



THE VASHON LOOP

Vol. 21, #11

OWNED BY ISLANDERS ~ PRINTED IN SEATTLE ~ FREE

November 7, 2024

KC Council & Executive: CUT IT OUT, Will Ya?

By Bernie O'Malley, Vashon Mayor 2016

Rural Vashon Town has great charm in its own unique Island way. Yes, rain, shine, chilly, or all of those, just see the hundreds of "visitors" on ordinary Fall and Winter weekends. Five thousand people in September to see Stupid Bikes, 2,500 for October's CiderFest, 3,000 to see Santa in his Cottage.

Yes, Vashon Town is mostly one-story 1930s-40s buildings. Yes, we've seen lovely million-dollar improvements in some buildings. But Kirkland or Leavenworth? Nope! Locals and tourists aren't asking for bigly 2- and 3-story tall buildings. We like our Quirky, Clunky, Human-sized walkable Town, especially with Locally Grown Stupid Bikes and Eccentrics.

Today, I want to have a conversation with our Elected Councilmember, Teresa Mosqueda. You and your excellent staff are finalizing discussions with your eight Council cohorts and Mr. Constantine. The Comprehensive Plan is up for a final vote in early December. There is a Full Council Public Meeting, November 19th, OverTown on James Street. Who's coming over there?

Forget about Downtown Seattle parking, ferry cancellations, dark winter roadways. You've heard 50% of Island Locals are over 55 years old. We didn't have laptops or smart phones in high school. We learned tech the hard way, and sometimes not at all. Yes, I'm trash-talking Zoom(TM): all of us little images on our 12-inch screens, trying to talk coherently for 60 seconds, struggling to unmute. Nope! Terrible ideas for the majority of Island constituents.

On October 17th, the KC Council's team bought a whole page of the Island's weekly newspaper. The legal and courteous duty was done - laid out in superfine font on slightly grainy newsprint were about 400 decision items for the December Comp Plan vote.

Here it is: "A Deal You Can't Refuse" (we pray).

3,000+ LOOP readers read my September and October Zoning articles.



Now, my neighbors and I have proposals for you. We'll identify some Positive tasks that will bring rave reviews, but we'll start with the Negatives, AKA "We Don't Want Them! No Way!"

Here are the Negatives (using wording from Council's ads), the "We Don't Want Them!" items needing your support to legislate CUT-OUTS for Rural Vashon Town:

1. "Allowing Micro Shelter Villages (also known as tiny house villages) as a temporary use on Church properties in the RA zone."
2. "Applying minimum density requirements in the Rural Town."
3. Amending dimensional standards for Vashon Rural Town, including height and parking requirements."
4. "Making changes to the sign code relating to historical markers and heritage trails" [for street rights-of-way and private property, in and beyond the Rural Town].
5. "Modifying or removing the rural area advisory commission."
6. "Allowing 'safe parking' as a permitted use in the NB zone and in Rural Towns as a use; prohibits in the R-1 zone; allows in the R-4 to R-8 zones in the

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Color, Mulch, Cut Back, or Not

Enjoying Your Garden This Fall

By Kim Cantrell, Little Bird Gardens

I hope you've been soaking in the rich hues of autumn! I mean, how could you miss them! Fall has arrived in full force this year, showcasing the most spectacular display of deep reds and brilliant golds, blended with rich oranges.

I was especially pleased that my Katsura tree finally had its best year yet, filling the morning air with that wonderful burnt-sugar fragrance and displaying vibrant golden leaves that really popped against the deep green of the Douglas firs. It was the first tree I planted on this property, and though it initially struggled those first years, a generous layer of mulch this spring has made a remarkable difference.

Other trees like the bigleaf maples in my woods are slow to get their fall color, as is the serviceberry, with just a hint of red beginning to show. A few more cold nights and they'll be at their autumnal peak. I love that we have really been able to enjoy the leafy show this fall for such an extended period of time.

I'd like to have more year-round interest around my property and recently added a Quercus coccinea (Scarlet Oak), an Arctostaphylos (Manzanita "Ghostly"), and one of our native beauties, Ceanothus velutinus (Snowbrush). Fall is the perfect time to plant trees, shrubs, and even some perennials. Why, you ask? Because as trees and shrubs go dormant, they focus energy on root development. Cooler temperatures reduce the need for frequent watering, which also minimizes transplant stress. However, you'll still want to

water newly planted specimens daily for the first week, gradually tapering off over the following weeks. Despite recent rains, our soil is still quite dry at depth, but also check moisture levels before watering to avoid overwatering.

A few quick tips for planting trees and shrubs: Dig your hole only as deep as the root ball to prevent settling. Look out for roots circling the trunk; spread them out or cut them, if needed, to prevent girdling as the tree matures. Once the tree is planted, mulch around it with arborist chips, creating a two-foot-wide ring around the trunk at a depth of 4-6 inches. Avoid burying the trunk itself, then water well.

Once you have that tree or shrub planted, the next most important step is mulching. Mulching around trees, shrubs, and other garden plants helps retain moisture (a key factor in my Katsura's success), keeps roots cool in the summer, and insulates them in winter. It also suppresses weeds and can help decrease soil erosion. I prefer arborist chips because they allow water to penetrate easily, break down slowly over time, and enrich the soil as they decompose, eliminating the need for additional fertilizers. Medium bark can also be an option for mulching trees and shrubs.

What else can you do this season? It's time to start cutting back perennials, though I recommend trimming those with pithy stems only back to about 12-14 inches. The hollow stems you leave by not cutting them back all the way will offer winter shelter for solitary bees, like the mason and leaf-

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How the Blues Brothers Invented AI

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Hard to believe at this remove, but blues music was once considered a fringe, largely forgotten art form. It was also commercially dead. Then the comedy duo of John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd formed "The Blues Brothers" in 1978, and their album "Briefcase Full of Blues" is credited with almost single-handedly re-vivifying the genre. Even harder to believe, their eponymous blockbuster movie that came out in June of 1980 smoothly introduced the concept of AI into everyday life. It also beat late tech-themed titles like "Blade Runner," "War Games," and "The Terminator" to the punch. How did it do that?

The windup: Elwood Blues and his brother "Joliet" Jake run a red light in front of a suburban Chicago

police cruiser parked out of view. The cruiser hits the siren, Elwood pulls over after passing by the Nelson

Funeral Home just east of O'Hare Airport. Elwood remarks, "Man, I haven't been pulled over for 6 months. I bet those cops have got SCMODS." Jake: "SCMODS??" Elwood: "State/County/Municipal Data System."

We cut to the police cruiser, where they do indeed have what Elwood dreads. We see a dash-

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urban area only when on a site with a religious facility, public agency, or social service use and with a conditional use; and allow in the R-12 through R-48, CB, RB, and O zones in the urban area subject to use-specific conditions."

Here are the Positive Tasks we ask you to focus on in 2025: 500 new Family Housing units in all shapes and sizes.

Work tasks:

1. Financial assistance for about \$95 million in various loans, grants, gifts, Federal, local.
2. Assistance with State and County permit processes.
3. Support for Community Land Trusts, contaminated sites remediation, drainage requirements.
4. New focus on water engineering plumbing systems to reduce residential consumption.
5. Review water availability and planning processes and uses of VMI's

several sole-source aquifers.

6. Review incentives for holders of unused water shares to sell shares or portions of re-engineered shares outright.

7. Clarify rules and permits on grey and black water discharges into ground, streams, and Sound.

OKAY, that's the proposal:

Work your legislative magic by the December Vote.

Assemble Staff support of new Family Housing.

Get Rave Reviews from your Island Constituents.

Thanks for listening.

VashMauria

In our previous edition, Bernie O'Malley was credited as the coiner of the term "VashMauria." Bernie advises us that Steffon Moody originated it.

Letter to the Editor

By Mark A. Goldman

Dear Friends,

If someone were to ask me today, what is the greatest threat to humanity and life on this planet, I would have to say that it is the people and the so-called government of the United States who act in collusion with many billionaires or trillionaires living in other countries. The United States no longer has a legitimate government. Nearly all of our elected officials are guilty of treason as defined by our constitution, while our people have been mentally poisoned with lies and propaganda, our bodies have been poisoned by fake vaccines, foods, and drugs ... too disabled to understand what our responsibilities as citizens or human beings are or how to live up to them. There are exceptions of course.

There are even elected officials today who are advocating for the use of nuclear weapons, which if used, would end up killing most of humanity in a matter of minutes, while those who survive would all too

soon wish they were dead. We actually might only be hours or days away from that event. Did you know that? Or a few weeks. Or a few months.

I suggest you hug your family and friends while you can.

I don't have the space to prove the truth of what I have just said here (although I am willing), and I don't know who is really asking. I wonder who today is prepared to believe the truth when it is told ... if it is ever again allowed to be told. And if you think I am saying this in anger or as an insult ... I would say those are not the right words. I'm simply telling the truth as I understand it. I'm just sorry that I haven't done more enough to help. I ask for forgiveness.

And I am convinced that learning why and how to honorably forgive ourselves and others for mistakes we've made is the only way to true freedom, peace and happiness. If you want or need a hug, I'm willing. I love you truly.

The Vashon Loop is published monthly

Vashon-Maury Clothing Drive Update

By Jane Valencia

Under the effort and direction of Daniel Hooker, the Clothing Drive has been running for ten years, for the past 2½ years at the Food Bank. Distribution takes place on Wednesdays, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

As mentioned in last month's issue, Daniel is retiring from running this program. Thank you for your service all these years!

Granny's Attic and the Food Bank are taking over running the Clothing Drive. Two volunteers have joined a third to help with this service. Thank you, Caelan Angell, Mo, and Mary Ashby! Three more volunteers would be ideal to spread out the work. Please consider taking part in this essential Island service. Contact Granny's Attic at vashongrannysattic.org or the Vashon Food Bank at (206) 463-6332 or vashonfoodbank.org for more information.

Thank you for your donations, especially as we head into winter. Bedding and winter gear, gloves and socks, are especially needed. Also needed are cash donations to help pay for gas used by volunteers as they collect and transport the Clothing Drive donations.

And thank you to Granny's Attic and the Vashon Food Bank for your commitment to keeping the Clothing Drive going!

King County Comprehensive Plan Meeting Schedule & Contact Information

Sign up for KC Comprehensive Plan email updates:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAKING/signup/39402>

Thursday, November 14: Look for the new striking amendment to the KC Comprehensive Plan

Tuesday, November 19, 1:30 PM, Meeting at KC Council Chambers (516 3rd Avenue, Room 1001) or by internet (see <https://tinyurl.com/44wha6p4>)

- **Agenda:** Public Hearing at Full Council—opportunity for public testimony, remote and in-person
- **Submit online public testimony:** CouncilCompPlan@kingcounty.gov

Tuesday, December 3, 1:30 PM, Meeting, at KC Council Chambers (516 3rd Avenue, Room 1001)

- **Agenda:** Possible vote at full Council—consideration of amendments, vote on final adoption of proposed KC Comprehensive Plan update

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<https://vashonloop.com/>
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Vashon! Sign up for health insurance and fix problems!

¡Regístrese para un seguro médico y solucione problemas!



Meet with Miguel from King County Public Health

at Vashon Library (inside at the back)

Wednesdays, 12:30–3:00 pm

- October 23
- November 20
- December 18
- January 15

Saturdays, 1:00–4:00 pm

- November 9
- December 7
- January 4

Se habla español

Call or email Miguel Urquiza
206-477-6965
or 206-491-3761
miguel.urquiza@kingcounty.gov

This is for Open Enrollment health insurance for 2025

You can also apply for food stamps and the ORCA Lift reduced fare program

How the Blues Brothers Invented AI

Continued from Front Page

mounted keyboard between the two officers. Almost the same as the machines look now. The following message types itself out on its terminal:

"Blues, Elwood

Illinois License: B263-1655-2187

Currently Under Suspension

Warrants Outstanding: Parking 116

Moving Violations: 56

Arrest Driver ... Impound Vehicle"

One of the officers walks up to Elwood's window and courteously informs him that his license is suspended, and requests that he step out of the vehicle. Elwood glances at Jake, starts up the Bluesmobile, a battered police surplus Dodge, and an epic car chase ensues. Watching it in the theater, the scene made a deep impression on me.

As an infamous local hot-foot, the last thing I wanted was for cops to have SCMODS, or anything at all like it. Since I was also fooling around with computers, I kept thinking about it. Keeping all that mainframe-stored data straight was one thing, and kind of boring. But at what point did a computer decide, "Arrest Driver. Impound Vehicle?" Clearly, this was some form of expert system. In fact, SCMODS was a superb example of a Finite State Machine, part of what we've come to jumble into the catch-all brand "AI."

Would 116 parking tickets be enough to get arrested, or just the vehicle impounded? Fifty-six moving



violations would be plenty for both, but where were the thresholds? What were the weightings? Some algorithms might have it say, "Give Driver Warning. Use Discretion. Driver Legally Blind. Escort Driver to Bat Cave." My parents' rather unsporting threshold was one speeding ticket, then no more driving privileges. So going 89 in a 20 MPH school zone would qualify both for my parents and State penalty points to suspend my license.

I kept thinking about it. Nine years after "The Blues Brothers" helped me find the music of Pinetop Perkins and Elmore James, I was jet-setting through the financial centers of Europe, a young information technology engineer at a start-up. I simply called up CEOs and Managing Directors at big banks and insurance companies to tell them I was making and selling systems to automate risk analysis. So they could make more money with less effort. They listened.

My systems looked a lot like SCMODS. AI's huge advantage is speed. You can scan a whole lot of data, sort and boil it down to associate past good decisions with a limited number of outcomes. That's a finite state machine. If you've got clean data - and that's the big "if" -

you can flag exceptions and route the tougher cases to where they should go: to humans with the contextual experience to know what they're doing. It's automation. It's what we do: figure out how to do something faster and better.

The AI priesthood class constantly rambles on about large language models (LLMs), neural networks, machine learning, internet scraping, hidden Markov this and generative AI that. Gobbledy ... fricking ... gook. It's database look-ups. It's mostly SCMODS, a collection system that kept track of your parking tickets and moving violations hooked to weights, rules, and some rudimentary math. Social credit score? Surveillance plus math.

Speaking of LLMs, where AI gets into a great deal of trouble is when you ask it questions. Especially open-ended questions. Ask a 5 year-old about the Moon or Mars and you'll get a lot of variability. Language is words, which are signifiers of meaning, which in turn spring from cognition and context. AI does not do well with strings of logic, cogito ergo sums.

As we all know, one word can

simultaneously be an insult, a compliment, both, or a nebulous place-holder. (Kek.) So, it is no surprise that OpenAI's best current version, GPT-4.0, when tested against 4,326 factual questions with only one clearly correct answer in subjects like science, art, and sports, scored 38.2%. Anthropic's top model, Claude, got only 28.9% correct because its algorithms are set to be less overconfident than OpenAI's.

The mistakes in these test batteries don't even repeat in the same way from one try to the next. Mixing LLM into regular old Boolean search functions is making the error rate skyrocket. Try querying Google with "How many furlongs from San Francisco to NYC?" The closest hit you'll get is "Flight time from San Francisco to New York - FlightSphere."

Managers are always looking for easy answers. For magic beans and silver bullets. The mayor of Chicago might want to hook SCMODs up to harpoon-equipped robots with which to affix the fleeing Elwoods and Jakes of the world. Sometimes they would get that old Dodge, and sometimes they'll snag a Tesla.

The Vashon Loop Health Disclaimer

It is the right of people to express and share their opinions, knowledge, and experiences to promote health and nutrition. As our collective wisdom grows, so does our individual and community resilience. On an Island where we must at times depend on ourselves and one another, this matters. We at The Vashon Loop are proud to support our community in the area of wellness. Health-related information may appear throughout The Loop, in articles, recipes, and elsewhere.

We remind our readers that your health is your personal responsibility, your body and situation are unique, and information in The Loop is for educational purposes only. Any health-related content is the opinion of the author alone and should not be used to diagnose or treat medical conditions or prescribe medicine. Consult with an appropriate medical resource or healthcare provider when making healthcare decisions.

Book Review – The Indoctrinated Brain

Review by Andy Valencia

Many of us have lived with loved ones who suffered from Alzheimers or other types of senile dementia. More recently, we've also seen complaints of "mental fog" coincident with the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2

novel coronavirus. One medical researcher, Dr. Michael Nehls, believes he's found a common mechanism for all of these afflictions.

Dr. Nehls is a physician and molecular geneticist. He has authored a range of academic papers touching on brain-related issues, and this book covers a career's worth of research devoted to chasing the root cause of such mental dysfunction. It provides a great deal of insight into Dr. Nehls' pursuit of the cause and cure of a number of mental ailments, and explains how his research was increasingly drawn to a critical part of the brain, the hippocampus.

About three inches in length, the hippocampus is the point of connection between the right and left sides of the brain. It is well-understood that the hippocampus is the place where short-term memories are registered and become long-term memories. Dr. Nehls' research shows that the hippocampus works with the nearby dentate gyrus to create the new neurons responsible for transcribing some or all memories to long-term memory. This enables long-term memories to not just be saved, but saved in a way that makes them available as memories. As the supply of these neurons is reduced, a memory can be saved, but is connected to fewer related memories. Your walk in

a local park where you see gardeners planting new flowers might end up being recalled by the question "What did I do today?" but not during a general conversation on gardening. Memories are important, but so is your ability to reach them.

Dr. Nehls ended up with the hypothesis that hippocampal health, along with the availability of new neurons, is central to many forms of dementia. His research eventually led him to conclude that the main feature of such dementia was inflammation in the brain structures. When COVID showed up, he was uniquely positioned to notice that the spike protein's unusual structure let it pass the blood-brain barrier and reach the hippocampus. Inflammation followed, and with it some mental ailments you've either experienced or seen in others. "Brain fog," trouble remembering and recalling, and even depression.

Dr. Nehls is not a virologist, and has nothing to say on how one catches or avoids COVID. But if your mental machinery is degraded - because of COVID or anything else, what can be done? This is the second part of his research.

Most of Dr. Nehls' therapeutic recommendations involve changing environmental factors to reduce brain structure inflammation and resume regular function. With accompanying scientific references, he surveys diet, medical side effects, pollutants, and the organic impacts of sustained stress and fear. Change what you eat, breathe, and touch. Look at when you get angry or scared, and reduce your exposure to their triggers - your mental state has an enormous impact on brain health. Anger and fright have a real, medical impact on the health of your brain structures.

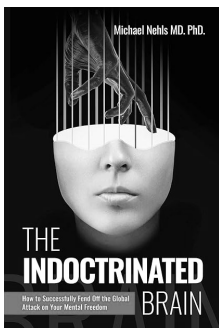
To help the transition to improved brain health, Dr. Nehls also researched anti-inflammatory

medicines. In interviews subsequent to his book's release, he has noted that his best results were with low-dose lithium, a drug which in higher doses is often used to address bipolar disorder. In the doses he uses, there is no "lithium zombie" effect, but the drug is quite effective at damping inflammation, including within the brain.

In addition to the cause and treatment of hippocampal-based ailments, Dr. Nehls spends a considerable portion of the book exploring how targeted brain impacts can be used as a method of societal control. He develops the hypothesis that SARS-CoV-2 was engineered to target the hippocampus. The subsequent liquid nanoparticle-encased mRNA with its spike generation programming was another efficient delivery mechanism.

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proofs, and Dr. Nehls' book falls far short of the mark. Was SARS-CoV-2 created to be a weapon? Were the vaccines part of this campaign? The book shares his strong opinions on the matter, but will not sway a skeptic. This does not make the material entirely irrelevant; technology that can be used for evil will eventually be used for evil. He provides a detailed medical description of this danger.

Dr. Nehls did bring one bit of unexpected good news to this no-longer-young writer. His research indicates that the reduced functions of the the hippocampus and dentate gyrus are not inevitable results of aging. Rather, they are the result of an accumulation of inflammatory factors in your environment. Age does not inherently steal your ability to think and remember. So stay on top of your mental health, keep that inflammation at bay, and you will be thinking clearly well into your senior years.



No Man Is an Island: The Power of Community

By Seán C. Malone and John Sweetman

"And let's try a wee dram of Laphroaig," I said to Seán. A rare bottle of this peaty, rare single-malt came about as the result of a trade between us. The trade details are obscure but somehow involved a battery for his vintage Ford for a bottle of whisky in return, but to be shared. The battery I traded to Seán was guaranteed to last longer than the bottle of whisky.

Every so often over many decades we have had the fortune to enjoy a nip, now and then, of the peaty bliss from the Isle of Skye.

"Do ya suppose we save a dram for our Haggis trap?"

The "Haggai" are reclusive residents of small, remote Islands and they awake from hibernation on our blessed Isle for Robby Burns Day and feast at the Sportsman's Club around February. They are lured out of their secretive lairs by a surfeit of decent single-malt and a plate of "Tunnocks" biscuits, for which we have a secret stash.

Island Voices

The Haggai are small, furry creatures known to be partial to decent whisky and only found within Island habitat. They are mostly friendly, except to the English. Naturally Seán and I, being of Scottish and Irish descent, are on good terms with them.

So naturally, our conversation turned to the wonder and mystery of our mutual long experiences of living on islands. Both of us have spent great portions of our lives on or around islands and have a special affection for our Island life. Seán has a view of island life that is special.

From Seán: After a hard day in Seattle, I knew I was on Vashon again as I climbed the hill from the ferry and rolled the window down to breathe in the fresh scent of the wet fir trees.

I've been around the sun 84 times and spent 24 of those years living on three islands: 36 years on Vashon, seven years on Prevost Island in the Canadian San Juans, and one year working for a Columban missionary on Cheju Island, Korea.

I've traveled around the world, worked in 7 countries as a documentary filmmaker, and never found a better place to live than Vashon.

When a ferry crashes the dock and service is suspended, it reminds me of John Dunne's poem of 1624, "No Man is an Island," affirming that any loss to "Man" is a loss to all Mankind. When ferry service to the mainland is suspended for any reason, making an appointment, or missing work, affects all of us.

A group of vigilantes stopped Captain Peabody from landing the Illahee ferry in 1948. As related by my father, the army provided landing craft for Island commuters for a short time. He described the spray coming over the bow of the open landing craft.

Vashon had its own ferry system for three years when it became impossible for the Vashon Ferry District to operate their ferries, and they sold out to the state. Peabody's Black Ball Line sold most of their ferries to the State in 1951, and Washington State Ferries became operational. It seems that "problems" have become part of their "service." Ever since.

At the (Old) Movies

By Michael Shook

Though I fancy myself a modern-enough person - apart from my animus toward cell phones, which has nothing to do with modernity and more to do with a desire to be nominally present, at least, to what is going on around me - I have nonetheless always felt drawn to other ages, some from long ago, some more recent. One of the nearer times is roughly the first half of the 20th century. The music, the literature, and the films of that time are stellar. I am tempted to say it was a golden age, but golden or not, a remarkable time it was.

Thus, among the many blessings gifted to me at birth, near the top of the list is that film was (is) still a relatively new phenomenon. Yes, it had already been around for more than 60 years, but that's quite young for what was an entirely new art form, and that of course is exactly what films are. Prior to the late 1800s, a film was literally an impossibility, since the technology to make one did not exist. It is exciting to be able to experience, to be (almost) in on the earliest years, and earliest iterations, of what film was, is, and can be.

What a delight it would be if we could regularly view the best of black and white films on a full-sized screen. Were I to conjure such a thing, I would start with some favorite silent films, classics well-known by name, at least, and which greatly influenced subsequent movies.

First up would be Fritz Lang's 1927 extravaganza, "Metropolis" (definitely not to be confused with Coppola's recent effort). It is astonishing in every sense. It is long - almost 2½ hours - but is a marvel of acting, set design, special

effects, action, pathos, and drama. Lang, who went on to helm many excellent films (among them some of the very best film noirs) pushed his actors and crew as few directors would, at least until Stanley Kubrick. The result of his demanding quest for perfection is that "Metropolis" is superb entertainment, if at times uneven despite the company's Herculean efforts. And the themes explored can give rise to hours of discussion.

Next is the first true vampire movie, 1922's "Nosferatu," directed by F.W. Murnau (a 1920 film, "Genuine," is disqualified, as it is a tale of a succubus, not a bona fide vampire). An unauthorized take on the novel "Dracula," it is one of the creepiest movies I've ever seen. Not terrifying in the manner of "Psycho" or "The Shining," but nevertheless one that, as Roger Ebert said, haunts the viewer long after it ends.

Max Schreck, in the role of the vampire Count Orlok, contributes mightily to that effect, via fine acting and startling make-up - those fingernails, those teeth! (And as long as we're talking vampires, 2000's "Shadow of the Vampire," though neither silent nor black and white, makes a wonderful accompaniment to "Nosferatu." A fictional account of the making of the latter, it is riveting, scary, humorous at times, with an ending that surprises - while it also comments on our late 20th, early 21st century obsession with being on camera).

Lastly, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," from 1920, is regarded by many as the ultimate celluloid example of German Expressionism, as well as the first true horror film. In any good horror movie, the purveyor of the evil attempts to ingratiate himself to those around him. But of course, the good Dr. Caligari, soon enough, is revealed to be not a very

nice person, one who keeps a murderous somnambulist in his eponymous cabinet. Or does he?

Who is Caligari? Who is Cesare, the somnambulist? We think we know, but the film portrays the inner life of mind as much as the outer physical life, and the inner realm is often a place in flux. The sets are simply astonishing, and along with the cinematography, the audience is thrown off-balance again and again. As art forms are wont to do, "Caligari" reflects its time and the beginning of the modern existential crisis that grew out of the slaughter of World War I, and the ensuing social, economic, and political turmoil in early Weimar Germany.

But, on to the talkies! Something light-hearted, frothy, and gay would go well after the films just mentioned. And you can't get frothier, nor more gay than the "The Thin Man" murder mystery series, beginning in 1934. Adapted from Dashiell Hammett's novel, the film starred William Powell as Nick Charles, a blue-collar detective who retires after marrying Nora, a delightful, beautiful, and very wealthy Nob Hill heiress, played by Myrna Loy. A wire-haired fox terrier, named Skippy, completed the primary cast, in the role of their dog Asta. He was nearly as popular as Loy and Powell and was paid \$250 a week for his canine scene-stealing.

The first three films in the series are my favorites, but there were six in all (followed by a radio show, a TV series, a Broadway musical, and a stage play). The men's suits and hats are fabulous, the women's gowns and furs slinkily more so, and everyone drinks and smokes like there's no tomorrow. None of that would matter though, unless the banter, the quips, and the witticisms didn't fly like confetti at New Year's Eve, and oh, do they!

The truth is, Loy and Powell are simply so attractive, their chemistry so delicious, that I wish I could join them at one of their numerous, endless cocktail parties, wear a swank tuxedo, and soak it all in, because it's just so darned much fun. Even if it involves murder.



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Up the Mast

By Suzanna Leigh

July 15, Sunday

Terns were diving for fish as we passed the red nun buoy at the mouth of Quartermaster Harbor. We motored into the teeth of the wind, hoping to get through the Narrows before the current was so strong against us we wouldn't be able to make headway. We raised the small jib and reefed the mainsail as soon as we cleared the bridge over the Narrows. We were fighting both wind and current as we sailed south.

The current varies in strength between Fox Island, south of Gig Harbor, and Day Island on the Tacoma side; it looked as though it was stronger on the east side near Day Island. We tested it. Yup, it was. It pushed us back up north. Sailing close-hauled – sailing almost against the wind – we squeaked by Fox Island and headed for Penrose Point at the end of Keystone Peninsula. Occasional gusts pushed the rail under, and once I had to let the main sail out to spill the wind so that we wouldn't capsize.

It was windy coming into anchorage under power. We dropped the anchor and tried to back down to set it, but the engine wasn't giving us any power, even when Bob gave it more fuel. I took the helm while Bob checked out the problem. The fuel can for the stove had fallen over the shifting cable, an easy fix.

We anchored in 15 feet of water and checked the tide charts. The tide

was at 6' when we anchored and would be at .5 feet early the next morning, a loss of 5.5'. That would put us in 9.5 feet of water; we draw 4', so no danger of going aground. We checked the barometer and marine weather report; no storm approaching. We could sleep easy and have a leisurely breakfast before going ashore and exploring the Penrose State Park.

I wonder if we will find thimbleberries tomorrow?

July 16, Monday

We put on our life jackets and climbed down into the dinghy. Bob took the oars and rowed, his back to the shore, while I, facing forward, pointed to the direction he needed to steer. We found two trails up the steep bank to the main trail, both nearly hidden by brush. We climbed one and found ourselves on a path leading through moss-covered maple trees and tall ferns to a grass-covered area with picnic tables and shelters. No thimbleberries, but the ranger was an old high school buddy of Bob's.

July 17, Tuesday

Anxious to take off under sail, perhaps we hadn't latched the shackle that connects the main sail to the halyard quite right.

Bob pulled on the anchor line until we were right over the anchor, then he latched the halyard to the main sail with a shackle and pulled on the halyard to raise the main. I loosened the mainsheet to prevent the wind from putting pressure on it

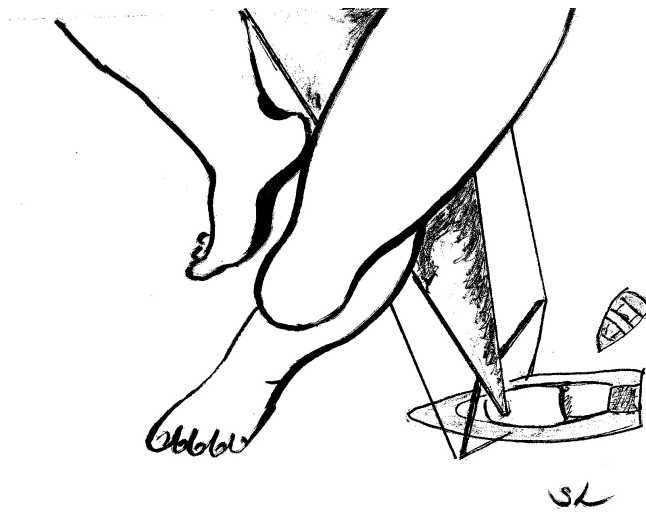


Illustration by
Suzanna Leigh

before we were ready to sail, and watched the sail rise, rise, SNAP – and fall. The recently released folds of the sail came falling and folding back down to the boom with a whoosh!

We set the anchor again and checked the damage. Had the shackle broken? Or had the halyard snapped? No, nothing of halyard or shackle remained on the sail, but there was the shackle, still attached to the halyard, up against the pulley at the top of the mast. Nothing for it but one of us to go up the mast to get it, and before that ugly cloud was upon us with wind and rain.

Being the lighter of us, and less strong, I felt more comfortable going up the mast myself than I did hoisting Bob up. I have only been up the mast once, and then only as high as the spreaders, about three-fourths of the way.

I climbed into the blue canvas bosun's chair. Bob fastened the jib halyard to the chair with a good

strong shackle, and pulled on the jib halyard to raise me up. Up I went, focused so hard on holding onto the mast to keep my body from swinging around it, on clearing the spreaders, and on locating the shackle at the end of the main halyard, that I missed my opportunity to look down at the boat far below me and panic.

Bob hoisted me up until I could reach the shackle. Once I had a good grip on it, he lowered me down. As I descended, still holding the mast with one hand, I pulled the shackle and main halyard down with me. Finally, my feet rested solidly on the cabin top and, with a sigh of relief, I climbed out of the bosun's chair.

Bob examined the shackle. It was bent, and Bob fixed it easily. Soon we were ready to sail again – but here comes the rain and wind!

We waited out the squall, then drifted off the mooring under sail, in the light fluky airs of the cloud's tail.

My COVID Story

By Pam (aka Gates) Johnson

It got me. After these many months of dodging the COVID bullet, the vaccines, the masks, the keeping my distance ... it finally got me.

It all started the night before my birthday. I was enjoying a warm, cozy sleep when my nose faucet turned on at warp speed. Wha? No Kleenex in this house, so I grabbed a roll of toilet paper and a paper bag and returned to my Lazy-Boy to finish the night. Needed to get my rest for the birthday festivities soon to come. Except the only thing that came was a headache and a lot of nose stuff.

I got up and thought about getting dressed. But the headache and nose blow-out were getting worse. Had to admit it, I was sick. I wrapped up in my blanket, blew my nose, closed my eyes, blew my nose again, and tried to go back to sleep. No luck. Thought it might be a good time to take a COVID test.

I had a stash of test kits secreted somewhere in my bathroom, so began the search. In my virus haze, the tests remained unfound. Called my niece to see if she had any. She did, but it was expired. I didn't care.

At this point, I had only enough energy to blow my nose and hope the tissue hit the bag when I dropped it in the general direction. Hydration is important, so I drank water, and you know the next step. On one of the many trips to the bathroom, I spied my test kits. Grabbed one and headed back to my chair.

My kit was expired too, but the on-call nurse said the expiration dates were extended, so I should go ahead.

Shoved the Q-tip up my nose hole, put it in the little jar, and waited. About five minutes later, two bright red lines showed up. Well, it was official.

Let my family know I was out for any planned birthday celebrations and back to the blankets and chair. My daughter said it was okay to feel sorry for myself and even indulge in a little crying, so I did.

I sleep in my recliner in the living room with the window open and a fan on my feet. That night, I shut the window, turned off the fan, turned on the heat, and bundled up under two blankets and a comforter... and shivered.

The one thing I did do was get a prescription for Paxlovid, which may or may not have been a good idea. Feeling crappy continued for a week before I decided to call my insurance on-call nurse. I gave her the symptom rundown and timeline, and she said I should go to urgent care. COVID rebound.

Small problem. I was too sick to drive myself and nobody would let me in their car to take me to town. The nurse said, well, wait a few days and see how you feel. Excellent medical advice.

My niece works at a health clinic. She was an angel and checked on me every day. She told me about this new health service on-Island that will come to your house. I called, and within an hour there was a knock on my door. They did a good exam, ordered some prescriptions, and gave me a steroid shot (lucky me, I had an ear infection too). Told me to rest.

One week later, I was still feeling terrible so called the mobile health team again. Zip, zap, and they were knocking on my door. As I sat at my dining room table telling the physician's assistant my problems, the tech was taking my vitals. The tech checked my pulse and gave the PA the side-eye, and checked my pulse again. They both got a worried look, then told me it should be over 50. Mine was 36. That's when they brought out the EKG machine.

The EKG showed some anomalies, but not enough to warrant a trip to the ER. They also called the mobile x-ray guy, who came to my house that afternoon and gave me a chest x-ray while I was sitting in my dining room. My heart rate was up to 50, so they said I was okay on my

own, and my doctor would call me, which he did.

Long story short, it has been three weeks of this mess, and I am now deemed not contagious and cleared for minimal activity. It's been a pain in my Kazooie, but there were a few upsides.

Upside one: I have some really good friends and family who checked up on me every day, brought me soup and strawberries and grapes and orange juice. Thanks to you all.

Upside two: I was knitting a baby sweater which got finished and turned out pretty good.

Upside three: No appetite, so I lost some weight.

COVID ain't no joke. Take it seriously.



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Managing Mother Nature

By Jo Ann Herbert

If all of us died the earth would heal itself.

Calling a plant a “weed” is like calling a human a racial slur. Every plant has a name and a purpose on earth. Are we to pull out all these plants we call “invasives?” We need more information about each.

That dandelion, big on the “Invasive Hit List,” is completely edible: flower, leaves, and root. The dandelion is one of the first flowers in spring, providing early nectar to bees and feeding other small insects, animals, and even bears! Dandelions are considered medicinal plants. And despite all the haters (human and chemical), it grows a long root for resilience. Dandelion says, “Keep thriving, don’t listen to the haters!”

King County killed some Japanese Knotweed (an “invasive”) on 156th, not far from the highway. All the plants have been lying dead for months. If they were poisoned, this is a dangerous area for all wildlife now. The plants can be mechanically removed (they travel by rhizome) or trimmed. But herbicides, the “easy way,” damage the earth and all the small inhabitants along the way.

Emodin, one of Japanese Knotweed’s active chemical compounds, ends the growth of Borrelia burgdorferi (the bacteria that causes Lyme disease). The Japanese Knotweed has also been studied for its effect on cognitive disorders, likely due to its resveratrol content. Positive effects on cognition as well as regulating blood sugar levels are also being

Island Resilience

recognized.

Lyme disease, elevated blood sugar, and cognitive impairment – health issues of our time. Is Japanese Knotweed a threat or a gift?

One out of every three bites of food we eat depends on the ability of pollinators to reproduce. These pollinators, the little, barely seen treasures of our world, lay some of their eggs/larva inside the stalks of tall grasses and plants. In the fall before we tear out the dried grasses and “clean up” the yard, consider leaving nature alone. Or leave the dried stalks upright, maybe somewhere out of sight, so they can keep that cycle of life going for us all.

We’ve heard the term “forever chemicals.” If only we knew what pieces of earth had been poisoned. If only all the animals knew not to forage or nest there and the raptors knew not to pick up their kill there and the deer not to birth there – forever.

On the many acres of a large property on Vashon, a pregnant worker was directed to pull weeds in a driveway recently sprayed with glyphosate. All this for a brief manicured look on the property in the never-ending cycle of grass growth, spray, repeat.

How about eliminating pesticides instead of eradicating plants? What about making pesticides illegal? Glyphosate, it’s sold on Vashon, and has

been used by the beloved Land Trust on “invasives.” Glyphosate, implicated in so many human deaths, along with the death of our soils, is being found many miles out in the ocean.

And glyphosate in the courts: About 165,000 claims have been made for personal injuries allegedly caused by Roundup. The Center for Food Safety, Beyond Pesticides, and the United Farm Workers Union have been fighting corporations that enrich themselves from the sale of these chemicals while the Cancer Centers multiply and grow larger.

Keeping rodents out of our crawl spaces? Hire someone (he comes to Vashon on Wednesdays) who goes all around the home and corrects areas where rodents may enter. I daily feed birds, chipmunks, and squirrels (rodents!) and in 28 years, have had no issues with my crawl space after utilizing this more healthy option.

Planting Douglas Fir. Now? In 50 years, our planet will have changed so much. The beloved native Doug Firs cannot take the heat that is upon us, and yet King County and The Land Trust are planting Doug Firs. Native, yes, but not created for the heat coming our way.

The trees that need to be planted now are the trees like those in California, that provide not only blessed shade, but that can also tolerate the sun’s rays as well as radiant heat from the asphalt that we are pouring all over the earth.

Managing Mother Nature? Let the earth do what it will. Humans, if we step back – the earth will heal.

(For joy, listen to Pete Seeger sing “God Bless the Grass.”)

Editor’s note: We have been unable to determine if/when the Vashon Land Trust and King County use herbicides of any sort. However, both organizations have extensive online resources to help with non-herbicide weed control.

Color, Mulch, Cut Back, or Not

Continued From Front Page

cutter bees. Other insects will use them too, for winter hibernation. If this look isn’t for you, consider laying the cut stems horizontally in an out-of-the-way spot for insect nesting.

When it comes to cutting back grasses, leave them standing for winter interest, then cut them back in spring. Evergreen grasses generally don’t need a spring trim, but it’s a good idea to check on the specific needs of your plants. And if you don’t get around to cutting back all your perennials, that’s fine! Freshen them up when new growth appears in spring. Some perennials, like Echinacea (coneflower), Symphyotrichum (aster), and Solidago (goldenrod), to name just a few, have seed heads that provide excellent food for birds, so you can leave them until spring.

Got leaves? Leave them! They make fantastic, free mulch for garden beds. You can chop them up with a mower or use them whole; I’ve been adding whole leaves to my beds for years, and I love how they suppress spring weeds, leaving me time to do other gardening tasks. Alternatively, compost the leaves in a designated area, and after a year or two you’ll have rich leaf mold to spread on your beds like compost. If you rake up leaves off your lawn, add them to your beds, too.


So get out and enjoy your garden this fall! Whether you do a little or a lot, spending time outside in the fresh air with your hands in the soil is as good for you as it is for your garden, and we all need that!

For an in-depth guide for planting trees and shrubs, visit: <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/planting-trees-and-shrubs-in-the-landscape-home-garden-series>

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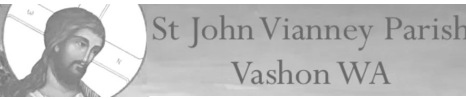
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Savers Are Losers

By Stephen Buller

Robert Kiyosaki, famous for writing the number-one bestselling book on personal finance, "Rich Dad Poor Dad," says savers are losers. If you're able to get past the controversial and inflammatory nature of the statement, you will find much truth, especially in 2024.

I'll argue for the merits of saving for the future. The ability to make a conscious decision to forego the pleasures of today for something greater tomorrow is a defining characteristic of successful people. It shows vision, patience, and discipline.

Saving is also essential for groups of people to consolidate resources and accomplish more together than anyone could alone. There is a poetic beauty in humanity that makes us both self-serving and social creatures. Cooperation is usually more productive overall than working alone - if you've ever put together an Ikea bedframe by yourself, you know what I mean.

So, saving is good - but you must be saving the right thing. If you're saving something that doesn't store value, you're losing purchasing power all the time. If you have an ambitious goal that requires years of saving, you're fighting an uphill battle. This is the case of all fiat currencies, and it has accelerated in Western countries over the past few years, but make no mistake: It is by design.

This is why "investing" has become such a necessity. It's not good enough to save, because the interest payments on a savings account don't keep up with the inflation tax. Instead, we must beat the rate at which our currency is devalued - then pay more taxes on our "returns."

This is why, according to Robert Kiyosaki, the rich use debt and taxes, not savings. Why save painstakingly for years when you can take out a loan? The currency is immediately at your disposal, and it's not taxable income. You'll owe interest, of course, but if you put the funds to good use, you should be able to make the monthly payments,

which will only get easier as inflation works for you.

At this point, I should say this is not a recommendation to go into debt. It's also not a statement that debt is bad. I don't think there is a problem with banks consolidating funds and making large loans towards productive ventures. In fact, I think that's the point of a bank, along with protecting individuals' deposits.

The problem arises when our currency is untethered from real money. In times and cultures past, if a bank made enough bad loans, it went out of business. That might sound terrible, but it meant banks had to be smart about where they deployed funds. They were incentivized to make savvy investments with limited resources. It also increased competition, both in the banking industry and among the ventures funded.

Today, bad loans are papered over with the creation of new currency, which incentivizes riskier loans. This rewards failure, skews market valuations, and erodes the purchasing power of diligent savers.

In general, a nation's government is in charge of its currency and so must interact with banks in some way. Throughout history, failing

governments have used currency debasement to fund unpopular programs, and 21st century America is no exception. In fact, we might epitomize the scheme.

It's easy to become entrenched in the way things are done, to think that this must be the only way. I think we need to reimagine what money looks like. Rather, I think we need to humble ourselves and accept that those who came before us already knew the answer - gold.

When individuals are empowered, they come together in beautiful ways. I want to envision a better future for all of us, and argue that the most prosperous society will use a money that allows the average worker to save the fruits of their labor and build towards their goals for the future.

For now, you can just save real money instead.

Correction

In our October Issue we inadvertently ran Stephen Buller's article, "Measuring Money," under an incorrect title ("Managing Money"). We regret the error.

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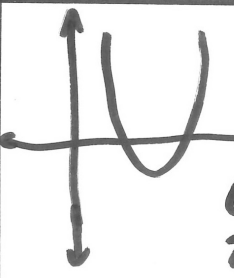
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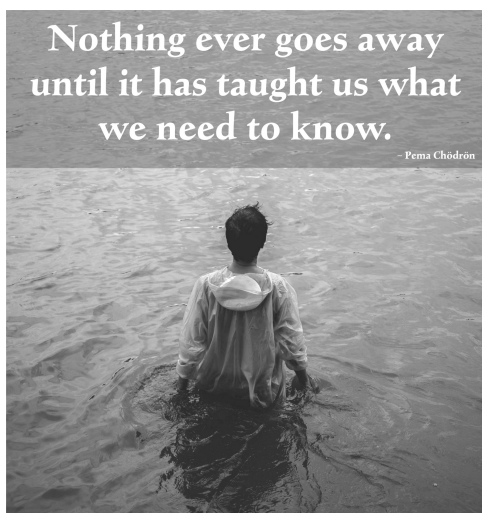


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Herbal Adaptogens

By Kathy Abascal

Adaptogens are remarkable plants. They increase our ability to handle stress, both physical (such as an illness or injury) and mental (such as a difficult job or financial issues), and most of us would benefit greatly by taking them regularly.

I was taught that adaptogens will not solve our problems, but instead put us in a place where life's tribulations do not bother us as much. You can be yelled at longer before you lose it and yell back. You can endure more traffic jams before you go nuts. And they help your body, for instance, fight off a virus without getting really sick.

Adaptogens work well for those who seem to catch every cold that goes around, or who are coping with a significant injury or chronic illness. These herbs do not act quickly enough to help you get over the flu or take the edge off acute anxiety, but they can make a significant difference when taken for 6 to 8 weeks or longer.

Almost all of us lead stress-filled lives and most of us would benefit from taking an adaptogen regularly. There are many different adaptogens, each with an individual profile and set of actions. A fabulous book that teases out the differences between adaptogens is David Winston's book "Adaptogens." However, what all adaptogens have in common is an ability to help the brain reduce its tendency to hyper-react to stress. A calmer person sleeps better, works better, and usually has a stronger immune system.

The ginsengs (Asian and American) are the most famous adaptogens, but they are challenged plants, expensive, and most often adulterated, so I tend to recommend other adaptogens. Two I like are schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*) and rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*).

Schisandra is an interesting-tasting berry and has a long historical use of improving many conditions, with a particular use in reducing or stopping unwanted sweating (including night

Health Matters

sweats). It is also used for coughs, forgetfulness, and insomnia. Indigenous folk used the berries to combat fatigue on long hunting trips. Research shows it helps revive liver cells damaged by alcohol, toxins, or viral hepatitis. Its constituents improve reflexes, fine coordination, blood pressure, and stamina.

Human studies on schisandra are for the most part not available in English, but apparently show that schisandra improves eyesight and hearing. For instance, schisandra increased the ability of young men to thread a needle! Western research has focused more on schisandra's effect on horses: Horses could be made to run faster with less increase in heart rate, and schisandra seemed to reverse muscle damage in horses no doubt pushed too hard.

If I had a horse, I would add some schisandra berries to its feed. If I had high blood pressure or were a perimenopausal woman suffering from insomnia, night sweats, and forgetfulness, I would take schisandra regularly. If I felt like I needed liver support, I would turn to schisandra.


Rhodiola is a favorite herb in the Scandinavian and Russian traditions. Today, it is also grown in Alaska, making good-quality rhodiola quite available. Research indicates that it may stimulate the nervous system, reduce depression, and alleviate altitude sickness. The Russians have used it as a support where physical or intellectual strain, flu, or other illness caused sleep disturbances, irritability, headaches, and fatigue, which in turn affected peoples' work ability.

The Russians also use rhodiola as a tonic for overworked, stressed-out people, and have some interesting research supporting that view. In one study, they gave it to overworked emergency room doctors and found that rhodiola substantially

reduced their fatigue while improving their work performance while on night duty. They also gave it to medical students preparing for exams. The students reported less fatigue, improved sleep, less need for sleep, and more motivation study. Those taking rhodiola also got better grades than those on a placebo. Last, they gave rhodiola to foreign students and found that they were less "psychically fatigued" and anxious. (The study also suggests that it is a challenge to be a foreign student in Russia.)

One very nice aspect of rhodiola is that it is energizing at lower doses, but becomes slightly sedative at higher doses. Thus, it has built-in safeguards for those who might be looking for a bit too much stimulation.

As mentioned above, the effect of an adaptogen builds over time, so they typically need to be taken regularly for some duration to really be of benefit. My sense is that now, as winter approaches, is a good time to start taking an adaptogen to help handle holiday stress and winter illnesses.



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Left - Community Altar



Island Epicure – A Gluten Free Thanksgiving!

By Marjorie Watkins and Suzanna Leigh

Marjorie told me that since now she is 100 years old, she is considering retiring. Not to worry, though, she is leaving us with a wonderful backlog of archived articles to draw from for future "Island Epicure" columns. Also, I am republishing some of Marjorie's cookbooks, such as "Gluten Free Baking," launching December 1st! It will be available at Lavender Cat Studio on the Studio Tour (December 7-8, 14-5, at 20733 87th Ave), or you can pre-order a copy for \$15, by emailing me at leigh.suzanna@gmail.com.

In the meantime, this is from Marj's Island Epicure column, dated November of 2016:

After the Turkey, Pumpkin Pie

The pumpkin pie of this Thanksgiving feast is a recent invention of mine that dodges several family members' allergies, and comes with very little lactose and no gluten. No more eating the pumpkin-and-spice-flavored filling and throwing away the crust!

A favorite gluten-free piecrust is the Almond Meal Pie Shell, below.

Almond Meal Pie Shell

- For a 9-inch pie
- Preheat oven to 425 degrees
- 1 cup almond meal
- 1 cup oat, sorghum, or millet flour
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ cup soft butter
- ¼ cup water
- 3 tbsp olive oil

In a mixing bowl, stir the almond meal, flour, and salt. Work in the soft butter. In a measuring cup, fork-beat the water and olive oil. At once, pour it into the dry ingredients. Work the mixture together. Form into a ball. Pat it flat. Transfer it to your pie pan, mooshing it and mashing it with clean knuckles and pushing it up the sides to fit the pan.

Make a decorative, fluted edge. Prick the bottom and the sides all over with a fork. Bake for 15 minutes or until the pie crust is crisp and the fluted edge a light brown.

Pumpkin Filling

- For a 9-inch pie
- 1½ cups home cooked or canned pumpkin pulp
- ½ cup white sugar
- ¼ cup molasses
- 1 tsp ginger powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon powder

- ¼ tsp clove powder
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1½ cups almond milk
- ¼ cup rich cream
- Walnut halves

Mix all but the walnuts. Pour into prepared pie shell. Arrange walnut halves as a circle around the perimeter of the pumpkin filling. Reduce oven heat to 350 degrees. Bake 40 minutes. Insert knife midway from the rim to the center. If it comes out clean, the pie is done.

If using a standard wheat flour-based crust, bake at 425 degrees for 15 minutes to firm the crust. Reduce heat to 350 degrees. Bake 40 minutes more. Test for doneness by inserting a paring knife midway from rim to center. If it comes out clean, your pumpkin pie is done. Serve warm or cold with whipped cream.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

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

Share it with us at editor@vashonloop.com

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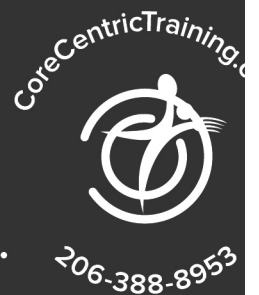
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Día de Muertos, a Mexican Feast To Honor Life

By Cynthia Sadurni



Editor's Note: This article appeared on our website in celebration of El Dia de Muertos. Although the festival is now past, November continues as a time for remembrance. Enjoy this article and allow it to inspire you in honoring your departed loved ones, and do keep it on hand for next year.

*Illustration by
Cynthia Sadurni*

From the author: This article is dedicated to the memory of my brother Jaime Sadurni, who placed the most beautiful ofrendas.

As soon as the autumn days arrive, and the trees turn into beautiful colors, the light begins to change, becomes angled, perhaps even brighter, a blaze before the colder days to come. It immediately takes my mind to Día de Muertos, Day of the Dead, one of the most colorful and beautiful Mexican traditions. It is a day steeped in remembrance and symbolism, perhaps one of the richest examples of the seamless blend of Mexico's prehispanic past with the spirituality of the Catholic faith brought by the Spanish.

First and foremost, Día de Muertos is a celebration of life, an opportunity to look back at memories and shared moments with our loved ones, as we set the table for the souls of our dead and invite them back into our homes. I thought that I could share a little of the meaning and significance of the elements that you can find on the ofrendas, the altars set to commemorate our loved ones that have gone before us.

This is knowledge that was passed on to me growing up, and it is my hope that it will inspire you to look beyond the plethora of sugar skulls and decorated skeletons that have begun to populate the stores in preparation for Halloween (also a day full of ancient lore, but that is a story for another time) and see them in a different light.

There is much love invested in preparing the altar. It is for me, a time to reminisce about my loved ones that have gone before me, a time for healing and remembering that death is a part of life, another step in our journey.

It is the belief that, during the first two days of the month of November, the dead are allowed to return to our plane of existence and feast on the food left for them at the altars. The first of November is dedicated to the souls of children and the second for adults. Altars are traditionally set on October 28 and are taken down on the evening of November 3. In recent years, it has become customary to honor our animal companions as well, on October 27.

Here are some of the elements that must be included in the ofrenda:

Salt: It is meant to purify the souls on their journey.

Water: It is included to satisfy the

thirst of the departed. It is also one of the four elements, and the source of all life.

Cempasuchil flowers (Mexican Marigolds): Their colors are reminiscent of the sun, and it is this, along with their perfume, that helps to guide the souls to the altar. It represents the earth element.

Votive candles: They also guide souls on their journey, and it is another of the four elements, fire.

Papel picado: It represents the air element, and it adds color to the altar.

Copal incense: It cleanses and purifies the space dedicated to the altar.

White tablecloth: It represents purity and also creates a safe space for the souls of the departed to enter safely.

It is customary to include sugar skulls, beautifully decorated with flowers and the name of the departed. Clay ones are also included, along with figurines of skeletons dressed in traditional clothing, known as Catrinas (female) and Catrines (male). A cross is always included, whether made of flowers, clay, metal, or wood. Of course, the photos of loved ones who are being remembered are set in the place of honor. Also, you may put other elements that the members being honored enjoyed in life, like a favorite object.

Food also plays a very important role, as the favorite dishes and desserts of our departed are set on the altar for them to feast on. It is believed that the souls partake of the essence of the food that is offered; thus, the flavor of the dishes is greatly diminished or is completely gone after this day passes. While some believe that the food should not be eaten after being taken down from the altar, other families will enjoy it after the return of the souls of the departed to the world beyond.

Amongst the foods set on the ofrenda, pan de muerto is always present. If you like to bake, I invite you to look for the recipe online. It is delicious! There are many traditional dishes served on the altars, chicken in mole sauce, refried beans, rice, but I would like to share with you my mom's recipe for candied pumpkin, or calabaza en tacha. It is very easy to make and the ingredients are easy to find. I would also like to invite you to be curious and do a search online. There are many great resources to learn more about the beautiful and ancient traditions of Día de Muertos.

Calabaza en Tacha (Candied Pumpkin)

Ingredients

- 1 medium pumpkin (the orange kind used for pie works; you may use the variety you prefer, but I do recommend using one with thicker skin)
- 3 to 4 cones of piloncillo (this can be found in most Mexican stores; it is basically raw cane sugar shaped like a cone)
- 1 or 2 cinnamon sticks (optional)
- 5 cloves (optional)
- Mexican crema for serving (you can easily make your own with 2 parts sour cream or crème fraiche and 1 part milk; whisked thoroughly until smooth, it will have a thick yet liquid consistency)



You will need a Dutch oven and a steamer basket.

Instructions

Start by crumbling the piloncillo. If it is hard to do this, you can use a cheese grater. Set it aside. Cut your pumpkin in half, then take out all the seeds and pulp, leaving the flesh as free of strings as possible. Cut each pumpkin piece in half again, then proceed to cut into thick wedges.

In a large Dutch oven, set the steamer basket on the bottom. Start by placing a layer of pumpkin, flesh side up, and generously sprinkle with a thick layer of piloncillo. Place another layer of pumpkin, this time flesh side down, so that it is face-to-face with the previous layer. Sprinkle piloncillo. Add another layer, flesh side up, add piloncillo, proceed with the same process until you have used the whole pumpkin.

Add any extra piloncillo. Add about 1/2 inch of water, then cover and simmer at low heat until all the piloncillo has dissolved, the pumpkin is soft, and the liquid has turned into a rich syrup. It is very important not to use too much liquid at first, since pumpkin does shed a lot of water during the cooking process. Cooking times will vary depending on the size and variety of pumpkin used.

Let it cool to room temperature, dish and serve with a generous amount of the syrup, and drizzled with crema. Enjoy!



Ofrenda by Jaime Sadurni

Missing a Headlight?

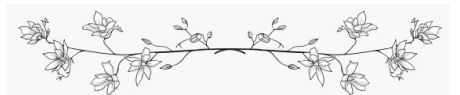


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Take, for What Is Given – A Villanelle

By Jane Valencia

Years ago, in the dark of the year, a friend shared with me a dream she'd had. I quickly forgot the nature of her dream, but a phrase she spoke sparked my imagination: "Take, for what is given." I set to work on a poem. Except for the occasional haiku, I write free verse. Why I chose to write a villanelle remains a mystery to me.

The villanelle dates back to 15th and 16th century France and Italy. Nineteen lines long, this poetic form consists of five "tercets" (three-line stanzas), and a quatrain (a four-line stanza). It has two refrains – two lines that repeat throughout the poem. The first and third lines of the first tercet alternate as the last lines of the remaining tercets. In the quatrain, these two lines conclude the poem.

The strict form of the villanelle includes a rhyme pattern, with the first and third lines of each stanza rhyming, and the second lines rhyming with each other across the stanzas (ABA). In the quatrain, the fourth line rhymes with the first and third lines (ABAA). My poem loosely follows this pattern.

Perhaps the best way to experience a villanelle may be to briefly note the rules, then let them go. Read the poem aloud, feel the shape of the words in your mouth, and listen.

Over the years, I've wondered who "this child" is in the poem. In different seasons of my life, I've imagined a gestating child, a dream of a child (my second daughter was born two years after this poem came to be), one's inner child of wonder and play, a creative expression, a

fanciful post-harvest scene, or the coming of a new year. From my family's faith tradition as we approach the Advent season, the Christ-child emerges as a likely possibility.

A poem leans in and whispers in your ear. I leave the "who" or "what" to you and your own dreaming to decide.

Take, for What Is Given

Take, for what is given
Hands outstretched to you
Celebrate this child within

Glimpse the breath of heaven
A hushed grey-golden hue
Take, for what is given

Taste the light, handwoven
Winter grace from pumpkin moon
Celebrate this child within

Ah! The soil is leavened
And here's a rich, leaf-simmered stew
Take, for what is given

Blessings from the raven
Pearl stones from fields of truth
Take, for what is given

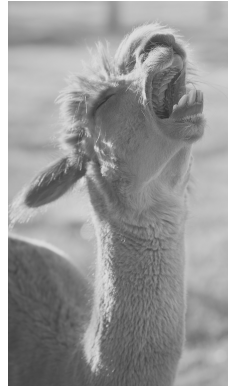
The end is the beginning
And see – the path is new
Take, for what is given
Celebrate this child within

~
Below is the poem set to music.

1. Take, for what is gi-ven
2. Glimpse the breath of heaven, a Hands out-stretched to you hue Ce-le-
brate this child with - in. Take, for what is gi-ven 3. Taste the
light, handwo - ven. Win-ter grace from pumpkin moon Cele - brate this child with-
in. 4. Ah! The soil is leavened, And here's a rich leaf-simmered stew.
Take, for what is given. 5. Blessings from the ra - ven. Pearl stones from fields of
truth. Ce-le - brate this child with - in. 6. The end is the be - ginning And
see, the path is new. Take, for what is gi-ven. Ce-le - brate this child with - in.

Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker



Never donate to people who collect money for marathons.

They just take the money and run.

~

Did you hear about the man who spontaneously evaporated?

He's mist.

~

I used to be addicted to soap.

Now I'm clean.

~

Why don't blind people skydive?

It scares the heck out of the dogs.

~

A skydiver is on his first jump. As he descends, he pulls his ripcord and nothing happens. As he's plummeting towards the earth, he sees someone coming up from below.

He calls to him, "Do you know anything about parachutes?"

The man replies, "No. Do you know anything about gas stoves?"

~

Q. Which superhero likes hummus the most?

A. Pita Parker

~

From the editor: The following joke was printed incorrectly last issue. Enjoy the correct version.

Q. How do old hippies count their wives?

A. One Mrs. Hippie, two Mrs. Hippie, three Mrs. Hippie

Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses

Sam has 3 fewer pets than Nancy. Emily has as many pets as Sam and Nancy combined. If Nancy has twice as many pets as Sam, how many pets does Emily have?



Island poetry in these pages
How about yours?

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The Observant Frog's Log


By Alex Soriano



Alex Soriano

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Aries (March 20-April 19)

The Sun's annual transit through Scorpio is a time when you experience a different side of your nature. It is equally valid, though a whole other shade of psyche. In lived reality, there is a self who you think of as you, and there is a self who you think of as the you in relationships. You may have some idea that these are the same person, and ultimately they are. The intensity building in your sign (spanning from the April 2024 total solar eclipse into many other planetary events in 2025 and 2026) is putting the pressure on you to emerge, grow and become in ways that may feel exceedingly challenging. Your connections to other people must always support your deeper growth, your foundational drive to actualize your true self. Who you are and who you are becoming are out of the control of others. Yet a true partner will be there for the things about you that are not about them.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

The Sun's movement through your opposite sign Scorpio is making you conscious of your most intimate partnerships. Yet one thing you may not be aware of is a power struggle that is brewing just off-stage. There is something deeper going on, and its roots go much further back in time than any present relationship. Let's imagine we're doing a hypnotherapy session. We're going to regress you back to when you were around two years old, when you were at times crawling around on the floor. There were people in that environment who seemed extremely powerful. Sure, all the adults did, but there was someone who stood out: someone you were afraid of. Who was that person? Can you see their face, and hear their voice? How do you feel in their presence? Did they express that anger at you? And did you take on some of that as guilt or resentment? This may provide the context you need.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

The coming weeks are an important turning point in your ability to take care of yourself, and to resolve matters associated with a personal healing project. Yet this is more than about any one issue; your chart describes deepening your commitment to wellness as the most important thing in your life. You are made of strong material. You can endure a lot. The goal now is to endure less, and to be at peace with yourself. You've been through many twists and turns, and you need some ease and peace of mind. This is more likely to come from a spiritual place than from elements of physical care or lifestyle. All you need is what A Course in Miracles calls the "small willingness," which includes asking for help and being open to it when it arrives. Keep choosing what helps you and returning to the universe what does not.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are a passionate person, and you must live passionately. Yet the world has become so cool and detached this may seem impossible, or extremely dangerous. And please, let's be real. Passion implies sexual feelings, and that, in turn, implies your feelings for others, and what you want to share with them. You and your feelings must be free to exist on your own terms. Also, if you are in a situation that does not facilitate your desires, then it's time to rethink that.



Planet Waves

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



Right versus wrong are not issues so much as honest versus dishonest; sincere versus faking it. So be mindful of your agreements, and ask yourself if one of them is to be honest. That, ultimately, is your passport to freedom. Be real about who you are at all times.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Leo is the sign of the Sun and the source of all light in our solar system. People know you as outwardly directed, and bold about taking leadership when that's necessary. Yet this is the time of year when you tend to recall yourself into a deep inner space. Your introverted and emotional nature reveals itself to you. I encourage you to follow your desire to have more solitude, and to offer no explanations about why you feel the way you do. This movement is as natural as breathing, and the seasons, and equally as necessary. This is a time of profound catharsis, regeneration, and healing. It does not need to go on for months. In fact, several days of actual solitude, and even a weekend away from your friends and family, can have a profound effect on your self-awareness. You don't need to talk about your understanding of what existence—and your existence—are about. Yet you need to stay connected to these things, so that you make the right decisions from moment to moment.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

The intensity of Virgo is drawn from a deep, underground ocean in Scorpio. While you would rather think things through and document your thought process with impeccable logic, there is a side of you that is thrown by your emotions like a bubble of seaweed in the crashing surf. Yet once you know about this aspect of your nature and how it tends to work—the tides, while imperfect, are predictable—you will be much more at peace with yourself. It helps to ride out any turbulence without trying to go into mental override mode and create the illusion of control by making arbitrary decisions. Instead, try swimming to the bottom of your inner pool, and you will come out in a much more peaceful place. If you're in a tight spot of some kind, study the whole environment rather than just focusing on the specific people or circumstances that seem to be involved. The figure always conceals the ground, and as a Virgo, the ground you stand on is your best friend.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

Your financial superpower is understanding people. It's been said that the Earth is the source of all wealth, and I would say that it's understanding people's motives. They are more often driven by their emotional desires than by their physical necessities. And once you know that, you will find it much easier to offer them what you have. To do this, you have to be curious and you need self-confidence; and you need to trust yourself. That's another way of saying being honest all around, and never taking unfair advantage of someone. There is still

static coming from deep in the family-of-origin angle of your chart, and you're starting to see that it's about more than your mother. You will benefit from looking at the line of your grandfathers on both sides of the family and getting a read on what was really troubling them. You will know you're making progress when you feel more secure and also when you feel liberated of the kinds of fears that do not reflect who you are.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

What does it mean to "get a new start"? It's about making a decision followed by changing your approach to your existence. This includes how you see yourself and see the world. Learning is the discovery that something is possible, which means possible for you. Then you would live that way. You seem to be at a crux point, where you've had enough of something—in yourself. There's an emotional approach that's easy for you to slip into that leaves no room for love, for self-respect, or for something to be possible that wasn't possible yesterday. This has something to do with resentment. One possibility is to take a more spiritual approach, which actually means putting things in God's hands. Another is to recognize the conditioning of your family to be, well, just like them, and in effect, not be yourself. You could also express yourself. You could say what you mean, and mean what you say at all times.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

The location of Scorpio in your solar chart—right before your sign—is saying that concealing yourself will not work. This is the 12th house, the place where, for everyone, their desires are swept, usually never to see the light of day (or of the night). However, having Scorpio here is just too much to contain: your passion and emotions, your drive to connect, and wanting to go deep into experimental places. You know you're a visitor here, and showed up to have the experiences available only on Earth. Controls imposed by various power authorities, from parents to the government, are not about right or wrong but rather their convenience. If you're connected to your feelings, your curiosity and your passion, you are more difficult for people like teachers to manage. Those who live full-spectrum won't be content with littleness, or with people telling them what to do. If you want to live boldly, let yourself out—all of you. Love yourself for doing it. Honesty is the only requirement.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Beware of those who thrive on chaos. There are plenty of them, and lots of opportunity here in the disembodied digital age to stir the pot. The thing being churned up is your insecurities. Everyone has a few of those, and yours center on one primary theme: will the people who surround you accept you for who you are? Or must you be some kind of politician (which started around the age of three) who convinces people that they have won you over? As time has moved on, the fundamental

tension of your life is between your need to be absolutely who you are, and your fear that you will be rejected for doing so. I would, however, fill you in on one fact that you may have missed: nobody cares that much who you are or what you do. They only pretend, till that gets boring. You have far more freedom to exist than you think.

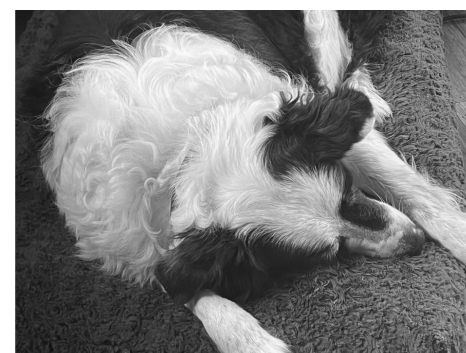
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

What do you want to accomplish? I suggest that rather than considering your concept of what this is, reflect on your actions as the most reliable indication of your intentions. You may love what you discover, which is an invitation to do more of the same. You may wonder why the heck you spend so much time worrying or putting off or getting involved in sidetracks that burn your most precious resource. Once you have this awareness, your choice of what to do is more potent. Draw yourself closer to the fulcrum, where small decisions get greater results. Such decisions always involve the action that you take, in the moment. This is a common dilemma when it comes to the expression of art, music, writing and other activities that are thought to be about passions. Often there seems to not be enough time to do these things. Be patient with yourself, and look for the sources of internal resistance. Claiming your existence is a bold gesture. And what others may think—or what you think they may think—is boldly irrelevant.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

The Sun has finally entered your fellow water sign Scorpio, and what's good for one water sign is good for the rest. I encourage you to actually feel what you are feeling, and to make the space to freely want what you want. The important thing is that you conduct yourself in a way that is appropriate for you. It's not easy for you to see when others are setting your rules for you, because you are so easily influenced by group dynamics, and by the memories and remnants of your family of origin. Ask your questions, of yourself and of others, and do not stop asking until you're satisfied that the answers are correct. If something seems "to make no sense," that's probably true—so you can save a lot of energy by not rationalizing what is plainly ridiculous.

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When we are young,
pain is the absence of
pleasure.

When we are old,
pleasure is the absence
of pain.

- A professor of neurology