

Coming and Going



Send him mail.

"One Improved Unit" is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OIU-only RSS feed available [here](#).

What would a column about my personal growth and improvement be without an analysis of the coming year? As cliché as making New Year resolutions is, I have a lot to work on and work towards. Since 2003, I can identify clearly each year the major milestones I made as far as personal ideology and commitments were concerned. I evolved from an agnostic progressive to a theistic voluntaryist in 10 years; from a not-so-eligible bachelor to a husband and father. I suppose I should take some time to look back at 2012, and then look forward to 2013.

The Last Year

My children turned 7 and 3, my marriage, 8. Each relationship saw its ups and downs last year. My son is in the middle of his childhood. He's become very savvy with video games and electronics in general. His greatest challenge right now is controlling his frustration when whatever electronic he's using fails to yield to his commands. He's overcome quite a few obstacles by way of super-villains in his video games, and I as his father have managed (so far) to overcome his emotional distress that occurs about the fourth time he's tried and failed to beat his opponent. We don't force our kids to suppress their emotions (we aren't Vulcans, right?). On the contrary, we allow them to express them as much as they need to. But it's not easy. It's often very difficult for us as mature adults to detach ourselves from the situation and become the foundation that he needs in those times of trial. To us, it's just video games. Who cares, right? To him, it's his life's work. He brings a passion and drive the likes of which I don't think I ever had the opportunity to experience. The exceptions (in opportunity, not passion) are what I was forced to do: chores and homework. But he's choosing his challenges. They are his. He owns them and he has an intrinsic motivation to see them through to the end.

My daughter, through no prodding or pushing on our part, has grown into the most polite 3-year-old I've ever known. She's learned "please" and "thank you" by seeming happenstance. We parents do our best to be polite and respectful to our children, and I

suppose it's rubbed off on her, but she's taken it further than that. If we compliment her clothes or hair or something, she gives a big smile and says "thank you!" It blows my mind. She, too, is improving her electronics savvy. She can turn to Netflix on the television or computer and find her favorite shows. And she has even beaten a couple of Nintendo DS games. There has been and will be a major difference between her early years and her brother's. She will never be yelled at or spanked. My son says he doesn't remember the spankings, but I can see the effects. For example, the trust he has for me is not as deep as it would be had I not been so violent with him, but instead succored and mentored him through the challenges of learning to use the potty. Regrets, there are many, but all we can control is what we do today and tomorrow.

The Coming Year

The most important improvements I can make this year concern my family. My parenting has a long way to go. Our understanding and application of the principles of unschooling likewise have a long way to go. To that end, we will be attending an unschooling conference in the spring. We attempted to attend one last month, but the weather forced us to cancel. We were very much looking forward to it, and are looking forward to the next one. (The whole family will attend.) It will provide us much needed support on both the unschooling and peaceful parenting fronts.

As much improvement as my wife and I have made in our own relationship, we each still have things to work on. Our journey began over 9 years ago, and has seen both sickness and health and thick and thin. Though becoming parents was intentional and much desired, it has been more than we could have ever anticipated. Likewise, unschooling has so far been more than we anticipated. Philosophy or theory is one thing, practice is another. Unschooling is very exciting, but because of our own school-based upbringings, it has proven very challenging. Overcoming the schooling mentality has been and will continue to be a process.

The last few years I have studied and learned much regarding the ethics and economics of liberty. I will continue developing my understanding of these things. I will also continue the writing that I have started. I am thoroughly enjoying these weekly columns. The greatest benefit to me of writing has been the clarity of thought that it has created. My projects at LargePrintLiberty.com have been fruitful. I promised a follow-up book to *Everything Voluntary*, and perhaps I will deliver on that promise by the end of next year. I have many more ideas for books. I am also contemplating ways to expand this site. I've been asked about a podcast. That idea is very intriguing, and I am giving it some heavy thought. We'll see what happens. (No promises!).

Final Thoughts

Life is wonderful. My wife is wonderful. My children are wonderful. You are wonderful. We are all coming and going, somewhere. May this year provide us opportunities, peace, and prosperity. Godspeed.