

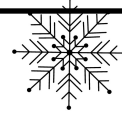


THE VASHON LOOP

Vol. 22, #1

OWNED BY ISLANDERS ~ PRINTED IN SEATTLE ~ FREE

January 7, 2025



Apocalypse Now! (Or, Maybe Not)

By Michael Shook

As I type this, we are about a month away from the inauguration of the President. Trump will go from "President-elect" to full-on "President of the United States of America, Donald J. Trump." These words strike fear and loathing into the hearts and minds of many Americans. But having heard some of these concerns, I'm reminded of something Mark Twain said: "Most of the things I worried about in life never happened." I think that may be true for Trump2.

This is not to say that I regard Trump's latest bout as President casually, though in fairness, I don't regard any particular Presidential term casually. One can never quite foresee the direction an administration might take, nor what crises might arise, or the subsequent response made to those crises (terrorist attacks, the Iranian hostage situation of 1979, COVID, financial meltdowns, etc.).

I do think it safe to say that Trump2 will be, if nothing else, at least as bumpy a ride as his first administration, even if nothing crazy happens in the rest of the world (the odds of the latter are slim to none). The chaos, the rants, the texts at all hours of the day and night, the lawsuits (some of which are already rolling), the blustering accusations, and the slights feverishly fomented - both real and imagined - all this and perhaps more will come our way.

In the near term, a concern for me is the economy. The much-spoken-of tariffs could be bad, especially for Washington state's export-based livelihoods, as many have already noted. We could also get a double whammy if Trump manages to

deport significant numbers of illegal immigrants, given the crucial work they accomplish in many sectors, farm labor foremost. On the other hand, for how many years now have previous administrations (hello, Biden/Harris) and Congress kicked the can down the road on this issue? If they had not so badly botched securing the Southern Border, and created a reasonable, workable plan for hiring seasonal labor, we wouldn't have the situation we have now.

There are some decidedly good things Trump has proposed. For example, getting rid of the idiocy called "Daylight Savings Time." This would be nothing short of fabulous. It's a stupid idea to begin

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Refill Vashon: Thoughtful Habits Made Easy



Refill Vashon / Golden Afternoon is located across the street from Thriftway, in the former Licensing building; on the right is Tracy Chait showing some Refill wares and a pair of second-hand Osh-Kosh dungarees.

By Caitlin Rothermel

An interview with Tracy Chait, owner of "Refill Vashon" and "Golden Afternoon"

Can you tell us about your background and what inspired you to start Refill?

It's hard to pinpoint just one thing - it's been a journey of many threads coming together. As a teenager, I was part of an Eco club and had a deep love for animals and the ocean. Growing up by the sea shaped my connection to nature.

Later, I became a teacher and did a lot of outdoor education, which reinforced my commitment to sustainability. I also worked in sustainable design and vintage clothing in California, focusing on eco-friendly interiors and vintage finds. Becoming a mom was another pivotal moment; I became more aware of reducing chemical exposure for my kids and started creating my own cleaning products in the kitchen.

Then, I got involved in a fiber shed project and sold products at the Farmers' Market. Over the years, all these experiences wove together and culminated in this business.

How do you choose the products you sell?

At first, I focused on items I had used and trusted for years with my family. I also created many products myself, especially in the early days at the Farmers' Market. As the business grew, I began collaborating with friends who are makers and artists, many of whom I wanted to represent in the store.

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Looking for Conspirators

I Know What You Did

By Andy Valencia

People can be sneaky, especially when they're doing something they oughtn't. Imagine if you were one of these sketchy people, and found that somebody honest was looking at your actions, talking to people, and in general collecting evidence against you. You've "done the crime," and now you're going to "do the time."

Or maybe not.



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Since at least as far back as the 1960s, there has been a way to make honest people apologize and stop asking inconvenient questions.

"That's a conspiracy theory."

Like any "get out of jail free" card, it gets used and used again until it gets terribly worn, and then it finally stops working. It's time for the wicked to find some new way to avoid justice, because the old trick is just about used up.

An official story is being floated, and from your personal knowledge, your investigations, or just your common sense - you question it. You can expect shortly to be labeled a "conspiracy theorist." You'll no doubt blush, stammer, and assure everybody that you don't hold with conspiracy theories, certainly not! You back away and drop the matter.

What an odd thing to be embarrassed about. A conspiracy is just an activity where two or more people work together without making their cooperation public. People do this all the time. In criminal law, there's an entire branch of criminal charges that can be brought against you for conspiring to commit or hide a crime - "conspiracy to defraud," "conspiracy to commit murder," and so forth. You can be sure prosecutors don't blush and apologize for bringing this charge against the accused.

Or perhaps you're embarrassed about putting together a theory? Science is pretty much defined by people trying to learn something they don't yet know. After initial research, they create a theory which they then work to either confirm or deny. Where would we be without theories as the first step in scientific progress?

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Singing the Survival of All Beings

By Erin Durrett

Mother orca, Tahlequah, carries a dead baby, once again, for all to see. She is holding her loss in a way that makes it possible for us to mourn with her, and the deeper vision is to see our own children in that mother's arms. Could there be a more gracious, dignified, or heart-wrenching way of reminding us that in saving her family, we can save ourselves and the rest of creation?

Who knows the songs that will multiply the salmon and clean the waters? How do we learn to sing them? The First Peoples lead the way in water, salmon, and orca habitat restoration - let's ask them! Let's contribute to their efforts. Let's join Vashon's Save Our Salmon organization (<https://www.wildsalmon.org/>) which has allied with the people who have lived with the orca in this place for thousands of years.

We need to support with money and actually take part in their efforts to clean the water, remove dams, and restore Tahlequah's food to the Salish Sea so she and her family can thrive. The song of the Living Earth is being sung - it's time to learn it and join the singing of the survival of all beings!



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Don't Forget the Birds – So How Do Those Hummingbirds Survive?

By Ed Swan

Ed Swan was a master ornithologist with an incredible depth of knowledge and a generous enthusiasm to share it. He inspired many Islanders to learn about birds, and was a regular columnist for The Loop. This article appeared in the January 17, 2007 issue.

During this long cold spell, many may be wondering what birds do to survive the cold. Birds utilize a number of adaptations that enable them to regulate their heat and make it through inclement weather. Birds use both physical and behavioral mechanisms to minimize heat loss.

Behaviorally, many species deploy a variety of tactics for keeping warmer. The main areas of heat loss involve their legs and bills, since they lack feathers for insulation. Birds often stand with one leg tucked up into the feathers, cutting the exposed area in half. Flocks of shorebirds may often be seen resting with their bills inserted into their feathers. One combination includes covering the bill and sitting low to cover both legs. A warmer feeding strategy employed by juncos consists of holding their breast feathers down to cover their legs as they scoot along the ground looking for seeds. In addition, pretty much all bird species might be seen at one time or another puffing themselves up into a ball to hold in heat.

Finally, birds take advantage of environmental sources of energy such as the sun to help them out. They orientate their bodies to expose the maximum area to the sun. Many possess dark feathers or skin pigments towards their rump that they turn to the sun for better heat absorption.

Birds have a number of physical adaptations to help them out. Some reduce blood flow to and from their legs to lower their temperature and avoid bringing in cold blood to the center of their body.



Others have the veins and arteries touching within their legs, so that the warm blood coming out from the body's center heats up the cool blood coming in.

Our hummingbirds use another method to make it through. They seek sheltered areas to rest and become less active in order to expose themselves less to the cold and use less energy. They may also induce torpor. Torpor reduces their energy requirements. They drop their internal temperature, breathing, and heart rates. Active birds stay at around 40°C, birds in torpor drop down to 9-12°C. In one study, an Anna's Hummingbird suspended its breathing for up to 5 minutes at a time.

Torpor has its price; birds are unable to react quickly to predatory and other threats, taking several minutes to revive. They also require an immediate easy, energy boost of food.

Ed's article continues with a round-up of local bird sightings, specific to the time of his writing, Jan. 2007. To read in full, go to the Featured tab at vashonloop.com, click on Loop Archives, and select v. 4 #2. The article is on p. 7.

Refill Vashon: Thoughtful Habits Made Easy

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As we've expanded, I've done extensive research and product testing. My team and I trial everything before offering it to customers. I also like to find things when I travel.

Tell me about your clothing section, "Golden Afternoon"? How does that fit into your vision?

The clothing is entirely secondhand and exclusively for kids. I have a handful of friends who help source unique vintage and secondhand pieces, and I also find items myself. I love to offer secondhand clothing; it's sustainable, and also more affordable and less "risky" for parents, especially as kids' tastes and sizes can change quickly.

I also want it to feel welcoming here in the store, especially for families. We have a play area for kids, and it's not unusual to see families visiting. It's important to me that the space feels like a community hub.

What are some of your favorite products that you sell?

We have skincare and wellness items, including small-batch herbal tinctures, soaps, and refillable deodorants in glass jars. I prioritize plant-forward, clean ingredients.

We also sell ceramics and textiles - they're not refillable, but the hope is that the design is really timeless and you won't get tired of it in your home. Everything's designed to be really durable and last a long time.

How can customers purchase your products, especially the refillable ones?

We encourage customers to bring their own containers for refills - it's a big part of our sustainability effort. In the store, we have a refill section stocked with bulk items like dish soap, hand sanitizer, and laundry detergent. Customers can use their own bottles, or if they don't have any, they can take one from our community crate, which operates on a take-one-leave-one basis. Our goal is to make refilling accessible and eco-friendly.

What would you say to someone who sees sustainable shopping as challenging or inconvenient?

I'll admit it's not as convenient as traditional shopping, but many meaningful things in life aren't. Cooking from scratch, growing your own food - these things take effort, but offer great rewards. My advice is to start small. Pick one or two manageable changes and stick with them.

Start with easy swaps that integrate seamlessly into your routine. For example, our shampoo bars last 8-10 months, much longer than liquid shampoo, so you're not constantly running out, and you're reducing plastic waste.

"Unpaper" towels are another great starting point - they're washable, save money, and reduce waste. Another idea is to stock up on essentials like dish soap or laundry detergent in bulk, so you're not running out frequently.

The key is to focus on one or two changes at a time and build from there as they become habits. Once

those habits are in place, you can add more sustainable practices at your own pace.

Any final thoughts you'd like to share?

I'm just really grateful to have a brick-and-mortar space where I can connect with people face-to-face. After so much time spent online, it feels refreshing to build a real community, seeing familiar faces, and creating a nice spot here.

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The Vashon Loop

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

<https://vashonloop.com/>
January 7, 2025

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

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Curiosity, 2025

By Caitlin Rothermel

Will you pick a word for 2025? Choose a word that captures what you want to aim for this year.

Applied well, one meaningful word can act like an anchor, helping to focus your thoughts and align your subconscious mind with your intentions. Different than new year's resolutions, which force you onto a task or series of undertakings, a single word is more like a road you walk on - a road with a view worth considering.

Once you decide to look for your word, it can show up in many ways - often quickly, following some straightforward consideration, but also as a picture in your mind or based on something someone says - occasionally, with perfect timing - that resonates just right.

Then, define your word in a way that ties it to a purpose you feel ready to stick with for at least a year. Be as interpretive, spiritual, symbolic, or Carl Jung-ish about it as you wish.

In 2021, the first year I picked a word, I chose "Leapfrog." I saw it clearly in my mind's eye - in my interactions and experiences, I wanted to "leap" over unnecessary noise and land closer to the heart of the matter. Also, in that very unique year, I needed a new way to understand what "moving forward" could mean.

This year, my word is "Curiosity." As I see it, curiosity is naturally inquisitive and open-minded. My curiosity wants primarily to understand who I am, and also who others are - both how we think and how we feel. Ideally, this curiosity remains in place even if it means looking at touchy or painful issues.

It seems that we are born into our



curiosity. In Internal Family Systems (or "parts") theory, curiosity is one of several "C-words" that describe the key parts of our deepest self. Each C-word refers to an innate part of our being and represents a mode of expression we were all born with - although it can feel like we no longer have access to it, or only sometimes have access to it.

(If you are curious, the other C-words are calm, clear, compassionate, confident, connected, courageous, and creative. If you think of a healthy, outgoing toddler, it's easy to understand how each word shows through in their everyday actions.)

Taking on curiosity is both exciting and anxiety-provoking. I have a love-hate relationship with curiosity, and I bet you do, too.

Real life can make me grouchy and punchy, leading to disinterest and stubborn irritation, which definitely blocks curiosity. Then, when I'm feeling curious again, I end up having more questions and ideas than I can fit into the time available (because sleep is also important, as is feeding and caring for myself and my family). This can feed back into being grouchy.

But, when I'm really engaging with my curiosity, I become extremely

connected to what I'm doing. It's a flow-state feeling, a fantastic brain-body activation. (Side note: what happens next is that I typically realize how nice it feels and then become distracted from my curiosity.)

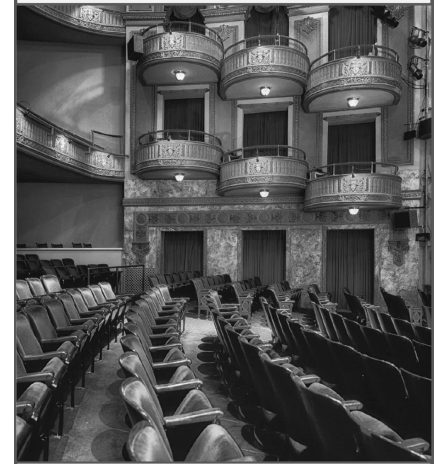
With curiosity, you're no longer limited to what you were "good at" in school, or really to any boundaries in terms of what you can look at. In any endeavor, it's always possible to get a bit more understanding. And honestly, "a bit more" is a completely reasonable goal.

Something I'm also learning, slowly, to like about curiosity is that it leaves room to be wrong. When you open yourself up to curiosity, you're likely to find out that you were wrong about something. Realizing that things are not anywhere near as settled as you thought is actually both scary and exciting, no matter how old you are. If your ego gets hurt, it can really hurt, but it also opens up room for insight - sometimes within moments or hours.

Put another way, when I find a way to keep my curiosity active even when it hurts, something new and really useful always happens next.

With all that said, what's your word for the year?

If you feel completely averse to something, get to know it better. Whatever you feel yourself leaning away from, try leaning into.



If you hate opera, go learn more about opera. Getting to know something gives you an appreciation for this thing that you used to just dismiss.

~ Derek Sivers

DispatchHealth Corrections

We made a few errors in last month's lead article. The correct spelling is "DispatchHealth" without a space. It is already in network with Apple Health, with the exception of Molina, which they are working on adding. In addition to blue and white, their vehicle also sports persimmon red accents, and is a spiffy Hyundai Santa Fe, not a Ford Escape. Both the following phone contact and website were created specially for Vashon-Maury residents: (253) 617-4010, <https://www.dispatchhealth.com/locations/wa/vashon-maury-island/>

Looking for Conspirators

Continued from Front Page

You look at a group of people, and their behavior suggests that they're up to something. You study them more closely, and eventually have an idea of who's in this group, and what they're secretly working to achieve. You roll this up into a description of what you think they're doing - a theory about their conspiracy. What should you be called? If your goal is to print it in a newspaper, "investigative journalist" might fit the bill. On the internet, "blogger" could suffice. Or, you post it on some corporate-controlled social media and get a comment like "Oh, I see a conspiracy theorist is off his medication."

Conspiracy theories matter. The 1964 US government faked a battle in the Gulf of Tonkin, leading to an escalation of the Vietnam War. A generation later, in 2003, the US swore that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, shortly before invading the country. In both cases, there were "conspiracy theorists" questioning these stories. Both times, they were shouted down. A terrible cost in blood and treasure might have been saved if their conspiracy theories had been run down to conspiracy facts.

Hearing that something is a "conspiracy theory" is a sign that you should pay more attention - not avert your eyes. When you see something dismissed as one, ask yourself some important questions. Who is conspiring? What are they doing together in secrecy? Does it fit with the facts available? Can you tie the hypothetical conspirators to some gain in wealth or power? As in criminal investigations, look for motive, means, and opportunity.

When you make a conspiracy theory the start of a line of inquiry rather than a reason to stop

looking, you remove a terribly useful tool from the hands of people with a long history of lies. Lying to the public should be a last, desperate act of the authorities. Not a convenient go-to tool for governing. Make lies expensive and dangerous again. Turning high quality conspiracy theories into conspiracy facts is a great way to do this.



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New Year's Resolutions Depend Upon Gratitude, Appreciation, and Attitude

By March Twisdale

Gratitude and appreciation are super powers. They can change our outlook on anything and everything in a heartbeat, without the participation or agreement of any other natural force on Earth, including other people.

And yet, how often do we use these great life skills? In our own lives, for our own benefit, and as parents, being upfront and speaking openly as we model their use in front of our children? Or with our friends, when they are feeling down and despondent?

How often do we start off from the place of recognizing all we have to feel gratitude for, the blessings in our lives already? Imagine if one's New Year's Resolution was grounded in appreciation of the great things already in our lives, first and foremost. From there, we could ask ourselves, "What do I resolve to do more of in the year to come?"

Years ago, I came across a lovely poster titled, "Attitude." This is the primary key unlocking our superpowers of gratitude and appreciation. To be grateful or to feel appreciation is a choice that our attitude either nurtures and allows or rejects and prevents.

It is my belief that by unlocking Gratitude and Appreciation with the key of Attitude we are best able to form amazing Resolutions as we head into the New Year. These three superpowers place us in reality, and it is only from that point of clarity that we can form plans likely to take us where we need to go.

And, because life isn't always a bed of roses, how do Gratitude, Appreciation, and Attitude help us when facing the hardships, struggles, fears, and disappointments of life? They help us by creating clarity.

Cooking for the Hay Crew

By Pam (aka Gates) Johnson

Seems like this time of year, it's all about the food. I spent five days and about three hundred bucks preparing a Thanksgiving dinner for just seven people. If you are brave enough to read this to the end, you will find out the answer to an important Thanksgiving-related question.

First off, I kind of love to cook. It's my thing. When I got married and moved to Vashon at the ripe old age of 21, I knew nothing about cooking. My dad would never let my sisters and me into the kitchen, not even to wash the dishes. He was a little strange. So, when I arrived here, fresh from a life of leisure and fast food, I had no idea how to feed my new husband. BUT I could read, which I did, and taught myself how to cook.

During my time working for the school district, I would prepare meals for the middle school staff on conference or early release days. The meals morphed into a pretty big deal. Lots of work, but I loved doing it. Felt like the teachers needed a little appreciation for their hard work.

My husband also worked for the school district and would have time off during the summer. We needed some extra cash, so started a business of cutting and baling local hay. In those years, there were a lot of people raising livestock and a lot of big fields that needed cutting.

One memorable summer, we cut hay for Frank Benskin, who lived at the Jesus Barn Farm. Frank wanted to put up loose hay, not baled. We cut the hay, and when it was cured, we brought in a big flatbed trailer to haul it back to the barn.

I was a misplaced city girl, a wannabe farmer. I was put on the trailer with a hay fork. The men forked the hay and threw it up to me. My job was to stomp the hay down, being sure to build up solid sides, and load the trailer. When we got the loaded trailer back to the Jesus Barn, the hay was grabbed by a big hook thing and hoisted into the hay loft and stomped down again. Good times.

But I digress ...

Island Voices

Identifying the possibility for success of our next step is a greatly positive thing to do. It's not cynical. Grounding our goals in reality prevents wasted effort and disappointment. For example, I can't survive a deadly lost-at-sea scenario right now because I'm sitting at my desk, typing this article. It sounds absurd, but it's just as absurd to expect to attain instant, true, delighted happiness if, first and foremost, what I really need is to have a good cry. But, I can find my swimsuit and head to the gym (if they're open), and I can let my emotions move through me, alone or on a call with a good friend, knowing I will feel better afterwards.

Gratitude and the experience of appreciation are not magical, nor are they "make me instantly happy" pills. They are reality-grounding practices, bringing us into closer alignment with our honest truths, clearing away the fog, and allowing us to see both near and far. In this way, we can look into the many distances, determine where we hope to end up, and then we can look down, at the firmament beneath our feet, and see upon which we stand. A cliff? A never-ending desert? Or perhaps we stand in the thick, deep and sucking mud of the tidelands, and the only way we're going

to get out before the water rises to drown us is with the help of other people.

All of those situations I described are perilous, are they not? And, with a despairing attitude, we are stuck. But, with an attitude that seeks what we can be grateful and appreciative for, we discover that a close friend has tied a rope around our hips and is ready to belay us down the sheer cliffside. In the desert, we see not-too-distant palm fronds waving in the wind to the north, suggesting that water and survival lies in that direction. And, after yanking futilely at our legs and stuck boots, we pause long enough to stand tall and search the horizon, allowing us to wave wildly at distant clam-diggers who go from thinking we were just another clam-digger having a good day to realizing - we're in distress and we need help.

My point being, life is what it is right now at this moment. Period. We are here, where we are, and there are blessings we may be missing. By using our superpowers of gratitude and appreciation, we are better able to comprehend the totality of our current reality, allowing us to set goals with a good chance of succeeding! Such as the hopes and wishes many of us are considering as we step into the New Year.

With love and best wishes for everyone's New Year,

March

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We baled hay for people, but also for ourselves. My husband would be out on the tractor all day, then at night would have to get a crew of teenagers to haul the bales back to our farm and stack it in the barn. All this had to be done pretty quickly because the threat of rain at any time could potentially ruin all the bales.

Hungry farm workers needed to eat. And that is where my feeding the hay crew began. Around eleven or midnight, the guys would come into the house, hungry, hot, and tired. Teenage boys eat a lot, especially when they are doing hard physical labor. My meals would be farm-type fare, and lots of it. Nothing fancy. They would sit down, chow down, then go back at it to get the hay in the barn before the rain came.

Nowadays, the hay business is gone, the husband is gone, the kids are gone, but I can't move past the need to prepare large amounts of food. My family comes to dinner here every Thursday. I haven't figured out how to cook a reasonable quantity of food for one meal. There always has to be enough for a hungry hay crew.


Why make a three-pound roast when there is a five-pounder for just a few bucks more? Spaghetti? A gallon of sauce and a couple pounds of noodles should be enough, with a green salad and a couple loaves of garlic bread. A big ham requires potato salad and homemade dinner rolls.

You get the picture. My son never goes home empty-handed, unless the dinner wasn't quite up to par.


I am getting up there in age, but this Thanksgiving 2024, I still made the big meal, fit for a hay crew. There was turkey and stuffing and ham and mashed potatoes and gravy and homemade rolls and corn pudding and cranberries and candied yams and green salad and black-bottom banana cream, pecan, pumpkin, and key lime pies.

I used to make seven kinds of pie every holiday meal, but I am slowing down in my old age. Plus, I made 14 pies for other people, so was a little pied-out. There was plenty of leftovers for everybody to take home their fill. They left me enough to get me through the next couple of days, but not enough to put me into a food coma.


A couple of days later, I asked myself ... was it all worth it? The work, the expense, the exhaustion? Well, it darn sure was worth it and I will gladly do it again next year!



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Winter Sailing – Not!

By Suzanna Leigh

I've never done much winter sailing; I'm not a fan of cold storm winds and wet cold hands. Still, there's something romantic about greeting the new year aboard a sailboat anchored between firework displays. Besides, Sea Change had a propane heater we wanted to try out.

We checked the weather report. Of course we did. No storms predicted, so we headed out on the last day of 2002. We passed the red nun buoy at the entrance to Quartermaster Harbor at about 1:30, just before high tide. Almost no wind, so we headed out under power. The winter sun played peek-a-boo with the clouds, giving Bob a halo as he stood at the helm with the sun behind him. Saint Bob.

We anchored off of KVI beach just as the sun was setting. We checked the depth sounder: 30 feet. We checked the tide level: even with a loss of almost of 12.5 feet of water when the tide went out; we would have plenty of water under the keel.

We set the anchor tight with plenty of anchor line out, so that if the wind should come up strong from the south or southwest, the anchor would hold and we would be safe.

Time for an anchor down drink. Hot cocoa?

I confess to being spoiled. It is Bob who gets up first to start the tea water and turn on the cabin heater. It is Bob who puts on his foul weather gear and goes on deck to change the propane tank when the first one runs out. That little heater burned a lot of propane while we played cribbage and read to each other waiting for the new year to roll in.

We kissed at midnight and went on deck to watch the fireworks all around us. We could see fireworks from Des Moines, Burien, and even - over the hill of Maury Island - from Tacoma. For the rest of the night, I curled up next to Bob to keep warm and listened to the wind in the rigging.

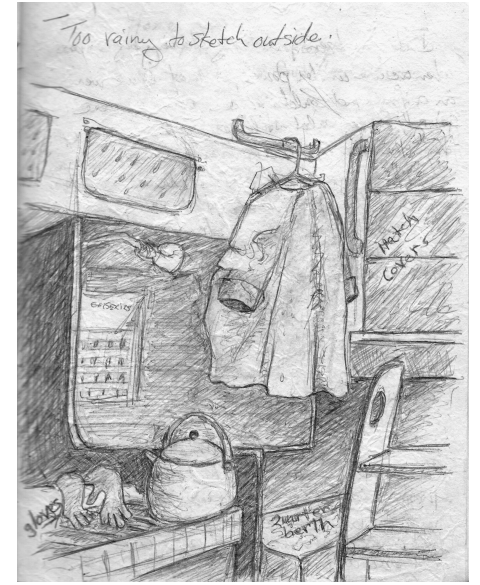
In the morning, the sky was completely overcast and a heavy rain

showed no signs of letting up. The weather report said small craft warnings for several days, with gusts to 30 knots and waves 3-4 feet. And rain. The previous report was bogus! There was no hint of storms when we checked it before leaving the dock!

Sailing and motoring between storms, in the rain, with 30-knot winds predicted, did not sound like fun. We decided to head home.

Bob pulled up the anchor around 10:30, then I took the tiller while he went below to warm his cold wet hands and wash the dishes. In spite of my long johns, turtleneck, wool Navy sweater, and warm cashmere sweater under my foul weather gear, it wasn't long before I was shivering. Bob heated water for tea and hung up a coat hanger for my wet jacket where it could drip harmlessly over the naked quarter berth. Then he came up to take a turn at the tiller. We made it home before the winds hit.

The adventure happened when we got home and discovered that James and his friend were two days overdue from a cross-country skiing trip. Were they lost somewhere in the



New Years 2003 illustration by Suzanna Leigh

snow between Crystal Mountain and White Pass?

It took some finagling to get the rescue team to look for them; they couldn't confirm that they were still in the mountains because they couldn't find James' car in the parking lot at Crystal Mountain. The snow plow had covered it up! When the rescue team in the helicopter finally did spot the skiers, they could see that both men were moving along well, though slowly, and decided to let them continue on their own.

James and Steve finally walked out of the woods three days late, about a quarter of a mile from their car, and still had one candy bar between them. The same rain that sent us home early had forced them to change course and to slog through heavy snow too wet to ski on.



Apocalypse Now! (Or, Maybe Not)

Continued from Front Page

with, akin to cutting one end off of a blanket, then sewing it onto the other end (as cartoonist Oliphant noted decades ago).

Bizarrely, our own Senator Murray said recently, "I've been fighting for years to make Daylight Savings Time (DST) permanent so that Americans can have more sunlight during their most productive hours ..." I say "bizarrely" because, what the heck happened to "Follow the science?" And the science on sleep is crystal clear. Doctors who study sleep, including the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, the American Medical Association, and the Sleep Research Society, all recommend permanent Standard Time, nationwide. The health consequences to DST are significant and well-documented. They include increases in car accidents, cardiac incidents (heart attacks), and atrial fibrillation onset, among others.

Another proposal that appeals to me, at least in principle, is Trump's intention to appoint Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy to lead a Department of Government Efficiency (DoGE), though it does seem a distinctly Quixotic adventure. However, the federal budget last year was \$6.75 trillion, and we are now \$36.17 trillion in debt, which is 123% of the Gross National Product. Interest payments alone were \$882 billion, which is more than the Defense budget. (Just typing numbers like this makes me queasy.) I can't help but think reducing some of that would be good.

But, as with all efforts to rein in spending, there's a rub. By far, the bulk of the budget is Social Security, interest on the debt, Medicare and Medicaid, defense, and various supplemental aid. Those items cost about \$5.7 trillion, and since we took in "only" \$4.9 trillion, and there is another \$1.1 trillion worth of budget items piled on that, cutting back starts to look rather daunting. Who's going to say, "Sure, cut my benefits, childcare aid, medical ..."? Who, of any party, is going to give up his or her slice of the pie? Or even a part of it?

The reluctance to give up something we already have may stop cold any plans to shrink the government significantly. After all, the bottom line of politics has forever been, "What have you done for me lately?" which refers to all things monetary. This is closely followed by the successful politician's credo of fixing potholes, i.e., "Give people stuff, or get stuff done that (might) make their lives easier."

Well, we're all familiar by now with the things Trump has said he will do. Who knows if he will be able to accomplish the bulk of it? Though the Republicans do have majorities, they are thin, and politicians of every stripe always want, desperately, to be re-elected. A goodly number may find a way to evade certain vexing votes just to placate their constituents, especially when it comes to the pocketbooks thereof.

Time will tell. Meanwhile, I plan on giving as little of my attention as possible to whatever sound and fury ensues. Instead, I'll focus on what is actually in my control - which is not much - while bearing in mind Candide's immortal admonition: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin" ("We must tend our garden").



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The Planting of a Monastery

Part 2: Looking North

By Abbot Tryphon

We had put a great deal of effort into our humble monastery, located inside a home in residential Richmond, California.

But after the dramatic drug raid at a neighboring house – including a helicopter with spotlights – I prayed that we might be permitted to find a new monastic home in a rural location. The very next morning, I called our bishop, who immediately supported our plan to move our monastery out of Richmond! My very next call was to a well-to-do friend I knew from my Berkeley graduate school days, who pledged us \$800 per month to support us during our search.

Our monastery consisted of myself, Father Paul, and all the many supplies needed to support both our day-to-day needs and our community worship life. We planned to often live out of our pickup truck camper as we searched, so our first step was to store away most of our possessions. Since my spiritual mentor was located in Santa Rosa, we visited him and also rented a storage unit there to store away our library, icons, and furniture. We could now begin the search for our promised land.

The Search

While living in the San Francisco Bay Area, I had often taken my vacations in the area north of the Golden Gate Bridge, and this is where we started. We rented a two-bedroom cabin on Cobb Mountain, just north of the Napa Valley wine country, and



began our quest for that rural location. With the financial backing of my benefactor in Berkeley (an Episcopalian), we set out each morning with a realtor, searching for just the right old farm or ranch house, hoping to replant the sprout that was our fledgling monastery.

We finally found a promising old farm, with 55 acres, a farm house and even a guest house. With the help of our benefactor, its 1987 price was within our means. Sadly, many neighbors of the property organized to block our purchase, and we realized that we needed to look elsewhere. We drove northward, out of California and well into Oregon.

Traveling in our old Ford pickup with a camper on the back, and pitching a tent each night, we continued our journey, seeking after God's will. The sight of two bearded monks, dressed in black robes, joining other campers in state parks, certainly attracted attention. I remember one old man trading freshly caught trout each morning for a cup of dark roasted coffee, which I'd prepared in a French Press. His wife was sick of trout, and he was sick of her coffee.

We were the beneficiaries of their marital spat, enjoying pan-fried trout for breakfast each morning.

We had a large dyptich with an icon of Christ on the right and the Holy Virgin on the left, which served as our traveling iconostasis. Each morning, we would set the dyptich on a picnic table, place incense in the censer, and pray Matins together.

The smell of the campfire, fresh coffee, and incense, united together, seemed as a beautiful offering to God, and has remained with me to this very day.

One campsite that was particularly memorable was just east of Portland, Oregon. The mornings were crisp with the air and scent of early autumn, and we were the only people occupying the state campground. Mount Hood loomed above us like the spire of a great cathedral, and I felt I could remain there forever. Chanting Matins before this mountain made me feel connected to the Prophet Moses of the Old Testament, for I felt I was standing on holy ground.

Medford for the Winter

With the prospect of winter ahead, we knew our days of camping had come to an end. Visiting a small Orthodox mission parish in Medford, Oregon, we were invited to move into the vacant house next door, formerly the home of an old man who had passed away. His daughter, who lived in Texas, agreed to let us live rent-free, provided we paid the utility bills.

We contacted a Medford realtor, and continued our search for that elusive rural site on which to plant

Common Orthodox Christian terms

dyptich - pair of photo holders held together by a hinge

icon - pictorial presentation of a holy religious figure

iconostasis - front wall of an Orthodox church, holding icons

Matins - morning prayer service

our monastery. Day after day, we would drive through the mountains and valleys of Southern Oregon, looking at farms and ranches, and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. After the snows of winter had begun to melt, we happened upon a 50-acre ranch, with two old houses and three barns, surrounded by federal forest land.

Located in the Applegate Valley, just west of Ashland, it seemed like a perfect location for a monastery. Yet, when we approached the county about establishing a monastery on this ranch, we were told it would be impossible, for the land was zoned for a family farm, and the county was unwilling to recognize our monastic brotherhood as a family, insisting we'd have to be "blood-related." If we wanted a monastery in their county, it would have to be within the city limits of one of their towns.

Where did we belong? Our invitation to Holy Week in Seattle was the first part of God's answer to our question, as we learned about Vashon for the first time.

Love in Christ,

Abbot Tryphon

continued next month

Island Vehicles: When Oil Filters Attack

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Motor oil contains hydrocarbons, detergents, viscosity enhancing agents, and after being used in an engine, fine metal particles. It is not recommended for skin care. But if it sprays you in the face, it imparts a nice supple feel for a week or so.

Running an errand in Seattle, my route took me past 12th & Jackson. The uphill angle on Jackson is a lot steeper than it looks on King5 News. When I pulled up to wait at a stoplight, my view of the rumpus was obscured by a sudden puff of black smoke. Then, clouds of it were coming from the front of our Subaru Forester—smoke from an engine bay is never good. Expecting the worst, things like "valve cover gasket, catastrophic failure," "head gasket, \$5000 fix," and "blocked oil pressure relief valve" rose in my head like zombies from open graves.

I pulled over, parked near a group of loitering cops and raised the hood to look for the source. Subarus have long held a reputation for both blowing gaskets and mysteriously burning or losing oil. Their "Boxer" engine has the pistons horizontally opposed, so rather than going up-down like a sensible inline four cylinder, they go side-side in pairs. This has advantages like a lower center of gravity, natural balance, and good power. In the past decade-plus, Subaru has addressed its former bugaboos and has now climbed atop the reliability ratings, but the Boxer design inherently places higher stress on valve trains and gaskets as motor oil tries to fly out the sides. As was happening right in front of me.

Under the hood, I couldn't see any obvious source for gushers, but oil was hitting the exhaust pipe flange fast enough to not burn off, and a drizzle was dripping onto the street. At a rate of about a gallon per hour. Pretty grim, and mechanics were closed. Time to cut the tour short and run to the nearest source of quarts, the Gul

station on 6th Ave South.

After about 5 quarts of refills, I limped into the home driveway. Driving the Forester up on ramps, gathering tools and, steeling myself against the inevitable, I slid underneath the car and took off the plastic skirt that protects against light road debris. It doesn't really protect much, but does block you from seeing anything. There weren't any telltale rivulets or trails from the head or valve cover areas, but it was a mess. Most of the blackish, first-leaked oil was thickest around the front of the engine bay near the filter (a round screw-on can with holes and paper baffles inside it). Which I had never seen happen before.

In cities, it can be convenient to drop off at a Jiffy Lube, or buy at a dealership that includes pre-paid changes. Disposing of one's own used oil is a chore. Motoring life started for me at a time when kids were expected to change their own oil as needed. Because getting maintenance for vehicles from the few service providers on-Island can be competitive and unpredictable, I now usually do it myself. Having made not much over 40 oil and filter changes, maybe I was the problem. Did I not tighten the filter enough?

Because it was too slippery to check for hand-tightness, I put the tightener strap on and gave a mild tug. Maybe an eighth of a turn. I then asked my kid to start the car, and in the flashlight I could see some oil coming out to the filter's right-side rim. Aha! So it was too loose. I tightened more with the strap, a half turn or so, and asked him to start up again.

On Subarus, oil pressure at idle is fairly high, at 40+ psi (pounds per square inch), about twice as strong as water comes out of a garden hose. I had compressed the filter to the perfect angle to spray me in the face with a blast of 180° oil. As they say in the trade, "Welp: there's your problem." It was definitely not too loose anymore. To get the filter off, I had to use the old trick of hammering a



Comic By Anne Cotter Moses

screwdriver of just the right size on through to make an unscrewing handle. Which, given the typical placement of filters in narrow spots, took another half-hour of awkward reaching and cursing.

I've heard of oil filters getting dirty, but not failing. Except in the fabled Double Gasket scenario, which is where you take a filter off and don't notice that its rubber ring has stayed stuck onto its mounting point; you put the new filter on top and a blow-out ensues. Thankfully, I hadn't made that mistake, and a replacement immediately straightened it out.

On inspecting the FRAM Orange filter, there was a small irregularity in the rubber ring. Honestly it didn't seem like much. Maybe a steady routine of 100 potholes a day doesn't help? I'm not sure whether the fault was operator error, manufacturing defect, or pressure anomaly. What I'm sure of is there are worse things for your skin than hot Mobil 1 5w-20 Advanced Synthetic motor oil.

Herbs With Kids – Winter Wonder and Vitality

By Jane Valencia

Author's Note: For plant safety basics when foraging, read "Herbs With Kids – Plant Safety Basics and a Few Summertime Remedies" – published August 2023 and available on vashonloop.com

With the rain, cold, mud, and leafless trees, winter seems a bleak landscape for herbal adventure. But nature never leaves us bereft. For kids and kids at heart, January offers its own opportunity to connect with the herbs.

A great way to do so is to head out to the forest, field, shore, or even just down the street, and put on our super-powers of observation and curiosity. Let's start with ourselves. We're dressed in rain gear and clothes that insulate and protect our precious body warmth in various ways. We can ask: Why do we need to stay warm? If we're exposed to too much cold and for too long, what happens to the function and activities in our bodies? What happens when wetness enters the picture? When we plan to be outdoors for any length of time, why do we put aside cotton, and instead wear wool, silk, or suitable synthetic fibers?

Heat moves toward cold sources, and wetness combined with cold pulls away heat. If you're an Islander with children, you probably know how to dress for warmth and fun, no matter the winter weather. But what about the trees and low-growing plants, exposed as they are to the elements. How do they cope?

Keep noticing and wondering. The deciduous (maples, alders, apple, and the like) have dropped most, if not all, of their leaves. Don't trees have leaves to get their food from the sun via photosynthesis? Does that mean that the trees (and other plants who've dropped their leaves) don't "eat" during the winter? Do they have other sources for nourishment, or do they just slow down and – in some fashion – "hibernate" until spring? What would an idea like hibernation – which we associate with bears, or even ourselves in a metaphoric way – even mean in a plant's life?

We might consider too, that when harvesting for food or medicine, we usually harvest from the parts of the plant where its vitality seems most concentrated. In early spring, we might harvest buds, catkins, new shoots or leaves; later on, we harvest flowers, fruits, or seeds. Later still – in late fall or winter (now) – we might harvest from areas of the plant where sugars or nutrients are stored, such as in the roots or inner bark.

Island Resilience

Even if greatly reduced or dormant, where do you think the vitality of our plant neighbors lies within them now? If we head outside to a nearby tree, we might ask questions like these: Does this tree seem to be "active" in some way, or perhaps more "sleepy?" Maybe activity is happening in places where we can't see, such as in the tree's roots underground?

Settle into relaxed – even playful – inquiry. If these trees suddenly became human, what kind of people would we see? What would they be doing or how might they seem to be feeling, rooted in the earth as they are on this particular day?

Explore other trees, and also shrubs and plants, and wonder about them as individuals or groups, tucked in for the winter. Even with bare branches, dead leaves, broken stems, or empty seedpods, do you sense life in the plant? Do you think they're dead, having either completed their life-cycles or succumbed to the elements? Or maybe they've only died back?

Again, these kinds of questions aren't necessarily meant to lead to textbook answers, though if your family's passions lead in that direction, follow along with that fire of interest. You could also make a point to check back with these plants and trees, perhaps every few days or weekly, and see when or if they "wake up." Is there a decisive moment when a plant shifts into the mode of spring and new growth? is it gradual? Do all the plants and trees "wake up" at once, do they do so in groups, or just one at a time?

As you wander, noticing this tree or that herb, be on the lookout for glimpses of above-ground life. Obviously, the evergreens retain their needles. If you know Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) or Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) trees, you could harvest sprigs of needles to nibble upon, or to make into tea. Simmer four 2" sprigs, or about ¼ cup of needles in 2½ cups of water, covered, for 15 minutes, then strain and drink. Doug-fir and Western Hemlock needles are rich in Vitamin C, and can support immune and respiratory health when drunk as a tea or inhaled (very carefully!) as a steam.

If you are familiar with red alder (*Alnus rubra*), you might discover buds on the branches. You could try a tiny nibble. What is the taste? Sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter? A mixture of flavors? What is the feel in your mouth? Take time tasting



Wings the Herb Dragon, with a sprig of Douglas-fir needles. Illustration by Jane Valencia

that bud, noticing where your attention is drawn in your body, and any responses you have to it. This kind of attentiveness helps us learn the language of plants. More about that another time!

Red alder is immune-supportive, nourishing our lymphatic system, with anti-viral properties. While not tasty (in my opinion), you could include a bud in a tea blend.

On your wander, you might notice a last flower here and there, or some new plants poking forth – a glimpse of spring to come. We'll leave any tiny herbs alone for now, though if you are a long-time herbalist or forager, you are probably like me, and can't help but pinch a bit of cleavers or dandelion to eat.

As you and your children head out on your winter wanders, do take time to wonder – about our tree and herb friends. Doing so is not only fun, but attunes you to subtle expressions of life energy in the plants. This perception grows ever more useful as one heads along an herbal path.

For some resources, please see this article online.



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Leading experts agree that many disease states are fundamentally caused by the same thing. Cancers, prion (brain) diseases, diabetes, heart disease, MS, and arthritis can all trace their pathology to a dysfunction of cellular metabolism.

The human body consists of 70 trillion cells. Each one has numerous functions they are responsible for. When cells are chronically unable to perform their designated functions, disease manifests. Agrochemicals dismantle cellular communication and ultimately, cellular function.

Unfortunately, chemical contamination is unavoidable here in the US. What we can do is be proactive, be conscious of what we put into our bodies, and be diligent about detoxification.



Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Dr. Marli Parobek, DNP

Greetings, fellow Vashonites! With the rain and dark in full swing, we are primed and ready to discuss Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), otherwise known as "The Winter Blues."

According to the National Institute of Health, SAD is defined by a new onset of depression with symptoms that last 4-5 months, and is related to seasonal changes, with winter being the most likely season due to less daylight and colder, darker days. With the lack of sunlight, and less socialization and exercise, the body produces fewer of the "happy-making" neurotransmitters, dopamine and serotonin. Holidays can also add their own type of stress and sadness, as many people spend the holidays without friends and family, or without a loved one who recently passed away.

The definition of clinical depression is: low interest or motivation to do the things we once loved to do, social isolation (avoiding social interactions in favor of "staying in"), low energy and fatigue, and/or a decrease in appetite. And if that is not depressing enough, the Pacific Northwest is the most likely region in the United States to be affected by SAD. A 2022 poll of Washington residents showed that 59% experienced some symptoms of SAD during the winter months. Women, consider yourself doubly blessed - recent data from the World Health Organization says that women are more 50% more likely to be depressed than men.

But how do we stack up to other states? Certainly, we are not the saddest ever, are we? Fortunately, we lost that title to Oregon, and West Virginia was runner-up. Washington State is in the middle of the top of the pack, with beachy states like California and Hawaii splashing in as the two least-depressed in the union.

Why should we care? It's only a little sadness, this too will pass, won't it? Most likely, yes. When

Health Matters

the weather improves, so will our mood. In the meantime, however, depression is the number one risk factor for self-harm and suicide, and contributes to other medical problems such as obesity, chronic pain, diabetes, stroke and dementia.

When do I need professional help, such as therapy or medication? When your sadness is persistent and interferes with your ADLs (activities of daily living). Thinking of your daily routine, has your mood affected your partner or your pets? Are you no longer caring for yourself, such as hygiene or cleaning your home? Do you purposely avoid leaving the house and socializing? These are signs that you may need professional advice to push through these feelings.

These feelings do not have to be permanent or allowed to affect you. You too can fight the winter blues:

1. Exercise/movement: A brisk walk outside is best; however, even around the house is beneficial. Being outside, breathing in the flora and fauna on one of Vashon's nature trails, or strolling uptown to window-shop fits the bill. Movement of any kind helps our body produce serotonin and contentment.

2. "Do onto others as you would have them do onto you." This Golden Rule reminds us that simple acts of kindness toward others produce dopamine in the brain. Whether we make a phone call, bake a loaf of banana bread, or open the door for a stranger, we give and get this happy neurotransmitter for free.

3. Prayer/reflection: Doing good for others does not need to be a physical act. When we consciously include others in our thoughts and prayers, we are creating the ultimate love for mankind.

4. Social gatherings: As my Grandma Ida used to say, "Put on your shoes and come out!" Here are a few suggestions to shake off the dust and leave the house: The Vashon Senior Center is a low-cost recreation center, and the lunches smell delicious. The Vashon Library is a quick and free location to curl up with a book or take a class. Check out local Vashon Facebook pages for seasonal soirees.

5. Reading. A good book is an adventure that awaits the turn of each page. Try the Vashon Bookshop for local authors or review the classics. Better yet, create a book club among friends.

6. Volunteer. Vashon Island is abundant with volunteer opportunities. Like small animals? We got you. Large animals and being outside? Check! Allergic to pets and prefer biped mammals who speak? Outside of Narnia, you can find talking mammals called people everywhere, and the organizations that provide resources for those in need. They are waiting to hear from you!

This Winter, reach out to your fellow Islanders and show why unconditional love makes our Island "The Rock with a heart."



Volunteering at the John L. Scott Toy Drive at Camp Burton - Dr. Marli Parobek and Brett Flora

Island Epicure – National Soup Month

Warm Up A Cold Day with Mesclin Flatbrod and Hot Chicken Soup

By Suzanna Leigh and Marj Watkins

Marj Watkins' "Gluten Free Baking" cookbook is a do-it-yourself project; Marj first printed in the 1970s under her publishing imprint, Firtree Press. This year, I dug it out of retirement, put a new cover on it, updated the dedication page, and published it with my imprint, DragonRider Press. We sold it during the Vashon Island Visual Arts Holiday Tour.

When I told Marj about the sales and gave her royalties, she was delighted! Her face lit up when I handed her 10 percent of the sales - all of \$10.50.

"I'm rich!" she said with a twinkle in her eye. "Now how can I invest this to make it grow?"

The following is adapted from her January 2011 article in The Loop:

January is Soup Month

A bowl of steaming, aromatic, flavorful, and nourishing soup cheers the heart and soul like nothing else. Let the wind blow and the rain pour or the snow pile up on the ground! You'll be cozy and content sipping and inhaling the goodness of a well-made chicken soup. Something magical in it helps to ward off colds and flu or get you over it if illness strikes.

Every country has a favorite chicken soup. The Thais simmer the chicken in coconut milk. The French always include wine. Mexicans add lemon juice. The soup below is

probably made in all Scandinavian countries, and in Belgium we encountered one very much the same. Chicken soup is universal. Wherever and however you make it, you'll love it and it will do your body and spirit good.

Even if you are cooking for two or just for you, make the whole recipe, It's even better the next day. Enjoy it within four days. Still got leftover soup? Reboil it and it will keep another four days, or you can freeze some to reheat later.

Universal Chicken Soup

Makes 6 servings

1 whole chicken breast, or 2 legs, or 3-4 thighs

¼ cup sherry or white wine, or 1 tbsp vinegar

2 large or 4 medium-sized onions, wedge-sliced

1 leek, halved lengthwise, cleaned and sliced

2 large or 3 smaller garlic cloves, peeled and diced

2 long carrots, sliced

2 ribs of celery cut in 1-inch chunks (optional)

4 russet potatoes, peeled and diced

4 cups stock - chicken or beef

1 bay leaf

½ tsp turmeric

1 tsp dried tarragon leaves

2 tsp salt, or to taste



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½ tsp coarse black pepper, or to taste

Water as needed to keep the ingredients well-covered, plus an inch or two

Place all the ingredients in a large kettle. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer until vegetables are very tender and the meat is almost falling off the bones. Scoop out the chicken pieces. Discard skin and bones. Cut the meat into bite-sized pieces. Return to the kettle. Bring to a boil. Serve hot with whole wheat bread, crackers, or gluten-free Mesclin Flatbrod.

Mesclin Flatbrod

Finding gluten-free crackers is not easy! So many gluten-free breads and crackers are mostly starch - not a lot of nutrition in those. Mesclin Flatbrod, on the other hand, features high-protein sorghum flour and good-for-your-heart oat bran or rolled oats. It is surprisingly easy to make, and tasty too!

This recipe is from Marj's "Gluten Free Baking" book.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

1 cup sorghum flour

¾ tsp salt

1½ cups Bob's Red Mill oat bran or rolled oats

4 tbsp soft butter

1 tbsp dark brown or coconut sugar (optional)

½ cup plus a few drops more milk or water

Sift flour, sugar, and salt. Stir in oats. Blend butter in. Gradually add liquid to make a firm but not sticky dough. On waxed paper, roll out to about ⅛ inch thickness. Score both ways to create squares about 2½ inches on a side. With a thin spatula, transfer to a foil-lined baking sheet or to parchment paper.

Bake 15 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes. Transfer to racks to finish cooling.

May be stored in a plastic, ceramic, or metal container with a tight-fitting top.

Marj Watkins "Gluten Free Baking" cookbook is currently available from Suzanna Leigh, leigh.suzanna@gmail.com. The Coffee Roastery is now carrying sorghum flour!

Restoring Magnesium After the Holidays

By Kathy Abascal

Editor's Note: Please enjoy this article, reprinted from the January 6, 2011 Vashon Loop and just as relevant today.

Magnesium is an essential mineral. It regulates and helps maintain normal blood pressure. Magnesium also helps regulate our cholesterol levels. Low stores of magnesium increase the risk of abnormal heart rhythms, associated with both heart attacks and strokes.

Magnesium strengthens our bones, and we store almost half of our magnesium in our bones. A diet rich in magnesium prevents the formation of gallstones.

Lack of magnesium is a big issue in diabetes, being overweight, and in insulin resistance. Magnesium influences the release and activity of insulin, the hormone that helps control blood sugar levels. When that system malfunctions, our blood sugar levels rise. As they rise, we start losing magnesium in the urine.

Magnesium deficiency is a serious problem because it is needed for more than 300 biochemical reactions in the body. It helps maintain normal muscle and nerve function, keeps heart rhythm steady, and bones strong. It is also involved in energy metabolism and protein synthesis. Unfortunately, most of us do not get the recommended daily allowance of magnesium on a regular basis. To make matters worse, we do many things that deplete our bodily magnesium stores, especially over the December holidays:

We drink more alcohol. Drinking

causes a prompt, vigorous loss of magnesium in the urine. As a result, drinking will, over time, deplete body stores of magnesium and many of the side effects of alcoholism are attributed to the effects of too little magnesium. Because magnesium helps maintain the heart's rhythm, magnesium loss may explain why, in one study women simply drinking a class of wine a day had more heart arrhythmias, including atrial fibrillation.

Another problem with alcohol is that while the liver is processing alcohol, it stops maintaining blood sugar levels and they plummet. This makes makes sugary breads, pastas, and desserts much more irresistible.

Tempting holiday foods rich in white sugar, white flour, and high-fructose corn syrup also quickly take their toll on the body. Free fructose in those foods interferes with the heart's use of magnesium. One of the consequences is an increased tendency to form blood clots that can cause stroke and heart attacks. And our typical diet today – even without our extra holiday foods – contains too much fructose. In 1980, over the year the average person ate 39 pounds of fructose and 84 pounds of sucrose. In 1994, we ate 66 pounds of sucrose and 83 pounds of fructose. Today [2011], some 25% of our calories come from sugar, mostly in the form of fructose.

Other things in the background add to our inability to maintain good magnesium levels. Many of us take calcium supplements, and high levels of calcium can block magnesium absorption. Many of us have high blood pressure (often because we do

not get enough magnesium), and we take a diuretic drug to lower that pressure. But diuretics, even those that spare potassium, deplete magnesium. So, a vicious circle arises.

Our diet is too low in magnesium, so our blood pressure rises. We take a diuretic to correct our blood pressure, but the drug lowers our magnesium levels further. In the end, this may well increase our chances of suffering strokes and heart arrhythmias.

Likewise, diabetes causes a loss of magnesium in the liver. High blood sugar levels, which many of us experience thanks to holiday eating, trigger a release of more insulin. In turn, insulin increases the amount of magnesium we lose.

Finally, consider a few more holiday triggers of magnesium loss: Sodas, coffee, high salt intake (think ham, bacon, and processed foods), and of course, stress. Yes, all the stress of trying to make the holiday picture-perfect eats up magnesium.

As we move through the holidays, we lose magnesium. Beginning with Thanksgiving, we typically eat fewer vegetables. We eat more fatty meats, more mashed potatoes, gravy, rolls, and chips. We drink more alcohol and eat lots more sweets. So, we stop getting magnesium from our food and deplete what little we have stored in our body. Our health begins to suffer, and our immune system responds with inflammation. We ache more, we sleep poorly, we gain weight.

Now that the holidays are past, we should make some serious efforts to rebuild our magnesium stores. It the perfect time to begin following an anti-inflammatory diet filled with foods rich in bioavailable magnesium and devoid of magnesium-depleting foods and beverages. Or at the very least, fill your January diet with plant foods like nuts, whole grains, legumes, green leafy vegetables (Swiss chard, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and such), and fish.

Supplementing with Magnesium

Many people find it hard to get enough magnesium from the food they eat and decide to take magnesium supplements (usually, pills or liquids). When used in supplements, the magnesium is combined with other compounds to make the magnesium more "bioavailable" – that is, to improve its absorption and use in the body.



These combined Magnesium formulations also help to address other specific needs. You can pick a single formulation or a combination product that has more than one type of magnesium.

If you've had stomach or intestinal problems with magnesium in the past, don't despair, there are gentler formulations available! Typically, a daily magnesium dose of 200 to 400 mg is recommended. Always search out a high-quality supplement and read the label before buying.

Magnesium oxide combines magnesium and negatively charged oxygen ions. It is easy to find and affordable, but also less bioavailable than other magnesium types. Magnesium oxide is often used as a laxative or for heartburn relief.

Magnesium citrate is one of the most common magnesium formulations and has better absorption than magnesium oxide. Like magnesium oxide, **do** use magnesium citrate for constipation but probably **do not** use it if you want to avoid diarrhea. It's also helpful for kidney function.

Magnesium glycinate has high bioavailability and is gentle on the digestive system. Glycine, an amino acid, has calming properties, making this a good option to improve sleep and reduce anxiety.


Magnesium malate may contribute to cellular energy production and muscle health (including muscle cramps). This formulation is gentle on digestion and has been recommended for people with conditions like fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue.

Magnesium taurate is easy to absorb and gentle on the stomach and is often used to support cardiovascular and nervous system health. The amino acid taurine enhances magnesium's calming effects on the heart and muscles, and this formulation has been recommended to benefit hypertension, arrhythmias, and stress-related conditions.

Magnesium l-threonate is a newer magnesium formulation that supports brain health and cognitive function, with minimal effect on the digestive system. It combines magnesium with L-threonic acid, a substance produced when vitamin C breaks down. It's important to know that magnesium l-threonate is more expensive and contains less elemental magnesium per dose than other magnesium preparations.

~ By Caitlin Rothermel





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Vashon family!**

**We hope 2025 brings comfort and joy
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We're still waiting for that deep freeze to
make a dent in those pesky fleas. Keep your
fingers crossed.

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Hoppin' Johns Black-Eyed Pea Stew

By Eva Deloach

This recipe yields 10 servings.

- 4 tbsp butter or olive oil
- 1 large onion
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 lb dried black-eyed peas
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable broth - more as needed
- 1 whole ham hock or smoked turkey breast
- Salt, pepper, and cayenne to taste
- 2 tbsp white vinegar
- White or brown rice

For vegetarians, don't add ham and use vegetable broth instead. Add some chopped mushrooms and maybe some Cajun spices.

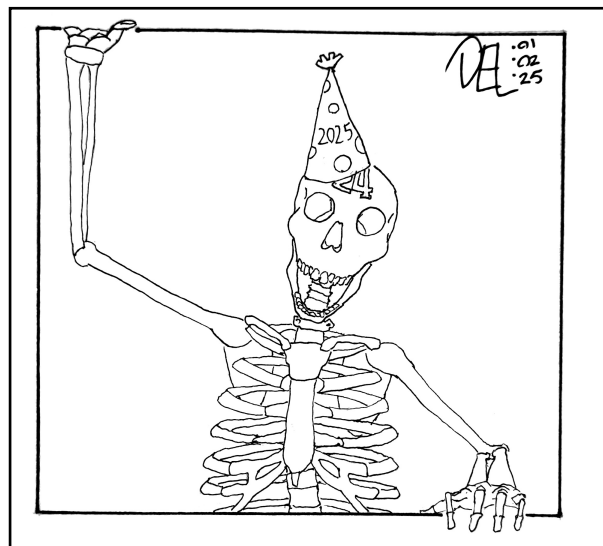
First thing, soak your dried black-eyed peas in cool water for at least 6 hours or overnight, and rinse before using.

In this Hoppin' John recipe, the black-eyed peas are stewed after soaking. Heat the butter or oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until caramelized, then add the celery and bell peppers and stir for approximately 4 minutes.

Add in the soaked beans, then add the ham hock (or other meat) as well as salt, pepper, and cayenne, to taste. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and cover the pot for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes, check the liquid level; if it's too soupy, cook with the lid off for another 15 minutes or so. If it's too thick, splash in a little more broth. Stir in the vinegar, then taste for seasonings. Add more spice if needed.

To complete this meal, serve with collards or braising greens, cornbread with honey and butter, or over white or brown rice. Make sure to get plenty of the cooking liquid spooned over the top of your rice.



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

Share it with us at editor@vashonloop.com

Illustration by Del

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Pancakes for Matrona

By Jane Valencia

We were heading soon to a gathering, and I unexpectedly found myself with a spare 45 minutes. Could I cook something to bring? We had a new large griddle, and over the years I've made a lot of pancakes. The pancakes today would need to be dairy-free. Gluten-free, or digestively gentle, would be a plus. That gave me the excuse to make pancakes with one of my new favorite grains, einkorn.

Einkorn is an ancient grain, with the simplest genetics of all wheats, making it easier for the body to digest. It is more nutritious than modern wheats, and has great flavor. Our gluten-sensitive daughter can eat and enjoy our einkorn flour creations. I hoped this would be the case for a friend with sensitivities who would be at the gathering.

It seems that this was so, as she asked for the recipe! Here it is, for you to enjoy, too.

Freshly milled einkorn flour is available on-Island from Fernhorn Bakery. You can also purchase einkorn flour at Thriftway. You can also substitute other flours for the einkorn in this recipe, though you may have to adjust the liquids.

Don't let the ingredients stop you from trying this recipe. Pancakes are a flexible and forgiving medium that welcomes experimentation! In addition to substituting flours, you can use 2 eggs instead of the flax "egg," and you can replace the coconut milk with a dairy or non-dairy milk of your choice. When replacing the reduced-fat coconut milk with other milks, add 3 tablespoons of virgin coconut oil or butter.

Blueberry Einkorn Pancakes

Ingredients

- 1¼ cup whole-grain einkorn flour
- 1¾ cup all-purpose einkorn flour (or just use 3 cups of whatever einkorn flour you have)
- 2 tbsp ground flax seed (or 2 eggs)
- 6 tbsp hot water
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp grated ginger
- ¼ tsp cardamom
- ⅛ tsp nutmeg
- 1 can reduced-fat coconut milk (or milk of your choice)
- ½ to 1 cup or more of water
- 2 cups blueberries, frozen or fresh
- Coconut oil (or butter, or other oil of your choice) for frying
- Optional: 1-3 pinches of lavender buds and rose petals, as desired



Make flax "eggs:" In a small bowl, combine the ground flaxseed with 6 tbsp of hot water. Let it sit for at least 5 minutes. Or: beat two eggs and set aside.

The batter:

1. In a large bowl, combine the dry ingredients – flours, baking powder, cinnamon, cardamom, and nutmeg.
2. Empty the can of coconut milk, including the cream on top, into a saucepan. Heat low, and stir, until the cream melts and combines with the milk. Turn off heat. Add ½ cup of water and combine.
3. Make a well in the dry ingredients, pour the liquid into the well. Add the flax eggs and grated ginger, then combine the ingredients with a minimum of strokes with a wooden spoon.
4. Wait a few minutes to give the flour a chance to fully absorb the liquid. If the batter is too thick, add more water – perhaps as much as another ½ cup, or a bit more.
5. With a few strokes, stir in the blueberries and, if including, the lavender buds and rose petals.
6. Heat your skillet or griddle over medium heat. Add a couple of teaspoons of coconut oil. When the skillet or griddle is heated, scoop about ½ cup of batter for each pancake.
7. Fry on the first side until the top begins to bubble. Check the bottom with a spatula for the color. When the pancake has crisped slightly with a bit of golden-brown color, flip it and cook the other side. Repeat until all the batter has been used. As needed, add a little coconut oil between cooking each pancake to prevent sticking.
8. Makes 16-20 3" to 4" pancakes. Serve and enjoy!

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this train

By Claudia Hollander-Lucas

This poem is inspired by a train ride I took from New York City to Washington, DC in early April last year. The seasons morphed in the frame of my window from bare limbs on budding shrubs to fragrant huge blooms on the evergreen Magnolias that line many streets and yards - all this in the space of 3 hours going 80-plus miles an hour. The poem "this train" is transported from the east coast to the Pacific Northwest and from dark winter into a beckoning spring. I consider it a "sound poem" with lots of word and sound repetition to mimic the sound of a train moving along its track.

this train

this train is
 a wrinkled drink
 in this certain winter

nothing in mind as
 her train window flashes
 in landscapes

a shudder of grey-
 white- grey- white
 grey-white-grey

then a speck of pink
 inside the thin strands

of liminal green
 a woman boards
 with her giddy flick of a ticket

like a newborn leaf
 as swift as an hourglass
 she empties this winter -

a flirting glimpse of eden
 a suddenly spring
 along the wet tracks on
 this southbound train.



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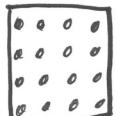


Math Puzzle


By Anne Cotter Moses


You know square numbers  4


 9

 16 etc.


There are also triangle numbers!

 3

 6

 10 and so on...

Every square number is the sum of two triangle numbers

 16 = 10 + 6

Find the two triangle numbers that add to 25



Haiku Comic - While the Crescent Moon Sleeps

By Laura Jones

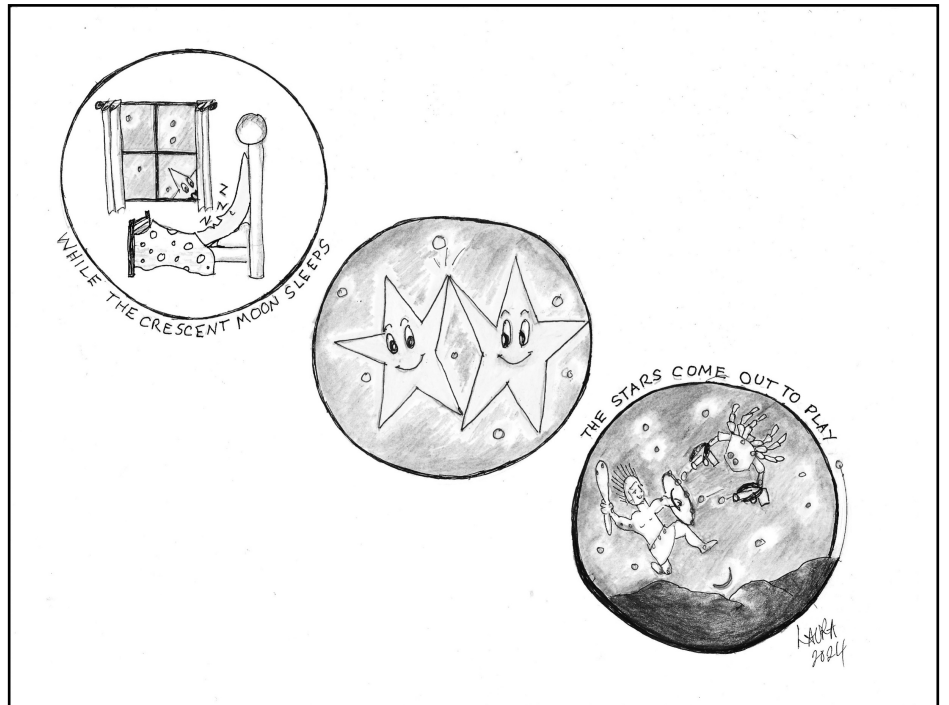
Introduction from Jane Valencia

Recently, my friend Laura Jones shared with me some comics she had created for an online Haiku Comic class with David Lasky. I was captivated and charmed, and asked if we could print one. Though traditional haiku has three lines containing 5-7-5 syllables, not all haikus stick to such a rigid structure. For Laura, a gift of haiku is its quality of "moment and brevity," resulting in reflection, surprise, or even humor. These are the qualities that she strove to capture in her poem and artwork.

While originally intended as a Fall-themed haiku comic about the moon, "While The Crescent Moon Sleeps" is just as appropriate for winter.

Laura describes her inspiration, "Fall and winter are difficult for me as there is so much darkness and rain. But one delight I am able to find in these longer nights is the intensity of the twinkling stars. What a wonder to observe their nightly playtime."

On clear nights this month, may we all step out to enjoy the stars!



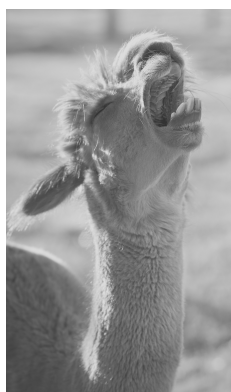
The Observant Frog's Log

By Alex Soriano



Laughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker



Amelia, a librarian at the Vashon Library, said that she ate a synonym roll yesterday.

It gave her the saurus't throat she ever had.

From Chad at the library.

What is Grumpy of the Seven Dwarves' favorite bread?

Sour, d'oh.

From a checker at Thriftway:

Q. Have you heard about the new corduroy pillow covers for winter?

A. They're making all the headlines.

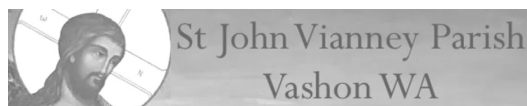
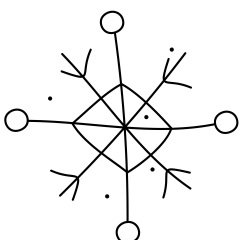
Two more from Amelia:

Q. Why couldn't the pirates play cards?

A. Because the captain was standing on the deck.

Q. What do pirates call a vacation?

A. Rrr and Rrrr.



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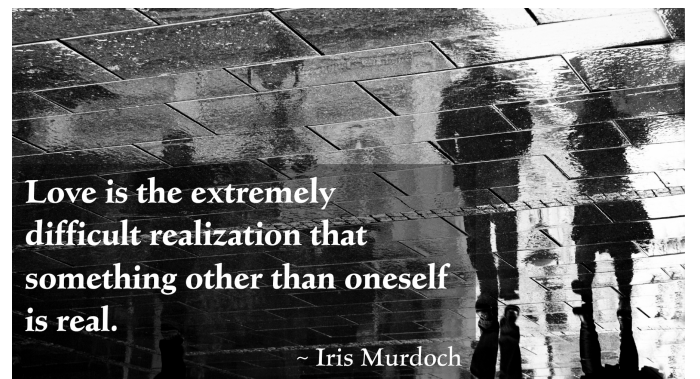
Island poetry in these pages

How about yours?



Submit your poems to
 The Vashon Loop!

Write to: vashonloop-poetry@janevalencia.com



Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real.

~ Iris Murdoch

Aries (March 20-April 19)

You are about to embark on one of the most exciting years of your life. What you experienced in 2024 was merely preparation, and gave you a push in a certain direction. Check your map and compass to determine just what your heading is. Initially, you will experience the developments in your life as changes to your social environment. You may have a prescient sense of what is about to be rearranged over the next few months, and you will have an opportunity to get ahead of the curve. Yet remember at all times that however dramatic society becomes, the actual changes are being driven by an impulse deep within you. The question I am urging everyone to ask themselves involves assessing how overexposure to the digital environment has changed you. It's vital that you understand what has happened to you, because much of the theme of the coming few months will be a recovery operation—what might best be described as soul retrieval.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

Do you feel a calling to leadership? Do you have a sense that you're the one person who can get things done when nobody else can? That may actually be true. The only leadership is by example, and that includes the example of what you do with your feelings. This is about your relationship to the past—and what you feel certain figures from the past have deprived you of. This calls for a reckoning, if you are going to get yourself to a position where your example is worth following. You are, at this moment, seen as a kind of avatar: a manifestation of something far beyond your own personal life. Perhaps that is true, though remember that leadership does not allow for any self-obsession, solipsism or sense of yourself as better. Keep your feet on the ground, and notice how many people are struggling to get through the day.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Put a pin on the map to mark where you are today. Then consider the many directions you could go from here. On the earthly plane, you have all 360 degrees of the compass rose to choose from. You do not need to keep going in the direction that you are. Look around at your surroundings all the time, and consider the possibilities. With Mars currently retrograde, you're likely to make inner discoveries of a very rare kind, which will have the effect of helping you set your priorities. The thing to look for is where your emotions are driving your choices, rather than your heartfelt values and priorities. The matter comes down to one of entitlement. Many people feel that way but have not investigated the truth of the matter. Even fewer can admit their prejudices about how they feel they should be treated. This is where the real work—and your most important process—can happen. Soon you will understand that your real goal is freedom.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is likely to be the year that you make astounding progress in your professional life. You've been working up to this for a while, and many factors are aligning that will increase your call to duty and your confidence level. As a necessary byproduct, you will soon be a much more visible person, and you will also



Planet Waves

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



be judged based on the actions that you take. This condition will increase in a series of steps that occur over the next three to five months—the immediate future. There's just one way to do this safely, which is to remember who you are—and to be that person at all times. As the year develops, your visibility will increase and that sense of solid grounding will become increasingly important. Most of the people you see in apparent leadership lack this one property. They undermine themselves with hypocrisy. You are old and wise enough to know this does not work for long.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

The miracle of the next two years will be a degree of self-discovery you may have never imagined. In the digital age, most people coexist with many obstacles to their growth and self-awareness that they have not identified as such. Many factors will conspire to bring your locus of identity inward. This may arrive with a nauseating sense of the spiritual crisis that has dragged humanity into its clutches, swallowing so much that is good and helpful and human. Though there will be many changes to your outer circumstances over the next 12 months, all that matters is your commitment to understanding your purpose. As a Leo, your role is to hold the solar system together, and to provide heat and light to everyone who surrounds you. No matter how bright you may shine, this is a humble role to play. You know that if you go astray, many may follow. Be aware of that without fretting or obsessing. Do not dilute the power of self-knowledge, which will be the great gift of this time in your life.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

As the fog clears, you will get a new sense of the landscape of your life. One effect is likely to be that what appeared complex, intricate and fraught with obstacles may start to reveal itself as much simpler than you thought. The world is illuminated with stage lighting and adorned with theatrical smoke. This is the time to remind you of a theme associated with the imminent departure of Neptune from your opposite sign Pisces. Such a placement can create the illusion of isolation without it really being there. I suggest you proceed as if the veils have already lifted and the illusion of separation has dissipated. And while you're on this wavelength, you might size up any emotional or mental habits you have that tend to push people away when they want to come near you.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

I promise you one thing: 2025 will be one of the most exciting years of your life. Astrology coming in from every angle seems designed to move you toward your greatest possible potential. Consider that what seem to be your external experiences are some indication of what is going on within you. "Experiences" are usually one's responses to life and the environment in which it is lived. The response is much more significant than the worldly event, which is always subject to interpretation. The highly unusual developments of the next

year and a half will bring you many opportunities to leave behind situations that have been problematic, or that you were stuck in. Be careful whose advice you take, because most people you meet lack the creative imagination to dare. Thankfully, you have it in abundance.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

At the core essence of Scorpio is fully inhabiting the work you do as an expression of your personal truth. A great many people feel it's enough to make peace with going to work, and there are others who do so unhappily. You must love going to work, and it's essential to your well-being that your occupation be a true expression of who you are. This necessity is going to rise to the surface over the next year and a half, and it will come with opportunities to clear your agenda and make new commitments that arise from a deep inner desire rather than some external necessity. You may get closer to the source of the paralysis that feels like the need to do the same thing every day. For you to do something different, you must be someone different. As the eminent Fritz Perls once said, get out of your mind and come to your senses.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Currently you are in a box, and you need to think outside of it. Currently your ruling planet Jupiter is in a square or 90-degree aspect to its antithesis, Saturn. This is the 'box' to which I am referring. Jupiter in your opposite sign is saying this is a matter of partnership. Saturn in Pisces is about your personal sense of security, and how you manage your emotions. You may notice that both positions make you averse to taking big chances, one out of fear of disrupting a relationship and the other a matter of confidence. What's really happening here? To what extent are your perceptions of a relationship and your insecurities limiting your power of choice? And to what extent is this merely an excuse for not wanting to act? You have time to work this out.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

The Sun enters your sign this year with the reminder that you are truly at a turning point. Everything you've ever thought was true about yourself is up for reconsideration. You have made significant progress on several matters related to your family over the past year. More than ever, an evaluation will remind you that you're at a point of decision. You are choosing between several options that it would be helpful if you articulated. One is to take developments as a matter of fate. Another is to imagine that your life is a quest for survival. A third is to consider that your existence is a creative adventure, and one of the most important ingredients is an element of uncertainty and even a touch of chaos. If you allow for the

uncertainty factor and make friends with it, you will feel better and open yourself up to greater possibilities. Be glad when you get to a point where you know that a decision is both imminent and necessary. That's the place to stop and ask yourself: on what basis do I want to make this choice?

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

The world has a problem now, which is if anyone speaks freely for more than five minutes, they will invariably say something that offends everyone in the room. I propose as a personal goal completely dumping the notion of "offended" and not recognizing it as a valid thought or feeling in everyone. It's a big game, which would better be called "justified in being judgmental." And as with most things, this is described by the very unusual digital problem faced by humanity. Many people feel that humans have outgrown our use, so they have taught something else to think for them. I would assure you of this: if a human did not think it, it's not thought. You're under constant pressure to concede that you are replaceable and nobody will know the difference. This is a final attempt to extinguish the human soul, and you know better than to fall for it. But it will take strength and passion to hold your course.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

One of the blessings of this year is that some of the pressure you've been under is going to be lifted. There has been a silent pressure created first by Neptune starting in 2011 and then by Saturn starting in 2020. It's difficult to describe the conditioning force of Neptune, which creates all kinds of distortions—particularly of isolation and a sense of invisibility. With Saturn, there is always the pressure to get things done and conform to authority, and you've had a good bit of that to contend with in recent years. Yet these transits have changed you and compelled you to square up with yourself. As they end, you are left to be your own teacher and to study independently. Your best friends are your curiosity and sense of adventure. Keep them with you at all times.

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And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been.

~ Rainier Maria Rilke

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