

"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed."

- Ernest Hemingway

I'm often asked how I start these seasonal monolithic magnanimous monstrosities of sarcastic satire and plebeian prose, and Ernie pretty much hit the nail on the head. He was also spot on when quoted "I drink to make other people more interesting." But that's a conversation for another time.

A lot of things in the making came to fruition this year. Our little West Coast Wing Clan permanently resettled to the rolling hills of the Inland Northwest, we put a member on the African continent, and even have someone in high school sports (gasp!). For those of you who complain of length of this annual narrative, please stop now, put our card in your basket, and have a Merry Christmas.

Now that those people have left room, what a crazy twelve months!!! Having a year and a half to plan a move is unheard of. All of the little fixes/touch up paint/ yard tweaks/ lipstick-on-a-pig was done well in advance of spring. We strongly leveraged EBay, Craig's List, Goodwill and the city landfill to de-clutter over 20 years of 'asset accumulation'. Our Spokane renters were out of our home in April, which allowed us to take a 26' U-Haul of contents over before listing leaving the Renton house the best it had looked in years. Combined with an unusually low inventory/ high-demand housing market for our area, we put the homestead up in mid May and received multiple offers selling in just a week (+ over asking). Added benefit was not even having an open house for nosey neighbors. We signed some papers, one more U-Haul trip, and come July became proud permanent denizens of Greenacres (♪ It's the place to be ♪) in the Spokane Valley. Of course, it wasn't without a hiccup. Nancy's manager at Liberty Mutual signed off on her working from the local office in Spokane (five miles from the house) long ago. The management tree I report up is East Coast and they are, well, still in the 1980's when it comes to workplace flexibility (same people who told me I needed to work from the office after telecommuting for seven years even though the teams I support are scattered over three time zones). When I threw out the idea in early spring that I MIGHT need to relocate to another office, I got 'we cannot support that work arrangement at this time.' Which loosely translates to 'thanks for 22 years don't let the door hit you on the ass when you turn in your badge.' While mulling that over, the same brain trust assigned me to lead a very high visibility and critical project (aka unpopular and controversial) which could NOT fail. I gladly took on the work, and once underway and past the point of no return, advised I was moving and kindly asked to revisit my work office request. Let's just say I've got a nice cubical in the Spokane office (and even a little bonus for the project).

Didn't see Jaclyn much this past year. Still keeping her grades at the 4.0 level with full credit loads plus all of that engineering and math curriculum. Somehow finds time to do TA work (for \$\$), tutoring for calculus, carve out a few minutes for a boyfriend, and stay a very active member of her ΑΩΠ sorority (although she calls it a fraternity for reasons I didn't commit to memory). Last summer she spent nearly two months in Kenya with a team from Engineers Without Borders, an organization that sends students to manage ongoing water and sanitation projects across several towns/villages. She immersed herself into the culture, learned local customs (including some Swahili), and even drank from the headwaters of the Nile at Lake Victoria (filtered x6, UV treated x4, several tablets, no more than two sips). An incredible experience for anyone curious about the world and ready to absorb all it has to offer. And for a souvenir she even brought me home an African machete. I am such an easy read.

Mitch continues to eat more meals that I can count, and is a little bit taller every time he gets up in the morning. Goodwill has been getting a lot of once worn jeans as of late. I haven't measured him on the back of the pantry door for a while, but he does have to hunch over to hug me now. I can't complain given I'm still getting a hug at age 14. That kid has so much hair that every time he has it cut the floor looks like someone shaved Persian cat (and it fought the entire time). He's taken to the move well. Other than complaining about the sunshine like some kind of pale skin vampire, being in a high school of 2200 students has yielded many opportunities. We were surprised when he actually wanted to turn out for a sport - Cross Country. It seemed a

little odd, given he has never shown any interest in hiking with me and always grumbled whenever we'd walk more than two miles. Now he runs 5 to 8 miles routinely, always literally minutes under my test time at any stage of my life. We not only found out what real running shoes cost, but also he's a size 11 and not a 13. That would explain the toenail loss at Glacier this summer. As for scouting, his current rank is Life Scout which means just a couple more merit badges and an Eagle Project and he'll be in that top 3% of all Boy Scouts. We might be playing the time game, as once girls and cars enter the equation the odds of building a public bench or information kiosk start getting pretty long.

As for Nancy, I'll break from tradition and let her voice tell a story or two:

Who likes country music! Instead of the usual ladies Palm Springs trip, the girls swooped into Nashville for the 2016 Country Music Festival. Four days full of country music and visiting with upcoming artists. Nashville is truly the capital of county music boasting four story bars with bands on every level. Scratched that off the bucket list. Although I would like to return when things are not so crazy and see more of the city.

Attended the Friel Family reunion this summer, which was only the second in the last five years. It seems each reunion we lose a family member. In 2006 it was my Uncle Ralph; this time it was my Mother. I don't think I want to plan another reunion for fear of additional loss. However getting the Friel family together is a great time. Families traveled from all around the country (WA, CA, PA, AZ, ME) to gather at my cousin Denny's in South Kingston, RI. He is a gracious host and can he ever throw a true Friel party! The Friel side of the family really knows how to celebrate - it's in our blood.

Although my mother passed this year, as I followed Facebook I saw several friends had similar family losses. I was not alone. But I was really fortunate to have visited with her for a full week before she left us. I'm so grateful for that time we spent together as we did not know if was her final days. Sometimes God just tells you in his own way that you need to make a trip and visit, so I did. The week following the service brought more of the family together for a Cinco De Mayo Celebration of Life we had in her honor. It was great to see old neighbors, family and friends from my childhood and hear stories about my mom's golf events. I learned her nick name (FILO - First in Last Out) and smile realizing how it was so fitting and in true Friel style. We will keep up that tradition in her honor.

The move to Spokane and the new house and yard has been exciting. All the hours of re-landscaping and tearing out all the plants (or weeds as I call them -- plants that grow where you don't want them) took up several weekends and many many hours. I have been enjoying the search for new places to dine and there are several breweries and wineries in this region to explore too.

Somehow we still were able to carve out a week to visit one of our favorite places, Glacier National Park. It was nice being four hours closer, and August is a fine month for GNP. We met up with some old Buckeyes from Ohio (which we try not to hold against them) as well as some new acquaintances. It was a week of revisiting and sharing classic hikes, mountain views, glacial lakes, as well as grinding out some trail miles and high risk huckleberry picking (where only the bears can hear you scream). We even took in a rare sunny and calm boat tour up on Alberta's Waterton Lake, and witnessed the power of a magnificent thunder and lightning storm that blew thru the park mid week. One of the more surreal moments was standing atop 8,436' Swiftcurrent Lookout with Jac and Mitch at my side. Not only had they done an impressive 18 mile 3k day to get there, but it was just over thirty years ago I had stood at the same spot for the first time myself. It felt like yesterday (except for the pain in every joint of my body).

The page grows short, and Ernest would agree I have bled enough for one sitting. Merry Christmas to you and yours, and may the New Year bring experiences to make you smile and laugh.

Dave, Nancy, Jaclyn, Mitch

MOUNTAIN MAN REVIEW



Tranquility at Cathedral Lake

Only got in one hike this year. A late fall 50 miler in the High Pasayten Wilderness skirting the Canadian border. Words are useless. This picture sums up the trip and why I do what I do.

/// Dave // /