Star Date 01/01/2024

Julian day 2460311.08333

Unix Time 170439764

It’s the first day of 2024 and for a while I was having trouble thinking of a good New Years resolution. Tiffany’s resolution is to de-clutter and Andrew said he has a lot but will “get back to me on that☺” A few weeks ago, I read an interview my brother Jamie, who is a blogger, gave to a fellow blogger. Jamie said that a good way to start writing is to just write about anything and don’t get hung up on what to write. I’ve wanted to write some sort of a blog/journal for some time but haven’t committed to it. After pondering Jamie’s advice and wanting to have a resolution for the year the lightbulb came on. My new year’s resolution is to write everyday about…well…anything.

My first priority is to not lock myself into what this has to be. I don’t want to call this a blog nor do I want this to be a journal. Giving this any type of label could possibly stifle writing so I’ll steer clear of labeling for now. I’m also not going to put any size limit on it other than I do need to write something.

Next order of business is to establish what method I would like to timestamp my writing. First thought is to use the day/month/year format. My space nerd self wants to use the Julian system. Nasa has an easy date/time conversion at <https://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/tools/jdc/#/cd33>. Also thought it would be cool to use Unix time. Unix time is the number of seconds that have elapsed since 00:00:00 UTC on 01/01/1970. A good time/date converter can be found at <https://www.epochconverter.com>. I don’t want to violate my first priority so I’ve decided I can use whatever method I feel like on any given day. Today I’ve used all three and I might use something entirely different in the future.

The last thought is what am I going to use to write with and how am I going to save/store it. Physically writing in a journal would discourage me from writing due to my bad penmanship and poor spelling. I am the most comfortable with using Microsoft Word so for now I will primarily use that. I may write in the future using Raspberry Pi OS, LibreOffice. As for saving/storing my writing, I probably will just save them locally for now. I have a Tumblr account at <https://www.tumblr.com/ikeating> that I call iBlog but it never stimulated me to write in it. I may decide to push them to my GitHub page [https://ikeating.github.io](https://ikeating.github.io/) in the future. Some things to ponder in the future;

* who is my audience
* what font do I like the best
* whether or not to publish someplace

So that’s my setup for my new year’s resolution. It will be fun to see how it motivates and helps me with other ideas, plans, and goals. If anyone is reading this, have a great New Year’s!

02/01/2024 2023 Holiday Recap

As usual the holidays past by in a blink of an eye, but everyone seemed to have a great time and there was only a couple of hiccups along the way. To start the holidays, I was summoned for jury duty for December and January. I ended up having to report for jury duty on December 6th and 13th. On both occasions I thankfully wasn’t selected for the jury. However, I suspect I picked a nasty cold from being in a small room with all the jurors and ended up being sick from December 8th through the 10th.

I was supposed to go with Tiffany and Andrew on December 9th to see Aladdin with the Thingelstad’s but was not able due to my cold. However, they went and had a great weekend full of holiday activities.

By December 15th I had recovered and was able to have a holiday get-together at Florio’s with Tiff, Andrew, Deb, Vernon and his friend Kate. The following day, December 16th, Tiffany, Andrew, and I attended the Rock and Roll Christmas Spectacular at the Reif. This has become a tradition for us and never disappoints.

The Transportation Department had a holiday potluck at the bus garage on December 21st. The food was wonderful and I had a really good time visiting with fellow bus drivers. It was especially sweet for me as I have recently obtained a new bus route that I like. I previously had bus route 38 and now have 34.

I made an attempt to put forth a serious effort at ice fishing during the holiday break. I went to the Pokegama Lake store and purchased a scoop of Fat Head Minnows and a dozen Shiners. I also went up into the garage attic and retrieved all the necessary hardware and made sure it was working. Then…the weather decided it wasn’t winter anymore. At first the ice was a good 7 inches but as the break wore on, it was reduced done to 4 to 5 inches. We also got a lot of rain which didn’t help. I gave it a good try in front of my place but was only able to catch one perch. I have future plans of heading across to Sandbar point.

We went to Deb’s for Christmas Eve and visited with Julie. On Christmas Day we had Deb and Kim over for celebration and dinner. Tiffany made a Prim Rib which was absolutely to die for! She has done this three times so far and each one has turned out perfect.

Andrew was excited to receive a new Nintendo Switch, Beats ear buds, and a new desk. On a somewhat humorous note, Tiffany bought us lottery tickets…which is also what I had bought Tiffany. Andrew won a few bucks but Tiffany and I didn’t do well☺ I think we agreed that idea may stay in 2023.

The dive team was paged on December 28th to prepare for a possible recovery in the Northwest Angle on Lake of the Woods. A Bombardier track vehicle and gone through the ice by Flag Island. There was one victim but personnel on scene were able to make the recovery which turned out to be very fortunate for me as I once again got a chest infection. I ended up being sick from December 28th to January 2nd. I also had a filling put in on the 28th which then fell out on January 2nd☺

Lastly, we had dinner at the Timberlake lodge with Deb and her friend Steve to celebrate New Year’s Eve. After, we watched the ball drop at home with Dick Clark’s Special. All in all, it was a great holiday break and it went by supper fast.

03/01/2024 Anthropomorphize

This short writeup is about an anthropomorphized bear and fascination with graphical displays found in science fiction movie cockpits, control panels, vehicle dashboards, and any kind of tft/lcd electronic displays. Anthropomorphized? A bear? What does any of this have to do with each other? Ha, let me explain.

Let me start by briefly describing my fascination with electronics, coding, and anything tech related. Many years ago, I obtained my amateur radio license which opened up a new world of hobby electronics. Early on, I mostly just tinkered with analog circuits. More recently I took some college courses in computer science and have applied computer programming to micro controllers and single board computers.

There is a certain visual aspect of all this that I enjoy, how beautiful and amazing an analog circuit board can look. Constructing an analog circuit Manhattan style on a copper plate is amazing to look at. All of the transistors, resistors, capacitors, and the rest look like a futuristic metropolis rising up! While learning to program C, I used a simple gfx graphics library to create simple bar graphs, animations, fractals, and many other fun visuals. While tinkering with micro-controllers and sbc’s, I always tend to lean towards the visual side of things by adding tft/lcd displays to graphical show what’s going on. The point I’m trying to make here is visual…electronics and electronic displays grab my visual attention. Let’s move on with what any of this has to do with a bear.

In 2000 Warner Brothers released the film Red Planet staring Val Kilmer who played the part of a spaceship mechanic who ends up stranded on the surface of the red planet. His only means of escape is to jerry-rig a Russian sample-and-return rocket to fly his way back to the orbital return vehicle. While he is attempting to fix various issues, he uses a built-in diagnostic terminal which is mounted on the side of the rocket to see if various systems are working. The graphical interface had an animated bear in a spacesuit that would either cross his arms if waiting for input, give a thumbs up if system was ok, or look distraught if something was wrong. I loved it! Ill never forget that movie because of that animated bear☺

You might find it strange by how much I liked that animation but I’m not alone in this. There are many who are obsessed with recreating displays from science fiction cockpits found in Star Wars, Star Trek, and others like The Last Starfighter. I never really had any thought that anybody else really cared about my animation until I stumbled across this website <http://www.decodesystems.com/yetms/index.html> . Turns out there is one other person in this world that also took notice of the terminal mounted on the Russian rocket! I don’t know who it is but they devoted an entire webpage to it with lots of cool information and pictures. The big take-away from it, I learned there is actually a name for the animated bear…Anthropomorphized avatar!

After looking up what anthropomorphize means, I found that it means “to attribute human form or personality to things not human.” Cool. Then I started wondering if the fact that it was a Russian bear had any meaning. Sure enough, I discovered the Russian folklore bear often appears semi-anthropomorphized as Mikhail Ivanovich, or as Mishka. Interesting note, Putin is sometimes referred to in coded conversations as ‘Mikhail Ivanovich.” Also, in the 2017 film Salyut-7 a plush toy of Mishka is used as a zero-g indicator by the Russian cosmonauts. I also had a stuffed bear as a child that had the name Marushka…Coincidence ha!

04/01/2024 Adventures

I thought today I would briefly note some great adventures I’ve had. What words define a great adventure? Memorable, comradeship, out-side-the-box, unknown, mental/physical effort, danger, unknown risk, excitement, doubt, and financial risk are all word(s) that encompass traits of a great adventure to me. Let’s begin!

Traveling by Amtrack Empire Builder to visit my Grandparents

DC10 from Honolulu to MPLS

Airlink fiasco in MPLS with drunk guy and blind guy

Fishing Lake Sakakawea with Irv, rattle snake, motherload, storms, cliffs

Fish stinky swamp, getting stuck and walking to get help with Irv.

Exploring Greenway Mines

Mooney ride from Hibbing airport

Qualifying with Glocks in snowstorm

Piper Jean Streyle Robert Leroy Anderson FBI jet ski impeller DCI car

Lake Okoboji Scuba frozen

Snorkeling with Chuck and Joan

Scuba diving Molokini Caldera narcosis woo gnarly waves

Pheasant Hunting is SD with Rich, Bill, Wayne, Stacy Tufto

Investigating burglary and extraditing suspect from Trinidad Co. with Casey

Blackie Federal Court

Skydiving

Finding my brother, drive to SD, investigating, Tiff calling

Ice diving cert in Tioga

Jon taking me to the Mines in Tioga

Removing truck from lake

Recovering body from Swan Lake

This is just a list. In the future I might write about some of the specific adventures that I have listed. Some of them have already been documented in police reports, video, and other media.

05/01/2024 Connecting TFT FeatherWing V0 # 3315 to Arduino Uno

I wanted to use a SD card inserted into the TFT Featherwing to display an image using an Arduino Uno instead of the Featherwing 32u4. One of the reasons for doing this was to split up memory between the Arduino and Feather. The point of this writing is to simply show that I was able to connect the Arduino to the TFT Featherwing.

The ATmega328P has a flash memory of 32 KB of which 0.5 KB used by bootloader and has 2K of SRAM. The Feather ATmega32u4 has 32K of flash memory and 2K of RAM. The following is the pinout for connecting the Arduino to the TFT Featherwing.

Uno Pin # TFT Pin

5 🡪 SD

6 🡪 RT

9 🡪 TFT

10 🡪 TFTDC

11 🡪 MOSI

12 🡪 MISO

13 🡪 SCK

In conclusion, I’m not sure what I would use this configuration for. The idea of splitting up tasks/memory between microcontrollers was the driving force behind this exorcise.

06/01/2024 Journal entry for the day

Busy day so I’ve decided to do a journal entry. Woke up a bit late and after getting ready for the day I made a plan for Andrew and I to run into town for a few errands. Tiff made some tasty quesadillas for me that got me going.

We had a much welcomed four to five inches of snowfall Friday night. I snow blew the driveway, swept off the vehicles, and started up Andrew’s Trailblazer for some winter weather drivers training. Andrew wasn’t really excited about driving but he was a trooper and agreed to the plan.

Andrew drove us to L&M where we bought a new ice fishing rod, some ice fishing accessories, and a poly snow shovel for the deck. After leaving L&M, I noticed we had zero gas so we made a pit stop at Cenex for some badly needed gas. We then drove over to the Pokegama Lake store for some propane and shiners. Andrew did a great job driving on the slippery roads and we made it home without incident!

I then hastily made my way out to the lake for some ice fishing. I walked out to sandbar point. I was pleased to find that the walk wasn’t that bad and I was able to get myself on the point with my Garmin GPS. I didn’t have any luck and it started to get windy and snowed quite a bit. Andrew and Willow walked out to visit me.

After returning home, I grilled some pre-seasoned chuck-eye steaks Tiff got from S&S meats. We have been really pleased with the chuck-eyes! I then used our new snow shovel and had a great time shoveling off the deck. I’m so glad I replaced the old deck boards which makes shoveling so much easier.

07/01/2024 Gerber MP600 multiplier

I have never written a product review so today I thought I’d give it a try! Up for review is a black anodized Gerber MP600 multiplier that was issued to me by the US Corps of Engineers when I was employed in the summer of 2023 as a park ranger at Pokegama Dam. I’m not sure why they choose this model other than the MP600 is advertised as being issued to the armed forces. Gerber list it as product number 07550 and has a list price of $90.00.

Closed, the multiplier is five and one-eighth inches long and six and five-eighths inches when the pliers are extended. The pliers open to approximately fifty-five degrees and the handles open to approximately sixty-one degrees. Gerber list the tool’s weight as nine ounces.

The multiplier contains a short needle nose pliers that contain a wire cutter and crimper. The pliers are accessible by snapping the tool with your wrist causing the pliers to slide out the pivot end of the two handles and lock. The pliers can be retracted by pushing in two spring loaded push pins located on either side of the two handles and then slid back in-between the two handles. The pliers, cutter, and crimper have worked as expected with no issues.

The Gerber multiplier has two handles that both contain various fold out tools. One handle has an imperial three-inch ruler stamped into the side and the other handle has a metric eight-centimeter ruler stamped into the side. Both handles are stamped “stainless.” The imperial handle is also marked with a sword-and-shield logo and “GERBER Multiplier” stamped on the side.

The imperial handle contains five-fold-out tools and the metric handle contains four-fold-out tools. All of the tool’s lock in the open position by two sliding spring-loaded locks, one on each handle. In order to close a locked tool, you must push the sliding plastic switch against the spring to disengage the lock while simultaneously closing the tool. I have had no trouble with the plastic lock switches and they have worked as advertised.

Looking at the five-fold-out tools within the imperial handle we find a two-and-one-eighth inch straight knife blade, small medium and large flat head screwdrivers, and a three- and one-half inch file. The medium flat head screw driver also includes a bottle opener. The metric handle contains four-fold-out tools. One two-and-a-half-inch serrated knife blade, a lanyard loop, a Phillips head screwdriver, and a can opener.

The multipliers came with a black nylon sheath that secures the multiplier with a flap secured with Velcro. Clip & Carry sells a Kydex sheath for $29.99 that looks interesting. The web site is <https://www.clipandcarry.us/products/kydex-sheath-for-the-gerber-mp600>.

Overall, I think the Gerber is a solid everyday-carry multiplier. I haven’t had any malfunctions or noticed any damage to mine. I’m not sure what the practical use of the lanyard loop is but I suppose you could use it as a plum bob☺

08/01/2024 notes

Today I am a bit tired and I think I have a lingering sinus infection or issue going on. Itchy nose and lots of yucky stuff in my nose. We made an unscheduled stop at the Japanese Restaurant due to Andrew having a band concert and celebrated Tiffany getting a nice raise at work! Anyway, I had plans on writing but instead I’m going to list two ideas that I want to write about. After this, I am going to start to read the Devine Comedy by Clyde James.

I will write about the following in the very near future;

* Scuba Diving problems that led to panic
* What I think is out beyond are known existence.

09/01/2024 – 10/01/2024 Panic

During my twenty-four years of serving as a peace officer, I never experienced condition black (uncontrolled panic.) Sure, I’ve experienced fear, concern, confusion, and adrenaline dumps but never actual panic. I‘ve always considered myself to be cool, calm, and collective under extreme pressure. On October, 27th 2022, I experienced uncontrolled panic for the first time. It wasn’t a result of one thing, but rather a culmination of poor decisions and lack of training that eventually came together as explained in the following diving incident.

I, along with Jon and Terry were at Tioga mine pit for an afternoon dive. Our plan involved diving along a vertical rock wall and then spending some time looking for a GoPro camera that Terry had dropped in a recent dive. I was equipped with a full dry suit, redundant air supply, extra mask, redundant computer, dive light, and other needed accessories. Other than being overcast and cloudy out, there were no weather concerns.

At approximately 1737 hours, we began our decent. The visibility was approximately twenty feet and it was darker than normal due to the lack of sunlight. I immediately started to become irritated with a small leak that was coming from my mask skirt. I only had descended to approximately thirty feet and hadn’t reached the edge of the vertical rock wall yet, so I decided to deal with the leak later. After reaching the edge of the wall at around fifty feet, I excitedly went over and began my decent down the side of the wall to a planned depth of one hundred feet. I later found my dive computer had recorded the water temperature to be forty-four degrees. Yet even in the cold water, I was perfectly warm and snug in my dry suit…except for that irritating leak in my mask. I now was nine minutes and thirty-six seconds into the dive, at approximately 105 feet deep, and was roughly seven feet away from the face of the wall. Without giving it any forethought, I decided I had enough of the irritating mask and pulled it off my face with the intention of redonning it to fix the leak.

Cold water hit my face and it felt like getting hit with a hammer in the middle of my eyes! I immediately felt the cold-water shock response. Sudden, rapid increase in breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. This also made me involuntarily gasp making me believe I couldn’t get enough air from my regulator. While I was gasping for air, I tried to replace my mask and make a seal. The mask skirt felt stiff in the cold water and I clumsily fumbled with it using my dry gloves. I was trying to make a seal against my Neoprene hood that had not been properly trimmed. I failed to make any kind of seal and couldn’t see anything but dark gray. I was too far away from the vertical rock wall to physically touch it and at this point didn’t even know what direction the wall was. I then started to feel vertigo and couldn’t tell if I was descending or ascending due to lack of any kind of buoyancy control.

At this moment, I believed I couldn’t get enough air, couldn’t see anything, felt I was falling into the abyss beyond no decompression limits, and I wouldn’t be able to control an assent due to lack of any kind of reference. Absolute pure panic hit and fight or flight took control. I choose flight! I slammed down on my dry suit inflator valve and started screaming into my regulator. I took the rocket ride all the way from 105.1 feet to the surface!

Fortunately, I’ve had enough training that I involuntarily breathed out by way of screaming into my regulator and flared my body the best I could during my assent. After breaking the surface, I burped out a bunch of expanded air from my lungs. I would later realize how fortunate I was that I had just started my deep dive and hadn’t had enough time to build up nitrogen.

The following is a list of reasons for why I eventually ended up panicking;

* Did not address leaking mask seal at the beginning of dive when first noticed.
* Had not practiced mask removal/replacement recently.
* Have only practiced mask replacement in a warm pool while kneeling on the floor.
* Neoprene hood had not been properly trimmed for face and fit for mask seal.
* Did not stop to think what were the consequences of removing my mask at 105 feet in cold water.
* Arrogantly thought I would have no problems because I’m a professional and have done this in the past.
* Did not prepare to maintain proper buoyancy due to the fact I was against a rock wall that plunges deeper than no decompression dive limits.
* Performed mask removal well away from face of wall and lost visibility of wall resulting in nothing to feel or see to orientate myself as to my location.
* All of this resulted in vertigo.
* The cold water made the silicone skit of my mask feel ridged and harder to seal.
* Never practiced mask replacement with dry gloves.
* Terry didn’t do a deep dive and Jon was not by me.

In conclusion, I found the following definition for ‘Condition Black’ in the public domain of the internet, “You are in a blind state of panic where you are unable to react to the situation because you have developed neither the inner tools nor the outer skills with which to react. (e.g.: It happens, you had no raised awareness it was coming, are unprepared, unaware, untrained, and under their control and influence”.)

11-01-2024 LoRa notes (open for editing)

Radio transceivers have always sparked my interest. Many years ago, I obtained my amateur radio license, and then more recently became interested in programming micro controllers and single board computers. I discovered Adafruit Feather boards that contained LoRa transceivers within the ham radio spectrum of 70cm. Thus began my journey into the topic of LoRa.

LoRa stands for ‘long range’ and is a low power communications protocol. Frequency Shift (Compressed High Intensity Radar Pulse (CHIRP) ) Modulation (FSCM)

Open System Interconnection (OSI) Reference Model

7) Application

6) Presentation

5) Session

4) Transport

3) Network

2) Data Link

1) Physical -- LoRa

Based wireless networking standard

SF = Spreading Factor (7 – 12)

LoRa Frame

Preamble is at start of every frame (repeated and known as the base chirp)

Packet

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

LoRa Physical Layer

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Preamble Sync message Payload CRC (only in uplink)

8 symbols 2 symbols

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

12/01/2024 & 13/01/2024 & 14/01/2024 Fenix HM50R & HM50R V2

This is a product review of the best headlamp I have had the pleasure of using, the Fenix HM50R. I also want to compare it to the updated HM50R V2 that I have on order. Upon starting this review, I got a little hung up on worrying about listing all the specifications. Anyone can look up the specifications, so I’ll stick with my observations and leave it at that.

The HM50R is small, while wearing it I barely notice it. It doesn’t move around on your head and the headband has a sticky silicone material that helps it stay put. The 500-lumen output is more than enough light. The headlamp has low, medium, high, and turbo brightness settings. I normally find low and medium brightness is all I need.

Fenix recommends the 16340 rechargeable Li-ion battery or one CR123A Lithium battery for the HM50R. The headlamp has a Micro USB terminal for charging. The max charging current is 700mA, and the charging time is about 1.5 hours. Fenix also states it’s capable of withstanding temperatures down to -40º (CR123's ONLY). Fenix states the follow for checking the status of the battery “With the headlamp switched off, single click the switch to display the battery level for 3 seconds in different colors: Green constant on: more than 80%, Green flashes: 50% - 80%, Blue constant on: 20% - 50%, Blue flashes: less than 20%.”

I have the new HM50R version two on order and have found the following differences with the first version.

Version two is advertised as having a red light and flashing red light both of which the original doesn’t have. The light output in lumens for the new model is low 30, medium 130, high 400, and turbo is 700 lumens.

Fenix recommends the Fenix ARB-L16-700P Li-ion battery, 16340 rechargeable li-ion battery, for version two. Fenix states the following concerning the use of CR123A batteries, “CR123A Lithium battery is not recommended. As some modes fail to light up due to circuit limitation, and only Low mode is available when the battery level is low, so it is not recommended to use CR123A under non-emergency situations”. The version two has a USB C port for charging.

01/15/2024 Weekend review

Andrew and I had a nice three-day weekend due to no school on Monday. Tiffany had to work on Monday but she also had a great time.

Andrew had theater practice for his role as Grimsby in The Little Mermaid on Friday afternoon. Tiffany and Andrew then went to El Potro for takeout. I had a ground beef Chimichanga that was delicious. After super we watched Leave The World Behind. I thought it was a great movie, kind of had vibes similar to Cape Fear. I probably would need to watch it again to get its full meaning but it was about hackers infiltrating our world and causing people to turn against each other causing chaos and destruction.

On Saturday, Tiffany made Porchetta for dinner. Tiffany and Andrew then went to the movie Wonka and I stayed home to prepare for guests on Sunday.

Sunday was cold, it was around -11! After getting ready for the day, I hauled out the Clam ice fishing house and began attempting to set it up. I got it out of its bag, expanded the pull-out sides and top. I then entered it and marked four spots where I would auger fishing holes. I then pulled the Clam off the spot and then augured the holes. While I was ice auguring, I had my back to the Clam. After I was done, I turned around and realized the Clam was gone…. It blew all the way to Melanie’s. After sprinting after my ice house, I eventually got everything set up for fishing. It was quite the hassle and of course Tiffany watched the whole fiasco☺

After getting everything set up, Megan, Kassi, and Maple showed up to do a little ice fishing and then we all watched the Green Bay Packers vs the Dallas Cowboys football playoff game. We didn’t do very well fishing but Megan caught a Perch and the Green Bay Packers, to Megan’s delight, beat the Cowboys. Megan had brought some Honey Whiskey with her and we had a taste. It reminded me of Fire Ball but without the cinnamon and not as sugary. I grilled polish and bratwurst, Tiffany made a Greek pasta salad, and Megan brought taco dip. We all had a really nice time visiting and Willow had fun playing with Maple. After everyone left, I went back out to try fishing again. It was frigid out. It was spooky being in the dark and hearing the ice cracking all around. I didn’t get anything and after a short time returned home.

I slept in on Monday. After getting ready for the day, I returned to the Clam to try fishing again. Sunday night I had just left the Clam out on the lake due to how cold it was and the Clam was frozen into the ice. At around 5pm Andrew walked out with Willow to say hi. Andrew must have brought me good luck because after they left, I had a really big fish on but lost him. At 5:30 I caught a nice thirteen-inch Walleye! What a great way to wrap up the long weekend.

01/16/2024 Fenix Review

Today I am finishing the Fenix review that I started on 01/12/2024. The 12th, 13th, and 14th didn’t go well for writing and I got hung up on the review. I guess it’s to be expected that I will have days when my inner writing voice goes AWOL.

01/17/2024 GitHub

Tonight, I moved this, my collections of writing, into my git repository for [https://ikeating.github.io](https://ikeating.github.io/). I’m not quite sure what I’m doing with it yet. While I was doing this, I updated my introductory page with new employment information. I really don’t have any great ideas yet about how to share my writings to my page. It’s created with HTML and I have been writing within a Word document so I’d have to figure that out.

I think for now all I would want is a simple list of months. Each month would contain all of my writings for that month. I suppose I could simply cut and paste all of a months’ worth of writing and put it into a linked HTML page. Seems kind of crude though. I’m cringing at what my brother would think of this idea☺

I do like the idea of my writing getting backed up, and stored, within my GitHub account. I’m sure a better idea will come along, so for now I’ll just focus on the writing.

01/18/2024 Nothing

I’m having quite the time thinking of something to write about. My mind is not turning very fast today. I’m not ready to do a journal entry and I don’t think I’m in the mood for any kind of product review. How to do something maybe? But do what… idk. I want to know, when am I going to find my writing spirt? What’s my go-to? I have this same problem with other projects, hobbies, and life vectors. No direction at times. Compass just spins sometimes. Weqfiupqwihfqbwfbiwbvbfpibqwpbiwfbpi! I was talking with a fellow bus driver today by the name of Bill Chopp. He asked me what was on my mind, I realized I had nothing on my mind. On the bus too nowhere.

The only things I could think of to write about are the following;

01/19/2024 through 01/21/2024 No entries

01/22/2024 Another three-day weekend

I had another three-day weekend due to end of semester. Saturday morning, I met my fellow dive team members at the barn to replace regulator hose O-rings. After which, we then headed to the middle school pool for our gear checkout and I.A.D.R.S. watermanship swim test. The first test is a 500-yard swim which is 10 laps (20 times back and forth.) I completed the test but was not happy with my performance. The second test involves treading water for 15 minutes, your hands have to be out of the water the last two minutes of the test. Treading water never has been an issue for me as I can pretty much float without moving. The third test is the 800-yard (16 laps or 32 times back and forth) snorkel swim. Again, swimming with any speed is not my strong suite. The fourth test is free diving to a depth of nine feet and retrieving an object. I completed this test with no problem. We didn’t do the 100-yard inert rescue tow.

Unfortunately, Andrew picked up RSV…? Maybe… and had to stay home from school on Friday, the last day of the semester. He pretty much had to stay home the whole weekend. He didn’t start feeling better until Monday when he was able to attend theater practice.

After the swim test on Saturday, Tiff and I, drove over to the Trout Lake Community Center for the annual SAR appreciation pot-luck. It was fun to visit with people and the food was delicious. After eating, we left and drove to the Bolder Taphouse to meet Kassi and Megan for cocktails and watch a bit of the Green Bay Packers vs. the San Francisco 49’s game. We stayed until halftime and the we all went home. Much to Megan’s displeasure, Green Bay eventually lost.

Sunday, I once again set up my ice fishing shack and gave it a try. I didn’t have any luck but it was a good time. Tiff and Andrew went over to Kim’s to use her sauna. For supper we grilled chuck-eye steaks.

Monday, after dropping Andrew off at theater practice, I tried ice fishing again with no luck. Someday I’m going to get a couple Walleyes☺

01/23/2024 & 01/24/2024 Kremer’s

In June of 1991, at the age of sixteen, I walked into Kremer’s Ben Franklin Five-&-Dime, 323 NW First Avenue, Grand Rapids, MN, to see if I could find a job. Eventually, I was escorted to an upstairs conference room to take a job placement test. I remember the test had lots of math, I assumed for operating a cash register. Fortunately, I failed the test miserably. I never would have enjoyed working at a checkout. If my memory serves me right, I met Mr. Kremer who actually looked like Ben Franklin☺ Lucky for me, they had a freight/maintenance position open and they offered me the job! So began my adventure working at Kremer’s for $4.25 an hour☺

The department store had two floors and a basement. The basement contained a hardware department, offices, food pantry for the upstairs luncheonette, freight receiving and freight storage areas, incinerator, boiler-room, public bathrooms, employee workshop, and other employee areas. The main floor contained the majority of shopping spaces, luncheonette, and three checkout stations. The upstairs was the arts, crafts, and fabric department. Also, upstairs was a conference room, storage, and HVAC equipment. The building contained an elevator that serviced all three floors. There were also large staircases that went down to the basement and up to the second floor.

My primary duties involved sweeping, mopping, freight receiving, maintenance, and responding to dispatches via intercom to various locations to assist customers and employees. Changing ballasts in florescent light fixtures, cutting foam in hardware, stripping and waxing floors at night, replacing floor tiles from wear, cutting down boxes and burning them in the incinerator, assembling and disassembling shelving units, and sorting received freight in the freight room were all tasks I remember frequently performing. Some tasks supposedly required a license, I was asked for my electrician license while changing a ballast one day, I just laughed and thought it was a joke…

Dean Frater was the store manager and Kevin Johnson was the assistant store manager. The only other employee names that I remember are Arlene (she was in charge of the hardware department), Jerry & Dan Mann (fellow freight/maintenance workers), and Casey & Karla Salisbury who were friends that worked at the checkouts.

I really liked being a jack of all trades. I never knew what awaited me when I showed up for work. It was a big store and I liked being able to move around a lot. My favorite responsibility was maintaining the elevator. People seemed to get stuck in the elevator quite often and I would have to figure out what was wrong. I also had to occasionally maintain the elevator by entering the shaft and grease the rails and make sure everything was in order. I would always find money and other lost items that had been dropped within the elevator and then would fall to the bottom of the shaft. Another fond memory is that of riding in Kevin’s old dodge truck that had cement for running boards. We would drive around and use it to occasionally hauling shelving from of-site storage locations.

My shift was from the end of school, to closing. Some days they would have me skip school in the morning to help with receiving freight. They would contact school and give them some excuse as to why I wasn’t there…Seems like that was some type of child labor law violation☺ The lunch counter was closed at night so when I took my break, I usually ate a bag of cheddar or pizza flavored Combos. When the lunch counter was open, I loved to have Kremer’s famous sloppy joes! So delicious. The sloppy joes were also the reason the lunch counter drains would constantly plug up. I would have to go into the boiler room in the basement and pour copious amounts of ST Drain Opener into the pipes to clear them.

Working at Kremer’s also had a fair share of sketchy jobs. I often had to replace florescent light tubes and instead of properly disposing them we burnt them in the incinerator. We actually burnt most everything in the incinerator. Speaking of that incinerator, occasionally I had to enter it and scrub the inside, don’t ask me why. I also remember being tasked with chipping asbestos off of piping…yep, I did that. Another notable incident involved me laying on my back in water underneath a set of air conditioning coils. I was holding a treble lamp while I attempted to use a long-handled brush to scrub the inside of the coils. I dropped the treble light in the water and the bulb broke. I then was immediately electrocuted; I distinctly remember feeling the wave of electricity pass through me! I lived. And as long as we’re talking about electrocution, we had an old metal jigsaw that I would use to cut pegboard for the shelving units. Nobody liked to use the jigsaw because it had a short that would randomly jolt you with a good shock.

Yet another incident occurred while we were receiving freight in the basement. A semi-truck would pull up alongside the building, as the freight would get unloaded from the truck, the freight was thrown down a chute that went down into the basement on a conveyer that contained metal rollers. Sometimes there would be a lull and you would be standing there with nothing to do. I decided it would be a good idea to run my gloved hand along the rollers. Unfortunately for me, I accidentally rolled my hand into one of the powered rollers which then immediately sucked my hand in-between two rollers. Fortunately, somebody stopped the conveyor before I lost my hand. They had to use a sludge hammer to knock out a roller to free my hand.

Christmas time was a fun time to be at Kremer’s. The store looked beautiful with all the decorations and light hung up inside and out. Although it did terrify me to hang the garland around the outside of the building. To do so, required working with a ladder on Icey sidewalks and it had to reach all the way up to the top of the second-floor roof. All the employees would draw names to exchange gifts with other fellow employees. One year Casey gave me a little squirrel Christmas ornament that has been one of my favorites!

Another busy time for all was during Tall Timber Days. I would have to set up and run electrical to our food cart. Kremer’s was located right in the middle of all of the festivities so it pretty much was a mad house.

An interesting fact about the pantry cold storage for the luncheonette which was in the basement, it was used to store dead bodies. There was paint around the bottom of the cellar that was supposedly there to hide blood stains. At some point there used to be a morgue/funeral home in the basement. During the winter when the ground was frozen, they would slide bodies down the freight chute and store them in the pantry.

In July of 1993, I resigned my position to attend the law enforcement program in Hibbing, MN. Unfortunately, Kremer’s was also in the process of going out of business. Walmart had moved into town and Kremer’s couldn’t compete. One of the last memories I had was Kevin Johnson collecting a handful of cash and giving it to me as a thank you. I don’t remember how much it was but I will never forget how much it meant to me. The following is the entry I had on my resume regarding Kremer’s;

Part-time Maintenance/Freight Employee-06/91 to 07/93

Supervisor: Dean Frater, Manager

Ben Franklin Kremer Company

323 NW 1st Avenue

1107 Pokegama Avenue South

Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Phone # 218-327-2387

Salary: $4.25 to $4.65 per hour or $340.00 per month (approximately)

01/25/2024