

# THE PERIODIC PONDERANCE

Volume 8, Number 1 1525 Spruce Street, Suite 300, Boulder, Colorado 80302 2nd Quarter 2007




We at The Wealth Conservancy are champing at the bit and raring to get into our new space. The builders and designers are steadily accomplishing the great feats with which we have challenged them. "Put the door there; no, no, I think over there. Oh wait, I've changed my *other* mind; I think . . . back there where it started." "Oh, that's *exactly* the pattern of carpet tiles I want in my room. But, can I have teal instead of grey? Oh, yes, that's *perfect!* Except can I maybe just have three more green?" In spite of it all, we're targeting an end-of-April move-in date.

Here are some statistics you may need to know:

**Our communications (phones, fax, email, website) will be down for at least 4 hours on April 27th.**

Our phone numbers will remain the same, as will our fax number.

Our location will be 1525 Spruce Street, Suite 300, Boulder, CO 80302, beginning April 30, 2007. **During the week preceding April 30, we will likely be back and forth between spaces. If it's possible for you to anticipate your needs for that week, so that we can accommodate you prior to the actual move, it would be tremendously appreciated.**

Parking is metered on the street. It appears that meters are readily available throughout the day. 

Please pardon our mess as we prepare, move and get settled. Then be sure to come see us in our new space!

by Barbara Denny

## DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT IT!

A recent experience of mine serving as a Medical Power of Attorney (Medical POA) reminded me of how important it is to have that document in place. It's hard to imagine a time when we would be unable to make our own healthcare decisions; however, I think we would all agree if that were to happen, we would like to be the one to decide who would make important healthcare decisions for us and know that person would carry out our wishes.

It's important to understand the differences between the available healthcare documents and other terms so that you will receive the level of protection that you intend by signing the various forms. Here are a few of the main points to know: a Living Will is to be used in terminal situations only. It does not require a POA to act on your behalf, rather it is a document in which you state your preferences regarding prolonging your life in a terminal situation. By contrast, a Medical Power of Attorney would allow someone you designate to make healthcare decisions for you if you were to become incompetent (i.e., unconscious, but not necessarily terminal).

There are Durable and Springing Medical Powers of Attorney. A Medical *Durable* Power of Attorney (MDPOA) would become *effective immediately*, relieving the POA from having to prove you are incompetent

in order to act, which can be tricky. With a *Springing* Medical POA, the agent's powers would become effective *upon your incapacity*.

Other interesting points to know are that you may always change the individual whom you designate as your POA, and it is a good idea to talk to your POA to let him/her know your wishes regarding medical treatment. Also, it is a good idea to execute several original copies of your Living Will and MDPOA: one for you to keep, one for the agent, and one for your medical file. That way, if it needs to be used, it will be at everyone's fingertips. Finally, since healthcare decisions may need to be made quickly, it is a good idea to name someone who lives near you and would be available right away if the need arose for your agent to act.

The good news for my friend for whom I served as the Medical POA is that she is back at home and doing well, and relieved that she had these documents in place! It is my hope that in passing along this experience to others we can learn the lesson of making sure our medical documents are in order the EASY way.



by Melissa Hoyer



## A LETTER FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Recently, Myra received an email from her daughter Michelle's friend who has been serving in the Peace Corps in Lesotho, Southern Africa for the past two years. As her service draws to a close, she wanted to share some of her impressions, experiences and insights. This young woman's poignant words are worth passing on. And so, with her permission, we offer the following excerpts (as we don't have room for the whole letter) from her email:

(From her introduction) . . . I do not think any of my thoughts or learned lessons are exceptional or extraordinary . . . It is their very ordinariness that causes most of us, myself included, to forget to acknowledge, embrace, and congratulate ourselves on changes well done or lessons taken to heart. It is their ordinariness that lets us quickly overlook them, taking them for granted. One of the most important things I have embraced during my Peace Corps service has been the ability to be in the moment. And when each moment passes, I have had the opportunity to savor each one's flavor and texture, learning its barbs or rose-petaled softness. Each encounter has given me something. Perhaps that's why most of the time I go to bed exhausted by eight p.m. Not all of my memories are good or exemplify the best in me, but they all have given me a valuable mirror into myself and into the greater humanity we are all a part of. This list is not an exhaustive laundry list of pros and cons of Peace Corps life, or even of Lesotho. It is one woman's reflection on a two-year period spent in a different culture. I take these thoughts and lessons with me on the next steps of my journey.

- Homegrown veggies taste better than store bought, every time. Fresh herbs make a world of difference in a dish. Sharing food with people that's been grown and cooked by my own hands, bonds me to them. It is an intimate gift and exchange.
- I can GARDEN! I know, this is all really quite shocking, but I swear this is all true. After teaming up with my master gardener friend, Me Matumisang, I discovered there's more to gardening than weeding and flowers. I understand to not like gardening is to reject a serious life-giving force. It's would be like damning water or oxygen.
- A real leader empowers people. A real leader nurtures relationships and focuses on people's strengths. A good leader is optimistic and passionate. A really good leader doesn't take everything personally and realizes a failure can be more informative than a success. A good leader helps create teachers out of students. I am a leader.

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Boring C r e a t i v e

An Investment Policy Statement is the core of your investment strategy. It embodies your current financial situation, what you hope to achieve in the future, and your attitude toward risk. It is your assurance that your assets will be managed in keeping with your expressed goals and objectives.

It's also boring. (Except to Steve, thank goodness, and others of his ilk.) At The Wealth Conservancy, it's six pages of what to many of us is an unintelligible language. Words and phrases like "Risk Tolerance" (okay, most of us know that one by now) or "Evaluation Benchmark" (getting a little muddy?). How about a column titled "Strategic Allocation" with percentages for "Asset Allocation" under it? And that's just the first page!



But it is also necessary. Would you build a house without a blueprint? Or go around the world without a travel agent? With input from you, we devise an investment plan particularly suited to your individual wants and needs. It provides an outline or template to follow when Steve makes decisions to buy or sell, about investments and investment managers, about available cash needs, etc. Without the IPS Steve would be operating in the dark, and you would resemble the guy in this issue's cartoon.

by Barbara Denny

## SINGING THOSE DEBIT CARD BLUES



Debit card use is up—it's probably the most convenient way to pay for everything from a cup of coffee to a vacation. It's also one of the riskiest. While consumers' losses due to unauthorized credit card charges are limited to \$50 (and some banks waive even that), debit card losses are not, necessarily. It's true that debit card losses that are reported within two business days are limited to \$50; however, losses reported after two days are limited to \$500. If the loss is reported more than 60 days after your bank transmits a statement that includes an unauthorized funds transfer, the bank doesn't have to reimburse you, potentially making you liable for losses up to the entire balance in your account and your maximum overdraft line of credit. This is because of a difference in regulating agencies: credit cards are regulated by federal fair-credit laws, but debit cards are regulated by the law that governs electronic fund transfers.

In spite of the risks, using a debit card is still an easy and convenient way to pay for goods and services, so here are some suggestions to protect yourself:

- ◇ Shield your hand when entering your pin number and look around for anyone trying to sneak a peek.
- ◇ Check for signs of tampering on ATMs and card-readers (tape, wires, loose connections). Small businesses are often targets for this type of fraud, so be aware of unbranded or suspicious looking ATMs or card-readers.
- ◇ Never let a cashier or clerk enter your PIN.
- ◇ Try to never let your card out of your sight at restaurants, gas stations, hotels, etc. (Some restaurants are beginning to use card-reading systems that can be brought to your table.)
- ◇ Check your bank balances regularly and often; the sooner you spot an unauthorized debit, the less your liability will be.
- ◇ Report errors, even small ones, immediately, and close all compromised accounts.
- ◇ And the old standard—say it with me—Never give any credit or personal information online, by phone or to anyone you don't know.
- ◇ For large purchases always use a credit card to assure your maximum consumer protections—and to get miles!



by Barbara Denny

(Continued from page 2 - South Africa)

- I got to love a little boy when previously I have never liked kids. He was beautiful and finally I am happy he is in a better place.

- Africa's the best of both worlds: In the morning there are birds, singing children, yelling women, animals grunting their disapproval at being herded, taxis honking hello, church bells ringing, buckets being filled with water...the sounds of life. I have been surrounded by life, life I feel connected to. Life that's in my face, demanding acknowledgement and watching my reactions. Life; thick, raw, deep, brilliant, amazing. As the sun goes down, it takes with it all the sounds. The dark plunges my house into silence, into a stillness people seek in the wilderness. I do not have to go camping or "get away" (although that is great!). Every night I am wrapped in a blanket of remoteness that balances out the Life of daytime.

- No matter how much I am butchering sesotho or any foreign language, I use it when I first meet people. It is respectful and well received. It's like wearing a suit to make a good first impression on a new boss. First impressions do matter.

- A mother is nothing to scoff at. A woman can choose to be a mother or a career person or both. Neither one is better or worse as long as it is she, who makes her decision. If this were a perfect world, parents would get paid.

- If I order a cheeseburger, I have to ask if they have beef, buns, and lettuce in stock. Now that I know this, I have no problem doing it. And it *is* funny!

- I am damn lucky to be an American, and I love my country! I am blessed to have been a PCV [Peace Corp Volunteer] and lived in Lesotho with brilliant people.

- I am leaving Peace Corps with my motto intact. "Love to live and live to love" still rings true for me. I am a better person for being here, and there is always room for improvement. I am not bitter or cynical, although some non-PCVs have heard us PCVs talk and been appalled. We have seen, heard, and experienced what others have not, and although we are not authorities on experiences, people, attitudes, or cultures, we do know what is practical and realistic. I can be practical and optimistic and excited about life after leaving Peace Corps. I can be hopeful and realistic at the same time.



## THE NUMBERS GAME

**39** – Percentage of taxpayers who didn't do anything to try to minimize their 2005 tax (Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive)

**38** – Percentage of taxpayers incorrectly reporting capital gains or losses on their tax returns due to confusion over how to calculate the number (GAO) (*Thanks to our record-keeping capabilities, our clients do not have this problem.*)

**\$31,150** – Estimated federal income tax due from each presenter, performer, and the host based on the value of the “gift bag” each received at the 2006 Academy Awards (MarketWatch)

**\$8.5 million** – Estimated advance for former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan to write his memoir (The New York Times)

**213** – Number of years the New York Stock Exchange operated as a nonprofit entity before going public in March 2006 (Associated Press)

**70** – Percentage of low-and moderate-income households that use credit cards to pay for their basic living expenses (Demos/Center for Responsible Lending)

**2 times** – The amount of personal wealth married people (each) accumulate during their lifetimes compared to someone who remains single or divorced. (Journal of Sociology) The major reason is pretty obvious: two live cheaper than one. What isn't so obvious is that married people tend to work harder than single people. The study tracked participants who have been part of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth since 1979 and are now ages 41– 49.

**26.7** – Percentage of new mortgages in 2005 that were interest-only, versus 10.2 percent in 2003 (New York Times) (*I'll bet Steve has something to say about this statistic.*)

**2,434** – Average square footage of new homes in 2005 (Census Bureau)

**1,660** – Average square footage of new homes in 1973 (Census Bureau)

**5,000,000** – Number of U.S. senior citizens who are financially abused each year through investment scams. (Securities and Exchange Commission)

**1** – Ranking of America among 42 countries for highest percentage (22) of citizens who have no money left after paying essential bills and spending discretionary dollars (ACNielsen)

**42** – Ranking of Thailand among 42 nations with the highest percentage (3) of cash-strapped citizens (ACNielsen)

**9** – Number of affluent families out of every ten affluent families who will lose their fortune by the end of the third generation (Christian Science Monitor)

Compiled by Myra Salzer

### TWC Closures

April 27, 2007.....Moving Day, Systems down  $\pm 4$  hours  
May 28, 2007.....Memorial Day  
July 4, 2007.....Independence Day

Published by  
THE WEALTH CONSERVANCY, INC.  
1525 Spruce Street, Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80302  
303-444-1919  
FAX 303-444-1479  
[www.thewealthconservancy.com](http://www.thewealthconservancy.com)  
[twc@thewealthconservancy.com](mailto:twc@thewealthconservancy.com)  
© 2007 The Wealth Conservancy, Inc.