

December 3, 2006

Happy Holidays Family and Friends,

"So this is Christmas and what have you done , another year over and a new one just begun. And so this is Christmas, I hope you have fun, the near and the dear one, the old and the young. A very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year, let's hope it's a good one without any fear. And so this is Christmas, for weak and for strong, for rich and the poor ones, the world is so wrong. And so happy Christmas, for black and for white, for yellow and red ones, let's stop all the fight. A very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year, let's hope it's a good one without any fear. Happy Christmas!"

-- John Lennon and Yoko Ono

However you may feel about the war, we all still need to support the nearly 200,000 U.S. military service members serving in Iraq today and many more serving around the world during the holidays. As we celebrate the season, let's not forget their sacrifice. One way to show you care is to send care packages, but care packages aren't as needed as they once were. That's because there are 53 American Armed Forces Exchange Service facilities throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, each providing at least toiletries, phone cards and cold drinks. So we recommend you now order "Gift from the Homefront" gift certificates, allowing troops to pick up toothpaste, socks or even Burger King Whoppers when they want them at any of these facilities. Order the gift certificates by visiting aafes.org or by calling (877) 770-4438. Gift certificates may be sent to an individual service member, designated by the purchaser, or distributed to "any service member" through the Air Force Aid Society, American Red Cross, Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, Fisher House, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Operation Homefront, Operation Interdependence, Soldier & Family Assistance Center, USA Cares or the USO.

It's great to be back supporting the military again. In August I started working for the U.S. Marine Corps in Quantico, VA. I'm a writer/editor and public affairs specialist for Marine Corps Systems Command. I've been handling mostly media queries, but soon I will be editing a new magazine, probably after the first of the year. I recently worked on the dedication of the new National Museum of the Marine Corps, and was able to hang out with the media during the president's speech, shooting photos and covering the event.

Priscilla isn't working yet because she is still undergoing physical therapy for her new knee. She had her first knee replaced in 2003 and that went fine, but her second knee replacement didn't do so well and she had that replaced again this past June. That happened right after we sold our townhouse in Fullerton, CA. We then spent a month and a half in a Long Beach apartment while Priscilla recovered before we moved to Lorton, VA, near Washington, DC.

Moving from California to the East Coast was our fourth trip across the nation, but we only made a few stops this time because we hurried to get to a family reunion at Priscilla's Mom's house on the Jersey Shore. We began by heading north and visiting Pebble Beach with it's 17-mile scenic drive. There are eight golf courses along the breathtaking route that takes you by the beautiful Pacific coastline, including the emerald fairways of the world-renowned Pebble Beach Golf Links. Along the way we discovered some treasures like black cormorants, brown pelicans and California sea otters, painted on nature's canvas with the natural soothing hues of the seashore as their background. We ate lunch at the Inn at Spanish Bay with a view of the first tee where a few doe enjoyed a grassy meal while men hit balls over their heads.

Next, we visited Priscilla's sister Laurene and her family in Palo Alto. Boy, kids sure do seem to grow fast, and Laurene is so inspirational with her green lifestyle. After the nice visit we stopped in Sacramento and visited my cousins... another nice visit and more kids growing up way too fast. Then we continued north to the state where I

grew up and spent some time with my brothers in Portland. Steve and Rosemary's kids, again, way too fast. From Portland we finally started east, but first we made a stop in La Grande and visited with my friends Don and Perry. I've known Don since junior high school and we shared a house for a while before I joined the Navy. It's always great catching up with these old friends. We also had a chance to catch up with some old friends of Priscilla outside of Ogden, Utah. In fact, it was Cilla's namesake friend Priscilla and her daughter Alexi. They met us for dinner just across the Wyoming border. One more time... way too fast!

Except for spending the night along the route, we didn't make another stop until North Platte, Nebraska, the home of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. This is where the famous and colorful showman, Army scout and buffalo hunter decided to retire. He owned an elegant 1886 Victorian home with a huge red barn on a 4,000-acre spread he named "Scout's Rest Ranch." The restored house and barn now sit on a 25-acre state historical park. I arrived early in the morning before it opened so I was unable to meander inside Bill's home. It was cool, though, at sunrise with a misty fog shrouding the picturesque scene. I also wandered over and visited with the three scrawny bison near the barn.



Besides stopping for substance and rest, our two-vehicle convoy (Priscilla drove her Prius hybrid with our cat "Amore" while I guided my Tacoma truck and trailer) didn't make any diversions again until we hit the Jersey Shore. While we lived in California, Priscilla had made a few trips back to the east coast to visit with family, but I hadn't seen most of her relatives in a few years. They all seemed to marvel at the weight Cill and I have lost over the past couple of years, although I put a few pounds back on (checking in at a little over 200 now), and I couldn't get over how much all the kids had grown in such a short time (that seems to be the theme of the year). All 15 grandchildren call Priscilla's mom "Megs" and her husband "Chief," although I'm not sure why. We took a big family photo on the beach and there's more than 30 people in the photo. It was great to spend time, visit with and see everyone. Plus, I really enjoyed playing in the ocean, and drinking in the romantic sunsets and wonderful wine with my wife and her family.

We returned to Chief and Meg's Long Beach Island house in New Jersey for our anniversary in early October. Priscilla's Mom was nice enough to let us use it for a romantic weekend getaway. We drove up and took the coast route via the Cap May-Lewes Ferry. The weather was a little rough, so Priscilla didn't have the best time on the water, but I sure did enjoy the boat ride. We both really enjoyed our stay on LBI, though. We had a nice anniversary dinner at the Plantation restaurant, took a stroll up the beach, saw a great sunrise come up over the Atlantic, visited the Historic Viking Village during an environmental fair, visited the Barnegat Lighthouse, did some shopping at Bay Village and watched the N.Y. Giants win at a local sports bar. I also took a little drive down to Atlantic City and brought back an extra couple of hundred dollars playing craps. I'd say we had a very successful weekend.

The best time that Priscilla and I had recently was attending *Cirque du Soleil's* performance of *Corteo*. We witnessed this joyous procession the evening following Thanksgiving under the big top in DC. It's a festive parade imagined by a clown, a marvelous show that brings together the passion of the actor with the grace and power of the acrobat, plunging us into a theatrical world of fun, comedy and spontaneity situated in a mysterious space between heaven and earth. We thoroughly enjoyed this timeless celebration in which illusion teases reality. This was Priscilla's birthday present this year, and not only did we see the show, we also enjoyed *Tapis Rouge*, a VIP tent open one hour before the show and during intermission, allowing us to discover an array of mouth-watering food, fine wines, and delicious cocktails all served up in a stunning setting and a comfortable atmosphere. It also came with great seats for the show so we could easily be overwhelmed with the magical story of beauty, fantasy and poetry that only *Cirque du Soleil* can tell.

We spent the day before, Thanksgiving, first delivering home-baked cookies to military guards standing duty on this rainy holiday at area bases and to some of the injured service members at Walter Reed medical Center Hospital, and then we spent the rest of the day visiting with our crazy cousins the Pattersons and Johnsons at Karen and Red's in Beltsville, MD. This is the best holiday to reflect what there is to be thankful for... which brings me to a story I saw recently on the Today Show. Charlie Ebersol is part of a team that produced and directed a documentary called *Ithuteng* (Never Stop Learning). It's about a South Africa school where raped and violently traumatized teenagers learn to overcome their young lives' horrors. Charlie had just heard a horrible story about a young person and afterwards a student asked why he was not smiling. Charlie said because he just heard a story that made him sad. The student replied, "You don't have the right not to smile. You're alive. You have a great life." When you think about it... we're all alive, we all live comfortably in the U.S., we all have a great life. That's something to be very thankful for. So actually, none of us have the right not to smile.



I've smiled a lot lately.. The Saturday before Halloween, as Zorro I escorted my wonderful wife, dressed as an adorable sexy devil, to Miranda and Steve's Halloween Party. Then one week later Priscilla and I attended the Marine Corps Ball, and she said this was the first "prom" like event she had ever attended. She was a beautiful vision in her long elegant black gown. I think we made a great looking couple with me in my tux. The next weekend, on the Marine Corps' birthday and the day

before Veteran's Day, I worked the dedication of the new National Museum of the Marine Corps, and covered speeches by former Marine and nationally known newscaster Jim Lehrer, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and President Bush.

Since I get every other Friday off because I work a compressed work schedule, Priscilla and I have taken that day to visit a few museums in the D.C. area. We marveled at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's new Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, also known as "America's Hangar." It opened near my birthday in 2003, just in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first flight. We saw a WW-II P-38 Lightning, the B-29 Superfortress "Enola Gay" that dropped the first atomic bomb and the giant supersonic airliner "Concord." What impressed me the most was the SR-71A Blackbird, the world's fastest jet propelled aircraft. Its top speed is about 2,250 MPH or Mach 3.3. Priscilla was most enchanted by the Space Shuttle Enterprise. I recommend not eating at this museum, as the eateries are ran by McDonalds.



On the other hand, we ate very well at the new Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. The museum's *Mitsitam* (means "let's eat" in the Piscataway and Delaware language) Café, with a fire-pit-equipped kitchen, serves Indian-inspired food, including quahog clam chowder, Peruvian mashed-potato cakes, smoked seafood and bison chili. It's set up like a food court, but every booth is authentic Native American food from different areas. We ate from the Northwest section which included Salmon and Venison. We also enjoyed the nearly one million tribal objects housed at the museum, some as old as 10,000 years and all hailing from more than a thousand indigenous cultures in the Americas, from the Arctic to the southern tip of South America. We strolled through the museum's three main shows: *Our Universes*, which focuses on Indian spiritual beliefs; *Our Peoples*, which presents historical events as seen through native eyes; and *Our Lives*, which explores the identities of Native Americans in the 21st century. An excellent museum.

We also visited the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, where we learned how the U.S. government prints money and saw millions stacked on pallets. Even though I asked, they wouldn't provide any samples. One place that really impressed me was the National Archives. We went there with cousins Stuart, Karen and Lynn. Most everyone knows that the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are there, but the other exhibits are also impressive. Gripping eyewitness accounts, in the form of letters, diaries, audio and film recordings, chronicle dramatic moments in U.S. history. We didn't take enough time to really enjoy everything so we're going to return here one day.

One of Priscilla's favorite events that we attended this past year is the Long Beach Grand Prix back in April. I volunteered to work Public Affairs for the event with friends Pam and Fred, and Priscilla visited the day of the celebrity race. After the race was over we were walking by the fenced off celebrity area trying to get some photos when this race suit comes flying over the fence. I was able to help Priscilla grab it, and then we noticed the "Dr. McDreamy" name tag. It was Patrick Dempsey's suit. I quickly talked with a few friends and we were able to get Priscilla in to meet Patrick, and he gladly signed his suit. I think she also gained a new appreciation for racing that day, as one of Fred's son's took Priscilla on a behind the scene's tour with a walk through the pits. She was really impressed. What an adventurous day that was for her. I also had a great time setting up interview rooms and working the press resting and food area. I was able to get Sebastien Bourdais's autograph (the race winner and series champ), as well as Katherine Legge's. She's the first woman to ever compete full-time in the Champ Car World Series. Katherine really impressed me when we met, and I hope she does well with her racing career.



A couple of months before the Grand Prix, while working for the City of Bellflower, I had the opportunity to meet the Academy Award-winning actor Ernest Borgnine. He's one of my all time favorite actors, a former Navy Sailor, and probably known best for his TV role in *McHale's Navy*. He was the guest of honor and the keynote speaker at Bellflower's Bravo Awards in February.



One of the reasons we wanted to return to the East Coast was to spend time with family, and we've been able to do a lot of that. We've attended a couple of Scott's football games and to see him receive his junior black belt in karate. We were there when Lynn and her cheerleading team won a local competition, and we saw her brother Ryan play varsity football for his high school. Priscilla also witnessed Shannon's softball game, saw Brittany inducted into the National Honors Society, watched Amanda compete in swimming, and she tries to get up to Jersey once a month to visit family, especially her niece and nephew Eric and Brooke. And we can't wait to see more swimming and diving

events, upcoming school plays, and other activities that nieces, nephews and cousins are participating in.

We saw one of our cousins graduate from college at about this same time last year. We flew to Maryland from Southern California to yell and scream as Erin received her degree from Frostburg State University, located up in the mountains in the panhandle of the state. Much of the Patterson-Johnson clan were there... Erin's parents Red and Karen, her brothers Sean and Ryan, and her sister Lynn. Her uncles Stuart and Bruce also attended, along with family friends Sharon and Earl. Erin's ceremony was held on my birthday, and we attended a graduation party afterwards at a local establishment, so I did get to go to a party on my birthday. This year Priscilla is organizing some special events on Dec. 16th for my 50th birthday (which is actually the 17th, but that's on a Sunday, so we're partying Saturday night), an early family dinner at one restaurant and later in the evening all are invited to the Tysons Corner *On The Border* restaurant for margaritas and more.

Even if we don't see you for my birthday, we hope to visit with you sometime during the season so we can wish you happy holidays, if not in person, hopefully by phone, email, or at least through holiday cards and letters. This is a special time of year, a favorite time for Priscilla and myself. We love decorating the house and putting up the Christmas Tree, and I enjoy writing this letter and sharing our year with you. We also try not to miss the holiday specials on TV... all the great animation like the Grinch, Rudolph and the Peanuts gang, and the movies like *White Christmas*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Miracle on 34th Street* and *A Christmas Carol*. Have you noticed all the different versions of the Charles Dickens' classic? I don't know which version I enjoy most, but it is one of my favorite stories... the premise of three spirits haunting the miser Ebenezer Scrooge, taking him to the past, present and future in order to prompt him to adopt a more caring attitude in life, is such a creative idea. My favorite spirit is the *Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come*, the most fearsome of the three. It is a slender phantom, 12 feet tall, and appears to Scrooge as a figure entirely muffled in a black hooded robe, except for a single gaunt hand with which it points. It never speaks or makes any sort of vocal noise. It is probably inspired by visual representations of the Grim Reaper. The spirit shows Scrooge scenes from the future, including his lonely death and the lack of attention given to his funeral, the mourning of his clerk Bob Cratchit over the death of Tiny Tim, and finally his own grave. This hooded ghost gives Scrooge the vision of what life will be like if he doesn't change his ways. That's a very strong message!

Somehow we need this phantom to visit us as a people, maybe all three spirits. First, to take us back to the past, to show us our addiction to power and speed, and how this addiction is using up all our energy and resources, polluting the earth and destroying the planet. Then the ghost of the present would appear and show us the warnings we received and how we're ignoring them. This spirit would tell us about global warming, how the planet is dying, and how most of us still drive gas-guzzling, pollution-creating SUVs, how most of us don't recycle or buy recycled products, and how most of us refuse to live a green lifestyle. So don't be surprised when the third spirit arrives, the Grim Reaper, to show us people suffering and dying from the storms and flooding created by the melting of arctic ice. And then as it takes us further into the future, don't be surprised if this hooded figure just points at a dead planet, no animals, no species, no people.

We think it's time to adopt a more caring attitude toward everyone and the planet. And the holiday season is the best time to start. Priscilla and I are now doing our best to incorporate a green lifestyle, to change the way we live, the things we buy, and what we do, to help save the planet. If we are going to make a difference, we need everyone to do their part. And if you don't know where to begin... join our cause. We're trying to start a new organization called PURPOSE - People United Rightly Protecting Our Sacred Earth. You can visit our online discussion group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CommittedPURPOSE/>, where everyone can share ideas and learn more about what they can do. And you can find more information and links about global warming, reducing pollution, protecting the environment, endangered species, ocean dead zones, nonviolence, and human rights, with tips and ideas to help save the planet, at our temporary website <http://FreedomExpress.net/PURPOSE>. Don't just be an environmentalist, be an Earth Warrior and start living with a PURPOSE.

Thanks for letting us share our life adventures and our passions with you. We hope your holidays are filled with adventure, passion, peace, hope and the gift of love. Whatever your faith, the true meaning of the holidays - giving the gift of love - is a powerful message. Not just on your given holiday celebration, but every other day of the year as well.

Much affection,
Bill and Priscilla