If you know someone who would benefit from being an Insider, feel free to forward this PDF to them so they can sign up here.

Note: As an Insider, you can read all prior Insider newsletters here.

Quick Tips for our Insider friends!

It's been quite a roller-coaster this year, as we explained last time, and we're looking forward to having a much better 2026. We're ending with a bang, and we'll be back with the next newsletter at the start of January.

In place of the video demo, I present Kimberly and I singing a very short medley of terrible SQL Christmas carols from 2010! Remember, we're not called SingingSkills… From all of us at SQLskills, whatever you celebrate in the upcoming holiday season, we thank you for your support during 2025 and wish you the very best!

NEW COURSE: AIVSE: SQL Server 2025 Vector Search Essentials

We're tremendously excited to be developing a library of AI-focused courses, as well as new courses focused on traditional SQL Server topics, all based on SQL Server 2025. Joe Sack is back with us and he gets the honors for our first new course: AIVSE: Vector Search Essentials.

This online course provides a comprehensive introduction to vector search capabilities in SQL Server 2025. Designed for SQL Server DBAs and developers, you'll learn why traditional search methods fall short for semantic queries and how vector search solves these challenges. Through detailed explanations and demonstrations using a property search scenario, you'll gain the

foundational knowledge needed to evaluate and implement vector search in your own environments.

More information about the course is [here](#).

It's available for one-year and lifetime access and is on sale through the end of the year in our revamped [shop](#). If you're a Blackbelt Lifetime subscriber, login and use the discount code 'bbai' to save $100 on the sale price (it automatically checks your SQLskills account email), otherwise, as a newsletter subscriber use the coupon 'newsai' to save $50.

December Blackbelt Sale!

From now through end-of-year:

- Blackbelt Lifetime: US$1,895
- Blackbelt One-year: US$990

If you already have a one-year Blackbelt, buy a second one-year BlackBelt and we'll convert it to Lifetime and we'll give you the 2022 Update recordings free.

You can buy directly [on the website](#) or [contact me](#) if you'd like to use a PO/invoice or if you'd like to inquire about a bulk-purchase discount.

Book Review

I topped my goal of 150 books and I'll do my usual book summary at the end of the year. In the meantime, here are a few more reviews of wonderful books for you!

Firstly, *[The Great War: A Combat History of the First World War](#)* by Peter Hart. An excellent book, filled with quotes from all ranks from privates to field marshals, exploring all the fronts, major battles, and commanders. Highly recommended! From Amazon: "In The Great War, Peter Hart provides a masterful combat history of this global conflict. Focusing on the decisive engagements, Hart explores the immense challenges faced by the commanders on all sides. He surveys the belligerent nations, analyzing their strengths, weaknesses, and strategic imperatives. Russia, for example, was obsessed with securing an exit from the Black Sea, while France-- having lost to Prussia in 1871, before Germany united--constructed a network of defensive alliances, even as it held a grudge over the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Hart offers deft portraits of the commanders, the prewar plans, and the unexpected obstacles and setbacks that upended the initial operations."

Secondly, *[Citizen Sailors: The Royal Navy in the Second World War](#)* by Glyn Prysor, which I borrowed from my Dad while in Scotland. Extremely interesting book about the Royal Navy in

WWII. From Amazon: "During the Second World War the Royal Navy was the most powerful of Britain's armed forces. Its sailors fought across the globe in vast battleships and claustrophobic corvettes, makeshift minesweepers and silent submarines. They endured nerve-wracking convoys, fought epic gun battles, carried out deadly secret missions, rescued armies and landed the largest invasion force in history. Naval power was the foundation of Britain's war effort, and sailors shaped the nation's destiny. Drawing on hundreds of contemporary diaries and letters, Glyn Prysor's original and gripping narrative evokes the triumph and tragedy, horror and humanity of the war at sea, bringing to life the sailor's war as never before" Highly recommended!

Lastly, *[The Custom of the Country](#)* by Edith Wharton. Just finished listening to book #106 this year. Excellent book, and how shallow and almost hateful Undine is, over and over again! From Amazon: "Considered by many to be her masterpiece, Edith Wharton's second full-length work is a scathing yet personal examination of the exploits and follies of the modern upper class. As she unfolds the story of Undine Spragg, from New York to Europe, Wharton affords us a detailed glimpse of what might be called the interior décor of this America and its nouveau riche fringes. Through a heroine who is as vain, spoiled, and selfish as she is irresistibly fascinating, and through a most intricate and satisfying plot that follows Undine's marriages and affairs, she conveys a vision of social behavior that is both supremely informed and supremely disenchanted." Highly recommended!

Ponderings…

As you all know, one of my fortes has always been disaster *recovery* and I've written here about it many times. What continues to amaze me is the lack of disaster *preparedness* that's out there, and not just in the SQL Server/IT world.

If you're in the US (and it even made minor headlines around the world), you've likely read about the extreme weather we've had in western Washington state over the last week, and its continuation this week. One of the hardest hit areas has been Skagit County, and you've likely even read the name Concrete – the tiny town a few miles from Camp Savage along the Skagit River.

Luckily CS is in no danger from river flooding, but it's easy to get completely cut off, and there's a real danger of very large trees (100+foot evergreen/maple/alder) dropping across our access road and in our gate area, or a landslide. In fact I'm writing this on Tuesday evening at CS as a windstorm rages around me and more than 4" of rain has fallen in the last 48 hours.

I always make sure I'm here at CS when a big storm is forecast so that I'm on the camp side of any blockage, because apart from (of course) a big chainsaw, I also have some very large machines that can make short work of any problems. I'm not talking about my beloved Kubota

tractor, Fiona, as she's waaay too small to be able to handle big trees or a slide. We have a large excavator (Isabel) that can lift 12,000lbs, a bulldozer (Dolly) with a logging winch, and an 18-yard dump truck (Alice). Yes, we name all our machines – lol. We got all of these old, well-used machines to save a bundle on equipment rental fees and operator costs (I've learned to use them) for construction, but they're also very handy for disaster recovery!

(Isabel is just a little bit bigger than my tractor!)

I can't just wait for a disaster to happen and then expect these machines to work. I have to prepare. Last week I did equipment maintenance including charging all the batteries, topping off all the fluids and fuel, and making sure they all start and run. I do all this every quarter but made a special effort last week as I knew this set of storms was coming.

Plus I filled up spare diesel, gas, and propane tanks and made sure I have plenty of water, microwave food, dry food, and tinned food. And coffee, lots of coffee! I've also got one of those 25-year shelf-life 5-gallon buckets of dried meals for if I *really* get stuck.

My point in telling you this? You've probably got the tools you need to recover from a disaster, but do you know they're going to work when a disaster actually happens? You can't be complacent and just assume the answer is yes. For instance, you need to make sure that you (or someone):

- Can locate and restore SQL Server backups

- Can run a database repair if needed
- Can failover if needed
- Can reinstall SQL Server if needed
- Can fix up base infrastructure if needed (networking, storage, application servers, web servers, and so on)

"Oh I'm on Azure/AWS/etc, so I don't need to worry about that" you might say… well what if your hosting service has a prolonged outage? Do you just sit there while the business is down and losing money? For how long? And then you're back to the list above…

Disasters do happen, both in real life and in IT. Don't be complacent. Prepare!

And on that happy note, I leave you for 2025 and sincerely hope your holiday season is quiet, smooth, and disaster free!

The Curious Case of… / #TBT

A combined Curious Case and #TBT (Turn Back Time) to end the year! There are a ton of interesting tidbits in here that you may have missed in earlier newsletters. Enjoy!

- *The Curious Case of… log truncation in a distributed availability group*
- *The Curious Case of… missing log information*
- *The Curious Case of… missing 832 errors during memory corruption*
- *The Curious Case of… recovering from a ransomware attack*
- *The Curious Case of… community*
- *The Curious Case of… disconnected AG secondary replica and transaction log out of space issue*
- *The Curious Case of… eager writing and minimally-logged operations*
- *The Curious Case of… random failing log shipping restores*
- *The Curious Case of… data compression caching*
- *The Curious Case of… tracking page compression success rates*
- *The Curious Case of… the BULK_OPERATION lock during a heap NOLOCK scan*
- *The Curious Case of… the un-killable thread*
- *The Curious Case of… object ID 99*
- *The Curious Case of… log generated during a DROP TABLE*
- *The Curious Case of… lack of motivation*
- *The Curious Case of… the failing differential restore*
- *The Curious Case of… the aborted xdes map*
- *The Curious Case of… resolving call stack symbols on SQL Server 2019*
- *The Curious Case of… almost online index rebuilds*

- *[The Curious Case of… setting up a server for DBCC CHECKDB](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… extent scan fragmentation](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… the 8060-byte row size limit](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… whether corruption can propagate to secondary databases](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… restoring a table into a different database](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… a sudden latency and memory usage increase](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… transactions rolling back during DBCC CHECKDB](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… a truncated log file after a revert from snapshot](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… emergency-mode repair](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… why a minimally-logged operation doesn't make a log backup smaller](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… too few log records for an offline index rebuild](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… what is the wait resource (0:0:0)?](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… why the transaction log has to be zero-initialized](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… how to find which page an index row is on](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… very long failover times with a large ad hoc workload](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… does SQL Server use a read/write thread per LUN?](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… trying to find an MDF file in a RAW disk](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… how to find FILESTREAM info from an MDF](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… the CLR assembly failure after an AG failover](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… unstoppable DBCC CHECKDB](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… faster disks causing more WRITELOG waits](#)*
- *[The Curious Case of… copying FILESTREAM files between tables](#)*

SQLskills Training

We have no plans for live, public classes in 2026, but we've already released the first of many new courses coming over the next year! And of course, all our recorded courses from the last few years are still as relevant as ever.

To help your manager understand the importance of focused, technical training, we've also added a few items to help you justify spending your training dollars with us:

- [Letter to your manager explaining why SQLskills training is worthwhile](#)
- [Community blog posts about our classes](#)

You can get all the details in our [shop](#).

Summary

I hope you've enjoyed this issue – I really enjoy putting these together. If there's anything else you're interested in, I'd love to hear from you - [drop me a line](#).

Thanks,
Paul

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