

A few things that happened this year

FOR THE FIRST TIME

• I ATTENDED TRAFFIC SCHOOL TO AVOID A TICKET (my first moving violation—I thanked the cop when he was done) and found myself, despite resentment and tiredness, totally involved in the experience, geek that I am. Raised my hand and answered questions too much. BOTTOM LINE: Traffic school does not teach you how to deal with the psychological issues of driving defensively at all, especially driving in the city. I have some good ideas about how I would run a traffic school. A very UN, cross-sectioned experience. Every possible type of person there. • 2 DIFFERENT PEOPLE COLD-CALLED TO RECRUIT ME FOR A JOB. Definitely a first for me. • I READ LUCKY JIM (FINALLY). • I DID SOME CALLIGRAPHY for the outgoing governor of this state (for the \$) - nothing fancy (not proclamations)—inscribing photographs, and gained new insight into the physical qualities which help politicians be elected to office. • MY APARTMENT WAS ROBBED - The thing you always wonder about happening to you in the city finally did... Came home late one night to find that some asshole jerks had crowbar-ed open my back door and filled two pillowcases full of things I basically couldn't afford to replace, even with renter's insurance (highly unrealistic deductible). Both the Chicago Police and my management company came out of this looking very bad. The police didn't come until after I called 911 a second time (I thought I saw someone inside my apartment from where I was standing on the street, hyperventilating), although when they came I was never so totally thrilled to see a whole mess of cops in my life. I had to call them from my neighbor's apartment, which was scary in itself. The cops were straight out of central casting: Irish, smokers, thick nasal Chicago accents, young freckled faces, impossibly cynical, called the perpetrators "goofs." Two embarrassing things happened with them: 1) when they busted in my place there was something quite embarrassing lying on the floor of my bedroom (I discovered this later) which I know they saw and 2) when they were walking around the apartment assessing damage they looked vaguely at my bedroom in all its untidyness and said, "Well obviously they were in here too" and I had to tell them no, that was the normal mess. I laughed hysterically at that point, in part because I had been holding my breath wondering if they would say that, as if this were a movie. Eventually a wheezing police technician came, carrying gun, nightstick, handcuffs, and his fingerprint testing equipment in a PLASTIC BATMAN LUNCHBOX. He was alternately taciturn and cynically talkative with another marvelously rounded, juicy Chicago accent... After he left, my bra picked that moment to blow an o-ring and totally crap out on me—it literally fell apart—too much psychic disturbance, I guess—and I struggled to put on a new one as my building's Croatian janitor and his two translators/helpers knocked on my door. They had come to board up the back door (I had had to yell at the management company for them to hold off until the police dusted for fingerprints). After everyone had left I piled all moveable furniture up in front of both doors (I had the strong sense I didn't want to sleep anywhere else that night) and proceeded doggedly with one of my evening's original plans, which was to make a cake (!), which I did. Made a lot of phone calls. The next day the janitor screwed all the pieces of wood and locks back into their original holes, making the back door even unsafer than before, and all my building manager could say (over and over) was, "Well, it happens to everyone eventually in Chicago," READ: I WILL DO NOTHING TO HELP YOU. My cat was singularly unmoved by the experience. They stole all my CDs, those fuckers, including my Nilsson/Corelli Turandot, which I really miss. • I TRIED BEN & JERRY'S "PHISH FOOD" for the first time - It's phantastic. • I PURCHASED MY VERY FIRST (second-hand) first-edition Barbara Pym! (if you follow) Quite hard to find—they were only printed in runs of 3- 4,000, I think, when first published in the 1950s. Too bloody exciting. Found it in a great bookstore in Providence, R.I. • I BECAME SOMEWHAT ADDICTED TO LOVELINE (how ridiculous), the LA-based radio call-in show. I actually called in once to complain about how Adam always trashes fat people (trés horrible) and got on the air and found myself TOTALLY BACKING DOWN. Larry Flynt was the guest that night, and I think that made me feel somewhat unsafe. I felt like I hadn't listened to the show enough at that point to comment on his defense (except, of course, I had) and so I let him get away with it. I wrote a pissed-off email message to them later. Hrumph. Not a very fulfilling experience. • I HAD TO TAKE MY CAT TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM - 1:00 a.m., careening down Western Avenue. The old pet death vs. available funds dilemma (she almost died—I paid. I love my cat). • I WAS MOST FEARFULLY BETRAYED (I'M QUOTING YOU'LL NEVER EAT LUNCH IN THIS TOWN AGAIN) AT A SPECTACULAR NEW LEVEL BY A COMPUTER - It mangled a final class project I spent almost 40 hours on. A Photoshop piece. It didn't completely mangle it beyond recognition, which would have somehow been easier to take; it irretrievably changed it just enough to make it totally different and wrong. The whole experience beautifully illustrated at this whole new level the random destructive capacity of computers. I learned my lesson. • I BOUGHT TWO PAIRS OF exquisitely designed Fiskars Softouch scissors to replace the long sturdy old-fashioned galley scissors I had carefully stolen from my last job, which had in turn been stolen from ME in the robbery. A great success. • I SAW MY SIXTH PRODUCTION OF DON GIOVANNI. This one: quite uncomfortable \$10 seats for a good Chicago Opera Theater production; a bitchin' Donna Anna and fairly decent Don. Interesting staging, including TheDescenttoHell, which was handled on top of the dining table. I am starting to really collect Don Giovannis. • I READ SOME OF ANAÏS NIN'S diaries (eh). • I ASKED A MAN OUT VIA EMAIL. Ah, technology. • I WENT TO PITTSBURGH for a conference and saw Flashdance on TV while I was there, how appropriate. • I CLEANED THE FILTER OF MY AIR CONDITIONER - Yikes! I'd never done this (didn't know I was supposed to!) and I got it...3 years ago? 4? It's running beautifully now. • THERE'S MORE, YOU KNOW.

