

The Parkins Report – Events of 2012

As we enter our fourth year of non-retirement, it is once again time to reflect back on the past 12 months. The year began, as usual, in the midst of the rainy season. January usually turns cold and relatively drier. This year, the dry part got left out, resulting in an ice storm that bowed trees and shrubs nearly to the ground and closed our street for several days. We only lost power for a few hours, but parts of Olympia were dark for six days, prompting a few visits from the children to launder clothes, bathe, and recharge their electronics.

Yard: We survived the storm relatively unscathed, with no broken trees, but the thaw revealed a serious doggie doo problem with our newly-xeriscaped yard, and the fact that our year-old Jeep--the warranties for which all ran out at once, due to putting 36,000 miles on it during the first year—was subject to serious roof leakage, resulting in rain showers from both dome lights during the humid seasons. The Jeep we just lived with until this winter, since our maintenance budget went for new tires on the first anniversary. Two visits to the dealer, one for each dome light, may have taken care of the issue. As for the dogs, a reluctant complaint to the animal control department provided relief--which seemed to be effective until the rainy season returned--after pouring gallons of stinky solutions onto the lawn, which the rain quickly neutralized, and repeated futile pleading with the neighbors to contain or train.

House: Having spent the children's inheritance on landscaping last year, this year we went into debt to focus on the house. A few home-made interior storm windows helped with winter drafts; an infrared survey led to a partial attic insulation project. But, the big project this year was a two-month total remodel of the main bathroom, replacing the old rusting cast iron tub and sink with a custom tile shower and pedestal sink, losing the cavernous linen closet in the process.

Work: the first half of the year was dominated by month-to-month contract extensions and proposals for a five-year renewal on the IT support contract for the

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, in partnership with Dell. In the spring, we attended the Cascadia IT conference in Seattle (well, Larye did, while Judy went shopping). Judy finished quilting her “last customer quilt” in October., which she delivered at a quilt retreat in Montana, while Larye made his second on-site visit of the year to Rocky Mountain Laboratories, the first having been shortly after the contract award, in June. Other work included remodeling a couple of web sites: one (pro bono) for the Olympia Weavers Guild, for which Larye is the web editor, and yet another aircraft brokerage sales listing site. After all the effort committing to another five years of potential gainful government contracting, the workload has been disappointingly small, making taking on other clients attractive. But, work comes all at once, with the last quarter being very busy.

Hobbies: We are still active in both the Olympia and Tacoma weaving guilds, and acquired two more floor looms, a table loom and several tapestry looms (some home-made), loaning a table loom and a floor loom to sister-in-law Danielle to make room for the new ones. All the big looms need serious restoration and additional accessories. Judy chaired the setup for the Ladies of the Lake Quilt Club show in August, plus a memorial display to honor three founding members who had passed on. And, of course, we both attend the Ruby Street art quilting group. In the fall, Judy had “Family Ties,” a small star quilt made from her father's neckties and photos of her parents and siblings, accepted at the La Conner Quilt Museum's Quilt Fest. We spent four days at the show, taking classes in quilting and beading. We took a month-long class in enameling in Olympia this spring, the art of fusing glass powders to copper. Larye served on the Mason County Transportation Improvement Program Citizen's Advisory Panel, focusing on bicycle issues. The aircraft construction project continues to languish, due to time and space constraints. The garage remains wet in winter; home repair projects clutter the workbench.

Travel: Our travels were restricted to three trips to

Oregon to visit friends, a week-long vacation to Canmore, Alberta in the spring, three trips to Montana, and a couple to the Quilt Museum. We canceled a planned bike tour in Colorado: our bicycling consisted of a few local rides, an overnight to a Montesano B&B, and participating in the Northwest Tandem Rally in Salem, Oregon, a rainy weekend where we chose the short, 20-mile loops each day. Larye rode a few 20-40 mile training rides in September before tackling the 69-mile “Birthday Ride” in early October.

Health: As we age, our health problems seem to be the usual, rather than age-related. We both went through the dreaded Efudex treatments in the winter and spring to clear up years of sun damage, leaving us looking red and raw for a few weeks. We're due again as the short dark days return. Larye had a worrisome time in early spring with a lesion that didn't heal, which, after insisting on a biopsy, turned out to be an infection, probably a legacy of our Florida bike trip in 2011. He now knows the answer to the “are you allergic to penicillin” question. Judy had a return of her reflux issues, and is losing weight, off coffee, pastries, and any kind of rich food, which is effective treatment, but not a lot of fun.. We both attend yoga twice a week at the Senior Center, which has done wonders for our flexibility over the past two years.

Visits: We didn't get to visit our out-of-state grandchildren this year, but some of them came to us. Shawna, Steve, and the boys arrived in their motor home in September, on an ambitious shake-down cruise that went through all six tires on the loop through Utah, Oregon Coast, and California. Our guest rooms stayed busy, with 18 bicycle tourists from all over the world taking advantage of our Warm Showers lodging exchange and our proximity to the Pacific Coast Bike Route. We also had a visit from a Montana friend and her daughter; brother-in-law Ben and nephew Rick stopped in on their way back to California from Montana, and Ben returned on a sadder note, after losing his brother in Bremerton.

– Judy & Larye