



Dear Friends and Family,

December 2008

This year was relatively quiet but enjoyable. We didn't make any very long trips, didn't have any momentous events, and generally did what we usually do and more of the same. The defining moments had mostly to do with having fun. Life continues to treat us royally.

In January, Richard's brother, George, and his wife, Elaine, came out to AZ to visit. It was great seeing them again and we celebrated George's birthday while they were here (at a fish restaurant where they treat you like the king of the sea – always good to help your brother feel right at home).



February brought our annual Variety Show and I was on stage again, performing "I Hate Men" from *Kiss Me, Kate*, and a scene from Neil Simon's play, *Chapter Two*. I got a lot of enjoyment from being able to throw things at the men on stage while acting the shrew. I now find that singing and playing humorous roles are my favorites.



March and April were quiet. We enjoyed the good weather here and the relative quiet that comes in our spring. I was still singing with the "Desert Divas," a women's choral group here, and working on web sites for two of our local clubs. Richard still enjoyed playing computer games, reading, and harassing me (nicely, of course).

For Mother's Day, I flew into San Francisco and stayed with Morgan for a few days. While there, we met up with Travis and Craig for dinner and also had a fine day together at the Muir Woods. Morgan is now working for a company in SF doing Flash designing. Travis is still working in SF as an IT professional, and Craig got his real estate license and has been selling homes in the East Bay since late summer or early fall.



It started getting hot in June, and Richard and I contemplated traveling somewhere cooler but instead decided to stick it out in the "warm" Arizona summer. We also decided (both of us!) to take singing lessons. Richard has always had a nice voice, but he hadn't sung in years and years. Now, he and I do a nice Faith Hill/Tim McGraw duet and sing Neil Diamond and Linda Eder songs with gusto. We also spent time watching animal shows on TV. As you can see, our cats enjoyed that, too.



In mid-July, We traveled to Joshua Tree to see Cyndie before she left for a year in South Korea. This assignment came as a surprise; she and Scott thought she'd be stationed at 29 Palms for three years, but that's the Army for you. Scott came for a visit to AZ in late July and it was good to see him relaxed, away from work for a while. He's still a sheriff in San Bernardino County.

The rest of the summer found us doing more of the same, but I started tap dancing (yep, really) and did pretty well. I'd shuffled off to Buffalo as a kid, and it's amazing how much you can remember from that long ago. Of course, I can't recall what I did yesterday, but shuffling off to Buffalo comes easily. Anyway, I progressed to a tougher class and started tapping in earnest. And that class was leading to a dance in a show, so . . . well, more about that later.



We headed back to Scott's house in September but used it as a stopping point on our way to the Shambala Animal Preserve located in Acton, CA. This sanctuary for mostly big cats was begun by Tippi Hedron and she still lives there and maintains the sanctuary through donations and use of her own funds. Two friends had donated to her ROAR foundation and shared tickets with us (thank you, thank you) so we were able to spend a morning touring the sanctuary. It is much like a zoo in some ways, with enclosures and the rest, but the absolutely fascinating thing was to find that these animals do not look at you the same way. When you walk by an enclosure, the cat looks at you and YOU ARE PREY. No doubt about it. I've never experienced that feeling before. It was truly amazing. If you want to learn more about Shambala, visit the web site: <http://www.shambala.org/> and you can also view some videos I shot on our web site: <http://www.galeandrichard.com/video/videos.htm> .



October is when things start to bustle again where we are. People who don't stay here for the summer start coming back and activities begin again after a summertime respite. Both Richard and I started doing things with the Drama Club again – he helping with building scenery for plays and shows and I working on scripts and acts. The first "big shew" of the season was our annual

Celebration of Music. Richard helped to build this set which was absolutely fantastic. A friend asked me to be Cher to his Sonny and we did a fun rendition of "I've Got You, Babe," and then I did a spoof of a Patsy Cline song, "She's Got You." This act is hard to describe: I pull lots of things out of my dress as the song lyrics progress: first a picture, then some 45 records, a class ring, magnifying glass, a golf club, some Kleenexes, a garden hose, another golf club, and finally a hand saw. How I got all those things into that dress is a trade secret! It brought a standing ovation as the finale. I was proud. I hope to have a video of this on our site soon: <http://www.galeandrichard.com/video/videos.htm>.



We stayed here for Thanksgiving this year and enjoyed a great meal at home with four good friends who brought food to share. After the festivities were over, we found Bella, our youngest cat, sitting amid the fabric leaves and centerpiece I'd bought as a



table decoration. She had become very attached to these leaves (she clung to them when removed from the table), so we took the leaves and arranged them and the centerpiece in an unbreakable container on our coffee table and let her "nest." Of course, as soon as she got down, the other two cats had to try the nest, too.



Most of the west-coast Leach clan is gathering at Scott and Cyndie's for Christmas this year. Cyndie will be on leave from S. Korea. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again and playing games like we usually do.

I hope the holidays find you well and happy. Don't forget our door is open if you're ever in our neck of the woods. We'd love to have you visit.

Love from all of us to all of you!

Gale, Richard, Orion, Rigel, and Bella