

2011 Nibbles

Hey, step away from that paper shredder! I know what you're thinking. Besides, not to worry, it's only a one-pager this year (two sides). First, how 'bout dem Packers? Thirteen and oh as I write, nineteen and oh since the last time anybody in Green Bay uttered the word "loss". If the Packers stay lossless and win the Big game this year in Indianapolis they'll have overcome the jinx of perfection (sorry '07 Patriots). They will even have bested the '72 Dolphins, who had to win only fourteen regular season games (now sixteen) to eventually win it all. In any case, may the best team win, and let us pray – puhleez – that Madonna does not sing *Like A Virgin* at halftime.



Literally or figuratively. **J**anuary found Nancy and me in Hawaii. I attended a conference and we snorkeled in the company of turtles. Inspired by their grace, Nancy weaved one. I know, tough venue, but the cause of science must move forward. Two days prior to leaving Anchorage a pipe in our septic system broke. It was dark and five below outside. Nancy and I lay on frozen ground reaching inside the septic well struggling to hold two halves of a broken PVC pipe together. "Fragrant" gray water gushed out one end. Imagine holding the limp end of a garden hose, turning on the water full blast and directing the flow from the nozzle into a drinking straw. You get the idea. The next day I went to Lowes and rigged a fitting to enable a more controlled way to drain the tank of a few hundred gallons. I finished just in time to enjoy a New Year's Eve date with Nancy, and pencil a note of caution to the house sitter: Don't take long showers!

February: I became a year older, the Packers won the Big game, and a moose broke through our backyard fence and ravaged our trees and shrubs. Then



it crapped in the snow (see nuggets) and left, presumably, through the same gash in the fence where it broke in. Ain't nature grand? **M**arch: John Haines, former Alaska poet laureate, dies. Loved his poetry. Many years ago I was a



student in an essay writing class he taught. Mood: ☹️. **A**pril: Death and taxes. One consolation of the first inevitable fact of life is that it brings a merciful end to the second. I discovered I had done a pitiful job of tax planning in 2010. Dear Obama: I never want to hear you say the Nibbe's have not paid their *fair* share! **M**ay: Sensational weather – 70's. Nancy and I biked and we got our colons screened. Squeaky clean, both of them. After my screen a nurse told me to expect a greater than usual need to fart – she called it *medical air*. I was still groggy from the anesthetic as Nancy led me down the hospital's hallway out to our car, when all of a sudden I let a big one go. A real head turner. I have never seen my wife's face glow red like that. **Over**→

June: A surprisingly quiet month preparing for the storm of visitors who all picked 2011 as the year to visit



Alaska. I built a boardwalk on the south side of our house mostly from lumber the builder had left. A fine place to set a lounge chair and kick back with a glass of wine to enjoy the afternoon sun, which is up nearly twenty hours a day that time of year, one third that long this time of year.

Sniffle. July: My parents, brother and sister arrived for a family reunion of sorts. The former two

were unaware the latter two were coming. Oh what fun it was; we reminisced and grilled and shopped and traveled and fished. How did we do? See above. At three am we drove north to the Deshka River and spent the day slaying King salmon. It started slow until finally sister Gail set the pace with the first fish in the boat, followed by brother Steve, myself, dad, and finally mom. Weather was sketchy when we started, but steadily improved, so that by the time our guide was filleting fish it was warm and sunny. Next up was our friend Kevin, a fellow PhD-er from Cleveland. We enjoyed a pretty gnarly climb on our mountain bikes up to Lost Lake Pass (~1800'), followed by a furiously fun descent. August: Other friends from Cleveland arrived, Bob and Hope, who we like to refer to by the monomial "BobHope". They experienced it all, sunny and warm in Denali Park with Nancy as their host, snow on the drive back to Anchorage; the return of summer in Anchorage, then a biblical three day rain in Seward. Finally, the Schenkel family, also from Cleveland, were here visiting family and camping around the state. They unloaded their R/V in our driveway and offered us all their leftovers. Plus other stuff they did not want to take back to Cleveland. We still have a half bottle of family-size ketchup in the refrigerator. All the booze, however, is gone. September: We pause to rest. Slow month. The nation's credit rating tanked from AAA to AA+, leaving me wondering why we skipped over AAA-.



Like other things we've been told to fear – remember Y2K? – it turned out to be a non-event. Lucy, our Husky hybrid got into a porcupine real bad. The veterinarian had to sedate her to remove the quills. Margot Kidder was arrested for protesting a proposed oil pipeline. As I said, slow month. October: I travelled to Wisconsin to be with my family as my mom courageously underwent open heart surgery. She's recovering well. Steve Jobs died and I left my iPod on the plane in Seattle.

Coincidence? Rufus the Airedale turned eleven. November: Winter arrives with cold and snow in tow. Moose appeared in the trees behind our house, spying our fence, and I'm like, "Don't even think about it. There's a freezer waiting for you otherwise." December: The country feels economic despair, yet winter brings solace. Nancy remains gainfully employed at the breast surgery practice. She likes it there. I'm still at work helping to launch a small biotech company focused on system's biology and biomarkers (say what?), and I do research in that area. The main difference in our work day is I get to work in pajamas, if I wore pajamas (visual alert!), whereas Nancy doesn't (wear pajamas or get to work in them). Best to all of you and your families in the New Year. Merry Christmas. And Go Packers!