

Team Osprey

By the Vashon Loop Editorial Board

At The Vashon Loop, it is hard for us to not take certain issues very seriously these days – that’s because these are serious times. Last year, The Loop took the opportunity to dive deep into the structures of several local administrative organizations. The experience was so eye-opening that we wrote a number of critical articles.

In some cases, we critiqued these organization’s plans for levies that would further raise our property taxes (which have already more than doubled in the past 10 years). Most importantly, we felt compelled to critique the management of these organizations – especially serious deficits in their communications strategies and a lack of transparency and real community engagement in their decision-making processes. We have actually observed a pervasive problem.

Here’s the thing. We live on an Island. Most of us chose to be here and not somewhere large and anonymous like Seattle, Tacoma, or Olympia. Vashon operates like a small town, and its residents have traditionally wanted to understand what is happening in their community. We want a detailed and robust local dialogue – this is a completely reasonable expectation.

What we are not here for is to experience the distanced, unresponsive, and even condescending bureaucratic structures that now manage our larger cities. Locally, some of our problems have been profound, like events at the Vashon Island School District – hidden for some time but ultimately recognized and acted on. Other problems are in earlier stages and don’t involve interpersonal harm, but still reveal troubling patterns.

In the week between Christmas and New Years’, such a problem showed itself. On a local Facebook nature and wilderness page, a resident asked what had happened to the osprey nest located adjacent to VIFR headquarters. The nest was apparently removed as part of a renovation, but without any community consultation, such as with local Audubon members. Another



The cell tower heights, now empty of nest

Facebooker reviewed recent VIFR minutes (updated most recently in October 2023) and did not find ospreys mentioned in renovation discussions.

Dozens of people expressed serious concerns, to the extent that when VIFR posted its year-end review of activities on another local Facebook page, posts asking for information on the ospreys dominated. This was followed by a VIFR Commissioner interjecting multiple times to encourage people to attend the next monthly VIFR meeting, in person or by Zoom, to “ask questions and become informed.”

This commissioner told us that the Fire Chief could not be expected to answer these questions online. Once questions are asked online and responded to, only more questions will follow, you see, and that is troublesome and difficult to manage. This is confusing to us at The Loop because, last year, when campaigning for their substantial levy lift, the VIFR used a very emotional,

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What Brought You to the Island



By Kay Sherman

I first came to the Island in 1960, at age 19, with my younger sister Jeanne, who was 14. We only came to look.

We were looking for a new place to live. The house we were renting in West Seattle was just down the road from the ferry dock.

Just off the ferry, we met Dave, a realtor. He said, “Are you going someplace special?” and I said “Vashon.” I had a B52 hairdo and high heels on because I was in beauty school. Dave said, “Well, you’re going to have quite a fine walk. It’s a long ways to walk.”

We looked at several pieces of property that day. I liked Vashon because there weren’t many people here back then. I was raised in Craig, in southeast Alaska, so this is what I was used to.

I left Alaska on my 42-foot boat

when I was 18. My husband Jack and I were out fishing, living on the boat. Jack had an aneurysm on the boat. He was unconscious, there was a storm in Ketchikan, and planes and helicopters couldn’t land. So, we headed to Seattle by the inside passage. I brought him here all the way by myself, taking care of him and driving the boat, anchoring at night, and traveling during the day.

Jack was from Seattle. He was one of the original architects for the monorail. He also worked on the Space Needle; he knew German, and the space Needle was built by Germans. We made it to Swedish hospital in Seattle, where Jack survived for ten days.

After Jack passed away, I grew up in a hurry. I stayed in Seattle, and my family joined me. Mom and dad were kind of already looking for a property down here – they were just renting in Alaska and had been living on their boat for a while.

After my visit to Vashon, I told my mom and dad, “There’s an Island out there, and there’s a ferry to the Island. Why don’t we take the ferry and go see what it’s like?” Well, we did, the next day. My dad fell in love. He liked the property with the creek in Paradise Valley and we bought it.

There wasn’t a house on the property; it was just raw land. So, we found a yellow rental house by the golf course. We lived there for probably three years, then we had a house brought over. At that time, the airport was being built, so there were a bunch of houses they had to move.

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Olympia Set To Appoint “Rubber Barons”

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Washington State is eager to further cut carbon emissions. To that end, it’s anticipated to pass a law requiring residents to buy ultra-low rolling resistance tires when replacing original (OEM) equipment. Officials promise this will save hundreds per driver in fuel costs. This is true. For a given car or light truck in normal driving, these new “Low-Rollers” improve fuel economy by about 2.5 to 3.5%.

That’s the good news. Who doesn’t want to save some gas money?

The bad news? First, since the low-rollers are more expensive to produce, and priced accordingly, they probably won’t save much money, if any – even though Washington’s gasoline prices are the second-highest in the United States behind California’s. Second, the upside is tiny, because tires only account for about 20% of total vehicular friction. Third, tire production is a demanding material science where trade-offs are literally baked in and the risks of squeezing out the last possible mile per-gallon quickly and clearly outweigh the benefits.

The consequences to forcing wholesale adoption of these new products are predictable and will require increased caution from drivers accustomed to less caution. First, a quick spin through tire design. Spoiler: You can’t reduce rolling resistance without hurting traction.

For most of us, the simplest way

to upgrade our vehicle’s safety and performance has been with tires, which have gotten better and better. Since the 1970s, general tire quality has progressed to something of a golden age, most happily in terms of grip in wet conditions, off-roading, and versatility. Other properties like compound, durability, sizes, noise, and fuel efficiency have incrementally improved, but the biggest, hands-down amazing strides have been made in wet grip.

Wet grip sounds sexy. Fun. And it definitely is. But why is that a good thing on a car? Think of rounding the blind, off-camber, decreasing-radius corner where Westside Highway SW turns east onto Cemetery Road. So many drivers have spun off in the same spot that the property owner on the north side has installed a big cedar log to protect her house from crashes. Because vulcanized rubber naturally sticks to wet pavement much less well than dry, even professional drivers can get surprised by slippery roads and lose control despite paying attention. Soles on shoes have treads so they stick, not slide.

Advances in tread patterns and grabby compounds squash and shoot water backwards, like Super Soakers, making for shorter stops and maintaining stable contact on soggy blacktops. These have greatly reduced accident risks in bad weather. Not long ago, a mere moment’s inattention or misjudging a patch of water could send you hydroplaning

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14/48 – The World’s Quickest Theater Festival Arrives



Photo by Michelle Bates from 14/48 2023

Amy Broomhall, Maria Glanz, Jeannie Dougherty, Jill Bulow

By Jane Valencia

Taking place at the Open Space is 14/48, a whirlwind production made up of Vashon artists and collaborators, in which 14 plays are created and performed in 48 hours.

Here’s how 14/48 Vashon describes the process:

“On Thursday night, this group of fearless creators gathers and throws themes into a hat. A theme is drawn and seven writers head home to write seven brand new ten-minute plays overnight. The next day, seven directors draw the play they will direct, then they draw their cast, and then they get to work: those seven new plays are rehearsed, designed, and scored throughout the day, and performed twice on Friday night ... and then the whole process happens again. And thus, 14 new plays are born and performed in just 48 hours. It’s theatrical madness of an incredibly creative sort.”

The production is in its sixth year on Vashon, and is steered by Invitations and Planning Committee members, David Godsey, Cate O’Kane, Andy James, Maria Glanz, and Mik Kuhlman.

Mik, who is well-known on the Island as an actress, producer, and teaching artist, shares further about 14/48.

“Everything is random,” Mik explains. Not just the theme or which play the director will direct, but even the cast is randomly selected. And then, there’s a design team working, and a band that are people who don’t normally play together. They have to write a theme song and music that goes in and out of each show to set the mood for what’s coming up, and take us out at the end.”

The production houses easily at Open Space, because “You have to have seven rehearsal rooms going, and a costume shop, a prop shop, a band rehearsal space, and a place to feed everybody.” With about 25 actors, five musicians, seven writers, seven directors, ten designers, two artist liaisons, three stage crew, five tech people, and four food preparers, plus a handful of hunters and gatherers for props and costumes and hardware, around 70 people are involved.

“It’s so fun to watch. You can’t believe what people can create in a day.”

Mik goes on to describe the process. “You have to really go from the heart in it, and from the gut. You don’t have time. You cannot say no in that process. So if somebody has an idea, you just say, ‘Okay, yay. Let’s go.’ There is no time for self-doubt.

You say ‘yes’ before you even know what you’re saying yes to. You’re committed to the process.”

Mik believes that the experience is excellent training for actors, creators, and producers. The work, she explains, “Doesn’t have to be perfect. It has to just get out there. And when you do that, you actually drop a lot of that excess stuff, and the process becomes magical.”

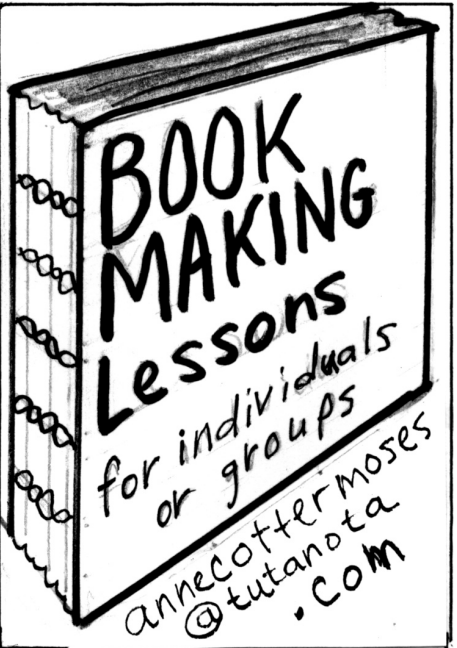
Earlier, Mik and I had been talking about trees. Now, she shares a concept about how trees grow that relates to the process of 14/48.

“A tree has to soften its bark. The tree has got this boundary. It has to soften the boundary in order to grow into a new boundary. It literally has to do that. And it’s what we do as humans. It’s how we grow, too. It’s a really beautiful correlation.

“Because you have to first soften the boundary. You can’t have the edge – you have to soften it, and then you have to drop it, release it. Then you have to build a new one – really quick, and grow into that one. It’s not something that’s there. You have to imagine it and create it, I guess. But the first step is the softening of the bark, or you don’t have anywhere to grow – to grow into your next boundary.

“So that’s what 14/48 is literally like: here’s the boundary – grow. The softening of the bark is the stage where we’ve let it go, where we have to let go of our schedule. We’re going to slam into a weekend that’s going to require 24 hours, because you’re on hot – It’s a lot of work. And you do it twice. It’s exhausting.”

Yet clearly exhilarating, and clearly worth the adventure. “And it’s so good,” Mik finishes, “because you get to create, and you get to play with people. And the audience gets to celebrate the creativity of the theatre



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community condensing our process into two back-to-back, 24-hour periods. It’s well worth taking in both nights. Fourteen world premiere plays in one weekend!”

14/48 not only takes place in the Seattle area, but in other states and countries too. There’s even a high school 14/48. Don’t miss 14/48 Vashon at the Open Space, on Friday, January 19 and Saturday, January 20. For tickets and to find out more: www.openspacevashon.com.

The Vashon Loop

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Distribution: The Vashon Loop is a monthly newspaper, with 3,000 copies printed per issue; the paper is distributed to multiple sites throughout Vashon-Maury Island, and all content is also available at our website.

<https://vashonloop.com/>
January 7, 2024

Address: The Vashon Loop, P. O. Box 2221, WA 98070

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Team Osprey

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high-touch outreach strategy. Is it only a priority for VIFR to be responsive at some times?

Fortunately, after New Years', the VIFR did release a statement on their Facebook page. They reiterated that moving the active osprey nest was an essential part of the main fire station renovation, said that they had consulted with wildlife specialists during this process, and have since met with local Vashon Audubon representatives. It's still to be determined if we will have an acceptable solution.

Providing this response was a good step on the VIFR's part, but the underlying issue still remains - at what point did it become acceptable for officials to ignore and deflect to such a degree? We agree that more people should track and attend meetings. But community meetings should never be the only means of communication.

Please keep in mind that there is a big difference between expressing criticisms of our service systems and not appreciating our service providers and our ability to access these systems. This year, The Loop will be paying more attention to strategies that could improve or re-envision our Island services in a way that better matches current and (more importantly) future needs. Going forward, we will discuss all community issues in the realistic context of money being harder to come by, and the assumption of



ongoing ferry disruptions - recently acknowledged by the Seattle Times as expected to extend five years or more. We invite you to join us if you want to explore and write about these topics.

If you want to talk more with the VIFR about the ospreys or other topics, the next public Commissioner's Meeting will be on Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at 6:30 PM at the Penny Farcy Training Facility (10019 SW Bank Road). Pay attention to this date - incorrect information was shared on Facebook saying the meeting would be on January 20, 2024. As of this writing, no Zoom link for this meeting is available, but VIFR has indicated that this link will be posted closer to the meeting date.

The Vashon Loop is published monthly

"Rubber Barons"

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off into an unforgiving tree or ditch.

The industry's technical progress over the past 50 years has been marvelous, and delivered peace of mind to steep and winding roads on dark and stormy nights. Selected sport models recently achieved a Holy Grail milestone, providing almost the same road-holding and stopping power on wet roads as on dry. This breakthrough is available to most any interested car owner willing to pay a few hundred extra bucks.

With experience taken from racetracks, we commonly use all-season tires to easily tackle the lighter snows and slushes the Pass is prone to. This has largely reduced the need for specialized snow tires, and these all-seasons often last for over 50,000 miles. As for off-roading, some highly fuel-inefficient 20-inch Trail Hogs trucked my whole family up 11,000 feet of steeply rutted wilderness tracks and back down without a scratch.

Tires are a compromise between the limitations of physics and chemistry, and now governments demand that manufacturers optimize for fuel efficiency. To comply, they have only one path: To reduce rolling resistance (i.e., the energy required to make them gain or maintain speed) by using a stiffer, harder rubber compound and shallower treads. Harder tire, easier roll.

But harder rubber means less grip. In most available models, that harder compound is enhanced with a silica-based additive that restores some traction without adding the friction back in. Ultra-low rolling resistance tires start out with a hard and slippery compound, then the science folks try to figure out how best to compensate for the inherent limitations. While they were able to tease a lot of stick-ability back into the rubber, testing has demonstrated that eco-class tires are a significant step

backwards on every performance and safety measure. The traction just isn't the same, and the drop-off is worst right where you'd expect it, but you least want it: in the all-important wet grip.

For example, it takes 20 feet longer to stop a car going 50 mph in the rain on Michelin E-Primacy tires (\$300+ each at Tire Rack, a poorly rated 3.7 out of 5 on Tire Reviews) vs the same car using the regular Michelin Primacy. A 20-foot longer stopping distance (29.7 meters vs 36.2 meters, in a European test) also implies approximately 20% less straight-line traction. That's an absolutely horrible result, and 20 feet longer is a huge difference when you stomp on the brakes to avoid hitting a deer jumping across a slippery ditch-lined country road. Or when you're trying to not hit anything on any road.

While the specifics aren't worked out, Olympia is already committed in concept to implementing something like California's statewide Replacement Tire Efficiency Program for passenger cars and light-duty trucks. Their idea is to "ensure that replacement tires be at least as energy-efficient as the vehicle's original equipment." What trying to enforce that at a local Les Schwab or Costco will look like is a good question, but driving to Idaho or Oregon looks like a possible answer.

A tire, like some other things, rolls downhill. Fancy notions originating at the top of an organizational hierarchy become chain-of-command problems, with the heaviest responsibilities falling on the chain's lowliest links. The implications of drivers suddenly needing 20% further to stop during emergency braking events are profound, but it seems that eking out up to one extra mile per gallon is the only metric Washington state's legislature is focused on. Is sacrificing so much for low rolling really worth it?

require college degrees. But our society is undergoing large shifting stresses right now, and the pain of those stresses lands squarely upon the people doing such jobs. Do NOT make a decision to enter one of these areas based on what was true a decade or two ago. Instead, find a recently retired worker in the industry, and let them walk you through what the job was like, is like now, and where they see it going.

I especially recommend approaching a military recruiter only after you've talked to a recently retired veteran or two. Expect the recruiter to use high-pressure sales techniques; they are being pushed hard to bring in more recruits. Remember that they can promise what you'll do and when you'll be able to leave military service. Once you're sworn in, they don't have to keep those promises. It's happened within recent memory, just do a search for "military stop loss."

Until my next article, just remember: there are lots of options. You'll be fine.



Making a Living Without a Degree

By Andy Valencia

My last article provided a strongly negative take on college. It wasn't fair or balanced, because pretty much everything else you'll read concerning college will tell you that, unless you buy a college degree, you'll die disfigured and alone in a gutter somewhere. Before you reach your mid-twenties, most likely. Read anything else first, then read my article - now you're balanced.

Ideas in the abstract can seem OK, and yet there you are in your last semester at Vashon High School. You're going to get a diploma and your final report card. Now what? For most new adults, your stomach is uneasy, and your heartbeat quickens. You feel afraid, and exposed, and powerless.

Sometimes, these dark emotions are true warnings from the recesses of your brain. In modern culture, these feelings have often been placed into you, to make you do something. Being a legal adult only means that you didn't die before reaching your 18th birthday. Being an actual adult means making good decisions for yourself, even when it takes courage. Gather all of the facts and all of your feelings, think it through, and go with the best option. Sometimes following the best option is a little scary, so be courageous.

But what DO you do without a college degree? I had my own ideas, and then our incredible Island kicked into gear. The world is awash in great jobs that don't need college degrees. A pattern that quickly emerged was

that people were enthusiastic to tell about their work and liked their jobs. Not in the sense of doing their job to the exclusion of life, but rather, they work and make a living, and then come home to family, hobbies, church, or whatever else completes them.

The first Islander to reach out was a 911 operator, who became a supervisor, and now she's written books and has her own 911 training company. Handling emergency communications is demanding and fascinating, and they will hire and train you straight out of high school. Very often, as you accumulate experience, they'll even fund part-time college studies. Once you're inside the public safety community, it's often possible to choose to grow out into some other public safety position, such as becoming a paramedic. If this kind of job interests you, there's extra details at the bottom of the web version of this article.

When I dropped by my local credit union, I casually asked about jobs-once again with an enthusiastic response. You might assume credit unions only hire people with college degrees in math. In fact, what they want to see is a high school diploma and the ability to work carefully, with attention to detail. They also want to see somebody with a great work ethic and impeccable integrity. Because credit unions operate under federal law, all of their compliance training is just a part of bringing a new employee up to speed. It's absolutely normal to start as a teller or intern and work your way up to branch

manager. Even the corporate officer positions can be held by people who started as a teller with their high school diploma.

Trade schools open their doors at a fraction of the cost of a college degree. One of our local men, fresh out of the military, took a three-month course and became a crane operator. Within the year, he was earning a full salary with benefits. Look up at the crane towering over one of the building sites in Seattle, and think of the person up there operating it. Weight and balance, clear communications, complete situational awareness, and the ability to make safety decisions quickly. If you're OK with heights, that could be you up there in the middle of a high-rise building project. The three-month training I mentioned included a commercial driver's license, making available an additional range of jobs.

I plan on doing another article, since I haven't yet touched on some other important employment areas, like automotive, electrical, water systems, and plumbing. But I wanted to finish by mentioning some traditional no-degree areas, and giving a word of caution.

The military, some police departments, and many junior medical support positions do not

The Old Man

By Michael Shook

Last year, 2023, marked 25 years since my father died. I did nothing in particular to mark the occasion, other than noting it was that accumulation of years whereby things are thought about, or spoken about because, well, because a certain amount of time has passed. And it seemed like not that long ago.

Then, a long postponed visit to relatives on my wife’s side came into view. Off we went, in October, to north-east Arkansas. We had a lovely time, and I enjoyed seeing the rolling countryside, with its assortment of beautiful trees, so different from our tall, slender firs, and stately broad-crowned maples.

A highlight for me was a side trip we made to Oklahoma, where Pa was born and raised. It’s about two and a half hours to Tulsa from C’s family in Arkansas. Pa spent some of his childhood in Tulsa, but grew up mostly on a ranch outside of a town called Avant, about 30 miles north. I’d wanted to visit for some time, and here was my opportunity.

Oklahoma! Where the wind comes sweepin’ down the plain!

So we sang as we crossed the border from Arkansas into Oklahoma, followed by as many other tunes from the musical that we could remember.

Our first stop was Tulsa. Pa’s parents divorced when he was about 10 – hence, the move from Avant – and we found where he had lived, thanks to the address on a letter he wrote home to his mom from summer

Island Voices

camp. It was only about eight blocks from central downtown, decidedly on the “wrong side” of the main rail line, and only a block away from that.

The house was long gone, and a small, brick one-story commercial building, from 1942, is in its place. I got out of the car, and walked a bit, up and down, trying to imagine my dad as a young boy, transplanted from the country where he helped care for livestock, split kindling for the woodstove, and did all the other things kids do out on farms and ranches. Then it was back on the road, north to Avant.

I don’t know what I expected. I guess I mostly just wanted to see the place. And now, trying to recall what I felt when we arrived, it’s difficult to say. There’s barely even a town there anymore. Never very big, Avant was part of the oil boom in Osage County, but that particular field went dry pretty fast. And when the boom was over, a familiar scenario played out. The population dropped from just over one thousand, and has continued to decline to its current population of a few hundred or less. There were no stores that I could see, not even a gas station.

What’s left of the town is tiny, only about 8 by 13 city blocks. It is nestled in a valley – more like a very large swale – between gently sloping hills to the north, west, and east. To the south, the main road comes in off of old Oklahoma Highway 11. The west border is defined by a healthy-

sized creek – Bird Creek – while another creek, Tucker, runs across the north of town and joins Bird at the northwest corner of the valley. During the record floods of 2019 that devastated many areas of Oklahoma, Avant was not spared. Bird Creek crested at 34 feet above flood level, and most of the town became a shallow lake. More than 70 homes were destroyed.

We drove around, slowly, trying not to draw attention, while I looked for ... what? I felt like I was trying to find something familiar, something I knew, but in a place I’d never been, and had only heard a handful of stories about. I tried to imagine it as it was when my dad was there, from sometime around 1916-1917, to when he graduated from high school in 1932, along with 18 classmates.

The old high school, a three-story brick affair, burned in 1938. I was hoping to find some pictures or documents, but everything had gone up in flames. What I do have regarding the school is the story of the time Pa and his best friend got a cow up the stairs to the third floor and left it there over the weekend (with plenty of water and hay, of course). Those farm boys.

We drove around again, one last time. I scoured the area, wanting to connect Pa to the place, and maybe, somehow, myself. Among the surrounding hills and ridges, he hunted deer, and birds – pheasant, quail, grouse? He must have run

down these streets, to a friend’s house, or maybe to the house of a girl he liked. He must have played baseball somewhere nearby. He loved the game, and was good at it, a steady glove at third, light-hitting, but quick and could get on base. We looked at the old bridge over Bird Creek that he had told me about – blocked off now and ready to collapse – where he and friends would swim, after jumping from the lower section, then take turns on the bank keeping watch for cottonmouth snakes.

Then it was back to Arkansas, and we flew home the next day. Avant has stuck with me, adding more detail to my remembrance of Pa. To see the places where he lived, worked, and loved as a boy, and then as a young man, and the challenges he faced, then and later in life – his parent’s divorce, the Great Depression and loss of the ranch, the Dust Bowl, the Pacific Theater in WWII, and all the rest life throws one’s way in 83 years – I am filled again with gratitude. He was a man, flawed (as are we all) but capable of wonderful things (as are we all). Most wonderfully, there has never been a moment in my life that I doubted his deep love for me.



Legends Of Vashon – The Orca Club

We require two things to be published as a “Legend of Vashon.” It has to be set on Vashon. And it has to be a good yarn. Enjoy!

By Arnold Swimmer

I heard that, back on Vashon, people are talking about swimming the Colvos passage. That brings back memories! I didn’t swim on the Colvos side, but I’ll never forget the night I swam and nearly died right off the shore of Vashon.

This was a long time ago, back when there were ocean amusement parks where you could go and see dolphins and orcas swimming around and doing tricks. There were companies that would go out and catch these animals, and right off of Vashon for a while there were pens where they’d hold the poor animals. There were guards and a boat, and the further you stayed away, the happier the guards were.

The rumor at the time was that they had an orca in there, and you could see the floats that anchored the nets for the enclosure. Sometimes you thought maybe you could see a fin, and maybe it did look like an orca. I don’t know who thought up “The Orca Club.”

The idea was simple. The orca enclosure was a big upside down letter “U” pointing into the sound. You swim out to the net, follow it along into the sound, and then it curves back. When you reach the other end of the net, you swim back to the shore. You’re now a member of the Orca Club! You’re following the net, and not actually swimming in

with an orca, which might, I don’t know, eat you or something.

You had to do it at night because of the guards. It was also too cold to swim in anything but a wetsuit, but I knew somebody about my size who had one. It’s amazing how quickly a dumb idea turns into a dumb guy (me) standing at the shore in a poorly fitting wetsuit. But there I was.

We’d checked the tide tables, and I shouldn’t have had to swim against anything except the usual random currents. There was no moon, but my eyes had adjusted to the dark and there was enough stray light to let me see the net I’d follow. I looked at my buddies, then the water. Too late to back out, so I waded in.

It was pretty muddy, so I was relieved when it got deep enough that I could float clear of the bottom. It was harder than I expected to spot the first net buoy, but there it was, and I swam out to it. I had flippers on and, as it turned out, they were one of the reasons I didn’t die that night.

Laying hands on the cable connected to the buoy, I realized how lucky I was to be wearing gloves – the cable was crusted, and would have cut my hands up. The rubber of my gloves was going to be pretty chewed up by the end of this swim, oh well. I struck out along the cable, letting my hand touch it after every three or four kicks to make sure I was on course, and after not too long, I reached the second buoy.

I had worked my way along several cable spans, and was pretty far out, away from the shore. I had done my several kicks when I reached

out for the cable – and it wasn’t there. Oh boy, that was bad news, and I figured I’d drifted out away from it a little farther than I expected. So I angled inward, kicking with one hand out in front of me so I wouldn’t catch the cable in my face.

But now I’d gone far enough that I knew that, wherever the cable was, I wasn’t going to find it by swimming around in the dark. Probably this segment had sagged deep enough that I’d swum right over it. I was getting cold by now, and it was time to finish up this swim. I pointed my body up vertical and flutter kicked to get my head as high up out of the water as possible, so I could spot the next buoy. This was when I discovered that a little surface mist had come up, and all I got was a nice view of nothing.

That got the blood pumping, and now I had to think hard and fast. I needed to pick the right direction and swim in a straight line. If I missed the land, I’d swim out into the open sound, freeze up, and drown. I had tried to keep track of where I was pointing, so now I took my best guess of where the shore was, and started swimming straight at it.

Yes, this meant I was swimming in with the orca. The big, cold, quiet of the water was a lot scarier than a critter which might eat me – or might leave me alone. The sound was going to kill me for sure if I didn’t get out of it pretty soon.

I swam strongly, and those flippers let me move along at a good pace. I was starting to worry that I should’ve reached land by now when I heard a sound off to my left. It sounded just like a fin cutting through

the water, and I almost angled away before I realized that I would never swim clear of an orca. I kept going.

And then it hit me, tearing right across my chest. The fear of orcas jumped way up higher than fear of drowning, and I tried to make a sharp turn to the right, to get away from it. But my knee hit something, and then I realized that I hadn’t been hurt by an orca – I’d bumped into a jagged rock. I probed with my foot, and found that I could touch bottom. I’d gotten back to land!

I got up onto the muddy beach, then worked my way along the shore to try and find my buddies. It was high bank, and it quickly got to where I’d have to go back in the water to go further. Not happening. I eventually found a path, up to a driveway, and then up to a road. It was dark, but I walked along until I figured out where I was.

My buddies were nearly ready to call the Coast Guard when I found them. I was pretty chewed up from my crash into that rock, and I told them my story while I bled on the back seat as we drove to somebody who could patch me up. They all told me I was definitely an Orca Club member, and I told’em it was just another name for the Stupid Club.

It wasn’t long before I moved somewhere hot and dry, far from the south Sound. People ask me if I miss the ocean, but I think that night gave me all the ocean I’ll ever want.



Holy Envy

By Suzanna Leigh

Christmas is the keeping place for memories of our innocence. – Joan Mills

I had planned to write about making Christmas – or any winter holiday – bright. About my adventures when I had no money to fuel the Christmas spirit, and yet Christmas came anyway, bringing warmth, comfort, and even joy.

But today I feel empty. Today, I have the money for Christmas presents, to buy a tree and some poinsettias, to make holiday treats. And generally, I have a sense of joy that lives in me year around. Today not so much. Today I have “holy envy.” When I read of my friend’s rituals and beliefs around this season, I feel a vague sense of longing. Would it help to light a menorah, even though I’m not Jewish? To celebrate Advent like my Catholic friends? My Mormon friends are counting down the days to celebrate the birth of one called Jesus.

Santa has listened to children’s Christmas wishes at the Santa’s Cottage uptown. Christmas lights are strung across porch roofs, around trees, along fences. Christmas tree stands flourish in the IGA parking lot and at the roadside stand where a local fisherman sells fresh salmon in season. Ace has an isle with lights, fake wreaths, and tree decorations.

Perhaps I need to employ some of the techniques, activities, and rituals that brought me joy in those times of scarcity, in past Decembers. Let’s see. What did I do the Christmas my second child was due? I was eight months pregnant. Kinderpa, baby’s father, was off prospecting for gemstones in the desert. Child support? What’s that?

We could not afford a tree, so I found boughs of Douglas fir that had blown down in a windstorm. I tied them together and stood them upright in a five-gallon bucket with rocks. Voila! A tree!

I had no tree decorations, but I did have pieces of stained glass in ruby red, ultramarine blue, and sunflower yellow, left over from a stained-glass window I made. I wrapped copper foil around the edges of some triangular pieces and soldered them together. Voila! Little stained-glass angels to hang on the tree!

A few months before, I had found – left behind in a house I cleaned – a box of gaily colored cards with the word “JOY” printed red on pink. These I arranged among the branches of our tree. Their colors and message brightened the room.

Although money was scarce, I did have food stamps. I bought walnuts in the shell, candied fruit, flour, and honey. I shelled the nuts, careful to keep the shells whole when I could. In the half-shells, I made beds for little gray yarn mice and covered them with scraps of red fabric. These I hung on our tree. When the whole shell, both halves, was unbroken, I wrote Christmas wishes on slips of paper and put them inside the glued-together shell. Then I hung those on our tree. Everyone who came to visit was invited to choose a walnut from the tree and open it to find their wish.

With the candied fruit, flour, and honey, I made fruit cake. In spite of folklore to the contrary, it was quite good!

A song kept running through my head:

“Hey ho, nobody home.
Meat nor drink nor money have we none
Still we will be ha a aapy.
Hey ho nobody home.”

Well, I believe the words we say program our brains to create our lives, so I changed the words to:

“Hey ho, everybody home.
Meat and drink and money have we lots,
And we will be ha a aa py.
Hey ho, everybody home.”

Although the song didn’t bring Kinderpa home that Christmas, I invited the neighbor kids over to make gingerbread cookies and decorate them. It



Illustration by Suzanna Leigh

was such fun making and decorating the cookies that this has become one of my Christmas traditions.

Traditions do bring a sense of completeness, of comfort, and sharing my traditions opens my heart. If my heart is feeling empty this year, what shall I do to change that? My kids are grown, and my grandchildren are not available, so who can I invite over to make cookies with?

Good Santa vs Bad Santa

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

As we passed by Mikey’s Fish Stand ... now selling Christmas trees, naturally our conversation turned to Christmas seasons long past.

Never to argue with John, but there is no “bad Santa Claus,” as he is modeled after a saint and always produces positive thoughts. Seán always argues with me “... and besides that, Santa is a made-up avatar of good and bad.”

Seán’s baby sister called two days ago, asking about Christmas events. It turns out that she had the famous “five-point chrome star” that always adorned the top of our tree growing up, but she had given it up to a junk collector as the ancient wiring that made the star blink in sequence had begun to smoke, thus signaling the demise of the legendary ornament.

In past decades, Island folks rarely bought trees. There were simply not enough sellers of trees, and in those times trees had to be “substantial” in order to bear the weight of decorations. Later, as we went through family remnants, after the passing of grandparents and others, we realized that the ornaments, lights, and other decorations were very heavy compared to these days, and possibly even hazardous to our eventual health, although being old now, maybe we just lucked out!

We both remember vaguely some white stuff that was used as “snow,” and upon later reflection, we think it was asbestos. Thin foil strips of lead were used as a rain drape and

collected after each season to be reused. We don’t know how we got to be as old as we are with this background, but maybe overconsumption of Christmas sugar helped.

In those days, Christmas trees were put up a week before Christmas. This is because houses were heated by wood, coal, or oil, resulting in dryness, and the electric lights then in use were like small nuclear reactors that would dry out the needles if not turned off, and could result in fiery catastrophe. We remember that some families actually used flaming candles as lights, which no doubt resulted in occasional tragic Christmas fires.

The biggest Christmas accident Seán can recall is the year that mom’s two Siamese cats, Meeko and Chacre, took down the Christmas tree, breaking bulbs and lights and scattering decorations all over the living room floor. We did not blame the cats, as they had devious cat motives.

A note of caution for cat owners! Do not trust Siamese cats, no matter how innocent they appear! John recalls a tragic Christmas tree accident wherein two Siamese kittens chased an expensive ornament of a delicate glass bird up to the tree top and made a wreck of our decorations. We kids were nonplussed as we simply snacked on the broken candy canes while parents dealt with the mess.

Every year a debate occurred about “Santa!” Was he real? Was he coming?

One year, after the usual discussion of “Have you been good? Or have you been ‘bad?’”, it was asked:

“Is there a good Santa and a bad Santa?”

“Well, what do you mean?”

“Well, the good Santa brings us socks and underwear.” These were, of course, things meant to enhance our moral and physical well-being. In a word, boring.

But if there was a “bad Santa,” maybe he would bring us BB guns and comic books? These were things

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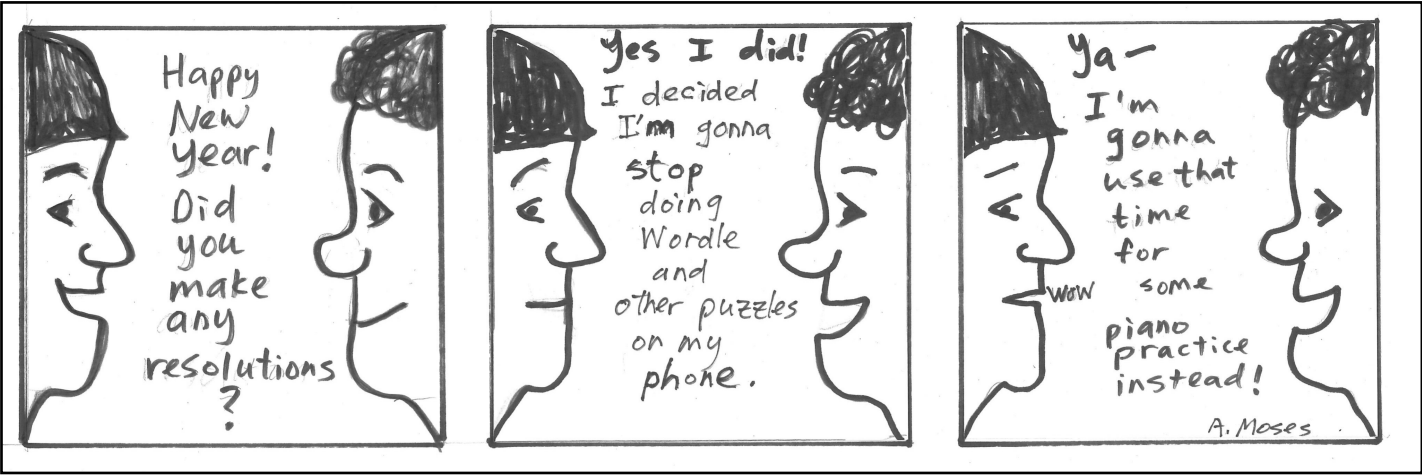
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FOR AGES 5 - 15

that could “put your eye out” and “rot your mind.” In a word, fun!

The question lay dormant, but one Christmas, there was a “Red Ryder” BB gun and some somewhat read-over comic books in the Christmas stockings. Plus, the usual nuts, chocolate, and oranges. That year, we liked the bad Santa.

This year, we both are hoping that Santa will bring us a bottle of decent single malt scotch, preferably Laphroaig. Or maybe we’ll just get socks and underwear.



Four Twelves to New Life

By Deborah H. Anderson

Four times in my life I have been given a particular hiatus, for 12 weeks. It’s an interesting fact, maybe more so a phenomenon.

The first time was 12 weeks in the hospital in my hometown when I was nine years old, after being in a car that was hit by a drunk driver doing 90 miles per hour. Twelve weeks trussed up in traction while doctors sought healing for almost every piece of my body from my L4-5 to the tips of my toes. It was during those weeks I decided to dedicate my life to doing good works for others and to add to the world. Looking back, knowing my instincts as a child were to overcome evil with good is very reassuring.

The second time I experienced something significant for 12 weeks was the Spring of 1991. At the time I, a woman of deep life-long faith, was writing, producing, and directing a children’s musical, a vaudeville version of The Good Samaritan for my two oldest children’s sixth grade Sunday School class. The powers that be wanted me to direct a show that could be rehearsed in one-hour rehearsals every week with only one outside rehearsal the day before the production.

They wanted every child to have a starring part. I told them it would be easier for me to write that kind of show than find that kind of show already published. So I did. But the minute I started, a bizarre thing happened; I lost my faith. It was the deepest, darkest vacuum I ever experienced. I thought Christians had

sold the biggest bunch of hooley ever, was physically repulsed picking up a Bible, and wanted to give up seminary and the call to ministry.

The morning after the show opened (which was a smashing success) it was like a veil had lifted. My faith returned like it was before, with this exception. As one who prayed without ceasing, constant conversation with God, I realized I had not prayed one prayer during the whole 12 weeks of production. I learned, felt deeply in my soul, that God wanted to know my prayers weren’t needed to make good things happen. My prayers were desired to be in a loving relationship with God. Wow! God is God and I am not! What freedom!

The third time was the winter of 2019. Twelve weeks with my foot in the air because I broke my toe on a piece of luggage in the middle of the night getting up to water the cat. A diagonal break, if I put pressure on it before the bone formed a scab, the toe would split in two. Kind of an incentive to stay still with my left ankle mostly resting on my bent, right knee. Lots of time for thinking. I was irritated. I had things to do. Sideline by carelessness.

Yet, during those weeks, as I thoroughly resented not having a regular life, I came to accept the hand I had been dealt. Born into pretty toxic circumstances, taking a long time to learn who was harmful and who was safe. Dealing with all the fallout a naïve church girl can embody. I came to appreciate how I

had positively responded to each negative. I healed a lot more than my toe.

The fourth “12-week sabbatical” was this past October, November, and December. A bright young surgeon fixed every residual damage from the accident when I was nine and insisted I take three months in isolation, healing, and resting. Never in my life have I had that luxury, for life to just stop, and rest and heal.

The first 12 weeks? School came to me in the hospital in order for me to graduate fourth grade on time. The second, like I said – wrote, produced, and directed a children’s musical. The third time? You can sort out a lot of family relations laying on your back with a telephone in your hand.

This last little while? I had a time for rich reflection watching my body heal, doing snow angels in bed. I developed a warm, positive regard for myself and my own journey and for the good choices I have made and the risks I took with courage and hope.

This 2024, I have decided to live in 12-week parcels. Seasons. I’m going to live out four seasons of deliberate connection to my days. I am curious to observe what I glean from the days of each season. I am open to every opportunity for good and healing. My very best wishes for your days ahead in 2024. May wisdom and warmth and positive regard for yourself bless you every minute of the coming year.



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New Year's Resolutions for Our Community

By March Twisdale

As we step into 2024, I think we can agree on one thing. Our interconnected lives are directly impacted by individual choices, including our habits and decisions as consumers. Everyone can agree that options are good for customers, and what's good for customers is good for business. This includes payment options. Indeed, it's our local business owners who are quick to remind me that there are dozens of reasons why a person may use a debit card yesterday, a Visa card today, Venmo tomorrow, and cash on Friday! Every single business owner I have spoken with has been 100% in agreement on this point.

Yet, our consumer choices do have consequences. It's the holidays, right? Family and friends come to visit, and who doesn't want to meet up at their favorite café? If that family makes eight individual purchases using plastic, they will incur \$7 to \$10 in transaction fees. A single, group purchase using plastic will incur \$3 to \$6 in transaction fees, while a family spending cash will result in \$0 in transaction fees. Meaning, 20 families paying with plastic (or cash) can be the difference between scheduling an extra barista to work an eight-hour shift – or not.

Here's the rub. At the café, because the transaction fees are hidden from view, this family has no

awareness of the divot they've created in the café owner's profit margin. Now, consider how you feel when you're charged \$0.08 for a paper bag at the grocery store? Do you hem and haw, trying to decide if you want your groceries single- or double-bagged? If you do, don't feel bad. Customers are always cost-conscious. It's our responsibility to be careful about how we spend our money. We all want to avoid spending money unnecessarily, and we also want our local business owners to do the same. That drives prices down for everyone, right?

This is where things get beautiful. We, as consumers, have a direct ability to influence the cost of doing business by, (1) shopping locally (no matter how you pay), and (2) choosing to use cash, when possible.

The goal, therefore, should not be to hide transaction fees from view. Who wants to accept endless Bank Taxes as our new normal? This is what will happen if we quietly embed transaction fees into the cost of goods and services. Unlike other business expenses, like overhead and employee payroll, these fees can be minimized and avoided by aware and motivated customers. Just as we have a choice to bring our own bags (or pay for new ones), we also want the choice to create or prevent transaction fees.

The future is fragile, and the importance of our economic environment, business ecology, and

commerce sustainability cannot be overstated. For all Island businesses, the surge in transaction fees over the past decade has been worrisome, but most owners fear bringing up the conversation will be off-putting. So, they don't say anything. The truth, however, is that profit margins are tighter than most realize, and as a result, some of our beloved local businesses have felt it necessary to pass transaction fees back to the customer. Meaning, if you pay cash, your bill will be slightly less than if you pay with plastic.

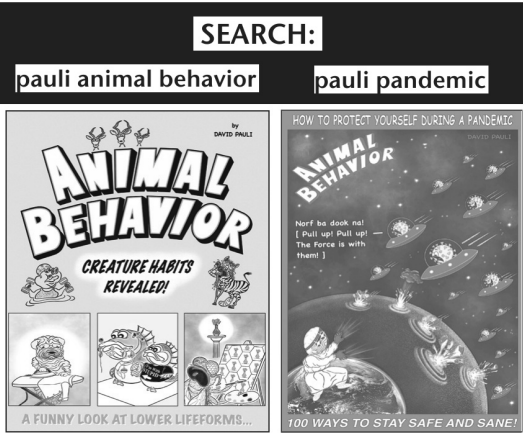
Island Resilience

My goal in writing this article is to help Island businesses by increasing consumer awareness. I love our various centers of commerce and the beautiful communal gathering spaces and experiences they create. And, I invite everyone to make a Community New Year's Resolution!

If paying plastic, try to group purchases together. If your favorite local business decides to pass transaction fees back to customers paying with plastic, please give them grace. This is likely a true economic necessity. And, whenever possible, love up your local ATM and keep Vashon money on the Island by paying with cash.

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Far From Home – A Hard Road From Reality to Stability

By Daniel Hooker

Recently, a friend, who like most people I know, quotes the media's "facts" surrounding the unhoused/homeless situation, said: "Most people who are homeless are unwilling to accept help – because they're on drugs."

It's hard to empathize when success is measured by a human's abilities to be a "contributing taxpayer."

Please understand that to climb back out of the streets while following "the rules" is quite difficult. Just an example: For me to remain an insured driver while having only a PO Box and a cell phone, and no legal street address, my auto insurance more than doubled. That this situation also affected my credit and ability to rent a room or an apartment was another huge – almost impossible – hurdle to clear. My car insurance was \$75 a month, for a minimum insurance of \$15,000 to \$30,000, and now, no longer in that situation, I pay half that, for coverage that is more than twice my former policy.

Another example: I have a friend who was homeless. At the beginning of the pandemic, she got a job with a salary of \$200,000 a year. But because of her credit rating, even with that salary, she couldn't find a place to rent. She ended up living on a reservation in a tent on the edge of the Grand Canyon, and was able to do all her work by phone.

Reforms need to be made. Allowances need to be given for those who are struggling to return to a stable housed and employed "normal" life.

Realize that the unhoused statistics include 25% of children who are attached to either a single parent or a couple who have lost their housing due to unforeseen financial disasters. For the majority of lower-income families (taxed citizens), we are less than one paycheck from being on the streets. Once

there, depression is common and leads to escapism such as alcohol and drug abuse.

At the Vashon Food Bank, I'm seeing more and more people coming to the Island to escape city homelessness.

To categorize a human being as a "taxpaying productive member of society" is by all logic crazy! While the billionaires escape from being tax-paying citizens, they leave the middle-class and laborers the burden of paying to resurrect the unhoused, as if they were dead.

Finding Solutions: Where to Start?

My feelings are that most larger institutions of government only support themselves on the interest created by the funding set aside for the unhoused, continuing the position to which they were appointed, in which they work to "solve" the dilemma.

Creating non-profit loan and credit firms that promote housing and jobs will enrich our society by creating tax revenues that build up society, creating cities that are safe without criminalizing those less fortunate. Without solutions, we as a society will fall, through every fault of our own. We need to be our own heroes, we need to be focused and not distracted by what is not truly important (video games, cell phones, YouTube, Facebook, and "big media influencers").

Remember, Christmas should be a celebration of Christ's ideals, all year long. "Love thy neighbor," all year long, and not just at "Christmas time."

Without the help of my friends Kim Nelson, Holly Tuttle, and our friend Lin, I'd probably still be struggling to find housing. Being a hero in your community may mean taking a chance, and helping those around you.

We have solutions on this Island that are being created, including Vashon Cohousing and Vashon Household.

Vashon-Maury Clothing Drive



Where: Vashon Food Bank

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

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

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

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



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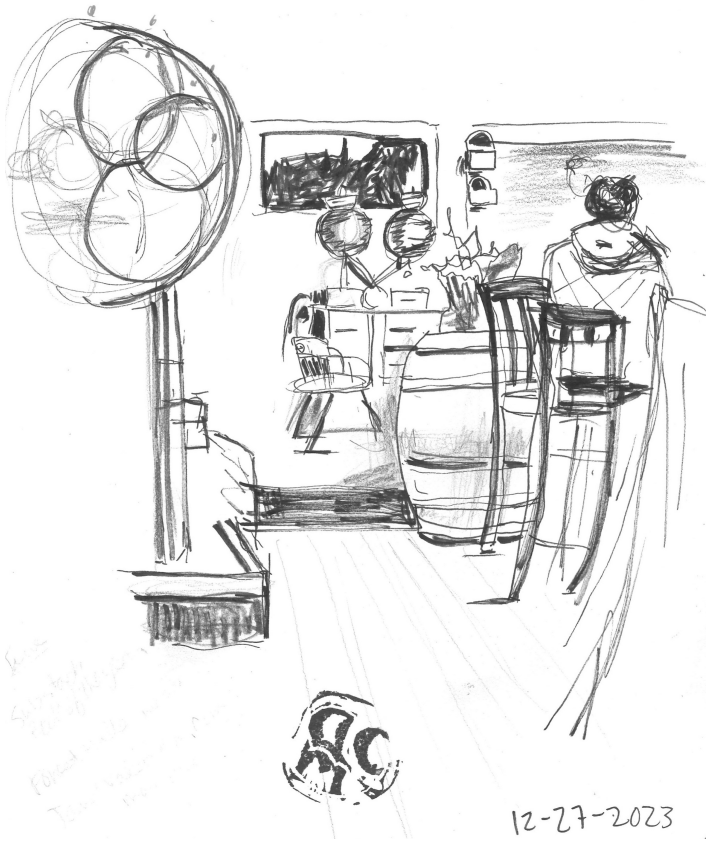
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At The Roasterie

Illustration
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Island Epicure – Honey Is Healing

By Marj Watkins

My father cherished his half-dozen bee hives. The bees never stung him. He placed some hives in his friend’s orchard, where they helped the fruits to thrive by pollinating the flowers.

Honey is one of the oldest sweeteners in the world. Many variations of honey are cherished around the world, both for their sweetness and because honey is antiseptic. To put it simply, honey kills germs. As a little girl visiting my grandma, Fanny Brunson, I saw it in action when my uncle Royce burned his hand while fixing the tractor. He brought his wounded hand to his mother.

First, grandma plunged his hand into the teapot sitting on the table. The tea was cold and took the heat out of her son’s burned hand. Then, she slathered the hand with honey and tore a strip from her apron to quickly bandage Royce’s hand.

Suzanna says she used honey on her baby’s arm when he reached over a steaming hot pot. His arm blistered immediately, but both the blister and his screams subsided when she put honey on it.

There are many varieties of honey. Buckwheat honey is used in cough syrup. So how do honeybees make honey? They diligently collect the nectar from flowers and carry it to their hives. Those bees are responsible for transforming floral nectar into honey by adding enzymes to the nectar and reducing moisture.

Rich Osborne explained how



local, raw honey works to relieve allergies. The bees pick up a smidgeon of pollen, which gets into the honey. It’s just enough so that your body learns how to deal with that allergen in a healthy manner. Then, when you are exposed to larger amounts of the allergen, your body doesn’t feel overwhelmed and go into “attack the intruder” mode – which is what causes the allergic symptoms. You may be able to get raw honey from a Vashon neighbor in season, or you can get local raw honey from Rich at the Waterfront Market at Ruston.

Before honey is ready to sweeten your tea or put on top of your muffin, the honeycomb walls of the hive are removed and put into a spinner. By being rotated rapidly, the spinner separates the liquid from the waxy comb, releasing fructose, glucose, other sugars and water, plus enzymes, minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants, the good-for-you compounds that boost your life span. This is raw honey. Further processing removes some of the nutrients, and sometimes up to 20% of cheaper sugars are added.

Do be careful not to feed raw

Arroz Con Leche

By Cynthia Sadurni

Arroz con leche, rice pudding Mexican style, is one of those comfort food desserts of my childhood. It is sweet and wholesome, almost like a loving hug. This delicious and easy to prepare sweet treat comes to us from Spain, and before that, well, that is quite a long story! There are many variations on how to prepare it, but this is the version that my Mom used to do all the time. I hope that this recipe will bring a smile and sweet thoughts to your table.

Arroz con Leche Tradicional



Ingredientes:

- 1 taza de arroz blanco
- 3 tazas de agua
- Cáscara de un cuarto de naranja o medio limón amarillo (nosotros lo hacemos con la primera opción); es importante quitar la parte blanca y solo usar la piel, de lo contrario, amarga.
- 2 rajas de canela (esta se consigue en cualquier tienda Mexicana)
- 3 tazas de leche evaporada
- 1 lata de leche condensada
- ½ taza de pasas (mi mamá siempre usa pasas amarillas por su sabor suave y afrutado)

Opcional:

- 1 chorrito de licor de naranja. Este es al gusto.

Preparación:

- Es importante lavar el arroz con agua tibia y después se enjuaga con agua fría hasta que salga clara para eliminar el almidón.
- En una olla grande, poner el agua, la canela, la cascara de limón o naranja, y una pizca de sal. Se pone a fuego medio hasta que empiece a hervir.
- En otra olla, se ponen la lata de leche condensada y las tres tazas de leche evaporada. Se pone a fuego medio para calentar, se apaga y se tapa. Es importante que no hierva.
- En la olla con el agua hirviendo que tiene la canela, se agrega el arroz y se deja cocer a fuego bajo hasta que se consuma el agua. Después se le agrega la mezcla caliente de leches y dejamos que se termine de cocer el arroz. Es importante durante este paso remover lentamente, de manera ocasional la mezcla para que no se pegue. Debe de quedar ligeramente aguado, es decir con líquido. Las pasas se agregar en este paso para que se ablanden, o si se prefieren firmes, agregar al final.
- Una vez que se ha enfriado la mezcla, se agrega el licor de naranja.
- Se sirve con canela en polvo y a temperatura ambiente o, si se prefiere, frío.

Traditional Rice Pudding



Ingredients:

- 1 cup white rice
- 3 cups water
- The peel of a quarter of an orange or half a lemon (we do it with the first option); It is important to remove the white part and only use the skin, otherwise the taste will be bitter.
- 2 cinnamon sticks (can be found in any Mexican store)
- 3 cups evaporated milk
- 1 can condensed milk
- ½ cup raisins (my mom always uses white raisins for their mild, fruity flavor)

Optional:

- 1 splash of orange liqueur; this one is to taste.

Directions:

- To remove the starch, wash the rice with warm water and then rinse it with cold water until it comes out clear.
- In a large pot, put the water, cinnamon, lemon or orange peel, and a pinch of salt. Put it over medium heat until it starts to boil.
- In another pot, pour the can of condensed milk and the three cups of evaporated milk. Heat the mix over medium heat, until hot, then turn it off and cover. Don’t allow it to boil.
- In the pot with the boiling water that has the cinnamon, add the rice and let it cook over low heat until the water is consumed. Then add the hot milk mixture and let the rice finish cooking. It is important during this step to occasionally stir the mixture slowly, so that it does not stick. It should be slightly watery, that is, with liquid. (It tastes so much better if it’s “soupy.”) The raisins are added in this step to soften, or if you prefer them firm, add at the end.
- Once the mixture has cooled, add the orange liqueur.
- Serve with cinnamon powder and at room temperature or, if you prefer, cold.

honey it to babies under a year old, though. About 2% of honey samples contain the type of bacteria – Clostridium botulinum – responsible for producing a neurotoxin that babies’ digestive systems have not yet developed the ability to fight.

Suzanna’s cough syrup:

Cover a slice or two of onion with honey (buckwheat honey is great, but any pure, raw honey will do).

Let this set overnight. The honey draws out the onion juice from the onion and mixes with it, making a nice-tasting cough syrup.

Vashon! Do you have a favorite recipe you’d like to see published in The Loop?



Share it with us at
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Sat. 5:00PM, Sun. 9:30AM
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Easing a Sore Throat

By Kathy Abascal

As winter weather settles in, more and more people are complaining of being tired and having sore throats. This could be COVID, of course, but in many cases, it is simply the start of a winter cold. Many respiratory infections begin with symptoms of fatigue and a slight scratchy dryness in the throat that soon evolves to a seriously sore throat, followed by the runny nose and other symptoms. There are good herbs to help your body stop this chain of events.

If I wake up a bit cranky or have a slightly scratchy sore throat, I always turn to echinacea tincture to prod my immune system into action. This herb works best if you take small, frequent doses, and taste the herb rather than swallowing it in a capsule. The lymph tissue in the back of your throat keeps track of what is coming into the body and sounds an early alert to the rest of the system when something seems amiss. The system seems to respond more quickly when the throat tissues are directly exposed to the compounds in echinacea.

My favorite sore throat herb is red root (Ceanothus spp.) The Eastern version of this plant is called New Jersey tea, and its leaves were substituted for true tea in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party. There are many species of red root, all are evergreen, and many have lovely lilac-colored flowers with a pleasant, mild fragrance. They come in many shapes and sizes and are easy to grow. The root is very red (hence its common name) and it is very astringent.

Medicinally, red root is used to tone the lymphatic system and improve the flow of lymph. Red root can be helpful in ailments where the lymph does not flow properly, causing issues ranging from hemorrhoids and varicose veins to fluid-filled, tender breasts. It was a favorite of Eclectic physicians for the swellings of mumps and tonsillitis, and it is a stellar remedy for swollen and sore throats. Red root should be taken frequently, and should be gargled a bit before swallowing so it

Health Matters

comes in good contact with the throat tissue.

I often combine echinacea and red root with yerba mansa (Anemopsis californica) tinctures in a sore throat remedy. Like red root, yerba mansa helps draw out fluid from boggy throats and adds to the antimicrobial action of echinacea. Gargled and swallowed about every hour or so, this mixture of herbs can do wonders to soothe the throat and prevent a cold virus from settling in.

But not all sore throats signal the onset of a cold. Some sore throats instead follow in the wake of respiratory viruses, and are caused by secondary bacterial infections. Our mouths and throats are usually protected by a layer of gooey mucus that forms a barrier, essentially trapping bacteria in muck. Viral infections, however, tend to damage the mucus-secreting cells, and while those cells are in recovery, it becomes easier for bacteria to move into our bodies.

As a secondary defense, our bodies use hyaluronic acid to “glue” cells together in tissue layers. This helps to prevent bacteria from moving deeper into the body. However, some bacteria produce an enzyme (hyaluronidase) that dissolves

the “glue” so they can squeeze between cells and make their way in. Echinacea has an anti-hyaluronidase action that counters the bacteria’s ability to dissolve the tissue barrier. This is one of the ways that echinacea works in the body and one of the reasons why it can help prevent secondary throat infections after a cold or other respiratory virus.

Another simple way to prevent secondary infections (such as strep throat) is to sip on a cold infusion of marshmallow root when one’s throat feels scratchy. Marshmallow root contains large sugar molecules that turn gooey and gelatinous when warmed. A cold infusion is a way of extracting these molecules without heat, so the beverage is not thick and icky to drink. Once in the warm body, the sugars thicken and coat the membranes damaged by the virus and create a sort of false mucus barrier that helps prevent bacteria from invading. Marshmallow root is a very safe, inexpensive herb.

Well-chosen herbs can help to ward off all kinds of microbial attacks. With a few herbs and a little rest, you can quickly stop sore throats from becoming more difficult ailments. And never forget the importance of rest in helping your immune system.



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Black Cumin Seed Oil, a Powerful Medicinal Fat

By Shelley Headley and Tristan Carbery

We have learned a lot about “fats” over the years – what’s healthy for us, what’s not – and many have come to understand that heavily processed and refined oils, such as corn, canola, soybean, and sunflower, should be avoided. At the same time, there has been a wave of hype around more healthful oils like coconut, medium-chain triglyceride, and olive, and even ghee and butter.

But did you know there are powerful, medicinal seed oils that are proven to support health by providing protection against metabolic, cardiovascular, digestive, hepatic, renal, respiratory, reproductive, and neurologic disorders, and even cancer? The benefits of seed oils are taking the natural health and healing space by storm, with mounting evidence supporting the potential benefits of functional foods or nutraceuticals for human health and diseases. While several organic seed oils have proven health benefits, we are going to focus on one, black cumin (Nigella sativa Linn.), a highly valued nutraceutical herb.

Nigella sativa is an annual herbaceous plant native to Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran. Black cumin seed oil is considered one of the most important medicinal plants in the world and has attracted growing interest from health-conscious individuals, as well as the scientific and pharmaceutical communities.

The pharmacologic effects of black cumin, and its main bioactive component thymoquinone, include the ability to attenuate oxidative stress and inflammation and to promote immunity, cell survival, and energy metabolism. This provides diverse health benefits, like supporting normal blood sugar levels, maintaining a healthy bacterial balance, promoting healthy inflammatory response, supporting strong immune and cardiovascular systems, keeping your liver healthy, and maintaining healthy lung capacity and function. Furthermore, black cumin acts as an antidote to mitigate various toxicities.

Nigella sativa seeds and oil have been used for centuries in the treatment of different diseases. Because Nigella sativa seeds are also a significant source of high-quality proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, fatty acids, and phytonutrients, its byproduct – press seed cake – can be added to formulate and balance rations for farm animals, providing many of the same benefits to them that the oil provides for us.

Never before promoted in the U.S., Headley Holistics on Vashon are the first to bring this valuable product to market, and we are seeing amazing results in horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and even dogs! When fed to animals, the benefits of this potent superfood are numerous: superior skin, hair, and hoof health; a reduction in symptoms of metabolic issues; it also acts as natural feed-through fly and flea control. In addition, black cumin seed

oil is known to be energetically cooling. We have found that, when fed daily, seed press cake produces a mild calming effect, and when combined with other natural ingredients, like high-quality CBD isolate, produces significant anxiety-reducing relaxation in horses and dogs that lasts for hours.

When shopping for medicinal seed oils and seed press cake products, remember that not all are created equal. We are proud to use, recommend, and sell the highest-quality seed oils and seed press cakes available. Andreas Seed Oils holds several patents on the most advanced oil seed presses in the world. His technology allows for the raw ingredients to be pressed in their whole form, and his seed oils and press cakes are potent, uncorrupted, and always 100% organic. The seeds

are never ground or oxidized, and his meticulous process and attention to detail is unsurpassed.

As the exclusive distributor for Andreas Seed Oils and Organic Seed Press Cakes, we have worked tirelessly to brand and bring these valuable ingredients to market. Launching with great success here on Vashon Island three years ago, these products are now available nationwide, and the positive reviews are streaming in! Let 2024 be the year you turn your health trajectory around. Experience the power of organic black cumin seed oil for yourself and press seed cake for yourself and your animals today.

Shelley Headley and Tristan Carbery, Co-founders of Headley Holistics, have dedicated their careers to advancing holistic care for both humans and animals.

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Happy New Year from all of us at Headley Holistics and Evolved Remedies!

Look for some new, exciting developments coming your way in 2024.

Cheers! Here's to a happy, healthy New Year!

Our Laundromat Is Back



By Andy Valencia

For those without the room or the budget for their own washer and dryer, it's been tough since our laundromat in town closed. But they've now reopened at the same location – with a large number of very nice-looking washers and dryers. Both cash and cards are supported, with washers running \$4 to \$10 based on size, and washers costing \$0.25 for each five minutes. A couple customers told me they'd spend maybe \$2 to dry a small load of wash.

There's a child play area, a change machine, and a couple of vending machines – one with food, another with washing supplies. Right next to the play area is a sofa and wall-mounted flatscreen with the usual TV channels. It's a clean, comfortable space that is as easy to use for your weekly wash as for catching up to a dirty laundry tsunami after a big visit of guests.

Welcome back, Vashon Laundry! They're open daily 6AM – 9PM.



What Brought You to the Island

Continued from Front Page

We bought one of them for \$2,000 and had it moved over on a barge. The landing was near the fishing dock in Tramp Harbor, and the house was trucked to us from there. After that, we moved in and started working on the property around us.

Vashon felt like home right away. I finally had a home; it was really nice. I got a job at the beauty shop. Then, I went to work at K2. I was a

base trimmer, putting the bases into the frames. They liked my work, and I liked the work, too.

The only thing to do at night on Vashon if you wanted to go out was the bar, The Alibi. That's where I met my second husband. I wasn't even a drinker, but if you wanted to meet someone on the Island, that was the place to go. That was the social life back then.

The Bear King's Lullaby

By Jane Valencia, inspired by the song "Binwag's Lullaby," lyrics by Debra Knodel

Once upon a time, a Bear King lived in a great forest hall in the north. During summer and the time of abundance, he had many visitors to his hall – Deer, Chickadee, Raccoon, and Red Fox to name a few who came. During the long summer days, the animals share much food and merriment together. In Autumn though, the visitors go their own way, and the Bear King too prepares for winter. And when winter begins, the Bear King is all alone.

The Bear King, as other bears do, drowns through the long winter nights. Many bears wake up and prowl about some before returning to slumber. The Bear King does this too, leaving his cedar branch bed to wander. But his wakefulness sometimes stretches unbearably, and overwhelms him with desolation. When he gazes outside at the winter-shrouded trees, and the imprisoned river, his own heart feels cold and locked in. The bleakness often grips him far too long before he can wrestle himself free to sleep.

One night the Bear King wakes to the North Wind whipping through the canopy of his hall, and lashing the tree tops back and forth. Wind is laughing at him, mocking him in just that aggravating way that Coyote might. The Bear King's heart swells with anger. Raising up on his haunches, he growls at the Wind.

This changes nothing with the Wind. The North Wind continues to laugh and whirl about. Infuriated, the Bear King lashes at one of the Alders growing in his hall and scrapes downward: roar! Stains appear on the tree where he scraped it, and, if it

were daylight, the Bear King knows he'd see that they are crimson-red. He pulls back. He's hurt the tree.

With a sigh, the Bear King lumbers over to a particular Douglas-fir that has bark crystalline with hardened resin. Breaking off a slab, he warms the resin between his paws and with his breath until it softens. He slathers the warmed resin onto the Alder as a tree-healing salve.

Sad and regretful, he retreats from his forest hall.

Outside, the Bear King gazes upon the snow, which is as it always is during the long winter, smothering the trees, and locking the river in ice. On the horizon, he notices the undulating green and purple that are the Northern Lights, but he feels no joy. He glimpses the stars – sharp points in their constellations. And there! Even the constellations that all bears revere are bright and visible: the Great Bear and the Little Bear. But they seem so very distant, as if they had their backs to him and were heading away. He finds the North Star, Polaris, but feels that somehow he has lost his way.

And so he wanders down the river.

The North Wind whips again. The Bear King shakes his paw at the sky! He expects to hear the Wind in renewed laughter ... But instead – how strange! – he hears not laughter, but song.

*"Don't wake my children,
don't stir from your slumbers,
I'll whisper of wonders
to sweeten your dreams.
The trees are wearing
the winter's snowy mantle,
And icy jeweled necklaces
decorate the streams."*

Bob on Vashon



Bob first reached fame as a fantastic USPS delivery driver. Vashon at large then discovered Bob as one of our great workers at the town post office—he gained fame as a “package whisperer,” finding your box when hope had faded. When Bob retired earlier this year, Vashon shuddered. So we were pleased to spot Bob back at work this holiday season.

Aside from his drolleries concerning plea bargains and parole terms, apparently he agreed to return and help during the holiday rush.

Thank you to Bob and the Vashon USPS office for a job well done during the Christmas rush!

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**Once something can't
be said, you're already
in a tyranny.**

~ Simone Weil



What is this? The forest singing?
The Bear King leans into the Wind to listen.

*"I'll sing of the North Wind
who's chasing his tail.
Whirling and growling, he laughs
at the moon.*

*Although he's strong and
he's noisy in midwinter,
His song will soon soften
to summer's gentle tune."*

It's a lullaby! A Mother Bear must be sheltering in a den nearby. She's singing to her tiny cubs of winter.

*"Outside, Northern Lights
dance with the stars
Waltzing over mountains,
Wearing rainbow tiaras
and slippers of ice.
The Great Bear smiles
from her home near Polaris.
She's guarding our passage through
winter's endless night"*

Ah! The Bear King almost glimpses a grand dance around him. The song coaxes him to join in.

*"The first thoughts of berries
are formed on frozen branches.
Young shoots of grass
lie suspended in snow.
The salmon are chanting
their spells out in the ocean,
Breaking icy enchantments
that stop the river's flow.*

*When darkness fades
and the long nights start to dwindle,
The sun warms our bodies
and wakes us from sleep.
We'll wander a world
that has skies as blue as glaciers,
Peaks touched with splendor,
and valleys green and deep.*

*Outside, Northern Lights
dance with the stars,
Waltzing over mountains,*

*Wearing rainbow tiaras
and slippers of ice.
The Small Bear teases
and tumbles in your dreams.
His laughter will lead you
through winter's endless night."*

The Bear King growls, but gently. Maybe, just maybe, he hears the Small Bear at play in the dreams of the tiny hidden bear cubs.

*"So dream of the salmon
that leap in sunlit rivers,
Trees filled with honey the color of gold,
Berries ripened
to fill your mouths with sweetness,
Summer's warm bounty
after winter's bitter cold.*

*But now Northern Lights dance with
the stars, waltzing over mountains,
wearing rainbow tiaras and slippers of
ice.*

*The Great Bear smiles
from her home near Polaris.
She guards us with love –
on our passage through the night."*

The song disperses, but the Bear King's heart continues in its flow. He peers at the jeweled ice necklaces adorning the river, the Northern Lights dancing with the stars. And he feels the Great Bear smile upon him. The Bear King raises his paws to the heavens. He salutes the Great Bear herself, and waves to the Small Bear. He bows to the Northern Lights, and even nods in good humor at the laughing North Wind.

The Bear King lumbers back through the forest to his great hall. When he nestles in his bed of cedar branches, he knows he will soon, at last, sleep. To dream about the beauty and truth of winter, and of the promise of spring, and the summer to come.

For a link to the recording of this song, visit this story at vashonloop.com.

Honoring Meadowbrook

for Cora

By Yvonne Higgins Leach

Up against the wetland forest
where bands of light fuse with frosty grass,
the bull’s crown of points cuts the sky
like a lapidary cuts stone.
My daughter, new to this small town,
has found the meadow where the elk herd thrives.
This birthplace of the Snoqualmie Tribe.
This Hyas Kloshe Ilahee,
their “great good land.”
Close enough, we see the bull’s exhalation spill
into visible air, others lay their bodies
of thick smooth fur into the earth,
and some graze to fatten up
for the harsh winter ahead.
No haunting bugle, no ritualized rut,
just benevolent existence—
this first witnessing together
of what is holy.
What cannot last
is still a blessing.
The minute we drive away
we make room for this
new song in our hearts.

From Vivien: “Honoring Meadowbrook” is about a moment when my daughter, new to the area of North Bend, took me out to view the elk.
This poem appears in Vivien’s new book just released by Kelsay Books titled “In the Spaces Between Us”.

Llaughing Llamas Chronicles



By Daniel Hooker

Someone asked me, “What do you call a Dagwood sandwich now in modern times?
I replied, “I don’t know ... Rubenesque?”
~
Q. Why did the elf suffer from depression?
A. He had low elf-esteem.
~
Q. What do you call an elf with ear muffs on?
A. You can call him anything you want. He can’t hear you!

~
From my friend Ariel Chilini:
I finally have a New Year’s resolution, and that’s to read more.
I’m turning off the sound on my TV and putting in captions.
~
A burglar has been casing a mansion for weeks. On Christmas Eve, no one is home, and so he’s able to break in. He sets to work cracking the safe.
Suddenly, in the dark, he hears a voice, “Jesus is watching you.”
He turns around, looks everywhere in the dark with his flashlight, and doesn’t see anyone. He returns to cracking the safe, working more hurriedly.
He hears the voice again, “Jesus is watching you, and he’s not happy.”
The burglar finds a light switch. He turns it on, and finds he’s standing right in front of a bird cage with a parrot in it.
“Are you Jesus?” he asks.
“No, I’m Moses,” the parrot says. “The Rottweiler behind you – he’s named Jesus.”
May Jesus watch over you and your family during this holiday season and 2024. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



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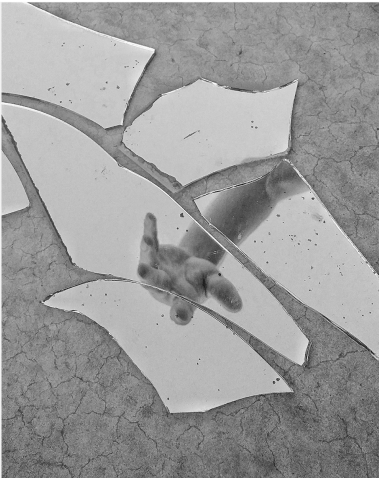
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“I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something.”

~ Neil Gaiman



Aries (March 20-April 19)

Those who try to make their mark on the world are building a sandcastle at low tide. One’s mark has always been transient, though in the digital environment, most of its expressions verge on irrelevant. The question more suited to the moment is: what is the mark that the world is making on you? How have you been changed by the rising tide of technology? How have your social experiences been reshaped by an environment where nearly everything is a paid transaction? If you draw the lines out and see where they converge, you might decide that you must intervene, at least within your own personal sphere. By that I mean with those the very closest to you. And it’s probably high time you meet, in person, some people you consider your online friends and test that whole theory. Along the way, don’t let anyone convince you that you are anything other than human. The arguments are sly.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

The more you persist in thinking for yourself, the more you will grow and gain in wisdom. Not enough has been said about how this is the origin of all freedom. It’s not difficult to understand why; a great diversity of people and things take an interest in you not doing so, and make you feel guilty if you do. Yet thinking for yourself is the only way to make your own decisions, and the most important of those is determining who you are. The governing element is guilt: it’s the seeming barbed-wire fence that you reach when you have ‘gone too far’ or are ‘too free’. If you have the guts to challenge this, you will be able to do what so few have done, and actually transcend significant elements of your past conditioning. The question is, can you go beyond the limitations of guilt and still have a conscience? That would be helpful to everyone.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Life is often a matter of compromise, though it should be a lot more than that. The coming few weeks represent the culmination of a long span of your personal history, dating back to some time around 2008 or 2009. This has been a time when you’ve been presented with many enforced changes and what some would call lessons. In times of rapid and profound change, it’s essential to stick to something true about you at your core. While Pluto drives many changes, it also pushes people into focusing on their inner nature and bringing that out despite any adversity. If Pluto has one central lesson, it is, “you will learn how to be yourself.” Not everyone likes this; it’s too much responsibility for most. Yet you had little choice but to rise to the occasion and establish a level of radical independence from those who would seek to control you in any way. It is a mighty task to rise above the kinds of structure and restriction that the whole world depends on and seems to be in love with. Yet you have done very well.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The Sun’s ingress into your opposite sign always comes as a relief. The metaphor is that the Sun reaches its furthest extreme south toward the Tropic of Capricorn (which feels like you’re being stretched beyond your limits) and then begins its gradual journey northward along the horizon toward the Tropic of Cancer—that is, your own personal line that encircles the globe. The concept of solstice implies a pause. It would be wise of you to slow down your life for a few days



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



and collect yourself. Even if you’re involved in something urgent that you must wrap up before the end of the year, some time for reflection—even a solid 24 hours away from normal activity—will help you make better decisions and be more efficient. As Mercury retrograde ends on Jan. 1, I suggest you do a similar ritual: pause and refresh your mind. Your often amazing productivity is based on efficiency and not on speed or volume. You are the one with the ideas, so relax and let your mind flow—and let your creativity do most of the work.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

The people who came before you—your parents and the generations before them—had many responsibilities and obligations that you don’t have. Yet while these commitments vanish and technology develops over time, few dare to consider the possibility that our lives are no simpler, no happier, and no more secure. You now have an opportunity to find out why that is, and to determine whether it’s true for you. Why is this important? A necessary element of spiritual growth involves finding the present. This is not just about “letting go of the past” or resolving it or such, but a kind of geographic navigation to the moment you are in, such that you may fully appreciate the properties of where you are now. And the astrology of our little era has you hovering around a portal to certain truly meaningful realities of recently bygone eras. I’m not saying that you must dispense with progress; I am asking whether it really is so progressive. You will find some genuine comfort and nourishment in whatever simplicity you can access.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

If there is such a thing as the future, it’s only available to us right now. Your chart describes a situation where you may have to keep bringing yourself back into the present. It may feel a little like this: something from your personal history is trying to get your attention. You can go back and investigate what that was about, and when you make a discovery, you take it back to right now and use it as a tool to help you with what you’re facing, or wanting, at this time. Then something else gets your attention and you go back and see what that was about and retrieve some wisdom and put it to work now. You don’t really ‘resolve’ the past as much as you learn from it and give it a job. For most people, unresolved means “nothing learned and nothing gained.” Therefore, claim what is yours. Take possession of what you’ve learned and gained and put it to good use right now.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

The Sun’s ingress into Capricorn will at least provide some sense of having solid ground beneath you. Just be careful, as there are gaps and openings that were not there before. So you really need to watch where you are going, and wear solid shoes that track the ground and protect your ankles. One of the major themes of your chart in these years is what the wisdom of the past has to offer you. Your elders knew something that is being rapidly lost and had the benefit of being guided by necessity, a term which seems to no longer have any use. However, the way things are going overall, we might

admit that there is such a thing and it does not involve how much foam is on your latte. You do not need entertainment or diversion in any form. You will benefit from taking care of your home environment, and cultivating family ties with anyone you know is committed to the practical reality of mutual support. That and nothing else should be called community.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

The mystery of your life will continue to unravel. There is one matter on which you can make tremendous progress this month: evaluating and setting your priorities. Such is a deeper dive than most people are willing to do; and it’s why so many people go through life feeling misguided and making decisions they regret. Snap yourself out of this foggy, soggy state and get real with yourself about what matters to you. One of the most helpful exercises in prioritization is making out a will. This gets you to think through both who and what are important to you, helps you sort out who your true friends are, and compels you to fully assess that often elusive thing known as your values. The next year will have many signals coming through that it’s time to take major steps and wrap up old business so that you can move forward without compromises.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Your primary spiritual assignment this month is to practice being honest with yourself. It’s crucial to know when you don’t know, and that you have a sense when you’re wrong about something before you find out the hard way. The simplest approach is to pay attention to what you observe and what you think about, and notice where things don’t match up. This implies a degree of self-reflectiveness that today would seem to be a feat that only the great sages were capable of. When you make a statement that you think is a true fact, ask yourself how you know that. If you don’t know how you know something, that’s called a belief. Then there is this other thing, called faith. Beware, such is not hope. Faith is a subtle sense of certainty that you cannot account for. It is an understanding with existence. You may find that you are feeling this somewhat strongly. It’s best not to pick apart why, to question yourself, or to speculate. The thing to do with faith is acknowledge it, forget you had the thought, and keep going.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Since 2008, the mighty planetary system known as Pluto has been in your sign. This magnificent cluster of six objects all orbiting a common point has come with every conceivable up, down and sideways, and its presence in your life has represented the single greatest phase of self-discovery and self-becoming that you’ve ever lived through. I should also include a lot of self-un-becoming, as Pluto has a way of dismantling people, things and situations. Once Pluto enters Aquarius on Jan. 20, it will only spend an additional six weeks in Capricorn, during a very brief retrograde in the autumn of ‘24, between Sept. 1 and Nov. 19. The final few weeks of a 16-year event may give understanding of why you’ve been through all these things. ‘Why’ is an elusive concept, though meaning is implied. And while

meaning is rarely simple, it can have a zen-like quality at times where suddenly you just understand. And that may come with the sense that, at least, it was all worthwhile to get you where you are today. You may not want to do it all again, but given the choice, you probably would.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

If you feel uneasy about a future development, or like you are approaching a breakthrough point, that is the approach of Pluto into your sign. This astonishing system of six little planets all orbiting a common center arrives in your energy field on Jan. 20. Be conscious of your transitions, in whatever form they take. Significant evolutionary movements may be disguised as seemingly small changes. More than anything, notice how you respond to people and how they respond to you. Your quest for the forthcoming 20 years (yes, 20 years) of Pluto in Aquarius is to remain human. What else could you be? There are a lot of options, but let’s define the one you want: sensitive to your feelings and those of others; loyal to your friends; adaptable to current conditions; capable of having a conversation without a script; and more than anything, willing to make up your own mind no matter what everyone else is doing. These character traits sound like they describe the lead character in a science fiction adventure series. Which is precisely true, that character is you, and you’re also the one writing the book of your life. Include plenty of love and warmth in your story.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

Saturn in your sign is offering you a time of relative stability but also of dependable change. Saturn’s presence indicates that you are in the process of sorting out who you are and who you are not; of who and what belongs in your life, and who and what does not. Where Saturn is placed, there is always a clearing process happening. Saturn shows up in your sign for under three years out of every 30—so its presence is a rare gift. The true essence of Saturn can be stated in two ideas. One is the Reality Principle. Your mission is to honor what you know to be solidly true. The second idea is that you are responsible for structuring your life, and for taking authority over yourself. This is one of the most important times in your life for knowing who your friends are, sticking with them, and letting anyone else go. It’s been said that the people we consider friends are the ones who we take care of. I’m not talking about that—your natural tendency is to take care of whoever is around you. When I say friend, I’m talking about the people responsive to your needs and moreover, to your life’s purpose.



The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it.
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson