

2021 The Year In Review

Friday, December 31, 2021

Besides what is required to work at home, there were a lot of video calls with groups of people from high school, university and prior jobs last year. If you're part of that, or got one of the many letters or one of the 120 cards I sent out, you can probably stop reading now, because you'll have heard all this already.

If you're a software person you already know how the video call user experience can be improved: video side-chats; better video and audio mixing (not just Brady Family boxes, with one person talking); focus selection; shared background music; etc. And that's not even getting into virtual reality: virtual sports like shooting pool or darts; shared activities like cooking or construction; road trips; tours; etc. I'm looking for huge improvements in the next few years.

We put our company, 9code GmbH, into liquidation. It was a good seven years, but it's over now. Jacqueline is extremely happy she won't have to do that any more. Part of the shut-down process is to cancel our ISP hosting service. The new email address is derrick.oswald@protonmail.ch. I've set up an old Raspberry Pi (B rev1 from way way back) as a web server to host 9code.ch and ninecode.ch. So far it's still the old content, but I have some ideas – there are a lot more options when you own and control the web server, even though it's smol.

I started preparing for my retirement next year by cashing out a 3rd pillar account (the equivalent of a Canadian RRSP). I'll probably work all of 2022, even though I turn 65 next October, to spread the tax over three years. There will be a party. Trust me. No matter what the pandemic has to say about it. According to European mores, I have to organize it myself of course; hopefully at the [Villa Mettlen](#) just like my 60th. Everyone is invited, though in reality it's probably only people in Switzerland that will attend. More details will be coming closer to October.

The new job at Open Systems isn't going very well, at least from my point of view. It might be just me being an old curmudgeon – too stubborn to put in the extra time and effort needed to really learn the technologies. But in my defense, it's also due to a lack of agency, since the security posture of the company means always asking someone else to do – or allow – practically anything. And sometimes they don't allow it; like the blunt “no” when asked if data from PROD could be used in the DEV or TEST environment. It's also not a lot of actual programming, but rather [GitOps](#) configuration of opaque black boxes in [Azure](#), so it's not about science (I haven't seen any floating point in a year) and mostly about trial and error, with cycle times in the range of days. It's not entirely unpleasant; there are occasional successes, cloud based security is an interesting field that's exploding in importance and I'm with a great group of people (who cover for me when they can). We'll see if the plans to quadruple the size of the team has any deleterious effects on that.

I have three fewer teeth since the beginning of the year. Including last year and an implant scheduled next year, this means the score is -4:+1 after spending a lot of money. The general aging of populace demographics and the evolution related average lifespan of teeth suggest that dental technology is a good investment in the long term.

This year, Jacqueline made good use of her private pool (Muribad), and I, my private gym. They're not really private, it's a little joke we share since we rarely encounter anyone else so it just seems like they're all ours. The bad news is, the gym is closing for good today – mostly due to a pandemic related drop in membership. Most of the equipment is sold off and moved out, so it's been a little

spooky. I haven't decided what next year's exercise regimen will be. I still don't own an electric bicycle, but maybe this is a sign I should.

Samantha is working as an architect in Vevey and quite involved in l'Habitat Léger – the tiny house movement in Suisse-Romande. She's living in her self-built tiny house north of Aigle. Alexandra is close to wrapping up her under-graduate medical degree and has chosen her masters topic already. Mom and Dad moved to another apartment in the same condo in Mississauga. I pulled the ol' "but I'm in Switzerland" trump card so I didn't have to help move them. Kudos to all who did help though.

We only traveled around Switzerland this year, which I have to admit isn't all that bad really. However, we are starting to repeat ourselves, returning to our favorite spots on more than one occasion. The usual modus operandi is to set out by train, often followed by post bus (yes, the Swiss postal service operates bus routes to remoter destinations), hike around for a while on a mountain, down a gorge, or around a lake, and then use the "Take Me Home" feature of the SBB app to find the nearest civilization and be home in time for a late dinner. People with cars have to return to where they started... not us. As to the question before starting out "Should we pack cheese and crackers?", the answer is always yes because when we don't we regret it.

I'm still journaling nightly. Now I've added a drawing component, which is mostly doodles. Hopefully with retirement, I'll be able to devote more time to these things and actually get good at them. The biggest problem is content – what to draw or write about. One can draw what one sees, i.e. landscapes or portraits, and write down daily activities, but these have better media in photography and video. Instead I admire the likes of Gary Larson (Far Side) and Randall Munroe (XKCD), with their ability to imagine alternate realities, so that's the type of drawing or comic I'm aiming for. We'll see if I'm as funny as I think I am.