

# 2017 The Year in Review

Wednesday, December 27, 2017

We are all happy, and in good health. No worries. I can't think of anything to complain about, and if I did complain, no one would listen anyway. The year flew by, as they are wont to do at this age, with nothing extraordinarily good or bad happening.

Business wise, things have slowed down significantly. Some of it may be due to our secondary customers (electric distribution companies) getting budget pressure, but another part is just me getting lazy and not wanting to pivot to the next thing. The current focus is primarily in electrical engineering, which is interesting, because that was my undergraduate degree; but that happened quite a while ago – if you're less than 40, it was before you were born – so there is a lot of re-learning going on. So, sadly, I might have to get a real job in the new year.

But as usual, my outlook is optimistic. I'm particularly enthusiastic about the progress of renewable energy, especially solar. This has the possibility to profoundly affect the living conditions of vast numbers of people in developing countries. There have also been huge advances this past year in genetic engineering, space travel, artificial intelligence, transportation, finance and many other fields (not to mention my old favorites nanotechnology, robotics, 3D printing, materials and computing). The big threats like environmental degradation, concentration of wealth, and loss of privacy are largely political problems, which I hope can be addressed through grass-roots movements.

We again took the opportunity to travel in and outside Switzerland. Foreign vacations included Lisbon, Erlangen and Heidelberg in Germany, home to Ontario for summer vacation, Domodossola in Italy for shopping and visiting with relatives in Brittany and Les Verrières in France. Domestically, in addition to numerous trips to Zurich and Lausanne to visit Sam and Alex, we made excursions to Sion, Saint-Imier/Mont Soleil, Basel, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Bantiger, Rapperswil & Thalwil, (hike around the) Wohlensee, Romont, Saillon, Lonay, Interlaken, Creux du Van, Geneva, Fribourg, Toffen, (climb the) Niederhorn, Bellinzona, Porrentruy, and Yvonand & Yverdon-les-Bains.

I celebrated my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in October. As a young lad, I never gave much thought to growing old – I guess I never thought I would make it. So to observe the milestone, I rented out the local "Schloss" (roughly 'mansion' or 'castle'), arranged for catering, and invited everyone I knew who's on the continent. My aging memory being what it is, it was like planning my own surprise party. About 50 people dropped by to mark the occasion. You should always take your birthday with a pinch of salt – then a shot of tequila and a slice of lime.

I find myself in possession of a non-trivial windfall in the form of Bitcoin. Transaction charges are exorbitant at the moment, so it's just theoretical at this point. Maybe next year I can find a way to cash out.

Jackie won a gym membership by guessing the number of rubber ducks in a barrel, and she couldn't really (or didn't want to) use it, so now *I* have to go to the gym every day. I'm getting back in shape

slowly – true, pear-shaped is a shape, but not a good one – and working at a low-keyed pace on upper body strength, flexibility, balance and stamina.

Last years New Years resolutions were fulfilled, by and large; I took MOOC courses for at least the first half of the year, cut back on calories, and reconnected with at least 50 friends (in part thanks to my birthday party). I'll have to push out the time-line on the last resolution though – making new friends isn't so easy when self employed and speaking a foreign language. So here's the new list:

- make fifty new friends in 2018
- re-engage with German lessons and pass the B1 exam
- release a first version of my *More Stainless Steel Rat* short story
- learn four new technologies, e.g. Python, Angular2, React, MLib, TensorFlow, OpenStack etc.
- don't save anything for special occasions, being alive is a special occasion