

"Some of my best material is in those emails."

--Penny

A selection of Michael O'Reilly's email correspondence

Volume I
1998 - 2012

I have been living in a fool's paradise thinking no one would want to hack into my e-mail. I would be devastated if all that were to disappear. Apropos, just this morning I was moved to tears with the thought of mourners at my funeral being given my password and being allowed to read years worth of correspondence with my posthumous permission.

The fact is, I write very thoughtful and heartfelt letters. As a body of work, they convey a depth of engagement that most of my friends are only dimly aware of, each perhaps thinking that he or she is the only one.

Penny, in an email from 2010

On technology....

I should point out that I am composing this letter in Microsoft Word. When I cut and paste it over to my BBS it ignores all the apostrophes. Whats more {see?} if I dare use quotation marks it starts typing at the top and ruins the letter. Thats {ugh!} why you will see dialogue etc. marked off with asterisks.

Blessed Sanctuarrians,

Save the trees. But don't forget our beloved luddites. They (we?) often get left behind when technology vaults ahead. Do you remember a deaf guy from out west, his last name is F? He often felt excluded and sometimes even unsafe at the gatherings. He feared that if the maypole were going to fall on his head he would not hear the screams that might save his life. Sending out electronic replicas of the call is a marvelous idea. However, if we start using the networking platforms that so eagerly offer themselves for our convenience, the medium becomes the message and the message is "spend another hour indoors on the computer."

I love you all and have found you increasingly on my mind lately. I believe I'm hearing the call. I'll see you soon. But for now, I must run outside.

Can you believe I don't have a camera? It's a shame. It's those modest wages and my laziness.

I suddenly realized that it has been over two years since I took a photograph. I tell myself Im too busy enjoying the moment to worry about documenting it. Plus I don't like worrying about a nice cameras. I think I should just run out right now and buy TWO of those disposable cameras and start being at least theoretically open to the possibility.

While I was IMing you, a pop up ad over took my screen. I clicked on the wrong spot and it took me to a room with two overly sexualized hussies who tried to enroll me in their party games (TRUE). In fleeing them I turned a wrong turn and you were lost to me.

Meanwhile, isn't this a first? E-mail! We're movin' on up, aren't we? G BOUGHT a NEW computer yesterday and so I have sole use of the one that L off loaded when his friend, K gave him a laptop. So this is the first e-mail in its new spot, outside the upstairs kitchen where G and I used to share a computer. It is a sad day, really: everyone to his separate screen. *sigh*

Since you're still stuck in centuries passed there's no use in nagging you about how to be more up to date.

The thing you will find about e-mail is that you can communicate far into the night with folks who will gladly hear from you early the next morning. Another thing you find is that some people who never returned your phone calls will also ignore your e-mails while others will snap

back with a response that will make your neck ache. Yet another discovery that awaits you is that once every seven or eight days quickly develops into two or three times a day. Especially when you're waiting for a response to something that's being ignored. That's when the youtube habit kicks in. Soon those hours you used to waste poring through National Geographics will go up in smoke as you watch that little clock in the corner of your screen tally irrevocably forward. But so much you will learn on the Internets!

Welcome to the late 20th century. Let me know how you find this experience.

You're right about never knowing with me. I can go days without checking my e-mail and often just the reading wears me out and I log off without making even one reply. But today I got up early and still have wind in me.

Hope you are not quite as out of it as when I spoke to you the other day. Like sero discordance there needs to be a word that expresses media discordance. I've lost a lot of friends to the malady. Maybe "discorrespondence" is a good word for people who never write but hang on the phone when you're trying to get out of the house. Or who blog but never call. Or who refuse on principle to read the holiday newsletter you spent a week writing. Or who drop by unannounced. Or who send gifts and cards that turn ones stomach. Or who never update their Facebook page. Or who lurk on a newsgroup. Or who respond TO ALL. Perfectly lovely people who can't get their point across because it's not in the recipient's preferred medium. Discorrespondents.

I guess I'm in a pholosophical mood today that borders on sadness. But don't get me wrong. I'm going with it. Sadness beats despair any day. Probably because it has more meaning from my view. At least it gets me to write.

Due to the latest news regarding Yahoo! and their rather large security breaches, I am regretfully closing down pennysolucky@yahoo.com and opening up this new account. I will still receive mail at the old address for a while but will eventually shut that down giving you as many chances as needed to make the switch.

While I wish you all a happy holiday season, I hasten to disabuse you of the thought that this in any way constitutes a genuine holiday greeting. To my old fashioned mind, those must be made of paper and arrive in the mail. It's a custom I honor only in the breach so don't hold your breath for a holiday greeting from me. But know that I hold you in my heart and think of you often in quiet moments. Mostly what I think is that it's been far too long since we've spoken and simmer in a stew of equal parts blame and self-recrimination. I trust you share the sentiment.

This old typin' iron I'm usin' cain't open that dern file ya jes' sint me.

On inheritances.....

5 October, 2001 Dear Eileen,

I just received what will possibly be the last statement from Old Kent, the executors of the probated portion of Dad's estate. It appears that you received a distribution that exceeded that of the other four survivors by the amount of \$0.01. I am hoping that you will, at your earliest convenience, make available the extra penny for joint ownership on a rotating basis.

If I may suggest, you could send it first to Camille. Since, according to the statement, you have been in possession of the penny since September 10, 2001, she would be entitled to hold on to it for about a month before she passes it along to me **SKIPPING YOU FOR THIS ROUND**. Around the 10th of December I will make a point of handing the penny over to Kevin who will enjoy its enrichment until the second week of January, 2002. By February 10th, 2002, when Stephen will be expected to hand the disputed coin to Camille, we should have in place a mutually agreeable plan for the long-term co-ownership of the extra penny.

I have every reason to believe we will be able to share the penny harmoniously. I trust I speak for all involved that your prompt attention to this matter will bode well for future dealings on this matter.

Sincerely,
Michael F. O'Reilly
(your brother)

On the Faerie Castle.....

Everyone loves our house and the heart circles themselves are like love cake so we can hardly go wrong.

My hopes for the house are for it to be seen as a pleasant place to live and a pleasant destination for people to visit. I would like the people who live in the house to treat one another with warmth and respect. I would like generosity to be the hallmark of our interactions.

I admit Rogers Park is out of the way for some. That's why I would like guests in our home to be greeted with a warm smile, a delicious beverage and a tasty bite to eat. What's more, if they are overnight guests, I would like them to be offered the most comfortable bed in the house. I would like to be known for fun parties. I would like to build a wet area in the basement to take advantage of the sauna and to provide a uniquely luxurious place to entertain. This area could also serve as cozy guest quarters. I would like the rest of the house to be breezy, open and orderly.

On spirituality.....

I will be attending my second meeting at church to be a confirmation sponsor for one of the kids there. He called me up two weeks ago and introduced himself and asked me if I'd be his sponsor. I saw the wicked hand of God at work and jumped at the chance to be dragged into something quite meaningful. More on that later, of course.

Thank you for the thoughtful and encouraging missive. It means a lot that you took the time and put these thoughts together. I envy (though not quite to the point of emulation) the place that meeting has for you and the deepening effect it has on your writing. I did go to a gay Quaker meeting a few times down on Dakin or thereabouts. I'm too feckless and disruptively flighty plus I kept falling asleep. The ensuing embarrassment tipped the scale toward the "flight" imperative. I think my character is better suited to loud even giddy paths to spirit. Hence the faeries.

On smoking.....

We were in the smoker's tent at SMS. It was toward the end of the gathering and I was partaking in a lot of needless nicotine. Essentially I was trying to stuff my feelings about the imminent diaspora. Taking hold, I wrote on a piece of paper for you to read "No cigaret smoke until at least June 1st. -Penny"

You helped me find the paper and I was being silly, writing it in white colored pencil on a rolling paper. Then I got a little more serious and wrote it with a bic on a magazine subscription card. After holding up for you to read, I walked down to the fire pit and tossed it in.

The written and shared vow proves a very solid wall to lean against. The limited term gives strength without despair. It works for me. The subsequent vows get longer and easier to honor. But "Never again" doesn't fit my style. I like to ENJOY a cigarette.

On Cap'n Electron

Today I was running wire for the phone system at Centro San Bonifacio where XTN used to work. They just moved and I helped them paint for two days and then tossed in a twelve hour day as Cap'n Electron. It was a silky feeling slipping back into the tights and cape, strapping on the tool belt and cutting loose with the drill.

On trouble with the law

I got arrested at the World Naked Bike Ride? It was a pain but hopefully the case will be dismissed on Friday. It gives me a reason to buy some fresh Sunday go to meetin' clothes.

Character is destiny and there's no escaping it. We were divided and conquered. I don't know what to say.

Without a doubt M was the best dressed and best looking fellow in the entire building. Sharp suit, snappy new hair cut. I didn't recognize him at first, taking him for a lawyer. I'm not sure if he recognized me or not but we walked right past each other. Twice!

When I finally snapped on who he was, I could see that the guy he was with was not his client but his lawyer.

M was by himself when we came back into speaking distance and I said "hello" and "You brought a lawyer?"

"I secured representation." He's getting all formal on me and I put it down to the sharp suit. I am keenly aware of the myriad effects an outfit has on its wearer.

"He's not for sharing?" Here M shows just a hint of annoyance and I can't blame him. Who's this clown jumping on my train?

"He said he doesn't like to do that." Well there ya go. That explains the silence. How do you tell someone you don't have anything to offer? But that certainly set up a two tier society going into the courtroom.

M sat by himself on the left while B and I sat together in the middle. B's wearing a pair of beige crepe pants, a black blousey shirt and this purple swirly print tie. So I'm right in the middle of our threesome with dark green cuffed slacks, a brand new striped shirt and somber green tie from Marshall's (\$30 total). But I still have my nasty goatee and B's all young and clean shaven. So while I'm better dressed, B's got me beat in the looks department.

I gotta go to work. Tune in next time when B and I first set eyes on Officer _____?, the prissy brunette who likes to volunteer for Bush.

B and I were bonding and being buds. You know how it is when you get together with an old roommate. He was telling me about his swirly purple tie. On loan from his girlfriend and one of two choices. I heard the prosecutor's clerk inquiring of someone about Officer Doyle.

"As much as I like officer Doyle," I told B "I don't feel like seeing him today." That's when we both saw that it was Officer Prissy checking in in Doyle's stead.

My official stance regarding the this entire affair is that I don't care what happens to me. I'm officially indifferent to all outcomes. So how do I reconcile the rush of adrenaline that coursed through my body when I laid eyes on her? I guess knowing I was in the hands of a Republican just gave me a start.

You all know how much I was counting on this not happening. And here it was. My odds of dismissal were falling fast as the policewoman with the nice makeup and the traditional ideas slipped out of the baby blue warm up that had been covering up her uniform signifying that she was now On Duty.

I had to admit that I was completely unprepared to play the game they had in mind. But that's nothing new. It's like any other game I have no interest in playing like baseball or poker. I just roll over and play dead. They quickly grow bored and leave me alone.

Now B tells me he has plans to ask for a continuance and hopefully not have to give up his vacation in August. I asked him if he'd be willing to share his lawyer and he said sure. Remember, he was the one who suggested it here in the first place. So when they call us up we're gong to call her "our lawyer" and tell how she couldn't be here today and when could we all come back in a couple of months and like hash this whole thing out?

P gets called first. His lawyer has been stalking and sauntering around since we walked in. He seems to want to give the impression that this is all old hat to him. He also doesn't want to appear to take it too seriously. There's something about his disdainful smirk and swaggering walk that hopes to convey an air of boredom. The whole effect would have been quite stunning if he looked as hot as his client. But the mussed up hair and loosened tie sort of ruins it.

They go up and face the judge. There's some jargon spoken. I can hear the judge asking if this is "the bike thing" and then lifting an eyebrow at discovering that we're not all being represented by the same counsel. He asks them to step down and the court proceeds through the docket causing us to be tried separately and at random.

B goes up next and he gets the judge to agree to a continuance to seek counsel. The first date he hands B is right in the middle of his California Dreamin' tour. So B asks if a later date

would be possible. The judge says, "Sure, how much time do you need?" with just the tiniest hint of irony. "Would some time in September be all right?" "Fine."

Now B's been reading the fine print on his summons to appear and it says right there that he mayn't leave the State of Illinois without the permission of the court. He clearly wants to avoid any trouble with the judge so he asks him if it would be all right if he left the state. "You're not planning on staying out there in California are you?" So B has the court's permission to travel to California this August. You can check the record if you don't believe me.

Next it's my turn. I'm called up to face the judge who already has sent three thugs home until Monday for wearing shorts, threatened to hold until last anyone who doesn't say "Here!" when his name is called and has requested a departing cop to empty her revolver into whoever it is whose car alarm keeps going off. This guy's a real sweetie. But probably a Democrat all the same.

Suddenly he's talking right to me. "Do you have counsel?" "No your honor." "Would you like to enter a plea?" And get this whole thing over with? Right now? I'm sorry, B, I plumb forgot about you. The offer of having the band-aid ripped off in one swell foop took me by surprise. And it looked good. Certainly it would save me the cost of a lawyer. And I can be real cheap.

So he asks me how I plead to the charge of public indecency. "Well I was riding my bike with no clothes on." I hate lying. I'm a terrible bullshitter. He sort of snorts. "The question is do you plead guilty or not guilty to the charge?" I know what the law says. My penis was hanging out. That's against the law. So I had to admit it looked like I was "GUILTY!!!!!"

So I plead guilty. He gives me three months supervision and I can go. No need to appear in three months. No fine. I just have to make sure I have clothes on whenever I'm outside in Chicago particularly when addressing police sergeants.

That's all for now. I have to get up early tomorrow and report for jury duty. No lie. M and B can interrupt me any time if they think I'm taking too long to tell this story. But let me tell you it gets juicier when M gets his turn under the glaring judicial heat lamp.

---Bow down before the one you serve
You're going to get what you deserve
----HEAD LIKE A HOLE
BLACK AS YOUR SOUL
I'D RATHER DIE
THAN GIVE YOU CONTROL!

Nine Inch Nails off their album
Pretty Little Hate Machine

Now that we've both been dispensed with, B and I are just hanging out to see how M bears up under the glare. When we ask him what's going on, he admits that he has no idea. His attorney keeps taking M into the corridor to aprise him of his case's status Things look pretty much up for grabs.

There's no end to the paper shuffling and it turns out that argued cases are tried last. So, since M's lawyer wants to plead "not guilty," they'll have to wait. This doesn't thrill the judge or the cop.

After all but clearing out the gallery, the judge calls for a recess. Now M's attorney starts moving around the court room and warming up his vocal cords and arguing muscles. We can

hear him trying his defense out on the clerk and the court reporter first. He's going to argue it on first ammendment grounds.

In the meantime, the cop is doing the same thing. She's all in a klatch with the city prosecutor and her clerk. Her right hand's on her hip. The left one's all a flutter and her eyes are rollin' around in their sockets. I say to B, "Uh oh, it looks like it's us against the girls."

I don't know if this is common procedure but M's attorney disappears into the judge's chamber. A minute later some very loud voices are reverberating through the walls. Is some prisoner getting unruly or what???

M takes this opportunity to tell me and B, "The city's out for blood!" I wonder if his lawyer is in the process of donating a pint right now.

So finally the case begins and it's clear the prosecution intends to paint a lurid picture. What's more, Officer Prissy wants us to believe she was one of the arresting cops. According to her, she was there in plain clothes. I am so sure. By her account, the bike ride consisted of seventy five naked men. She also was under the impression that these guys were protesting oil. "Oil?" asks the judge "They were protesting oil? The price of oil or what?" "I don't know, I just heard they were protesting oil."

Ugh. Now the prosecutor wants to know what sort of bystanders were witness to this unseemly display. "Oh, a large number of people ranging in age from two years old to eighty." So the girls are apparently upset about the penises being ground into the faces of a G- audience. Bear in mind how this judge gets upset about men's knees and shins and you can see that our ship is starting to take on some serious water.

At this point, I notice there's a guy who for some reason has not been called. He's wearing shorts and a t-shirt. I know that he's going to get sent home till Monday if he shows himself in front of the judge like that. So, sick of the lies and bullshit, I decide to bug out. On my way, I tell this guy, "Hey, you wanna borrow my pants?" He's like what the hell.

So I missed the rest of the grisly procedure. I was stranded in a hallway waiting for the guy to finish with my pants. What I didn't count on was one of the guards running in to the judge to tell him his last customer was wearing someone else's pants. So the whole effort turned out to be for nothing. The guard laughingly recounted to his buddies how the judge told the guy, "Come back on Monday with your own pants."

So only B or M will be able to give you details of how the First Ammendment stood up to the enforcers of sartorial propriety. All I know is that M was found guilty, fined \$100 and given three months supervision.

By the way, anybody heard from him?

The other time I was hauled into court was for kicking a bus and breaking a window (charge: vandalism; year: 1993). I waltzed in with the same cavalier attitude but with a twist. I fully intended to plead guilty and didn't see why I needed to pay a lawyer to say that for me. Well, the cops were there, the bus driver was there, the CTA lawyer was there. The judge told me he would not speak to me and that I required counsel. He indicated a fellow off to the side who was willing to represent me for \$250 cash. The guy spoke the jargon for me and I got probation. Later, it was expunged. So I'm a thug. The FBI knows ALL ABOUT ME. My brother's an FBI agent and so what? I'm relaxed about all this.

Yeah, just as you deduced, things went pretty much as anticipated today. I got fined \$1000 for having the dog off leash. Andrea saw the wisdom (I guess) of not trying to squeeze

any blood out of me when she could look to my homeowners' instead. Afterward I got the chance to apologize to her and that made me feel much, much better. Staas, who could only counsel me that it was not wise as far as liability was concerned, nevertheless concluded that the apology went a long way toward diffusing any wrath that might redound upon you and Buster. Her point was that she wanted to make sure it wouldn't happen again. I assured her: not if I can help it.

So I'm happy again. I hope you, too, are feeling lightened and optimistic.

On getting older....

I'm getting old. Grey hair, heart arrhythmias, sharp plunge in interested looks. Sigh. I'll cut it off for now before I get too cranky.

I'm in a good mood and looking forward to spring and summer. On top of that, I feel like I'm coming into a fresh phase of my life. That's a treat at my age (45 and accelerating is the unofficial tally).

You are so right. I am more somber. That hardly means sad or even crabby (well maybe a little crabby) but sedate and nowhere near as frivolous as before. As for America, well, my guarded optimism is in harmony with the overall emotional reserve I'm experiencing. I'm sure you've met plenty of gurus who would like one to believe that a calm such as this is the highly sought after result of years of correct practice. It's age. Pure and simple. Kittens, puppies, teenagers. What do they know?

Can I tell you something while it might still do you some good? Wait two more years before you completely rethink your sexuality. I have it on good authority that a man reaches the height of his powers at the age of 37. Yep. No one is sexier than a 37 year old man. After that it's true. Time to find a new game. For me it's been work. That is, my new game is the work that I do. I'm happy going from house to house improving things for a modest \$20/hour. It's also my social life because I end up befriending everyone I work for. I think some folks who knew me back when are disappointed that I'm not as silly or effervescent anymore. I can't help them. Look at that dog curled up on the couch. He used to chase a ball for hours.

I'm almost through with Proust. I'm on about page 1650. On the last full moon, I put on my coat and hopped on my bike to go down to the beach for the monthly drumming and fire twirling thing they have. I got a block away from the house and thought about my book waiting next to the bed and just turned right around. So that's me-finding pleasure in yesterday's literature.

What gives in your new life of adventure? Isn't it strange? It feels like everyone is getting a new life this year. Is that so we can be better prepared for when the aliens come next year? Like "Look busy! Here come the aliens!"

On surviving being in the hospital.....

Let her know that medical outcomes are surprisingly dependent on how much doctors and nurses like her. When I would take the time to greet each person who walked into my room and learn their name, it was a survival strategy, in addition to common courtesy.

Back in November when I was in the Big Hos, I maintained my dignity by refusing to don their tatters and strings. And I never appeared less than fully closted. Just like I try to wear a tie when I fly. You never know who will be determining your destiny based on looks. No patchouli guru is getting on that plane before me.

On travel....

Travelling makes me edgy. It requires extra loads of justification because of my environmentalism. Plus I'm cheap and plus I feel (sometimes without reason) that I might be needed here. I wish I could just flit off at every summons with a clean conscience and a peaceful heart. I'm working on making that the standard. The plaster's still wet on that one.

10-4. Ready to fly. I've got my suit ready, the one that proclaims, "I ALWAYS wear a tie!" Very convincing especially after an eight hour bus ride.

I'm going to the Gathering this week. I'll be back the following weekend. It feels like an extravagance to be taking off when I'm just making the bills but Mom would warn me not to economize myself into regret.

On parties.....

I have plans for a couple festivities. For my 45th birthday, I will be asking my guests to bring old 45s to play. I'm praying for lots of snow to make it magical.

Then for April Fool's Day, which falls on a Sunday, I'm planning to make the house look like it's for sale and put open house signs around the neighborhood. There are already a glut of condos for sale so there will probably be a lot of shoppers looking for Spring Clearance Sales. Couples and their agents will stumble into a brunch in full swing to the merry cheers of "April Fools!" See if you can make that one. Should be good for a laugh or two.

And the Open House is an April Fool's Day joke I've had up my sleeve for a couple of years. K is helping me make the house look like it's for sale. On the weekend of, we'll have a real For Sale sign out front and on the day of, Open House signs up and down the block. Any stray shoppers will get to look at the house and when they come upstairs we'll all yell "April fool!" and give them some quiche.

Always causing some stress. Many friends are having little infarctions. Ooops!

On correspondence.....

Jonathan just wrote to me and told me you were on the verge of sending me a note. So in typical American Style, I will make a pre-emptive strike based on questionable intelligence.

I found myself thinking upon you this morning. My most recent morning ritual is the most lethargic one to date. I lay there in bed for forty five minutes just thinking. Fretting often. Musing occasionally. Today I was chiding myself for getting so out of touch with you. My excuse is that I've found myself in various down drafts and for fear of dragging others down with me, I have kept to myself. No one wants to hear about Grandma's neuralgia or Penny's ongoing moral examination. I'm a mess. No parties, the no costumes, no jokes. So don't fear that you've been excluded from any festivities. Au contraire!

Winter's coming on. Have you ever put on a cold wet bathing suit? That metaphor is yours to use without attribution. I would only ask that you show me what you did with it. I've got more of those lying around in my box of screws and nails. I keep thinking I should just toss the lot of them.

On the holidays.....

I'm bracing for the holidays. So much unnecessaryness in my opinion. Have J tell you about my two upcoming parties. More unnecessaryness but on MY terms.

On politics.....

I like Obama. The promise to me of a non-white president is the hope of being able to finally start waking up from the racist nightmare that is life in this world. The effect this would have on all manner of policies is also encouraging. I will be voting for Obama on Tuesday. I think that we should be realistic that either Democratic candidate will bring out some discouraging reactions across the country. It'll be a long hot summer. Gotta love it.

I loved this video. It made me laugh. It's so corny and sincere and cynical at the same time. I mean how can a campaign ad not have a tinge of cynicism or slickness about it? And one thing that's intriguing to me: I don't ever recall hearing the words "nuestra nacion" referring to the US. That's new.

On career choices.....

I was just Googling this guy I went to high school with. His name was mentioned in the New Yorker. He's the Vice President of global strategy at Google. Harvard Law degree with

specialty in human rights. *Sigh* This sort of wistful melancholy only takes hold when I compare myself to other people.

Meanwhile I'm going broke out of spite towards the current administration. I never trusted myself to have the spine to wield the power we were offered and not get corrupted by it. And here I'm reading about Google (and the guy I knew in high school) struggling to maintain their integrity while breaking into the Chinese market. Good Luck!

I'm in New York for the weekend helping my sister's mother-in-law move out of her house of 50 years. There's a lot of hand holding and a modicum of actual toting. Not quite on par with the launch of Google.cn but they appreciate my help.

I was very pleased to make your acquaintance at the Beltane gathering. I wonder what lasting impressions took away from your time there. I saw a picture of the May pole that you figured prominently in. I liked your outfit. Orange paint becomes you!

I'm living a fairly pleasant existence in Chicago. But today I got a little off balance. I found out a friend I went to school with is a VP of Shell Oil. That sort of made me feel puny. So I'm scooping up the crumbs of my self esteem and trying to mash them back into their original cupcake shape. Note to self: ' You know better than to compare yourself to other people.

You crossed my mind the other day. I was painting a friend's back porch and that gives one hours of freetime for the mind to roam. So you floated by and brought a smile to my afternoon.

So S told me how to get into the Alumni section of the Rice Webpage so that I could stalk you. I have to admit I was thrown for a loop to discover that you've made it as a VP of Shell Oil. It really caused me one of those defensive reactions I get when I go to class reunions. Do you ever get it: the need to justify every decision you've made for the last quarter century? "How do I explain THIS?" as you're looking around at a life that makes perfect sense to you and everyone you know EXCEPT perhaps folks you haven't seen in twenty-five years. So that took a couple of days.

My mind has been bridging the gap between being twenty in Houston and forty-six, bald, STILL HIV+, living in a house with five other people, working odd jobs for friends, riding my bicycle everywhere, eschewing so many of the trappings of modern life and paying the predictable consequences. No iPod, no cell phone (YET), no car, no camera, one charge card, no dental insurance. Have you flossed today? I have!

So I'll just leave it at that. A teaser. I would love to hear from you. I hope all is well in your world.

I gave birth today to a letter to KSM, Vice President of Petroleum and Natural Gas Exploration at the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company in the Hague, Netherlands. Thank you for being the midwife.

Letter to KSM

It was so nice to get that note from you the other day. Yesterday I was back painting and spent a good portion of the time on a KLM jet with you. "Wassup, girl? Who dis Mr. Moore? You gots you some chilluns waitin' at home? Gimme the lowdown."

I've been thinking about homecoming. I wasn't even thinking about going until you asked. But if you go, so will I. I think it would be a real treat to hang out with you. Were you planning on going or are we talking ourselves into it at this point? Plus how in control of your whereabouts and whenabouts are you?

I mean aren't you under a lot of pressure these days? I'm reading the headlines and biking past gas stations. I imagine red faced maniacs screaming at you, "Whadya mean you couldn't find any more oil???" Six billion crack addicts knocking on your door at all hours of the day and night. Yow!

Meanwhile I'm living this clownish existence. Serious. Brace yourself for a few photos. Check out my house. I painted it myself. Keep in mind that no one thinks to take a picture until I'm in some flipped out get-up. So you're getting the frosting, not the cake. 3000 words come to roughly 1,672 kbytes. I hope it don't balck your Crackberry.

Did I tell you that SH, my freshman roommate, is in the Department of Justice? I googled him and it turns out he is a Deputy Associate Attorney General. He's in charge of voting rights and had a part in restoring sovereignty to the native Hawai'ian government.

And I painted a kitchen AND a bathroom today! So you can tell I'm still in the throes of the mid-life crisis I thought I would be dead for. It would be laughable if it didn't upset me so. But I find myself feeling mildly hopeful (no small achievement at this contracting time of year). There's an inexplicable silver lining starting to shimmer. We'll see what comes of that.

On raising silkworms....

I have been so crazy lately. I think it started with those darn silkworms. I still haven't quite recovered from that silly stunt. But after I got back from Mexico and that root canal, (the silliness to end all silliness?) I landed a big job helping a friend remodel a kitchen and two batrooms. Not batrooms, bathrooms! It wears me out but I'm actually making money. So old fashioned it feels like a new fad.

As I was saying the silkworms eat a diet that consists solely of mulberry leaves (FRESH!) sprinkeld over them to be within their reach. Quite fussy and spoiled they are.

On words.....

I had it in my head to open up the dictionary and just start copying "imp..." words but they're still popping into my head so I will make two lists: "Before Webster's" and "After Webter's."

Before Webster's:

imp, impish, imperious, imperial, impocerous, impervious, imprecation (I think that's a word, though I don't know what it means and I don't know if it has an adjectival form), imperturbable, imploring, here's a good one: impecunious, imperative, implacable, importune, importunate, importuning, important, impotent, implausible (I like that one!), impassable, impossible, impenetrable, imprinted, impressive, impressionable, impressed, imploding, implicated, impractical, impracticable, impulsive, impartial, impugning, impugned, impugnant???, impunitive???, impelling, impelled, impaled, impala-like?, -esque?, impalliable?, impacted, impacting, NOT impactful, impalatable?, impure, impaired, imputed, impinging, impassive, impertinent, imprecise, improved, improving, improbable, imparted, impeding?, [Gleeman got these right off: imposing, impetuous, imposter (NOT an adjective), Floria tosses out impregnable, impermeable and impeachable. (Impressive!)]

I'm going to let this stew a little longer before I open up the dictionary. It's sort of like microwave popcorn, you wait until the pops come one second apart before you open the door. As long as I can tink up a word every minute or two, I'll hold off on the cheat.

So this is After Webster's (actually After the Scrabble Players' Dictionary WHICH I hasten to point out it a flawed work as it contains "impulsed," "impulsing," "impulses," but NOT "impulsive!"):

impainted, impaling, impanelled, imparked, impasted, impavid (means brave), impawned, impearled, impeded, impending, imperilled, implanted, impleaded, impleading, impledged, implicit, implied, impolite(!) (how did we miss it???), imponed, imporous, imported, imposed, imposed, impounded, empowered, impregnated, imprimis, imprisoned, improper (another "!"), impudent (again, !)

So, dere!

Fuck the Scrabble Players' Dictionary. These from Scribner's:

impalpable, impassioned, impatient (that was one of yours), impeccable!!!, and how 'bout impenitent, hmmm? Did I say imperceptible? I don't think so. And noone thought of imperfect. Impermanent, imperishible. What about impersonal? Implicated, impolitic! Imponderable, yessss. Impoverished, yes, yes! Impressionistic, well, sure. Imprisoned. heaven forfend. Mais improptu, bien sur! Arrgh, improvident, improvised and finally imputable.

Well that's about it without poring through every dictionary on the face of the Anglophone earth. Did I miss anything? I'm Pimpimp Goin' to Short Mountain

On worrying.....

The other day as I was stressing out I was telling people who asked what I was doing lately. "Oh, worrying, fretting, dreading and regretting." It has a ring, doesn't it? Dreading is the punch line and the one that got me thinking. Do you remember "The Adventures of Letter Man?" The evil Spell Binder would change letters and imperil an entire schoolbus full of children. Well I feel like the Spell Binder has taken the "m" in "dream" and changed it to "d," turning "dreaming" into "DREADING." Help us Letter Man! So I will be dedicating my gathering and 2008 to relearning how to dream.

Happy spring,
Love, Michael
Fears of Your Life

On the way home in the car, I was in charge of keeping H alert. I was uncharacteristically non-verbal. I simply had nothing to say even though I had a really nice gathering. So I decided to just read out of the red "Book of Fears." (Yes, I went back to the pavillion and lifted it after you were so kind as to return it for me.)

So, after about four pages of "12. Fear of being chase by bulls. 13. Fear of being lost. 14. Fear of elevators. 15. Fear of doors when they slams. 16. Fear of Fires and smokes...." H says, "Mike O'Reilly, you're going to have to stop. I'm being hypnotized and it's not safe!" I looked for the warning but nowhere does it say, "This booklet must NEVER be read aloud in a moving vehicle or to someone operating heavy machinery." So we added "139. Fear of being hypnotized while you're driving a car on the interstate."

96. Feared. Michael heard the cable on the 5 Fulton bus popped like a loud firecracker it scared him and the Bus driver Sunday night November 11 1992. At Night.

On marriage.....

It's Penny. W and H and I came up with a fun idea for Gay Pride: Gay Mergers. W is Ronald McDonald and I'm Burger King. We have an enormous cheese burger with two grooms on top. Sound good? H is Aunt Jemima and we're still looking for a Mrs. Butterworth. They have an enormous stack of pancakes with a pair of brides on top. Other ideas:

Jolly Green Giant plus Little Green Sprout

Jack Daniels and the Marlboro Man

Handy Andy and the Empire Carpet Guy. (Yeah that's a stretch.)

Would you like to Mr Clean and get gay mergered to Brawny? Lemme know.

On FOIA.....

Dear Department of Water Management;

I would like to request a brief budget outline that would justify the Department's proposed 50% increase in water charges taking place over the next three years.

Please send the information to me (e-mailed or written):

Michael O'Reilly

1623 W. Estes, Chicago, Illinois 60626

(773) 465-9329 pennysolucky@yahoo.com

Thank you very much,

Michael O'Reilly

On bumper stickers, coasters, coffee mugs, mouse pads and refrigerator magnets

It was very nice talking to you the other evening. It capped off the nicest day I've had in months. Here are the adages I can think of off the top of my head. I feel like there might be one or two lurking yet in the cerebral folds.

I wish I were as good as you are at not comparing myself to other people.

Will you go with me to my codependant meeting?

I'm sorry for being so apologetic.
Maybe I should stop "maybe I should"-ing.
Do you think I should be making more of my own decisions?
If there's one thing that I can't stand, it's a complainer.
Think universally. Act interpersonally
Ignorance is addictive. Enlightenment is an acquired taste.
Blessed are those who sneak up on the right for they shall attain their destination.
Blessed are those who honk their horns for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are those who are clean of car for they shall see their own reflections. Honk if you're rude and impatient.

On literature

I am adoring the Proust. The sentences are SO very complex and yet well crafted and understandable. That's saying a lot for a translation. I can't imagine trying to slog through it in French. I'm halfway through The Guermites way. It amuses me how everyone is always wheedling for an introduction to some titled personage. I think the only place in this country you'll find that sort of behavior would be in Hollywood and D.C.

I have been doing nothing but work, work, work. DULL BOY.

I feel like I should return his invitation but find Tolstoy so alluring that I forsake all living human contact for him. I'm a little concerned at my antisocial tendencies. I'm getting quite withdrawn lately. Phase? The look of things to come? I'm sure I would be utterly transformed by an infusion of ten or twenty thousand dollars. But failing that I feel I must force myself to rejoin the human race on some humble scale. This letter is about the extent I can manage.

It is such a delight to see your name in my in box. I think about you almost every day. When I'm flossing I remember how you avoid raisins, "little sweet bits between my teeth" as you called them once. I've been fine lately though under employment makes me lax and sluggish. Today I have a few things that I simply must do but fear I may end up reading Anna Karenina from cover to cover!

On the effects of narcotics

It's Penny here. I fell into a stupor last night at around 8:30 with the result that here I am at 4 in the morning with my mind wandering in all directions. Who should float across the screen but you weeding in the garden saying "I'm just drunk enough to be doing this?"

I was sad to see you take off so early from the gathering. I would have had the chance to discuss with you in person the discoveries I was making with regard to the effects of THC on my brain chemistry. For years I've avoided using the stuff for the way it has of turning me into an idiot. I come up with all these cockamamie schemes of social organization- typically along the lines of "It would be so cool if everyone..." Then insert some utterly absurd and unheard of practice with the flimsiest relationship to reality.

The upshot is that the next day I feel utterly humiliated.

This time, however, emboldened for no apparent reason, I ventured from my self-imposed prohibition and took a couple of puffs. What I found is that in moderation (2.2 puffs MAX!) the idealism that stretches disastrously to the ends of the universe can be limited to just those people in the immediate vicinity. In other words "You look so attractive" replaces "Everything is so miraculous!" Which is no less disastrous but only privately as opposed to universally humiliating.

So the damage was limited to a couple of evenings spent working my way widdershins around the fire essentially hugging everyone.

There were a couple of embraces that did more than smolder. Those led to some very interesting data. A was very cooperative in helping me compare the two mental states of high and not high on my level of amorousness. Result: when I was high he turned into a seventeen year old with a 31" waist prompting all the predictable responses on my part. Not high: no such magic. :(

So that's what I learned on my summer vacation. I hope you are well. I think of you fondly in quiet moments.

It's Penny. I enjoyed getting to know you better at the gathering. In spring my "issue" was nicotine. This gathering it was pot. I'm sure I told you how I discovered that in smaller quantities it causes me to idealize the people in my immediate vicinity causing them to be more attractive to me. In larger amounts the effect stretches to the ends of the universe leading to untenable schemes of social organization. It's all so embarrassing when the effects wear off.

Back in Chicago I'm "a happy idiot and struggle for the legal tender." It's bizarre. I have no life beyond that. I'm fading into a tool belt. And it feels fine.

Fell asleep at 8:30 last night. That's why I'm up a 4:30 thinking about folks far away. Maybe some toast and another nap.

So the coast is clear enough for the moment that I can fill you in on two promised threads: what I did on my autumn vacation and the latest on my intestines.

The CAT scan revealed nothing. So as far as that goes, I don't have CA, diverticulitis, a cornnut from the eighties or some impacted Thanksgiving turkey. I was sharing the good/inconclusive news with who asked, "Does it feel like a kinked garden hose?" "Why, yes, you might describe it that way though I've been telling them that it feels like a pile up at the corner of Sheridan and Sheridan." She says, "I had that off and on for years though knock wood it hasn't happened for a while. In fact not since I started on Clonazepam four years ago. It's a stress thing with me."

Back to the original question: What did I learn on my summer vacation? Well this gathering was about reefer. I have been avoiding the herb for years. My experience has been that it alters my thought process so radically that what comes out of my mouth is an embarrassing soup of global utopic schemes that have no relevance on this planet.

What I experimented with this last gathering was smoking in moderation. I worked with the hypothesis that the level of idealism in my thoughts is roughly proportional to the number of hits I take. So I limited myself to two good hits and occasionally a half assed hit to top it off.

After two hits the rose colored glasses would extend their effect only to the people in my immediate vicinity. Essentially the effect would manifest itself in an urge to say, "Ya know, you are really attractive." It was an aphrodesiac.

One evening I spent a fire circle going widdershins hugging each person in succession. It wasn't too embarrassing. I wasn't foolish enough to put the moves on 'em. Just a hug for a minute or two, along with the conversation you would share during a waltz. A gracious transition would find me in the arms of the next partenaire.

So that was my revelation. A little reefer makes you look like you did in your prime. A lot of reefer makes the entire planet look like Narnia after the Talking Beasts defeated the Snow Queen. Clearly one dosing protocol has some marketing potential.

On dog sitting.....

Homer is catching on that I'm his friend and champion in the battle against Total Sparky Dominance. He cuddles with me on the couch when Sparky's in his cage. But I am a real softy and hate to hear Sparky whimpering in his cage so tonight I stuck him in there only long enough for Homer to eat in peace. Then I made the mistake of falling asleep with the bedroom door open. Next thing I know, that motherfucker is in my face and then up on the bed. I tried to ignore him making a mental note to never leave the door open again. Then he starts moving around on the bed. Oh, for heaven's sake!

The dogs are fine. I feed them both a little twice a day. Homer gets his food in the bathroom hallway with the door closed. When he's finished, I peek in there and he's up on Claire's bed giving that look like in the Valley of the Dolls poster.

On reconnecting.....

This entire class of 80 facebook experience is knocking at my brain, tugging at my heart and giving me back pieces of my life I didn't even know were missing. And building from there! That's the part that really blows me away: building on long neglected foundations. I keep feeling a bubbling urge to sort these feeling out in writing. As Linda Judson says "I feel a blog coming on."

PS. B and I dated for a few months. She asked me to the Turnaround and I did what I could to appear interested and straight. It was a stretch for me. Bless her heart.

Dear J,

You can see how I bugged your sister into giving out your e-mail. I hope that's okay. Anyway how ya doin'? We used to live in Grand Rapids. Right before we moved to Wilmette. There were creeks we used to play in. Blessed patches of unusable land that provided a refuge that I've grown to appreciate intensely after decades of city living.

Long, long ago, one morning in advisory you told me "O'Reilly. You were in my dream last night. I was in the desert. There were a whole bunch of us. We were evacuating. All of us were going up this dune and piling into a airplane." It was probably an aeroplane. The kind with two propellers and rows and rows of rivets. "You were one of the kids that made it onto the plane. But before I could get to it, they closed the hatch and took off without me.

"Just then a voice embraced me from behind. It said, 'Fly, diamond!' Then I closed my eyes and the voice and its arms lifted me up into the sky."

This is gonna sound much harsher than it's meant. I felt really accused by that image. It sort of got stuck in my craw (like no duh, huh? Three decades later.). Anyway, I know it was just a dream and I shouldn't feel so self-conscious for being your symbol of conventional success. Though the callousness of our abandoning you did embarrass me. Would I really leave you behind?

All I'm trying to say is that, appearances notwithstanding, I was never really interested in conventional success. I really respected that you had your own band back then. Plus I envied that your inner wisdom was reassuring you of powers that the rest of us either scorned or ignored. All I got from my dreams were warnings. Warnings against joining the corporate structure and warnings against challenging the smug titans who rule this world.

We have our thirtieth reunion coming up. It's funny, it's hysterical how the prospect is touching off something of a crisis. I'd love to show up dripping in unconventional success. But it just didn't work out that way. I took the road less travelled and got stuck in the mud. Ah, well. *sigh*

I hope you are well. I also hope that you don't think I'm nuts for going on and on like this. I just wanted to respond and dammit you just disappeared after high school. Isn't it funny how things just hang there waiting for a chance to move forward? Yeah, right, O'Reilly. Whatever you say.

On organizing.....

I hope you are doing well on this glorious Thursday. I'm thinking about your paper chase and want to share some thoughts about how I go about organizing my bills at home. In general incoming mail can be sorted into five simple categories. They are (in order of consternation): junk mail (straight into the blue bag); personal correspondence (tiniest by volume); magazines and catalogues (generally all the same size and format); bills (uniform in size EXCEPT the phone bill [pet peeve]) and troubling missives that require complex responses in a timely fashion.

These last are the only portion that warrant closer inspection and dedicated files. What's more, safely sequestered, the stress they can cause is prevented from spilling over into the other areas of your life.

My hope for tomorrow (Are we still on? Do we have a time? is to approach the pile of bills in your dining room with the above template. I envision an assembly of five labeled boxes and the two of us evaluating each piece of mail in the room according to the criteria they represent. I won't deny the possibility that some correspondence will defy categorization but their number will be small. Once the mail has been sorted, we can begin to formulate a lasting system with daily utility.

Let me know if this meets with your approval or if you feel I'm overlooking something (like the fact that it goes against all you hold sacred, for instance). I'm eager to hear what you think as well as how you feel about this proposal of mine.

Hi Again,

I'm glad to hear you enthusiastic about all these portentous pieces of paper. I, too look forward to making strides in the name of ORDER and CONTROL. Aw, heck what virtue could we not throw in?

I must inform you that my time tomorrow is a bit constrained. I am dog sitting out near Portage Park. Fortunately, I have the use of a car so I will not be wasting time on my bicycle. So if you get your vaccination right after your hair appointment and I bring a lunch, we can blast straight through the afternoon and I can get back before the dogs burst. Does that sound good? Or do you want to get the vaccination at 6:00?

I'm looking forward to attacking that back room. What I envision is that on Saturday afternoon we will HAUL the contents of the room into the living room and dining room. You know I always like to use this phase of the operation for sorting and winnowing. Thus, things slated to leave the apartment will go near the front door and never reenter the back room. It would be great to have boxes on hand. We will want to bear in mind the White Elephant's hours of operation and not fail to bestow some bounty upon them. When the room is emptied, we will need to take a minute to sweep and mop. Then I run away and leave you alone with the mess.

Sunday comes and the first thing we do is race off to the container store for shelves. This will be stressful for me because I am not one who has faith in buying solutions. But I am willing to go along with anything that will accommodate the volume of things you wish to keep. We get back to your place, put the shelves together and start packing things up.

On prayer.....

Tanks for da laff. Har har har dee har har! How yoo bin? Me, stressed. Actually driven to prayer to ask for some slack and a free pass back into the good life. It's working! God is such a sucker.

On being on TV, more dog sitting, and more trouble with the law.....

I have been a poor correspondent. When you first sent your text regarding Wisconsin and Wendy Williams, I was in a terrible mood. I don't know if you heard about the dog bite. Something I'm not proud of nor eager to talk about. BUT I was dog sitting for a friend's pit bull and I let him off the leash to play with a couple of dogs he knew. A lady came up with her little dog and when she yanked her little dog away from "mine" he bit the woman! UGH!!!

Well this could cost me thousands. At the very same time,. Wendy Williams is wanting me to talk about leopard spots in NYC. I just couldn't disguise my dread at the thought of popping out the New York the day before I was due in court., So they sensed this in my phone interview and gave me one of those "We'll call you" responses and let me off the hook. I have to admit I was relieved.

Since then, the lawyer has been working on my behalf and maybe my homeowners' insurance will help pay for it. We'll see. Anyway I'm in a better mood, not panic-stricken and anxious. But still not up for an appearance on TV. I don't know why I'm afearred of standing on camera with a woman whose breast size cannot be contained by any letter of the

Dinner with Andre." Why shouldn't they at least put "My Heart Circle with Camera" on their Netflix queue after it gets booed at Sundance? That's MY dream.

I'm Penny and I'm passing the talisman.

Here is the article I have been agonizing over. I should have started it before tonight but ah ambivalence => paralysis, deadlines => look I think I saw her eyelids move.

How to host a Heart Circle and Kill It Off One Participant at a Time

When I consider airing our dirty laundry, it occurs to me that one wouldn't need name tags to identify whose are the rainbow boxers with the racing stripes or the greyish pee-stained briefs with the 54 inch waist. Writing a roman a clef can be quite tricky! Perhaps it's best if I just stick to "I statements" as we're so fond of calling them. Mine are the tighty-whities with the hole in the ass.

In our city, we have a monthly heart circle. Our circle acknowledges that it's discriminatory to have any event on the same night of the week. That's why we have it every night on the 19th. That was chosen arbitrarily. By ME! I just decided. Like George Bush. I figure, if I'm going to have the heart circle in my home every month (NOT a recommended policy), then I can bark out a few orders. Like "Get OUT!" Who's to say otherwise? Like "PLEASE wear clothing." MUST I condone every kook? Like "I'm tired of cooking. If you want to eat, you better bring some food. This is not a road house. Mama's tired."

Last month we were down to five. Five. Patient listeners, thoughtful sharers, dear friends, true hearts. Ahhhhhhh.

On engineering.....

I remember at Rice I was up for some award and they interviewed me on my engineering interests and ideas. I told them breathlessly about awe I was by bridges and overpasses. I did not get the award. The awe persists.

On class reunions.....

What? You're too busy to call your alma mater?
From: Michael O'Reilly <pennysolucky@yahoo.com>
To: undisclosedrecipient@yahoo.com

Dear Undisclosed Recipient,

This is a shot in the dark from Michael O'Reilly. I am reaching out to you this morning (Look! It's Sunday morning!) NOT as your senior class president but as a lowly functionary on the NTE Class of '80 30 Year Reunion Committee. I have taken on a randomly assigned list of 25 graduates who through some combination of oversight and obstinance have eluded our grasp. This, my opening volley, goes out to those nine on my list for whom we have an e-mail address that has not yet been returned as "undeliverable."*

It is our shared ambition to include as many graduates as we possibly can in this year's upcoming reunion festivities. Perhaps in our enthusiasm you have been besieged by more than one request to acknowledge our efforts. Please understand that the third tentacle from the left

often knows not what the second from the right is doing. And trust me that I can understand hesitating to submit oneself to our eight-armed aquatic embrace. Let me reassure you that the benefits of returning to the fold far outweigh the annoyance that it entails.

One of the surprise treats, from what was for me an overwhelming and disconcerting 25 year reunion, was the Saturday morning open house at the school. A breakfast that had a breezy, alcohol-free ambiance was followed by tours through the building and an opportunity to roam free just like 4th period! It was great! And family friendly, too.

It would warm my heart to hear back from you, Undisclosed. Don't make me resort to threats.

Yours, Sincerely
Michael O'Reilly

*Mrs. Green always said, "Don't even think about it. The period ALWAYS goes inside the quotes." Still I think about it.

A hasn't called me back but I think about her. She and I were friends somewhat. We were two of three East students that took physics one summer over at West. We were silly in the back of the class. What the fuck was I doing taking physics in the summer??? What a NERD! And T! We were SO NERDY in fourth grade. We had this mutual friend named B. He was very tall and angular and we would play "The Birds" at recess, poking and jabbing at each others' eyes. So silly! How do you look someone in the eye knowing you poked it out with your bird/hand four decades prior?

Dear Dr. A,

My name is Michael O'Reilly. I went to Howard and NTE with J. He and I were in band together in junior high and then saw one another every day through high school in Mr. Bachmann's advisory. I'm going out on a short limb in guessing that you are related to him in some way. If that's true, might you be willing to put me in touch with him? My motives are two. First, there is a thirtieth reunion coming up and I am on the Little Bo Peep committee. J has eluded our loving grasp for years. Second, I'd just like to say hello to him and respond to something he told me once.

Neither of these motives carries a huge amount of weight. Together they barely justify my bothering you. Nevertheless, I hope will look kindly on my request. Please accept my fondest wishes and regards.

On self-improvement....

Hi there, Secretly I have been improving my typing . I found this website that offers free lessons. Interested? it's www.typingweb.com. I'm half way through the beginners' lesson. It makes me feel like the girl from Tennessee Williams' the Glass Menagerie.

On mental health....

As I was reading about distorted thinking and depression I started wondering what sort of insight these guys might have when the distortions go the other way. I mean we have known plenty of people whose inaccurate self assessments supported and evergreen sense of confidence and appeal. I miss being that person! But I steer clear of them now. They remind me of things I've done that are embarrassing now. Excesses of enthusiasm. So to root out the fallacies and return to balance. There's the challenge.

On homestay hosting...

Our new Castle mate Ahmed is working out even though he makes me nervous. I worry about offending someone who possibly harbors a very strong sense of sin. And SO MUCH of what we do around here is strictly forbidden. But he likes me and likes our style. That's a puzzle to ponder.

Our last homestay fled after two and a half hours. Saudi brick-redneck from the edge of the desert, 19 years old went packing after a frank discussion of the meaning of the word "gay." "You do sex with the man?" Still looking for someone in that room.

Subject: Clean radical seeking space starting summer or fall
Darling Papyrus, You make a LOT of demands and do not paint a picture of the ideal roommate. Are you 23 or 24 by any chance? I suggest you have someone look at this ad and rewrite it completely. You had me wondering at the passive aggressiveness crack and lost me at the lenient rent.

Quotes and Snippets

Somehow I don't think there's anything better than a good laugh.

I was thinking about you all day yesterday. Just wondering how you were.

We are only humans. If you want unconditional love you will have to look to God or a dog.

P.S. Tonce upon a wime there was a gritty little pearl named Prinderella.

Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver and the other tarnished forks that have been munched by the garbage disposer.

Ah, 2011. What an awkwardly numbered year. So almost 2012. Like some gawky younger sister. Still I have good feelings about it. Like it'll be a halcyon respite somehow.

I work for "myself" which means any gal with a leak or a squeak can call me and want me there. Such a life I've chosen!

I am not chained to this computer but this phone don't go nowhere without me.

Friends call me Penny. So please CALL ME MIKE!

Just "Penny" please. Like Cher or Madonna.
