

BURNHAMISH

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Flash back to 1994: Bill Clinton was president, the Motorola 2900 Bag Phone was at the forefront of cell phone technology, and OJ Simpson took us along on history's most exciting low-speed chase.

Sometime between Nancy Kerrigan getting whacked in the knee

and Newt Gingrich achieving House Speaker status, I accepted a new job with a company in Michigan, and by golly, I also had to move there, leaving behind family and friends. In the Holiday 1994 edition of *Burnhamish* I remarked the three most stressful events in a person's life are getting a new job, moving, and leaving family and friends. Check, check, and check! Certainly, there are plenty of other events that share the rank of "most stressful," and your list depends on your particular circumstances. Perhaps *losing* your job, *not* being able to move, and being *close* to family are stressing you out. Perhaps writing holiday newsletters pushes you over the line.

**It's not stress that kills us,
it is our reaction to it.**

-Hans Reyes

The last few years have been replete with stress of all kinds—don't let the holidays cause more. Let go! Reduce your expectations a little. When was your last "perfect" (insert your special event here)? Is there such a thing? Perhaps your holidays are closer to perfect than you're letting them be.



Holiday 2011

**THERE'S ONLY TWO SONGS IN ME,
AND I JUST WROTE THE THIRD**

Perhaps the biggest news for 2011, and I think you will agree, is that I got a new office desk. Who doesn't like getting new office furniture? It's just like Carolyn's, but a mirror image. It is a nice desk. I sold the old desk, and got enough to pay myself for the time and effort it took to disassemble the pieces and bundle them up, with all the hardware sorted and placed in zipper bags with the assembly instructions.

I got a new office desk because we moved into a new house. In the old house, I had a man cave off the master bedroom, and Carolyn set up a home office in the former dining room. In the new house, we share a den on the first floor, so the desks must match.

"But what about your man cave," you may ask. I have to build a new one! The old house had an unfinished basement, but there was a space for a workshop. I need a workshop because ~~I have to hide from my family~~ I am an engineer, and I have to drill and saw things. The new house has a finished basement, but no workshop, so I will have to build one.

**YOU HAD A MAN CAVE AND A
WORKSHOP, AND YOU WENT
AND BOUGHT A NEW HOUSE
WITHOUT THOSE THINGS?**

We bought a new house because we wanted to see how much we would lose by selling our old house in a depressed housing market. I'm kidding. We

**WHAT THE HECK IS WITH
THAT PICTURE ON YOUR
CHRISTMAS CARD?**

What did you do for Mother's Day? Go to brunch? Visit with family? How boring. We decided to do something we had only dreamed about in the fifteen-odd years we lived in Michigan- tour the ruins of the Packard plant in downtown Detroit! My good friend and Motor City native Tim Soboleski selflessly gave his time to take us on a tour. We also visited the old Ford Piquette Plant (at the same time some Model T enthusiasts were doing a photo shoot), and gazed in stunned wonder at the urban art of the Heidelberg Project. For more images go to www.burnhamish.com and click on "Tour de Troit."



**Don't sweat the small stuff...
and it's all small stuff.**

-Richard Carlson

really wanted to find out how many days it would take to pack our stuff, and how many trucks it would require. I'm kidding again. What we really wanted was to break the world record for longest closing. I think we came pretty darn close.

I am kidding! I kid. I am a kidder.

Do you remember that new job thing I told you about last December (or January- I forget, did we send out Christmas cards before or after Christmas)? Navistar determined I was neither a felon nor a junkie, and I started working for them in lovely Fort

Wayne at the end of February. I stayed in a corporate apartment there during the week and

drove back to Waterford on weekends. Apartment life reminded me why I choose to own a house.

THE SINGLE LIFE

While I selfishly lived a second bachelorhood in Fort Wayne, Carolyn and the girls carried on as best they could without me. Carolyn continued building her organizing/green consulting/focaccia bread business while Lauren and Shae continued the drudgery of finish-

ing out the school year. Carolyn also baked a lot of focaccia bread.

After skiing season ended, Lauren and Shae took up tennis, which they both enjoyed. Seriously, any activity where they can whack a ball (or any object, really) at someone else appeals to them.

Maybe baseball didn't stick because you're trying to hit the ball *away* from everyone else.

Lauren and Shae also continued with their 4-H club activities. Growing up, I always thought 4-H was only about prize hogs and growing the biggest vegetables. Their 4-H group was more about sewing and crafts than, oh, animal husbandry and squash. Both built model rockets, sewed pajama sets, and participated in a fashion show. Shae, participating as a "Cloverbud," would have won an award in the show, had she been eligible to win one. Lauren entered her pajamas in the Oakland County 4-H fair and snagged first place in her category! She also won awards for poetry and an illustrated children's story she coauthored.

While all this is going on, Navistar was renovating their new headquarters in Lisle, Illinois (this is where I put the pieces together- pay attention). When I hired in, Navistar was



headquartered in Warrenville, IL, but their engineering was in Fort Wayne. Hence, my nightmarish commute. The new headquarters has corporate and product development all at the same campus. Bad news for the people of Fort Wayne, but good for me, since I pursued the job because it was taking me back the Chicago area.

WRAP IT UP ALREADY

Okay okay. The house went up for sale in April, we moved out June 30th, and moved into the new house shortly thereafter.

We were homeless for three weeks, but ~~sponged off~~ enjoyed the hospitality of relatives during that time.

We spent what seemed like the next eternity unpacking the trailer-and-a-half that held our possessions, and we think we found everything. We even found a picture we lost from the last move in 2002. Yes, there were some things we had never fully unpacked.

LIFE GOES ON

Shae Started third grade at J. B. Nelson Elementary, and is excelling in every subject. Of course. She wants to play percussion once she gets into fifth grade, but has been advised she will need a couple of years of piano lessons first. Unlike all the drummers I grew up with,

percussion students these days need to know something about actual music. We are desperately looking for a piano teacher in the Greater Batavia Area, so if you know one, or are one, let's talk. If you're a drummer, I'll try to hook you up.

Lauren started 6th grade at Roto Middle School, and joined the concert band as a trombone player. I had absolutely no influence on that decision, but I insist she sticks it out until the end of the year, then she's free of the tyranny of the bass

clef. She loves Drama class, and anything that has to do with reading, writing, and mythology. And vampires.

Carolyn put her organizing business on the back burner (next to the bread dough) when we put the Michigan house up for sale, and focused her efforts on the move. It took

years to feel "at home" the last time we moved, and we had only moved five miles. This was a bigger move, in every respect, but we are back home. Finally.

Me? I'm simply the architect of all the grief and frustration. And the breadwinner, so there. Carolyn is still the bread *maker* (yum!)

Joyous Kwanzaa! Lichtigin Chanukah! Merry Christmas!



Shae and John scrounged up enough snow to make a miniature snow-sleestak.