(September 15th, 2026)

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!

I hope you all had a great summer! As the season draws to an end with the autumnal equinox next Tuesday, I realize just how little of my huge CS to-do list I managed to get done, and how behind I am on SQL Server stuff I planned to do this year. It's going to be a very busy Fall on all fronts!

In contrast to the badly smoky picture from the previous newsletter, this is what a clear-air sunset should look like at CS! (straight from iPhone last week, no editing)

SQLskills News

And talking of clarity, if you want to learn all about the SQL Server 2025 AI capabilities, for the next two weeks, our AI/Vector Search classes and bundles are all half price – shop here!

PASS Data Summit Workshop

Join us in Seattle! The PASS Summit is fast approaching and I'm excited to be presenting my absolute favorite workshop *Performance Tuning with Waits and Latches*, plus a session on *Advanced Data Recovery Techniques*. Bonus is that I'll have Kimberly with me!

Book Review

Over the las month I've spent the majority of my listening on various Great Courses – lots of history, one fascinating one about the Federalist Papers, three on understanding law (our youngest is in law school), and much more. But I did read some actual books, so here are two…

First is Paul Theroux's *Sunrise with Seamonsters*. Theroux is one of my favorite writers, most especially The Great Railway Bazaar, and I enjoyed this collection of 50 newspaper and magazine pieces from the 1970s and 1980s tremendously! I rationed this over the last 3-4 months to prolong the enjoyment. My favorites were the long article on the NYC subway and the final eponymous story.

Second is Jane Mount's *Bibliophile: An Illustrated Miscellany*, An excellent book, with interspersed sections on book stores, curated stack of books by genre, writer's workspace, and more. I particularly enjoyed mentally ticking off books I have, have read, know of, from the various genre stacks. Rationed reading it too to make it last longer.

I also blew past my total of 157 books from 2025 and I'm easily on course to top 200 this year!

Ponderings…

In the last newsletter I reflected on the 15 years that I've been writing the regular Insider newsletter and I had lots of agreement from you that you're not worried about AI replacing your job and/or your company moving everything to the cloud any time soon, or at all.

Then I came to write this newsletter last week and suddenly I was reminded that it was 25 years since the horrors of the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks.

One thing that came to mind very strongly was what I was doing the day before, on 9/10/2001.

My dearly-departed little sister was visiting from Scotland and I'd driven a few hours east to the Grand Coulee Dam, so she could experience the evening laser show and see some of the dramatic en-route scenery. When we arrived, we drove onto the top of the dam and stopped to look down 350' at the water downstream, look up at the cranes, and then drove across the dam to the visitor lot and took a tour, The tour included going right into the guts of the dam where we could view the spinning shaft of one of the gargantuan turbines, in a little room similar to this view from the 1930s (it was a bit more safety-conscious by 2001!)

(Source: https://www.historylink.org/file/7264)

But the next day, the ability for the public to do both of those things vanished forever when security was heightened after 9/11. Plus things like being able to go right to a gate in the airport to meet friends and family off a flight or visit the cockpit of a plane on a long-haul flight (which I did on the way over here in 1998 to interview with Microsoft).

Sometimes events cause instant changes in society, and sometimes those changes are gradual. We're seeing a gradual change right now with the advent of AI affecting the job market, social media, information retrieval, and many other things. (And I hope AI doesn't lead to an instant, catastrophic change as has been posited and discussed recently.)

So all this got me wondering… what other things did it used to be possible and normal to do, but no longer? Both in the SQL Server world and in the wider world.

Thoughts?

The Curious Case of…

This section of the newsletter explains recent problems we've helped with on client systems or been asked about online; they might be something you're experiencing too.

I've said this before quite a few times but I'm always amazed how the same weird issues can crop up many years apart. This is a Curious Case from 2018 that was duplicated in email from a student last week!

I had an interesting email conversation over the weekend with someone who was having a weird corruption issue. They'd seen a backup fail on a certain page in a large database, run *DBCC CHECKDB*, and decided to fix the corruption by dropping and recreating the nonclustered that the corrupt page was in – then the backup succeeded.

That wasn't the part they thought was weird. Two days later, a backup failed again, on the same page in the database, and a subsequent *DBCC CHECKDB* found that indeed that page was corrupt, but in a different table this time.

Their question to me was how can that possibly happen?

The answer is that the I/O subsystem has a problem with the storage for that offset in the data file. When the original corrupt index was dropped, the corrupt page was deallocated. At some later point that page was allocated again, to a different table, and was successfully written to disk (I know this for sure, because the first thing a data backup does is a checkpoint, and if that succeeded, then there are no dirty pages in memory from before the backup started). The page then failed to be read from disk – a clear I/O subsystem problem.

Bottom line: The smoking gun here was that the same location in the data file became corrupt as part of two different tables and two different times, ruling out (to me) a SQL Server bug or a memory corruption. When there's a corruption like this, I usually suspect the I/O subsystem first.

#TBT

(Turn Back Time…) Blog posts we've published since the previous newsletter plus some older resources we've referred to recently that you may find useful.

The TBT this time is about identifying and fixing esoteric query plan performance issues, and Joe recorded four excellent courses on this that are entirely relevant to all versions of SQL Server:

- *SQL Server: Common Performance Issue Patterns*
- *SQL Server: Common Query Tuning Problems and Solutions – Part 1*
- *SQL Server: Common Query Tuning Problems and Solutions – Part 2*
- *SQL Server: Troubleshooting Query Plan Quality Issues*

I hope you find these useful and interesting!

Video Demo

In this demo, Jonathan shows the improved syntax for TRUNCATE TABLE for partitioned tables that was introduced in SQL Server 2016 and allows direct removal of partitions from the table without partition switching. (Paul: I had no idea this syntax existed either!)

The video is 3 minutes long and you can get it in MP4 format here.

The demo code is here.

Enjoy!

SQLskills Training

We have no plans for live, public classes in 2026, but we do have new courses this 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