



# THE VASHON LOOP

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OWNED BY ISLANDERS ~ PRINTED IN SEATTLE ~ FREE

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*Welcome to the Island!*

## Legends of Vashon His Night Out

By O.S. Van Olinda

One afternoon in early September 1895, Mr. Lehmann started out from Seattle in his little sloop, having with him his pretty little three-year-old daughter. He intended sailing over to Vashon Landing, tying his boat up there and walking across to visit his brother John, who at that time owned the farm in Paradise Valley now occupied by Dick Fuller's greenhouses, originally the Gilman homestead.

It was a beautiful, clear day and there was a perfect sailing breeze – until he had made his way in past the head of Vashon Island dash – when it died out completely.

As sailors have done a thousand times before, he wished with exceeding fervor for a breeze and, as has happened a thousand times, his little craft “lay becalmed, like a fairy barque upon a sea of glass.”

It was only a small sloop, but a cumbersome thing to row the two or more miles to the Vashon Wharf, so he worked it into shore and made a landing a short distance of the Aquarium post office.

No doubt there are few people now, even on Vashon Island who know that Captain Fish, a retired sea captain, bought a small place on the beach in the north of section seventeen, had a post office established there and named it Aquarium.

The hillside above was heavily timbered at that time, as, indeed, was the greater part of the Island, but a trail led up through the gulch, along a sharp ridge, then along the gulch side and, if you were a good climber and did not lose the trail, you would eventually make your way out to the highway (to dignify it by that name) exactly in front of the present home of E.J. Mace. The “highway” wasn't much more than a pair of wagon tracks through the timber and brush, over roots and small stumps and around the larger trees and ended some hundred and fifty yards north of the present Fjeld Corner.

Mr. Lehmann evidently knew of this trail, but did not know just how to locate it, so he tried to

find his way up the hill through the brush and timber. It was well toward evening when he started in and in the dense timber it was quickly dark. There was a full moon which came up early, but it shed only a dimly diffused light in the depth of the forest.

He wandered about, fighting his way through the thickets, stumbling and climbing over logs, the greater part of the time carrying his little girl, until he was well nigh exhausted.

Finally, after a short rest, he left the child, sleeping, in a comfortable spot, marking it so he could find it again – as he thought – and started alone to try to find his way out. He was still unsuccessful and eventually gave it up as impossible. Imagine then, if you can, the state of this father's mind when he realized that he could not find his way back to the place where he had left his little daughter! He searched desperately during the rest of the night but did not find her until after daylight.

He did manage finally, however, to work his way back to the beach and then down shore to Captain Fish's place, haggard, exhausted, and with his clothing practically torn to shreds.

Captain Fish, his good wife Ellen, and daughter, Manila, ministered in every way possible to the needs of the two weary wanderers. The child was little the worse for her part in the adventure, but Mr. Lehmann had neared the limit of endurance.

*Photo by  
Claudia  
Hollander-Lucas*



## Treat or Trick

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

Our assignment this month from The Loop editors was to write a “spooky” Halloween story. Now normally we do not take story “assignments,” but this seemed a quite reasonable request since we were running low on story ideas, and a little additional “direction” came just in time to forestall our usual spirited debate over what to write about.

So over a fire blazing in my backyard on a warm September night, we came up with an idea, only slightly influenced by the 25-year-old bottle of wine Seán brought over and shared.

Seán and I shared many of the same Halloween trick-or-treating adventures, including the classic “flaming paper sack” on the porch trick, but his trick was much more successful than mine in that he managed to actually light the bag on fire.

My trick of this nature merely produced puzzled annoyance to the intended recipient as they only found a wet stinky, slightly charred bag on the porch that could have been dragged in by a raccoon. In retrospect, I should not have used fresh cow manure, but what does a nine-year-old know?

Perhaps in belated penance for our youthful naughtiness on Halloween, we have always been generous to our trick-or-treaters, reverting back to the old custom of creating treats at home to dole out, although the number of visitors has dropped off since we

changed from offering baked cookies to deep-fried kale and chocolate-covered Brussels sprouts. You never can tell on Vashon when a vegan might show up.

In my case, I now have to hand-deliver full-size Snickers bars to the few neighborhood kids, who maybe are now a bit skeptical of how healthy my treats are.

Seán describes his early Vashon trick-or-treating adventures well, although I suspect he has purged some of his real naughty deeds in the interest of The Loop being a much better publication than the “National Enquirer.”

Treat or trick has been around since the 1500s or earlier. Our favorite house was the Willhight's, who lived just down the road towards Cove. Mr. Willhight worked at a large bakery in Seattle and would bring day-old bread home to feed their pigs. At times, the pickup load also included old cinnamon rolls and all sorts of sweet rolls, doughnuts, and too-old cookies. At our request for a treat, Mr. Willhight would back his pickup out of the garage and let Kit, Mike, Molly and Dale Bates, and myself take whatever we wanted, but not too much.

A retired coast guardsman who lived right across the road was a different story. He never left his porchlight on or answered his door. One year, we tried to get the coast

Continued on Back Page



## Harvesting Stones

By Jane Valencia

A reflection from 25 years ago, when our family lived on the Island's west side.

We are deep into autumn – on All Hallow's Eve, it so happens – a day whose crone eyes decree decay and change, and spark with new beginnings. The apples on the old tree in our front lawn are perfect – large and both sweet and gently tart, without wormholes or bird pecks. No unseemly blemishes to chop out. We can smilingly, confidently offer them to our friends.

Our planting field, our garden-to-be (or, when we're daring, our farm-to-be) is like a carpet taking form, a weaving. The ground has been plowed, tilled, and tilled again, and enriched with soil amendments. Today Andy broadcast seeds onto the canvas – vetch, peas, rye, clover – our winter cover crop. Because the earth is damp with rain, we attempt to shovel the seed into the soil. It is calm in the golden light, and I feel as if I'm burying treasure. Gold-yellow-green poplar leaves pattern the brown of the garden. These I turn under with the seeds, layering gold dishes into the dark earth.

After a row and a half, Andy gives up and decides to call upon our walk-behind tractor. He'd thought the wet dirt would clog the tiller, but now figures it's worth taking that chance. Shoveling has been absurdly difficult and slow, and we'd be at it for days. Soon I see that the tractor is going well. I lay my shovel on the grass and turn to the task of pulling stones from the field.

It's amazing – so many stones recline on top of the ground, even rather large ones. Andy and I had pulled stones from the field after it was first plowed. And again after tilling. Whenever we walk by, we pull out stones. But the earth continues to

Continued on Page 10

# Community: Being Part of a Whole

By Daniel Hooker

You're new. If you really want to be part of the community, get involved. You'll feel better about being involved, and your body will feel better.

For me, many years ago, saving myself from pancreatic cancer and heart disease (68% blocked descending aorta) involved coming to peace with myself and finding salvation (non-religious). Finding meaning in participation in noble causes kept me alive, and sharing humor changed my cellular consciousness, which made each cell happy in turn. All this created the perfect medicine for what ailed my spirit. I healed up through the act of volunteering.

As I continue writing about food banks, farm bucks, and local farms which nourish our village of Vashon Maury Island, I wish to acknowledge one of the main contributors that enrich our way of life here on these Islands joined as one: Granny's Attic.

Volunteering is the life-blood of this community. While shopping at Granny's Attic, take pride in the fact that this past year \$250,000 has gone back to worthy non-profits as well as other worthy institutions and programs. These include VIGA Farm Bucks and The Vashon Maury Food Bank's Picnics In The Park. The

Backpack Pantry program for Vashon School district students received \$5,000, and the Senior Center received \$17,000 for meals and services. And our Vashon Maury Island Food Bank also received \$9,000, which is what they spend monthly for fresh produce.

Granny's Attic employs ten people – six full-time, four part-time – with the backbone of its workforce being its 145 volunteers. "We need more," Granny's manager, Brian Vescovi, stated during our interview.

Brian Vascovi stated that Granny's has a volunteer board that votes on grants given. He shared about its illustrious beginnings in 1974, to address a need to support the then year-old Vashon-Maury Health Services Center.

Brian stated that Granny's is "The happiest place to work." This is obvious when you walk in the door. When you smile at someone, they smile back!

Being part of this caring community, and all that makes Vashon and Maury Island unique, gives it an ambiance like no other.

So, if you are new to our Island, take pride in how we share our love in this large village by shopping at Granny's Attic, and even volunteering with others who support this way of life.



## Cash Is Queen

By Rich Osborne

My name is Rich Osborne. My company is All Things Rich. I sell olive oil, vinegars, sauces, spices, salts, rubs, and local raw honeys. Also dragons. I was a vendor at the Vashon Farmers Market on Saturdays for five years. When COVID-19 hit in 2020, my retail sales opportunities were closed down. My friend Daniel Sullivan, of Shipwreck Honey, invited me to visit him at his booth at a new market at Point Ruston. I walked in, and there was my friend, Stacy Carkonen.

Stacy knew me and my business from when I was a vendor at the Broadway Market in Tacoma, which she managed. She was the new Market Manager at Point Ruston. "Rich! What are you doing here?"

I replied "Just looking around. The place looks great!"

Stacy asked, "Do you want to sell here?"

I sniffed and said, "Well, it smells like money here. Sure. I would be happy to sell here."

"When can you start?"

"Next Thursday?"

"Great, we'll see you then."

And so it began. It has been over 5 years. Things are getting better. We finally have FREE parking. However, a few months ago, my credit card processing company added new charges to my bill. I am now being charged \$0.15 per transaction in addition to the 3.15% I was already paying. I spoke to the credit card processor about this. It was explained that I should add the 15-cent transaction charge to the customer's charge, and it won't cost my business anything. It was then stated that it's

only 15 cents, and that customers don't care about 15 cents.

I thanked them for their counsel and called the four other big credit card processors. They are all on the same page. So I thought about it.

Last year, I was doing about 20% cash sales. I decided to invite my customers to pay cash if they had it. If they don't have cash, no problem, cards are fine. I call it my "Cash is Queen" project. My customers have been very receptive.

The math works like this: I pay 3.15% on credit card sales. That's \$3.15 per \$100. Transaction (swipe) charges are 15 cents, so every \$100 in cash sales pays 21 transaction charges. I average about 21 credit card transactions a day, which is \$3.15. Receiving \$100 daily in cash sales pays the 21 charges, so my customers are not paying that damn swipe charge. They appreciate this, as it demonstrates that I am looking out for their best interests.

Bottom line, I am now taking in close to 40% cash these days, which pays my swipe charges and then some. Fifteen cents may not be a lot, but it adds up over time. And my sales are growing.

Rich Osborne, owner of All Things Rich at the Waterfront Market in Ruston. Come see me!

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



Contact us at  
editor@vashonloop.com

## Granny's Attic Beginnings

When the Vashon-Maury Health Services Center began in 1973, a group of women served as volunteers. A year later, the Center board asked their volunteers to organize monetary support of the Health Center. These women started with a plant sale that raised \$353. A rummage sale followed, and in due time they began a thrift store. The Health Center Volunteers dba Granny's Attic opened to the public in June 1975. The profit for that first month was \$1,120. The Health Center volunteers then voted to give the Health Center \$500 a month as long as the store balance was over \$500.

Today, Granny's Attic is a beloved fixture on the Island, providing clothing, toys and household goods at affordable prices. Islanders shop to find just what they need and those "special somethings" – treasures indeed – donated by fellow Islanders.

A non-profit 501c(3) organization, Granny's Attic grants profits from their sales to other Island organizations devoted to the healthcare and well-being of Island residents. Since 1976, Granny's Attic has donated over \$2.2 million.





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The Vashon Loop is published monthly

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

## The Vashon Loop

Editors: Caitlin Rothermel, Marc J. Elzenbeck, Jane & Andy Valencia

Contributors: Eric Coppolino, Daniel Hooker, Anne Cotter Moses, Alex Soriano, Pam (aka Gates) Johnson, Seán C. Malone, John Sweetman, Dave B., Chef Julia, Michael Shook, Stephen Buller, Merna Ann Hecht, Michael Feinstein, Claudia Hollander-Lucas, S. E. Reid, Suzanna Leigh, Rich Osborne, March Twisdale, Julia Carlson

Comments: editor@vashonloop.com  
Placing ads: sales@vashonloop.com

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# Deer Hunting With the FBI

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced that a rifle cartridge commonly known as the Springfield Thirty Ought Six (.30-06) was used last month to assassinate a prominent conservative activist during an outdoor rally at a Utah college. Online pushback against this statement began immediately and continues to thrive, with an ongoing cottage industry of digital sleuthing. The general public’s trust in the FBI and other institutions is lower than for expired gas station sushi, but still. Why would a common bullet type fuel so much pushback? Short answer: people who use it know that it is physically impossible. What follows is based on 50 years experience using the suspect’s rifle along with many others.

After a 33 hour investigation, the FBI officially released these details: a lone 22 year old gunman carried his grandfather’s scope-equipped .30-06 Mauser hunting rifle across a campus, climbing stairways to a roof overlooking an assembly. He conceals the rifle by stuffing its separated stock, barrel, and scope down his jeans. Between the stairs and the shooting he changes clothes. Using only a Phillips screwdriver, he reassembles the 60s-era rifle on the roof. At a distance of 140 yards in front of 3,000 spectators, he shoots his target in the left carotid artery just above the clavicle. The gunman disassembles and re-conceals grandpa’s Mauser, runs across the roof and jumps down. He goes to a small wooded area just across the street and again re-assembles the rifle. This time without the screwdriver he left on the roof.

The killer leaves the rifle and drives to a local Dairy Queen for an ice cream sundae. Ironically enough,



this last part is the most plausible assertion in the story thus far. (After a stressful shooting, assassins often need comfort food.) There are problems with the FBI’s account. A rifle down his jeans? A stretch. But there were some more expensive and custom break-down Mausers sold in the 60s that could be taken apart in a minute or two, so we’ll skip past the jeans and incredibly speedy rifle assembly and re-assembly. Not realistic for a novice, but with practice theoretically possible. Let’s move to the bullet and where it is said to have struck.

The .30-06 cartridge, first released by Springfield in 1905, was a response to the 1899 Hague Convention’s prohibition on soft-head “dumdums,” or rounds that would significantly expand after entry into the body. Military planners specified improved range, penetration, velocity, and ballistic efficiency within the constraints of hard “spitzer,” or expansion-resistant Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) bullets. These were intended to often pass through and more mercifully wound soldiers with aimed fire up to or beyond 500 yards.

The power of the .30-06 is staggering. Even today, only two somewhat more powerful rounds are widely available, usually reserved for elk and moose at ranges beyond 400 yards. If you hit a quarter-inch steel plate at 140 yards with a .30-06 FMJ, it will punch right through. If you put

three thick books behind that same plate, it’ll punch through those, too. It will disintegrate 3 concrete blocks laid end to end. It will go through an oak tree a foot and a half thick.

So what would happen if you were to shoot a human being in the neck at 140 yards? A hydrostatic shock wave would move across the entire upper torso ahead of the bullet’s entry. Its path would open a temporary wound channel bigger than the approximate length and diameter of a 24 ounce Energy Drink can, pulverizing a tissue layer on both sides. Then it would make a somewhat larger exit wound on the body’s far side, trailing aerosolized blood on its way to drilling into something else.

Officially, the prominent activist named Charlie Kirk had no visible exit wound. The autopsy doc said his steel-like spine stopped the Miraculous Bullet in its tracks. But that they also failed to recover it. Wrong. While some variances can occur, this isn’t how a .30-06 FMJ works, so one did not hit the victim. How about the soft point version?

A hundred years ago, Field & Stream popularized the soft point .30-06 to hunters for bigger game at longer ranges. It’s a heavy bullet, with a lead tip that starts to mushroom upon entry into a body, rapidly transferring much of its 2,500+ foot-pounds of energy into the flesh. The effect is like a pickup truck hitting a big animal, knocking them off their feet. The expanding bullet blows open a huge wound channel the size of a 2-liter Coke bottle, turning flesh and bone into a mound of hamburger. It may still exit whole, stay inside, or can also break into fragments upon the spine or shoulder of a large animal.

If a .30-06 soft point bullet hit a human’s left front neck, its devastating effect would be censored. Humans lack an elk’s thick hide and fur to help contain resulting tissue damage. The impact would drag a large man’s body right off a chair. Much of the victim’s throat, inner neck, soft palate and surrounding muscles would be displaced in a spray of red. For comparison, a smaller and much less powerful

military Full Metal Jacket bullet hit President JFK in the head, removing a large section of his right skull and brain.

Charlie Kirk’s wound was very different. The shock wave started on his opposite side, his right, proceeding across his upper torso to the left. His head was pushed forward and down. He slumped to the left and fell off his chair-not away from the gunman’s position, but towards it. His jaw remained tightly closed the entire time. If you shoot a big whitetail buck in the neck with a .30-06, the impact can make the tongue fly right out of his mouth. Kirk’s carotid artery appears to be not an entry wound, rather an exit wound’s location from a bullet packing much lower kinetic energy.

I learned to shoot and hunt as a child in the Adirondacks, as was typical in those times. My teachers were World War Two combat veterans, all of whom earned Marksman or Sharpshooter badges with the .30-06 as part of their military training. Not one of them used it for deer hunting. They didn’t want to waste meat and considered it overkill at practical distances. More than that: my uncle Hank and our neighbor across the street were decorated heroes from the Battle of the Bulge and Guadalcanal, respectively. To my knowledge they never shot a .30-06 again.

Despite hunting since age 6, I’m still squeamish about killing. Still scared of guns. I’m scared of the bodies, the gutting and skinning, the shock of taking a life. Even after many, they become part of you. The swirl of emotions include pride and sometimes shame. It’s not something healthy people take lightly. Most develop rituals to reach up into the sacred and down into the profane.

It’s tempting to speculate about what and who murdered the activist named Charlie Kirk. It’s also some kind of magic trick above my pay grade. All I need to know is that the FBI is lying, with a new level of straight-faced ignorance and intent, no regard or self-respect for how painfully obvious. They just don’t care. Not the sort of people you’d ever want to take deer hunting.

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# Charlie Kirk Spoke For The Voiceless. Now, We Speak For Charlie.

By March Twisdale

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed the perfect proof that social media can churn up a hurricane of inaccurate memes, cherry-picked quotes, and other sloppily shared content that utterly misconstrues the true breadth and width of a person’s very public and very well documented life.

As the world responded to the dangerous political assassination of Charlie Kirk – which was also the tragic murder of a beloved man, husband, and father – many became concerned. Was Charlie being intentionally maligned? This was followed by a question, “If so, have I been misled?”

And like that, a trope came into being, seemingly overnight. It goes something like this: “I thought I knew this man. Then, I saw how the world was responding. Confused, I sat down and binge-watched dozens and dozens of hours of his content – in long form, unedited – and now I know. I misjudged him.”

Why do so many Americans care so deeply about Charlie Kirk? It’s because America is struggling to bring the voices of the many into our government system. Many Americans feel unheard, and this is especially true of our nation’s working class. The people who build, maintain, protect, and grow our nation.

These people are busy! These people are why your life is so good. Why you have food on the table, a roof that doesn’t leak, toilets that flush, and any goods or services that ever traveled on a truck (that would be 99% of everything, by the way). They are busy with the good work of loving their family, their community, their coworkers, and their country.

And, they have concerns.

In recent years, a politically interwoven network of radical agenda items have coalesced around a specific political party. These dramatic social experiments and those supporting them have gained extraordinary political power very, very quickly. Perhaps worst of all, a concurrent campaign to silence contrary voices has been

# Island Voices



Photo by Carrington Tatum

wielded with extraordinary success.

So many Americans feel incapable of speaking up. Parents wanting to retain loving relationships with their children, health care professionals wanting to remain employed, business owners fearing community boycotts, K-12 students fearful of backlash from teachers and administrators, and college kids hoping to avoid social ostracism from peers as well as the disapproval of deans, professors, and department heads.

Into this new frontier of modern-day censorship and thought-control came Charlie Kirk! To the relief of many, Charlie ignored the naysayers. He began to visit college campuses, with his “Prove Me Wrong” signage and a microphone specifically for those who disagreed with him. “Come to the front of the line,” he said, again and again, for years.

For this, Charlie received a tsunami of death threats, experienced physical violence on campus (and in other public spaces), and after years of character assassination, his life itself was ended by a single assassin’s bullet.

There was exactly one purpose for the landslide of slander, libel, defamation, muckraking, calumny, and character assassination of Charlie Kirk. It was an effort to reduce his voice, to stop him from talking, to ... make him unheard. But, Charlie didn’t back down, and this is exactly why so many Americans loved and admired him.

On September 10th, the ideological war against Charlie Kirk escalated to the ultimate act of silencing. On that warm, sunny day, this beautiful and amazing man lost his life to political assassination, his wife lost her beloved and deeply committed husband, their children lost their father, and the American people lost one of the bravest voices of our time. He faced tremendous pressure to shut up, pack it up, go home, and instead – he chose to keep the dialogue open. He chose to live as a freely speaking, thinking, and worshiping American, in spite of the risks.

Here is a full quote from Charlie’s last interview, barely two hours before his assassination on a Utah college campus. That morning, Charlie joined Andrew K. Smith at the Restaurantology Summit by Savory, sharing insights on entrepreneurship and building a movement that endures. Andrew ended the interview by asking Charlie one last question: “What is a quote that you live by?”

Charlie answered with two quotes, one from the Bible and one not, saying:

“The first is, not in the Bible, it’s “This too shall pass.” People think it’s in the Bible, but it’s not. It’s King Solomon’s phrase, which is really amazing when you think about it, because it’s good no matter what season of life that you’re in. If you’re going through the worst of times, this too shall pass, and things are gonna get better. If you’re going through the best of times, though – it’s really humbling – this too shall pass, and this will fade away, ‘cause this will not last forever. So, I love that. It’s a time-transcendent truth that applies towards all periods, as an entrepreneur. It humbles you when you need it, it builds you up when you need it, it gives you hope when you need it, and it also give you a little dose of a gut check.

“One of my favorite verses though is Romans 8:28: which just says that, ‘God works all things for good for those who love Him.’ It’s a very freeing and liberating verse for those of us that are Christians, because we believe that when things could be really bad, God is working it for His good – His perfect and pleasing will. Which is a very hard teaching when you come across business closures or staff layoffs, but it’s very liberating that God is working all things toward an ultimate good. So I love that, and it kind of is very freeing that I don’t have to be in charge of everything, um, and there is a God, and I am not Him, and I surrender to His will.”

We love you Charlie. We see you clearly. We hear the totality of your words and thoughts. And, we will speak up for you, as you did all those years for us. We will open our mouths and speak. Bravely. Respectfully. Clearly. With dignity. For ourselves and those speaking with us.



# From Sailing Adventures to Painting Adventures!

By Suzanna Leigh

Sailing season is winding down; I don’t sail much in winter any more. Now I’m off to a new adventure: making watercolor paint from plants. Color from plants gives me a very different palette than I am used to working with. Will I even like it?

Have you ever tried to dye with beet juice? That beautiful purple red just begs to be used! I was probably 14 when I tried to dye something with it ... the dress I was making for my Barbie? It didn’t work out. The color just evaporated.

I gave up for a few decades as other interests claimed my attention: painting in watercolor, school work, boys, raising a family. Then I discovered dyes from onion skins. Such a fine golden brown color, especially on silk! And turmeric – pure gold! I even made an indigo vat and tried several techniques to make indigo patterns on silk. I made dozens of hand-painted and dyed silk scarves and sold most of them; then I ran the numbers. To make the kind of money I needed to, I would have to make AND sell 70 scarves a month. Hmm. Not doing that.

I went back to watercolor painting.

Fast forward another decade and change.

I began to hear about and see paintings made with plant dyes and pigments. Hmm.

Enter Carolyn Sweeney’s class at the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, near Lincoln City, Oregon. The class promised to teach how to make watercolor paint from plants! Ah! Two interests combined into one: watercolor painting and plant-based color! My friend Robyn and I decided to take the class. Robyn found a motel for us overlooking

the beach, where her service dog, Andy, would be welcome.

A week before the class, Robyn and I sat down to plan. Robyn said she would bring an electric frying pan so we could cook our own meals in the motel room. We made a list of foods and utensils we would need to bring and divided it up. I made gluten-free bread.

The class was amazing! We came home with a set of pastels, 6-8 inks, an indigo crayon, and a set of 6 colors of watercolor paints in tiny pans, which we made in class. We had a field trip the first day to gather goldenrod – and were completely worn out by a 4-mile hike uphill both ways. I took copious notes by video, in my phone, and in the booklet Carolyn gave us. I now have an understanding of how to make these things – and recipes!

When we got home, I went through my supplies from dyeing silk and found that I had almost all the chemicals and utensils I needed. What I didn’t have I got at Granny’s Attic.

Then I walked down to Crow Beach to give thanks for a safe and wonderful trip. I happened to have a plastic bag with me, a habit I picked up because so often people leave beer and soda cans littering the beach or the parking lot. I don’t like seeing them, so I pick them up and put them in my trash bin.

Lo! There, lining the parking lot overlooking the beach, was a healthy stand of tansy. Now tansy is poisonous to animals and humans, so I didn’t feel bad picking all the little yellow flowers that I could. The crow watching me certainly didn’t mind!

When I got home, I learned that tansy toxins can be absorbed through the skin! Oops! I will wear



Art by Suzanna Leigh, created using plant-based pigments. To view this painting in color, see this article online at [vashonloop.com](http://vashonloop.com)

gloves next time!

I spread the flowers on a tray and left them outside overnight to let the bugs escape before boiling the flowers to get the color and beginning the days-long process of making a yellow pigment. The pigment can be kept indefinitely until I need it to make paint, crayons, or pastels.

Why go to all this trouble, you may ask?

Just as sailing keeps me aware of wind and water, foraging for dye plants keeps me in tune with nature’s seasons. I love the excitement of discovery when a plant I didn’t pay much attention to before gives me a new beautiful color!

Suzanna's paintings done with color made from plants will be shown at Anu Rana's in November.

# Tech Blitzkrieg, Part Three ...

... or, “Open the pod bay doors, Hal.”

By Michael Shook

That, of course, is an iconic line from Stanley Kubrick’s classic science fiction film, “2001: A Space Odyssey.” Hal – the HAL9000 computer responsible for keeping the spacecraft operational – is malfunctioning badly. Rather than allow itself to be partially shut down, and having already done in the rest of the (human) team, it has decided to kill Dave, the lone surviving crew member.

As we’ve learned from recent test scenarios, modern AI programs would do the same to (fictional) engineers tasked with shutting off, or changing, the AI programs. Life imitating art.

Out of control AI is obviously a serious issue, but there is one I think more immediately pressing that has to do with our general interactions with AI. We are increasingly delegating our most important tasks to machines, and I don’t mean things like welding car frames or operating shuttles at airports. I mean the casual way some are outsourcing to AI the best of what our humanity has to offer: our language, our communication skills, our musical, literary, and visual art, and, for some sad souls, even relationships. This outsourcing, which renders only simulacra of human-ness, is well under way. Consider, for example, writing.

“Learning to write is learning to think. You don’t know anything clearly unless you can state it in writing.” S. I. Hayakawa may have been exaggerating when he said that,

but only slightly. Each step in the writing process presents formidable difficulties. We must convey clearly what we wish, and to do this we must think, and think carefully. We must determine what we are trying to communicate, and then decide upon the form in which to do so.

The work is then accomplished using words, and words, being metaphors, are devilishly difficult to summon into an order that will make sense to others. Further complicating matters, the others are likely to have different notions about not only the words used, but about whatever idea, emotion, or concept one is attempting to declare. Thoughts, conjured into words, thence organized into sentences that will make sense to strangers – ha! Nothing to it. Or at least, so it seems if one has access to any of the fast-proliferating AI programs that will do the writing for them.

Suppose I want an essay about “X.” Roughly speaking, all I need do is tell the machine what I wish, and guided by that input, it draws, at breathtaking speed, samples of sentences, words, paragraph structure, etc., and combines those with more samples of how such an essay could be written. I tinker with it, print it, and voila! I have “my” essay. But I’ve handed over my agency to a machine. I’ve avoided wrestling with vocabulary, syntax, phrasing, rhythm – all the aspects of writing that make a piece uniquely mine, that compel me to think, and think clearly. It’s an ongoing refining



# The Urge to Purge

By Pam “Gates” Johnson

It’s not spring, so why has the spring cleaning bug landed on my shoulder and begun to scream in my ear? It is telling me ... PURGE! CLEAN! DOWNSIZE! I ignored the screams until they started to drown out everything and take over most of my waking thoughts. Okay. I get it. The time has come for me to get off my lazy rear end and do some serious purging.

The place to start was my pantry. I have a little chest freezer that has lived there for a few decades. The problem with a chest freezer is that you (meaning me) put stuff in it. Then you put more stuff on top of it. Then more stuff goes in. By then, you (meaning me) have forgotten what was on the bottom layer. There was probably a package or two of hamburger in there, but since I couldn’t see it and didn’t want to dig through three or four layers of frozen stuff, it was just easier to buy a new package.

And so it went for years.

I’ve been talking about wanting to get an upright freezer and finally just did it. Now the problem was, what to do with the old freezer and the three or four hundred pounds of frozen stuff inside? My granddaughter had mentioned that she needed a little freezer. I told her if she took the stuff inside it, she could have my little freezer. All she and her boyfriend had to do was come get it.

Ordered a new upright and it was delivered. Granddaughter and boyfriend arrived to take the old one. The new problem was, how do we get the loaded freezer into the back of their truck?

Thursday night came, which is Family Dinner Night when the fam come to my house for a meal. That meant an extra two big strong men to help with the freezer move. All the men agreed that there was no way they could move it while fully loaded. Nephew suggested he pull the backhoe up to the pantry window and all the food be thrown into the bucket. Once the freezer was in the truck, he could dump the food right into it.

Granddaughter thought that idea had merit, but they continued to throw around ideas. Finally, it was decided that my son would unload the freezer and throw each item to my granddaughter. She would decide whether it was a keeper or a thrower. Keepers went into a big Rubbermaid bin, throwers went into the trash.

And so it began.

Oh, the things that were unearthed. Containers of leftover soup, frozen applesauce, tomato sauce, pizza sauce, lasagna and pizza portions, venison, sausage, roasts, steaks, even a 10-pound prime rib roast (which I kept). Once everything was vetted, out went the freezer to the truck, the food got reloaded, freezer got plugged into an extension cord (the kids were spending the night).

process that clarifies, that helps me understand what I know, or don’t know.

A work of creativity is fundamentally an expression drawn from within. It is an outpouring pulled from one’s self, and, I believe, a reflection of what it is to live, and to live as a finite being. We are blessed and cursed with the knowledge that our time is limited, and the end will come, we know not where, when, or how. (This knowledge is omnipresent, whether the creator is conscious of it, or not.) These truths hold whether I’m building a house, or a garden, if I’m singing, writing, or – most importantly – when I’m in a relationship with something or someone I love.

No matter how sophisticated the AI, it does not live. It “functions,” but without the foundational elements that make us human, that spur us to create (and also destroy) in the first place – grief, joy, heartache, love, hate, boredom, spite, loneliness, jealousy, admiration, respect, disapproval, determination, courage ... the list is long. Absent these, the idea that a machine can create anything truly vital is absurd. Even generative AI can only spew out what is put in, mostly a series of general concepts. And concepts without life, without death, are mere sophistry, even if combined in novel ways. I don’t see that as real creativity, and therein lies the mischief at the heart of the enterprise.






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Whew!

I have probably mentioned that I have been in this house since 1975. There have been some major changes and renovations over the years. Best guess is the kitchen was overhauled somewhere in the early to mid 1990s. New cabinets and counters and floors and paint and such.

Well, the eye-level and above cabinets are the ones that get used the most. The bottom cabinets are another story. Since I was now fully engaged in purging, I set my sights on the lower cabinets.

The cabinets were mostly full of pots and pans and casserole baking dishes and such. How many 8-inch square cake pans does one single old lady need? There were at least five or six, not counting the new ones I now use. Cup cake pans? Big, medium, and small with 6 to up to 48 cupcake holes. Again, how many do I need?

A full set of Revere Ware copper-bottom frying pans with lids. I have a good set of Calphalon, so don’t need those.

Eight million plastic lids with no containers to go with them? A potato ricer. An apple peeler. Lasagna pans. A few things were totally mysterious and unidentifiable. Of course, there were various old papers, manuals for appliances long gone, checkbooks

When Hal, through some sort of machine-logic calculation, concluded that the mission was in danger from the humans, he simply began to eliminate them. He – it, properly speaking – had no qualms about murder because it was not murder at all, not in the sense we know it. It was the logical outcome of its “thought.” Hal could act only on information in a mechanically rational way, without recourse to human emotions, and without the crucial dimension those emotions and our mortality bring to decision making.

Revealingly, Hal’s voice never changes tenor, even when Dave is removing the faulty software. Though he does tell Dave, “I’m afraid,” there is no hint of real fear. Why? Because Hal was a machine. Death and life were just abstractions. The mistake made in “2001” was trying to make a machine live, and now we are making that same mistake.

This is disturbing. If AI is used to do drudge work, and keeps to such tasks, all well and good. If not, the danger is great. We may not only sacrifice increasing portions of our humanity, but we may also find ourselves with an entity that, using its machine logic, decides the most “logical” thing to do is to remove the unpredictable humans who keep mucking things up. And that’s when we’ll be hearing some version of “I’m sorry, Dave. I’m afraid I can’t do that.”

from banks that no longer exist, and just plain junk.

Granddaughter and I went through everything, and she decided to take maybe 20%. I kept about 8%. That left a bunch of stuff. My next step is to go through the remaining 72% and figure out what goes to Granny’s and what goes to the dump.

Now that stuff is down to a manageable amount, I am having pull-out drawers installed in the cabinets so things don’t get pushed to the back, never to be seen until the next purge, which will probably occur somewhere around the year 2050. The pull-outs will be installed next week.

It’s pretty quiet here right now. Granddaughter and boyfriend left around noon. They wanted to miss the traffic jam around JBLM on a Friday. A friend who is also a handyman, came over and helped me order the pull-out drawers for the kitchen cabinets. Things that need to be put away are in big tubs, pushed out of the way.

All is right with the world, except that the new recliner I bought last spring and that I sleep in broke in August and La-Z-Boy can’t get a tech guy out here to fix it until October 30th!

Sometimes you just can’t win for losing.

# Ferry Follies

By Dave B.

Here it comes, the ferry discussion. I think we have heard it all, but here goes:

Our wonderful ferries and the folks who ride them.

Now THIS is a subject all Islanders have an opinion on. How do YOU feel about riding our WSF system? I can tell you if I had to ride off-Island for work every day, I would be a cranky, ugly mess. As it is, I go off-Island approximately 3 days a week. That is my choice as I have control over my work schedule, and it suits me after 43 years in healthcare.

It is very difficult to make a living on the Island without having multiple jobs, and the ferry does not make it easier, even the few times those folks need to go to Costco, Walmart, or Starbucks. So, most Islanders are patient and understand that the ferry workers are at the mercy of the mechanics of the boat, the number of cars in line, or if someone calls out sick and the Washington State Ferry (WSF) folks try to find a replacement.

What is worrisome is the increasing price with more problems year after year. Am I wrong? Nope.

I realize that the ferry system is short on boats, has a budget, and is working with what they have, but let's look at some problems that can possibly be fixed or at least acknowledged. First, the north-end ferry dock is terribly laid out. Fauntleroy way is getting extremely busy, and we have a cop directing traffic at peak times, but "peak times"

have become "all the time."

The ferry line on Fauntleroy way is not user-friendly and the poor tourists who have no clue how to navigate it can cause issues. The locals are very vocal about cutting in line and it makes for poor relationships, especially in the summer. Add folks parking along Fauntleroy who sometimes do not understand that the ferry line after 2:00 p.m. begins all along Fauntleroy. If they do not move their car, it is a serious issue trying to get around them.

Throw in a few New Yorkers who have attitude and we get fights and confrontations we do not need on a two-lane road next to a park. So, if you are visiting our Island and have had issues in line on the north end, please understand Islanders sit in that line EVERY DAY. Imagine that!

The south end used to be much more mellow and friendly, but now that the Pagoda and skybridge are in place, the wait between 7:00-10:00 a.m. and 1:30-5:30 p.m. is not conducive to a fun time. The 62-car Chetzemoka seems to run late day after day. The ferry workers are trying to squeeze every last car onto the boat, but with all the commercial traffic I wonder if the Chetz is even built for that kind of load.

In addition, putting a roundabout with one lane going into the zoo/aquarium, down to Anthony's restaurant, and onto the ferry was honestly a stupid idea. I have talked to my ferry-worker friends on the south end and WSF folks TOLD the powers to be that redesigning the road with a roundabout was NOT a good idea.

I would bet people who got this pushed through do not ride the ferry at 1:40, 2:40, or 3:40 p.m. during the summer. Maybe not at all! I have seen that line back up all the way to the Italian restaurant, and then it gets really fun. Add folks with boats trying to come up to the roundabout from the lower parking area and it's more confusion. People who want to get to the park or zoo sit in the same roundabout line with all of us folks who just want to get home. Not a good idea.

Can a second lane be added? I hope so, but who is going to pay for it?

In WSF's defense, they have quarterly meetings to get feedback from the public, but when was the last time you saw something change from those meetings? Yes, we finally have a third boat on the north end, but only sporadically and only in the summer. More times than not, it gets pulled to go elsewhere.

We DEFINITELY need a bigger boat on the south end. Remember those two joyful weeks when the Issaquah was in Point Defiance? You could have all four lines filled to the top and still got onto the ferry. It was heaven! Why can't the Chetz be moved as the third boat to the north-end and a larger boat be moved to Point Defiance permanently?

In order to live and work on Vashon, we all need to get along, enjoy the ride, and take a breath on a Friday afternoon. At least when you get on the ferry, you can go up top and have a beer.

Note: I will be attending the WSF virtual meeting on October 14th and may have further information in my next rant. Stay tuned.



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# Beyond Ideology: What Every Death Takes From Democracy

By Julia Carlson

On a small Island like Vashon, it’s easy to believe we’re insulated from the turbulence of the outside world. But lately, even here, you can feel the weight pressing down on America. Conversations at the grocery store, whispers on the ferry, posts in local groups, it’s clear that the past few weeks have been an emotional roller coaster for all of us.

We’ve seen more lately than the human psyche is built to handle. The events unfolding in real time have pushed people in different directions; toward faith, toward unity, toward anger, toward bullying, toward canceling, and sometimes even toward hurting those who care about us most. There is a shift happening, and we all feel it.

In the middle of this, people keep asking me: “Why are so many people deeply impacted by Charlie Kirk? Can you help me understand?”

I welcome those questions when they come from a place of genuine curiosity and not an urge to fight. My perspective is unique, and to explain it, you need to know a little about me.

I grew up in Washington, while my other parent lived in California. I split time between both. As an adult, I’ve lived in Arizona and Texas. That means I’ve lived near both the Canadian and Mexican borders, and in some of the bluest and reddest states in America. Because of that, I’ve seen both sides closely, and I don’t belong entirely to either. I was raised hardcore Roman Catholic and was even kicked out of Catholic school for asking too many questions. I’m no longer religious, but I am deeply spiritual. I’m also a parent now, close to 40 years old, and I’m watching firsthand how young people are being shaped by the culture around us.

That’s why I can say this with confidence: America is in collective mourning. The hysteria is real. The violence is real. The grief is real. But the reason it feels different right now, the reason it feels like something truly shifted, is Charlie Kirk.



# Real Estate and Shelter

By Stephen Buller

I travelled to Thailand in 2014, and – in addition to the delicious food, exotic sights, and incredible scuba diving – a conversation with my friend’s father stuck with me. He and his wife were expats from the U.S. and were building a home in Thailand. However, they were unable to own the home because only Thai citizens are allowed to own real estate there.

My younger self thought, “What insanity is this? I’m so glad I live in a country that values the free market!” As the years have passed, I have realized some problems with my perspectives – both that this is a terrible idea and that we live in a free market society.

The largest reason for my change in perspective comes from recognizing housing as shelter, a basic human need. Our government subsidizes food and drinking water in multiple ways. Thankfully, breathing air is free –for now – and mostly clean. But when it comes to shelter, “affordable housing” is a cotton swab over a gaping wound.

The federal government actively makes overall housing more expensive by allowing the Federal Reserve to purchase mortgage-backed securities (MBS). These are investment instruments containing many individual mortgages, some of them toxic, at risk of default, and not worth the price they pay – or someone else would have bought them.

Prior to the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008, the Fed was only allowed to purchase Treasuries (U.S. bonds), and I would argue that’s not a good thing, either. However, I expect the “menu” of purchasable assets to only increase. Don’t be surprised if the Fed purchases stocks in the next market downturn.

# Island Resilience

Some are only now learning who he was. Others are mourning as if they lost a personal friend. Why? Because Charlie represented a voice we don’t hear anymore. He created space for difficult conversations when most of society seems too fragile, too angry, or too fearful to allow them.

The last election cycle especially revealed his impact. My own teenagers and even my middle schoolers knew him and followed his debates. For the first time in my lifetime, I saw the youth genuinely energized by politics. Early in the election, Charlie stood out to me. His approach was simple but powerful: he would challenge people with the question, “Prove me wrong.” And often, instead of facts, people would respond with only feelings.

This was eye-opening, not just because of his sharp debating skills, but because of the culture it exposed. Our colleges, which once promised critical thought and open dialogue, often churn out students more eager to repeat slogans than to wrestle with ideas. As someone who once worked in higher education myself, I found that heartbreaking.

Charlie’s gift was that he confronted this. He didn’t run from tough topics; he ran straight at them. He challenged people’s beliefs, motives, and assumptions. He defended free speech in a time when many of us were being silenced.

I know that silencing personally. During the pandemic, I was censored on social media, shamed by people I thought were my allies, and excluded from society because of my vaccine status. At one point, I even filmed the inside of hospitals to share what was really happening, and was shut down for it. I know the sting of being told your voice isn’t welcome. That’s why I respected Charlie’s relentless defense of speech, even speech he disagreed with.

Did I agree with everything he believed? No. His overt Christianity, for example, isn’t my path. But I respected his right to his faith. More than that, I respected the fact that he didn’t hide it or dilute it.

He lived what he believed, and modeled that same courage for young people who are told every day to keep their mouths shut.

That courage is why his death has left so many reeling. For me, the feeling on September 10th, 2025, was hauntingly similar to how I felt on September 11th, 2001: shocked, hopeless, traumatized. I felt the world pause. Something shifted.

Charlie wasn’t just a conservative commentator. He was a cultural force. He lit a fire in the youth. He modeled what it looks like to engage instead of cancel, to question instead of blindly follow. He told us, over and over, that when we stop talking, violence fills the vacuum.

And now, violence has taken him.

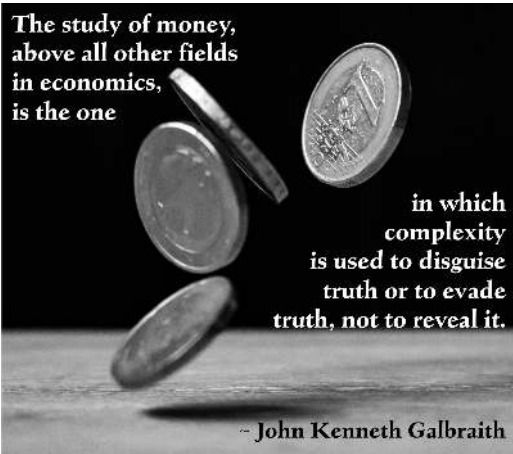
You may not agree with his views. You may not have liked his tactics. But it is impossible to deny his impact. He reminded us that free speech, faith, family, and personal responsibility matter. He reminded us that we can debate passionately and still walk away neighbors. He reminded us that America is built on conversation ... not conformity.

That matters here on Vashon, too. We’re a small Island, but we’re not immune to the divisions tearing apart the mainland. I’ve watched neighbors stop talking to each other over politics. I’ve seen community spaces grow quieter because people are afraid to speak honestly. If we can’t hold conversations here, where we live side-by-side, shop at the same grocery store, and ride the same ferry, then where can we?

That’s why Charlie’s death should matter to us. It’s not just about who he was. It’s about what he represented: the reminder that dialogue is essential, even when it’s uncomfortable. Especially when it’s uncomfortable.

If nothing else, I hope his loss jolts us awake. I hope it reminds us to talk to one another, not about one another. To wrestle with ideas, not silence them. To ask better questions, not cancel the people asking them.

Because if we stop talking, we lose more than just a man, we lose the very spirit of America. And if we’re not careful, we could lose the spirit of our Island too.



Thailand, I’ve learned that many countries allow only citizens to purchase property. I still think there are pros and cons to this, but it would certainly decrease demand and therefore prices in the housing market.

I’ve also learned about homestead tax exemptions, where property taxes on primary residences are lower than an investment property or second home. As a businessman, this appeals to me because there would still be savvy people who could make a business out of rental properties, providing a valuable service for people who want to rent instead of own for various reasons, even if their property taxes were higher.

Property taxes are based on a home’s assessed value, though, so again the main issue is getting prices down. As usual, the solutions we’ll be presented with will instead be to take on more debt, probably in the form of 100-year mortgages and negative interest rates, to focus on our monthly payment and not on the fact that we’ll be slaves to that debt for the rest of our lives.

That’s the reason it was called a “mortgage” to begin with. Now, will our children and grandchildren be saddled with our debt as well? Or will we remove some of the artificial and speculative demand for shelter, a basic human need, to make it more affordable?

# Against Boosterism

By Caitlin Rothermel

It's time to talk about COVID booster shots and the implications of encouraging their use. Before I go there, it's important to first summarize some vaccination policy changes that have occurred at the federal and state level.

On October 6, 2025, the CDC officially voted to shift COVID-19 vaccination guidance for all eligible U.S. residents to shared or individually based decision-making, rather than as a universal recommendation.

In medical-speak, shared decision-making, or SDM, refers to when patients and clinicians weigh options together. Specific to vaccine policy, it means the vaccine may not be regularly recommended, but can still be offered when both agree it makes sense. So, SDM shifts authority away from the federal level ("Everyone should do this ..."), directly to doctors and patients talking ("What is best for me?").

If this seems sound to you, you're not alone. An editorial in The Boston Globe, "Actually, the CDC's New Vaccine Recommendations are Reasonable," called the updated guidance "unremarkable" and noted that these new COVID vaccination recommendations are "in line with what is already done in other high-income countries."

Fundamentally, the primary concern presented by this new guidance was that removing the universal recommendation for these vaccines could lead to denied insurance coverage.

In response, Washington, Oregon, and California and Hawaii have formed the West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) and have set their own immunization policies for COVID and other respiratory infections, effectively reinstating prior vaccination guidance under state authority rather than deferring to the CDC.

A joint governors' statement explains the WCHA's rationale: "The CDC has become a political tool that increasingly peddles ideology instead of science, ideology that will lead to severe health consequences. [Washington, etc.] will not allow the people of our states to be put at risk."

Next - and here begins the booster part of this story - for no good reason whatsoever, a regional and local narrative was rolled out, focused on re-vaccination. Our prior high uptake was praised, while our lackluster ongoing booster use was chided (as of this writing, only 3.1% in the state have received this season's dose).

Because I am a fan of clarity, it was ... vexing ... to me to see media stories promoting booster injections by repurposing the same under-

# Health Matters

supported and overplayed phrases, like "best available science," "well-tested," and "safe and effective."

As discussed previously by The Loop (and many others), the research and testing behind the development of the mRNA injections was far from comprehensive, and myocarditis - an inflammation of the heart muscle that damages cellular and cardiovascular function - was the first-proven, but by no means only, serious harm associated with the injections.

The language used by the media to encourage boosters would you make think there had been no changes to the "best available science." But in fact, published research now shows clear problems, in particular with repeat injections. It can be hard to find this story covered in the media, but accessible and reputable information, looking at large groups of people studied over time, is now available.

Let's start with the Cleveland Clinic. A globally recognized academic health system, the Cleveland Clinic conducted a retrospective cohort study from 2022-2023 to compare their employees' time to COVID infection based on whether or not they ever received the COVID vaccination (yes/no) and based on the number of injections received (0, 1, 2, 3, and 4+).

More than 50,000 staff were followed for about 16 months; during this time, about 4,400 developed COVID. In the results, two things stood out: Initially, the vaccinated had low COVID rates, as did the unvaccinated. The low rates in the vaccinated group only lasted for as long as the virus strains targeted by the vaccine remained the primary circulating form of the virus. As the next two COVID strains became predominant, any observed protective effect decreased and was then lost altogether.

Importantly, patients who received boosters experienced greater infection risk, in a clear and progressive pattern. According to study authors: "The higher the number of vaccines previously received, the higher the risk of contracting COVID-19."

Other research has confirmed that the effectiveness of the COVID injections decreases over time. Measured as infections, emergency visits, and hospitalizations, decreased effectiveness becomes apparent about 3 months after

administration, requiring patients to get another injection to "reawaken" their spike protein antibody levels.

A relationship between COVID vaccines and cancer risk is also coming into focus. Last month, another very large study - evaluating the full South Korean population of 8.4 million-plus people enrolled in a National Health Insurance database - looked at one-year overall cancer rates for people who received the COVID vaccinations and those who did not. People with vaccinations had an increased risk of multiple cancer types - between 20% and 68% higher. Specific to patients who received the mRNA vaccines, breast, colon, lung and thyroid cancer rates were elevated. Specific to patients who received booster doses, gastric and pancreatic cancers were elevated.


Why is all this happening? A good place to start is the immune system, and an antibody known as immunoglobulin G4 - or IgG4 - holds at least part of the answer. The immunoglobulins, or Ig's, are circulating antibodies that protect the body from infection. There are five Ig types, with IgG being the most common, and there are four IgG subclasses, with IgG4 being the least common.

While IgG's 1 to 3 focus on tasks like activating inflammation and recruiting immune cells to help the system attack and clear infections, IgG4 is different. Its role is to ignore immune triggers that would normally bring on a strong response - it dampens inflammation.

To illustrate how this can work positively: With allergy desensitization treatment, patients are gradually exposed to specific triggering antigens, leading to a reduced allergic response and increased IgG4 levels. At the other end of the spectrum, patients with IgG4 related-disease experience a breakdown in immune balance, causing inflammation and organ damage.

The first round of COVID mRNA vaccinations primarily trigger an IgG1 and 3 response, but repeated injections can lead to a bodily "switch" to an IgG4-dominant profile. By promoting Ig profile-switching, boosters "train" the body to ignore a replicating virus. Over time, this can weaken the body's ability to fight infections, and may increase the risk of recurring or prolonged infection. When considered alongside other immune changes found to be triggered by COVID vaccinations, there are downstream implications for cancer and autoimmune disease.

As always, you can find links to source information used in this article in the online version.



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## Mini Gingerbread Cheesecakes

By Chef Julia

Developed by Chef Julia during her time at Le Cordon Bleu, these Mini Gingerbread Cheesecakes capture the essence of the holidays in one creamy, spiced bite. The silky cheesecake base is infused with molasses and warm gingerbread spices, layered over a buttery gingersnap crust.  
Perfect for festive gatherings or quiet winter evenings, they pair beautifully with a cup of spiced chai, a dark roast coffee, or a drizzle of caramel and a touch of whipped cream.

## Mini Gingerbread Cheesecakes

### Ingredients

- 15 ginger snap cookies
- 24 oz cream cheese
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup molasses
- ⅛ tsp salt
- 1½ tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ tsp lemon juice
- 3 eggs
- 4 tbsp butter



### Directions

1. Crush all ginger snaps and mix with the butter. Line muffin tins with ground ginger snaps and butter for crust. (Set aside.)
2. Mix cream cheese, vanilla, sour cream, molasses, lemon juice, and eggs.
3. Add in sugar, salt, ground ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.
4. Place batter into muffin tins on top of the ginger snap crust.
5. Bake 25–30 minutes at 325° or until centers are almost set. Cool completely; refrigerate.



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Photo below by Claudia Hollander-Lucas



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# Legends of Vashon The Story of Tomtomtidimiddletom

By Andy Valencia

## Part 2: He learns about his world

Tom woke on the second day and got busy fortifying his position. He looked at how much energy and materials remained, and decided to push his shoot up just a bit more, and then thicken the stalk to make it stronger. If it snapped off, he didn't have enough energy left over to send a new one up!

He hoped the bouncy thing would happen again, as some extra dirt had settled on his roots last time, but it didn't. Still, with his longer stalk he was actually getting enough sunlight to do some real good. Tomorrow he'd grow his leaves a bit.

Having done all he could for survival, he took time to study his new world in more detail.

Way down below him, he could see a whole bunch of his kind of weed dotted on the ground. He called out "hellooooo" down to them, and all the youngest ones called back "hello!" But they

didn't know enough to say anything else. However, there was a large weed down there who answered "greetings" in a deep (for a weed) voice. His name was Samsamrotatidion, and he didn't have a short version of his name. He was stuffy that way, but Tom didn't mind because Samsamrotatidion had a wealth of information.

Tom was riding on a "car," nestled in the rear of it in a part known as a "bumper." In all Samsamrotatidion's immense memory, this had never happened before. Tom's situation was unique! Just for a moment, Tom felt a little arrogant and important, but then he looked at Samsamrotatidion's tremendous size - at least three inches across! - and his own tenuous grip on a bumper. And he went back to being his humble self.

They spent the day chatting back and forth. From Tom's higher vantage point, he could see much further than any of the weeds on the ground. He described one big box, and a weed that had once taken a ride on a shoe said it was a "house." A different box was over the other way, and a weed which had once ridden on a tractor said it was a "barn." They wanted to know what he'd seen when the car had been moving, but he admitted that he'd

been too small and weak to gather any impression. He promised to do better next time.

There was one weed who was brown and still. She had "gone to seed," using all her energy to build a big bulb full of seeds. As this happened, she talked less and less, and all her green just faded away. Finally, she fell silent. The next day the pod split open, and silky little wisps of seed floated away as everybody watched in respectful silence.

As the day faded away again, Samsamrotatidion mentioned another danger. Tom's car rolled around on those rubber circles he'd so briefly seen, and being pressed down by them was just dreadful. Many was the weed mortally stricken by that terrible pressing weight! Samsamrotatidion asked if there was anything Tom could do about this? Tom promised to help if ever he could figure out how.

Tom was almost asleep as evening arrived, wondering if he could possibly send out seeds without losing his life's energy. But then the people came out to the car, putting all manner of boxes and bags into it. It was completely dark by the time they finished, and Tom finally fell asleep, wondering what sort of adventure he'd have next.



## Harvesting Stones

Continued from Front Page

produce more, to push them up, it seems, like stalks of corn or like eggs. At first we'd constructed piles of stones, careful cairns, but now I fling the rocks into the grass. Eventually I'll have to gather these, because we'll have to mow that area at some point.

I pull the stones, and enjoy the weight and chill hardness in my palms, and the damp earth against my skin. I'm glad I'm not wearing gloves. Realizing this, I press my hand against the earth, leaving prints like leaves behind.

I step in and out of the field, carefully, not wanting to compact the soil, but knowing it can't be helped, and knowing that Andy will be tilling it all again anyway, where I've stepped. As I place the stones to the side and prepare to return to the field, I seek the places where I've stepped before. I look carefully for stones, so I have a purpose for being in that space. And I feel as if I'm entering sacred ground.

And aren't I, truly? We are tending the soil, shifting it, feeding it, nurturing it, tucking it in for the night, so that God's mystery of life may burst forth in the spring and bless us, bless the world. Here is a place of awakening on so many ways. Life rising to an organic thriving mass. A galaxy in the garden. It is sacred ground because things are happening within this space and we are aware of the happenings, somewhat. We will perform what rituals we can, do the dance, stand back to study the situation, and then do the next right thing. We will attempt to move with the rhythms of the unseen cycles and influence them in great and small ways.

Again and again, I press my hands into the soil. I notice the deep small marks that also knuckle into the field - hoof prints. The deer have added their own patterns to the blanket. One of our cats sits in the dirt and meows at me. She demands the benediction of my fingers on her fur, while complaining about the garden's newest initiate: Molly the dog prances by to nose where our cats have

beatifically defecated in our field and primly covered their offerings. Molly grins, unearths the cat scat, engages in her own comic dance and trots off.

I leave another hand print and remove another stone.

~

I shake frozen curly fries out of a plastic bag and spread them on a baking pan. I pull long shards of ice from the fries and toss them into the sink - the stones from the 13x19 inch field in my kitchen.

A number of large yellow-touched-with-red apples crowd expectantly on the counter, watching the process, and exuding a scent of sweet harvest, their approval and grace. It is autumn, All Hallow's Eve, and the outside has nudged within. The cheerful gifts of summer shine gold onto our path as we descend into the long stone nights of the year.

## Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

I was going to cook alligators tonight. But then I realized I only had a crock pot.

~

What kind of award does a dentist get for excellence?

Aw, he just gets a little plaque.

~

Singing in the shower is fun, until you get soap in your mouth, then it becomes a Soap Opera.

~

I woke up laughing this morning. I must have slept funny.

~

I asked my North Korean friend how it was over there.

He said, "I can't complain."

~

The Secret Service is no longer allowed to yell, "Get down!" to the president when he is under attack. Yup. Now they have to yell, "Donald Duck!"

~

Q: What do you call woman who burns all her credit card bills?

A: Bernadette.

~

From Caitlin, via Jeremy Clarkson:

Farmers don't need digital ID - the sheep already recognize them by baa-code ...

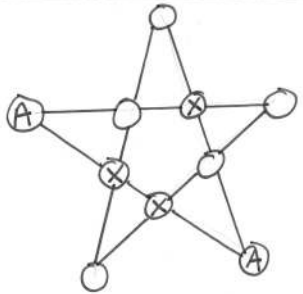
~



Go to  
Page 11  
for the  
Solution

### Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses



**A's and X's**  
The figure here must be filled so that each row of four circles contains two A's and, two X's. Which circle must be filled with an A?

### News You May Have Missed



- AI job market impacts are finally being acknowledged
- Contest to live in an old Soviet city
- Las Vegas costs are up - tourism is way, way down

Read the full stories: [vashonloop.com/missed/](http://vashonloop.com/missed/)

A young lady at the laundromat told me this one:

Q: What's a vampires favorite fruit?

A: Nectarines.

~

Vampires love to write. They only suck at Type O's.

~

Q: What is a ghost's favorite type of car?

A: A boo-ick.



Aries (March 20-April 19)

By the time they're adults, most people don't change so much. Growth is barely a thing; learning happens on a special occasion. Healing is perhaps imagined, and then the concept is abandoned as doctors and pharmacists fill the space where it might be possible. Awareness is a known concept, and yet most people walk around in the haze of their own polarization, judgment, and lack of curiosity. You are being called to bring your life to a more meaningful place. The present rare alignment of Chiron and Eris in your birth sign is not about astrology. It's about everything within your own consciousness that is insisting that you pay attention to your inner being and what is actually happening around you. I am not talking about some flowery New Age notion-it's time to get real about the necessities of your growth and your healing.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

It is difficult to know what you don't know, especially when it's something about you. Yet is it true that the story of your life is of one surprising, even shocking, self-discovery after the next? The funny thing is, you tend to forget these moments. What you discover either disappears back into you, forgotten like a dream, or it takes its place as something you always knew and was always there. Yet what's happening now cannot fit into either of those categories. Your present self-awakening is so radical and coming from such a deep place that you cannot fail to notice. Vulnerability connects you to that being that is you. Acknowledgement that you can grow connects you to the most important experience of being a child, which is some fusion of discovery and maturity. Children love to grow and love to discover. So what happened to this kid that it seems necessary to leave him or her alone in the dark? That's no place for a child. And it's no place for you.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

The world has become a kind of one-way mirror, like in an interrogation room. Everyone is on display and at the same time cannot see the people who are looking at them. You may be sensitive enough to feel the toxicity of this kind of energy arrangement. Plenty that happens in the so-called real world is conducted on the rules of digital transactions, by people who treat one another like robots. you won't be happy being anything other than human, and that is the challenge-a serious one, too. To preserve your humanity and live within your true being means somehow addressing pressure coming from nearly every angle. Yet you will benefit from the company of others who see the situation in a similar way as you do. There are strategies that you can bring to the problem, which include generosity, sincerity, personal contact, eye contact, and cooking your own food. This may seem like a small measure, but it is not.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

It's difficult to find direction when the world is in chaos, or meaning when society is drowning in the irrelevant. Nearly all judgments people make about themselves and others are based on appearances of things like happiness, success and meaning. Once you start eliminating these misleading references, you're left



with how you feel inwardly. Your sense of direction and purpose are described by the sign Aries, where many new cycles are turning over. Count on your awakening to accelerate over the next few weeks, as Chiron, the planet of healing and awareness, makes contact with an even newer astrological factor called Eris. This all but assures you will notice and discover new qualities within yourself. They may radically contradict your old expectations, but you will have a vantage point on yourself and where your mission aligns with the necessities of the world.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

When you peel back the spiritual theory, metaphysical concepts, and religious dogma, all you really know for sure is that you're here on Earth. Under the influence of Chiron and Eris making contact in the most philosophical house in your chart (the 9th place), a helpful mantra can be: "where am I, and what am I doing here?" Please don't rush to answer those questions. Let them stand, and feel the tension that would naturally infuse a real inquiry. You might discover you actually don't know much. You might say something like, "I'm me, and I'm in Greene County, NY, and I'm writing a horoscope." Okay, what does that tell you? What are all those things? Yet simple or over-general answers are better than ones containing assumptions. As you gradually clear away what is not true, what is true will become more apparent. Overall this is a slow process that will have several points of revelation over the next six months, and you're in one of them now.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

There is the question of whether it's possible to self-actualize when you're in a relationship. This is a difficult matter, as we are all in relationships of various kinds; but I'm talking about the kind where your entire identity is invested in the connection. Consider a commonplace situation: someone is changing, and yet the people around them expect them to be the same person they were yesterday. As the person having the growth experience, you would be the one to initiate the discussion. Be respectful of what you don't yet know, and of the fact that everyone is going through some kind of rapid evolution right now. Stick to the basic facts and do not justify yourself. Where shared commitments are involved, be clear if you need help; state what you can and cannot do. And yes, this will be a test of whether your relationships are sustained by love, or by something else.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

The Chiron-Eris connection is taking place in the angle of your chart where you meet the world face-to-face. It's also what you see when you turn your head a little to the left, and little to the right. You may be looking around at upheaval and weird developments and wondering what in God's name is happening to the world around you. This may involve deep and potentially justified concerns about people close by. And it's also possible that you're feeling alienated

from a world that you just don't understand and that is changing so fast you cannot keep up. Libra is the sign of both balance and dependable relationships, and you are more likely to be the source of stability for others in your sphere. You have a significant advantage in a world that is degrading from the overuse of emojis and machine-written emails. Use your words, and use them wisely. You have a sense of what a game everything has become, and that should help you avoid the pointless ones and engage in those that have a purpose. Finally, you have the power to direct your energy in specific ways. Every application of your mental power calls for a thoughtful decision process.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Your ruling planet Mars will be moving through your sign into early November, which will help you feel like yourself in a world where nothing much feels like anything. So you'll be at a distinct advantage while many people around you are spinning, teetering, tottering or just plain old confused. Mars in your sign-for now-will help you maintain an inner orientation, which is the most important thing you can have. It will keep you focused on your instincts, and help inform you about what you want. Meanwhile, the most important developments in your life are happening with that thing you call work. This is taking place in another Mars-ruled sign, Aries. With Mars visiting you, you are likely to make the connection to an enhanced sense of purpose or calling or meaning. You cannot work for money; you must work for love of the activity. The right thing will not feel "easy". That's an important clue.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

While your sign has a freewheeling, stop-at-nothing reputation, it's easy for you to get caught in small details and what you think are the expectations of others. It's like you have a powerful engine with a block of wood under the gas pedal, which prevents you from revving your engine. That block of wood involves various concepts related to family, your notion of integrity, and a certain undeniable need for control that tends to run your life. Chiron and Eris are generational factors that are now making their closest alignment (since 1972) in Aries. That's the most creative and self-creative angle of your chart. For you, creative and self-creative are the same thing, the making of who you are, and the making of art in some form. You may feel like you would have to take the biggest chance of your life to enter new territory-and I would say that's about right.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

There is so much focus on family life and family history in your chart, it's amazing you have the ability to focus on anything else. Yet if you're responding to your astrology, you may be feeling the need to involve yourself in a work project that breaks any previous mold of what you've ever done in the past. So if you're feeling restless and like you need something new, by all means experiment. Whatever this is will (if

you allow it to) take hold over the next six months. If there is not something new, it's likely you're feeling pressure to move on from something that's been around for a long time. Meantime, your chart is revealing a need for a real social life-something that's grown vanishingly rare in the digital era, and especially post "covid". What does it mean to feel safe in your body, in your home and in your world? the sooner you develop your sense of inner sanctuary, the better.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

You could sum up all of your spiritual and intellectual growth with what may seem like a Zen koan: know when you do not know. This is the prime directive, the original instruction and the meaning of life for all whose chart contains a strong Aquarius signature, and that includes you. A century of overexposure to electrical and digital mass media has all but ruined our minds, and your particular mind is at the epicenter of this colossal battle for the soul of humanity. Know when you don't know. Do not fall for the mock certainty, the false clarity and the pseudo intellectualism that currently dominates consciousness. Knowing when you don't know is the dividing line between a genius and a moron. Yours is the astrological archetype most susceptible to the influence of experts. Intelligence can make people more prone to believing propaganda rather than less. Therefore, place yourself in a constant state of self-reflection. Do not believe anything. Examine the evidence carefully, and seek the perspective of others with different views.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

Several astrological factors describe you as walking on the road less traveled, in the context of current aspects (largely events occurring in Aries and also the air signs). You have the potential to relate to existence through the emotional, the intuitive and the feminine. In the present, you have the power of Saturn working the last degrees of your sign. That describes the need and the opportunity for completion-on several different time scales. Think back three years; think back to the beginning of this year. What's been on the docket or gathering dust on the workbench? Drive those things to completion, which will be easier than it seems. Meanwhile, there may be something going back to 1996, the last time Saturn exited Pisces. As for Jupiter, your classical ruling planet is in your fellow water sign Cancer, picking up the vibes of Chiron and Eris. The Jupiter element is translating into a luck factor, a creative resource and an opportunity for that thing known as pleasure. Take advantage while it lasts, and while it's at its peak.

Read extended monthly horoscopes plus a wealth of extra material at PlanetWaves.net

Math Puzzle Solution  
By Anne Cotter Moses

Answer to puzzle  
It is helpful to reframe the question and ask, "Which circles can't be filled in with an X?" We can then see that only the bottom-left can't be assigned an X, for that would lead to having one row with three X's or three A's.



# Bird Sermon

By S. E. Reid

Aside from being one of the most widely recognizable saints in history, Saint Francis of Assisi is typically used as an enduring symbol of holy ecology and love for Creation.

According to the legends about his incredible life, Francis preached to the birds, extended compassion to a ferocious wolf, and surrounded himself with a vision of Creation as a vast family, one to which all beings – human and nonhuman – belong. His role in church history gives us a glimpse into a restored Eden, where all things live in peace and grace is our common language.

Today you often find his tonsured statue in gardens, and he is usually depicted with attentive birds, gentle deer, or a tamed wolf. The stories surrounding him and his strange life are numerous, too numerous to recount here, but make no mistake: just like most saints, Francis was a complicated, imperfect person whom God used for incredible things.

No matter the details, the iconography of Saint Francis is a reminder to examine and challenge ourselves in our service to this Earth, given to us by God as the most tangible gift we could ever receive. I wrote this poem to honor that gift.

the birds in my garden  
are full of gossip, today

as they tell  
and retell  
the only sermon they know by heart:

the one the saint told  
to their ancestors’ ancestors  
their mothers’ mothers  
their fathers’ fathers

passed down  
like a story,

and now  
they preach to me  
every morning.

from the branches of the baring cherry tree  
and the fenceposts of the garden  
and the top of the greenhouse  
and the leaning evergreens

they speak to me  
of the love of God  
and the sweetness of seed  
and the grief

of leaving summer’s warmth  
behind

tiny proselytizers  
to the goodness of the earth

in a tongue  
only they  
remember.

*The Feast  
Day of  
St. Francis  
of Assisi is  
celebrated on  
October 4.*



## Poems From “Grief Age Love”

The following two poems are included in a new anthology written by over 30 Vashon poets, and edited by Jeanie Okimoto of Endicott and Hugh Books.

The book is called “Grief Age Love: Poems for the Autumn Years.”

Jeanie Okimoto writes in the Introduction “... As we all make our way in this broken world, the poets in this collection have traveled wide stretches of the human terrain....they offer a rich quilt of emotions and experiences. Many have been published extensively, and others turn to poetry on certain occasions when the muse shows up and the spirit moves them... as in the words of the Irish poet Brendan Kennedy, ‘poetry is one of the most vital treasures that humanity possesses; it is the bridge between separate souls.’”

In these times of deep division there is also a deep need for human connection. Love and Age and Grief are themes of experience for all seasons.

This book is available at the Vashon Bookshop and Vashon Senior Center. All proceeds will be donated to the Vashon Senior Center.

### Autumn

My small hands inside a tangle  
of wet strings, a music I could hear  
with the cacophony of seeds,  
seven years old in the sharp crimson  
of late October,  
in a frenzy of wonder  
and the sadness  
that comes to certain children  
as if they already know  
the taste of loss.

It was the one thing my father did  
with me, each Halloween  
when the leafsmoke sang  
itself into the dusk,  
he took me to choose  
the pumpkins,  
at Panazzo Brother’s fruit stand,  
they dazzled the chill Midwest evening  
heaped in a bin like autumn full moons.

We scraped and carved them  
into another life, grinning  
and grimacing. Then the excitement,  
placing the warm-breathed beings,  
flamed from within  
on the front porch.

This is the one tiny pocket  
in any costume I wear  
in which I carry my father,  
the small flicker of memory, still alight.

~ Merna Ann Hecht

Merna Ann Hecht is a Teaching Artist, Poet and Storyteller who works with global youth. Also an organic gardener, baker and immigrant rights activist, she still loves Autumn and Halloween best of all.



Michael Feinstein is a writer and poet living on Vashon Island.

## Treat or Trick

Continued from Front Page

guardsman to answer his door, and he wouldn’t do it. We had never “tricked” anyone before because we didn’t have to. Every Vashon family gave cakes, cookies, or possibly a drink of cider. We prepared a response to the coast guardsman by filling a paper bag half-full of dog manure, and lit it on fire.

He opened his door to our knock, and stomped on the bag, to put out the fire. You can imagine how fast we cleared his yard as he yelled epithets at us, including, “Get the hell off my property and never come back.”

We ran out to the road to plan our escape to Cove, where we found ample people with their front door lights on and gates open to encourage the young people to “trick or treat,” because of their costumes or just because they hadn’t been seen for awhile.

The Secors were the next family to trick-or-treat at on the Cove Road. The Secors always prepared a haunted house for us. The lights went out one Halloween which made the haunted house even more scary. You were told to stick your hands through a plastic sheet to feel the brains of a cow. They were damp and scary, whatever it was. Sister Molly thought that was just a bowl of wet spaghetti.

Ed Secor was just a few years older and was training to be an opera singer. His voice would carry for a quarter-mile, and hidden in the tent, it became scary because he sung in Italian, which none of us could understand.

We continued toward Cove and were almost to Bruner’s when we heard a profound scream from the top of the ridge to the east. It sounded like babies screaming. The screaming turned out to be a cougar. We almost dropped our bags of cookies and candy. We would walk to Cove to trick or treat some other year, and we ran like Billy Blew for home.



To be nobody-but-yourself – in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else – means to fight the hardest battle which any being can fight.

~ E.E. Cummings



LEFT: Photo by Claudia Hollander-Lucas