

# EVOLVING

LAST SAY SO HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER 2011

## Making the Transition

Happy Holidays and seasons greetings. It is with peace, love, and sincere gratitude that I write this year's newsletter. I hope that your family, loved ones, and you are healthy and happy.

This has been a difficult year for our family. Losing a loved one never is easy. Some of our days and nights have been filled with sadness, and the tears sometimes flow unexpectedly.

As a people, we grow, change, and evolve. It's through this evolution that we learn to develop strength to move on in spite of our sadness.

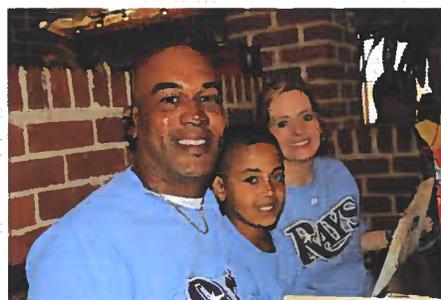
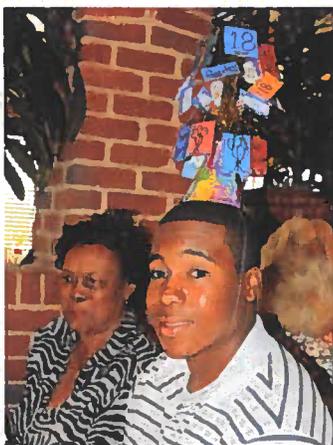
As much as we have sad days, we also have happy days, because we lean on and trust a patient God who also is our comforter and shield, and for this we are grateful. We also are grateful to you, our family and friends, for all the visits, phone calls, and words of encouragement during our family's period of transition. May God bless you abundantly, and may His light shine upon you, and give you peace. WMG



## Beyond the Gates

I spent the first few weeks of the year preparing for a speech I gave at the "Beyond the Gates" program at my alma mater, Sewanee. As you know from last year's newsletter, I peppered it with some of my favorite quotations. I also am often prone to do the same for speeches I give. For the speech I gave at Sewanee, I

tried something different--I created my own quotations. As I searched for a clever quote for my speech, I read where Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "I hate quotations, tell me what *you* know." I took his advice, and proceeded to think



*“Marichal, I am pleased to inform you that we have renewed your contract for five more years. Congratulations.”*

about what it is that I know. As a result, I created twelve life principles that I shared with a roomful of students in historic Convocation Hall at Sewanee, and I’m sharing them with you (next to last page). Perhaps you have developed your own guiding principles; if you have, I’d love to read them. I hope some of mine will resonate with you.

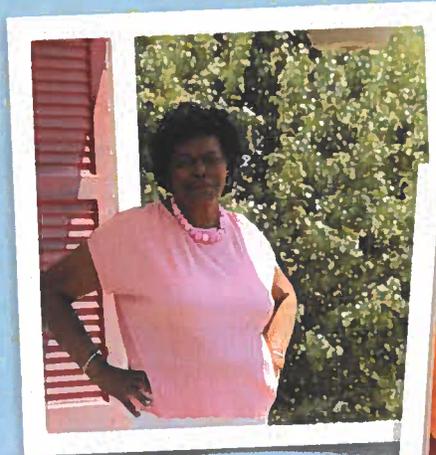
You all might recall that I underwent an important performance review to determine if my contract would be extended. I still didn’t know the outcome when last year’s Newsletter went to press. While I was still home for Christmas last year, I received an email with an attached letter from my boss that let me know that my contract would be renewed through 2017. Though this is an informal, yet important process, I felt a real sigh of relief that my boss contacted me during the break to tell me that I passed my performance review with flying colors

and that my work with faculty, staff, and students is valued. I am grateful.

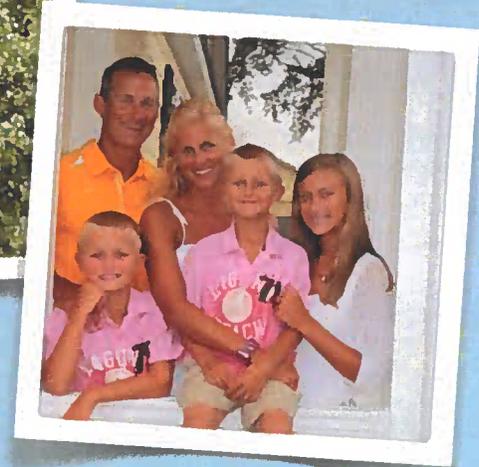
My responsibilities at work continue to expand; I am responsible for the work of a large number of people, and the demands have increased tremendously. With so much demand of my time at work, I often struggle to find ways to balance my personal and professional life. It’s a constant balancing act; I often

work twelve hours days, come home, eat dinner, and spend the next 3 or 4 hours answering emails. Staying in touch with family and friends is important to me, and increasingly difficult. It would be nice to be able to accept all the invitations I receive to speak, emcee an event, or join a group, I know I can’t do it all; I have gotten better at respectfully declining. Indeed, I am evolving.

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

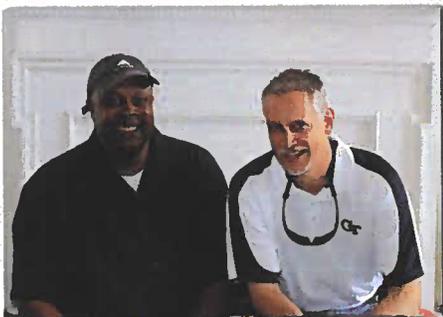


\* Mom posing for the camera on her front porch, Summer 2011.



At Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina with my long time friend, Mark Peeler, and his lovely wife, Maggie, and children, Hope, Jenkins, and Max, July 2011.

## CONNECTIONS: FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES



At Sewanee where I met up with my college roommate, basketball teammate, and long time friend, Lance Gotfredson, Spring 2011.



At the Black Solidarity Conference, with Ronnell Higgins, Chief of Yale Police, Rodney Cohen, Assistant Dean of Yale College, and guest speaker, Mr. Cornel West, Winter 2011.

### Favorite Songs of 2011

Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrica

I Believe

I Won't Let Go

At the Altar

Still Here

The Living Proof

Ok Here's the Truth

## Earthquakes, Hurricanes, and October snow storms in Connecticut

The winter months in New England were treacherous (see photo below). The piles of snow that accumulated on our lawns turned into hardened ice, and remained until they finally melted in April. Although we were surrounded by a great deal of snow, the roads almost always are passable, which means that there never are any days when the university is closed.

Since August there have been several other weather-related events in Connecticut. Many parts of the state felt the strong force of an earthquake whose epicenter was located somewhere in Virginia. At the time of the quake, I was facilitating a training class for approximately 100 student leaders, when suddenly, I saw that the students were not paying attention to the presentation, but were focused on their vibrating cell phones (apparently students were receiving phone calls and text messages from their family and friends asking if they were okay). Though we didn't feel the impact of the earthquake in the building we were in, my colleagues in other buildings felt the shake and saw furniture and desk items moving; many believed that a bomb had

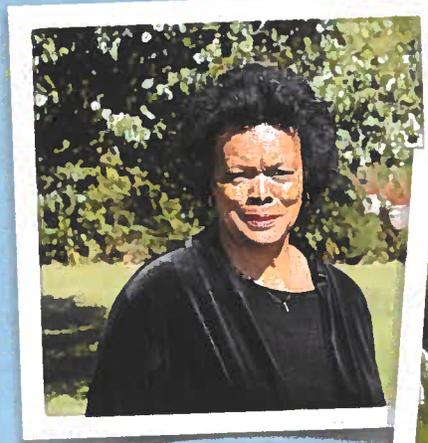
exploded. Tall buildings in downtown New Haven were evacuated until the origin of the rumble was known. Fortunately, there were no reports of injuries.

A few days later, we experienced a hurricane. It occurred on the day after our freshmen arrived to campus for the start of orientation. Many parents of our freshmen were stranded and couldn't get home due to cancelled flights and inactive commuter trains, while power

lines, trees, and other debris blocked the flow of vehicle traffic. Needless to say, there were many of my colleagues who lost power for up to 10 days. In anticipation of the hurricane, I spent the night on campus. I was fortunate to return home the next day to electricity and hot water.

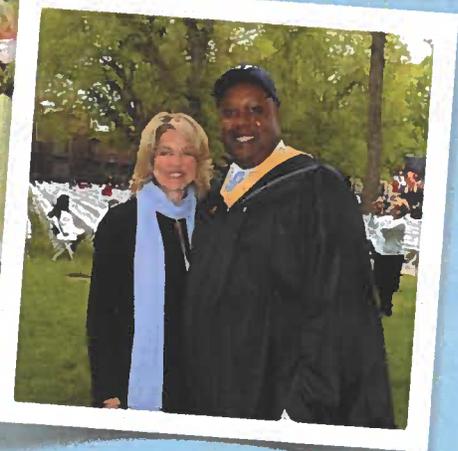
At the end of October (Halloween weekend), it snowed--a lot. Hardly a person believed that it would snow as much as it did. It is unusual for it to

## PHOTO MEMORIES



*On the Old Campus at Yale posing with former CNN News personality, Paula Zahn at Yale's Class Day Celebration, May 2011.*

\* *Mom pauses for a photo as she leaves for church, September 2011.*



## PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL: IT'S A CONSTANT BALANCING ACT



**Winter in New England.** A view from my front door. What a snowy winter it was.



**At a retreat with a few members of my staff.** Here we are about to board a boat to take a cruise around The Thimble Islands, sailed by Captain Kidd in 1665.

### Favorite TV Shows

American Idol

The Sing-Off

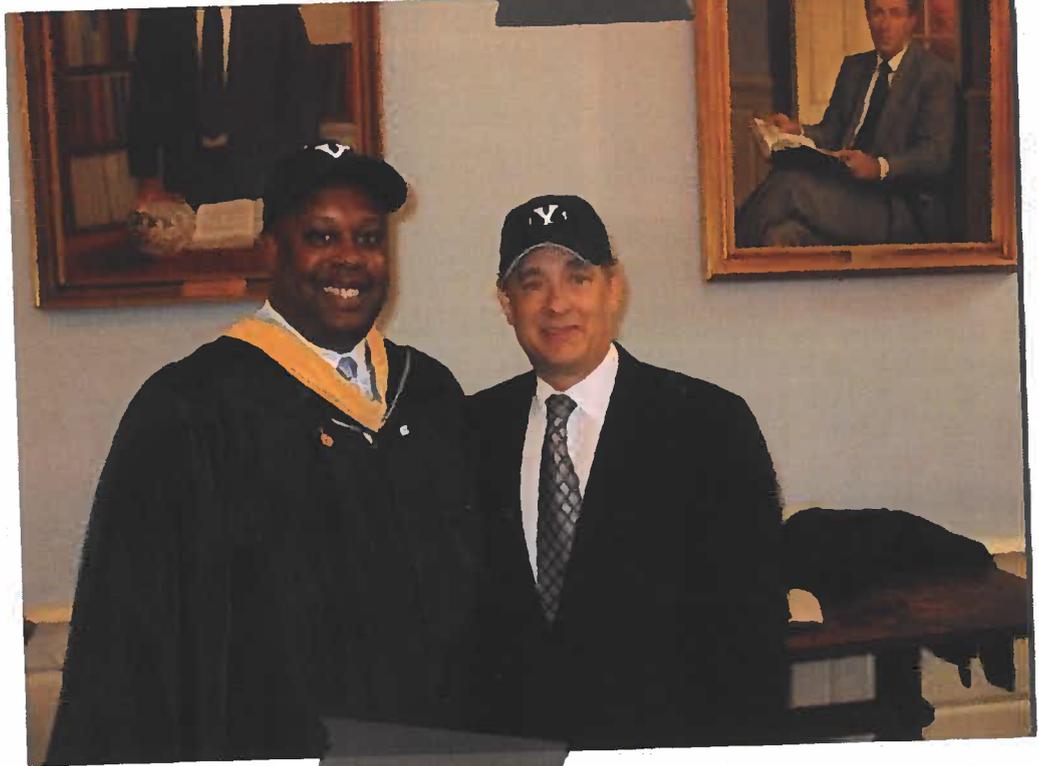
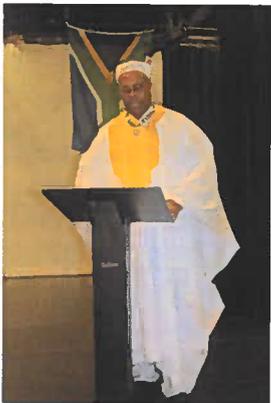
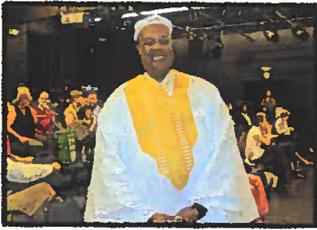
PTI

Sunday Best

Oprah's Life Class

What Would You Do?

## At Film Premiere



**TOM HANKS IN CONNECTICUT HALL AT YALE UNIVERSITY. MR. HANKS WAS THIS YEAR'S CLASS DAY SPEAKER. HE IS A FUNNY MAN.**

snow so early in autumn. At least six inches of snow fell in my neighborhood. Ordinarily this wouldn't have been a problem, but since trees hadn't shed their leaves, the weight of the snow (and later, the ice) snapped tree branches, and they, along with many trees, fell on power lines. Unfortunately, this time, I wasn't so lucky; I lost power for four days. I also had to discard all the food in my refrigerator. Things are back to normal now, but rest assured, more snow is coming.

Perhaps the most fun I had this year was when I went on a 12 day concert tour of South Africa with the Yale Concert Band. Unlike my tour of Italy with the Yale Symphony Orchestra a few years ago, in which I was asked to be part of the percussion section and perform, for the tour of South Africa, all I was asked to do was to come along for the ride. What a long, sixteen-hour ride it was! I am always amazed at how it is that a large aircraft filled with luggage, people, food, equipment, and fuel can take flight and remain airborne for such a long time.

Once we landed in Johannesburg and got through customs, we traveled to Gauteng, a forty minute drive from Johannesburg, where we went on a safari at the Krugersdorp Game reserve.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2011

SPEAKING AT THE "BEYOND THE GATES" PROGRAM AT SEWANEE

SPENDING TIME WITH MY FAMILY DURING SPRING BREAK

TRAVELING TO SOUTH AFRICA

PRODUCING A FILM ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

EARTHQUAKES, HURRICANES, AND OCTOBER SNOW STORMS IN CONNECTICUT

VISITS FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS (SO FEW, STILL)

# LAST SAY SO HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER



This game reserve is said to be one of the most visited reserves in this region. We saw a number of animals, including giraffes, lions, impala, wildebeest, and zebras (the animal photos on the next page were taken while we were on this safari).

Following the safari, we were treated to a "braai," which is a term in Afrikaans for barbecue. It is a very popular social custom in South Africa. We were served steaks, chicken, and lamb. We also were introduced to a food, called pap, which is a traditional porridge made from ground corn (we would compare it to grits or hominy). It was served with a tomato and onion sauce. Pap is a staple food of the Bantu people of South Africa.

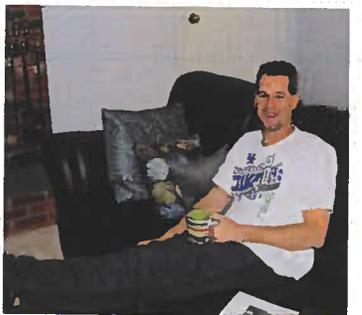
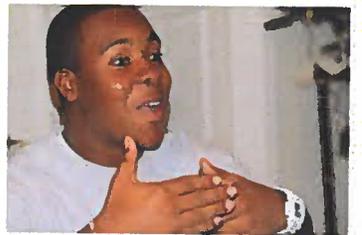
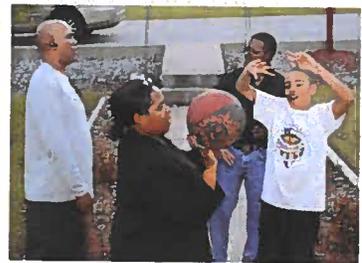
Signs of poverty still are prevalent in South Africa, and we witnessed this first hand when we traveled to Soweto. Shanties, which are improvised dwellings, made from scrap materials, such as plywood, corrugated metal, and plastic line the streets in Soweto. These dwellings, which are devoid of electricity and plumbing, usually are seen on the periphery of the city.

The most moving aspect of the trip for me was to hear stories about the days of

apartheid as told directly by the South African people whom we met along the way. One such story was told by Antoinette Pieterse, the sister of Hector Pieterse, a twelve year-old boy, who was one of the first casualties of the June 16, 1976 Soweto Uprising (more than 500 people were killed that day). Ms. Pieterse happened to be at the historic Hector Pieterse Museum the day we visited, and she agreed to meet with us and tell the moving and painful story of her brother's death.

On day six, we traveled 230 miles from Johannesburg and stayed three days in Swaziland. This was the "rustic" part of the tour. Our first stop in Swaziland was at the *Bushfire Festival*, where we played an outdoor concert. The *Bushfire Festival* is a three day carnival where more than 15,000 people from Swaziland and other places in South Africa come to enjoy music and other cultural activities.

At the conclusion of the concert, we made the short trip to the Mlilwane Game Park (also known as the Valley of Heaven), where, for the next two days, we lodged in rustic beehive grass huts. During the night, we could hear seemingly harmless warthogs and impala



# LAST SAY SO HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER

grazing outside our huts. On the second night after dinner, we were entertained by a performance from the natives of Mlilwane (see photo below). The following morning, half the touring group arose at 4:30 AM and climbed Mlilwane mountain to view the sunrise (see the front cover photo I took as we hiked up Mlilwane mountain). The other half of the group went on a sunset safari.

From Swaziland, we were bused back to Johannesburg, where we boarded an airplane headed to Cape Town, the final leg of the tour. Cape Town is a beautiful city, and is one of the most multicultural cities in the world. In addition to performing several concerts, while we were in Cape Town, we joined in on a community service project and built houses for a day. We also were invited to perform in a community that's known for its gang activity. As we were booking tour dates, we connected with a group of concerned citizens from a Cape Town community who had banded together and started raising money to purchase musical instruments to teach children how to play them as a way to keep them off the streets. When we arrived, for security and safety reasons, we were escorted to the performance site, which was an old, unheated gymnasium that had a small performing stage. There were no music stands, so many concert band members devised a way to use the extra chairs in the building and taped

their music to the chairs. The young South African children performed for us first, and then we performed for them. Since most of the young children played by ear and didn't know how to read music yet, we left them some of our sheet music, and encouraged them to learn to read music and to expand their repertoire.

Once we returned to the US, I organized all the video and still footage I'd taken to begin the process of creating a movie from this experience. I was able to spend time in TN visiting my family and at the beach visiting my longtime friends, the Peelers, and they were the first to see the unedited version of the movie. Many thanks to them for their helpful comments. The edited film premiered this fall at Yale's Off-Broadway Theatre. It was well-received.

In this newsletter, you'll see a few photos of several prominent folks that I've met this year, but none of them compare to the photos you'll see on the back cover. I end this year's newsletter by dedicating this edition in the memory of my dear father, Mr. William Howard Gentry. With peace and love, WMG



## A few Books I read this year

1. The Tender Bar
2. Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness? What it Means to be Black Now
3. Long Walk to Freedom
4. Mandela's Way
5. The Racist's Guide to the People of South Africa
6. Fail Up
7. The Book Thief
8. A Reason to Believe
9. Decoded
10. Men from the Boys



# LAST SAY SO HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER



“Always Evolving”

*Embrace* difference in others and become globally sophisticated around issues of multiculturalism, pluralism, and diversity, and then watch how the *hug* you give yourself broadens your perspective and expands your personal and professional opportunities.

Enjoy the learning process, and concede that learning is a life-long endeavor.

Create or produce something artistically at least one time per year and present it to a friend or a group of people. Develop the habit of exercising the right side of your brain.

Find a spiritual home, a center, a base, a community, a support network.

Honor traditions, yet be willing to try something different. Be amenable to change.

Outside of your small world, there are human needs; take a look at the larger world and be of service to people in need.

Find a mentor for yourself and become a mentor to someone else.

Simplify. There is nothing as easy as simplicity.

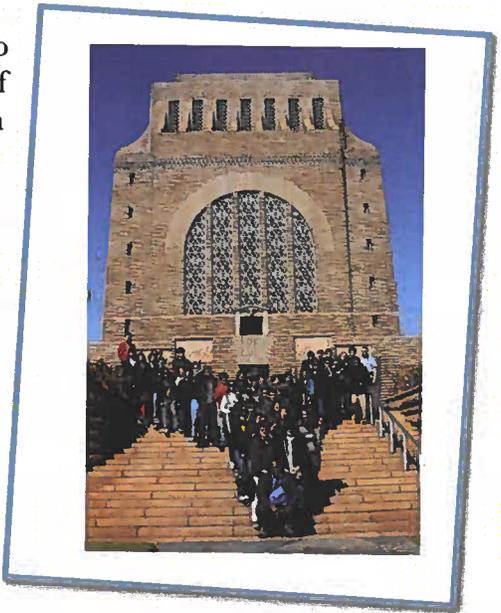
Clear your conscience—apologize. There is someone out there to whom you owe an apology.

Don't take yourself too seriously. Laugh at yourself sometimes; self-deprecation affirms your imperfections.

Find a connection to the natural world. Take a hike in the woods, get outside and breathe the air, climb a tree, lie in the grass—dream about—and chart your next adventure.

Identify your passions and pursue them with zeal. Your passions do not have to be related to your livelihood, but if they are, then—well done.

Created by W. Marichal Gentry. Presented at Sewanee's “Beyond the Gates” participants, The University of the South, January 2011.



# In Memory of William Howard Gentry

