



# The Taylor Times

The Newsletter with "Schmaltz"



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## WHERE TO BEGIN?

### DONNA'S ORDEAL

Each year seems unlike any before it, but this one has been especially unique. By now, many of you are probably aware that Donna (my significant other, domestic partner) was hit by a car while attempting to cross highway 19 in Florida last New Year's Eve, and that event has resulted in a year of many struggles for both of us. The good thing is that she is recovering well... the bad, that she is still recovering.

The paper-saving version of this story is: Donna had left Mom's to go for a walk just after dark on New Year's Eve. A half hour later, after twice getting no answer on her cell phone I set out to find her. I didn't locate Donna, but I did find an accident scene a mile from the house and started checking local emergency rooms. I found her on the first try at Community Hospital with two broken legs, the right one at the ankle, the left just below the knee in about five pieces. Fireworks had already started that night and speculation is that Donna, in an incoherent state of fear, tried to get away from them by going straight across the six-lane highway where there was no marked crosswalk (not unusual for that road, mind you.) Traveling at 45 mph the Cadillac might have seen her, but it's driver certainly didn't. She would



*Donna, Jeff, and "Nacho" in Nuevo Vallarta*

### MEXICO VACATION

Our major expedition of the year was a trip to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, over Thanksgiving, Donna's first time. With her no excursion or experience is what could be considered normal and this journey was no exception. The first full day there we were finishing dinner at a restaurant at Paradise Village Resort where we were staying and noticed a lot of activity on the beach just over the open glass wall from our table. We soon found out they were digging up turtle hatchlings to be released into the ocean. Donna was quick to scurry around the wall and help with the process. I had to wait to finalize the bill but was there with enough time to help with a few myself. This actually proved to be a treat that doesn't happen every day.

On Monday, we went just a mile or two from the resort for a swim with the dolphins. When we walked in we found several of the dolphins not only playing with a ball, but tossing it at us in an obvious request to play, which Donna was no slouch to oblige, playing "fetch" with the critters. After the dolphin swim was the kiss by a sea lion (apparently wearing Au de Fish), a visit with the Macaws (birds), and checking out the wild iguanas.

The next day we took a drive

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## MUSIC FOR A MOVIE

This was the third and final year of my studies with Hummie Mann's Pacific Northwest Film Scoring Program. It ended with the writing of a score for an actual student film. This is an edited version of the process here, but you can visit my music web site for all the gory details, including the music. Go to [www.blackdiamondbrass.com/jt-music.htm](http://www.blackdiamondbrass.com/jt-music.htm).

We started in January with a screening at Hummie's place of some 20 or so short



*Watching the recording session from the booth.*

films, deciding which we wanted to do in order of preference. Teams were then assigned to the selected films and each was given a copy of the film without music. My team chose a spaghetti-Western called "A Fistful of Mud." Our first task was to "spot" the film and determine how many themes there should be, what cues should have music, and who would write each one. We decided there should be a good guy/ranch theme, a bad guy theme, and a gay son turns gunslinger theme. (See the web page for the story.) At our first meeting with Hummie we were given the go-ahead to write three themes each for the different subjects. Hummie then selected one theme of each of ours and we moved on to using those themes, as appropriate, in the cues we had chosen earlier. From here on our meetings with Hummie were strictly individual.

We started writing musical sketches based on cue lengths and time codes to fit exactly into the scenes, determining "hit" points along the way to highlight with music. When each sketch was complete we would orchestrate it, using the knowledge and techniques Hummie had taught us in our earlier classes, even if some of us didn't

## *ORDEAL* (Continued from page 1)

ultimately need a trauma center, and when an ambulance finally became available after spending its time with New Year's Eve wackos, we transferred her to St. Joseph's in Tampa where she would spend the next nine days.

She wouldn't be allowed to put weight on either leg until at least March, but after a week we had her, with difficulty, using a slideboard to get into a wheelchair. This achievement allowed us to move her to a

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always quite "get it." Eventually, with a lot of labor pains and a lot of help from Hummie, the cues were ready for recording by an orchestra.

The orchestra of volunteers was assembled and we all met with scores and parts in hand. As Hummie conducted each cue the corresponding composer sat in the recording booth listening and providing occasional comments, corrections, or direction. Once the recording was done the last step would be the mixing session to balance the master recording for final use in the film. That happened in early August, some seven months after the initial screening. And shortly after that we received copies of the finished film, with music, and a certification that we managed to get through it all (without reference to how successfully, thank you very much.)

I don't honestly expect to do any pro film scoring anytime soon, but I have already been applying the principals I've learned to other forms of composition so there has been some definite benefit to the long ordeal. In fact, on my music page once again you will find the most recently completed piece I've written called March Maligned for Brass Band. There is an electronic version of it posted, but the music will be premiered live in concert at the 7th Annual Northwest Brass Band Festival in January. I'm kind of excited about it since it is the largest concert piece I've written so far. I do have another nearly completed called Incantations for Tuba and Brass Band and I hope to have it finished soon and perform it as soloist in either our spring or summer concert later this season.

**ORDEAL** (Continued from page 2)

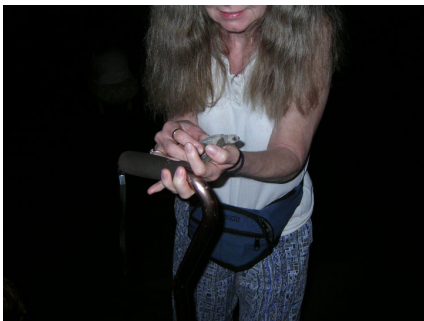
nursing facility not far from Mom, where she would spend another 25 days, with Mom's generous help. (I had to get back to work.) After a final surgery on January 22, to repair the left leg the doctor declared her fit to travel (if she could find a way to do it) and I went back to get her. Thanks to frequent flyer miles we got comfortably situated in first class. The trip had its down moments but could never have been done at all in coach. Of course, it's also probably the last time I'll ever be able to fly first class.

35 more days in a Seattle nursing center and lots of physical therapy and we find ourselves where we are today. Despite bones which have long since healed, managing pain has been a difficult proposition and is frequently a great discomfort leading to strength and balance issues, but despite all the other challenges in her life, Donna's been a trooper through the whole thing. We will again be visiting Florida this year which will bring it all full circle. Hopefully that circle will represent



*Donna terrorizing the halls in Florida*

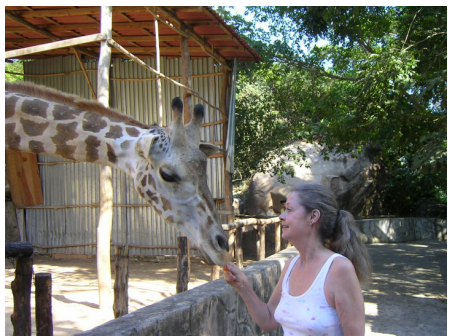
the final healing and not some haywire tractor in a cornfield.



*Releasing a turtle*

**MEXICO** (Continued from page 1)

down south of town to the Puerto Vallarta Zoo, where we'd been told they had black leopard and lion cubs that you could play with in addition to the regular zoo animals. The zoo proved to be very nice at least in terms of their regular animals and layout. For \$5 you could buy a bag of various foods to feed to the animals along the way. The camels, giraffe, and zebras all enjoyed the carrots, the monkeys liked the bread, and the myna birds enjoyed the peanuts. If you need a restroom be sure to check it out before going in. The first one we tried was



*Giraffes LOVE carrots*

literally draped with an ungodly number of huge spiders and tangled webs, almost enough to make you go, restroom or not. I think I saw something like it in a movie once. Thank heavens the next one was not so challenging.

We finally reached the holding area for the cubs where we observed the leopard jumping rather excitedly around its box and the lion cub fast asleep on the floor of its pen. Donna decided that she would sit down with the mellower of the two animals. Unfortunately we found out a little too

quickly that the maxim "it's best to leave sleeping dogs lie" can be just as accurately applied to lions. As the handler placed the cub in Donna's lap it became obvious that it was not happy and it's first action was to bite Donna on the wrist. Of course, the handlers thought nothing of this... "we get scratched and bitten all the time, it's not a problem, you'll heal right up," but as visitors to this land of raw meat eaters and foreign bacteria I had a little different opinion. The puncture wounds were not severe, but were bleeding, and I personally

couple of times before heading back into the depths. When we got back to the resort I took Donna to the local clinic where we had the doctor clean and bandage her bite and write a prescription for antibiotics. So how many people do you know can say they got to release the turtles, swim with the dolphins, see a gray whale, and get bitten by a lion all in a matter of four days? Well, now you can at least say one.

**Mom's Visit to Seattle**



*Donna and El León*



*Mom and Donna at the rest stop to Bellingham*

felt that we should at least have the \$10 that we paid for the encounter returned. That was more like pulling lion's teeth, but they reluctantly agreed.

We left the zoo and stopped for drinks and appetizers at Le Kliff Restaurant just down the road, one of the most beautiful and appetizing eateries in the area. As we sat there overlooking the bay one of the early arrived gray whales surfaced briefly, long enough to slap its tail on the water a



*Mom and Uncle Frank*

