

Mia

A JOURNAL BY FOR & ABOUT WOMEN

WINTER
2009

MY RELATIONSHIPS

PAPER NAPKIN
NOTES FROM DAD

MY TASTES

THE GIADA AFFAIR

MY MONEY

VACATION
HOUSE SWAP

MY CAUSE

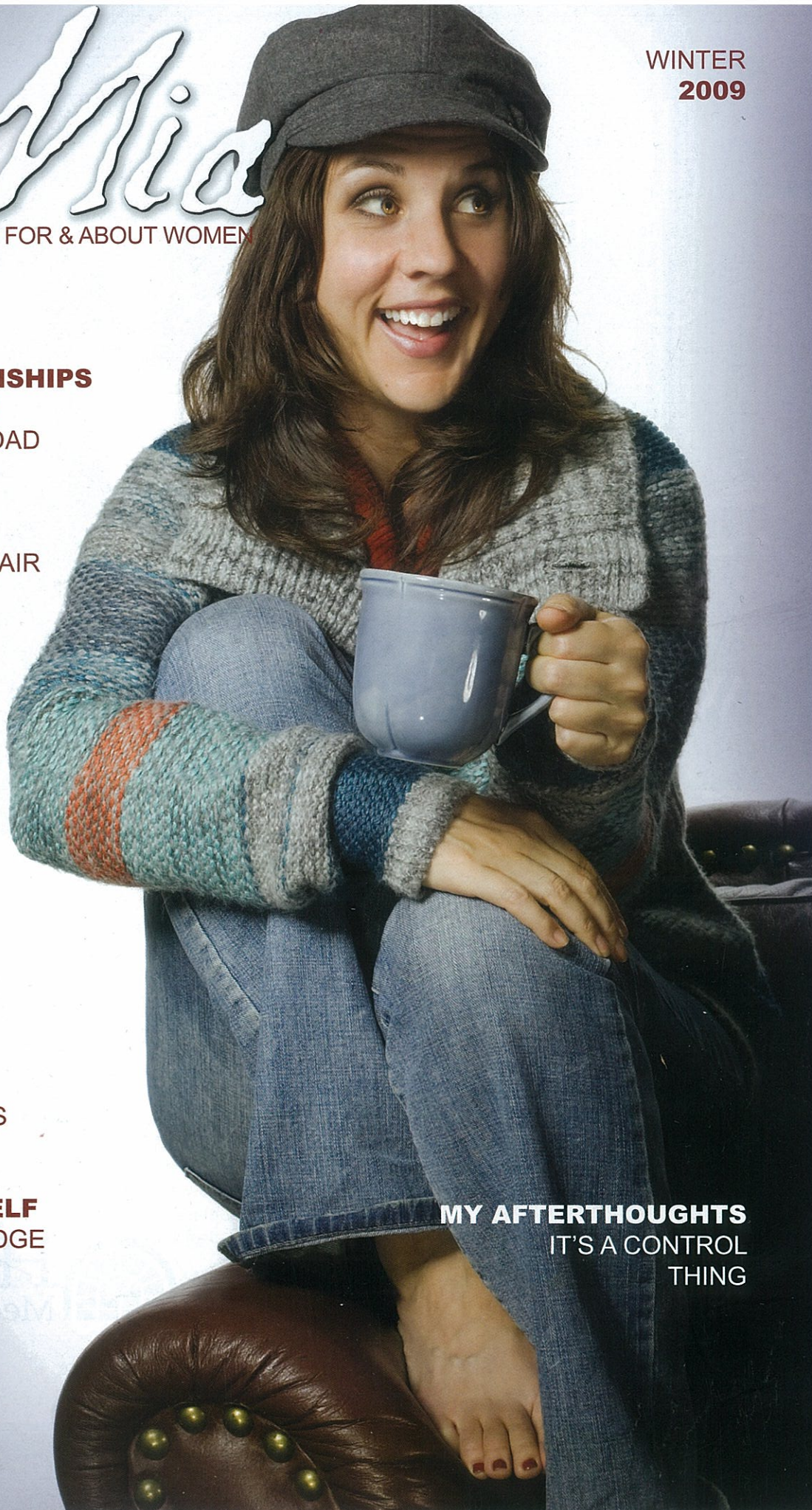
WOMEN
RAISING WALLS

MY BOOKSHELF

OLIVE KITTERIDGE

MY AFTERTHOUGHTS

IT'S A CONTROL
THING



Solo Road Trip

BY TAMMIE DOOLEY

¹ a celebration of the adventurer in all of us, ² dis
easy chair and move one step out of our comfort z
two nights away from home preferably via foot or

GETTING BACK ON THE HORSE

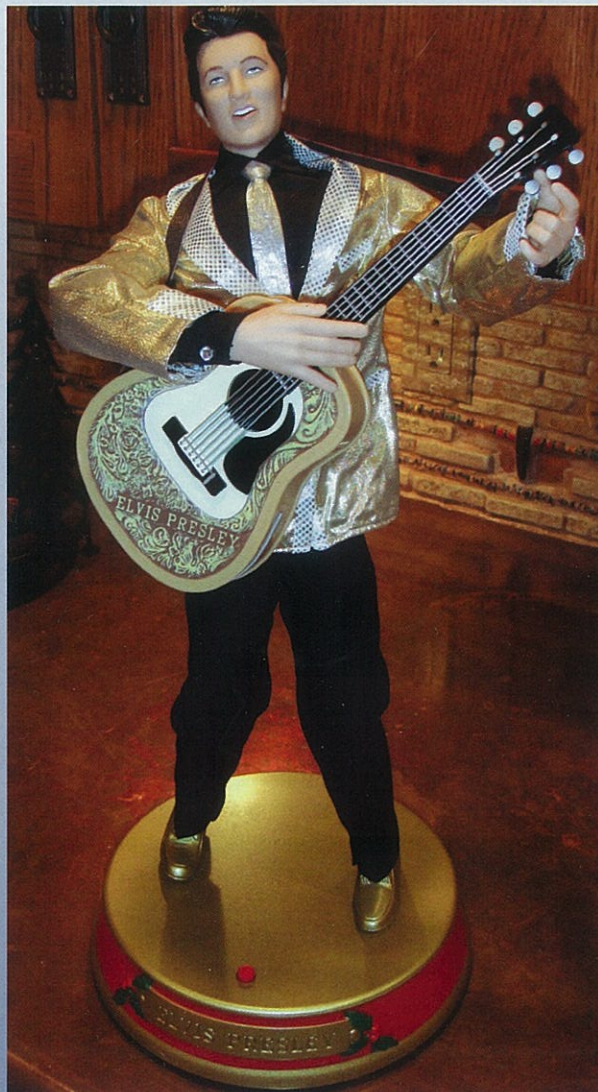
For the first time in 10 years, I've put up a Christmas tree. The last time was the year my son left home after high school graduation. It's been a decade since I strung the lights, hung ornaments, or cared. Not about the holidays; I've continued to care about them, I've just not cared to decorate.

The best Christmas I remember for the span of my entire adult life was that first Christmas I threw care to the wind and dared to not bother with any of it. I was free. Free of the stress of attempting to fit it all in, free of the burden to take it all down and store it away after the holidays, free to sit back, sip cider, watch the fire, listen to the crackle of logs, bake at my own pleasurable pace, lay back on the sofa with a warm blanket and just soak in the joy of the season and my freedom.

I spent time walking around town, gazing at lights, listening to children's laughter. For the first time I understood what the spirit of the season was all about. My heart was light.

My mother, sister, aunt, and girlfriends were horrified, and have continued to be horrified. My walk-to-the-beat-of-my-own-drum leanings meant I relished their horror to an extent. I've wanted to answer their burning question, but I never really had the stage for it. Until now.

So what kind of person doesn't put up a tree? I'll tell you what kind of person. A woman who was a single mother working over 60 hours a week, with shopping to do and food to prepare for her contribution to the family holiday gatherings. A woman with tears of stress streaming down her face as she sits in front of a mound of crappy gifts she overspent on because she didn't



ll of us: ' discovery of the lost art of solitude; 'to pry oneself from the
 our comfort zone; ' traveling alone exploring the unknown for at least
 via foot or a 4 wheel drive vehicle.



have the time to bargain hunt, all the while knowing she had to face the reverse of it all when the holidays were over. A woman who wanted to sit on the sofa with a son and read Christmas stories, sipping hot chocolate; but instead stayed up past midnight stringing lights, because that's what we do for our children.

What kind of person doesn't put up a Christmas tree? The kind of woman who raised her son and decided to take some time for herself. And I liked it. A lot. So much that I've reveled in the pure, undecorated experience of the season for ten years.

My life changed when I married five years ago. It changed for the better and the easier. And while I could have easily decorated the past few years, my husband's take on it was equally as unconcerned as mine.

We had two things we retrieved from the basement every year - a hooked wool rug of a frog dressed like Santa sitting on the back of a huge trout, and a two-foot tall Elvis holding a guitar who, when you push a button on his base, swayed and sang "Blue Christmas".

Our decorating conversation went something like

this. After dinner one of us would look at the other and say, "You wanna decorate?" The other would say, "Yes!" We'd silently walk downstairs to the basement, get one decoration each, carry them back up the stairs, place them, push the button on Elvis, straighten the rug, smile to each other, and sit back down. Done. It was GLORIOUS.

Every year has brought mounting pressure to decorate our lovely home. Our friends and family woefully lacked appreciation for the humor of Elvis and the frog/fish rug. So I succumbed last year. My son was home for the first time in many. It seemed an appropriate year to open the stored Christmas boxes and get back on that horse. I can't say I looked forward to it. The last time I went through the steps, it was gut-wrenchingly stressful. My brain hasn't forgotten that feeling. But opening those boxes revealed things from my son's childhood I'd forgotten about. Smiles and sounds of delight.

The vice-like stress of it all was gone, replaced with only pleasurable memories and a sigh of relief. The dread was over. That time in my life was behind me. I'll never decorate like I used to. The pressure disappeared when my son left home. I too grew up and realized I didn't care what anyone else thought, and the overwhelming need to keep up with the feat of decorating that my hyperactive and overachieving Mom had always managed (and still does) blissfully receded and then disappeared completely from my lengthy to-do list.

I'm much happier with less stress and wholeheartedly believe those around me are happier as a result. They don't care about how many strands of lights are twinkling in my house or the footage of my tree. I'm kinder, more cheerful, more tolerant. My relaxed self is a gift to others. And I firmly believe that it is a gift my friends and family prefer over any other kind of wattage. *Mia*

MEETOURWRITERS



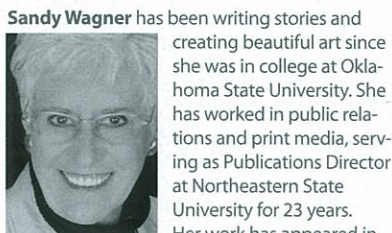
Sheilah Bright, a former journalist, is a newly-minted empty-nester-determined to experience the world through travel, writing and photography. As part of a photo tour last year, she was one of few visitors to take to the streets of India and experience the country's true colors. Her work has been published in numerous newspapers and magazines, including *Oklahoma Today* where she is a contributing editor. She and her husband live on Bright Morning Farm, a 35-acre homestead in Sand Springs. You can read about her travels and view the photographs at brightjourneys.com or contact: sheilahbright@me.com. Sheilah wrote *My Travels: "Finding Perspective in India,"* on page 6.



Having her husband, Bobby, home full time due to a medical disability at the same time her children left home has been an adjustment for **Juli Armour**. When Bobby started experimenting in the kitchen she became suspicious and shares what unfolded in *My Tastes: "The Giada Affair"* on page 11. Juli is a partner in The Leslie Group, and appreciates that in addition to being handy in the kitchen, her husband is extremely supportive of her work. She and Bobby are making the best of the empty nest, and are still trying to spice things up in the kitchen, including experimenting with their newest obsession, a juicer.



Cynthia Mabrey is an award-winning editorial writer, and published author. She created a weekly newspaper column and recorded the corresponding weekly radio spot 'Parental Perspective' both of which ran in the Louisville, KY market. After moving to Tulsa, Cynthia did international marketing and corporate communications for the Tulsa company, Sustainable Solutions Network. She is thankful to be the mother of nine, stepmother of three, and grandmother to seven. She and her husband, Paul, enjoy singing together, both at church and with the Signature Symphony & Choral. Cynthia wrote about the unexpected impact of discovering her Italian roots in this month's "My Heritage: Finding Her Place," on page 12.



Sandy Wagner has been writing stories and creating beautiful art since she was in college at Oklahoma State University. She has worked in public relations and print media, serving as Publications Director at Northeastern State University for 23 years. Her work has appeared in *The Minneapolis Star*, *St. Paul Dispatch*, *St. Paul Downtowner* and numerous other publications.

She loves to paint, and wrote about her acrylic on canvas series in *My Art: "Women Through the Decades,"* on page 14. Artist contact: sawagner55@gmail.com

Joy Zedler, along with her husband, Stephen, and three children, Annabelle, 7, Sophie, 5 and Oliver, 2, recently moved to Ocala, Florida, to be a part of Ambleside International School. Considering that Ocala is the "Horse Capital of the World," and that they're just an hour Disneyworld, there's a good chance there may be more house swapping in their future. Joy wrote *My Money, "Swapping Houses for a Dream Vacation,"* page 16.

Mary Lee has spent most of her professional life as a newspaper writer and editor. While at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, she served as a features writer and features editor and co-edited "The Prevailing South", a collection of essays by noted writers that included Pat Conroy, Alex Haley and David Halberstam. Her work has appeared in *Southern Living* and *Cooking Light*, and she was the author of several editions of Frommer's travel guide to Atlanta. She lives in Atlanta with her husband, Dallas, also a published writer, but most important, the love of her life. They both write occasionally for "Like the Dew," an all-volunteer website covering Southern culture and politics. Mary reads anything she can get her hands on, including the backs of cereal boxes, and has been in the same book group for 20 years. Mary wrote the *My Bookshelf* review of *Olive Kitteridge* on page 19.

After 18 years as a CPA and Certified Financial Planner, **Tammie Dooley** made the leap to her dream job - freelance writing and photography. She gave up the 10-hour day chained to a desk in exchange for a 12 hour day chained to a laptop (but now she dangles flip flops). Tammie's passion for adventure and solo road trips, the solitude of which provided a lifeline during the pressure of her financial career, were the initial propellant for her writings. She has had numerous articles published, and is *Tulsa People's* travel writer. *USA Today* named her black and white photograph of the Badlands one of the Top 10 Iconic Photographs of America in their Picture America contest. She's a fly fisherman, loves Westerns, and recently conquered the summit of a mountain for the first time. You can find her online at SoloRoadTrip.com. Tammie shares an excerpt from her blog on page 20.

Brenna Lemons is a free-lance writer from Tulsa. She is the mother to 13-year-old Caleb and Lucy, two. In her spare time she enjoys painting, writing, drawing, reading, and playing the piano. She also loves spending time with her husband

Josh and the kids. She's currently on a sushi kick. "Imagine" is her favorite song and *Siddhartha* is her current read. Writing is her passion and she lives by the notion that everything happens for a reason, and that love is the greatest gift you can get... and give. Brenna wrote *My Journey, "Habitat Brings Her Family Home,"* page 22.

Holly Wall is a reporter working and living in Tulsa. She writes full-time for the *Tulsa Business Journal* and freelances for *Urban Tulsa Weekly*, *Tulsa Kids*, *Intermission* and *Art-Focus Oklahoma*. Her son Isaac is a year and a half old and the light of her life. When she's not mothering or writing, Holly enjoys reading, cooking, eating and seeing the sights of Tulsa. Holly wrote *My Cause: "Lady Builders Raise the Walls,"* page 23.

Chelsea Coleman began farming in July 2008 with her husband, Don. Together, they are "bootstrapping it" on Bootstrap Farm, an eight-acre vegetable farm in Bixby. What they don't have in knowledge and experience, they make up for in nerve, commitment, and elbow grease. She believes in work, food, people, and taking care of the earth. Chelsea wrote *My Relationships: "Love Notes on Napkins,"* on page 24.

A wife, mother to three, creative writer, communications consultant and PR specialist, **Charlotte Guest** enjoys seeing what each new day brings. She works for a variety of clients in the Tulsa area and loves playing tennis, oil painting, movie theatre popcorn and funny greeting cards. She is learning how to play golf, despite her type-A temperament. Charlotte is often inspired by this quote from Helen Keller: "Keep your face to the sun and you'll never see the shadow." Charlotte wrote *My Inspiration: "Finding Hope, Offering Hope,"* page 26.

Monica Roberts is an Oklahoma native and Tulsa is her adopted hometown. When she's not being a mom to Jack, Lucy and Oscar (children, not dogs), she writes, works as a marketing consultant and tries to take a nap, which rarely works out. She enjoys cooking, reading, long walks and entertaining. Monica writes the column, "Afterthoughts," page 37.



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