

California Breezes

COLUMN LEFT



The rain empties from the heavy clouds as our first big winter storm arrives, luckily after the Rose Bowl parade and football game. So, what better excuse do I have on my day-off than to start this edition of the "Breezes"? The tree and tinsel have been disposed of, the ornaments boxed away in closets, and the long holiday season is over. A new year has begun, a time of reflection as I look towards the next twelve months with optimism. I suppose it is natural for people to chart their progress in life this time of the year, and while I do not want to talk about this specifically, the way I view my life's journey is what I do want to share, and see if it resonates with any of you.

It seems to me that there are two models of the walk through life: the "I have arrived!" model, and the "I will never arrive" version, which is the one I have decided best fits me. The first one involves the philosophy that at some point, usually in adulthood, one considers that he or she has "arrived". A plateau has been reached, marked by attaining a certain place in one's career, or assembling the dream family, or recognizing some level of success, however measured. At

this level, the person sees that it is time to feel "settled" down or in, and that whatever nomadic tendencies may have been present up till now have been banished to the past.

The second model posits that life is a continual journey, with new and challenging surprises all along the way. One does not "arrive"--ever--but that this fact is not something to despair over, but to be accepted and embraced. This is where I see myself. Before, while studying to be a priest, I thought that ordination was to have been my "arrival". A career set in place, and questions about "where I was going with my life" answered, I was all set to settle in with my priesthood. Well, obviously unexpected curves pushed me off the prescribed path, and instead of settling down, left me wondering what the future had in store for me. While that was disconcerting for a while, I came to realize that I probably will never "arrive", and that the journey I am taking will venture me into different directions, many of them unexpected. I am fine with this, and I simply want to enjoy life wherever it takes me, however it challenges me. I will never have children and grandchildren to be proud of, a house with the picket fence in Suburbia, USA, doesn't seem likely either, or any of the typical characteristics of a "settled-down" lifestyle. I am not sure if I will even have Social Security to look forward to, but at least one thing is sure--my 401k awaits me someday in the future!

birthdays coming up

February 1st: **Jason Lee**

February 2nd: **Arianna**

February 21st: **Dad**

February 21st: **Sr. Marilyn**

(January must have been a slow month!)

Happy birthday
to you all!

HOUSTON

Lingering Memories of '94

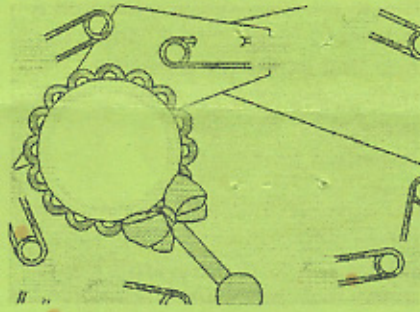
In an instant, Christmas is over. The months-long buildup is now history, and spending on gifts is through, and now it is time to look towards a new year with new optimism for better times to come. Our holidays were filled with lots of, well, waiting, wondering if our new addition would come along with Santa, Rudolph and the rest, or would he make us sweat it out until January. At this writing, he has not come out of hibernation, but nonetheless, we are ready for him. I hope that Christmas went well for the rest of

the family, especially the grown-ups, because it always goes well for the kids. As each year passes, and as our kids grow a little older, I become more and more convinced that the real spirit of Christmas is not in the matters of buying presents and all that rot, but, rather, in the true innocence of the children who still believe that an overage, overweight, and overworked single individual can bring happiness to the countless families of this world in one solitary night.

Remembering my own memories of Christmas brings back times of little or no responsibilities, only carefree and joyous times in all that the season brought. Now, as a parent, I try to relive those times each year, but through my kids, and through watching them become excited by the arrival of Santa Claus. The true meaning, involving the birth of Jesus Christ, rests in the hearts of us old enough to understand its significance, and to realize that in due time, our kids will come to understand it themselves, and will replace the childish icons of the holidays with holier substitutes.

Looking back over the year that is now concluding, I would have to say that it contained highs and lows, probably like others' as well. Last January, we had two new permanent guests arrive into our home from war-torn El Salvador. Despite their immediate help with the kids and household chores, it would still take months to acclimate ourselves to their arrival, and the adjustment was necessary on both sides. Then, in May, we found out that our family was going to expand again in nine months, much to our initial chagrin. Starting over with nightly feedings and the rest of the mess that goes along with a new baby, we both felt at first that we would not be ready, nor willing, to go through it again. But that feeling would eventually disappear, to be replaced with excitement that another child will be

born--a person who would give us many hours and years of pleasure and pride. After all, the intensive attention-sharing would last only for a relatively short time, until Gregory would become more independent. But, now I have to say that this is the *last* kid for these ever-getting older parents! I want to think about retirement-planning, not diapers.



Frinee and I are very much looking forward to the baptism and the visitation by Mom and Dad, Lynn and Woody, to our neck of the woods. Although Houston lacks the natural scenic beauty of say, New Jersey or parts of Michigan, it is always so special when someone takes the time and expense to come to Texas. Our state is so rich in history and culture, and everyone who doesn't live there thinks that we live in a big, hot and dry state, devoid of natural attractions. And that is only somewhat accurate. Texas possesses such diverse beauty, ranging from the mountains and ruggedness of West Texas, to the green, forested eastern side of the state. In the middle is probably the best part, with rolling hills and all kinds of attractions to enjoy. So, it distresses me to hear people blast the Lone Star state based upon mere glimpses of what may have been negative experiences of people who are not too familiar with our God's Country.

All of us from Houston wish everyone else a happy new year, filled with good health and a full spirituality. Thanks to all those who sent us Christmas blessings, as we wished you the same in our hearts and minds!



The buzz around town...

With all the rains we have had here in Southern California, no one can rain on San Diego's parade! With the Chargers going to their first Super Bowl, that city has gone nuts, as can be expected. Of course, this Super Bowl can be called the California Bowl, since for the first time ever, two teams from this great state are squaring off against each other for the crown. I was watching the AFC championship game between Pittsburgh and San Diego at work, and when we won, I was jumping up and down and shouting with joy. Who cared if this caused a scene?

Very eerie was the fact that the earthquake that devastated Japan happened *on the very anniversary day* of the big Northridge quake of '94. Much has been made of this anniversary, but to be honest, I am not one who wants to dwell on that horrific day. Not that I am one prone to forget the past, but the reminders of that terrible experience are all but impossible to forget, so why would I want to bring it all up again? I expect another big one to happen here, but just when and how big, no one knows. Time to move onto happier thoughts!

Looks like I will be moving from Calabasas soon. I have been talking with my ex-roommate, Mark, and he and his friend have decided it would be nice to find a house to rent together, somewhere in the North Hollywood area probably. My lease is up at the end of February, so I may decide to leave then or shortly after. I would give Melissa a month's notice, and since most of the furniture here is mine, she would have to find someone with furniture of their own, or face

having to buy her own stuff. Anyway, I know she would be surprised and saddened when I tell her, as she sees us as family, although I don't quite share the same perspective on our living together the past year. Moving to the North Hollywood area would move me further from work, but closer to other friends and the social scene I enjoy. No more

rolling hills with grazing cows to look at outside my patio door, but change is good, I think.

Speaking of apartment living, we recently had painters over to patch and paint the place, so now there are no signs of earthquake damage visible. It had been a few years since the walls had been painted, with the exception of one wall I

painted a grape color, so it was about due anyway. Thinking back to the days on Colonial Drive, I can remember some of those paint jobs the living room or the kitchen went through. One that stands out for some reason was the time the kitchen had a brick red floor with bright yellow walls. I think the fridge was a color similar to the floor at the time...



from "PACIFIC NORTHWEST
BEAUTIFUL COOKBOOK"

Western Washington

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

It's common in western Washington to have lots of green tomatoes at the onset of fall, due to our short growing season. Cornmeal-coated fried tomatoes are often served with pan-fried oysters and tartar sauce.

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 large green tomatoes, about 2 1/2 lb., cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil or a mixture of oil and bacon drippings

In a large bowl, mix the cornmeal, paprika, salt, and pepper. Dip the tomato slices in the mixture to coat them well on both sides.

In a large skillet, preferably made of cast iron, heat half the oil over medium heat. Fry the tomato slices in batches until golden brown on both sides, a total of about 2-4 minutes, adding more oil as necessary. Serve immediately.

SERVES 6

(Wonder what's better--the recipe or the movie!)



Saw "Legends of the Fall" recently. Found it to be an emotional rollercoaster, an intense film with some good acting, beautiful scenery and some violence. I normally avoid movies that are violent, (which is why I refuse to go see "Pulp Fiction") but there is not an overwhelming amount in "Legends" and I recommend it, especially if you are a Brad Pitt fan, which I am!

Watched "Driving Miss Daisy" last night, at home. I can't remember ever seeing it, although I feel I must have a long time ago. I really enjoyed it, and it reinforced my notion that Jessica Tandy was a very fine actress. A real gentle film worth renting and viewing if you haven't seen it in a while...

I wasn't going to do it, but I finally had to get outta the house one very rainy day, so I canoed to the local movie house and saw "Dumb and Dumber." To say that it was a great movie would be a gross exaggeration, but it did provide lots of laughs at the goofy antics of Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels...



Happy Valentine's Day!!