



Merry Christmas,

I hope the holiday finds you well. I just had a very uneventful and Covid Free drive across the country. I think every state I went through was locking down just as I got to it. As the news reports blared that it the Covid was everywhere and I was going to catch it if I didn't bow down to the Science and Stay the F home. I am living lucky cause I feel fine. Then again, I was mostly sleeping in the car and everything was closed along the way. I hope you are at least able to get some holiday cheer as 2020 limps to a close. All in all, I am doing pretty good. As you can tell from the poorly photoshopped Christmas card above, I am in Washington DC at the moment.

I still have a lot of work to do on the mountain but the poor road conditions during wet season and the lack of heat make it too hard to stay over the winter months. October came and the chill in the air had me contemplating my winter escape under the Covid travel restrictions. Serendipitously, I got a call from a friend of friend about a house sitting opportunity here in the Washington DC suburbs. I started a slow meandering drive across the country starting in early November. 4500 miles and 3 weeks later, I was having Thanksgiving dinner at the oceanside Dashboard Diner.



Even with my keen talent for procrastination, the 7 day work weeks, long summer days and Covid restrictions made for some good progress. I used my new tractor to smooth the heavily rutted access road, got the well dug, the Carport, for lack of a better term, is protecting the trailer. The Wintershed is sooooo close to being a livable guest room.



On the other hand ,I still don't have running water and the Wintershed is still a shed. The pit of despair is still glaring pile of 20 years worth of hoarder debris. The derelict cabin still stands stubbornly against the wind, rain and snow. And the access road needs to get a permanent fix



With the Covid closures, I should have gotten more done seeing as how there was absolutely nothing else to do to distract me. I did my best to get caught up on my Netflix and Amazon prime shows. But I can only watch on my phone. Usually my signal only lights up the tiniest of the 5 bars so it's a slow slog through a movie as it buffers every few minutes.

I find that You Tube works pretty well because most of the videos are relatively low bandwidth. I started with construction how to videos since I really have no idea what I am doing. I also spent a lot of time watching cast Iron skillet restoration videos. Really boring stuff. I guess YouTube felt bad for my boredom and started recommending stuff. Comedians, small cabin tours, cooking shows. Etc. Mostly bandwidth burners. You Tube must have added some derivative calculus to it suggestion algorithm. Cow Hoof Cleaning, Girls modeling clothes they just bought, Parkour guys jumping all over the place for no apparent reason. Then the close up ear wax cleaning videos. I guess the Ear stuff kept my attention long enough for the algorithm to take notice and the pimple popping videos started showing up. At 20x magnification to boot. It was like watching African Grubs pop out of people's faces. The only thing worse would have been if the videos were 3D.

I have to admit it was mortifying and mesmerizing at the same time. I have to hand it to the marketing folks when a dating ad interrupted one particularly disgusting video asking if I needed a date. Well, Duh!!!. I have been watching pimples pop for 3 hours on a Saturday night.



With the Covid, there is no dating. With the masks, there isn't even much girl watching. Probably just as well. I am far from fastidious regarding my personal appearance. I usually have a layer of dirt on my skin and clothes. Showers use too much precious water compared to the benefit. Laundry, is just a fool's errand. They don't stay clean enough to warrant the laundromat time. And nobody really cares. This is how I dressed for Friday night steak dinner.

Another time, I had to make a supply run. Stopped in at the grocery store to restock the fridge and pantry. I must have gotten too used to solitude because my inner voice that grumps about the price of things was not actually my inner voice. A very nice lady tapped me on the shoulder and offered me \$15 to help or maybe just quit my whining. I thanked her and told her I was just in my work clothes. I chuckled and she apologized then slinked away, maybe in embarrassment. I keep thinking, I should have taken the money so she might feel like she helped someone that day. There will be other opportunities.



I am not the only one staying busy on the mountain. There is a [high end housing development](#) going up. I am of mixed opinion on it. On the one hand, they are putting in a nice paved road all the way up to my access road. My property value is going up even before the assessor dings me for the water well. On the other hand the only place to find people who can afford the houses is Seattle. The impact with the ones that have moved over already is being felt. Property taxes and government fees are going up. Weekend traffic in my 3 stoplight town is backed up for miles on the weekend. I have walked out of our only grocery store on weekends because the lines are so long. They sell \$7 dollar (plus tip) beers at the pub. The animal life will probably start getting pushed out. Or least my way. I am fond of my flock of wild turkeys and the occasional deer that hang around the property. On the other hand, there has been a bear rummaging around by stuff and a cougar that leaves footprints in the dust over night.



Cougar Tracks



Midnight Bear Visitor from trailer cam



Bear Prints



A Big Wild Turkey

I am going to weigh the pros and cons next summer and decide what to do. The big downside that I can't fix is the wind. It howls almost all of the time to a point where it can be exhausting. That is what will be the main factor in driving me out. Stay tuned to see how its going.

I am sitting in Covid Sequester here in DC until Mid January. Not sure where I will head to next as I wait out the winter. No reason to go out because everything is shut down. Luckily I have been in DC many times so I know what I am missing. I have 8 months of computer chores to work on and a couple of cats to annoy. So I'll sign of with best wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2021. There is no where to go but up, right?

Take care

Don

Oh, One more thing.

I have been relying very heavily on Instagram to share the property progress or lack thereof. If you have an account and want to watch the effort, my IG tag is @twndonmiller. There is additional info in the links below. I am working mostly diligently to get them all updated while I have a good internet connection.

I have been catching up on the www.trippinwithdon site and will continue to do so over the next few weeks of internet access.

I have also been posting **Mountain Progress Photos** on my Google Drive:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/27Wbzppcw5eqJtfU8>

Oh, and By the way....Here are Google photo Albums from my travels earlier in the year. My phone was stolen in Nepal and the replacement was really low end with a bad camera so the picture taking gets a little uninspired from India on.

Balkans: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/JL6g7oDYUw4MSms7A>

Athens: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/1cQ1DD111Z7AhzVA7>

Istanbul: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Bb3YMcc7fZCemu9f6>

Varanasi India. Outdoor Cremation city: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/JjG7YWKtsRhvYkGH6>

Agra, Taj Mahal: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/EZriMDCBxnPwDPad8>

The following links are from 2019 but since I didn't get a note out last year, here you go

Jaipur, India: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/z9prPSQs2Ron4FZS8>

Goa, India : <https://photos.app.goo.gl/p8ShqgNbdQ7hjiQp9>

Nepal: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/NQeEap7jUTwoGJaF7>

Himalaya Trek: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/vC689hfzWdxhhZQM9>