

The Seventh Annual Tripp/Tanenbaum Holiday Letter

1994 seemed compressed. Like a soap opera - real events - only compressed into a shorter time span. So this year, I am not limiting my ramblings to one page. Postal rates be damned.

From my perspective, the most exciting thing about 1994 was launching my own business, ***FiQuest Mortgage***. It was actually created in 1993 - as you all know from last year's letter. The Resolution Trust Corporation, or more accurately, Raid The Cash and Ruin The Country, finally laid me off in April. My business partner, Richard and I had been told that closure would take place in December, but our government just couldn't work that fast. On the last day, the Homestead Savings headquarters building became a vast cavern of abandoned careers. It was surreal - there were only five of us left in the final two weeks - rattling around in a building that had held hundreds of employees. The Savings and Loan industry was created by the Federal government when banks shied away from the home mortgage market. However, now that any investor can buy and sell home mortgage based securities - the S&L industry with its bloated government watchdogs is an expensive albatross. The whole damn thing should have been destroyed when it was "deregulated", but too many bureaucrats would have been forced to find meaningful employment. But Homestead was "berry berry good to me" in the end. It not only gave me a steady income while we started up the business, but ***FiQuest's*** executive furniture and supplies were procured at below bargain prices because the RTC doesn't know how to hold an auction. We closed '94 with a real (taxable, even) profit, and high hopes for next year. Let's all think economic recovery.

In May, Jeff and I vacationed in Italy. Did you know that Jeffrey's first major was in archeology? Well, we hit the 2,000 year old "hot" spots right off. From our center of operations in the Hotel Santa Catarina on the cliffs in Amalfi (an amazing, spectacular hotel) we drove to the ruins of Pompeii - now almost completely excavated. Pompeii and Herculaneum, being on the downslope of Mount Vesuvius, were buried under volcanic ash in 69AD. Pompeii was a huge and affluent Roman town. Herculaneum was smaller, but better preserved - the intricate designs in the tile floors, and the colorful frescoes on the interior walls just like they were thousands of years ago. Geez, and here in San Francisco, we fight to preserve 1-room Miner's shacks for their "historical value". The Gold Rush took place in 1849. Big whoop. In Rome, the marble facing that was on the Coliseum is incorporated into modern buildings, and most of the Forum was carted off by scavengers long ago. The Vatican was rich, rich and even more rich. The Sistine Chapel was crowded - with paintings and with people. Although Michelangelo's work can be stunning (the sculptings in Florence are awe-inspiring) the Sistine Chapel was just not as moving as everyone says. We got caught in a rainstorm in Trastevere - this is one of my favorite memories. The restaurant where we stopped makes a mean cappuccino - it was warm inside with musical background provided by the familial back and forth in Italian among customers and owners.

Jeffrey scored an important new client in late 1993, Philip Morris, and they kept flying him back and forth to their headquarters in Manhattan. In my humble opinion - this country has a nasty habit of blaming the substance - and not addressing the behavior. Prohibition was a failure. Zero tolerance is a failure. The snobby self-righteousness of the anti-smoking activists just chaps my hide. Anyway, Jeff acquired lots of new clients in 1994 and brought a lot of work into the firm. In fact, 1994 was his best year ever. Joy and David actually saw a clip of him on CNN in Singapore. Of all places. Keep your eyes peeled - his fame is sure to grow.

This August, we spent a few days in New Orleans. Bought voodoo dolls, beheaded Barbie fashion victim dolls, and a 5 foot tall inflatable doll version of Edward Munch's "The Scream". It is truly a sight. Saw gators in the swamp, ate gumbo, and danced down Bourbon Street.

In September, Jeff's grandmother, Claire, took ill and he flew back to move her from Brooklyn to Philadelphia. She is now doing quite well. In October, Jeff and I attended his 15th college reunion. I saw the Brandeis campus for the first time. Jeff's college mate, Nancy Gottlieb, her husband and their three daughters really brightened up our stay. After that, we went to Pennsylvania via New York City. We spent the night with Ray and Jeanne - a delightful visit - stopped in Jeffrey's grandmother's former apartment in Brooklyn, packed up a few things, and joined Carol, Hayley, Jim and Claire in Berwyn. We toured some senior care facilities with Claire, and soon after we left, she moved into a great place, Chestnut Hill Residence, where she is living now. It's a short drive now for both Hayley and Carol to visit her, and she has met some new friends. Chestnut Hill is a beautiful old mansion with about 35 residents. They take lots of trips together (museums, the zoo, etc.) and Claire is very busy.

For Thanksgiving this year, Jeffrey and I celebrated at home - it coincided with our 10th wedding anniversary, and we spent the time with Mr. Levi and Mr. Clancy. It was a wonderful 3 day weekend.

I must admit that despite my vigorous protests, my niece threw herself a Barbie-themed party for her fifth birthday - maybe we'll burn the dolls when she burns her bra. Jeff and I threw a Tree Trimming party this year, with some near and dear friends. It was a great evening - thanks to all who came. The next week, we installed all new windows and sliding doors, and the house has been in general chaos ever since.

This year, all of the presents were bought and wrapped a week before Christmas! Pretty good, but I left no time for the cards. So it goes. Since I am writing this letter on New Year's Eve, I can tell you we had a warm and happy family Christmas Eve with Valerie, Tom, Lindsey, Chris, Tera, Roland, Alexis, Stripes, and the inflatable Edward Munch Scream doll. To our horrified amusement, Lindsey took quite a shine to this unique work of art, and waltzed with it across the living room. A sight to remember! All in all, 1994 was a pretty good year. It was the Chinese Year of the Dog, which is my astrological year, nuclear war did NOT break out, and my loved ones are doing well. Happy 1995 - some say it is the Millennium already -- so I guess we made it!