

Upfront

We live in a world of carefully curated imagery. The things we see on social media disingenuously suggest life is continuously lived in its most beautiful forms. Have you ever chosen to share a photo that you think makes you look fat(ter than you are in the real-o-sphere)? Probably not. But the human experience is messy. And without the (metaphorically) ugly, would the beautiful seem so special? An honest accounting reveals that we each regularly confront the complete range of possible conditions, and it's the oscillation that truly makes us feel alive.

Microcosmic example: Our house is decked out in its holiday best. Jenna is very good at this stuff, and I dress a fine tree. The pictures you see on this page are the exact visuals available to me when I look up from my screen. You, in this reading moment, are looking at what I, in my typing moment, see. Here's what you aren't seeing: I'm wearing a coat...inside. Somehow, we scheduled a complete week-long HVAC overhaul (because the last several iterations of installs and patches were less than good) to coincide with the only two nights of the year to dip into the 20s. At best, we'll have heat (the "H" in HVAC) by the weekend. By then, we might require the AC. At present, I hear a (very nice) guy who is working on the project trimming insulation board with a box-cutter. Doing so makes an uncomfortable squeaky sound. If you draw a line straight down two floors from that guy, there are two other men

bent over a hole that held a toilet an hour ago. They are snaking 100 feet of hard cable through our drain lines, trying to break up enough of the intruding roots from a tree behind our carriage house to allow wastewater to flow out of our house instead of back onto our garden level floor. That exercise sounds like a rhythmic distant hammer hitting an unfortunate and very vocal cat. Also, my train of thought was just interrupted by a spam call offering me tax relief, though I'm confident I've paid all such bills. And if I seem distracted...I'm keeping one ear trained toward the front door, wary of the possibility that the kitty will make a run for it when one of the trades teams goes out to take a break or grab another tool.

Like I said, real life rides a sine wave that bounces between highs and lows. Learning that we might need to demo our floors to replace broken pipes qualifies as a low. Celebrating Christmas with the girls and their guys when they fly in this weekend...that's a high. You must know one to fully appreciate the other. It's like a metaphysical law.

Speaking of appreciation: I...we...appreciate you. You, the reader. You, the advertiser. You, the friend of *The Skinnie*. As another year draws to a close (This is the final issue of 2025), we thank you for your ongoing and faithful support, and we look forward to seeing and serving you in 2026.

Merry Christmas to you and yours and accept our best wishes for a wonderful New Year.

Scott A. Lauretti



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