

SAVE THE DATE!  
July 24, 2010



*We're Getting Married!*

Hey! We've booked the hall, the judge, and set a date to get married. Please mark on your calendar that you'll be busy on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July – busy getting your groove on!

You will receive more info about the celebration within a couple of months.

D: WHO DAT?

We're staying at a hotel in the French Quarter of New Orleans to attend one of my good friend's wedding. I had been fascinated with the city ever since reading a little bit more on Hurricane Katrina and starting up swing dancing.

Early on in the day, we walk around the narrow streets lined with dozens of poles with a sculpture of a horse on top. The main purpose of these poles must be to keep the intoxicated upright. I'm almost certain of this. Other than that, there isn't much to see in the quarter during the day. The balconies are empty and all the doors are covered up. There are very few windows to see through. On our initial walk around, the place looked deserted, so we went back to the hotel, had some omelets and went to bed.

When we woke up later on in the evening, the place looked totally different. Doors swung open to show bright neon lights advertising drinks that are poured. The street was packed with people with drinks in their hands speaking all sorts of languages. A doorman points at us and yells, "Come on in, it's wall to wall girls in here!" I give Caroline a look to see if she approves and she nods while we walk away from the venue.

Music pours out into the street from every building, and most of the time it is live jazz that is being played. During our entire five night stay, we got to go out to listen and dance to live music, which is a luxury anywhere else but New Orleans.

Caroline and I already have a place booked in the French Quarter for our Honeymoon next year – the same time as the annual Louis Armstrong Jazz Festival. I can't think of any better place to go and let loose for a week.

PS: Go Saints!

DEREK AND CAROLINE'S PAMPHLET  
2010



We don't tweet much these days...

## C: SNAPSHOT OF A SUNDAY MORNING IN MAY

The family is outside on the porch, conversing after a large birthday breakfast. Our plates are long vacant from the feast: croissants, almond Danish, sausages, pineapple, watermelon, and quiche. Brent is playing soccer with Diesel, the energetic black Labrador.

Clara is practicing her ballet moves, one clumsy tip-toed step at a time on the hill – the ideal stage, as far as she’s concerned. Dad and Dave are discussing last night’s Sounders game, and Derek and I are swinging on my mother’s porch swing. It is 10:30 and already very warm out on this May morning.

Elliott approaches, arms outstretched. I pick him up, and plop him down on my lap. There is something in his quiet, intelligent presence that makes me wonder what lies behind my nephew’s big, sparkling brown eyes. Elliott and I are working on a new vocabulary word: swing. Derek and I move the porch swing back and forth, back and forth, as I sing in Elliott’s ear: “Swinging, swinging, swinging...” It’s not long before he joins me in his sweetly high-pitched, barely audible sing-songy voice.

We swing, and we sing. Swing and sing.

“Doesn’t the world look a little different when we’re swinging?” But all I am doing is making an observation. Maybe I expect him to just sit there, stay there with me, completely unaware in his newly working mind of what I am really asking.

But instead: there’s a pause: “Mm hm!” Elliott suddenly proclaims, in seeming agreeance. For his auntie: a moment of understanding.

As Mom and Jessica are discussing the joys of blueberries, as Becky and Mike are supportively watching Clara plié and relevé, as India is huddled in the doorway, unsure if she wants to make an appearance with that dog running around out there, my nephew continues to lay his head against my chest, his body sinking into my own.

We swing and we sing...

## D: ODE TO PHO

Caroline and I have been fairly good about eating in these days partly because she is a good cook, partly because she puts up with my meals once or twice a week, and mostly out of necessity. When we do go out, we’re limited to the places that we can dine at as we both are paying off debt accrued while we were in college. Pho is great for us simply because it’s cheap; cheaper than fast food cheap.

There are other benefits to the meal: it’s fast, warm, and we get a chance to sit down at a table to eat. Our apartment is fairly small, so we have gone without a table to save space. The service at pho restaurants is minimal, meaning we aren’t bogged down by waiters coming in and checking up on us all the time. They take our order, come back with yummy soups with the meat still being cooked in the broth as they place it in front of us. It doesn’t take more than 5 minutes from entry time to get your food. By the time that I have squeezed the lime, added shoots, thrown in some basil, and mixed in various sauces, the meat is cooked and ready to eat. It really is the most efficient meal that I have ever encountered.

The first time we went to Than Bros on South Tacoma Way, our server dropped off our food and just before she was about to leave, she asked what nationality I was. “I’m Filipino” I told her. To which she said as she was walking away, “Oh. You look half black and half Mexican.” People always have a hard time figuring me out at first.

I think we go back to that place each week just to see what she’ll say next.



## C: COMMITMENT

On December 8, I stood along South Tacoma Way with my co-workers while a procession honoring four slain police officers from Lakewood passed solemnly before us. As the hearses passed by, I felt a sad anger: *Why on earth are we even here right now?* It was a short-lived moment of intense grief. Because immediately following the bodies of the officers were the bodies of their families - deeply wounded, but *alive*. And immediately following them, a procession of servicemen and women so long, I could not help but feel deeply moved. I listened closely to Gov. Gregoire that day when she spoke these words: *"We owe the children of these officers, all nine of them, a present and a future that is safe and secure."*

Our community was violated on November 29 in a way that is very difficult to even think about, let alone truly comprehend. But the true spirit of unity that was witnessed as a result of this horrendous act has led me to think about my own commitment to our community. This year I have been very fortunate to not only keep my job, but to truly flourish. I have taken on new responsibilities at WWEE, working with a new housing program enacted by the Obama Administration, called the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP). HPRP aims to keep those affected by the economy in homes as they rebuild their lives toward self-sufficiency.

Also this year, I wrote and received my first grant proposal to the City of Tacoma, requesting funds for a sustainable rainwater collection and distribution system for the community garden where I work a plot (and grow beautiful tomatoes!): LaGrande Community Garden. In September, I joined the Board of Directors for Guadalupe Land Trust (GLT), the nonprofit organization that owns and runs LaGrande, and seeks to preserve open spaces in the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma. Comprised of a small, yet committed bunch, GLT is dedicated to making Hilltop, in the notorious Central District of Tacoma, burst with life. Become a place where families are proud to live. A place where the *present and the future are safe and secure*.