

# Families Burning

Copyright 2014 Mark Lee Golden markleegoldenwriter.com

As the fading sounds of jingling bells, reindeers' names, and dreidals spinning, I find myself once again in an awkward position. I burn families and I toss nice people into trash cans. Annually, I dispose of fathers, mothers, children, newborns and pets.

Early in December these familiar and not so familiar faces arrive by the mail. Usually there's a newsletter summing up the mostly good and yet bad of the twelve months behind — behind us all. This piece of unfolded paper displays a montage of family members proudly smiling or laughing in various significant activities, scribbled captions explain just what. I also receive posed family photos shot in front of the flames in their fireplace or a daytime forested snowy wilderness scene.

I like to see who's who and what their news is — don't get me wrong. But, I know when I open this mail that a day will come when these friends, near and far, will accompany scraps of food, used tissues and gift wrap paper, pet droppings and whatever else is considered refuse, and land in the trash can or fireplace. Disposing of the sentimental next to the stinky and greasy is awkward.

When placing friends or relatives and their loved ones into the kindling I get twinges of guilt. This annual ritual of conflicted emotions occurs during the echoes of what some sing as "the most wonderful time of the year!" True, the previous days might've been so, but with New Year's before me, I must clean and normalize my home. The family, neighbor, and relative burn pile is set to the flame on this wintry day when the Spokane, Washington, temperature lumbers in the chilly teens.

Personally, I don't send out such holiday photo postcards or greeting cards *included* with my life in selected review. Certain people are compelled to faithfully update me — perennially. A beloved cat died here, a son graduated there, and Grandpa passed 95 years young in good health.

I'm just glad that my large living room (where the fireplace waits) is not crowded with the dutiful mail senders as I light a match to the recent snapshot of their lives. I watch families transition to ash, their updates indistinguishable from one family to another, I see paper newsletters burning faster than photos.

Inherent to us all — during twelve months of passage — come varying degrees of warmth and chills. The stable nests we work to maintain don't always hold together. Shaken by bigger birds who raid our eggs; wind gusts rattle the home; and empty nests are inevitable. We watch our youngsters fly and then add a new layer of prayer. Sometimes we outgrow our fine nests and fly to somewhere new and better.

The tradition to keep in touch and inform are added seasonings to the season. Whether sweet, salt or spice, the webwork of relationships of which I am valued I note. This adds inner and outer warmth. *I was remembered for another year...I was.*

DISCLAIMER: I [have](#) received responses from ecology minded readers complaining that I should "recycle" and not BURN my mailings.