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## In Washington state, the more things change ...

Puget Sound Business Journal (Seattle) - by [George Erb](#) Editor

As we enter a new year, Washington state faces a great many pressing issues for which the outcomes are completely unknown.

What will be the depth and duration of the recession? How much federal largesse will pour into Washington from President-elect Barack Obama's stimulus program? What will become of Seattle's Alaskan Way Viaduct?

For the answers to these and other questions, the Puget Sound Business Journal editorial page often consults a source — we'll call him Harald — who belongs to a team of retired engineers and physicists from the Boeing Co. and the University of Washington.

Harald's idea of a good time is telling stories and playing the accordion at the Sons of Norway Lodge in Ballard. But through the miracle of quantum physics, scavenged aerospace parts and takeout pizza, Harald and his friends quietly built a time machine in an industrial building only a stone's throw from the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

They've played cat-and-mouse for years with the city's building inspectors, and they try hard to keep the device from straining Seattle's power grid. Still, accidents happen. Some of you skeptics may recall a power outage in the University District and Wallingford a few days before Christmas. Officially, the cause was reported as "unknown," much to the team's relief.

After the crew replaced their shorted-out switches and fried motherboards, we asked Harald to fire up the machine and visit Seattle 25 years in the future so he could tell us how some of the great issues of our day were resolved.

He came back from Jan. 1, 2034, with the following highlights:

– After the Panic of 2008, business executives, elected officials and regulators said they had learned their lesson and would never again succumb to a speculative bubble followed by a devastating collapse. Never again! They redoubled their resolve after the Panic of 2016, the Crash of 2023 and the Hydrogen Fuel Cell Collapse of 2031.

– After years of frustration on the gridiron, the University of Washington in 2033 sold its football team to the University of Southern California and leased it back for \$16 million a year.

The Huskies improved to 8-8.

– Fifteen years after being placed on the National Historic Register as a “structure of engineering significance,” the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge was reopened in 2029 as a jogging/biking path and fishing pier. It broke apart and sank during the 2032 earthquake.

– President Obama and Congress awarded \$250 million in federal stimulus money for “shovel-ready” public works projects in Washington state. Among the projects was a \$550,000 skateboard park in Wenatchee. The park was later demolished to make way for a taxpayer-subsidized, \$320 million hydrogen fuel cell plant. It closed in 2031.

– The Boeing Co. in December 2033 announced that it is “only six months away” from delivering its first 787 Dreamliner.

– In December 2033, a 2-inch snowfall paralyzed Seattle for three days. Unable to either salt or sand Seattle streets because of a dispute between the mayor’s office and the City Council, the Seattle Department of Transportation tried, without success, to borrow snowplows from Spokane.

– The Museum of History and Industry in 2009 persuaded JPMorgan Chase to donate the WaMu Center sign from Washington Mutual’s former Seattle headquarters. By 2034, the sign was in storage.

– After years of fruitless negotiations, lawsuits and political reversals, state and local officials in November 2033 unveiled three options for replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

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