

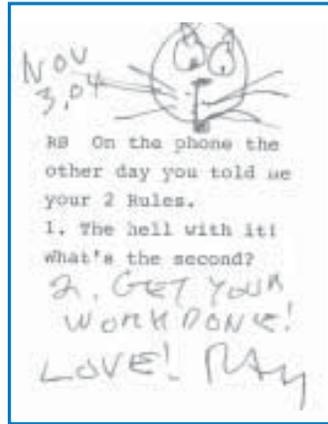


Jackdaw

2005

Brief Lesson from der Magister

In a phone conversation with the Legendary One, Ray Bradbury, about some minor point, he said, “Not important! Forget it! Remember my Two Rules of Life. The first is...*The Hell with it!*” I forgot to ask him the second.



So I typed a postcard with that Rule One on it and “What’s the second Rule?” Four days later, back came my postcard in an envelope with his kindergarten style “cat face with whiskers poking out” and underneath Ray had scrawled “#2. Get your work done! Love! Ray.” That’s how things are handled by the sci-fi Master Hissself, plus his largesse in suggesting the name “Jackdaw” for this annual report.

2005 So! Welcome to the latest Jackdaw replete with sundry news, very personal views, stolen quotes, musing and meandering thoughts ... But – this year no trying to squeeze in lots of names. Every year after the mailing goes out, the laments begin, “I didn’t see *my* name in Jackdaw!” or “What happened to *me*?” Of course you should be in here! All 1200 names should be. Sorry, not possible. Causes wars and insurrections. And pimples.

I can’t open things. Tightly wrapped cellophane items, bags of peanuts or pretzels on planes, all are a mystery to me. But you’d be amazed how many nice women I’ve met traveling who watch me twisting and grimacing when snacks are served, who then gently reach over and say, ‘Here ...let me do that.’ It’s the Motherly instinct.



Privately, in my house, I *attack*. Gouge the top of the soup can and rip it off! Sharp scissors shear the edges of all packaged foods. A Jim Bowie Alamo knife opens the side of the goldfish snacks. [No Virginia, this does not warrant the karate scream “Hiii!!”]

Why do Olympic divers dry off when they’re going right back in the water?

Routines and Memory Joggers

Some mornings when I step out of the shower, I think of the famous efficiency guru Gilbreth, “Cheaper by the Dozen” - who had 12 children (speaking of efficiency.) He was forced by the size of the house, the size of the family and paucity of bathrooms, to teach each child how to bathe, dry and get out of the bathroom in the shortest possible time.

To demonstrate, Father Gilbreth would step into the tub fully clothed, (no water), sit flat and pantomime the most efficient motions of rapid bathing and then the fastest way to dry off. (What a laundry bill that family must’ve had!) So I admit, some mornings I try drying off in the fewest “swipes.” Not really important but — ticks of time here and there make a difference – sometimes. Do you ever think of odd things like this?

I have another one. Occasionally when I bend over to retrieve anything, I think of the movie, “The Jackal”. The wily Jackal has outwitted the police of Europe and disguised as a one-legged World War veteran, manages to line up the target, General De Gaulle, in his sights for the one killing shot, when De Gaulle suddenly bends down to kiss a child and the assassin misses. A miss here and there by the smallest margin could change your life. Maybe.



Example. On one of his last days as head of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge’s Triple Red Emergency phone was ringing wildly! He leapt to the phone, heart beating. His assistant came rushing in. “WHAT? What is it?” “It was a telemarketer,” Tom sighed and put the phone down.

Perfection

In addition to writing lots of copy for client brochures, company promotional materials and our own Waymish stuff, I also write several newsletters. That means often having to get approvals from non-writing people. Some tend to struggle over “the exact words to say.”

Ted Cohn, my very close friend and Waymish co-author has co-written and edited at least 6 of his own business books. His ex-partner had a tendency to agonize over sentences. I *love* Ted’s advice: “Just write it! Don’t worry about it. You’re presuming the reader will even get this far!”

How do you tell when you run out of invisible ink?

Michael

He won the Pulitzer Prize for his book and movie, *The Hours*. On a west coast trip, Michael Cunningham spoke of the three phases of creativity. “The first,” he smiled, “is writing the book. An author can do anything – invent people who never existed, go back in time, go off in tangents, create fictitious situations – whatever. It’s a delight and you hope your book will sell. If not,” he shrugged, “you write another book.”



“The second phase is turning the book into a film. You submit a treatment. *The Hours* was my first attempt and mine ran over a hundred pages. The producer smiled very tolerantly, and said, ‘Michael...as a film this would run...oh... I’d guess...about 17 hours.’”

“The third process is filming. On the set, I realized these talented ladies gave my words different shades of meanings, so I had to stay up all night re-writing! Here’s the lesson: you can write just so much, edit just so much, and then comes the time when you *have to publish*.”

The concept works for me. Set a time limit. Do your damndest. Realize, “That’s it. Time to publish.” Or - time to make that tough decision, make that difficult sales call, compose that critical letter, call the attorney/the angry client/the IRS – whatever. Don Gertsman calls this moment, “the binary world of Yes or No.” Nothing in between. *It’s Time to publish*. Great advice. And it *will* move your life along.

Name it

Rob Morrow’s daughter is Tu (Tu Morrow); Musician John Millencamp’s kid is tagged Speck Wildhorse; Jason Leigh’s contribution to posterity is Pilot Inspector. Do these people hate their children – or – are they trying to see if their offspring can overcome an huge impediment early in life? [Bob Westenberg contributed these. Ask him.]

Then there’s the meat grill salesman George Foreman who named SEVEN of his children “George!” I think George #1 got bopped in the head once too often when he was boxing.

Thank... fully

Sign for Maine water service company: “Swimming pools filled. Septic tanks pumped. Not same truck.”

Recent enlightenment

I have come to the conclusion all so-called Customer Service training is off the track. Why? Because all the gurus chant the same tired stanzas: it costs 5 times more to get a new customer; it takes 3 times longer to get a new buyer up to a loyal buyer’s purchase level...etc, etc, blah, blah, blah...

My question: **Do employees care about that stuff?**
No! That’s Management’s mind set. .

Let’s replace all the worn out jargon with the real solution. *Teach service people HOW TO SELL.* Forget the “outstanding service” routine. In Sales, first you have to completely know your product. Wouldn’t that be something – to meet a clerk, counter agent or box store salesperson who had solid knowledge of the stock, the prices and location of items? This is the direction for my seminars in 2005. Selling, not “serving.” I know this’ll work.

What happens if you get half scared to death – twice?

Who said “It’s too late?”

He did have a good time! Name: J. L. Hunter “Red” Rountree. Age: 92 (died Oct 12, 04). Age when he started robbing banks: 86 (1998). Sure he got caught. Last time (2003) he was nailed for the heist of First American Bank, Abilene, Texas. He was 91 at the time. Originally, he made his fortune as the Rountree Machinery Co. but a business loan turned sour and he turned sour on banks. (Is that unusual?).



Generous. When he was 76 he married a 31 year old and invested \$500,000 in her drug rehab. See? Heart of gold. Got run out of the State of Mississippi after he held up the SouthTrust Bank in Biloxi. One time he walked very slowly to a teller window, handed a note to the lady teller demanding money and the teller burst out laughing, “Are you kidding?” He got the money plus a 12 year sentence in Springfield Federal Prison that finished him. Old Red reported: “You want to know why I rob banks? It’s fun! I feel good for days!” Hey – when you want to do something, one reason’s as good as another.

Underneath it All

Did you know the whole of Naples, Italy is undermined by an incredible series of deep tunnels, catacombs, crypts, watercourses and cisterns? And wouldn't you know some enterprising natives would set up tours of the tombs? Of course. Problem is that for several centuries the neighbors of Naples have been dumping all manner of trash down the open shafts at ground level. The clutter of rubbish clogs the passageways and deters the paying tourists, well, not entirely.

One dude has a dandy plan to make money conducting the tours and innovatively help unclog this monster junk jam. He's added drama to the caverns tours with blazing torches, some faux Greek statues and as a finale he cajoles each paying tourist to pick up and carry out two big bags of trash! It's called chutzpah, Italian style.

After that November basketball fiasco

in Detroit when the players charged into the stands, one NBA player complained, "Man – it's so bad now I can't pull my stretch Hummer into a handicapped space, treat my posse to Cristal shooters and Beluga Caviar without some fool gettin' in my face." Uh huh. Times are tough, Brother.



It's 3005. A cyber-archeologist and his assistant discover a 2004 computer in the rubble of a destroyed building. "Look at this!" exclaims the assistant who asks, "What was it?" "In those days the back of each of these machines was a jungle coil of wires in an effort to interconnect all their old time communication devices."

"How did it work?" "Well, someone had to tap out every message letter by letter, by pressing individual keys so the message appeared on a display screen and then by pressing a "Send" signal they transmitted messages to various receiving devices." "Whew," says the assistant, "I'm sure glad we have GTP!" "Of course! Without *Global Thought Projection* how could we have ever gotten rid of all those clunky machines and wires?"

I pulled into the local 7 11 for morning coffee and a tall blonde guy getting out of the next car laughed and said, “You’re from the East!” “How do you know?” “You left the keys in your car and you’re wearing penny loafers.” Am I really that obvious?

Postage Due. A romantic guy in Taiwan wooed his girl for 24 months, sending her over 700 marriage proposals. No surprise: she married the mailman.



Being exact. Friend Ben Gay III charges \$200 a hour for his expert advice. Call him on the phone “to talk” and Ben interrupts, “Fine but remember you’re being charged 3.33 cents a minute and the clock is running... Go ahead.” I like that!

Year’s Greatest book *Van Loon’s Lives*, courtesy of Tracy Yeager. 900 pages. Published in 1942. I read 5 to maybe 10 pages at a time in the bathroom, so it’s taking months. The book is intriguing and mind-boggling. It’s Van Loon’s fascinating invention - teaching history through fictionalized story-telling.

Steve Allen’s *Meeting of the Minds* on TV stole the idea from Van Loon. Every chapter of Van Loon is a 4 hour imaginary dinner party in Holland with ancient and venerable historical personalities paired off to dine, debate and disagree. George Washington with William the Silent; Cervantes, Shakespeare and Moliere all in one night; Byzantine Empress Theodora and Queen Elizabeth (a cat fight). Kings, Inquisitors, Napoleon, villains. What a way to learn history! Van Loon’s own classic education encompasses the whole of antiquity and he sprinkles in anecdotes, asides of crime, punishment, religion, politics, dynasties, overt and subtle warfare, plus the personal good and evil of the guests, who disappear promptly at midnight as the candles flicker out. .

I strongly commend this wonderful (out of print book) to you serious Readers. Check Amazon, ebay, or a Borders for a used copy. Van Loon will be a Keeper on your book shelf. I promise.

When anthropologists asked an old chief what the Indians called America before the white men came, the chief said, “Ours.”

Before Pearl Harbor This September, I was riffling thru an old file. A single piece of paper fluttered out. Picking it up, I read this – handwritten: “*Rec’d of R J Considine Fifty (\$50.00) Initiation fee – in amazement with much pleasure but just a bit of apprehension. H. Stiffler.*” It was dated **10-27-40**. Hal was fraternity President of Pi Kappa Phi at Drexel in Philadelphia. How did he know Craig, Jaus and I would constantly be in trouble for the next 3 years until we all went into the Army?

Thought. If you’ve taken a 1000 chances in your lifetime — what’s one more?

Cathie Goldsmith took me to a luncheon and tour of the USC library.

Before computers, book titles and authors were cataloged on index cards packed tightly into little wooden boxes – the ones you pull out with a curled metal grip. Well, USC kept the boxes intact.



As an alumnus, for \$10,000 a box you can belong to the *Top Drawer Society* as a Friend of the USC Library. Donor name appears on the front your box. The sum is payable over 4 years. Copy limited to 22 letters. Ingenious! The boxes are sold out.

Speaking the language. Like this: “Omlette, the definition is – I should pop yo ass fo what you jus did but omlette dis one slide.” Fine. I dig . What’s the problem with that?

Giving Away Ideas.

One story is about the era of railroads. A man got to wondering exactly where the Super Chief train westbound passed the Super Chief eastbound. He sent his idea to the railroad. They commissioned an artist to render a dramatic, sweeping full-color scene of two giant trains rushing past each other in opposite directions. The railroad printed thousands of huge, full color wall calendars entitled “Where East meets West.”

The man wasn’t paid for the idea. When he was asked how he felt whenever he saw the calendars, the man replied, “Marvelous — and very proud.”

Who did these?

What about those omnipresent rudimentary figures for “Man” and “Woman” that tell



you which gender goes in which bathroom? What’ll you bet the person who designed those either (a) chokes every time he/she sees those images or (b) or is proud beyond belief, thinking, “I did that – and it’s everywhere!”

Everybody recognizes this I ♥ NY symbol. Robert Buckingham says designer Herb Lubalin *contributed* that image to New York. Imagine Lubalin’s reaction, satisfaction or chagrin seeing the mass multiplication and some very tacky take-offs of “I ♥ This” and “I ♥ That.”

My vote for the most universal, handy, dandy idea is that little plastic clip on the end of every phone line that snaps into any phone instrument and into any wall jack. Now THAT is genius!

Giving away ideas creates ideas. If you only have one idea - then you better hold on to it.

A Marine just returned from Afghanistan applied for a greenskeeper job at a golf club. “It’s stressful,” warned the head groundsman, “You have to fight the terrain, weather, insects, and demanding club members.” The Marine asked, “Will there be anyone shooting at me?” “Of course not!” “Good. I’ll take the job,” said the Marine.

There are 3 types of people, I decided one morning as I snapped and crackled my cereal. *Talkers, Starters and Finishers*. Bob Schwartz of LIFE Magazine, a writer and a neighbor of mine in Nyack, NY, published a groundbreaking interview for LIFE Magazine on “Mad Dog” Doyle, kingpin of the New York waterfront unions. I asked Bob how he got the story. He said: “I went down to this shack on the edge of a wharf and there was this old guy in there. I asked for “Mad Dog.” He said, “He ain’t here.” I said, “I’ll wait.” And I did – sat for all of that first day.

Second day. Same question. Same answer “Ain’t here.”

The third day (the Rule of 3), Bob said, “I walked in and immediately the old guy said, ‘I’m Mad Dog, whatta ya want?’ – and I got the interview.” That, friends, is a Finisher.

Post Script: After reading the story in LIFE, I complained, “You didn’t tell me you were working on that!” And he said (Get your pencil and papers ready, students)... “I found out a long time ago if you’re going to write something, *you write it*. If you talk about it, it will dissipate into thin air after about 3 tellings.”

P.S. Need we discuss Talkers and Starters? I think not. Just look at what’s lying around your house/office/garage. Review what you *said you were going to* do and haven’t. Pick your own category. Ouch!

Notable observation

Arnold Beckman, who was a renowned scientist, super philanthropist, major benefactor to Caltech, billionaire, lived to be 104. He was the oldest U.S. Marine, too. Asked the secret of his long life, he answered, “Breathing.” Not a bad deduction for a member of the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

Out the Window... Somewhere I read a famous English scrivener (Johnson? Bosley?) who lived on the second floor, would write letters, seal them in an envelope and then throw them out the window, confident that 99% of people are so honest *someone* would mail his letters. And they did.



I tried this in my building. I had a small envelope to send to someone on the 5th floor. So I sealed it, pressed the elevator button for the 5th floor and when the doors opened, threw the envelope out onto the floor. Wouldn’t residents of the same building be at least as trustworthy as London residents? Of course! Next day, Bryan, our postman brought my letter back, saying “Someone found this on the 5th floor.” OK. So, as I descended for lunch, I threw the envelope out – again. Back it came - again. That proves....what does it prove? What worked in 1867 ain’t worth a damn today.

(Overheard on a cel phone) “Wait a minute! You’re not saying ‘Yes.’ I recognize that tone you’re using. It’s your ‘Uh Huh’ voice - which means you don’t want to do it. Is that right?” Keen listener.

Best Challenge to Bad Customer Service

Jack Lane, stymied by some stupid store policy keeping him from buying what he wanted fired back, “*Where’s the humanity in your company?*” Have to remember to put that one in the new edition of Waymish II, coming out in Spring.

Best Customer Service. Was coming back from Bangkok through Singapore. Giant airport. Was swinging my head looking in all directions for my gate. Gorgeous Singapore Airlines flight attendant pulling her wheely bag says, “Where are we going today?” We? Cute. “LA” was my answer. “Follow me,” she says and guides me up onto this huge long moving walkway and stays with me all the way to the very distant gate. “Thank you,” I said, “Are you going on the flight?” “Oh no,” she smiles, “I’m on vacation. I’ve been flying for 8 days and I’m on my way home. I live here.” Put that in the How It Should Be Done book.

I take a lot of ribbing for the number of typewriters and computers I have spread around my office and house. Well, I don’t feel intimidated in the least now. I read John Updike has **seven typewriters** in different rooms so he can hop and skip from one project to another. So if you get notes from me, whatta you care which machine writes them, huh?



More jazz

Now a Board member of the Los Angeles Jazz Society and Editor of their newsletter. Very good fun. Nice people. Get to lots of public and not-so-public music sessions. Chance to meet some giants of jazz up close and personal who are fun loving, hard working guys who “just wanna play.” (Want to be on our newsletter list? E mail me.)

Fame. Did you know how Dame Edna (the TV talk show drag queen) first created attention in her native Australia? At a Sydney bus stop before a horrified audience, Edna, dressed as a tramp, went about digging into a trash bin, pulling out remnants of a chicken and a bottle of champagne and began gorging herself, emitting lip smacking, yum-yum noises. Of course he/she had planted the menu in advance. There's no bizniz like show biz, like no bizniz I know...

Singapore, as previously reported is great. And going back this May was a treat. Lisa (my pal) Watson is **organized**. She faxed a map of Singapore to Pasadena in advance. So after a 19 hour flight and an arrival at 6:30 a.m. (ugh), I handed her map to my taxi driver and closed my eyes for the trip to Blair Road.

Lisa had also arranged the following: her maid Maria was at the door waiting. (It's now 6:49 a.m.). Breakfast was on the table, plus maps of the city, bus schedules, a list of Singapore phone numbers of friends I'd met in a previous visit and a local cel phone ready for me to use!

Her instructions were: "Eat, sleep, be ready to meet your friend Retnam at noon. He and his driver will take you to the Ritz for lunch and the afternoon. Jos is in Shanghai. I'm in Taiwan but we will be back in time to have dinner with you." How casual and international can you get? We three had a great reunion Friday night to Sunday, then off to Bangkok. Nice to feel you have "your own room" and a second home in Asia.

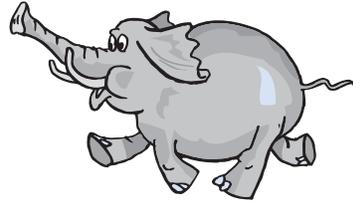
Bangkok is Hot, sticky, polluted and traffic has recently slowed from 7 to 3 miles per hour. Not the place to be if you're in a hurry. However – the Conrad Hotel, which our seminar host Ramesh chose for us speakers, was lush, luxurious and lavish. ("Conrad" is a new upscale version of Hilton. The Hilton name appeared nowhere.)

New

Met some nifty people – among them, Kent Wertime, Ogilvy, Hong Kong. Brits Charles Arthur and Claudia Schlesinger. AND my Conrad hotel do-it-all guy, Narongasak Inboomsom or "Jack" (Most Thai people have l-o-n-g names and one short nickname – thank goodness.) He agreed to mail 125 postcards pre-addressed with my labels but added with a twinkle, "I shall have one of my people add 'U.S.A.' to each card, Sir, so they can be delivered to your country." "Oh yes. Of course. Thank you, Jack.

Bangkok Incidents

(1) Going to dinner in a taxi. Rounded a corner, there strolling leisurely down the sidewalk was...an elephant! A huge, hulking, gray elephant. Charles turned and in his understated British tone quietly asked, “Ray... that *was* an elephant?” I said “Yes, Charles.” With a quick intake of breath Charles muttered “Ah, good.” Bangkok days were filled with much sightseeing, shoes-off touring of countless temples and my conclusion that Gold is the favorite color of that country.



(2) Take a taxi, get taken for a ride. The city is so complex, the gypsy cabbies say “Yes” they know whatever destination you mention, drive off for 6 or 7 blocks, jump out and ask another cab driver “Where is this place?” Pricing is about as predictable. You have to keep yelling, “Meter! Meter!”

(3) Intriguing sign posted at the King’s summer palace: **Forbid to drive car out of Palace. In every cases if disobey, a renter prosecuted a larceny in Royal Palace allegation.”** (Wow man, they’re serious, huh?)

(4) Ask the hotel operator “Are there any messages?” Inevitable reply: “Yes. No messages.”

(5) Along the crowded, crowded streets, there were Kiwi shoeshine stands shining open-toed sandals. To each his own. And enough buzzing, swerving motor bikes on the streets that you think you’re inside a beehive!

Why was I there?

My Workshop, “The 10 Things I’ll Never Forget from my 100 Years in Direct Marketing” (slight hyperbole) worked well and “What Happened to the Golden Promises of the Internet?” was my luncheon speech. Host Ramesh swears I got ubiquitous good marks. Very kind. .

They are “out there”

In 1952 Betty and I moved to Nyack, New York. . Chris was knee high. Betty was pregnant with Lisa. My company’s product would not sell in NY. I was broke. So I went down to the river and got a job on what was to be

the Tappan Zee Bridge at absolute bottom wage - \$1.50 an hour. Sometimes we worked 70, 80 and even 90 hours a week in the winter, out on the water. Some fun. But OK money for then.

I knew zero about engineering. Luckily, I was “adopted” by Grigg Mullen, an extraordinary U.S. Marine who looked like Burt Lancaster, muscles and all. He taught, I learned. Six months later I was in charge of half the concrete operation for the bridge.

Another displaced person on the job was Vinnie Hill, a break-the-mold guy with an elfish, devil-may-care sense of humor who, surprisingly, was studying piano with Johnny Mehegan of Julliard. So, Saturday mornings, Vinnie and I would go into Julliard, be two of maybe 10 fortunate human beings in a private concert listening to dual pianos by Johnny with stars like Marian McPartland, Cy Coleman or George Shearing

That was 54 years ago. I dialed the magic number – 411 - phoned Vinnie in Nyack. Gloriosky! He was there, retired professional pianist-poet-painter - and cool. Yes, he sent me his piano music on CD. Yes, we talk and write and laugh about every two months. The point? Reach back, friends! There are some worthy and good people you know and maybe loved, waiting out there.

Out of the woodwork.

We had a small intimate family Memorial for Betty in November. Lisa and Wayne designed a gorgeous bronze box that we officially placed in the mortuary. Eleven of us then sat around and talked. It was sad at first, but the tone turned when I described “their mother” at a raucous, loud NY Hilton Hotel party, skirt hiked up, bongo drums between her knees banging away in time to the music! (“Is that Betty Considine???”) This triggered other anecdotes my kids, nieces and granddaughters never heard about Betty. Many sides to that Lady.

Putting it down

We each wrote something for the service. (We Considines do like to write.) You can imagine the tenderness from five points of view. My “chapter” kept growing to 18 pages, to the time Chris was born (1952) and how we trotted him around at age 2 to Cambridge cocktail parties, swathed him in a furry blanket and plunked him down in the host’s bathtub. Imagine the chagrin of innocent ladies about the enjoy the plumbing privileges when a small blonde head would pop up out of the tub chirping “Hi!” Later, we concluded Chris had been in the bathroom with more women by the age of 2 than most men have been in a life time!

Otherwise.

Health is good. Energy unchanged. More impatient than ever. Snarly to poor performing clerks, waiters and bureaucrats. Take the time to compliment the good ones – in person, in writing to their management. Slam the lousy ones.

Working the usual 5 days and rather than retiring (never!), I go to and come from work at times that suit my whim according to what has to be done. Get this – the medics check my pacemaker *via telephone* every 3 months! (Is this medical tele-treatment or what?)

Family's fine. Chris and Cathi off to Belize for their annual Xmas respite. The Oakland contingent (Lisa, Wayne, Izzy, Aislynn) thrive in all 4 directions. Life is good. Friends are faithful. Every day is an adventure.

Presently

Contented, sharing house with Lynn - although I think she's insane commuting round trip 70 miles to work each day and back at night in LA traffic from Beverly Hills to Arcadia. We are enjoying, very busy with movies, theater, dinners, jazz and mini-trips.

We're off to Oakland for Christmas to see the two sprouting 16 year old granddaughters, now 5'8" tall! (Are they girls or women?) We stay at the Marriott, see the Reverend M. Hull Wolfe and his team of Afghan waiters who cover the hotel restaurant for the Christians since their Afghan holidays are "later."

Thence we trek to Palm Desert for Alan and Linda Hahn's LARGE cocktail party for 40-50 jazz lovers and than en masse we all caravan to the Big Band Desert bash December 29. Lunch the 30th with Shel and Trudy Pessin. First time in 8 years. Lookin' forward to that reunion.

Actually, all of you should call someone who was important to you years back and "put it together" again. There's a very satisfying feeling to be the one who made the reconnection. Give it a try. 411 can find phone numbers anywhere.

2005 Vows

*I intend to be with and stay with the
Marvelous Minority of people who*

- *respond on time - to everything*
 - *help answer big questions*
 - *react to small requests*
 - *don't flinch at major favors asked*
- *and expect the same from me.*

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I hear a nurse coming down the hall. I gotta go now.