Susan should now change search criteria accordingly. Jim thinks has finally gotten through to daughter regarding economic realities and jumps on her bandwagon. Susan wonders how Katie will fit her two bedrooms worth of clothes, all Gramma's furniture she said she wanted,

Freydi's video game equipment and most importantly the cat and his litter box into 700 square feet? Susan wonders if can run away from home?



**April** – After all, Susan has been home one whole month and family bonding really straining sanity. Opts for R & R trip to Phoenix with easy-to-please bridge buddies. Have great success at regional bridge tournament winning gold points. Jim points out that if he weren't home earning gold there would be no happy memory making trips to AZ or anywhere else. But does Jim win any points – gold or otherwise - with Susan for this sacrifice? Doubtful. Susan feels truly beneficent individuals do not use guilt as ploy.

**May** – Jim's health takes turn for the worse, as massive amount of candy, substituted for cigarettes, is not dandy after all. Doctor gives Jim big lecture on turning over new leaf: must eat right, get exercise, cut down on drinking as now borderline diabetic. Susan thinks a lot more is wrong with Jim and schedules Alzheimer expert to speak at dinner party.

Attendees learn that eating right and exercising also good for dementia prevention. Jim elated to learn that two glasses of wine/day good for brain power. Jim fails to turn over new leaf, recalls only fact that alcohol consumption good for him. Susan bereft at thought of not having Rech to kick around anymore. Intensifies reform efforts on his behalf.

**June** – Take great trip to Wisconsin with Dufault's. Spend anniversary night at Brewers baseball game. Susan good with this as can eat favorite Milwaukee bratwurst and beer. Also saving up tickets for big 40<sup>th</sup>-anniversary coming up next year.

Continue up north to Dairymen's. Greg astonished when Jim actually uses credit card to buy Susan a deeply discounted gift at Kohler golf club. Tells pro better check card as probably no longer valid. Jim pleased that got Susan jacket that actually likes. Presents of the past for which Susan still holds grudges: lady of the night lingerie, fishing tackle box, jewelry from Fred Meyer



(Portland's Walmart wannabe), royal blue size 14 Speedo. Dufaults depart and Woody arrives! This very exciting for both parents to share whole week with Woody. Most time spent with him in years. Clearly now mature as can stand parents. Also clearly now better fisherman than Dad as catches big Muskie and many more fish. Finally, smart enough to realize Dad clueless about where fish to be found in lake. Depart thinking have turned corner in relationship - will now be super close.



**July** – Jim ponders how can be so old. Disgusted that Susan’s entire summer social life seems to consist of attending weddings. Seems like just yesterday he and Susan had been wildly romantic and in love and having own nuptials. Now lucky if can sleep in same room. Decides dictum “vita brevis” spot on. Must use time left in happy pursuits. Goes on fishing trip with other old B-school buddies to Yellowstone and Jackson, WY. Forgets to miss Susan. But also forgets flight schedule. Susan concludes would miss her if mind right.

**August** – Woody returns to join Brent Berselli’s wedding party in Portland. Jim and Susan think this will be perfect follow up to fantastic Wisconsin bonding. Woody’s agenda slightly at odds with parents’ perception. Time Woody spends with wedding activities, 2 days; time Woody meets high school friends, 3 nights; time spent hanging with Katie, 1 morning; time in Seattle with college frat brothers 4 days; time spent with Jim, 2 hours. After Woody returns to Carbondale learn from Brent’s new wife Kaley, that Woody now seeing someone. Katie can easily understand why Woody would not tell parents, but feels slighted that she wasn’t in the loop.

**September** – Jim finishing up time as finance chair for country club. Torturous task for Jim as he cannot comprehend spending so much money on items he does not consider essential - like \$4 million redo of golf course. Tries to tell fellow directors that good idea to live within means, but clearly cannot communicate any better with them than with Susan. Trips Susan finds essential in September:

- 1) Jaunt to San Francisco to rendezvous with wonderful friends from Esso days. Jim attends for one day of trip. Says cannot possibly take more time off work, but manages to get in round of

golf with William Hurt while Susan away. Claims this duty of golf club board member. Susan and Aussie friends stay in hotel found in Internet search located in Tenderloin district. This showing foreigners true slice of drug dealing life in America. And so economical! So Susan decides must also experience Napa and Auberge du Soleil for balance.



2) Tour of eastern colleges offering dance majors with lovely young cousin, Lily. Susan thrilled to end excursion meeting Woody in Nashville. Seeing whites of his eyes, Susan fires question has been dying to ask non-communicative son. “Woody, I hear from Kaley that you’re seeing someone. Is this true?” Instead of apologizing for lack of consideration for parents left out feelings, Woody astonished that has been betrayed by Brent. Asks when could possibly have told Brent, as was sure Brent fairly busy on wedding night. Susan assures Woody she doubts Kaley, a capable attorney in her own right, would make up evidence. Woody finally confesses that: indeed,

he's seeing a girl, named Amanda; she's from Springfield, IL and has brown hair and blue eyes. That total extent of testimony Woody willing to share. Susan complains about this to Aussie friend, Helen. Helen, unaware of political correctness comments, "Susan, you can tell a lot from brown hair and blue eyes".

3) Memory making birthday present for Jim: fishing trip on Mackenzie River with Katie, Freydi and loving wife. Jim really enthusiastic about idea and signs up with favorite fishing guide for two days. This way more fishing time than Susan had bargained for so encourages Jim to ask Freydi's brothers to come along for second day. Freydi, thinking the more the merrier, also asks good friend to come. Now need three hotel rooms for two nights, three drift boats instead of two, rain outfits for young people who will be miserable in predicted deluge. Cost of trout fishing trip now comparable to honeymoon in Paris. When Susan discovers skyrocketing cost, graciously gives up sure-to-be-soaked-seat in boat to pare expenses. Has great lunch instead with high school friends in Eugene. Jim, Katie and guys do catch enough trout for lunch and a huge steelhead, so Susan concludes great memory for Jim. At least until Visa bill arrives.

**October** – Susan learns when finally lands back home that Katie has quit job. This second job Katie quit since start of year. First job at Macy's no good because has to work nights and weekends and has sales quota for opening Macy's credit cards. Katie has philosophical aversion to credit for others, as should not be spending money they do not have. Thus, Katie should not be pushing this service on them. Right away starts new job at US Bank. But bank job way harder than she thought – could actually be arrested if money missing at end of day. And, unbeknownst to Katie, tellers at bank also have sales quota: must refer customers to fellow bankers so can sign them up for additional

services. Katie panics that this job not at all what she anticipated and says wants to quit right away. Jim points out to her that times are tough and if she quits, she herself will be living on credit. Also mentions fact that cannot be a homeowner without a job so would have cancel current short sale offer and forego search for dream house. Jim hires career counselor to talk to Katie about suitable options. Also hires counselor to help with anxiety issues. Career counselor tells Katie if have choice between quitting and being fired, always better to quit. Katie panics that just a matter of time before the ax will fall, so gives notice same day gets letter of commendation for outstanding customer service. Susan sees light at end of tunnel for getting rid of cat and litter box fading as have to cancel offer on house. Freydi's and Christi's saintliness tested though out month of trials.

**November** – Susan had it with month at home and flies back to Florida. After all, doesn't want Leecy to feel deserted. Jim's feelings not as important. Susan and sister do mother up in heaven proud by visiting her southern relatives - dead and alive - in Georgia and North Carolina. Delighted to discover graves of ancestors and see assisted living quarters. Susan sees this trip as one of duty. Jim views it as dereliction of same. Especially peeved when learns that Susan will only be sleeping four nights in same bed before leaving again for beach getaway. Susan says will not be sleeping as impossible to do over Jim's sonorous snoring. Susan realizes that Jim doesn't understand her needs. Upon return schedules important night with close friends to view "The Brain in Love". Surely will help couples learn how to bond better with spouses. What Jim learns from watching video: anxious women need more than one minute of affection before sex.

What Susan learns from DVD: Jim suffering from male menopause – should get testosterone checked immediately.

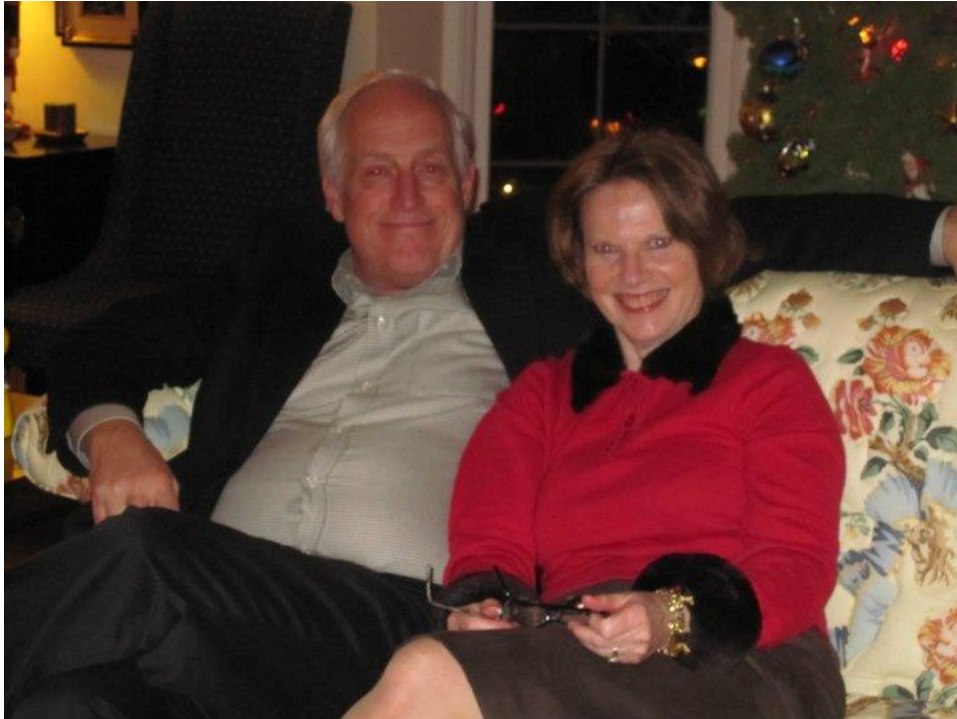


Perhaps worries over Jim's health distracting Susan when runs red light Monday before Thanksgiving. Perhaps Susan suffers from Seasonal Affective Disorder as Christmas approaches since same time of year as backed into L.O. police squad car. Susan causes three-car accident and totals last year's cash for clunkers Nissan Versa. Luckily no one really hurt and Katie – thank goodness for daughter living at home – comes to Susan rescue. Plan strategy for breaking news to Jim. Tell Jim \$384 traffic ticket and \$1,000 insurance deductible way cheaper than a burial urn and memorial service. Jim should be glad Susan still alive and no need to replace with expensive new bimbo wife.

**December** – Hap, happiest time of the year begins with Jim in total funk over failure to sock away sufficient funds so that can retire before age ninety. Susan tries to cheer him up by saying auto insurance settlement check a big windfall. Jim retreats to garage, listening to Christmas carols and drinking Dewars into the wee hours of Saturday. So remorseful in morning, vows to turn over new leaf for holidays: will give up drinking and be charming. Except at Bad Santa Party, because wouldn't want to disappoint neighbors. Susan, also overcome with guilt over not meeting budget, vows to reform as well. Will cut way back on gift giving. Will only buy presents for immediate family and friends. Scratches all cats from Xmas list. All looking forward to Christmas with renewed spirits sans spirits, joy in the simple pleasure of family homecomings – Woody and Leecy – and thanks for all our friends who've stuck by us through thick and thin.

**Love to all!!!**

## Life With Father Wreck Christmas 2011



**January** – Jim’s New Year resolution: will be a big help to Susan. Decides this at stroke of midnight on January 8. This not a good time for determining actions as comes after night of drowning post-Christmas blues with booze. But has good intentions and begins undecorating Christmas tree that Susan has refused to tackle. Susan goes to bed thinking good thoughts about dutiful spouse. This rare occurrence on Friday night. After a bit, sounds of clatter interrupt pleasant dreams about shopping. Susan figures Jim just broke an ornament or two and returns to reverie. Susan wakes again when dawn breaks only to find Jim not in bed. Panics that clatter could’ve been Jim dropping dead

so jumps from bed to see what was the matter. The fire on the breast of the black tar driveway gave a luster of midday to the front yard and living room. When what to Susan's worrying eyes should appear but Jim sitting straight up in a high-backed chair. After determining he's not yet dead she inquires what in the world – not real word used – he's doing. Jim informs Susan that he's maintaining a vigil on the fire in the driveway. Further questioning reveals facts about fire: a) Christmas tree main source of fuel; b) additional flammable material in the form of wreaths added; c) 20 half burned candles added as kindling to insure steady burn; and d) both Multnomah County Sheriff and Dunthorpe Patrol extract promise from Jim that he keep watch over illegal conflagration. Fire still smoldering on driveway at 10 a.m. so Boy Scout Jimmy now douses fire with lots of water. Katie and Freydi, heading out for day, take photo for evidence of Father's misadventure to post on Facebook. Luckily Jim not on Facebook so cannot be personally tagged. This probably why partners in firm against social media. Susan hopes this puts end to Jim's helpful phase as marital partner.

**February – March** Susan gets what she wishes for in spades as Jim totally ignores her for next two months. Jim too busy teaching graduate business school class at Portland State to have time for anything else, much less for unappreciative wife. Determines that business policy curriculum and writing abilities of students both suck. Will single handedly improve life of university and graduate students. Spends every weekend rewriting cases. So consumed with class preparation that hasn't yet graded papers - pisses off students who want feedback about grades. Halfway through term learn facts of life in academia: students can email professor night and day and expect immediate response to queries. If do not get response in short order can email dean to complain about professor. Professors not allowed to give grade below B to any graduate student. Jim appalled at thought must give good grade for sub-par performance. Thinks

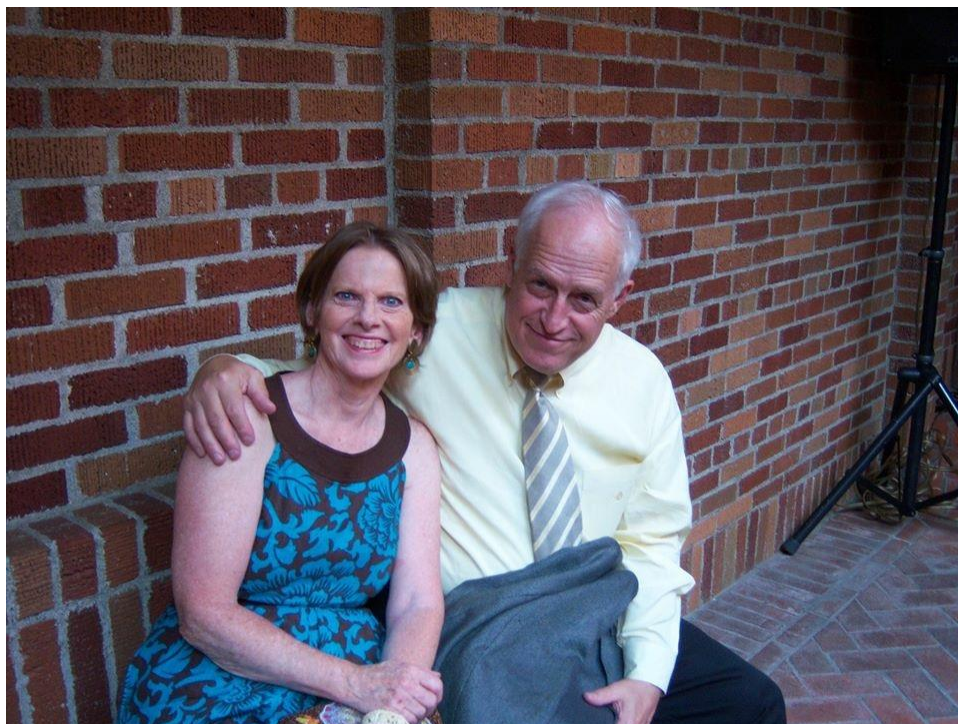
Democrats must run PSU. At end of term, “B” student emails Professor Rech complimenting him for teaching her how to “right papers”. Jim decides not to quit day job as investment banker for academic career.

In three months of teaching time, only weekend Jim agrees to take off is for annual Golphorama trip. Susan decides if you can't beat him, should join him, so plans simultaneous trip to Palm Springs to see her friends while Jim with golfing buddies. First night after dinner friend Cecily tells Susan they should check out local over 60 pick-up bar. Susan says should wait until another night, but as driving by locale Cecily points out bar. Astonished to see someone resembling Jim standing outside front door. Throws U turn and returns to find Jim chatting up bouncer and smoking cigarettes while cohorts inside. Luckily for Jim, has not in fact picked up anyone except burly bodyguard. But Jim so shocked to see spouse and friend he socks down even more scotches than already consumed. When leaving Jim tries to get in car with Susan and Cecily. Bouncer thinks he's harassing Susan and asks if she knows that guy. Susan forced to admit that indeed he's her husband. Cecily must bribe bouncer \$10 to see Jim gets into correct car with designated driver. Next morning golfing buddies disgusted with Jim that brought wife to Golphorama. Jim assures them he had no control over wife and she was on her own. This only mildly appeases men. Susan has great time in desert and feels no remorse for deserting Jim for additional week vacation while he returns to work.





**April** – Katie and Freydi finally find Fannie Mae owned home they like and can afford. Sainly real estate agent, Christi, has told Susan long ago: “Face it, in their price range there isn’t going to be a perfect house” but Susan a doubting Thomas so must see every home for sale in tri county area to believe this true. Time spent in home search: 19 months, 6 days, 3 hours and 10 minutes. Jim elated as feels they have gotten house at good price. Even inspection showing multiple problems doesn’t dampen his enthusiasm. Assures Katie and Freydi that needed repair projects are easily doable. Joyous day when close on property!!! Kids get keys to house and all think just a short time before will be inhabitable.



**May** – Cannot believe that marriage has remained intact for forty years on May 29! Susan hoped for romantic anniversary getaway to exotic location. Locations on Susan’s bucket list: Bali, Bordeaux, Brazil, Botswana. Not on bucket list: Boulder Junction, WI. Settles for this since 2011 mantra “if you can’t

beat them, join them” and Woody wants to fish with Jim. Susan secretly happy to have both kids along on trip. After all, not much left to talk about to Jim. Have great time despite fact that fish - due to late arrival of spring – more interested in sex than in food. Jim remarks that reverse seems to be true for Susan. Woody – now doing great in Illinois at graduate school for Behavioral Counseling - offers to talk to parents in case they feel could benefit from his services.



**June** – Quickly apparent that Katie and Freydi’s house has issues. Get bids on new roof, exterior paint and new heating/air conditioning system. Way more than budget but forge ahead anyway. Jimmy Fix It tells son in law that has vast experience as plumber, electrician and carpenter so no need to spend money hiring other professionals. Freydi fails to recall classic line from Animal House: “You f#!@\*d up, you trusted me” and believes Jim totally capable contractor.



**July** – Jim’s Mid-Year resolution: will be a big help to Katie and Freydi. Susan can forget any help from Jim for foreseeable future. In fact, Jim guilts Susan into undertaking his cause célèbre. Initially Susan - who hasn’t hoed anything in own garden for years - cannot comprehend why, when has perfectly good gardeners, she should be pulling ivy in daughter’s yard? But succumbs to “If you can’t beat them, join them” mantra. Time spent by parents at kid’s home on projects: mowing lawn and pulling ivy, 15 days; demolition and debris removal, 6 days; cleaning garage 3 days, 23 hours. Katie has started new job at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney and must be at office at 6:15 a.m. So way too tired most days to come to house after work. Weekends must sleep in to catch up on lost beauty zzzs. Freydi and brother Franky work diligently trying to accomplish honey do list for Katie. Katie really good at bringing lunch to her work crew and writing great notes of thanks and encouragement to laborers. Jim feels hugely appreciated after receiving numerous



notes from daughter. Feels totally vindicated in decision to help Katie over wife.





**August** – Susan’s effort to stave off a) pain from aching muscles from weed eradication project; b) migraines from dealing with Jim 24/7; and c) memory losses from premature senility; results in massive overdoses of aspirin and fish oil. Blood so thin that



ruptures big blood vessel in leg at Jazzercise. Stricken in pain that afternoon at Home Depot. Can hardly walk through aisles to car. Spends rest of year avoiding exercise and home improvement stores. Results of avoidance behavior: Susan gains 20 lbs. and pisses Jim off that not pulling her now substantial weight on project. Susan has lots more fun at bridge camp at the beach and reunion with high school friends in Sunriver than bonding with spouse.

**September** – September 2nd brings Jim’s 64<sup>th</sup> birthday. Susan determines she still needs Jim and will still feed Jim. Throws big party to celebrate commitment to aging sexagenarian. Rech’s old age defects and remedies: 1) Tinnitus – hearing aid 2) Hiatal Hernia – skip all dinners so can sleep at night 3) Liver damage – only drink massive amounts on weekends 4) lung damage from smoking – give up cigarettes (for third time) as soon as Katie’s house done 5) heart disease and pre-diabetic condition – give up candy after 10 p.m. and 6) memory loss – no recollection of problem.

**October** – No light at end of remodeling tunnel. Tempers begin to flare over who really in charge of project. Susan and Jim forget not really their house. Cannot believe that Katie and Freydi don’t like way Susan has sanded linen closet shelves or way Jim put up ceiling molding. Katie and Freydi forget that parents are unpaid labor and you get what you pay for. Susan and Katie have big catfight over who’s top dog. Jim sure that Halloween fast approaching, as family appears to be demon possessed. Jim recalls that Gramma Helen thought Susan had demonic visitation years ago so feels this could be satanic repossession. Susan recognizes that acting in favorite co-

dependent manner, but can't seem to stop. Blames problems on devil Jim who got her into project in first place.

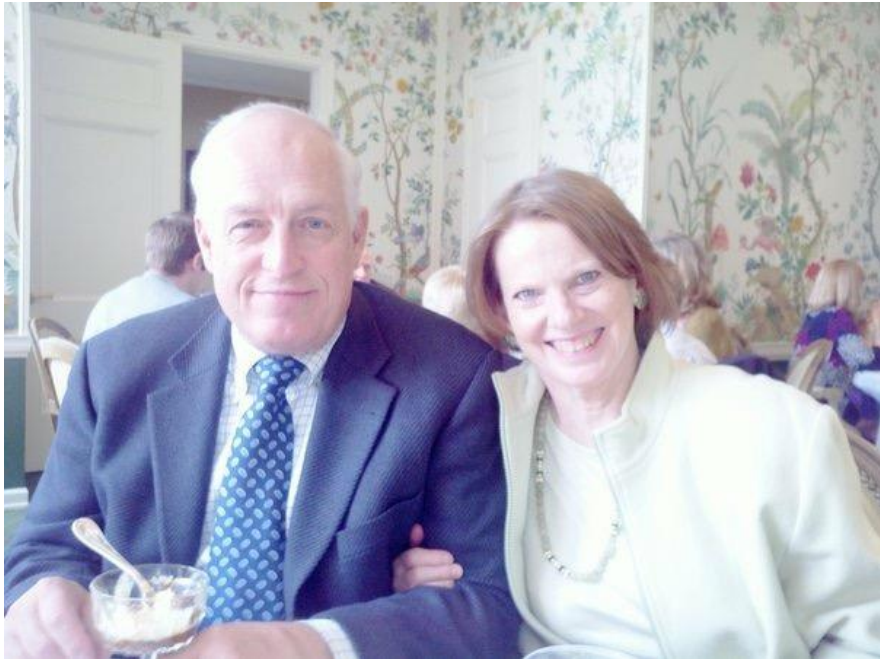


**November** – Thanksgiving brings a happy homecoming: Woody arrives with his girlfriend, Amanda. Susan and Katie thrilled that finally get to meet Amanda. (Jim also excited but is more macho and so cannot admit this.) Had feared Woody would never risk subjecting Amanda, who he clearly likes, to our clearly dysfunctional home scene. Also glad that cousin Maggie came from Chicago and Cryan family from Seattle. Also coming for dinner are the Dufault's, Schweitzer's and Franky, so have full house. Susan tries to impress Amanda by saying that Maggie a minister so qualifies to say grace. Food actually edible and no fights erupt at dinner table. At midnight after staying up to finish the last of the dishes, Susan and cousin Laurel concur that it's been a great day – one to cherish and remember when days are gray. Good thing since gray days numerous in Portland in winter.



**December** – Kick off holiday season with great trip to NYC. Lucky to reunite with Barkhorn's and Elspeth and celebrate

wedding of Warsaw's son, Drew. Notice lots have changes in Big Apple since left city in 1975. NYC no longer defaulting on Big Mac bonds. In fact, 1% of populace doing very well despite financial meltdown a few years earlier. Jim tries to join Occupy Wall Street protest but finds he's a day late and a dollar short. Nevertheless, insists Susan take his picture at Zuccotti Park. Jim totally identifies with protestors as Fat Cat Susan has usurped all his earnings. Back in Portland Jim tries to get into Christmas spirit by watching "It's a Wonderful Life". However, informs Susan that Mr. Potter had it right all along – S&L should never have made those loans. Susan not sure Jim's commitment to the 99% is genuine and certain Jim not in merry mood yet. Encourages Jim to view "A Christmas Carol". This backfires when Jim feels Scrooge talking directly to him: "What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in them through a round dozen of months presented dead against you?" Susan assures Jim indeed has a marvelous existence. Why just this very day 1) had email from President Obama and Michele asking him to come to dinner at White House in exchange for small campaign donation 2) Katie and Freydi moved furniture from storage to new house, so just a matter of months before will be empty nesters again 3) axiom "no news is good news" true, so good have not heard from Woody since Thanksgiving and 4) still has wife of 40 years. Jim ponders the last 40 years and realizes that he has been blessed with fabulous friends and family who have helped keep him out of the gutter. Jim finally sees error of ways, dons degenerate Bad Santa outfit and heads off to party carrying Christmas in his heart, scotch in his flask and exclaiming: "God Bless us, Everyone!"



**Happy New Year and Love to all!!!**



## Life With Father Wreck Christmas 2012



**January** – Looking back over year’s calendar realize life in 2012 has been totally boring. Could be true for lots of reasons: Jim refuses to believe that economic life as we know it will continue and issues edict that this is the year must finally institute financial frugality. This puts huge crimp in Susan’s lifestyle as cannot leave Jim every month for R&R and escape from the ordinary. Must sleep every night in same bed with Jim. Typical night at Rech household: Jim arrives home from work and refuses to eat dinner with Susan as hiatal hernia will keep him up all night if eats too late. Susan fixes leftovers and eats alone. 9 p.m. Jim eats mass quantity of candy and sneaks cigarette in garage. 10 p.m. Jim says going to bed early, so can get beauty rest. 11 p.m. Susan gets in bed and turns on TV to drown out Jim’s snoring. Jim wakes Susan ten times at night due to fits of coughing up

candy, of sleep apnea and trips to bathroom due to aging bladder. But successfully get through January without Jim creating another Christmas tree conflagration in driveway. Hole in asphalt from fire still visible to visitors.

**February** – After 2 1/2 years of cohabitating with parents to “save money” Katie, Freydi and cat, Oreo, finally vacate second floor to move into new house! Clearly only people to save money are kids as parents have paid for huge living expenses for kids and cat: Money Jim and Susan spent for extra groceries, \$3,877; cat litter, \$267; family cell phone plans, \$2,033; Netflix that only young people can access as only they have most up to date technological devices, \$240; ripped up furniture resulting from cat exercising his claws, \$5,000 plus. All thrilled that getting lives back, especially Freydi who has been saint to put up with Susan and Jim for so long. Move into new house even though has much work still needed to be really habitable. Katie advises Mom that should get dog as cannot rely on Jim for companionship.

**March** - Jim ignores self-imposed anti-travel proclamation and leaves for male bonding golf trip in Phoenix. This opens Pandora’s box for Susan who insists on equality and schedules trip to meet Woody and Amanda in Memphis. Woody, an Elvis wannabe in his youth, happy to visit shrines of Graceland and Sun Studios. Both Amanda and Woody gracious to mother throughout trip, lulling Susan into false hope of continued closeness with now mature son.

**April** – Woody begins full time work at clinic in Illinois. Despite long commute, Woody says job is great. Everyone agrees that income is great. Woody fails to mention to financially anal father that not quite up to date with bills. So Jim surprised when notice for delinquent taxes arrives. Jim has a near fatal heart attack but manages to yell at Susan that she must

get a hold of her son. Susan rockets into codependent mode: must save husband from heart failure and son from wrath of ranting Rech. This easier said than done as Woody too smart to answer constant calls from overly anxious adults. All turns out well inasmuch as Woody has already dealt with the issue. Assures parents that now that finished graduate school and starting paid job, will be on top of finances in future. Woody asks Mom if Dad is under stress. Susan, now in dire need of break before break-down herself, goes to Phoenix to play in senior bridge tournament with equally competitive senior citizen girlfriends. Weather lovely in Phoenix but spend entire trip in hotel ballroom with no windows and little air circulation. Cannot understand why other players appear so ancient. Susan shocked when elderly couple approaches table and she recognizes them as friends from 1972 when Jim in the Navy in Athens, GA.

**May** –Susan’s despair at aging results in plans for a great birthday for herself and friend Linda with same exact birthday. Women make reservation at favorite women’s club for night of actual birthday. Men inform spouses that will be busy on their birthdays with business obligation so cannot make dinner that night. Instead will make all plans for romantic night out. Plans evolve thusly: Day 1-5: no action taken by men. Day 6: Jim emails Susan: Can she arrange tickets for play? Day 9: Linda inquires if place has been picked for dinner. Day 11: men email that since Brew Pub right next to theater, would that be OK for dinner. Day 12: women agree that choice is not great but OK. Morning of: Linda emails men, have they made dinner reservation? Night of: women arrive to find that reservations not accepted, happy hour in full swing, must wait for table and given flashing/beeping plastic device to hold for next 45 minutes while standing at crowded bar of twenty somethings. Linda bursts into tears as this crowning moment to miserable day. By time seated can order only fish and chips if want to get to theater on time. During intermission Jim complains that play sucks

since he cannot fathom why Anna Karenina would dump good husband for Vronsky. Susan wonders why any woman would be suicidal over potential loss of man. Men congratulate one another on having planned and executed such a nice evening for their spouses.



**June**—Jim freaks out when realizes that will soon need to retire as 65<sup>th</sup> birthday looming ahead. How will he spend his time? Will he be home for lunch while Susan spends her time spending all of his hard-earned money? Will money last until he dies? Jim says must sell house and move to tax free state. Susan aghast at thought of being confined in smaller space with Jim, but dutifully attends lecture entitled “Daring to Downsize.” Susan realizes that she will have awful time parting with artifacts sure to bring big bucks on Antiques Roadshow. Articles stored in basement certain to be worthwhile one day: 2 boxes of 8 track tapes, 10 shelves of paperbacks circa 1965 to present; five plastic bins of assorted toys including GI Joes, My Little Ponies, decapitated Barbies and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles; five boxes electronic equipment such as princess phones, analog calculating machine, Kodak cameras and countless boxes of memorabilia and love letters now yellowed with age—Priceless!!!

**July** – Jim breaks out in weird rash. Rash spreads rapidly to all non-exposed parts of body, including privates. Susan remarks that all fungi like the dark. Jim not amused. Embarrassingly, Jim must show spots all over now aging, bulbous body to female dermatologist friend, Debbie. Cannot identify cause of rash but inquires of Jim if has been under stress? Whatever rash is, Susan wants no part of it or Jim until disappears. Luckily Susan’s sister and brother arrive to provide welcome relief to marital disharmony. Make fun excursion to Seattle to see Woody, Rech-Cryan cousins and Seattle Mariners game. Woody can spend only 14 hours with relatives as has important wedding of frat brother to attend. Woody spends 4 hours with Katie, Freydi and brother Franky at dinner, 7 hours sleeping, 1 hour at breakfast with family and final 2 hours shopping for dress up clothes as has forgotten to put suit in suitcase. After hearing Susan and Jim argue about what sights to see and how to navigate Seattle streets,



sister Leecy gives couple what she thinks is a compliment: “I would never have bet your marriage would last this long.”



**August** – Young people continue to take leap of faith into marriage bonds. August consumed with attending many happy ceremonies. Jim not pleased that all of the bridesmaids and other young ladies address him as sir. Jim assures Susan can now resume relations as rash now receding. Susan still suspicious as Jim’s eyesight questionable: has been seeing black spots - So how can be sure spots on skin now vanished? Jim consults eye doctor. Doctor can’t determine cause of vision impairment. Asks Jim is he has been under any stress?



**October** – Jim catches bad cold on plane flight home and fears he might get pneumonia. Spends entire weekend in bed. By Monday pneumonia abated but lower back now totally out of whack from slugging around all the time. Friday calls physician friend who, sight unseen, calls in prescription for painkillers to pharmacy. Doctor does, however, ask if Jim is under stress. Jim

spends next week in drugged out state. Sciatic nerve starts to act up. Jim finally visits regular internist only to learn that back and leg fine, but inquires of Jim did he realize his intestines were protruding? Tells Jim surgery for hernia in order. Jim flips out as has never had an operation in all his 65 years. Determines to put off knife cutting as long as possible.













**November** – Take trip to LA to visit Susan’s brother Bob and wife, Sue who hadn’t seen Jim in a long while. At the sight of Jim, Sue exclaims in her Korean accent “You old man!!!” Sue assures Jim she can solve his problem by dyeing his hair an auburn

brown color, so will look young like her husband, Bob. Later in visit when Jim complains that can't afford to retire, Sue has solution to Jim's problem: Susan loves shopping too much. Susan shops because has an empty heart. Jim should take Susan to church: "Heart filled with Jesus no need to shop - you save money!!!" This best case for Christianity Jim heard in a long time. Trip also to celebrate friends 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday at Disneyland – Jim relieved to learn actually a cool private club in Magic Kingdom where can drink alcohol without Minnie disapproving – after weekend of abstinence with teetotaling Christian crusaders, Jim suffering huge withdrawal symptoms. Trip capped off by lunch on Election Day with good friends from college, the Warshaw's. Karen not put off by Jim's poor appearance but appalled that Jim has actually voted for Romney. Says would really like to know why Jim did this as used to think he was smart. Jim tells Karen thinks fellow HBS graduate will do better with economy. Susan, in complete agreement with former female roommate, points out George W. Bush also in same HBS class and rests women's case. Susan ecstatic when plane lands in Portland to announcement of president's reelection. Jim thinks Susan has no clue that gravy train has just jumped off track and conjures image of Susan dancing on his grave. Jim makes tacky remark to the effect that he hopes Susan's happy now. Susan asks Jim if he is under stress. Cousin Maggie, a qualified Presbyterian minister, arrives for Thanksgiving in time to offer prayer at dinner. Jim hopes Maggie can also counsel Susan on Christian virtues – alluded to by Sue in CA - of giving all goods to the poor and leading humble life. Instead Maggie and Susan take cousin Emma back to Seattle and have great time shopping and spending night in boutique hotel.

**December** – December not off to good start: instead decking halls with boughs of holly, Jim decks walls of bathroom with bouts of vomit. Susan - also stricken with norovirus - too sick at

time to care about Jim's poor performance. True casualty of the illness: Jim's hearing aid which apparently fell into the toilet never to be heard from again. Jim happy not to hear Susan swearing as swabs floors and walls with bleach solution recommend by public health department.

Since Jim's been saying since start of recession that the world has changed, begins to ponder if Mayans could be correct and world will end on December 21st. This would be huge relief to Jim as would then be certain not to outlive his money. Plans big End of the World Party and invites all neighbors in to drink up his booze. Hungover on December 22, Jim must face reality that a) still here b) now even more broke due to extravagantly excessive alcohol consumption at party c) out of scotch and cigarettes and d) still married to spendthrift Susan for whom he has yet to buy a single Christmas gift. But year ends peacefully and family still together on Christmas Day. Morning happily spent with Katie, Freydi, Franky and Franky's new girlfriend from Nepal, Praise. Everyone missing Woody – who celebrates Christmas in Illinois with Amanda – but glad all seems right with his world. Father Wreck ends year plotting how to dispose of now brown evergreen tree. Susan hopes he is not under stress when final decision is made.

**Happy Valentine's Day and Love to all!!!**

# **Life With Father Wreck**

## **Christmas 2013**

**January** –Woody allows parents to visit him in his neck of the woods, St. Louis. Susan and Jim not invited to Carbondale because then might make co-dependent type comments about the cleanliness of his abode and fact that cats are trashing property to which they hold mortgage. But have great time with Woody and Amanda. OK, Susan and Amanda have to suffer through football playoffs and sit in hotel room most of the time but figure small price to pay to be with guys. Guys concede to leave hotel to smoke and bring in food. Upon return to Portland Jim undergoes hernia surgery. Jim assures Susan that this will be no big deal – back to old self in no time. In fact, so excited to leave hospital on day of operation (and still high on drugs), insists on visiting office to tell partners that reports of his death have been greatly exaggerated. Partners could care less but Susan really pissed that Jim, under drugged induced postoperative spell, has pulled out stitches. Next week spent in desperate attempts by Susan to quell Jim’s pain and anxiety: ice compresses filled, 200; bandages changed, 47; “Can you get me a little something to drink? entreaties, 37; whines regarding fear of dying, too numerous to tabulate. Susan strains back trying to heft bulbous body of Jim back into bed. Susan hopes Jim never seriously ill as she’s seriously rethinking the “for worse” part of nuptial vows.

**February** –Luckily Susan able to escape nursemaid duties by taking trip to Washington, DC. Has great time staying in Willard Hotel with Elspeth and celebrating marriage of Barkhorns’ beautiful daughter. Henry misses Jim but he is only one. Susan continues on to Florida where has grand adventure with sister

Leecy on Pine Island. Pine Island like throwback to 50s and you can fish for tarpon. Susan almost misses Jim. Brother Bill joins siblings for more R&R and neither Barnett seem to miss Rech-in-law. Feelings mutual as Jim having too much fun in desert with derelict golfing buddies to give wife a second thought. That is until cronies suggest a return visit to The Nest. Jim on best behavior at senior pickup spot as sure Susan's spies are lurking in shadows.



**March** - Stock market continues climb but Jim and friend, Lynn Pierson, sure it's just a fluke. After reading volumes of erudite economic forecasts determine will bide time until inevitable market correction to invest cash. Jim designs super computer model to tell him which stocks have correct valuations when time is right to strike. Model indicates future good for steel and utilities. Cannot fathom why Susan's investment club buying



Amazon and Google. Advises Susan on foolhardiness of women's investing strategy.



**April** – Jim praying playing stock market will pay off big time as will need all monetary reserves for retirement. Will surely need to downsize dilapidated dwelling. Jim makes huge list of summer repair projects for house in order to make ship shape for putting on market next spring. Concludes cost of hiring people to do repairs excessive. Jim will do all work himself. Jimmy Fixit thinks best place to start is in back yard where ivy has been growing for last 25 years, forming sculpture like growths over rock pond, fence and fir trees. Susan votes for painting house. Jim assures her that painting is next on his list and commences plant pulling.



**May** – Great 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary spent with kids at Dairymen's. All thrilled to have Freydi and Amanda along for first time. When kids leave, Jim forced to invite Susan along for afternoon's fishing. Susan not keen to begin with but when dark clouds roll in, thunder commences and lightening lights up loons on lake Susan insists Jim drop her back at shore. Susan tells Jim looks like men are catching huge fish off dock. Why doesn't he try there? Jim way too proud to catch fish on worm off pier. Tells Susan storm has passed and now safe to set out for deeper waters. With falling barometer fish biting like crazy and Jim hooks several big bass. So preoccupied trying to get Smartphone to take photo of fish, fails to see storm approaching from South. Also fails to answer calls on phone. Susan, back at the lodge has seen small cyclone whipping up the water and wonders whether Jim has the sense God gave geese? Frantically tries to call Jim on cell phone to no avail. When waves start to wash into boat Jim realizes he must back boat up to haul anchor. Possibly due to

being merely a Supply Officer in Navy, Jim clueless that this maneuver will swamp boat with incoming waves. As boat begins to sink, Jim hears voice from shore calling out over raging winds, “Do you need any help?” Macho Man Jim demurs until another huge wave completely fills boat. Good Samaritan turns out to be local pastor who, after Jim swims ashore, helps Jim pull boat onto bank and gives Jim a ride back to civilization. After thanking minister profusely, Jim hobbles back into lodge. Susan surprisingly solaced to see Jim alive. That night at dinner in the lodge everyone wants to know who was the yokel who sank the boat? Jim tips dock staff to buy silence on subject. Later that month minister amazed when receives donation to his Boulder Junction church from lost soul Rech.







**June**—Susan, trusting Jim able to get himself home in one piece, departs Minneapolis airport for Moscow. Susan turned down trip to Russia proffered by parents her sophomore year in college saying she wanted to spend summer with Jim. Susan not making same mistake twice. Spends 21 glorious days in Moscow, St.

Petersburg and countryside. Lucky to be able to go with friend, Lynn Reynolds, and stay with her son's family in Moscow. Reynolds treat guests like royalty, even have suave young driver, Serghei, chauffeur old ladies around town.





Back in Portland Jim leading life of Riley. Tells all who'll listen Susan has totally deserted him. Sympathetic friends take pity on Jim being home alone and invite him to many parties. Since Jim not missing her, Susan feels completely justified stopping off in NYC on way home. Celebration of John Lawrence wedding totally worth ditching Jim for another few days.

**July** – Woody invites Jim to return to St. Louis for a male baseball bonding experience. Says he's got great seats for Cardinals game and wants to share them with someone who really loves baseball. Jim ecstatic to have manly adventure with Woody – oh, and Amanda. Jim calls home that night to say what a terrific time they're having eating bratwurst at ballpark and slurping ice cream custard cones from Ted Drewes. Susan now green with envy. Didn't care all that much about Cardinals but eating is Susan's favorite pastime and junk food her go-to food group. Susan ponders whether Amanda's baseball creds are better than hers: Did Susan not suffer long hours in the rain seeing every frickin baseball game from T-ball through Varsity? That night in Susan's dream Woody appears as male Judy Garland vision singing chorus of "Meet me in St. Louis".

**August** – Jim spending most of free time playing in dirt pile in back yard. Despite spraying ivy with gallons of weed killer, roots still clinging to dear life and rocky soil. Coaxes Susan into joining root-ripping ritual. One afternoon back breaking labor enough for Susan. Leaves for annual bridge camp at beach. Susan thrilled to learn new conventions. Jim ruminates why Susan too weak to work but can manage "weak twos"? Susan avoids chores by dragging Jim on another excursion out Oregon coast with Leecy who's come to escape Florida heat, Katie, Freydi, cousin Emma and friend. Having great time until Jim determines hike down huge hill just what needed to show guests rugged coastline. Leecy suffers vertigo panic attack – fears will

not make it back up cliff. Jimmy to the rescue: says not to worry, he will hike back up, get car and save distressed damsels. Leecy and Susan should take other path back up and meet him in parking lot. What Jim failed to know: other path even worse and doesn't end at said lot. Leecy moves at snail's pace in route. When girls don't arrive, Jim, in gallant effort, tries to climb back down to beach over rocky shoreline to see where women went astray. Falls on moss covered rock into chilly ocean. When women finally reconnoiter with Jim, find him breathless, bleeding and soaking wet.

**September** – Hallelujah! First Social Security check arrives in mailbox. Jim thrilled that has lived long enough to get money back from Uncle Sam. Never thought that would happen. Concludes no longer needs term life insurance as was only necessary for income replacement. Susan wonders if Jim starting to lose marbles as clearly life insurance well worth thousands of dollars in case of accidental spousal homicide. Besides might need money if Jim kicks off early. Susan points out to Jim that his investment strategy seems somewhat flawed: Market hitting all time high while Jim's cash still garnering far from great rate of return of .01% in bank. Jim informs Susan that, as graduates of Harvard and U of Chicago Business Schools, he and Lynn know how to analyze economic data. Another excessive email exchange confirms cohort's prediction of looming market correction. Conclusion: stay the course. Seeing no progress on repair list either, Susan tries to hire house painter before heading off on umpteenth trip of the year. Jim says bid seems exorbitant and should wait and consider carefully until return from European vacation. Trip to Italy most romantic Susan and Jim have been in years. Love Venice, seeing old Exxon friends in Tuscany - Jim consumes mass quantities of Chianti Classico with

always amiable Aussies - and walking Appian Way in Rome. Hope springs eternal that marriage will survive 'til death parting.



**October** –After nine weekends of hard labor, 40 bushels of recycled yard debris, two huge piles of rock sifted from soil and re-occurrence of carpal tunnel syndrome in Jim’s hands, ivy eradication project completed. Jim purchases \$450 worth of boxwoods to reforest denuded landscape. Jim so excited that skips dinner Friday night so can get to sleep early and start planting at crack of dawn. Skips breakfast and lunch, too, as in heat of battle with shovel. Miraculously all baby boxwoods now lining edge of garden so brown dirt behind not as visible by late afternoon. Finally, Jim eats healthy meal of fish and chips topped off with huge amounts of candy. Was supposed to take Susan to movie, but after falling asleep at computer informs Susan too pooped to participate. This not new to Susan who’s heard this line before, usually at bedtime. At about 10 p.m. Jim

rises from sofa and screams in pain from terrible Charlie Horse in thigh. Tells Susan pain so bad cannot breathe. Suddenly collapses back in couch and passes out. Susan seen this behavior before as well so might not give second thought but oddly no alcohol has been consumed by Jim entire weekend. Susan panics. Calls 911. Jim totally incoherent entire time Susan conversing with dispatcher. Amazingly when both firemen and paramedics arrive, Jim rallies and start telling guys this occurred because he was getting frisky with wife on sofa. Nice young fireman asks if Jim seems normal to Susan who must confess this is typical behavior. He advises Jim and Susan that, “if you were my parents – oh, or friends” he would tell us to go to ER. Susan, who has now almost had a heart attack herself, must drive Jim to hospital as Jim refuses to go in ambulance. After 3 hours in ER, numerous tests of all varieties, cannot quite figure out what went wrong. However, doctor lectures Jim that he has all the risk factors for heart attack and stroke: high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and smoking. Release form from hospital states as follows: STOP SMOKING, STOP SMOKING, STOP SMOKING. Arriving home at 2 a.m. Susan despondently eyes cancellation letter from life insurance company stating policy no longer renewable. When Jim arises on Sunday morning realizes has new lease on life and clearly was vindicated in dropping life insurance policy. Tells Susan he will quit smoking, “just not today”. Jim finally decides hiring painter good idea. Painter informs Jim too rainy to paint house now - must wait until rainy season stops, perhaps next July.





**November** –Jim and Susan agree on something: love having relatives and friends in for Thanksgiving feast. Susan very lucky that cousin, Laurel, such a good cook as Jim totally worthless in any culinary endeavor. Meals that Jim has prepared over 42 years in Susan’s kitchen: burnt bacon and eggs - fried over very hard in grease of burnt bacon - blackened hamburgers and Campbell’s Chicken Noodle Soup garnished with crumbled soda crackers.





**December** – After near death experience in October, Susan really worried now about Jim’s ability to stay alive atop ladder.

Convinces Jim that can no longer put Christmas lights all over creation. Jim forced to scale back exterior illumination. Neighbors and wife thrilled that tacky display no longer features icicle lights and flashing reindeer. Windfall distribution from ladies’ investment club allows Susan to shop excessively for Christmas gifts for kids. Susan tries all manner of guilt to get Woody home for Christmas. But Hamilton – now opting for less suggestive given name – chooses to be with Amanda’s family for holiday. Jim assures Susan that only normal that son likes Amanda more than mother. Luckily, Katie & Freydi, Franky & Praise make Christmas morning jolly time. Jim spends majority



of New Year's Eve watching Twilight Zone marathon on upstairs TV far from Susan before hitting hay alone at 10:49 p.m. As new year dawns, hope for fulfilling married life in future fades . . .







**Happy Ground Hog Day and Love to all!!!**

## Life With Father Wreck

### Christmas 2014



**January** – “It was the worst of times. . . it was the winter of despair.” Jim having major meltdown because of a) Christmas Visa bills now appearing in mailbox b) stock strategy of 2013 of waiting for market correction totally backfired and c) impending retirement looming large on his horizon. Can see no light at end of financial tunnel and wonders if life will be worth living after loses day job. Susan also despondent after taking down Christmas decorations, without fun festive activities and with only Jim in house. Plus, rain begins deluge season making Oregon even more depressing in January, further exacerbating Rech household melancholy. Luckily, good friends, the Dufaults, offer diversion of coming to CA for some fun in the sun. Susan asks if she must invite Jim. Even though they say she must,

Susan readily agrees to go with whining spouse, Jim. Have great time in Palm Springs and things begin to look better.

**February** – Surely God is good as gives Rech’s something wonderful to look forward to: Katie and Freydi announce that they are expecting a baby! Both parents and grandparents-to-be are ecstatic. And another trip to Phoenix also lightens spirits.

OK, Jim’s imbibing of too many spirits at “Golphorama” takes its toll: 1<sup>st</sup> night Jim so pleased to see old Marriott cronies drinks wee bit - or way bit – too much Dewars. Since doesn’t want to ruin golf game and/or liver takes break from scotch on night 2. Night 3: Jim figures he is good to go again and consumes alcohol in quantities of mass destruction. Buddies must assist Jim off floor and into bed. This pathetic behavior is – sadly for Jim – communicated to Susan when she arrives at hotel after men’s golf outing over.



Men have finally determined that wives can – after 30 years – join them for first ever “Wife-o-rama”. But men assure Susan that the lack of restraint in drinking is totally offset by fact that Jim never played better golf, so all is forgiven by guys. Susan only forgives derelict Jim after having terrific time with other spouses.

**March** - Just when things beginning to brighten for Susan, Jim begins month long hibernation in upstairs office. Claims he is getting ready for teaching graduate business class at Portland State. Since Jim will be teaching course on business evaluation, Susan cannot fathom why researching class material more enticing than relationship with her. Wonders if really spending time perusing HBS cases for class material or if visiting websites of Don Juan wannabes?



**April** – Jim’s class begins. Jim envisions himself as inspirational professor ala Goodbye, Mr. Rech, To Sir Rech With Love, or Mr. Rech’s Opus. Devotes all free time to correcting student papers and planning scintillating speeches about statistics. Susan begins to feel like she’s drowning in sea of social isolation. Must save herself if cannot depend on Jim for companionship. Susan returns to Palm Springs to celebrate 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of friend, Cecily. Cecily and girlfriends just want to



have fun and this so much better than being with boring Jim. Susan sees value in maintaining female friends and so barely unpacks bags before leaving again for bridge tournaments in Seaside and Sunriver. Jim complains that Susan spending too much money on trips and too little time at home performing wifely duties of fixing him leftovers. Susan tells Jim if he would practice bridge program on computer instead of surfing net for porn or whatever, she would consider having him as her bridge partner. Until then she will not be caught dead at bridge table with Jim who refuses to learn even one new trick or convention.

**May** – Susan and sister Leecy have great trip to NYC joining brother Bill’s family for Joanna’s graduation from Barnard.



Thanks to Barkhorn’s putting them up in high style, have wonderful accommodations and Jim cannot complain about cost of trip. Henry again mentions that he misses Jim, but again, he seems to be in minority . . .

**June** – Jim retires after over 20 years at Macadam Capital Partners. Partners give Jim a great send-off but tell him to have office cleaned out ASAP.



Susan provides Jim home office space upstairs in small nook with no windows or ventilation. Jim considers un-retiring but what can he do? Weighs options for second career: day trader, golf pro. Determines that degree in engineering will finally pay off big time: will be next This Old House Bob Vila. Commences new life with enthusiasm. Susan not as enthusiastic about being in home alone with Jim, so schedules activities out of house from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. most days. This mistake as leaves Jim unsupervised in remodeling design decisions not to mention safety risks he imposes on self through lack of good judgment and out of shape body. However, does afford Jim ample work break time to smoke in garage without Susan mentioning smoking against work place regulations.







**July** – Ultrasound photos foretell Katie and Freydi are having a baby boy! Jim tells Freydi that either a boy or girl are good, but that Freydi dodged a huge bullet by having a boy, as they are much cheaper to raise. Jim begins to daydream about all the great fishing trips he & his grandson will take together. Katie and Susan all excited because now can decorate nursery accordingly. Katie wants walls painted gray despite Freydi saying that current color navy blue might be good for son. Luckily for Katie and Susan, very generous friends give baby showers to aid in outfitting room and baby. Even so, Jim notices that huge amounts of money being spent on Pottery Barn Kids website and begins to fear that assessment of affordability of baby boy may not be in line with reality. Dollars spent for clothes, \$235; curtains, \$198; crib, dresser and glider, \$1,312.

Last weekend of month, Shorewood girls arrive for reunion. Old high school friends are awesome houseguests and even Jim is on



best behavior as realizes little chance Susan's ultra-liberal friends will side with him in an argument. So Jim says nothing when girls say going for a big night out to see show starring octogenarian drag queen.



*Donella D*



**August** – Susan wakes up to find has turned old overnight: all joints seem to hurt and hard to move around. Tries to get sympathy from Jim but he, too is falling apart. Susan sees doctor who starts tests to determine what might be going haywire. Hypochondriac Susan has multiple theories: could be caused by Lyme disease, or listeria infected peaches from Fred Meyer or something really revolting caught by sleeping in same bed with Jim for 43 years. Despite pain, Susan rallies to go to bridge camp at beach with better bridge players than spouse. And Susan hell-bent on going to Wisconsin where she and Jim will get to see Amanda and Woody at Dairyman's. When Jim checks in at club office, immediately recognized as guy who sunk boat last year. Jim has whole week to bond with Susan and fish in lake before kids come. Day 1: Susan gets bored with sitting in boat and Jim's lack of alluring conversation. Days 2-7 Susan mutinies, takes car and shops in Boulder Junction. Fish also find Jim non-alluring. At least four muskies miss taking Jim's Mepps Giant Nut Buster. Day 8-11: Woody and Amanda great sports despite rainy weather and parents thrilled to have time with them. Only Woody manages to land a Muskie. All joyful except Jim not so much as catches nothing. Refuses to let others come in out of rain until he is successful. Susan finally tells him she's had it and Jim steers for shore.

**September** – Jim's second career as construction foreman not going well. Jim freaks out about house paint, which started out looking purple when applied by painter. Takes coaxing by painter, wife and real estate friend, Christi, that paint will not ruin resale value of home before Jim's nerves return to normal. Plus Jimmy Fixit manages to ruin hands in 6-weeks by a) building fence with Freydi b) building concrete wall to support tacky plastic window well covers c) perching atop not quite high enough ladder cleaning gutters and d) re-tarring 200-foot

driveway two times. Real men don't ask for directions at Home Depot so first time Jim mistakenly rolls half of surface with roofing tar, not driveway filler/sealer. But finally, successfully covers incriminating evidence of hole in driveway caused by Christmas tree conflagration of past season.

September 14<sup>th</sup> – Logan James Gomez born!!!



Most adorable baby ever. Katie and Freydi great parents but not too sure about Jim's ability to babysit. Try to train Jim how to hold baby properly. Jim advises them that he will not do diapers but will teach Logan old Delta Tau Delta ditties and raucous Navy songs. Parents worry turns to ire when Grampa Jim remarks: "What a porky little tax deduction!" Jim and Susan head to Washington DC to witness wonderful wedding of Gray Dufault. See Vilardo's and Hatch's in DC, visit Buckeystown for a trip down memory lane and have dinner with Barb and Bill Duncan and Carrie Barnett. Rendezvous with Bill, Paige and



Joanna in Chapel Hill and old college friends, the Muffleman's while staying at Inn at Warner Hall. Jim and David prove to wives that have not matured a bit since graduation 45 year ago by drinking all wine in Inn's cellar.

**October** – Happy occasion of wedding of Ty Reynolds good reason to return to Georgia where Jim and Susan lived when Jim in Navy. Have great time visiting Athens again with Sapera's, staying with college friends, the Bertelson's, seeing Susan's Henry and Duncan relations and planting a tree in Valdosta in honor of steel magnolia mother, Helen Duncan Barnett and aunt, Sarah Garbutt Duncan. Sue, Carey, Laurie and Leecy attend planting ceremony and cousins have delightful day exploring haunts of ancestors and eating biscuits and other scrumptious southern delicacies they remember from childhood.







**November** – Doctor tells Jim he must go under the knife to correct carpal tunnel nerve in both hands. Jim thinks he should do both at once. Susan informs Jim that her wifely duties do not include cleaning Jim up in bathroom if both hands impaired. Jim undergoes surgery on one hand. Susan also seeing lots of doctors who finally tell her that she has Dermatomyositis. Tries to blame Jim for illness, but doctors inform Susan it’s an autoimmune disorder where her own body attacks itself causing muscle problems. When Susan announces at dinner that she must take lots of Prednisone to combat disease, her friend laments that Susan will get fat and lose her hair. Jim pipes up “How fat?” Susan’s other friend hits Jim hard. So much for wedding vows of “for worse”.

**Thanksgiving, 2014** – “**It was the Best of Times . . . we had everything before us.**” Happy homecoming of Woody, Amanda, Leecy, Maggie and Cryan cousins for Thanksgiving. Great feast with Berselli and Dufault families.







**December** – Jim has second hand surgery. Susan hides ladder from Jim so cannot destroy hands or kill himself putting up icicle lights. Since home repair career on hold until hands recover and

since Jim believes country is moving in wrong direction, Jim ponders entering political arena. Has epiphany: fervently feels may have future as politician.

**Starts by sending letter to would be financial backers:**

“I have decided to run for President in 2016 since I have the time now that I am retired.

I am debating the merits of the platform on which to base my campaign and would appreciate your sage advice.

Platform:

- I promise to do everything anyone likes and nothing anyone dislikes.
- I will ensure everyone gets special treatment by all branches of the government, since everyone deserves it.
- I will also make the world safe for everyone, eliminate hunger and disease, and end all carbon emissions in this country by 2020.

Susan advises me that I will not get any votes, including not getting hers. Says no one would believe an old conservative white guy about my platform and my blunt delivery will alienate every voter in the country. However, I am not so pessimistic.

Thanks,

Jim”

**December 31<sup>st</sup>** - Since Susan now taking massive doses of Prednisone, waking at 3 a.m. most days, Rech’s fail to ring in New Year. Instead in bed by 9 p.m. But still sleeping in same bed so take that as good omen for year to come. Katie, Freydi and Logan also sleep in same bed. Days Logan has spent in newly painted, expensively outfitted nursery: 0.





**Happy Ground Hog Day and Love to all!**

# 2015-2017

Susan was diagnosed with cancer in the summer of 2015. There would be no more of her Christmas letters thereafter. Christmas was still a joyous time, but she didn't have the same strength to share the year with friends and family in her letters.

But she did not lose her spirit, smile and positive outlook for the future. Nor did her friends desert or ignore her. Quite the contrary. As the word spread, more and more people sent their love and support, and asked to be kept updated.

During the 2 years:

- She continued her relentless social life by getting out with friends for lunches, spending a great deal of time with Katie and Logan (and then AJ in 2017), Colonial Dames meetings, investment club meetings, Town club meetings, not to mention the many dinners and lunches out.
- We traveled the country to see friends we had made over the years, New England, Florida, D.C., North Carolina, Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Virginia, Illinois, Washington to mention the ones I remember.
- We made our annual vacation in northern Wisconsin in all three years.

During this time, we decided that the best way to keep people up to date was to send out e-mail blasts to everyone at once. This task fell to me, Father Wreck. After a few of the initial e-mails, I concluded that they needed to be more upbeat to be consistent with the strength Susan was showing in fighting cancer and continuing to enjoy life, even through her pain and fatigue. The following pictures are a testament to how strong she was throughout the ordeal of 2 years.















































Antonio Joseph Gomez born in January of 2017. A truly wonderful day for all.



We attended her 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion in June of 2017, which we both loved.





We made our annual trip to Dairyman's in northern Wisconsin later in June of 2017. The first week was with close friends.



The second week was with the family.







We got back to Portland after the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. She was still feeling low, but I was in denial and not recognizing her increasing pain.

Toward the end of July, we attended an outdoor concert at Waverley. She continued to demonstrate a strong spirit and smile.



A week after this picture was taken, she lost her battle with cancer.



Susan Barnett Rech passed away on July 28<sup>th</sup> after a two-year battle with cancer. She had family at her side and was finally out of pain and is now at peace.

Susan was born on May 9, 1949 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was blessed with loving parents, Joe and Helen Barnett, and three siblings, Bob, Leecy and Bill. She attended Lake Bluff Elementary School and Shorewood High School in the Milwaukee area. She earned an undergraduate degree at Northwestern University and a master's degree at the University of Georgia.

After marrying Jim Rech in 1971, she pursued many lines of work before her children arrived. In Newport Rhode Island, she worked at an antique shop. In Boston, she worked for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and the Harvard Business School. In New York, she worked for E. F. Hutton and then ADP, both in customer relations. She stayed with ADP for her time in Houston and then in Maryland, until her children arrived: Woody in 1982 and Katie in 1985. Since then, she devoted her time to making a wonderful home for her family.

During her time here on earth, she was a dedicated volunteer. As she moved around the country with Jim, she volunteered at many organizations in Newport, RI; Athens, GA;; Boston, MA; New York, NY; Houston, TX; and Buckeystown, MD. Her opportunities blossomed in Portland beginning in 1986. Riverdale School District, Colonial Dames, March of Dimes, the Boys and Girls Aid adoption agency, and the Town Club, amongst others, benefitted from her efforts.

Her occupations outside the home included party planning, vacation organizing and friend- making. These were some of her favorite things to do. She was successful on all counts and made everyone's lives more fun and fulfilled. To the end, she smiled all the time.

Her biggest chore in life was the 50-year project of trying to train and control Jim. He had been a frat-boy and a sailor, so the task was not easy. With help from many family and friends, she was amazingly successful in this endeavor, but those people all know that she never considered the project completed. Her family and friends have promised to take over the task.



Although it is difficult to mention all the qualities which made her a wonderful woman, a few stand out: smart, funny, energizing, hard-working, loving, giving, and faithful/friendly to all. But stubborn and strong-willed need to be included as well.

She is survived by her husband, Jim, her son and daughter, Hamilton and Katherine, their spouses/significant others Freydi and Amanda, her siblings, Bob, Leecy and Bill, her much loved grandchildren Logan and A.J., and loving cousins and their families. Susan had close friends here in Portland and around both the country and the world, all of whom will miss her deeply. In lieu of any flowers, Susan would want people to donate to their favorite charities. If you don't have a favorite, please consider the Knight Cancer Institute here in Portland, who helped give her extra time on this earth, or the Barker Adoption Foundation in Bethesda Maryland, who blessed her with her two loving children.