

Legends of Vashon

Whispering Firs Bog

By Tioga Webb

I’m going to keep this vague, because I don’t want any trouble after all these years. If you were around back then, you can fill in the blanks.

Some people say Vashon is all boggy spots, at least in the winter. The bog I lived near was called Whispering Firs Bog. It was near town, and near the highway. You know the kind of person who owns a Tesla? That’s exactly who didn’t live near the bog. Not that there were Teslas back then.

Mostly, the deputies left you alone, but every now and then there’d be trouble, or a new deputy would start on the rock, and then maybe they’d come down to try and find me and run me off. I’d been living there off and on for a couple years, and had laid planks on top of rocks I’d pushed into the mud. If you went quick and catlike along the planks, the rock wouldn’t sink down into the mud as you ran across.

So, I’d see their flashlight sweeping, and I’d sneak out into the bog on my plank road, out to a little solid spot where I’d hide. The grass grew around and over the planks, so unless you knew where they were, you weren’t getting far out into the bog. Usually, a deputy would nearly lose a boot in the sucking mud, then call it a night.

Uphill from the bog was an abandoned holly tree farm. It didn’t work out, go figure. My dad said they should’ve tried a Scotch broom farm instead. There were just rows and rows of these trees, huge and prickly and barely enough room between them to get through.

In the middle of the trees was an abandoned farmhouse. It still had some roof on it, but no windows. There were parts of the floor you could walk on,

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Vashon-Maury Island Welcomes

Its Newest Resident



Say hello to “The Bird King.” He holds court at Point Robinson Park on Maury Island daily from 8 AM until dusk, and entrances young and old alike, including a curmudgeon or two at The Vashon Loop. Drive to 3705 SW Point Robinson Road, and park in the upper lot. Then follow the steady flow of Islanders and tourists eager to meet and greet this grand forest troll.

A Mousetrap For

Billionaires

By Caitlin Rothermel

It’s a serious sign of how culturally messed up we are that we so often defer to experts – sometimes even refusing to take advice from anyone who’s not an expert – while allowing wealthy generalists to claim they have real expertise across a number of areas.

This is a big-picture problem because so many schemes fueling today’s economy are nothing more than high-stakes gift. Think about Elizabeth Holmes and the Therasnos blood testing system. Along these lines, we are learning more and more about Stockton Rush, the cofounder and chief executive officer of OceanGate Expeditions.

Last June, the OceanGate submersible, Titan, imploded at 3,500 meters while trying to reach the Titanic shipwreck, killing four passengers and Rush. The catastrophic failure was blamed on the submersible’s experimental carbon fiber hull. As it turns out, former employees, professional societies, and other colleagues had been trying for years to stop Rush from using the Titan.

Born to a wealthy and established San Francisco family, Rush was the youngest of five children. He was descended from two signers of the Declaration of Independence, and his father was briefly the president-elect of the Bohemian Grove. Yes, that Bohemian Grove. Rush got a Bachelor’s in Aerospace Engineering from Princeton, and with initial plans for a career in the flight industry, worked briefly as a test engineer at McDonnell Douglas. Later, he got a business degree from UC Berkeley, followed by a stint in venture capital.

OceanGate was founded in 2009 with the goal of building a small fleet of submersibles to use for expeditions, and to conduct sketchy-sounding environmental assessments to learn how to “safely” mine U.S. offshore waters for oil and other resources. Rush initially tried to purchase a more conventional metal submersible, but only a few

exist, and they are hard to come by. So instead, he learned how to build submersibles.

An avid scuba-diver, it was actually the Puget Sound that inspired Rush to commercialize submersible dives. He initially provided underwater exploration for tourists who, understandably, didn’t want to scuba-dive in the Sound during the cold season. This business model worked for a while – Macklemore was a passenger once.

Rush built the Titan submersible specifically to visit the Titanic, and problems were apparent from the start. In recent interviews, Karl Stanley, a submersible expert and builder provided some new insight. Professional colleagues with Rush for ten years, Stanley firmly believes that Rush “knew how this story ended.” In other words, Rush must have expected, at some level, that a catastrophic implosion was a likely, eventual outcome of the Titan dives.

In 2019, Stanley went with Rush for the second dive of the Titan in the Bahamas. Although they only went down to 400 feet (the Titanic is at 12,500 feet), Stanley was shocked to hear sharp, regular, loud noises from the walls of the submersible – the sound of carbon fibers snapping in the hull. Stanley compared the noise to a shotgun, Rush said it was more like firecrackers, and Rush’s efforts to reassure Stanley were disconcerting: “Those are the weak fibers, letting go to ‘thin the herd.’ This is improving the strength of the hull.”

Most submersibles are made of steel or titanium. As Rush saw it, carbon fiber had an advantage over metal because of its high strength-to-weight ratio. But carbon fiber is mostly used in the aerospace and auto industries. It was totally unknown whether the fiber would hold up or become brittle under the interacting forces of internal and external oceanic pressure.

In a subsequent, heated email conversation, Stanley insisted that the Titan, as currently built: “... is not a marketable product ... people are going

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Support Your Immune

System

By Jane Valencia

As we enter Autumn and the flu season, a responsible thing we can do for ourselves, our loved ones, and our community is to ensure that we ourselves are in excellent health. Here are three avenues to tend to your immune resilience.

1. Tend yourself and your family like a garden

A garden that thrives is one in which plants are planted according to their needs for sun, shade, water, soil, and climate conditions. When plants are in good health and in community – as opposed to monocropped – pathogens and pests have a difficult time taking hold, much less spreading. Just so with us. We need healthy and diverse foods, appropriate pure water and sunlight, and other vital and vibrant aspects for an environment that supports us – including companionship.

Eat whole foods, get good sleep, and, on a frequent basis, get good exercise, or at least take vigorous walks. We are also so much more than the things we eat and the ways we tend our physical health: do what you can to reduce stress! This may range from practices of prayer and mindfulness, to making life changes to remove yourself from continually upsetting situations, to engaging in life with curiosity and openness, and cultivating a positive outlook.

Tend to healthy relationships. Meet friends for tea or a walk. Smile, laugh. Have heart-to-heart conversations. Spend time in nature. On Vashon, we have a great boost in all of this. We like to connect with friends, to collaborate on projects, celebrate or grieve together, and engage in gatherings and in work that are meaningful to us. We are surrounded by forests¹ and shore, and have clean air. Joyful, healthy living in community, and time in nature, nourishes our vitality and our immune systems.

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Through your donations and in-store shopping,
Granny’s Attic has donated over \$140,000 to
Vashon Island non-profit organizations so far this year!

Accepting donations with some limits on amount and sizes, but exceptions can be made. See website for more details.

Visit our new website and socials for the latest on Granny’s Attic.
www.vashongrannysattic.org



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Clothing Drive at the Food Bank

By Jane Valencia

If you stop in at the Food Bank on most Wednesdays, you’ll come upon tables arrayed with clothing, sleeping bags, blankets, and other gear, available for free. Your host is Daniel Hooker, who is not only a humorist, offering jokes as he does here in The Loop pages, but, when asked, sharing healing and other helpful suggestions. During my time sitting with him and his dog, Falkor, I was fascinated by the ebb and flow of conversation and the many avenues it took. The exchange of items to clothe and shelter, friendly insights, intriguing knowledge, generosity and kindness, and just plain catching up with one another is rich currency indeed!

Daniel shared the story of the origins of this service.

He started out as a middle-class kid, raised in Lake Union. When he was five, he moved with his mother to Germany, and enjoyed a lifestyle that included riding in limousines and planes. Two years later, now in New York City, Daniel had holes in his shoes, and was starving. The worst night of his life was when he was eleven, and living in Tahoe. He and his mom suffered in -24 degree Fahrenheit weather in a panel van with thin walls, a down sleeping bag rated at -15 degrees, and a Coleman catalytic converter using white gas to keep warm. With a background of such experiences, Daniel became determined that no one should go hungry or endure cold, and decided to give back.

Ten years ago, Daniel began

collecting donations of clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, heaters, camp stoves, and other related items, and distributing them mainly through churches. As he often had little to spare in the way of his own resources, he was told, “You give away too much!” Being half-native, Daniel has this to say in response: “I’m nature. We think differently.” And sure enough, as he reached out, he found that more often than not, he received assistance and resources as needed. One person who has helped significantly in this service is Lynn Simpson. She helps with storage of the donations, and sorts them to be sure they are usable.

These days, Daniel obtains many donations by way of Facebook groups such as “Vashon All” and “Buy Nothing Vashon.” Many times he’ll pick up the donations himself, using his own resources to do so. But easiest is to drop off your donations at the Food Bank.

He says, “It’s my way to give back, and make sure the children get new jackets, and something brand-new for the school year. Nice clothes come through here.”

As the cold and wet season begins, we can all be involved, either by donating clothing and gear, or, if you are in need of resources, by heading over to the Food Bank to see what is available.

Daniel notes that, six years ago one November when it suddenly snowed, four people let him know that without the sleeping bags they received they “wouldn’t have made

Vashon-Maury Clothing Drive



Where: Vashon Food Bank

When: Wednesdays,
10AM–2PM
(except the first Wednesday of the month)

Needed: clean clothing, shoes, rain gear, warm jackets for all ages; bedding/sleeping bags, tents, camping stoves, heaters (electric or emergency camping heaters also welcome)

Contact: Daniel Hooker,
(707) 771-1999, to discuss contributions, 7 days a week, 9am – 5pm.

Thank you for your support and generosity in keeping Vashon-Maury Island a caring community and village.

it.” If ever you or I wanted to make a difference, donating sleeping bags, blankets, and other cold-weather gear to this service is especially helpful, and could save lives. Donations should be clean, and its helpful if clothes are folded.

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Health Disclaimer

By Caitlin Rothermel

Last month, the Loop Editorial Board reviewed and updated the “Health Disclaimer” run in every issue. We made changes based on input from a writer who pointed out that its language – applied to be legally protective, and typical of what you would see in a health disclaimer – was actually off-putting when viewed alongside a person’s hard-wrought writing and research efforts.

Our discussion led us to ask questions like, How broad is the concept of health? Isn’t health actually part of almost everything? If health considerations exist when discussing an herbal or exercise regimen, aren’t we also treading into health by publishing recipes? Given that, how far do we want to go in terms of self-protective language, and how come we aren’t equally focused on the language of self-benefit?

Although conventional healthcare is becoming more fragmented and harder to obtain (and our Island



location leads to additional accessibility issues), alternative healthcare in Washington State is a bright light in a dimming room. We have a real paradigm shift in preventative health happening right here, and it’s not discussed often enough.

First, in Washington state, naturopathic doctors are covered by commercial insurance. Theoretically, patients on Medicaid (low-income) can also get ND coverage. Because of this, people are incentivized to become NDs, and NDs are less likely

A question from reader Ellie:
“It’s been on my mind ... the Vashon Loop is free to the community, and all its contributors are volunteers ... How can I help support The Loop?”

From The Loop: Thank you, Ellie! You can subscribe to us at our Substack (address below). You can also send donations to PO Box 2221, Vashon WA 98070, or donate via the “Fox Box” at Café Luna!



Subscribe at <https://vashonloop.substack.com>

to be considered second-class practitioners. My ND provides me with integrated, attentive care – a perspective that’s often missing from conventional medical settings.

This acceptance of NDs has led to an increased openness to a range of alternative, preventive therapies like massage, acupuncture, neuro-feedback, and nutrition counseling. Exercise instruction that targets your fascia to strengthen and improve the resilience of aging and/or sedentary bodies. Chiropractors whose multifaceted and careful techniques bear no resemblance to the fearful neck-cracking that’s often assumed.

The value of this was brought home recently when I visited one of my oldest friends. She lives in a village in the Adirondacks in New York. In many ways, her little town is similar to ours. Both places have an artistic and independent vibe, are off the beaten path, and have gone through big population and income changes in a process that’s sped-up considerably in the past few years.

My friend and her husband own

and run a restaurant, but their bodies ache, they are tired often, and they have to travel about 100 miles to see their doctor. I had ideas for alternative treatments that could help, and I was so certain that something useful would exist in their village because it felt like this was a place where such things belonged. But I researched, and there was almost nothing – no fledgling alternative health community that I could see. Not even an acupuncturist.

Our “woo woo” West Coast lifestyle is joked about, but the health modalities we have access to bring pleasure, improve functioning, and provide us with real and ongoing benefit. We also support one another in researching and obtaining this care – we respect and are curious about each other’s health choices.

Since The Loop was restarted, we have been running regular columns talking about health and written by our Island’s practitioners. If you provide a health service here, we would love to learn more about what you do. Write us at editor@vashonloop.com.

Please Don’t Search?

By Andy Valencia

Over the years of my life, the US has been shedding ability at a pretty decent pace. We sent manufacturing overseas, and now we have almost nobody who knows how to design for manufacturing, how to set up injection molding, how to use a mill and lathe to fabricate custom parts. We’ve aggressively shed mining and timber – we still use metals and wood, but it feels better to have its collection and processing be done somewhere else, on our behalf. It was OK because we were all going to be information workers.

Then we sent most of our software work offshore. This was OK, we were told, because it was just the less-important work. Our senior software people were still valuable. I asked how anybody in the future could become senior if not by way of a junior position? There was no answer, and I knew this part of the “information worker” economy was in trouble. When you read about the months-long, brutal, degrading interview process to get a software job, you should realize that this is a symptom of many people competing for few jobs.

Our economy is now defined by “FIRE,” an acronym for Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate. You might work in a restaurant, or a market, or a gas station, but you basically work in support of the FIRE job holders. Aside from the executives, isolated in their Olympian top floors, most workers in FIRE are indeed information workers. But, truth be told, their work is a mix of the menial, repetitive, and largely

meaningless.

But, back to my article title, what does this have to do with search?

Google’s search quality has been sinking for years. In past articles, I’ve mentioned DuckDuckGo.com, which has run a far superior service in both result quality and protection of your privacy. But many people have now reported on an implosion in Duck’s search result quality. For most purposes, it suddenly became useless. Why would they do that?

Search is a tool for pointing you at pages holding information. When you read those pages, your knowledge grows, and then you can answer or refine the questions which caused you to search. As you pursue the search results, you become a more informed person in general. At least in the area of your search topic.

And now we are coming to the end of the virtuous cycle of searching, reading search results, and becoming educated and informed. Google’s results are poor, and Duck’s are now tragic. What a coincidence that a brand new way to get answers has just arrived!

For with “AI,” specifically things like ChatGPT and its ilk, you no longer read material, you no longer learn, you no longer form your own answers. You ask a question, and it tells you the answer. We shed manufacturing, and lost our ability to create the things which fill shelves. We shed software, and now almost nobody has any idea how our technology works. With learning itself

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now obsolete, what exactly is left?

Our appetites and our vices, I guess. How do you build an economy on top of eating and perusing naughty websites? If you don’t have a good answer to that question, let me suggest one: Don’t use AI. Ever.

Vashon! Sign up for health insurance, help with food stamps, and ORCA Lift!

Meet with Miguel from King County Public Health
1pm - 3pm,
at Vashon Library
(inside at the back)

Wednesday, October 18
Wednesday: November 15
Saturday: December 16
Wednesday: December 20

This is for health insurance that will begin the following month.
Se habla español.

What Brought You to the Island?



My name is Rose. I woke up to a glowing light and many, many brothers and sisters. I ate, drank and slept, and then suddenly I was in a box. The box opened, and I was on Vashon. It’s great, except for the dogs, cats, raccoons, coyotes, eagles, and hawks. And the cold. And the heat. But my afternoon snack of cereal flakes makes it all worth it.



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Crabbing

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

“Hey Mike, he’s hiding under that patch of seaweed.”

We were hunting crab with a pitchfork down at Manzanita on the south end of Maury Island. Crabs can move as fast as a person walks on dry land. Mike poked the pitchfork into the seaweed and scared the ten-inch Dungeness into the open.

Two GIs, from the Nike site, were out a lot further and diving for the crabs with bare hands. This is a dangerous way to hunt crab because a ten-inch crab can break a finger if a person isn’t careful. The army guy caught Mike’s crab in the deeper water and swam in to give the crab to me, which I promptly dropped into the galvanized tub we pulled along behind us. The GIs weren’t paid much, and they fished off the Standard Oil dock or caught crab to help feed their families. They had a couple of dozen crabs that day, and weren’t going to miss the ten inches they gave to Mike and me.

In anticipation of a minus or very low tide, Dad and his fellow Sportsmen’s Club members would drink until the wee hours of the morning and then head for the Ellisport beach to hunt crab. They used waders that were chest-high to navigate the bottom of Tramp Harbor, which turned out to be Dad’s undoing. He was crabbing with Earl and George McCormick, who had a big fire on the beach.

Dad’s tub was full of crabs when he caught another. They used a two-mantle Coleman lantern to search the

bottom. Dad had cut apart a large tomato juice can and wired it to the back of his lantern, thus illuminating the bottom, but not getting in his eyes. There was a blood-curdling yell from way out in the bay, and Dad was hurtling towards the shore, his tub full of crabs, creating a wave behind him.

Still yelling, he ripped his waders off to reveal the cause of his agony. There hadn’t been room for one more crab in his tub, so he had dropped the last crab down his waders and suffered the consequences.


The story was repeated many times down at the Sportsmen’s Club, much to Dad’s consternation.

“At those times” we appeared to have no limits and hardly any seasons. Plus, no license for kids! And nobody ever measured the shell. Rock or red crabs were the sweetest, but they yielded less meat and were hard to crack. Which maybe is why we called them “rock crabs.”

The crabs were boiled about as soon as we got them ashore, cracked, and eaten with loads of butter. Crab chowder was made with “crab” butter and smaller pieces.

It seems times have changed, as well as crab success, which is a bit spotty. We now get a license, throw out undersized and females, put our pots down in “season,” and especially do not put excess catch down our pants. Nevertheless, we are not going to reveal our secret crab trench spot!

Island Voices



Ancestor Feast!

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FOR AGES 5 - 15



Family Search Open House, October 21, 2023

The Vashon FamilySearch Center and the Vashon Genealogy Club are cosponsoring an open house at the FamilySearch Center on Saturday, October 21, 2023, from 1:00–2:30 pm at 9330 SW 204th St.

The purpose of the open house is to make the public aware of the facilities and resources available on Vashon and help those who are interested in getting started in compiling their family history and genealogy.

Experts will be available to help those with more advanced family history challenges and questions. From Alex Haley’s 1976 blockbuster novel, “Roots,” through modern-day DNA testing and forensic genealogy, family history has been a passion for many, and an interest to nearly everyone.

This is your chance to mingle with the experts, check out the resources available, and start your family history journey. There is no fee. Please join your friends and neighbors at this special Island event.

Island Hopping – A Way of Being

There is a reason we are drawn to looking at the ocean.

It is said that the ocean provides a closer reflection of who we are than any other mirror

– Rick Ruben, “The Creative Act: A Way of Being”

By Suzanna Leigh

Behind us, our little 9.9 hp Suzuki outboard left a trail of swirls in the afternoon light, as Eli-Oh chugged along south of Lummi Island on our way to Chukanut Bay. There was no wind, and the water was as smooth as old glass. The afternoon sun cast sparkles on our wake, making a trail of light off to the horizon. There was no other boat in sight.

With more than one-half mile of open water between us and the dark green hills of Lummi to port and Cypress Island to starboard, my sight and lungs came alive with a sense of openness, freedom, and peace. I let go of the tiller long enough to try to capture the slow ripples and ever changing ovals of color: the grays, blues, and whites reflected from the sky, and the dark, dark green-black of 40 fathoms of salt water below us, but the camera just couldn’t do it.

Below, my son James was napping or planning his next adventure.

By the time we dropped anchor in Chukanut Bay, the sky and water around us glowed with brilliant oranges and yellows. The next day, we secured the boat at Fairhaven and took the bus from Bellingham to

Seattle, where my dear husband Rich met us. He treated us to dinner at our favorite West Seattle restaurant, Endolyne Joe’s, and we took the ferry home to our own Island, Vashon.

How dark and closed in our house felt after four days on the water! How stale the inside air after filling our lungs with salt air! It made me wonder, are humans really meant to live inside, the way our current lifestyles dictate? Is there another way of living? All the worries I left behind while on the boat fell back on my shoulders. The world of “civilization,” with its senseless shootings, bitter political rivalries, and natural disasters, but even more, the spoken and unspoken expectations of who we should be and how we should live – of right and wrong and of gender roles – closed in on me. I understand now why James spends as much time as he can up in the mountains or out on the boat. We need that time away to reclaim our humanity, to reconnect with the Source of All Life. To remember who we are. To remember why we are here.

For more of Suzanna Leigh’s writing and art please visit her substack, “Drinking Color,” at suzannaleigh.substack.com.

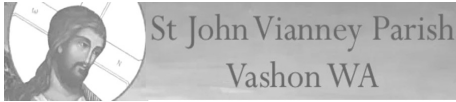


Illustration by Suzanna Leigh



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Vashon, WA 98070
206-463-3940

Sunday Service at
10:00AM



Vashon's Catholic Church
Noon Mass Wed-Fri
Sat. 5:00PM, Sun. 9:30AM
<https://stjohnvianneyvashon.com/>

Church of the Holy Spirit will host an Autumn Animal Blessing and Halloween Party, October 29th at 11:30 am

Gather with us outdoors to sing thanks to the divine for all creatures and a blessing of the animals. We will gather under cover if it rains. Enjoy our labyrinth, forest trail and church while you are here.



Bring your beloved animals and their memories, and the wildlings in your house of all ages. We will bless them each and all.

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Reforming Property Taxes and Composting Toilet Regulations

By David Earle

Last month, I wrote about Vashon and Washington State’s serious housing problem, offering solutions the King County permitting department could put in place to make it easier for lower-income individuals to buy land and construct housing.

This month, I return to my point: “Land hoarding is a thing.” For instance, the Reed family of Tacoma owns 770,000 acres of land in Washington State. There are many landowners in the U.S. who own more than 1,000,000 acres. Our property tax code encourages this by charging people like Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos the same 1% rate that other landowners pay. Without some constraints – especially in residential areas – the market is artificially deformed. Because a few individuals own so much real estate, property availability is lower, the prices are higher, and fewer people can live in a home of their own.

King County has an \$8 billion dollar per-year operating budget. Most of us agree that we want the basic services this budget provides. However, our property taxes treat all homeowners the same, without respect to their financial positions.

Our regressive tax code further exacerbates the housing crisis by being a burden on the poor, disabled, and elderly. We need to overhaul our property tax system to reflect reality.

Presently, it is easy to hoard real estate if you are wealthy. What I propose looks more like a (much less expensive) version of our federal income tax code:

For those who own less than \$1,000,000 in combined real estate, yearly property taxes shall be 0.5% of the value of the property owned (one-half the current rate). This will help to protect people who need a place to live and are currently paying more than \$10,000 a year in taxes on top of their mortgages. For those owning property appraised between \$1,000,000 and \$1,500,000, the property tax

rate shall be .75%. See the table for other proposed rates, which increase as property value increases.

Property value	Property tax rate
< \$1,000,000	0.5%
\$1,000,001 – \$1,500,000	1.0%
\$1,500,001 – \$2,000,000	1.5%
\$2,000,001 – \$2,500,000	1.75%
\$2,500,001 – \$3,000,000	2.0%
\$3,000,001 – \$4,000,000	2.25%
\$4,000,001 – \$10,000,000	2.5%
\$10,000,001 – \$50,000,000	2.75%
> \$50,000,001	3.0%

This will encourage building homes that are more modest in scale, whilst discouraging the construction of bloated homes. Overly large houses do not help anyone, as they are too expensive for most to afford and use more resources than needed to construct and maintain. By using more lumber, labor, electricity, and fuel, owners of homes greater than 3,000 square feet leave fewer resources for others.

Perhaps better than using tax brackets, we could simply plot a curve based on these intervals. Each landowner would have the value of their assets run through a simple calculation, arriving at their tax rate. To ensure this concept works, we’d need to create a database of all King County homes, their values, and a list of owners. This information is publicly available, but would take some time organize. It would probably need to be adjusted to some extent. Corporations would not be exempt from these rates.

This change would make financing a home easier, protect those with limited financial resources, and place more responsibility on the wealthy to fund King County’s annual budget. It would also protect our elderly population by reducing their tax load around the time they reach

retirement age. It breaks my heart every time I see an older person sign up for a reverse mortgage or have to move out of a life-long home because property taxes have gone up in relation to their fixed income.

In addition to these changes, I propose the county offer a comprehensive manual and plans to build a composting toilet that works. Contrary to the typical experience, it is possible to build a composting toilet in a way that is pleasant to use (zero smell), looks nice, and saves thousands of gallons of water each year. Consequently, we also need plans for well-designed graywater systems.

I mention this because King County’s septic permitting process, septic construction, and sewer hookups are very expensive.

This year in King County, we will spend more than \$1 billion dollars treating wastewater. Every year the U.S. \$5 billion dollars to flush clean drinking water down the toilet. That’s just the water bill. We spend far more as a country to dispose of wastewater – pumping, trucking, and treating it.

Not being allowed to adopt composting toilets as a primary option for home construction is one more expensive component that holds people back from building a home. Even for those who would later like to add septic or sewer, avoiding having to finance that portion of their initial build would help more people create homes of their own.

Some will argue with me because flush toilets are all they’ve ever known. Obviously, composting toilets are not an appropriate option for high-density housing. Still, I believe this approach will protect our environment while helping more folks create a place of their own.



Report From Aman Omid Village, Part 3

By Nellie Bly

Prologue: This was written over the course of several deployment periods of one to three weeks. Aman Omid Village on Holloman Air Force Base closed at the end of January 2022, having in-processed and placed 16,000 Afghani evacuees. All but eight survived. For the five months it existed, and adjusting for average population, the Village death rate was about one-third that of the general U.S. population.

Afghani women are, for the most part, extremely modest and they rarely ventured out. They were essentially treated as chattel property and were not expected or typically allowed to act or speak for themselves. They were never alone in public. It was almost impossible, even with a competent interpreter, to elicit a useful health history. The socioeconomic status of the men seemed more varied, and they spent a lot of time outside.

Prepubescent children seemed to be regarded as disposable. Even tiny ones wandered unsupervised, with few Afghani adults paying any interest to their safety or welfare. On my first day, enormous amounts of materiel and supplies were moved using high-lift all-terrain forklifts, and we saw several near-misses, with toddlers nearly crushed. Later, all vehicle movement in the village required a walking escort to ensure a clear path.

Peri-pubescent girls were considered targets for unbridled male sexuality and were carefully escorted by relatives. There were very few

post-adolescent boys of 15-20 years or so; once able to bear arms, they had been recruited into the Taliban or killed.

We had FBI, U.S. Marshals, and State Department special agents. There were Taliban among these people. A major concern was the steady disappearance of the 30-inch metal bars that supported the cots.

We were steadily busy. Three nights ago, we had five calls in 22 minutes and had to split every EMS team. One was an obstetric patient with a high-risk, third-trimester miscarriage, and two were collapsed women in different areas of the crowded dining hall. Each of the collapsed young women spawned a wave of hysteria that yielded more collapsed young women. One was actually sick, and the others were psychological conversion reactions. In some cultures, being sick and acting sick are not readily distinguishable.

On another recent tour of duty, we were called out after midnight to a patrol ATV rollover, the second such inexplicable accident in this flat environment. We had four patients, young airmen, one with a few inches of his left humerus protruding sideways out of his upper arm. He kept asking, “Do you think it’s broken?” Until another paramedic asked, “Was it like that before?” Shock manifests in funny ways. We decided to rename the ATVs as STVs, for “Some Terrain Vehicles.”

Essentially, the majority of the EMS mission was on the women’s shoulders, and men were their support staff. Our women provided



the majority of the patient bedside work, as most of our patients were pregnant women or children transported in the arms of their mothers.

Our women were also the ones tasked with the burden of providing and modeling female self-actualization in a culture and population that had never seen strong independent women. The Afghani men tried to pretend the women paramedics weren’t real, or tried not to get caught staring at them. The Afghani women treated our women with a strange combination of deference and scorn. The children couldn’t stop touching them, and seemed to regard them as superheroes.

This particular gig was hard, even for very experienced providers. The person on the stretcher was our priority, but in Afghani culture, the patient may be merely a “useless” woman, failing at her baby-making, son-producing role, or worse, a child, evidently not really regarded as

human until puberty.

For the most part, our paramedics were extensively experienced helicopter rescue/critical care providers. Everyone seemed to need to talk and adjust to the challenges of balancing care delivery that was culturally competent with Western norms of child advocacy and egalitarianism. Some can’t handle it and quit. Some never got the chance or flamed out.

On my first day, during in-processing for clearance onto the base, my expected partner was denied entry. One was escorted away by military police after something popped up on deep background. One was arrested for aggravated DUI, for driving the wrong way on the highway; he was on his way from the off-duty crew house in Alamogordo to report for duty here.

This was a terrifying, rewarding, challenging, extraordinary, inspiring, and agonizing type of EMS. Nearly all of it involved the kinds of patients and calls we dread: very sick children and high-risk, pre-term impending deliveries with multiple prior pregnancies, poor prior outcomes, and no prenatal care, compounded by linguistic and cultural barriers that inhibited nuanced understanding and care management.

At good moments, it was like getting paid to camp with cool people, many of them actual old friends. And we had a nearly nonstop F-16 Fighting Falcon air show in our yard.

This will likely be the last thing I do in EMS. It seems like a good way to wrap it up.

What's a Boiled Frog To Do?

By March Twisdale

When we're dealing with human nature, concepts tend to last. Consider the phrase, "Out of the frying pan into the fire." This has roots as far back as ancient Greece between 620 and 564 BCE, and its wisdom is summed up by two other well-oiled phrases: Sometimes, we get "caught between a rock and a hard place," and "look before you leap!"

For the frog in the pot, observing more coal being added to an already overly hot fire, the most pressing question is not whether to jump, but "in which direction?"

Last month's article, "How to Avoid Being Nickeled and Dimed," presented readers with the considerable costs associated with adopting a "plastic habit." Quite simply, our global economies have been meticulously re-designed over the past few decades to create a never-ending stream of income ("Bank Taxes"). Like the unwitting frog, many have barely noticed this shift, nor are most bothered by it.

We should be. If you missed last month's article, check it out. In summary, Vashon Islanders are paying upwards of \$160,000 in "Bank Taxes." Every. Week.

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was typical to pay \$5-\$8 a month for a checking account, which included free checks and a new-fangled ATM machine (if you happened to need your money when the bank was closed). You could even use your

Island Resilience

ATM card at "some" businesses, although most people wrote checks or spent cash. At the end of a month, you'd have spent \$5-\$8 in fees, whereas at the end of a week today, most of us have spent upwards of \$20 in fees. That's \$80 a month.

How many of us would be okay with our bank saying, "Hey! We'd like to charge you \$80 a month for your checking account (with no checks), a debit card, and reduced banking hours." Few to none. The banking industry knew this, so they got smart. They offered rewards. They made plastic ubiquitous. They incentivized society into shifting (over a couple decades) from cash to plastic. And we began to say, "Yes, yes...let's go cashless! It must be a good idea, right?" As we floated, small, green, and trusting in an increasingly hot pot of water.

It gets worse. As an Islander, I'm not going to tell you to give up on your Amazon habit. With ferry costs and lines, gas prices, and the awful traffic throughout much of Seattle and Tacoma, I get it. But consider this: Amazon is 100% plastic, making it a "Bank Taxes Forever Zone." Do the math. Amazon accounts for roughly 40% of the U.S. ecommerce market (2022), and Amazon's average daily sales revenue is \$1.29 billion. That \$1.29 billion in transactions results in \$25,800,000 in "Bank Taxes." Every. Day. And that's the U.S. only.

The move to shift global economies from cash (free

transactions) to digital money (transactions with fees) is not coming from a place of benevolent charity. It's a meticulously and strategically implemented plan meant to benefit its developers and investors. And it's working. Forty years ago, Vashon Islanders primarily paid with cash or check. Today, it's a 90/10 split (plastic/cash).

It goes beyond everyday transactions. The Superbowl. The World Series. The NBA Finals. March Madness! Middle East Film & Comic Con. Sundance Film Festival. Montreux Jazz Festival. Online gaming? (Yikes!) Each "cashless event" adds to an ever-increasing system designed with one goal in mind: to continuously extract resources from an entire planet. Forever.

It didn't used to be this way. Banking had a much smaller footprint, it was far less costly, and it can be this way again. Vashon Island can become \$160,000 richer - every week - simply by conducting local purchases with cash. Thankfully, there are some options for dodging "Bank Taxes" at most cashless venues. Next month, we'll touch upon some of these.

For now, climb to the edge of the pan, look about for a green lily pad with Benjamin Franklin's visage or (hopefully soon) Harriett Tubman - and jump!

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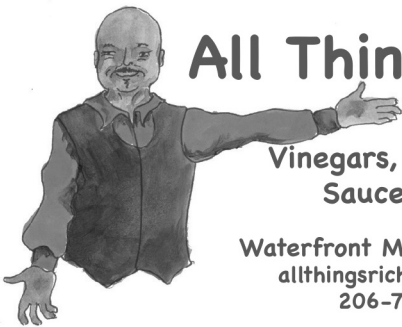
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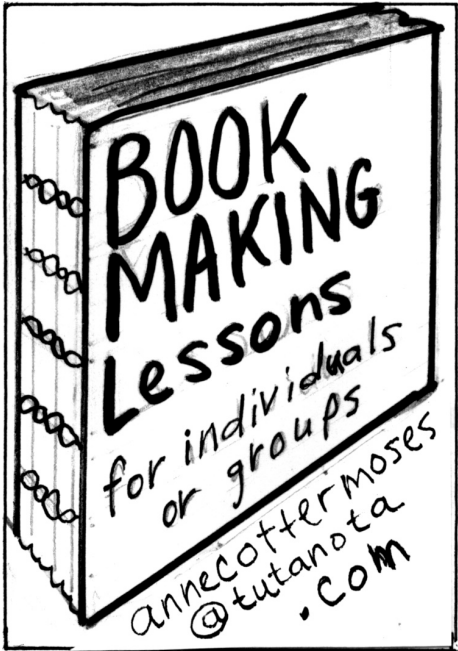


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Place

By Michael Shook

July marked 11 years at our property, and I feel I know the landscape now. The first trees I planted look like proper trees, rather than sticks. And the surrounding extant trees are familiar to me in ways they were not when first we moved here.

To get to know a place takes time. Time to understand not just the physical landscape, but how that is affected by the shifting seasonal weather patterns. The wind, for example: from which direction does it blow, fall and winter; when is it drying, when damping? What are the rhythms of sun and heat; how does light hit this part of the property, then this part, and which areas are more protected from both heat and wind? It all takes time; wandering, watching, tending plants in the morning, the afternoon, into evening, in all seasons. Paying attention to what is going on in the sky, the dirt, and with insects, birds, raccoons, deer, and the other life-forms the land teems with.

The result is to be granted a sense of place, and within that, the opportunity to practice human being; for human-ness, done appropriately, is an action, more verb than noun. We have to learn how to be human, through teaching by a host of others over our lifetimes – including other species, both flora and fauna – if we are ever to be something more than a cunning, violent, bipedal predator. And place is needed for that. Not “my place,” as if this were my possession, though there is some of that (yet much more that place possesses me). This, specifically, is where I am, and where I am becoming. A considerable effort must be made to invest myself so. For it is in a specific place that I do my living and dying, my loving and, because of that, inevitably, my grieving.

Such consideration sets me thinking about placement. My dictionary speaks of placement as “The assignment of a person to a suitable place.” I am so assigned. My ancestry is mostly Scots-Irish and Dutch, with some Viking thrown in. It’s my belief that, largely because of that genetic heritage, I


have never been bothered by our months of low, gray cloud cover, glimmering light, and (mostly) gentle rain. To the contrary, I anticipate and welcome the rainy season, embrace it, the more so because of our summer drought. It may help that, growing up in the greater Puget Sound basin, a phrase I heard regularly from my parents was “Go outside!” no matter the weather. I soon learned that, by dressing appropriately, a bit of cold or rain was of little consequence.

But it seems reductive to limit the assignation of place to mere genetics. Humans are remarkably adaptive and can make a home for themselves almost anywhere. And Americans in particular have made a secular religion out of going places, sticking for a while, then moving on – here, there, everywhere, anywhere, and back again. A nation of immigrants, to a degree unfound elsewhere on the planet, a restless, rootless people. We move a lot, almost three times as often as Europeans (on average eleven times in a life, as opposed to four, respectively). We move across country for a job (the most common reason), or education, or a new start, or because we want a change of scenery, a different climate. Whatever the reason, or reasons, it has been and is so pedestrian an action, that upon hearing loved ones will now be residing 3,000 miles away, the news is received with a sigh, and a shrug of indifference. We’ll just hop a flight and visit, or not.

Which makes enacting “place” quite a challenge, if indeed it is thought of at all. Place requires, in addition to time, a kind of involvement that is wholehearted. I must risk entanglement in the life of a place, or, to put it another way, I must love the place itself, for itself, in order to be in and of that place. Relationships with land (and the people thereof) must be entered into and nurtured, which then, of course, makes me vulnerable to calamitous pain when the land/people are harmed. (Within this slight meditation, let me now place humans aside for a moment, and consider the pain of the land that affects me.) The land pain, the wounds inflicted upon the countryside, these ebb

and flow, now close at hand, now far distant, but accumulating nonetheless over a period of years, as place is altered in myriad ways, and I am powerless to stop any of it. To be present as land, trees, waterways, even sky, are riven, buried or uprooted, destroyed; then the sorrow comes upon me, made worse by the knowledge that I, too, like all of us, have participated in that destruction.

And as time – “the destroyer of all” – does its work, place gradually becomes displace ...



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Getting New Perks at the Vashon Sportsmen’s Club

By Hugh Lord

How do you start a fire without a lighter or matches? Well, at the Vashon Sportsmen’s Club Kids Camp, that is one of the things they teach you. Even once you know how, it’s still not easy, but if you keep practicing it starts to seem easier. Until it rains, then like in Fallout (a video game), you’ll need to upgrade your skills for another level of difficulty.

Kids Camp happens once every summer and lasts for a week; it re-started in 2022 after getting cancelled during COVID-19. Kids Camp usually has around 21 kids, six main activities or sections, with about 33 volunteers. Like the name says, the activities center on wilderness skills that are handy for camping. Safety is number one, number two is to learn, and number three is to have fun. Which includes s’mores.

This past July, the camp had the same six main activities as in 2022 when I went there for the first time. Fishing, survival skills like knot-tying, wood-cutting, making shelters, cooking meat on fires, archery, shotgun training, rimfire (precision target shooting with 22-caliber rifles), and lunch at 12:00 noon. This year I came back as a youth advisor, which is a teenager who is a helper to the head counselors and passes on experience to the newer kids. Which means you’re basically a mentor in training.

The camp is a long day, starting at

8:00 am and going until 4:00 pm. When I went there the first time, it was a big transition since it was the summer, I was sleeping in a lot, and had gotten used to staying up super-late. The first day in the camp, I was really tired and it put a strain on my cheerfulness. It also made it harder to pay attention. It was definitely easy to fall asleep early that night.

This year was a different challenge. It wasn’t easy for me to make the change from student to advisor because there were times where I had to hold back from arguing. Some of the campers seemed pretty tired, but the majority of them seemed to be doing a better job than I had on my first day back, even those who traveled in from off Island.

Most of the campers settled in by day three, but a few still struggled with some tasks, and there were some kids who were really good at other things. One camper named Chris seemed to be the best at shotgunning. While everyone else was randomly hitting and missing clay pigeons (flying targets), he was a natural who hit almost every single one. Whereas with rimfire the competition went back and forth between about ten kids over the whole week, with a very close final contest on Friday.


The Sportsmen’s Club is almost 100 years old now. It was built in the 1930s by community members led by the famous Japanese strawberry farmer Mr. Mukai. Rod and gun clubs were a popular idea at the time and many others were built all around the

country. But, unlike most others that usually focused only on fishing and marksmanship, ours is somewhat unique and compares favorably by doing more.

The Club holds events through the year, some for kids such as a Trout Fishing Derby. Others are for adults, for example, earlier this month, there was a Chili Cook-Off. Family movie nights were held this spring and summer, there is a free pool table on the ground floor, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and scouting programs use it, and the Club House is sometimes rented for

memorials or private parties by Sportsmen’s Club members.

Best of all, the Summer Kids Camp may expand into a full overnight program in 2024. I hope that happens, but either way will definitely plan to return as an advisor.



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From Minglement: Black Buffalo Barley

We love the foods of the fall time and want to highlight from time to time some of the not so-widely used ingredients to add to your own fall food home-cooked creations. This time around, it’s Black Buffalo barley. We brought this very ancient, naturally hull-less barley in to Minglement a long time ago for its nutritive value. This tasty grain has a sweet flavor and comes with 15% protein, the highest source we’ve seen for healthful, cholesterol-fighting beta glucans. Try as a substitute for a whole-grain pearled barley.

Soak overnight and cook for about 30 minutes, or simmer for at least one hour. It can be tough if not prepared properly. One option, if you are able, is to coarsely grind to make

more of a porridge for breakfast, or add spices and your imagination to make crackers and more. Make enough to last for two days, and add a tablespoon or two into your hot breakfast cereal.

Many folks with wheat allergies find this barley an acceptable substitute. The flour is a beautiful pastel purple and makes a great ingredient in pancakes and muffins. I add it most of my fall soups, including substituting for the noodles in chicken noodle soup.



Jack
O'Lanterns on
the porch. It's
that time of
year!



Island Epicure – Steve’s Granola

By Marj Watkins, as told to Suzanna Leigh

“Oh Mom, venison again?!”

When I was growing up during the depression, eating all of my meals at home, breakfast was usually oatmeal mush with sugar and milk. We didn’t look forward to it, but when you are hungry, you eat whatever is presented. If we didn’t have that, we had rice for breakfast with milk and sugar. Not very nourishing. But sometimes we had fried venison. If you shoot a deer in season, you have latitude on how you eat it, but if you just got the deer out of season and got very quiet about it, you might give some pieces to the poor. You tell them, “Don’t tell anyone I gave this to you.” You have to do what you can to survive.

One day, two policemen came to our house. They said, “We have been given a tip that Howard Brunson has been poaching venison.”

“Oh dear, who would do that?” My mother trembled. “Isn’t that illegal?”

The policemen could see the little kids playing on the floor and thought, “This man has got to feed his family,” so they said, “Well, we’ll just not say any more about that, but we will have to check back and be sure you are only eating legitimate meat.” Then they went away.

My mother said, “Thank God they didn’t go look in the woodshed. There was a dead deer hanging there.”

After that, my dad always took pillowcases for the deer meat and

butchered the deer that he killed on site. He put it in the back of the car and put something over it.

He always knew where to find the deer because he planted food that the deer liked, to help them make it through the winter.

These days, I eat granola with yogurt on top and an orange. This gives me protein, vitamin C and other vitamins, and lots of flavor. This granola is made by my son, Steve Watkins. It is especially delicious and nourishing.

Steve’s Granola

Into a very large mixing bowl, put:

- 1/2 of a large box of Old Fashioned Oats
- Oil enough to moisten (olive oil works well)
- 1/2 cup honey (try to get raw honey from an Island neighbor, or local raw honey from Rich Osborne)
- 1 tsp salt
- Raw nuts to taste (crushed cashews or walnuts, a handful of sunflower seeds)
- Optional: almond or coconut extract

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Line a baking tray with parchment and spread out the granola mixture on it. Bake to a golden color, not brown, stirring occasionally.

Remove granola from the oven and stir in golden raisins or craisins. Cool and store in a large jar. This can keep for a long time, but in our house it goes into our tummies fairly quickly.

Autumn Plum Chutney

By Claudia Hernandez

Not much is better on a leisurely weekend afternoon than a snack of sharp cheese, good bread, and a homemade preserve. At once spicy, sweet, and tangy, this plays well not only on a cheese board, but also spread on roasted winter squash or a sandwich. This recipe for Autumn Plum Chutney is quick, easy, and well worth the effort.

Autumn Plum Chutney

Ingredients

- 1 ½ pounds plums
- 12 ounces onions
- A generous ¾ cup raisins
- 1 cup light muscovado sugar
- ½ tsp crushed, dried chile
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp yellow mustard seeds
- ⅔ cup cider vinegar
- ⅔ cup malt vinegar
- 1 cinnamon stick



Directions: Halve the plums and discard the pits. Peel and coarsely chop the onions. Put the fruit and onions into a large stainless steel or enameled pan with the raisins, sugar, chile, salt, mustard seeds, vinegars, and cinnamon stick. Bring to a boil, turn down the heat, and leave to simmer for an hour, giving the occasional stir to reduce the risk of the chutney sticking.

Spoon into sterilized jars and seal.

Claudia Hernandez has been a chef and baker for over 30 years. She started Wild Roots in 2014 on Vashon Island with a focus on local and seasonal food. Her food will be available starting this October, beginning with Soups, Salads and Desserts. You can contact her at claudiahskitchen@gmail.com.



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Masks

Masks are back in the news. A few Islanders have written to us with their thoughts. We always welcome your input. Send to editor@vashonloop.com.

Masks and Children

By a Vashon Mother

There are countless studies proving that mask-wearing provides little if any of the protection the media and U.S. Centers for Disease Control have led people to believe (or it's straight-up inconclusive), but as a mother of two young children, I would like to address this topic as it pertains to them.

My children were toddlers in the spring of 2020; we were newer to the Island and hoping to make friends. No matter where you land on the COVID-19 topic, I think we can all agree that what began that year was especially traumatic for the youngest and most rapidly developing little minds in our community.

To not see faces or clearly hear voices is quite scary for children, and "smiling with your eyes" while wearing a mask does nothing to comfort them. Identifying faces and recognizing their expressions contributes greatly to a child's neural development, social awareness, emotional growth, and their ability to assess their surroundings. It is biologically part of the way we evolve. There is no substitute for learning these skills, nor is there another way to allow the brain to develop in those areas.

Over the last three-and-a-half years, we have created a recipe for much emotional and psychological trauma. We have only just started to witness its effects in these children, and this will likely continue to unravel in untold ways throughout their lifetimes. Now, consider that these very same children will be running the world and making more and more decisions for us as we age, and it becomes a rather scary situation for us, too.

Health Matters

Back to the Basics

By the Polite Masker

While listening to the car radio and waiting for a late North End ferry on the morning of September 14th, I heard an ad for Vicks Vapo-rub. It featured a girl coughing and sniffing and said that with cold and flu season coming right up, it was time to think about applying some Vicks to keep those nasal passages clear.

As the commercial was finishing up, the thought arose, "That's the first thing I've heard about colds in a long time." Then, about an hour later on the ferry another version of the Vapo-Rub ad played, again with coughing and sniffing. Nothing about shots. Nothing about masks. I listen to commercial radio and drive as part of work, so have easily heard over 10,000 announcements cross the airwaves on masks and shots during the past 3-plus years.

I haven't heard them again, but the Vicks commercials were a turning point for me. To be considerate to family and friends, I've worn masks whenever and wherever asked. I've even worn them outside. But I've known the whole time they're useless at stopping the flu, and nothing short of a gas mask will stop a virus. If they did the job, then why did we have non-stop COVID spread? As is said, if you can smell it, you can catch it.

It's time to face my family and friends normally, with a smile. Except for a costume fundraiser or Halloween parade, I won't be wearing another mask. If one is offered, I'll reply with a polite, "No thank you," and proceed. If I get the cold or flu, I'll just take time off and break out the cans of chicken soup that are getting near their expiration date.

Mask Mandates Raise Significant Concerns

By a Vashon Community Member

Mask mandates, while well-intentioned, raise significant concerns that cannot be ignored. Advocating for individual choice, "my body my choice," as well as personal liberty, I firmly oppose mask mandates for several reasons.

First and foremost, mask mandates infringe upon our fundamental rights and freedoms. In a free democratic society, individuals should have the autonomy to make choices about their own health. Requiring masks under the threat of legal action, fines, or denial of essential services strips citizens of basic as well as constitutional freedoms, and sets a dangerous precedent for government overreach and control.

Furthermore, the efficacy of mask mandates remains contentious. The scientific community itself has provided mixed and evolving guidance on the effectiveness of masks in preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses. Studies have proven that extended wearing of masks can create significant harm. By imposing mandates, governments promote a false sense of security and divert resources from more effective public health measures.

Mask mandates also disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. People with certain medical conditions or disabilities may be unable to wear masks safely, and mandates can lead to discrimination and exclusion. Additionally, lower-income individuals may face greater barriers to acquiring masks or may be more heavily impacted by fines, exacerbating existing inequalities.

The unintended consequences of mask mandates should not be underestimated. They can foster division and resentment among communities, with some individuals feeling

Continued on Page 10



Support Your Immune System

Continued from Front Page

More specifically:

"Our emotions play a central role in the functioning of our immune systems—so much so, that there's a whole field of science called psychoneuroimmunology. Our moods – and sense of connection – have a profound effect on our white blood cells (the immune cells, such as B cells, T cells, natural killer [NK] cells, and macrophages). Feelings of stress and social isolation are some of the biggest immune "downers" out there. Stress hormones, such as adrenaline (epinephrine) and cortisol, weaken immune function. Conversely, when we are relaxed and happy, our cells produce neuronal signaling molecules such as serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, and relaxin, which have a strengthening effect on the immune system."²

2. Specifically tend your immune resilience.

Some physicians feel that the so-called flu season might be more appropriately designated as "Vitamin D Winter" or "Vitamin D deficiency season." With cooler seasons and the decreased sun and time out in it, our Vitamin D levels diminish. Illness tends to follow. Studies have found that those who suffered severe COVID-19 illness, had extremely low Vitamin D levels. Those who maintained their levels weathered COVID-19 much

better. See our article on Vitamin D at vashonloop.com

To make sure your Vitamin D levels are sufficient: Be outside in the middle of the day when you can. This is likely not going to be enough in our winter months; therefore, you might also supplement with Vitamin D. Educate yourself on Vitamin D3 with K2, and check with someone or a resource you trust if you want to verify your approach.

Optimize omega-3 fatty acids, including both EPA and DHA, as they are immunomodulating.³ Foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, sardines, and seaweed. If you decide to supplement, be sure to obtain good-quality fish oil.

Herbally, you might amp up your garlic intake by including it more frequently in your foods. Garlic is a potent immune system tonic and antimicrobial herb. Honey is also immune-building.³ You could make Fire Cider, or another herbal tonic, and enjoy throughout the season. Elderberry syrup, adding astragalus root to your soups or decoctions (herbal roots or barks that one simmers to extract the constituents), making soups with medicinal mushrooms and bone broth, teas with immune-supportive herbs that have an affinity for the respiratory system, smudging your house from time to time with antimicrobial herbs such as rosemary and red cedar – all of these can help support you during the fall and winter. See this article at vashonloop.com to find out more.

3. Adjust your routines as needed.

Stay home or keep your distance if you feel yourself vulnerable or under the weather. If you feel illness coming on, stay home. If you can, take time to fully recover.

Seek help from your community when you need it. Recognize that illness is natural. Our immune systems need to meet up with colds and flus to stay optimized.

Should you wear a face mask? The choice, as it always should be, is yours. Be sure to read our online article "Masks for All Doesn't Work – A Practical Dilemma," to understand what masks can and can't do, and other issues related to mask wearing.

When it comes to supporting our immune health, we are not and have never been helpless. Mentioned here are only a few drops in a sea of diverse, plentiful, time-honored approaches for nourishing one's immune health. No doubt you can think of many more that I have not considered.

What are ways that you keep yourself and your loved ones healthy in the winter season? Please share your remedies and practices with one another and with us! We all benefit from learning from one another.

Visit this article at vashonloop.com for references and links.

A Mousetrap for Billionaires

Continued from Front Page

to freak out about this.” Ultimately, Rush worked on a Titan redesign from 2019 to 2021. He claimed to be collaborating with NASA and Boeing on this (he was not), and later told a Titan Mission Specialist that he had “gotten the carbon fiber used to make the Titan at a big discount from Boeing because it was past its shelf-life for use in airplanes.” Boeing has denied this.

The Titan was put into service in 2021 and ran about 15 missions through June 2023. Regulatory and technical workarounds were the norm. OceanGate was based in Everett, WA, but was actually registered in the Bahamas and operated outside U.S. territorial waters. Because the Passenger Vessel Safety Act of 1993 prohibited submersible dives below 150 feet with passengers on board, all Titan passengers were reclassified as crew, or “Mission Specialists.”

A Titan mission provided the kind of extreme tourism experience that is coveted in high-end circles. In this culture, it’s notoriously difficult to find a way to truly stand out. Stockton Rush would have been acutely aware of this phenomenon. Discussing Rush’s business model, Karl Stanley said, “Every part of this was driven by bragging rights and name recognition.”

The Titan trips sounded genuinely awful. You may have heard that Rush and the crew used a wireless Logitech controller to steer the Titan and control its speed. Other features were equally concerning, or at least deeply uncomfortable. The submersible was deadbolted from the outside. Inside, five had to sit close together for hours on the floor in a space the size of a minivan, with only one window in front. The toilet was at the back end, separated by only a curtain. And the Titan’s electrical system was built by Washington State University undergraduates, who I am sure were very talented, but still.

The Titan missions from 2021 to 2023 only reached the Titanic 14% of the time. Interviews with former Mission Specialists describe multiple points of failure, like loss of surface communication; electrical issues; computer shutdowns; sonar problems; thruster malfunctions; and difficulty releasing the ballast, which prevented ascension. On one trip, everyone had to bodily rock the submersible back and forth to release the roll weights that would allow them to return to the surface.

According to Karl Stanley, “Stockton was designing a mousetrap for billionaires.”

So, did previous Mission Specialists hear the carbon fibers snapping in the Titan? Yes, they did. As part of the Titan upgrades, Rush built and patented an “acoustic monitoring system” to electronically track the frequency and intensity of carbon fiber breakage. Supposedly, the system would raise an alert if the cracking went beyond the norm, leaving enough time to rise to the surface, but, as director James Cameron later put it, “If your idea of safety is listening to your hull breaking, you’re doing it wrong.”

Some sort of hard end was in sight. A series of accreditation groups had either refused to class the Titan’s design or were ghosted by Rush after requesting additional safety testing. Two former high-level OceanGate employees, ready to blow the whistle, had been successfully silenced by legal action. Rush had pushed his way through problems, but was also at a financial impasse. The development of the OceanGate fleet was not progressing, potential clients were being advised against diving with them, and the last recorded funding round of \$18 million was in 2020.

Rush’s story gripped me because of how much it reads like a textbook example of “elite overproduction.” First described by mathematician turned data-based historian Peter Turchin, elite overproduction happens when societies hit peak economic growth, even as the elite have already produced too many heirs. This leaves nowhere near enough room in existing power structures for all

the people expecting to gain privilege, and it predictably and ultimately leads to social crisis.

At a personal level, I found it harder to learn a lesson from this story. Diving on the Titan exists outside the realm of anything I or almost anyone I know could actually do. It also exists outside the realm of anything I could imagine desiring. That said, we face a future of less supply, more frustration, and a need for greater discrimination. That is the case whether you are rich, poor, or part of the shrinking in-between group. The ability to maintain realistic expectations and a clear mind in the face of dwindling resources and increased demands on your mental energy is going to become more difficult and more important.

So please – buckle up your seatbelts (if available), turn on your BS detector, take care of your vehicle, and move forward with a close eye for the next technical difficulty (it’s guaranteed to come).

Mask Mandates Raise Significant Concerns

Continued From Page 9

unfairly singled out or punished for personal choices. This divisive atmosphere is counterproductive to fostering cooperation and unity.

Rather than relying on mandates, I believe in promoting education and encouraging responsible behavior. Providing accurate information about the risks of COVID-19 and what we know about the benefits of mask-wearing can empower individuals to make informed decisions. Moreover, emphasizing the importance of other preventative measures, such as hand hygiene and social distancing, can also be effective in curbing the spread of the virus.

In conclusion, while the goal of protecting public health is paramount, mask mandates are not the solution. They infringe on personal freedoms, lack consistent scientific support, and can lead to unintended negative consequences. We should prioritize education, individual choice, and a collaborative approach to public health rather than relying on coercive measures like mask mandates.

Whispering Fir Bog

Continued From Front Page

and others where your foot would go through. A real fixer-upper.

But still, a roof and some walls, you figure some squatters would help themselves. And every now and then, somebody would give it a try. Never for more than a couple nights, and then they moved on. Usually to leave the Island entirely. It didn’t feel good there, and that’s coming from somebody who lived on the edge of a bog.

One night, I woke from my sleep by a sound. A shriek? It woke me, but stopped before I heard it clearly. It didn’t sound good. I waited, then I heard crunching wood, up in the direction of that old house. If somebody wanted to knock it down, that was fine. But if that was a woman’s shriek, I’d at least go up to town and get a deputy to have a look.

I put on my shoes, and my coat. It was cold and damp, Vashon-style. Then I started up the hill, squeezing between the prickly holly trees, and hoping nothing was coming downhill for me.

I passed the last tree, and there I was in the clearing around that house. It was quiet now, and though I’d come along pretty quietly, I was suddenly sure there was something watching me from inside the house. Or somebody, but that wasn’t how it felt right then.

A shape leapt right out of a hole in the house where a door used to be, and it reached towards me, making a sniffing sound. It started another jump, but by then I had turned

around was running straight downhill back to my camp. I heard crunching and crackling sounds behind me as it followed.

When I reached my camp, I kept right on going. I missed the first plank and my leg went straight down into the mud. I pulled it up, losing my shoe, but I didn’t care. I ran along those planks faster than I’d ever gone before, and only stopped when I reached my hiding spot in the middle.

I heard it, whatever it was, reach the edge of the bog. It got quiet, and then I heard a grunt. It had somehow figured where I was, and jumped straight towards me. But it landed short, making a plop as it crashed deep down into the mud. It snorted, whined, and splashed around. But the mud had it, and presently it was just making bubbling sounds; then the night was finally quiet.

I slept out in the middle of the bog that night, and in the morning gathered up my gear and headed straight to the highway. I don’t know what was down there, and I never want to find out. It was time to find a new place to camp ... Which was out by the AT&T satellite dishes. It was boggy there, too, but the good kind of bog. I saw plenty of odd things there, too, but I’ll let somebody else tell those stories.









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Ever pondered the link between your health and what's on your plate? The agro-chemical industry's heavy reliance on pesticides should be raising more concerns.

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Curious to dive deeper? Reach out to discover more.

Excerpts From “The Heart of Vashon”

“The Heart of Vashon: Sharing Our Stories” is a lovingly written tribute to the Island. The stories were originally solicited for a community-building literary project of the same name spearheaded by Mary G. L. Shackelford and Shirley Ferris in 2015. The book may be purchased at the Vashon Heritage Museum, Vashon Bookshop, and Vashon Pharmacy. All proceeds benefit the Vashon Heritage Museum.

Benign Neglect Farm

By Tamara Kittredge

“A place belongs forever to whomever claims it the hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he makes it in his own image.” -Joan Didion

I moved to my 4-acre “farm” in the 80s and began making it my own with the energy and passion of a 27-year-old. Over the years, I’ve created a place called home, “rendering it, shaping and loving it so radically” to call it my own: Benign Neglect Farm.

Calling it a farm is a stretch – the only animals that I have been unwittingly raising are deer, raccoons, rats, and an occasional squirrel. My garden produces lots of vegetables, fruit, and flowers, and frankly is more than enough for me to steward and share with the 4-leggeds.

However, I can state that the name Benign Neglect is apropos. Teaching elementary school on the mainland for the past 30 years has forced me to make peace with dandelions, blackberries, and ivy.

This daily exile to the mainland has also given me a very deep appreciation of the safe and peaceful nature of the Island. I come home to the sanctuary of Vashon, and see natural beauty around me which causes me to smile, inside and out.

Upper Shinglemill Creek Trail

By Brian Brenno

I took a walk today in one of my favorite places on Vashon – Upper Shinglemill Creek Trail. Once you enter the ravine, you are taken back in time. As usual, I was reminded of the following passage from my grandfather’s journal:

“I can remember going to Sunday School. Believe it or not, I did. I don’t know if it did me any good or not. Mel, Flo, and I would go through Cedarhurst and walk the beach to Colvos, hoping the tide wasn’t in. The Colvos Church and home again, that was a day’s work, no road at the time.”

When I walk the Shinglemill trail, I imagine my grandpa heading west from the family house on the north side of Lande’s corner, following Needle Creek down to where it meets Shinglemill Creek, and then following it to the beach, most likely nearly the same route as the current Shinglemill Creek Trail.

I think Native Peoples had a cool way of naming places that reflected what went on there, old-time lore and personal experiences. That’s how I feel about many places on Vashon. Shinglemill Creek Trail would be: Place My Grandpa Walked That Takes Me Back in Time.



Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

Compliments of my land lady, and expanded upon by me:

I used to be interested in being a banker, just like my grandfather in Nome, Alaska.

But I lost interest in making cold, hard cash.

~

You can get a sleigh online this time of year, if you’re willing toboggan.

~

What do you get when you cross a rabbit with an onion?

A bunion!

~

What’s the difference between a stoner, a politician, and a vampire who smoke marijuana?

The stoner inhales. The rest suck.

~

From Stephanie:

If you get in a fight with clowns, which one should you go for first?

Go for the juggler!



Beer and the “Tourist Dollar”

By the Footloose Foodie

Hello friends and neighbors! I have returned from summer adventures. Alaska, crabbing on the Peninsula, visiting family, and embracing new friendships. The last I wrote the plan was to visit, breweries on Vashon. I tried, but was disappointed. One was not following posted business hours and the other, well, was less about food and more about the brew! And I am all about the food!

I felt that the dining experience was less than an experience and more of a tourist attraction, not very exciting. Hey, on the up note, I was told the brew selections were wonderful and tasty. I got myself a “Meatball sandwich.” The price per-bite was not well balanced. Tater tots not something I would pay top dollar for. Pizza I was told is delicious; however, not my choice of business to purchase a pizza. All and all, I could not see reason to return. I would suggest the brew enthusiasts to go and enjoy! I know many who do and enjoy the brew offerings.

I am brought to mind the businesses of Vashon. I have considerable experience in operating various types, serving our Island community. My personal experience leads me to believe that there is much emphasis on the “Tourist Dollar.” I know well how such dollars are a needed boost to our business community – approximately a 30% increase during tourist season.

That “tourist season” is fast becoming a year-round event. We as a community must not forget “our people.” Those who year-round support and would like to enjoy nights out. Saturday family lunches. Sunday morning breakfasts and brunches. Perhaps it’s time to create family-structured menus, priced with our resident families as a priority.

Let’s get our core Vashon community to get out and enjoy the foods of Vashon, prepared by our local chefs. served by our neighbors who happen to be servers.

I am told that being land-locked, product cost is a bit higher. Yes, this can be a reality, but it need not prohibit stepping out of the box. A food service loses its love when preparing, cooking, and serving becomes just another “for dollars” event. Not an event of sharing great food available to all in an all-inclusive venue.

Show the love we Vashonians have for our community and serve it well and with “Love!”

I remember a few years back, one of our largest eateries had an Italian Dinner Wednesday night, served family-style. A sense of community was present, with much laughter and friendly conversations among neighbors and friends. This “Foodie” sees so much potential in our community eateries. Perhaps as a whole, you can get creative. We have ugly bike nights, First Fridays, holiday street gatherings, Strawberry Festival. Why not a second Wednesday of Family-encouraged dining! Bring out the spirit of love in sharing a meal!

A side note. My birthday meanderings took me to Anthony’s at Point Defiance. The food was amazing. The menu attractive to all in my party. Great beverages that were only enhanced by the personal, caring servers. Price comparable to many Island businesses. Yes, I hit the ferry jackpot, so no issues with walking across and a ferry ride home.

Please remember. My “Friendly Foodie” meanderings are of my choice and opinions and thoughts here are my own. Agree or disagree even agree to disagree, it’s all good and makes for stimulating thoughts

Can’t stop drinking
and want help?



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turned to ideas! Perhaps you would like me to visit an eatery? Let me know.* I would be happy to oblige.

Perhaps this “Friendly Foodie” should try being a food critic for our Island community? Please make known what you would like to see in a meal out! Send me out to your favorite, and if it rates a high score, a drawing will determine if you receive a gift certificate so you may also enjoy one of your “Favorites!”

Write the Footloose Foodie at editor@vashonloop.com.

Vashon! Do you have a great story that you want to share with The Loop? We want to hear from you!



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Aries (March 20-April 19)

Standing up to your relationships is a matter of confidence, not confrontation. Ultimately, this is about understanding that no relationship is strictly necessary, and that all must have a purpose. Sadly, we are trained to act from a place of obligation, and relationships are expected to serve their own ends. Yet with ethics like this, it’s easy to get lost in a fog. My question is: what do you want, and what do you want from the relationship in question? Make sure you know these things, and are being sincere with yourself in your assessment. Either you will get them from this relationship experience, or you will not. You cannot expect anyone to change; therefore, you must be willing to make the changes that place you at the center of your existence.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

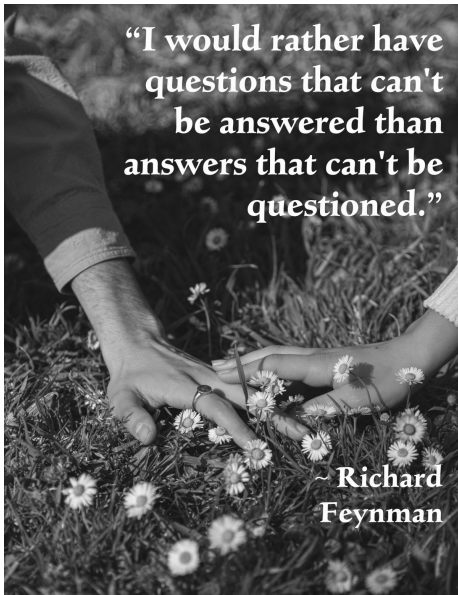
What seems to be about something large is really about something small. In other words, the core matter is not a big deal, but it’s a subtle, important one. Your charts looking ahead to the spring describe quite a bit of progress that could be delayed or even diverted if you are not entirely real with yourself, and act on what you know. The coming conjunction of Jupiter and Uranus in your birth sign or rising sign takes place April 20, 2024. This is something to honor and respect now, and if you do, it will be much more relevant then. Tune into your potential, and recognize that you have not always identified what was holding you back in the past. You are a more mature person now. Notice, and do what is right for you.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

You have blessings that you may not be counting, and are not even aware of. Now that Mercury is direct, you can tap into some of those, even though they may remain out of sight for a while. You will validate their existence by accepting their gifts. One of these is peace of mind. It can seem insane to have any state of serenity in the world as it is today, so you will need to do this on a kind of dare. A state of serenity is a decision and a habit, in that order. With the Sun about to enter your fellow air sign Libra, this is a good time to experiment– and to do so in a creative way. Creative means learning; learning is the discovery that something is possible. This is not so much an event as it is a state of mind, and for you, the immersion in beauty is always the thing that gets your mental and emotional glands flowing.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

When the Sun enters Libra, you’re invited to be at home in the world. Of course, that invitation is open all the time, though when the Sun moves through your 4th solar house you can truly feel it, and feel the inclination to respond. Said another way, it feels safe



“I would rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned.”

Richard Feynman



Planet Waves
by Eric Francis <http://www.PlanetWaves.net>



to feel safe. There is something else going on which may be contributing to this. A Chiron-like planet called Asbolus has entered your sign; after completing a brief transition period, it will be with you for about 20 more years. This is focusing your awareness on the serious problems humanity faces at this time, and is likely to be calling on you to stand up to them. You are starting to understand that you share something in common with all life. This is a deep realization, and it will give you strength. You are starting to recognize that your actions make a difference. And you are in a position to gather around you people who want to make changes. Get to know them before you determine that they are sincere.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

It’s been said that fortune favors the bold, and this is true for you now. Yet the nature of courage is less about conquering the world and more about expressing your ideas with some finesse and gusto. Now is the time to turn up the torch, and to speak directly rather than in rhymes, riddles or metaphors. Get to the point of what you want and what you need. This is about your spiritual quest, your healing process, and learning to be yourself without reservation. Factors involving areas in your chart where you establish your reputation, take leadership and take responsibility will be building in strength over the next six months, and we could also say that fortune favors preparation. Yet the first step is saying what you mean and meaning what you say. Of course people will respond, and even the meekest comments invite pseudo controversy. That much is a game; being real in your writing, speech and artwork, at all times, is the essence of your spiritual journey.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

There is a reason why financial matters are treated with such taboo: they involve secrets, they touch on issues of death and legacy, and people tend to treat money as if it was some occult, mysterious object rather than a storage device for energy. Financial freedom is personal freedom. You are aware that, on one level, your ability to make choices depends on your resources. And at the moment, your astrology is saying to get your own, and to be minimally dependent on others. For many people, the appeal of relationships involves a monetary arrangement, which is then cast as love or partnership. You will make useful discoveries if you peel back the layers and look closely at the dimensions of your agreements. What would you do if you suddenly had all the resources that you needed? What about your situation would you change? That would be an honest assessment of how you really feel. Then the question moves to, do you need to take action in any event?

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

Relationships of all kinds have been under scrutiny the past couple of months, and once again this comes to a head in the chart for the Sun entering your birth sign. Slowly, the fog is clearing. The truth is emerging, though this often happens through confrontations–not your favorite thing. Gradually, you are determining what is necessary, what is harmful, and what you want and do not want. With the Sun moving through your sign, and a

solar eclipse forthcoming, think of this moment as a phase of sorting out. While much of life seems to be a popularity contest, in truth, that does not apply to any issue that actually matters. It would be best to remember that people decide how they feel about you; you have no control over that. But you do have control over whether you’re true to yourself, and whether you honor your own opinion rather than wondering what the neighbors may think. I know that has never seemed to matter more, and in reality it has never mattered less.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Events of the next month will help you blow off pressure. There’s often an odd, hidden intensity before the Sun enters your sign–that is, when it’s moving through Libra each autumn. Yet this year there are points of release that will feel better than your ears popping after you get off of a long flight. You will have opportunities to experiment with taking initiative. That will be the most wholesome response to your inner revelations; one will flow to the next. The whole point of making a personal discovery is the impetus to take action based on what you know. There comes a point where you can no longer live with certain conditions once you have determined what they are. Your chart is set up such that you are at your most alive when you allow yourself to be resolutely who you are. If you’re looking for a key to success, that’s an excellent place to start.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

The time will come when you must make big moves, though it’s a little in the future–about three seasons from now. Now is the time to prepare, by which I mean learning how to engage in all facets of your work in a new way. The thing you want to be doing is the one where time seems to disappear. You are so involved that you look at the clock and it’s 9 pm and then you look again and it’s 2 am. Notice what you’re doing when that happens, and do more of it. You may enter certain situations and feel like you can never really be sincere enough; or like you’re not real enough; or like you’re uncertain who you are. You may not think of this as helpful, though really it’s about working your inner frontier. Make friends with what is unfamiliar within you; with parts of you that are injured; with what you don’t understand. These are the true sources of your strength and creativity.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

The Sun entering Libra is calling you to take leadership, in your life and to some real extent, in the world around you. While yours is often described as the strictly business sign that is all about ambition, it’s humorous that these topics in your chart are covered by a sign that’s about balance, beauty

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and justice. You always look good with a splash of color, and you can apply this idea to the realm of personality, even to corporate or family circumstances. The digital world is bleaching out our sense of justice; at the moment, this is burning bright in you. You can hold it up like a beacon in our dull world. Emphasize contrast, and demonstrate boldly that there are such things as right and wrong.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

The Sun entering Libra on Saturday will help shift your priorities, and remind you that you live in a much wider world than you usually notice. Though the concept of “levels” is not always helpful, in this scenario, the idea of rising to get a better view is appropriate. Shift your priorities to a higher order. Consider what really, truly matters to you, and emphasize those things on a daily basis. Your foundations are shifting. Even further down, the tectonic plates of your soul are moving and rubbing up against one another. There are mountains forming within you. In truth, there is a new world being born within your psyche. The first signs of this will be your choice to take a more magnanimous view of people, and of life. You will find yourself offering your help when you do not stand to benefit. You will recognize what is true because it’s beautiful and elegant and feels right (rather than stirring up angst or worry).

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

Patience is not a virtue. It’s a necessity. So too is the art of not wasting time waiting for something to happen. The thing to do with time is to use it wisely; that means reconciling the past (represented by Saturn retrograde in your sign, for about another six weeks). It means looking inward for what you need to address, and then preparing for what you know you want to do in the future. The Sun’s ingress into Libra favors all forms of negotiation. Generally, once you’re in a position to discuss the possibilities with a willing party, you can come to an agreement that works for everyone. It’s essential that you determine where you stand with everyone in your life, and notice who is willing to engage in the sharing and exchange of resources. That must include you; offer what you reasonably can to any situation from which you benefit. Do a little more than your part–not a lot more, just a little more. Then really pay attention and see what happens next. Important developments are on the horizon; it’s up to you to make sure they are the right ones, that support you and the greatest good.

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