

## Coyote Control Faces New Challenge

The American Dream has always been imbued with some wildness. Not surprisingly, people can have widely differing opinions and definitions of its benefits and boundaries. Amidst reports of increasing coyote activity, Vashon social media groups have recently hosted lively debates that hint at a deepening divide between those who advocate for coyotes as a protection-worthy net positive and those who accuse the animals of negative, potentially predatory behaviors.

Karen DuPleinty, Island eco-leader and chairperson of the international non-profit, "Coyote Forward," dismisses the accusations as both inaccurate and misinformed. "The coyote diet consists of rodents, fruits, food waste, and occasional small game. They self-regulate and pose no danger to household pets."

Local retiree Art Froman disagrees. "What a load of bull\*\*\*\*! We had a cat. Friendly. Got him home from the shelter, fed him, let him outside. Gone! Didn't have time to think up a name or take his picture to put on the telephone poles." Aimee Kay replied, "Karma always bites back. Letting cats roam decimates bird populations and causes climate change. Cats are just following instincts, so it's on us to act humanely. We built our kitty a \$45,000 sun porch to satisfy his sense of the

outdoors while staying green."

The two camps sharply disagree on the merits of coyote control versus tolerance. Further exacerbating the ethical dilemmas, recent reports point to the presence of canid hybrids, a longtime commonplace of the American Frontier. These particular coy-dogs, however, may be of a completely new type. Across several states, the popularity of Goldendoodles - who have gregarious natures combined with often careless owners - has led to a proliferation of the dreaded Coy-Poodle.

Armed with a friendly demeanor and wavy fur, the variant can effectively camouflage predatory intentions, disarming suspicions until in attack range. This success formula seems to have made its way to Vashon.

As Facebook commenter Janet Yelling wrote, "We were out walking Gretchen, our dachshund, and saw some sort of poodle mix walking on the neighbor's lawn. It kind of pranced over to say hello with its tail wagging. All of a sudden it grabbed Gretchen by the neck, tore her leash right out of my hand and made off into the woods. By the time we could get there, it ate her down to the paws. We don't know whether to be heart-broken or grossed out. Now our son wants us to get one."



Artist's rendition of coy-poodle

While environmentalists caution against revenge for grief associated with alleged pet losses, one contingent proposes vigilante action in line with state and county laws allowing for protection of pets and livestock. The owner of "Riders of the Apocalypse" gun store, Zach Sheridan, is offering \$50 per regular coyote pelt and \$100 from the new Coy-Poodle or Poo-Yote variants. According to Zach: "They make a great conversation piece for the wall, and a beautiful jacket. Check us out on Ebay. Also, we have a sale on night-vision scopes now, just \$1,999, and that includes sighting it in for you."

In response to complaints and appeals for help, King County has established a dedicated hotline to report coyote-related incidents or to use for primal scream therapy. The number is 877-766-9683 or 877-POO-YOTE.

## Dope – Legends of Vashon, 1895

By O.S. Van Olinda

Some 13 years after the first settlement was made on Vashon, the summer of 1891 to be exact, J.E. Mace bought a 10-acre tract of wild land in what was then known as the "Vermontville settlement," now the Glen Acres district.

Thirteen years wasn't really much time in those days, when homes had to be carved and grubbed from the virgin forest, the popular tools being the axe and grub hoe, and our Islands were still something above 98% timberland.

In those days, too, everything which came to the farmer's meat house was meat. In other words, Vashon farmers made use of every available thing which came to hand, and wasted little.

Mace, at heart a pioneer, had few resources, and almost every Sunday would see him combing the beach, where he picked up quantities of lumber and often other articles of which he could, and did, make use.

Thus it happened that he was taking his usual stroll on the beach one fine Sunday morning in the early spring of 1895 and came upon a strong canvas sack which contained something very heavy.

He dragged it a little way up from the tide and carefully cut the strong cord with which it was tied - the sack would come in handy at "tater diggin' time" - and found a number of small tin cans, 80 when he counted them, weighing about one pound each, each very neatly and carefully wrapped in

oiled paper, but with no label or mark of any nature to disclose what they might contain.

He cut open the top of one of the cans with the large blade of his pocketknife and found it filled with a yellowish-brown, pasty mass which had little odor, and he was no wiser than when he had first found the sack.

He carried the sack of cans up off the beach a short distance on the south side of Dilworth Point, hid it under a large log and, taking the can he had opened, went up the hill to the home of a neighbor, John Hopkins, and asked him if he knew what queer kind of "putty" it was.

Hopkins was an Englishman, widely traveled and of education and experience. He took one glance at Mace's "putty" and told him that it was opium.

Mace knew that there "was a law," but he didn't know a thing as to its details. He went back and carried the sack of dope up the hill and showed his find to Asa Start, an old friend and neighbor who lived directly across the road from his own place.

They buried the stuff on Start's place, making a rough map and marking the spot where it was hidden, so that it could be easily found again. This map Mace gave to his wife, telling her to give it to anyone who might come around looking for the stuff - if such should happen - and he took the next morning boat for Seattle to learn his

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## The AI Bubble And Its Needles

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Hot as the Dot-Com bubble may have been, the AI bubble is blazing. There are strong connections between now and then. At its height in 1999, a smallish company named Sun Microsystems made computers key to powering the graphical internet, and its stock was bid to a staggering 10x price to sales.

If Sun Microsystems valuation was staggering at that valuation, Nvidia's current 40x sales figure is eye-popping. For perspective, the historical price/sales average for Standard and Poor's 500 companies is only 1.5x.

Like Sun, Nvidia is an innovative, smallish company, a maker of computer graphic cards with an up-and-down price history. It sells 80% of

all AI "cloud" server farm chips, designing the best metaphorical shovels and picks for miners in an AI Gold Rush that's in everything, everywhere, all at once. By volume, its product is worth more than gold and easier to transport than uncut diamonds.

Since OpenAI rolled out ChatGPT's public beta in November of 2022, the AI sector has absorbed trillions in investment, led by pension funds, big tech, and Congress members, driving United States stock markets into their biggest bull run ever. A few weeks ago, Nvidia hit \$2.4 trillion in market cap, coming within a good trading day of being the world's second most-valuable company. Only Microsoft and Apple

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## Honorary Deputy Sets Out to Slow Speeders

Due to staffing shortages in unincorporated areas, the King County Sheriff's Office has updated its General Orders Manual to certify residents for recording and reporting speeders. A volunteer is pictured on Cemetery Road deploying a county-issued radar gun and camera recorder. According to the Deputy, "One little red Honda is going to get a very rude awakening."





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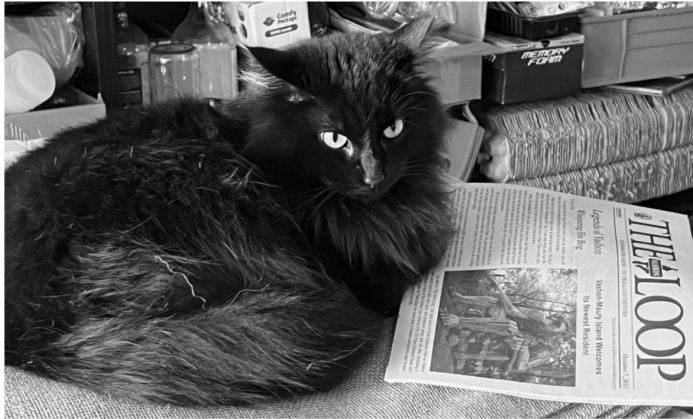
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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editorial Team,

The headline of your March 7 editorial is a good description of its reasoning – "Feckless."

You argue that public funds now "serve irregular immigration, people with addictions and/or mental illness," unlike 20 years ago when "the concern was for members of our community with modest means – they held down jobs, had families, and Vashon benefited by their being a neighbor." Why the distinction? People with addictions and mental health issues are or have been our neighbors. Recent immigrants have families and are some of our hardest-working, lowest-paid neighbors.

You criticize our governor for wanting to site a homeless center in Kirkland\* over the community's objections. I've always been a strong advocate of bottom-up planning and other forms of participatory democracy, but I also acknowledge that government has a role to play in siting unpopular facilities that have a public benefit – homeless shelters, treatment facilities, jails, garbage transfer stations, sewage plants, and transportation infrastructure. There would be no Fauntleroy Ferry Terminal if it was up to the immediate neighbors.

It's ironic that your editorial criticizes the siting of the Seattle Indian Health Board's facility on Vashon. When you're talking about Native Americans, it is the rest of us who are the "irregular immigrants."

Your neighbor, Jim Diers

\* Editorial correction; this should be Kenmore

Andy Valencia responds on behalf of the Loop Editorial Team:

Feckless or otherwise, The Loop's editorial stance is that citizens should be involved early enough in local proposals to influence early decisions. Even when the issue is contentious. In fact, especially when the issue is contentious.

With respect to Vashon Community Care Center – VCCC – the comments we've received assume, variously, that we have adopted a pro or con position on the development. To repeat the relevant text from our article (emphasis added), we wrote about VCCC:

**Without questioning the merits of our own new development**

Since publishing our "Feckless" article, we've become much better informed on the VCCC project, and hope to cover it in future issues. My own first contact with the new owners of VCCC is a tale in itself, which may get published at some point.

Thank you for writing to us!

Andy Valencia

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# The AI Bubble And Its Needles

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still remain above it.

Starry-eyed speculators like Google (Alphabet), Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, and Facebook (Meta) are splurging on tents in Deadwood and filing their claims. They see the enormous potential impact on their future business, so are compelled to establish an advantage. Collectively, they're funding AI-focused spin-offs and start-ups at a furious rate of one or more per day.

One potential problem for new prospectors, large and small, is that, just like in the Dot-Com era, this Gold Rush doesn't yet have a clear or established business model, and graphically-oriented Generative AI requires huge amounts of computing power. Another potential issue is supply disruption: 90% of AI chips are now made in Taiwan, which is politically subject to China and just experienced a major earthquake.

I've helped make solutions and core AI technologies for over 30 years, so am just an old foot soldier doing his usual homework. Nvidia does have a real business model; its recent performance was propelled by sales growth and they reported record top-line revenues last quarter. If you dig a little, however, there are interesting signals in the details. In 2023, Nvidia made many "strategic investments" in its customers. These customers took money from Nvidia, then used it to buy chips, which Nvidia then booked as service-connected revenue,



immediately round-tripping the sales. The customers then typically used the chips as collateral to raise more money from other investors to fund their electricity-hungry server farm operations.

If you've got the hottest tools in the world, why would you need to lend new customers money? On the one hand, Ford and Toyota do this all the time to unload inventory. At the Microsoft-hosted "Davos of AI," Nvidia just announced its new Blackwell 200 chip, said to be 30 times more powerful than the H100. So, with a better shovel on the way, it made sense to clear the old ones out. Chips go down in value, not up. On the other hand, we've seen former stock market darlings Enron and Cisco use similar sales accounting and practices with disastrous results.

One of its newest start-up customers, HyperCloud Nexxus, got a \$1.1 billion loan from Nvidia. It is valued at \$100k and founded by a Norwegian who went to jail for money laundering - then changed his name and moved to Dubai. Earlier

this year, HyperCloud Nexxus also announced a \$300 million merger with American Cannabis. So ... why would a server farm with a billion in brand-new H100 chips want to buy a pot company? Some market observers questioned the strategy and the proposed deal was called off on March 1st.

This is not to say that former international felons don't make fine executives, and that mixing chips and cannabis isn't a match made in heaven. Or that it's illegal to loan money to somebody to buy your product and call it revenue. What it's saying is that there are speculative red flags gathering and that millions of Americans now have a substantial portion of their retirements riding on one giant bet. Wall Street consensus is that Nvidia's stock price is expected to double or triple over the next year or two.

As it happens, one of my first AI projects was for a government that asked, "How can we predict avalanches in the Alps?" There are a lot of factors - temperature, motility, declension, wind - but the simplest way to predict an avalanche is to go to where one already happened and consider how much new material has accumulated. Avalanches, like bubbles, are cautionary tales. Their energy potentials swell until they can't be contained anymore. Then it lets loose all at once.

Consider Sun Microsystems again, that little company that once powered up the internet. While it was indispensable its stock rose like a rocket, to \$200+ billion. As the internet was built out, lead times for

its orders shrank, inventory ballooned, and the stock lost over 96% of its value. Sun's CEO, Scott McNealy, later publicly told investors they were crazy to have paid so much for the stock. He kept right on making great computers and eventually Oracle, a database company that adapted to and enhanced the internet, bought Sun for \$7 billion in 2010.

The selected S&P 500 list of important publicly traded stocks was created 67 years ago. During that time 148 companies on it have temporarily been valued at over 40x sales. None stayed so for long. On average, over the following year the price per share of those blessed 148 fell by negative 38% compared to the market average. History may not repeat exactly, but there are obvious parallels for the current crop of AI flyers with euphoric expectations.

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## Myocarditis By The Numbers – Part 2

By Caitlin Rothermel

Last month's article looked at the increase in myocarditis in the United States since the COVID-19 pandemic. Among young men in particular, vaccine-induced myocarditis seems to have at least doubled. This month, I looked at some new research that used national vaccine databases to study patients who developed myocarditis after COVID-19 vaccination.

A study published in January 2024 used a "big picture" historical perspective to understand vaccine-associated myocarditis. Researchers looked at all myocarditis events reported to the U.S. Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) from 1990, when the database was started, to August 2023.

Of the millions of events reported through 2023, only a small percentage were for myocarditis - 3,078, or 0.3%. But nearly all of these myocarditis reports were filed in 2021 - 2,414, or 78%. Put another way, between 1990 and 2020, an average of 11 myocarditis reports were filed each year, but in 2021, this rose to 2,414 (and continued at high rates in 2022 and 2023).

VAERS reports are designed to tell a "medical story" of what happens after vaccination - when the problem started, what went wrong, and how it resolved. Looking at these VAERS myocarditis patients, one-half were children and adults younger than 30, and 69% were men. Three-quarters (76%) of patients needed emergency care and/or

hospitalization, and 3% were deaths. There was greater risk after the second dose, something that's been shown in previous research.

In another story, last month in social media, we learned that the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention responded to a Freedom of Information Act request with a fully redacted (ie, purposefully blank) 148-page document. The FOIA had requested long-term data from the "MOVING" study. (MOVING is meant to be an acronym for "Myocarditis Outcomes After mRNA COVID-19 Vaccination Investigators and the CDC COVID-19 Response Team.")

Sponsored by the CDC, MOVING looked at young people (aged 12 to 29) diagnosed with myocarditis after COVID-19 vaccination. Patients were found by searching VAERS myocarditis reports. The researchers used CDC criteria to confirm the myocarditis diagnosis, and directly contacted patients and their doctors to ask if they would take part in a survey interview process that covered patients' symptoms, quality of life, and medical records, as well as how well patients' doctors thought their recovery was going.

Noteworthy to me was that the CDC felt comfortable using VAERS for this research. Despite being a federal database that clinicians and patients are encouraged to use to report vaccine-related adverse events, VAERS has been labeled "unreliable" and "unverified." As recently as February this year, a CDC representative was quoted as saying,

"VAERS is ... not the dataset we use to determine causality or the impact of the vaccine."

In actuality, even though VAERS doesn't include information for all patients - a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report found that VAERS contained "fewer than 1% of vaccine adverse events" - VAERS data can be predictably used to estimate serious adverse events.

Back to the MOVING study: Of the 836 patients found eligible through VAERS, two-thirds responded to the invitation; the others could not be reached or didn't want to participate. The studies' initial published results were optimistic - of the 393 patients whose doctors responded, 81% were considered "fully" or "probably" recovered at about 90 days. At that time, 68% of patients were cleared to engage in all physical activities, and 26% were still taking medication to manage their myocarditis.

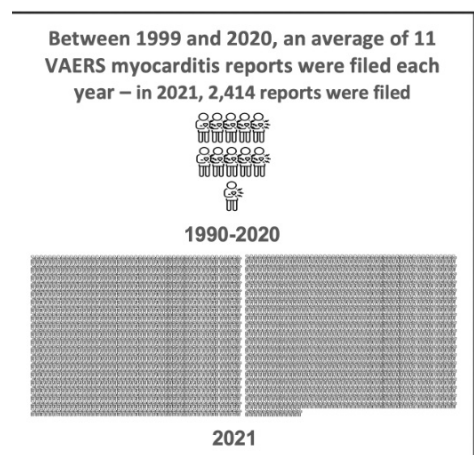
That was part one of MOVING. It ended in January 2022, with results published 10 months later. The last sentence of the published manuscript introduces MOVING part two: "The CDC is conducting additional follow-up on patients who were not considered recovered at least 12 months since symptom onset, to better understand their longer-term outcomes." This one-year MOVING data is what was requested from the CDC by FOIA, and we apparently are not allowed to see it?

The CDC may have planned to publish these MOVING results and not wanted them seen until finalized. In fact, the FOIA exemption code used suggested just this. But

MOVING part two would have ended in January 2023. For how long should the public be expected to wait? Also, searching online, I couldn't find any recent updates about MOVING. Quite the opposite: a September 2023 CDC summary only mentions the existence of MOVING part one.

A study from Australia gives some insight into what we don't know about how these patients are doing - longer term. Conducted using the national Surveillance of Adverse Events Following Vaccination in the Community (SAFEVIC) database, this research looked at 67 teenagers and adults with post-COVID vaccination myocarditis, all treated at the same hospital. At about a year to a year-and-a-half after their diagnosis, on medical imaging, 30% had signs of heart scarring and ongoing disease.

There is one more important myocarditis story to tell - do the benefits of the injection outweigh the risks, at least in terms of myocarditis? Next month, I will return to this.



## The Power of the Pen

By Deborah H. Anderson

The original draft of this was written in hunter green. I used to write words that came from my interior place, personal experience words, in mahogany. It's a shade that looks deep red, like blood poured on the page. Life has gotten a little lighter, and those feeling words are like forest bathing to me, now. Hunter green better suits.

Since the draft of anything I write is in cursive in a spiral-bound notebook, and I am a person deeply affected by color, I have a collection of pens of differing shades and hues, each with its own purpose. Of course, I also have favorite brands and grips. A proper grip urges the words out of the pen like labor contractions.

I write professionally, so writing eventually becomes collaborative: editors, agents, other writers in critique, beta readers, booksellers. There's an annual gathering called AWP - Association of Writers & Writing Programs. Over 9,000 writers collect themselves in one place. This year, the location was Kansas City, Missouri, the week before the Super Bowl.

As you can imagine, the logistics of the conference are vast. It's a mobility marathon, even if you use an assistive device. Every MFA or MA or BA program in writing sends students and professors. Every ounce of post-surgical physical therapy was focused on me being strong enough to get to, soak in, and enjoy as much of AWP as

I could.

The presentations are either readings of current published works or panels of particular writers or editors on certain topics. The sessions last 50 minutes or sometimes 90. There are about five to seven topics each 50 minutes. The sessions go from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. There are three days of that schedule. Evenings, there are genre parties with readings. Simultaneous with the sessions, there are constant readings. Can you even imagine?!

The highlights for me were panels on the benefits of intergenerational intersections for women writers. Two sessions on the needs of writers with disabilities. A session on writing projects that take forever, decades. A panel on crafting the complexities of Jewish women. That was exciting because only the Sunday before, women from the Vashon Ecumenical Book Club had discussed "The Weight of Ink" by Rachel Kaddish, and there she was on the panel! Telling her "Thank you" for her work brought great joy.

The first of April, I get to start writing full-time. It has taken years to set up my lifestyle and resources for that. I am finishing writing the draft of this column staring at Mount Rainier while sitting on the porch of Longmire Lodge. Staring at the majesty and strength and snow-covered peace of her is the perfect metaphor for beginning that journey.

## Island Voices

I've just asked a stranger to take a picture of me writing. As she took several from different angles, she asked "Memorializing something are we?" Indeed.

Arriving home after the conference, my tool kit was replenished. It's one of the few times ... let's just say it's been a month of goodness that brought challenges settling into the new opportunity. Writing is no longer like giving birth to barbed wire. It brings me joy. It's not a fast process but much that is good in life is slow. If you have thought about writing, do. If you are a writer, ya' know. And now, I hit "send," and my editor buffs and polishes. I'm going to go back to sleep.

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## Technology – Friend, or Foe?

By Michael Shook

The question came to mind because we bought an electric car. Well, a partially electric car, a plug-in hybrid. It feels like a tank compared to our 16 year-old Subaru, but nonetheless drives very nicely, and is quiet as can be, even when the gas/hybrid motor kicks in.

The Subaru was doing just fine, and, since we rarely go anywhere off-Island, it has quite low miles. But, we've been talking for several years now about getting something electric, and it seemed like the time was right, a good move to make, for a couple of reasons.

First, there's the advantage of the hybrid gas engine, so we're not dependent on charging stations on those occasions when we do venture out into the wide world. And second, since it has a range of about 40 miles on a charge, we can do about 98% of our driving silently whooshing about the island on electricity (almost silently - it makes a weird sort of ringing sound at low speeds, like something from old "Star Trek" reruns).

And then, about a week after we'd bought the thing, I read an article in the Seattle Times, which spoke to the growing need for electricity, much of which is fueled by ... sigh ... electric vehicles. Of course, electrical demand is also being driven by the insanity or stupidity, or both, of schemes like "Bitcoin," along with our compulsion to buy and use electric gadgets of every kind imaginable (and some unimaginable). These range from remote alarm

systems (because crime is so rampant within the neighborhoods of people who can afford to buy alarm systems), along with thousands of idiotic games one can play on one's stupidphone - sorry, "smartphone" - though a phone that diminishes brain function hardly seems to me to be smart.

And speaking of stupid, do we really need refrigerators that link to our phones, so we can check to see if there's milk, and is it still fresh, while we sit in our cars in the parking lot that is our freeway system?

But I digress.

So, technology. And again, I ask ... friend, or foe?

Friend, I suppose, since it allows us to do a great many cool things. Like this. Typing by electric light on an electric keyboard, which makes editing and rewriting a breeze. It beats the heck out of scratching away with a quill, by candlelight.

I wince, though, to consider that, in a rather unfortunate turn, the words typed will go to "the cloud," which, of course, is not a cloud at all, but a series of massive collections of servers - electrical storage units the size of football fields, that use staggering amounts of electricity. These in turn are backed up by rows of diesel generators, there to provide more electricity in case there is an energy catastrophe. Not very green, but I suppose it's reassuring to know the pictures that people snap relentlessly, look at a couple of times, and then store in said cloud, never to be seen again, will be saved for eternity. Or at least until the servers

burn up, the juice runs out, or the 856th trillionth picture or TikTok video is posted.

So, perhaps foe. Foe, since to generate some of the immense amount of electricity we need to make all this technology work, we have dammed up just about every river there is in the lower 48, and thereby killed off salmon, trout, and numerous other fishes, not to mention the creatures that feed on them, while turning the rivers into something that resembles a series of very slow-moving ponds.

And let's not kid ourselves. The dams are not going away. They make too much juice, and every bit of that juice will be needed to help provide the estimated tripling of power we will use by 2050, according to some industry analysts. It is a marvel of cognitive juggling that we carry on with the fantasy that somehow this is "green" energy. When the true cost to the environment is calculated, dams are about as green as a coal-fired plant.

Sadly, much the same could be said about our new plug-in hybrid electric car. We are already trashing new places on the planet, and exploiting many of its brown-skinned people in new ways, to mine lithium, cobalt, and other rare-earth minerals for our computers, phones, and yes, cars. Not good. Of course, we can and will improve on that, but it will be a fight. As humans, we are loathe to pay upfront for our conveniences. Witness the outrage over the carbon tax that jacked up gas prices last year.

Still, on a more uplifting personal note, we have a solar panel array, which generates about 35% more



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electricity in a year than we use, so that's some comfort. And, also in the Times, it was reported that the total cost to the environment in emissions works out to about half of what a fossil fuel-only vehicle creates (pleasantly surprising to learn was that that includes the mining, manufacturing, and eventual disposal/recycling of the vehicle - huzzah!). This, too, is comforting.

Obviously, it's silly of me to pose the question in the first place. Technology is just technology, and if there's a fly in the ointment, it is the same fly it's always been - humans. We're still learning how to manage this onslaught of new technology, and in the short term, it's proving to be more than a little challenging. Nevertheless, history shows that we will, eventually, pull the wagons around so as to head in a good direction. I'm confident we will do so again, even as I wish it to be sooner, rather than later.

# Mortise and Tenon

By Seán C. Malone and John Sweetman

"How many of these joints have you done?"

"Well, only one today, but it's not even lunchtime yet."

That refers to the "Mortise and Tenon" joints we were making to assemble a "picnic cover" for our friend Bill who had a property on Indian Point. It has been pointed out that these joints were discovered to be at least 7,000 years old.

Our friend Bill was a retired applied physicist who had contributed to early laser development and appreciated complex ideas. Bill was a designer of the steering rockets on the lunar module of Apollo 10.

At first, as a neighbor and friend, we would help him out with small projects, and he would compensate us with some cash or a good salmon dinner ... as long as we cooked the salmon. But Bill had bigger things in mind as he asked us to build several projects. So, as a couple of retired lads, we had to come to an amicable arrangement.

"I could give you two an hourly wage. What do you want?"

We pondered that offer and didn't want to spoil the fun we were having. So, after some thought over grilled salmon and a bottle of Vashon wine, we agreed.

"We'd like to be paid enough to make it look respectable, but not so much that we couldn't tell you to buzz off if we didn't like what we were doing."

And remember, we only charge half as much as anybody else, but as a bonus, we work twice as slow."

One of the reasons we were "slow" is that we basically hated nails, crappy two-by-fours, and simple joints, which is where mortise and tenon joints came in, among other tedious construction joints.

Bill found this agreeable, and we proceeded to build many small projects. We built what we think is the finest outhouse on the Island. It had wi-fi, an incinerating potty, and a genuine bronze porthole. In addition, it had heat, a flat-screen TV, and a fold-down bed. A Dutch-style door with a stained-glass window completed what Bill came to call "The Throne Room."

Bill wanted a Zen Garden up the steep hill across a small, permanent stream, so we built a stone pathway to a bench overlooking our secret crabbing spot. The Tori-style Zen gate is still at the entrance, although covered with an Akiba vine from the old Minglement building. Our big project was covering a picnic table and sink adjacent to the small spot that was suitable for any structure, but we spent days moving and leveling with shovels and a wheelbarrow just to get a start.

We used not one nail in any of this. Pegs and

jointed posts and beams were what we enjoyed doing. After many expensive trips to Tacoma Screw, we used bronze marine bolts. There were some nails, now that we think about it. We nailed the cedar roof with copper fasteners and installed a copper ridge line to continuously release copper salts for moss prevention.

Most of the work was done with older hand tools such as chisels and auger bits, so a lot of "verbal banter" took place. Many times, as Bill left to get supplies, he would say, "I hope you two haven't killed each other when I get back."

Such was the fun of working.

Old Daisy dog loved to go under the cabin and try to dig out the supports to the cabin floor. So, one day the cabin wall shifted. I heard a loud ping as one of the three-by-three-foot windowpanes fell out. John replaced the rotted logs above and below the six-by-six, four-pane window. While repairing the window frame, he found square nails that had been out of use since the 1860s.

John's description of our relationship with Bill is precious. I had never worked a mortise and tenon joint, so I participated as a helper. Our porthole offered a great view of outer Quartermaster Harbor. Though the bronze porthole was new, it had been destined for a Liberty ship of the early 1940s. Bill's project continued for over three years, only proving that we worked "twice as slow for half as much."

# Dope – Legends of Vashon, 1895

Continued From Front Page

rights and duties in regard to it.

Two strangers had been for several days roaming over the Island, ostensibly looking for a tract of land to suit them, but in talking with the farmers, invariably bringing the conversation around to the subject of smugglers and dope-running. They put in an appearance at the Hopkins place on the very morning on which Mace left for Seattle and, after some small talk, asked Hopkins if he had ever heard of any dope showing up on the Island. He told them of Mace's find of the day previous.

They lost no time in getting up to Mace's place and exchanged knowing

glances when missus Mace told them that Mister Mace was "not at home." After considerable questioning, they told her they were officers looking for opium, which was supposed to be in Mace's possession. She said she knew nothing whatever of it, but showed them the map which Mace had given her. They wasted no more time in conversation, but at once resurrected the dope and carted it off to Seattle.

So, Mace returned to his grub hoe and stumps, a little poorer but much – very much – wiser. He conveyed the impression to his neighbors by the use of numerous lurid adjectives, not really naughty as he was a good Baptist, but forcible, satisfying and to

the point, that next time, if any, things would be decidedly different.

History repeated itself so quickly in this instance that it might almost be said to have stuttered. Three weeks after his first adventure in the suppression of the dope evil, Mace was again devoting himself to the business and pleasure of combing scantlings and other flotsam and jetsam from the beach, when he came upon another heavy canvas sack, identical with his first find.

This time, he carried it up into the timber and quickly and skillfully concealed it, doing it as he said, "with one hand so that even his other hand didn't know what was going on," and he took counsel with no one.

The following morning, he disturbed the slumbers of his son, Ed,

at an early hour with orders to row him down to Vashon landing in time to catch the Iola. Just off the south side of Dilworth Point, he had his son beach the boat while he carried one heavy canvas sack, which might have contained clams, but which really was something vastly different from clams.

On reaching Vashon dock, the sack was transferred to the little steamer, to Seattle, and then up to the Customs Office, where he turned it in and made his claim for the reward allowed by law. On a court order by judge Hanford, in June 1895, Mace received \$175 for turning in his "brown putty." It was reported at the time to have sold for \$564.



## Vashon-Maury Clothing Drive

Where: Vashon Food Bank

When: Wednesdays, 10AM-2PM

(except the first Wednesday of the month)

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

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

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

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**Evening Prayer**  
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**St. John Vianney Catholic Church**  
1st, 3rd, and 5th Wednesdays  
First Fridays

# Retrospective – Don't Forget the Birds

By Ed Swan

*Ed Swan, a master ornithologist with an incredible depth of knowledge and a generous enthusiasm to share it, inspired many Islanders to learn about birds. His column, "Don't Forget the Birds" appeared for years in The Vashon Loop. Ed passed away on Oct. 28, 2022.*



White-Crowned Sparrow  
Photo by Sherry Bottoms

With birds returning from their migrations, and springtime inspiring both our seasonal and year-round residents into song and activity, we reprint this article. Thank you, Ed, for sharing your devotion for the birds with our Island. We miss you! This article was originally printed in The Vashon Loop, Volume 6, No. 7, April 3, 2009.

As I heard white-crowned sparrows begin to sing on territory in the last week of March in the Chautauqua Elementary School parking lot, I thought about what I learned recently reading "The Migratory Ecology of Birds" by Ian Newton. This great book reviews the history of what humans discovered over the last two centuries about bird migration, and summarizes all that is known on the biology of birds and migration in a very exhaustive but readable way.

Ornithologists often use white-crowned sparrows as study subjects for migration research because they provide a common bird that is easily caught and banded, and is spread across the continent. These sparrows star in projects illuminating migratory preparation, cues to starting migration, and path-finding to

locations. For example, several studies looked at body mass changes pre-migration of white-crowns in California. Birds store up on fats before migration because, in birds, fats per unit of weight provide 7-9 times more energy than protein or carbohydrates.

Some birds repeatedly caught over several days gained as much as 20% of their body weight in a day. Their behavior changed from the usual morning and just-before-sunset foraging peaks to feeding all day long. With the start of migration, birds ceased eating by afternoon, to have time to purge their systems prior to a night of flight.

Other studies involved displacing white-crowned sparrows thousands of kilometers from their wintering grounds. Researchers took 411 sparrows from winter quarters in San Jose, California to Baton Rouge,

Louisiana, and 26 returned to be captured again in San Jose the following winter – 21% of the 123 that would be expected to survive and return without movement off their usual path.

That displacement, along with other studies, shows that white-crowned sparrows utilize both the stars as a compass and the Earth's magnetic field to determine latitude. Use of the magnetic field proves useful for species when clouds block the sky. White-crowned sparrows appear especially sensitive to magnetic fields and appear able to find quite specific locations with that sense. As the time of migration approaches, White-crowned sparrows display "migratory restlessness," fluttering their wings and pointing their bill up to the night sky. In the displacement studies, older birds with a longer time to obtain a magnetic sense of location, and a memory of the night sky, showed a higher

probability of returning to the original wintering grounds.

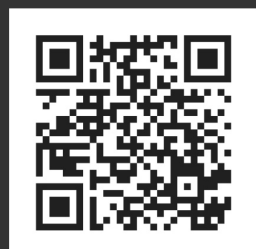
White-crowned sparrows, like our wintering fox sparrows and several other species with many different wintering populations, have a leap-frog migrating pattern. The birds breeding at higher northern latitudes "leap over" other populations of the same species to winter the farthest south. Those with the shortest distance north to fly leave first, since spring will warm up and prepare their nesting areas for habitation before those of birds utilizing areas farther north. For example, western populations of the Gambel's white-crowned sparrow breed in Alaska and northern Canada and migrate south to southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Our local Puget Sound white-crowned sub-species goes only down to western Oregon and as far as Berkeley in northern California to winter.



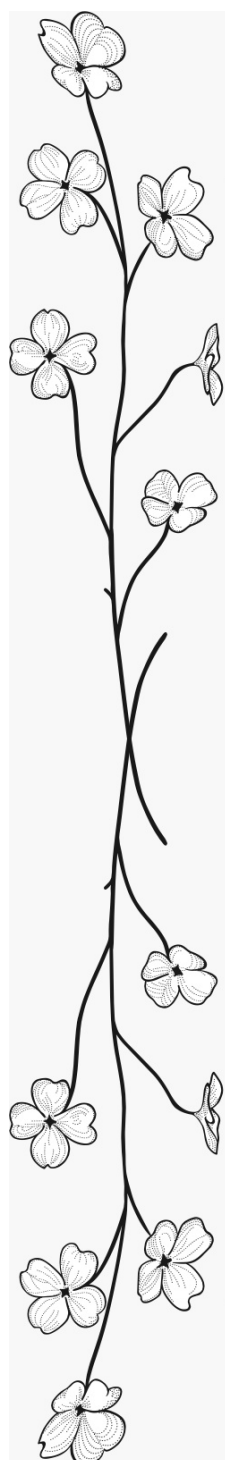
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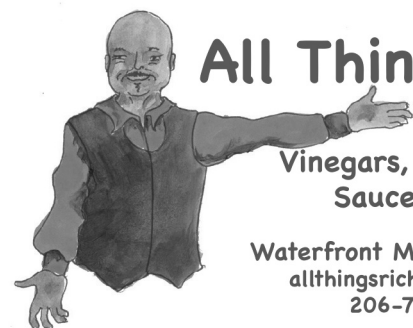
Still confused over the diet-related cardiomyopathy issue as it pertains to a grain-free diet and your dog?

Well, much as we surmised, after years of actual science-based study, the blanket statements made that feeding dogs a grain-free diet had a causal relationship to heart disease has been thoroughly debunked.

In fact, Science Diet now faces a massive class action lawsuit for the role they played in perpetuating the stories without any reputable research to back them up.

**This will be one to watch!**

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## The Value of Giving a Damn!

By March Twisdale

After a year of talking with Island businesses about the significant negative impacts of point-of-service (POS) transaction fees (Bank Taxes), I came up with an idea. How about passing these fees back to customers paying with plastic, just like the grocery stores charge customers who show up without a bag? The only real difference between the two is that the cost of bags for a grocery store is super-small compared to how much money we lose (as a community) due to "transaction fees."

While sharing my idea with business owners, many expressed interest because they'd begun to track the dent "transaction fees" make in their annual profit. The results are eye-popping!

During these conversations, I was asked this question several times: "Why do you care?" As one person put it, "You're not a business owner. This doesn't effect you directly. So, why is it so important to you?"

My primary answer is rooted in my lifelong focus on environmentalism. A core tenet being "resource conservation."

A century ago, Theodore Roosevelt said, "The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem, it will avail us little to solve all others." Back in the early 1990s, when "fracking" was becoming a thing, Robert Redford advocated for conservancy of energy versus extracting more from the earth, saying, "We don't need more energy, we just need to conserve the energy we have." Estimates at the time suggested we could reduce energy demand by 70% through conservation efforts alone.

These ideas stuck with me, along with values I picked up from my grandparents, both of whom were children during the Great Depression.

"Waste not, want not" applies not only to apples in your tree, old clothing torn into strips and woven into rugs, or fresh water pulled up out of the aquifer. The same can be said of energy stored in the form of money. That dollar bill in your pocket represents human effort. Someone's hard work and labor was injected into our Island

## Island Resilience

economy like oxygen, picked up by red blood cells, circulated throughout our community, making life possible.

Why do I care? Because I value my fellow community members. Their human effort, creativity, energy, and hard work is worth a lot, and I don't want it wasted.

"Why do I care?" Because I value our Island environments: natural and human-made. Economically secure people take better care of one another, community infrastructures, and natural resources. Lowering stress also reduces crime, illness, addiction, family strife, and community instability.

"Why do I care?" Because cost of living increases on Vashon are a community issue. By directly reducing the cost of doing business, we help reduce the cost of goods and services.

"Why do I care?" Because "Forever Bank Taxes" (transaction fees) are the epitome of being "nickel and dimed" + "groomed" + "fleeced." By working together, we could keep upwards of \$160,000 per week on our Island, in our pockets, circulating in our community.

Yes, you read me correctly! What's at stake is millions of dollars every year. Read more here: "How to Avoid Being Nickel and Dimed" September 2023.

But, what about tourist season? Excellent question. People don't come to Vashon in search of big city ambiance. They're here for the small-town feel, a walk down memory lane, a break from the high-tech hubbub of distant lands. And tourists are people at their most flexible, because every destination has its own unique habits and circumstances. And always, upon arriving at one's destination, tourists need to know, "Where can I get cash?"

Tourists are also plenty smart. They got here, didn't they? Of course they can adjust to local norms. Indeed, experiencing something new is a big part of why people travel. Let's give them some new ideas to go home with. We assume people living in the city are on board with businesses

saying, "No Cash Accepted." But the truth is, many people are deeply concerned and frustrated. In the absence of balanced media coverage and/or community engagement, many feel like they're the only ones bothered. We can remind them, they are not alone.

It's not just Vashon Islanders who are wising up. Various business sectors, some of them national in scope, are working around these Forever Bank Taxes by automatically offering customers a choice between a "Cash" total or a "Card + Fee" total. Island businesses doing this say, "When a customer is faced with paying an extra \$3 or \$35 or \$56 (based on the total bill), most will go home for their checkbook or head to the nearest ATM."

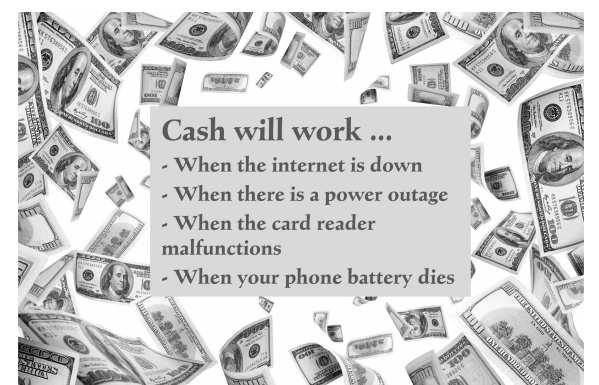
No one wants to send more money to the banking industry, and we can opt out. We can choose to keep our money here at home, on our Island.

While some people struggle with change, Island business-owners already doing this tell me that the vast majority of their customers understand and are actively supportive. We are a community, after all, and that means we care about one another. By consistently lowering business costs, we all gain in the form of lower prices, higher wages, better business re-investment, and community resilience across the board.

On the technical side of things, different POS systems are being used on Vashon. I have heard that the US Bank's system is excellent, but it's not the only one. Check with your provider, to learn how to work with your particular system.

Have questions? Go to vashonloop.com and search "March Twisdale." You'll find a series of articles beginning in early 2023, exploring this issue. You can also talk to your favorite local business owner!

While you chew on that - here's an idea! Maybe we could have local ATMs competing for Vashon Island's Unofficial Mayor? We could all "vote" with our ATM cards, to see which machine gets the most love in the form of withdrawals! (It's an idea ...)



## Ham Radio in "Peacetime"

By Andy Valencia

Last issue, I talked about the strength of ham radio in providing communications during catastrophic disruptions of our traditional networks. But what does a ham radio operator do when the world hasn't gone full Mad Max?

If you have a handie-talkie (a hand-held radio, about the size of a cell phone), the most basic activity is to tune in a local repeater, make sure you're not interrupting anybody, and transmit your call sign and "monitoring". You might hear me say "K6AJV monitoring". K6AJV is my legal identifier, and saying you're "monitoring" means you're open to a conversation.

Somebody might well call you back - but what do you talk about?

Anything. Because you're both hams, there's a built-in conversational starting point. Where are you, what equipment are you using, what kind of antenna? Does it work well? Do you have hopes for something newer and better? Are you a new ham? When did you first get licensed, and what was your first "rig" - that is, radio?

It doesn't have to be about radio. If you mention that your radio is mounted in a classic Camaro, your fellow ham might come back to tell you about his restored Model T in the

garage. Who knows? It could just as well be about the weather and your weather-monitoring station. Or they might be just visiting, and you can warn them about some road work to avoid.

Sometimes a group of hams gets on the radio at the same time on a daily or weekly basis. For years, there was a "road runner net" in the Seattle area, a group of hams who talked with each other as they commuted. It was natural to be talking about vacations, new vehicles, or their promotion at work. Usually, at least one ham would share the dumb joke of the day.

Your handie-talkie or car-mounted radio uses frequencies that reach across a city or county. When you get home, perhaps after dinner, you can turn on your shortwave radio, connected to an antenna mounted on your roof. Because of the sun's effect on the ionosphere, during the day you'll be able to use shortwave frequencies to reach across the nation, and often out to other countries. At night, it's more typical to reach people in your state and a couple of adjacent ones.

As an oddity of history, on shortwave instead of saying "K6AJV monitoring", you instead call "CQ CQ CQ this is K6AJV K6AJV K6AJV". The conversational possibilities when somebody calls you back are similar



to what you'd experience on your handie-talkie. The wrinkle is, the person you talk with can be multiple states over, or even multiple nations. Radio models and antenna designs are common the world over - but if you both have a child in college, the details described by a ham in Italy can differ from your own experiences in fascinating ways. The same with food, vacations, or even how they do house-wiring.

My previous article talked about "repeaters," a ham counterpart to a cell tower. Hams form clubs, and very often one club activity is to put up a repeater and maintain it. That's just the starting point, since a club is inevitably a social organization. Potlucks, white elephant parties, as well as technical presentations are all typical at a monthly meeting.

In addition to local clubs, hams have a central organization that represents them, the Amateur Radio Relay League, "ARRL." One of the ARRL's functions is to administer awards, permitting a ham to have official recognition of notable achievements. The "Worked All States" award is given when a ham submits proof of contacts with at least one ham in each of our 50 states. "Worked All Continents" is similar

for talking to at least one ham on each continent. DXCC is the "DX Century Club", a prestigious award for having talked with hams in 100 different countries. Hams usually frame this certificate and hang it on the wall above their shortwave station. The ARRL also administers contests. One of interest to Vashon is the annual "Islands on the Air," where hams across the world try to talk to as many hams on as many different islands as possible. Vashon-based hams suddenly become very popular!

The most famous contest is "field day," where hams pack up their radio and batteries to go somewhere off the grid. They then see how many other off-grid hams they can reach. Often, the antenna is just a wire looped over the highest tree branch they can reach at their campground.

Hams have put up satellites known as OSCAR - Orbital Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio - which can be reached from any ham on the ground as the satellite passes overhead. When an astronaut on the International Space Station is a ham operator, there's a station up there and they can "work" hams down on earth during their off-hours.

Continued on Page 8

## Herbs With Kids – Springtime!

By Jane Valencia

Spring is here, and behold! Many of our beloved herbs are in vibrant form, with new leaves unfurling and some actually in flower. This is a fine time for you and your children to forage for herbs, as the new growth that beckons us mirrors the vitality the plants impart to us. Young leaves that are edible now likely won't be so later when they become bigger and tougher.

Many “weedy” plants are mineral-rich tonic herbs, and help to cleanse the body of the congestion that illness and the winter's heavier foods can bring. Even just nibbling on them can be refreshing to the spirits, as well as our bodies. Your children may already be familiar with some of the plants below, as they tend to be favorites. Furthermore, all of the plants mentioned here are wonderful for infusing in vinegar. Please see the “Springtime Vinegar Recipe” included in this article.

*Important note: Before harvesting herbs, please learn or review some plant safety basics. Visit [vashonloop.com](http://vashonloop.com) and find my August 2023 article, “Herbs with Kids – Plant Safety Basics and a Few Summer Remedies.”*

Look for the following in disturbed, open areas, such as your yard, or perhaps your garden:

**Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)** – This delicious, nutrient-dense, and juicy herb is wonderful to eat as you pick, or to include in a salad. In a vinegar, it lends a subtle mineral flavor. Chickweed is a gentle, effective remedy for soothing hot, inflamed skin conditions, such as insect bites, scrapes, and itchiness.

It also makes for a cooling, gentle remedy for pink eye (conjunctivitis). Pound some chickweed to make a green and goopy mass, or “poultice.” Place the poultice on your inflamed, closed eye (note: make separate poultices for each eye, and do not interchange or reuse the poultices). When the poultice gets warm (every 10 minutes or so), replace it with a fresh poultice. Do this several times a day for 2-3 days.

**Dandelion flower and leaf (*Taraxacum officinale*)** – The young leaves are a spring tonic, and help aid digestion. The flower is a favorite among Islanders for making into dandelion fritters. Make up a batch of simple pancake batter. Then either (1) add the flowers to the batter and cook them up as you would pancakes. Or

(2) dip the flowers in the batter and fry up the coated flowers. That's it!

Kids and the kid in you may especially enjoy herbal fritters drizzled with another plant's tasty gift: maple syrup. For savory fritters, eliminate the sugar, and, if you wish, add spices or other herbs.

**Purple archangel, more commonly known as purple dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*)** – This herb has many common names, including henbit. When I witnessed one of my hens nibbling this plant, I knew why! Myself, I prefer to call this plant purple archangel. With its tiny-lipped flowers and many pairs of small “wings” (leaves), this weed resembles miniature dragons, or perhaps cherubim or seraphim. For its imaginative inspiration alone, I court them. I browse on the leaves and flowers, and also include them in my springtime vinegars. There is a subtle “green” flavor, distantly reminiscent of nettle.

**Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)** – Eat your nettles! Drink your nettles! So much green goodness exists in this plant. But how do you eat this plant without getting stung? One can harvest nettle bare-handed and get minimally stung – and one can eat a leaf raw, by folding the leaf in on itself and crushing it so that all the stinging hairs break, and the leaf becomes juicy. But these practices are best learned in person from someone familiar with nettle.

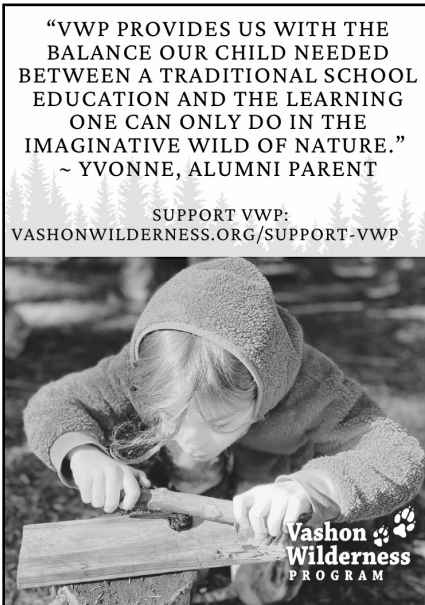
If you and your children are new to nettle harvesting, you can avoid getting stung by moving carefully around the nettles, and by wearing gloves. Use scissors or clippers to cut off what you want. Harvest just the top three pairs of leaves, and from young plants before they flower.

You can chop the nettles and include them directly in your vinegar. They will lend a lovely rose color to it.

When using nettles to cook, I plunge them briefly in just-boiled water to deactivate the stinging hairs. I do this even when I plan to sauté the nettles or bake with them. That's just my extra precaution in relation to nettles, as cooking in oil or baking them can often work fine on their own to deactivate the stings.

I include nettle in stir-fries, omelets, lasagna and more – using them like kale or spinach in these dishes.

To find out a lot more, please go to [vashonloop.com](http://vashonloop.com) and read Kathy



Abascal's article “It is Nettle Time,” published in February 2023.

**Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)** – At this stage in spring, cleavers are not so good to eat raw, as they are starting to get more pronounced hairs that can irritate the throat, or the skin of some when handled. But you can chop this herb up and add them into a vinegar, where they will lend their mineral-rich goodness.

Cleavers also promote lymphatic drainage when made into tea or tinctured (a topic for another time). Also called “sticky-whicky” by Island children, cleavers will, by late spring, have grown into long lanky, hairy strands that stick to things. Kids love to grab lengths of cleavers and decorate themselves with crowns and garments made of the plant, or sneak up on friends and decorate them. Cleavers can be made into balls, hoops, and much more. Playing with them leads to ingenuity!

**Other springtime herbs you might forage** – Eat from the plant or include in your herbal vinegar:

Violet (*Viola tricolor*, *V. odorata*, and others) – leaves or flowers

Bittercress, also known as shotweed, hairy bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*) – for its peppery taste; maybe just a few pinches of the flower or leaf

Plantain (*Plantago major*, *P. lanceolata*) – leaf; this humble plant is so worth getting to know

Douglas fir – new needles

Salmonberry – blossoms (if in abundance) and new leaves

Wild cherry – blossoms

Bigleaf maple – flowers; these are great for fritters.

Many more are possible! Do your due diligence in researching herbs. Be careful to use reliable sources. It's best to consult with specialists you trust. Do not rely on AI-generated content. See this article online for a pointer to reliable resources.

You can also include herbs from your garden, such as rosemary, lemon balm, mint, or thyme. With aromatic herbs such as these, you may wish to use just a little bit. You and your children can taste and decide.

## Springtime Herbal Vinegar

Vinegar effectively extracts minerals from herbs while also imparting its own health benefits. These benefits include aiding digestion, helping to regulate blood sugar and lower cholesterol, and helping with skin health. When enjoyed with high-mineral foods, vinegar's acidity helps our bodies to assimilate those minerals. Infusing vinegar with springtime herbs charges our vinegar with additional benefits as a tonic. Combine with olive oil, and add a little garlic or other enjoyable ingredients to make a salad dressing.

Have on hand:

One sterile jar (any size), plus a plastic lid or piece of wax paper. Vinegar is corrosive to metal. Be sure to use a plastic lid, or line a metal lid with natural wax paper.

Vinegar: Use organic if possible. Choices include raw apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar, rice vinegar, champagne vinegar, or white wine vinegar.

A mild-tasting vinegar will allow the herbal flavors to be more pronounced. Using a vinegar that is pale will allow any colors the herbs may impart to be more apparent.

**Directions:**

1. Gather appropriate herbs
2. Allow them to “wilt” – to dry out for several hours or perhaps for a day if they are especially juicy.
3. Chop the herbs and loosely fill the jar, leaving at least 3/4” below the rim.
4. Pour vinegar to completely cover the herbs, to about 1/2” below the rim.
5. Stir the herbs, and make sure they are entirely covered by the vinegar. I like to use a chopstick to stir.
6. Screw on a plastic lid or a lid lined with wax paper; place the jar in a cool, dark cabinet for up to 4-6 weeks.
7. Strain your herbal vinegar through a coffee filter into a clean, sterile bottle or jar.
8. Store your herbal vinegar in the refrigerator and use within 6 months. If it ever looks or smells “off,” toss it into your compost or yard.

Tonic dosage: Start by taking up to 3 teaspoonfuls (child) or tablespoonfuls (adult) daily.

*Note: Springtime herbal vinegars using the herbs above are gentle tonics. However, if you are taking pharmaceuticals, are allergic to certain plants, or have other health concerns, consult with appropriate resources or with your health provider to discern which herbs are right for you to include.*

May you and your children enjoy the tastes and friendly medicine of spring!



## Ham Radio in “Peacetime”

Continued From Page 7

And then there's the truly exotic. EME – Earth Moon Earth – also known as “moonbounce.” Hams with huge antennas and high-power transmitters can beam a signal at the moon and reach amateurs across half of the earth as the signal bounces off the moon and then strikes the earth just shy of three seconds after it left the transmitter.

There's digital modes of communication, like email and texting, and there's techniques for communicating across vast distances using tiny amounts of transmit power. In the latter, advanced digital signal processing teases the message out from the background noise where the human ear can detect nothing.

Traditionally known as a “fox hunt,” there is a game where you try to find a hidden transmitter using a directional antenna; no animals are ever harmed! There's also an entire sub-genre of hams who build their own radio equipment by hand. There are still hams who communicate using the “dits” and “dahs” of Morse code. Whatever your interests, there's probably a part of the hobby that would interest you.

Get started at [arrl.org](http://arrl.org) or [w7vmi.org](http://w7vmi.org)

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## Sleep in the Weeks and Months After Your Child Is Born

By Amber Matusky

In the first weeks and months after a baby is born, sleep is elusive and fragmented at best. Newborns need to feed frequently and parents are on high alert, tending to their infant's needs. Sleep is a basic human need, and long-term sleep deficiency can have a negative impact on parents' mental health and babies' development.

Sleep training is controversial, and is often thought of as a negative thing. Many people associate the term with the "cry it out" method, where a parent tucks their baby in for the night, closes the door, and does not return until the desired wake time in the morning, ignoring all of their baby's cries during the night. This method is quite extreme and one that I do not advocate.

However, it is also not sustainable for families to be up several times a night tending to their baby for months, or even years. And parents can inadvertently end up creating habits around sleep that are not sustainable over the long term. Common challenges parents face with their babies include frequent night-wakings, short naps, only sleeping when held, and long, drawn-out bedtime routines.

Sometimes, parents have to return to work, have older children to care for, or feel their mental health or relationship is suffering. These are the reasons people hire a sleep consultant.

As an experienced birth and postpartum doula, I enjoy presenting parents with many options as they navigate those early weeks and months, find their footing, and gain confidence in their new roles as parents. Getting enough sleep is a high priority, and a topic I spend a lot of time talking with clients about. That is why I expanded my education and became a certified pediatric sleep consultant. I can

# Health Matters

now support parents and lead the whole family back to nights of uninterrupted, rejuvenating sleep.

When I work with a family as a sleep consultant, I present clear and detailed guidelines for multiple options that teach independent sleep, as part of a customized sleep plan.

A newborn will sleep anywhere from 16 to 20 hours in a 24-hour period. An adult's sleep cycle consists of a total of five stages of sleep (drowsy, NREM1, NREM2, NREM3, and REM) and takes between 90 to 110 minutes. During a typical night, an adult will complete 4-5 sleep cycles.

On the other hand, an infant's sleep cycle only has two phases, active (REM) and quiet (NREM), and takes around 50 minutes. This difference in sleep rhythms, understandably, leads to new parents feeling more tired than they have, possibly in their whole life! The good news is that a baby's sleep cycles mature relatively quickly, and by about four months of age, their sleep patterns resemble those of an adult. Many parents refer to this challenging period as the four-month sleep regression; however, this is where magic can happen when you are consistent, have information, a plan, and support!

It is important that parents feel that any plan they undertake aligns with their parenting style, so that they can be completely committed to it and are able to execute it with confidence and consistency. I meet parents where they are, and during our two weeks together, offer unlimited support as sleep plans are implemented.

Babies are adaptable and resilient. While guiding parents as they teach their child the skill of independent sleep, I have seen incredible results in a relatively short amount of time. The benefits of sleep training extend throughout the whole family and last a lifetime.

In the 17 years I have been supporting parents

through birth and their postpartum period, I have seen many beautiful ways to parent children. Though no one can be the perfect parent, there are a million ways to be a great one. My wish is that families will feel supported during a challenging time of life as they navigate their unique path.

Amber Matusky is a certified pediatric sleep consultant and DONA-certified postpartum and birth doula. If you are the parent of a young child who struggles with sleep, check out more details about Amber's sleep consulting work at [soundpediatricsleepconsulting.com](http://soundpediatricsleepconsulting.com).

## Spike Proteins, Mental Fog, And Depression

By Andy Valencia

This article is a early "heads up" on some very interesting research coming out of Germany. Dr. Michael Nehls is a physician, as well as a molecular geneticist, and has been chasing population-level brain health issues for many years. He is a published author with works in the area of Alzheimer's disease, for instance.

Most recently, he has been studying the brain health impacts of the spike protein. One of the important differences between SARS-CoV-1 and SARS-CoV-2 is that the protein has changed in a way that greatly increases its ability to pass through the blood-brain barrier. He noted a correlation between exposure to the new Cov-2 spike protein and subsequent indications of depression, mental fog, and other aspects of reduced cognitive performance.

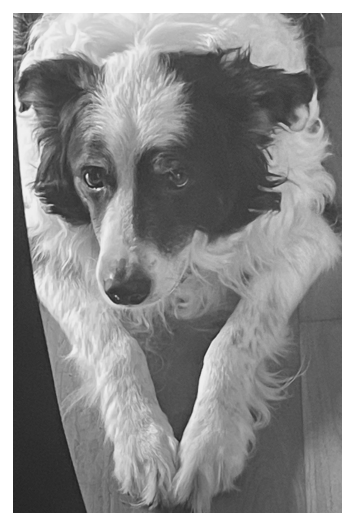
This led him to study brain mechanisms, ultimately identifying significantly impaired hippocampus function. A cytokine storm is an unhealthy immune response; in the lungs, it results in a dangerous reduction of respiration efficiency. What Dr. Nehls found was a cytokine storm in the hippocampus, greatly impacting its function.

One key function of the hippocampus is to refresh the neurons of the brain. Unlike many organs, this function is provided without attenuation, regardless of age. In an affected hippocampus, this production is virtually stopped. The result is indeed the depression, mental fog, and reduced cognitive performance Dr. Nehls had been studying.

The good news is that this condition is likely treatable. Robust vitamin D levels - helpful on so many other fronts - help here as well. Lithium in large doses is well-known as a treatment for bipolar disorders. Interestingly, minute doses of lithium might be quite effective in inhibiting the cytokine cycle caused by the spike protein. There is cautious optimism that these will be among the therapies that can help to restore hippocampal health.

One final "treatment" for your brain health is already well-known: reduce negative thoughts and emotions. Anger, hate, and other dark emotions reduce your quality of life, but they have an actual physical impact on your brain's health functions. If you're consuming media which makes you angry, afraid, or anxious-cut back on it, or avoid it entirely. It's a great way to optimize for health and happiness.

It's early days for these findings, but we thought they were interesting enough to be worth mentioning to our readers. The web version of this article has pointers to some related resources.



**Your life's a nanosecond; if you have a contribution to make, then make it. Don't bitch about it, just do it.**

~ Richard Serra



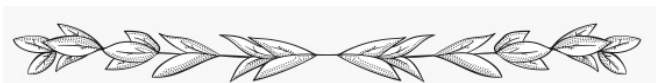
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Rat poison in pet food? One of the biggest and most heavily contaminated agricultural by-products in the U.S. is widely used for two things: rat poison and pet food.

Ethanol production is big business, and corn is the most common raw ingredient used. The process by which corn is transformed into ethanol results in byproducts called "corn gluten meal" or "corn distiller's grains."

The problem? Because these grains are earmarked for ethanol production, they receive dangerous amounts of glyphosate throughout the growing cycle, making them extremely effective as rat poison. Unfortunately, these byproducts have also found their way into low-quality pet foods as fillers.

Check your labels before you buy!

Melanie Farmer  
Sidereal Astrologist



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206.370.4394

# MINGLEMENT

ORGANIC MARKET EST. 1972

## From the Roasterie

By Eva DeLoach

The beans we cherish most come from older varieties grown in high mountain altitudes, where they thrive without the use of pesticides. Here, the coffee plants are allowed to adapt naturally to their environment, resulting in beans infused with deep, complex flavors. But it's not just the growing conditions that contribute to the unique taste of our coffee; it's also the meticulous process of fermentation.

After being handpicked at peak ripeness, the beans undergo a fermentation process. This crucial step, often overlooked in modern coffee production, is essential for developing the beans' flavor profiles. As they ferment, the sugars in the beans break down, leading to the formation of aromatic compounds



that give coffee its characteristic taste and aroma.

Once fermented, the beans are washed and dried in the equatorial sun, a process that further enhances their flavor. Only when fully dried are they separated from their parchment, sorted, and graded for quality. It's a labor-intensive process that results in a very flavor filled, high quality bean and well worth these extra steps.



## Island Epicure

By Marjorie Watkins and Suzanna Leigh

### Marjorie

With the thermometer on my balcony reading 40 degrees, the temperature in the kitchen is cool enough to make a baked dish for dinner. How about a custard or a quiche? People have been eating mixtures of eggs and milk heated to thicken them since at least ancient Rome. My many-times great grandfather Charlemagne was most likely served a savory custard in a crust, with cooked vegetables from the palace garden and mushrooms from the surrounding forest. The English word "custard" came from the French term "croutade," which originally referred to the crust of a tart.

A conventional quiche is like a custard pie without the sugar; a savory custard with vegetables and cheese in a crust (I have never met a quiche without cheese). It originated in what is now the Lorraine district of France - when it was under German rule, way back in the Middle Ages. So, Germany and France both claim to have invented it!

### A simple sweet custard (5 servings)

Blend together:

- 2 cups milk
- ¼ cup sugar or honey
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Add and beat together:

- 2 whole eggs or 4 egg yolks
- 1 tsp vanilla

Distribute this liquid into 5 little custard cups. Sprinkle with a dash of nutmeg. Bake at 300 degrees for about 40 minutes, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. They may be eaten warm or cold.

### Quiche

For a gluten-free pie shell, preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Mix together:

- 1 cup sorghum flour
- ¾ cup brown rice flour
- ¼ cup cornstarch or potato starch
- Work in ½ cube of butter

Pour in about ¾ cup water while stirring the dry ingredients with a fork to form a soft ball.

Grease a glass pie pan. Press the soft dough evenly on the bottom and sides of the pan and ½ inch above the rim. Hold the pan up to the light to make sure it is evenly spread. Create a fluted edge, folding the extra dough under as you go. Bake 10 minutes in the preheated oven. Reduce heat to 375 degrees.

### Marj's Quiche Filling

I happened to have a head of broccoli that really needed to be used up before all its tiny buds became tiny blossoms and it lost its rich green color. I made this as an augmented Danish omelet, but it would have been a quiche if I baked it in a pie shell.

- 2 large green onions, chopped
- ¼ cup green bell pepper
- 1½ to 2 cups steamed broccoli florets, chopped
- 3 oz grated mozzarella cheese

## Beets, Hemp Hearts, and Parsley: A Hearty Antioxidant Salad

By Nichole Banducci

I love a good salad. They're such a great opportunity to cram a bunch of veggies into one meal, while delivering on flavor. Bonus points for a salad that can hold its own at any time of year. This hearty antioxidant salad certainly makes the grade!

To me, each salad needs to have a great balance of ingredients, without overdoing it. Achieving that balance typically means a base (greens or grains), a "hero" veggie, texture, and a savory touch. This salad's breakdown is as follows:

- Base = parsley
- Hero = beets
- Texture = almonds
- Savory = hemp hearts (nutty) and feta (creamy/salty)

## Beets, Hemp Hearts, and Parsley: A Hearty Antioxidant Salad



### Ingredients

- 8.8 oz beets (I use "Love, Beets," pre-cooked)
- 2 bunches curly parsley
- 1 cup feta crumbles (I love "Follow Your Heart" vegan feta)
- 2 cups shelled hemp seeds (or hemp hearts)
- ½ cup chopped Marcona almonds (almost any nut would be delicious ... pecans, walnuts, cashews)
- Juice of two lemons (about 6 tbsp or ⅓ cup)
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp mustard powder

### Instructions

- Dice beets into 1/2" pieces (note - if you want to keep your cutting board beet-juice-free, dice the beets in the same large bowl where you'll be mixing the salad.)
- Chop the parsley into pieces smaller than 1/4" (aka "fine chop")
- Rough-chop the almonds
- Put beets, parsley, and almonds into a large bowl
- Add feta and hemp seeds to the same bowl
- Add lemon juice, olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and mustard powder to a jar; shake well and pour over salad in bowl
- Mix well and serve
- Leftover salad can be stored in the fridge for about three days

- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1½ cup milk or half-and-half
- ½ tsp salt
- ⅓ tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp minced parsley (optional)

Instructions: Sauté the raw vegetables until cooked, but not brown. Add steamed broccoli florets. Beat together milk, eggs, salt, and pepper. In the baked pie shell, spread the grated cheese. Add the cooked vegetables. Pour the milk and egg mixture over it. (Garnish with parsley)

Bake in center of the oven at 375 degree, for 40 minutes, until knife inserted in the middle comes out clean. The top of the quiche should be brown and slightly puffed. Remove to a wire rack for 10 minutes to let the custard set.

### Suzanna's variation:

It was the first night of Ramadan, and I wanted to make something special for husband Rich/Rifaat to eat after his first day of fasting, so I made quiche for the first time ever.

- For vegetables I used:
- ¾ cup of sliced mushrooms and ¾ cup chopped chard, sautéed down to about 1 cup total.
  - ⅓ cup shrimp, cooked, peeled, and chopped

I used 1 tsp of Aleppo pepper instead of black pepper

I served it with a salad of steamed green beans (½ cup? Sorry, I didn't measure)

- 2 stalks celery (chopped)
- 1 slice cooked golden beet (diced)

Dressing:

- 1 generous tbsp frozen orange juice concentrate
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp vinegar

I don't do pie crusts, though, so son James made a fine crust using oat flour instead of Marjorie's flour mixture. It was really good! And guess what? Real men DO eat quiche - the men in my house devoured it!



## Poetry By Ona Gritz

### In Sycamore Park

A narrow path overseen by a few metal benches leads to the massive wonder this place is named for, limbs the size of trunks, and a plaque that dates it back to 1650. Today, beneath that great latticework of shade, my friends discuss what is known about the communal network of roots. Even a stump, otherwise dead, still shares what it has with the group. Meanwhile, my own stingy core keeps replaying a moment on the phone this morning, Jean sniping in a way that was so old and familiar it stung me to silence, same tone, same words, I swear, as in that first summer when I was eighteen and enthralled with her. Now I'm nearly sixty, she's newly widowed and, as she fingers the mottled bark, I half think it must be illegal to be pissed at a friend, no, a sister with a grief that fresh. And yet, as Sue explains how fungi are the brains underground, my mind goes from fungus to fester. "How do botanists date trees," Lisa asks, "when they can't see the rings?" I shrug and glance at the gold band that links Jean to an absence, then hug my thickening middle and, with it, the girl I was who always assumed, whenever someone was so much as brusque, it was somehow her fault. "I can't get over this thing," I say, wanting to mean the sycamore. All it has felt in its almost four hundred years. All it must know and have forgiven.

### Spring, 2020

For these last almost four months when I've either been home amid my Lysoled counters and untouched mail, or out with the dog, crossing streets to dodge neighbors unless they cross to dodge me first, each of us waving to say what a smile would if it weren't covered up: It's not personal; good to see you; stay well; let us all stay well. Only our son has ventured out, into the wide changed world, bringing home food in packages we regard like they might detonate, walking on trails with his girlfriend after her doctor father's test came back clear, and finally, just last week, to an actual restaurant. Afterwards, we're hungry, my husband and I, for assurances first: Was the staff masked, the seating far enough apart? But then, for a taste of how it felt to eat a burger served by a stranger, to do something so remarkably ordinary again. As a precaution, we've widened the table for this conversation, adding those extra slats like we used to for company, as those he's now company, him, the only person I'd ever hosted in the small, closed space between my pelvis and heart.



Ona Gritz's new memoir, "Everywhere I Look," is about sisterhood, longing, true crime, and family secrets. Helen Fremont calls it "profound and beautifully written," and Rachel Simon says, "This is a book that will take hold of your emotions – and, if you're willing, change you." Ona's earlier books include a middle grade novel, "August Or Forever," and "Geode," a finalist for the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award. Ona teaches creative writing to teenagers with disabilities.

### Island poetry in these pages

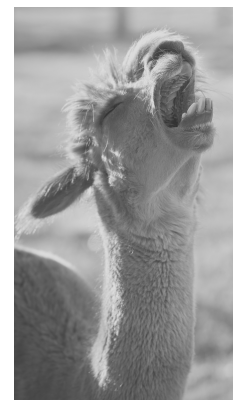
How about yours?



Submit your poems to The Vashon Loop!

Write to: vashonloop-poetry@janevalencia.com

## Llaughing Llamas Chronicles



By Daniel Hooker

Q. How do you ask a country girl out on a date.

A. Attract 'er!

~

Q. You know it's springtime when you look out your window and you see two black birds stuck together.

A. And then it snows, and you realize they were just vell-

crows. They stick together until the end of winter.



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## Solar Eclipse – April 8, 2024

By Melanie Farmer

Eclipses are pure astronomical phenomena; those who experience its shadow share this with the world. The events, live-streamed globally, have no political attachment, no violent content, no war., no race, no gender ... nothing.

The eclipse is separate from all expectation or meaning, from new-age interpretation, from history. Here's our chance to be unified as both scientist and mystic. As scientists, we have volumes of past astronomical data. As mystics, we can be in our creative mind, absorbed in awe. Fully present. Divinely joined.

What is an eclipse? An eclipse occurs when three celestial objects come into alignment, blocking one another. In a lunar eclipse, the earth blocks sunlight on the moon, casting a shadow across the lunar surface. In a solar eclipse, the moon blocks sunlight on the earth, casting a dark pattern or tracking shadow.

Astrology of the eclipse. When the sun is blocked, we are in shadow. It can be liberating, annihilating, or both. Since the October 2023 solar eclipse, we have all been engaged in six months of shadow work. The April 2024 solar eclipse can be interpreted through two orientations used in astrology:

In Sidereal astrology, the eclipse is occurring in Pisces and Virgo, pointing towards continued religious fanaticism and cleansing of the other. (Pisces = religion, oceans, mysticism, sensitivity; Virgo = health, hygiene, cleansing, pragmatism.)

In Tropical astrology, the eclipse is occurring in Aries and Libra, pointing towards continued war,

conflict, diplomacy, and relational peace. (Aries = war, conflict, urgency, courage; Libra = justice, accommodation, diplomacy, respect.)

In Vedic astrology, a Sidereal system, Rahu, the north node conjunct Chiron is the solar eclipse. Rahu is a chaos agent. Head of a serpent who swallows the sun, he blocks the sun's light, tricking all. Chiron is the wounded healer, and represents primal wounds.

Additionally, a Jupiter-Uranus conjunction starts on April 20th. This conjunction happens every 14 years. Basically, it's a collective shift of the unconsciousness and will run with the cascading post-eclipse effects.

Atmospheric impact of an eclipse. Sudden changes in ionospheric conditions (positive-negative) during an eclipse can lead to ionospheric anomalies, such as holes or plasma depletions. These anomalies can disrupt radio signals and GPS navigation systems.

Effect of ions on bodily function. The ionosphere is the atmospheric layer that contains a high concentration of ions and free electrons (eg, hydrogen ions). Ions are atoms or molecules with a net electric charge due to the loss or gain of one or more electrons. Ions help to regulate osmotic pressure and the body's water content; they transmit nerve signals, activate enzymes, contract muscles (including the heart), and help form bones and teeth.

Exposure to positive ion concentrations is considered bad or "heavy." Sources include cities, crowded places, offices, industrial areas, schools, and cars. Also, settings with fluorescent lighting; toxic carpeting, upholstery, or paint; and/or electronic devices like televisions, phones, and computers. Research suggests that exposure to positive air ions may be associated with feelings of

unpleasantness, irritability, and increased anxiety.

Exposure to negative ions is considered good or "light." Sources include crashing water, sunlight, dense forests (especially pine), mountains, parks, waterfalls, springs, beaches, and outside after heavy rain and storms. Some research shows that exposure to negative air ions is linked to reduced depression, anxiety, and stress, and improved psychological well-being.

It is ironic that people are crowding to areas where the path of the eclipse is darkest, which is exactly where positive ionization will be greatest! Ancient Vedic astrologers did not identify losing electrons due to a solar eclipse. Rather, feeling bad or confused was attributed to Rahu, as he generates mental confusion, chaos, and distorts reality.

Eclipses were also known as "King Killers." Historically, eclipses have been markers for major changes, both personally and collectively. To protect the monarch, a ritual, dating back to the first millennium BC, was devised: the "substituting ritual" or "sar pūhi."

In this ritual, "a person would be chosen to replace the king. He would be dressed like the king and placed on the throne ... The real king would keep a low profile and avoid being seen. If no additional negative portents were observed, the substitute king was put to death, therefore fulfilling the prophetic reading of the celestial omen while saving the life of the real king."

Keep an eye on the global "kings" during this cycle. Some will simply fall, while others may be replaced, put to death, or scapegoats may be found.

Melanie Farmer is an artist and goddess horse cult member, archetypal astrologer, and ayurvedic bodyworker. Contact via [ayurvedicastrologer@gmail.com](mailto:ayurvedicastrologer@gmail.com) or [www.vashonrider.com](http://www.vashonrider.com).

**Aries (March 20-April 19)**

It's not merely that this will be one of the most unusual months of your life so far. Rather, you are entering a phase of existence—lasting years—that will stand apart from anything you've experienced before. The message of your charts is about doing the work of self-actualization; if you are in any way struggling, the question is: are you being real with yourself? Related questions include: are you being true to your healing process? The simplest way to describe self-actualization is to recognize that your relationship to yourself is your one and only priority in this world. This is not about denying the existence of others, nor the various roles that you serve for people and that they serve for you. Yet you must have a point of orientation from which you can define "self" and "other." If you find this difficult, take solace that many are in your situation. Very few take action, which means to actualize, which means making decisions based on honest perception. And that is the theme of the moment.

**Taurus (April 19-May 20)**

This may be one of the most unusual and brilliant months of your life, if you can hang loose and shed some of your attachments to the past. You don't need familiar right now—you need bold and adventurous. Embrace the sense of 'no turning back' that's likely to infuse your every step. You may feel like you're not up to such an adventure, because you're not personally ready for it. This astrology is saying one thing: the past is the worst possible reference point for your future potential. "Let go and let God." Events in your adjoining sign Aries may have you under what feels like quite a lot of pressure to discover something you don't know about who you are. Who you are and who you express in the world are about to drop into perfect alignment, and if you let this happen without resistance, you will gain something you take with you for the rest of your life.

**Gemini (May 20-June 21)**

The challenge for you is to think with your whole brain. Though this is not based on exact science, the metaphor works well enough: humans tend to think with half of their consciousness, and half of their awareness (at best) and shut out the rest. This leads to a polarized and distorted view of oneself and of existence. As the world goes wild this month, and unexpected and even impossible developments seem to burst out of nowhere, resist the temptation to be razzled and dazzled by the show. Keep your awareness turned inward, and calmly study your responses to people and situations. Notice that you will have two seemingly diametrically opposed views on any circumstance. Note what those opposing or distinctive viewpoints are, then consider the idea that there is a way to see the world that transcends the parts, and the sum of the parts. You are a different person when you do this, when you transcend your limited or "hemispheric" perceptions. This month, Sedna enters your birth sign for the first time in 11,400 years (yes, since back in one Stone Age or another). This represents a profound and necessary shift in your mental environment.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

If astrology means anything, this will be one of the most unusual months of your life. The central image is a kind of debut where you emerge into the



# Planet Waves

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

world as the person you always thought you might be. To stand visibly in your truth, as a matter of action, is to stand out, to express your desires and your accomplishments honestly and with humility. That is a vulnerable place to be. Yet it would seem that if you want to claim your position in the world, vulnerability is a small price to pay. Those who admit their vulnerability as a conscious idea are often protected by their commitment to truth, and by being in alignment with themselves. While you're a private person in many ways, your current necessity is to be recognized and noticed. In order to do your best work, others must know about you. The example you set for others is your only teaching and your only true accomplishment. Model for others your ability to be steadfast and true in a world of chaos and deception. That is the mark of strength and integrity, and it's the story being told by your astrology—now and far into the future.

**Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)**

The key to understanding Leo is the idea that your spiritual or religious orientation is about self-development. So far as I can see, you know that the way to higher consciousness is through your own self-awareness, and your commitment to growth. The April 8 eclipse is a bonanza of self-actualization. It's about the awakening to who you are, and who you always were. This, in turn, offers an opening into many new possibilities, all of which you contain within you (and always have). The healing that the world needs is personal healing, because no other is possible without it. And that is what you have available. Think of the eclipse of the Sun, the celestial body associated with Leo, as a curtain drawn back, revealing something within your own awareness: the attractive power of wholeness. You will get a look at how important the example you set really is. In the words of A Course in Miracles, this is a journey without distance to a destination that has never changed.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)**

This is your moment to reach escape velocity on a concept of relationships you no longer can abide. I am talking about the idea of losing yourself in a person, or investing yourself in them so fully that there is little left of your previous concept of who you are. This sometimes manifests as alternating between "the me who is in a relationship" and "the me who is not in a relationship," as if they are two different people. This cannot be supported by the psychic structure of true personhood; of self-actualization; of having the space and the freedom to be yourself. Most relationships are formed on the basis that you will remain the same person who you are today, and that is why growth is so stressful. I have read for many clients for whom even the idea of healing is threatening to a relationship. Yet growth and healing (as one idea) is your single highest priority. You know that no matter what else happens, you must be your own person—and that and nothing else is the basis of your relationships.

**Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)**

From one day to the next, you may feel like you're waking up in a different world. The gift of this moment is your

growing recognition of what unusual times we are living through. You may observe significant distinctions and unusual qualities whereas before you saw very few. Moreover, they will matter to you: you will know that your new way of seeing is teaching you something about yourself. As the April 8 eclipse approaches, imagine the world is becoming a wholly transparent place, where you can gaze at all of the situations in your life, and have the ability to move through the different spaces—anywhere you want. Seek understanding while remembering it does not come quickly or easily; at no time are you an outsider gazing in; rather, your perspective is from within the midst of the world, surrounded by it on all sides.

**Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)**

You came into this life to do something all your own—your invention, your idea, your design, and your opportunity to express yourself. Not everyone has such a mission. You may think they do, but then wonder how they can do something from day to day that bears no resemblance to who they truly are. For those people, you provide an important example, though that too is secondary to serving in the specific way you're called to serve. Most others would be made very nervous by doing something so distinctive and unproven. The universe has a way of clearing the path when people make a decision to do what is truly right for them, and obstacles will be learning opportunities. Your charts describe how the fastest way to take a curve is to be in the inner lane, then move silently past whatever might have blocked your way. Be respectful and generous, and you'll make friends where you could have made adversaries. And you're well poised to recognize the power of your state of mind as your best ally in any situation: keep it positive.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)**

These days may have the feeling of a moment you've long been waiting for, and I'm happy to tell you that is true. If you've ever needed cosmic consent to be who you are and do what is right for you, you have it now—with astounding emphasis. Indeed, anything may feel right, so make sure that's really true. I have a clue for you: Do the one thing you've always wanted to do the most. Where is there? Only you know. The April 8 solar eclipse describes the seed of your creative impulse, which is self-discovery. You are not here to produce anything; you are here to understand yourself—and that gets the results. Those are shown in an April 20 conjunction of your ruling planet Jupiter with revolutionary Uranus. This is about you inventing a new approach to your work, based on your newly-acquired self-knowledge. Then the healing process shifts to your relationships. The message there is to relate to others not as half of a relationship but as a whole person. I suggest you seek collaboration rather than completion.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)**

You're in a profound process of sorting out your priorities, your ideas and your sense of belonging on the planet. Most descriptions of Capricorn say your sign is about aspiring upward. My take is that what you live for is to be grounded and confident in who you are—

and succeed from that place. You have plenty to reflect on from the Pluto-in-Capricorn years, though you also know that you're being called to de-emphasize the past and be present in the moment. Pluto's new location in Aquarius is urging you to understand your priorities—and how they are different from those of everyone around you. Events in Pisces are saying you must get over your guilt complex, and not let your emotions cloud your mental clarity. There seems to be a tremendously important decision you have to make, though the pressure is false, and you will soon see that there is a solution to the situation that serves everyone. The discovery is the power of mental blocks, and how much strength you can set free by letting them go. The centerpiece of April's astrology involves your home-making and security angle. I suggest focusing specifically on the spaces you live in, and make them perfect for who you are.

**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)**

Your sign has what I call a 'contrarian' side, which sometimes shows up as disagreeing with others for the sake of doing so. Yet this is a mere shadow of your true originality. Pluto in your sign indicates that you now have the strength to never allow yourself to be persuaded of what you don't agree with, or what is not true. Your mind is shockingly fresh right now, and you may walk around with the ongoing amazement that you've never seen the world quite like you do now. Feed that experience gently, and take any opportunity to rethink what you thought was 'settled science'. One thing to be real about is your anger. It can be a powerful motivation for change, or a toxic acid that burns you up from inside. But you can't do anything about it, or with it, if you don't acknowledge how you feel. Remember that once you make contact with anger or the feelings that mask it (frustration, depression, and confusion), you will be motivated to make changes. Fortunately, given this month's total eclipse and many other factors, the time is right for radical growth and progress.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)**

Accomplish by creativity, stealth and shapeshifting what you cannot do by force. Make yourself noticeable in only the ways you want to be noticed; practice selective dispensing of information. Spin everything consciously to create the image that will be useful to you, and gently work your way through resistance and obstacles. The worst judgments are your own self-judgments; this is not easy to master in a world that seems to deal out harsh opinions on a moment-to-moment basis, though they cannot stick to you if you do not agree. The unusual sequence of events that span the incomparable month of April 2024 take you through some strange inner territory as the world goes through its upheavals. Whatever your outer circumstances may be, how you regard yourself is the defining factor in nearly any outcome. At the moment you're going through a profound rite of passage in the realm of experience known today as self-respect or self-esteem. This involves understanding all facets of the value that you put upon yourself. There will be problems that money can solve, and I suggest you resist the temptation to take that approach. Stick to what is right and true.

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