

HB 1814 – What’s the Real Story?

By the Editorial Team

In January and February 2023, rumors began to circulate. A proposal was afoot! The goal? Rehiring Washington state employees lost due to COVID-19 vaccine mandates.

On the Jason Rantz Show (Conservative Talk Radio 770 KTTH), King County Council Vice-Chair Reagan Dunn stressed the need to “rehire” King County employees lost to vaccination mandates. He’s standing on somewhat solid ground, as on February 6, King County and the City of Seattle issued a press release stating they no longer required proof of vaccination against COVID-19 as a condition of employment.

In that February 6 announcement, King County Executive Dow Constantine said, “Today, our experts advise that immunity has reached a level that allows these requirements to be relaxed.”

Meanwhile, on February 19, KOMO News reported on proposed legislation HB 1814. According to KOMO, Rep. Chris Corry “introduced a house bill that would create hiring preferences for bringing back state workers that were fired, and give those workers a chance to catch up on contributions to the state retirement plan.”

HB 1814 is not alone. Cyndy Jacobson was interviewed in January by John Sattgast, on Washington House Republican Radio. She promoted another bill, HB 1029 (which also concerns the re-employment of workers dismissed due to vaccine mandates), by saying, “Let’s encourage localities and encourage private sector businesses to hire back those people if they want their jobs. Let’s mandate that the state create a pathway ... Let’s just extend an olive branch and

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Farming Is Easy

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Empty pastures are like the vacuums which nature abhors. If you happen to have one, fenced and reasonably capable of growing grass, things will appear to fill it.

Soon enough, someone is bound to notice, and ask, “Would you like a slightly used goat? How about two?” If you respond, “Yes, but only if you drop them off and lock the gate,” you’ll be amazed at the speed. Presto!

And so it was that we obtained the sweet-tempered Millie, and her young sidekick, the high-born Billy. Millie fulfilled her purpose as a defoliant, but Billy, an African import, was so picky his lips touched neither native nor invasive Himalayan blackberry leaves. He preferred kale, lettuce, the bark of fruit trees, and above all, flower beds.

As it turned out, after Millie passed away from old age or constant molestation, Billy wasn’t as “fixed” as had been claimed. Greener pastures were found after a determined search, and Billy managed to wind up as stud on a goat farm across the country in upstate New York – a happier fate than smuggling him into Seattle in the wee hours and tethering him on a former neighbor’s back lawn.

On the plus side, we learned a fair amount about goats, in that they may come, and they may go.

At some point in the goat experiment a displaced young Holstein needed refuge, and after due process, we responded, “Yes, but only if you drop her off and lock the gate.” As a kid I attended a Cow Pie High located between two commercial dairies, and even dodged bulls while picking apples. Manure is familiar territory.

Decades later, my wife attended an immersive Permaculture Boot Camp on Vashon. While there she hit it off with a bunch of people, one of them from an

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The Rebirth of Green Burials

By March Twisdale

Patricia Buchanan’s green burial was a first at the Vashon Cemetery, but not the first on our island. Long before European colonists arrived, the native people living in the Puget Sound received what we today would call a green burial. Begging the question, what exactly is a green burial?

Within the realm of traditional burials, each cemetery has its own rules. Vashon Island’s three-person board has worked to offer Islanders some level of flexibility. Here are some details related to “modified” green burials.

First, there is the question of embalming. Assuming you live and die within Washington State, you have the option to be embalmed or not. Whereas, if your body crosses state lines, you must be embalmed by law, unless you receive a special exception, which is usually based upon religion. Next, there is the choice of how the body will be held or contained. Traditional burials lean toward a casket or coffin, while green burials lean toward a wicker basket or shroud. Then, there is the question of whether to include raw earth (dirt) in the burial ceremony? Several “modified green burials” at the Vashon Cemetery have included dirt in the bottom of the vault, with the edges of the vault obscured from view, creating the illusion that the deceased was being lowered directly into the earth. But they were not.

All modified green burials have one traditional burial requirement that cannot be avoided. The cement liner, or “vault” that surrounds the deceased. This box withstands the forces of gravity and time, as heavy equipment rolls over the surface, grass is mowed, stones are placed, and people walk by.

This is why Vashon Cemetery is seeking to purchase (or be gifted) additional land for dedicated green burials. As in, truly green. To qualify for burial in the new, green burial section of the Vashon Cemetery, one cannot be embalmed, nor can they use a liner or “vault.” The reason is that these two elements cause harm to the

environment. Which, of course, is the whole point of a green burial – to return our bodies back to the earth in the most natural and least harmful way possible. Also, biodegradable baskets and shrouds are acceptable, but no metal caskets, and wood caskets need to be made with orthodox, wooden dowels only. No nails or screws.

On an Island with 11,000-13,000 residents, you can imagine that the 30-40 green burial cemetery plots are going, going ... possibly already gone. Which means we need to step up and offer additional land for green burial dedication. One idea is to find land that fills in gaps in the Land Trust’s goal of creating walking paths across the entire Island. Another is to find land that is contiguous to the cemetery. Obviously, the land must be accessible to the public, and there are regulations related to how wet the soil can get, partly to protect watersheds and streams.

Dare I say, a view would be lovely?

If you’re interested in selling or gifting land to our Vashon Island Cemetery, please contact Lisa Devereau at 206-799-7480. The future of green burials on Vashon Island is now our responsibility.

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Spring Gardening

By Kim Cantrell and Little Bird Gardens

**The delight of watching our Island bloom.
Ah, Spring.**

I delight in the small things that, in time, will turn into something big. Spring invokes that feeling in so many ways, with greenery tips from the bulbs planted last fall, the new buds on shrubs and trees that make the woods bright with their chartreuse colors, and the seemingly dead branches coming to life with new growth.

One of the first signs of spring on Vashon is the early bloom of our native Osoberry or *Oemleria cerasiformis*, also known as Indian plum. This is an integral plant for early native pollinators. We also see glimpses of red currant, or *Ribes sanguineum*, with delightful pink flowers that gently dangle from its branches, and many more beautiful blooming trees, shrubs, and flowers that begin to wake up in March.

If you’re like us, you are itching to get out into the fresh air and into your garden, and there are several tasks to get started on in preparation for spring.

It’s called Spring cleaning for a reason.

Spring is a great time for organizing, clearing, and preparing your garden areas for planting. You’ll want to clean up or replace your garden tools, bring in new compost/mulch, and decide what seeds, starts, and plants you want to put in the ground. Spring is an excellent time to transplant, divide, and add new perennials, shrubs, and trees to your garden. Plants are less likely to suffer from transplant shock if moved and planted during their dormancy. Spring soil should be rich with nutrients from efforts during the winter months spent cultivating leaf mulch, proper pruning, and building up our composting bins.

First things first: Weeding.

As spring arrives, so do the weeds. Weeds can be annoying, but they strongly indicate soil quality and temperature. When weeds are small, using a

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Code of Conduct

The United States of America was founded on a set of agreements and goals that were unique in their time, and remain unique today. As of Monday, February 27th, only 336,142,103 humans enjoy the protections of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which specifies our individual rights in relationship to our government. Such as freedom of speech, press, and religion. That's only 4.2% of earthlings.

Over the past century, citizens of our nation have held fast to these ideals, thanks to various safeguards put in place by the Founding Families. With great effort, the fertile ground of liberty bore fruit, including a free press that provided some level of protection from government power and its inevitable corruption. Unfortunately, as media was consolidated into fewer, larger presses, they became far less independent - soon resembling a "branch" of government, rather than a wary watchdog.

Today, there is a new category of media. Yochai Benkler, author of "The Wealth of Networks," testified in the United States vs. PFC Bradley E. Manning trial on July 10th, 2013. He described the Networked Fourth Estate as, "the set of practices, organizing models, and technologies that are associated with the free press and provide a public check on the branches of government."

We of The Vashon Loop are a part of this renewed Fourth Estate, and we are not alone. The suppression of the past three years has highlighted how

far we have fallen from the ideals our nation stands for, and the result has been electric! Professional writers, disillusioned by widespread MSM (mainstream media) censorship have flocked to Substack in the same way that famous YouTubers, facing content moderation and cancellation, have moved to Rumble. Why? Because our freedom of thought, speech, expression, and discourse is all that protects our 4.2% of humanity from the totalitarian domination experienced daily by Chinese citizens (18.5% of the world's population).

If you are not free to print what you truly think, then are you living in the United States of America? Or in the crumbling ruins of a country that once drew millions of immigrants from around the world, all in search of hope and a better life? Only those who have not experienced oppression are capable of dismissing or making light of it. For the rest of us, we know the worth of freedom and the cost of its loss.

We encourage you to learn about the Substack Platform. You'll find amazing writers with great content on every topic imaginable, all uncensored and free to share their thoughts.

The Vashon Loop is published monthly

What Brought You to the Island?

By Herb M. Beck

My wife Karen and I wanted to start a hobby farm. We both grew up in West Seattle and were high school sweethearts. Both of our parent's homes had views of Vashon Island. Our friends Mark and Joyce Vornbrock had recently purchased 10 acres on Vashon Island. Mark suggested we look at land on the Island.



were ready to start the hobby farm. Our pasture grass had been planted in September while building the house. Our daughter Kristen began raising 12 baby chicks in the new house while we built a chicken house and pen. We prepared the soil and planted a large vegetable garden and a one-eighth-acre pumpkin patch. We constructed outbuildings and landscaped our yard.

The next year, we built livestock fencing and acquired two ponies. We also enlarged our market garden and pumpkin patch with the help of our new compact farm tractor. Our home was now looking and feeling like a hobby farm, and we were having fun!

The next year, we added 2 horses and 2 pigs, more chickens and ducks, and you-pick vegetables and pumpkins. The pumpkin patch was really fun for everyone. Our children

It was September, 1979. We met with one of the Island realtors. The first property we looked at is where we live today. Four and one-half acres of raw land, overgrown with scotch broom and blackberries, and alder, birch, and willow trees. It's less than a mile from Vashon town, and our children could walk to the elementary school. We fell in love with the island very quickly. We had been researching the hobby farm lifestyle for a couple of years. We were now ready to begin!

We met Vic Urban, an excavating contractor who would clear the land for us. After a few weeks with his bulldozer and tractor, we could see our beautiful land. Permitting in 1981 was a fairly fast process, about three weeks. We installed our electric power, water, and gravel driveway during the summer of 1981. House construction started September 1, 1981. We had some very good tradesmen to help build our dream home. We also had help from family members and friends. Karen and I and our two children, Herbie (8 years old) and Kristen (3 years old), moved into our new home on March 1, 1982.

With a new house to live in, we

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The Vashon Loop

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Don't Go It Alone – Build Community Resilience

Several of us were out on the land, picking out microplastics from the compost-laden field (see “A Field of Plastic” on page 6). Our friends had put out a call the day before that they needed help, and here we were, on a beautiful almost-spring morning, plastic bags in hand, in section of a two-acre field, looking carefully for tiny bits of plastic in the damp soil in which new grass sprouted.

Some of us had not seen each other in awhile, so, as we plucked, we caught up. Our friends shared about the situation that had led to this, plastics in the sheep field, and some related story. We had morning and afternoon shifts, with lunch provided in between. We'd finish one section, then configure a new section, and so could clearly see our progress. Kids helped as much or as little as worked for them. Dogs were welcome. Sheep nearby (including new lambs) offered a lot of curiosity when we needed breaks.

Conversation deepened, turning to dreams, musings about connection with the land, and how to cultivate and demand the best of oneself (virtues) to meet challenging times. Early February is a time for preparing ones' tools for the growing season, for sorting seeds and making a garden plan if one hasn't done so already. Today, we happened to take this time of year to remove plastics from earth – alas, an all too 21st-century environmental task.



That King County and other organizations are failing us in righting a bad situation (microplastics in supposedly organic compost), set us into problem-solving mode. We spoke of making our own compost and of calling on one another for help: Our friend's email had been a modern version of hollering down the road to neighbors in order to raise a barn together, hold a quilting bee, or receive help with a harvest.

In our times, we may have to deal with toxins, plastics, and other calamities that our ancestors never dreamed of. But at heart, we know – we still know – how to do community. And we can wake up to the strength and promise that nurturing community provides. We begin to know community resilience again.

On this Island, we're sure you have countless stories to tell about coming together in community to deal with a difficult situation. These are the stories worth vigorously sharing right now. And it's worth taking note of their common

elements, which in turn build community resilience. They are often surprisingly simple.

1. Identify your problem. Typically, it's something that feels way too much for one person or family to deal with.

2. Reach out to people with whom you've shared community. Your friends, neighbors, colleagues. Folks you've already engaged with in a reciprocal way, giving and receiving.

3. Let your people know you need help, and specifically how they can help you and when. The more specific you can be, the better. Bonus if you can provide them with food, but if that's overwhelming, you can also ask folks to bring something to share if they are able to do so.

4. If it feels too hard for you to ask for help or to organize, find just one person to help you do this, or to do it for you.

Truly helpful work, food, fun, and an opportunity to catch up and chat about whatever comes to mind – all of these ingredients, and others like them, bring folks together and nourish community in powerful ways. Being out in nature can really help too, as can making music.

At a certain point in your work, you'll feel a new sense of what might be possible. This is where the magic happens: when in the course of working together, we come to sense that bigger, deeper landscape. We may glimpse how the Island has called us to be here, and why we might even be called to a specific place upon it. We may come to know ourselves as a people who are so much more than what an agency,

organization, or government may these days consider. We begin to discern the strength, imagination, and the driving creative force that we have as a woven community, that these entities lack. We may begin to sense that we have an ability to come together and solve problems in the surprising way that nature has.

For, at the heart of it, we humans are meant to be in community. It's a natural force. We are not meant to be governed, managed, and told how to think and act – but to surrender to a more expressive, mutually purposeful life that is stronger when we value and respect one another, and know each other as essential, with gifts to share, hands to lend, and the dreams and will to forge new paths.

Organizations and various authorities aren't going to easily come to a place where they can right the many wrongs, and fix the many problems of our current world, or even just our Island. But look what happens when two or more – in true service and with a curious will – gather to solve a problem or address an issue.

We have so much more than the buckets of microplastics we gathered that day. In restoring the land inch by inch, we grew to care very much about what happens next with it and in the future. We have renewed and strengthened our connections with one another. And we have a new story to tell.

This is Island stuff. It's a force to be reckoned with.



Farming Is Easy

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old island family here well before Ma & Pa Kettle (see “The Egg and I”) became cultural icons. Her perma-buddy had adopted the homeless Holstein, temporarily placing her with a foster herd of Austrian Highlands.

Then, a local radio company, which had at first seen value in a free lawnmower under their towers, reneged on a promised hosting deal, citing plausible fears its underground antenna network could be bent out of shape. We were Plan C, so one bright October morning a cheery woman from the Institute of Advanced Bovine Studies hauled in Minnie, complete with papered pedigree, to take possession of our pasture. And then our lives.

Certain facts had been left undisclosed. She was the biggest cow I'd ever seen. The Guinness Book of World Records still lists the largest Holstein, now deceased, as standing 6 foot 4 inches. While we never bothered to measure, in order to look Minnie in the eye, I had to look up. A

year and a half old and already on the far side of a perturbed 3000 pounds, she shook her massive head and let loose with signature bellows that could rattle old windowpanes and your solar plexus.

No one admits to it now, but one of the kids re-christened her right away to “Leslie Lou Minnie Moo.” It stuck. (My suggestion, “Cowzilla,” was shot down with prejudice.)

Now, you can dabble in goats, but cattle demand commitment, even resolve. They will not be ignored. As co-evolved as dogs, they are the answer to that eternal question, “What should we do with all this grass?” There was plenty of it, and Leslie was settled in behind secure new fencing with 55 gallons of clear water and a fresh salt lick.

I walked back to dial into a conference call, and while it was winding down, a notification popped up on a Vashon Facebook group. It said there was a cow loose on the highway, and my immediate thought was: “Hahaha! What kind of dumb hayseed would let ... their cow ... oh.”

To be continued.

Terms of Concern

By March Twisdale

Totalitarianism is a form of government / political system that prohibits opposition, outlaws individual and group challenges to state-sponsored claims, suppresses free speech, freedom of movement, and freedom of philosophical beliefs / religion, exerting excessive control and regulation over public and private life.

How do we recognize a totalitarian state in the making? Answers to this question can be found on myriad bookshelves.

A few years back, I attended a training by long time islander, Margot F. Boyer, based upon a book she contributed to, titled: “Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment.” Goodreads' summary of the book states, “Resisting oppression requires that everyone – both those who benefit and those who are restricted by these social arrangements – become more aware in everyday interactions.”

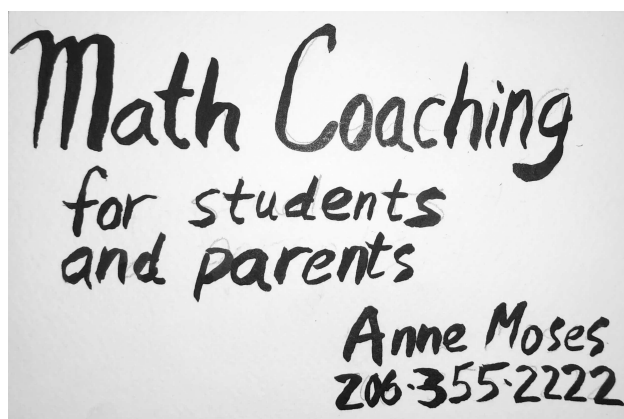
Eric Arthur Blair was an English novelist, essayist, journalist, and critic, who wrote under the pen name, George Orwell. In his life, he also came to understand that our position within society dictates our experiences. In other words, if you have never been oppressed, you are less likely to see it coming.

Elucidated in his dystopian novel, “1984,” were the brutal and inescapable lessons of the first half of the 20th century. “Card-carrying members” of totalitarian states typically enjoy perks and privileges, while avoiding persecution. To them,

it often seems that the persecution of “non-members” is justified. We saw this when children and babies were separated from illegal immigrant parents and locked in kennels along the Mexican border. Many Americans enjoying legal citizenship justified this terrible abuse, saying, “They brought it on themselves.” Was this true? Was it their fault, or ours, as the perpetrators?

Theodor Seuss Geisel wrote nearly 50 books, while living through the bulk of the 20th century, many of which teach deeply moralistic messages, complete with silly, funny characters, and impossible-to-forget rhymes. In particular, Dr. Seuss held no punches when it came to depicting greed-driven resource extraction, fascism, segregation, and other human failings. His book about Star-Belly and Plain-Belly Sneeches, and the capitalist who callously stokes their prejudice, then profits by selling them solutions for their perceived second-class status, before packing up and leaving with all their dough, is especially worthy of our time. Why? Because, in the end, the Sneeches realize their differences don't matter, and their commitment to community and one another does.

Which brings us back to our original question: How do we recognize a totalitarian state in the making? If we accept the wisdom of these writers, we will resist oppression in these ways: (1) Beware the segregation of people based upon compliance or resistance to the demands of the state; (2) remain compassionate and refuse to accept the persecution of minority groups by the state; (3) and notice when diversity is being suppressed.



The Whimsy of Wisdom and Loop De Loop

By Deborah H. Anderson

In junior high, 7th grade to be exact, I decided that Diane Fargo had the most beautiful cursive handwriting. Hers, with the perfect "F's," the top line swooping over the graceful, descending vertical, providing the exact structure for the carefully curved middle horizontal line. So beautiful. Deep sigh.

Yes, hers was the cursive styling I would emulate. I also liked the way my 6th-grade teacher did her lower case "t's." Thus, did I fall in love with penmanship. Cursive, to be exact.

During a time when everything written from 4th grade on was done in cursive, no block print allowed, I had plenty of practice. With disabled legs and feet that frequently failed me, what I could produce with my hands became important: writing, handwork, and piano. Cursive connected me to my own thoughts and brain function in a way that was affirming and empowering.

Today, we know that this is literally (pardon the pun) true. According to developmental neuroscience researchers, "Even if students use digital pens and write by hand on an interactive computer screen, cursive handwriting helps the brain learn and remember better."

Using a high-density electroencephalogram on 12-year-olds and young adults, researchers found that, "... cursive handwriting primed the brain for learning by synchronizing brain waves in the theta rhythm range (4-7Hz), and stimulated more electrical activity in the brain's parietal lobe and central regions." The authors went on to say that this kind of "oscillatory neuronal activity" is important for both memory and encoding new information. Scientists have found a further connection to enhanced reading acuity.

For me, cursive is like dancing with my hands. From the very first exercise of making continuous

Island Voices

loop lines of "Os" slanted gently to the right (as a right-hand dominant person) – such that they touched a top and bottom line equidistant from each other, measured by a dotted middle line – a place of beauty and grace opened in my heart and creative spirit.

Frequently, in the years to come, I heard "You have lovely handwriting." While I could critique my flaws in spacing and size, I just say "thank you," knowing I am preserving an archaic tradition and practice. Inside, I know my handwriting will never be as beautiful as Diane's.

To this day, with this article as an example, most of my first-draft writing is done in cursive in spiral notebooks. Each project or piece has its own gel pen color and nib size that reflects back to me the tone I'm intending. This was composed in black gel with a .07 nib.

Last week, my best cursive story yet happened in the University Village Apple store. My phone had been distressed for over two years. With no viable solution save shelling out \$795 for a new iPhone 12 plus, I was directed to a young twenty-something Russian immigrant from Siberia. After an awkward moment when I mentioned I had to have the phone restored because I was in daily contact with friends-like-family in Kyiv, he plugged my phone into a computer, confident it was an easy fix.

In the next 20 minutes, while the phone whirled away with corrective activity, the conversation wandered into the deadline for this column. Excited when I mentioned the word "cursive," he shared his similar passion. He launched into an exposition on Cyrillic, Chinese, and Turkish cursive. How had I not ever considered that other languages also had cursive versions? Into the lovely unknown once more.


He had a theory that cursive was disappearing in this country because it is too hard for immigrants

to learn, on top of everything else they have to learn, from the starting point of so many languages. I've had my theories as well. When technology entered education, it was quite the unknown, shiny thing. During the dot-com bubble, learning to type took precedence over learning handwriting, and cursive was pushed off the radar of necessary skills for adulthood, or life.

Typing eventually only needed two thumbs. But our brains, and eyes, and all the points in between need what cursive offers. And the parts of our body we've lost with using just two thumbs need to be restored. With all my heart, as a writer and an educator, I believe it is time to bring back teaching that 3rd-grade rite of passage – cursive.

My phone was restored and renewed. An international moment of peacemaking occurred while a young Russian man helped me connect to friends in Kyiv.

Writing all this has renewed my passionate commitment to bringing back cursive in our schools. It's essential for brain growth. Essential. Let's not cheat future generations out of better, more artistic, learning and reading skills.



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Early Wage Slaves – Part Two

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

Last month's issue of The Loop described Seán's early experiences at earning money as a youngster by rubbing finish onto Skippercraft boats. Even though Seán is a few years older than I, our early experiences had a certain parallel. We had some good laughs together as we compared our young entry into the world of actually earning money.

I came into the world as a wage slave after a summer working in Port Townsend, where I discovered the "real" world of time cards, pay slips, regular hours, and worst of all, the mysterious "payroll withholding" system.

It was maybe 1959 or so, and I was barely old enough to drive. I was spending the summer at my grandparent's farm on Marrowstone Island, which was a short distance from Port Townsend, except for when you actually had to get there. My grandfather was port engineer or some such title, and he contracted on a number of projects. I suppose I was a subcontractor to a sub-contractor, or maybe even further down the line. All his employees came from Ballard. They were mostly Scandinavian and one Finn who piloted a Piper Cub to some jobs. I was certainly at the bottom of any career opportunities.

I was farmed out to George Cotton's crew of skilled workers as a "gopher." The Cotton family is still in Port Townsend. I learned later that term "gopher" meant I was the one to go for ... this and that tool or heavy thing, and to bring it to whomever asked. I learned a lot of naughty Swedish and Norwegian words when I made mistakes, which was ... often. My grandmother would admonish me, but corrected my pronunciation of the swear words when I used them.

The first few weeks were good, as I rode into Port Townsend with my grandfather and worked

on the ferry terminal. But then I was assigned to work in the paper mill, and my grandfather having another project, could not provide a ride.

The alternative was to take our carvel planked rowboat with a 5 horsepower Johnson outboard through alcohol passage into the mill just south of Port Townsend. We had the boat up on the beach on the Oak Bay side of Marrowstone Island, where my Grandfather had a modest farm and a big log house that is still there.

The problem was the tides and currents, and the occasional failure of the outboard, and my days at the mill sometimes being 16 hours. I did learn to crawl the edges of the channel and use the back eddies, but when a rip caught the bilge keels, sometimes the boat would swirl around out of control. At other times, I had to row along with the 5 horsepower outboard, because it didn't have enough power to beat the tide.

I never actually knew what it was we were doing at the mill, except it was up under the roof through a maze of steel ramps and scaffolds. Naturally, my short career started at the bottom, and I was always scrambling up and down, bringing whatever was needed, and sometimes things that were not needed.

The stink of the mill even to this day brings back wretched memories. Nobody could smoke, so the Swedes chewed Snus and the Norwegians some kind of plug tobacco. When I made a mistake, they would unload a large spit aimed at me. Later, though, they got to tolerate me enough to share their lunches, which is why to this day I despise lutefisk and love "sill," or pickled herring.

My first pay packet came a month later, after the job was finished, and I was put to work placing little rubber washers on thousands of bronze ring-shank nails for a dock in Port Angeles.

I had calculated what I should have received based upon my \$1.25 an hour wage, and when I counted up my net pay, I discovered it was short of my calculations. Bitterly disappointed, I complained to my grandfather. There was a faint smile on his face when he gave me a pre-college

education in the tax and accounting world. Years later, I looked at the social security statement they give you. I never found my wages. That's when I learned another accounting principle, namely that somebody could "fiddle" the books.



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Spring Gardening

Continued from Page 1

hand tool such as a Hori Hori garden knife or a Speedweeder can easily disrupt weeds, and prevent them from establishing roots. Early disruption of weeds helps to prevent them from reproducing. It is also easier to pull weeds and invasives when the soil is moist. Tackling invasives like blackberries is best done when they don't have leaves. Continually cutting back on these plants will help reduce their energy levels, and will eventually eradicate invasives from your landscapes.

Once your clearing and weeding are done, next comes the mulching process. This helps to suppress new weed growth and retain moisture by preventing evaporation later in the summer. Two inches of mulch is a good amount for the average bed. Use 4 to 6 inches if you are trying to suppress weeds in a new planting area. Adding compost to raised beds and borders after the winter, when soil compacts and uses its nutrients, will give them a fresh start for the season.

Protecting your garden.

Two big things to consider for your garden are irrigation and fencing. Maybe you already have this handled, but for those who haven't, protecting your gardens from deer will save you from heartbreak later in the season. Deer love new spring growth; it is so soft and tender, they are often willing to try plants that later in the season they won't touch. And since we're having a dryer season than usual, irrigation planning, whether in the ground or on top with a drip or soaker hose, will prevent your investment from shriveling up later in the summer.

Planting, finally.

Now that you've got your garden prepped and ready, it's time to germinate your seeds and plant those starts and potted plants. If you are starting from seed, read the packages to determine if seeds are better started in a pot or planted directly in the ground. Many seeds are good for years. If you have old seeds, you can determine viability with a water test - put your seeds in a glass of water. If they sink, they are good. If they float ... bird food?

If you are transplanting from a pot, determine if your plant needs extra compost. Natives can go straight into the ground without additional amendments (our favorite). For trees and shrubs, your hole should be as deep as the root ball and twice as wide as the pot you are transplanting. For smaller plants and veggies, use the size of the original container as a guide for your hole. The general rule of thumb is to have the top of your plant level with the ground. All your new and maturing plants must be nourished while they acclimate to their new home. Watering and keeping the area around your new plants free of weeds are essential.

Spring is an invigorating time for all those projects we dreamt about during winter. Come stroll our gardens. We are happy to talk about your ideas, make referrals to local growers, and help you with all your garden needs.

Kim Cantrell has been tending gardens on Vashon for over 20 years and owns Little Bird Gardens, located at The Country Store. Learn more at littlebirdgardens.com

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A Field of Plastic

By Renée Marceau

It's the beginning of February, and winter storms have passed, blowing a tarp into one of our pastures. I jump the fence to retrieve it. As I walk across the field, with small green sprouts of fresh grass coming up, I notice a color that doesn't belong there in the dirt: blue, then red, then white. I stop. Upon closer inspection, I realize these are bits of plastic.

My mind whirls in confusion. I think back to the fall. After years of discussion, my husband and I finally invested in reseeding our sheep pastures in an effort to bring our over-grazed fields back to vibrant health and nutrition for the soil and the sheep. We purchased 20 yards of organic compost and grass seed and spread it out over two acres last September. Now, as I'm looking over our fields at beautiful, new grass, I realize: we've littered our pastures with garbage – small micro-pieces of plastic.

What?! How could this happen when I've purchased *organic* compost? I immediately went to where I purchased the compost to demand an explanation. I learned that this compost was most likely purchased from Cascade Compost or Land Recovery Inc (LRI) in Pierce County. But it doesn't really matter. I learned that all the food and yard waste programs in King and Pierce counties will most likely have plastic and other non-organic material in the compost. Very few Washington state facilities produce "certified organic" compost.

Self-Sufficiency and Money, Money, Money ...

By Gene Kuhns, Jr.

As we know, money challenges for an individual or a family are a great cause of stress, and are a contributor to divorce or separation. If money is a challenge for you, there are 4 steps you can take to become more self-sufficient and feel less stress with finances.

Step 1: Keep a \$1,000 emergency fund. Emergencies will always happen, and can be devastating to a person's/family's financial situation. Have an emergency fund. To start with, this should be a minimum of \$1,000, until you are out of debt (see step 3). Have a contest with yourself ... how fast can you get \$1,000 put away? What can you sell or do to make extra money? Make this happen quickly!

Note, this emergency fund is to only be used for emergencies. No, eating out is not an emergency ... nor is a birthday, or Christmas.

Eventually, after you are out of debt, this emergency fund should be built up to be 3-6 months of "survival" income (the amount needed to sustain life, should you be without an income).

Step 2. Live by a zero-based budget. What is a zero-based budget? It means that all your income is assigned a "job" before it is earned ... there is nothing (zero) left over. Don't let your eyes gloss over at the word "budget," but get excited that you will be in control.

Make a list of all your fixed bills

Island Resilience



Photo by Julian Dahl

Most often "organic" just means it's made of organic, natural material.

As a consumer, this is frustrating. It's obvious it's made of organic material, so why label it as such unless it's actually certified?

When I pressed the seller as to why they don't just stop carrying it – because it's obviously unethical to be selling compost as organic when it's filled with plastics – the response was that they would no longer be in business. At least half of their income comes from selling this organic compost to Vashon residents.

It seems rather appalling that a business would respond in this way, but is this really that unusual? Maybe for smaller business in a small community, where reputation is worth gold. But the reality is this is "business as usual" in our current state of commerce – few companies in the supply chain will walk away when business practices are unethical because they have a business to run, a

mortgage to pay, a family to feed, etc. So where does the buck stop? Where does the accountability land in this situation?

I needed an immediate remedy, and the seller was obviously not going to offer to be part of it. They pointed out that I had the opportunity to refuse it, but instead I purchased it. On one hand, this is true. On the other, I was not given all the information needed to make an informed decision. But in line with "business as usual" practices, sellers often do not give all the information to potential customers. Unfortunately, again, this situation is not unusual. And I wasn't going to argue with the person and create controversy. I could see the issue was much bigger, and I needed an immediate remedy.

So, I put out a call for help to my personal community. If folks came out to do a "pasture pick-up" for a few hours one Saturday, I'd feed them lunch. This turned out to be

Also, strive to earn more, by doing odd jobs, etc.

All extra income, or savings on expenses, should go to the top-most debt. Keep paying the minimum amount on the other debts. When the top debt is paid off, then all extra money "snowballs" to the next debt and so on until all debt is paid off.

Celebrate every debt being paid off! Throw a party at the end. Again, do not get into any new debt.

Step 4: Now, without debt, build up your emergency fund to 3-6 months of a "survival" budget. Also, pay extra on your mortgage. Also, invest 15% of your income in retirement investments.

In conclusion: Doing the above 4

rewarding on multiple fronts: it got over three gallons of micro plastic off the pastures, preventing it from being ingested by sheep or landing on garden beds; it generated renewal of community through adversity; it led to discussions of the underlying issues, and how to approach creating a remedy; it led to shared education on the pervasiveness of micro-plastics in many aspects of our lives; and it produced ideas on how to make our own compost, and motivation to change consumer habits to reduce the purchase of plastic. THIS is the type of activity that will begin to move mountains and support where true accountability lies – in the individual.

A longer-term remedy is to educate folks, which is why I'm writing this article. You, my fellow Vashon neighbors, need to know that what's being sold as "organic" compost may not be organic and instead contain non-organic material. It's really up to each of us to educate ourselves by asking good questions, seeking answers, and using our money to speak for our values – even when it's inconvenient.

Please see this article on vashonloop.com for resources regarding plastics, and to view a short timelapse video made of the field clean up. You can also visit Zero Waste Vashon for educational material and an update on their ongoing work to create a compost facility for household and yard waste on Vashon. See: <https://zerowastevashon.org/>.



steps is hard work, and requires us to sacrifice now, to be better off in the future. Delayed gratification is a challenge in this "buy it now" capitalistic society. But you can do it!

As Dave Ramsey often says, "Live now like no one else, so later you can live like no one else."

In the end, I promise that you will be happier and experience less stress in your life revolving around finances. You will be taking a massive step towards becoming self-sufficient and being able to help those around you out of love.

Gene Kuhns is the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Vashon, WA

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Did you know that every time you drive your car, you are being exposed to aerosolized glyphosate? The US leads globally in ethanol production, and because almost all starch-based ethanol is made from heavily contaminated corn, the biofuel industry has introduced glyphosate into the fuels that power our planes, trains, and automobiles. While it has long been known that exhaust fumes are toxic to the lungs, this transformation may be leading to a critical increase in the toxicity of those fumes. How tragic that our attempts to reduce carbon emissions using extracts from glyphosate-exposed food crops as a fuel source is exposing us further to the damaging effects of this chemical.

MINGLEMENT

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Eva's Lebanese Hummus Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups roasted butternut squash (half of a 2.5 lb. butternut squash)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 ½ cups cooked chickpeas (one 15-oz can of chickpeas, rinsed and drained)
- 2 tbsp tahini
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 2 tbsp water
- ½ tsp sea salt with black nigella seeds
- ¼ tsp smoked paprika
- ¼ tsp cumin
- Freshly ground pepper
- Cilantro as garnish

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

2. Wash butternut squash, cut in half, and scoop out seeds.
3. Rub 1 tsp of olive oil over insides of butternut squash (½ tsp on each half).
4. Place olive oil-rubbed-side of squash down on a baking sheet and roast for 30 minutes.
5. Remove from oven and let cool.
6. Once cooled, scoop out 1 ½ cups worth.
7. Add butternut squash, 1 ½ tbsp olive oil, chickpeas, tahini, garlic, lemon, and water to a food processor or blender, and process until smooth. Purée the squash with its skin. *Important! The skin adds to the delicious flavor.*
8. Add in spices and blend until well-combined.
9. Serve with veggies, crackers, or dipping of choice.
10. Will keep in fridge for up to 1 week; makes approximately 8 servings.



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The Best 3-Ingredient Chocolate Chip Cookie Ever!

By March Twisdale

About a decade ago, I was blessed with the friendship of a wonderful Island family. Among the many amazing ways we enriched one another's lives, we enjoyed cooking together.

Today, I share one of the best chocolate cookie recipes I've ever encountered, and yes, it has only three ingredients. Imagine a gooey yet crunchy, sweet and tender, mouth-watering and healthy cookie! Yes, it is sugar-free, egg-free, dairy-free, gluten-free, flour-less, salt-free, and well, you get the idea. Even more importantly, it's simple, easy, uncomplicated and requires zero special skills or tricks. It just works, deliciously.

Final note! This is a great base for a variety of "added bits," such as raisins, finely shredded coconut, peanut or almond butter, chopped nuts and various spices. Bon appétit!

The Best 3-Ingredient Chocolate Chip Cookie Ever!

Ingredients

- Raw, very ripe bananas (they should have a mottled look, with plenty of black spots, but still white on the inside)
- Rolled oats of your preference (quick, old-fashioned, extra thick, gluten-free or not)
- Chocolate chips (whatever variety you love – carob, dark, milk, white, peanut butter, you name it ... or, skip the chocolate entirely, and use raisins instead)



Peel and mash the bananas in a bowl, add oats to preferred consistency, toss in chocolate chips of any variety, and mix. Drop spoonfuls onto a cookie sheet, bake at 350 degrees for about 8-10 minutes, until the exterior of the cookie begins to look cooked (not wet and glossy). Cool and eat!

Notice there are no quantities offered? That's on purpose. The goal is to find the consistency that is most similar to a standard cookie dough. So, play with it your first time! You can always add more oats. Start off with less and a more wet mixture, bake and taste a batch (yes, you might end up eating them all) ... then add more oats, if you wish, and repeat.

Everyone will have their own unique texture preference, and each batch will be slightly more or less wet, depending on the ripeness of the bananas.

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The Unadulterated, True Story ... of Water

By Tracey Stover

Bear with me as I weave an inspiring tale about the miracle of water that you are.

As we explore how extraordinary our bodies are, we can then access these amazing vehicles, and engage with all we are inspired to do.

Oxygen plays an essential role, ranging from supporting the body's metabolic processes, to being the doorway to the metaphysical. Let us similarly address the role of water. When the first multi-cellular life form crawled out of the sea billions of years ago, it adapted to living on land by carrying the saltwater with it. In truth, we are walking bags of saltwater. At birth, water makes up at least 85% of our composition, and over time, that diminishes to about 75%. For beings that are mainly water, being well-hydrated is critical.

I'd like to introduce you to the work of Dr. Batmanghelidj. He was a researcher at heart. During the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, he was imprisoned and became the in-house doctor for his fellow inmates. With few medical supplies, he improvised using the power of the placebo. Every prison cell had a bucket of water, so he began prescribing water, several times a day. Patients consistently got better; Dr. Batmanghelidj knew this was beyond the power of the placebo - clearly hydration was much more important than he had realized. On

Health Matters

the day of his judgement, he fervently asked the judge to not let his research about the healing powers of water be lost with his death. The judge in turn, pardoned him, and told him to take his research to the world.

Some of Dr. Batmanghelidj's findings included how dehydration causes stress on the body and extended dehydration is the source of many diseases, including heartburn, back pain, arthritis, colitis pain, migraine headaches, asthma and hypertension. He wrote a book, "Your Body's Many Cries For Water."

How much water should we drink? The easiest suggestion I have found is to drink half your body weight in ounces of water. For example, if you weigh 100 pounds, then drink 50 oz of water, or approximately 6 cups of water daily. A pinch of sea salt supports absorption and maintains electrolyte levels.

This intake does not include coffee, tea, juices, herbal tea, sodas, kombucha, or anything alcoholic. Anything with caffeine or alcohol is dehydrating. There are no substitutes for water, and not all water is equal. Are you drinking tap water, bottled water, or spring water?

The symptoms of dehydration to be aware of include constipation, dark-yellow urine, chronic fatigue, headaches, heartburn, rheumatoid pain, back pain, and leg cramps. Thirst is often the last symptom one experiences.

Proper hydration significantly improves every metabolic function of the body, and one can rehydrate the body and resume good health. I did. In my 40s, I overcame constipation that had been chronic from childhood.

The quality of water is also important. Masura Emoto, a Japanese scientist, astonished the world in the 1990s with his amazing water experiments. In his book, "The Hidden Messages In Water," Emoto showed how our consciousness alters water. Glasses of water that had words of love and gratitude on them formed beautiful crystals, while words of hate and war deformed the crystals. He found that tap water from around the world often deformed the crystals, due to the pipes and the chemicals added (such as chlorine and fluoride), while spring water formed lovely crystals. In Emoto's experiments, after water crystals were

degraded - be it from other's consciousness, environmental factors, chemicals, or EMF devices - one could bless the water and reformulate the beautiful crystals.

Our thinking, intention, and actions are an unstoppable force. We are not victims. Water reflects to us the power we have over our reality. The opportunity exists for us to learn to focus the mind and make blessing a habit - blessing all that we ingest, to transform the body and what is consumed. This has a profound domino affect, internally and externally. According to water researcher and photographer, Veda Austin, water is an extraordinary, other-worldly substance, which we are only beginning to scratch the surface of understanding.

One last thing; please consider joining me on Wednesday, March 15th at 1 pm for a free, 30-minute class on "Breathing Through Anxiety." Contact Tracey at 206-769-0040.

Health Disclaimer

Information in The Vashon Loop is meant for educational purposes only. Any health-related content is the opinion of the author alone and should not be used to diagnose or treat medical conditions or to prescribe medicine. Your health is your personal responsibility, and your body and situation is unique. Please consult with an appropriate medical resource or healthcare provider when making healthcare decisions.

Songs of Kindness, Music of Love

By Jane Valencia

The songs are soft and gentle, sung in what is called a "lullaby voice," all voices blending in music that is not intended for performance, but for the comfort of those who are suffering near or at the end of life. Two to four singers gather at the bedside, offering restful songs to soothe and nourish. This is the special kind of music that Barb Adams discovered when, in 2005, she responded to an ad about a Threshold Choir starting up on Vashon. The music changed her life.

After joining the Threshold Choir, Barb took part in the Providence Hospice volunteer training to get a good foundation for the work. She linked up with Melissa Frykman-Thieme, who played therapy music on the harp in Seattle, and the two went out as a pair to play for patients. To begin, Barb played autoharp and sang, but soon got a harp too, and learned to play it. Barb describes her experience playing with Melissa as a kind of on-the-job training.

Barb soon became the therapy harpist for Vashon, and became more involved in the work. She came to serve a huge area covering South King County. Leaving the Island, her work involved travel from facility to facility, and to private homes as far away as Covington, Renton, and Auburn.

"It was a big stretch but it was something that I absolutely loved," Barb explained. "My heart was really drawn to this work through doing that."

Meanwhile, Barb became director of the Vashon Threshold Choir, and serves as director to this day.

"The harp is wonderful, and people think of it as an angelic instrument, and feel an affinity for it," Barb says, "But I've always felt that the Threshold Choir had a special way of connecting, being just simply pure voices."

Barb, who has performed in the Vashon Opera and Vashon Island Chorale, explains of Threshold singing: "It's totally different when it's a service of kindness and love [as opposed to performance], and that's where my heart is."

Often in her harp therapy work, Barb plays and sings Threshold Choir songs, mostly ones she's written.

The Threshold Choir is an international organization, and almost all of the music in its repertoire are songs written by members. When Barb began writing her own songs, the Threshold Choir and its founder, Kate Munger, encouraged her. She now has 21 songs in the international organization's repertoire, and the Vashon Threshold Choir sings several of them.

Barb also loves to travel, especially to wilderness along rivers. While in these places, she often finds inspiration to write songs.

Sometimes she hears from singers, such as a Threshold Choir in Indiana, who tell her, "We use your song a lot. Could you write the harmony for it?" So, she's returned to a number of her songs and added low and high harmonies.

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When other avenues shut down during the pandemic, the Vashon Threshold Choir continued to sing. Last spring, they sang for two hospice patients who have since passed.

The Vashon Threshold Choir welcomes new members. Musical training and big voices are not needed. Requirements, Barb explains, are: "Loving to sing, being sensitive to the person in the bed at the bedside, being flexible enough to follow the breath, and knowing that what we're doing is offering something that's beneficial to them."

"It's wonderful to be back doing the service," Barb says. "The Threshold Choir gives the singers the opportunity to provide service and love, and to sing as a community within themselves."

Like the rivers she loves, the soft, comforting music Barb discovered in 2005 has led her on a transformative journey.

Below, enjoy the lyrics to one of Barb's songs.

Peacefully Drift

Live deeply in this moment
Find the stillness deep inside
Enter the quiet
The calm inner space
And peacefully drift
Peacefully drift
Peacefully drift beyond

From Barb: "This song was written in one of my favorite places, where the Salmon, Snake, and Imnaha Rivers come together in Hells Canyon. The isolation of this spot in northeast Oregon is incredibly peaceful, with vast views across into Idaho."

To find out more about the Vashon Threshold Choir, please visit thresholdchoir.org/vashon

HB 1814

Continued from Page 1

get moving beyond all this vaccine mandate stuff." Both bills, having made a splash in the local news pool, now sit in the Labor and Workplace Standards Committee, and their future is anything but certain.

The evolving nature of the situation is addressed in HB 1814, right up front: "The legislature further finds that vaccine requirements for state employees continue to evolve as the most recently negotiated state employee collective bargaining agreements remove the vaccine booster requirement and replace it with a \$1,000 incentive payment. In light of recent and future changes to employer-mandated vaccination policies, it is the intent of the legislature to facilitate the efficient return of state employees who separated from employment due to mandatory vaccination policies, by providing a hiring preference."


While King County has made an official policy change, HB 1814 is only a proposed bill, seemingly stuck in committee. Meanwhile, Governor Jay

Inslee's current FAQ page, pursuant to Directive 22-13.1 (which went into effect November 1, 2022) states: "The directive establishes a condition of employment for new employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by the date they begin state employment, and continues the requirement for existing employees." And, "The state reached agreement with most unions representing cabinet agency employees to continue the vaccination requirement via an interim agreement until June 30, 2023. New collective bargaining agreements with all unions contain the vaccination requirement, and those go into effect July 1, 2023."

We don't know what all of this means for the experienced deputy, ferry worker, firefighter, transportation worker, or other state employee wishing to return to their careers. At this moment, we're not sure anyone does! But, we're actively seeking answers to these questions, and we'll share what we learn in our April Issue.

Visit our website (vashonloop.com) to see links to government sources related to this article.

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Suzanna's Song

How I came to live on Vashon

By Rich Osborne

To the tune of "Rosin the Bow" or Ivar Haglund's "Surrounded by Acres of Clams"

I was working my booth down in Fremont, selling my spice and oil.

Content in my Shoreline existence, my temperature well below boil.

I'd given up chasing the ladies, I thought I was through with the game.

Then I met Suzanna from Vashon, and I ain't never been quite the same.

I've been from Seattle to Istanbul, I've rambled through many a town.

Then I met Suzanna from Vashon, Lord, that's where I'm settling down.

I looked to the west at the market, and there she was calm as could be.

After ten minutes listening and talking, I knew she was the one for me.

We talked all through that rainy Sunday, our lives and the people we knew.

Then I managed to get her phone number, afraid she's too good to be true.

I've been from Tacoma to Monterrey, I've rambled through many a town,

Then I met Suzanna from Vashon, Lord, that's where I'm settling down.

I called her a couple days after, she answered and agreed to meet.

The sound of the joy and her laughter, had swept me clean off of my feet.

Two times I did ask her to marry, and two times she said to me "No."

So I told her she'd best be the asker, and left her to manage the show.

I've been from Atlanta to Oregon, I've rambled through many a town.

Then I met Suzanna from Vashon, Lord, that's where I'm settling down.

In Pioneer Square she did ask me, one night as we drove to the dock.

At the Fauntleroy Ferry, I told her "Yes" and kissed her to cushion the shock.

And at Lincoln Park we got married, with all of our family and friends.

Then we sailed off into the sunset, and that is where this story ends.

I've been from Seattle to Istanbul, I've rambled through many a town.

Then I met Suzanna from Vashon, Lord, that's where I'm settling down.

When I sang that last verse to my sweetheart, she corrected me with a grin, saying

"That's not where your story ends, my Love, that's where our story begins!"

I've been from Seattle to Istanbul, I've rambled through many a town.

Then I met Suzanna from Vashon, Lord, that's where I'm settling down.

Are You An Artist?

By Suzanna Leigh

"Are you an ARTIST, or just a hobbyist?" That question always makes me feel like dirt. What do I have to do to be a "real artist?" Spend 40 hours a week in my studio? Produce 50 new paintings a year? Make my living with my creations? I assume the asker means, do I make my living as an artist. Do I pay my rent with art sales.

On the other hand, I flinch when some one says, "I'm an ARTIST!" As though that gives them rights us ordinary people don't have. Or perhaps they are trying to convince themselves?

All of this is just baloney, as far as I'm concerned. I am an artist, and none of the above applies. I sell very few paintings. I don't pay my rent or buy groceries with money from my sales. Instead, I donate my profits to support things I care about. I don't even paint every day. I don't care if people think I am an artist.

And yet, art is my life. It's just not my livelihood. Art forms and informs my life. Painting is a life skill. Marketing paintings is a whole 'nother skill and mindset, but seeing what to paint, whether it is in the world outside me or within my mind, is what makes me an artist. And it goes beyond that.

Painting what I see, sketching, develops my eye and my mind. It trains me to see things as they are, not as I want them to be, or as someone else says they are, to get beyond preconceived ideas of how things should be. When I sketch trees, for example, I see that every tree is an individual, even as the tree shows the essential characteristics of its species. And so it is with people. Nations have a character, religions have a character, even generations have a character, but within those broad categories, individuals vary widely. That's where the aliveness comes in, in the differences.

Painting is a spiritual journey for me. Painting, creating beauty, is a form of prayer. When I sketch or paint a landscape, I connect with nature and the source of all life. When I work in my art journal, I connect with the source of all life within me, and with my understanding of how that shows up in my life.

Painting teaches me skills I use in the rest of my life. For example, when the painting I am working on gets ugly, I learn when to let go and start over, and when to keep going until beauty emerges. That I can work through the ugliness until beauty emerges - wow, what a learning to take into the rest of my life!

How about you? What place does art have in your life?

147,000

By Andy Valencia

Stop off at a rest stop along almost any major highway, and you'll see signs - in English and Spanish - telling trafficking victims how to ask for help. Look at all the vehicles coming and going at a highway rest stop. How often is it one with a few children, minded by men with cold, careful eyes?

Consider 600,000 unaccompanied minors smuggled across our border each year. A larger and more vulnerable population is hard to imagine. How many land in desperately bad situations? Only a very few try to argue that this is minor problem.

This is not a political issue; it happens in Red states and Blue ones. It happens to places dominated by Republicans and by Democrats. It happens in wealthy states and in poor ones. But it is the poor and vulnerable who bear the brunt of this plague - an evil tax paid with lives, including children.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation National Crime Information Center system tracks active federal law enforcement cases, along with cases where a local agency chooses to enter their case into the FBI NCIC system. In 2021 (the latest reported year), 337,195 reports on missing children were added. The year closed with 30,400 of those reports still open.

For those taking cold comfort that "only" 30,400 cases are unsolved at year's end, remember that these are cases where somebody like a parent

went to law enforcement, went through all the institutional barriers to get a police report into the system, and then put an entry into the FBI's NCIC system. What about those who dare not contact law enforcement?

In October 2021, the New York Times noted an influx of 1.7 million illegal border crossings, including 479,000 families and 147,000 unaccompanied children. The numbers race ahead of the reporting; in December 2022, border patrol reported 250,000 encounters in that single month. These are the ones encountered, which is to say, the ones who didn't elude the US border agents. In another 2021 article, they note that the number of unaccompanied minors at the border are growing, and approaching 20,000 per month.

How many did elude the authorities? By definition, this is an unknown number, but various experts estimate that, for each encountered crosser, there's one, two, three, or more who elude the US agents. There is no reputable authority claiming it's a small number. We might really have 50,000 minors, alone, coming through our border. Each month.

Even for those children who are caught and enter the federal system, there are serious doubts about their long term safety. Bloomberg has documented cases where the children disappear without a trace. According to Edwin Mora: "It's not uncommon for federal officials to lose contact with unaccompanied children after their release from government custody."

Criminal cartels in Mexico have become major players in human smuggling, and children provide a terribly convenient source of victims. Since the cartels are de facto owners of illegal immigration across wide expanses of the US border with Mexico, they ("coyotes") could easily bring children across and route them into captivity instead of the promised brighter future. How would we know? Nobody's going to enter it into an FBI system.

A resource for these victims, projectnorest.org has a "LEAVE PAGE NOW" button floating on the right, so a victim can quickly hide their search for help when they hear their "handler" coming. How often is that button used in earnest? How would we know?

Medics checking a bandaged wound will use their nose, sniffing around the perimeter, to see if it smells of corruption - rotting flesh. In researching this article, I've caught that same whiff of corruption. The delegation of our border to cartels, the swarms of children, the lost children reported to our law enforcement, and the untold thousands who dare not use that system. And now, in late

2022, US Customs and Border Patrol has been ordered to not release border patrol statistics on social media, or even to the press. Why? To hide good news?

Consider that crossing number of 600,000 children per year. Stalin famously noted that one death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic. These children have become almost a Stalin statistic, but are also an unprecedented tragedy.

So far, talking about this is like talking about bad weather. Everybody agrees it's terrible - then you turn the page. Before you turn this page, take a moment to imagine these thousands of children, and what fates they've encountered. Now, imagine the ways that this situation might be improved. I hope you'll hold these ideas in your mind as you interact with politicians and others in authority.

The web version of this article contains many references to resources used to develop this article.

Contact The Vashon Loop to share breaking news!

Send pictures, too.

editor@vashonloop.com

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: March 15th
Wednesday: April 26th
Wednesday: May 17th
Wednesday: June 21st
Wednesday: July 19th

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

Se habla español.

Can't stop drinking and want help?



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Online Meetings: SeattleAA.org

AA Phone: 206-587-2838

Local Vashon Contact: 206-849-1980

No puede dejar de beber Alcohol?

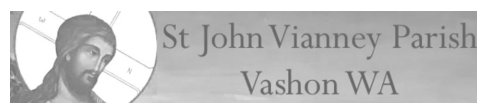


ALCOHOLICOS ANONIMOS

Reuniones de Internet: SeattleAA.org

Telefono AA: 206-587-2838

Contacto Local Vashon: 206-849-1980



Vashon's Catholic Church

Noon Mass Wed-Fri

Sat. 5:00PM, Sun. 9:30AM

<https://stjohnvianneyvashon.com/>

Business owners! Your taxes will be a lot easier if your books are in order.

When you started your business, did you know that you agreed to keep books of record? In addition to having peace of mind that you can support your taxes, accurate financials can help you run your business better and drive toward your goals.



VASHON ISLAND BUSINESS ESSENTIALS

Payroll, Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Business Consulting

Stephen Buller, CPA
206-463-3302

info@vashonisland.biz

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Main Store: 206-463-3852
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Early fleas?

While we remain hopeful that this winter's lengthy cold snap has put a dent in the flea population, we're pretty sure that as soon as the weather warms up a little, those little vectors of disease will reinvent themselves.

Keep an eye out and talk to your vet or us for solutions!

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Hours: Monday-Friday 9:30-6:30

Saturday 9-5, Sunday 12-5

pandorasboxpetproducts.com

Instagram: [pandorasboxshopcat](https://www.instagram.com/pandorasboxshopcat)

Stop in and see our specials!

Farm Animals Need Food, Too – Part One

By March Twisdale

Eighteen years ago, my family moved to the island. Our beloved family dog, Tiny, spent one night on our amazingly dark and quiet property. The next day, I walked to town, carrying my sweet, seven-pound companion in a soft, cushioned bag, met the staff of Fair Isle Vet, and called my dad on the phone, sobbing after they put her down. He reminded me, as I obliterated an entire box of tissues, that I'd known Tiny for longer than I'd known my husband or my children; thoroughly validating the deep, sincere love many of us have for our animal family members.

Life on Vashon Island would be so much harder if we were forced to go off-island for medical care, feed, treats, bedding, clothing, and other products we need for our animal family members. And so, today, I'd like to highlight a "not in town" business that has been there for so many of us, for close to 30 years: VI Horse Supply.

As Shelley and Gary tell the story, "26 years ago, McFeed's was shutting their doors, and with so many horses and other livestock inhabiting our Emerald Isle, it became apparent someone would have to step in to fill the void."

There are many types of businesses. Some cater to our wants and desires, while others provide for our needs and requirements. Both have value, and I remain consistently grateful for Islanders willing to trade their time and energy for my customer dollars! Whatever savings are gained from off-island pricing, it's hard to actually come out ahead when one considers the time spent, fuel burned, and ferry costs accrued.

As my family followed in the footsteps of Herb M. Beck, developing our own "Hobby Farm" of sorts, my appreciation for Island businesses

grew. For our dogs, cats, chinchillas, pet rats, and fish, we're happy to count ourselves as loyal customers of Pandora's Box. For our hundreds of chickens (over the years), Plum Forest Farm offers excellent customer service and a truly high-quality variety of feeds. And, for our equines, VI Horse Supply has had our back since day one.

This is no accident. When McFeed's moved to close, Gary and Shelley stepped in to fill the gap, with the full support of the Vashon-Maury Island Horse Association. Combining his decades of experience in the racing industry with her incredible research and product development savvy, VI Horse Supply is a perfect blend of their business knowledge, hard work ethic, friendly and down-to-earth attitude, and a sincere commitment to all of our larger farm animals, from horses to sheep, goats to pigs, turkeys to geese, and more.

I'm not sure where to begin when it comes to singing their praises. Gary is a colorful character, always ready to share his wisdom, on time with deliveries, a great mentor for young people getting their start as "wage slaves" (see John and Seán's February and March essays), and he's more than happy to chat if you catch him in between customers. Shelley is beyond smart, committed to the health of animals and people, willing to share all she's learned, and she's got a heart of gold. But, that's not what's kept them in business these past decades.

There's more to the story, and we'll bring it to you in our April Issue. For now, please know that VI Horse Supply's current hours are Thursday through Saturday, and they've got a tremendous sale going on this spring. For best selection, swing by sooner than later, and prepare to be impressed by "It's All Got to Go" prices!

Rose Hip and Snowberry – Part 3

By Jane Valencia

In a time when technology has fallen away, Islanders are rediscovering the ways of the forest. In a frenzy of excitement and discovery, two children, Rose Hip and Snowberry, have yanked quantities of moss and licorice fern from a tree. They turn to head home, only to stop short in surprise! Enjoy the final installment of this story.

In front of them is a creature – a thin and knobby man, green into yellow and brown. His hair spreads out in rootlets, his clothing is like green fingers, and his arms, legs, and hands like roots – rhizomes, actually – with little hairs and shoots springing forth. Despite the rootlets, Snowberry realizes that the little man's legs and arms are bare of clothing, and he is shivering harder and harder with each moment.

Snowberry has never seen a creature like this man before. Rose Hip though, fingering the handful of roots, holds them up. Gazing from the bundle to the little man, Rose Hip calls out in surprise, "You're a Licorice Fern!"

The man meets Rose Hip's eyes. "You can call me Sweet Root. And guess what? You're not going to make it out of this forest until we sort a few things out."

"What kinds of things?" Snowberry asks, in spite of a sense of knowing what Sweet Root means.

"Once upon a time your people

knew how to be good neighbors with us," Sweet Root says. "Even family. Now that you're back in the forest, it's time to renew our agreements."

Snowberry whispers, "What are they?"

Sweet Root snaps his rooty fingers. A wind enters the woods, mixing with the rain spatters. Now, sometimes the winds that blow through this Island seem to be winds from the Before Time. Those winds whisper of things lost like "electricity," "cars," "video games." But the wind summoned by Sweet Root seems to blow in from a different direction – from long ago – a way, way long ago. But also from a time and place that seem to have been here all along.

And those words brought in by the wind? They speak in some way of being kind, considerate, having respect. They speak of the generosity of plants – that plants enjoy giving, but they have their own lives and ways of being. That the plants have other relationships besides with humans. And so it's always good to ask first before taking, to give a gift before receiving, to be with the plant first, and truly listen, and accept what they have to say.

When the wind dies back, Sweet Root is still shivering. Rose Hip is wide-eyed, and Snowberry is in a jumble of new thoughts.

To be continued.



VI Horse Supply "We're Moving On" Sale
20% - 60% Off Everything

\$10 Breeches	30% Off All Barn Supplies, Stable Items & Equipment	60% Off Jewelry, Bedding & Novelty Items
30% - 50% Off Clothing -Adults & Kids -Horses & Dogs	30% Off All Fly Sprays, Shampoos, Wound Care & Grooming Supplies	
20% Off Supplements (Excluding Headley Holistics Inventory)	And More. Everything Must Go!	

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17710 112th Ave SW, Vashon, WA

•Store Hours: Thursday - Saturday 9am - 6pm•

Help Keep Our Doors Open!

Pandemic Relief for Camp Burton

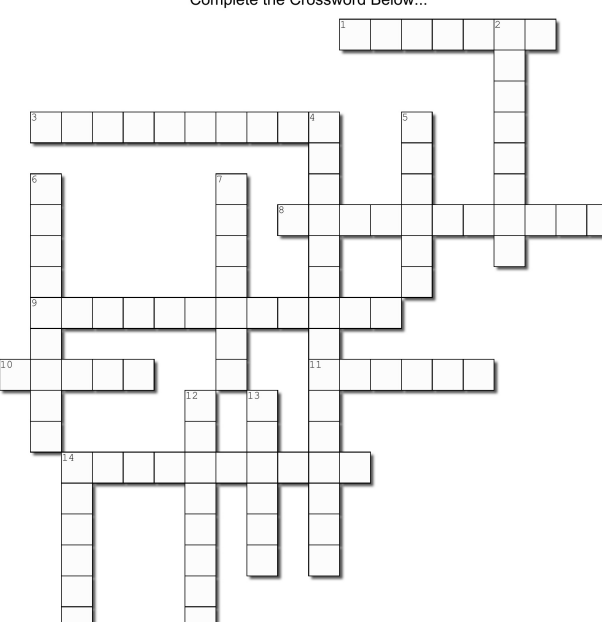
COVID-19 has impacted communities and businesses around the globe, including Camp Burton on Vashon. From 2020 to 2022, Camp Burton saw a decrease in rentals and events.

We are asking for your help. All funds raised will go towards operating expenses, preserving our staff, maintaining our facilities, and continuing services for our guests and the community. Your donations will enable us to continue to offer space and services for:

- Youth, immigrants, low-income families, and adults with special needs
- Art and music practice and collaboration
- Outdoor education and team building
- Meditation, prayer, and spiritual retreats
- Community events, meetings, and training
- Cross-cultural exchange and young adult mentorship

To donate, visit GoFundMe at gofund.me/bd718158

In Like a Lion...
Complete the Crossword Below...



Across

1. Rotted scraps & old leaves filled with worms and nutrients.
3. Leave 'em in the ground! Earliest food for the bees...
8. Don't miss your _____ to eliminate weeds now!
9. If they stayed the winter, refresh their sugar water often!
10. Tiny packets filled with fertilized plants babies called _____.
11. Have you ordered this year's feathered babies?
14. A solar heated building

Down

2. Along the branches, buds are _____.
4. Holiday celebrating a man who died on March 17th, 460
5. Small baby plants!
6. If you're lucky, you've got a rainwater _____ system!
7. A unique, layered soil prep method.
12. That which all life yearns for....
13. A favorite gardening tool this time of year.
14. Earliest volunteers peeking through the soil

Find Answer Key at vashonloop.com

Laughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

I'd like to start off with a story of my grandfather's visitors, Charles and Anne Lindbergh. My grandfather owned the bank of Nome, Alaska. When the Lindberghs stayed to visit, they did not stay at a hotel. They stayed at my grandparent's home. I, like my grandfather, have a practical-joke sense of humor, and my grandfather had a musical toilet seat. Anne went to the bathroom, came out a few minutes later, and urged her husband, "Charles, go to the bathroom." Charles, being a very shy

man, said, "Anne, I have no need to go to the bathroom." Anne insisted, "Charles, you must go to the bathroom." Charles gave in and went to the bathroom. The door closed and, a moment later, as he lifted the lid, the laughter could be heard throughout the house. The musical toilet seat was playing, "How Dry I Am."

Q: "What do you call a camel with no humps?"

A: "Humphrey."

I was trying to think of a joke about carpenters. But nothing wood work.

Aries (March 20-April 19)

Patience is not the first virtue that comes to mind when considering your sign. That's a good thing, because we count on you to get things started sooner, rather than later. Yet it will help to know that the energy leading up to the Sun's entry to your sign on March 20 comes on so fast and furiously, that you will benefit by preparing.

Obviously you cannot bring every situation to closure in a month or two, but there may be one or two that are right within reach, and others where you can get the process started. Through February, there will be strong activity in Pisces, which is your inner world – and this is the source of all of your wisdom, if you would only tap into your inner source.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

Your horizons are expanding. You may not need me to say that, but the world is caught in heaviness and myopia right now. You are blessed with some motivation and curiosity. And by now (thanks to Uranus in your sign) you have come to terms with the uncertainty factor of the world we live in. Today I'm here to say that the sky is beginning to brighten. One sign of this is activity in Pisces, where you find your most sincere and resourceful friends, and where you orient on your social existence.

Perhaps not much has changed visually, but people have changed, and our patterns of relationship have been damaged. You are in an excellent position to help facilitate the healing process. You might feel like a hippy from 1969 who has wandered into the robotic world of 2023. All the better – you can feel how strange our times are; you can feel what is missing.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Mars is continuing to work its way back through your sign, where it was retrograde until a couple of weeks ago. This may seem like a replay, but really, you're on a tour of the ways in which the territory of your life and the world have changed over the past six months. Imagine anger and aggression at one side of the continuum, and motivation at the other. Where do you stand? That may come back to what I keep describing as the issue of personal relevance.

When people feel like they don't exist, they get violent, partly as a means of cultivating their self-awareness. This is not healthy; you are especially ill-suited for any form of combat or extreme competition. At times this means you can take out this energy on yourself, which will manifest as anger or resentment. And that may be connected to the feeling: Am I anyone? Does anyone care? What's the point? Those questions, if you can ask them, are where your true journey begins.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may be starting to feel what you were not quite aware of the past few months, which includes fear, desire and anger. I suggest you not assume that any emotional sensation is correct, or giving you valid information. Rather, it would be helpful to tack a question mark onto your inner sensations. You may be surprised at the degree to which that question can blot out emotions on the fear/anger scale, by converting them into something tangible that you can



Planet Waves

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



act on.

Many of the people around you do not have a concept of a better life, much less accomplishing something relevant. You have both. And as Venus and the Sun move into your fellow water sign Pisces, the future will seem even more tangible. Let that give you the motivation to live the best life you can today.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

To feel alive, to relate to others, to succeed in any meaningful way, you must be uncompromisingly yourself. This is too difficult for most people, who are accustomed to pruning, scaling and shaping their personalities for the benefit of others. If you altered your personality in just one little way for everyone who wants you to conform to their expectations, you would be about as alive as an ancient Egyptian mummy.

Part of being yourself is doing just that in a diversity of settings, without compromising your integrity. This involves cultivating flexibility and adaptability, while also standing up for yourself when you need to. A lot of people are counting on you to have your act together, onstage and offstage. You can be yourself at full strength only if you are true, correct and ethical.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

The long journey of Pluto through Capricorn has encouraged you to reclaim your childlike spontaneity, or perhaps to reveal it to yourself for the first time. Well into February, your ruling planet Mercury will be moving through this territory, as if on a review of all the ways you've learned to honor the young and vibrant person within you.

There will be times people try to crush you with their strong views, or try to convince you that your influence does not matter. Neither position comes from a place of integrity. You are your own person, and the wise, observant little kid who is alive and well at your core is the light that illuminates you from within.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

This is a beautiful month for forming all kinds of relationships, from social bonds to professional partnerships to sexual relationships. While it will help to know what you want, what's available will surely extend beyond what you are familiar with. Jupiter moving through Aries, your relationship zone, is magnifying the features of an entirely different landscape than it did when it was last here 12 years ago.

Collaboration is one of the most effective forms of getting challenging or creative tasks accomplished. We are all in a position to support the work of others, and to have our work supported by others. I suggest you be generous with your personal resources (especially your ideas and special talents) and openly ask for the help and collaboration you think you need. Remember, though, that you are the one who holds certain specific keys, and teaches the common language.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Bide your time when it comes to important relationship matters. That

really means "abide in your time" – live there, moment to moment, and take note of what you notice. You have been through a lot in your personal relationships since August; important matters of commitment, integrity and reality must be kept front and center. The theme shapes up something like this: when someone tells you something, and you believe it, what generally happens? The message here is to go beyond belief and use some other more reliable method of character assessment.

Account for dual positions that you or others may take. Pay attention when you or anyone says one thing to one person and another thing to another person – about the same topic. Having two or more versions of "the story," meaning the person, is the usual way to avoid controversy, but at the expense of personal integrity and truth. This is the territory you must negotiate carefully, now and forever.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

There are times when the world seems locked and loaded, and ready for mortal combat. But this is not the situation you are in. Rather, you're in the situation where you must relate to people with a lot of energy, and who may represent some shadow facet of your character. You have a life that, at your core, exists apart from any relationship to any other person.

The true alchemical sacred union happens within you, and then radiates out into the world around you. Your astrology at the moment is magnificent in its description of that inner fusion with yourself (which is the very theme of Sagittarius, as illustrated in the Temperance tarot card, also called Art). The image of Sagittarius is of an inner collaboration, union and communion. As for art: here on the cosmic physical plane, remaining alert, awake and aware is the essence of thriving, and it's also the spiritual posture of true creativity. And here you are.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

This month brings the last of 20 conjunctions between Mercury and Pluto in your birth sign. Over and over again, sometimes a few times a year, Mercury has fused with the

influence of Pluto in an effort to deepen your mind, and activate the God-seed that Pluto has been furrowing and planting within you. No planetary influence has or ever will have the kind of impact and influence on you as Pluto moving through Capricorn. Events have taken you apart and put you back together.

While you will always be a work-in-progress, events this month will bring a spark of awareness to just how much progress you have made since January 26th in 2008, when Pluto first entered your sign. In the spirit of good therapy, give yourself credit for enduring all you've been through, for learning all that you've learned, and for doing what you may have been certain was impossible.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

This is the last month of Saturn in your birth sign or rising sign until it returns on Jan. 21, 2050. As the Sun moves through your birth sign, you will have a few opportunities to recap and review the events of the past three years. I propose you're looking for two qualities of Saturn in Aquarius. One is about your relationship to any and all groups; to what extent do you allow other people's views to form the basis of your beliefs and your decisions? Second, what is your relationship to authority, generally?

The very essence of the Saturn principle, no matter where it may appear, is about internalizing authority and being in command of your own vessel at all times. Commanding your own ship is a big responsibility. Some see that as a downside to be avoided.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

In March, Saturn enters your sign for the first time since May 21, 1993. What were the preceding few years like for you? At the start of any major cycle, it's a good idea to review the previous one.

Saturn has drawn you inward, toward the center of yourself, to an enforced reconciliation with your inner reality, on all levels. This has squeezed out all kinds of unexpected material, which may have included an ongoing experiment in the true nature of your sexuality. What if everything about you were revealed? What if you could have no secrets, because all minds are connected? That is your thought experiment of the month.

Read extended monthly horoscopes plus a wealth of extra material at PlanetWaves.net

News You May Have Missed

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These and more at vashonloop.com/missed



"I wish, as well as everybody else, to be perfectly happy; but, like everybody else, it must be in my own way."

- Jane Austen