



Publisher's Notebook

August 2020 Matt Winters

Congratulations for staying well as covidtime wears on

I've taken to calling this the "covidtime." Although we aren't ordered to shelter in place by health officials — at least not as I write this — the necessity of staying out of circulation as much as possible makes this feel like an eddy in the course of life, a swirling pool in which forward progress is stalled.

The novels "One Hundred Years of Solitude" and "Love in the Time of Cholera" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez cross my mind as capturing some essence similar to today's — of time trapped in amber, still rich in experience but somehow removed from reality.

I read "One Hundred Years" in a rough encampment below Cerro Aconcagua in Argentina — the highest mountain outside Asia. Between altitude sickness and dysentery, I was on the edge of hallucinating anyway, and Garcia Marquez's tale of a faraway culture in the Columbian backwaters really burrowed into my imagination.

Having the luxury of a job that can mostly be conducted by computer and internet, many of my covidtime days are spent at

home, with lots of them blending into another — kind of like I experienced in that alternately sweltering and freezing tent by a rushing glacial stream. This time's not all bad — sort of convalescence without, so far, getting sick. A recorded version of "Magic Mountain," Thomas Mann's meditative look at life in an Alpine tuberculosis sanitarium, sometimes plays in the background. A rich book that cinched Mann the Nobel Prize, it isn't gloomy despite its setting. The patients carry on rich intellectual lives and sometimes manage to get up to mischief.

Unlike Mann's privileged protagonist, Hans Castorp, most of us still have to make our mortgage, rent, car, credit card and utility payments. Covidtime may seem to have relatively few similarities to Castorp's extended retreat in the Swiss Alps. But like Hans, we can choose to use some of this weird time exploring our area's world-class scenery, enjoying its outdoor recreational opportunities, having low-key fun with loved ones and meditating on the slow march of time.

It's encouraging to read stories in this month's Coast River Business Journal, learning more about our neighbors who remain

optimistic while threading their way through the uncertainties of running hotels, stores, restaurants and charter-fishing operations. The new coronavirus is just latest in many challenges our area's economy has survived. As in the past, a great majority of businesses will come out the other side. Worry is natural but despair gets us nowhere.

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Like swimmers in a riptide, sometimes the best thing to do in an economic downturn is to stay afloat, intelligently conserving energy while keeping an eye open for chances to angle shoreward. In such circumstances, staying alive is a kind of profound progress, and something to be proud of. This goes for businesses and families alike.



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