

Season's Greetings! Hope all is well with you and your family.

This has been a busy year for us. Our biggest project has been the design and construction of a workshop. It has a small garage so Mike can maintain the cars, a wing for garden tools with greenhouse window for me, a wing for a shop for Mike, a wing with bathroom and storage, and a dog patio for the dogs (coming after the shop is complete and Mike repairs the invisible fence). The workshop is similar to the house in appearance – same style, color, siding, roofline, etc.

Early in the year Mike built a playset for Emma with swings, climbing wall, tire ladder, rope ladder, clubhouse, slide, etc. - we like to play on it too. Emma is beginning to enjoy exploring the forest and trails outside. It gives her a feeling of independence because she doesn't seem to notice us constantly watching her from a distance. She started preschool in the fall, which she really enjoys. It provides an outlet for her energy and curiosity, which when combined with her emerging independence can sometimes be daunting for Mike and me.

We're getting in tune with the seasons on the island now. Spring means weeding and mowing to stay ahead of the grass and weeds. It's several acres of mowing but Mike refuses to use a riding (aka "old man") mower. The summer has little rain, so we have to water the lawn and garden by hand (we need a sprinkler system). Mike is working on forest management most of the year pulling noxious weeds on the entire property (about ½ ton of weeds this year), clearing fire roads, cutting up fallen trees for firewood, etc. By the time fall and winter arrive we're ready for a break from all the outdoor work.

I mistakenly thought I would have more time for home projects once Emma started preschool. After driving her to and from town, there is only time for the daily chores. And then there is the volunteer work for the preschool. The wreath sale is the big school fundraiser during the holidays. Mike and I also got roped into helping them set up a website. We did manage to have the interior of our house painted (no more yellow walls). I also managed to do some fall planting in my flower garden. I recently joined a women's book club on the island. Several of the women are former software engineers (most from Microsoft) so it is fun to connect with others that have similar backgrounds.

Mike has been very busy with his company, Actional. He works face-to-face with the engineers in Montreal and Mountain View once or twice per quarter. Fortunately, he has been able to work from home most of the time. He regularly goes mountain biking on the trails around here and occasionally goes out to the sportsmen's club (where he is a range safety officer) to shoot trap and sporting clays with the guys.

We had several visits from family and friends during the year, which we always enjoy. We also took a week of vacation in April to see downtown Seattle and Vancouver Island. The highlight of the trip was seeing the spring flowers and having high tea at Butchart Gardens. In November, we visited family in California for a week. For the first time, Emma was old enough to really enjoy the trip and was excited to see her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Best Wishes,

Mike, Michelle, and Emma

<http://www.mclements.net>