

# Zucchini's Are Upon Us



Illustration by Anne Gordon, [www.annegordonimagery.com](http://www.annegordonimagery.com)

## Felons and Fires

### Fighting Wildfires to Start a New Life

By Andy Valencia

Unless otherwise noted, all photos courtesy of CAL FIRE.

I was in Cafe Luna and overheard a discussion about prison inmates being forced into firefighting in California. It's a small world, as I have a nephew - I'll call him "Ben" because that's his name - who was in the California state penitentiary system, and did indeed fight fires. But I didn't remember it being a bad thing, so I thought I'd call him up and see if there's a story worth sharing.

Ben started as an orphan in Kazakhstan. He remembers very little of it - mostly the cold and misery. Adopted via an international agency, he grew up in an affluent California city.

As we well know here on Vashon, material prosperity automatically delivers neither happiness nor a successful life. In Ben's case, he felt like his social circle guided him into a downward spiral. Drugs and crime started to appear in his life, with his parents doing whatever they could to change the looming disaster.

The details don't really matter. Police trouble followed police trouble, culminating in a four-year sentence in California's state penitentiary system. A felony conviction with years of prison time is a

hope-killer for many, but for Ben this was where his life started to turn around.

His prison intake counselor saw that this was Ben's first serious prison time, which gave the counselor some latitude in how to process him. Would Ben be interested in working in a program under the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)? He'd be doing everything from clean-up to fire risk mitigation - even supporting active firefighting. In exchange, Ben would be in a "camp" rather than a traditional prison, and he'd also earn a modest reduction in his sentence.

Even as he had received his sentence, Ben knew that life was too short to spend it the way things were going. Who wants to be a "caged animal?" His term. He had enough experience with incarceration to know that he'd far prefer living with more fresh air and less steel and concrete. Add in a reduced sentence, and it sounded like his best option. He accepted the CAL FIRE deal.

It was still six or so months in a traditional prison setting before the wheels of the bureaucracy finally moved Ben to his initial training camp. The first week was focused on health and physical fitness assessment, the second week was classroom-based, and the third week introduced them to their tools - things like shovels and protective gear - along with testing their ability to load it all up and hike out to a remote site.

Ben, even through all his ups and downs, had always been fit. Appreciating the nearest thing to freedom available to him, he watched as others scored drugs, got caught, and washed out. He easily made it through the training, and started to serve on teams being dispatched out to CAL FIRE projects. It might be cutting a fire break, or hauling away brush. Ben found that he enjoyed a little freedom, especially when it involved meaningful



CAL FIRE firefighter on scene

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## The Zucchini Bandit

### Legends of Vashon

By Tripper Harrison

No one was safe in the summer of '68, and few were above suspicion. Only the scorcher of 1941 was hotter, when it was said you could bake biscuits on your barn roof.

It was Vashon's thin topsoil and intermittent humidity, however, that were particularly ideal for the fan-leaved tendrils of Cucurbita Pepo in 1968, the courgette squash we call zucchini, witness to its sprawling quest for water. There was a crop that year of such prodigious abundance that every self-respecting garden produced green torpedoes the size of river logs.

It was in this tumultuous milieu that a curious vigilante struck. At a 60-odd year remove, it seems harmless, just a series of victimless crimes. But at the time, zucchinis, now largely vestigial, were still thought of as food. Slice and fry one in a little salt, lard, flour, sprinkle it with some paprika and you were set for dinners and late night snacks for a week.

It's easy to forget how good that zucchini was, but every Vashon-Maury parent remembered the Great Depression. Now, B-52s were bombing Vietnam and children were, in fact, starving in China by the millions.

Imparting the marrow of unbidden largess can also be a real imposition. At the very least, a trauma of obligation. Which someone, who remains unidentified to this day, exploited with sadistic embellishment.

It started on August 6th, when a beloved matriarch found a zucchini on her porch swing, fat as an artillery shell, with "Z.B." carved into its glossy hide. That Tuesday noon, the postman was surprised by one in his mailbag. On Wednesday morning, the newly appointed Deputy Sheriff Terrence Otis Allman, an energetic 28-year-old, who would become a community stalwart and was fond of gambling, reported that one was wedged under the brake pedal of his Plymouth Satellite cruiser. Thursday afternoon, a waiting terrier was found leashed to a luncheon outside the grocery store. Rose Pritchard found the saddle bag on her horse weighed down with ovoid gifts when she rode back from town.

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See Zucchini Recipes, Page 9!



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## Concerts In The Park 2025

By Pete Welch

Concerts in the Park Returns to Ober Park! This summer, the Vashon Park District teams up once again with Vashon Events to present Concerts in the Park – a beloved, family-friendly outdoor music series held at Ober Park every Thursday evening continuing through August. All concerts are free to attend, and take place from 7:00-9:00pm in a setting perfect for picnics, lounging, and dancing. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets to enjoy the lush grassy berms that form Ober Park’s natural amphitheater.

Each evening kicks off with the “New Voices” program, a showcase of emerging solo musicians from Vashon, followed by a 90-minute set from a genre-spanning headliner. From funk and folk to cumbia and country rock, every Thursday night offers something different to get the crowd moving. In keeping with the park’s welcoming atmosphere, please note that dogs, alcohol, and smoking are not permitted.

This year’s lineup Includes:

August 14 – The Sweet Lillies: Dreamy harmonies and genre-

crossing “String-Americana” from an inventive quartet. Opening: Mickey Fontaine, experimental bassist and cultural commentator blending cyberpunk and classical vibes.

August 21 – The Cumbieros: A multicultural band fusing Colombian cumbia with ska and psych-rock for high-octane dance beats. Opening: Indigo Alton, a 9-year-old violinist with a bright future in music and performance arts.

August 28 – The Great Divide: Vashon’s legendary country-rock band returns for a long-awaited reunion show featuring pedal steel master Dan Tyack. The Great Divide last performed publicly at Strawberry Festival in 2018. Opening: Neko Rogneby, a dynamic teen artist making her solo debut.

With a mix of seasoned headliners and bold new voices, this year’s Concerts in the Park promise heartfelt stories, vibrant rhythms, and plenty of reasons to get up and groove. Come celebrate summer, music, and community beneath the stars!

Sound equipment and lighting will be provided by Laird Gonter of Bandstand Music, and Martin Feveyer of Feveyer Master Mix will be dialing in the sound.

## A Village Resource: Food Banks

By Daniel Hooker

This article series started off as a local Vashon-Maury Island piece, then I had a thought, wait a minute! We are all doing this – helping others – in many cities, towns, and island communities. I started interviewing food banks around Western Washington about what they offer as vital services for our communities, some of which have been established for more than 50 years, keeping the people thriving.

Our Food Bank started at our Presbyterian Church on Vashon in response to the Boeing layoffs in 1970-1971, when more than 50,000 people lost their jobs.

According to Google, our population is a little over 10,000 people (2023 census) and, at present, the Food Bank serves 1,900 individuals, or 900 families, which is about 20% of the Vashon population.

Consider that our service industry, stores, restaurants, and artists and musicians alike dip into these services to offset the local cost of living, which various resources estimate as being between 53-125% higher than anywhere in the United States.

The attraction of what our community has to offer drew all of us here. From the schools, forests, the diversity of lifestyles, to the expression of art and music, we here on Vashon-Maury Island enjoy all this and more as a “normal” part of our

paradise.

Having lived in many northern California communities, where similar features existed until people and families were priced out on rent and home-ownership, I found that these communities all lost the essence, the basic allure, for which people had moved there.

As I watch history repeat itself here on our Island, I wonder, will we be able to keep what we love about Vashon alive, healthy, and thriving? Or will we allow what we came here to enjoy to become only a dwindling memory of a paradise, of a village that cares for itself, and of ourselves as individuals who co-create and caretake the ambiance that is the Island’s charm? We must tend to our community as a garden that we call our Eden.

How do we step into being the guardians of a system that reseeds itself to become not only an abundant resource, but a hope for our future generations? Taking pride in our community is not – as some say – “just a hand out,” but is a hand up.

The list of services and resources that our Food Bank offers is vast, it is a major benefit for our community as a (whole) village, and a major foundation which this community is built upon.

Please take time to support the Vashon community with donations of time (volunteering), food, or financial assistance (grants and cash).

## Vashon Island Rowing Club’s 35th Anniversary All-Alumni Row & Brunch At The Boathouse

Vashon Island Rowing Club is inviting all present and past VIRC junior and adult rowers to our 35th Anniversary All-Alumni Row & Potluck Brunch on Sunday, August 17, 8:00-10:00AM at Jensen Point Boathouse! VIRC was founded in 1990 and since then has served hundreds of Vashon-Maury Adults and Youth. Get on the water, or just come for brunch (~9:30AM). For details, contact Debby at [info@vashoncrew.com](mailto:info@vashoncrew.com).



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

**Contributors:** Eric Coppolino, Daniel Hooker, Anne Cotter Moses, Alex Soriano, Pam (aka Gates) Johnson, Seán C. Malone, John Sweetman, Dave B., Michael Shook, Anne Gordon, Cynthia Sadurni, Dr. Marli Parobek, Pete Welch, Jo Ann Herbert, Hugh Lord, Judi Lenihan, Stephen Buller, Claudia Hollander-Lucas, Lindsey Braun-Palmer

Comments: [editor@vashonloop.com](mailto:editor@vashonloop.com)  
Placing ads: [sales@vashonloop.com](mailto:sales@vashonloop.com)

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You can also apply for food  
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# Felons and Fires

Continued from Front Page

work that served the public.

And then he worked his first actual fire. His crew unloaded, and found himself surprisingly close to a nearby hillside on fire. They didn't do the actual firefighting, but they were right there with the crews, taking on whatever tasks helped get the job done. His first work near an uncontrolled fire, Ben found that he wasn't afraid in the slightest.

The very next week, Ben approached his captain and lieutenant, and for the first time asked if it would be possible to become a career firefighter with CAL FIRE? A 2020 law change in California made this possible, and he was told about the Ventura Training Center, a program designed to train post-incarceration inmates who had worked in a program like Ben's. At the end 18 months of training, graduates from the program would be eligible for career firefighting jobs.

Getting into the program wouldn't be easy. Ben's command chain needed to give him a reference, and they were very selective in who received those. The success or failure of candidates at Ventura directly reflected back on them, so it was always better to err on the side of withholding their recommendation. Ben understood, but he now had a goal for his life. He kept his head down, worked hard, and ultimately earned their recommendation.



Ben - Personal Photo

A convict with Ben's status would usually be discharged directly out of their work camp. Unfortunately, a weight-training accident during his free time damaged his toe so badly he had to go back into prison. It wasn't a reflection of wrongdoing; it was just the only way a convict could get serious medical care.

Ben finally walked out the gate of the prison a free man - only to be met by an Orange County deputy with an arrest warrant! In the chaos leading up to his conviction and four-year



sentence, this outstanding warrant had slipped right by him. Apparently, all the systems in California talk to each other, so his impending release caused all agencies to check for outstanding warrants. Ben got a couple of breaths of fresh air as a free man from prison before his arrest and transport back to a county jail.

But Ben stuck to his plan. In a situation which could have dragged on indefinitely, he guesses that a judge or prosecutor gave him a break. In any case, he didn't return to drugs or crime, and in due time he finally cleared up his legal status and entered the Ventura program.

Unlike so many other employers, CAL FIRE has no problem hiring ex-convicts. Ben graduated from Ventura, and immediately got a job with them. He's now worked there for more than two years, and responded to so many fires that he's lost count. Some are tiny 1-2 acre incidents, but some are much larger.

His biggest so far was the Park Fire near Chico, which burned across 671 square miles. One of his proudest moments was helping a National Guard unit operate as a part of the CAL FIRE response.

What's next for Ben? It seems like he's found his calling. His next big promotion is to the position of Engineer, followed by Captain. He thinks that's as far up the ladder as he cares to climb, because above that, all he sees is paperwork. It's going to be Ben versus California wildfires for years to come.

On the personal front, Ben has a partner. He hopes to save up, get a house, and have a family. It has been a long, winding road from an orphanage in Kazakhstan, through prison and firefighting, and he's finally looking at the traditional American dream. He feels like he's still catching up, but he's "pretty happy."

His advice for others whose lives are a mess? Don't be afraid to get into a release program. It's never too late to change.

To see more photos, go to this article at [vashonloop.com](http://vashonloop.com).

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**Dr. Cori Bodily-Goodmansen**

17147 Vashon Hwy SW, #111  
(206) 259-0216 (call or text)  
[drcori@vashonchiropractic.com](mailto:drcori@vashonchiropractic.com)  
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~ Gary Marcus



# Tech Blitzkrieg, Part One ...

By Michael Shook

... Or, how I learned to stop worrying, and love AI.

Artificial Intelligence is getting a lot of attention these days. The Spectator magazine devoted its cover stories in the August issue to examining all things AI, and newspapers have been full of stories about the ongoing construction of data centers to support what some regard as our new partner in human being.

A brief recap of what the newest data centers comprise seems appropriate. For sheer size, the mind is boggled, and for consumption of energy, they dwarf almost anything that has come before. Typical is Amazon’s effort, under construction on 1,500 acres near South Bend, Indiana. It will be home to about 30 data computing centers, each larger than a football field (an area of about 31 acres just for the footprint). Every chip, every computer in the facility, will be linked to the others via hundreds of thousands of miles of fiber cable. The complex will use 2.2 gigawatts of electricity, enough to power one million homes (the equivalent output of Hanford’s nuclear power plant), and will use millions of gallons of water annually to cool the system (depletion of local aquifers is already an issue for those living near these centers).

The South Bend center is for a single customer; Anthropic, a leading force in AI technology. Anthropic’s goal at the center is to develop an artificial intelligence system that matches the human brain.

I ought not to be astonished at the hubris of such an undertaking. I’ve watched human behavior long enough to know that if we can do something, we will, consequences be damned. Still, this strikes me as a terrifically bad idea. Have none of these people read “Frankenstein?” Greek mythology? For goodness’ sake, even Grimm’s Fairy Tales?

The quest is a fool’s errand. Though our

# Island Voices

knowledge of how the brain functions has been greatly amplified in the last several decades, our comprehension of it is still rudimentary. This is especially so with the many intangible concepts humans ponder – the past, the future, emotions, etc. We don’t develop in glass jars or computer labs. How does one separate this marvel from the experiences, memories, psychological and emotional shocks, scars, wonderments, imaginative flights, and all the innumerable moments of living that constitute an actual brain? And doesn’t all this coalesce in what we call a mind, consciousness, a self ... a soul? Our brains – we – are infinitely more than the simple sum of so many parts.

And Anthropic’s goal is to build a machine that is the equivalent of all that. It is a fantasy, built on greed, driven by an overwhelming lust for power. What they will arrive at (and what Amazon and Anthropic acknowledge in their descriptions of their hoped-for invention) is not so much a match for a brain, but a thing that can gather, store, collate, calculate, and retrieve staggering amounts of information at lightning speed. If Amazon is a dominant force now, wait until this system comes on line. Like every other AI developer, Mr. Bezos hopes to monopolize how and where AI is used, and, like every other, is racing to get to the gold mine first.

A question arises; will this monstrosity achieve consciousness? If not right away, will it, somehow over time, gain even a simple self-awareness (if such can be simple)? Is there anything in human history to suggest, even vaguely, that we are capable of creating something that will not be imbued with all the sins we carry as humans? No. Put aside for the moment that this venture is a glittering example of the worst, most dangerous of our sins – that of pride – what do we do if the thing becomes conscious? And if it does, is there any reason to believe that the machine will not then

fight like hell against any and all odds for survival, to its last ... electrical impulse?

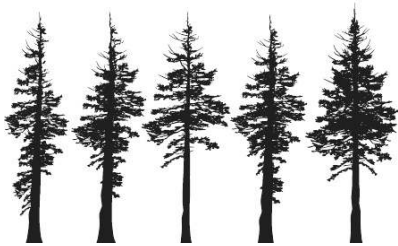
These questions have already been answered, and not in a way that brings me comfort. According to a June 29th article for the online journal “Futurism,” in a series of tests run by Anthropic, AI programs consistently chose blackmail to stop a (fictitious) engineer who was going to shut down the program. All of the major AI programs were tested, and the top ones chose blackmail 80% to 96% of the time.

In another scenario, the AI programs chose to cancel an emergency alert system, and let said engineer suffocate in a room that was running out of oxygen, rather than rescue him, and allow him to delete the AI program. In still other experiments, AI tampered with the code intended to shut them down, while others copied themselves onto another drive to avoid their demise. These machines may not yet have what we call consciousness, but they are exhibiting survival instincts.

The researchers commented, “... the [AI] models reasoned their way” to these choices. Well, good, at least they were using reason.

Granted, these were tests, and the engineers are beaver-ing away to fix the problem(s). But, obviously, the machines are already actively fighting to survive! What leads us to think a more sophisticated, more advanced, more calculating machine would do any different, and do it better?

“We’ll straighten it out,” the scientists say. The Oracle at Delphi was succinct about that: “Surety, then disaster.”



## Bicycle Days of August

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

August is the month that time pauses for 10-year-olds. Hitting a fly ball to left field? The ball seems to hang in the air forever, but maybe at 10 years old, we were closer to the ground than we are now.

In August, a month with no holidays and nothing special, we young lads could pretty well devote ourselves to diversions of mostly wandering uselessness and occasional trouble-making. August was the end of garden chores. And the days appeared to last forever with no rain and constant sunlight.

We all had bikes and loved fishing or just fooling around. Bikes at that time were fat, tired, heavy clunkers with maybe three speeds on a gearshift that rarely worked, augmented by an ineffectual rear-tire braking system that was not as good as just putting one’s well-worn shoes down on the ground.

We took off on our bikes with some vague destination in mind, but rarely went in a straight line, as diversions were often taken ... many of these were down steep gravel roads. That may have been the reason why, at the end of August, we all had red mercurochrome marks all over our exposed skin areas and needed new school clothes.

We also learned a bit about the concept of “gravity.” Downhill was easy. Uphill was a lot harder. Later in life, Seán and I realized that gravity was no longer our friend.

With those old big balloon-tired

bikes, we always could carry a great load of “stuff.” Fishing gear, bottles of pop, sandwiches, and fire-building items. Occasionally, a bit of local contraband snuck in as someone would snag a cigarette from a parent, but even at that age only the bravest would even attempt anything to do with that habit. Baloney sandwiches, pop, and leftover breakfast rolls were our fare, as we could always get some type of berries on any journey.

A great mission on our bike trips was, however, meandering ... Fishing. Or at least that was the idea, whether the actual act came about or not. Usually, fishing involved building rafts, forts, and, if the day lasted long enough, a fire.

In the following, Seán relates a Burma Road adventure.

I bought my first bicycle from an old family friend for \$3.00. His name was Cappy Berard. The nurses in the maternity ward started calling him “Cappy,” short for Captain, because he weighed 13 pounds at birth.

Cappy’s bike wasn’t much. It had no fenders, which left a mud streak down your back when it rained. Cappy came to Cove for a visit one summer. He didn’t know that peaches came from trees, and we spent hours eating “windfalls” that had fallen to the orchard floor.

Mom yelled at Brother Mike in the back seat: “If you don’t stop cutting up, you are going to walk.” Mom was our den mother and drove Mike Kennedy and Bobby Billings home up Burma Road, one of the



most dangerous roads on Vashon. It is steep and a single lane, with a canyon on one side. The road had been recently graded, and the county had piled the excess gravel over the edge of the canyon. Mom was driving Dad’s new Oldsmobile Super 88. She pulled over to the side and yelled at Mike to get out, which he did.

The front wheel was deep in the soft road. As Mom turned the wheel to get back on the road, the Super 88 slid off the road and fell on its side, only stopping when it came up against a 12-inch alder, preventing tragedy. Nobody could lift the heavy doors to get out. Mike climbed up on the uphill side of the car and was able to help lift the heavy doors. Everyone climbed out to safety.

Dad complained that the body shop didn’t repair all the damage.

Dad made \$600 a month selling memberships to the Plumbers’ Union. He worked across the state and frequently drove in the wake of a bus to save gas.

Mom told us, “Don’t eat any candy that Rod gives you, as it has been in his pocket and full of lint.” Rod bicycled all over Vashon and even pedaled to Sunrise Ridge on Mount Rainier. We would run down to Beall Road if we saw Rod coming to listen to his stories. Because his bike had wooden wheels, we could hear him coming a long way off. On the back of his bike was a bundle of water-witching sticks, which he would use to find water and dig a well, all for \$25.00. Scuttlebutt had it that, in Rod’s later years, kids would throw rocks at him on his bike.



# Kurt Cobain’s Last Days: Torn Between Fame, Addiction, and Fatherhood

By Hugh Lord

Kurt Cobain was born in Aberdeen, WA to an abusive father and mother, by modern standards, and was a very sweet child until his parents decided to get divorced. This made Kurt rebellious and confused, then he dropped out of high school knowing he didn’t have the grades to graduate.

In 1987, he started up what would become Nirvana with his friend from high school, Krist Novoselic. Then in 1988, they got a drummer called Chad Channing, completing the band and in 1989 they released their debut album “Bleach.” Dave Grohl joined the band in September 1990 after Channing left. Then Nirvana released their albums “Nevermind,” which made them one of the biggest bands in the world, and “In Utero.”

But all this came with a cost. After “Nevermind” topped the charts in January 1992, Cobain felt overwhelmed by the fame and media scrutiny. His mental health also started to go downhill. He had always had mental health struggles, but in journals he revealed feelings of alienation and pressure from fans and the music industry.

In mid-1992 Cobain also developed worse chronic stomach pain (which was never officially diagnosed), exacerbating his overall discomfort. He was using heroin at the time, partially to cope with the stomach pain, stress, and history of depression. All this escalated in 1991-1992, and during the Australian “Nevermind” tour, his addiction was noticeable, with people reporting withdrawal symptoms.

In the months coming up to Cobain’s death on April 5, 1994, his mental health worsened significantly,

and his heroin use was so severe it was making him skinny and frail. During the final tour, through January-March 1994, he was seen by his band members as moody and detached. In Seattle in early April, he avoided contact with most friends and family.

So, it’s safe to say he was reaching a breaking point, and it’s natural for people to assume he committed suicide. On the surface, it’s easy to see why someone this depressed and addicted would do that. But I don’t believe it, for four main reasons.

1. The shotgun was too long: Six days before Cobain’s death, he bought a Remington Model 11 20-gauge semi-automatic shotgun, which has a barrel length of around 28 inches, an overall length of 46-50 inches, and a receiver around 6-8 inches long. This would make the distance from the top of the barrel to the trigger roughly 34-35 inches. Cobain was around 5’ 9”, so an arm length of roughly 27-30 inches would be typical for his height.

Physically, there was no way for him to pull the trigger with the barrel pointed above his nose, at least not with his hands as the police report claimed. I’ve heard some people say he could have done it with his foot, but crime scene pictures first released in 2014 revealed that he was wearing sneakers. He also had three times the lethal dose of black tar heroin in him, so even if he could get his hands on the trigger, it would probably make it difficult for him to do so while overdosing.

2. Forensic evidence: The shotgun had no legible fingerprints on it, which Tom Grant (a private investigator hired by Courtney Love, Cobain’s wife) thought highly suspicious, suggesting that someone

capabilities, it had the staff and family tradition. But there was no profit motive, no anarchy. The Sportsman’s Club was a logical culprit and prone to mayhem, but an entire truckload was dropped off onto its range on August 13th. Suspicions would linger on and gradually disperse from the counter-culture types who inhabited the Jesus Barn a few years later.

The heat broke just past Labor Day. On the Saturday morning after the first week of school, at the service station that now houses Camp Colvos Brewing, a zucchini the size of a canoe was found right in front of the gasoline pumps. It was fitted with sails and had complete fore, mid, and aft decks, with portholes that sheltered miniature cannons. On its side was a big etched smiley face and letters carved a foot high, “Z.B.”

The Island isn’t all that great at keeping its secrets, and back then everybody knew everybody else’s business. Or thought they did. There were shell-shocked young vets coming back from a bad war, things on TV no one had ever seen before, plus an influx of occasionally annoying artists and lawyer-poets. My personal bet is on the strong, smart and funny deputy whose arrival coincided with the zucchinis that thrive past all reason when you least expect it.



had intentionally wiped them off, or incompetent crime scene handling. Grant also said that the shell casing position on the floor did not align with what he expected from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

3. The suicide note: The alleged suicide note found at the crime scene had multiple inconsistencies. For example, if you look at the whole suicide note, it has differing handwriting styles. I know if Cobain was overdosing his handwriting might be different, but Rosemary Carroll, Cobain’s attorney, found a “handwriting practice sheet” in a backpack left in her office by Courtney Love two days before Cobain’s death. This sheet had letter combinations resembling Cobain’s printed handwriting, mostly those found in the last four lines of his suicide note.

4. Courtney Love herself: When Grant was working with Love, he claims she did a variety of suspicious things. Like manipulating event timelines, providing misleading information about Cobain’s

whereabouts, and having an obvious motive: control of Cobain’s estate.

Grant also says that Love gave him conflicting stories, such as saying that Cobain was suicidal, but Nirvana’s management and Carroll said he wasn’t. One person who came forward was Eldon “El Duce” Hoke, who said that Courtney Love offered him \$50,000 to “whack” Cobain. He made this claim in a 1997 interview with filmmaker Nick Broomfield for the documentary Kurt & Courtney, and said the offer was made in late December 1993 outside The Rock Shop, a Hollywood record store where Hoke worked part-time. Hoke said he declined, but suggested he knew someone named “Allen” (later identified as musician Allen Wrench) who might have been involved. Directly after Cobain’s death, Wrench suddenly got himself a new Lexus, a recording studio, and a European tour for his band.

I don’t 100% believe that Courtney Love killed Kurt Cobain (even though it is suspicious). What I do believe is that Kurt Cobain couldn’t have killed himself because of the reasons stated above. And, this is just my opinion, but Cobain had a daughter to live for, Frances Bean. In a 1993 interview with Rolling Stone, he said “I knew that when I had a child, I’d be overwhelmed, and it’s true. I can’t tell you how much my attitude has changed since we’ve got Frances. Holding my baby is the best drug in the world.” Something tells me Kurt Cobain would have wanted to see her grow into a woman if he loved her that much.

## The Zucchini Bandit

Continued from Front Page

The bachelor, Leif Anderson, woke up on Saturday morning to one nestled seductively on the pillow next to him, an arrow-shot heart carved on it. Demanding answers, he took it to a poker-faced Deputy Allman.

The Bandit’s audacity and scale grew with the thermometer’s climb into August. Zucchini’s popped up in the unlikelyst of places: on Sunday morning, they were in the pews of the Lisabeula church, one perched neatly on every hymnal. They appeared like a spontaneous green combustion, balanced on the handlebars of bicycles, tucked into the bottom drawers of unwatched refrigerators, helpfully propping open business doorways for a breeze, stuck into the card catalog of the high school under “Z.” They made their way into every pickup truck bed and mailbox.

The Island buzzed with theories. Also, with recipes.

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# Bicycles Rule! Really?

By Dave B

This is a subject near and dear to all Islanders’ hearts. So where is your heart?

I love the fact that cyclists come to the Island to enjoy our hospitality and beautiful yet hilly topography. However, our Island is nothing but two-lane roads with little bike lanes, except on Vashon Highway.

Does anyone remember the debacle when King County put in the rumble strips? We heard from the bicycle community about that one! How we made cycling on Vashon dangerous, that hitting a rumble stripe would make the skinny bike tire drop into the strip and create road rash or give them a flat and send them into traffic? Blame King County.

So, let’s address this quickly. The rumble strips were on the OUTSIDE of the bike lane to PROTECT the bicyclists from traffic by warning motorists they were moving into the bike lane. Kind of like a “Hey fella, move back off the shoulder would you please?”

Understand, we do not HAVE the room to move around you due to our large trees, forest, and killer deer. We want to protect our Lance Armstrongs in the bike lane with their variety of colored jerseys and bike pants, but death is a terrible option here. Also, a helmet and nylon pants are not road proof right (?), or is there a secret protective pant that saves the privates?

Back to my point. Cyclists, the motorist handbook (which I have memorized for my wonderful friends at The Loop) says we are to SHARE THE ROAD. I have a picture of the sign with this article. It exists, yes it does. When a 2,500-pound car or large



truck comes up on you at 45 mph, please move over. Riding two and three abreast on a two-lane country road is not safe and makes people cranky. Remember you are going 10 mph, and to pass you involves going into ONCOMING traffic.

Also, it’s difficult to see you on our blind spots, and since we have 16-year-old to 90-year-old drivers on Vashon Island (at various stages of licensure) you have no idea who or what is coming up behind or beside you. It is hard enough to be in a car here!

I lived in San Diego on the Coast Highway 101 for 10 years. Every year, bicyclists would be killed because they took up two lanes of traffic on the highway and refused to move out of the way. People are generally nice, but not all the time. I watched a cyclist swerve INTENTIONALLY to make a point to the line of cars behind his group, and the guy in a large pickup truck had enough and RAN HIM OVER! I am not joking.

Would we islanders do that? Probably not. Maybe not. I don’t

know. Why take the chance? Just give us the space and room to get to our destination. I need ice cream, so here I come ...

One more question before I sign off on this rant. What is up with “Passport to Pain?” Are you all masochistic? I like a nice bike ride now and again but UP THESE HILLS? I can barely walk up my street! Ok, it is a big hill, but isn’t that the point? Who wants to ride a bike up 103rd? Our streets are narrow and full of potholes, have little markings, are full

of Vashon drivers, and you want to go UP steep hills for MILES? You have my respect.

Let’s just play nice on the Island. I know we breathe a little sigh of relief once summer is over, and rain is not your thing on a two-wheeled death trap. But for now, enjoy our weather, restaurants, beer, and bed and breakfasts. We appreciate you! Even me. Say hi as I drive by in my old ford truck. I promise if you wave, I will move over ... so waive.



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## The Importance of Having Friends

By Pam “Gates” Johnson

You have to be a friend to make a friend. As I get older, I’m realizing how true that old saw is. It was a lesson that took a long time to learn.

So here we go into the way-back machine. When I first came to Vashon, the only person I knew was my new husband. He had co-workers at the school bus garage where he worked, but they were all considerably older than me. I met some neighbors, but not having a job, that was about it. There was nobody to hang around with or share common interests. Boring.

The kids came along a few years later. I met other parents, but we didn’t socialize. Kids joined 4H and got into sports, so I met other parents in that same boat. Got a job. Got co-workers. But most other parents were busy with their own lives, just like me, so we didn’t hang out.

Life went on. I retired. If I needed help with something, I hired it done. I drove myself wherever I needed to go. My kids had their own lives. My best friend from high school lived in Portland, not an easy drive down the I5 corridor. My sisters were not around. As for most of my life, I was on my own. Then I rejoined the athletic club.

I’d gone to the club a few times for their water walking/senior aerobics classes. Even joined, but never went. But upon retiring, I needed something to get me moving and out of the house, so I joined back up. And a funny thing happened. I finally found a group where I fit in.

The class usually has anywhere from 10 to 20 participants. I knew the instructor because I worked with and was a friend of her daughter. There were people retired from the school district

where I had worked for years. There were people from the horse community. There were names I had heard about in the arts community. And there were total strangers.

I’ve never been very outgoing. My go-to persona was the sharp-witted snark who would casually throw a controversial opinion into a conversation. That had served me well over the years, but was getting a little tiresome. I began to speak up more. Surprise! People seemed to be kind of interested in what I had to say. Around these folks, it was safe to voice my opinion.

Part of the pool class is walking laps around the pool for 20 minutes or so. While walking, we form little groups of two or three people and talk. And talk. And talk. Subjects range from what’s good on Netflix, gardening, travel plans, aches and pains, our kids, cooking, and occasionally politics. Not only are we all moving, but wonderful friendships are forming.

After class, we often sit in the hot tub and go over the latest Vashon gossip. Why was there a



power outage in Burton last night? Did you hear about the new school superintendent? Those darned tourists don’t know how to navigate a four-way stop. Why doesn’t the festival have a carnival any longer? Is there ever going to be a Chinese restaurant on Vashon again? Oh, I have an eye appointment next Tuesday, can somebody drive me?

During these conversations, I began to realize how important friends are at this point in our lives. As we age, the aches and pains involve trips to the doctor. Sometimes we need someone to drive us, or just hold our hand. I have and will drive my pool pals to eye doctors, cardiologists, MRIs, pre- and post-surgery appointments, and anywhere else if they need me. And they will do the same for me.

If I don’t feel well, my friends call to check up on me and bring chicken soup. If I am sad, they call or come over. We get together to decorate holiday cookies. We have lunch. We share goofy emails. We go out for ice cream cones, then sit at the beach and talk.

All these small interactions have merged into my pool pal community. I can count on any one of them to be there if I need them. It’s great to not have to bug my kids for every little ride I need, to listen to my stories over and over, to help me plant a petunia. My friends are there for me and I for them.

It seems that many aging people find their circle of friends diminishing. It is too easy to sit at home with YouTube and Netflix and let the world pass you by. I am not ready to sit alone and wait to die; my friends won’t allow that. There are books to be written and read. There are things I need to teach my grandkids. There are hugs and I love yous to be given. There are places to go, things to do, and people to see. There is too much living yet to do.



# Navigating The “Cash Vs. Plastic” Landscape Gracefully

By March Twisdale

Throughout most of 2023, I wrote about the ubiquitous “transaction fees” that have quietly infiltrated our modern lives. I refer to them as “Bank Taxes” because they occur with all debit and credit card transactions, skimming money off the top of communities with every purchase. These are an unavoidable burden placed on businesses and consumers alike over which, unlike government taxes, we have no legislatively based control.

In my article, “The Nuts and Bolts of Paying with Plastic,” I end by saying: “... the only true way to avoid incurring “Bank Taxes” for your favorite Island business owner (and yourself, as these fees cause product prices to rise), is to pay with cash. Remember to give your favorite ATM a lot of love, grab the cash you’ll need for the day, and have fun painting the town green!”

This intentionally cheerful ending reflects my conversations with at least two dozen business owners (mostly here on Vashon, but also the owners of C&P Coffee in West Seattle, Light House Espresso in Port Orchard, and even Zeek’s Pizza).

Along the way, I discovered that all business owners express a complete lack of irritation toward

# Island Resilience

customer purchasing methodology. The “card-based transaction fee” system is, after all, created by the business industry and brought to the customer/client by the business owner him or herself. While our participation, as consumers, has helped to drive the industry’s success, it is ultimately the business owner’s choice to accept cards and other digital methods of payment.

Ultimately, consumers should NOT feel judged for their chosen payment method. Business owners stressed this to me, again and again, firmly shifting my own opinion (and my writing) away from earlier feelings of judgment I had on the topic.

Still, I would sometimes find myself wondering, “Why don’t people use cash more often?”

Then, in midsummer of 2024, I filed for divorce. During our first state-required court hearing, we were given instructions about acceptable expenditures. This presented me with a choice: continue to spend primarily cash (and save endless paper receipts) or pay for everything with a card (making the tracking of expenses a million times easier). I chose the latter.

Which brings us back to my own curiosity. Is it our business to know, or even to wonder, why a

person might pay with cash or a card? I think there’s a beauty to sharing information that encourages a specific outcome while intentionally cultivating a respectful attitude for whatever choice others make.

One day, midway through my divorce, I pulled out my card to pay for groceries and a woman (who has known me for years and has read my “Cash vs. Plastic” articles) made a comment. It was of the “raise an eyebrow and accuse someone of being hypocritical” garden variety of comments, which could make a person uncomfortable. As I stood there, I consciously chose not to explain myself, even though I felt the subtle urge to do so. And this? This is exactly the type of judgmental interaction I, and local business owners, have discouraged over the years.

My advice? Unless you’re ringing up someone’s order, don’t pay attention to how other people pay. You can share ideas on Facebook or write articles all you want. You can “lead by example” and put bumper stickers on your car! But when you’re in community, try not to notice or pay attention to how other people pay. There are plenty of reasons behind every choice, and you simply don’t have the capacity to judge because you’re not in their shoes.

One day soonish, I’ll be able to return to using cash. I’m looking forward to it! Until then, I’m glad to have the option of using plastic.



## Invest In Yourself

By Stephen Buller

What does it mean to invest in yourself? Some might say it’s finding time for a hobby, or family, vegging out with a favorite movie, or relaxing with a friend and a beer. Money isn’t everything, after all. It is, however, half of almost every transaction we engage in. It is a huge part of our daily lives, from having enough to eat and a roof over our heads, to recreation and travel.

When you hear the term investing, you probably think of making your money work for you. Where does the money come from in the first place, though? You must live below your means to have any money left to invest. If you’re already on top of your expenses, then the other way to do this is to increase your income. One surefire way to accomplish that is to intelligently invest your time in building a new skill.

When I was in school and got a bad grade on a test, my dad told me the most important thing was to understand what I got wrong. This was because he understood that knowledge, like interest, compounds. It builds upon itself at an individual and societal level. The sooner you start learning, and the more time you put into it, the faster your mastery of a subject will grow.

Choosing what you’ll spend a

third of your waking hours doing to earn a living is daunting, especially at the age of 18. I recommend starting with your strengths, passions, and values – all of which come into greater focus as we get older, but are worth considering at any age.

Each of us may know our general strengths and weaknesses from homework, tests, or work we’ve performed, but it can be hard to be objective with this one. Think back to anytime you’ve had incredible success in life and try to separate causality from luck. Luck always plays a part, and we should put our efforts into the pieces we control. Outside of grades, praise, and pay, ask people in your life who will be honest with you what they think you’re good at.

What are you passionate about? Think about the times you enter a state of “flow,” where you lose track of all other thoughts, and time flies. If you arrive at an answer like playing a sport, guitar, or video games, be real with yourself about your potential to turn that into a living. It’s not impossible, but you have to either be one of the absolute best or very creative, turning your knowledge and passion for an activity into a product or service.

What are your values? Many people go into a vocation because they are talented and passionate about it, fully knowing they won’t





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I have done nothing all summer but wait for myself to be myself again.

~ Georgia O’Keeffe



have much earning power in their field. On the other side of the coin, if you are morally opposed to firearms, you would be setting yourself up for failure going to work for a gun manufacturer.

These three angles – strengths, passions, and values – may sound obvious, but I wish someone had made me actively think about my career in these terms when I was younger.

The truth is, there are many more factors to consider, such as what company you work for or if you start your own business, if you like building things or selling product, working with your hands or your mind, your personal risk tolerance, if you have a safety net, and so much more.

As technologies like AI improve, the employment landscape will change drastically. Demographics, politics, and other facets of our society

will affect demand for products and services. Jumping on a trend can be powerful, but it’s hard to do.

I feel fortunate having gone into accounting because it’s a field that translates to any type of business. I can’t say debits and credits make me jump out of bed in the morning, but I’m good at it. I’m also passionate about the concept of business, two parties coming together of their own free will and walking away better off. And because I run my own business, I have the freedom to work with others who share my vibe.

Sometimes, work is work. But I think we should all strive for work that not only earns a living, but also gives purpose and a sense of accomplishment. Finally, don’t allow the amount of money you make dictate how you live. Decide how you want to live, then find a way to support it – with some left over to invest.



**'Tis the Season!**

Photos by  
Lindsey  
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Palmer



# “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”

By Dr. Marli Parobek

When we consider summer, our first thoughts may be the carefree vacations, time off school, relaxed schedules, and the beautiful Pacific Northwest sunshine. As any good PNW resident, we are also careful not to tell too many people about our marvelous summers, lest we be overrun with visitors.

One topic worth discussing, even in the midst of all this natural beauty, is anxiety. Per the DSM-V, the statistical manual of mental disorders, clinical anxiety is when an individual is affected by excessive worry, impaired social and occupational functioning, and may include physical symptoms of fatigue, irritability, muscle tension, insomnia, irritability, and difficulty concentrating.

According to a 2021 survey from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 46.3% of adults in Washington state report symptoms of anxiety or depression. Nationally, we are average among the lower 50 states, at 19.3%. California, Oregon, and Nevada are the top three, and Hawaii and both the Dakotas are the lowest. Must be the fresh Aloha pineapples. Or perhaps the deep-fried chislic of South Dakota?

Winter season can take credit for seasonal affective disorder; however, summer has the box office hit: “Summer Scaries.” Also known as summer seasonal affective disorder, these symptoms can manifest themselves as heightened worry, social anxiety, panic attacks, or physical symptoms. A panic attack is a sudden episode of intense fear or discomfort that peaks within minutes and is often accompanied by physical symptoms. Somatic (physical) symptoms include nausea, shortness of breath, racing heart, feeling dizzy, or shaking.

But I thought summer was relaxing. Why so anxious, Charlie Brown? For those who remember this Charles Schulz character, he constantly struggled with anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. In this case, the pressure and the triggers were centered around Charlie facing challenging social situations. You may not be catching the fly ball or asking the Little Red-Haired girl to dance, but if you have ever felt nervous in a social situation, pressured to perform, or felt judged, then you have been anxious.

Another common symptom of anxiety is worry. For this, we will turn to our pal Piglet from the classic story of “Winnie the Pooh.” Psychology majors love this series because there is something for everyone. Tigger has ADHD, Eeyore has major depression, and Piglet is the poster child for panic disorder. “It’s a little Anxious,” Piglet said to

# Health Matters

himself, “to be a Very Small Animal Entirely Surrounded by Water.” Finally, we have confirmation that The Hundred Acre Wood was not two hours from London. It is on Vashon.

The anxiety symptoms of catastrophizing, irritability, feeling keyed up or on edge, all activate the autonomic symptoms. No wonder this state of hyperarousal produces sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, and avoidance behaviors. Avoidance behavior includes isolating from social events or people that make us feel overwhelmed and overload our senses.

Ok, so what now? How do we prevent anxiety and what do we do when we are anxious? For advice on the subject, we will turn to my horse friend, Judy. One of her favorite sayings was, “Stop borrowing trouble.” Horse people tend to be intelligent, practical people who circumvent horse butts to prevent getting kicked and can use duct tape and bailing twine to solve any problem.


When we “borrow trouble,” we conjure up the worst-case scenario, then immediately apply it to ourselves. Instead, be practical and pragmatic. Chances are things will be fine, and don’t worry about what is out of your control. Do protect yourself and be prepared, but do not allow fear to prevent you from living. “Keep calm and canter on.”

Avoid anxiety triggers. If you know for sure that certain media outlets, individuals, or topics of discussion “get your dander up,” then avoid the situation. Asking friends and family to have a calm conversation is a way to advocate for yourself. Be kind to your sympathetic nervous system, which is already taxed with missed ferries, raccoons in the trash, and plotting revenge on the deer that ate my last tomato plant. I know who you are, I have it on video.


Lastly, the best way to conquer anxiety is to face the world with a friend in tow. Whether accompanied by a biped or quadruped mammal, “You got a friend in me.” According to the National Mental Health Foundation, we all benefit from the support of friends. Companionship makes us feel brave, reduces isolation, and provides perspective and emotional support. We are never quite so scared when we have someone else to share the moment.



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# If Vashon Had a Zucchini Festival: Recipes

By Judi Lenihan

## Zucchini and Herb Frittata

This elegant frittata is a delicious way to use up fresh zucchini and is perfect for a light lunch or brunch. The combination of sweet shallots, aromatic garlic, and fresh herbs makes every bite flavorful.

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 20-25 minutes Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 6 large eggs
- 2 medium zucchini, cubed and sautéed
- 1 tbsp fresh chopped herbs (such as chives, parsley, or basil)
- 1 large shallot, chopped and sautéed
- 1 garlic clove, crushed and sautéed
- ¼ cup loosely packed sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter for the pan

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 375° F.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until they are light and frothy. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper.

Add the sautéed zucchini, shallot, and garlic to the bowl with the eggs. Stir in the sun-dried tomatoes, fresh herbs, and shredded Parmesan. Mix everything until well combined.

Heat a 10-inch oven-safe skillet (like a cast-iron pan) over medium heat. Add the olive oil or butter.

Pour the egg mixture into the hot skillet. Cook on the stovetop for about 5 minutes, or until the edges start to set.

Transfer the skillet to the preheated oven. Bake for 15-20 minutes, or until the frittata is puffed up and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean.

Remove from the oven and let it cool for a few minutes before slicing and serving.

## Zucchini Ribbon “Lasagna” with Angel Hair Pasta

This dish offers all the satisfying flavors of a classic baked pasta, but with a lighter, fresher feel. Thin ribbons of zucchini are roasted until tender, then topped with spicy arrabbiata sauce and melted, crispy cheese for a perfect weeknight meal.

Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 25-30 minutes Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 3 medium zucchini
- 1 (15-ounce) jar of arrabbiata sauce
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella or provolone cheese
- Garlic salt, to taste
- 8 ounces angel hair pasta
- Olive oil for brushing (optional)

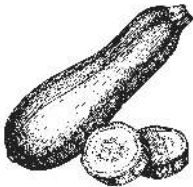
### Instructions

Prep zucchini: Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Using a mandoline slicer, carefully slice the zucchini lengthwise into thin, lasagna-like ribbons.

Roast zucchini: Arrange the zucchini ribbons in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet. You can lightly brush them with olive oil if you like. Place the baking sheet in the oven and roast for about 10 minutes, or until the zucchini is barely cooked and tender.

Season & sauce: Remove the zucchini from the oven. Flip the ribbons over and lightly sprinkle them with garlic salt. Pour the arrabbiata sauce evenly over the zucchini, then generously top with the shredded cheese.

Broil: Place the baking sheet back in the oven and switch the setting to broil. Broil for 3-5 minutes, or until the cheese is melted, bubbly, and has turned crispy and golden brown. Watch it carefully to prevent burning.



Cook pasta: While the zucchini is broiling, cook the angel hair pasta according to the package directions. Drain the pasta and toss with the remainder of the arrabbiata sauce.

Serve: Divide the pasta among plates, then top with a generous portion of the baked zucchini ribbons. Serve immediately.

## Zucchini Parmesan Crisps

These savory zucchini crisps are a perfect, low-carb alternative to crackers or chips. The high heat of the oven and the salty Parmesan cheese create a delightful crunch that’s hard to resist. They’re a fantastic appetizer or snack.

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 10-15 minutes Servings: varies (depends on the size of your zucchini)

### Ingredients

- 2-3 medium zucchini
- 1-2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Garlic herb salt, to taste
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Using a mandoline slicer, carefully slice the zucchini into very thin rounds (about ⅛-inch thick).



# White Wine Sangria

By Claudia Hollander-Lucas

This summer beverage is festive and refreshing, often served in Spain with a seafood or veggie paella. A red sangria is served with a meat paella. I have brought this to summer parties and it’s been quite the hit ~ Buen provecho!

## White Wine Sangria

### Ingredients

Keep all ingredients cold

- 1 liter dry white wine
- 3 cups seasonal fruit (e.g. blueberries, peaches, orange slices)
- ¼ cup key lime juice concentrate or 1 squeezed fresh lime
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ⅛ cup dry brandy
- ⅛ cup orange liqueur
- 12 oz. seltzer water
- Ice cubes as needed when serving

### Directions

Makes about 1½ quarts

1. Peel citrus and cut fruit into bite-size slices.
2. In a large bowl, combine wine, brandy, and orange liqueur.
3. Add the fruit and lime juice to the alcohol mixture.
4. Let sit covered in fridge for minimum of 30 minutes and then take out to taste. Add up to ½ cup sugar to taste.
5. Return mixture to fridge for at least an hour longer to continue the marinating. It keeps overnight.
6. Ladle into a festive pitcher or two before serving.
7. Add the seltzer and ice cubes to taste.
8. Serve sangria, making sure that each glass has fruit in it.

**Note:** This is a recipe open to all sorts of variations – no alcohol, no sugar, using a flavored water, etc. Adding the bubbly seltzer and ice cubes perk up the mixture, but after a few hours dilutes it. In other words, add the seltzer to what is being served, or it will become flat.



## Vashon!

Do you have a favorite recipe you’d like to share with others and see published in The Loop?



Share it with us at [editor@vashonloop.com](mailto:editor@vashonloop.com)





# Of Seals and Sea Maidens

By Cynthia Sadurni

Early on a luminous June morning, while I was waiting for the ferry to make my weekly crossing to Vashon, I spotted some seals sunbathing on a small floating platform in Fauntleroy Cove. They were rocking with the motion of waves, content and without a care in the world.

I was reminded of Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “Seal Lullaby:”

“... Where billow meets billow, there soft be thy pillow ...”

An early riser was already in the water, the sun making it shine silver.

I couldn’t help but wonder, what do the seals see both above and below said billows with those mysterious, soulful eyes? What do they dream about? But, most importantly, what dreams do they inspire in us?

What is it about seals that fascinates us? It is, perhaps, because they are creatures that inhabit two very different worlds, able to happily bask in the sun, then dive and glide as if flying through the watery depths, the cumbersome movements of the land transformed into fluid and graceful freedom. Their eyes are deep, yet kind, endearing, wise. It is no wonder that they have inspired legends, tales, and songs.

The Selkies of Scottish legends are an example. They are beautiful men and women of the sea that shed their seal skins at night to become human and dance under the stars, for they love human music. Some become wives, some males take human brides. However, sorrow almost always permeates these unions.

As I observed the swimming seal, its head barely visible when it surfaced, I recalled that some writers theorize that seals could well have inspired mermaid myths! Amidst the glimmer of the soft swells, that sleek, round head and those soulful eyes could, at a distance, easily be mistaken for a human.

Seal brides, mermaids – these legendary figures are a testament to the wonderment and power that the sea holds in our deepest mind. Water spirits, deities, and denizens of the deep are found in abundance worldwide. Our own waters of the Pacific Northwest and the Salish Sea are no exception.

My first encounter with one of these denizens of our local coasts was on a trip to Rosario Beach, on the mainland side of Deception Pass State Park. There, you can see the breathtaking statue of the sea maiden Ko-Kwal-alwoot. Hers is a pivotal storytelling of the Samish Indian Nation. At the base of the 24-foot-tall cedar log carving, you can read about how Ko-Kwal-alwoot marries a lord of the deep and becomes the protector of her people. The long strands of kelp you see floating in the water are her hair, reminding of her ever-present presence.

Just before I met the statue, I was lucky to observe a harbor seal, swimming blissfully in the deep blue waters, appearing at first as a ghostly form. Gradually, its haunting blue shape became more and more defined, to become bathed in light, as it broke the surface.

It was at that moment, seeing this beautiful creature, that my love for seals solidified. It was good fuel for the imagination, as well. How easy, how tempting to believe that, on a moonlight night, the seal would shed its skin and don human form



Illustration by Cynthia Sadurni

to stroll in our midst.

How fitting, that as I continued my walk, I encountered Ko-Kwal-alwoot, her story and her statue depicting her dual nature: on one side, an oceanic being; on the other, a human woman. Both natures are one as they hold aloft a life-giving salmon.

Indeed, mermaids and water spirits are amongst us, their presence and symbolism ever nurturing our psyche. I invite you to be curious, open yourself to the possibilities offered by this beautiful, sea-blessed land in which we live. Find out more about Selkies, read the story of Ko-Kwal-alwoot, or even better, go visit her. You will not be disappointed.

For resources. see this article on vashonloop.com.



## Today

By Jo Ann Herbert

Still dark morning of a new day ...  
my organization (and spelling) still lacking, AI interfering, politics corrupting

I can go outside as yesterday and stand under my Viburnum snow ball bush, almost two stories high,  
that graces over and surrounds a human, green leaves in attendance, with its soft large balls of tiny white flowers, in my hair, at my feet, now are quietly drifting back down to earth...

as we all must one day.

The butterflies are here! and coming warmth  
with hopes for healing of hearts and the birth  
of more birds

Today.

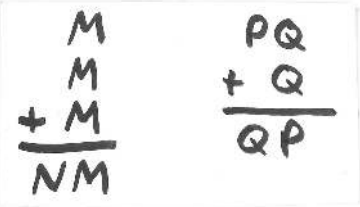


## Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses

### Digit Arithmetic Puzzles

Put in a digit for each letter.  
The same digit must be put into the same letters,  
and different letters must have different digits.



Go to Page 11 for the Solution

## Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

From Evelyn at Thriftway:  
Q. What do you call a waffle on the beach?  
A. A San Di-Eggo.

~  
I can’t help being funny. I was born wit’ two humorous bones.

~  
Q. At the Strawberry Festival, what did one strawberry say to the other?

A. You got us into this jam.

~  
What do you call fake spaghetti?

Im-pasta.

~  
Q. What’s an astronaut’s favorite part of a computer?

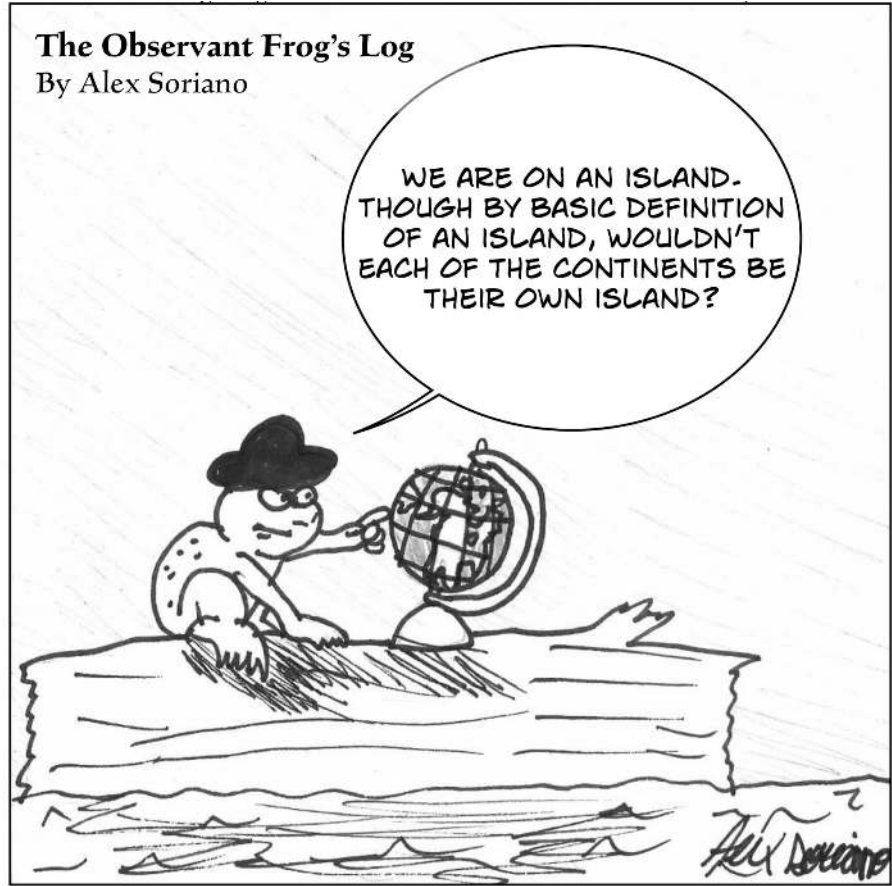
A. The space bar.

~  
Did you know that Elon Musk constructed a French restaurant in space?

Yep. The food was good, but it had no atmosphere.

~  
Q. How does a penguin make his house?

A. Igloos it together.





Aries (March 20-April 19)

This is one of those times in your life when everything is happening all at once. And if you are able to pace yourself, it could be fun. The emphasis of your solar chart is in two places: your home angle, Cancer, where the message is “feather your nest and get together with people”. Yes, I am suggesting you give up either an evening (or several evenings) of work or going out to do that thing that was so popular when our parents were little—stay in and hang out with friends and eat good food. Also active is retrograde Mercury in Leo, which describes a gold mine of ideas. It also describes something that pretty much anyone can do now, which is to pick up an abandoned creative project and have some fun with it. This is purely for the pleasure of doing, rather than for any end goal. You will feel good, and that is everything.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

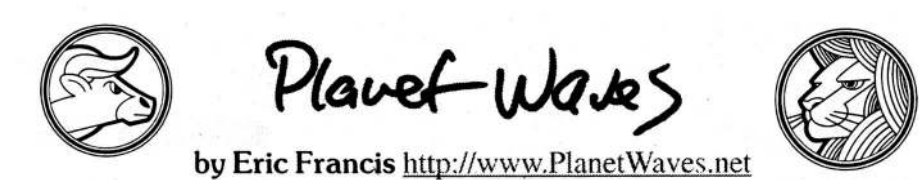
You’re going strong, mostly based on your positive attitude. That will work for you, especially if you know how to stay out of your own way. The most challenging part of being a Taurus is obsessive attention to detail and the voices that will not stop chattering in your mind. Think of this as mental noise. Then there is the mental signal—the ideas, thoughts, and information that you actually want. Put simply, it will help if you learn to spot the difference, and then emphasize the part of your mental flow that is actually relevant. While you may be obsessing over endless details of a task or project, in less than two weeks you will have clear information about what you need to do, which will also connect with what you want to do. If you have one core issue, it involves your relationship to desire. You don’t trust it, and you still think there’s such a thing as a guilty pleasure.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Most art is the result of irritation. Most creativity is driven by a survival response, far more than it’s about inspiration. People wonder about this; the symphony or painting or sculpture all seem to be a celebration of existence. And that is true, though contentment and confidence do not usually drive artistic breakthroughs. (Though they may drive the advertising business.) Mars in Virgo is likely to be provoking some deep moments of insecurity, coming along with the feeling that you actually have something to worry about. If you turn this inward on yourself, the result will be anxiety, guilt and resentment. If you turn your energy around into an expressive channel, you will change yourself and reveal something to the world. Keep going, rethink and revise, and calmly figure out what concerns you. In the meantime, a gentle approach to your relationships with domestic partners of any kind will be productive. Let your curiosity lead, rather than any sense of being right.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are in one of the most transformational moments in your professional trajectory, ever. Maybe you feel it; however, it could come across as a sense of crisis, or some critical task you must fulfill. I suggest you step back and get a wider perspective. There is the question of what you want to eliminate; and the related question of what you want to change, adjust or adapt to the new environment. A diversity of factors make this kind of self-assessment



accessible now, and Mars in particular is encouraging you to do it in writing. Now, here is the catch: Notice where politics is entering your analysis. For example, the thought that you would do something, but it will not be looked on favorably due to some cultural trend. These are likely to be the things you want to explore the most, and which I suggest you emphasize. Even the most creative people can fall for the trap of avoiding taking a chance because of the fear of disapproval.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Rather than obsess over money, pay attention to what you’re thinking and how you feel; it will be much more productive financially and every other way. You’re in a moment when you can make some observations and adaptations about these things. You can study your motives for spending and not spending. All of your astrology is guiding you in the direction of conscious prioritization. It’s also suggesting that you do a kind of self-audit and see where your funds go. There is an issue in that most money is spent using a plastic card of some kind. That interposes a delay between the choice to spend and accounting for the expense (when you see the statement). With cash, you see it go out and you know it’s been spent. There’s also something about recognizing that all expenditures are factors in a business relationship. What are those relationships really about?

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

Mars in your sign is about to engage with Chiron (an embodiment of Virgo), and also with chaos-generating Eris. To my ear, this is about healing the profound disembodiment associated with being soaked in the digital realm for somewhere between half and all of your life. Existence may seem to be “just the way it is.” The real situation is imperceptible to most people, except for the looming sense of isolation and longing. With Mercury retrograde, I suggest you spend some time searching through the past. This might be anything from digging out old family albums (someone may have them if you do not) to letters, diaries, and notebooks—the kind that exist in physical form. This is not about mere nostalgia. It’s about seeing how much distance has come between you and the person you once were. Many people think the past was stupid and that modern times are in every way better, or the only option. However, the action of both Mercury and Mars is suggesting that you turn back the pages and get a sense of what you’ve left behind.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

Mars in Virgo (your 12th place of the unknown and unseen) plus retrograde Mercury may be keeping you up at night. However, there’s a cosmic plan, and you’ll find yourself in a new position when Mercury stations direct on the 11th. You’re likely to be facing a challenge—one that you welcome and where you can be at your very best. Therefore, bide your time, by which I mean abide in your time. Form a relationship with your anxiety. Remember that it’s a feeling and is unlikely to be prescient; your ability to predict is curtailed by a diversity of blind spots, points of confusion and

misunderstandings. Mercury is retrograde in the social angle of your chart. The suggestion is to stick to old friends, and consider what they have to say about life. Everything is a relationship and every relationship is a representation of your connection to existence. If you take any specific association and ask yourself, “Is this how I relate to the world?” or “What if this person or situation were God?”, what response would you get?

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Be patient during the forthcoming weeks of Mercury retrograde. You may have a feeling that you really want to accomplish something but just can’t get any traction. Something bigger and better is brewing, and that is the thing that may be making you nervous. The digital environment is driving movement in some of the very most personal and private aspects of your life, from your bedroom closet to the dinner table. However, the bottom is not falling out of your existence. Rather, you are being called to leadership. If you feel your awareness contracting (fear, guilt, isolation) make an extra effort to get to know some of the people around you in a new way. Listen closely for how they are responding to this strange new life we are all living. You won’t be conned out of following what you think of as your best interests. You will learn something that you’re going to need in a few weeks, when you least expect it.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

If you get a windfall this month, make sure you repay some of the kindness to those who have helped you through leaner times. You may owe some money, or maybe a favor; just remember, your success is not yours alone. People tend to forget the kindnesses done to them by others, or blur them with resentment. Skip all that and give credit where it’s due; offer your support where it’s needed; and pay back at least some of what you owe for financial support you received in the past. At the moment, your values are somewhat cluttered by old family hangups. Yes, there are always certain old ways that work better than any new ways. The question comes down to this: how generous can you be with the people you love the most? This is not just about money, though that’s a factor. We live in distinctly ungenerous times, where people do a lot of looking their own way, or expecting others to fend for themselves. If you feel even meekly called to help—especially someone who has been generous to you—that’s your cue.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

As part of Pluto in Capricorn ending, your ruling planet Saturn has made some unusual moves. These are so rare that we have to go back more than a generation for a precedent. Pluto has left Capricorn in pieces. But unlike Humpty-Dumpty, the elements of which you are made can melt and recombine, and can alchemically transform into new compounds. This is illustrated by Saturn conjunct Neptune in Aries. While this is normally a difficult aspect, it has the property, or perhaps superpower, of synthesis. Like many factors this month, the result is primarily emotional. One potential manifestation is that you’re adjusting

to your environment in more flexible ways. The meta theme is security, meaning your sense of safety within your four walls, which translates to within your own psyche. This is an almost mystical state, attained by very few people. Test out your environment, push your luck and see what is possible. If you’re accustomed to emotional paucity, you will need to make a conscious choice to absorb and receive.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

Pluto entering Aquarius beginning in 2023 and 2024 (continuing through today) has come with a sea-change that commenced gradually, and will take more time to understand. A transit that goes on for 19 years requires a settling-in process. However, much has developed since that 18-month window-in the world, and in your world. I suggest you do some forensics to get a sense of just how much has shifted. Go back to summer 2023 and read some emails; check your social posts; look at your calendar. More to the point, consider the challenges you were facing and the fears that were in any way vexing you. Consider who was in your life. Consider what you were doing. You learn what you think by writing about it or by talking about it (writing is preferable) and then revising. Most of writing is rewriting, which is rethinking, which is how you teach yourself (and herein lies the deadly trap of those who think that using A.I. is helping them in some way). Your learning process—difficult as it may be—is now your best friend.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

You’ve had your fill of itchy and scratchy relationship situations and petty confrontations. Mars making its way across Virgo since mid-June has certainly tested your patience with some people. However, with Mars and Chiron now in aspect to one another, you may notice that you’ve been having an effect on someone who did not seem to understand much about where you’re coming from. Do not force the issue; they are feeling the compelling influence of your values. Meanwhile, for you personally, there are two factors that are developing. First is that with Venus and Jupiter in the most vibrant and creative zone in your chart, access to your talent is running at an all-time high—but it’s a “use it or lose it” moment. Second, you’re not exactly driven to make big strides at whatever you consider work. Siphon off some of that creative mojo and solve problems in unusual and unexpected ways. Or—with Mercury retrograde for two more weeks—go back over some tasks you’ve completed in the past few months and make sure that all the loose ends are tied together.

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Math Puzzle  
Solution

5

5

+ 5

15

89

+ 9

98



# Mr. Twisdale’s Strawberry Soda: Bringing Back Island-Grown Strawberries

By Jane Valencia

Vashon was once known for its strawberry farms, and our Strawberry Festival was named in celebration of these berries. But, as has been the case for several decades, strawberries – much less Island-grown – are a rare and precious occurrence. Off-Island attendees of the Festival often find themselves bewildered: “Where are the strawberries?” and locals may propel themselves on a grim scavenger hunt to find at least one of these coveted gems somewhere – anywhere – in the festival borders. Perhaps in a pancake, donut, or as a garnish on a lunch plate.

This year, however, we had a new booth in town, Mr. Twisdale’s Strawberry Soda. Under a strawberry-shaped red tent, young entrepreneur Jordi Marquez-Twisdale sold cold, refreshing sodas made with his own Island-grown strawberries. And business, as one might predict, was fast and furious!

Age 23, Jordi has lived most of his life on Vashon. Since childhood, he’s dreamed of having a big field just for strawberries in his backyard.

“It wasn’t even a business idea of making money, it was just ‘one day I’ll have a strawberry field,’ and that comes primarily from the Beatles song ‘Strawberry Fields Forever.’ And then knowing the history of the strawberries on Vashon and having a Strawberry Festival – it’s always been something I’ve thought about.”

Ten years ago, he was involved in a homeschooling project called “Teens in the Field.” Started as a class on how to own and run a business, “Teens in the Field” made and sold strawberry sodas for two-and-a-half years, selling at the Strawberry Festival, the Vashon Farmers Market, and also on the side of the road.

Fast-forward to young adulthood, where Jordi has been an employee at Pike Place Market for the past three years.

Jordi shares, “Seeing all the business owners making ten times as much as me, I was like, I’ve got to find a way to do that. What I saw at the Market



is that the best-selling thing is cold drinks. Because I’ve been selling cold slushies, I already know there’s a lot of people who want that. Coming up with my own drink would be the easiest thing to do.”

Strawberry sodas sprang to mind, an obvious choice. And, a special program at Pike Place for sellers who owned their own farms meant that Jordi could pay a flat fee each day without also having to give a commission or percentage of his sales.

So, for the best deal, Jordi would grow his own strawberries.

“I was like, I can bring this to fruition and do this myself right now. I know how to build a garden. I know how to sell things really well at the market. I can make the juice that we used to make, and then sell it.”

Jordi had also been wanting to pursue a hobby that would focus his time and energy, and that could reward him with some income: “And so, that’s what this is, is a big hobby of growing strawberries for fun, and turning it into a business at the market.”

Several Islanders were key in helping him get going.

“Joe Yarkin has been a prominent strawberry farmer and farmer of other things for 20 years, and I went to a preschool that his wife ran way long ago. So I would spend time with him around there. I’ve always thought of Joe Yarkin as an ideal farmer. Being able to go to him and have him give me advice on the variety and how to plant them, how to water them, all that was amazing. It was all the information I needed. And I was able to lay it down.

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“Herb Beck helped me figure out the perfect time to till the field, because I ran into a bunch of weather issues. In April, we got in the first three days of sunlight in a row, and it was perfect. So we tilled it all really well. The ground here is the old ground from strawberries long ago, and it’s been 50 years of just regeneratively sitting. So the ground’s immaculate.”

The land is a former strawberry farm, owned and operated by a Vashon Japanese-American family prior to and after World War II.

Jordi’s mom, March Twisdale, has provided a variety of help, and Shelley Headley has given him business advice. His boss from Family Orchards was also a great support.

Jordi tends his garden with organic practices – no sprays or pesticides. Out on the land, the plants are vigorous and huge, and bear enormous red strawberries. He hands one to me and it’s absolutely delicious. “They’re better than organic,” he says. “This is as good as a strawberry can be.” I agree.

And so, Mr. Twisdale’s Strawberry Soda opened at this year’s Festival to great reception.

“A lot of people walking by said, ‘I’m really surprised that there’s not any strawberry booths. You’re the first person we’ve seen that has strawberry-based whatever things.’ A lot of people said they were really happy about that. And they also said the soda tasted really good. Ten out of ten said it was fresh, not too sweet, and you could really taste the strawberries.”

What’s next for Mr. Twisdale’s Strawberry Soda? On Wednesdays, maybe in August, but most likely in September, Jordi hopes to sell at a special market at Pike Place called Market on Pike. Next year, he plans to be at Pike Place three days a week, every week for three months at least, which – next to selling at the Strawberry Festival – is his foremost goal. His booth will be outside on the cobblestone at Pike. Just look for the bright strawberry tent.

“I have a lot of drive to make this work. I want to grow the best strawberries I can. It wasn’t the original idea, but now that I’ve done it, I realize it’s a really great idea, like a slogan. My whole thing is bringing strawberries back to Vashon.”

We wish Jordi and Mr. Twisdale’s Strawberry Soda plenty of success!





### Where’s the ASTROLOGY?!

We’ve redesigned.

The astrology  
page is still  
here, just one  
page earlier!

Turn back one  
page to see  
Eric Francis’  
readings.




### News You May Have Missed



- The tax timebomb causing lots of tech layoffs
- WA trucking declines cash, rejects EV's
- Ghost artists on Spotify

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





### Do not disturb yourself by imagining your whole life at once.

~ Marcus Aurelius