

To one and all:

Life in the slow lane is a new and different experience. I am still decompressing. Life is a lot more relaxed than it was – and I have no idea how I managed to accomplish all I did when I was working full time.

So, what is it that occupies my time?

Well, I am keeping up pretty well with what is happening in Washington to Healthcare Reform (or Health Insurance Reform, as it is now titled). I write letters to the editor and the occasional editorial. I also write letters to such folks as the politicians themselves, but I really don't expect those to be read or attended to if they are read. The height of futility is someone who really knows something about how things work trying to get anyone in Washington to pay any attention to what he knows or says. It is a sad commentary on our time and political system, but probably just a product of how many of us there are.

Daily, Nancy and I tend the vegetable garden, which is housed in six elevated beds, each about 3 feet tall, 4 feet wide and 10 feet long, filled with earth selected carefully by Nancy, fertilized with love with only organic fertilizers, watered (at least up until this week) by the public irrigation system, which has now turned off for the winter. The garden has turned out an amazing stream of tomatoes, lettuce, parsley, cilantro, cucumbers, squash, peas, green beans, onions, artichokes, eggplants and peppers, to say nothing of the small harvest of red raspberries earlier this summer. We had two dinners featuring collard greens. The bok choy was fine early in the summer, but bolted rapidly with the onset of hot weather. The peas, green beans, lettuce and cabbage continue to produce – and we continue to plant more and more “waves” of them to keep us supplied.

The berry picking season is now gone, but we picked about 2 gallons of blackberries from wild vines in the neighborhood during August and September (mostly on my visits here, but Nancy and Zack picked even while I wasn't here). We have pulled out our pumpkin patch; it produced about 100 winter squash and a tall crop of weeds before we harvested all we could and looked to getting rid of weeds and squash plants alike.

As fall winds into full color (and there is a lot of it), our 1.5 acre “meadow” needs tending. We have cut the grass down as low as we could – first with a “field mower” pulled by a tractor (yes, I drove) to reduce the grass from 3-4 feet tall to 6-8 inch stubble, then with the trusty ride-on lawn mower to take it down to an even 3-4 inches. We have sown a winter “cover crop” which includes a couple grasses, vetch and clover. In the spring, it gets cut down and a summer crop planted, but when it is tilled into the ground, it adds humus and nitrogen to the soil, and helps to loosen up our clay base. I'm getting pretty good with the lawn mower.

I am also getting pretty good with the weed-eater – trying to keep down the growth in all of the places the lawnmower will not reach.

We are drawing up a scale map of our property so we can start planning next year's vegetable garden (we are looking forward to corn and beans in addition to what we have had this year). Also, we are looking to plan a formal space for the blue berries and raspberries so we can get enough of them into the ground to make a reasonable crop in another 2-3 years. But more than that, we want to plant a decorative garden – a place of flowers and greens to walk and meditate in – places to have picnic lunches, places with streams of water and koi fish, hidden nooks and crannies and perhaps even a small maze. We have plenty of room for it, so the primary limitations are time, effort and funds to invest.

At this moment, our home and our apartments in Little Rock are still both on the market with no offers. We have calculated and recalculated the prices - they seem reasonable. The market is just slow. We are not impoverished by this, but it does put a crimp in the cash flow. Sooner or later, they will sell; sooner or later, we will have our cash from them and things will loosen up a good bit. In the meantime, we move forward slowly and we wait.

Some of the moving slowly and waiting has to do with unpacking the household goods from a 3600 square foot Little Rock house into a 2000 square foot Medford house. We have divested a good deal of stuff on the way here – both in garage sale and in donations to charities of one kind and another. We continue to make donations, but at this point we are mostly just unpacking to find out what we really have, and then deciding that we will find a place for this and we will put that into the storage unit for later. In that process, we have the garage now about $\frac{3}{4}$ emptied out, and the storage unit pretty well filled up. The next project will be to make the file cabinets accessible and start to bring the stuff to fill them back into the house from the storage unit. We have also retained a lot of bookshelves, but all of the books are in boxes in the storage unit. On the other hand, we have changed curtains, deployed (and purchased) rugs, and used our furniture to populate the house (moving Zack's furniture – which was all there was here for 5 months - gradually out to the garage and to the storage unit). The house is coming along. We have projects enough to last for some time in terms of fixing it up, but it is very livable now, and becoming more beautiful daily.

Nancy had eye surgery about two weeks ago. She developed a “macular hole” – something about the vitreous shrinking and pulling the retina off of the sclera. They removed the offending segment of vitreous from her eye and injected air to push the retina back into place. Now she is waiting for the air to be replaced with fluid and then for her vision to resolve to whatever it will be when the healing process is complete (which, we understand, may take as long as a year). During her first week after surgery, she had to lie down facing the floor for as much time as she could stand, so we spent a lot of the day caring for her. She is back up now and we are recuperating together.

Daily rhythms are interesting things. I have worked in a daily rhythm for the last 10-15 years that had fairly well defined times in it for awakening, going to bed, brushing teeth, and so forth. With the change in daily demand on my time, my rhythm has been totally upset, and I have not yet re-established any kind of replacement. I don't think it is yet

apparent to me what my days will be like over the long term, so establishing a rhythm doesn't yet make a lot of sense. However, it will soon, and getting my body back into a diurnal rhythm is important. Nonetheless, I am getting plenty of exercise, spending a lot of time out of doors and enjoying myself tremendously.

I am sure that I will make the rounds of local physician groups and hospitals and touch bases with the local university (Southern Oregon University) and with the medical school in Portland – but none of that seems particularly important at the moment.

The leaves are yellow-orange-red and the air is crisp. It calls to me.

Take care. Enjoy fall. Savor the flowers, the colors of the leaves, the graying of the skies and the crisp nights. Each day is a gift. Don't waste a single one.

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