

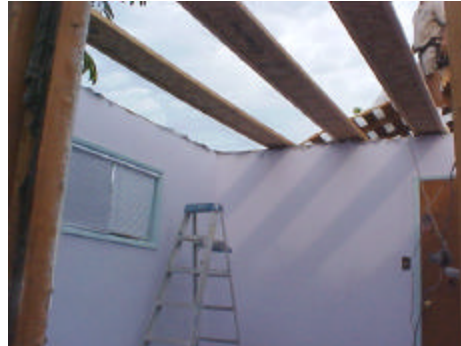
This is a note from a couple of lost friends - we hope you had a good Thanksgiving! Merry Christmas (2005, 2004, and 2003!); Happy New Year(s); Happy Valentines and Summer Solstices. Greetings to all our friends to whom we've missed sending our annual letters and holiday wishes for the past two voyages around the sun. We enjoyed reading your holiday cards and letters (some of them uncovered as recently as this fall!) and appreciate your friendship in spite of our disappearance from much of our shared activities, places, and traditions these past couple of years. So as Desi often told Lucy on those old TV episodes, we've "got some splain'n to do!"

You're probably familiar with the cautions and horror stories told about house renovations, caring for elderly parents, grad school adventures, and empty nest changes – these have been the subject of books and films for years. We can now attest to the truth of practically everything you've seen and heard, no matter how exaggerated some of those stories might have been!

Home reconstruction: Since Grace had moved in the previous year, we decided to enlarge the house to give each of us more privacy and comfort. We contracted plans and workers to add a second story master bedroom and study and to enlarge Grace's bedroom, the original bathroom, and the living room by eliminating another bedroom. Work to turn an indoor patio attached to the garage into temporary sleeping quarters for Tom and Renata began right after Memorial Day 2003. Work on the foundation and the rest of the structure was planned around moving Grace from one side of the house to the other. "While we have this torn out, we might as well fix . . ." became our mantra as work continued for the next eighteen months.



June & July 2003 – foundation and structural work; even with the water heater outside, we still had hot, running water!



July – Sept. 2003 – removed old roof; replaced pipes and wiring; added new second floor, walls, and roof!



Oct.'03- Feb.2004 – insulation, windows, interior walls, stucco and plaster; new deck and balcony work begun.



Mar.'04 - rain forced us indoors into temporary quarters downstairs! We moved upstairs in May so old walls could be knocked out; new walls, floors & windows appeared next.



Still more to do, but in Dec.'04 we called it "done" for a while!

Right now, we're looking at building a gate, finishing the downstairs bathroom, and finishing the deck.



Grace: Renata's mom fell in October of 2003, suffering respiratory failure and seizures after reacting to pain medications in the ER. She spent 30 days in intensive care in Ventura before being transferred to the Sub-acute Care Unit at Simi Valley Hospital where she learned to