

2019

Greetings All:

There was a LOT of stuff going on this year. So I'll skip the usual holiday quote that takes forever to explain and is normally not all that interesting anyway. They do make me appear well read at least.

Let's start off with Nancy. She got in a ton of travel this year. By Metric or Imperial measure. Work took her to scenic cities like Fairfield, OH and breathtaking Plano, TX. Even a familiar stay in comfortable Seattle for some less than memorable training. But that's not to say there wasn't play. Nancy got her pedicure with painted flowers for Cabo San Lucas in January and sunscreen, then broke out the sunglasses for her early summer Palm Springs outing. She even turned it up a notch with a stay in historical New Orleans with her sister (pre-Mardi Gras so no bead necklaces or body painting that I am aware of). Somehow, there was also her cousin's midweek wedding in Las Vegas. That's not to say I didn't get to tag along on anything that wasn't more my style, like taking part in the .5K St. Patrick Fun Run in bustling downtown Ellensburg (yes, that .5k = 1600 feet) and attending the Inland Northwest Brew Festival. Even when she is home, she is never there. It is all about volunteering. Secretary and merit badge counselor for the Boy Scouts, heavily involved with the high school and Theatre Boosters, even running a parent lead concession booth at the Gonzaga Basketball games (bragging rights of getting into sold out games, pretending the cheers are for the nachos with extra cheese 😊).

What about the Mitch man? Well, he is now a high school senior who hasn't cut his hair for almost two years. His head is constantly buried in my fridge like a grizzly bear fishing a salmon out of a raging river. He also has this millennial gift for being able to stare into his phone for hours and watch TV at the same time. His driving is coming along now that he is getting hours behind the wheels. Only bumped in the garage once and got the first accident out of the way (good thing I had that 16-year accident free policy). But he did finish his Eagle Scout project which was a year in the making. This one was a lot of sweat - building Smokey the Bear fire safety signs for three different rural fire stations. I liked how the fireman on duty always came out to WATCH Mitch's crew dig the post holes and do the laborious installation in the hot July sun. Yeah, didn't do much to dispel the 'eat till sleepy, sleep till hungry' stereotype. But at least it got them away from the ping pong table and weight room. Theater was big this year. Mitch was in most of the high school plays and even did a couple of summer community theater plays that he got paid for! Of course, it didn't cover the gas going to and from rehearsals and worked out to something like a dime an hour, but he did learn why a lot of actors wait tables and literally starve. I like the irony of when he was a Nazi Stormtrooper in the Sound of Music, I could only think this is the ONE time a guy could get away with wearing a swastika, an Iron Cross, and carry a prop firearm in a public high school. Felt so much like my school years in the 1980's. But, at the end of the day he will graduate with a letter in both theater and cross country, so at least we have broken that three-generation drought.

Then there's Jac? Most people don't know I specifically chose the Jaclyn spelling not because of the Charlie's Angle Jaclyn Smith tie-in (helped) but because of where the Q is on the keyboard. The Q and P take a HARD pinky strike on a manual typewriter. My small-town high school required TWO semesters of typing for all students (male and female). I

recall football players complaining to the coach that hitting those keys were killing the muscles in their forearms (a pain I have felt) making it hard to catch the ball on game night. I swore my child would never feel that pain. How was I to know her generation would type with their thumbs on a phone? Alas, I digress. She has been pretty much a ghost this last year. A ghost that sends emails from beyond for money that goes to a very of this world bank account. But that is coming to an end, most likely by the time you read this. Jaclyn is graduating mid-December from MSU with her mechanical engineering degree. I would love brag about her and go thru all of the stuff she's been up to, but that would require words and space I don't have. Just look for her on social media and tell her I sent you. She did a summer internship (Boeing) and a one in the fall (Blue Origin), which put her a semester behind, but very much worth it. She started the job search early, fielded a few employment offers, and is very happy to start her first job in the real world for Blue (I found out not to say BO) after the first of the new year. She is at the perfect place to grow and foster her curiosity of the world and will be back in the Seattle area where she grew up. It's a bittersweet moment when a parent realizes their child has become an adult. It comes with a heavy sigh and a reluctant swipe of a tear. However, it also comes with a loud chuckle and ear to ear grin as I think about the seventeen-year-old Subaru with a 160k miles I'm about to take off our insurance and title in her name. More parking space!!

Last but not least.... Dave. After leaving Liberty Mutual of many years, it was time for a personal reboot. My loving and supportive wife understood that IT was never my first choice as a career and dared me to find another. Something with great stories like the old days in insurance claims. Something that challenged and scared me a little (or a lot) at the same time. So I did it. I got my commercial driver's license last summer, passed my training and applicable endorsements, and have been doing school bus driving since early fall. Yep, a 40ft long 15-ton diesel smoking glossy yellow sled that safely takes our precious youth to mediocre public education. But the stories are priceless. As I have learned from my decades of hiking trips, there is some stuff you cannot make up. I can finally say I am a professional at "using my mirrors." Much more to come in the future. Next time you see me ask about what I call the 'prison bus' experience. 😊

We did get in some partial/full family trips in this year. The 2000-mile National Park road trips are kind of on hold as we cycle out the last of the offspring. We did hit an old favorite - Glacier National Park. I cut my teeth there for climbing/hiking back in the eighties and the entire park just feels like an old friend who has never aged. That constant, a true north, my benchmark that reminds you how fast time has passed. It is always fun sharing trails with the kids that I did when I was about their age. Just their knees crack a lot less and breathing seems so simple. Nancy had a slip and fall the first day which she powered thru like a soldier, but afterwards we found it was an actual broken ankle bone. Fortunately, Glacier has a lot to give off the road and with its historical lodges, so good times were had by all especially since we had both of the kids to share with.

Unfortunately (for Jaclyn), her spring break didn't align with Mitch's. So, in April the three of us found ourselves in Italy. The long flight gave us many hours to discuss if it was IT-Tally or IT-Telle (I was more of an EYE-Talli-Ana fan and stuck to it). My first time in a European country, and we were in one with so many historical significances. It was thru the high school's Education First program, funny because I was more interested in learning than twenty plus student on the trip. That's why I told them bidet was a French word for water bottle filler and they are located next to the toilet because Europeans are 'weird'. There is a lot of be said for standing in the Coliseum of Rome, walking thru the ruins of Pompeii, and strolling along a five hundred year old bridge in Florence which was the only one not to be destroyed during WWII. Learned a lot about what to do not/do on future foreign travels. So much to experience so little time; touring pace is key, as well as leaving room for improvisation. And watching the Fiats and Smart Cars and Scooter navigate thru sheer traffic madness. Italians are great drivers in a place with too many cars. And coffee bars that served beer.

The Wings - Dave, Nancy, Jaclyn, Mitch, and Figgy