



# Mittge Commentary: An Evening With Charlie Is a Fine Time, Indeed

By Brian Mittge 18 hrs ago

Since the beginning of newspapering, the headline "local boy makes good" has always made for a great story.

In the case of Charlie Albright, the Centralia-born piano prodigy who is now a globetrotting, headline performer, the story is more along the lines of "Local boy, now grown, makes good music that makes you feel even better."

Last Saturday, I had the pleasure of taking my two oldest children to "An Evening With Charlie" at Centralia College. We were treated to a concert with music of the finest quality, played by a confident performer whose ease on stage nearly matches his amazing skills on the piano.

What struck me about the concert — aside from the virtuoso playing and jaw-dropping improvisations — was the way that Charlie spoke so easily and plainly from the stage. He had the kind of confidence behind the microphone that few performers attain at any age.

It's clear that Albright is no longer a wunderkind whose youth is part of his appeal. One observer of the performance noted that Albright has clearly made the crucial but sometimes difficult transition from child prodigy to adult performer.

He explained the songs that he was playing in a simple, easy-to-understand way. He made us feel smarter without making us feel dumb.

In introducing a set of etudes, he told us that "etude" is a kind of lesson or study.

You could play scales and arpeggios, which is kind of boring, he said, or you could practice an etude and learn the same things.

Several times he told us that he was going to make the concert fun, and it was.

It's an enjoyable feel for a concert, and a great complement to his remarkable talents.

My second-grade daughter, fairly new to concerts and curtain calls, was very pleased that the crowd's roaring enthusiasm brought Albright out on stage again for an encore.

"Our applause pulled him back," she said with a smile of delight.

I think that our "local boy" has more than made good on his youthful potential. The next chapters of his story should be even more fun to watch.

## The Finest in Our Community

I had the pleasure of attending an assembly Friday that honored volunteers at Cascade School in Chehalis. A long line of humble volunteers were given a moment to introduce themselves to 500 kids and the parents in the back. These are the folks who do the busy work so that teachers can focus on educating, or who read books with the students who have never had a parent read to them.

Most of the volunteers were moms (and a grandma or two) who had students at this K-1st grade school, or who started volunteering when their kids attended, and have continued to give their time.

A few others had no children in the district, or no kids at all. They simply volunteer because it's a way to give back to the community and stay engaged. One gentleman is childless — but he volunteers and has hundreds of kids whose days he brightens, who who brighten his.

Talk about inspiring! Seeing these people who are collectively helping support and mold the next generation of students, without compensation or direct benefit, is a sign that our community has a deep bench of talent and caring. Our kids are in good hands, with both the teachers and the community members who support them.

## Get Your Hands Dirty on Earth Day

This coming Saturday is Earth Day, and I'll be among the many volunteers of a different sort who are getting their hands dirty and having a blast at the annual Friends of the Seminary Hill Natural Area work party.

We'll be gathering at 9 [REDACTED], an hour earlier than normal (I'll get to why in a minute), and finishing around 11 o'clock. There will be refreshments and some tools, but bring your own (along with work gloves and boots).

In many ways this is my favorite event of the year on Seminary Hill. Laboring alongside like-minded folks, everyone eager to work hard together — it's a slice of the good life. I hope to see you there.

## Goodbye, Sandy Godsey

And with the good times, we also know sorrow. The reason we're getting together early is to make sure that we have time to get cleaned up and changed for the 2 [REDACTED] memorial service for a great woman, Sandy Godsey.

Sandy, who died on March 22, was the definition of a good friend. She was caring and considerate, thoughtful and quietly joyful. She was a founding member of the Friends of the Seminary Hill Natural Area, and served as president of the group from 1993 to 2014 — by far its longest-serving leader.

(On a personal note, I was honored when she asked me to take over as president of this estimable group, and I did so in part so that she could have the chance to retire.)

Her memorial will be held at 2 o'clock next Saturday, April 22, at the First United Methodist Church of Centralia, at the corner of Washington and Plum Streets.

I'll be among many friends there, paying our respects to a woman who gave so much to her family and friends, to Centralia, and to the Seminary Hill Natural Area.

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Brian Mittge doesn't have much of a green thumb, but he's OK at getting his hands dirty. Join him at the Seminary Hill Natural Area next Saturday at 9 o'clock. And drop him a line anytime at [REDACTED].

