

2007

Greetings! Once again it's the festive Pacific Northwest Wing Family year in review. People often ask me what I do to prepare for what has become a highly anticipated literary rite of passage. My secret: I wait until the last minute, thumb thru a calendar, and then perform a chore-like Christmas activity with some underlying angst to set the mood. So since I just climbed off the roof from hanging lights and broke about half of them, let's get this letter rolling (and you can forget formatting to the page).

The family composition has pretty much stayed the same. Two parents (or 1.5 depending how I'm acting), two kids, two dogs, two cars. Nancy had to turn in her company car earlier in the year; the first time she has permanently been unable to abuse free transportation in about a decade and a half. We did pick up a low mileage Subaru, so replacing the corporate ride is the first Asian pony ever is in the Wing stable. I'm learning a lot about the horizontal opposed 2.5L Phase II E26 engine. Even though my workbench is full of things to take apart, there always seems to be room for one more four stroke mystery.

I'm still with Safeco doing Quality Assurance in the IT department. Over the course of the last year I've been dabbling with a little ad hoc telecommuting. A day per week here. Maybe two there. When at home I play classical music throughout the house so I feel like I have a really important position in a fancy office. Or at least I'm sitting in the waiting room of one. The company recently moved the entire home office (several thousand people) into leased space in high rises in the heart of downtown Seattle. So I asked to telecommute full time..... and got it. I generally make it into the cube farm about once a week to keep a face to my name and tell some hiking stories, while saving 2.5 hours (daily) in commuting. Of course I still waste the time saved in other assorted ways, but that's not the point. So in a time of corporate outsourcing-layoffs-reorganization, I'm holding onto a job that doesn't particular challenge me as much as I like but does provide the personal freedoms of basically feeling unemployed. It dawned on me that I am obviously I'm at the top of my professional career, which is find kind of funny since I can't really explain what that career is.

Nancy has been progressing upward through the ranks of Safeco in the premium audit department as she settles into a full time desk job and gets away from field work. She manages national and regional programs, as well as has input on the daily coffee and snack order. Personally, that sounds like the best of both worlds to me. At the same time I get to hear what the people in upper management of a Fortune 200 company gripe about; it's nice to know they don't like to mow their lawns either. Nancy also turned 50 this year, which brought her a few perks around the house (more than just AARP benefits). Her and Jaclyn took in a week long Caribbean cruise in the spring and did lots of snorkeling and swimming with dolphins. And then we all did a week in southern California which included Disneyland, California Adventure, and ample of catch up time with her family (a lot of running around, a lot of sore feet). If you ever want to feel secure about you relationship with you wife or family, Disneyland is the place to go. While standing in line for the new Finding Nemo attraction, I saw a dozen different couples/families have public meltdowns of Chernobyl proportions. Those displays can

only culminate in a nasty divorce and therapy for the kids. I think the phrase 'happiest place on earth' is all ironically relative. But getting back on point, Nancy also enjoyed a couple of unrelated trips to Palm Springs, Arizona, and Sonoma wine country. It was kind of like she was chasing the sun and actually found some this year.

Mitch only had to go in for stitches once this year, so we'll be putting 2007 in the win column. He started kindergarten, and as expected we have had many personal conversations and email exchanges with his teacher the first few weeks. His boyish heart of gold and kindness are being balance out by stubbornness and non-conformity. The first report card displayed unusually high scores, so it's clear there's a lot he's hiding behind those innocent brown eyes. Although I personally think this is a dynamite combination of traits for success in the business world, right now we need to just focus on keeping that "permanent record" clear for the next couple of years. Mitch has also been very involved in Taekwondo, which is helping shape both his confidence and discipline. He is going thru his belts and is currently at high-orange, excelling at the axe kick, knuckle punch, and making tiger eyes (grrrrr.....very scary). I wish I could put that on my resume.

As for Jaclyn, she is trying to introduce the sport gene into our branch of the family tree with soccer (it still looks weird to see our last name embroidered on the back of a warm-up jacket). I found out this is an all year sport depending on how you balance out your leagues. Her game and workout clothes are better quality my hiking gear. When she's not running up and down the field or playing keeper, she's honking on the clarinet (annoying the dogs) and doing homework. Jac was accepted into what we called in the old days the gifted (or the current and more politically correct 'highly capable') program at school this year as she started the fifth grade. It's a lot of work, but she is taking up the challenge with like minded students and really enjoying herself. Although Girl Scouts has gone by the wayside, she still goes camping with me from time to time out of sympathy (and a love for Top Ramen).

Ah, camping. We got in a few good weekends this year. Jac and I did our annual February trip to Orcus Island in the San Juans. Always a dicey time of year, we got one day of biblical rain the reminded us why Lewis and Clark cursed that atmospheric condition so much in their journals. Speaking of, Jac and I also stayed a weekend in a yurt at the mouth of the Columbia River in March, which happen to also be a clamming tide. Combine American history and freshly dug razorbacks, and you've got some good chowder and a big camp fire. As for fire, Mitch is coming into his own during our sojourns to the woods. Just pack along ample mac & cheese, marshmallows, and firewood, and he is one happy kid. Rain was also the theme for the big family Kelso campout this year, which saw more tarps and pop up awnings than the infield of a NASCAR race.

With that being said, here is wishing the happiest of holidays and a Merry Christmas for you and yours.

*The Wing Family*  
*Dave, Nancy, Jaclyn, Mitchell*

## 2007 Mountain Man Review (Supplement)

All of that talk about rain in 2007 was just a sham. We had lots of sun this summer and shoulder hiking season, just not when most people wanted it. Regardless of if you support global warming or are on the side with the Ice Age Cometh crowd, there are plenty of outdoor activities for whichever way the worldly climate may swing. You just have to apply yourself, always wear layers, and above all remember Al Gore is a moron.

SK XII. (Snow Camp -12<sup>th</sup> Annual). Another legendary outing. We tackled the trails around Mt. St. Helens. One key was renting a couple of state park cabins within a relatively short drive of the mountain, which only shows how with age comes the need for certain comforts. But it did allow for a quick mountain bike ride between hikes around Battleground Lake. Brrrrr!! Talk about a cold one!! The approach road was so icy I had to put the chains on the Dodge. The skies were amazingly clear; even at camp miles from the volcano, it never warmed up much past 30F in the sun. The hard blue and crisp snow gave me the proverbial picture post cards photographs. The cabins were warm and spacious, the Dutch ovens never went dry, fires were big and hot, and their warmth brought out even bigger stories. The snowshoe miles were good and company better.

SH (summer hike). I wanted to pull off a 50 mile trip early in the summer to test my new gear configuration (i.e. my pack coming in at just 30lbs *with* climbing gear). It was just me and another like-minded friend with an understanding/indifferent wife. With all of last winter's storm damage (bridges/roads/trails washout) and late snow, it was hard to find a thread through the mountains that long which was passable. As options dwindled, we settled on the Buck Creek/Spider Gap loop near the Glacier Peak area. This trip had it all: a semi-loop with a car drop, 10K plus of gain, multiple high passes, a great glacier climb, and coming in just at fifty miles with the side trips. In the four days we saw blazing summer skies, hidden alpine lakes, and pristine snowy peaks. In spite of some pretty heavy bug activity and a nasty slide I took on an icy snow field, I would have to say this is personally the best hike/trip I've ever done. And considering my past experiences, that's really saying a lot.

OKH III (older kid hike). This was the third year hiking with what has become known as the 'older kids,' and we did two nights out at Barclay Lake along Hwy 2. A comfortable couple of miles through second growth forest, the lake was cold, deep, blue, and wedged in between wonderfully craggy mountains. The campfire burned bright, and although a round of the 24-hour flu hit a couple of tents (sans Wing), it was great to watch how the kids have grown with each annual camping trip. As well as not coming home with vomit soaked sleeping bag and pillow.

YKH I (younger kid hike). This was first year of the newly ordained 'younger kids' (all girls but Mitch). Most of the second-born kids of the guys I hike with are under the five year mark, and they somehow collectively lobbied for their own backpacking trip with Dad since their older siblings had been pulling it off for years. We were more than happy to accommodate. Near Sunrise on the shoulder of Mt. Rainier was a perfect walk in camp that put just over a mile on their tiny little legs. Of course, when you are above six thousand feet and it is frosting off in the low 30's at night in August, some of the many precious moments weren't all that pretty. Between rock-throwing into a glacial lake, playing 'house' in the various tents at our group site, and marshmallows over Sterno cans (no fires in NPs), it was clearly the first of a great many outings to come.

FH (fall hike). This fall we scratched American Ridge off of the Life List. The common description: "stroll undulating miles atop an expansive and open ridge; experience sensory overload from the non-stop views that will leave you believing in a higher power." My trail journal read: "nearly 40 miles of cartilage-grinding ups balanced with vertebrae-pulverizing downs, no water the first 13 miles, no marked trail in the middle 20's, swinging between 5500 and 6500 feet, and over 10,000' of cumulative gain and loss." But talk about a great trip! Where else but in the Cascades can you hike in with the 80's on exposed ridges in fall colors one September day, then walk into a storm biting a twenty mph headwind in the mid-30's the next? The miles were for the most part enjoyable, company above par, and I picked up some more stories for that ever growing book.

I know I missed something, but I can't spill over another page or the postage rate jumps. Till next year.