



The Taylor Times



The Newsletter with "Schmaltz"

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EVEN BAD YEARS CAN BE GOOD YEARS



On the shores of Puget Sound. Emma Schmitz Memorial Overlook Park in West Seattle

OUR YEAR

(by Jeff)

2020 will no doubt be the first year to go down in infamy since 1941. (I know, that was a day, not a year, but that makes this 365 times more significant.) It was the first truly global pandemic since the influenza of 1918, the first economic downturn of this magnitude since 1929 (still slowly recovering), and the year of a presidential election unlike any of us have ever seen in our lifetimes. Forest fires in the west consumed more land than any previous years, and some of those years were already quite bad. An unprecedented six hurricanes

and several more tropical storms hit the Gulf Coast in a year that saw the Weather Service run out of names for storms. On the good side, there have been no catastrophic earthquakes this year and Kilauea stopped erupting before this year ever started. Hopefully no comets will hit us until 2021.

The year started innocuously enough. There were rehearsals for the three music groups in which I play, Brass Band Northwest, Washington Wind Symphony, and the Eastside Symphony. In addition, I had been asked to play the second tuba part in Stravinsky's Rite of Spring with



A sunset down the street in the Shorewood area

and churches were shut down, canceling all rehearsals and concerts. Masks became the new late winter fashion accessory despite the frequent difficulty trying to find them in stores. Those that could work from home were allowed to do so if the company could support it. I was lucky. Mine did. With the construction industry slowed, but not stopped, our engineering design

Orchestra Seattle. I'd never played it before and had been enthusiastically advised to do so given this opportunity, or I just might regret it. The concert was in mid-February, and it was, without a doubt, one of the most exciting performance experiences I've ever had (and there have been others).

Several pieces of my music were scheduled to be performed by both Brass Band NW and Eastside, including two world premieres.

At work, my company opened a new small office at the north end of town to handle a lot of jobs up there and ease the burdensome commute through downtown that people working on them had been suffering. It gave me the opportunity to move into a newly vacated office to help mitigate fragrances that were affecting my asthma. All in all, 2020 would have been a banner year, had it been sliced with the sterling bread knife already in hand. Then along came Covid! And dash away, dash away, dash away all!

THE GROWTH OF COVID-19

After the onset of Covid-19, first observed in the U.S. not far from us, and its rapid spread around the country and the world, our governor, by the end of February, had declared a stay-at-home order. Non-essential businesses, schools

continued. We were all able to access the company server and continue our work from home, though it did mean I was only able to enjoy the new office for a single day. It was tense and frustrating, but manageable.

We were supposed to spend a week in Longview during April, but the resort was forced to shutter and cancel all reservations. The weather was decent as winter turned into spring and the days got longer. Donna and I started walking in the mornings, (and getting to know all the dogs in the neighborhood), something we still try to do as much as possible. We even managed to get a good hike in along Coal Creek in July, but as the drudgery of the virus threat prodded us further, tempers flared, not just because of the increasing isolation, but because of those who either didn't believe or didn't care that there was a problem, refusing to wear masks or keep



Mount Rainier from a neighborhood walk

their distances. This created a threat all its own.

Early in the summer I needed to get license plates for the Hyundai I'd put back together after its accident in 2016, and someone coming out of the agency turned back to the rest of us standing in line outside, all wearing masks, and said we didn't need to wear those masks, it was all just a hoax. This was and continues to be the dangerous attitude that too many people still have.



Chuckanut Drive near Bellingham

BRIGHT SIDES

While I miss rehearsals and performances, I've been able to spend more time with Donna, who used to complain so often that I was never home and now complains that I need to go back to the office because I'm driving her crazy. But we've done more cooking, putting together a list of favorite meals. We've enjoyed

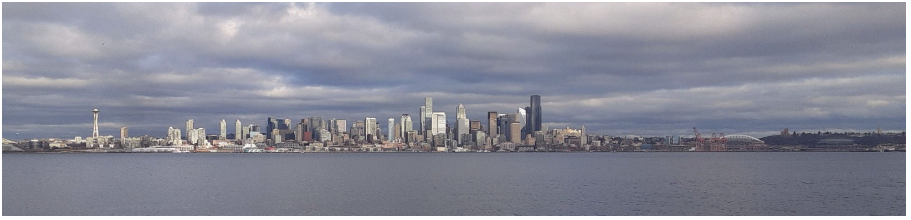
takeout from restaurants that we had not formerly been able to frequent much. We've been able to take some drives to get us out, including an early fall outing along Chuckanut Drive into Bellingham, and have been pretty lucky to have decent weather to enjoy them. We discovered several more blueberry farms not quite so far away as "almost to Canada" and, in late summer, continued our tradition of picking despite frustration with several other people not wearing their masks. And I found that I not only was able to save the time (and gasoline) that I used to spend commuting, but with music performances curtailed, music writing has expanded, with several new pieces completed or substantially completed this year, notably the 'Cornucopia' Concerto for Trumpet and Brass Band and Shifting Sands for English Horn and Orchestra.

The experience of working from home and proving that it CAN be done, provides hope that even upon finally declaring retirement I can, if necessary, continue to do some work without the need to go into an office, leaving us to move elsewhere if we want (and we have been discussing it.)

Obviously, there is hope on the horizon as the new vaccines for Covid-19 are being rolled out and distributed. As senior citizens we will likely be in the second wave of inoculations after front-line workers, and



Crow taking a break in Fauntleroy Park down the hill



Downtown Seattle across Elliott Bay from Duwamish Head

while it may mean an extra month or so to get our shots it may also mean that there will be time to observe any negative effects early recipients may experience. Initial indications are that with this new approach to vaccine (mRNA) there may be even fewer unfavorable complications than with the typical flu and other vaccines.

2021 will still likely have a troublesome start, with cases continuing

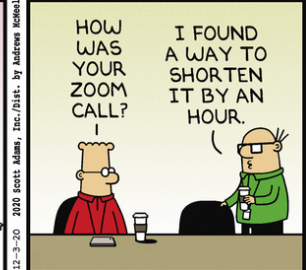
to rise and treatment facilities reaching or exceeding full capacity, but as the year moves forward, especially with a new administration that may be more realistic in its approach to defeating the virus, we can have hope that we will see a gradual improvement that will result in at least a vision of normalcy before we all completely forget what it was like.



We wish you all the healthiest and happiest new year that you can have! Stay safe!

Jeff and Donna

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