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Sherman Pruitt opens up

'I will forever be wounded and hurt by this experience'

BY BRIAN SOERGEL

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This is the second of a two-part series on Sauk-Suiattle Police Chief Sherman Pruitt, who Mayor Nelson initially selected as Edmonds' new police chief. City councilmembers, with a 4-3 vote, confirmed Pruitt's appointment on Dec. 8.



Sherman Pruitt

A week later, on Dec. 15, Nelson rescinded his offer, announcing that newly unearthed information showed Pruitt "omitted relevant details from his application materials."

Specifically, in a personal letter to Pruitt the Beacon obtained, Nelson said Pruitt had failed to disclose that he had applied for a lateral position with the Lake Stevens Police Department, a position he was denied after a background check.

In part one of the series, Pruitt explained that he applied for the job and that he was aware of public opposition to his appointment as the other candidate for police chief was Acting Chief Jim Lawless, a 25-year veteran of the Edmonds Police Department.

Pruitt also spoke about a domestic violence allegation from more than 20 years ago, an allegation eventually rejected by a prosecuting attorney after the case was reviewed; and of his claim that Councilmember Vivian Olson acted with "intent and malice" in attempting to derail his appointment.

(Read Olson's response in a Guest View column on page 4.)

As with part one, the Beacon agreed to publish Pruitt's story on his terms, offering a question-and-answer format that he was able to read before publication. He had a few changes that did not attempt to alter the main narrative – that this was Pruitt's side of the story.

You can read the first part of The Beacon's story at bit.ly/3sUusOb.



Comments have been edited for clarity.

Beacon: Can you talk about the Lake Stevens job that you were not hired for more than a decade ago? Mayor Mike Nelson said this was the reason he rescinded the job offer – that he later discovered you didn't disclose that on your application.

Pruitt: I was told by the HR Director (Jessica Neill-Hoyson) and the mayor that they received information that I submitted an employment application with the city of Lake Stevens in 2009. I told Jessica I don't remember applying with them.

I believed the city of Edmonds was providing me accurate information. Therefore, I submitted two public information requests with the city of Lake Stevens to verify if I submitted an employment application.

I don't remember submitting an employment application with the city of Lake Stevens. The two public information request responses from the city of Lake Stevens means that they do not have any record of

see **PRUITT PART 2** page 11 ▶



Doug Lofstrom with his "Edmonds ... It's Our Town," which has a prominent place at the Edmonds Waterfront Center.

BUSY ART, BUSY ARTIST

Doug Lofstrom started painting in his late 70s – turns out he's pretty good

BY BRIAN SOERGEL

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It's never too late to start something new, and 83-year-old Doug Lofstrom is exhibit one. Long taken by the thought of painting – but never putting inner thought to canvas for 75 years or so – he somehow has managed to become one of Edmonds' most prolific artists.

A longtime Edmonds resident and former real estate agent for Windermere Edmonds, Lofstrom now works furiously to catch up on years of blank canvases.

You could call it a hobby, but Lofstrom's painting rises above the quotidian, and buyers hand over good money for his bright-sized work.

And visitors to the soon-to-open Edmonds Waterfront Center will take in one of his grandest works: "Edmonds ... It's Our Town," a 10-foot-wide acrylic-on-canvas triptyc with a 48-by-72-inch mid-



Beacon photos by Brian Soergel

Detail from "Edmonds ... It's Our Town," with the Waterfront Center and the Edmonds Center for the Arts. Below, the full painting.

dle piece and two accompanying side pieces.

Lofstrom completed the piece in 2017, soon after he started painting in his home and outside, in good weather, in front of Windermere's office on Fifth Avenue South. He gave it to the Waterfront Center, but hopes a donor will purchase it from him and donate it to the museum.

You might say the "Edmonds ... It's Our Town" is busy, and Lofstrom would agree.

"It's extremely busy," he said the other day as he stood before his work and attempted to explain it all. If that were possible.

There's certainly a lot to look at, and repeat viewings will no doubt bring new discoveries. There's an abundance of blues, of reds, of yellows. Mount Baker is in view, as is Mount Rainier, no matter that their geographical proximity is not exactly spot on.

The Sound is there. The Olympics.

see **LOFSTROM** page 12 ▶



► from **LOFSTROM** page 1

The peninsula. The Walla Walla ferry. The fountain.

Edmonds businesses are grouped on a horizontal plane with, again, verisimilitude be damned. ChurchKey Pub sits on the far right, the Waterfront Center holding down the left. This freewheeling expression is overlaid with names of business owners, of phrases Lofstrom's fond of.

Among those locals are Brooke (Baker) from Chanterelle. Haifa (Alhussieni) from Cafe Louvre. (Greg) Hoff from Windermere, and Shubert Ho from Salt & Iron, among others. James Spangler, formerly of Spangler's Book Exchange is listed twice. And Tracy Felix from ARTspot, who Lofstrom said was an early supporter who provided needed encouragement, is there too.

(Editor's note: Freewheeling? Yes. I asked him where the Edmonds Beacon was, and Lofstrom promptly picked up a pen and scratched it in.)

Crowding into the scenery are textured Picasso-esque shapes, blobs, letters, and other randos you'd have to look at closely to identify.



Photo courtesy of Doug Lofstrom

Doug Lofstrom working on the details of his painting late in the process.

"All this stuff is action and color. It pops. And it makes me go 'wow.' I'll find people just standing and staring at it."

Doug Lofstrom

"All this stuff is action and color," Lofstrom said, sweeping an arm over the three panels. "It pops. And it makes me go 'wow.' I'll find people just standing and staring at it. Oh, what is it? Oh, right, it's the fountain. I'm very energetic, and I wanted it to show the energy of the city in it."

People are taking notice. "Lilly Hendershot (of the Branding Iron), upon seeing the Edmonds piece, said it would become my signature work," Lofstrom said. "Me? A signature work? I was new to painting."

A serendipitous trip to Italy

The artistic bug began nibbling on Lof-

strom during a glorious four-month trip to Europe with his wife, Carol Kinney, which included a month in Italy.

"We just loved Italy," he said. "We purchased a painting there from an artist named Massimo Cruciani, an acrylic on glass.

"We had it shipped to us. When we got home, it was like, Oh, my God, it was just gorgeous. I loved the colors. And I thought, maybe I should try to paint because I had painted once in 1969, just for fun. I did just one painting."

He told Carol he'd like to teach himself to paint. She said he could barely draw his own name.

Undeterred by the good-natured ribbing, Lofstrom laid out a plan.

"I would paint – get a load of this – I would paint 25 paintings, and then I would sell only one. So I'd always have an inventory of 25. That was the deal. Carol said, 'Oh my God, you'll never sell one. Why are you doing this?'"

He pressed on. Buying supplies. Painting on a canvas atop the washing machine. Painting on a large canvas held up by two chairs and a desk.

A fast worker, Lofstrom had 25 paintings by the end of 2016. The first one sold to a

buddy, a fellow real estate agent searching for a present for his wife. He asked a price. Lofstrom, perhaps overstating its value, put forth \$1,300. Not so fast. The buddy offered \$650. Sold.

Not bad for the first of Lofstrom's future oeuvre.

Lofstrom and Carol, no longer skeptical, slapped high fives.

"It was so fun," the budding new painter, then in his late 70s, recalled. "And then another guy showed up about a week later and bought one for \$1,000. And I thought, OK, this is good, because I've now paid for my materials."

(The first two paintings were decidedly less busy – Airstream trailers pulled by old trucks.)

Emboldened, Lofstrom approached Denise Cole at Cole Galley.

"Doug, you can't do that," Lofstrom said Cole told him. "You're untrained. I have a whole bunch of painters who are great artists who work to hang their paintings here. You cannot be charging those prices."

So Lofstrom took his art – and himself – to the street, where he sold several paintings to passers-by. One painting – crafted in front of Engel's Pub – pictured a cityscape he painted from his memory of Italy. It was 6 feet long and 4 feet high.

A guy stopped by one day and asked Lofstrom what he'd take for the painting. Lofstrom named his price: \$3,500. The guy offered \$1,600. Sold. The guy left for the bank and returned with 16 \$100 bills.

Capitalism and street bartering in action. No agent fees. "Oh my God," Lofstrom said. "This was all so phenomenal."

After more painting and a few more sales, friend and Windermere Edmonds owner Greg Hoff posed a simple question.

Why not paint what you see in Edmonds? The result is on the second floor of the Waterfront Center.

Artist website: dougloft.com.

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3	5			6		9
	9			7	5	
5	7					4
	6	1		2	7	
9				8		1
1	2			9		
5		9		4	8	
8	9	3		6		

Sudoku solution on page 5

Help protect your family's inheritance



Deanne V. Bilsborough
Financial Advisor

You might contribute to your IRA for decades to help pay for your retirement. But if you don't need all the money, you may want to leave what's left to your children or grandchildren. However, if you want to ensure they get the most from this inheritance, you'll need to do some planning.

Here's a little background: Up until a couple of years ago, when you left the proceeds of your IRA to your beneficiaries, they could choose to "stretch" required withdrawals over a long period, based on their life expectancies. These required withdrawals were generally taxable, so this "stretch IRA" allowed your beneficiaries to greatly reduce the annual taxes due, while benefiting from longer tax-deferred growth potential. And the younger the beneficiary, the longer the life expectancy and the lower the withdrawals, so this technique would have been especially valuable for your grandchildren or even great-grandchildren.

Changes in laws affecting retirement accounts have significantly limited the stretch IRA strategy. Now, most non-spouse beneficiaries must withdraw all assets from the IRA within 10 years of the IRA owner's death. The beneficiary generally does not have to take out any money during that 10-year period, but at the end of it, the entire balance must be withdrawn – and that could result in a pretty big tax bill.

The stretch IRA strategy can still be used for surviving spouses, beneficiaries who are no more than 10 years younger than the deceased IRA owner, and beneficiaries who are chronically ill or disabled. Minor children of the original account owner are also eligible for a stretch IRA – but only until they reach the age of majority, at which time the 10-year rule applies.

So, if you want to leave your IRA to family members who don't meet any of the above exceptions, what can you do?

One possibility is a Roth IRA conversion. You could convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA over your lifetime, so your heirs would receive the Roth IRA. They would still be required to withdraw the assets within 10 years, but unlike with a traditional IRA, Roth IRA withdrawals are generally tax-free. These conversions are taxable, so you'll want to consult your tax professional in addition to your financial advisor, to determine if this strategy can help you achieve your legacy goals.

Another option is to purchase life insurance, which can provide a specific dollar amount to your heirs or be used to help cover additional taxes. This may be especially advantageous if you are 72 or older, in good health, and taking withdrawals – technically called required minimum distributions – from your retirement accounts, such as your traditional IRA and your 401(k). If you don't really need the money, you can use these withdrawals to pay for some or all of the insurance premiums. Life insurance can't replace an IRA as a means to save for retirement, though, so you should consult with your financial advisor to make sure you are working toward all your goals.

In any case, if you have a sizable IRA or you don't need the funds that you're required to take from your retirement accounts, you may want to start thinking about what you want to do with the money. The more thorough your legacy planning, the better your chances of meeting your legacy goals.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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► from **OPENS UP** page 11

background investigator was hired to do my background investigation with no biases, and I passed my background investigation.

I got questioned when I went back to face my community and my council. I got questioned, but it was a good thing that my council was so supportive and understanding and caring. They know my true character. They listened to me. I showed them documentation. I said, here's the facts, here's the truth.

For the record, I don't have any domestic violence convictions. My domestic incident was a verbal argument with my wife.

Beacon: What are you doing now? How are you handling things?

Pruitt: You know, I love serving the people. That's what I do for a living and I truly enjoy being a police officer and making a difference in people's lives. If you want to know who I am, I'm a husband who adores and loves his wife, and we've been together for about 25 years. I'm a father of five kids, and my wife and I have raised them all to be respectful and successful people. I'm a grandfather of five, four granddaughters, and one grandson. I'm a son, I'm an uncle, I'm a friend, I'm a colleague, and I'm a peer. I like to mentor young men and women to overcome adversities in life, and I enjoy coaching kids in sports.

You asked me how am I doing? I've had to overcome a lot of adversity; everyone's always doubted me and, when they do, I show that I'm a hard worker, and I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. I don't do it for accolades. I take pride in who I am and how I represent myself, my family and the organization I work for. I am respectful, professional, trustworthy, and dedicated to the community I serve. One thing I always say to my kids is that our last name is "Pruitt." So remember, "Pruitt can do it." One of my sons called me when this was all going on. He said, "If there's anybody I know that can overcome this, it's you."

So if you really want to know how I'm doing, this entire experience with the city of Edmonds has been really difficult for me. I have a gray cloud over me now and I'm constantly being judged and questioned about the news coverage. It's hard on me and my family.

I feel that people believe what they see on the news, and they don't know the true and full story. Again, I would like to clarify that I don't have any domestic violence convictions. My wife and I had a verbal argument, and it's documented as a verbal domestic violence incident.

The sad thing about this entire experience with the city of Edmonds is, I know that I would not have been treated this way if I wasn't Black. I truly hope that people are held accountable for the way I was treated.

Here we are in 2021, and people still abuse their position and authority to humiliate and discredit Black people, people of color. I am not only Black, but I am also Filipino Pacific Islander and Native American, and I am proud of who I am and what I represent.

I will forever be wounded and hurt by this experience.

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