

2003—My Year in Review

January: I started evening classes at the full time level, taking 12 credits (Business Writing; Statistics; CPR & First Aid; Research Methods in Communications). For the next 5 months I had tons of homework and assignments, including a 25pg research paper.

I also had an epiphany and finally decided what I wanted to do with my life--I wanted to pursue a career in health care as a physician assistant (PA). That meant I needed to finish my undergraduate degree ASAP, AND take all of the PA program prerequisite classes (lots of biology, chemistry and other science courses). Not only did I need to take these classes, but I had to kick ass in them too.

In January, I was also hit in my car (minor fender-bender); I was super-busy trying to organize team uniform orders for 18 people, and I attended a 2-day seminar to be certified as an expert level cycling coach by USA Cycling.

By the way, throughout the year, I not only work my full-time job, but I also produce a monthly column for MetroSports Boston magazine. And speaking of things that are consistent throughout the year—Jean is the best.

February: Still super busy with school and the team's pro-deal stuff, I also took on the project of editing the USA Cycling coach's manual. Fun. Winter sucked with consistent temps in the single digits, and plenty of snow & ice. At one point we got a dumping of two feet of snow in Feb.

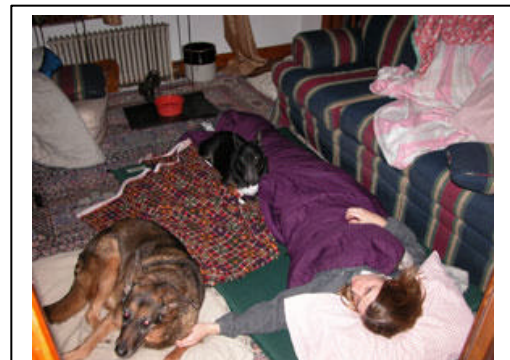
February also had me busily researching everything I could on PA schools and programs, and Jean and I were looking at EVERY aspect of remodeling the kitchen (by remodeling, I mean completely gutting and starting from scratch). Okay... it was mostly Jean by about 97%/3%...

Oh yeah, and I got a promotion at work to the position of Web Publisher.

March: I spent my first full day following a PA around to make sure it was what I wanted to do--it was great! Towards the end of the month I had significant shoulder surgery that put me in a sling for 6 weeks. The day after my surgery, I went into Boston to meet with the PA dept. chairperson for Mass. College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences (MCP) to get more info about their program. She convinced me to apply soon, so I was hell-bent to get all of my classes and other stuff in line to apply ASAP.

It wasn't fun trying to do all this with one arm (my writing arm at that). School was busy, and the kitchen project was getting closer and closer. We had our upstairs floors refinished, and while I was able to move all of the furniture downstairs (pre-surgery), I was not able to move a thing back up. I had to beg some friends, but the floor came out awesome!

For the next few weeks, I slept on the sofa because it was more comfortable with my shoulder.



Life while our refinished floors dried. Fun.

April: I spent much of April trying to get my application together. This included my entire academic history, some written essays and letters of recommendations. The application also required GRE test scores (Graduate Record Examination). I had no idea what the GRE was (it's like the SATs but with real questions), but I found a testing place and made an appt. I had two weeks to figure out what the GRE was all about. It was all about hard, but I somehow pulled off a decent score, finishing better than 80% in the verbal, and better than 75% in the math.

I started shoulder therapy (because I wasn't busy enough with just work and school) and on the last weekend of the month, I wielded a hammer and pry bar (one-armed) and dismantled and destroyed the kitchen down to studs and rafters. Thanks, of course to Arsen and Aleks too.

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Work, homework, therapy and school continued to dominate my life for many weeks. Jean? Who's that? That person that I see for about 2 minutes a day...



You can't imagine the mess this made...

May: My Spring Semester classes ended (i.e. I had finals and final projects due). In the end, I earned "A"s in all my classes. My shoulder was getting a little stronger and Jean and I had time for a short vacation to NJ/PA for some camping and hiking. We couldn't be gone for a full week because my next round of classes started. I had 14 credits over Summer 1 & 2 (Public Relations Writing; Intro to Communications; Anatomy & Physiology 1; Anatomy & Physiology 2). Fun.

As if that wasn't enough, I also started a 6-week youth mtb program for the city of Salem. I had to pass this off to Doug eventually, as this semester had me spending 6-8hrs per day, each weekend, studying.

My van was finally being fixed from the January fender-bender, the kitchen was making slow progress, I was still going to therapy, and I was called in to interview at MCP for their PA program!

Note: with the kitchen gutted, Jean and I had to do dishes in the basement, cook with the microwave on the closed in porch, deal with the refrigerator in the dining room, and make coffee in the bathroom. This went on for WEEKS!

June: Still, super busy. School is crazy, work is hectic, my birthday comes and goes (34), my Mom comes to visit, and I get my acceptance letter to MCP. Hell yeah, I start in September. Now I have to rearrange my life to be ready to leave my job and be a full-time student for the next couple of years...(i.e. sell my van, quit my job, etc, etc).

I get a one-weekend reprieve from studying as summer 1 ends and I decide to spend it doing mechanical/emotional/culinary support for a 5-man and a 2-man 24hr mountain bike race team. Was that wise? Who knows, but the 2-man team won.

The kitchen/house was still a mess, summer session 2 started up and work was still hectic. AND, I discovered a possible problem with my schedule at MCP that could extend my time in school to 5 or 6 years! (Certain classes that I needed were only offered at one time per semester and there were a few conflicts) This was trouble and I went in to Boston for a few meetings to see if this could be ironed out.

June also includes a tragedy as my neighbor, Aleks, an Albanian citizen, gets picked up by immigration on a "paper-work" violation and is thrown in a federal penitentiary!

July: Some of life starts to return to normal now. Jean and I start moving some stuff back into the kitchen, and after months of no activity, I start to get the VERY occasional run or ride in. That only shows me how grossly out of shape I am.

Jean and I start a letter writing campaign to Aleks and to local politicians to try to help him.

July wasn't too bad, just more of the same. Work, school, therapy, study, homework, continue to reclaim the house, etc, etc.

I also finally realize that I can not guarantee that MCP will go as planned so I decide to turn them down. What a major disappointment, after all that work to get in! I enroll in fall classes at Salem State and start working on plan B. It's a good thing I hadn't sold my van or given notice at work yet...



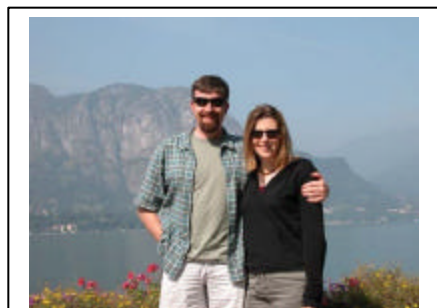
The kitchen is almost there...

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August: I had finals and final projects and then, finally, about 3 weeks with no school! Whoohooo. Time to get caught up on home projects! I re-do my office (new furniture, etc), do a bunch of freelance work for Dirt Rag, do lots of yard work, observe some surgeries, and do some more running and riding--including a day-trip to Kingdom Trails.

My hard work paid off with my classes as I earned two more "A"s and two "A-"s. I was also busy getting ready for more fall classes, which was more of a pain in the butt than anyone can possibly imagine. The administrative staff at Salem State is a joke. I hate them all.

September: Yeah, work is busy, yeah, I'm still doing freelance writing, but now a new opportunity springs up, as there are major staff changes at Mountain Biking magazine. Next thing I know, I'm the associate editor and I'm churning out plenty of articles. Just what I need to keep me busy.



Jean and I, north of Milan at Lake Como

My fall classes started, this time only two (General Chemistry and Editing). It's a good thing too, because all of a sudden, my work at Mountain Biking presents me with an opportunity to go to Italy for a bike show. Hell yes! I arrange it so that Jean only had to pay for airfare, and we are off to Europe! It was work, for sure, but the trip was a blast. When I got back, I had an appt at the University of New England (UNE), one of my plan B PA schools, and I start working on my application for them.

By the way—after months of prison, Aleks got out and he was waiting for us at the airport when we got back from Italy!

October: More work, more school, more freelance work, and more travel--this time Jean and I get to go to Interbike, a bike trade show in Las Vegas. Not as cool as Italy, but we head out a couple of days early to have fun in Utah (Zion).

We get back from that trip and we have a big party at our house to celebrate the new kitchen, followed the week later by planned knee surgery for Jean (after dealing with a year of knee pain).

I do some more work around the house—fix some cracks in the basement foundation and work on the attic floor. There is SO MUCH that needs to be done, but never any time to do it...



November: November had a lot of more of the same... more work, more school, more homework, more freelance, etc, etc. I finally get registered for my LAST semester at Salem State, which will be spring '04. I can't WAIT to be out of there. I got my application in to UNE in October, and they are waiting for my current classes' grades before my app goes any further. That's okay with me—I have a 100 average in Gen. Chem. and an A in editing. My current grades will only help my cause.

Jean's knee is still sore and her recovery (which should have been pretty fast) is taking a while. She's NOT happy.

I get a couple of races in (running and cyclocross) and we have a great big Thanksgiving dinner at our house (total of 10 people). Jean cooked her butt off, and it was all delicious.

December: December looks like it will be more of the same. Final exams and final projects due, freelance work due, work will be busy and the holidays will be hectic.

We just got three feet of snow dumped on us... THREE FEET! Most of you know how much I love snow... I spent 7hrs shoveling and pushing stuck cars. Ugh.

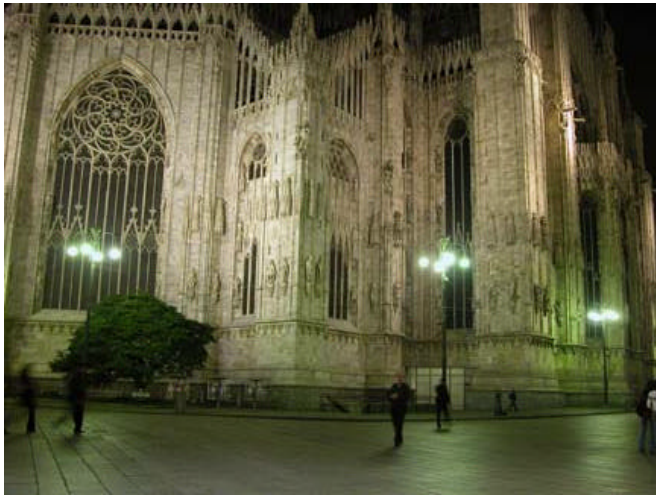
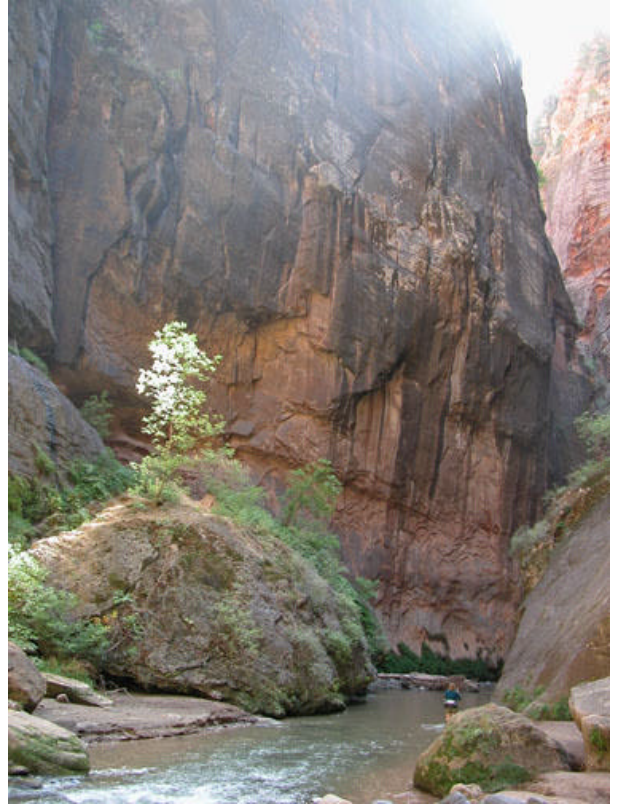
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Next year will probably be more of the same too, although I'm leaving my job at Tufts Health Plan in early January. My classes at Salem State will be day and evening, so I need to leave to finish my degree. I'm taking Public Affairs Reporting and Writing, Organic Chemistry 1, General Chemistry 2, and BioChemistry.



I'll also be looking for some kind—any kind—of entry-level health care job as that is the only missing component to my PA school application (they require a certain number of hours of experience). IF all goes well (and I hope and pray that it does), and I get into UNE, I'll be graduating from SSC in May, and then moving to Portland, Maine for a year, starting in June.

Stay Tuned!



The Duomo, in Milan, was INCREDIBLE!

Jean and I, hiking the "narrows" in Zion (Utah).



The end.