

Deep Space Rendezvous

By Mike Curtin

I’m not an expert on any of this, but 3I/Atlas is the object that’s captured my attention lately. It’s the third interstellar object known to enter our solar system (thus the “3”). The “Atlas” part refers to the telescope that first spotted it.

This is an unusual comet. It’s green, for one thing, which means it’s made up of different stuff than the white comets we usually see. It is composed of nickel, not iron like other comets and meteors in our solar system. It’s traveling much faster, too, and is coming in at about five degrees off the ecliptic – the flat plane where all our planets orbit the sun. Almost everything in the solar system moves along that same plane, so something coming in at an angle like that is unusual.

And unlike other comets that have an elliptical orbit around the sun, 3I/Atlas is just passing through and will return to interstellar space, never to return.

Some people say it’s just a comet; others think it might be something more. I do know it’s behaving differently from anything we’ve seen before.

The “Wow” Signal

One of the strangest things about 3I/Atlas is that it came from the same area of space that gave us the Wow Signal, one of the great mysteries of modern astronomy.

On August 15, 1977, the “Big Ear” telescope at Ohio State University picked up a powerful radio transmission from deep space. It was in a very narrow band, with high energy, and definitely not natural. The astronomer who spotted the signal wrote “Wow!” on the computer print-out, and that’s how it was named.



A 3D image of the interstellar object, comet 3I/ATLAS

Now here’s the thing: the Wow Signal came from the same location in space where 3I/Atlas originated. It’s been speculated that the Wow Signal was the comet’s radio message saying it was on its way.

Odd Comet, Strange Timing

When 3I/Atlas first appeared, it had an inverted tail that pointed forward instead of

behind. That was interesting to astronomers. Then it passed near Mars, which started having “Mars quakes,” seismic activity from the center of the planet. Around the same time, the U.S. government shut down, meaning that, among other things, public data streams from Mars satellites went offline.

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The Mississippi Reading Miracle, and What Washington Can Learn

By Mary McFarlin

The United States and Washington State are facing a literacy crisis. In 2024 in the U.S., based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 30% of fourth graders and 29% of eighth graders scored as proficient in reading.

While our averages in Washington are somewhat higher than nationally, we still have a long way to go – in 2024, only 31% of eighth graders performed at or above the NAEP-proficient level.

Why are literacy rates in the U.S. so low? According to investigative journalist Emily Hanford, we were “Sold a Story.” Her podcast series examines how debunked reading methods like “three-cueing” (an approach that encourages students to guess words using meaning, sentence structure, and visual clues rather than decoding them through phonics) became widespread in U.S. schools.

She reveals how influential publishers, curriculum authors, and teacher training programs promoted strategies not supported by the science of how children learn to read. Instead of basing instruction on decades of research supporting systematic, explicit techniques – including phonics – teachers relied on (and many still rely on) approaches based on “whole language” and “balanced literacy.”

The result is that millions of children – especially students with language-based learning differences such as dyslexia – were never taught how to decode words accurately.

According to the “Science of Reading,” explicit, systematic instruction that includes phonics is best for children learning to read and spell because it

aligns with how the brain connects print to speech. The Science of Reading is a body of research from cognitive psychology and neuroscience showing how children learn to read; it emphasizes explicit, structured instruction in phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Reading is not a natural process – unlike spoken language, it must be taught. Systematic phonics instruction helps children build the neural connections between sounds (phonemes) and letters (graphemes), allowing them to decode unfamiliar words accurately and automatically. This foundation supports fluent reading, spelling, and comprehension. Without explicit instruction, many children are left to guess words from context or pictures, which hinders reading development.

Phonics began to “go out of style” in the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of the “Whole Language” movement in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries. Whole Language emphasized meaning-making, rich literature, and natural language exposure rather than explicit instruction in phonics or decoding. Teachers were encouraged to let children “discover” how words worked through context, pictures, and experience with texts – rather than through direct teaching of letter-sound relationships.

This approach gained popularity in teacher education programs and classrooms throughout the 1990s, often replacing or minimizing systematic phonics.

“Balanced literacy” is an approach to reading instruction that emerged as a compromise between Whole Language and phonics-based instruction. It incorporates some phonics instruction but emphasizes reading strategies like using context or pictures to guess words. It often lacks the explicit, systematic phonics instruction supported by the Science of Reading, making it less effective – especially for struggling readers.

A New Taxi-Type Service On Vashon

Do you need a lift? There’s a new option for those living on Vashon. A decade+ employee of Washington State has recently left his job and moved onto Vashon to help his ailing mother. Meet Jonathan, who’s decided to also start a business providing taxi-type services to Islanders.

The cost? On-island trips cost between \$15 and \$25, depending on distance. For \$50 he can also pick you up, take you to town, wait up to an hour for you to finish shopping, and then return you home. He’ll even run you to SeaTac; prices starting at \$125. This is a new business, so be sure to verify costs when you contact him.

He knows how to drive in snow, so his service should hold up throughout the winter. He’s also pet-friendly, including having rubber mats. Your four-legged companion and their muddy paws are welcome!

He accepts cash, credit cards, Zelle, and Apple Pay. As he starts up his business, hours are very broad. If you want to reach the first ferry or be picked up from the last one–give him a call. He’ll probably answer. He’ll shortly also be an Uber Eats driver.

Text or call:
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Call For Support! With SNAP Cuts, IFCH Steps Up With Food Support

By Hilary Emmer

Dear Vashon Residents,

Starting November 1st, 2025, people who usually get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which I call Food Stamps as an old folk, will only be getting 50% of their November benefits.

Vashon Interfaith Council to Prevent Homelessness (IFCH) wants to help our Vashon residents who will be affected by these cuts. We will be setting up a special fund specifically to be able to give out food cards at our two grocery stores so people can still eat. Food insecurity is very scary and increases stress among families. We would like to lessen their fears.

IFCH is asking the community to donate money to IFCH specifically for this FOOD program. IFCH did a rent program during the 2020 pandemic. Though this, we learned how to reach into the community, where the most need exists, most quickly.

You can donate by going directly to our donation page: <https://ifchvashon.org/donate-2/>

Under “Add special instructions to the seller”, type in FOOD. Or you can mail us a check at IFCH, PO Box 330, Vashon WA 98070. Write FOOD in the memo.

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Granny’s Attic: A Store With a Clark Kent Appearance That Turns Its Community Shoppers Into Super-Heroes

By Daniel Hooker

I watch our Island community batten down the hatches, preparing for the ongoing storm that is a bipartisan multi-billion dollar cluster bomb of a budget. It’s dropped on the most impoverished portion of our population. I take pride in the people of Vashon-Maury Island and our determination and organized efforts to keep our Islanders afloat in this tempestuous political storm that is indiscriminate of families and children. It cuts deeply and slashes at civility.

When you look at Vashon-Maury Island as a haven from the outside world, you must take pride also in its abilities through the decades (and even a century back) to remain the tight-knit community of caring individuals, families, and businesses that make us a whole village.

There are many business on the Island, all teeming with resources that eventually funnel their generosity and love for our community into non-profits that keep this community afloat. Granny’s Attic is much more than a “thrift store,” with all the odds and ends that make it unique. I even found a numbered Picasso print for sale there ...

Brian Vascovi, the manager of Granny’s said in an interview on Halloween, that, from jewelry to art, many items are a third to half the actual fair-market values. Granny’s Attic has a website that leads you to their eBay Store. What I understand is that this sales venue could use help from volunteers to grow this side of

the business.

At present, approximately one-half of the grants asked for are given, with numbers like \$100K per grant cycle. (I believe grants are given out twice a year.)

The Interfaith Council received \$7,500 for its food security, such as community meals at the churches, as well as housing grants and dental needs (\$8,500 just for dental).

In conclusion, when you too want to make a super contribution as a private hero in our community, tell a new neighbor about Granny’s Attic, the thrift store that gives medals for participation (in the form of sales receipts for purchases). Buying treasures of art and jewelry makes this community rich as well as prosperous.

Thank you, Granny’s Attic for your efforts, and thank you, shoppers for being the Clark Kents that keep our community flying.

It’s That Time of Year Again

We have people sleeping outside who would like to be warmer.

I am collecting:

- Warm socks
- Gloves
- Coats
- Sweatshirts
- Sleeping bags
- Raincoats



Email Hilary Emmer at hilonvashon@yahoo.com

Thank You!

Art Is Under Attack on Vashon

By Mike Leavitt

It took living here for 13 years for me to realize how deeply the arts are embedded at the core of Vashon. Yet somehow, I still don’t understand it. To this day, every day living here, I am in constant awe at how many brilliant talents work their magic amongst our woods.

If you too appreciate this virtue of Vashon, I invite you to my art show at Vashon Center for the Arts in November.

If you also consider yourself an Island artist – no matter your capacity or practice – consider the political climate’s effect on surviving as an artist these days. Paints, brushes, carving tools, print-making supplies, photography, websites, taxes, bills and rent checks all fall hard under the skyrocketing cost of living. The arts are classically the first victim of capitalism gone wrong. Do you think any of this is getting any better these days?

My career sits on a razor-thin edge between art and commerce. I make sculptures for sale that make fun of selling things. This is my way of making fun of capitalism while living with it. This struggle remains no matter how much anyone benefits, reflects the purity of anti-capitalism, faithfully follows the dollar, or floats between these realms.

While Vashon suffers from a lack of institutional infrastructure, arts institutions are under threat from a private fear of backlash and institutional funding further up the chain being gutted at the highest levels. Consider the VCA’s free talks and public forums, and how the VCA



disperses funding amongst artists. Consider the classes only available because of the VCA, how tuition funds the artists who teach, and the impact of the education itself. Now consider whether any other Island institution is doing all of this.

The arts aren’t just under attack from above. It’s also coming from those of us who – no matter how much we love art – don’t see our role in the grand dynamic playing out right here on our chunk of clay in the ocean.

My art show at the VCA wrestles with the effects of present-day Capitalism on the arts, the environment and politics. The work installed will include art aimed at the oil and gas industry, childhood obesity, the fashion industry, and sculptures depicting firearms in reference to mass shootings. The show is titled “Good Buy! Cruel World.” The show will be on display until November 30th. Gallery hours are Noon to 5pm Wednesday to Sunday.

At 2:00 p.m. Sunday, November 9th, I will do a free talk at the gallery. I encourage anyone to attend and confront me with difficult questions. One purpose of art is to spark dialogue. So, let’s have it out. Bring opinions. Come equipped with hard thoughts. This talk – and the VCA broadly – is a forum for civil discourse.

The Vashon Loop

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Island Rides That Refuse To Die: The Toyota RAV4

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Choices usually involve tough trade-offs, summed up in design as “form follows function.” Sometimes you can get both, but function is primary. Comfort vs. Speed. Reliability vs. Sophistication. Safety vs. Cost.

When it comes to owning a vehicle, there is also a trade-off called “Living on Vashon.” Several factors give our environment surprising similarities to motoring in rural Costa Rica, Yellowstone Park, or a Bosnian war zone. Overboard? Well. At least in Bosnia, you could go to a car wash.

Point being, these places are all deferred maintenance hot spots. They have iffy roads with steep ditches. Neglected vegetation ideal for digging into paint, trees waiting to fall onto roads, seasonal pollen thick as mustard gas. Oncoming vehicles often prefer your lane over theirs, law enforcement is overstretched and sporadic, the same goes for mechanics. And if you get into an accident, however minor? Simple! Just get it towed to an off-Island body shop and wait 1-4 months while that metal gets ironed out.

Therefore, the per capita damage rate evident on Vashon’s vehicles is higher than in third-world countries. But there’s an upside: this also means there are some great cosmetically challenged values chugging around.



Enter the Island Car, the Island Truck. Maybe it shouldn’t be on the road and has barely legible registration stickers, looking like they used to say “08- 2008.” Maybe the rear brakes are shot, or the front, or the owner has been nursing them both along with the emergency brake for a few seasons. (Guilty, and more than once.) But the fact is they’re here and you need one for when somebody scrapes the passenger side of your Tacoma-detailed Audi Q7.

Our exposure process is Darwinian, and selects for certain brands and models, just as it de-selects others. The Toyota RAV4, its first and second generations (1996 and 2000) is the perfect example of a highly selected Island Ride that Refuses to Die.

The RAV4 was intentionally designed as a versatile worldwide vehicle platform that would stand up not only to deferred maintenance, but to systemic neglect and abuse. Toyota itself doesn’t even know exactly how many of them its plants have built,

but estimates range between 16 and 18 million units.

It has an incredible support network, reasonable parts and repair prices, and the most popular owner forums on earth. A set of new tail lamp assemblies go for \$69.31 on Amazon. Four screws off and back on, whether here or in the Khyber Pass. You’ve got new lights.

There’s a documented case on the RAV4World forum of one vehicle in Mongolia, a 1997 4WD manual transmission, 1.1 million kilometers (@700k miles), and still going. Its fixes included one alternator, three timing belts, and two clutches. The oil was changed every two years, whether needed or not.

When there’s a dirty RAV4 waiting in front of me for the ferry

covered in green mold, what I see is success. The early RAV4s are still used for hire through jungles in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. They’re used across the Australian Outback, in African civil wars, and as overloaded troop movers in the Ukraine. So, if its hatchback was rear-ended 20 years back and a rusty left front fender was hammered back out by a guy named Furball during the pandemic, I see value. This is a level of engineering humility that not only has proven its truth and goodness decades over, but was also reaching right up past it towards the divine.

Pros: Refuses to Die. Cons: Not immune to thermodynamic laws. Requires occasional fluids. Boring and ugly when new. May outlive you.

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Looking For Conspirators

I Know What You Did

By Andy Valencia

This article appeared in January, but we think it bears repeating.

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.

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?

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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I Believe We Are Not Alone

By Pam “Gates” Johnson

As far back as I can remember, I have always believed that we are not alone. To my Mr. Spock mind, it doesn’t make any sense that, in all of the gazillions of planets and solar systems and galaxies, we are the only “intelligent” life form.

Granted, I am not an astronomer or a scientist, but it isn’t logical to me that we are all there is. Seems to me that, as time goes by, there is more and more evidence that we have been visited. Otherwise, how can we explain the pyramids and the Aztec and Mayan architecture? They didn’t have excavators or bulldozers or cranes and civil engineers. At least, that is what we are being told.

Not sure when I became aware of my thoughts on this, as my familial and social peers were not overly interested in the subject. I never personally saw an alien or a UAP (unidentified aerial phenomena, previously called a UFO). One night, shortly after I was married, my husband and I were driving home through a long expanse of Eastern Washington desert. I was afraid to look at the night sky for fear of seeing a flying saucer. If I was ever going to see one, that was the time and the place.

Don’t think I ever told anybody that before. Not sure why I am so thoroughly convinced that “they” walk among us. Too gullible, perhaps? Watched too many movies and such? For some unexplained reason, I have never been able to force myself to watch “E.T.” or “Close Encounters of the Third Kind.” Maybe I previously had some sort of close encounter that I don’t want to revisit, and blocked it out!

There are some interesting TV shows I have watched to some degree, like “Mystery at Blind Frog Ranch,” “The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch,” and “Resident Alien.” Roswell is a hot topic, as is Area 51. We should never forget the Maury Island Incident. And now comes 3I/Atlas. Are they all somehow interconnected? Inquiring minds want to know. There are too many coincidences to ignore.

Someone I know swears up and down that they experienced a close encounter of the first kind, defined by astronomer J. Allen Hynek, as “Seeing an unidentified flying object within about 500 feet, but without any physical evidence or contact. This is a visual observation as opposed to physical



The Vagaries of Commuting

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

The West Seattle Bridge was closed to thru traffic going east and west. I had allowed 50 minutes to get from the Fauntleroy dock to my appointment at Swedish Hospital. I called the hospital to cancel and request a new appointment.

I had waited three weeks for what I had hoped to be my last eye appointment after three operations that had left me with the inability to focus my right eye at any distance.

After 30 minutes, I was able to exit the freeway and return to the ferry via the First Avenue on-ramp.

~

Both my sister, Molly and I, had commuted to high school in Seattle when the ferry ride for a student cost 10 cents. Dad was speeding thru the curves above the Heights hill, driving on both sides of the road.

Molly yelled: “Dad, please slow down.”

“I’m just straightening out the curves,” he replied. We were late for the ferry again. As we neared the bottom of the Heights hill, dad started honking the horn to implore them not to close the gate to the ferry and make us late for school.

~

Now, the state tells us that we won’t have a third ferry on the Vashon run for four years. For me, a missed ferry made me late for school at Seattle Prep. If the principal saw me coming down the hall late, he led me downstairs to the boiler room for three spats, a painful reminder that living on an Island had consequences.

The Jesuits quit using corporal punishment

Island Voices

evidence.” So here is a report from my interview of a personal friend whose experience happened on Vashon Island.

One winter night at about 1:00 a.m., this person awoke to an eerie silence. It was too quiet, unnerving. Not wanting to wake the rest of the house, they went downstairs to watch TV. Movement outside caught their attention.

Looking out the front window, they observed ... something. It was round and flat like a frisbee, about as big as a car. Red, green, and white lights flashed around the object. It stopped by the house and hovered; the only noise my friend could remember was one small clank.

They were paralyzed, not out of fear, just rendered immobile. No emotion, no fear, no thoughts. They were unable to speak or move. Only their eyes could move. They felt weightless. This lasted about 10 minutes, or so it seemed, then the object began to move, seemed to shrink to the size of a lawn-mower, moved to the right of the house, and disappeared.

Once it was gone, my friend could move and talk again, and felt more normal. I was surprised to hear that they were not left with a feeling of fear. They told a few people about the experience, but I think I am the only one who really believed.

Last summer, I had this goofy idea that our community should have a Maury Island Incident celebration. It seems more relevant than strawberries being celebrated (my personal opinion). I contacted the guy from Des Moines who made a film about the incident. He was very interested, gave me his contact info and told me to get in touch if there was any movement on the idea. The Heritage Museum was not interested. The Chamber of Commerce was busy with Strawberry Festival. I tried to contact the theater about their venue but did not get a response.

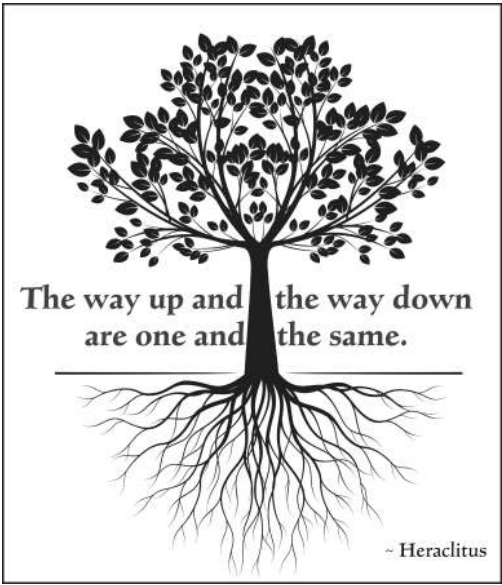
I still think a celebration has merit. Des Moines has a Maury Island Incident festival. Even Chehalis has a UFO festival (darn it, I missed it!). This is where it happened. Why don’t we do this?

Thought a lot about the celebration specifics. The movie could be shown, followed by a Q & A with the filmmaker. Food carts and vendors. Perhaps a time when people could share their own experiences. The airport flying saucer? A parade with out-of-this-world costumes. Flying saucers on bikes? A dance? Build your own UAP contest? The options are endless. So, what do y’all think? Is this an idea that has legs? I’m up for it. As they say on YouTube, let me know in the comments.

But back to the current burning question, is 3I/Atlas, the thing speeding toward a planet near you, a comet or something sent by extraterrestrials on another planet or another dimension on a fact-finding mission? How will we figure this one out? Are we smart enough to figure it out? There are many things out there we will never know. Perhaps this is one of them.



Gates Johnson's tattoo



40s, and at that time the ferry system was private and owned as the “Black Ball” Line. It was owned by a certain Mr. Peabody, who my grandfather always referred to as ... “that crook.”

Ferry service was erratic, and the fares considered to be “extortionate,” at least as far as family lore recalls. The ferry line was taken over by the state in the early 50s.

Virtually everyone on Vashon commuted to Boeing and other places. While the internal public transport system of electric trolleys worked well after one got to Coleman Dock, the “getting to” the ferry was erratic. My dad worked at the Boeing Renton plant and my grandfather had his office in the Securities Building. He also had remodeled some apartment building so he could stay in town if the ferry system failed, which it did.

My first commute was as a passenger, since my mom was supposed to birth me at the Winslow Clinic, but various complications necessitated a trip to Swedish Hospital. So my grandparents drove to the ferry dock, and naturally the boat was late. Normally my dad would be the one driving but he was in Cuba with the Army Air Force, on some top-secret B29 project.

The ferry being late, my mom had begun the birth process and was somewhat advanced as they finally reached Swedish Hospital. I bet the Black Ball line charged for an extra passenger. I would have been born in a different place had the ferry been on time.

Later on, about 2000, I commuted for years to the County Courthouse via those top-heavy old oil platform boats that were converted to the PO fleet. Basically, riding those was just a decade of continuous cribbage games.

Both our families commuted during the early

She Came on a Paddle Board

By Suzanna Leigh

“Hi! Is anyone aboard this boat?”
I put down my scrub brush and looked out over the stern to find the source of the words. Wait ... is that woman standing on the water? The woman spoke again.

“Is this boat for sale? Can I come look at it?”

Nope, not standing on the water ... well not directly. A slender woman about 50 years old was standing on a paddle board next to the boat.

“Yes,” I told her, “the boat is for sale. I’ve had a ‘For Sale’ sign in the window for over a month, but haven’t advertised it at all.”

I invited her aboard. She wedged her paddle board between Eli-Oh and the dock, and climbed into the cockpit. I think it was at that point she began to fall in love with the boat.

“Can we look inside?” Gaynor asked, after introducing herself.

“Of course!” I answered.

James straightened up from the circuit board he was working on and put the ladder back in place so that we could climb down into the cabin. Gaynor wanted to know all about the boat, its shortcomings, what might need repair, where things were located.

“Kate, come look at this boat!” she called out over the water. Moments later her daughter Kate, a young woman in her early 20s, was on board and falling in love with the

boat too.

“I’ve always dreamed of living on a boat,” Kate confided.

“I bought it from someone who was living on it with his wife and four year-old daughter,” I told her. “the V berth was the little girl’s room.”

Gaynor really wanted to buy the boat, but needed to figure out where to keep it. After a bit, she and Kate got back on their paddle boards and continued their exploration of the harbor.

“What about a partnership?” James suggested.

James and I took Gaynor and Kate sailing the next day. We had a fantastic sail! Gaynor’s sailing skills came back as she told us about her experiences on her boat in Virginia, Yankee Mistress. She told us about going aground and staying with the boat as the boat laid over on her side when the tide went out. Kate got the hang of sailing very quickly. She loved it! It was clear they bonded with the boat. I think James and I bonded with them.

“But where would I keep Eli-Oh?” Gaynor asked. “I wouldn’t want it out on anchor over the winter.”

“Anchoring over winter isn’t a good idea,” I agreed. “Every once in awhile, a boat will break loose from its anchor. Maybe the line was a little rotted or the winter wind was just too strong, and it ended up on the beach at Portage or Burton. What about a partnership?”



Illustration by Suzanna Leigh. This painting will be on display at Anu Rana's through November, along with over 20 other small paintings by Suzanna.



Gaynor’s eyes lit up. What a perfect solution! Then the boat could stay in this slip. Gaynor would join the yacht club as a full member so that she could get on the waiting list for a slip and have full access to Eli-Oh in the meantime; James and I could sponsor her. Kate could join as a social member, like James is.

It was a magical moment. As we talked, a swallow landed on the aft rail; perhaps he was drawn by our energy. An omen? Certainly a good one! He stayed and preened while we discussed how a partnership might work.

Over the next few days, Gaynor and I worked out the details of responsibilities etc., with Jim Hauser’s partnership agreement for Sea Change as a template. Gaynor gave me a check, I wrote out a bill of sale, and we went together to the vehicle title office in West Seattle to change the title. Gaynor and I enjoyed an afternoon of sailing together

Now Eli-Oh has two owners – Gaynor and me – and two sub-owners who are not be on the title, James and Kate. And, instead of selling the boat to some stranger, I have a new sailing partner!



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I Have Questions

By Dave B.

I feel like rambling this month. Not any particular topic, just odds and ends that may or may not tickle your fancy, and maybe start a conversation that we can discuss over coffee or a Colvos beer.

Why do we have SO many pizza places on Vashon? We have Rock Island, Vashon Pizza, there was Saucy Sisters, and now also Lunetta and the bar behind the coffee shop. And yet we have no good Italian food? Why? Do we not like Italian food here? Which pizza is best? You can buy pizza at IGA, Thriftway and maybe even Island Lumber, although watch out for the sawdust. What is your favorite?

Second, who is your favorite artist and or art form that has come out of Vashon? Favorite time of year to party? What is your favorite event: The Strawberry Festival, Stupid Bike Night, Halloween uptown, Engels Car Show, comedy night at Vashon theatre, or shooting a shotgun at Sportsman’s Club?

Does King County do enough for unincorporated Vashon Island besides recycling, trash pickup, bus service and plowing our roads (at least some) during a snowstorm? Oh yes, our police force on weekends and holidays. Also, who determines WHICH roads get plowed first? I know mine does not.

Ever wondered why SO many kids are bused to and from the Island every day, and do they really like coming here? In high school, I wanted to go sleep or get stoned, not get on a

boat and then a bus, only to do it again in the afternoon.

Why do so many people move here only to move away less than a year later? Is it due to riding our wonderful ferry system daily? That is a subject for later.

Who chooses the names of the ferries anyway? Can we have one named “The Greg?” If we do have a ferry named Greg, who is he/she/they/them? Is Greg famous?

How many burritos (breakfast or regular) can you eat in a week at Thriftway? What, you did not know Thriftway has both types of burritos? You better run there now ...

Who has the best burgers on the Island? You have lots of choices (kind of like pizza). Island Queen, Thriftway, Perry’s, The Hardware Store, The Eagles Club, the Country Club on Maury. and Sporty’s. Pete still has the largest pancake! You can even get burgers on the ferry now, which I love.

Which ferry sucks the least, the south-end or north-end? I bet I know the answer, or maybe not depending on the day, and whether it is a three-day weekend or there is a festival or first Friday.

Do we really have a high school football team? Sorry guys, but we are not very good. We tried to do flag football one year. It went well, and we received a donation to continue until someone stole the funds and left never to be seen again. Must have been from Kent!

How many streetlights are there



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on the Island? I have tried to count them, and after 11 I get tired or fade off into another random thought like I am doing here.

Oh, here is a good one. Who makes the best coffee? Luna, the Roasterie, the place by Pandora’s Box, Thriftway, Burton, or any number of eateries?

Exactly who is the buyer for the Vashon Pharmacy and where do they get all that cool stuff? Same for Eugenie at Kronos (one of my wife’s favorite places) and at Giraffe. (Editor’s note – We have an answer

for this! See our story about “Giraffe” in the March 2025 issue.)

Enough questions? Oh yeah, that is a question, isn’t it? Shoot, there I go again. If you answered these questions as you read, that was the whole point of reading this rant, right?

Ok no more ... for now!

PS, what questions do you have? I would love to hear additional questions that may spark debate in town. Contact me through editor@vashonloop.com.

Do We Have an Obligation to Think Twice Before Hitting Send?

By March Twisdale

Yes. Yes, we do.

Remember that game you played in early elementary school? It’s been called various things. My generation called it “Telephone.” Put 20 kids in a circle, have them whisper a short phrase in their neighbor’s ear, and by the 20th person, the message inevitably changes.

The moral of the story? Don’t spread rumors. Don’t gossip. The game shows us that, even when we have only the best of intentions, humans still have an innate tendency to hear things wrong and pass the information forward incorrectly. Short answer: the message gets garbled easily.

Does this mean we shouldn’t share anything? Of course not. But, from an early age, our culture in the West has admonished us to be as honest as possible, to be good to our word, and to take care when we communicate about others. We are taught “active listening skills,” such as saying back what we heard, asking clarifying questions, and not taking things at face value. Short answer: check your ego at the door and avoid stirring the pot.

Another community skill taught to American children? What goes in your ear need not come out of your mouth. When we listen to a fellow community member, or read something online, we are taking information in. Whether, how, when, and to whom we share that information falls entirely in our lap of responsibility.

Are we a rabblouser? A gossipmonger? Snitch? Talebearer? Quidnunc? Stool Pigeon? Rat fink? Nark? The list of such terms goes on and on, spanning the width and breadth of human society, now and since time immemorial. Why? Because human societies the world over know that bad information shared indiscriminately or with malicious intent is corrosive to all individuals involved, eating away at the delicate fabric of society.

It is my carefully considered opinion that we must not engage in casual sharing of unvetted information, for the sake of our own reputation, the reputation of others, and our collective dignity. A society that devolves into extremely childish and undisciplined sharing of clickbait is a society populated by adults who are failing to learn and/or honor all four of the Toltec Wisdom Agreements written about by don Miguel Ruiz in his book “The Four Agreements.”

“Be impeccable with your word”

“Do not take anything personally”

“Do not make assumptions”

“Always do your best”

Of course, you’re also failing to live by western, Biblical principles, or eastern philosophies, such as Confucianism, which emphasizes personal and governmental morality, social relationships, righteousness, kindness, and sincerity. All for the purpose of a harmonious society through ethical behavior.

So, yes! We have an obligation to think twice before hitting SEND.

What if all Islanders took this pledge? *Before I*

share, I will ask myself, “Is this information accurate, true, and helpful to the listener or society?” One step further, what if we pledged to hold ourselves accountable? Asking ourselves, “Am I sure? Have I taken time to research the video clip’s origin? Have I researched the topic personally?” And if there were a consequence for sharing information that was provably inaccurate and false, would we still hit SEND so casually?

These questions, and the pause they encourage, matter. Especially when the people who receive our content may trust us so much that they will blindly pass along what we say, and this could repeat one thousand times, resulting in a world overrun with lies.

We live in a world filled with fallen human beings. All of us are flawed, and all of us will get many things wrong in our lifetimes. Hitting send without care or forethought doesn’t need to be one of them.

We’ve all heard about “bad people” being employed by “bad actors” for the express purpose of creating social media content designed to propagate false narratives for the sake of political manipulation. This is true. It happens. With increasing frequency. But, the success of “manipulative narratives” depends almost entirely upon our collective decisions to vet the information carefully or send it forward without a second thought.

Many of us have become casual sharers of content. When the content is puppies being rescued, mountain goats eating salt off the sheer cliffs of a dam, or videos of a volcano exploding – it’s not a problem.

When the content is damaging to targeted individuals, society overall, and the emotional well-being of the individuals who receive it? That’s a different story. That’s when, “YES! We have an obligation to think twice before we hit send.”

The Mississippi Reading Miracle, and What Washington Can Learn

Continued from Front Page

Some states are changing their legislation around reading – they are identifying students at risk for reading difficulties and implementing evidence-based reading instruction grounded in the Science of Reading.

There is a “Southern Surge” in states such as Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. In recent years, these historically low-performing states have implemented evidence-based reading instructional practices and have shown significant gains on assessments such as the NAEP. For example, in 2013 Mississippi ranked 49th in the nation for its fourth-grade reading scores, but ranked ninth by 2024.

How did they achieve “The Mississippi Miracle?”

In 2013, Mississippi enacted a comprehensive early literacy policy, including investments in teacher training and coaching, early screening, and targeted assistance for struggling readers. Teaching practices based on the Science of Reading were implemented in classrooms across the state.

In Washington State, some legislative changes have occurred over the past several years. Starting in the 2021-22 school year, school districts have been required to screen for dyslexia indicators in kindergarten through second grade. And students in

grades K-2 who display areas of weakness have been offered multitiered systems of support.

In September, our governor officially recognized October as Dyslexia Awareness Month, and recent bills aim to mandate the use of structured literacy approaches for reading intervention. Institutions such as the City University of Seattle offer programs centered on the Science of Reading, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based literacy instruction for all students.

Additionally, some state districts, such as Issaquah, are adopting evidence-based curricula aligned with the Science of Reading. Several years ago, The Seattle Times featured an article titled, “Why Wenatchee Schools Turned to Brain Science to Help Kids Read.” It discussed how the Wenatchee School District successfully adopted the Science of Reading approach to improve literacy outcomes for students.

All students, at any age, benefit from explicit, systematic, structured literacy instruction. If policy changes are implemented at the state level, Washington too can improve its literacy rates!

Mary Blomgren McFarlin, M.A., C-SLDS, author of The Morphology Kit®, spent a number of years working as a professionally certified Educational Therapist and now specializes in structured literacy as a Dyslexia Specialist.

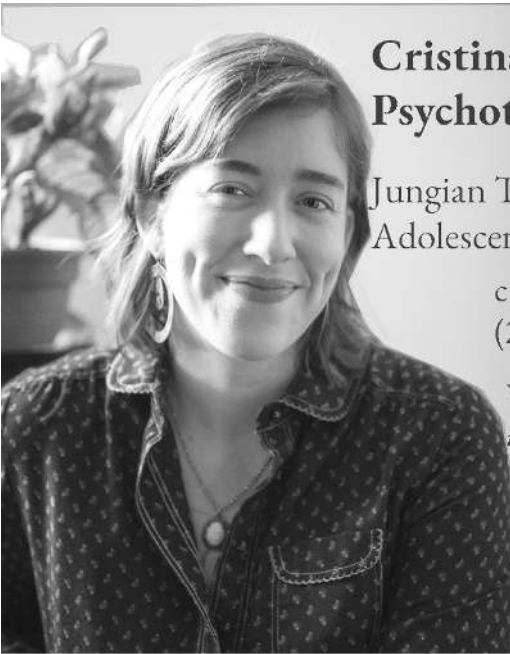
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My Precious

By Stephen Buller

I was chatting at a party the other day and, as often happens, found myself talking about our monetary system. I used the term “fiat currency,” and someone asked what that was. I know it’s annoying when people talk about their field in foreign terms and acronyms, as if everyone should know what they’re talking about – and here I’d gone and done it.

I answered simply, “Money that’s based on trust in your government rather than something real – like gold.” Was I presumptuous throwing this term around? Yes. *Should* we all understand this term? In my opinion, yes. The concept of money should be taught in detail by the time someone graduates high school.

Why isn’t it?

Because our current monetary system depends on the ignorance of the masses. It is a system of theft from the many to the few. A debt-based system requires people to live beyond their means, and a fiat system requires people to believe something is money that is not.

Enter the article’s title. “The Lord of the Rings” One Ring was magically enchanted to be indestructible, save by the fires of Mount Doom, making it slightly more impressive than the raw material from which it was forged. Gollum’s “precious” was made of gold. Mr. Tolkien demonstrates that fantasy writers need a firm grasp on reality to be effective.

We call gold and silver “precious” metals for a reason. This word means “of great value; not to be wasted or treated carelessly.” My passion for gold as money is on par with my passion for fantasy. I have written about it in past articles, so I want to quote an authority on the subject. Below is from “The Morgan Report.”

“When money loses its integrity, freedom soon follows. Throughout history, the erosion of honest

Island Resilience

currency has marched in lockstep with the erosion of civil liberties. The connection is not coincidental, it’s causal. Because money is not just a medium of exchange; it is the lifeblood of voluntary action. When it’s corrupted, everything downstream begins to decay – personal agency, self-reliance, and ultimately, freedom itself.”

Mr. Morgan uses the term “honest currency” in place of the commonly used term “sound money.” Gold and silver were originally called sound money because they made a ringing sound when dropped. I think it stuck because sound also means “sensible.”

The reason honest currency is important comes back to that word trust. If people don’t trust their hard work will be rewarded, they’ll stop working. If people don’t trust their money will retain its value, they’ll spend it all. If people don’t trust they have a chance at a better future, they’ll stop planning.

Mr. Morgan’s reference to “voluntary action” is vital. Sound money allows people to build self-reliance and engage in partnerships and collaborations only when it benefits all parties involved. Fiat currency forces dependency on a government which steals from the many to give to the few.

Why am I so passionate about this subject? For one, I think we’re at an inflection point – in many ways – in our society, and in the next few years, money will play a huge role in either empowering the individual or enslaving them to new and terrifying degrees.

If this is shocking to you, know that it’s nothing new. Nixon admitted we’d broken from gold in 1971, and really it happened long before that. In 2008, the Fed decided it could create as much currency as it wanted, and it has manipulated

interest rates since its inception in 1913. In 2020, the Fed removed reserve requirements completely, meaning banks can loan out as much currency as they, want with nothing in their vaults, not even paper notes, or digits on a screen.

Go back to ancient Rome, and the Caesars at least did the hard work of melting down gold coins and mixing in base metals such as copper to debase their currency. But in truth, they probably had their slaves do that.

Looking to the future, the more people understand what money is, and its powerful role in society, the harder it will be for governments to shepherd us into the next pen of central bank digital currencies and begin the scam all over again.

Gold was priced at \$2,625/oz. at the beginning of 2025 and reached a high of \$4,356/oz. in late October. It has pulled back about \$400/oz. on the commodities exchange, but the price of physical gold bullion only dropped about \$200/oz. Tolkien said evil cannot create but can only corrupt. Even gold has been corrupted by derivatives and exchanges.

The disconnect between reality and fantasy is becoming apparent. If you think your house has gone up in value, check it against gold. If you think your stock portfolio has returned 7% year-over-year, check it against gold. If you think your dollar will buy you as much tomorrow as it does today ...

No one knows how the next monetary reset will occur, but one thing is certain: As world governments continue to expand their currency supplies as the only means of maintaining wealth and power for their constituents, the price of gold as measured in those currencies will go up. More accurately, the value of those currencies will race to zero – as they always have throughout history.



Who’s Come Visiting Now?

By Anthony Latora

Sometimes my days are shifted due to unexpected visitors. The strange part is – you only know they were there because of what’s left behind: a small impression, remnants of a meal, stems left shortened by someone browsing. So many clues – some subtle, some obvious. One track in the sand and your whole day changes, leaving you to wonder: Who’s come visiting? And where could they be now?

Just another Tuesday on the heights of the harbor, as I begin my descent toward the shore. A cool breeze greets me, and a raven’s call echoes as it flies west, following the sun’s path in search of warmth. A few winding steps later, the air grows thick with salt beneath the slanted bigleaf maples on the hillside.

As I step onto the sand, I pause to let the scene soak in. The tide is lower, and I follow my familiar route along the shoreline until something different catches my eye.

Whose dog got out? I wonder, leaning closer to the sand. A streamlined trail cuts a single direction – purposeful and clean. Intrigued, I follow it over and under logs, making a brief stop where a small trickle of water spills from the wall onto the sand.

Not much farther ahead, a flurry of scratches breaks the pattern. These marks are unlike any dog’s, at least to my eyes. This has to be more than one creature here – *and what’s that there on the log?* Remnants of sea vegetables and crustaceans! *Oh, and another trail* – its paws are wider-spread and

asymmetrical compared to the canine. This time, the tracks slink away, hugging tighter to the hillside’s edge, and leading under even smaller cavities.

Eventually, these tracks lead me past washed-up trees and root balls along the coast. Once the area opens up, the new tracks take a quick turn, right into the Sound. My trailing endeavors end there. *What kind of animal was that? Were the trails related to each other in some way?* No way to know unless I sat and watched all day.

As I ponder, my gaze drifts north. Upon a rock just off shore, a great blue heron is backlit and silhouetted by the light reflecting off the water – still and poised for its next attempt at a meal.

I’m reminded of the patience needed to uncover the mysteries of nature. Indeed a mystery for now.

Photo by Anthony Latora



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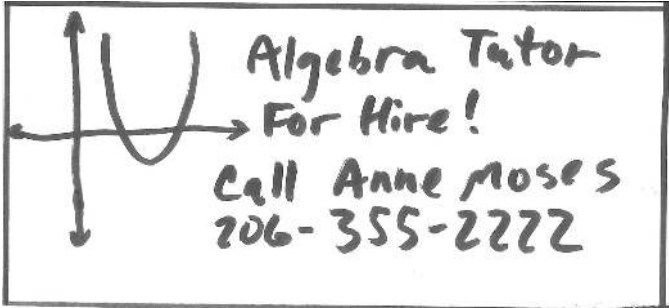
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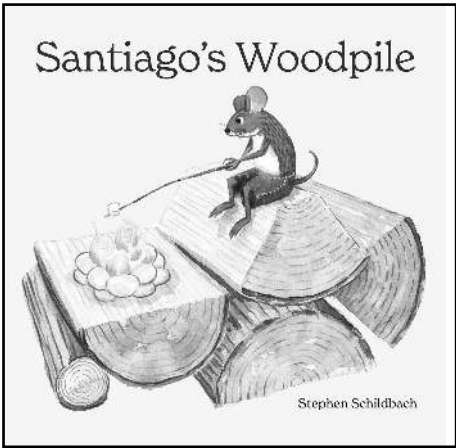
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The Long Journey Toward Self-Publishing the Children’s Book “Santiago’s Woodpile”



By Stephen Schildbach

Impracticality is deciding to write and illustrate a children’s book while working a full-time job. I’ve never written a children’s book. And long gone is an illustration career that once provided my full income. I’m a full-time web designer, and have two children to support with my wife. The available time to do such a large project could only be found in small increments.

However, being a creative person, making things can be a sort of addiction. The personal desire to both author and illustrate my first children’s book midlife occurred from reading to my children. I was also motivated by the thought that my youngest child would enjoy the book and I would get fulfillment reading it to him.

I moved to Vashon Island in August of 2022, and moving to a new environment stirs up the imagination. The inspiration for “Santiago’s Woodpile” came from living in a log cabin that is an enticing home to mice (even though we do our best to keep them out). At the same time, my eldest child had been playing with Calico Critters (cute little miniature figures) for years, and these little worlds she created were adorable to behold. Lastly, there were the many woodpiles I saw stacked around the Island.

Sometime in February of 2023, while drifting off to sleep one night, the idea of a mouse living in a woodpile came to me. I started to think of what a story for this little mouse might be, and I named him Santiago. This would be the start of my book.

I did not want this book to be a vanity project. I knew deep down that this was about more than the children’s book. It was also a practice in strengthening my patience, discipline, and humility with any large creative project.

A children’s book appears to be simple, and it is, relative to writing an adult novel. But, like anything that is new to you, there is a lot to learn. Initially, you miss important details behind the craft. I knew how to illustrate singular images, but had not done many projects needing serial images with a consistent character. The last time I’d illustrated a children’s book (“And Then It Was Sugar,” by Margarita Gonzalez Jensen) was almost 30 years ago.

The biggest act of humility was bringing in help. Ellie Peterson, children’s book author, helped edit the story. Alan Carr, former art director at Muddle Puddle, Inc., helped edit the illustrations. I had two other friends make general edits. I can say that it was the consulting from these colleagues that

raised the story up from a hobby to a book ready for the public.

I had no idea that editing was going to add so much additional time. Yet, I knew that the initial drafts were sloppy and missing key elements both visually and stylistically, especially the illustrations. It would take me two-and-a-half years to get to a point where I would be confident to present the story and illustrations.

Half way through the making of “Santiago’s Woodpile,” I had to decide whether to get an agent; approach many publishers; or self-publish. I often let little signs influence my decisions. In late 2023, I sent out my book proposal to three publishers. I heard back from one, and the email response was positive. But, the email went into my spam folder and I didn’t see it until it was far too late! I was also discouraged by the degree to which some publishers were limiting submissions to particular identity groups.

The largest discouraging factor was that publishers are not looking for new authors who illustrate their own stories. These significant details sent me to self-publishing, and my research led me to IngramSpark.

September of 2025, I’d reached completion of the book and now had to learn the details of self-publishing on IngramSpark. I’d heard many criticisms of this platform – its lack of tech support and bad-quality printing. I saw no other option without using a company that charged prices that made selling the book at a profit formidable. What committed me to using IngramSpark is that they have great distribution to online bookstores, physical bookstores, and libraries. Once I got the nuts and bolts of IngramSpark completed, I was ready for marketing.

I had a friend pronounce on Facebook that he was a failed writer. Immediately I thought, he wasn’t a failed writer, he just has the same problem most artists have – marketing their work. I have become determined not to be that same failed writer and illustrator. My antidote is marketing my projects for as long as it took me to make them.

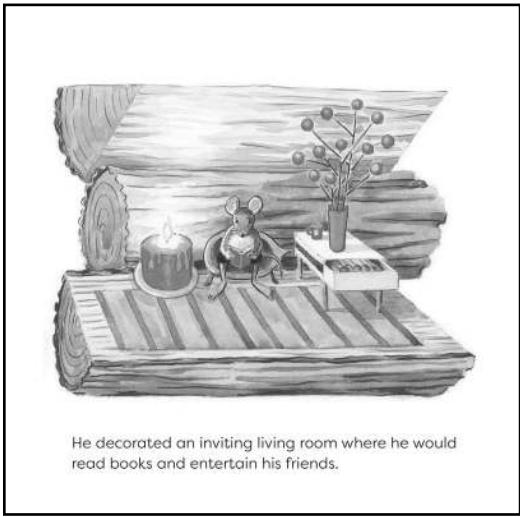
I was reminded once again of the power of asking for help. Self-publishing book consultant, April Cox, was interviewed online and suggested a book launch team. I later researched this term, and found it was quite a popular way to jumpstart book sales. As I write this article, it is the single-most effective way that I have started book sales.

You want people you’ve never met before to buy your book. One of the most effective ways to get people who have never seen your book is getting online reviews of your book on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Here is the moral dilemma I have no good answer to: if you don’t like Amazon, but you want people to buy your book, you probably should put your morals aside for this one detail, because it is Amazon’s book reviews that get you in front of strangers buying books. I don’t buy products from Amazon, but I made this exception, because it makes a positive impact.

Here is how a Book Launch Team works:

Email friends, family, and even request your followers on social media accounts to become a part



Above from "Santiago's Woodpile." Visit this article at vashonloop.com for the illustrations in full color.

of your book publishing team (I called it a book publishing community)

Those who accept the offer are on your Book Launch Team. Keep in touch with them, and instruct them along the way

Ask your team to buy your book on Amazon or Barnes & Noble

When they get the book, ask them to read it or read it to a child

Ask them to take a picture of someone reading the book and send it to yourself for promotion (one of my team members took a picture of their dog looking at the book)

Ask them to leave a review on the same site where they bought the book

Ask them to share your book through email, social media, or whatever works for them

Another approach for me to get the word out has been reading to children in public and educational spaces. It also is a great way to give back to the community. I’ve read at Vashon Bookstore, Chautauqua Elementary, and Huckleberry School (all on Vashon). I feel like I’m on tour. My next stop is Paper Boat Booksellers, November 8th at 11:00 a.m. in West Seattle.

Publishing a book is the longest journey I’ve made on any creative project. There is one aspect to publishing a children’s book that reminds me of raising children: Day-by-day turns into month-by-month, then year-by-year. Then, they (both my children and the book) go off into the world on their own, and I’ll be “promoting them for as long as it took me to make them.”

Stephen Schildbach lives in a log cabin on Vashon Island. He builds and markets brand identities for small business under his business Schildbach Design. Many of the joys in his life are shared with his wife Monica Schley, and two children. Visit Stephen at stephenschildbach.com.



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The Island Epicure Retired

Useless Old Woman?

By Suzanna Leigh and Marj Watkins

Every once in awhile Marj Watkins says, “Oh, I should write something for The Loop.” She has been writing her “Island Epicure” column since the 1970s and only quit when she reached age 100.

I remind her, “I told them you are retired. You don’t have to write anything.”

“Oh, thank goodness!” she sighs. Today she is relieved, but some days she says, “I am a useless old woman!”

I spent the morning working on her finances, heart in my mouth, so careful with her money now that she has forgotten. By noon, my eyes are crossed and my emotions exhausted. I close the laptop, grab my keys, and head to her house.

“I have been working on your finances,” I say.

She looks at me surprised. “I have finances?” she asks. She who was always so careful to pay her bills as soon as they arrived, who fired the housekeeper I got for her because she thought the woman was charging too much, who played the stock market and won. Who gave hundreds of dollars a month to charities to feed the poor.

Later, Jamila and I are helping her to dress, applying ointment to her rash, anointing her dry skin with aloe vera. “We are taking good care of you,” I say.

“No!” she clenches her fists in



Marj Watkins, The Island Epicure - 101 years old.

mock rage. “All my life I have taken care of everyone else. I don’t need anyone to take care of me now.”

But she does. She forgets to take her medicine, wears the same dress day and night unless we help her change. Needs help bathing. Forgets to put her teeth in until she has a plate of food in front of her and wonders how she will chew it. Before she relinquished her check book, she overdrew her bank account by hundreds of dollars – twice.

She has forgotten close friends’ names, but when Jamila comes in, she opens her arms wide in welcome. “You are here!” She exclaims with a big smile, and her love fills the room. She loves everyone and everyone feels it. She takes it for granted they

will love her back.

“When I am here,” Jamila says, “I forget my worries.” Jamila has much to worry about and much to grieve. Her husband is chronically ill and sometimes spends days doing nothing but sleep and pray. She grieves for her home in Syria, now gutted by the civil war, and for her friends buried in the rubble of bombed-out villages.

“But when I am here with Mom,” she says, “I am happy. She is like my own mother.”

Mom can no longer do the things our culture requires of us, but is she

useless? Her love creates a sanctuary in her home. She lifts people’s spirits, and her love ripples out to make this world a better place. Is she useless? I don’t think so!

She does still miss writing her Island Epicure column, so I promised I would include a recipe of hers here. This is one of my favorites, from her Gluten-Free Baking Book, first edition. It’s an older recipe; it includes Splenda, which she would never use now. My dad was alive then. He had diabetes and mom had not yet discovered coconut sugar.

Quinoa Sour Cream Scones

Gluten-free and high-protein

Ingredients

Stir together

- 1½ cups quinoa flour (or sorghum flour)
- ½ cup garbanzo flour or almond meal
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp soda
- 2 tbsp sugar, coconut sugar, or Splenda

Work in

- ½ cup soft butter

Beat and add in

- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 2 tbsp sugar (or substitute 1 tbsp honey to keep them from going stale)



Instructions

Stir liquids into the flour mixture. Turn out onto a floured board or counter. Knead into a ball. Flatten or roll into a disk 1/2" thick. With a floured knife, cut into wedges or squares. Place on baking sheet.

Variation: Add 1/2-1 cup dried cranberries for a holiday treat.

Bake for 12-15 minutes at 425 degrees until golden brown and tests done. Cool slightly on a rack. Serve with tea, hot milk, or coffee. Store cool in sealed plastic bag with the air squeezed out. Refrigerate.

Warm in 225-degree oven to serve later.

Thanksgiving Recipes

By Pam “Gates” Johnson

Soft Dinner Rolls

My daughter-in-law Sarah loves these rolls. I make them for her every few weeks.

Ingredients

- 1 cup warm water
- 2 tbsp soft butter
- 1 egg
- ¾ cups bread flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1½ packages dry yeast (about 3 tbsp)

Instructions

In warm mixing bowl, mix water, yeast, and sugar and let set about 5 minutes until yeast blooms. Scraping down sides, add egg and butter and mix well. Mix flour and salt and add to the bowl. Knead with a dough hook for several minutes until all flour is incorporated and dough is smooth.

Remove from bowl and hand-knead a few times, then put in greased bowl, cover in plastic wrap and a towel and proof in a warm place until at least double in size, about one hour. Remove from bowl, punch down and knead a few times.

Grease 9×13” or larger baking pan. Cut dough into about 1.3-ounce pieces, roll in the palm of your hand and place in the baking pan. I use a scraper to make sure rolls are the same size.

Let rise in warm place until rolls are double in size.

Bake at 375 degrees for 14-15

minutes, until tops are brown. Remove and brush with butter.

Baked Ham with Maple Syrup

Henry’s new favorite. My family loves this and it is so easy to make. One time, I made this ham and served macaroni and cheese as a side instead of potato salad. Jake and Paul sat quietly, looking at the table, then they both said “You can’t have ham without potato salad. Mom, what were you thinking?” I learned my lesson.

Ingredients

Ham (I really like the boneless half-hams from Costco)

Plain old fake maple syrup

Instructions

Get your baking dish and a good amount of tin foil. Put the ham in the foil and drench it with maple syrup. Seal it up tight, put in preheated 350-degree oven and bake it for 15 minutes per pound. Since this ham is already cooked, you just have to heat it through.

Unwrap the foil. Put it back in the oven to caramelize a bit.

Slice up the ham, and stand back if you are eating with my family. They love this with fresh, homemade rolls, and the required potato salad.

Roast Turkey

Ingredients

- 12-14 pound fresh turkey
- 2 sticks butter, softened
- Salt, pepper, and whatever herbs tickle your fancy

Instructions

Let turkey rest on counter for one

hour while you get everything together. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Remove strange parts inside the bird (save!), then rinse bird thoroughly and pat dry.

Rub butter all over; you can even lift up breast skin and put butter and seasonings between the skin and meat. Season liberally. Make sure the seasonings stick to the butter.

Now, here is the optional, may I say controversial, part: Do you stuff the turkey with dressing or no? My mom always stuffed the bird. My family prefers the dressing from the bird because it is moister and more flavorful. I will include my mom’s dressing (or stuffing) recipe, and you can decide for yourself. Side note: I have been doing it this way for 50 years and have not sickened or killed anyone yet.

Place turkey on roasting rack (in a roasting pan) breast side up. Put it in preheated oven and roast for approximately 15 minutes per pound, until thigh, breast and stuffing reach 175 degrees.

Melt remaining butter and baste turkey every 20 minutes or so, or until you run out of butter, then baste with pan drippings. This will give you the great crisp skin and brown color.

In the meantime, take the turkey neck, gizzard, and heart, but not the liver and put in a saucepan with large chunks of carrot, celery, and onion. Cover with water, bring to a boil and let simmer while the turkey cooks. I often get one or two turkey wings and throw them in the pot. This makes excellent gravy stock when mixed with pan drippings.

Check temp in a few different places in thigh. When it reaches 175

degrees (stuffing should be 165 degrees), remove from oven, tent with foil, and let rest for 20 minutes before serving.

Stuffing

If you want to go the stuffing route, here is how my mom made it:

Ingredients

2 packages seasoned stuffing mix (I prefer Franz) ... depending on how big your bird is and how much your family likes stuffing

1 pound bacon

One medium-large white or sweet onion, chopped

4 or 5 celery stalks, chopped

1 box chicken stock

Instructions

Cut bacon into ½” pieces and sauté with chopped celery and onions, until bacon is cooked but not crisp.

Dump dry stuffing mix into large bowl, add bacon mixture (add the grease, too) and add chicken broth until all pieces are moist but not soggy. Any leftover chicken broth goes into the gravy stock pot.

When stuffing is well-mixed and moist, loosely spoon into turkey cavities and secure with skewers or string.

Leftover stuffing goes into a small baking dish, covered with foil, and baked for about half an hour until it reaches 165 degrees.



The Story of Tomtomtidimiddletom

Part 3: Tom’s Big Journey

By Andy Valencia

After the night of packing, the car was already racing along as the first rays of sun woke Tom up. They were going very fast, and there were countless cars around them. As Tom watched the world go by, he wondered Just how big IS the world?

The answer was: very, very big. It had now been so many days with his car rolling along, usually surrounded by other cars – and he was still the only weed along for a ride! There was plenty of sun, and even periodic bouts of rain. Which was good, because the wind of the car in motion really did dry him out quickly.

Usually they stopped in the middle of lots of cars, and the people in his car would go off to a building. The next morning they’d come back out, and their journey would continue. Their parking place was always perfectly smooth and lifeless, and Tom missed all his friends.

Finally, a day arrived which was different. They had left all the cars behind, and instead were driving slowly, on a bumpy road. A cloud of dust was rising up behind them, and some of it settled as a layer of grime on his leaves. He hoped it would rain

soon and wash it off.

And then they stopped. Tom looked around, surprised to see the sun still well up in the sky. The ground was plain old dirt, and he could see all sorts of weeds dotting the ground around him. There were even trees nearby. He called “Hello, trees!” but they ignored him.

Instead, he heard a chorus of “ooh!”, “here!”, “hello up there!” coming from all manner of weeds on the ground near his car. None were quite like him, and the way they spoke was odd. But he understood them well enough. They had never seen a weed riding a car, and had him tell his whole story again and again, shivering their leaves in wonder.

The days passed slowly. The car would sometimes drive somewhere for the day, but always came back to the same place, which the weeds said was a “campground.” At the end of such days, he’d have to tell them about where he’d gone that day. A plant that could travel was unique. Tom felt like even the trees were listening as he told of water running in rivers, high cliffs, or meadows of grass which ran as far as he could see.

One day he pushed up a flower!

He was shocked, but the nearby weeds assured him this was natural; it was time for him to go to seed. Tom imagined himself as a silent, dry husk, and spent the rest of the day thinking hard. He felt sure a weed that could ride a car could also send seeds out and still stay alive!

A pine cone dropped from the nearest tree, bouncing off his car’s bumper and landing on the ground. Tom looked up, up, up and saw the tree had countless cones. *They were seeds.* If they could send out seeds without dying – so could he.

That night, he dreamt that he was a tree.



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Melanie Farmer
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Island poetry in these pages

How about yours?



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Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

I was doing some work on the house. First floor, everything is on track and going well. But upstairs is a different story.

The definition of Irony: the opposite of Wrinkly.

Witches are really bad at math, but great at spelling.

A pony goes to the vet, and says, “Doc, I think I’m dying. My throat is so sore, I can hardly talk!”

The vet examines his throat, and says, “You’re not dying. You’re just a little horse.”

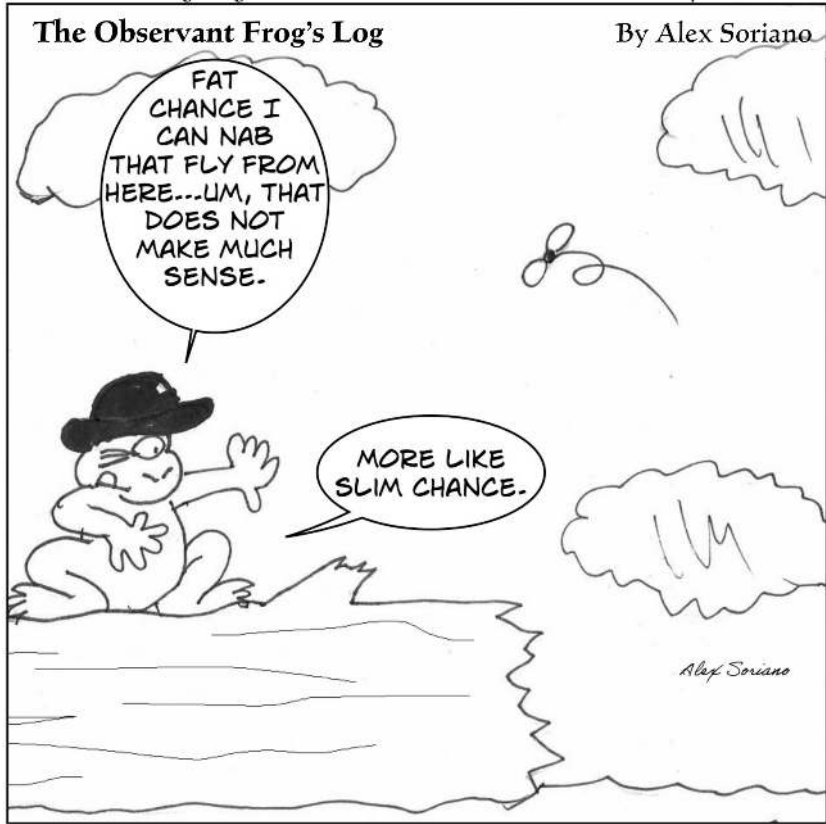
In England they use a lift, while we use an elevator. I guess we were raised differently.

Did you know that if you drive a Subaru backwards on this Island, U R A BUS?

Of all the inventions made in the last 100 years, the Dry Erase board is the most remarkable.

Why did the man fall down a deep hole? He couldn’t see that well.

I have a bunch of jokes about unemployment. None of them work.



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Aries (March 20-April 19)

Thankfully, the Full Moon swept across the angles of your chart that address needs, money and power arrives with a gift: Mars in Sagittarius. So you may experience a crisis of resources or commitment, but your ruling planet is soon taking up a journey across the most spiritually-focused angle of your solar chart. This says you have the vision and the faith to move through whatever may be troubling you. Yet the important thing is that you must choose between being caught in crisis and asserting your self-leadership-and almost certainly leadership of the people around you. That may not seem easy at first but you will get the hang of it if you make the least modicum of effort.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

The Full Moon in your birth sign is pushing you to make a decision, most likely about a relationship. You'll feel better if you're not forced into anything or compelled to make a choice you're not ready to make. Someone in this situation seems intractable. How have the last few conversations gone? Where did they start, and where did they end? What do you think the underlying issue or subject matter is? Some people can only make a decision when they are "forced" into it. Yet what that amounts to is being relieved of the responsibility and hence the benefits of your decisions.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

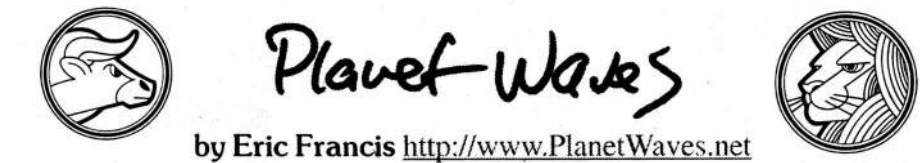
Mercury retrograde in your opposite sign Sagittarius means that it's time to address a partnership issue that has been lingering for a long time. However, if you initiate the discussion, or do so forcefully, you're likely to get off to an awkward start and it could possibly backfire in some way. But if you don't say anything, you are likely to feel resentful and those around you will smell something burning. Therefore I suggest you try a workaround. The way out of the puzzle is to focus on the present rather than on the past. Orient your mind and your emotions on going forward in an honest and productive way. Your sense of anger may be the result of a misunderstanding and it's fair to approach the question as wanting to resolve any such possibility.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Despite the sense of opportunity calling you most of the year, you may be struggling to connect. Events this month will bring you within reach of at least one ambitious goal, though you will need to have one in order for that to work. Just pick the thing that's the most important or that you like the best. From there, many connections will form. It is difficult to focus on a goal or an objective, because the whole concept of "direction" is nowhere to be found. There's something at which you are highly proficient, by which I mean a specific topic or skill. Your actual specialty is being you, but there is something else, and you may overlook it because you love it so much. That's the thing to focus on, and one clue is that nobody else is doing it, or doing it well.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Amidst the storm of astrology the past year or so, the most stand-out thing is the reorientation of your relationships involving Pluto entering your opposite sign Aquarius (technically, your 7th solar place). This is long-range astrology. It starts back in 2023 and settled in about a year ago; it



lasts until 2044. And it relates to many other changes that are in progress, but for you it's the pin in the pinwheel. This transit is real. It represents a shift in every relationship dynamic in your life, from the most personal one-to-one relationships to how you interrelate with groups-a very important theme in this lifetime. It's also about your relationship with yourself, which is the most important part. Pluto in Aquarius is for you a confrontation with definitions of yourself that have external reference points. There will be times of intense pressure to be like others. Being true to yourself will get you everything.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

Through most of the month, your ruling planet Mercury will be retrograde in Sagittarius. Virgo is one of the most practical and worldly signs, associated with things like food production and one's daily work. Sagittarius is the most cosmic sign, featuring two different deep space points that orient all of human consciousness and keep the Sun in its orbit around the galaxy. This is your 4th place, your home angle, which is to say that you are "at home in the universe", not just your garden. But then your garden (if you're fortunate enough to have one) is your universe. Most people walk around on the ground. You walk around on a planet that you know is suspended in space, with the whole cosmos "beneath" you. Mercury and Mars are now energizing this zone, which may be firing up your curiosity or your interest in your spiritual path. The intensity ramps up as Mars and Mercury form a conjunction on the 12th. This is highly focused astrology that is asking a question or pressing you about some important matter. Focus one question, write it down, and let it stand for a while.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

According to conventional astrology charts, there are no planets in Libra this month. Once Venus makes its exit on the 6th, it would seem you have an empty house. But that is not true. There is a world of subtle activity that can now come out of the subconscious world and into the light of day. They both involve three long term (ultra slow-moving) visitors to your sign that I assure you no other astrologer is discussing Logos is saying that it's up to you to make sense of your world and find the words to describe your experience. Makemake asks the question, "What is the point of the game?" Finally, there is Zeus, one of the special points without a physical body. This is about how you direct your energy, especially in the midst of a crisis, or when speaking of a person going through something deep.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

If you're doing the work, you will change your mind at least twice this month on an issue you thought was settled law. As your perspective changes, so too must your commitments. As new facts come in, you must adjust your beliefs. This may include admitting you were wrong in the past and making certain adjustments or offering amends. And then comes something that may be very difficult for you: keeping an open

mind. There is potentially a second and third wave of revelation and you will need to ride along with these discoveries. You are a fixed sign and the world is not a fixed place. We live in a time of everything, all at once, every minute of the day and night. That creates a density of chaos which carries the message "there is no truth, so why bother." But you must.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

It is likely that before the end of the month, you'll experience a reversal of viewpoint on something you currently feel strongly about. I suggest that you track your process of discovery and evaluation, and understand why you are changing your mind. It would be productive to observe what was preventing you from doing so in the past. The point of confusion is that we may be talking about an extreme need or desire or point of opinion. It's something you may have thought you would never alter or veer on. If you find yourself questioning, which will be the first step, then let yourself question. You have no need to panic; this is only a partial undoing of something that is not working for you in its current form. What you're really doing is making room for new ideas. This process is described by Mercury and Mars in your birth sign, with Mercury retrograde beginning on Nov. 9 and lasting through Nov. 29.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Your ruling planet Saturn is now deep into its final visit to Pisces for three decades. Capricorn needs water, and Pisces is providing it. Capricorn needs friends, and you're the most likely to find them in and among Pisces people and places, mostly in new places with people you don't yet know, though the retrograde is also prompting you to look up old friends and acquaintances and see what is going on with them. Saturn in Pisces is a metaphor for you going to them more than them coming to you. The holidays are approaching and if you have the choice, you can give yourself permission to not do the same old thing with your relatives-if you're fortunate enough to have them. Even Capricorns like change every now and

then.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

You must direct yourself with a strategy. I don't mean a 25-point plan, and I don't mean running an agenda on people. I mean a basic sketch about how you're going to proceed, subject to editing and adaptation to real-life circumstances as needed. This will require a little detachment, and taking a circumspect view-easily available, now that your ruling planet Saturn is back in Pisces for one last visit. By circumspect, I mean walk around the scene of something and get a perspective from different angles. Do everything you can to prove yourself wrong.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

The remaining months of the year come with the instruction to wrap up unfinished business. We can see this with the final return of both Saturn and Neptune to your sign, ending long cycles for the world and for you personally. It's rare enough that the slow-movers visit any sign, and for years, you've had two of them working together. It seems like the water of Neptune has flushed the truth out of certain deep facets of your existence, reaching underground and into unknown places. You know so much more than you did when Neptune first entered Pisces in 2012 and when Saturn first entered Pisces in early 2023. But even on the far end of those transits, there is still work to be done and discoveries to be made. You are still grappling with a feeling of invisibility, which Neptune has emphasized and Saturn has given you the discipline to address. These two planets describe structure and vision, and now is your opportunity to consolidate those lessons and apply those skills. Use whatever flexibility you have, another important message of these major factors at the end of their run through your sign. Make any necessary adjustments and focus on what you want to happen rather than what you may regret. Long cycles are coming to an end, and new ones are just as surely beginning.

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Canola Oil: More Than Meets the Eye

Canola Oil, originally derived from rapeseed, undergoes extensive processing and is heavily contaminated by excessive herbicide and pesticide use. Introduced in the 1950s, the FDA once banned it from the North American market because they found it to be harmful to both humans and animals.

Recent evidence has linked canola oil to numerous health issues, including inflammation, cancer, and neurological disorders. Opt for healthier alternatives like coconut or avocado oils for cooking, and olive oil for cold dishes.

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Poems From “Grief Age Love”

We continue to feature poems from Grief Age Love, the new anthology written by over 30 Vashon poets, and edited by Jeanie Okimoto.

The Language of Home

In the room at the top of the house
Under the madrone
She listens for stories the ancient tree tells.
She hears the tree sing and growl and moan and howl.
Those who have come before reappear and take their place
Woven into the place she calls home.

“Please come close” they say.
We want to tell you some magic.”

Stories of light stored from long years
Standing in sun and rain and starlight.
Stories written in layers that grow dark and deep
Laid bare by the shedding that sloughs daily from the tree.

Gone is not gone. They die and then they stay.
Grandmothers in the stars.

Where we live in the world is never one place.

~ Mary G.L. Shackelford

Mary G.L. Shackelford is a kooky old crone living in a hill, speaking in tongues, writing Praise Songs playing music and tending life. She is a home body.



Ann Spiers was Vashon Island’s inaugural poet laureate. She now stewards the Town Square’s Poetry Post in the Town Square. Her new poetry book is Wild Cucumber (Empty Bowl Press). She co-edits the best-selling guidebook Walks, Trails, and Parks on Vashon Island. available at the Vashon Bookshop.

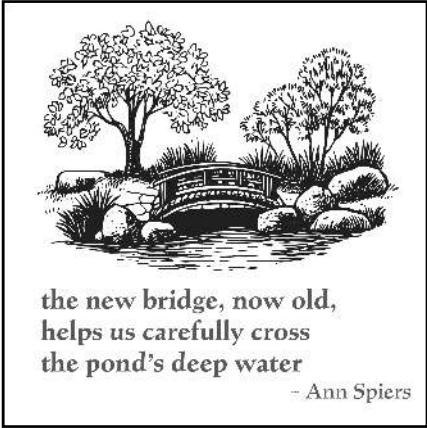


Photo by Claudia Hollander-Lucas



Leave Open the Doors of the House

By Jo Ann Herbert

I came in the spring
It’s fall now and time for going
Help my body to lie under the Redwoods right here
on the pile of golden needles
so golden the light, so quiet
yes, right here
don’t worry about the rain
soon I will be gone
turn my palms up
and in them place the seeds for all my birds
spread peanuts in the shell around me
and in my hair
my birds and squirrels and little chipmunks
will join me like always.
See the beautiful blue jays, hear their large wings flap
they’re sitting up above me now
the squirrels running around
the Colors, Look !
bright orange and yellow and red
the flicker now calling for me
Cut some branches of the Redwood
put them all around me
I will be covered
Oh did you see the Color? All the leaves !
A Rainbow spilled across the sky
Can you see it?
Leave open the doors of the house
so the birds can fly in and find the seed
maybe there will be mice
the douglas squirrels and chipmunks let them also find the food
Throw some out to them and all around me too
more for the flickers and blue jays ~
they’re calling out

Can you hear the light rain on the leaves?
dogwood colors drifting down...

Let me be Here, Outside
Under the Redwoods
with birds in my hands
animals trees and color
Look all around
Look, the Rainbow and I am fading

Leave the doors to the house open
for the birds to fly in.

~ Jo Ann Herbert
on the date of the writing, written quickly, all this was true ~ the fall colors so glorious my heart called out, a rainbow appeared and did fade. it was all so brief and beautiful.



If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.

-- Mark Twain

Deep Space Rendezvous

Continued from Front Page

3I/Atlas came closest to the sun on October 31st 2025, forming an alignment with the sun, moon, and earth. Earth is the planet of cycles. All Saints Day and All Hallows’ Eve are believed by some to celebrate the final destruction of Atlantis by comet strikes 12,000 years ago.
Also, while on the far side of the sun, 3I/Atlas was hit by four large coronal mass ejections (CMEs), huge plasma bubbles with intense magnetic fields and high energy.

3I/Atlas will be closest to the earth in mid-December as it comes out from behind the sun. What happens then is anybody’s guess, but it will interact with earth and humanity, like it did with Mars and the sun.

The Energy of the Sun

For the past two years, the Earth has been bombarded by solar storms (CMEs) and huge sunspots. We’re being bathed in that energy. I think it’s radically changing the planet.

You can already see the effects. There’s been a lot of seismic activity over the last couple of years, just from the CMEs emerging from the sun. We’ve had massive quakes – 9.0 and above – in places like Kamchatka, Russia, along the Pacific’s Ring of Fire.

I’ve been following a solar physicist named Stefan Burns on YouTube. He tracks how these solar bursts hit Earth and how they might be tied to earthquakes and electromagnetic activity. It’s fascinating stuff.

As for 3I/Atlas, I think it’s already interacting with the sun. Some psychics say it’s carrying “light codes” that are helping us to evolve, and raising the planet’s vibration. The sun and the Earth are conscious beings – they interact and communicate. The comet’s arrival feels like part of that conversation.

According to the channeled entity Bashar, the universe works in cycles: birth,

life, death, and rebirth. Civilizations rise and fall, seasons turn over and start again. Maybe this comet is a reminder of that.

3I/Atlas is being followed by a flurry of comets that are returning to the solar system now. I find this timing interesting, and again, believe these heavenly bodies are bringing higher frequencies of ascension for humanity and the planet.

Why I See It This Way

People sometimes ask why I interpret things this way. The short answer is, for me, it’s the only way to be happy.

Forty years ago, I got sober through AA. In the 12 Steps, I learned that you can create a higher power of your own understanding. That changed everything for me. I never related to the God I grew up with, the Catholic God. But the idea of a God that is a higher power you can have confidence in, and that you can put the things you’re powerless over into the care of – that I could believe in.

That freedom opened up my mind to other teachers: Edgar Cayce, Bashar, channelers, scientists who blur the line between physics and consciousness. They all talk about the same thing in different ways – God, or the universe, is everything, and nobody really knows what it is. God is the limits of your ability to conceive.

When I look at 3I/Atlas, I don’t just see an object moving through space. I see patterns, timing, and possibility. It all depends on how you look at the information. I tell people, “If you want to see it from a positive perspective, it’s going to be positive. If you want to see it from a negative perspective, it’ll be negative.”

Whatever happens, I think it’s going to be good for the planet and humanity.

Mike Curtin: Native of New York. Had the pleasure of watching my children grow up on Vashon. Practiced Chiropractic on Vashon for a number of years. Living now in South Carolina.