



Coyote Solution in the Works

By the Editorial Team

Local experts, inspired by Yellowstone National Park, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, have formulated an innovative plan to simultaneously curb Vashon Island’s growing coyote and deer populations.

“These intelligent and adaptable animals now manage to occupy almost every conceivable habitat type, from open ranch country, to densely forested

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Are Our Students Being Heard?

By the Editorial Team

Our society champions the “freedom to love who you wish” with great consistency. The movie “Loving” portrays the story of Richard and Mildred Loving, a couple whose arrest for interracial marriage in 1960s Virginia began a legal battle that would end with a historic Supreme Court decision in 1967.

The documentary film, “The Case Against 8,” highlights the battle against a 2008 proposition that would have banned same-sex-marriage in California. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the arrival of high-powered, right-wing attorney Theodore Olson, who helped defeat Proposition 8, stating, “Marriage is a conservative value ... We should want people to come together in marriage.” Again and again, Americans display a strong belief that no one should stand in the way of love!

Except where a power differential exists between two potential lovers. Doctor and patient. Therapist and patient. Prison guard and prisoner. Employer and employee. University professor and adult college student. Director and actor (especially during an audition). When two adults are in a relationship that automatically creates a power differential, our society creates strict rules, policies, and even laws ... that prevent love.

Why do these relationships happen? A lot of reasons. Some are conscious. “If I sleep with the director, maybe I’ll get the job?” “If I don’t go out with my boss, she might fire me.” Some are subconscious. Prisoners often live in fear, and having a guard as your boyfriend may create a sensation of security. A patient suffering from depression and seeking self-worth will be especially vulnerable to grooming techniques from a therapist. Medical patients open up

Continued Below the Fold

What Brought You to the Island?

By Randy Martinez

I lived in Ashland, Oregon for 2½ years. I liked Ashland very much; artsy, all the theater, pretty scenery, beautiful Lithia Park, good customer service at retail stores and restaurants. And it had a gay bar: “Cooks Tavern.” Unique for a town of only 16,000.

But, living in a small town as a single gay man felt limiting, so I decided to return to the Seattle area. Having attended school in Seattle, from fourth grade through college (UDub) – it felt like returning home. I wanted to find a community similar to Ashland in the Seattle vicinity, and my then-partner wanted to live on Vashon Island. I was keen to the idea, being initially enamored with the nature of the Island.

In 1989, the two of us, a friend, and our four cats moved to outer Quartermaster Harbor, with a tram running from where we parked our cars down to the beach, where our house was located.

When we ended our relationship, I moved out and, once again, guessing that living as a single gay man in a small town would be limiting, looked at several apartments in Seattle. But they weren’t right. So, I ended up renting a small home on 188th, which we then called Cherry Creek Door and Window Drive. Within 3 months of my living there, the place was sold!

My next move took me to lower Gold Beach. Honestly, at first the neighborhood seemed too suburban for my tastes, but I loved living there. I had a fantastic view of Mount Rainier, the summers were beautiful, and I started gardening for the first time.

While living there, I met Francisco in San Diego, and after a long-distance relationship of 13 months, he moved to Vashon Island in 1994. We bought a lovely small home on the North End, with a beautiful vaulted ceiling, and a view of Puget

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Book Review In Lockdown With “A Gentleman From Moscow”

By Caitlin Rothermel

I invite you back to mid-March 2020, when the COVID-19 lockdown started. It was seasonable on Vashon. But because it was not yet really spring, it was still easy to feel cold, especially at night.

Most notable at that time was a sense of worry and waitfulness. An uncertainty regarding what would come next, combined with a clear sense that things had changed fairly completely, even if it was impossible to know exactly how.

Going to bed, I started a nighttime daydream I still sometimes rely on and that is inextricably tied to, “A Gentleman from Moscow,” a novel about revolutionary Russia, published in 2016 by the American author, Amor Towles.

When I went to bed, I pretended I was in a bunk on the Trans-Siberian Railway, traveling through deep winter. The Trans-Siberian is the world’s longest train line, a two-week journey that covers 5,772 miles between Moscow and Vladivostok.

For a while, this bedtime state of mind worked like a charm. Pretending to be in a small cabin, experiencing security and safeness despite being only a functional engine away from freezing. Somehow, it really worked for me; it soothed my insecurities. But eventually, psychologically, I was ready to get off that train. Lockdown was still ongoing, but I wanted to broaden my mental horizons.

Another favorite hideaway fantasy has always a top-tier, turn of the century hotel. Nothing modern – too sterile. Rather, a classically built hotel – with unique rooms and distinct furnishings; long, mesmerizingly carpeted hallways; and a complex system of back rooms in the building’s bones. In other words, an architecture that a person in restriction could merge with over time.

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Students Heard?

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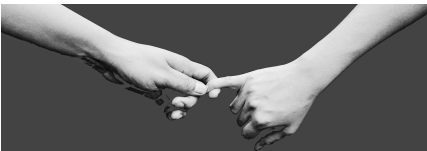
to their doctors about marital problems, and they open their legs for gynecologic exams. This may create a sense of intimacy and trust that can be taken advantage of by the doctor.

Now, imagine the impact of “power differentials” when the patient, employee, or student ... isn’t yet an adult?

Today, Vashon Island is awash in hushed secrets being spoken more and more loudly. And with real anger. Young people who attended and graduated Vashon High School are opening up about rumors shared routinely between students and warnings offered to incoming freshman. The idea that these concerns were commonplace amongst the VHS student body is alarming. Especially the fact that many parents are only just now hearing of them. Why?

It seems to us, at The Vashon Loop, that VHS students are on the losing end of three power differentials. First, they are students. The staff (from teachers, to coaches, to counselors) are automatically in a stronger power position. Second, they are still children, no matter how mature, while those who have power over them are much older adults. Thirdly, they are members of the “client” class, while staff are members of “the institution.” And an institution’s primary objective is to maintain and protect the institution.

Parents, on the other hand, have a duty to protect their children. This includes a safe environment for learning. This makes the title of this article, and the following questions, especially important: “Did any VHS students speak up over the past two decades about inappropriate behavior on the part of teachers, coaches, and staff? If so, were they listened to? If not, why not? And, is VHS listening now?”



Lessons of a Throwaway Bill (HB 1814)

By the Editorial Team

Centuries ago, when the colonists decided to throw off the yoke of British control, they were faced with a monumental task. Create, seemingly from scratch, a new government system that might serve the interests of the people better than most or all previous attempts. Of course, the founding families and their supporters didn't pull ideas out of thin air. They looked to history.

Of the many gems, strategies, and faintly held hopes inculcated into our fledgling system of government, two concepts became central to our self-perception as a nation. The role of all people in determining our forward momentum (including minority groups), and the need for a balance of power within our government structures. Abrogate these core tenets, and we would have a system failure.

While researching HB 1814 (concerning the re-employment and pension service credit of public employees separated from service due to a vaccination mandate), we discovered that some bills are written without a hope in the world of becoming law. That was a surprise, as was the the increasingly unbalanced nature of our own Washington state government. According to Ballotpedia, since 1992, the Democratic Party has enjoyed a "trifecta" of power 17 times - a trifecta is when one political party holds the governorship, a majority in the state senate, and a majority in the state house.

Is this a bad thing, in a "melting pot" country like the United States of America? Maybe. Our ideological differences and requisite commitment to domestic diplomacy strengthen our nation. When one party dominates our law-making bodies, diversity pays the price.

Across the nation, we have (and have had) unbalanced state governments. Someone recently mentioned that Washington state has had the longest run of Democratic party governors in the nation (since 1985). We wondered, "Is that true?" Turns out, it's not. Texas beats us, hands down. Just not in this century.

"Wait, wait!" You say. "I must have read that wrong?" We get it. Who thinks of Texas as a hot-spot for the Democratic Party? The answer of course depends on which version of the Democratic Party we're talking about.

Historically, the Democratic Party was the dominant party of the slave South, the Confederate South, and the Jim Crow South. Prior to 1995, Texas had a "non-Democrat" Governor for only 19 of 149 years. Imagine the effect of that monopoly on Black Americans? Now, imagine what might have happened if Texas politics had been more balanced?

Which brings us back to Washington state's own governors. Our state used to be brilliantly balanced! Since 1889, the executive branch in Olympia pretty much bounced back and forth, every term,

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Vashon Park District Levy – To Renew or Not To Renew?

By March Twisdale

"Despite living on Vashon Island for close to 20 years, I find our levy system confusing," I said.

"I understand," laughed Elaine Ott-Rocheford, Vashon Park District Executive Director. "Our property tax system is one of the most complicated in the country." After a two-hour meeting, and some seriously mind-bending exercises, I began to understand how we tax ourselves, how our tax rates remain flat or increase, how we're legally limited in how much we can tax ourselves, and how our districts "share" in that limited amount of money.

As our April 25th ballots begin to arrive by mail, I hope you'll make the choice to vote, one way or the other. Your choice to participate is more important than this levy, our next state Senator, or who sits in the Oval Office. As Americans, our belief that our government is our responsibility - matters.

When deciding whether or not to support this levy, ask yourself, "Do I want a Vashon Park District?" To answer that question, do two things: (1) visit their website at: <https://vashonparks.org/>, and then (2) ask yourself, "Does anyone else want a Vashon Park District?"

When we fund projects through government entities, we are either directly helping ourselves or we are helping others. When I was younger, and my kids were involved in many Vashon Park District activities, I was

paying into a system that I directly enjoyed. This month, if I vote yes, it will be for the sake of other families, our neighbors, Islanders I will never meet, and even people I don't like! It'll be for our community as a whole.

This April, we will be voting on the "maintenance and operations levy" for the Vashon Park District. Literally, their operating budget for the next four years. If you're new to Vashon-Maury Island, it's important to fully understand that our idyllic ambiance comes with a cost. Our legal status as "rural, unincorporated King County" has a side effect. If we do not choose to pay for the Vashon Park District, it goes away. Full stop.

If you have been here awhile, you may remember the chaos of the post-housing collapse years, when the Vashon Park District was forced to close down many of its services, while the new fields project collided with a sharp decrease in property taxes. Elaine Ott-Rocheford stepped into her role at that time, and since, she and her dedicated staff have turned that burning, sinking, leaky, collapsing ship around! Users of the Vashon Park District can see the improvements, whether you're a dog-walker, a swimmer, a playground lover, or a local sports organization renting space for workouts, practices, and games.

Gains for our community include job creation, wage increases for park district employees, and a diligently

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What Brought You to the Island?

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Sound. And then, in 2000 we adopted Marisol and Luther.

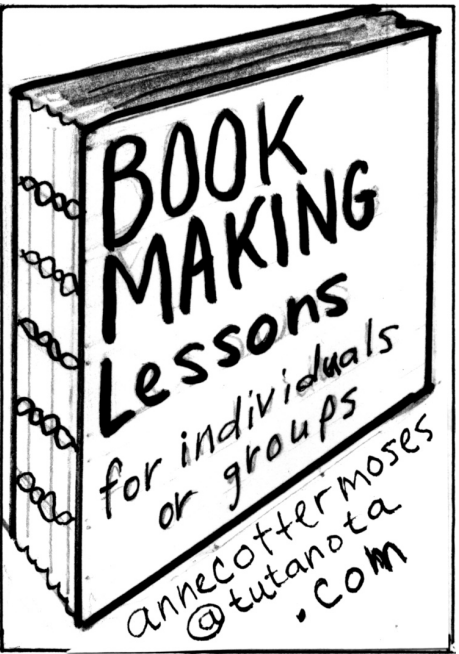
Marisol and Luther were born in Portland, and we brought them home from the hospital. As they grew, our small home became too tight, and in 2003 we chose the island again - moving to our current home on Dolphin Point.

Having kids expanded our universe and community: Co-op preschool, the Vashon public school system, Rock Island Pizza, Drama Dock theater productions, swimming, baseball, and more. Francisco opened his Barber Shop at the Old Fuller Store in 2005, and he's been working

there ever since.

With all of that, my family and I are visible in this small community of nearly 11,000 people. Not only are we involved in public endeavors, but I am an evident gay man, Francisco is Mexican, and Marisol and Luther are Black. On an Island that is 89% white, we stand out, and our experience, predominantly, has been that the community of Vashon has collectively put my family under its wing. We are able to be fully ourselves and be relatively safe. There are many places we could live where we would be a target for violence.

Here we are able to thrive.



The Vashon Loop

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What Bankers Want

By Andy Valencia

The world of money has gone wild in recent years. The Loop planned a sequence of articles on the subject, starting with the basics – what is money? How is it created? However, we’ve decided to jump forward to a discussion of a new, particularly dangerous proposal that would impact how we keep and spend money.

How does money work now, and what do they want to change?

Cash as you know it now is decentralized. You can meet up with somebody and do an exchange of money for a thing or service, without either of you ever being identified. This could be something truly illicit in the alley behind a bar. It could just as well be somebody mowing your lawn, or the purchase of a cannabis product.

Another aspect of our current money system is debt – which bankers love! The United States has landed in a lot of debt, with our national “bar tab” somewhere around 32 trillion dollars. Divvied across every man, woman, and child within our borders, that’s about \$100,000 per person – but add to that your car loan, student loan debt, mortgage, and credit card balance.

This might be too much debt, even for a banker. The US spends more on its military than the next nine nations combined, but as interest rates have recently climbed, our payment on the national debt is on track to surpass US military spending by 2030.

On the one hand, you have a



hard-to-control thing called “cash,” which lets money flow hither and yon. On the other hand, you have so much debt that the system is becoming unstable. The debt by itself is a bad situation, possibly even an emergency. The current idea is to rein in the freedom of cash under the claim that it’s the only way to address the debt emergency.

Central Bank Digital Currency

Technology – networking, computing, databases – has reached a point where we can get rid of that decentralized cash thing. Instead, each person gets an account on a new centralized service, where all your money lives. No more coins or dollar bills – it’s all just a digital balance in the one central service. In general, it’s talked about as “Central Bank Digital Currency” or CBDC. In the US, the name of our CBDC is “FedNow.”

If you want to purchase something, you identify yourself to FedNow, then the seller identifies themselves, along with what they’re selling at what price. The system decides whether you have the money,

whether you’re allowed to buy the item, whether the seller can sell it, and then it records the transaction. If FedNow rejects the transaction, the authorities may be notified as well.

Welcome to pervasive surveillance and control. Not a penny moves until you’ve asked FedNow and it has given permission. We are all supplicants; consider the power of the people controlling FedNow. Do they want to enforce a 15-minute city? Easy! Just reject transactions more than 5 miles from your home address. Are you a federal agent and tired of that pesky Washington marijuana thing? Shut off the dispensaries.

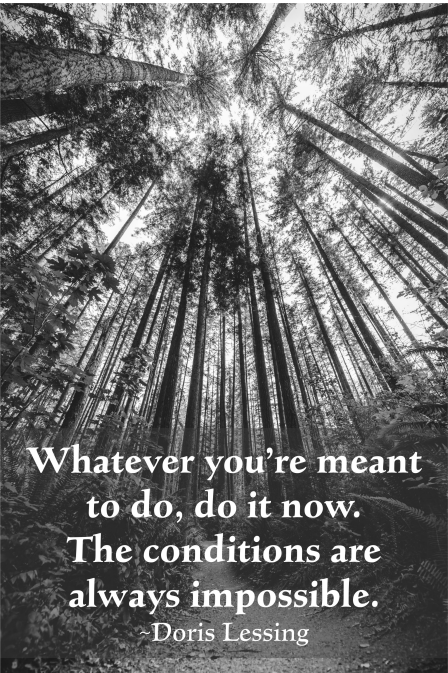
You might think you’ll trick the system by mislabeling what you’re selling. You know, the dispensary might say it’s selling “shrubs.” The problem is that pretty much everybody has already handed ALL of their data to big tech – purchases, rentals, searches, email, texts, cameras, and the rest. Big tech and big government already work together extensively. You’re not going to fool them.

When they detect your lies, what might they do? Take your money? Take you to court? What do you do if they won’t let you pay a lawyer?

At the moment, FedNow is being sold gently, as a new kind of convenience. The problem is it’s actually an unprecedented concentration of power, which all of human history assures us will attract those who love control and domination. The corrupt will join in, of course. And then they’ll also be joined by the same kind of criminals who broke into the Federal Witness

Protection Program, the Department of Commerce, Equifax, and the Internal Revenue Service.

It’s all the eggs in the single biggest basket in human history. As a nation, we find ourselves with serious money problems. Please ask many, many questions before accepting that CBDC’s are the obvious path to safety and prosperity. Here at The Loop, we’ll do our best to address the propaganda that will soon be pushed on the subject, and keep you informed.



The Vashon Loop is published monthly

Coyote Solution

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areas, to downtown waterfront,” explained Max Kaniss, director of the new Vashon branch of the WDFW. “This is why we need to capture a family of gray wolves from Yellowstone and relocate them here. With their help, we will regain the vibrant biodiversity of Vashon’s ancient ecosystem, allowing us to address the current imbalances caused by lack of a true apex predator.”

While some have expressed reservations, local County and State authorities are responding to a steadily rising volume of complaints from stakeholders. These are said to run the gamut from requests for complete extermination, to a middle ground of registering routine pet, livestock, and vehicle losses, to environmentalist demands to promote full inter-species harmony.

“The potential benefits of the proposed program appear to address and satisfy each of these groups, while mitigating acknowledged risks,” says Tawp Downe, a well-known government solutions expert. “We can easily micro-chip and track the wolves, measuring their ongoing impact in a safe, cost-effective, and humane manner. Eventually, we hope that this ‘track and tag’ process will become an annual event that Islanders can participate in and help to manage.”

“And,” Downe continued cheerfully, “if they try to pull a Lassie, our new drone technology will automatically track, tranquilize, and net them long before they get to

Mercer Island.”

In consultation with park rangers, Downe and Kaniss have drafted a plan to equip the wolves with cutting-edge RFID (radio frequency identification) and mini-cam technologies, designed to integrate smoothly with planned AI updates. These platforms will enable residents to sign up for a subscription based Adopt-a-Cub pilot program – or be signed up automatically, based upon AI recommendations. Both are an exciting pathway to sustainable long-term funding. Additionally, a 24/7 interactive Maury Island Wolf Den website is underway. The most optimistic growth scenarios anticipate a sufficiently thriving and stable ecosystem, allowing for the re-introduction of caribou from Alaska by 2030.

In keeping with environmental harmony, new Islander and former zookeeper, Sitee Knowes-Et’al, insists that optimal safety can be maintained if every Island household with livestock, pets, or small children (with access to the outdoors) keeps at least three dogs of a larger breed. “A nucleus of three versatile guard dogs is enough to ward off attacks by all manner of predators,” she explained. Conveniently, active chapters in Seattle and Tacoma stand ready to supply rejected urban pit bulls and other attack-style dogs in need of adoption and rehabilitation.

Still, there is always an element of risk. “We have to recognize that wolves, like coyotes and deer, are wild animals and not pets,” notes Max Kaniss. “But they absolutely LOVE freeze-dried liver treats, and we recommend that Vashon residents

carry a small bag with them everywhere. Preferably a couple of bags when on trails. If a single animal or an actively hunting pack approaches, toss at least one bag in their direction and promptly retreat to a safe distance or, where possible, into a stoutly built brick shelter.”

Next in this series will be “Rehabilitating Black Bears to Vashon – Pros & Cons.” And, if this story seems too good (or outrageous) to be true, refer to the print date of this newspaper (or solve this month’s crossword puzzle).

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It’s been our honor and pleasure to bring The Vashon Loop back to our community. Thank you for your support!



Student Debt

By Mickey Fontaine

Tuition loans have more than doubled in the last two decades, causing a myriad of problems for our country’s economy. And worst of all, a majority of this burden is held by people 20 to 30 years of age, a time in one’s life that should not be spent at the mercy of unpayable debts.

Future generations are critical to our society and economy, and they are increasingly restrained by unrealistic social expectations and nigh-impossible-to-pay debt. It is possible to falsely attribute the term “crisis” to the cyclic motions of business dynamics, and to confuse natural economic patterns with calamity. But student debt has more than earned the privilege of being called a crisis.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics compares the rate of past dues, defaults, and balance declines of student debt to other financial obligations, such as credit card bills and auto loans. They found that the latter correlate with recession and fluctuation much more than student loans. Student loans do not follow the up-and-down patterns of the economy, they simply rise. This hurts students much more than if it was a predictable fluctuation.

There are many reasons for this crisis, but a primary cause is the increased availability of federal loans, paired with wage stagnation. After the 2007 recession, there was pressure for economic changes to be made. Amidst many policy shifts made by Congress over this period, there was an overhaul of the Federal Direct Loan program that allowed it to source its loans from the National Treasury. This monumentally increased the availability of college funding, giving many more students the ability to enroll.

Although this change seems like it would bring positive results, it only made the problem worse. Institutions were now able to raise their prices to compete with the loans being made, without dropping enrollment rates, and the idling wage

Island Voices

rates of young workers made the issue even more severe. Between 1980 and 2019, college fees rose by 169%, while wages for young workers aged 22 to 27 went up only by 19%, according to a study published by The Hill. This imbalance between wages and fees makes paying off loan debt at times impossible, and has systematically destructive effects for our economy.

One of the results of this crisis is a decline in business entrepreneurship. To understand the negative effects of student debt on the business ecosystem, you need to also understand the importance of startups. Startups are newly established businesses that can easily adapt and overcome financial roadblocks to help drive the evolution of the economy due to their financial agility and ability to shape themselves to the interests of companies and consumers.


The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond describes “transformative” startups as “large, vibrant firms that provide jobs and income for other individuals, typically by providing a new good or service or by entering markets previously unserved.”

Even with the availability of angel and capital investment, the majority of new businesses are funded out-of-pocket in their initial years. And with rising student loans, young entrepreneurs have fewer resources to fund startups, causing failure rates to rise. Instead, they are forced to make economic trade-offs to repay loans, which degrades their financial integrity, in turn making it more difficult for them to get off the ground economically.

Imagine being a recently graduated business innovator who is willing to dedicate personal funding towards a startup; the sacrifices one is willing to make in this situation can be at times financially crippling or impossible due to the weight of student debt. Even if one is economically

stable, maintaining the balance between debt and innovation can threaten to force one beneath the poverty line. This is somewhere that more and more youth are finding themselves.

It is undeniable that the student debt crisis is one of the most dangerous systemic issues in the US. Due to its widespread severity, its sphere of influence reaches further than just financial well-being; it presents dangers to the business ecosystem, the job market, and public well-being. With the amount of political polarization and conflict in the country, an end to this economic blight seems distant. If attention is not directed toward this crisis, it will only get worse. Currently, it could go either way, and all you can hope for is future change.

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AtWork! Part 2 – An Interview With Brette

By Aly Norling

Brette is a smart, bold, funny islander who always speaks her mind. Brette recently began working at Vashon Thriftway and utilizes a job coach accommodation through AtWork! – a supported-employment nonprofit organization that works throughout Washington state to match people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with good jobs in their communities.

Brette and I shared a pot of Bella Coola tea at Anu Rana’s and chatted about supported employment.

A: Brette, why did you choose to work at Vashon Thriftway?

B: I wanted to work on Vashon because I didn’t want to deal with the ferries anymore. But also, it’s a nice community here.

A: What do you think it is about the Thriftway that – ?

B: It’s about the people, and I’m not alone. There’s people around me, so I’m not left to fend for myself.

A: Do you like your job?

B: Oooh yeah. I get to stock different stuff each time I go. I get to see my favorite coworkers every day.

A: What do you like about your coworkers?

B: They’re nice and we get to talk about work things, and also I give them great advice and some people say I’m sweet. Because I’m really kind.

A: Why do you like having a job?



B: Because I have more freedom to be an adult and not like a little kid. Or treated like a little kid.

A: Do you have any dreams for your career onward?

B: For me, I’m going to do artwork and work on Vashon here as long as I can.

A: What would you say to someone out in the Vashon community with a disability who is thinking about making use of supported employment?

B: It’s a really good idea. You have more options. If you need help doing things, they can help you along the way. And if you’re shy about doing different things, they can build up your confidence.

A: Cool! What would you tell a

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business thinking of participating in supported employment?

B: I would say it’s very helpful to the community, and it will be good for them because you never know what we might pull out of the hat! Because you never know what kind of disability a person has, it’s just of the luck. And if it works out for them, it works out for the business too. It depends on the business if they want

disabled people working there or not.

A: Is there anything else you want to say about supported employment?

B: Those are all the questions?

A: Yeah!

B: I breezed through them!

A: You did!

B: If you ever want to – or if things don’t go your way – just push yourself forward. And make your life happier. And if there’s a passion you want to do, they can help you through that.

For more information about AtWork! and how to begin services, visit atworkwa.org or call (425) 274-4000.

For Island businesses wishing to discuss partnerships with AtWork!, contact Aly at AlyN@atworkwa.org.

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By March Twisdale

The path leading to my first gun purchase has been long. It began in the summer of 1992. I was a young, healthy, and carefree college student, riding my bike along the American River Bike Trail in Sacramento, CA every day, to and from college, work, and just for the fun of it. Until the rapes, attacks, and bike-jackings started.

The common advice, for young women in particular, was simple: Stop. Stop using the bike trails. Stop riding alone. Stop riding entirely. Just stop.

The trouble with that advice is that it teaches a person (especially a young woman) to accept the loss of liberty for the sake of perceived security. I stress “perceived,” because riding on the road meant you might get hit by a bus. Driving a car during rush-hour traffic meant you were more likely to die in a car accident. Only riding when you could bring along a friend meant getting out of shape, making it harder to ride away from an attack – and even then, the front page story might end up being about two girls who didn’t make it home. How is that better?

So, when the world told me to lock up my bike and give up on hundreds of miles of convenient, smooth, and useful bike trails, I said, “No way.”

Yet, I’m not stupid. I love life! And safety is important. The trick is to increase one’s safety, protect one’s life, and make intelligent choices – without giving up on freedom. Live

smart, not scared. I began to read the news stories about the attacks along the river. It wasn’t just women. Men were also getting pistol-whipped, or robbed at gunpoint, the thieves riding away on bikes worth many thousands of dollars. Soon, I noticed a pattern. Then, I formed a defensive plan.

Around the same time, another deadly crime began to gain traction in the Sacramento area. Carjackings, where the assailant would walk up to a car, stopped at a red light, hop into the passenger seat, and threaten the female driver with a deadly weapon. First, she’d drive to an ATM machine, and then she’d drive to a deserted location, where she was inevitably raped and murdered.

Okay. Now what? As a female human, was I supposed to not drive, ever? Or not drive at night? Or always have another person in the car with me? Like a woman chaperoned by a male family member while shopping in Saudi Arabia? No, no, no!

Again, I read, listened to, and watched all the reports. And again, within the emerging patterns, I found an answer to the problem. A potential way to avoid what was becoming a sadly predictable outcome. And I rehearsed. I practiced. I ran these scenarios through my head, again and again, until I believed I would act instantly, in a way that increased the odds of my own survival. I trained for the moment when my actions – not those of an assailant – would make the difference between life or death.

These two years were the beginning of my evolution as a gun owner.

Not because I went out and bought a gun. I didn’t. In my evaluation, for the crimes I sought to avoid, a handgun wouldn’t help. What would help, in these two situations and many others to come, was a deep realization that I have a role to play in my own protection. Our world is dangerous. Pretending it’s not, and expecting others to keep

me safe, is risky and illogical.

Personal responsibility is the number one reason I chose to become a gun owner. What’s your reason?

This series will touch upon many aspects of this worthy conversation. If you are a gun owner and have thoughts to share, feel free to email: editor@vashonloop.com.

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The \$25 Car

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

This story began on Seán’s fireplace mantel. There is an old Plymouth master brake cylinder filled with either a mouse nest or some of Seán’s cigar ashes. Some years back, after Seán returned to Vashon, he told me that his first car had been sold to an Island friend, and that somehow it had come to an ill end at the old gravel pit, being pushed over the cliff. By accident or design was left in dispute. So 60 years later, Seán went off to find whatever had been left of his car. I was dubious, but sure enough he came back with some parts and I later even found the engine block after one of those big southerly storms.

This is the rest of the story from those parts he recovered.

The Firnstawls were peanut butter people, and named their peanut butter “Sunny Jim,” after a boy who died of polio at a very young age. He was called Sonny because of his “sunny” disposition, and his picture is on every bottle of the Firnstawl’s peanut putter. Jerry Firnstawl was a cousin of Sonny’s and a classmate at Seattle Prep. Jerry had a 1936 Plymouth Coupe with a rumble seat, which he sold me for \$25. It had no muffler, just a straight pipe that terminated under the rumble seat.

It was a straight 6 and ran like a top, and I used it to commute to school. If the day was warm, I picked up the Kerns brothers on Queen Anne Hill and took them on a scenic ride to Capitol Hill. Tom and Terry liked riding in the rumble seat. On this particular day, I was driving them through the Battery Street tunnel and I turned off the key to allow the gas to build up in the engine. When I turned on the key, there was a terrific explosion and a three-foot ball of flame flew out of my straight pipe, warming the feet of the two brothers and presenting a spectacle in the dark tunnel.

My second car was a 1930 four-door Ford Model A that cost me \$50. I had a girlfriend whose parents lived in the coal-mining town of Roslyn on the east side of the Cascades. The coal mine shut down in 1935, so most of the miners were retired. I found the Model A in an orchard where the owner had driven it to get it out of his yard. I finagled the price and drove it to Seattle at 35 mph on the straight stretches. It could make 50 mph going downhill.

My good friend, George Farmer, had dropped out of dental school and we decided to take the winter off to go skiing. I scouted all the junkyards for parts and filled a box with a generator, carb, spark plugs, and all the spare parts we might need for an extended ski trip across the western United States. Sun Valley was to be our first stop. Mom made a white plastic cover for the spare tire hanging above the rear bumper, and I wrote the names of our hopeful ski areas to be checked off as we went along. Sun Valley in Idaho was our first stop. I had taught skiing at both Stevens and Snoqualmie Passes, but couldn’t get a job at Sun Valley, so we moved on. Next stop, Alta, Utah.

I kept my 20-gauge single-shot in a rip in the headliner, just in case. About halfway across the Idaho desert, George spotted a Chinese pheasant in the ditch. I turned around, unlimbered the shotgun, and stepped out to retrieve our dinner. The pheasant had been eating sage and we cooked him over a sage fire, making it impossible to eat.

All the close work in the dental school lab had given George a skin condition. His constant

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scratching drove both of us crazy. We had to find a hotel where the bath was separate from the rooms, so George could sneak in to take a bath of potassium permanganate, a very purple drug that alleviated his itching. I waited outside the bathroom door for George to finish soaking in his purple bath, which left the bathtub “purple,” as it had several others up and down the California coast.

Better Together – Collective Reliance

By linda c moore

If we go back in time, we will find stories of working collectively on projects, tending to the land, harvesting and storing food. Not long ago, before moving to Vashon in 2010, I lived for 11 years in a community where 12 of us collectively owned and maintained the property. We came together one Saturday a month to “work party.” Twelve people working together can get a lot done.

I've thought about those days while tending a garden on my own; one person alone could take a week to do what six can do in a day. I got a taste of this when I needed to move the hoop house in the garden and couldn't do it alone. I asked a group of friends to help me out, and they showed up. In four years of tending this garden, the most memorable times were when friends came to work with me.

In early 2020, I decided to focus my attention on the place I've called home for five years now, and began growing food with the folks I rent from. I am witnessing ways friends can come together, and it makes sense. A group of five families gather once a month to ... "get 'er done." Each month, they rotate to a new place.

So imagine ... twice a year, a group of friends lands at your place, work-gloves and tools in-hand, and all you need is the plan! I gather that you may be thinking about your list of projects ...

Island Resilience

I asked members if I could interview them, and was invited to this month's work party. When I showed up, they were in full-swing. I spent a bit of time working alongside Mei, and asked what her favorite part of the day was, "The end." What happens at the end? "We eat."

How to start? Members reflected on the importance of coming to a set of agreements and expectations for participation, and with that said, there's flexibility. I asked Jen and Wendy to share sample agreements: At least one person from each family needs to show up. They rotate who cooks lunch based on who hosted last. And, being open to each other's visions.

Most everybody in the group has had experience with consensus-based processing. A few shared that they were in an ongoing conversation that had begun about two years ago, around the name “get ‘er done.” Some feel they’d like to have a name that’s not gendered.

What wisdom would you share with others? Seth answered, "At first you think, 'Oh I can't do this, because I don't have skills.' That's not the point; it's about coming together to support each other. Start by tackling blackberry brambles, hauling brush, and planting raspberries."

How'd y'all begin? Kristen, Nick, Japhy, and Edan moved to the island in 2013, and when they bought a house here they brought their DIY experience – called the Barn-raisers – from their previous house in Seattle.



The impetus for starting the group here was based on having more availability through sweat-equity than funds to hire somebody to do the work for them. And because they didn't have experience with some of the different tasks needed, they were inspired to bring a group of people together for skill-sharing. The group began meeting in fall of 2015. The deep connections that came to be are immeasurable.

Derek shared that when you're trying to take care of your own place, it can feel overwhelming, but with a group and organization as a host, you can get a lot done. He also likes it when he can just show up and take on a job that he is given. And the tool-sharing is pretty cool.

Other benefits are the kids learning to work together, and camaraderie and community within the group. I got a sense from all members that they're there because they have a strong community bond.

Katie's favorite project was the expansion of her garden. As it approached her time to lead, she researched Hugelkultur,* had a fallen willow chopped up, planned the day, and purchased the supplies – a map

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for success! Right after they finished that project, COVID-19 hit. While it put the group on a year-long hiatus, Katie had a garden to plant seeds and grow her food. But that's not why she's there - she's there for the community.

One of Seth's favorite project days was at Kim and Abel's, where they came together to engineer support for an ancient pear tree that leans, in a majestic arch, over one of the main paths. The tree had been slowly relaxing, and because of some very creative engineering, it is now well-supported and safe to pass under. Witnessing this coming-together to support the tree prompted me to write this article.

I wandered over to where Abel and Nick Z were working on a new trellis. I asked Nick what his favorite part was. He reflected on the learning aspect, and how he grew into it. Would he be inspired to do this with a group when he has his own place? He smiled and said, "Yes."

As I'm listening, I get a sense that these keywords describe their process: cooperation, being able to lead and be led, flexibility, and patience. Derek wisely added - "And a healthy sense of humor!"

Wendy, is there anything else you'd like to add? Her reply - "I think more people should do it, for the connections and care of the land."

**Editor's Note: Hugelkultur – literally, “mound culture” – is a traditional technique used in German and Eastern European societies to make mounded raised beds using rotting logs and plant debris that are allowed to compost.*

Saving on Cell

By Andy Valencia

This month my “big” column is about money. But I don’t want to leave the world of tech commentary entirely behind, and I have found a surprising way to save money on technology.

There are roughly four major cellular companies – that is, companies who put up cell towers and run the radios which talk to your cell phone. But there is a quirky market of “Mobile Virtual Network Operators” –MVNOs – who can also sell you cell service. They buy excess capacity from the big operators, and then give you a better deal. Sometimes, a much better deal.

My family has been living with a MVNO named “Red Pocket” for many years now. We have one phone on a plan that provides (monthly) 1,000 minutes of calling, unlimited texts, and 1 gigabyte of data; it’s \$8.25 per month. My own phone’s plan is minimalist – 200 minutes of calling, 1,000 texts, and 200 megabytes for \$2.50 per month. You won’t watch movies using this plan – use your laptop via wifi! – but it’s perfect for “Where are you?” messages and calls, along with emergencies. It certainly saves me money; the sales tax on your monthly plan might be more than my monthly cost!

If you're interested, you buy 360 days of service in one go. It's on eBay, search for "Red Pocket plan 360" and see what's available. When you make the purchase, they send you a SIM card. Put it in the phone, go to their web site, and activate it (including choosing a phone number or transferring your own). The web site redpocket.com has all the details.

Do you feel like your phone has become that thing from Sigourney Weaver's "Aliens" movie, an alien clamped to your face? Switch to a phone that lets you communicate without the siren song of the phone becoming your reality. The Nokia 2780 is a tiny flip phone with great audio. You can see texts and even compose them in a pinch, and you'll treat it like a phone, not a lifestyle. It's small and cheap - about \$90.

For an even more minimalist line of flip phones, have a look at the "Sunbeam F1" product line.

Save some money on your cell plan, and then buy a cheap phone which makes it easy to keep your head up and your eyes on the world. Take the money you save and pay off credit card debt, buy some organic ingredients for your meals, save for a rainy day, and at least once visit an arboretum or rose garden.

Live it up and leave your phone in the car!

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The coffee, enhanced by production at the farms, should be stored, cool and dry, then roasted to develop the coffee flavor, not to mask it with a roasted flavor. It needs to be brewed properly with the water temperature correct, the grind just right, dosed heavy, and brewed for



the right amount of time, whether with French press or Melitta filter and heating your own water. It's messy, and let's face it, time-consuming. Maybe it's not for every day. Just like this valuable coffee, it's a treat. Enjoy!



Pluto Means Change

By Melanie Farmer

As many historians and astrologers have pointed out, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We are living through an American astronomical Plutonian birthday – meaning that, over the last 248 years, Pluto has transited through all 12 astrological signs. This provides an opportunity to reflect on the last 248 years in a unique and special way.

Sometimes referred to as “Pluto Returns,” Pluto has completed an orbit around the sun, returning to Capricorn as placed in the sidereal astrological chart of the United States of America. Pluto in Capricorn reveals the odious and corrupt elements within hierarchies. King of the Underworld, he rules underworld riches including oil, precious metals, and gems. He flushes dark secrets, miscreants, and criminals to the surface.

Astrological Pluto is a cleanser and solvent, the transformer and powerhouse of magic. Pluto is a driver of enigmas and passion, an evolutionary spur. He is the darkness and alchemical fire we must pass through to restore our soul. Our current Pluto in Capricorn started in 2008. Previously, Pluto in Capricorn foretold the end of British rule, paving the way for the formation of the US.

In 1775, 248 years ago, political and economic concerns were dividing families and communities in the 13 American colonies. The

prospect of a revolutionary war separating the colonies from England did not appeal to everyone. But because the American colonies were becoming more prosperous and self-sufficient, conflict, struggles, and revolution were pretty much inevitable.

To cut a long story short, the British raised taxes to reestablish control, undermining the governing colonial system. Colonists claimed that only their assemblies, not the British parliament, had the authority to levy taxes. Colonists responded with expanded local militias and stockpiled weapons.

London ordered a march on Concord and Lexington to seize arms and crush the militias. The colonists, warned about the approach, skirmished, and boom, an eight-year Revolutionary War began, resulting in the United States of America.

The Battles of Lexington and Concord signaled the beginning of the Revolutionary War (April 19, 1775), which lasted through September 1783. In February 1789, sidereal Pluto entered Aquarius, leaving Capricorn. This corresponded with George Washington’s unanimous election (1778-1779) as first President of the US by the Electoral College (also established in 1789). Also developed at this time was the US Constitution, written in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in effect since 1789.

Capricorn is hierarchies, governments, and military order, Aquarius is the commoner, organized into equal communities representing democracy versus autocracy. Tropical Pluto transits into Aquarius on March 23, 2023 and will stay in Aquarius

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- 1½ cups peanut butter
- 1 cup coconut milk, non-sweetened
- 5 fresh basil leaves
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- 2 limes, juiced (or 1 tbsp bottled lime juice)



Blend ingredients; add more coconut milk if too thick.

Enjoy on rice, drizzled over chicken, flavor your favorite veggie dish, or use as a dip!



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Looking back on the founding of the US should provide cautious optimism for the future. Aquarius is the utopian visionary and humanitarian who puts in the effort to prevent total destruction. Aquarius is the scientist, analytical as well as intuitive. Sincere and accurate. Innovative and inventive, philosophical and foresighted.

Pluto is an accelerant and catalyst for metamorphosis and transformation, but first he acts as purifier.

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Melanie Farmer is an artist and goddess horse cult member, archetypal astrologer, and ayurvedic bodyworker. Contact via ayurvedicastrologer@gmail.com or www.vashonrider.com.

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It Is Nettle Time

By Kathy Abascal

The nettles are up! All over the island, young nettles a few leaves high are there for the taking. Very soon, they will be tall and gnarly. So, if you live on or near land that has not been cleared and manicured to death, you should go gather nettles soon.

Nettles and man have evolved together, and nettles are extremely good to us, an occasional nettle burn notwithstanding. For eons, we have used nettles as food, as a medicine, and as a fiber. Nettles were once used to make cloth, and a Danish man from the Bronze age was buried wearing clothes woven from nettle. Once upon a time, you may have read the fairy tale “The Wild Swans,” in which the sister wove nettle shirts to break a spell cast on her brothers. As a child, I found that troubling, as my experience with nettles was limited to welts from nettle burns. Only later did I learn that nettle fabric can be as fine and soft as silk.

Nettles are very rich in vitamins and minerals. In the days before vegetables were flown in from South America or grown in greenhouses, nettles were a godsend at the end of a long, nutritionally challenged winter. They remain a godsend (although underutilized today) because they are a gourmet food that is unparalleled nutritionally and energetically. Do go gather some and sauté them with shiitake mushrooms and a drizzle of aged balsamic. Or make a rich nettle and potato soup. And while you are out picking nettles for dinner, pick some extra to dry for tea or freeze for

Health Matters

later. If you dip them briefly in some hot water before freezing or eating them raw (as in a pesto), their stinging hairs will melt away.

Nettles are also a great medicine. They are often recommended to people with seasonal allergies, and there is some limited evidence that they can reduce those reactions. Nettles are also helpful for people with chronic ailments such as rheumatoid arthritis, acne rosea, and hepatitis C. This may simply be due to the plant’s ability to deliver good, easily absorbed nutrients. It is also possible that the plant’s interesting constituents have a positive effect on the body’s inflammatory response. Nettle leaf is diuretic and increases the excretion of uric acid, suggesting that it might be a good helper for those with a tendency toward gout or some types of kidney stones.

All parts of the nettle have been used medicinally. At least four clinical trials show that its roots help reduce the symptoms of enlarged prostate. In one study, nettle root combined with palmetto berry was as effective as the prostate drug finasteride, but without the drug’s side effects.

Unfortunately, we need to be careful gathering nettle root in the Puget Sound area. Nettles are rather long-lived plants, and they concentrate minerals. This area, thanks to the Tacoma smelter, was over-exposed to cadmium, lead, and arsenic, and it is possible that these minerals are still concentrated in

nettle roots. Note: Young shoots, however, should not present this problem, so it is ok to gather young nettles for food and tea.

Later in the season, you can also gather nettle seed. These seeds were often added to horse feed to promote shiny and healthy coats. An old German doctor reported giving his convalescent home patients one or two tablespoons of nettle seeds daily, and claimed they had a very energizing effect. Some modern herbalists also recommend nettle seed

for the run-down and overly tired. Consider trying nettle seed if you, or someone you know, suffers from long COVID fatigue. The seeds can also be used as a hair rinse for extra shine.

Remember though, if you gather seeds later this summer and intend to consume them, first sieve them to separate them from other parts of the plant that may have those stinging hairs that make nettles so memorable.

I’ve barely scratched the surface of how to use nettles as food, cosmetic, and medicine, but I hope I at least have motivated you to put on your gloves and go gather some. They are one of our best local delicacies!

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The Unadulterated, True Story ... of Nutrition

By Tracey Stover

Welcome back as I continue to weave the tale about our precious human bodies. What we ingest and how we ingest it makes all the difference.

In our exploration of extraordinary bodies, we must assess what we ingest. Do we really know what we are eating? Here is why: America’s farming soils are depleted of 85% of their nutrients. Between the practice of tilling soil, which degrades it – most farms do till, and large mono-crop farming necessitates an ever-greater need for pesticides – and the creation of genetically modified foods to create pest resilience, the results are food with degraded nutritional value. The jury is still out as to whether these foods are healthy to eat. I recently read that we have to eat eight oranges to receive the nutritional value our grandparents received from one. According to Scientific America, “Sadly, each successive generation of fast-growing, pest-resistant carrots is less good than the one before.”

Food from large, mono-crop farms fill the shelves of grocery stores; organically grown food is a much better choice, though over time, even organic farming requires increased organic pesticides. Are there any other options? Yes! There is regenerative farming that employs very little tilling, the use of livestock for trampling the earth, and no pesticides, as it uses the natural resistance of other plants and animals to deter pests. These are about 5% of

United States farms.

Americans were hit hard by COVID-19, in part, I believe, from generations of eating nutrient-deficient food. Our health has been compromised and our immune systems weakened.

Every time we choose food for the sake of convenience, or willful ignorance, we support industries that make choices based on profits versus the health of the soil and consumers. On Vashon, we are fortunate to have many local farmers; we can eat local, and we can find out how the food was grown. I just helped a friend clean a field she had laid with organic compost, only to later find it covered with micro-plastics. We have a systemic problem. For one, those little plastic stickers on our food do not compost.

What are we ingesting? Know your food, consider putting hands in the soil, be it in pots on a balcony, the strip on the sidewalk, or in your garden. Each of us can contribute, wherever we find ourselves, to help generate nutrient-rich soil and food. Growing food is one of the greatest acts of generosity to ourselves and others. We are only as healthy as the food we eat.

Imagine a beautiful, organic apple



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in hand – how do you eat it? How many times do you chew each bite? Seriously, do you chew five times before you swallow, or ten? In the East, they chew a minimum of 25 times per bite. Chewing breaks down the food and stimulates the salivary glands to release essential enzymes to begin the digestive process in the mouth. When the chewed pulp reaches the stomach, the enzymes signal the digestive acids to complete digestion. In our fast-paced lives, most of us eat standing, on the run, or simply vacuum it down in 5 minutes.

Merely sitting down engages the parasympathetic system, the “rest and digest” mode. I can sympathize with

the vacuum-eaters, but sitting and chewing avoids major digestive issues. Not chewing, or drinking smoothies, is akin to eating food whole, making it act like a time-bomb in the stomach, creating intense gas as the undigested food rots and passes into the intestines.

A little trick is to add granola or nuts – anything that makes you chew soft foods, like yogurt, smoothies, or soup. Chewing means taking more time to eat, and giving the body time to register it is full. Eat less, and the gut works less.

The simple act of chewing is to use the body as it was intended. Life is not meant to be rocket science, so let’s rebuild the soil, and reclaim our health.

On that note, join me for a free 30-minute class on “Three Things To know About The Breath,” April 26th, 1:00 pm. RSVP to 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.

Cowzilla

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

In last month’s “Farming Is Easy,” we introduced our foster cow Minnie, the purebred yearling Holstein whose name was upgraded on delivery to Leslie Lou Minnie Moo.

Standing barely shy of six feet at the shoulder, my personal code name for her, “Cowzilla,” was rejected by one and all as too negative, human-centric, and bovine-shaming. But that is her name to me, and in my defense, she would soon display superpowers, rampage, wade through ocean shallows and generally just keep getting bigger.

Even pretty good fences are mostly mental barriers to determined livestock, and it took Leslie about 45 minutes to defeat ours. After seeing the notice of a loose cow spotted on Facebook, I alerted the authorities (my wife) and then walked out to check on the two perma-cultie pasture observers who had been enjoying the early autumn sunshine over mimosas on unfolded lawn chairs. These were upended, indicating they had already left in chase. The fence wires weren’t barbed nor yet electrified, so I assumed Leslie had just plowed over or through, but there were no obvious signs of forced exit.

I opened the gate and walked the full perimeter. Nothing. Paying close attention while doubling back, there were a few wisps of twirled white tail tassel caught on a top post near the southeast corner. A milk cow in the ballpark of 3,500 pounds, feral though she was, had jumped over a four-and-a-half foot tall fence without touching

it. That kind of motivation can make for a long day, and we started recruiting more search volunteers.

From her perspective, Leslie was experiencing a romantic tragedy of Romeo and Juliet proportions. A most social animal, she had just been ripped from a nicely sized herd headed by her first great love, a handsome white Highland bull. Then she was tied up, separated, forced into a paddy wagon, disoriented, and ejected into a barren solitary confinement. As a creature ruled by her passions, Leslie (who would harbor an abiding fetish for old white Ford pickups that bore resemblance to her Romeo) set out to take matters onto her own hooves. Each of which left pressure imprints over a thousand pounds per square inch.

After first heading in romance’s right direction, an electric horse fence shocked her westwards, and she became scared and enraged. Plowing through thick forest blackberries, salal, saplings, and scrub maples, Leslie made a convenient four-foot wide passage for her mimosa-fueled pursuers, who, nearing the edge of the high-bank plateau above the Colvos, heard a rumbling in the undergrowth, followed by cracks, thuds and guttural screams as she fell two hundred feet down the cliff. Then silence.

Figuring she was dead, and on a fairly sober reflection of a shared fate, they turned back and the search party re-convened at the HQ. I left to pick up our kids.

Upon returning from work, a mildly surprised Larry the Bus Driver found Leslie foraging next to his

beach house. Aware of her background, he called her adoptive mom to report in, saying she was still in one piece. The nice lady from the Institute of Advanced Bovine Studies was on call with a horse trailer, and the party rendezvoused towards the dead end of Robinwood Road.

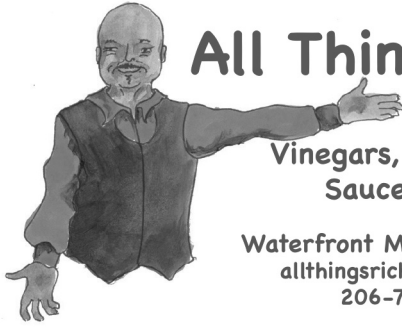
Question: so, assuming you find your wayward beast and have a trailer, how exactly do you get her inside it? Answer: You lasso her, of course. This cow was still having A Very Bad Day, however, and didn’t want any more ropes in her life. While evading, she tore a stamped steel gate apart like it was a can of Rainier, slicing into her left shoulder muscles deep enough to put my hand and forearm inside.

Aided by her state of shock they

eventually coaxed her into the trailer. By the time I got home with the kids my wife and the search posse were waiting by the front porch. Leslie had a two-foot gash but it hadn’t hit any major arteries. Bleeding mostly staunch. “What did the vet say?” Yes, they had called him, and he refused to come treat her. The wound couldn’t be stitched. What did I think we should do? “We’ll have to put her down. Right away.”

Mouths pursed. Gazes all shifted away to some distant focal point and the group shuffled off out of earshot to huddle. Resolved, they marched back as one and the designated speaker announced: “We can’t kill her. She’s pregnant!”

To be continued.



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Vashon Does the New Zealand Haka!

By Erin Durrett

Okay, so what is haka? Haka is the sacred dance of fire, passion, devotion to the land, the ancestors, the clan, the Earth, and all beings – the great dance of the Māori people.

My first glimpse of the haka was a few minutes at the end of the film “Whale Rider.” As I watched the Māori people dancing on the beach, the energy, pride, and love of their community captivated me – I was hooked! A search of the internet brought me to videos of the All Blacks New Zealand rugby team – they do a haka before every match as a challenge to the opposing team – wow! Haka is also done by the friends and family of the bride and groom to honor them at traditional wedding parties – wow!

It was clear to me that the haka is a vital, living artistic tradition that pervades New Zealand’s culture right to its core – and it’s for everyone, no matter their ancestry. I delved a little deeper and found Amelia Butler, a young Māori woman who now lives here in the United States and has founded her own company teaching Te Reo Māori (the indigenous language of New Zealand), as well as Te Ao Māori, the cultural and spiritual traditions of her home country. What an incredible legacy!

On Friday, April 14th, Amelia Butler will be here on Vashon to share the artistic and spiritual traditions of her native land.

Session 1 – Singing the Land: Māori Sacred Song

Explore Māori song, chant, and

ritual as it relates to land, place, ancestors, nature, and ourselves. Through indigenous knowledge and wisdom, we will re-create our relationship with land and the natural world.

Session 2 – Song by Hand: Māori Action Song

Learn a traditional Māori “song by hand” that will connect us together, through shared dance, movement, hand motions, and voice. There is power in embodied movement that connects us to nature and to each other.

Session 3 – Haka: Embodied Song

Haka incorporates full-body movement, voice, facial expressions, self-expression, mind, breath, spirit, posture, and action. Haka activates your personal power and authentic self. It is a transformational and empowering experience.

Please join us! The first two sessions are for teens and adults, and the third session is for all ages. For more information and to register email: singingthelandvashon@gmail.com.

The words and thoughts of indigenous peoples all over the world are shaped by the landscapes they have lived in for thousands of years, and their relationships with the other beings that inhabit those landscapes. This chance to explore Māori culture will help us deepen our relationship with this place that sustains us in so many ways, and with the wisdom that is held in the land itself.





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“A Gentleman From Moscow”

Continued from Page 1

“A Gentleman in Moscow” is set in the Hotel Metropol, an Art Nouveau building in central Moscow. Located near the Kremlin and Bolshoi Ballet, the Metropol represented a new high point in Russian luxury when it opened in 1905, with 200 rooms, hot showers, in-room telephones, and international dining.

Our main character is Count Rostov, a hotel-dweller in lockdown for 32 years. Designated a “former person” upon returning to the Soviet Union in 1922, Rostov is sentenced to never leave the Metropol. “Former people” were Russian citizens that included the nobility, clergy, industrialists, and members of the former Tsar’s bureaucracy and military. During the Russian revolution and subsequent civil war, these groups lost their social status and either left the country or were exiled, imprisoned, or killed.

Why was special favor shown to Rostov? It would have been politically inconvenient to kill him. This was because of a well-known poem he had written prior to the revolution – one that spoke out against the aristocracy.

Boosted from his suite, Rostov sets up residence in a 100 square-foot attic room. He settles into his new life with grace, openness, and curiosity. In this very influential Moscow location, the tumult and information from the outer world comes to Rostov, and what follows are a series of beautifully described mini-eras.

Although Count Rostov is fictional, stories told about the

Metropol are historically accurate. For example, from the 1920s to 1930s, the Metropol’s bar, the Shalyapin, was the preferred late-night spot for foreign correspondents and international businessmen. To entertain investors and statesmen, it became essential for the USSR to have glittering places like the Hotel Metropol, to promote the benefits of Communism to the rest of the world. So, even as Prohibition was the law in the United States and famine spread to the Ukraine, every evening, nighttime entertainment that included live jazz was available at the Hotel Metropol.

Over time, Rostov also engages in deeply satisfying relationships that include a love affair with a former film actress, becoming an adoptive father, and a headwaiter, and acting as a cultural interpreter for his Bolshevik handler. There are also great descriptions about eating food, and making food. Over time, the Metropol continues to function, with largely the same staff – seemingly locked in time, even as it gets a bit shabby.

Some books have great characters, and some books are set in a place that is a great character. This book has both, and it is less than 500 pages long (which is really manageable for a novel about Russia).

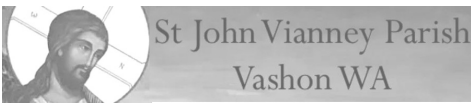
Last month, my husband was genuinely surprised, and said, “You’re reading that again?” (It’s been three times).

You bet I am, honey. Your turn next.

Throwaway Bill

Continued from Page 2

between Democrat and Republican – except for two brief stretches of Republican Governors (1901-1913 and 1919-1933). Then, in 1985, Booth Gardner took office, and the governorship has been controlled by one party (the Democrats) for 38 years



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... and counting.

Is this good? That’s a matter of opinion! For many, that opinion depends on one’s personal political views. But what if we set “politics” aside? Objectively, with zero trifectas (political monopolies), wouldn’t there be a constant need to listen to diverse voices, consider compromise, and explore new angles? When power is balanced, people have no choice but to work together. Collaborations may be hard work, but surely ... they’re worthwhile?

HB 1814 reflects the concerns, ideas, solutions, and sincere thoughts of several elected representatives who care deeply about our shared future. It’s worth your time to read it.





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Terms of Concern – “That Doesn’t Poll Well”

By March Twisdale

Given the age demographics of Vashon-Maury Island, a considerable number of us grew up during a time when “trust in polls” was high. For decades, “exit polls” were especially accurate, with a nearly 100% accuracy rate when compared to actual election results. Then, things changed.

It’s universally acknowledged that polling results failed miserably during the 2016 United States presidential election. That consensus can be found everywhere, from Forbes, to Heavy.com, to Pew Research, and CBS. The question is, “Have we fixed our polling systems, and are they reliable?”

This matters, because our Washington State Legislature is currently in session. Bills have been drafted, presented, and are either dead in committee (like HB 1814) or moving forward. When our elected representatives decide which bills to stand behind, support, oppose, or vote for ... what’s one of the first questions they ask? “Is it polling well?”

Maybe they should be asking another question? “How do we inspire American citizens to become more engaged?” On Tuesday, November 8, 2016, barely 20% of US citizens voted. As a result, from 2017-2020, 80% of us lived with an administration elected by a mere one-fifth of our population. Going back to 1996, about 100 million votes are tallied for each presidential election. In 1996, that was 34.7% of our

population. This trend is discouraging, especially when you consider that Icelandic participation hovers around 81-87%.

Mature islanders, with a handful of decades under their belt, still think we live in a nation dominated by two political parties. Maybe, but for how long? According to the Pew Research Center, 34% of registered voters identify as Independents. This isn’t good or bad, but it leaves political parties (and representatives seeking re-election) in an awkward position, as they struggle to align their votes with the desires and demands of increasingly hands-off and unpredictable constituencies.

In the echoing silence, politicians turn to the familiar ... the trusted ... the polls. This is like asking an admitting nurse to diagnose a patient’s illness or injury simply by checking their pulse and blood pressure. Who can draft good legislation or represent their constituents based primarily on polling data?

“It’s time for politicians to grow a spine!” Heard this before? Me too. But, maybe it’s not our elected representatives that need a spine. Maybe it’s us? If we’ve become so tired, irritated, frustrated, overwhelmed (and lazy) that we’ve given up or turned away in disgust, what right do we have to point fingers?

It is our privilege (and our obligation) to be the wind beneath their wings. The gusts that blow their

Vashon Park District Levy

Continued from Page 2

well-run parks district that increases our access to and enjoyment of many Island spaces, beaches, trails, horse facilities, rentals, classes, concerts, the ski bus, our sailing program, kayak safety classes, and more.

Inflation, inflation, inflation. If your budget is complaining, you’re not alone. Everyone, including the districts that define the quality of our community life on this Island (hospital, fire, school, library, roads, cemetery, the list goes on) is feeling the pinch. It makes sense at times like these to think carefully about the pros and cons of what to keep in our budget and what to let go.

For many, cell phone expenses can be reduced (see Andy Valencia’s article on page 6). Others are looking to gardening, wild-harvesting, and food preservation (see various Loop articles on these topics). Those with

sails. The spine that holds them up, tall and strong. Imagine how the world would change if each of us sent one email a week, telling our elected representatives what we want them to do for us?

Not what we’re angry about. What we want. It starts with you and me. Be the change. Get involved.

larger farm animals are excited to save gas/ferry fees by having access to high-quality feed on-Island (see “Animals Need to Eat Too” on page 11). Many will be choosing “stay-cations” this summer – dodging insane gas prices – while some are struggling to make ends meet at all. Alone, we are not.

And so, each voting decision will be uniquely personal. The Vashon Park District is asking for the same 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed housing value that we approved before. Due to our strange state taxation laws, this will result in an actual increase in revenue, with much of that helping them offset the same inflation challenges we’re all facing.

My home is assessed at \$995,000, and my husband and I currently live on a very tight, fixed income. I’m being asked to pay \$447.75 per year for our Vashon Park District. We see this as the real-world expense that it is – and a real-world collection of resources and employment opportunities for Islanders.

Like all of you, we’ll make our final decision when we fill out our ballot. Let’s see how close we can get to 100% engagement, as the owners of our own country.

Animals Need To Eat, Too – Part Two

By March Twisdale

I wanted to change the title of this article to “An Island of Exceptional Opportunities!” Ever since I moved here, I have been aware of our Island’s unique wealth when it comes to people power and the opportunities we co-create together.

Which is why I was impressed, but not so very surprised, to learn that Vashon Island Horse Supply is now offering hay that cannot be found anywhere else...unless you’re a Race Track or a Zoo. Once again, Gary and Shelley have come through, and our island animals are enjoying exceptional feed!

“Island response has been tremendous,” Shelley said, as we discussed my miniature horse’s insulin issues, supplements, glyphosate and Cushings disease. “No one will be carrying this hay. We’re lucky to have it, thanks to Gary’s lifelong connections in the industry.”

In addition to saving on gasoline, time and ferry fees, the price is good! We all know, “you get what you pay for,” and animal feed is no exception to that rule.

“Prices are sky-high across the region, creating risk for unwary buyers looking for a deal,” Shelley said, reminding me of my own horror story. “Years ago, I went in on a delivery of well-priced hay from an independent seller, only to discover my bales were filled with Canadian Thistle! I couldn’t even use it in my garden!” Shelley nodded. “Never buy hay, sight unseen.”

As is always the case, “every bale is guaranteed” at V.I. Horse Supply. Drop by for a chat, browse their sale items, enjoy some good, old fashioned country hospitality and check out the best quality hay this side of the Cascades!

Note: This is the third in a series highlighting Vashon businesses scattered across our island.

Carla DeCrona’s Lyrical Poetic Moments

Curated by her daughter

My Mom was a lifelong writer, artist, musician and wonder-filled being. Before her transition to the life that comes next, she was blessed with the opportunity to go through all of her diaries. Boxes and boxes of them. The vast majority, dating as far back as her early 20’s, she released. A few, she kept, and it is from this small, special collection that I am pulling monthly poems, quotes and short stories to share with you, our Vashon Loop readers and our Substack Subscribers from around the world. I hope you enjoy them as much as my mother most assuredly did, and this one, she suggests reading to the tune of “Farewell to Tarwathie.”

Well the day’s full of rainbows
And we’re ready to rise
we’ll be greeting the day
with the sun in our eyes.

And there’ll be no temptations
to linger inside
Like the birds from the north
the blue waves we will ride.

Now the sun’s kissed the sea
and the wind’s in the trees
let us head to the beach
to sail with the breeze.

Our kayaks are eager
to explore this fine bay
so it’s off we will go
to paddle and play.

Rose Hip and Snowberry

Final story installment will appear next month



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Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

Do you know that we have five planets that are lining up right now? And one of them is Uranus. Reminding me of an old Star Trek joke! “What do the U.S.S. Enterprise and toilet paper have in common?” Well, they both circle Uranus searching for Klingons.

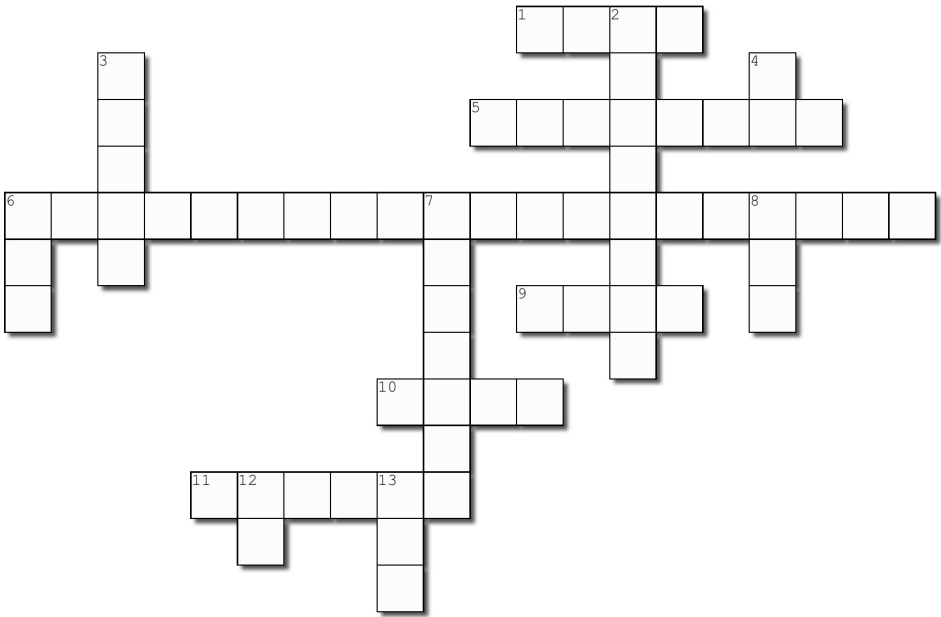
What do you call a bunch of cattle sleeping in a field? Bulldozers!

What do you call the type of milk that a miniature cow gives? Condensed.



Can You Solve the Puzzle?

Put the words in order, and you'll laugh like a Coyote!



Across

- Who, where, when, why, how, _____.
- Dead carcasses that _____-eaters enjoy.
- HappyAprilFool'sDay!
- The best of friends are always _____.
- The best relationships require give and _____.
- Vashon Island's secondary apex predator, after humans.

Down

- Large flying vehicle that holds hundreds.
- Vacation, holiday, travel, _____. And a question!
- Best place for The Vashon Loop? ____ my coffee table!
- Pronoun for a male, in the possessive.
- I travel light with just a carry-on, but most bring _____.
- Today I do, yesterday I _____.
- A two letter preposition.
- A super popular, 3-letter word that's also a definite article!



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Aries (March 20-April 19)

There is such a thing as too much integrity. That can come in the form of not doing something you truly want to do. It shows up as being too rigid to be spontaneous. It can manifest as hesitation on matters where you know what you’re doing. In other words, fear or guilt disguised as virtue in some form. This is an effect of your ruling planet Mars making a long square (90 degrees, maximum tension) aspect to Chiron.

Self-actualization is largely about doing what you want to do for your own reasons, having nothing to do with the opinions of anyone else, or their hang-ups. They have their issues, and you have yours—you don’t need any extras. When it comes time to wage the revolution, that will come in the form of overthrowing guilt and embarrassment and doing what is right for you, because you want to.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

You tend to like things settled and predictable. Yet, these days you are constantly being prodded to reevaluate just about everything. For you, this feels like living on a dangerous edge. Yet it’s entirely conceptual. Life is and always has been a ride on a soap bubble. Who you are is always a work in progress, whether you notice or not; whether you love that fact, or resist.

You are being bestowed with extra influence or potentially even power, and for that to work out well, you are responsible for what you know. Consider the tradition of the president of the United States initialing every paragraph of a document he is reading, as proof that he knows what it says. Your authority and power of communication must be supported by the constant embracing of new viewpoints, and the willingness to change your mind and update your files ongoing.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Mars has finally left your sign, after spending seven months there— Aug. 20, 2022 through March 25, 2023. This has not been easy; we might question whether it’s been meaningful, though we both know that it has. You have had to experiment with how to apply your will; how to connect your words to your actions; and most of all, how to work out your conflicts with yourself. On that particular matter, Mars has raised the stakes.

Mars in Cancer (along with Venus in Taurus) are both calling you to come from a unified place, emotionally. You may feel anger as a gut reaction, but have a value that you will resolve issues without resorting to aggression. Be alert to the fact that you will be inclined to take action whereas in recent months (or even going back much longer) you may have not done so. It’s still essential that you determine what constitutes right action, and what comports with your most deeply held principles.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Be aware of your emotional currents and riptides. Work with them rather than against them. Mars in your sign is something you haven’t experienced for a while, and it comes after seven months of what may have felt as no Mars at all. By this, I mean that for all these months, Mars in Gemini has been floating around a kind of blind spot, having mostly the effect of churning up your doubts and insecurities.

This is now a time for decisions, as a diversity of planets arc across the most powerful and expressive angle of your chart—Aries and your 10th solar house. Jupiter alone would be enough to put you



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



into a position where your decisions impact others, and can shape the future, and also reflect on your reputation. There are also the Sun, Chiron and Eris in Aries. And Mars is pushing matters along, making decisions inevitable; yet what you decide is up to you. Just keep choosing, and keep going.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Do you have a conscious vision for yourself? You are being summoned to tune into precisely that. I recognize that it’s hard to have hope or faith in the times we are living in. The difference between 2019 and today is that there seems to be a lot less potential, far less flexibility, and an odd sense that people just don’t seem to care about much. You cannot let what those muggles may think influence you or how you live. There is one thing you have that many people lack, despite any appearances to the contrary. And that thing is meaning.

Your freedom is in your potential; that in turn is released by your ability to make decisions. And those are always about being right where you are, and making observations about your situation and your environment. Here is a key, courtesy of a fortune cookie: Be humbly who you aspire to be; be resolutely who you are.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

Broadly speaking, you seem to have two possibilities at the moment: live in the context of a relationship/partnership and its concept of who you are; or make your own choices for your own purposes, which means thinking as an independent person without the encumbrances of the relationship. You may have been at this juncture many times before.

When you find yourself in the context of a relationship where your experience of yourself has expanded, you need to figure out what to do. Yet that really simmers down to one thing: tell the truth about your reality. Give people the opportunity to accept or reject you. Unless you are boldly honest about your situation, you will never really know where you stand with people. I know that most people live on completely different terms, smothered in mendacity and drowning in withholds. You’ve had enough success being real that you know it works pretty good most of the time.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

There is plenty going on that seems plenty important, which could distract you from your true mission. The distractions are related to the thing you want to focus on, but the difference is that there is a self-serving dimension to your true calling—it’s as much about you as it is about whatever you’re doing. This means focusing elements of your reputation, financial rewards, and building the future in a conscious way.

What is the most daring route you can take? Given several options, which is the one that requires courage, and also comes at a greater risk? That’s where you’ll have the most fun and stand to reap the greatest rewards. This requires invoking a certain boldness and willingness to challenge the social status quo. In other words, risking what some call “unpopularity” will work well for you, especially if you keep your deeper policy of doing things because they are the thing to do.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Your challenge is to invest your faith in what you think (or know) is right,

without allowing the insecurities of others to dissuade you. Under the influence of Pluto in Aquarius, one of the central questions you face is that between needing acceptance and wanting independence. If you want to have both at the same time, there’s only one way to do that, which is to do what you think (or know) is right, and then leave it to people to make their choices about you.

Most of your relatives did not do this; they took what they thought of as the safe route, specifically because they didn’t want to risk the judgment of others. Yet there may have been one person in your family who refused to play this game. Think carefully. She was way ahead of her times, she did what she thought was right, and she had the respect of others for doing so. Somewhere in your life, there is an example of how to be yourself under all conditions at all times.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Your ruling planet Jupiter is in rare form right now, glowing and resonating from your fellow fire sign Aries. And it’s hanging out close to another Sagittarian planet, Chiron. Jimi Hendrix, one of the greats born under your sign, once asked the true question: Are you experienced? This combination of factors is urging you to convert your curiosity into action by actually exploring and experimenting.

The action is taking place in the 5th place of your chart, the one where you specialize in having fun (to quote another Saggie rock star). Yet this is not where your astrology ends; you are being encouraged in all ways to be productive, and to accomplish solid things for yourself and for others. The work of assisting others must be centered on them and conducted in a spirit of nurturing and caring. The balance and interweaving of these themes is in your chart, and will be for the foreseeable future. And the two add up to a whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

The central question of Pluto working the territory between Capricorn and Aquarius is, for you, what action is the fruit of your knowledge? You have learned so much, plenty of it from experiences that you did not want at the time but today would not trade for anything. For the next 18 months, you will have a series of opportunities to consolidate your knowledge through various practical endeavors, putting it to work. The emphasis of your chart is, during this time, shifting to the social realm, though this may have turned you

off the past few years, as you figured out how many people sacrificed their intelligence to the god of conformity.

Therefore, there are openings for you to explore new social territory, and to assert your individuality in ways that seemed impossible or painful three years ago. The gradual departure of Pluto from your sign means that you must begin to provide your own evolutionary impulse; your own drive to change and grow as a voluntary act, rather than as something you are forced to do based on your circumstances.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

Pluto in your sign will provide you with an endless stream of discoveries and revelations, though let’s start with what feels like a quickening. The speed of time, if not specific events, seems to have picked up, like a river running through narrow rapids. The social order to which you’ve grown accustomed is unraveling or even reversing itself (whether you liked it or not; whether you benefitted or not).

Here is where original thinking will come in handy, which will often take the form of “what’s the best use of this problem or circumstance that seems to be out of my control?” The core focus of your evolutionary drive becomes something most people find extremely difficult to perceive. You must know, at all times, whether you accept something is true because you understand it to be true, or beause other people believe it. This will no longer be a safe refuge. It never was safe, but now you have the power to boldly challenge alleged collective views and therefore interfere with the way they can get a grip on you.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

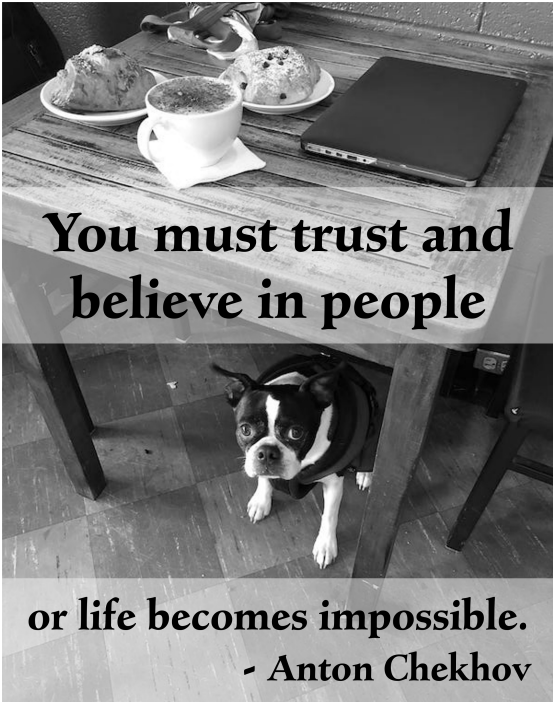
Saturn is gradually helping you get a grip on your time and on your life. To get the maximum benefit from Saturn, work with its core elements: honoring the passage of time, respect for when things must happen, taking authority over all matters of personal business, and reminding yourself there is a line where you end and others begin. This last one may be the most significant of them all. It’s something that every Pisces I know struggles with, which is because Pisces is the delta of Venus, the ocean that refuses no river.

Keep track of others in your life who are willing to take responsibility for the world around them, and delegate some tasks to them. You are seeing that you need to manage your workload and life flow consciously and carefully, and attend to many personal details you have overlooked in the past. With this approach, Saturn always gives more than it takes away, and helps eliminate much that was not serving you.

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You must trust and believe in people

or life becomes impossible.

- Anton Chekhov