

To My Friends and Family,

This year has certainly been one of changes. It started out well enough, but by late Spring I could no longer force myself to program computers on a daily basis. By August I wasn't even doing it on a weekly basis. This has been a recurring problem for me—at my previous job I worked part-time from home for the same reason. Not wishing to find another job and repeat the same mistakes, I reluctantly concluded it was time for a career change. With this decision made I realized that I had no idea what to do, so I went back to school to buy some time. This allows me to explore potential career fields while living off student loans. The downside of the whole thing, however, is that I must sell my condo.

I decided to go for the liberal arts instead of the hard sciences, and I found a good degree program at The University of Colorado at Denver. They have a Master of Social Science program, which allows me to draw from the various disciplines in the College of Liberal Arts. Unlike other degree programs, this one is quite flexible. I started attending classes last Fall and am looking to be accepted into the degree program next Summer.

It has been quite a transition! With my background in the hard sciences, I had some culture shock. In one class, for example, we read fourteen books in sixteen weeks and wrote a short paper on each one. I may be a fast reader, but I've never been that fast. And being something of a pragmatist, I have problems studying bizarre and completely absurd viewpoints because they're "philosophically interesting." Despite all this I am making the transition. It's fun to learn new stuff, and school opens up possibilities that I never really considered. This Spring I'm taking a class on creative writing.

I quit my computer-programming job in early August and started at UPS as a part-time package unloader. One unexpected advantage is that I've lost 35 pounds. For the first time in a long time I weigh less than 200 pounds. My goal is to get back to 160, which was my pre-marriage weight. The pay is low and would barely cover rent if I had to live off of it, but I enjoy having a physical job where I'm not required to think analytically. The people at UPS are nice, and I like working there—the atmosphere is different. As a part-time worker I still get full medical benefits and paid holidays. After a year, I'll get vacation time.

Another surprising turn of events is that I am now a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Never in my wildest dreams did I envision being a member of a union, especially given the anti-union sentiment I grew up with on my Dad's side of the family. I have heard horror stories about US Steel, and my own experience with the civil service has given me the impression that unions are simply a mechanism to allow people to get paid without having to work. Yet UPS is not as bad as I thought, in part because it has not been unionized as long as the steel industry and civil service. People here actually work hard, and I don't see the rampant laziness and inefficiency that I expected.

On the recovery front, I am making progress. For those of you who had the unfortunate experience of knowing me during my marriage, that whole thing was a symptom and was not the problem itself. I began the recovery process over nine years ago and have tried multiple approaches with a variety of results. I started seeing a different therapist about fourteen months ago, and I'm glad to say we've been making some real advances. We use a combination of inner child work and dream analysis. I used to laugh when I heard people talk about an inner child, but it works for me. I was puzzled when I heard others talk about tracing issues back to infancy, yet now I'm doing it myself. It has been a long process, but for the first time in my life I can see the light at the end of the tunnel—and it's not a train.

With this letter I send you my best wishes for the year to come. I pray that God will give you abundant life in all its fullness, to include peace, prosperity, happiness, and health. May God bless you and keep you until we meet again.