

# Oliver's Annual Newsletter

## Issue #2 - 2020



Dear Family & Friends,

As seemingly the most memorable year we've all experienced, I'm glad the year is coming to a close on a good note. Even though the pandemic has hurt many of us across the country and has forced us to live at home, there have been many bright bits throughout the year. From moving back home to living my best life in New York at the beginning of the year, here is a short list of things I did throughout the year:

1. Spent much needed time with family & friends
2. I moved back home to Mukilteo
3. Worked on new and exciting projects
4. Went on vacation(s)
5. I started binge-watching Netflix shows

Of course, many small things helped fill the time, but these were the main touch-points throughout the year.

Hopefully, you enjoyed my first newsletter and are back for seconds! I've tried to include more content and a deeper dive into each section, especially because there was plenty in this year's edition. As always, I'd love to hear from you, what you're up to, and any feedback you might have about the newsletter. Feel free to reach out to me at [olivercollins29@gmail.com](mailto:olivercollins29@gmail.com); I'd love to reconnect and hear what you're doing. And if you're back in the Seattle area, I'd love to catch up once we return to normal or even hop on a Zoom call.

Happy New Year!

## PRE-COVID

While most of the year was filled with spending time indoors, the first part of the year was overwhelming. After already spending three months in New York, I started to get comfortable with my job, the City, and making new friends.

It feels so long ago now, but before March, plenty happened in the City. A short recap of everything that's happened:

1. Going to events in and around the City
2. Spending time with visiting Family/Friends
3. Working on new exciting projects



*NYC w/ Shubha*

### FRIENDS/FAMILY VISITING

One of the best parts about living in New York is that I'm in the heart of the States, so many friends and family would pop in and out of the city all the time. Alex and Michael (separately) came to the city several times, Jeremie (a friend I met in Chicago) interned in the city for the first couple of months of the year, and my brother came to visit. If it weren't for COVID, some family from Spain would have visited, Adam would've spent a week or two with me, and Garrett even mentioned he was going to drop by too. I think eventually, though, I would've made my way to Montreal to visit the cousins and visit more of the East Coast.



*Strolling through SoHo*

Shubha also came to visit a couple of times, and we always had a blast. Every time she comes, we always explore a new part of the city or revisit old favorites. We typically stop in SoHo, but this time around, we went to see other places around New York: Central Park, Midtown, and Financial District. Of course, we always take the ferry to see the wonderful views and regularly eat phenomenal food around the city (ramen is a favorite among both of us).

Although Shubha came to visit, I often visited her, and there was never more than a three-week span where we didn't see each other. What was nice was that Shubha had been interning at AWS in Seattle at the start of the year, so it made coming back home that much more appealing. She had a little apartment across the street from one of the art schools in Seattle, and we often took walks around Lake Union.

## WORK/ACTIVITIES

Work has been getting exceedingly more interesting now that I have become more familiar with the codebase, colleagues, and Walmart's processes. We hired two more people on our team: a project manager, Neal, and another developer, Tom. It's been phenomenal working with new people across the org, and fortunately, we've been hiring the right people, so we get to joke around all day. Luckily, work has been abundant, and we've been fighting hard to hire more people to accommodate the increased workload.

I got to work on a couple of projects throughout the year that were especially enjoyable and rewarding. Towards the beginning of the year, the bulk of my time at work was spent adding features to our InHome project and spinning up new developer tools. All-in-all, most of my development time helped me familiarize myself with the technologies we use and the codebase to lead projects later in the year.

Aside from my work, my co-workers — specifically Yi and David — make my role enormous fun. We'd often hang out at

each other's apartments, eat lunch around the neighborhood, and generally have a good time at work. Even though we joke around a lot, both Yi and David have been great mentors of mine both in my career and outside. While Yi has left Walmart and I'm no longer working directly with David, we still group message each other and spend plenty of time sharing memes at work.

Apart from spending time with people both in and out of town, I tried becoming more active within the city. I joined the Alumni chapter board for CU,



Visiting FB with Yi



Winter in Greenpoint



Michael & I Sneaking into a NYFW After Party

joined the local garden group for my neighborhood, and started a new org at work. The alumni group is tremendous fun, and it's great to meet all the CU Alum out in the city. We also organize and attend some exciting events such as CU Boulder's NEXT celebration, Summer cruises, and of course, Buff dinners. I've also been trying to catch up with CU alumni in the city to see what they've done to make the most of the city and what excites them the most. What I've enjoyed the most about connecting with these groups has been meeting people and learning/exploring the city. I'm looking forward to joining more groups like these, but I'm stoked to see everything else we have planned for next year.

Besides work and my outside activities, there was always some event happening in the city. I'd often just be walking along and find some popup or one-day event that I'd stop by. I've become comfortable using the subway and already have a favorite line (the 7) and a favorite station (Hudson Yards).



## BACK TO SEATTLE



*Walking around the neighborhood w/  
Shubha*

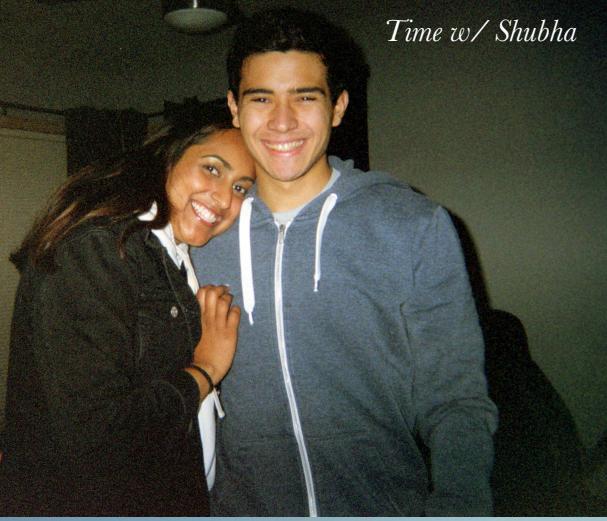
*In and around New York*

In early February, when Michael and I snuck into the NYFW after-party, we spoke with a foreign artist who mentioned that this year's NYFW had taken a big hit because of the effects of the coronavirus in international markets. We were taken back by what we just heard; we had only heard of the coronavirus a couple of weeks back. A month later, as I was packing my stuff from work, my coworker, Tom, said on his way out that he'll see me in a couple of months. I thought we were coming back next week. Now, after spending nine months in Seattle, do I finally realize the magnitude of the pandemic. It's been a humbling experience, though, and I'm glad we're going to come out of the pandemic with more experience on how to handle a global health crisis. Regardless, I'm thankful I'm getting to spend time at home with my family and friends, all while taking some time for myself.

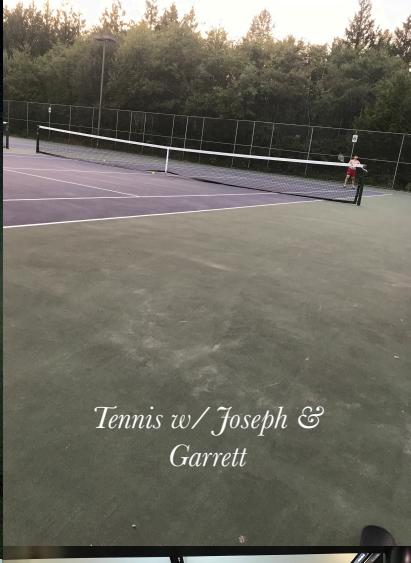
## FAMILY

The best part about coming home was spending time with family and close friends. After spending the last two summers away from home, and only having a month break between the end of my internship in Boulder and starting my job at Walmart, it was refreshing to come home to spend an extended period with the family. Fortunately, everyone is doing well for the most part. My mom is working remotely from home and enjoying her time crocheting; my dad is busy upgrading the sims at the

*Time w/ Shubha*



*Tennis w/ Joseph & Garrett*



*Last day in New York*



*FaceTime Dinner Dates*



*Celebrating Shubha's Birthday*



*CU Boulder Next*



*Exploring other Store No. 8 Portfolio Companies*



*Dinner with Phil! (Our Chancellor)*



*Visiting my Grandma "La Abuela" while she has COVID 😔*



*Renovating around the house*



*National Rx Delivery*

business, but also dealing with his Prostate cancer; Adam is studying from home; and June is also studying from home.

### **WORK / EXTRACURRICULARS**

Over the year, I've got to work on many different projects. I think the best project I've gotten to work on was National Rx Deliveries. Once COVID started unraveling and everyone started WFH, our team decided to work on a new service to deliver prescriptions directly into people's homes. I was one of a few developers that worked on this project day-and-night until we launched in mid-April. It was the most fun I had working on a project and felt so rewarding once we finished the project since the code I was working on was making an impact on people's lives.

Besides National Rx Delivery, I got to work on spinning up a new routing service, tackling on new partnerships with external companies, and a tad bit on this internal exceptions application. Of course, there's been a lot of work adding features to InHome and maintaining old projects so there's plenty of work to go around. Hopefully, we'll be hiring again soon.

Unfortunately, with everything going on in our world, Walmart had a couple of re-orgs that affected our org. We ended up getting split in half, our leadership and product moving back to Store No. 8 and the engineering team moving over to Walmart Global Tech. Because of this move, we lost a majority of the projects we were working on and a good portion of my team has left. While this may have been bad, one silver lining is that I'm having an increased role which is great considering I'm only a year out of school. I'm hoping we're going to have some more exciting projects soon and that I'll get to lead more projects.

This year I also learned about Slack groups and I've joined a handful. These slack groups revolve around certain interests people have so for example design, technology, crocheting, or whatever. Through one of these groups, I found out about an opportunity to work on an exciting new project. I decided to get an intro with this person that connected me with Sydney who showed me about this idea she had. I was very hesitant meeting with her for the first couple of weeks working through this idea, but I eventually got swallowed into the idea and have already made a

working prototype. I think we're planning on getting some customers in 2021 and then raise some money and expand the business while she's still in school. I'm incredibly excited about the potential, but I'm also learning a lot throughout the process so I'm having a ton of fun. I'm hoping to drop more information about the project within the coming months!

I've also been working on a couple things on the side as well. Namely, I've been working with a political organization that focuses on using data to help grassroots democratic campaigns across the country. Our team worked specifically with campaign NJ-11 over a four month period leading into the primaries in November. Our work included working with a lot of VAN data that political organizations have to work with, create visualizations for the data we had, and working with the campaign manager to ensure everything is going smoothly. Thankfully, we were working with a heavily funded and incumbent candidate, so most of the work was already done and we won the election easily.

I've also started taking a Data Science class through this program called DS4A. This program is held every week on Saturday from 10 AM ET - 8 PM ET (except on Holidays) and it's filled with lectures, group activities, networking events, and guest lectures. It's been an incredible opportunity and we'll be wrapping up our course in mid February with a group presentation.

## **ACTIVITIES**

While New York is full of things to do, there simply wasn't a ton of outdoor / sports activities that I can do. So once I came back to Seattle I immediately started spending the majority of my day outside. I picked up golf, got back into both tennis and golf, and started going on walks. I've also been spending a lot of time online playing video games with friends. Some games I've been addicted to this year have been Animal Crossing, Among Us, War Thunder, and Fall Guys to name a few.

Earlier in the pandemic, I also used to go on a lot of walks and drive around the town with Shubha and family. During the summer, Seattle is the perfect place to spend outdoors and I used to bike with James, Jay, and Joseph down to Seattle and see some amazing views. There hasn't really been a dull moment when the weather is superb, but since the winter months have hit and daylight savings has dropped the sunset down to 4:30, I've been spending a lot more time indoors playing games with friends. Hopefully, the weather picks back up soon and I'll be spending most of my day outside again.



*Golfing with Joseph & Jay*



*Plane spotting with Alex at PAE*



I've also been keeping track of my golf stats and going to do some analysis when I have more data, but I'm having a ton of fun golfing around the Seattle area. I think our golf group is planning on going on a golfing road-trip sometime in 2021 around the West Coast. None of us are very good, but we always play for Chipotle to make it a little bit more competitive.

As for video games, we're always looking for new games and people to play with. With school and everything, it's been tough to find time, but we always seem to find a day during the week when everyone is free.

### **SHUBHA / VACATION**

Although COVID separated us for the second half of the year, Shubha was interning in Seattle during the spring, so I spent time both with her and my family towards the beginning of the year. Once COVID hit and I came back home, Shubha ended up staying with us until she graduated in May. It was exciting spending time together quarantining, all while simultaneously working and studying. We went on many walks around the neighborhood, drives around the town, and going grocery shopping together.

Unfortunately, Shubha eventually left to go back to school, move out, and spend time with her own family in the Bay Area. Shubha's family also moved out from the Bay over to



*Time w/ Shubha*

Sacramento, which was a notable event during the pandemic. We're hoping to reunite shortly after the pandemic is over, and hopefully, that isn't too far into the future.



*Graduation we prepared for Shubha*

other again when we both get the vaccine, hopefully by the Summer. Still, we spend plenty of time talking every night through FaceTime and doing countless activities together. We're doing the best we can while staying with our families safe.

Apart from our vacation, Shubha interned at AWS in the Spring, graduated college in May (we threw her a small graduation party), and started her first full-time job at Twitter in July. So far, she loves her job and the people she gets to work with. She's also involved in several programs and groups outside of work which keeps her busy throughout the day. She's planning on staying with her parents in Sacramento until things settle down, and then she's planning on moving to San Francisco afterward.

We're hoping  
to see each

Nevertheless, we made an effort to see each other one last time before the end of the new year. For the first two weeks of November, Shubha and I went on a road trip throughout California. I flew into Sacramento, picked her up, and drove directly to Carmel. We spent the first few days overlooking the beach and exploring the small town. We then drove and spent several days in San Luis Obispo, Palm Springs, Los Angeles, and Cupertino. There were so many activities Shubha planned for the vacation, including a couples massage, visiting a hot spring, and even horseback riding. But what made the vacation so much memorable was spending quality time with Shubha and having those authentic moments either driving around Los Angeles or just watching Netflix together. This was my first vacation outside of college, and although it was very different because of Covid, I think we had a great time overall.



*Horseback Riding through a Vineyard*

# CONCLUSION

2020 had its ups-and-downs. Although the pandemic has locked us all at home and prevents us from doing just about everything we want, I'm thankful I'm spending time with my family, working on interesting projects at home, and making the best out of what we have. I'm hopeful that in 2021, we will eventually return to normal but also come out of the pandemic better than we came in.

As a yearly tradition, I'd like to revisit my previous newsletter goals and define three new goals for the upcoming year. My three goals from last year were:

1. Become a vegetarian
2. Read 5 books and give a detailed analysis of the top 5 things I learned and the one point I didn't quite agree with
3. Organize an event (can be anything!)

I was able to complete both goals 1 and 3 but missed the mark on goal 2. I'm going to append goal 2 as a fourth goal this upcoming year, but I fell short here. However, I was proud about switching over to becoming a vegetarian and have decided to keep this lifestyle a bit longer than anticipated. The first couple of weeks into the transition were the hardest, but you get into a routine once you get over that hill. For the third goal, I was able to put on an event for our alumni group to bring people together during COVID. It was a trivia night between a couple of chapters, and it was a ton of fun bringing all the pieces together. I'm hoping to do something similar in the future soon.

Because of the simplicity of my goals from last year, I'm going to go with a similar style for this year's goals. One goal has to focus on improving my mind, the other my career, and one for my body. Here are my goals for this upcoming year:

1. Read 25 books this year (five of which have to be biographies)
2. Become more organized and structured at work by documenting projects in an exclusive location (using Notion).
3. Take better care of my body by going to the doctor once a year, Dentist twice a year, Optometrist once a year, and Chiropractor once a year.

As with every year, I'm looking forward to what's next, and I hope next year will be just a little bit better than this year for all of us. Happy Holidays, and talk to you soon!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oliver".