

December 2007

LARRY: Some years are more hectic than others...

Whew, where to begin! I finished the hillside garden in LA, using multiple terraces to capture the sunset and mountain views. I've been experimenting with xeriscaping: using a combination of native plants that need only the winter rains and accent rocks that need no water at all ☺

Alas, I've had to bid adieu to the LA garden: we've returned to Walnut Creek a year earlier than planned! Emergent decided to centralize all technology development on the east coast, doubling my travel, when I've been trying hard to cut my travel in half! I did not want to live on a plane for the next year, so I left early to get a head start on the next big career step. Michelle's job had also gotten to be more hassle than value (see below), so we decided to rush the rest of the LA renovation tasks and sell early. Then, the whole housing market collapses, and I run late on the renovations. ☺ So we're now renting out our killer LA house (www.4316donpio.com), and we've just gotten back to our favorite place ever: our Walnut Creek home and garden!

And, finally, instead of shaping my life around my work, I am now shaping my work around my life. My repetitive stress injuries from my EA days keep flaring back up, with all the long hours and amount of travel I have been doing being an apparent factor. So the next career step will be one with much less travel, and one where I can put some of my new theories on iterative software development to the test ☺ In the meantime, I'm doing some consulting and training in accelerated game development techniques and working on another book: *Iterative Innovation in Games and Gardens*. The new business plan doesn't have a title yet... ☺

MICHELLE: As Larry mentioned, change is in the air. One you've probably noticed first off is the presence of this letter without an accompanying card. Since most of our holiday stuff is buried in the middle of the garage (we've only been back in Walnut Creek a week at the writing of this letter), we decided we'd rather get the news out than go spelunking for more paper. ☺

Larry alluded to my crazy ex-job at Phillips. After spending months cleaning up after my ex-boss, I spent the next few months teaching myself graphic design software to format the student catalog and student handbook to save the school thousands of dollars in the midst of a severe budget crisis. Although I'm not one for excessive praise and fanfare, the lack of appreciation for my efforts sealed my early departure, and I was followed by no small number of colleagues. My search has begun for my next employment "adventure," and I hold out hope that it will not take away energy from my new novel-writing effort.

The year hasn't been *all* crazy, though. Larry and I adopted a kitten ("Aji") this spring, bringing our cat total back up to three. I got to enjoy the company of my college friends in July in Maine, my family on a whirlwind vacation through San Diego and LA in August, and Larry's family on a trip to Canada in October. We managed to avoid any major damage from the Santa Ana winds and the wildfires, and now we're back in a place that feels like home.

We hope you'll come to visit soon! Here are our new/old digits:

Larry cell & e-mail:
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