

JR News

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Fall/Winter 2021

WORK, HOME, AND PLAY

life is precious... Remember to make the most of each day

Home/Health:

Erika and I are enjoying good health. We were both vaccinated back in the spring of 2021 and have not had a bout of the nasty flu that ran through the community. Despite my personal care team (PCA) being down to 3 young men, my health is stronger than ever. Their individual number of hours is higher than normal, but my well-being has improved because of continuity of care. Occasionally it comes with great sacrifice, we do have to get up at 4:30 am every Monday morning, but that makes for a great commute because no one is on the road.



I am however still dealing with the leg boo-boo. This is the recurring issue on the left shin due to the lack of circulation and occasional direct pressure from the weight of my leg on the bed. The good news is that it is healing, but slowly.

Covid continues to prove problematic with recruiting new PCAs. We have had no “new” interest during the past four months. We remain hopeful for some new trainees for the spring semester. My need for new recruits increases with each passing semester, my current team is starting to age out (remember I generally hang onto college students for 2-3 years). On a different but related issue, the voter-mandated minimum wage increase has placed more challenges on the

affordability of the PCA team. Costs will rise approximately 5% every year for the next four years totaling 20% (\$10K), for the same service.

Most people falsely assume that personal care expenses are covered by the government. This is only true for those who choose not to work. Unfortunately, I am not able to convert these additional labor costs to my employer, it is just something that I will have to absorb and lower my expenses and retirement savings to make up the difference.

Erika has been putting much time into those little home repairs. She has painted the kitchen, the bathroom, and organized much of the household clutter. You know, the things that just seem to accumulate over time. 😊 We lost our second outdoor glass table due to heavy winds. Never again will we pick up glass from the pool deck or the swimming pool, it is just not worth it.



Red did not work. 😊



Final product.

WORK:

The new semester started with a boom as Florida State University broke the [top 20](#) best public university rankings, as reported in the Annual US News World Report. Many of the FSU programs within the College of Business made the top 10. It is a pleasure to work with such high-caliber experts in their field. I also began the school year with a promotion from Teaching Faculty I to Teaching Faculty II.

The fall of 2021 marked the first time that we were back in the classroom for face-to-face instruction in 18 months. To be honest, I was a bit nervous to return, not because of covid, but because I was out of practice. Over the 18 months, I had become proficient at teaching online (teaching to a camera, not to people). I am still figuring out what pieces I should cut and what pieces I need to add to achieve the right balance for in-person instruction. In truth, one can get a lot of material in online instruction compared to in-person, but in person, you build a more authentic relationship with your students. It is easy just to post material and expect the students to view, apply, and master but in reality, only some of the students would excel. We all have different learning preferences, and the key is balance. There is value in both delivery methods and students should have the opportunity to choose what works best for them, just like the workplace.

The [Wheelchair Highwaymen](#) photography team was recognized by the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology ([FAAST](#)) with their 2021 Michael Phillips AT award of Excellence. We were most humbled by this recognition and were appreciative that others recognized that our use of drone technology could not only take beautiful pictures but also continue the civil rights struggle for equal access for persons with disabilities. This theme was picked up by the [Crealde](#) September 2021 “As I Am” Art Exhibition in which 5 different artists with disabilities



were highlighted for their annual fundraiser.

My work with Delta Airlines Disability Advisory Board continues full steam ahead.

During the October 2021 annual board meeting, I was re-elected Chairman of the



Research and Quality Assurance Committee and had an opportunity to do some in-house filming to assist with their diversity, equity, and inclusion training. Doing some videotaping and using the green screen backdrop was lots of fun. My LinkedIn page received over 3500 views and 175 comments

in less than a week. Who knows, maybe one day I could make real money as a social media influencer.

Once again, I had the privilege of reviewing grants for the Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation. I examined 20 different high-impact grants, exploring everything from recreation, to work, and to wellness ideas. It is always fascinating to learn about and support community needs.

The Wheelchair Highwaymen, in conjunction with other advocates, have had a real impact on Rish Park. While it is still not open, we are anticipating accelerated transformations when the Florida State Park System takes over management on December 1st, 2021. The Friends of Rish Park plan on continuing to serve as a critical voice to ensure that outdoor recreation for PWDs and their families is available in the panhandle of Florida. Our 2 separate TV pieces had a strong role to play in the upcoming management change ([September 1](#) and [September 28](#)). We are eager to thoughtfully expend our \$2 million appropriation from the 2021 legislative session.

As Thanksgiving nears, I am preparing for the end of the semester and building new online canvas portals for two classes in the spring of 2022. Most do not appreciate how much back-end work the modern educator must put in to effectively teach in this hybrid learning environment. The artificial intelligence required in today's teaching environment can make teaching less time-consuming, but it is only as good as your programming skills and artistic expression. Right before Christmas and just after exams, I am presenting at the [Worker's Compensation Institute](#) Conference in Orlando. Should be fun meeting new people and presenting about technology, PWDs, and work.

PLAY:

Summer/Fall 2021 has been an adventure. With covid somewhat under control, Erika and I choose to have a little fun. We had the pleasure of spending a little time in San Francisco (my first trip to the Golden Gate Bridge since my childhood). I am glad that I live in Florida, California prices are just outrageous. Breakfast for 2 at the



Fisherman's Warf was nearly \$100 – I mean really!? Eggs, cheese, toast, and coffee? I am super glad that I did not have to park my vehicle, they were charging \$75 per day. We got extremely lucky, the weather was perfect to enjoy some boating, sightseeing,



shopping, and visiting with friends. Erika had a chance to spend quality time with

her middle school posse (first time in 40+ years!) and I caught up with fellow Culver grads. It is super cool that they are still in touch, happy, healthy, and more.

With no Rish Park trip this past summer, we enjoyed a 10-day road trip along the east coast. Notable stops included; Atlanta, my parents' house, DC, Baltimore, Carolina Beach, and Savannah. I highly recommend taking the time to rediscover friendships, explore historical cities, and just have fun. With only 4-6 hours of driving between destinations, we were never too tired to enjoy the sights and one another. We got very lucky with the weather, most of the time, but had some unforeseen challenges with my power wheelchair malfunctioning and not retaining a charge which required my PCA to push the 600 lbs. sled from time to time.



Many of you know that Erika is a former tennis pro and an avid fan. Our first stop was to enjoy a few days of tennis at the annual Truist tournament in Atlanta. We had the perfect hotel location in Midtown (with the players) but because of my wheelchair problems and weather, we enjoyed tennis vicariously by talking to the players and participating in their [social postings](#) rather than actually attending the tennis matches. If you watch



closely, you can see the two of us. It is a great location for tennis and the players are quite approachable/friendly. I found them to be more down-to-earth than some of the other professional athletes that I have met over the years. We rode in the elevator with John Isner a couple of times, shared the same hallway with Sloane Stevens, Madison Keys, and Milos Roanic. I am confident that Erika will be returning to the Atlanta tennis tournament in 2022, she had a little too much fun.

While visiting with my parents (we did not stay as long as Mom wanted), we were able to enjoy Williamsburg, Yorktown, and spend time with my brother's family. Mom certainly enjoyed



having our small tribe around her dining room table. Truth be told, it had been 5 years



(their 50th anniversary) since we have all sat

together around their table and enjoyed good banter between us.

We had lots of fun watching our good friend, Mike Blum's daughter get married. She chose a beautiful location outside of Baltimore on the Chesapeake Bay. Her brother, Joey, who happens to live with autism, made some wonderful remarks about life, the tides, and the beauty of unions. We felt honored to be present.



Like Atlanta, I had some wheelchair challenges at the wedding. With the help of 3 people, we had to sneak me out and shove my power wheelchair across the parking

lot, and onto the shuttle. Thanks to good friends, no one was the wiser that I was having mobility problems.

We are looking forward to Thanksgiving with my parents and going to Orlando with Sonia. After the semester, we will be enjoying a week in Puerto Rico for Christmas. It will be my first time in the oldest city of America. They are celebrating their 500th year as a city. New adventures await. Look forward to hearing from you. Please have a wonderful holiday season.

JR