

Life in Minnesota 12

Oops...five months have passed and where have I been? Sorry folks it took so long to pick up the thread from as long ago as August.

Needless to say our preoccupation has been looking for a job which has not been easy given the fact that millions of jobs have been lost and competition for full-time requisitions are in small supply.

How had 3 experiences where he interviewed quite extensively for jobs that looked like a "go" from the get go and just as they were about to sign on the bottom line, the req got pulled. "Sorry, we're going to wait on filling this position." Can't tell you how many times that has happened to us.

Other positions were contract which should mean you can make more money, but that is quite the contrary. How has never worked a contract at \$45 per hour until now. His usual rate used to be \$65. He's up for a full-time job that pays half of his usual annual salary, which is below entry level, but it's a job. If he gets it, they tell him that if he fulfills a short time obligation, the turn around would be enough money to justify a higher salary and the position of manager or director of program management. They contacted How, not the other way around—knowing full well he was over qualified for the job they're offering, but they also have plans to bring on a professional program manager. They did a pretty good job of wooing him noting how over qualified he is, but they need his help. We're not going to hold our breath though. This will probably get yanked from under his feet as the others. That's how jaded we've become.

The most recent news on me is that I finally had the back surgery I've needed for years. I can honestly say that I have about 85% percent improvement on the pain and I'm near the 12th week since the surgery.

If I were to have this surgery anywhere, I couldn't have been in a better place than Minnesota. Apparently they have pioneered in back surgery. I went to a place called the Twin Cities Spine Center which is housed as part of Abbott Northwestern hospital. Excellent, excellent care and nothing at all to complain about. My recovery in the beginning was a little rocky at first, particularly when I tried to pay some bills. Days following I was still feeling the effects of the anesthesia, which I didn't know of at the time, but you should have seen the checks that were returned for payment, totally illegible. I was so embarrassed. Here's a post-surgery tip: Don't pay bills for at least 2 weeks following surgery.

They had to go in the front and back to put in these pads to replace discs and add bolts and screws. They built a wall with powdered bone which they made a thick paste out of. When I went in for the 6 week check-up they noticed that the fusion was already taking hold and that was good news.

I have to wear a brace all the time and for awhile I was using a walker and a higher toilet seat. I couldn't bend, twist or lift anything more than 5 lbs. To get exercise I used the walker to race around the dining room table (which seats 10 people) again and again with my brace on. I told How that with the brace and walker I felt like a gladiator driving a chariot in the arena, which the dining room is if you ever get the chance to visit.

We survived the holidays nervously rooting for Obama and quite remarkably he is now our president. Both of us cried on election night when it became obvious that he had won. What a moment that was. I think we will never forget it, like remembering where you were when President Kennedy was killed. It's part of living history for all time, but I'm scared for his safety. I told How that I wouldn't want to be the lead supervisor of the Secret Service guarding him. Imagine the many sleepless nights he/she has? What a job it must be...dodging shoes and all that.

On the children front Moana herself is having some back problems. Surgery might be in the future for her as well; Asher is engaged to be married to a "southern" belle who has an 18-month year old boy. I imagine that sometime later, Asher will adopt him; Lily is getting ready to move to Hawaii and out of Santa Cruz.

I'm planning on making a chuppah like I did for the temple for Asher and Jennifer, his fiancée. Having a chuppah wedding makes me very happy of course. The wedding will be in April 2010 so they have lots of time to plan for the big wedding. It looks like they're going to do the whole enchilada. Let's see...hmm...just enough time to lose another 20 lbs.

Of course we're in the middle of winter and some below zero weather. Everyone here talks about the weather. It's almost funny, but you can't start off a conversation without referring to the weather. In my recent column (ATTACHED) I talk about stories that need to be told and I thought, "How many stories on snow can people write about?" I think quite a lot. Like I like driving along and seeing the tree branches top-heavy with snow. Can't you just see a squirrel or some animal hopping from tree to tree ruining the symmetry of it all? But there's something pretty about that picture. I like the fact that when snow falls, it sometimes comes in different strengths and sizes. A crystallized snow flake is pretty awesome to see.

I see oodles of ice houses skirted along side the lake everywhere. I worry about people driving out on the lake and putting up ice houses with their huge trucks parked along side it. It just makes me nervous for them, but these guys are serious about ice fishing. Personally I think they're nuts. Where's the fun in freezing your butt off just to catch a fish? But my friends tell me that ice house fishing is large social events in which people go from one ice house to another for simple camaraderie and to drink beer. Some even bring along generators to provide heat and a little TV. I like the comfort of my home, thank you very much.

I thought for a moment that it would be nice to stop along side of Howard Lake and walk out on it, but I'm too chicken to do it. The worst part of snow is the icing that happens when the weather warms up a tad, melts the snow and then ices over again. Since the surgery, How has been doing the lion's share of driving. He worries that I might slip and fall and wouldn't that be a fine how-do-you-do if that happened, ruining my surgeon's work, which took him 7 hours to do?

I also have a lot of questions to ask like where do local birds, pheasants and the like go during winter? Sometimes they come to the bird feeder, which I was shocked to see. How come they don't freeze? We've also driven along the highway and smelled skunks. Where the hell do they hide? Do they hibernate? I guess not.

The other day How drove me to rehearsal in Minneapolis and it was snowing like the dickens. Lots of people walked and braved the weather including one young lady walking in stilts, wearing a short skirt and bear legs. Hm...was she wearing stockings –these days who knows? Unbelievable. One other woman wore a tank top of all things. Makes me feel cold just thinking of it, but these are hardcore Minnesotans mind you. I may be becoming one myself. Lately I've noticed that when the barometer gets to 30 or even 20 degrees, I actually feel warmer. That's a heat wave!

When it's snowing the sky is a deep thick grey and the picture of a day like that can look desolate or bleak to me. A blanket of depression comes over me so I turn my attention to my knitting or other needlework or bury myself somewhere in the house. It's too cold to work in the studio even with the heater going. God I miss doing my glass work. I'm so glad I had an additional unit installed (hanging from the ceiling) to keep the glass from fracturing. I want to do some painting and firing projects, but I think that will have to wait till spring.

I think that's it for now. Of course if anything happens on the job front, all of you will get some word. Meanwhile we'll be planning a wedding over the next year. My poor prospective daughter-in-law is already hyperventilating about it. When Destiny, our granddaughter calls (we both have a web camera so we can see each other and watch her grow) she reads to us from her Shel Silverstein books and then Jennifer and Asher tell us about the many jaunts they go on and things they're considering for the wedding. She looks alternately excited and stressed out, poor thing. The ring Asher gave her over the holidays is to die for. She'll need a crane to hold her arm up, no kidding. Word was Jennifer cried when she opened her gift. Wish we could have been there. We think she and Brayden the baby are just lovely. Stay tuned...Love, Maria

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