

Here I come a-waffling

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among the leaves so green...

My thanks to Elliott, George, Taylor, Maddie, Henry and Virginia, without whom this card would not be possible. — S.B.H.

“Here we come a-wassailing, among the leaves so green...”

December 2002

Dear Friends,

I'm not going to write a full-out “what-I-did-this-year” letter this Christmas. It's sounding too narcissistic as I attempt to write it, as well as “little-old-lady-with-too-many-cats”-ish. Not that I actually have any cats. Nor shall I dwell long on my adored nieces and nephews, except to say that Younger Sister presented me with another niece (Virginia Kay Wilson, 1/26/02) and I expect another nephew from Elder Sister (although she *will* insist it's a girl...) in the Spring.



I did a great many things this year, as well as *failed* to do a great many things this year:

- I continued doing improv comedy with One Hand Clapping, although the troupe is dwindling down, as are the audiences.
- I watched a great deal more TV than I should.
- I went into a Summer slump, and emerged again in the Fall without a tan.
- I went to Seagrave Beach, FL with Elder Sister + family for a week, and was courteously visited for 3 days by Hurricane Isidore.
- I attempted to find and buy a condo in Brentwood/Franklin. HA!!
- My office decided to switch from Macintosh Computers to Windows PCs, which sent me into despair, but I have steeled myself to the task and plunged semi-cheerfully into learning how the @#*%& things work.
- My beloved high-school choir reconnected this year, and we are in the process of planning a reunion around Easter.

My Recommendations for the Year

(an idea I stole from Elder Sister's Christmas letter)

Websites

www.lileks.com—I highly recommend this website by James Lileks, the syndicated humor columnist, which features a daily online journal called “The Daily Bleat” which ranges from intelligent commentary on the Middle East situation to stories about his adored 2-year old's newest word. It also has loads of interesting and amusing images and commentary on architecture, old cookbooks, and bizarre advertising of the 1920s-70s.

www.televisionwithoutpity.com—this site does exhaustive recaps of a few dozen television shows; and as the site's name suggests, it does so without pity - very amusing and

pointed mockery of today's television. Mercilessly funny, and particularly useful if you had to miss an episode of a favorite show.

Books

The Darling Buds of May by H.E. Bates—actually, this is the first in a series of 4 novellas about the Larkins, a charmingly odd and cheerful family in the English countryside in the 1950s. Unfortunately, they're out-of-print. I'm a sucker for almost anything English, and the stories about the Larkins are both idyllic and honest.

Traveling Mercies by Anne Lamott—This is the kind of book you find yourself wanting to give to everyone, hoping with all your heart they find the same things in it that you did. Anne Lamott is a liberal feminist with dreadlocks, and one of the best new Christian writers out there. Her essays about her life are like little jewels.

Television

Alias—I've been watching this since the premier episode, and I never miss it. Great writing, compelling action, and a fabulous love triangle.

Trading Spaces—I just jumped on the bandwagon with this, and a highlight of my Saturdays is sitting and watching it with Elder Sister and Elder Brother-in-law after the kids have gone to bed. I have learned more about interior design from that show than I ever imagined.

Film

Monsoon Wedding—I know, the one everyone will remember from this year is *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, and I liked it alot too. But the Indian film *Monsoon Wedding* has so much more joy and passion, so much more truth about the good and bad aspects of families and love, that I think it deserves Best Foreign Language Film. Truly a life-changing movie.

Spirited Away—This is a throwback to my geeky days as a fan of Japanese anime (which I still like a lot...) Haayo Miyazaki does the most amazing, poignant, honest, delightful and moving animated films around, and this one is no exception. It's going to be hard for most American viewers to follow half of what happens in this film, it's so crammed with obscure Japanese mythology and characters, but it is worth every minute for the beauty of Miyazaki's images and the absolute *cuteness* and humor of some of the characters.

Enough of that. I hope that you all have had a happy and productive year, and that this Christmas will be a blessing, and 2003 an even better year.

