

Dr. King's Legacy

By Michael Shook

It is February, Black History Month. I think January and February dovetail nicely, since last month we celebrated the birthday of one of the great leaders of the twentieth century, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And as I've considered the history of recent years, and the legacy of Dr. King, I have wondered if many of us aren't missing rather badly what the good Reverend was trying to communicate.

Last month, during the commemoration of King's birthday, our Episcopal Bishop sent out a message, wherein she spoke – mostly using King's words – of five core principles that King espoused for effective social change via the practice of nonviolence. They were:

- 1) Nonviolence means neither cowardice nor passivity.
- 2) The goal is not to defeat anyone, but to create friendship and understanding. The end goal is redemption and reconciliation.
- 3) Nonviolence attacks evil, not the evildoer. It seeks to defeat injustice, not the persons who may be unjust.
- 4) The nonviolent actor is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it.
- 5) Love is central. The nonviolent resister refuses to hate the opponent.

If we take King seriously, then we must ask ourselves to what degree we are, or have been, acting in accord with the precepts he laid out. It is easy to pay lip service to his legacy, to attend rallies once a year and to read yet another piece in the opinion pages about the "brave sacrifice and bold vision" that King bequeathed us all. But perhaps we ought to pause as we celebrate Black History Month and ask ourselves whether or not we are doing what we were called by his words to actually do.

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Legends of Vashon Speaking of Trees

By Jane Valencia

This story began overseas in the mid-1990s, in mid-Wales. With an Ordnance Survey map in hand, a friend and I sought a cairn circle on farmland in the hills. Lovely views of secluded valleys dotted with sheep opened up to us, and we passed crags of jumbled stone. I finally spotted a series of slightly taller than knee-high stones. For a moment, we were doubtful – the stones were so small, and barely distinguishable from the surrounding rocks. As we reached the stones, our uncertainty vanished. The stones of the circle were rough and gray, but at the center lay a flat end of beautiful white quartz.

The place was utterly silent. Lying down near the center stone I listened, eyes closed, to that silence and stillness. Then, I heard a chorus of birdsong, and the rushing of the wind. I could have listened to that music all day and into the night. I wished I could sleep there, under the stars, drinking in poetry like a bard of old.

Two chips of the white quartz lay beside the stone. A third piece lay wedged in an all-too-modern iron hook. My hand hovered over the loose stones, tempted to take one home. No. Those bits of stone belonged here, in this corner of Wales. I left them near their mother stone. The metal hook in the circle was another matter. I couldn't stand to see it lying there as garbage. I finally picked it up, intending to leave it, with its captured shard, at the road. On the way, I fiddled with the stone wedged in the metal. The chip loosened and fell into my hand, like a gift.

Even so, I felt a bit nervous when I slipped the stone into my pocket. I half-expected the red-eared white hounds of the Welsh Otherworld to come charging up the hill to tear me to pieces. When the hill remained quiet, I silently vowed to return the stone to the circle, cast it into the nearby lake, or offer it elsewhere in some suitable way. I knew it was not

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Carefully Consider Before Signing PSE's Easements

By Jenny Bell

Under the innocuously named "tree wire project," Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is masking an easement program that for some will result in a 10-foot-plus wide clear-cut on Island street frontages. One reason this may be happening is to move electric poles and infrastructure from their current locations in the public right of way onto Islander's private property.

PSE's "tree wire project" sounds like a community good. Indeed, the project would substitute sturdier, better-insulated wire that is said to fare well in storms, resist tree falls, mitigate wildfire risk, and reduce the need for frequent or severe trimming of trees and vegetation. However, the claim that the project is only about improving electric reliability may be misinformation.

PSE say that they need these easements for meeting the clear zone requirements required to work on county roads. This is still being verified – but at this stage, this does not appear accurate. The amount of land the easements ask for seem excessive and out of proportion to what is actually necessary. It also possible that PSE is taking this step to escape a King County (KC) "Franchise Compensation Fee" placed on utility's infrastructure on public roads.

Based on state law and a 2019 Washington State Supreme Court decision, utilities are required to have a franchise with KC in order to use county road rights-of-way (ROW). We have confirmed that the PSE/KC agreement includes \$2.5 million in annual fees for PSE to use KC ROW on public roads. By moving

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Vashon Trash Can Trial Hits Midpoint

By March Twisdale

As we hit the midpoint of the Vashon Trash Can Trial, it's the perfect time for Islander feedback, but who do we contact? That question is a moving target, but The Loop has dug deep and we have answers! Before we dive down the nearest trash chute (a la Leia, Luke, and friends) here's a reminder of our past "trashy" success!

Uptown trash has long been managed "out of sight, out of mind." Legitimate sources of trash in town are mostly generated by customer sales, and consisting primarily of napkins, coffee cups, pastry wrappers, or bottles and cans, reflecting our disposable container culture. Because all such businesses offer in-house trash cans, trash generation and disposal has traditionally balanced out nicely. Compare our streets to anywhere else in the region, and we look pristine.

It's not just businesses that keep Vashon looking good. Islanders have great habits! When our coffee cup runs dry or we chomp down on the last bite of our lunchtime meal, we either find the nearest shop with an

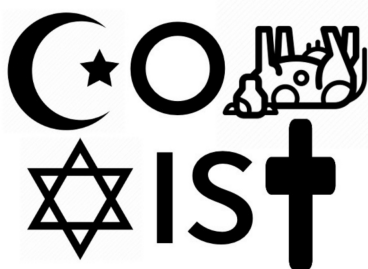


indoor trash can or we carry our trash with us and dispose of it at home. What we don't do is drop it on the ground. Thankfully, Island visitors, tourists and summer people tend to share our ethics around littering and pretty much do the same.

But we're not perfect, and business owners sometimes complain. In 2012, two cans were placed in front of US Bank and the Vashon Pharmacy. Initially a celebrated move, the inevitable problems associated with public trash cans soon came into play, leading to an effort by Jim Marsh and the Chamber (in 2019) to gain King County assistance. In 2020, that effort derailed entirely, but then came the 2021 Strawberry Festival.

Sto. Domingo did his job well. Scrounging around, he found one year's worth of King County money and enough unused trash cans for the trial. Amy Drayer, Executive Director

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CowExist returns! See page 3

Carefully Consider Before Signing PSE’s Easements

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their poles from public roads to our private properties, PSE appears to be able to shift the costs of this program, agreed upon and payable to KC, from PSE’s shoulders to individual homeowners.

Specifically, a generic easement statement provided by PSE, allows PSE in its “sole judgment” to take out any tree they feel is “reasonable” inside or outside the easement area without getting the owner’s consent. One neighbor received a 3000-foot easement request. Within this easement, PSE could erect poles on your land, as well as additional infrastructure, like streetlights, communication devices, or other attachments that are necessary or “convenient.”

The easement would also allow PSE to access your property at any time, and does not mention issues like limiting disturbance and protecting against blockage of ingress/egress.

PSE is a private company, owned by Canadian and Dutch interests. Why does it matter that PSE is foreign-owned? Because the laws and rules of countries outside of the U.S. regulate that corporation and, if they decide to sell the company, your property rights will get sold with it.

Vashon-Maury Island landowners are being bullied to sign permanent easements with clauses that a local lawyer has called “aggressive.” To accomplish this, PSE is using a real

estate acquisition firm, LaBonde Land, to badger landowners. I was repeatedly cold-called by this company and asked to “sign an easement, like my neighbors had.” The paperwork given to me asks for ten 120-foot Douglas firs to be taken out. My neighbor has been asked to substitute almost every tree of significance in his front yard – for power poles.

We love our local PSE employees who help us so valiantly in storms – but there is a difference between the company and the employees. With this project, streetscapes and property values would be diminished, and our ability to build on our land would be limited. The first ten feet of frontage of our properties is where our oldest growth trees often are – as we traditionally plant our trees as a buffer between our properties and the street. Our trees then become vulnerable to supersaturated soils and more frequent wind and ice storms – the loss of “buffering” trees of significance could result in a whole forest being taken out.

This project appears to be starting on 115th to 119th Ave SW; other proposed locations include 87th Avenue in Tramp Harbor and two sites in Dockton.

KC is a natural ally in this battle, and we have developed a petition that asks KC and the watchdogs meant to be monitoring PSE (the Washington

Utilities and Transportation Commission, and the Attorney General’s Office) to activate to protect our joint interests.

Specifically, we request that KC require a halt to the PSE easement-signing push, to give KC and the greater community the time and opportunity to request full details and conduct adequate community contact and discussions. We must also ensure that the Vashon community is given access to independent legal advice, equitably and at PSE’s cost, not the “free lawyers supplied by PSE” provided to early easement-signers.


A motion is being presented the

February 15, 2024 February Vashon-Maury Community Council meeting to support the Council in determining what Island interests are on this matter. Become a VMCC member so you can vote, and plan to attend this 6:30 p.m. meeting in person or via Zoom.

Our community must activate for our good and the greater good. Your signature matters, because numbers matter, and our lawmakers, representatives, and watchdogs need to see that trees, our streetscapes, and property rights/values are important to Vashon. The petition is available at <https://shorturl.at/clKQ2>.

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The Vashon Loop

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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.

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/>
February 7, 2024

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

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Big Moves in Northwest Print Media

How does Canada impact our local media? Canada-based corporation Black Press (named after the Black family, currently headed by David Black) has filed for creditor protection in British Columbia, and plans to file a comparable request in Delaware for its U.S.-based operations.

Black Press is the current owner of Sound Publishing, which owns 43 newspapers throughout Washington and Alaska. As a part of its restructuring, Black Press plans to sell off Sound Publishing to a new set of investors; because of Black Press's court protection from creditors, any such change is subject to court approval. But it is very likely that Sound Publishing will, in time, end up with a new owner.

With a new set of owners, each paper in the Sound Publishing portfolio will no doubt be answering the usual sorts of questions: What is your profit? How will you improve your profit? What else could we change to improve these answers?

It is too early to have any indication of what specific changes may occur. However, media buyouts have happened often enough in the industry that we can list some possibilities. Certain publications might be closed. Others, downsized and using more syndicated content in place of local reporting. Price increases for advertisers or subscribers might appear, and print editions may be discontinued in favor of digital-only distribution.

The economics of printing a newspaper deserve special mention. Corporate mergers often generate so much new bloat that no efficiency gains are ever achieved. In the newspaper business, however, printing costs are an important cost driver. The Black Press media empire certainly had access to very economical printing. Detached from the overall Black Press family of companies, there may be new stresses on printing costs for Sound Publishing papers that continue a print edition. A marginal print edition could easily be forced to a digital-only format because of printing cost increases.

While we watch these changes with interest, the Vashon Loop is wholly owned by Islanders, who operate it without debt. We print in Seattle, at a facility owned by neither Black Press nor Sound Publishing. Come what may, we intend to keep right on publishing that paper you find throughout our Island. There are already far too few local newspapers, and we hope all our regional papers weather this latest storm with little disruption.

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CowExist II

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

With much care, and over months, our foster cow Leslie's terrible wound began to heal under daily debridement and cleaning. Amazingly, what had been a deep, two-foot-long gash in her left shoulder, imitating for all appearances a hanging flank steak, gradually closed back together and began smoothing out into short-haired Holstein hide, until visiting neighbors and guests couldn't tell it was ever there.

This was largely thanks to a devoted volunteer, alias Rhett Butler. Along the way, we learned the benefits of Bag Balm in animal (and presumably also human) healing, and picked up more skills in ruminant ways – the basics of wrangling, watering, and luring.

It would be a stretch to say that Leslie was ever domesticated in any way, but like most beings accustomed to spending 90 percent of their waking hours chewing, she found

satisfaction in routine, welcoming and demanding human attention as part of it. Co-evolution may not be the right word for what has happened over a few eons, but should fate ever entrust you with a cow, you'll soon see how extraordinarily tuned in they are to people. They see all. And they seem to know all, with dog-like psychic powers.

Likewise, disruption in their routine is cause for concern. Example: When shuffling to my kitchen sink in the morning, thinking about turning on the faucet to start coffee, from 130 yards away, through two dense stands of forest, Leslie could yell, "Where the hell have you been, human? Get your abusive carnivore ass out here and fork over some hay. You're 8 minutes late!" (That's a translation, and she was wrong. I was only 7 minutes late. Cows are prone to exaggerate.)

In any event, there were no more great escapes, no desperate chases. With the exception of the threat of getting stepped on by an inattentive hoof and persistent "Moos" that could shake shingles right off a cedar tree, you might admit to a hint of tranquility. In military terms, at least, we had negotiated a cease-fire.

And, speaking of hay. Such mounds of hay. How much forage the average cow will eat in a day as a percentage of its weight involves a number of factors like crude protein content, total digestible nutrients, and age of feed, all of which are examined with precision at places like the Institute for Advanced Bovine

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When College Doesn't Make Sense Part III (of III)

By Andy Valencia

I'll finish this series of articles with some final notes on places to make a living without a college degree. The point isn't to supply an exhaustive list, but rather to give you a feel for where to look – and who to ask – when you start thinking about your future without that fancy and expensive credential.

The TV show "Dirty Jobs" tells you to look for the job nobody else wants to do. The counterpart of servicing septic tanks in technology is to test software and document it. You'll still have a hard time getting in through the front door of a large corporation – human resources policies make it almost impossible to hire an entry-level person without a degree. But there's a way around this.

A large portion of software surrounding you is open source. From the web server showing you content, to the low levels of your phone, from the tools that built that software, to the tools which organize its source code – it's all open to anybody to look at, build for themselves, or submit repairs or new features.

This is not a path for somebody who wants the world served to them on a plate. But if you have the sort of mind where you can hear about "git," and look up what it is, then look up a tutorial, then install it and play with it? Then you have the right kind of mind to find a cool open-source project, spot a chunk of

documentation that is missing, and write it. Typically, the missing bits aren't hard to find; they'll be white pages with "somebody please write this" on them. The project owners will be grateful! And they will never ask about your diploma.

You complain that you haven't made any money. You're not wrong, but your name is now on software which the average company is already using. By the third big chunk of work you put in, the project in general will be aware of your help, and you'll get a mention in the software release notes. Your resume can list this work, and a hiring manager can go look at your actual contribution.

Speaking as a guy who's hired many people in the tech world, I can assure you that once I know I have a candidate who can do quality work – I want to hire them. As a manager, I can get around HR because "bachelor's degree in computer science or equivalent experience" is satisfied by your established work history in that open source project.

Open source is equally open to software contributions. All modern software has test automation, which is just custom code that makes sure the software itself isn't broken. To contribute, you need to be able to write code, but test developers are terribly hard to find, making it friendly to entry-level coders. If you have discipline and attention to detail, learning to code is available to you for free – there are many books and web

sites – including the famous Khan Academy. Then, take a look at a few open source projects, eventually asking one, "Could I add some tests to your automation?" Most of the time, somebody will eagerly get you in touch with the right person. If not – try the next project on your list.

Or set aside the world of technology.

Plumbing and electrical require somebody who's healthy, doesn't mind being on the move all day, and will show up and do the work. Ask your local electrician if their company's hiring. If not, do they know of one? You can cold-call one after another, and eventually you'll find one who's open to bringing on a trainee. They'll have you come in to meet in person, and most companies will hire on the spot if they decide you're a good investment. The same is roughly true for auto repair shops – as with electrical and plumbing companies, it's typically not the smallest businesses that can afford to hire a pure trainee.

Plumbing, electrical, and auto repair are all also served by trade schools. These are mostly much cheaper than university, and depending on what you want to study, will run for months up to years. For plumbing and electrical, you can then approach a shop with proof that you can do code-compliant work, and have some experience with typical tasks. Automotive Service Excellence certification does the same thing for automotive work. If this training interests you, southseattle.edu, seattlecentral.edu, and many others are great starting points.

One very large, very old organization handles all their own training – the U.S. Postal Service. Our local office currently has two delivery driver positions open. You're looking at about a week of off-Island training, and then they'll train you on the particulars of delivery on Vashon. It's not technically a career position, but it's quite normal for somebody who works well to end up becoming a long-term employee. In addition to pay, there's full benefits – medical, dental, eye, even a retirement plan.

Because of all the training, the post office is not a great choice for a short-term job. There's packages involved too, so you need to be able to lift up to 70 pounds on occasion – and have good mobility, as you'll be in and out of your delivery vehicle all day. If you want a "real" job that is older than the U.S. itself, USPS is a unique possibility.

A final job to consider – call it a career, or a skill that can kick in to keep the bills paid. Short-order cooks can go almost anywhere and find work. Chat up the cook at any diner in the world and they'll guide you on how to get started. It's not a fancy occupation, but imagine knowing how to get off the bus in any city in the U.S. and have a paying gig the same day.

Intelligence, discipline, honesty. These make you valuable. I hope I've given you some ideas on turning your great general value into specific jobs in the 2024 U.S.



There’s Still Onions In The Stew

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

One day, overlooking the outer harbor, Seán and I shared between us some “bean-hole beans” and some “smoked ham hock green pea soup.” Naturally, tasting these dishes brought up the usual conversation. Seán still makes those old “Boy Scout” bean-hole beans without an actual bean-hole fire dug into the soggy ground.

Both of these dishes were ideas passed down from our families. Our mutual talk involved various family traditions of food preparation. We still argue about “clam chowder” ... as is the duty of anyone who has grown up on the beach.

The trouble with arguing between the two of us these days is that we are getting older and tend to forget one thing or another. We were arguing about “bacon” until it turned out we had already agreed on the type and cut!

We were out cutting wood one day, and a statement was made ... “We can still do the same things now that we could do at 30 years old!”

“What did we do at 30?”
“Well, I forgot.”

These could be nature’s warning signs of getting older, I suspect.

We both remember the meals that we hated. Yech! Tuna casserole with crumbled cornflakes on top! Those “squiggly” gelatin upside-down things with shredded carrots and other unidentifiable ingredients.

A Secret I Never Have Told

By Suzanna Leigh

Striding along the beach path, the storm wind blows the hair across my face and out behind me. Waves splash playfully over the driftwood. Trees dance in the wind. Gulls soar on the wind, crying their excitement as they play with the updrafts. Song bursts out of me, Hallelujahs, and my favorite song, from the musical, “Pippin.”

I’m 76 years old. Life is good. How did I get so lucky? Was it just luck? Or was there something I did – or didn’t do – that stacked the cards in my favor? Is there something in the way I navigated the winds of life, in my experience, that will help others to live joyfully even as we age, or to work through troubles and come up smiling?

Indeed I have. I was a pregnant bride, then my husband took off to find his fortune – with his girlfriend – leaving me and our young son with no income. In another relationship, my partner and I were busted for his marijuana plants and he went to jail, leaving me with a nursling and a three year-old – and again no income. I finished college 20 years later than my high school classmates, while raising three sons alone. I finally found a good man and a good husband, only to lose him to cancer a few years after our marriage. At age 47, when I moved into my house on Vashon, I had already lived in 45 different places, including a chicken coop, a miner’s shack without indoor plumbing, and a VW van.

What helped me to make it

Island Voices



Canned spinach and the horrible “creamed” corn. Boiled beets, boiled brussels sprouts, and overboiled cauliflower! Even the dog would not eat these under the table!

It hurts to write about these memories. The invention of “instant” potatoes should go down in history as the demise of any American culinary art for that period of our young lives.

Well, in spite of all of childhood’s culinary mayhem, we were lucky to have family that made some things we loved and remember today.

We were food critics from the beginning, but our voices were silenced by our mothers and the fact that we were basically hungry and ate (mostly) what was set before us – unless we could pass things like under-cooked peas to the dog.

Seán remembers the cook at Vashon grade school. He thinks that Mrs. Pederson was her name, if

through those years? What were the constants in my life when my relationships, my homes, and my jobs kept changing? Well, let’s see ...

Caring for three active boys and nurturing them into fine young men was my core purpose for almost three decades. Teaching kept me growing, when I finally found the work I was meant to do in the world for income – although where and how I taught changed several times. Having a purpose kept me grounded.

When the boys were young, I did quick sketches of them at play – really quick; they wouldn’t stay still long enough for a real drawing! I slipped away to paint landscapes in watercolor when I could, and I took art classes every chance I got. Drawing and painting weren’t my only creative outlet; when I didn’t have what I needed, I made it. Creativity kept me sane and helped me to solve many of the problems poverty made.

I walked in the desert when I lived in Arizona, or the in woods when I was in the Pacific Northwest. I talked to birds, put my arms around trees and felt their spirits, felt the aliveness of moss on the rocks. Nature nourished my soul. Still does.

One day, as I walked over the bridge crossing the Willamette River on my way to art school, I looked down at the river, then over to the tall cement and glass buildings in downtown Portland Oregon. The river was alive, the buildings were not. The river called to the wildness in me, to the girl I was when I explored the Maine woods and found a Presence there. It was a sense that “God” is like a matrix in which we all

memory serves. She was a good cook, though she always burned the canned peas, so much so that we called them “cigar peas” because they smelled and tasted like burnt cigars.

Seán’s brother Mike hated peas more than anybody and would try to pass them to the dog, folded up discreetly in a napkin, under the table. The dog hated peas even more than Mike, and Mike was occasionally caught out by the obvious evidence of shredded, pea-stained napkin parts. Family legend has it that Mike might have occasionally diverted the blame to someone else, although no one really believed that the dog had been the original naughty one.

We loved scalloped potatoes with farm cream and homegrown spuds, and of course, mac and cheese. Perhaps the best memories involve

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live, like fish who are in the sea and the sea in them. That feeling that the Divine is real, that one can experience it, kept me on the quest to know it better and gave me a positive way to relate to the world.

I felt pruned many times just as I thought I was about to flower, got the rug pulled out from under me just when I thought I had a handle on life, like the time I was cooking at the nursing home and going to the local community college to get the prerequisite courses on my way to becoming a nutritionist. My sons were two and ten years old. I barely finished the semester when I discovered I was pregnant again, and this pregnancy sapped my energy to the point where I could not continue working, let alone commute across the water to college and still give my sons the attention they needed.

In all, I identified seven constants, seven foundations, that have helped me to weather the storms and even to thrive in them. And now my spring is turning to fall. Now I am an elder, and I believe that the many years I have spent getting to this part of my life are about to bear fruit at last.

One of those fruits is my “7 Pillars” course, sharing some of the things that have helped me to thrive, things my mentors and role models have taught me, and things I have learned through research. In April, I

fish and chips or clam chowder. Salmon was always on the table, canned, smoked, or baked. Sometimes, we had so much salmon that we traded for peanut butter sandwiches at school lunchtime.

Beans and ham were constant staples, made to a consistent ideal. Although somewhat different techniques arise between us, we still make a passable clam chowder that is pretty much the same, no matter who makes it. The difference might be which clams look good at Thriftway. One of us adds either more or less onions than the other. I forget who uses less or more onions.

One item made around New Years or Christmas was “oyster stew.” The composition was oysters ... butter ... celery leaf ... cream, and more butter... and onions. Plus, a secret addition, which we are trying to recall. It was so secret we forgot exactly the secret, but we can tell you that onions were still in the stew every year.

am teaching this class as an introduction to the concepts, at Women Hold the Key, and I am developing it as an online class in more depth. I hope that by sharing what I have learned and lived, it will prompt you to discover what will keep you thriving as the years pass. The seven key concepts, “pillars” are:

Self care – care for our bodies, hearts, minds, and souls

Integrity – staying true to ourselves

Community – connection with neighbors, friends, and family

Purpose – how we serve this world

Connection with nature – feeling a part of the animal and plant world

Creativity – expressing our inner and outer worlds, appreciation of beauty and of others’ creations

Connection with the source of life – our spiritual journey

Suzanna is teaching a class on Connecting Art and Spirit on the 2nd and 4th Sundays in February and March at Women Hold the Key (based on one module of the “7 Pillars” class). She also teaches art journaling - on 1st and 3rd Thursdays - and watercolor (with Will Lockwood and Inge King) at the Senior Center. Coming in April is an Introductory class to the 7 Pillars at Women Hold the Key. Find out more at Suzanna’s Substack, Drinking Color.

♪ Oh I've had the fears of 66 years
I've had troubles and tears
by the score ♪

The Standing Nation – At the Speed of Tree, Part 1

By Jane Valencia

In May 2022, I attended a private performance of Mik Kuhlman’s one-woman show, “The Standing Nation – Remembering Our Kinship with Trees.” We gathered around an old and large Bigleaf Maple in a field. The tree itself was both theater and a centering presence, around which the show wove. Mik engaged with the tree, and the tree – through its nature – with her and with us, the audience. Nearly two years later, when I recall the experience, I am again enchanted. Thus, I met with Mik for a conversation.

“We started with all my collaborators for tea under a tree,” Mik says “With the tree’s presence there from the very beginning.”

“The Standing Nation” may be a one-woman show, but it relies on many to bring it to fruition and sustain it. “It was really powerful, I think, because a lot was said without being said. And it’s guided the whole piece ever since, because I am trying to come from a place of allowing. I’ve been saying, I’m going at the speed of trees. That’s how it started, at that level – where it all began. And it informs everything.”

The Standing Nation developed over the course of two years.

“As a solo performer, creator, theater-maker, it really takes me about 10 performances, and then I start to know and understand what the show is. It takes that long because the audience is part of the equation, the exchange. And then there’s the tree, which is like a partner or the world.”

Over the two summers of the development process, during the pandemic, Mik performed 23 shows for 475 people, taking 20 people at a time into the forest.

“I feel like [the show] is no longer a little sapling – it’s recognizably a tree. I feel like it’s got enough growth that it’s at that stage where a teenager goes off for college, right? Where they

really are developed, they really can do their own laundry. The show feels like that on that level. It feels developed. Now, it’s nuance for me. There’s some interactive work that I have dreamed of that I haven’t done yet. For example, I would love some spruce tea and to have a plank of wood that, as you come out of the forest, you get this sip of spruce tea.”

We spoke of the three trees that were central to those performances. I mentioned how, in the private show I’d attended, I’d been charmed by Mik’s use of a beautiful nook in the tree, in which she rested her head.

“And the first tree, in the Burton Woods didn’t have a place for me to nook in, and there’s nowhere to sit.” Attendees had to walk down a trail to arrive at the tree.

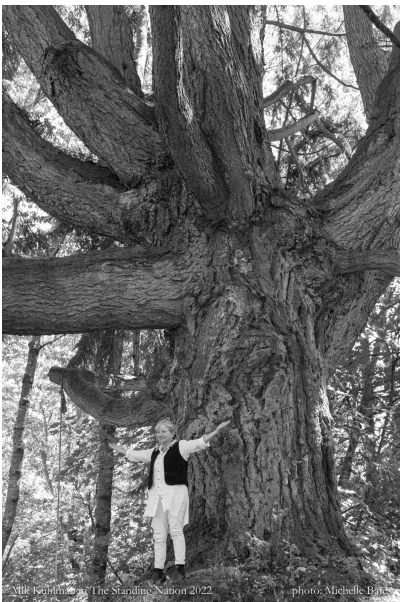
The third tree was an “octopus mother tree” with a big root ball.

“She’s just in a yard,” Mik describes, “and she’s a 250-year-old Douglas fir that did not go straight, and that grew into a forest on herself.” Approaching this tree is like entering a portal. As you approach, “You first go, ‘Okay, that’s a beautiful big tree.’ And then you go under her canopy and your jaw drops. You just walked under into a forest. It’s unbelievable.”

Mik continues, “And so the beauty of this show is that there’s a tree. And the tree has things to say, too, and it’s not speaking in words and thoughts. It speaks in oils, and it speaks in scents. When we walk into a forest, we can smell it. We inhale, we breathe deeper. It’s medicine to us in a very powerful way. So they talk. It’s another language, and it’s been fun to just dip into this as an artist.”

The Standing Nation came about, perhaps, as a result of the pandemic.

Mik Kuhlman had been offered a slot in the Vashon Repertory Theater’s first summer festival with a particular play that she really loved, “But it was dark, and I just felt like



Mik Kuhlman - The Standing Nation
Photo by Michelle Bates

‘that’s not what people need right now.’”

Mik explains further, “COVID changed me, in making me think twice. It’s not ‘What do I like,’ but ‘what does the world need right now?’”

Specifically, she wanted to do something about climate mitigation. “I feel that we as individuals, every single one of us, has to stop and ask ourselves, what can I do right now? Because I have to. We have to. And so as an artist, it made me say, ‘I have to do something that brings what I’m here on the earth doing, and my trainings and skills and efforts and time and dedication.’”

But what?

In a phone conversation with her longtime friend and collaborator, screenwriter Tess Clark, Mik mentioned her desire to do a piece about the environment.

“I have some beautiful western

hemlock forest that I see from my windows, and I was staring at their tops. And Tess said, ‘I know what you should do. You should do a piece about trees. I just read this beautiful article in the New York Times Magazine from Suzanne Simard, and you even look like her.’ And it felt like the North compass just walked itself right into place.” And I was like, ‘Yes. That’s it.’”

At the time, Tess was in her own exploration of plant life, asking: What’s this plant called, what’s native to my area, what are these plants in my yard?

She offered to write the piece. Initially, the writing was difficult. Finally a friend suggested, “Take your healer self and go into the woods. What would you tell people about based on all of this?”

This was a turning point. “We zeroed in on female scientists who are out there in the field doing the work,” Mik shared. “And then we zeroed in on this concept of things being in threes: the three women, and how about three trees and their relationships? Who are the trees that we know? So Luna, everybody knows Luna and Julia Butterfly Hill, that story ...” And The Standing Nation began to sprout.

“Tess had the exact essence to be able to speak for the trees, because she speaks from her heart, and has always really driven in the world from her heart. So it was these two really powerful pathways in that had instant openings, because they’re from the heart.”

To be continued.

Find out more: Mikkuhlman.com

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Dr. King’s Legacy

Continued from Front Page

Specifically, how are we conducting ourselves in our daily lives, in our interactions with our fellow human beings? Are we doing anything to build relationships, “to create friendship and understanding?” Are we practicing nonviolence? I wonder.

How often I have heard my family members, or friends, or acquaintances – intelligent, thoughtful, and progressive people, one and all – utter words of violent content, damning and condemning those they disagree with, their words dripping with contempt for the “troglodytes,” the “brain-dead” who are too dumb to know when they are voting against their own best interests; the “deplorables” that populate (in their minds) so much of the nation.

Indeed, too often I’ve been guilty of the same. Of course, some folks on the other side of the political divide say much the same about those they disagree with, but that is no excuse. All of it is the way of violence.

When I would indulge myself thusly, a good friend used to quote to me from Proverbs; “As a man thinketh, so shall he be.” Over the years, I found myself considering the words that too often sprang from my thoughts, and – because words are a form of action – what I was doing. I realized I was making myself angry, cynical, and bitter. I saw what a pointless exercise it was to so denigrate my fellow citizens. My ranting was poisoning my life, but no good change was effected, and it crippled any chance for sincere communication by destroying the possibility of establishing a relationship with those I disagreed with. And relationship is central to communication.

Carefully crafted studies, as well as everyday observations, have made it clear that before anyone will entertain a new perspective on a given issue, there has to be a relationship with the interlocutor. There has to be some element of trust. There has to be genuine listening. Absent that, one or both parties simply retreat to their respective barricades, and shout ever more loudly.

King’s message is, I think, more important than ever. Consider again his precepts. What would our discourse be like if we stopped demonizing others long enough to listen to them, to take their concerns seriously? To let them know that they’ve been heard, and not summarily dismissed?

Agreeing with the other is not the point, and paradoxically, we needn’t even like someone to act in this way. In the context of nonviolence, Dr. King dismissed the idea of liking someone: “Like is sentimental and it is pretty difficult to like someone bombing your home; it is pretty difficult to like someone threatening your children ... But Jesus says love them, and love is stronger than like.”

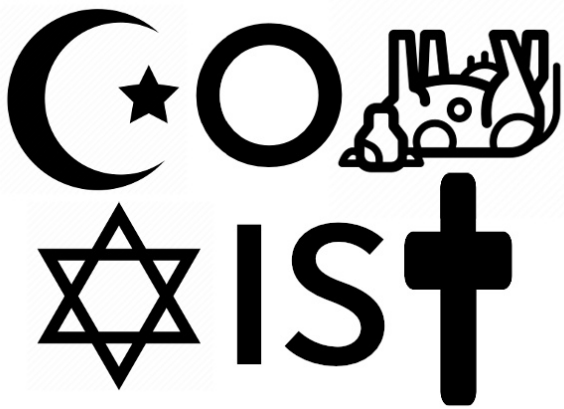
Love is the foundation of all life. It is the only force that can counter and transform the darkness that lies within all our hearts. Only love can generate the courage necessary to stop hating, to listen to others, to build a relationship from which understanding, goodness, mercy, and compassion flow. This is the way to create trust, and friendship, and build the “blessed community.”

When we use ugly, derogatory epithets to speak about those we disagree with – no matter how righteous our indignation – we are building walls of hate to lurk behind. We are creating the “other.” How are we to ever cross bridges to build a future for all when we are so busy verbally firebombing each other? What does it say about those who call themselves progressive and/or liberal, who regard themselves as better-informed, more intelligent, and more sophisticated than the “hoi polloi,” yet who nevertheless smugly slander those on a different part of the political spectrum? What does it say about how earnestly they are applying the teachings of Dr. King to their own lives?

This year, I am resolved to practice more diligently Dr. King’s precepts of nonviolence. I will especially bear in mind that, “The goal is not to defeat anyone, but to create friendship, and understanding. The end goal is redemption and reconciliation.” That seems to me a most worthy, if challenging, resolution. And I think the part about “redemption and reconciliation” applies to us all.

CowExist II

Continued From Page 3



Studies, aka Washington State University.

In brief, given decent hay quality, a reasonably safe rule of thumb for a pregnant young cow is 2.5% of body weight per day, or in Leslie’s case, somewhere in excess of 75 pounds. Left to her preferences, and with some wastage, Leslie was happiest with a 100-pound bale, ideally with some helpings of molasses-soaked grain (which she got addicted to as a bribe in order to scrub out her painfully open wound).

Do the math, and that currently equates to about \$40 a day or \$1200 per month in feed costs. Unless you have open rangeland and five acres of tall, natural grass per cow, ranching on Vashon is a hobby and not a serious business. Costs for just one wayward cow are roughly equivalent to owning and operating a nice 40-foot motor home on a cross-country trip, paying off a lovely yacht or sailboat with moorage included, maintaining a used Ferrari with a new Corvette thrown in, stocking a respectable wine cellar for Downtown Abbey, or 2 or 3 good trips to Thriftway.

While we waited for Leslie/Cowzilla to calve, we also gained new ranch hands in the form of two high-energy city teenagers, John and Denver. They were kind of a package deal. John, our godson from back East, befriended Denver from Tacoma while they were both counselors at Camp Sealth. They started to spend days off at the farm, and between running around, breaking tree limbs, shooting BB guns, and starting fires, they began to do occasional chores. Which included pasture frolics.

It was on one of these missions of chaos that John and Denver, along with our own two younger boys, discovered that Leslie had laid down in a thick patch of nettles under the shade of a big cedar nearest the barn. They raised the alarm, and we piled out from the main house to see, in the thickest part of that patch, a calf standing up first on two, then with some up-nuzzlings from a massive mom head, finally all four legs, splayed out and swaying.

Fortunately, there was nothing more to do than to stand in witness and marvel at new life. A healthy female calf, seemingly normal in every way compared to her outsized mom, entirely black but for a tiny white star on the middle of her forehead.

Born in nettles, one of the boys named her Nettie. She was an exemplary calf, and Leslie was a surprisingly good mom. There were a couple of udder complications associated with a bout of gestational diabetes (see “molasses-soaked grain”), but Nettie nursed normally and grew as one would expect, closely resembling a Black Angus with whom she had no direct relation. Months passed in peace. I honestly don’t know how many. But it wasn’t very many.

You see, all that time Leslie had been watching intently. Like the velociraptors in their Jurassic Park enclosure, she had noticed a vulnerability, a particular chain and ring set-up on the gate to the main pasture. To close the gate, you looped the chain onto a peg outside the gate post and closed the ring over to secure it. More importantly, Leslie had also smelled the presence of a bull about a mile-and-a-half away.

When her mind and body told her she was ready, Leslie reached through the gate and undid the ring with her tongue. It was off to the races, and down the highway again, but this time with young Nettie following.





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Legends of Vashon Speaking of Trees

Continued From Front Page

a stone to keep forever.

A few years later, our family moved to Vashon Island, and the stone did too.

In time, I pondered giving away the stone. But to whom or where? And would I really have the will to give away something so mythic to me as a quartz from a cairn circle in Wales?

One day, a teen – “Mia” – contacted me and another friend. She’d had a vision about a great elder Tree, and a festival celebrating the Tree. We adults listened, and then helped make this festival happen.

I emailed our community, detailing Mia’s dream. The festival would celebrate All Beings, and focus around a great and venerable Tree. At the Tree would be “Tree-speakers” – those who would listen to the Tree and speak what they felt the Tree saying. Around them would be musicians representing the four directions. There would be vocalists, dancers representing the chakras, and animals and other beings. Mia had found such a Tree in the Burton Woods, a kindly Bigleaf Maple. We invited our friends to bring the vision to life by taking on the other roles from the vision.

Several days before the Tree Festival, I held a music practice at the Bigleaf Maple. The forest duff lay thick around it. Mia mentioned that she had a special stone that she

intended to leave at the Tree during the festival. As she spoke of how hard it was to consider parting with the stone, I knew: I’d leave mine with the Tree too.

At once, I felt conflicted: If I did so, I felt sure I’d never see the stone again – it would be swallowed by the Tree! At the same time, my fanciful nature decided that perhaps this might be the start of the stone’s next journey: to enter some mythic realm of our Island.

The day of the Tree Festival arrived. Reaching the trail to the Tree, I was startled to see that a bunch of party confetti – little, colorful metallic bits that included words like “happy birthday” and “celebrate” – was strewn everywhere. Some other group had had a party of their own. I love sparkle and festivity, but was sad to see all the tiny metal bits lying along the trail and on the bushes, impossible to fully clean up.

Folk arrived at the Tree: adults and children, some dressed in rainbow colors, some as animals or magical forest beings. The celebration began with honorings and blessings spoken to the Tree. Then true greenwood music ensued – lilting and light-hearted fiddles, flute, pennywhistle, and harp; drums and rattles; and the otherworldly sounds of crystal bowls, digeridoo, and voices.

Mia and I settled in with the Tree. We listened to what arose in our hearts as a result of being with this Tree, and we spoke. I don’t recall the words, but, nestling in with the Tree with the intention of serving as a voice for it opened my cells and imagination to a different way of

perceiving and existing in the world. As a Bigleaf Maple might, I felt in communion with this forest, the Island, with the air and the soil, birdsong, sun-warmth, and starlight.

Eventually, the festival wound down. Stones in hand, Mia and I turned to each other. She placed her stone in a section of bark on the trunk. I placed mine in a hollow at the Tree’s base. The next moment, we both felt an electric charge of “What have I done?” She reached into the bark to take back her stone, and I reached into the hollow to take back mine.

My fingers closed around something ... different ... as did hers. We opened our hands.

In hers and in mine lay tiny metallic party-decoration words, both of which said “THANK YOU.”

What?! How could this be? Could the Tree really be thanking us? For the celebration and for the stones? It seemed so. Needless to say, we hunted no further!

I can’t say I’ve never looked for my stone since. Years later, Mia and I returned to those woods to find the Tree – and failed. We actually got a little lost in the woods, and that was strange to us because Burton Acres is a park with clear boundaries – not a deep wilderness. I took that as a mischievous message – perhaps from the fairies – to leave well enough alone.

A few years later, I returned to the woods and did find the Tree. I gave a half-hearted search for the stone, but really, I sensed that the

stone was now firmly nestled as an inhabitant of the Island, perhaps even as a guardian, with its own destiny.

As a Catholic Christian now, I marvel at these events, and wonder what it means to have experienced them. Scripture is full of words like these: “For you shall shout in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12), and, “The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord” (Psalm 33:5).

God’s Creation is woven of glory. Perhaps at times, the Holy Spirit moves with a sweet wild mischief within it.



Jane Valencia in a Bigleaf Maple in the Burton Woods. Photo by Michelle Burke



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Pruning, Part 1

By Kim Cantrell and Little Bird Gardens

It's been hard not to notice that this winter has been unseasonably warm, minus our little cold snap in mid-January. Many plants came out of the freeze as if nothing had happened, and then there are those that showed signs that the extreme drop in temperature was not their friend, like the early blooming sasangua camellias, whose flowers turned a lovely shade of brown. Thankfully, many of the unopened buds did not seem to be affected, and there will still be some blooms to enjoy.

The tender perennials have the hardest time, and we will have to wait to see if they emerge in the spring. And some of my grasses don't look particularly thrilled, either. I noticed this last year, too, when just about all the Carex testacea (New Zealand hair sedge) did not make it through the winter, though I think this may be more related to wet winter conditions, as these plants have proven to be quite resilient over the years.

As we think about what we hope to have in our gardens this year, and even though we got down into the teens this winter, be aware that we have moved into another USDA planting zone. We were zone 8b and are now in zone 9a, which means our winter's average lowest temperature has been between 20 to 25 degrees in the last 10 years. Our little planet is warming up, and no doubt climate change is a factor. But this is just one bit of information to know when choosing a plant for your garden, and we should be mindful of other elements that will help with a plant's success. Other components like soil type, slope face, moisture, and micro-climates will also play into whether a plant will survive in our local climate.

But what I imagine we are all thinking about as gardeners this time of year is pruning. With this warmer weather, there is a definite feeling of getting a head start on winter pruning. And as we are moving into what I call "pruning season," I hope to help you ease up on this task that many feel is daunting, timely, and necessary. My focus here is a primer to help with the "Why & When." I will address the "How-to" in another article.

Pruning is an art and a very special part of gardening, and should be treated as such. I love to prune, and I enjoy the intuition and finesse behind pruning. Over the years, I have seen my fair share

Island Resilience

of poor pruning, and I feel a deep need to stop it from happening to another shrub or tree. Poor things. So, let's talk about some things before we start our annual trek to the shed to get our clippers, loppers, and saws.

Good pruning should be minimal, help in retaining the plant's natural shape, and you will find in time that you will likely not need to prune at all. There are good cuts and bad cuts, there are times to prune and times not to prune. And taking the time to learn about each tree and shrub and its needs and unique behavior will save you time and create more enjoyment in your garden.

Pruning is often overdone and too much "pruning" is done with the almighty hedge trimmer. It's for hedges - it's in the name. I would say 90% of poor pruning is because of this tool. It is amazing how quickly you can ruin a beautiful specimen - it's quick, easy, and voil  , everything is a perfect little ball. This is high-maintenance, and it can cost you as a homeowner to keep up with this method.

Thankfully, there are ways to correct poor pruning, and over time, one can return many plant specimens back to their former glory, though there are some things that cannot be undone.

If you are the one who does your own pruning, or you hire help, ask yourself and them ... why are we pruning this? I hear It's too big, It needs to be pruned, or It's that time of year. So, let's start with timing. It is almost always a fine time to prune. Pending a hard freeze or a stretch of scorcher days, then prune away.

I do most of my pruning in the winter/spring so I can see what is going on with my deciduous plants, which is much easier to do without leaves on the trees and shrubs. I keep my summer and fall pruning to the utmost minimum, mainly taking out deadwood and broken or diseased branches. Plants are already stressed at this time of year and we don't need to add to that stress with excessive pruning - big cuts and the like. It is always good to research what plant you have and find the best time to prune accordingly.

This leads us to the next most common comment, it needs pruning. And I say, does it? I am

often in disagreement on this topic. If it is planted in the right place (meaning it can grow to its genetically determined size), then it should not need pruning, bar the occasional broken or wayward limb or deadwood. If it was poorly placed in the landscape, then you just might find yourself pruning, pruning, and pruning, and when you're done with that, a little more pruning. It might be time to move that plant or replace it with something that fits the space. Personally, I want to sit outside and enjoy my gardens as much as possible, without always feeling like there is something to do.

And this too big concept eludes me, too. What is this need to control the growth of a plant? The tree or shrub doesn't know that, and all they are doing is being themselves. They are living things that come with a set of genetics that determine their ultimate size. Nothing you do will stop it from wanting to grow, and the constant stress you put those trees into repairing those wounds will be the death of them. Topping trees and hacking and whacking away will not serve anyone well. No view, homeowner's association, or need to control should determine how big a tree should be and, hey, trees should be the view!

Many years ago, I was a lucky duck and had an opportunity to take the first Certified Master Pruning Series at the University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture, mainly taught by Cass Turnbull. She has since left this precious earth of ours, but left behind an amazing book that I highly recommend to all. Her knowledge confirmed much of what I had learned, plus helped me with some additional refinement. I literally laughed out loud while reading Cass Turnbull's "Guide to Pruning." Get yourself a copy and enjoy an informative and funny read; you can also visit plantamnesty.org to learn more.

Next time, I'll help you with some good pruning practices, cuts, and more. Take time to look around your garden and see what really needs to be pruned and you may find it all looks great with just a little snip here or there.

And just a little more advice, when in doubt, protect your investment and have a professional help you.

Vashon Trash Can Trial Hits Midpoint

Continued From Front Page

of Vashon's Chamber of Commerce, acted as liaison, while the V-MCC board worked with the county to "determine locations for the trash receptacles." Oddly enough, according to one prominent business owner who is active in the Chamber, Uptown business owners were not consulted, even though their storefronts are directly impacted.

According to David Vogel, trash management for the 2021 Strawberry Festival was insufficient. This was a one-time event, and minor fails were to be expected, as the Chamber was recovering from the strain of COVID lockdowns. Still, the 2021 Strawberry Festival triggered the Vashon-Maury Community Council (V-MCC) into action. Based on the assumption that the V-MCC represented broad Island opinion on the topic, John Taylor (head of King County's Department of Local Services) agreed to pass the proposed "Vashon Trash Can Trial" on to Bong Sto. Domingo, Community Liaison for King County Department of Local Services.

Overnight, Vashon Island was dotted with refurbished metal trash cans, and an email from the Chamber went out promoting this alteration to our Vashon Uptown experience.



Reminiscent of the Rumble Strip Fiasco of 2012, there was little to no public outreach prior to installation, but unlike that debacle (which rallied cyclists, parents, influential Islanders, our political representatives, and the 2012 version of the V-MCC), we can't blame the government. King County was invited in by a small cohort of Islanders.

Let us pause and appreciate those who step up and try. In a world where some try to do truly terrible things to others, we are lucky to live on an Island where most people try to do good. But good intentions aren't enough when your idea changes the lives of everyone else. A properly conducted, community-wide project requires the follow five steps: (1) broad public outreach allowing for community assessment of perceived needs, (2) clarification of hoped-for benefits, (3) brainstorming of potential unintended consequences, (4) consideration of myriad solutions, and (5) committed follow-through. Good intentions are a fine starting point. Now it's time to make needed changes based on actual experience.

Which brings us back to the amazing, friendly, and awesome Bong Sto. Domingo. Bong wants to hear from as many Islanders as possible, to accurately assess Island opinions on the matter. Also, he's aware that Vashon is experiencing two classic problems associated with public trash cans.

Inappropriate Dumping. This is the bane of the public trash can world, and Vashon is no exception. Our refurbished cans are even more vulnerable to this unwanted behavior, as the round, domed lids have huge openings and are unattached to the can itself. Remove the lightweight plastic top, drop in your old engine oil, car parts, paint supplies, insecticides, or simple household garbage, and off you go. See the online version of this article, with photos, on the Loop's website: vashonloop.com.

Trash can overflow. Overflowing trash cans make our streets look far more trashy (not less). One of several business owners interviewed emphasized that asking employees to deal with public trash cans on the roadside is too much. However, this January, frustrated business owners gave in to necessity, carting away several bags of trash piling up around the can directly in front of the Pharmacy, as it was an ugly eyesore for close to two weeks and the wind was constantly blowing loose trash down the sidewalk. The prevailing

attitude amongst business owners seems to be, "I don't think we need them, but I'm not entirely against them, so long as they are managed well and emptied frequently."

Shawn Hoffman, current owner of Vashon Market (IGA), brought a lifetime of experience to our conversation about the new public trash cans. "If you have to pick up a few pieces of trash or sweep in front of your store each morning, that's just part of doing business." Shawn also described trash cans lids used in big cities, attached to the can with small, round holes that allow for cups, bottles, and small bits of trash - while preventing household garbage or other inappropriate dumping.

Shawn's ideas remind us that public outreach and the inclusion of many voices results in far better outcomes. Next month's article will dig deep into a growing trash pile of ideas, many of which make a lot of sense.

We, the residents of Vashon-Maury Island have the answers to these questions. And the King County Department of Local Services wants to hear from us. **Contact:**

During February

David Daw, External Relations Manager, (ddaw@kingcounty.gov)

Beginning in March

Bong Sto. Domingo, Community Liaison, (bong.stodomingo@kingcounty.gov).

The Importance of Bitters

By Kathy Abascal

The holidays are definitely over, and most of us are now working on trying to recover from our excesses. These excesses usually involve too much sugar, too much of the wrong fats, too much alcohol, and too many late-night meals.

The ultimate effects of these excesses vary, but all involve an overwhelmed digestive system. Our food choices have thrown off our ability to properly digest and absorb nutrients. To make matters worse, many of the nutrients we really need are absent from our diet. The result: digestive “upsets,” weight gain, poor sleep, reduced immune function, aches and pains, and even depression. It is startling how many ailments and discomforts are due, at least in part, to the disorderly secretion of digestive juices.

Digestion is meant to follow an organized sequence that begins with chewing. As we chew, we mix our food with enzyme-rich saliva that starts to break down carbohydrates. Chewing also signals to the stomach that food is on the way. The stomach then produces acid to break down proteins in the food, while bile and pancreatic enzymes begin to be secreted into the intestines to digest fats and finish carbohydrate digestion, so we can absorb the nutrients they provide.

If we are eating healthy foods and digesting them properly, we provide our intestinal flora with

Health Matters

the “right leftovers” and do not suffer digestive problems.

However, when stress is present (and for most of us, it is), our stress response shuts down the orderly secretion of digestive fluids, including saliva. Without adequate amounts of saliva, we do not begin to digest carbohydrates in our mouth. We also fail to produce enough stomach acid, bile, and pancreatic enzymes. We do not break down our food properly, and end up feeding the intestinal flora very different leftovers, leading to the growth of the “wrong” flora, with far-reaching negative effects.

Getting the body to produce digestive juices when they are needed is quite simple: Take some bitter-tasting herbs before meals. The idea of beginning meals with a bitter-tasting substance is a foreign concept in the American food culture, especially after a holiday filled with non-stop sweet tastes – from cocktails, candied yams, and glazed hams, to pies, cookies, and other desserts.

It is easy to become addicted to the taste of sweet food and to be put off by the idea of taking something that tastes bitter. However, we need bitters because our digestion cannot work well without them.

The taste of something bitter causes a reflex

secretion of saliva, stomach acid, bile, and pancreatic enzymes. Perhaps because so many of the wild foods we evolved to eat were bitter, we are designed to respond effectively to any bitter taste. That taste makes us salivate. It makes our stomach juices flow.

Herbalists take advantage of those reflexes when they prescribe a bitter tonic. Shortly (5-15 minutes) before meals, the person takes some drops of a bitter herbal tincture mixed in water. This immediately starts the flow of saliva and transmits the message to the gut that food is on the way. This simple measure re-establishes proper digestion.

There are many bitter formulas on the market. Most contain the root of the beautiful flower *Gentiana lutea* (gentian), often combined with some other, more aromatic bitters, like ginger or orange peel. Unfortunately, many species of gentian are endangered today so, unless you know how the gentian tincture you are considering was sourced, I recommend instead a formula that uses one of the *Artemesias* spp. I personally think *A. absinthum* (wormwood) works very well.

Usually the effects of bitters become stronger the longer they are used, probably because we absorb important nutrients, including vitamins like B12, more effectively. So do give bitters a try, you will be amazed at what a difference this simple change will make in how you feel.



Interview With Vashon Chiropractor, Dr. Cori Bodily-Goodman

By Caitlin Rothermel

How can a chiropractor help someone?

The main objective of chiropractic care is to get the spinal joints – which your nervous system runs through – aligned. This allows your nerves to penetrate and innervate your organs and glands and keep your system running.

For many years, chiropractic just involved spinal adjustments. But our toxin and stress levels have gone up, and people need more support. I went back to school for nutrition, because the quality of our food is just not what it was back in the day, and that makes a huge difference in your inflammation levels, which will affect your spinal alignment.

What are common reasons that people come to see you?

Most common are neck pain, headaches, lower back pain, and sciatica; also, knee or shoulder pain, and even digestive issues – aligning the spine affects the nerves to the digestive tract. Sometimes, it’s just overall joint pain – where everything hurts!

If I see young people, it’s typically for general wellness or because of a sports injury, or a fall – things that are not repairing on their own. Sometimes, newborn babies can get stuck when coming out of the birth canal; which can affect their alignment. This can also be the case with Caesarian section. Kids and infants usually only need minimal adjustments to stabilize.

During perimenopause, women face specific metabolic and hormonal issues. Estrogen levels and progesterone levels change, which can increase joint pain and cause hormone headaches. It’s also common for hip pain to increase during menopause. These patients need adjustments and overall alignment. We can also use cold laser therapy, and hormonal and neurologic resets, and certain supportive herbs.

Tell me about neurologic resets. What are they?

I use the Neurologic Integration System, or NIS. It’s a therapy developed by a New Zealand osteopath. There are certain pathways that get blown out with inflammation or injury – like a circuit – and sometimes your body has a hard time turning those circuits back on. Finding these pathways and resetting them, so to speak, turns the circuits back on.

NIS is non-invasive, but very effective and quick. It’s great for people with concussions or who need to reset cranial compression, especially following injuries or car accidents.

You also use an activator to make adjustments. What is that, and how does it work?

The activator is a low-force, accurate impulse tool. It directly moves the joint or part of the spine faster than your body can tense against it. But it’s not heavy, and it doesn’t typically hurt.

With the activator, you can do very specific adjustments. Afterwards, the area has the potential to stabilize a little quicker, and in my experience, the adjustment can last longer than a manual adjustment, so you wind up needing less treatment.

Also, the activator can be used from babies on up, and it’s really good for people who have cervical plates or other hardware in their back – people who can’t be adjusted manually. I have a lot of patients who come to me because they can’t get adjusted in other ways.

What made you initially interested in being a chiropractor?

I always knew I wanted to do something related to health. Growing up, I was always the kid with all the illnesses and injuries. In my 20s, I got to the point where I had chronic issues – I became very ill, and I was frustrated with going to the doctor and not being able to resolve my

problems. My brother suggested I go to this chiropractor he had used when he hurt himself at work. I thought, a chiropractor – what?

I went, and the chiropractor didn’t just do adjustments, he talked about energy work, my diet, and the benefits of spinal realignment. Within a month, I went from barely getting out of bed to feeling like I was completely back to myself. It was almost like a light bulb went on, and I knew this is what I wanted my journey to be.

Why do you think that chiropractors sometimes get such a bad rap from medical doctors?

That dates back years and years, to when the first chiropractic university was founded. Medical doctors labeled chiropractic as “unscientific.” This stigma seemed to start in medical schools, so doctors had this view from the start of their career. That led to a lot of kickback from medical doctors. Chiropractic focuses on “Clearing interference and letting the body heal itself. Align the spine and let the nervous system take care of itself.” Most physicians lean towards a different route, with training that involves more medication and surgeries.

I think that this small battle started and evolved, such that medical doctors coming out of school had it in their heads that the chiropractic profession was not valid.

My dad was a veterinarian – very, very medically minded. He had a negative opinion about chiropractors. When I told him I was going into chiropractic school, he was not exactly supportive. But every time I learned what an adjustment did for the body, I explained to him the scientific mechanism. Over time, he completely changed his thoughts because I was able to explain it in this way.

It’s not always recognized that, for their bachelors’ degree, chiropractors and medical doctors have the same science requirements. After undergraduate work, chiropractors attend a four-year chiropractic college and have similar class requirements as medical doctors.

How do you assess new patients?

Before I even talk to them, I watch their gait and how they get up from their chair. I can tell where their pain levels are just by watching certain movements. Also, the eyes can be very revealing. If someone is in pain or their system’s not working, their eyes will look heavy and almost at half-mast.

People in chronic pain will be withdrawn or cranky. The best part of my job is seeing their eyes, mood, and attitude change after a treatment.

With new patients, I like to set aside time for the initial visit. We take a health history, learn what’s happened in the past – injuries, surgeries, and medication use. I follow this with orthopedic exams, looking at posture, and then isolate specific areas to find what’s working and not working. That’s how I’m able to target treatment.

What made you decide to come to Vashon to live and practice?

My husband and I got married here several years ago. In general, we both wanted that feeling of being connected to a community, and during our wedding, we found out that my husband had relatives on the Island. We thought, why don’t we just raise our kids here?

My clinic was right off the ferry in Tacoma, and there was never an intention of me working here. But I had a patient base from Vashon, so I originally decided to work one day a week here to support that base. This was around the same time that Dr. Carlson retired. Then Dr. Curtin left, and I realized I had to make a decision, that there was a need here, with the ferries getting worse, and people not wanting to make that trip for a 15-minute appointment.

Now, in my waiting room, everyone knows everyone, and it’s like a social hour (that is great). My patients here are so lovely to be around and I really enjoy, and am very grateful, to be able to work on Vashon.

Visit vashonchiropractic.com or contact Dr. Cori at 206-259-0216 or email drcori@vashonchiropractic.com.

MINGLEMENT

ORGANIC MARKET EST. 1972

At The Roasterie



Illustration by Jane Valencia

Once upon a time, while sipping tea (Chocolate Mint Rooibos) on the Roasterie front porch, an Islander envisioned an ancestor right there with her, and painted her. Inspired by a recent conversation with Eva about ancestors, Jane shares that painting with you now.



Island Epicure – Mushroom Herb Soup

By Marjorie Watkins and Suzanna Leigh

Nothing warms us on a cold winter’s day – or night – as well as a bowl of hot soup, whether it is the beginning of lunch or dinner. This recipe comes from the Caucasus range of mountains, where they say the men all live to the age of 100 years. The diet of the people living in the Caucasus makes good use of local plants, such as mushrooms.

Many mushrooms have healing qualities, but some are poisonous, so you have to be careful. We went mushroom-hunting here on the Island once with Steve Self. There are many kinds. We found champignon, the common white button mushrooms that are good to eat. The French name for mushroom is champignon. But there is a white mushroom that is very poisonous. The red ones with white dots, you aren’t supposed to eat those. They will make you sick. And there are yellow ones with white dots; they could kill you. I don’t trust myself to pick up mushrooms that are safely edible. I would rather get them from the store.

Suzanna says chanterelles you can pretty much tell, and they are very good. They are kind of an orangish color, funnel-shaped, and kind of frilly. They don’t have the typical caps and stems like most mushrooms. I don’t know where they grow; I’ve never found them, but other people have. They are easy to identify, and people have found them even here on the Island. Sometimes, Thriftway carries them.

Suzanna also remembers hunting bolete mushrooms with Steve. Instead of gills, they have kind of a sponge on the bottom. They are pretty much all edible, although Suzanna says she thinks the king boletes might have upset her stomach a little.

The king boletes have a red top and spongy bottom, with a white stem. They aren’t the poisonous amanita muscaria, which have a red top with white dots, gills underneath, and a white stem. The best boletes are tawny on top, kind of a golden tan, and spongy on the bottom, and can be very large. But you have to eat them right away (fried in butter!), because there’s a little worm or something that loves them. If you don’t eat them right away, pretty soon you don’t have any to eat.

I’m sure portobello mushrooms would be good in this recipe; you can get those at Thriftway. And of course, the common mushrooms you can buy in the grocery store are good too.

Mushroom Herb Soup

Makes 4 servings

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup finely chopped yellow onion
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 cups sliced, fresh mushrooms
- 4 cups chicken stock or chicken bouillon
- ½ cup chopped, mixed fresh herbs, such as basil, mint, parsley, or coriander
- Salt to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper

Cabbage Salad With Warm Shallot Vinaigrette

By Caitlin Rothermel

When we first moved to Vashon, we had the pleasure of working with Len Wolff, one of the most professional and responsive realtors on the Island. Recently, Len and his wife Nancy started a new venture with the magazine, “Good To Be Home,” which is how I first came across this recipe.

In truth, I initially read the recipe because I don’t like raw cabbage, or any cabbage-dominant recipe, and I wanted to be proved correct again in my lifestyle choices. But this salad intrigued me. That’s because it uses a hot shallot/garlic vinaigrette to instantly cook the chopped cabbage, and I love shallots and garlic as much as I’m bored by cabbage. Furthermore, the final step of the recipe, where you add the hot vinaigrette to the cabbage mix, provides a very satisfactory feeling of finesse and completion. Last, there’s the cheese part.

I’ve made this several times now, and it has become a household staple. Along the way, I’ve I added some tweaks to the original recipe to really perfect it. Read on and you will see.

Cabbage Salad with Warm Shallot Vinaigrette

Ingredients

Serves 4

- Green cabbage, about ½ of a medium head (2- to 3-lbs)
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 4 medium shallots
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2-3 tbsp red wine or rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 cup freshly shaved gruyere or other Alpine-style cheese
- Optional: ½ cup walnut pieces or pumpkin seeds
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper



Instructions

In a very small bowl, mix and set aside the balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar, Dijon, and honey.

Slice the cabbage thinly and in a crosswise direction; place in a large bowl. Add ½ to 1 tsp salt and squeeze the cabbage (“massage” it) with your hands to distribute, soften, and absorb. Do this for 20-30 seconds. This part is essential!

Gently mix or toss the cheese and nuts (if used) into the cabbage mixture (no squeezing this time).

Slice the shallots and garlic very thinly. In a small pan, heat the olive oil and butter until the butter melts. Add the shallots and garlic, season with salt and pepper, and stir frequently at low/moderate heat until the shallots soften and caramelize – about 10-15 minutes.

Remove shallot / garlic mixture and immediately whisk in the mixed vinegar, Dijon, and honey. Last, pour the final shallot vinaigrette over the cabbage mixture and toss to coat and wilt.

Vashon!

Do you have a favorite recipe you’d like to share with others and see published in The Loop?



Share it with us at editor@vashonloop.com

Directions:

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add chopped onions. Saute 3 minutes.

Add lemon juice and sliced mushrooms. Saute 4 minutes.

Pour in chicken stock or bouillon. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cook slowly for 15 minutes.

Enjoy the flavors. Serve with pumpernickel bread and cheese for a whole meal.



After Snowmelt

By Yvonne Higgins Leach

an eloquence emerges:
a birdsong, a feast of wildflowers,
water falling in flight.

The salmon, wolves, beetles,
bull trout, mushrooms, caribou,
the cougars, beavers, and bears

in their broadened wild spaces
astonish the landscape.
And in the sky, too –

a huge cloud drift
changes shape, woven by wind.
Whether air or earth

with no human presence here,
the language of this poem
remains nonviolent.

This poem appears in Yvonne’s new book just released by Kelsay Books titled “In the Spaces Between Us.” “After Snowmelt” is her attempt to come to terms with what humans are doing to nature and the environment.

In past issues of the Vashon Loop, the poetry of Yvonne Higgins Leach was incorrectly attributed to Vivien Higgins Leach, and, incompletely, as Yvonne Leach. We very much regret the errors!

You in Preview (Paris in the Winter of 1913–14)

By Rainier Maria Rilke, Translated by Marc J. Elzenbeck

You who I foresee
the lost beloved who never comes
I won’t know your favorite songs
so have stopped trying to stop
the waves of your next moments
which will surely obliterate this landscape.

The cities, towers and bridges
twist and turn in their courses
of lands forever trembling
in the thrall of intermingling gods
who fight and resist, rise but elude
the unexpected is where I’ll find you.

That was you in the gardens
that I saw with such great hope.
But for an open window you almost
bumped into me at the farmhouse
and I’ve found the streets where you
had just departed, hearing your footsteps.

Sometimes your face appears in mirrors
you’re so beautiful the movers drop them
and stare at the shards as if I’m to blame.
But who knows? Maybe the same bird sang
and his warbles rang through us both
alone into our souls yesterday evening.

Surprise Visitor to Fern Cove

By Laura C. Lippman

Big old furry rug
lion-of-the-sea
sprawled and sloppy
on your moldy float
lolling and rolling
in all your stinking glory:
rank of breath and coat
king of your perch,
clad in your majestic robe of sloth
sans deadlines or lifelines
surrounded by your court
of oblivious widgeons
and coots.

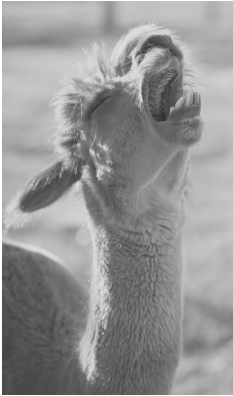
Laura and her husband live on Vashon part time. They love to walk the beaches and parks, birding, invasive weed eradicating and tidepooling. With her writing group, Laura recently published “Writing While Masked, Reflections on 2020 and Beyond,” published by WSU press.

Can’t stop drinking
and want help?



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
Online Meetings: SeattleAA.org
AA Phone: 206-587-2838
Local Vashon Contact: 206-849-1980

Llaughing Llamas Chronicles



By Daniel Hooker

Q. What’s the most dangerous thing in your bathroom to use as your life preserver

A. A sink!
~

From J.J. Mormon at Island Lumber:

I can’t understand why New Yorkers make such a big

deal about New Year’s Eve. I mean, after all, every year they drop the ball!

~

I saw a leaf that was in the shape of a chicken. Apparently it’s from a poul tree![pole-tree? poultry!]

~

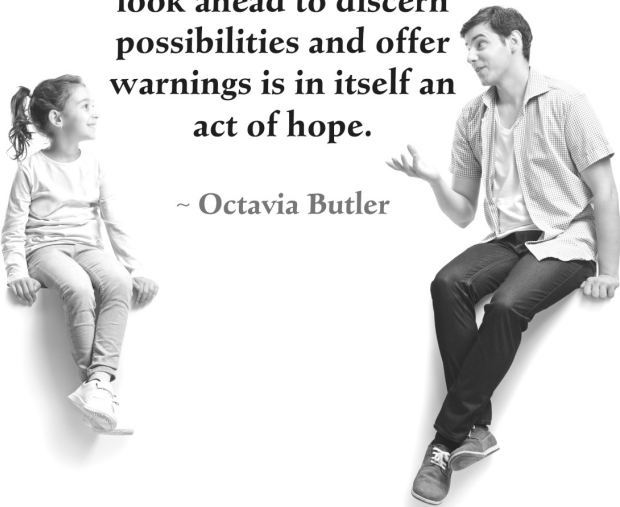
Q. What’s the most sarcastic bear on earth?
A. A pan! Duhhhhh!

~

I went to a wedding this weekend. It was so emotional, that even the wedding cake was in tiers!

The very act of trying to look ahead to discern possibilities and offer warnings is in itself an act of hope.

~ Octavia Butler



The Vashon-Maury Clothing Drive Needs You

By Daniel Hooker

With help from our Community, Granny’s Attic, Mary Ashby Milne, and of course the Vashon-Maury Island Food Bank, I have been giving clothing and bedding away for years, and it’s been a pleasure.

We need volunteers!

The Vashon Maury Island Food Bank serves approximately 280 individuals and families a week, and so do we. We give away an average of 1½ to 3 suburban truck-loads of warmth and caring a week. In addition to volunteer help, I’m seeking someone to take over running the Clothing Drive. I’m leaving the Island soon, and I would love to see someone commit to Community Caring as I have done, and keep the Clothing Drive going.

There’s no pay involved, and, as matter of fact, it could cost you time and money. But the rewards are incredible, when you see a child beaming with joy over new clothes and jackets, and in one young girl’s joyous words at Christmastime, “You mean that I can shop for my mom, and get her a new jacket?” Yes, you can!

News You May Have Missed

Private Equity-run hospitals hurt the patients

Was your EV’s MPG too good to be true?

EV tires have a surprisingly short life

Articles from Around the World
vashonloop.com/missed

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



Contact us at
editor@vashonloop.com

Vashon-Maury Clothing Drive



Where: Vashon Food Bank

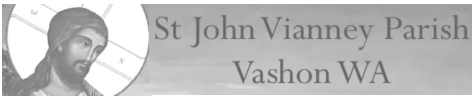
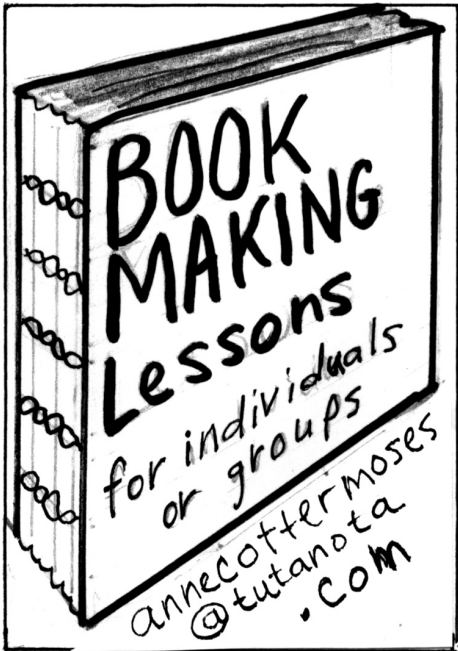
When: Wednesdays,
10AM–2PM

(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.



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

Aries (March 20-April 19)

You may passively observe the changes to your social environment, and you can also step into the scene and investigate directly. For many years, the world has been locked into certain patterns that seem to weave an ever-tighter mesh. Now, that is slowly starting to unravel, though few have noticed. The changes to you and within your sphere of experience are being driven by your personal awakening. If the influences seem to be coming from the outside in, beware of the illusion. You are entering one of the most intensive spiritual growth spurts of your life. You may be wondering how you can handle your feelings and the potency of your awareness, and the answer to that is, gently. No matter how fast you or “things” may seem to be moving, take it slow, and keep your senses open. They will tell you more than your mind.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

With the Sun and Pluto now working together at the top of your solar chart, you may have the idea that anything is possible. In pure theory, that is true. Yet much depends on a series of decisions you make about how to adapt to shifts in society that few people are noticing, much less understanding. Remember that to understand is not to make up a story. Those with whom you have a difference of opinion, values or point of view are your most important allies and indeed bellwethers in this strange world we are now inhabiting. Those who “agree” with you or who affirm your viewpoint are something of a road hazard. If you’re in any form of leadership, you want advisors around you who disagree, and who are not afraid to disagree with you. I don’t mean out-and-out conflict; I mean genuine differences in perspective that you then take under advisement. Ultimately, your goal is to get the two hemispheres of your brain talking to one another—and to make your decisions consciously.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

What is the framework of your beliefs? You have a certain view when you look out the window of your mind, and that is largely determined by what you hold to be true. Often, that’s based on a collection of past notions and biases that have little value today, except maybe as reference points. Pluto in Aquarius is here to help you expand your horizons. One of your strengths is your flexibility, though it doesn’t always apply to all facets of your worldview. However, the time has come to adapt your ideas about life to what is actually happening in the world. This is about being more observant rather than doing anything that goes against your principles. And it’s about making sure that your principles are grounded in an honest dialog with yourself rather than your concept of what is acceptable to others. This should not be such a fine line, but it is.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You’re entering a period of achievement, long worked-for, hoped-for, and perhaps even expected. Yet this will come with significant responsibility, and little that you can take for granted. While you tend to be someone willing and capable of thinking for many people, now is the time to remember that your life is about you. Your goals must align with the things you want to do, and your motives must align with what actually motivates you. You are growing into a



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



sense of your personal mission, and the relationships you form with the people immediately around you are a much more useful concept of the universe than anything abstract or outside your immediate grasp. This is your moment to heal from the damaging effects of the digital environment, or to surrender your humanity to them. Healing is an active process of engaging with the world in ways that seem risky, out-of-character and mostly with an unknown outcome. Allow your curiosity about yourself and about life to lead you. Write it on your mirror: Curious = Awake.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Pluto in your opposite sign Aquarius is inviting you to explore the world with a new sense of adventure. You may be discovering that you have more room to move around, even if that comes in the form of little social openings you can squeeze yourself through. Emphasize the people and situations that you find genuinely interesting, or that challenge you. You may also be noticing that people have an influence on you unlike they have in the past, and there may be some compelling characters appearing in your line of view. Get to know people, and don’t be quick to judge them. Most will turn out to be unlike what they seemed at first, and what you discover will amount to a social learning process like you have not experienced since you were dropped into the middle of a kindergarten class and were looking at 20 unfamiliar kids. Let yourself be drawn in the direction of what is unusual, strange, unpopular, and maybe even repelling. Allow the world to develop in new ways, humming a little tune of, “Things aren’t quite what they seem.”

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

It’s not always easy gaining clarity. It’s also not easy seeing what you missed, or correcting views and opinions that not only were wrong, but that you used to make important decisions. Many things are shifting and changing in your world and in the world, and it’s calling for a total reevaluation of matters you thought were long settled. Saturn in your opposite sign Pisces is providing you with a kind of corrective lens. It will correct in the direction of what is realistic and necessary. It’s also helping you filter out people and things that are based in mere fantasy. Pragmatism is no way to run a creative and fruitful life, but we all need a little, and you now have some available just when you need it the most. Events of the next few months are going to hold out possibilities and potentials; you are in a situation where less is definitely a reliable form of more, and where quality is the best form of quantity. If you’re seeking a new form of success (and you most likely are), start by microdosing modest achievements.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

I have often described Libra as the human blow torch. Turn it down and you barely notice the flame. A little higher and you can make a nice creme brulee, baked Alaska or indoor s’mores. Turn it all the way up and you can cut steel. With Pluto now in Aquarius, you are set to express maximum, concentrated heat, and to take the kinds of creative risks that change you, and

might change the world. Yet this calls for some guts. You may feel way out of character sustaining this kind of energy for any length of time—but you can do it. It’s time. Way past time. You might say that the only true freedoms are the ability to love who you want to, and to be creatively daring. In many instances, this translates to breaking consensus: doing what is not usually approved of, that which has not been done before, or is seemingly inappropriate. A good definition of art is when you do it anyway. It’s not merely beauty. It’s the truth emanating from yourself that must be expressed, no matter what.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

The time has arrived for you to either take charge of a family or household situation, or separate yourself from it. Yet more than this is about other people, you’re being called to summon a level of internal emotional mastery. Such will feed your sense of belonging on the planet and in your personal environment no matter what others may think. As a child, it’s never safe to go against the adults. They could leave you in a basket outside the orphanage. However, today, that’s not possible, especially if you have your own bed and your own supply of food. Yet the anxiety of rejection by the tribe stalks most people to the last days of their lives. The essence of Pluto in Aquarius is moving beyond this fear. It’s at the heart of the matter of your emotional independence, which translates to your personal liberty. You are no longer a child—which most adults need to remind themselves of every day. Pluto and other factors reveal that you have the strength to stand in your truth, and the strength to keep growing.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Persist in working on whatever you’re doing—the thing that’s for your own purposes, which you are into because it’s the thing to do. Minimize responsibilities to others, or keep them in their proper place as you serve your own purposes and your own goals. You are in an extremely rare moment where a tangible, focused breakthrough is not only possible but verges on inevitable. You are, in many ways, a traditionalist, and you have the ability to sustain your devotion to a project or purpose for a long time. But then come the points of mutation, where you depart from what you know and explode your personal tradition—to great effect. I strongly suggest you not concern yourself with the end results, but rather that you just keep doing what is interesting and provides you with a focus of activity: a purpose, in the moment, somewhat related to what you were doing yesterday.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

The thing often lacking from the whole idea of Capricorn (and many of its people) is doing things for the pleasure of the experience. Where one has Capricorn in one’s chart (and for you, it’s your point of orientation), the subject matter of that house takes on an air of responsibility, duty and obligation. The ancient Roman festival of Saturnalia happened when the Sun was in your sign (look it up, it was a trip). Yet to me that seems more like a pressure release than the actual savoring of existence and the exploration of life’s nuances. In order to do that, you would need to make a

conscious effort—to set aside business, and responsibilities to others, and get yourself to a place you want to be. It’s true that an element of productive activity is a helpful diversion. However, you might want to find the nearest pinball machine (or your favorite arcade game), or your favorite poet, and indulge yourself for a while—just to remind yourself what it feels like to do something for no special purpose.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

Pluto arrived in your sign two weeks ago, and is about to take a conjunction from Mars. This is an activating event, something that will tell you about this new stage of your life in a way you were not expecting. Pluto often works on a deep level, poised for an aspect from a nearby inner planet. That personalizes it, brings it close, and makes it real. Mars calls for action. It’s likely that you’ve come to a realization, long in the making, that is waiting for you to make a decision and put it into motion. You may sense what that is about now; you may feel like you don’t have enough information to make a decision. Therefore, it would be unwise to rush, or to preempt your natural process of discovery. Reliable information is likely to be the specific thing you’re missing. Meanwhile, the thing to do now is to be sure you know what you want. You are motivated to move mountains when you experience actual focused desire. There will be two parts to this: Mars enters your sign first, followed by Venus. Mars is concerned with fast action, and Venus with correct action. Remember.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

Keep your options open; the very best of them has yet to make itself known. And as Mars joins Pluto in the most sensitive area of your chart mid-month, it will help if you manage your anxiety carefully. Your fears will seem larger than life under this astrology. So whatever techniques you’ve learned over the years, dust them off, and put them to good use. You have more important things to do than fret or worry. One of them is to work with those you know are your friends toward the improvement of your life circumstances—whatever the field of life may be. Ultimately, you possess responsibility for your choices. Each one is part of your maturing process; each demonstrates your commitment to yourself and to who you are. Yet in our time, perhaps worse than many others, there is a lack not just of loyalty but also the lack of understanding what loyalty is and why it’s so important for both the giver and the receiver. This is part of the fundamental chaos of our times, and the fraying and fragmenting of humanity. In all you do, act as if to hold the world together.



If you’re not
making mistakes,
then you’re not
making decisions.

~ Catherine Cook