



December 20, 2004

Dear Family and Friends,

In just a few days, you will be joining families and friends for the holidays. May you all have a festive season with a Happy New Year. Let me share my **2004 Yuletide confessions** of an Innkeeper.

When I reflect back on the past twelve months, my saddest time was the decline of my father's (Fred) health. The family was able to find excellent private health care to ease the burden. His last six months were spent between hospitals and nursing homes. Finally my **Dad** found **peace on July 12<sup>th</sup>**. To celebrate his life and his special love of the sea, we had a family gathering on September 11<sup>th</sup> and took him on his final trip on the Cape May Whale Watch. We'll all miss him and his lively conversations.

Following my father's "crossing over" **three strange things** happened within the next week. Is there truly an after life? On the day I arrived up north to help the family with the funeral arrangements, a **tree** was nervously **hanging over** my father's old homestead. That night the police came and had the tree removed.

The next day at the funeral parlor, I received a call from a Cape May neighbor stating that a **second tree** from my father's last home had fallen over in their yard and it had to be removed. Two trees coming down in just 24 hours on two of the places he lived. Was it just a **coincidence**?

When I arrived safely home, a few days later, my nephew Max and his lovely Scottish wife, Lynne came to Cape May for a much needed vacation. Max informed me that I had no cable TV. Just the week before, all my TVs lost their picture and I had to call Comcast for service. I called the cable company again but was puzzled why it recurred. Comcast suggested I call the Electric Company to check my electrical service. My Electric Company informed me that my problem was a "temporary service" connection. Since I've been here for 11 years all my **electrical shorts** were caused as a result of the setup. Well, the connection, once removed from the building, was blazing hot and replaced with a permanent setup. Was Fred already working his angel deeds to insure that his family was safe? Well you be the judge.

For winter vacationing, I decided to stay close to home since my Dad was failing and I wanted to lend a helping hand to the family. In late January, I took a quick trip with a friend to **Newport, RI**. We loved the city, the great mansions and toured a few of the ones that were still open. It turned out to be the coldest weekend of the year and shopping became an impossible task with the bitter cold. On Sunday, we attended mass at the local Church where Jackie and John Kennedy were married. It was great to be surrounded by all that history. We hope to go back in warmer weather.

Throughout the year I continued to meet and greet **many wonderful people** from all over the world at Antoinette's. We continued to work on the standard maintenance chores but added a replacement **boiler** for heating the house and a new **chimney flue** to replace the deteriorating liner.

Halfway through the year I decided to do a "**clean sweep**" of all my house clutter from top to bottom. The challenge was how to keep me motivated to clean out 24 rooms, a large basement and a 3-car garage. Well, with hired help, three months and 110 hours of labor, I was pleased to say that my clutter pile was significantly reduced and now sat in the garage. Following 2 HUGH garage sales much of my trash became someone else's treasure. More sales will follow in 2005.

To continue my downsizing, I began washing and ironing my **lace collection** which began 25 years ago. I joined an antique fair in the park and set up my tent with the help of some loyal friends. My first attempt in 2003 was a washout. Well sales were steady and I did finally begin **selling** my collection. But it may take me another 25 years to deplete my supply. So to be continued . . .

I finally got my **estate documents** in order (wills etc.) after 12 years of procrastination. As executor of my father's estate, I found out quickly that you must have a legal will. The State of NJ immediately freezes your assets until the will is probated by the Surrogate's court even if you have a joint account. Checks bounce. If no Will exists, months could pass before you may see any sign of resolution. It becomes a financial burden on the family if your paperwork is not in order. Make it your New Year's resolution if this is also true for you. You'll feel a whole lot better and it's better for your family and/or friends. If you need some help just give me a call.

I continued my **night classes** with advanced upholstery and furniture refinishing sessions. The school added a basic **gardening** session so I decided to give it a try. The Gardening teacher worked in New York for several years and was responsible for many of the indoor atriums on Wall Street. She was a walking book and I just signed up to repeat it in the winter. My indoor plant that she gave me is barely alive but now I know the signs of a slow death.

I thought the fall season would quiet down but to my surprise it didn't. In late October, a friend asked me to assist her with a neighbor to clean out her house for a big move to Texas. Well, after two weeks of waiting to help her pack, we finally got a peek at the workload a day before the moving trucks arrived. Sadly, this single lady was a **QVC addict** and was embarrassed to let us see her living conditions. Within 24 hours it became clear that 75% of her possessions were just new and duplicates and would not be moved. So the plan was to have a Moving sale after she left for Texas. After eight straight days of unpacking her collections, we found that she had 150+ cleaning supplies, 400+ ladies' makeup, 200+ baskets, 1000+ woman clothes, 200+ pieces of Tupperware just to name a few of her NEW collections. Finally after two weekends of sales, we were able to weed down her possessions to donate to the local charities. The following week I learned from Oprah and Dr. Phil that with online shopping this has become a serious problem here in the United States.

As December was approaching and I was beginning to plan my Christmas decorations for Antoinette's, I got a call from a lady about buying a Doll House. As most of you know, my **father made 5 doll houses** which proudly sat on my front porch. I had to move 2 of them to warmer ground when I bought my outdoor rocking chairs. But the weather does take a tole on indoor doll houses that sit outside all year.

This lady had seen the doll houses on the front porch during a Horse and Buggy tour. Would I be interested in another one? Her husband Carl, retired from IBM in upstate NY, had made one but had no place to put it. He carried it downstairs to sell it at his yard sale but the roof fell off in transit. So I graciously went to see what this house looked like. Well, Carl did a lovely job on this Victorian doll house. I explained to Carl my dilemma that the doll houses need to stay outside and that they must be made weatherproof. The remaining ones on my front porch were slowly deteriorating but I'd hate to remove them because of the sentimental value and pleasure they give my guests, especially the children. So Carl immediately agreed to winterize the dollhouse he made by adding exterior paint and stains to both inside and out. With Carl's enthusiasm, I recalled the excitement my father experienced while making these houses. The good news is that I now have a **Doll House engineer** (or DHE for short) who is willing to help me in the spring to spruce up my Dad's houses. Carl's dollhouse proudly sits next to Fred's houses and they make a lovely site together. Was Fred again performing his new angel duties to find me a DHE? Dad, thanks for the help.

One last thought for the holiday period. Please lets' **remember our Military** personnel who are serving our country while we are enjoying our holidays. Thank you for everything.

Well, better head to the Post Office before they close their doors. Please keep in touch and would love to hear from you via email at [deannab@snip.net](mailto:deannab@snip.net). <http://www.antoinettescapemay.com> Happy Holidays.

Fondly, *Deanna*