

## ***2020 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian***

In 2020 it isn't really true that laughter is the best medicine. A COVID-19 vaccine is. And it's tough for us to find humor in a year when 300,000 Americans have died in the pandemic.

That's a tragedy deserving of tears, not smiles. And yet... life goes on, for those of us fortunate enough to still be living. So here's some glimpses of how we've managed to cope during these tough times.

Our new-ish dog, Mooka, tops the list of what drives us crazy while also keeping us (questionably) sane. We never realized that a Husky mix would be obsessed with hunting mice on our ten rural acres.

Are there mice in the Arctic? Guess so. Sometimes Laurel waits to see how long Mooka will stare at tall grass where her prey are lurking before returning to Laurel's side. The answer appears to be forever.

Which also is the answer to how long it takes everyone on a Zoom call to get everything working properly on their computer. Deep conversations about the meaning of life in the Covid Era are difficult to have when most of the time is spent with "Can you hear me?" "How about now?" "Unmute yourself!" "You're breaking up."

Brian has been doing most of the grocery shopping, his role both before and after the pandemic hit.

At first he wore an N95 mask and gloves into stores. The gloves turned out to be more trouble than they were worth, since he'd have to remember to take a glove off before opening the car door to avoid contaminating the door handle. Cries of "Damn it!" would carry across the parking lot with regularity as he forgot the proper glove removal sequence to get the bags into his car.

Cursing also accompanied our watching of Trump's notoriously fact-free Covid press conferences. Fortunately, the Secret Service isn't able to monitor what was yelled at the television. We only hope.

Lots of people bemoan how they aren't able to go to movie theaters any more, instead having to fire up Netflix. Well, we'd love to have something more than a barely smoldering Netflix, given our crappy CenturyLink DSL. Much of our movie-viewing consists of watching a spinning ball and the caption "buffering,"

Both of which tend to last for as long as Mooka stares at a mouse hole.

Cooking would be something to occupy us during these stay-at-home times if either of us liked to cook. As it is, we each prepare our own basic meals, doing our best not to intrude on the other person's sacred space in front of the microwave.

Here's a cooking tip: Trader Joe's frozen organic brown rice takes just three minutes to prepare. Be sure the proper side of the bag is down before pressing "Start."

Aside from Zoom calls, our main socializing occurs at the dog park. Not so much with people, of course, since we have to stay at least six feet away from the humans, while the dogs are much more intimate with us.

The presidential election was a high point, especially since an oversupply of marijuana in Oregon has made it really cheap. It's been pleasing to see Biden win, then win again, and keep on winning as Trump's not-so-genius legal team bumbles its way to loss after loss in the courts.

May 2021 be filled with more laughter and less sorrow for all of us. Our hearts go out to everyone who has suffered during the pandemic, which is almost everyone.