



In the PINES

By T. Lee Brown

What a great year

It's been a tough year for kids, including mine. Tough year for parents, including me. Tough year for educators. Guess who's not having a tough year?

Multi-zillion-dollar tech corporations, that's who. The smoke-choked, politically divided, pandemic mess that is 2020 has brought riches of users and data to companies that make money from digital device use. If you're Fortnite, Amazon, TikTok, or Google, this year is for you!

For the rest of us? Dang, 2020 suuuuuucks. We don't have normal concerts and parties and school. Fun vacations and hugs from grandparents are a rarity. It's

understandable that we'd turn to some extra tech for comfort, though we know it's kinda unhealthy.

Our family usually shuts off devices from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. That way we get 24 hours of real presence and together-time. It's called Digital Shabbat.

Even something so basic feels harder to do nowadays. This week we cheated, leaving my husband's phone on in case my family in Lane County had to evacuate. By Saturday night I was glued to the fire websites, weeping over the loss of my favorite spot on the McKenzie River.

Kinda unhealthy, yes. Also understandable, given the circumstances. But what if our tech use in general goes far beyond kinda-unhealthy? What if we've entered an era of deep, corrosive wrongness that's destroying our culture, our democracy, and our kids?

Experts believe we have entered that era. People are starting to catch on. Soaring into the Top Ten on Netflix this week came a documentary called "The Social Dilemma." It features high-level technologists from companies like Google, Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook/Instagram/Whatsapp.

These folks were trying to create something good — or at least cool

— while making lots of money. Instead they created a monster.

Big-name investor Roger McNamee explains that for 50 years, tech companies made money selling hardware and software — a nice, simple business. Then everything changed.

"For the last 10 years," he says in the film, "the biggest companies in Silicon Valley have been in the business of selling their users."

Wait, what? Who? Yep, they are selling us. We the People. They're not just selling ads targeted at us. They're not just selling information about us. They are selling our attention and behavior — which they're remarkably good at nudging, shifting, and changing.

They're selling our choices, our focus, and our future. Even the people who build the technology find themselves unable to resist its influence. Brewing a great beer doesn't make your liver magically immune to alcohol.

Tech giants unleash a constant barrage of scientific experiments on users. As the wolf told Little Red Riding Hood: the better to manipulate you with, my dear.

"You are a lab rat," explains Sandy Parakilas,

former operations manager at Facebook and product manager at Uber. "We're all lab rats."

He points out that we're not lab rats for something positive, like developing a cure for cancer.

"We're just zombies," he says, "and they want us to look at more ads so they can make more money."

Call it Big Data or call it Surveillance Capitalism. In the end, tech companies are selling you and me. They not only learn everything about our behavior — who our friends are, where we drive, what images we look at, what links we click — they modify that behavior. Being aware of the manipulation does little to prevent it.

They're selling our kids, too. Parents who try to be responsible about their kids' screen time are finding it hard during Covid. When we checked in with Sisters School District last week, we were handed a Google Chromebook and a login to the Canvas platform.

Canvas is a cloud-based learning management system that received a crummy privacy rating of 63 percent and a Warning label from Common Sense Media. The Chromebook tablet allows Google to aggregate behavior data about children

worldwide, insuring a lifetime of future corporate earnings.

Most users have no idea how their data is used and abused. I don't have that excuse. I've been researching and sounding the alarm about all this for several years. I quit social media and Amazon Prime. We don't play video games. Geolocation is turned off on my phone. Etcetera.

But my family still gets sucked in. Trapped in our house (that we are fortunate to have), keeping distance (from germs and humans alike), looking through pea-soup smoke at a dim salmon-orange dot in the sky (apparently it's called the sun), it's hard to imagine disconnecting any further.

And so the Chromebook comes on for math. Zoom — notorious for privacy problems — brings relatives together for video chats. YouTube — one of the worst tech media offenders — offers groovy old music videos. A series on Netflix takes our minds off the social infrastructure crumbling around us.

Glued to my screen, falling down the rabbit hole, I can almost believe that 2020 is tolerable. Yeah, sure. It's been a great year.

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CITY OF SISTERS NOTICE OF SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET HEARING			
* For supplemental budgets proposing a change in any fund's expenditures by more than 10 percent.			
A public hearing on a proposed supplemental budget for <u>CITY OF SISTERS</u> (District Name)			
for the current fiscal year will be held at <u>520 E. Cascade Ave., Sisters, OR 97759</u> (Location)			
The hearing will take place on <u>September 23, 2020</u> <u>6:30</u> <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PM (Date) (Time)			
The purpose of the hearing is to discuss the supplemental budget with interested persons.			
A copy of the supplemental budget document may be inspected or obtained on or after <u>September 16, 2020</u> at (Date)			
<u>520 E. Cascade Ave.</u> between the hours of <u>8:00</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM and <u>5:00</u> <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PM (Location) (Time) (Time)			
SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGES AMOUNTS SHOWN ARE REVISED TOTALS IN THOSE FUNDS BEING MODIFIED			
FUND: GENERAL FUND			
Resource	Amount	Requirement	Amount
		1 Finance - Materials and Services	10,500
		2 Operating Contingency	(10,500)
Revised Total Fund Resources	4,034,381	Revised Total Fund Requirements	4,034,381
Comments: Increase in Materials and Services for City Managed Account administration			
FUND: SEWER FUND			
Resource	Amount	Requirement	Amount
		1 Capital Outlay	64,000
		2 Operating Contingency	(64,000)
Revised Total Fund Resources	2,870,217	Revised Total Fund Requirements	2,870,217
Comments: Increase in Capital Outlay due to Aeration improvement project			
FUND: SEWER SDC FUND			
Resource	Amount	Requirement	Amount
		1 Capital Outlay	96,000
		2 Operating Contingency	(96,000)
Revised Total Fund Resources	1,939,594	Revised Total Fund Requirements	1,939,594
Comments: Increase in Capital Outlay due to Aeration improvement project			
FUND: TRANSPORTATION SDC FUND			
Resource	Amount	Requirement	Amount
		1 Capital Outlay	84,515
		2 Reserve for Future Expenditures	(84,515)
Revised Total Fund Resources	1,083,115	Revised Total Fund Requirements	1,083,115
Comments: Increase in Capital Outlay due to US20/Locust project design and right of way acquisition			