



Greetings. One and All.

Hmmm. As I pen my annual tome, I think of all you naysayers out there. All the people who complained for the better part of 20 years every time they saw my Xmas letter arrive in the mail. Few fully appreciated that the format, font, and even the folding was all so carefully engineered to avoid any thickness surcharges or going over the first-class stamp rate. And STILL, you would all lament how it would take two (or possibly three) sittings in the bathroom to get through all of it. Tsk Tsk. Shame on all of you.

What a burden my Xmas tales of cheers and jeers have been on your Christmas season. Somehow, the mere 2,000 words I craft (on average) on the Wing Family and the Season of Joy always made the top of your personal list of First World Problems. Which I forever take as a compliment. So, after zero REAL **Ho Ho Ho** content for two years, how are you all feeling? Shaky hands? Night sweats? Maybe a touch of remorse? Just keep all that in mind as I unpack the last year (or so).

Where do I start? A world in turmoil. We just got thru a chaotic election cycle that rivaled few in history. Unrest in the Middle East is a little too close to world oil production. A proxy conflict in Eastern Europe is reminiscent of the Cold War days. Financial markets are hitting unprecedented highs as Artificial Intelligence takes over everything except for minimum wage jobs (which are paying very well in some states). But the truly amazing thing is ---- none of that hasn't stopped Nancy from traveling.

Still sniffing the vapors of that post-retirement buzz, Mrs. Wing has been traveling more than US writers and artists invading 1920s Paris and going all Bohemian. A couple of weeks in Cabo San Lucas always starts the year with an authentic Mexican bang and some sizzle in the sun. That was then balanced out with a fortnight and a half (alert – math problem) in Europe in the spring. Mainly in those cooler, soggy climes of the island countries. But she can only do the official start of summer with a week in Palm Springs and that excellent dry heat. And if that was too warm, there was (thankfully) another week in Carlsbad just north of San Diego (which is famed for having Goldilocks temps - not too hot, not too cold).

August brought Nancy to GNP for about a week, but Mitch and I worked long tour days during the very short Glacier season (< 90 days), so there wasn't much kickback and visiting time. But after those long days spent in Montana, the mountains were swapped out for a week at sea as she set sail on an Alaskan Cruise. Then came the official bookend to summer with Labor Day week at a neighbor's timeshare in the Northern Idaho Panhandle on the sky-blue shores of expansive Lake Pend Oreille (which included some fine dining as well). A last-minute week in New York City during an unusually warm spell this fall was a nice travel box to check off. Only to be topped off by a week in Las Vegas, because what happens in Vegas..... Hmmm. I don't know. I have only been there twice in my life.

During the limited time remaining in the year, Nancy still dabbles in real estate. After selling her first house, she decided it was more of a job and hard work than she was really interested in. So, she now does small fee jobs for Redfin, like home showings and being there for house inspectors when they need a key. When her schedule permits. It seems to check the boxes for a hobby job, but she is starting to wonder if it's worth all the annual fees and continuing training required to keep the realtor license.

As for the boy Mitch, well, I'm going to say he crossed the line from youth to adult. He finished up EWU in late spring with what I will call a Co-vid degree. You know, one where you paid for four years of in-school education, and it was all online (for an extra technology fee per credit, naturally). But with his fancy new degree, he did what we all do: take a seasonal job. This was a little my fault since I could (and did) sell him on a place that I truly love. So he spent the summer as my roommate in Glacier Park, driving the Red Buses.

This is one of the most challenging jobs you could have in the Park. Giving commentary, driving the treacherous cliffs on the narrow Going to the Sun Road, and dealing with the amazingly stupid things people do in our national parks. There are lots of big personalities on the spectrum. But he took it all in stride. Ground through the long hours, made money, and met/worked with people you can only find working the seasonal gig. So, with some coin in his pocket, he touched the home base for a few weeks and then off to the big city—and I mean THE big city: NYC.

With all those years of acting in high school and college (not his major), he wants to follow that fire inside and see how bright it can burn. We fully support him (morally), as this is the best age to chase dreams before the weight of the world crushes them like that proverbial anvil on Wile E. Coyote. It's a hard line of work in a hard (and expensive) city, but I look forward to hearing his stories of living in the heart of a pulsing, breathing metropolis that could be its own country. And also what it finally feels like to be a minority. ☺

As far as Jaclyn goes..... Well, she's off doing Jaclyn stuff. Now that she is past the mid-20s mark, I only follow her on Strava to see what's happening. Still dating Pat. Still in West Seattle. She still has a dog (or at least half of one - not sure how that ownership works with unmarried kids these days). And still works at Blue Origin (which always has to be followed up with 'Jeff Bezos's space company'). We don't talk on the phone as much as I'd like, but it makes up for the gaps when we do. It is hard to be sad when your children lead their own lives and live happily and actively with someone they care for. And an empty three-bedroom basement is sometimes a GOOD three-bedroom basement.

As for Dave, I'm still working two jobs to keep Nancy in the lifestyle she is accustomed to. Nine months driving the school bus, trying to win the hearts and minds of tomorrow's leaders one day at a time (like the French said when they would not let go of colonial Viet Nam). Then, three months driving tours in Glacier NP in the big red antique motor coaches. The school district has been pushing to extend the school year (earlier start and later end dates), so I might have to choose between the two in the not-too-distant future. If you call that a choice.

This last summer at Glacier was a little different. I've always focused on getting in miles and peaks or perfecting my drive behind the wheel (better content/narrative, presentation, engagement). But only a little social time. I remember working in IT days at Safeco/Liberty, where we had the three-pronged model: quality vs. cost vs. time. To change any of the three will come at the expense of the other two. So, this season, I backed off on the hiking (only 177 miles), rested a little on my laurels with touring (only 58 total tours this summer), and delved more into the social aspect of seasonal work. It was a real eye-opener. I realized I had been working with people who were more genuine and authentic than anyone in my entire career. Sure, seasonal jobs are full of their share of crazies. But this type of employment seems to strip away all pretenses and social facades, and you find yourself interacting with many people out there you will be forever thankful to have met and experienced. I suggest giving it a try.

I picked up another JDM vehicle to keep the Figaro company in the garage. It's a 1997 Mitsubishi Delica with the cold weather Chamonix package. I've never owned a van, let alone a diesel, so it has been quite an experience. It is probably one of the most universally functional things I've ever owned: it can transport eight people counting driver (although they should be of Japanese stature), or fold up all the seats and haul 8' lumber. It has often been called the Swiss Army Knife of minivans. It's a shame they never made it to the States. My biggest problem is getting to be storage. Especially since I still have my eye on the Daihatsu Copen, which will become legal to import under the 25-year rule starting in 2027. I might have to rent garage space. Or put Nancy's car on the curb. But renting space would cost less in the long run (with lawyer costs and all).

So there you have it. A brief but meaningful catch-up on the Wings in Spokane. Nothing really earth-shattering is happening, but sharing is always fun. Of course, for the skinny, you can always read my blog: AdventuresWithGoatBoy.com. I'm a little freer with faceless profanity on the World Wide Web.

Merry Christmas from Dave and Nancy

