

## The (not so) Plain and Simple Correspondent: Apathy... or a Path Onward?

Katie Green, *Columnist*

Choices, choices, too many choices. At a restaurant, after attending a fabulous symphony concert last week, the bewildering array of choices on the menu induced brain paralysis. It was a strain to finally settle on something. Similarly, the waning days before the midterm election has fostered indecision in the minds of some as they scan the menu of left, right, and centrist hopefuls running for public office and weigh the promises, claims and accusations. My own rule of thumb, as a person who spends lots of time thrashing about in the kitchen, is to choose the candidates who will create a casserole layered with chunks of what is holy, merciful, just, and kind ... if – and

### EDITORS' COLUMN



We often make light of the blessing and curse it is to not own our own press — and we've been open about our pressing delays, some of which relate to the press and some of which relate to graphic design bottlenecks. If anyone thought printing a publication was like clicking print on your printer at home, you're in for a surprise. Last edition, we experienced fortune and misfortune that was truly the epitome of owning a small business: going in on the ground floor, seeing every aspect of what it takes to put out a product (and getting your hands dirty and sorting papers from the refuse box when you find out you're 500 short!) — all while other deadlines loom for other jobs.

We've been printing this little independently-owned community publication for two years, as of last edition. Its printing was the first time the stars aligned (albeit through misfortune) and we were able to see the press in action.

We got to meet Chris, a press operator and manager for 25 years - the guy who ensures the paper is crisp and colorful each edition, and we got to see him light up when we told him all the wonderful things you all share with us when you think an edition looks particularly nice and colorful.

Thank you to everyone that supports us and our passion to build community every edition. We know we've been busy, we know we have so much more to do, improve and build — so, truly, thank you for joining us on this journey.

— Nicole Aimone, *Editor-in-Chief* and Taylor Scott, *Managing Editor*

### ON THE COVER

"Cast your ballot" (2021) Photo, by Nicole Aimone



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Cover image traced by Taylor Scott, *Managing Editor*

it's a big if – one can discern accurately from the welter of "information" bruted about out there concerning the demented souls who run for this and that. Once decisions have been reached, no matter how agonizing, and marks made by names, one will have fulfilled one's duty as citizen, as is our hard-won privilege, and one can only hope the collective vote will serve up the savory best, not a mess of pottage. It's a gamble. Who knows what the ramifications will be until the political machine rolls on into next year and the next, cranky and imperfect. Maybe we will have helped shoot ourselves in the foot, maybe helped save our bacon (to mix a few metaphors).

I am concerned that apathy will be more of a problem this election than inflated partisanship or indecision. In fact, one commentator stated that young black men are especially apathetic about participating in what they see as the mockery of elections and one can hardly blame them. What has this country done for people of color but alternately punish and neglect them, hardly ever granting them anything but tenuous citizenship which can be snatched back with each new administration. In the apartment house where we live, since politics are rarely discussed openly, some of my fears of apathy were laid to rest when, toward the end of one of the debates, I roamed the halls and could hear from behind closed doors the sound of televised candidate voices. I don't know what side these folks are coming down on or if they are still dithering, but at least they are listening, considering.

Returning to the symphony concert, there is no better metaphor of how the world could be if it only would. People of all ages, sizes, colors, and nationalities playing instruments that

take momentary turns in the spotlight then blend back into the ensemble again. Weaving, weaving, weaving, led by diverse composers – on this particular program a German Jew expounding on Scottish themes, an American-born composer living in Switzerland who created a



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violin concerto for a Ukrainian virtuoso, a monumental tone poem by a German who was accused of being pro-Nazi but was a-political, as was later proved by a post-war commission, and was only trying to shield his Jewish daughter-in-law and his grandchildren by appearing to go along with the Reich. Music exists in its own cosmos and we can all get lost happily among those glittering galaxies, no matter the genre. Its appeal is universal. Some scientists hypothesize that music may have even existed before human speech.

By way of illustrating how important music is to our species, our California son was visiting last week and while we were meandering around the UW campus one afternoon we saw two rather scruffily-dressed, impressively hirsute men on a bench engaged in an animated exchange,

nose to nose. They were generating a little heat, gesticulating energetically. I tensed. As we neared them we overheard that they were disputing some fine point about Johnny Cash! A little difference in interpretation, it would appear. At our house we sometimes disagree on the merits of certain pieces, but politely, or so I maintain, since the decibels never soar on the subject, nor do I reach for the rolling pin ... but I have been known to roll my eyes toward heaven and He sometimes throws his napkin in the air.

The worldwide lectionary reading from the Bible for the church-going contingent this week included the parable of the pestiferous widow who wouldn't take no for an answer in asking for justice against her opponent. She tirelessly knocked, and pounded on the door of the judge "who neither feared God nor had respect for people". The judge finally "said to himself ... because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice so that she may not wear me out by continually coming." Well I ask you, can we do less? I can think of a few judges, not excepting the highest in the land, who deserve to meet up with a gaggle of demanding widows set on wearing them out, (a terrifying prospect). Apathy, indifference, is the reverse. It is the dried up mud puddle, sere and lifeless, while persistence can lead down the path to the powerful, thundering Niagara Falls of justice.

VOTE

*Katie, who until recently lived in Plain, has been writing for fun and profit since childhood. Self-described as opinionated, she writes in the interests of a more loving, better-functioning world for all. She may be reached at katiuegreen@icloud.com.*

## Our Fragile Democracy — Part 8: The Bill of Rights - The Origin

Beverly Pestel, *Columnist*

"Our Fragile Democracy" is a series of thought-provoking columns by retired local professor Beverly Pestel exploring the history and struggles of our nation's form of government from its founding to our current social, cultural and political tensions — looking at solutions and means of learning to work with one another, in hopes of preserving our democracy.

If you want to have an unvarnished view of the significance of civil rights, go to the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) founded in 1920 "to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States". I do, so I did.

Their take is this: "The Constitution was remarkable, but deeply flawed. For one thing, it did not include a specific declaration – or bill – of individual rights. It specified what the government could do but did not say what it could not do. For another, it did not apply to everyone. The 'consent of the governed' meant propertied white men only."

Previous columns have dealt with the expansion of voting rights covering about 175 years that finally brought American citizens of every race and gender eighteen years and older into the consent column. That was huge, but there is so much more at stake.

The Bill of Rights is the name given to the first ten amendments to the Constitution ratified in 1791, three years after the Constitution was ratified. So, why the three-year delay between the Constitution and the Bill of Rights? Why not do it all at once and get it over with?

The Founders were certainly concerned with individual rights, they said so in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold

these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It does seem, however, that the "among these" and the "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" issues could have benefitted from a little flushing out in the Constitution.

During the writing of the Constitution the issue of a bill of rights focused on two opposing points of view. The most straightforward position came from those



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who were afraid of a strong centralized government, and consequently argued for a bill of rights that would guarantee that this new government would not trample on the freedoms recently won from the British. The other side argued that a bill of rights was unnecessary. Unnecessary? A motion to have a bill of rights included in the Constitution was defeated without debate. That definitely needs some flushing out. And why did those opposed to a bill of rights win the argument in 1787 only to lose in 1791?

To be fair, after independence had been declared in 1776, states immediately began writing constitutions and bills of rights.

Many of the rights enumerated in the state bills were those citizens believed were naturally theirs and that one of the most important tasks of governments was to protect them. The argument that a federal bill of rights was unnecessary stemmed partially from the fact that these rights were addressed in the state constitutions.

In 1789 the First Congress of the United States prepared a Joint Resolution. Transcripts read: "The Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the government, will best ensure the beneficial ends of its institution."

Hmm. "[A] number of States...expressed a desire..." Put more plainly, New York and Virginia specifically had refused to ratify the Constitution until a pledge was made to add amendments to the Constitution addressing rights. Since arriving at 100% ratification of the Constitution was considered essential, this pledge had been made and the Joint Resolution addressed this promise. Alexander Hamilton expressed it this way in Federalist Paper No. 9: "A FIRM Union will be of the utmost moment to the peace and liberty of the States, as a barrier against domestic faction and insurrection." So, how did the Bill of Rights folks prevail over those who had opposed its inclusion in the original Constitution?

Those opposed to a bill of rights in the original Constitution did not do so because they opposed the principle. States, after all, already had bills of rights.

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