

## HOW I SPENT MY COVID SUMMER

As a child of the 1950s one of my adolescent delights was reading *Mad Magazine*. A favorite *Mad* article describes a student writing an essay in the first grade on “how I spent my summer vacation.” The article follows the student as he moved through grade school, High School, college, graduate school, and finally a Ph.D., all with ever more sophisticated versions of “How I spent my summer vacation.” This year’s Oregon SAF annual convention even proposed attendees share videos about what they did this summer as we all attempted to cope with Covid-19. So as a retired Ph.D. forest hydrologist, how did I spend my Covid summer?

My wife and I followed the Oregon governor’s orders to shelter-in-place. We live on a 36-acre former dairy in Alpine that is planted to a tree farm. We are blessed to have a beautiful place to retreat to and to be able to work on projects. Twenty-five years ago, when we first moved to our home, I planted Douglas-fir on upland sites and a few ponderosa pines, western redcedars, and hybrid poplars in wetter locations. Being confined to the property this summer allowed me to check out the health of the forest and removed dead and damaged trees. The Willamette Valley has been suffering from a prolonged and severe drought that has affected many stands including mine. Squirrel and ice storm damage were also present. I now have a three-year supply of firewood stored in my barn and I was able to provide my brother with his winter firewood.

We have diligently tried to follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance about using masks, social distancing, and washing hands. This is our way of protecting others, lowering the Covid-infection curve, and showing our patriotism. That meant no in-person SAF chapter meetings and no in-person SAF state and national conventions. This was particularly bad for me because I had not been diligently documenting my Continuing Forestry Education credits and it was time to renew as an SAF Certified Forester. Fortunately I could participate in both the state and national conventions using video conferencing. They were great and I filled up my CFE credits! Of course I missed seeing colleagues and friends in person, but the SAF conferences allowed me to get updates on our catastrophic wildfires, forest watershed issues, and other topics of interest to me.

Staying home also allowed me to complete some long-term professional and personal projects. When I retired seven years ago one of the projects I was working on was the Alsea Watershed Study (AWS) Revisited. That research has provided new information about the effectiveness of contemporary forest Best Management Practices. One element in the original AWS (1958-1972) and the revisit was measurement of dissolved oxygen response to forest management. I was the lead author on that paper but it had languished in my retirement. I had the isolation and time this summer to get it completed, accepted, and published (Understanding dissolved

oxygen concentrations in a discontinuously perennial stream within a managed forest, *Forest Ecology and Management* 479 (2021)). I also finished a long-time effort to co-author a book, *Justifiable Kidnapping*, which is a true story about how and why my friend, Ron Whitelaw, abducted his children and stood trial after hiding with them in Lebanon, OR for seven years (<https://tinyurl.com/yxdlvdjn>). Finally, my identical twin brother, Dr. Gene Ice, and his wife, who live in Tennessee, got trapped in Salem, OR when the governor announced the shelter-in-place. We used this opportunity to write a book, *The Egg*, which describes what it is like to grown up as identical twin brothers. The chapter on Extrasensory Perception (ESP) is mind blowing. We have printed author's copies of the book but must wait to finish it for when Gene can get back to his home where he has some key photos. I've even been working on my model railroad, finishing scenery and structure projects that have been in boxes for years. My model railroad theme is circa 1920 logging.

Finally, I learned about an opportunity to partner with the Oregon Department of Forestry to reduce fuels near my house. The program even provides modest cost sharing funds to compensate for labor and materials (<https://tinyurl.com/y24ojset>). I pruned and thinned the trees on several acres around our house, controlled brush with herbicides and tractor crushing, and mowed high grass. I removed most of trimming debris and created four huge burn piles. There were some real scorchers when I burned the piles. Just before Labor Day my wife and I had to drive down to California for a family emergency. Like so many others, we faced the dilemma of driving and conducting essential business during a disruptive pandemic. When we drove back to Oregon it was through the Sacramento Valley under an apocalyptic pall. We even watched from I-5 as air tankers dropped fire retardant near Medford and took back roads to get around road closures. It was reassuring to have done what I could to reduce wildfire risks around our home in a year of terrible burns, but sometimes weather overcomes even the best preparations.

So how did I spend my Covid summer? It was frustrating not to be able to workout at my gym or go shopping without careful precautions. It was extremely upsetting not to be able to see and hug family, or to go out to lunch and a movie with a friend. But I did get more done on my little tree farm than I have for the last 10 years and I completed some personal and professional projects. I even attended key SAF meetings. But boy do I look forward to 2021 when I can look you in the eye, speak to you without a mask, and shake your hand. And what did you do this Covid summer?

Have you ever wanted to know what it's like to be an identical twin? Experience the adventure of two lifetimes as identical twins Gary and Gene describe the joys of brotherhood, family, friends, pets, sports, science and faith. What is it really like to be a twin? Can they communicate by extra sensory perception? What mischief have the Twins kept secret? What are the lessons learned from 140 years of individual and shared living? All is revealed!

Dr. George Gary Ice is an award-winning professional forester and an author of numerous technical and peer-reviewed publications. He is the author of *A Book of Christmas Miracles* and *Justified Kidnaping*. He is an elder with the Bellfountain Community Church and lives with his wife Becky in Alpine Oregon.



Dr. Gene Emery Ice is an award-winning physicist and an author of numerous technical and peer-reviewed publications. He is author of *Music World* and is an elder of the Presbyterian Church USA. He lives with his wife Rosalyn in Oak Ridge TN.

The Egg



G. Ice and G. Ice

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# The Egg

Wisdom from 140 years of living

