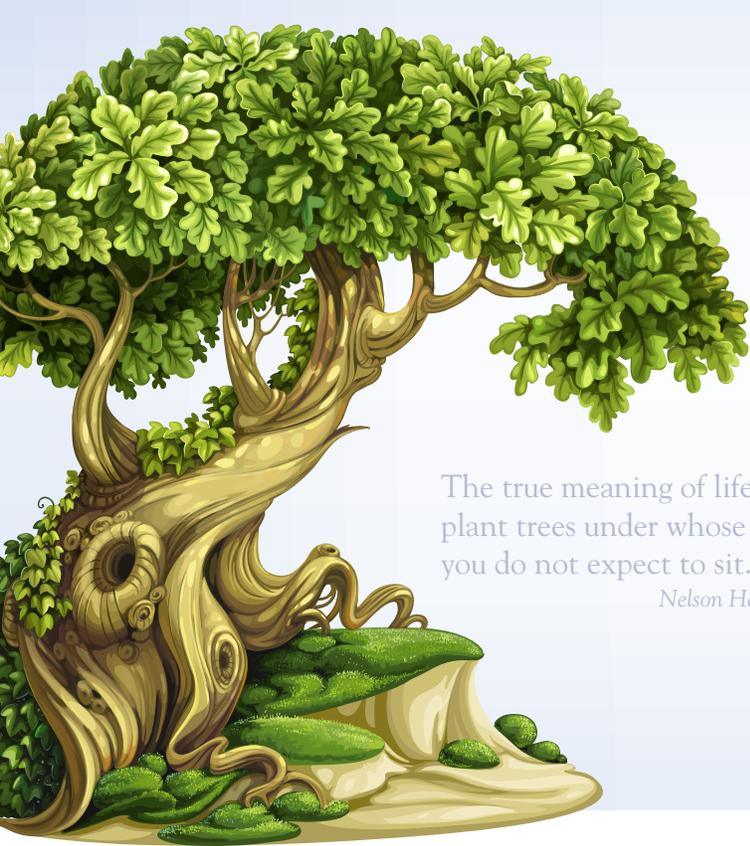


JOY TO THE
WORLD

*Merry
Christmas*



*Happy
New Year*



The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.

Nelson Henderson



Avatars, Linda and Michael in the cockpit of a 747 Dreamliner

2017

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?



Tuesdays with G-dogg
Grands, Aiden and Ariana, spent a couple nights a week with grandma and grandpa (us) while mom worked (volleyball coach for a junior high club team) and dad continues night school to finish his degree.

It was a great first Christmas and New Year as Newlyweds. We were most blessed to host both Thanksgiving and Christmas for the family.

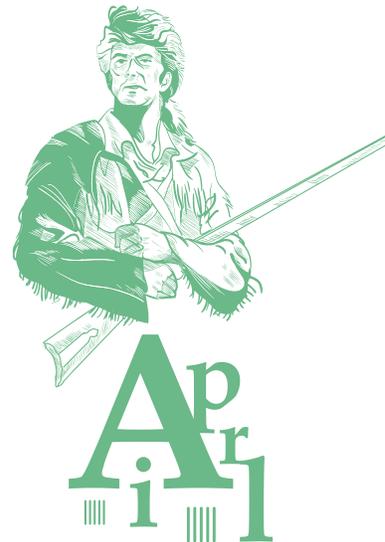


Flip or Flop Pacheco
We stepped into high gear to help the kids, Andrew and Alicia, secure and renovate their new home for spring move-in.



March

Flip or Flop Pacheco Episode 2
From drawing designs to digging ditches to dealing with the city, weekends and more were spent getting the Pacheco house move-in ready.



Remember the Alamo! Austin for business and then on to The Alamo for tours, re-enactments and (ahhhh!) a most lovely dinner on the Riverwalk.

The reenactment of medicine, circa 1836, and the tactical medical supplies (most similar to plumber's tools) remind us just how precarious life was back then and how fortunate we are today.



May

Time flies in retirement
To think it was 14 years ago that Michael retired from FileNet/IBM. We traveled to Laguna Beach for a FileNet reunion at Ted Smith's house where Michael got to catch up with the old gang.

June



Hot-Lanta

Atlanta for an apartment conference. Then on to tour the Coca Cola factory, stumbled upon the first Chick-Fil-A (what!?) and ran into Michael's brother, Rob, Vivian and family (who live in Tiburon, California) walking back to our hotel. How crazy is that?



Sit right back and hear a tale Las Vegas for business, then direct flight to Eureka, California, to celebrate Michael's 65th birthday (Medicare!?) aboard a sailboat. Marble hunting with the kids, Elliot, Brena and grands in the Redwood Forest. They are expecting kid 4 netting a "grand" total of 7 for the proud grandparents! Whoo hoo!

Andrew and family finally moved into their new place in Pacheco. We reallocated the contractor from Andrew's house to Love Lane to begin, in earnest, the "world's greatest patio." There should be plenty of time to have this complete by September, right?

August

High tension

We nearly lost the marbles we found in July completing the patio in time for the Labor Day party. Fortunately an angel named Gabriel saved the day

and finished the space to perfection (with mere hours to spare). Our neighbor, Judge Calhoun, who watched the daily parade of construction trucks and material deliveries remarked, "I was sure there was no way you'd get it done."

September



Yee haw!!

First Annual Labor Day party: Over 50 friends and family and a new patio including fans and—mistrs, to provide a perfect, oh-so-cool backdrop for Back Forty BBQ. Sandra (Linda's sister) flew in from STL. Elliot and family came down from Eureka. So much fun. So little time.

Back on a plane to San Diego for business and right back home (been there, done that).



October

Vegas (again)

In fact, the show was in "the" hotel of the mass shooting. (sigh) Time to catch our breath.



Solving the housing challenge

Off to the Motor City to meet Sec. Ben Carson, as well as Rep. Rick Lazio, and Sec. Henry Cisneros. Fantastic time hob-nobbing with housing notables while discussing solutions to America's housing challenge.



Loved the Ford Motor factory and The Ford. (above—The Allegheny is a monster: 125' long, 11' wide, 16' tall, weighing 771,000-lbs. It pulled 160 coal cars, each with a 60-ton load. If only pulling passenger cars, it could run at 60 mph.)

Off to D.C. for more hob-nobbing and to the grand opening of the Bible Museum.

Thanksgiving at Love Lane, another annual tradition, we hosted 23 family members at the big table (page 2).

Fun fact: Linda accepts a Board position with the Benedict XVI Institute in San Francisco.

December

It's time for HOLIDAY travel! Singapore, Java and Kuala Lumpur.

We started our tour in Singapore, "The Lion City," in which lions never

actually lived. We learned about the early Malay presence on the island, the establishment of a British base there by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, its conquest and occupation by the Japanese during WWII and its becoming an

The long-haul flight UA1 SFO to SIN



is 17+ hours (8,441 miles) which was easy-breezy in the 787 Dreamliner. We hit the ground running and spent arrival day completely refreshed. We walked everywhere.

Thailand

Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur
Singapore

Sumatra

Jakarta

Java

Bali

Yogyakarta



independent republic in the 1960s. In spite of having few assets beyond its strategic location and the industriousness of its people, Singapore has achieved first world prosperity.

Singapore society, in common with the other countries we visited, is a mix of Malay, Chinese and Indian. The proportions vary by country but each culture maintains its distinct identity in each of the countries we visited. Interestingly, each of the local governments encourages the ethnic groups to remain distinct, maintaining their own language, although use of a common language is also supported. No melting pots there.

The Malays tend to be Muslims. Chinese tend to be Buddhist or Christian, and the Indians tend to be Hindu or Muslim. In Indonesia and Malaysia, the great majority of the women wore the Muslim head scarf. On the other hand, while there were mosques everywhere broadcasting the call to prayer 5 times a day over loudspeakers, we did not see many people breaking to actually pray.

From Singapore, we flew to Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It is the location of two UNESCO world heritage sites, the Borobudur Buddhist temple and the Prambanan Hindu temple. Both are huge sites which were in ruins, victims of neglect and the frequent earthquakes that strike the area. Both have been substantially rebuilt.

While Singapore is in the top 10 in the world in per capita GDP, Indonesia is around number 100. The difference really showed in the roads and buildings. The prices of things also required some adjustment since there are 14,000 Indonesian rupiah to the dollar. We began with 500,000 rupiah in our pockets thinking we were rich, but found that we were quickly running out of cash. Still, things were inexpensive in dollar terms once we got outside of our western-style hotels.

Yogyakarta (Jogja to the locals) is nominally ruled by a sultan. At the sultan's palace, we got to witness traditional Javanese dance accompanied by Gamelan music.

Christmas Day, we went to Mass at a local Catholic church. Catholics are about 3% of the population and there were two churches within easy walking distance of our hotel. Everything was in Indonesian and they sang

Right: Linda and Michael in front of Marina Bay Sands in Singapore (yes! we went to the top!) Below: Borobudur Temple at sunrise.

many of the responses—but they had a nice hand-out and we used Google Translate to allow us to read it. We were the only Westerners there and had many people come up to wish us a Merry Christmas after Mass.

Starting in Singapore and continuing in Indonesia, we saw advertisements for durian, "the king of fruit." Curious, Linda arranged with our guide to purchase one of these rather large fruits (100,000 rupiah!) The edible flesh is attached to egg-sized seeds and has a consistency politely described as slimy. The smell and flavor is surely an acquired taste. Fortunately, our guide attacked the fruit with relish and so, by eating slowly we got him to consume the lion's share of our purchase.

From Jogja, we flew to Kuala Lumpur and spent a day touring the city. KL is home to some of the tallest buildings in the world, including the Petronas Towers. While tickets to the Petronas Towers were sold out the day that we were there, we got a good view of them from KL Tower.

From KL, we drove back to Singapore so that we could stop at Malaka on the way. Malaka was an important city to the Malays and was subsequently conquered and colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch and British in turn. It has many surviving colonial era buildings, the ruins of a colonial fort and St Peter's Church, established in 1710, the oldest Catholic Church in use in Malaysia.

On the drive we passed miles and miles of palm plantations, which are used to produce palm oil. Malaysia is the world's number two producer of this oil and it is used extensively in local cooking.

After a night in Singapore, we boarded our non-stop flight back to the USA, happy with our trip but also happy to be going home.

The flight catapulted Michael into a Silver Club status on United. How handy when we head to Africa next year.



We are so blessed to get to see the world. It reminds us of who we are, and the beauty and expanse of God's creation. We wish you an amazing year of love, joy and prosperity ahead. May God's face shine upon you.

Linda & Michael

