

2025 A Year Reviewed

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2025 has been SLOW. I've felt more stuck and set-back than ever, but that doesn't mean the year lacked happy moments of success. This year I worked as a professional ESL teacher in Guadalajara for 7 months, privately tutored a 10-year-old boy (10) in English, started a successful men's yoga group, traveled casually with Antonio, advanced in my mastery of Spanish through Toastmasters, and read more widely than in 2024.

There is much to be proud of, but I think the year was dominated by the disappointment of financial set-backs and the extended wait for our US spousal visa. In the first quarter, when it became clear we would need to wait another full year in Mexico before getting the visa, I became apoplectic. My intense anger at being denied my liberty to return to the US with Antonio blocked me from viewing another year in Mexico as a gift. I never fully overcame my narrow-mindedness, and I passed most of the year gritting my teeth, waiting, and swinging in and out of rage. As my day-to-day experience swung further from what I envisioned upon my retirement, I lacked the resilience to reframe and redesign my circumstances. Even now I continue to wait for an expected future and view my current circumstances as something to endure. This will be an area for spiritual growth in 2026.

I suspect my attitude has been to my detriment. Only time will tell if the arrival of the visa and the return to the US will resolve this angst. It's technically possible we won't get the visa or that changing government policies will delay it further. Logically, my desire to return to the US and my expectation that it can offer us new possibilities is not crazy, but life has taught me that waiting on some future contingency to declare yourself happy is a recipe for discontent.

Employment

In this new phase of life as a "retired" forty-something I have struggled to find gainful and fulfilling activities to which I want to give my time. This year, I continued an English teaching contract with the Proulex school, a venture of the University of Guadalajara. I enjoyed working with the school through August, but decided to resign in order to travel with Antonio in August and September. Since then, I have been working privately with one student, a ten-year-old (10) boy who is the son of a friend. I have enjoyed teaching language, but the work at Proulex was pretty regimented, and I didn't find the student population to be particularly motivated. Through the experiment with ESL teaching I have decided that teaching in Mexico pays way too poorly to justify any uncomfortable factors in the work environment - inconvenient working hours, administrative red-tape, or unmotivated students. I plan to continue with private students where I can control all the factors. Unfortunately, I know this will lead to limited work because most Mexicans want lessons in the evening after 8pm when I am much less inclined to work.

After leaving my work at Proulex, I decided to start a new project called “Guadalajara Men’s Yoga” (Instagram [@gdlmensyoga](#)). I host a weekly yoga class focused on men. We meet in a small studio space I rent by the hour. I’ve averaged about fifteen (15) students per week, and I’m really pleased with the results. The main goal is to create a community event for healthy movement and meditation. I ask attendees to pay \$50 pesos (about \$2.70 USD) each class to cover the studio rental. After practicing yoga, we enjoy a coffee together in a lovely cafe - Endémico Vivero Cafe. The cafe is decorated like a greenhouse, and they sell plants as well as coffee and breakfast. The project has been a perfect way to make new friends with similar interests and exert myself in a way that gives back to the local community. I usually clear about \$15 dollars a week on the adventure.

Since I hope to leave Guadalajara in June of 2026, I doubt I will experiment any more with corporate work in Mexico. The pay is simply too low for the hours. Professional Mexicans really get a bad deal. I have considered looking for technical jobs which might pay a bit better, but I’m doubtful I’d enjoy the added stress.

Travel

In 2025, Antonio and I stayed close to home, spending most of the year in Guadalajara, but we did make time for lots of small trips and three weeks in the Caribbean.

In January, we took a trip to a colonial pueblo, Tepatitlan, just a few hours from Guadalajara. We spent one night there and explored the town. We were impressed with the mix of development and historic appeal. Tepatitlan is like a western cowboy town. Historically and even today there is lots of farmland around the city, but there is a more developed center, a University, and a beautiful cathedral.

In February, our friends took us to Moreleo, Patzcuaro, and the Butterfly Sanctuary in Michoacan. This is the place in Mexico where you can see the incredible migration of the Monarch butterflies that leave the north to winter in Mexico. We didn’t catch the reserve on a day with lots of fluttering action. Most of the butterflies were high up in the trees sleeping, but we enjoyed the adventure. Michoacan is a beautiful state full of lakes, and I was drawn to the bustling town of Moreleo. Patzcuaro is a historic pueblo with an amazing old-world Mexico feel. In the town there is a lake with a small island in the middle with an interesting sculpture and places where you can sit and enjoy a cantarito.

In March, we enjoyed a quick trip to Puerto Vallarta for some beach time. The weather was really breezy and fresh.

In April, I headed to Seattle to check on my condo, cabin, and friends. This was the first time I was able to see the damage from the water leak at the cabin (more on that ahead). I stayed with my friends Todd and Gil for a couple nights, walked the trails of Glacier, and finalized plans to refurbish the cabin. While I was in Seattle, Antonio visited his family in Tempoal, Veracruz helping his parents repaint the house.

In August I visited Fairhope, Alabama to see my parents, and after that I met Antonio in Playa del Carmen, the city where we met, for two weeks. During our stay, it was very hot and the ocean and beach were severely impacted by sargassum. We both decided to make it our last trip to the Caribbean in Summer. Oddly, we had already planned a second Caribbean trip in September with my brother and sister-in-law. They invited us to visit a Club Med in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Again, it was quite hot and sargassum was in the water and on the beach. We spent most of our time at the beautiful adults-only pool and participated in lots of activities like yoga, pickleball, kayaking, and sailing.

In late October, I flew my parents to visit us in Guadalajara for my birthday. My brother, Jeremy, and my sister-in-law, Tiffany, joined in. We saw the historic areas of Guadalajara, ate at some nice restaurants, and saw a few Day of the Dead events. Unfortunately, I struggled a little to keep my parents entertained. Moving around the city in the traffic was hard, and the sidewalks are so rough they had trouble walking.

Books Read

I read eleven (11) books in 2025. Four (4) books in Spanish and six (7) books in English. The best fiction novel I read was *Como Agua para Chocolate* and the best non-fiction was *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal World Order*. Reading eleven (11) books exceeded my goal (7 books) and was a huge improvement over 2024 when I read only two (2).

1. Como Agua para Chocolate. Esquivel, Laura. 1989. Español. Fiction.
2. Sociedad Z. La Rusia de Vladimir Putin. Faraldo Jarillo, José María. 2022. Español. Non-Fiction.
3. Era de Idiotas. Pastor Vico, David. 2024. Español. Non-Fiction
4. A New Earth. Tolle, Eckhart. 2005. English. Non-Fiction
5. Crossing Zero. Sorensen, Anders. 2025. English. Non-Fiction
6. Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal World Order. Gerstle, Gary. 2022. English. Non-Fiction
7. The Medium is the Message, Marshall McLuhan. 1964. English. Non-Fiction
8. Orlando. Virginia Wolfe. 1928. English. Fiction.
9. Deviants. Santanu Bhattacharya. 2026. English. Fiction.
10. Tierra. Elroy Moreno. 2020. Español. Fiction.
11. Battlefield Cyber: How China and Russia are Undermining Our Democracy and National Security. William J Holstein, Michael McLaughlin. 2023. English. Non-Fiction

Financial Misfortune

On January 16, I received a message from my rental manager in Glacier, WA that sometime after January 4 when they last cleaned the cabin, a supply line for my bathroom sink “failed” and flooded the cabin with water. It was bad. I would later learn from the water company that 17,000 cubic feet (128,000 gallons) of water poured into my cabin. As I processed my insurance claim, I

discovered another bit of bad news. The policy I had on my cabin for many years included a limit on the coverage for water damage caused by broken pipes. I was flabbergasted. I didn't know such limits existed. Later I would read on the Whatcom County Insurance Commissioners site that they had issued public announcements warning people that these kinds of policies were being written. In the end, the damages totaled \$55,000, and my insurance paid out the max allowed of \$32,000. I share these numbers as a warning for anyone who reads this. Broken pipes really can be catastrophic, and you probably expect any damage from them will be covered up to the value of your home. Make sure your insurance agent hasn't snuck in a coverage limit on this kind of damage. In the end, I feel the misfortune resolved well. I was out of pocket \$22,000, but I got new floors and kitchen cabinets for the cabin.

In May, the second misfortune of the year struck. While driving on a busy freeway here in Guadalajara, Antonio collided into the back end of a line of stopped cars. It was a 3 car pile-up. Our little Nissan March was pretty smashed. The transmission was damaged, and we couldn't even drive the car off the freeway. To make matters even more interesting, we suffered an extortion at the hands of the Guadalajara Transit Police who told us our paperwork for the car (a yearly registration) wasn't sufficient. We ended up needing to bribe them \$200 dollars to leave the scene of the accident. Luckily we had insurance on the car, and all the repairs were paid for. Unfortunately, the car would be in the shop waiting for all the parts for the two hottest months of the year. The most important thing was that Antonio wasn't hurt badly. He needed some physical therapy for a deep bruise in his abdomen where he hit the steering wheel, but this recovered over a couple months.

The Visa for Antonio

Here at the end of 2025, Antonio and I have been waiting two (2) years and three (3) months for his US Visa. On January 14 of this year (2025) we received notice that the visa was approved by the US Customs and Immigration and Service (USCIS). In all we had waited 484 days. It was an exciting moment until we realized the wait for a consular interview in Ciudad Juarez would be another 12 months. For the second time in this process our hopes were dashed. We never planned to live in Mexico for this long, and it feels like there has been a big restriction on our future.

Currently, we expect to receive news from the National Visa Center (NVC) in February or March of 2026 informing us that an interview date has been assigned. Based on what we have seen in online forums, the interview is usually within sixty (60) days of receiving that notice; so, based on the info we have, I hope to have a visa by May of 2026 and move back to Seattle in June.

This whole process really infuriates me. So many US citizens are affected. By June 2025 the government had already received 585,506¹ applications for Immediate Relatives of US Citizens for the year. All of those people entered a line that will have them waiting for at least 14 months

¹ Data available at <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>

for approval and then potentially up to a year or more for finalization at a consulate if they are living outside the US.

Currently 871,740 immediate family members (spouses and children) of US citizens are waiting for a visa. By law they are entitled to a visa. By act of congress, no annual limits are imposed on this visa class (Immediate Relatives). However, due to administrative nonsense, understaffing, and outdated technology, US citizens are being asked to wait two or more years to bring their families home. I consider this gross negligence and an infuriating use of bureaucracy to impede the liberty and freedom of hundreds of thousands of US citizens.

Once I am through this process and back in the US, I will look for ways to involve myself in political action that demands improvement to this system. Whatever a person thinks about employment, asylum, or humanitarian immigration, I hope we can all agree that the families of US citizens should be treated with the utmost respect and efficiency by our government. A three year wait is simply unacceptable.

Goals

The results of my goals from 2025 are below. I achieved six goals (6). I failed three (3) goals.

1. Health. Attain 75kg weight by June and maintain. **FAILED**
2. Health. Reduce to 15 wks < 10 alcoholic drinks and avg 12 drinks per week. **ACHIEVED**. Achieved 17 weeks with less than 10 drinks. Averaged 11.7 drinks per week.
3. Health. Gym or swim 3 days per week. **ACHIEVED**.
4. Health. Focused rehabilitation program for shoulder injury. **ACHIEVED**. My shoulder still isn't perfect, but it's much better.
5. Visa. Acquire Visa for Antonio. **FAILED**. Expect to achieve it in June 2026.
6. Work. Maximize use of TEFL certification. **PARCIAL**. I worked for 7 months at Proulex Language School and after continued to offer private lessons to Emanuel. In all, the experiment of teaching English was a success, but I feel I learned it's not the part-time opportunity for which I'm searching.
7. Learning. Complete two levels of the ToastMasters training program in Spanish. **ACHIEVED**. As a bonus, I competed in an Area competition and won first place (in English).
8. Learning. Read two (2) books in Spanish and five (5) books in English. **ACHIEVED**
9. Learning. Choose and complete two courses related to technology, writing, or dance. **FAILED**.

New goals for 2026

After a year of tinkering with exercise to lose pounds, I think the best approach for me is to end my focus on weight. At nearly 50 years old, I'm happy to be active and not to be severely overweight. At this point, I don't think my body can handle intense training and hash treatment. I

will focus more on wellbeing and mobility. In 2026, I want to see a nutritionist and develop a diet plan, but I don't want to base my sense of success on a weight number; so, my official goals will not involve measuring my weight.

I also feel inclined to loosen my focus on "personal growth" activities like learning new technology or completing courses. I want to allow my years of focus on math and computers to come to an end. Maybe I will find a way back to those passions, but for now, I feel alienated from the technical world and a desire to define myself through other skills and pursuits. I will continue to explore writing and creativity. I also want to find some fun "mind training" activities to keep my mind sharp with memory, numbers, and language.

Obviously the biggest goal of the year will be to start our new life in Seattle. As we move into the second quarter of 2026, I expect most of my energy to become focused on ensuring we get the visa and that I make the transition to the United States as easy as possible for Antonio. I want him to feel supported, excited, and invigorated by our move. I will need to be conscious of my tendency to be a program manager, stress over details, and push for efficiency. I want to embrace the journey and concept of enjoying even the small tedious moments together.

1. Learning. Read 12 books in 2026.
2. Learning. Write at least 2 essays over the year and maintain a journal writing at least once a week for 40 weeks of 52 weeks.
3. Learning. Complete level 3 of Toastmasters by June 2026 to become an advanced member.
4. Family. Do everything in my power to secure a US visa for my spouse, Antonio, and return to Seattle.
5. Family. Get settled into the condo in Seattle with Antonio doing some light remodeling to make the space comfortable for two.
6. Family. Help Antonio find a job or productive activity for acclimation to the US.
7. Work. Continue to operate the Guadalajara Men's Yoga Group consistently until we depart for the US offering a class for 23 of the 27 weeks until July 2026.
8. Work. Offer English classes to Emanuel and Brenda (the fiance of my trainer Alex).
9. Health. Continue my workouts with Alpha Fitness completing 3 sessions a week for 24 of the 27 weeks until July 2026.
10. Health. Reduce to 31 wks < 10 alcoholic drinks and avg 10 drinks per week. Reduce to 31 weeks with 4 or more sober days.