

Nematode Worms

By George Underhill

Sometimes it's a bit difficult to come up with an article that will tempt you to waste your time reading it. How about this? A professor at the University of Washington is researching how different genes can affect constipation. To that end, he has been watching nematode worms go to the toilet. How are you doing at *your* job? On those occasions when you find that it is not particularly rewarding, give a thought to that professor who, presumably, *chose* to do this research. Of all the possible topics on which to spend a lifetime of study, he chose that one. It could not have been planned.

I spent five years studying forestry, then spent thirty working years in computers. This was not a field of endeavor in which I had long harbored a desire to work. It just happened. I have found, over a lifetime, that the big decisions, the ones that were life altering, just happened. I didn't plan them. Some random confluence of events transpired, and then I ended up doing something I never planned. If I hadn't been accepted at University in Forestry, I would have attended the Merchant Marine Academy at Buzzards Bay. Who knew?

When I interviewed for the computer job, the interviewer asked me about hobbies. I was in my final year of college, and my hobbies were partying and raising hell. I'm not terribly smart, but I was smart enough not to tell him that. I said I did crossword puzzles, thinking this was a semi-intellectual pursuit that was sufficiently innocuous not to get me in trouble, even though it was an activity I didn't actually partake in. A-HA! He thought; a logical mind. He will make a good systems engineer, and I was hired for that. I didn't know what a systems engineer was, but it was a job and I needed one. It turned out to be a lifetime career.

When we moved from the Big Smoke to Picton, it was because we wanted a week-end away from the kids, and the Quinte Board of Trade or someone like that had a booth at the Sportsman's Show in Toronto. Off we went for a week-end in Picton at the Merrill Inn, two places we had never heard of, and ended up spending the next twenty years here. No plan. We just ended up here.

Some people plan almost every element of their lives, some do not. When I am about to make a

major purchase like a car, TV, or Computer, what I should do is ask one of my planning friends, for they would have researched the purchase on the Internet, probably tested the product, looked at Consumer Reports, all that stuff. What I do is go out and buy something that appeals to me. Is it smart? Of course not, but that's what I end up doing.

So how about you? Have your big lifetime events been anticipated by you for many years? I see people highlighted in the media who say that they have wanted to be an actor (or dancer, or business magnate or something) since they were children. I kind of envy them because they seem to have a career direction in life while I just bounce around doing whatever I end up doing. It's the same with hobbies. I like woodworking, drawing, fishing, writing, hunting and other things, but I don't like them well enough to get good at them. I can't, and don't, participate in them five days a week. A mile wide and an inch deep, that's me. But, doggone it, I don't think I'm alone.

I'm just glad I'm not studying the toilet habits of nematode worms.

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