

Vashon Chosen as Cyber Ferry Host



Visual by Anne Gordon.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) announced a long-term goal to convert its ferry system, the world's largest,* from antiquated diesel propulsion to an all-electric carbon-negative fleet by 2034.

The announcement comes in the wake of a U.S. carmaker's pending acquisition of Danish manufacturer Traekke-Benet A/S, dubbed "the Tesla of ferries" by the British Broadcasting Corporation for its pioneering construction of fully electric boats that have started plying Baltic Sea routes over the past decade.

These new ferries offer a fast, feasible option for Puget Sound riders, with significant performance upgrades over current technologies, which together promise to be a game-changer. The 1,500-ton hydrofoil base design boasts a 40-ton, 10 MWh-capacity battery and will apply its considerable thrust via robust Rolls-Royce Kamewa S4 waterjets, as presently deployed on Hong Kong-Xinhua fast-crossing routes.

Cruising speeds will top out at 52 knots, or just shy of 60 mph, compared with 15-17 knots for the old diesel boats.

For the State Ferries' Fauntleroy-Vashon service, what now takes 20-25 minutes to travel will

* Excluding Canada

Continued on Page 3

Luna @25

By Andy Valencia

It's been 25 years since sisters Tina and Leslie first opened Cafe Luna. Turtle Island Restaurant, which had shuttered for the final time a year before, provided the location. The ladies asked various Island old-timers about the possibility of an "internet cafe" and, having been assured it would never work, went ahead and opened one. The sisters' husbands, both having paused their commercial fishing careers to form a contracting firm together, used the conversion of the old restaurant space as a showcase for their skills.

It was a daunting task. The interior had nothing a cafe needed - not even ceiling panels overhead. The sisters and their husbands mounted a heroic effort, managing to open just before the husbands went back to their commercial fishing. But build it they did, and any current customer traveling back in time to that opening day would recognize "their" Luna.

Some of the innovative ideas have long since faded away. When it opened, Luna had a back area where you could rent time on a PC and access the internet. Some of their great ideas just weren't practical - they hoped to move barista's shifts around on a regular basis so their job didn't feel stale. And some of their ideas continue undiminished, such as holding the cafe to the highest standards of cleanliness and tidiness.

And the coffee. A long-time friend of Tina's, David Narazaki, guided them on all the actual details of a cafe. What machine to buy, coffee beans, how to pull shots, even how to lay out the counter and cash register. This author still remembers that each initial barista was given a copy of the famous book "Espresso: Professional Techniques."

They started with very long hours - at the time, there was nothing to do in Vashon Town after 6 p.m. With just the two sisters doing it all, burnout became a pressing issue. They relented and hired barista help and trimmed back the cafe's hours.



Tina and Leslie

Tina and Leslie loved running the cafe and being a resource for the community. But the enormous effort of opening the cafe plus keeping it running had taken its toll. When Tina had her first child, the sisters started looking for somebody to take over the business.

The next owner, Sandy, was already known in the Vashon coffee scene, as she had run the coffee-stand down by the north end ferry dock. One of her early changes at Luna was to remove those rental PC's, taking down the wall and expanding the seating capacity. A big stainless steel hood, still mounted to the wall where the old restaurant's cooking grill had been, was finally removed. And the late, great Darryl Caldwell convinced Sandy that Wifi should be available as an amenity to the customers - like napkins.

Sandy also introduced beer and wine. Like her predecessors, she put enormous effort into shaping the cafe. Towards the end of one particular summer, most of her baristas - all high-school age - turned in their notice one after the other as they got ready for the school year. Sandy used all her energy and ingenuity covering the needed cafe hours. Like

Continued on Page 3

News You May Have Missed



Fire Department Announces Drone AirTaxi

- A medical/emotional support vehicle for up to 3

Taiwan AI Tycoon Offers Billions in Exchange for Vashon

- Promises factory, jobs for certain residents

Food Bank Restaurant Seeks Second Michelin Star

- New expansion promises "brutalist chic" experience

Oxygen Levels Continue to Plummet on Vashon

By the Vashon Loop Editorial Board

Try as we may to deny it, there is a problem, and we know it. Vashon has an oxygen (O₂) crisis, and our situation may actually signal an unrecognized problem for the entire region.

The world first took notice of greenhouse-gas-induced climate change in the 1970s. We were asked to be primarily concerned with increasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels, but in the late 1960s, amateur Vashon investigators, equipped with homemade paramagnetic sensors, began to observe local O₂ reductions.

This small, intrepid team, led by glassblowing and micro-mirror enthusiast Arnie Halvorson, had been convinced since childhood that declining O₂ - not excess CO₂ - posed the greater threat to humanity.

Sixty-five years ago, they built 100 ingenious grounded sensors, which were quietly placed in multiple Vashon sites as part of a homeschool science project. Because Vashon soil is uniquely high in electrical conductivity, our Island was the

Continued on Page 2

Oxygen Levels Continue to Plummet on Vashon

Continued from Front Page

perfect choice for this technology. Since then, almost all the sensors have survived, continuously sucking in O2 and analyzing its atmospheric percentage, with Jason Halvorson, grandson of Arnie Halvorson, now managing the sensors.

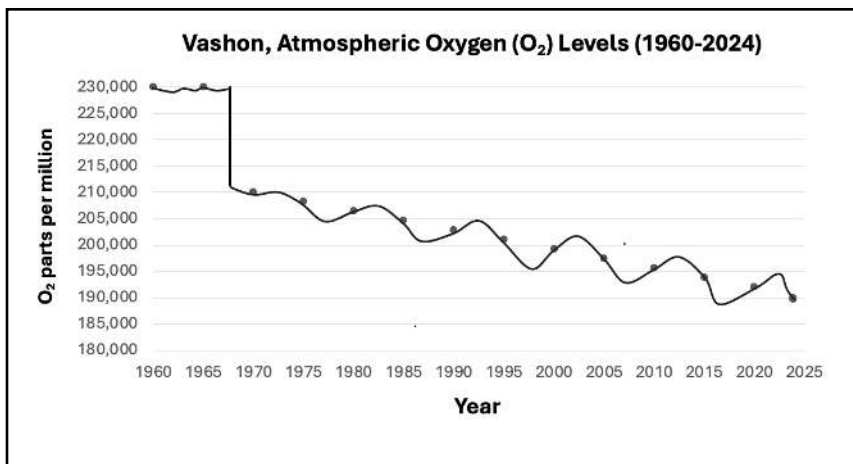
Worldwide, O2 levels have remained stable for about 3 million years - at about 209,000 parts per million, or PPM. Interestingly, in 1960 when Halvorson and team started their research, they found that Vashon Island had somewhat higher-than-average O2 levels, at about 230,000 PPM.

The first drop in Vashon O2 was dramatic and happened in 1967 - widely remembered as the year the frogs did not croak until the Ides of March. Since then, the Island has lost a little O2 every year, with current Vashon O2 levels hovering at about 190,000.

These flip-flops in our O2 values are not without health impacts. Jason Halvorson recalls his grandfather describing Vashonites as being different in the 1960s: "He always said, 'It was easier to breathe back then, even if you had to deal with more free radicals.'"

Now, with decreased O2 levels, health problems shift to respiratory issues and trouble with thinking and concentrating. According to Dr. Richard Leafleiter, a retired toxicologist and Vashon resident, the effect for some may be similar to high altitude, with symptoms like confusion, dizziness, and difficulty sleeping. His advice is to not drink, especially if you are already high.

Many have asked whether mold - which Vashon has so much of - might play a role in the O2 predicament. Dr. Leafleiter stressed the importance of understanding that this is not the



case, because mold does not photosynthesize.

Until recently, Washington State had not paid enough attention to this problem. But that changed with the current Legislative Session. It has occurred to public officials that this phenomenon might not be limited to Vashon - but it is not possible to know right now, because only Vashon is measuring it. This has led to calls for a new tax to evaluate the extent of the problem.

Several strategies have been proposed to help alleviate the negative effects of the O2 crisis. A King County task force is being developed; current proposals range from state-subsidized "O2 Bars," to

mandatory house redesign to improve O2 ingress and egress. More radical is the "ALL TREES" movement (Action for Land Legacy: Tree Restoration, Expansion, Education, and Stewardship). This would involve Island-wide deindustrialization combined with mass eminent domain property seizures, and is supported by 32% of Vashon residents.

What next? Perhaps Vashon can learn to live in productivity and harmony with our O2 problem, or maybe it will choose to force change. Either way, in the future, it's likely that Arnie Halvorson and his team will finally be given the recognition they deserve.

The Mile-Long Hot Wheels Record



By Travis Holman

Did you know that Vashon Island is currently working toward setting a world record?

This attempt is something that may bring out the inner child in you, because the mission is to collect and assemble the longest Hot Wheels track in history!

If you need a refresh, Hot Wheels are those little, die-cast cars that almost every child since 1968 has had hours of fun with, scooting across the floor or on miniature racetracks.

A Hot Wheels racetrack that will shatter the existing record of 2,500 feet, aiming at a whole mile - that's 5,280 feet - is our goal! We already have about 400-500 feet of track donated, so we're almost 10% of the way there. Can you help?

Straight, orange portions of track, of either 1- or 2-feet are easiest to find at your local Dollar Tree, and you can even find it on Amazon. Curved pieces are welcome as well, for fun, but we're looking for sheer length here.

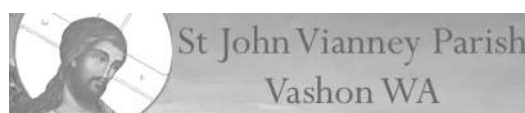
Why are we doing this? Because we can. It's great for community and fun.

Where will this event happen? Wherever we can find a whole mile to let gravity carry a Hot Wheels car into the history books.

When will it happen? Simply put, whenever we have 5,280 feet of Hot Wheels track!

So! If you would like a little nostalgia kick, or you simply want to help some Islanders achieve a lofty goal, you know where to find us.

You can mail Hot Wheels track or donations to P.O. Box 1245 Vashon, WA 98070. Granny's Island Variety has volunteered to set aside any Hot Wheels track that comes their way for the cause. So, with the community's help, we can make this world-record attempt a reality, Island-style!



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



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The Vashon Loop

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End of Life Conversations at the Vashon Senior Center, 2025

On Fourth Fridays, through June

April 25, 1:00-2:00 pm
Palliative Care, Hospice, Grieving, Your Care Team

This series is coordinated by Jane Neubauer. Topics to be covered include health care directives and other planning documents, hospice services and medical aid in dying, legacy, and burial options.

Vashon Senior Center
 10004 SW Bank Rd

To request an event for your group, volunteer with us, or request a speaker, contact:
 Susan Pitiger 206-818-4232
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Luna @25

Continued from Front Page

her predecessors, she had greatly improved Luna, but was running out of physical and emotional energy. Once again, it was time to sell.

Moving onto Vashon is a shock in itself. Moving onto Vashon and taking over Luna was not a combination for the faint of heart! Enter Natalie and Luke. With Natalie's experience owning a dance supply store and Luke's background in construction and construction management, they brought an almost perfect combination of skills.

While Natalie left many distinctive changes to Luna, her single biggest was to convert from the slow and unreliable ADSL internet service to the current Comcast one. If you missed the ADSL era of Luna, be assured that you owe her a debt of gratitude! Speed and reliability were a welcome change.

And that new ceiling Tina and Leslie had installed? Roof leaks had water-stained it, driving Natalie crazy until she finally had it entirely replaced. Be sure to look up and admire it - just another of the countless details that make up Luna. Can you find the secret stash of notes?

The years fly by, Heather joined Natalie as an owner, and now it's been 12 years under Luna's latest and current owners, Cindy and Carly. As Luna celebrates 2025, its 25th year in operation, this mother/daughter duo have been at the helm for almost half of Luna's life. Cindy bought the cafe, and immediately brought daughter Carly on to help with the "front" - sales, espresso, smoothies, and everything else you encounter as you make your purchase. While they're both experienced bakers, Cindy made the "back" her focus, reconfiguring to

better support her desire to offer a range of food items freshly baked right on the premises.

One of their early, vivid memories is the time the cafe almost burned down. A compressor up on the roof broke down and caught on fire. When somebody finally got onto the roof, they found a charred ring around the failed unit. It would probably have caused a major roof fire - except that it happened during a rain storm.

What was a compressor doing up on the roof? In the earlier years of Luna, musicians would do shows there in the evening. One refrigerated display case in the cafe had a particularly noisy compressor, annoying both the musicians and their audience. The offending compressor pump was removed from the unit and replumbed to be mounted up on the roof, where it was free to make all the noise it wanted. Ironically, music in the evening was dropped a few years later, but the compressor remained up on the roof, almost forgotten until it burned up.

Live evening music came and went, but from-scratch baking in the back of the cafe has become a defining feature of Luna's offerings. In the early years of Carly and Cindy's ownership, fritattas, biscotti, and their packaged cookies immediately became some of their biggest sellers. Seasonal soups soon joined them on the menu.

Zucchini bread was a big seller and a customer favorite. Sadly, it was an absolute misery to make, with bits and pieces of the ingredients sticking to the cook's clothing and hair. (Brownies took the bread's place in the lineup.)



Cindy and Carly

What's in Luna's future? Cindy and Carly have found that every single aspect of the cafe has customers who love it just the way it is. The tables, chairs, coffee beans - even the floor. Cindy sometimes imagines something new for that floor, but she's also been told that the current one contributes to the Luna look.

They weathered COVID, feeling the stresses just like every other Island business. It did give them some time to step back and pay attention to many pending details of the cafe. This has been helpful as inflation has hit; they know exactly what goes into each of their products, how it's priced, and how it's used. Tight inventory control and targeted bulk purchases have helped them buffer

their customers from the worst of sticker shock.

The future of Luna will look a great deal like what is already familiar. Great coffee and an evolving suite of food offerings. Cindy has been stepping back, helping in the kitchen as needed - and she continues to keep the books. Carly has become the primary manager, and doesn't foresee a time when Luna won't be her main day job.

"Vashon Years" are like dog years, and Luna's 25 years of operation is more like a century anywhere else. Be sure to thank Carly, Cindy, and any of the others who have cared for Luna over its many years of operation.



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- Leaving a contribution in in the "Fox box" on the counter at Café Luna.

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Continued from Front Page

be reduced to as little as 6 minutes, or 7-8 minutes with docking time. Docking time itself will be quicker and safer using AutoHelm, software integrating proprietary LiDAR-based navigation and piloting aids. Amongst its many features, AutoHelm has built-in whale recognition and avoidance systems.

Critics are uncertain, citing unproven technology, the high price tag to convert the existing fleet, new dock construction requirements, and each round trip consuming up to 3,300 kilowatt hours of electricity. However, Traekke-Benet executives calculate that the payback period for each ferry, assuming no spontaneous immolation events, is only 5½ years compared to diesel operation, saving over 4 million tons of dirty carbon during that time.

With rapid-charging stations at one or both docks, the ferries can also top off batteries and run additional routes. The prototype will fully recharge overnight from a traditional but upgraded wall socket (pictured) equipped with 1.21 Gigawatt fast-charging capacity.

Admittedly, a full fleet of electric ferries could have a profound effect on the regional electricity grid.

Fortunately, a timely energy answer is on the horizon. Before leaving office, former Governor Jay Inslee quietly approved reviving three partially completed nuclear power plants originally commissioned by the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS, pronounced "Whoops"), halted in part due to concerns over being constructed in 9.0+ earthquake zones.



Upgraded wall socket with 1.21 Gigawatt fast-charging capacity. Visual by Anne Gordon

"Washingtonians need to remember me as Mr. Clean Power, and at the rate we've been blowing up dams, we have no alternative but to go with the nuclear option. Remember, it's not a budget deficit, it's an investment in our future. I'll be in Idaho."

To keep the revolutionary hydrofoil to its light target weight of only 1,500 tons, innovative features like multi-modal seating and unstressed hull elements will be designed by IKEA and made from recycled paper. In the unlikely event of a power loss, the gull wings atop the ferry automatically deploy 180-foot-high substitute propulsion sails.

Vashon will serve as a test-bed for the first ferry, set to go into service April 1st 2029.

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~ Joe Rogan

My Grandson Wants Me to Write a Cookbook

By Pam (aka Gates) Johnson

If you've read a few of my columns, you probably guessed that I like to cook. Nothing much pleases me more than to prepare a meal for friends and family. Back in my school-working days, I would make meals for the entire McMurray staff, 30 people or so. It was great.

Now I'm down to cooking for my family every Thursday. My 10-year old grandson has taken an interest in food prep and is my official assistant chef (when he has time). We are getting good at making cookies. I showed him how to cream the butter and sugar, how to slowly add the dry ingredients, and to not stick his hand into the mixing bowl when the beaters are turning. He and I believe we have perfected the chocolate chip cookie recipe; not flat, nice and rounded.

The first time I can recall my grandson helping me cook was when I was making fluffy yeast dinner rolls. After the dough had first risen, I put it on the counter to punch it down. My grandson, who was about four at the time, punched that dough like it owed him money. He beat the holy heck out of it, laughing and having a great time.

I showed him how to roll a hunk of dough in the palm of his hand until it formed a perfect ball. The rolls were baked to a golden brown, then put on the table with butter and honey. My boy and his mom would eat three or four rolls apiece during dinner, then could be seen chomping one down as they walked out the door to go home.

A few of my grandson's favorites are chicken roast, anything beef, homemade pizza, and a Chinese noodles recipe my mom made years ago that my kids now call Mimi Ramen. Recently, my grandson asked me to write him a cookbook with all my recipes. That got me thinking. Are my recipes really my own, or did I steal them from someone, or get them from a cookbook or site like "All Recipes"? Some are definitely my own. Some

Island Voices

are recipes I found and tweaked. And some are out-and-out thievery. What should I do?

For the McMurray Exploratory Week days, I organized a food experience where kids could sign up for a week of in-depth classes and tours focusing on a specific cuisine. We did Spanish, Italian, Southern, Mexican, and Greek, to name a few. Classes were held at Whole Foods, Sur la Table, and PCC. We toured the South Seattle Community College culinary program, which really made me want to quit my job and enroll in the pastry program.

Our students learned how to make pasta, gnocchi, flourless chocolate cake using Marcona almonds, and many other exotic dishes. One year, a McMurray parent taught us how to make authentic baklava. A few of my Exploratory students graduated high school and became professional chefs. One of my co-teachers learned to make jambalaya, and continues to make it years later. The years of Food 101 Exploratory gave lots of people lots of good recipes.

After my daughter got married, much to my surprise, she began to take an interest in food preservation. About every other year, she goes to Westport to buy tuna, fresh off the boat. She brings it to my place, where we pressure-can it. Once you have home-canned tuna, the commercial just doesn't cut it. Her latest purchase is a Blackstone flat top. You can cook everything on one of those. I have one, and my son also just bought one. We are walking advertisements for those grills.

This brings me to my nephew. He has a few specialties: fried rice on the flat top, smoked brisket and Dutch-oven cookery over an open campfire. His fried rice is a huge favorite with the fam. He learned how to do it by watching Teppanyaki chefs at Asian restaurants. A frequent dinner conversation centers around the idea of selling his

fried rice at Strawberry Festival. His smoked brisket is melt-in-your-mouth, out of this world. If he had his smoker going and the fried rice performance, he would make bank as a concession. My grandson and I would sell cookies or maybe even slices of pie. I think it would be interesting and fun.

So, back to the idea of a cookbook. Some ideas: Barbecued ribs, my way; Black Bottom Banana Cream Pie; Ma Johnson's Easy-as-Pie Crust; Lucille Spakowski's Lasagna al Forno; my ex-mother-in-law's pot roast; Mimi Ramen; my Mile-High Apple Pie; chocolate chip cookies; Garibaldi, Oregon barbecued crab; softest dinner rolls ever; Mom's Potato Salad; chicken soup with homemade noodles.

Hmm, there doesn't seem to be many, or any, vegetable dishes. What can you do with vegetables besides make a salad or steam them? Oh, I nearly forgot about roasted roots, a dish that instilled a love of roasted vegetables in more than a few McMurray teachers. Guess that falls into the vegetable category.

As for creamy or cheesy sauces, that just isn't in my wheelhouse. Something about the smell of melty cheese triggers my ick reflex. Definitely no macaroni and cheese or broccoli with cheese sauce for me. The irony is both of my parents were born and raised in Tillamook, and I spent the majority of childhood weekends there. We didn't spend a lot of time talking about the local cheese. Mostly we just dug those horrible clams that live in the mud.

To this day, I have a deep-seated hatred for clam digging. Thank heavens that my folks didn't make me eat those darned things.

The idea of a cookbook is simmering. I'll let you know if it comes to fruition.



The "Mighty Mac"



By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

From John: We rarely write about contemporary things, but this story is now old enough to be a least on the edge of vintage recollections.

Over 20 years ago, I had helped Seán return to the Island, and he had acquired a great place. An old cabin, situated above a steep bank on Pillsbury Road. The only trouble was the bank in front was slowly sliding away.

Not to worry! We had a plan. We were going to trim the alders and blackberries back and install various vertical bank reinforcements to prevent the annoying but minor expulsion of debris from the steep bank. Turns out, the idea was much simpler to plan than actually execute, as have been most of our well-laid plans over the years.

Our first idea was to cut the various, intrusive blackberries and "dog hair" Alders into small pieces and lay them as sort of a mulch on the downhill side, against the small stumps and cut-off blackberry remains. This turned out to not be a good idea, as the hillside was nearly vertical, and gravity began to be less

of our friend than when we were younger.

At that time in our life, both of us were agile chainsaw operators. Seán, in particular, was a rare genius with a chainsaw. No one could sharpen a chainsaw as well as Seán, and after helping with his wood-cutting for years, no one could make precise cuts and pack a cord of wood squirrel-tight as well as Seán.

Frankly, Seán is a wood cutting elitist snob. All his rounds were precise, square cut, and knots bumped. Maybe Alex Sinner can do the same now, but Seán's work is both "art" and wood.

So, after we both spent a few days "chipping and chopping" "big" debris into "smaller" debris, we soon noticed our work was, firstly, "a lot of work," and secondly, we were not having much effect on the bank stabilization concept. Seeing the puny results with our small saws, we were ready to give up on the project.

Twenty years ago, this new thing appeared on the internet: "Vashon Freecycle." A kind of revolution in the way we Vashonites got rid of "stuff." Now, the old way was to merely push unwanted crap into the bushes or swamp and let the natural acids of blackberries and nettles take their usual style of hiding or decaying.

Of course, the alternative then, as now, was to push stuff to the side of the road, hoping for someone with less good sense to pick it up. The result was pretty much the same as the other alternative, except it was now on county right-of-way and someone else's problem. "Freecycle" offered various items for "free" and sort of cut out the "middleman" of

roadside pickup.

Seán and I discussed: "If we only had a chipper!" Freecycle! And sure enough, that is where the venerable "Mighty Mac" chipper came in! Free! (You haul ...).

We transported this machine to Seán's place and got it into the bank overhang. We used it for a bit; the results were better but not much better than our previous work. So, we hauled it up the hill to my place on the Burton Loop.

A few notes about Mighty Mac, which is the identification on the venerable device: it appears to date from the late 60s. There are minimal safety features ... as in none. Exposed belts, flailing pieces of steel, and not even a warning of "Do not put your head in this funnel." But it worked.

I loaned Mighty Mac out, but was always called to "fix" it. So, I figured it was like a dog that had adopted me as a companion and just would not work for anyone else. Sometime in the distant past, a friend helping me lost a phone from his shirt pocket into the Mighty Mac's maw of swirling blades. So, I claim it even has "Wi-Fi."

I used this vintage machine on unruly backyard waste and trimmings. At that time, our neighbor, John Beba, and I were doing a lot of woodwork. Sixteen-inch planers ... massive sanders ... routers, and so on. Things could be a bit noisy at times. Sometimes, I recall the beautiful symphony that was a combination of the 16-inch planer and the Mighty Mac!

From Seán: Well, one day, John beckoned me over to look at a "new" device he had acquired to go with his vineyard. Painted red ... compact,

and brand new was a chipper!

We tried it out, and it sure worked smooth. He asked me, "What you think?" I replied, "It sure is smooth, uses less gas, and does not clog up much."

John added, "And it has ... bright red paint."

"Yeah sure," I said. "But all that aside, ours makes a lot more noise than yours and I've been telling people the Russian Mafia has been mowing our lawn, which pretty much has kept the riffraff outta the area!"

One time, a significant part broke, so I took it to my old friend, Lee Smith of Burton fame. Lee looked over the parts and observed that there had been an apparent design flaw. He carefully made a new part and corrected the error.

The old piece of metal is still running ... started on the third pull this spring. I'm not a real fan of the Russians anymore, so I've changed my alibi about the noise. I just claim that it's a device to drive away the coyotes, and it's a good response to those annoying leaf blowers.



End of Life Decisions

By Michael Shook

I've been immersed in David Slavitt's wonderful translation of Boethius's "Consolation of Philosophy" recently, and, while walking the dogs this morning, a remnant drifted across my mind: "... nothing in life lasts."

No kidding. It's so obvious as to be banal, and yet we humans quite often live as if "everything in life lasts." I wonder if that is not in part from necessity. We all know from a young age that death awaits us, but life demands such tremendous exertion, and such focus, that often we are immersed in simply getting the things done each day that must be done. Leaving death to one side is just practical (though I do think that "to one side" is Death's residence. He or She - It? - is ever-present, ever-ready, part of the warp and woof of life).

Taking care of dogs has proven an excellent teacher of "nothing in life lasts," with lessons alternately stern and playful, many mundane, but eventually, inevitably, sorrowful. I come to this considering my older daughter's plight today, a day like any of her days off, except that this day she and her husband await the arrival of the veterinarian, who will euthanize their old dog, M.

M is 12, a rescue Catahoula hound, and a sweet creature. She's had a good life with her adoptive family, basking in the attention and care. But her health took a serious turn for the worse a few months ago. Her physical ailments became much

more serious, and she began to exhibit signs of "sundowner" syndrome. The canine dementia compounded her age-related ill health, to the point where a decision had to be made; redouble efforts to keep her alive (and in pain, in addition to the mental confusion), or have her euthanized.

Between my daughter and son-in-law's difficult decision, and "Consolation of Philosophy's" commentary, I was cast back to the memory of friends and family whose parents declined mentally until dementia seemed to make the person we had known disappear. Of course, that's not entirely true, nor is any of it simple. The physical human was still there, still looked like who we knew, but the mind that contributed so vitally to who that person was, was gone almost completely. (I'm tempted to say gone utterly, but so much of a person is unfathomable.)

Yes, there would be moments of clarity, brief and startling, but nonetheless only a poignant hint of the now mostly missing loved one. It was like a series of heavy curtains pulled across the person's essence, then suddenly swept aside somehow - and there he or she was, only to vanish in the next instant as the thick material draped back into place.

I recall a woman, the wife of a couple who had known me all my life, friends of my folks for decades. Having moved, they were back for a visit, and I dropped by my parent's house to say hi. She - the friend's wife - looked kindly at me, inquired of my

name, we chatted, and then I went to the kitchen for fresh coffee. When I came back in, she smiled, and asked who I was. My mother told me later that year that she, the friend, was moved to a care center where her husband would visit. She never again recognized him, but would sometimes tell him, "I've got a beau, you know." I thought how heartbreaking that must have been for him, to gradually lose his wife of more than 50 years, powerless to stop her drifting away.

I hope never to have to deal with that in those I hold dear, but of course, only time will tell. The lifespans of we who live in industrialized nations increases, but for some, that entails outliving our brains. My wife and I occasionally have discussions about "what if?" Would either of us want to end our lives while we still were capable of making conscious decisions? (We say "conscious decisions," but is a person with dementia conscious, or not? And how is that manifested?)

My answer now is "yes," but that's with everything still safely in the abstract. I tell myself I don't want to burden my family with a slow, rotting-brain decline into death, that I don't want to live if I'm literally not in my right mind, but how do I really know that, until I'm in the midst of it? And is that a moral choice? Ethical? Is that an action rightly even within my purview?

Between euthanizing pets, and seeing livestock slaughtered, I've been witness to enough of a certain kind of killing to know, deeply, that the taking of any life is a mighty, mighty thing. Standing at my parent's bedsides as they passed, I glimpsed something there of grave mysteries that we cannot fully penetrate, not intellectually anyway. We may perhaps know in an intuitive, soulful, heart-felt way, and that somehow urges me to make caution my watchword in these matters.

Is dementia inconvenient? Kind of silly even to ask that. Everything about life is, in some way, inconvenient, so why should aging and death be any different? But as we go forward, ever more enamored of technology, and modern medicinal "miracles," including quiet ways to end our lives ourselves, I confess to feeling concerned. There is the potential, as with all things human, for our actions to go very badly wrong.



A Pascha Wish

By Andy Valencia

In the ancient monastic tradition, monks would spend the 40 days leading up to Easter (which they called "Pascha") out in the desert praying. Some would not come back, the victim of animals, accidents, starvation, or illness. On the eve of their departure, they would gather to make peace with their brethren. Each monk, in turn with each other monk, would face them, bow, and ask pardon for any offenses they had committed. The receiving monk would answer, "God forgives you, and I forgive you." That monk in turn would ask pardon, and then they would share a ritual triple embrace: left-right-left.

For the first time in my life, I participated in this ritual of forgiveness - it was quite an experience. Each remembered outrage you carry is a double burden: for you to hold it, and for the target to have it held against them. It's hard to describe the liberation of formally leaving this weight behind.

The conception of God varies. For some, it's the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For others, the God who encountered Moses. It may be the Great Intellect, or the Universal Sublime Light. Buddhists have been known to say that their God is so great, he doesn't need to exist.

However you perceive the universe, I hope you'll accept my apology for anything I've said or written which pained you. In turn, as we all head towards Easter, or Pascha, or Spring - I hope you'll consider how you can enter these brightening days with a lighter heart. Peace be with you.



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Tax Game Time

By Stephen Buller

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes." Perhaps one of his less inspiring quotes, but the sentiment holds true today, arguably more so than in 1789.

In case you'd forgotten, your federal taxes are due on the 15th of this month. If you own real estate in King County, your property taxes are due on the 30th. If you run a business in Washington State, your taxes are due at the end of the month, and the next month, and the next ...

It's easy to complain about taxes, and I'd like to take a more nuanced approach than "taxes are theft" or "make the rich pay their fair share." Instead, let's look at taxes from the following angles: 1) What are taxes for, 2) How should they be assessed, and 3) What can you do? I'll be sure to give my color commentary at the end.

First, what are taxes for? The answer is, a lot of things. Different agencies in different jurisdictions assess taxes for different purposes. Your federal taxes largely fund programs like Social Security, Medicare, and national defense. Property taxes often fund schools, police, and fire. Business taxes fund a wide range of social and environmental programs.

Second, how should taxes be assessed? This all depends on your perspective. If you think taxes

Island Resilience

should be used to fund essential government services everyone benefits from, then they should be assessed across the board with something like an income tax. If you think taxes should be used to redistribute wealth, then they should be assessed on specific entities or individuals. If you think taxes should be used to incentivize behavior, then they should be assessed on specific products or activities.

Third, what can you do? For most people, unfortunately, the answer is not much. If your primary source of income is a job, there are few ways to decrease your taxes. However, simply investing your money can provide interest, dividends, and capital gains which are taxed at lower rates than earned income.

If you really want to bring your tax bill down – taxes are most people's single-largest expense, so I encourage you to at least consider it – you need to look to those incentives I mentioned. If you start your own business, you may be shocked that your tax bill goes up at first, but if you reach a certain size, you can benefit from corporate tax rates. This is because the federal government wants people to create jobs.

There are tax credits for building new housing, and rental income is usually tax-free because of the magic of depreciation. This is because the government wants people to provide shelter. There are tax credits for investing in solar and other "green" energies, and there are still benefits of drilling for oil. This is because energy drives our economy.

The list of incentives goes on and on, and

comprises the majority of our tax code. There are disincentives as well, such as "sin taxes" on alcohol or cigarettes. We are still incentivized to have children with a federal tax credit, but if the government decides our population is getting too high, they could change that into a child tax.

No one likes paying taxes, but we all benefit from programs they fund. As citizens, our focus should be on the programs we choose to fund, and how. As individuals, I think we should consider ways we can decrease our own tax bills by investing in activities our government wants us to.

Is there corruption, lobbying, and other barriers that make it hard for the average person to get ahead? Welcome to reality. In my opinion, the "fairest" system would be one where the government stops social engineering, and everyone pays a flat percentage of their income to fund essential programs.

There are good arguments to be made for taxes on something other than income, such as a sales tax. The individual has a choice whether to purchase that item or not. But there are some particularly terrible types of taxes.

Property taxes on residential homes, in a country where real estate prices can be artificially and wildly inflated, can cost someone their home. Similarly, an unrealized gains tax is absurd – and a bill was just rejected by Washington's governor because of this. In isolation, how do you pay for unrealized gains except by realizing those gains by selling your investment?

"Don't hate the player, hate the game." I don't think Ben coined that one, but it applies here. Hate an unfair system, and let your "representatives" know, so positive tax reform can be made. But don't hate your neighbor. Learn what you can do to up your game.

Domesticated Animals Have Value, Too

By March Twisdale

For eons, there were no coyotes on Vashon Island. For 10,000 years (or longer), human beings have lived in and around the Puget Sound, along with wolves and bears and cougars and many other animals native to this region. But not coyotes.

We humans are native to this land. And, like all creatures, we defend ourselves against predators that threaten our safety, our homes, our animals, and our territory. This is natural.

Native Americans did not sit idly by when top predators unwisely intruded upon human-claimed space. Nuisance animals were hunted down and killed. Their skin, fur, teeth, and bones were put to good use, as humans and their chosen animals (traditionally dogs, but later, horses) went about their much safer lives due to the lessening of a predator threat.

Over time, new Americans arrived on this continent. Their numbers were greater and they also worked to eliminate the threat of top predators. Over time, much of the continental U.S. was emptied of wolves and into that void came the coyotes.

This is the origin of the problem, but there's more to the story.

Human beings change the world they inhabit, and that change is not reversible. Going back in time is for fantasy and science fiction novels.

When it comes to managing invasive species, we need to lean into reality. This begins by treasuring the ecosystem humans have created on Vashon. Today – our Island offers much greater food diversity, thanks to the many thousands of humans who have (over two centuries) introduced

myriad edible plants, berries, vines, tubers, and disease-resistant trees loaded with an abundance of fruits and nuts. We even brought the European honey bee! And, of course, our Island is dripping in milk, grass-fed meat, and pasture-raised birds/eggs.

The arrival of Coyotes threatens this human-made ecosystem, and many Islanders want to see this invasive species removed entirely. But they are silent. Why?

It could be the gaslighting: "Coyotes aren't killing pets on the Island, they just go missing for other reasons." Or, the blaming: "You need to lock up all of your animals 24/7. If you don't, it's your fault they get killed." For cats, it's the shaming: "Don't you know how many songbirds domesticated cats kill?"

The truth is, most domesticated cats (on Vashon) are carefully managed by loving families that invest heavily in their health and well-being. They provide incalculable value as "fur-babies and family members," and even more value to homeowners, gardeners, and farmers by keeping the rodent population in check.

Coyote packs, on the other hand, directly harm our efforts to increase our food resiliency. Coyote packs are making "pasture-raised" a thing of the past, as they hunt at all hours of the day, making even fancy barns and night-time lock up practices insufficient to protect livestock and backyard flocks. Coyote packs are also devastating migratory wild birds, directly contradicting the goals of the Audubon Society and Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust.

And it's only getting worse. Because, coyote packs are smart. They



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conserve energy. Why chase a lean, low-calorie, hard-to-catch deer for two hours, when you can slaughter penned-in domesticated livestock in three minutes flat? Vashon Island is OUR Island. The domesticated livestock are our farm animals. The pets are our fur babies. And, the small children running around on acreage and quiet trails are our children. As coyote populations rise, resource competition increases, and the packs run up against our watery boundaries, predation pressures will increase on all domesticated animals AND small humans will begin to look appetizing. This has already happened elsewhere in America.

We have a choice to make. For better or worse, Vashon Island is our resource. our human-created environment. Our chosen, developed, planned out, and well-endowed Island ecosystem. And there is no way that coyote packs are going to fit. None.

If we'd been more mature, more realistic, more honest 10 to 12 years ago, we'd have petitioned the state to immediately fund an effort to "capture and remove" or "capture and euthanize" this invasive species while its population was still small. The state knows that coyote reproduction (when they invade a new space) is a hockey stick: small,

gradual increases for a few years followed by a rapid explosion in numbers.

We have reached the leading edge of that hockey stick, and our community is feeling the effects. Every week, there are Facebook posts about disappearances. Many, many more stories never land on Facebook, but if you ask 10 Islanders about coyotes, you'll hear at least 8 stories of death to pets or livestock.

If this bothers you, good. We should be bothered. It's our duty to protect our animals, and that doesn't mean importing millions of dollars worth of lumber, tons of cement, and thousands of rolls of wire, all for coyote-proof barns. It doesn't mean covering the island in hundreds of livestock guardian dogs who bark constantly, cost a fortune to feed, and tend to roam. It doesn't mean raising penned in, grain-fed flocks that produce poor quality eggs and meat, while our wide-open pastures sit fallow.

It means, we do the hard thing, and we eliminate the coyote packs.

Editor's Note: For more information, go to this article on vashonloop.com for a link to last year's article on this topic, and to specific stories regarding coyote interaction with children.

Island to Island, Forest to Forests: Part 1

By Jane Valencia

Vashon-born and raised and a 2024 University of British Columbia graduate, Mabel Moses, has worked with "The Mother Tree Project." With a mission to practice forestry in a way that better preserves biodiversity and carbon storage, MTP was started by Dr. Suzanne Simard who many forest-loving Vashonites know for her work with tree communications.

Mabel now lives in Haida Gwaii, an archipelago briefly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands. Haida Gwaii has a population of 4,500.

Mabel first came to Haida Gwaii by way of an intensive semester program with the Haida Gwaii Institute, from which you could receive university credit. She came to learn forestry and forestry science, but within the context of a small community.

Mabel shares, "Canada has now acknowledged that the Haida Nation has title over Haida Gwaii, the legal implications of which I do not entirely understand. But basically from what I do understand, it's a historic moment of Canada acknowledging that they had claimed what wasn't theirs, and beginning the process of giving land back to an Indigenous Nation. Hopefully paving the way for more of this elsewhere in Canada and the world."

Mabel says she doesn't understand the government and legal processes to explain title more, but encourages readers to look at the Council of the Haida Nation website for more information.

The course has 15-20 students. Students are hosted by community members or can live on their own. "You learn science from professors, but also you get to hear from a lot of guest speakers and people in the community, many of whom are fairly cutting-edge for the work they've done to push the community forward."

Classes are taught in three-week blocks, and include one on the forest, others on beaches and rivers, and on wildlife. A seminar focuses on students' personal experiences with all they are learning.

Mabel continues, "It's a lot of field trips, a lot of ecology and forest sciences, and a focus on Haida values, such as a deep respect for all beings, and the Haida Nation's legal authority surrounding forestry."

"You learn a lot. Everyone who I know who has done that program falls in love with the place and community."

Which is why, upon graduating from UBC, Mabel returned to Haida Gwaii.

But before then, Mabel was an undergraduate with the UBC Faculty of Forestry, considered the leading forestry school in Canada. Majors range from Wood Products, Conservation, Forest Sciences, Urban Forestry, and more. Mabel chose a more classic Forestry major, meant for people who

want to work in the forestry industry or as a professional forester. "It looked fun, and I wanted to learn more out in the woods."

A mix of a professional certificate and a Bachelors of Science in Forestry, Mabel degree sets her up to become a professional forester. With it, "I can do planning in the logging industry, consulting, and science. I feel like with all the degrees, you can go anywhere with them. People end up doing all kinds things."

Dr. Suzanne Simard was one of Mabel's professors. In 2023 and 2024, Mabel was a crew member on The Mother Tree Project.

Mabel explains, "We were looking at how logging impacts carbon in the soil, at the biodiversity of above-ground plants, and also how trees from a single species but different climatic regions in BC do outside their historically climatically adapted area in different kinds of harvests, and more. The Mother Tree Project is a huge one. [Jane-review quotes I added?]"

"My opinion after traveling to so many harvest sites throughout my degree is that a one-size-fits-all strategy of logging doesn't work because BC is so diverse ecologically.

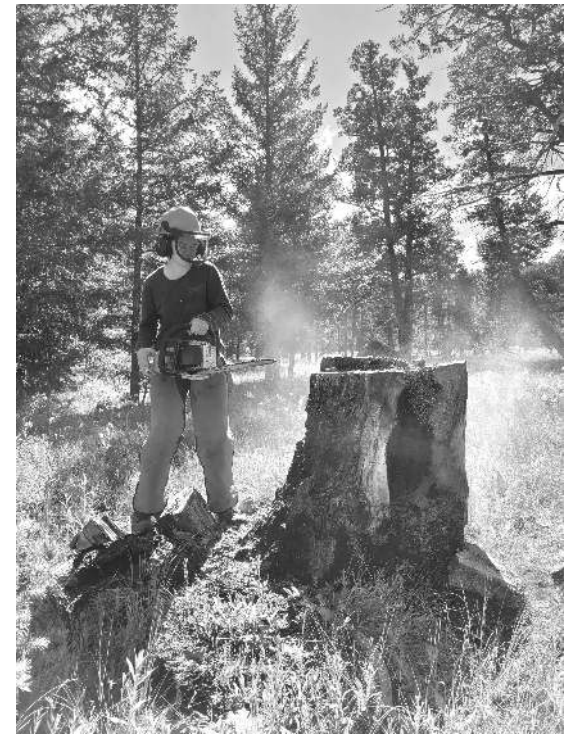
"Different strategies can enhance tree survival and carbon storage. Data is gathered to show the complexities of forests and how logging effects them in different ways.

"I also got to work for Dr. Lori Daniels, another of my professors, who studies wildfire. The projects that I was on use western science to back up knowledge of Indigenous fire stewardship practices. It was really cool to get to work with communities and learn more about how people had a relationship with fire before colonization that was very, very different than what we have now."

Mabel shares further, "We were in the grasslands where people had used fire to keep those ecosystems healthy before Canada and the U.S. banned and suppressed burning practices. A lot of plants there are important for food for people, bears, and all kinds of other animals that respond really well to fire. By regularly burning, the land didn't have the infill of trees that we have now, which is just a lot of fuel that creates really intense fires when they do go up."

Another job Mabel had was working in Washington one year for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). There, she learned more about how forestry works on the ground, including how to work with foresters, to set up cut blocks, and see how DNR enforces or oversees logging and roads. "I got to see the government and industry side of forestry, so now my opinions of what logging is are rooted in my personal experience, rather than in stereotypes."

Mabel elaborates: "I've gotten to see a lot of different sides of forestry, and to work with a lot of different people like foresters and loggers, and they do genuinely care about the forest. And the scientists do too, obviously. In the Faculty of Forestry, sometimes there's tension because you have a bunch of people who went into those



Mabel taking a fire scar sample for a fire history project - Photo courtesy of Mabel Moses

programs to study Conservation and to study science, and they see how the logging industry is really harming biodiversity and food systems in a lot of ways.

"And then there are a lot of people in the program who come from logging families, and that is their community's livelihood, and they've also been a part of it, so they can see what it actually is. They know that the people working in logging do care. And sometimes there is tension.

"The issue is complicated and seems to me to come down to different value systems, capitalist and extractive, versus more holistic. And also a disagreement on the definition of what a forest is, what sustainable means, and what science we should listen to."

Some cherry-pick science to support their logging practice.

Mabel continues: "But you learn from everyone. Towards the end of my degree, we had a guest speaker who put a slide up of all the values of the forest. It listed a bunch of ways that you can use timber, like this or that kind of board, paper, and so on. And then other values were listed, such as spirituality, magic, and happiness. And people were just snickering and saying, what the f*** is magic? Me and my friend were like, that's what we find in the forest. It is magic. That's where I go to reenergize myself when I'm feeling badly. It's one of those things that I have very strong feelings on."

The different perspectives toward the forest mean that Mabel adjusts her language.

"I feel like I switch up how I talk about forestry, depending on who I talk to. Because I feel everyone cares about the forest in some way."

"My opinion is that the issues are bigger. I learned that a lot of the wood in Canada is going to the U.S. to make single-family homes. Maybe the issue isn't just that we're cutting and selling all this wood in BC because of capitalism. Maybe people shouldn't be building such big fricking homes. We need to figure out more ways to recycle wood, too. Some of the wood science students at UBC are on the cutting edge of that, learning how to recycle wood.

"The issues are part of a bigger story of how we choose to live, our connection, or lack of connection to the resources we use, and modern American culture."

To be continued.

For links to find out more, view this article on vashonloop.com

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Nettles, a Natural Super-Food

By Jayne Simmons

Everyone remembers the first time they met nettles in person. Sometimes, you were just trying to step off the trail for a moment, and nettles found you. Or if you are lucky, and you have a good mentor, you got to learn how to fold up the leaf and eat it without getting stung!

My mentor was a 10-year old I met during a Vashon Wilderness Program Summer Camp I hosted at Sister Sage Herb Farm.

When those deep green shoots first peek through the earth, you know winter is basically over; and it turns out that this changing of the season is when nettles are needed. With protein, iron, minerals like potassium, magnesium, calcium, and zinc among others, and vitamins (K, A, B1, B3, B2, and B6), and Omega-6s, they are a true super-food. They contain antihistamine properties helping those with seasonal "hay fever" and the general sluggishness that can come with the changing of the seasons.

I like to gather nettles two or three times each spring. The first picking is when they're just a few inches tall; these are the darkest color and have the least amount of stems. They'll sprout again where you cut it, so you can return in about ten days. By the third cutting, they might be a bit taller, and the leaves a touch brighter. Those final cuttings or any plants that get super-tall can also be made into a strong overnight compost tea to nourish other plants. Once you find a reliable patch and you have permission to pick, a nettles patch keeps on giving,

Health Matters

coming back year after year, spreading by root system.

I was first introduced to nettles as a food in 1987. I worked at what would now be called a farm-to-table restaurant called The Magnolia Bar and Grill, in Durham, North Carolina. The farmers and wildcrafters used to just knock on the back door with a bounty of heirloom vegetables and wild foods. Every shift, I learned about plants like nettles, ramps, and many varieties of culinary mushrooms. The chef would sauté the nettles with garlic, add a bit of their house-roasted veggie stock, and serve them over creamy grits with morels and asparagus.

When I moved out to Seattle, I worked at Place Pigalle and The Pink Door in the Pike Place Market, and I learned that the chefs here make a similar sauce, drizzle it on salmon, serve it with risotto and fiddlehead ferns and top it off with a huckleberry dessert!

Cooked fresh nettle-tops can be used in a variety of dishes as a substitute for spinach or kale. Steam or blanch the nettle tips, drain them, and cut them with scissors before adding them to your recipe.

- Add to omelets, scrambles, or breakfast sandwiches
- Use in stir fry recipes, in curry sauces, or spanikopita
- Add to almost any soup recipe, especially onion or potato

- Blend into pesto or other dips
- Include in the ricotta layer of lasagna

Dry nettles as quickly as possible in a warm, well ventilated dark spot, until crispy dry. The smaller the leaf, the faster the drying process. The leaves can be cut off in the field, or after they are dry. They are best left whole until use and crumbled by hand or powdered in a blender or dedicated coffee grinder. (Use a mask to avoid breathing the dust.) Remember to store dried nettles away from light and in airtight containers to preserve their nutrients. Refrigerate nettle infusions, since the protein content makes them spoil easily.

- Make a simple tea or an overnight infusion that is rich and thirst-quenching.
- Incorporate dried nettle powder into bread recipes
- Add a couple of tablespoons of dried nettle to a smoothie for an energy blast

I am challenging myself to eat a dish with nettles in it once a week for the next 6 weeks. Please let me know how you love to make nettle a part of your life?

Nettles are basically free, taste great, and are easy to prepare. In fact, some people will actually pay you to take them away! (Does that sound like your dream job, or nightmare?)

Jayne Simmons is the owner and principal farmer at Sister Sage Herb Farm, located on the Roseballen Land Trust on Vashon Island. She is the founder of Sister Sage Herbs Natural Remedies company and makes products from herbs she grows and sells online at sistersageherbs.com and in person at the Pike Place Market. She can be reached at jayne@sistersageherbs.com

Time Together – Healing

By Ali Elsberry

This is a bit of a detour from my usual "Time Together" articles, but I'll loop back around to that in the end.

I have a slightly different approach to healing than the average person. I believe that our health is our full responsibility and ours alone. I don't believe that you "catch" anything, or that anyone "gets you sick." I don't believe that health comes at the advice of a politician, in the form of a pharmaceutical, at the end of a needle, or from anywhere other than deep within our core.

But I do believe that all physical symptoms, from the common runny nose to the largest cancerous tumor, stem from our traumas, thoughts, and beliefs, and how we have dealt with those over the years, or more importantly, how we have NOT dealt with them. (I would also like to add that a healthy diet and lifestyle are of utmost importance and they go hand-in-hand with our emotional health.)

Once in my early 20s, I found a lump in my breast. I was referred for a mammogram, and upon going in for the appointment, was absolutely horrified to discover that the standard medical approach to "find harm" in this case was to painfully smash my breast between two cold, metal plates. I actually asked the technician how this process wasn't damaging and she told me that it's just what they do, and breasts are only made of fat so it doesn't matter anyway.

After that, I was sent to the University of Washington Medical Center for further scans, and then on to Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. At the end of all this, I was told it didn't look good and that they wanted to do a biopsy. At that very moment, young, conventionally minded me thought "Nope!" Something within me that I had not yet come to embrace knew that I hadn't just randomly ended up

with this growth, and that if I grew it, I could get rid of it. I walked out of that office and never went back. Three months later, the lump was completely gone.

Fast forward two decades and a multitude of experiences, and I am currently writing this article from my bed. This past February, right before a trip to California, I had a session with my psychologist and I brought up the fact that, at times, I don't feel safe or protected. We talked about my childhood and how, despite being a kind and well-behaved little girl, I was constantly being punished for things - at times in extreme and abusive ways, with other punishments seemingly small.

We addressed how these feelings that I carry with me in adulthood of not being safe and protected are directly related to that; I was always in fear of getting in trouble for something, not feeling safe or protected from the punishment. I instantly felt a rush of heat through my whole body; we talked a little more and then ended the call, and I went about getting ready for our trip. Then, the day before we left California to come home, it hit. Hard. It started with whole-body shaking, a lot of swelling, and soreness in places.

Before I go any further, I will say that I have a complete, unshakable faith in why my body is experiencing something and my ability to heal. I wear my body every day, I know it better than anyone else. I didn't always feel this way. It took many years and countless difficult situations to reach this point of trust in myself. But when I did, the feeling was absolutely profound and resonated deeply in my soul in a way that is hard to put into words.

At any rate, I got us home from California that next day and began my healing. I won't go into all the

details of the things that I have dealt with in the past month, but right now I am moving through a new and intense physical pain in the exact spots in my body where I have experienced a physically and psychologically traumatizing injury in my past, injuries that had me feeling unsafe and unprotected.

When I was young, I experienced 10 years of seizures. All the experts agreed that these were just "normal" childhood seizures; I was put on medication, and it was a long time before anyone started to ask questions. One of the things that would trigger a seizure was a quick and sudden "change of gears" where I did not have adequate time to adjust. For example, one time in my teens I was taking a nap, woke up suddenly, and realized I was supposed to be down at the neighbor's house five minutes prior; I jumped up, threw on my shoes, and ran out the door.

I made it halfway down the road before I had a seizure. I fell straight onto my knees and, as a result, ended up with a very deep wound below my left kneecap. I instantly got up and kept going because I felt like I would be in a lot of trouble for not being there on time. When I got to their house, I used the hose to spray all the blood off my knee. Much to my relief, the woman whose children I was watching was in such a hurry to go that she didn't even notice anything was out of the ordinary.

Five days ago, I woke up to the most intense pain radiating out of the exact spot where my scar is from that accident, and no amount of icing, Epsom salt baths, heat packs, or any other measure I tried even came close to touching the pain. But I knew they wouldn't; I was finally releasing the trauma.

Two days ago it was my right hand, where our old Jack Russell, who had the most aggressive prey-drive of any animal I have ever

known, completely attacked me when I reached down to try and stop him from going after a cat that had come into our backyard. Again, I felt like I would get in trouble at the time, and now I had pain in the exact places where he bit me.

Not only has all this made for a fascinating observation, but I have simultaneously watched other physical symptoms just disappear, some things I have been dealing with for many, many years.

My whole point here is that we owe it to ourselves, and especially to our children, to really, truly deal with our traumas. And I don't just mean the big ones; I have done work around even small things, like something someone once said that I locked away in my body and never would have guessed it could have made the impact it did. When we heal this neglected emotional presence, we are such better parents, and the time we spend together with our children is so much deeper and more meaningful. We are no longer carrying something that has unknowingly influenced how we react emotionally; in turn, space opens to allow for us to be more joyful and authentic.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to this work, there are so many avenues to explore that can bring about immense changes. It happens to be helpful for me to talk to someone (oftentimes, I am able to recall memories that I could not recall otherwise through prompted questions), but you will know the right method, or methods, when you find them.

The saying is so true - we cannot change the world, but we can change ourselves, and if we all do this work to heal ourselves, we in turn will change the world.



Casserole ...

By Megan Hastings

The definition of a casserole is "a kind of stew or side dish that is cooked in the oven" ... Ok, that is a wide berth of genres. But let's talk about the best of the best.

First, I'd like to say, I have always been a sucker for a casserole ... green bean casserole, broccoli cheddar, tuna fish, lasagna, au gratin potatoes. I am both Midwestern and from the 70s. Let's face it, you couldn't walk an inch in those clogs without drunkenly falling into a casserole.

Ah, the memories of childhood. I can almost hear the sound of the whispers of people, background disco, or early yacht rock playing. As a kid at these parties, I had to wait patiently for the time of the night when the casserole would eventually come out of the oven. I am patient and usually hungry ...

By the time the 90s came around, I spent much of my time in cafes. Cool, hip places with thick cigarette smoke, and super-exotic foods like Moroccan stew, vegetable quesadillas with black beans, and of course, Egyptian lentil soup.

Priceless days sitting under vintage circus backdrops and reading about far-away places and dreams, or simply people-watching with my own cigarette, espresso, and lentil soup. Then, there was the onset of chili mac. To this day, one of my favorite casseroles.

When I'm feeling nostalgic, I will invent one. I always love the idea of casseroles made with the eggless egg noodles used for stroganoffs. But alas, I'm married to someone who does not share this love. Perhaps too many nights of Hamburger Helper in the distant past.

I have certainly matured my casseroles since those days of yore ... And I am still in constant search for the creamiest and most decadent one!

I made this one for our Christmas Eve dinner. But great for all year long.

Spring Vegetable and Chickpea Casserole

Ingredients:

- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 leek, cut and diced
- 5 cloves garlic
- 1 tbsp flour
- 2 cups Brussels sprouts, cut in half
- 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, cut into medallions
- 1½ cups oat milk
- ¾ cup white wine
- 2 tbsp tarragon
- 1 tsp rosemary
- 1 cup each, spinach and Swiss chard, or 2 cups of either
- Parmesan cheese
- Juice of one lemon
- Smoked gouda, or cheese of your choice
- Baguette or other crusty bread
- Salt
- Chili flakes
- Pepper



Instructions:

1. Sauté onion, leek, and garlic.
2. Add 1 tbsp flour and coat the above
3. Add Brussels sprouts and potatoes.
4. Add the oat milk and white wine, tarragon, rosemary, and salt, chili flakes, and pepper to taste.
5. Let cook to full heat and simmer until the potatoes are almost cooked through.
6. While this is cooking, cut the bread of a baguette or other crusty bread. Bake into crostini.
7. While there is still enough liquid, add the spinach or Swiss chard, the parmesan, and the lemon juice.



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Kin Ship by Anne Cotter Moses

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There's a certain kind of early morning songbird, but I don't know what it is!


The long wait for wood-chips!

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I am both Midwestern and from the 70s. Let's face it, you couldn't walk an inch in those clogs without drunkenly falling into a casserole.



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Island Epicure – Easter

By Suzanna Leigh

Resplendent in a blue brocade robe she brought back from the Orient, Marj presides over Easter dinner. A widow now, she is the matriarch who sits at the head of the table and blesses the food.

“Lord of the Universe,” she begins, “Thank you allowing us to live in this beautiful place.” She looks around the table where four generations are seated, and continues, “Thank you that we are once again gathered together. Please let there be peace in the world. Amen.”

The feast is a potluck affair; my sister Jeannie and her husband Don and son Morgan have come up from Oregon, bringing pies and gluten-free rolls. My son Atom and his son have brought roasted vegetables. My brother John contributes a special tea, and my son Jeremy has brought the cheeses his vegetarian child loves. I provide the roast beast and potatoes. My brother Steve has made a delicious salad. My husband Rich/Rifaat has contributed the very best olive oil and vinegar for the dressing. My son James whips the cream for the pies, and my niece Amber, up from Oregon with her daughter Penny, has done the last-minute shopping.

Conversation centers around books we’ve read, movies we’ve seen, the kid’s favorite video games. Puns abound, and Google is handy to look up word definitions or check facts

I can remember growing up coloring Easter eggs with food coloring and vinegar, hunting for colorful eggs in the grass, finding Easter baskets waiting for us when we got up on Easter morning. I always wondered what baskets of chocolate



Easter bunnies and jelly beans had to do with the Resurrection.

I thought maybe back in the early days of Christianity, the Church had combined the celebration of the Risen Christ with the Jewish holiday of Purim. Purim honors Queen Esther and the delivery of the Jewish people from certain death. Easter and Esther sound so much alike! But still, where did the bunnies and Easter eggs come from?

I made another connection this spring, when my neighbor Hope invited me to a gathering of women to honor Ostara, the goddess of spring and new life.

I had never heard of Ostara, so I did some research.

Turns out that people from Ireland to Germany honored Ostara. Her holiday was on the spring equinox, and was celebrated with feasting. Rabbits and eggs were her symbols; rabbits for their many offspring, and eggs because they contain life. I can imagine the hens, set free to feast on spring greens and newly awakened insects, laying their

eggs in the tall grass, and the children being sent out in the morning to find them. Finding the eggs would be like finding little treasures!

My Seventh Day Adventist relatives did not celebrate Easter; they said it was a Pagan holiday. I don’t look at it that way. I feel that these holidays that predate Christianity are born from our very human need to mark and celebrate the season’s changes. It thrills me to honor the Divine in the form of Ostara, about the same time I remember the Resurrection. It fits, somehow, the conquest of life over death.

These days, we get the same vegetables year-round, even if they are imported from Mexico or grown in greenhouses. What if our roasted vegetable dish included only vegetables that would be available in early spring a thousand years ago? My guess it would include root vegetables that have been stored over winter, and maybe some fern fiddleheads.

Roasted Vegetables, Olde Style

- 2-3 carrots
- 1 large parsnip
- The last of the stored onions
- 1 beet
- Maybe some dandelion root and fern fiddleheads
- 3-4 whole garlic cloves

Cut the vegetables into chunks about 1-1½” (My family will insist on including potatoes). Smear a layer of olive oil in a roasting pan. Add the vegetables, including the garlic, in a layer, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Of course there would be a salad with spring greens such as sorrel, chickweed, and dandelion (not the imposter with fuzzy spiky leaves).

Enjoy a spring feast that has been celebrated since time before memory!





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Llaughing Llamas Chronicles



By Daniel Hooker

Did you know that Atheism is a non-prophet organization?

It should be investigated by DOGE, Congress, and the WHO for taxation without representation.

I have a new response to people’s questions about why

I’m walking on crutches: “I’m avoiding a Cane Mutiny and a Staff Infection.”

An original from my landlady, Lynne S.

Q. Where do records go at the end of their life.

A. They go to their vinyl resting place.

Q. Who is the wealthiest man in Mexico?

A. Jeff Pesos.

As I was about to walk into IGA, there was a woman with a pit bull with the name of Hoss.

She said, “Look. I got my dog some ice cream.”

I looked. It was Häagen-Dazs.

I said, “So you got some Doggen-Hoss, I see.”

She smiled.

Doggen-Hoss – ice cream for dogs!


Last month I had a lot of car issues, but bad brakes never stopped me before.

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



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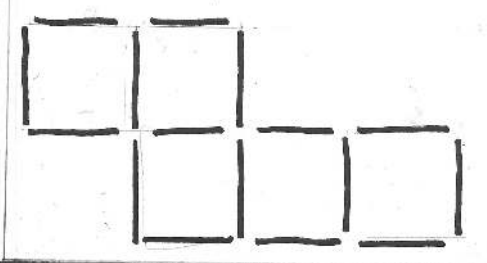
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Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses

Corrected Reprint! Sorry, puzzle fans, for the mistake last month!

Move two sticks into a new position so That you end up with exactly four squares.



Go to Page 11 for Solution to Math Puzzle

2025 Poetry in the Gardens at Lakewold Gardens

By Monica Schley

I am so pleased to be included in Lakewold Gardens' 2025 Poetry in the Gardens. Each year, Lakewold invites local poets to submit original poems to the Winter Garden Poetry competition. My poem, "An Edible Garden" was accepted and is now installed in the Garden's self-guided tour. You can listen to the collection of 10 poems on the website as well. Visit <https://lakewoldgardens.org/garden-programs/poetry-walk/>

Between March and through the end of summer, you can listen to the poetry as you wander the gardens. Watch for the signs and scan the QR codes with your phone. It's an absolutely stunning historic venue in south Tacoma.

An Edible Garden

for my children,

in response to words lost from the Oxford English Junior Dictionary

The hearts of children
Eat acorns at recess
Taste yellow willow tendrils
Dropped from a shattering wind
Caterpillar says the boy

As time no longer moves
Like it used to a broken line, a wheel
Modern scholars have omitted moss, kingfisher and
Blackberry from the youth dictionary

Yet tulips break red beaks
As April enters the yard
Are flowers ever green? Asks the girl
Hellebore says the mother, remember when
We saw burgundy ones in the garden down the street?

Taking note: the broken flow
Words meant to be of use -
Sea otter, lichen, clover

Bluebells are up
Cheshire moon on the rise casting spells in springtime

Collected shells, feathers, stones beneath the Douglas fir
Where violets grow edible petals they know
Eaten almost in desperation, searching for the sweetness
They seek there
Like bees finding pollen
A psalm, a prayer



Lakewold Gardens - Illustration by Stephen Schildbach stephenschildbach.com

each morning (Version 4)

By Claudia Hollander-Lucas

This poem originated from a call from King County for the Poetry on the Bus project in 2023. The theme was "Landings". My very short poem was designed to touch the everyday commuter with a message of hope to play the long game rather than being overtaken by politics and daily stresses. This poem kept evolving as the world turns - version 4 features the elementals and the human post-modern position toward history and Nature.

each morning

it starts fish-like with a swimmer
who strokes then breaks through the tide
tracking sand in imprints that water will
soon erase. The swimmer stops as an
old rock shift-nods its head-
speaks to swimmer...

*my flesh knows you.
in bones you know me.
my lungs have laid in sediment,
lava, and all that is erupting then spills.
You stand on my cliffs of shell
as I hold your feet.*

Old rock sun-dries the salted flippers and feet...

*I am old. Old fire, old pattern of gales,
the life of shell into salt and sand. I am waves
of green tendrils at shore, the slapping water
against hollow canoes.
I am the SlowTime of mermaids and summer.
I am not oiled or frightened by Greeks.
I am more than ornate columns who proclaim
that Belief and Declaration will spawn right action.*

SlowTime sinks further from flesh as it burrowed
in layers of root. Voices told of mornings when
heaven grew distant from earth, when cicada chose
to sleep in decades rather than days in the nape
of a tree. It became the voice of indifference.

To swimmer this meant almost nothing
nothing beyond the trace of stroke after stroke,
thinking of his climb up through circles toward daybreak,
the daybreak that calls as a siren in a rising sea.

version 4_March 2025

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Island poetry in these pages

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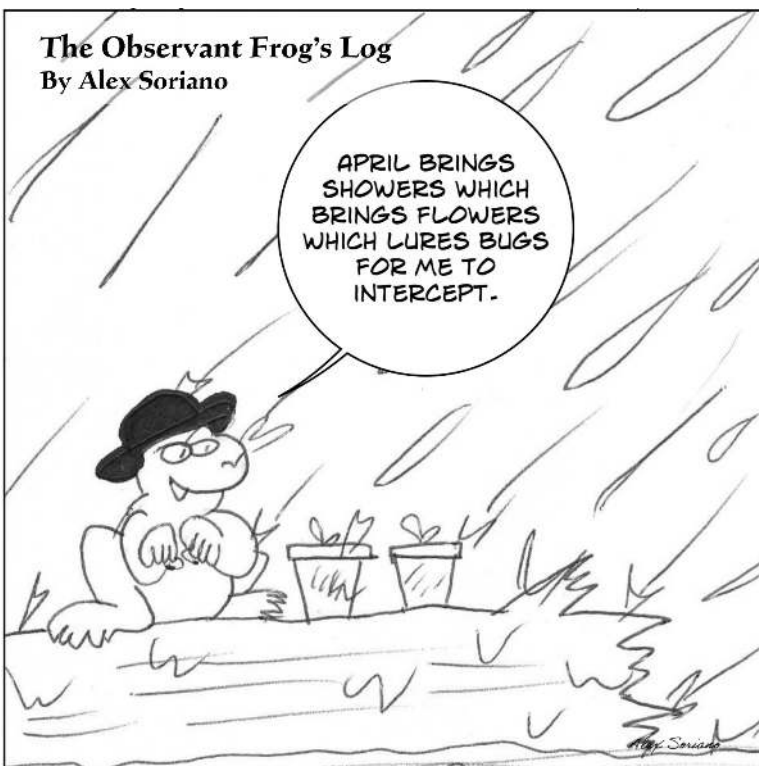
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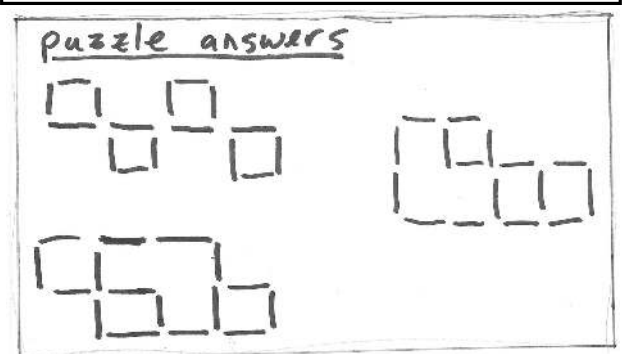
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Math Puzzle Solution

(See Page 10 for Puzzle)

By Anne Cotter Moses



Aries (March 20-April 19)

Neptune enters your sign this month for the first time since April 13, 1861. This is visionary, and you are the one to whom the vision will be coming. Yet you might not quite notice the presence of Neptune except for the sound of your ears popping and the pressure relief as it exits your 12th solar house. More noticeable is that you have two inner planets retrograde in your sign—Mercury and Venus—and you may be struggling to understand your feelings. That's the whole point. Retrogrades are a minor irritant that calls your attention inward. They present special challenges here in the digital age since there is barely such a thing as "within"—meaning inner awareness. The effect of digital is to turn people inside out, to void and nullify any notion of privacy, and to turn the world into a kaleidoscopic mirror that nobody knows is a mirror. So tune in. Visit your inner life. Do things to encourage the establishment of interior space. Read a book and write on paper. When these transits come, inner awareness will not be a luxury. It will be entirely necessary as a means of navigating your life and staying grounded in your personal reality—rather than a dream or fantasy.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

You may feel like you're walking with one foot on either side of a canyon. One side of the canyon is supposed to be the familiar you that you know, though you can't find that person anywhere. On the other side is an inner world that you knew you contained, but had no idea the depth and intensity of your private cosmos. If you want to experience the potential and the beauty of the moment, I suggest you drop any notion that people might think you're weird. This is one of your usual phobias, which is why you dress so impeccably for every occasion and maintain the image of total integrity. That's a brittle container for the kind of inner fire that you're pumping right now. The time is long gone when you can hide from yourself. Get out of your own way. You are joyfully beyond any need to impress anyone.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

There is an old expression about how it's not what you know, but rather who you know that determines your success, and for you that is likely to be true. Your life is now populated with people you never imagined existed, or thought you would get anywhere near. All you have to do is be sincere and remain present for every conversation. Some who you meet are likely to become partners in your success, and you will become partners in theirs. Yet possessing real knowledge is essential, as is knowing where you lack a grasp of a situation. I suggest you never, ever pretend to know something that you do not. You might think that someone presumes a lack of intelligence when a person asks them questions. That is not true. Asking questions, when necessary, is a sign of intelligence and curiosity. Maintain situational awareness in social environments. Pay attention to who notices you; to who is looking at you; to who wants to get your attention. Those are signs of curiosity and invitations for engagement.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your charts are describing a series of breakthrough moments for you in



Planet Waves

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



your vocation or profession. What happens through the month of April will reveal this to you. It's more important that you get a good start than it is that you drive anything to some expected conclusion. All of this is described by activity in Aries, which is where you boldly express yourself in the sphere of worldly business, leadership, and reputation. There's a lot of fire there now, and you must make focused, refined moves that utilize what you know and what you know about yourself. Yet you might use as your mantra, "There is no rush, even if it feels like you must." Over the next month or so, you will make the transition from one stage to the next as planets gather and do some fancy maneuvers at the very top of your solar chart. You are learning about yourself, finding out what you know and giving yourself opportunities to grow in ways you had not imagined before.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

You stand at the brink of a spiritual path based on a relationship to your deep inner being and its quest on the planet at this time. I don't mean self-improvement. I mean some fusion of self-discovery and self-realization. This implies that you are discovering and realizing something that already exists and that you do not have to make or create; you were born this way. The teacher known as Yogananda said it well: "You do not have to struggle to reach God, but you do have to struggle to tear away the self-created veil that hides Him from you." The rare fusion of Chiron and Eris will help you discover or rediscover the inner being that has not been shaped, conditioned or concealed by digital technology. If you proceed with sincerity, you will be ably guided by your inner light.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

As a Virgo, one of your most important necessities is to align yourself with developing resources in ways that are aligned with your values—and that's what's happening now. What you're learning about yourself is revealing possibilities that otherwise seemed unrealistic or unnecessary. Trust yourself enough to be a visionary; and once you can see what you aspire to, be bold enough to take the first steps toward making it real. Yet in this process you will discover the drive and the discipline to create something entirely new and worthwhile. And this will be based on an understanding that only you possess. Don't worry about winning people over. Focus on your own commitment and determination until what you are building takes on a life of its own.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

You may have experiences in your intimate relationships this month unlike anything before. And it's important that you not pre-judge them as good or bad, meaningful or not. Careful observation is required, and that calls for patience. These developments are about your own growth, which means how you respond to your experiences. Remember that your environment is changing; the environment of the world is changing—and I don't mean

global warming. The appeal of the digital world is that it will clean up the untidy or really messy parts of our lives. The message of the AI and the digital environment is that they will save you from being human. Need I say that this is something you don't want? Yet you may be seduced; there are many ways to get lured out of your personhood before you have even claimed yourself fully and before you know what is even happening. Whatever occurs over the next five or six weeks, treasure your humanity every day.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

It would be too easy to lose yourself in work when your spirit is calling for devotion to your healing process. Healing from what? All that ails you; all that worries you; all that you know hinders you. These are not separate problems or situations. Your chart contains a few double-edged swords, and one of them is the way that external effort and the daily grind can consume the bandwidth of your inner growth. Yes, this happens to a lot of people—though you have a special situation: an easy escape hatch (your opposite sign Taurus has something similar, by the way, which suggests that the issue is easy to entrench in your relationships). Just get the shot or take the pill and you won't need to take care of yourself. But none of that is true. You must take care of yourself, and by that I mean focusing on your original instructions and your inner universe. These are your only assurances of sanity and peace.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Your astrology describes the perfect blend of elements needed for a personal rebirth. The world is getting old and it is tired. Yet amidst the dull expectations that may surround you—and at times seem to overtake you—you have the potential to dive deep into personal recreation. This may feel like a stretch, especially if you've been living through an insecure and disillusioning phase. Notice when you experience a more tangible sense of yourself. From that experience look back and recognize the marsh that you've been trying to get across, potentially for years. It would be worthwhile to ask yourself how many of your decisions in these years have been made on the basis of security and not on happiness. This would be an excellent time to recognize that there is a bold difference between the two. Some of the best times of your life have also been the most uncertain. Enlightenment may amount to recognizing that to truly meet existence consciously is nothing more or less than a bold creative experiment.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Keep your home in order. Rather than cleaning your house in one crash event, gradually work to tidy up and get organized. In Marie Kondo style, do a little putting things back where they belong before you get to bed. Dig out a drawer or a closet every couple of days and notice the discoveries you make. We are in a very important year for your home life, and your home is center stage of your spiritual journey. I see you living in a splendid

cave that opens to the ocean, with a view of both land and water. Speaking of water, take care of your plumbing fixtures. Make sure everything works properly and repair what does not. The influence of water is arriving in your home, and your part is to have a conscious relationship with it. Make your bathroom into a cushy little spa—and use it well.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

The recent eclipses and current planetary retrogrades have you in a mental scramble. You must wake up to the nature of the transitions that are dawning in your life, even as the world itself seems to be spinning off its axis. It's not that nobody is noticing the chaos, but it's clear that nearly nobody is considering the source. What is being called "artificial intelligence"—a total misnomer—is the latest and most powerful wave front in a scenario that goes back about 85 years. Only now is it surfacing that the goal is to relieve humans of the supposed burden of thinking for themselves. But this is not relief from anything; it is actually enslavement and the total submission to authority for its own sake. If you are blessed with one thing, it's the ability to have your own ideas. Now is the time to stop and think—for yourself. This will surely apply to specific situations in your life, and also to the big picture of what is happening to our society.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

The more seriously you take the money thing, the more of it you will have; this in turn will give you more options to do what you both want and need. By 'take seriously', I mean honoring the principle that money flows toward structure. This spans everything from planned purchases to budgeting; from bank accounts to business organization. What is more challenging is understanding your own principles, if you even know what they are. Intense, really unbelievably strong activity in Aries from now through the spring of 2026 suggests a few things. One is that you're figuring out how different your priorities are than those of the people around you. These have their roots in your values. The key to happiness and sanity for anyone with Pisces prominent in their chart is living in accord with their values. That comes back to one's purpose, one's deepest motivations, and ultimately to your agreement or commitment related to why you came into this life at all.



**If you look
carefully, everyone
is pretending.**

~ Hafez