

Holy Moly! It's December! No, it's MID-December. I always have this Year in Review thing done before Thanksgiving and should have been licking stamps and inserting mailing labels backwards in the printer weeks ago. It's just not like me to miss an easy deadline and get so far behind on a critical project that people are depending on; and then expend ten times the required effort to push out half of the quality you have all come to expect. But then again, I have been working in IT for the last six years.



Let's talk about work. Nancy has been busy. As you recall she was one of the last ones out the door of her company this time last year as they closed their doors. She got to experience the state unemployment process & administrators, positions I firmly believe were invented by the government to create jobs for people who by all rights are unemployable in the real world. Nancy worked for a fee company for a little while doing premium audit, and although she wasn't technically shackled to an oar or chained to a road gang, she got a good taste of what slave labor is like. She even got a business license and did some independent audit work on her own. Just when we were getting finances positioned to enable her to do the stay-at-home parent thing and hang out with the soccer moms and watch Oprah in the afternoon, an unexpected position came open at a regional mutual insurance company. It is growing into a great opportunity for her to create a department in her discipline from the ground up and really show her knowledge in the profession. And it's fun to count the cows on her commute to rural Enumclaw, along with the prestige of working for the biggest thing in town since the pickle factory closed.

I had my own E-Ticket ride as well. I'm coming up on 12 years with Safeco and last year was a wild one (or as wild as you can get working for an insurance company). Although I seem to fit the mold of an IT person (non-athletic, kind of geeky, well versed in worthless facts), I'm really just a guy who likes to go hiking and tell stories. So I have been pursuing other opportunities within the company that would take me back to the claims side of things and the areas where I am well versed and enjoy. A perfect claims management position opened up for me in over in Spokane. The job I wanted in the city I wanted to work. Everything was in motion, the move package was in the works, and we were looking at homes and schools. But just before the planets aligned and I got the sweet taste of that hot Eastern Washington air, some senior management reared its ugly head. They didn't feel comfortable with an IT person handling those oh so complicated and expensive claims losses (obviously they didn't see that two million dollar project I worked on last year, or the fact I've got designations equivalent to a masters in insurance). So the opportunity unexpectedly passed, and I returned to power washing moss off the roof every spring and trapping moles in the yard each fall. They say every time a door closes, another one opens. I've just got to remember to pull in my chin when it swings shut.

Actually, I've gotten to know doors pretty well; at least interior ones. Upgraded to all new raised six panels (including closets) thru the entire house. Other than that home projects have been pretty tame this year. Since there was a very real chance we wouldn't be here, I was actually contemplating on what little niceties I've built into our humble abode that I wanted to rip out take with me (and what to hide in the walls for the next people). Lately it's been little fine tuning and maintenance efforts, which equates to crown molding, chair rails, and figuring the odds on which tree in the greenbelt will fall on the house next (wouldn't mind a direct hit to the kitchen). I picked up a lathe recently to fill in the gap amongst my wood shaping arsenal, which means besides burning time in the garage making things square AND round, I can now happily & crudely copy anything and call my mistakes 'old world charm'. But I still have too many fingers and too few scars to be considered any kind of professional.

Mitchell got his fair share of scars this year. Three separate trips to the emergency room for stitches to his head. Still waiting for that knock from child protective services. He's three now, repeats everything, and has the attitude of a disenfranchised government employee. He's heavy into Thomas the Train, and although I think little engines running around a track with faces and talking is kind of creepy, at least he can appreciate the difference between steam and diesel-electric power. From his build and strength, if he fattens up a little I'm afraid we might break the generation's long drought and have an actual athlete in the family (there go Saturday hikes). Too soon to tell if he's

