

This is a snapshot of our year so you know what we have been up to. We were in Ensenada, Mexico in December, January, & February. A Mexican family took us under their "wings" & shared their home with us until we found a place to stay. We rented in Punta Banda just south of Ensenada. Our place was on a long sandy beach. We watched the fisherman in wee hours of the morning & flew kites, went for walks, built sand castles & went on daily adventures to experience the culture of Mexico. The markets, fish & segunda...second hand stores were a big thing and I enjoyed town and roadside stands of all sorts. Ian, Owain & I went venturing further south to look at some undeveloped beach property. It was absolutely magnificent and unoccupied but who knows what the future will bring there. My dad & step mom came up to visit us for awhile as well as several other friends from Thetis Island. Ashley my niece who home-schooled with us last year came as well. There are many stories to tell but another time maybe.

Ian drove back home to Thetis & to teach a septic course in British Columbia part way through our stay. While in Mexico he worked for part days writing some courses & a Standard Practice Manual for the Ministry of Health for septic designers & installers. Someone took this work back east & we heard that parts of it were being considered for a national audience. Ian spent a lot of time on this document. He is still working on getting it out to the BC audience that it is intended for.

Originally we went to Mexico to work on the new 49' Schooner sailboat but it didn't arrive in Mexico until one week before we left. I was kind of happy about that because we actually played & relaxed as a family which doesn't happen a lot living with a "type A" worker. I am encouraging Ian to go back there in January before the baby is born to make a work plan to get the job finished. I would really like us to go do something in the fall on the sailboat.

We did stay in San Diego California for awhile to enjoy the sites of the city. Owain enjoyed the zoo of course. He did really well flying on a plane...probably because he was still breastfeeding. We stayed with my cousin Craig who is from Chemainus. He is a foreman at a plastics plant.

When we finally returned from our journey...spring popped up & we started working on Swordfern Cottages garden bed. We planted herbs & all other deer friendly plants we could find. I was proud of myself because I used a lot of the plants from the garden at Rosemary Cottage. We planted pear trees & more hazel nut trees to complement the plum, fig & apple trees that are pretty well established.

We planted the vegetable garden & a new strawberry bed as well at home, Rosemary Cottage. Sadly the new soil we purchased was nutrient deficient so our crop was a little less productive than usual. Owain enjoys using garden tools & machinery in the garden. He especially enjoyed picking & eating the raspberries & strawberries when they finally produced. We have been collecting seaweed to help our raspberries produce more this year.

We also kept busy with the contracting business. I do the books & secretarial duties as much as possible. This is difficult for me because our days are already full with Owain activities. Honestly, preparing breakfast, doing morning chores, bathroom business with a toddler, & organizing to go outside takes up about 4 hours in the morning. Our days usually begin at 5am. It is shocking how quickly time goes. Then we go for our daily walk to Clam Bay Beach, around the development or to the Ice cream Marina & beach. We get home just in time for lunch. Nap time for Owain while I nap or do household chores. By the time Owain gets up we would do a couple of small jobs around the house then it was time to make supper & clean up the kitchen, play for awhile, read books then go to bed. WHEW. We like to go to town once or twice a week for a break. We usually go swimming, visiting, to the library & grocery shopping and try to visit someone on the big island but usually we like to get home as town can be exhausting.

We did make a special effort to take Owain to the beach as often as possible this summer. He really enjoys looking at all of the sea life & can identify many items. He picks up the crabs & tells us that they tickle his hands.

Ian worked a lot on the third phase road and putting in the hydro poles and trenches. He doesn't plan on marketing this phase until after the Olympics in hopes that the market will be good then. He still has to finish up the roads with

more material but it is all looking very nicely finished. We did make a deal with one couple for one of the properties because we felt they were very special. He is very community oriented & is heading up a communal type green house for us all to grow veggies. He is an amazingly hard worker with a big dream. It is refreshing to be around him. His lovely wife is in Vancouver doing a refresher nursing course.

Ian continues to work on contracting jobs off island as well. He specializes in challenging spots and has been away to Prince George, Salt Spring Island, Shawnigan Lake, Qualicum Beach and is working on a tiny gulf island off of Thetis too. I am learning a lot about the septic & water treatment. There are so many concepts that apply to what I am teaching too.

Prior to knowing I was pregnant I accepted a two half days per week teaching position with grade six students. I have really enjoyed working with these kids. They are really starting to form ideas, opinions & questions that are thought provoking for all of us. Ian's parents Owain full time one day & Nana Trish & Gramps Jim have Owain the other day. Owain's Great Auntie Judy takes him on Wednesdays when I need to do town jobs or I substitute on that day. There is a little cousin named Curtis that plays with him there too. When Owain works with Ian he particularly enjoys getting rides on the machinery. Owain looks so serious on the bulldozer & is happily engaged on it for up to an hour.

We do go for walks daily to "deer hunt" or to look for deer, Owain uses a branch as a fishing rod or a kite, we watch the sheep down the road, feed Dusty the horse apples, go for walks & play dates with Anna, Tim & Katia, go to Connections With Kids once a week, & likes to play at the pond with daddy.

I have squeezed some of my preserving jobs in which I feel a sense of accomplishment doing. I froze tomatoes, beans, raspberries, blueberries, apples & plums. I dried plums & herbs such as Rosemary & Thyme & hazelnuts. I made crabapple jelly for Christmas presents. I dried medicinal herbs such as stinging nettle, lemon balm & rosehips. I bought a bunch of organic peppers & dried them as well. We dried banana slices which were super yummy too.

I continue to experiment with healthier recipes with less fat by using apple sauce & cutting out refined sugar or using less. I have had some successes with

ginger & peanut butter cookies & berry & pumpkin muffins. All of which Owain enjoys helping me make them by licking the bowl & using the electric beaters. He is starting to drop fork peanut butter cookies & make the balls too. He especially likes forming snakes with the dough.

As busy as Ian is he continues to volunteer. He is the chair of the Thetis Island Improvement District which is in charge of our volunteer fire department. He also belongs to the BC Ferries Advisory Committee. He is considering standing to participate on the revision of the Official Community Plan for Thetis Island. I help out with as much of this as possible and make time to do the Thetis Community Hall bookings.

What about next year? Well I mentioned before that I hope we will go away on the sailboat to do some volunteer work. If I have it my way we will go to the Pacific Islands in the fall. Owain, baby & I would fly after Ian set sail with a hired sailor to sail across the ocean with. We would work in isolated places around Fiji. Failing this dream...I would hope that we could build an addition on to the house to make another room for the baby. We would put all of the bedrooms in the addition with a big room below. So we will see how life unfolds for us.

With Loving Kindness,

Ian, Sherri, Owain & "baby bump" due to enter the world Feb 1st Grandpa Marcel's birthday.