

January 9

Happy New Year! I decided that Ben needed someone to look after him while he was alone for the week so I bought him a Beta fish. Ben named him Wallace so he fits in with Drover and Maggie (from the Hank the Cowdog series).

The snow necessitated that Ben extend his internship so he didn't finish it over Christmas break. Another bummer is that he can't actually do much because he isn't 18 for another month.

Physics was canceled so Ben is doing Chemistry along with Pre-Calc II. Next quarter he needs Art and Ethics to complete his degree. Somewhere in there he needs to present his senior project to his high school.

We've been frustrated that Amanda can't get her required history credit the traditional way so we've added a World History online course to her schedule. She is worried that she'll need to complete a year's work in a semester. I'm worried that I won't be able to get my data entry done while she is home!

February 10

Happy 18th Birthday to Ben today! He managed to find time to meet me for breakfast, but he is feeling terrible with the flu that is rampant around our house.

His nephrologist nixed the border patrol idea because the dehydration caused by the heat and rigorous exercise would cause the medication that is protecting his kidneys from protein leakage and scarring to stop working.

I could probably post every day with Ben's different career ideas. His favorite plan of the moment is a Wildlife/Wilderness Management degree from the University of Montana in Dillon, MT.

Racheal and Amanda are making plans to go on a mission trip to Mexico in July. Racheal has an interview Friday.

February 12

🙏 I was told today that the college where I am working plans to cut their class offerings by more than half. Please pray that they keep their night classes, or I'm out of work!

Ben is very sick with the flu.

February 14

When I got home from work Thursday night, Ben's temperature was up to 103 degrees and his blood pressure was down to 90/60. I spoke with the on call nephrologist at Children's who thought rehydration seemed necessary. Ben said he would drink gallons of water if he didn't need to go, but being on the island makes it hard to "wait and see" because there is about five hours where the ferry doesn't run. Better safe than a transplant, so off we went on the 11:30pm ferry.

Hardly anyone else was on the road. I told Ben he should have all his appointments that time of night. No one else was in the ER waiting room either. That was a first.

By the time we got there his fever had broke and his temperature was normal. I

couldn't believe it. After bolusing him with 2.5 liters in ER, his orthostatic pressures corrected themselves (going up from laying, sitting to standing when they had been dropping). But his blood pressure and blood sugar were both very low so they admitted him on a maintenance IV. This is the first stay where he had three male nurses. Usually you don't even see a male nurse on the floor.

In the morning the attending doc was one we hadn't seen in several years. Since we last spoke she bought a place on the island. She felt that Ben was safe to go home but for some reason the orders didn't get put in. When Ben asked the nurse, he said he would check on it. Within 15 minutes we were out of there. The nurse said that was the fastest discharge he'd seen in his 7 years at the hospital. The doc didn't want us sitting in a ferry line on a three day weekend...bless her heart!




Happy Valentine's Day!

February 17

I don't know if you really want the blow by blow report on this virus but it has moved into the "feels like someone ran a grinder down my throat" stage for Ben. That lasted the rest of us about 5 days. They tested him at Children's to see if he had the true influenza. No one said he did so I'm assuming not.

February 27

 Ben got his acceptance letter to Central Washington University's Criminal Justice program. Woo-hoo! It is his back up plan, but he is really happy knowing that he has some place to go this fall.

We found out that the University of Montana Western participates in the Western Undergraduate Exchange program. It means tuition would be slightly more than residents pay but not the exorbitant out of state tuition. With lots of phone calls and running around, he got his paperwork in by the deadline. Now we wait...and fill out more scholarship forms...and practice using Skype...and cherish those rare hugs and kisses.

He had blood work done this morning and his potassium came back at a critical level. And I had just fixed these yummy "loaded potatoes" for dinner! He needs to get that rechecked at the hospital lab over the weekend. No one has any idea why it is so high. High potassium can be deadly so he will reluctantly interrupt his weekend plans to get another blood draw.

March 11



Ben was accepted with distinction at Western which means a potential scholarship. Central offered him a \$2400 merit scholarship. He did get the WUE rate at University of Montana. Now he is waiting for all their financial packages to make his decision. Whew! It was a wild ride for a month trying to get the applications and essays together and sent in before the deadlines. It always made me nervous that he was so sure he wanted to do engineering without considering anything else. He might change his mind 10 more times but at least he is moving forward.

His blood work came back ok. He is always on the highest end of normal. This was a reminder that he needs to watch his potassium even though the critical value could have been caused by clotting during the draw.

Ben will be home in a couple weeks doing his final classes online. A philosophy class and an art class. He isn't really a computer guy so it will be interesting.

April 10


Ben is enjoying taking his online classes (not necessarily the classes themselves) because he can schedule his homework around when the fishing bite is on. He caught a 21.5" Rainbow at Lone Lake this week.

He decided on an Environmental Science degree at Western Washington University. Most of his current credits should transfer but he has to take a math placement test and see where he lands in their curriculum.


The tentative fall schedule is out for Skagit Valley College. They are only offering 6 transferable classes (down from 15 last fall). Two night classes are being offered so there is a possibility that I will remain employed as evening clerk, but I won't know until September. I had a brief increase in my data entry hours, but was then cut back because the customer base is diminishing. If I lose all my work, maybe I better till up that huge garden I used to have.

Wishing you many blessing and malted eggs for a Happy Easter!

April 21

 **Amanda moved up to varsity tennis yesterday and even won a tough match! She is still trying to help us understand how the scoring works, but we are getting better. We think an announcer would help.**


April 26

 **Thanks to Todd's mechanical prowess, he earned a trip to Yakima to compete in the Washington state bus mechanic's competition where he won second place! He was most excited about the Carhartt coat he won. I was happy that he won a trip to a mechanic's conference in Wenatchee. A father and son won first and third; the three of them were one point away from each other on the written test.**

And Ben won a scholarship from the Washington Association for Pupil Transportation!

May 11

Last night Ben told me this has been his best year ever. I thought it might be because he is graduating with his high school diploma and Associate in Arts transfer degree after missing most of two years of school after his WG diagnosis.

But he told me it is because he shot the nicest 4-point Blacktail buck on the island, caught a 21" Rainbow trout in Lone Lake, and caught a 5 lb. Smallmouth bass.



May 12

Ben's luck just keeps getting better....he caught a 7 lb smallmouth bass today!!! (above right)


May 18

 **Ben and I made a "quick trip" to Children's ER this morning after finding out that his potassium level was critical. Our contact numbers were messed up at the docs office so the doctor had been leaving several messages a day at Todd's work since minutes after they left the appointment with him Friday afternoon.**

Today ER redrew the blood work, did an EKG and physical exam and determined everything is ok for now. This is the second time he got critical potassium results so the doctor thinks it has to be something in his diet.

Never schedule a Friday appointment!

June 6

 **One week until Ben's graduation. He isn't big on ceremonies so he won't be walking in either the high school or community college's commencement exercise. For the last month, he has had bad, bad senioritis. Now it is final test and project time and everyone is cranky.**

June 15

 **It's done. Ben managed to get both of his diplomas even though he stopped running before he reached the finish line. Since he keeps changing his major, we are still researching financial aid, college, living arrangements, etc.**

June 24

The girls are in LA with their youth group working at a homeless shelter for a week. They have checked in every day and it sounds like they are having a good time. Amanda has some online school to do when she gets back before she can begin her summer.

Ben and I have been checking out studio apartments in Bellingham for when he starts the Bellingham Tech Fisheries program in the fall. He met with an advisor and the fisheries program director and visited the hatchery a couple times. He has several more apartments lined up to check out Friday.

June 29

Back to Bellingham we go. All that riding and getting in and out is hard on Ben because he dislocated his knee last week. He was pulling on a rope for Todd and the next thing he knew his leg below the knee went out 90 degrees to the right. I want him to have it checked out and he wants to tough it out.

The burn ban starts tomorrow so he has gathered a group to have the final bon fire of the season. A redneck summer solstice party?

July 12

Ben found a 550 sq ft one bedroom apartment in a gated complex. Todd and I spent the weekend up there moving him in and then checking out the town. Besides looking for a new couch, we spent most of our time in Fairhaven and in city parks. Ben plans to move up there the first part of August which gives us a vacation home for few weeks.

August 1

Seafair weekend, a sad anniversary of Ben's diagnosis. It has been six years. He is out fishing this week.

See pics of his fish and more at <http://www2..whidbey.com/backhome>

If that doesn't work go directly to the picture hosting place at <http://picasaweb.google.com/pambrager/WebsitePics?authkey=Gv1sRgCIPXm4-o8dEV#>

August 12

Ben has been salmon fishing every day. His fish are marinating in brine and he has the smoker ready. Drover can't behave in the boat so he doesn't get to go fishing. Girls can only go if they never complain or need to pee. That leaves me out.