

Sew Against the Machine

By Kavi Rana

It feels impossible to create or run a business or just survive when the world is crumbling around us. I know everyone is going through it right now. Our paths and future are as uncertain as ever. I am grasping on to hope for humanity and for our planet as we navigate this chaos of dismantling illusions.

All I can do is my work, which is to tend to my community and build something meaningful in a system that constantly desensitizes us with its atrocities. My optimism is tested constantly by the state of the world, but alas the passion I have for a better future is stronger than my fears and doubts.

My sewing journey began when I was young, hand-sewing clothes to save money and express myself. My grandmother and mother sewed my school uniforms in Nepal, and those early experiences showed me the power of transforming fabric and clothing with intention. Over the years, I kept teaching myself by mending, altering, and upcycling my clothes.

I later studied Sustainable Fashion Making in Florence, Italy, where I immersed myself in the full fashion design process; from sketching figures and building mood boards, to hand-drafting patterns, sourcing sustainable fabrics, and sewing garments with the precision of Italian craftsmanship. I created my first collection of three outfits, all made from thrifted fabrics and second-hand clothes sourced from local Italian markets, upcycling them into something entirely



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Kavi Rana - Photo courtesy of the author

Health Care Cost-Sharing: A Quiet Shift Away From the Affordable Care Act

By Caitlin Rothermel

You are probably outsourcing too many of your health care decisions, and your health plan is one of the biggest drivers of both the costs and choices you are and are not allowed to make.

It's no secret that the price of Affordable Care Act (ACA) health plans is increasingly untenable. It's been rough going for employers purchasing group health plans and for people purchasing plans on the individual marketplace. In Washington State, individual ACA plan premiums have increased by 8% per year over the last two years

Open enrollment is approaching again, and things are going to become more intense. In 2025-2026, small business plan premiums will increase by 6-16%, and individual plans by an average of

21%. Why? Partly, it's due to very large and apparently unanticipated increases in medical care costs for ACA customers.

Exemplifying this, in July 2025, one major U.S. insurer (Centene) posted losses so high (\$1.8 billion) it drove down the stock value of the entire sector. Centene has since announced that it is "in the process of requesting premium increases for Obamacare plans for 2026 to reflect a higher proportion of sicker patients who need more medical care than it previously expected."

But increased spending by insurers is only part of the story. In addition to the original subsidies provided to lower-income individuals when the ACA was passed, additional tax credits, designed to be temporary, were put in place during COVID time. These subsidies adjusted premium costs based on monthly income, and benefited 81% of individual Washington state purchasers. But these subsidies expire this year, and it's not clear at all whether they will be renewed.

If the subsidies are not renewed, the Kaiser Family Foundation has modeled the combined impact of this loss alongside premium inflation, and estimates an average 75% increase in premium costs in the individual U.S. market. Based on this, it's expected that 80,000 Washington state residents - primarily healthier people with moderate incomes - will drop their health insurance this year.

The rising cost of health coverage is disturbing. Equally disturbing is how little you get for it. Hard-working families are being asked to pay premiums that rival their housing costs, yet each year they receive less coverage and shoulder more out-of-pocket costs. High deductibles mean that even routine medical visits require careful planning and budgeting, with the upshot being that many now hesitate to access basic care.

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Cost of Living

By Stephen Buller

Since COVID, the cost of living has been increasing at rates not seen for decades. Depending on your circumstances, this could be catastrophic, no big deal, or even beneficial to your overall wealth. For the average person, there is no better time to get serious about a personal budget.

Before we get to a simple budget concept anyone can apply to their life, let's address the main reason things are getting more expensive. There are myriad factors, but number one is the inflation of our currency.

The natural state of the world is one of decreasing prices. You heard me - things should be getting cheaper. This is because we build better tools and processes to create goods as our understanding deepens over time. Think of the first supercomputer compared to today's iPhone.

It's important to compare apples to apples, and saying a Tesla Roadster today should cost less than a Honda Civic last year would be unfair. But recognizing the nuance in comparing one car to another gives insight into one of the ways the government manipulates the official cost of living through "hedonic" adjustments.

Do you ever feel like products aren't getting any better - in fact, the quality may be going down - but they're just adding features no one really needs? If the exact same make and model car increases \$1,000 in price from one year to the next, the government may judge the addition of eight more cup-holders as increasing the value of the vehicle, so - using a "hedonic" adjustment to compare apples to apples - there was really no increase in cost. You paid more for a better car.

This is one reason why the official cost of living

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Letter to the Editor

By Paul S

As a year round bicycle commuter on Vashon, I found Dave B's opinion piece (Bicycles Rule! Really? - August 7) a little disturbing. His stated concern for bicyclists reads more like annoyance with having to share the road with us.

Although most drivers on Vashon are courteous and respectful of bicyclists, there seems to be a misunderstanding about the meaning of "Sharing the Road." It does not mean "Sharing the Lane."

According to Washington state law (RCW 46.61.110), "The driver of a vehicle approaching an individual who is walking or cycling ... on the right-hand shoulder or bicycle lane of the roadway, shall pass safely. The driver shall ... reduce speed to a safe speed for passing and pass at a safe distance, where practicable of at least three feet, before passing and until safely clear of the individual ..."

This "3-foot rule" applies to the outer extremities of both "vehicles," including side-view mirrors, handlebars, saddle bags, etc. Even if one is bicycling a reasonable 1 foot from the edge of the road, to safely pass them, a motorist would need to drive partially in the opposing lane.

Bicycles Rule! No, But the RCW Does

It is not okay to share the lane with a bicyclist, even if momentarily inconvenienced by oncoming traffic, a blind curve, or a hill. I have had more than a few scary moments on Vashon when impatient drivers have decided it was okay to do this.

Of course, there's one situation on Vashon where I wouldn't dream of riding my bike at the edge of the road with heavy traffic. That's when a full ferry is unloading at the end of the workday. No driver in the right lane is following the 3-foot rule and the bicyclists that do this are crazy. Even if someone gets run over, I don't expect this will change.

Otherwise, I am truly grateful for the majority of Vashon drivers who appreciate the vulnerability of bicyclists and follow the 3-foot rule - most of the time. At the end of Dave B's opinion piece, he writes "Let's just play nice on the Island ... Say hi as I drive by in my old Ford truck. I promise if you wave, I will move over... so wave."

I'd like to think that my waving isn't a pre-condition for Dave B's "playing nice" and moving over, but if someone were to safely pass me in their old Ford truck, waving as they went by, I would guess that would be Dave B and I would wave back.



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Food Banks and Farm Bucks: a Much Needed Service for our Community

By Daniel Hooker

In addition to the Vashon-Maury Island Food Bank, we have other sources of help on the Island.

One alternative is "Farm Bucks," which you can acquire at Vashon Library on Friday and Saturday mornings. This is for our local organic and organic-practice farms. Food stamps and EBT cards can be used to receive Farm Bucks and tokens to purchase healthy produce and dairy products, and meat on the Island. Ask the Librarians at our Vashon Branch to share the list with you. I have

personally purchased from Venison Valley for years.

There is a food bank across from Kathy's Corner Nursery on Vashon Highway, as you come into town, which operates on Tuesday. Please recognize that they are operating solely on donations, and be generous.

In a time where neighborhoods are losing Fred Meyers left and right, it's a good feeling for Seniors such as myself to know that Vashon cares and has alternatives for those who are on a tight budget, and doing their best to manage.



You can use Farm Bucks to purchase food from Island farms.

RIGHT: Mango lassi is one of the dairy products available at Venison Valley



South of town, the food bank on Vashon Highway operates on Tuesdays



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

The Vashon Loop

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Health Care Cost-Sharing

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This leaves many in the position of paying hefty monthly bills primarily as protection against a potential catastrophic event. At the same time, more and more physicians are – for valid reasons – refusing to work directly with health plans because reimbursement is both low and unpredictable. Plus, if you prefer to rely on alternative health care options, those are likely to not be covered at all.

This is no way to live, but what choice do you have, especially if you have a family? One option more people are turning to is health care cost-sharing. These are systems in which participants collectively share medical expenses instead of paying traditional insurance premiums.

I spoke with two Vashon families who have relied on such plans for several years. I wanted to understand why they made the switch, how the model works for them, and the advantages and drawbacks they’ve observed with this approach compared to traditional insurance (see the table accompanying this article for a succinct list of the pros and cons).

Dr. Leigh Siergiewicz, a naturopathic doctor, and her family have used Liberty HealthShare for about seven years. Leigh has strong feelings about traditional insurance, “We do not like to participate in organized crime. If insurance CEOs are making \$60 million a year and then don’t want to pay for anything for their customers, I don’t want to be part of that.” Practically speaking, Leigh and her husband reached a decision point when “the cost of the marketplace premiums and deductibles became about 30% of our income total before anything was even covered.”

They chose Liberty because it was one of the older, more established health-sharing programs. Currently, they pay premiums about \$700 per month for a family of four, with a deductible of \$2,500-\$3,500. Each month, their payment goes directly to Liberty, and the organization uses those funds to cover medical expenses across its membership pool.

When it comes time to submit a claim, Leigh either pays out-of-pocket and sends Liberty a “super bill” for reimbursement, or – if the bill is large, like a hospital stay – Liberty handles negotiations and payment directly with the provider. In practice, this means Leigh often receives lower, cash-payer rates for services such as lab work, and in more complex situations, Liberty’s negotiators work to reduce charges before bills are paid. In Leigh’s case, this included negotiating a hospital bill of roughly \$50,000 at the time of her child’s birth



From the Editors

down to about \$17,000.

Established in 1995, Liberty is run by the Mennonite church, but members are not required to be religious, although they must agree to a statement related to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, personal rights and liberties, and the obligation to assist others in need. When Leigh was doing her original research, she looked at some non-religious programs, but many of these were brand new. This is an important consideration, as Leigh has seen some of the plans she originally reviewed subsequently fail.

Another plan Vashon residents are using is Samaritan HealthShare, a Christian ministry established in 1994 where members support one another’s medical expenses. Each month, instead of sending money to a central office, members are assigned another household and mail their “share” directly, often with a personal note or prayer attached. Membership in Samaritan requires signing a statement of faith, having a pastor or priest sign an annual confirmation letter, and agreeing to certain lifestyle standards.

Jonathan (not his real name) and his wife chose Samaritan about five years ago after years of watching their individual insurance premiums climb steeply under the ACA, even as coverage eroded. As self-employed small business owners, they faced marketplace policies costing nearly \$20,000 annually with high deductibles.

Although the ACA restricts enrollment to set periods, Jonathan argues that its guarantee of coverage regardless of health status eroded the traditional risk-sharing model and undercut the very principle of insurance. “When you buy homeowner’s or auto insurance, you have to buy it before the accident or the fire. With the ACA it became, oh, I was just diagnosed with cancer, I can go get insurance now.”

This shift transformed insurance into a “discount program,” and accelerated a cycle in which sicker individuals stay in the pool while healthier ones opt out, driving costs ever higher. This dynamic undermines insurers’ ability to balance premiums across a broad base of healthy enrollees, and fuels a cycle of “adverse selection” we are now

Pros and Cons of Health Care Cost-Sharing Plans Compared to Traditional Health Care Plans	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower costs and deductibles: Monthly premiums and deductibles are lower than ACA insurance; cost increases not mandated by the state• Provider flexibility: Choose providers freely• Bill negotiation: Plans will negotiate large hospital bills down (e.g., \$50–60K maternity bill reduced to ~\$17K)• Cash-price advantage: Members may get access to discounted cash rates for labs (and sometimes imaging)• More rapid access to care: No pre-approvals required prior to treatment; upfront cash-pay model can give quicker access to care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow reimbursement: Members must pay certain costs upfront; reimbursement can take a few months• Administrative burden: Members must be organized, submit their own “super bills,” and meet deadlines• Waiting period before filing claims: eg, 2-3 months’ wait before claims for acute care; longer for pre-existing conditions• Coverage exclusions: No high-risk activities covered (e.g. skydiving), no coverage for abortions, genetic testing in pregnancy, or certain pre-existing conditions, including mental health• Not ideal for complex health needs: People with ongoing, high-cost medical issues may not be well-served• Preventive care: Preventive care, such as screening colonoscopies, may not be covered unless symptoms exist

seeing play out – higher costs lead to higher premiums, driving more healthy people out of the market, further weakening the pool, in an ongoing loop.

With Samaritan, preexisting conditions are excluded at entry, and certain situations (e.g., injuries related to alcohol) are not covered. Jonathan’s family has filed successful claims, including a breast lump workup and knee surgery. While upfront cash payment is required, reimbursement from members generally follows within a few months. For Jonathan, the tradeoff feels worthwhile – he avoids the “insanity” of rising ACA premiums and instead participates in a system he views as more transparent and community-driven.

For older individuals, turning 65 doesn’t necessarily mean leaving a health share program. Many plans now offer options that work alongside Medicare, helping to cover out-of-pocket costs rather than replacing government coverage entirely. Certain employers can also take advantage of this model: small businesses with ≤50 employees are not required under the ACA to provide health insurance, which means they can legally offer stipends or self-funded allowances to help workers with medical expenses. Employees may then use those funds to join health care sharing plans. The

caveat is that these plans are not legally considered insurance, so the contributions don’t carry the same tax advantages as ACA-compliant coverage.

Leigh and Jonathan’s experiences with health care cost sharing plans underscore a broader trend. Had the ACA never passed, grassroots alternative approaches would almost certainly have emerged to address the crisis of affordability – and in many ways, that’s what is happening now. Healthier individuals are peeling off, while those with chronic conditions remain in ACA plans because they need guaranteed coverage.

Critics may argue this creates an unfair, two-tier system, with the sick “trapped” in an ever-shrinking and more expensive pool as the healthy “jump ship.” Yet, the ACA itself set these incentives in motion by eliminating preexisting condition exclusions without building a sustainable way to balance the risk pool. The result is a system inevitably designed to strain under its own weight – those who most need healthcare are left with increasingly costly plans, while others seek relief and alternative options.

In the end, this division is not just a problem for one side or the other – it is a structural flaw that threatens the stability of healthcare financing for everyone.

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Fighting Forest Fire in the Early Sixties

By Seán C. Malone and John Sweetman

The origin of this story was probably about six years ago, when Seán and I were reviving a couple of old Motorola hand-held radios from his firefighting days.

“Looks like we need batteries!” And Seán said, “Look in the freezer because I have several boxes of double A’s.” And sure enough, he did, which I immediately identified having come from his last firefighting adventure. At that time, it must have been 15 years or more. Sure enough, they worked just fine.

One may wonder how a number of excess batteries came to be surplussed to whomever could use them. When the fire is out, and the debris and extra stuff is either left on the scene or just carried off from jumbled piles, it’s too expensive and difficult to move, inventory, and store stuff to the next fire. One might consider this wasteful, but the exact opposite is true.

It’s the same with feeding firefighters 7,000 calories a day because 18-hour days of smoke and continuous work are more taxing than a marathon. Massive amounts of food are required.

Firefighting is like a fast-moving war, and radios are the vital link in rapid communication under really nasty circumstances. Radio operators are like catchers in baseball; only they can see the whole field. All firefighting crews are hopefully oversupplied because fire moves a lot faster than a quartermaster’s requisition pencil.

For example, a chainsaw that breaks down is simply cast aside and a new one is picked up. Normally, a broken saw requires a “sit down” on a convenient log for a bit of a fix. Not so with firefighting and rapid changes of intense and deadly conditions. Brief, explicit radio communication is key to fighting a fire. If you listen to fire communications without onsite context, you will not be able to make any sense of anything.

Island Voices

Seán related some of his experience.

I was fighting fire with a pick and shovel in the summers when I was a student at the UW. I had a girlfriend who grew up in Roslyn and was a physical education major, while I was in the School of Forestry. I drove my old Model “A” to Roslyn to meet her four brothers. Someone told me that the Forest Service needed firefighters, because the fire in Wenatchee was out of control.

I parked my old 4-door Ford at the Ranger Station in Cle Elum, where they loaded 30 of us on a bus and drove us over Blewett Pass to the fire in Canyon 3. I was handed a shovel and told that our purpose was to protect the city of Wenatchee.

The Forest Service was fighting the fire at night and we dug out a four-foot-wide fire line. At 2:00 a.m., we were told to take a break until the morning. We had no place to go, so the foreman told us to sleep in 4 feet of ashes, because the ashes were soft to lie down in and warm from the fire.

In the morning, we were told to pack our gear and fly to Baker, Oregon, as the Snake River fire was also out of control. The DC-3 must have been a smokejumper plane, as there was no rear door in the cargo area where we exited upon landing at the Baker airport. The Forest Service then trucked us 25 miles to a camp on the edge of the Snake River gorge.



Tech Blitzkrieg, Part Two ...

... Or, resistance is futile.

By Michael Shook

When cell phones first arrived, I thought they were swell. Here was a handy thing to have, especially since I worked in construction. I could call our driver and tell him to pick up some more 2×6’s, or to swing by the shop for the table saw, and so on. The basic cell phone was (is) a wonderful tool.

Likewise, the personal computer – I’m typing this on my laptop, far more easily than on an actual typewriter (at least for me), making it light-years easier to edit and rewrite. And e-mail gives me a convenient way to keep in touch with friends.

Though I am indeed a Luddite, I acknowledge that much technological change is not only inevitable, but good. Just as the advent of the automobile rendered equine transportation a thing of the past, even as it displaced a significant portion of the labor force, it proved a great boon overall. But the difference now between that, and the technologies of today, as manifested in computers, smart phones, and the AI “helpers” that crop up everywhere, is that the new machines are meticulously tuned to use, misuse, and abuse some of the most vulnerable aspects of our human-ness, our all-too human frailties and weaknesses.

This is not by happenstance. It is built into the technology itself. The claim is efficiency, but the engine driving it is greed. The machine helps

us, yes, but it also uses us as things – information fountains, garnering all manner of knowledge of our habits, our desires, our dislikes, in everything from politics, to sports, to clothing, to food. It plays upon our pride, our sense of self-importance, our inherent narcissism, and, most of all, our craving for attention, to be noticed in this increasingly impersonal, always indifferent world. Through the algorithms employed, we receive one dopamine hit after another, drawing us inevitably deeper into a relationship with an electronic device. And we purr as a cat purrs when stroked.

We are being overwhelmed in a tsunami of technology so sophisticated, and so tuned to the way our minds work, that much of the time we don’t fully realize what’s happening to us. Or, if we realize it, find ways to dismiss it – think, for instance, how many times we’ve taken in passages similar to the one just read, been made aware of the insidious and deleterious effects that too often occur from the use of digital devices, and yet, still, pretend it is not happening.

Meanwhile, those who create, manufacture, and control these devices, work endlessly to find new ways to keep us hooked, new ways to “guide” us, if you will, making us ever more dependent on their machines.

The pervasiveness of the technology is destined to remove any real choice as to whether or not to participate in its use. That may be



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behind the casual dismissal we so often employ, the fatalism of, “Oh, well, whaddya gonna do?” To read a menu, to pay for parking one’s vehicle, to gain access to needed information – increasingly, these are done only through the use of yet another “app.” Yes, there are savings there, monetarily if in no other way, but what is being sacrificed? If nothing else, is not the human interaction required in these, and many more activities, an enjoyable, and, even moreso, a necessity for our communal existence?

I can imagine a day, not far off, when there will be no grocery-checker, and tickets for a ferry will be purchased by showing an app on one’s smart phone, and there will be neither ticket seller, nor booth, just a kiosk, with a creepy AI voice. One may argue that such will be an improvement, that it will relieve someone of a tedious, rather boring job (at least from some perspectives), but what then? Of the jobs that will soon be lost to AI, in all its forms, what will those rendered jobless do to earn a living? We may find ourselves questioning, “What are people for?” as does a character in Kurt Vonnegut’s prescient 1952 novel, “Player Piano.”

And every time an app is used, what it is used for, where it is used,

They made me a radioman because of my experience with amateur radio. The PRC 10 was a tactical backpack radio that must have weighed 80 pounds. I was assigned to work for the Division 2 commander; Dick was a high school teacher from Cle Elum.

Not long after, I was sitting on a rock halfway down the slope to the river, and the commander was sitting on a rock above me. “Seán, please give me coordinates for that heavy smoke across the river from us. I will call them in to the Wenatchee airport and request a borate drop.” Borate is a fire-retardant and came out of the plane as a heavy pinkish powder.

Later on, there were five bi-wing Stearmans overhead. Because the Stearman planes had no radios, there was a low-wing Piper Comanche leading the by-planes that were stacked up. When I made radio contact with the Piper Comanche, I gave him the coordinates for the drop and directed him to the fire.

As the plane flew over the hot spot, I yelled into my mic, “Now!” And the pilot wagged his wings, signaling to the by-planes above us where to make the drop. They peeled out of their column and dropped their borate over the fire. The borate mixture tended to form clumps which the fan in the bottom of the Stearman failed to break up. We were always told to stay behind a tree when there was a drop, because it was dangerous. One day, an old firefighter stuck his head out from behind his tree. He was killed by a clump of borate that the plane’s fan failed to break up. I was also told that we lost six pilots on that fire.

when, and how often, are all recorded, and fed into data centers, thence into AI programs whether we wish it or not. As well, our movements are continually tracked, if not by our phones, then by the computers in our cars, even down to the device embedded in your tires to record tire pressure.

Ostensibly, this is to help us, to make our lives easier, safer, to smooth the path. Mostly, though, the information is used by companies to tailor advertisements specifically for each of us. Or for political entities to create messages to appeal to us, and, too frequently, to our worst impulses – to the detriment of ourselves and our republic. Or, the information is gathered and sold to various government agencies, which is perfectly legal, though without doubt, unlawful. The adage, “If you’re not paying for the product, you ARE the product” was never more appropriate.

Not surprisingly, Congress has shown no stomach whatsoever for prudent regulation of technology companies, given the massive amounts of cash showered on them by our new Gilded Age masters. I doubt we can look for relief in the shorter term.

We will be assimilated.

Sleep

By Pam (aka Gates) Johnson

When you think about it, sleep is kind of a weird thing. It is an altered state that can creep up on you at any time, day or night. When you are in it, you don't know what is going on around you. Sometimes it is deep and unconscious. Sometimes it is that strange half-asleep, half-awake nether-land where things can happen and you're not sure if what you are thinking or seeing is real. As we age, sleep becomes more important, but also more uncertain.

Maybe sleep patterns change because our level of activity changes. In youth and our working and child-rearing days, we worked from dawn to dark. Always on the go. Running here. Driving there. Carrying this. Moving that. Thinking, thinking, thinking. Always something on the mind. No wonder we would fall into bed and immediately transition into that deep REM sleep. We had to! Our batteries desperately needed to recharge before the onslaught of the next action-filled day.

As my activity slows, I find I am more aware of sleep patterns. Some friends still get up at the crack of dawn, just like they always did. Some sleep in until 8:00 or 9:00 a.m., unless there is a specific reason to get up earlier. A relative who shall remain nameless has totally flipped the sleep switch. She sleeps all day, wakes up around 3:00 in the afternoon, then is up all night.

Whatever works for you, is what I say. You earned the right to make your own sleep choices.

My sleep is a combination, or perhaps a mish-mash. I never know what I will get on any given day. On exercise class days, I get home around 10:30 in the morning, eat something, sit down in my recliner, and wake up two hours later. This is not planned; it usually just happens. If I remember to unmute my phone, I might get woken up by a telemarketer trying to sell me extended auto coverage or a burial plot. Often, chatty walkers going to the Shinglemill Trail will wake me. (Why do they talk so loudly?) Or the UPS driver might be dropping off an Amazon package for my niece.

It's no problem if I have things to do and places to go. The needed energy is there. Naps are not mandatory. Trips here and there get taken, often in a timely manner and on-schedule. So, my sleep is not limiting or altering my daily life. However, night is a different story.

Oh, and I must add the caveat that my bedtime often depends on what ridiculous TV series I am currently binging.

Depending on all the outside distractions, like long late-night phone calls, interesting YouTube videos, or the latest episode of Resident Alien, the lights in my head dim anywhere from 9:30 to 11:00 p.m. I usually cap off the day with a bowl of orange sherbet (my current favorite) - a not really bright thing to do - fill a big glass of ice water to quench any nighttime thirst emergencies - again, not too bright - turn off the lights, and hope for the best.

Not sure when or why it happened, but I now sleep in my recliner. I have a perfectly good bed. In fact, I have two perfectly good beds. Like most normal people, I have slept in a bed my whole life. Everybody sleeps in a bed, right? Sleeping in a chair seemed kind of dumb. I think it started after a knee replacement surgery. It was easier to get up from a chair, rather than rolling around trying to get out of a bed. Much less painful, too.

By the time the knee healed, I was used to sleeping in the front room. When I woke up, I could look out the window and see deer creeping around, or listen to the rain coming down, or check the skies for UAPs (the new buzz-phrase for Unidentified Aerial Phenomena; UFOs are so last year). If I can't fall back asleep, the TV is there, just a remote control click away.

Seems that I am not alone in this recliner-sleeping thing. It has come up in random conversations that other folks my age often spend the night in their Lazy-Boys. Shoulders, hips, and knees are happier when they don't have to stay in one position for an extended period of time. An electric recliner gives that little extra push when it's time for an emergency pit stop (darn that glass of ice water). A little extra bonus is there are no sheets to change.

One night my routine was proceeding normally. I had made my second trip to the bathroom and fell peacefully back to sleep. Sometimes I fall asleep with the TV remote in my hand. It usually falls off my lap when I move around or get up, but this night was a little different. When the remote slipped out of my hand, I

heard it hit the floor, then ...

Elizabeth Taylor and Mickey Rooney were in my living room! And a big horse named Pie (stupid name for a horse). "National Velvet." I realized the TV had turned itself on when the remote hit the floor. Liz and Mickey were chatting away, but my darned eyelids kept falling down, so I couldn't see what was happening.

Looking back over these eight million nights of my life, I realize how unappreciated a good night's sleep is. Can't remember the last time I had eight hours uninterrupted. No getting up to use the bathroom. No loud unexplained noises. No sick kids or livestock running amok through the fences. No two hours in the middle of the night when sleep just won't happen.

Oh no, here comes my theory on sleep (random theories come to me often these days).

Maybe, when we are born, our little internal computers are programmed with a predetermined number of sleep hours. We use a high percentage of those hours as babies, sleeping most of the time (unless you are my son, who did not sleep for the first year of his life). Youth and teen-age years also use up a lot of our hours. As we age, there aren't as many hours left in the sleep-vault, so there are fewer to use, ergo shorter nights.

This is not a complete theory. Not sure how naps, medical-induced unconsciousness, concussions, or fainting spells figure into the equation. I'm still trying to figure that part out. I will let you know when I come to a conclusion. Meanwhile, I think I will take a nap.

We Love Summer People

By Dave B.

Please, no more Audis? The Subaru PNW Outbacks are bad enough. I love all of you on Vashon, but when people come to the Island or move here and try to fit in, think about where you are? You are not in Seattle; Newport Beach; Boulder, Colorado; or anyplace else where it is okay to be rude to the locals just because you think you are a local. Being here a year or in the summer does not qualify you to be rude or arrogant.

My wife would say, "You have to drink the Kool-Aid." What exactly does that mean? I am going to try to interpret it, but understand that my pea brain sometimes lacks the skills to articulate. Here goes: We are a hippy commune, a farming-and gardening-loving, family-driven, K2-skiing, mountain-climbing, kayaking, biking group of people who smile at you at Thriftway, IGA, or the hardware stores. We love our pets, forest, recycling, and trail running and even the killer deer mentioned in past articles. The coyotes, not so much!

We like to drive old trucks, moss-riddled cars, and have dogs sticking out the window of our vehicles. That is what and how Vashon has drunk the Kool-Aid. We understand how to adapt to our Island, weather, ferry system, and forests. And we love our TROLL. If you don't know about him, you are not really here yet. You should check it out!

I grew up in Newport Beach and Costa Mesa in Southern California - now wait for it - in 1965. Back then we were ALL locals. The beach there was Vashon in every way. We were safe enough to even ride our bikes (at 13 years old) from Costa Mesa to Cooks Corner, halfway up Saddleback Mountain, while the city was beginning to build Irvine. The point here is everyone was exactly what I said at the beginning of this piece. Calm, kind, with no attitude. We loved it.

I know people (including my wife) all say that we Californians ruined Colorado and other states,

but everyone from the east coast moved to California, and instead of drinking our California Kool-Aid, these transplants gave us some attitude. I left it to them by 1990, and when I go to visit my friends who stayed, it is unbearable to me as an old local. What a rat race.

Vashon does NOT want to be Seattle. I feel (and most locals agree) that we do not want to change Vashon to resemble Seattle. If you want to, fine, go back to Seattle or Newport or Boulder or wherever you are from. I know it can be frustrating to get anything done here, and since we are SO Democratic, we need to have five committee meetings to change a light bulb. We still like who we are and what we represent: the PNW at its finest (and silliest).

It is expensive to live and work here, hard to find an affordable house, and jobs are very difficult to come by unless you know a LOCAL (i.e., networking). Yet, I wake up to birds singing and the wind blowing through our giant 130-year-old trees. The stupid raccoons and the deer eating my garden and blueberries still make me laugh (and

cry), but I would not trade the ferry ride for the I-5 and I-405 corridors now or in the future.


If you can get along with the folks here, work out the ferry schedule (that sometimes exists), and roll with the diversity here, you are good to go. Understand that it takes a while to really be accepted, as folks tend to come and then leave often, and putting time and attention into someone who may or may not stay is exhausting. Riding a ferry sounds like fun until you do it every day, right?

My neighborhood has residents that have been on our street for 30 years. We have been on this hill for 10 years, and block parties are becoming the norm. And I know fifty percent of my neighbors by name, their pets, and some of their political views (not the best idea, though!).

Once you are established here, it is nirvana. When a bad snowstorm hit a few years back ("Snowmageddon"), Thriftway was party central. Try that in Seattle. People traded food to get folks what they needed, and shared stories while in line to checkout.

Enjoy the hospitality, and hopefully you can adapt to the lifestyle I love so much.

Bye for now...



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Sailing Home

By Suzanna Leigh

June 24th

I was in La Conner scrubbing dark gray lichen off the boat hatch when I got the text. It was from R.

“Hi Love, I just heard our friend Wesley passed away last weekend. Her memorial is 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, June 29th. Can you come?”

Of course I will come! We leave here tomorrow morning.

June 25th

OMG I have never seen so many herons! The tide is way out and there are HUNDREDS standing ankle-deep on the acres and acres of mud flats at the north end of Swinomish Channel – all looking south as if expecting something! Herons to our right, and an eagle perched on a piling to our left.

~~~

The wind came up and we had a nice sail almost to the southeast end of Lopez Island before tacking and heading for Deception Pass. Deception Pass is tricky; the tidal current runs up to 7 knots and we do 4 knots – 5 if we really push it. Even with the current going our way, there were eddies and whirlpools and back eddies and upwellings to watch out for. Sometimes there would be an eddy a few boat lengths off to our port side and James would begin to breathe easy – until it suddenly surged toward us!



James at Blake Island - Illustration by Suzanna Leigh

When we got near Oak Harbor, the wind was strong enough to heel the boat over so far that the cabin floor was too steep for me to get from one side of the boat to the other. By then, James was at the tiller again and loving it, but I was so tired I was almost in tears. We took down the sails and powered up so that we could reach Coupeville before dark – never mind that it takes more gas!

We tied up at the historic wooden Coupeville dock (built in 1905, and still in use) just as the sun was setting.

## June 26th Coupeville

It was just dawning when James popped his head out of his sleeping bag and asked, “Is there any wind?” Last night was windy; it shook the

boat and sent waves to rock it. I lay awake worrying that the mooring lines wouldn’t hold. They did.

A single crow is dive-bombing an eagle on the roof peak of one of the buildings lining the shore. A harsh cry alerted us to a heron landing on a piling just a few feet from the boat. The wind has died and the water is quiet.

It is 5.5 feet deep on a normal low tide here, but today there’s a minus 3 foot tide. We need to leave before we find ourselves high and dry.

## June 27th

We set the anchor down in Kingston last night, just long enough to eat the dinner James cooked while I was at the helm. We checked the depth with our lead line and realized

we would be sitting on mud when the tide went out, so we tied up in one of the many empty slips at the marina. After two 12-hour days, we are ready for a slower morning with crepes at Jai Amie Crepes, and showers. My brain isn’t awake yet, my hand is painfully numb from long hours at the tiller yesterday, and I am drinking two cups of tea to ease a headache. Sailing with James, I use muscles I didn’t know I had! Even so, sailing makes me come alive!

~~~

We left the marina at 11 a.m. The spot where we had anchored for dinner was all mud, a foot or so above water level. We steered carefully between the red and green buoys marking the harbor entrance – and went aground. We were able to back off, and decided to follow a resident sailboat whose captain knew the harbor. It went out the same way we did – and hit ground so hard the stern rose up.

A small fishing boat came in on the “wrong” side of the buoy and made it through safely. Their depth sounder said 4 feet. We draw 3.6, so we were able to slip out safely.

James went on the marine radio to alert two sailboats heading in. After a bit, we looked back to see them hanging out at the harbor entrance but still afloat.

Tonight we will anchor next to Blake Island, and tomorrow – home in time for Wesley’s memorial!

U.S. Natal Astrology – Karma Comes Due

By Melanie Farmer

Eclipses influence both political events and personal growth, with their effects rolling out over about six months.

It’s rare to have consecutive eclipses impact the U.S., as we experienced in 2023 and 2024, and even over the past 10 years. Astrologers refer to these periods as “eclipse season” or “operating in the shadow of the eclipses.”

We are seeing an accumulation of effects with the upcoming September eclipses, tied to the Rahu Mahadasha cycle the U.S. is currently experiencing. Rahu represents the head of the serpent consuming the sun, and suggests The U.S. has been in a continuous “Shadow of the Eclipses” season; the country entered this Rahu cycle in August 2016 and it concludes in 2035.

X Marks the Spot in Texas

The October 14, 2023 solar eclipse, with Moon-Sun-Mercury in Virgo, foreshadowed current political and natural disasters, as well as what can be expected for the upcoming September 21, 2025 eclipse.

In sidereal astrology, the U.S. natal chart has a Scorpio ascendant, with Virgo in the 11th house, and Neptune and Saturn in Virgo. Virgo is an earth sign that represents purity and health. It is indicative of groups, communal activities, and broader societal visions. Also, humanitarian efforts, charities, political groups, and any association formed for a mutual goal.

On July 4, 2025, Neptune (a water planet) conjoined Saturn turned retrograde in the U.S. chart’s 5th house (indicator of children) ruled by Pisces, a water sign. On that same day, destructive and deadly flooding took place in the Hill Country region of Texas. During the flooding, water levels along the Guadalupe River rose rapidly. There were at least 135 fatalities, 27 from Camp Mystic, a Christian girl’s summer camp.

Saturn turned retrograde on July 13, 2025, while conjoined with retrograding Neptune in 5th house Pisces. Retrograding planets indicate going backward. A return movement to pick up on what was missed the last time around the wheel. It’s

about unfinished business that must be resolved and remedied.

Neptune is illusion, escapism, and dissolving boundaries, while Saturn anchors in hard truth, and holding firm boundaries. Neptune is mystical and an indicator of the collective unconscious, but also deception, disillusionment, and addiction. Neptune blurs boundaries between reality and fantasy, while Saturn, king of karma, slaps us with truth we try to avoid.

For example, media exposure of the Epstein Files escalated after July 7, when the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation released a memo stating that no additional files related to the investigation would be made public.

Saturn’s retrograde on July 13, increased the stubborn resistance to the DOJ and FBI memo, calling for more truthful information, exposing lies and contradictions. To understand where we are at, it’s important to note that the last time Neptune conjoined Saturn in Virgo in the 11th house was 165 years ago, in 1860, when the U.S. was on the brink of civil war.

Texas Gerrymandering and Bleeding Kansas

On July 21, 2025, Texas Governor Abbott convened a special legislative session to redraw state district lines after Donald Trump requested changes to secure five additional Republican seats.

Recently, Missouri announced a similar plan to redistrict. Redrawing and redistricting have been employed previously to affect voting outcomes, such as between 1854 and 1859, as new territories were admitted to the union and slave states and free states sought congressional representation.

As per the Constitution, two senators represent each state, regardless of population. In the 1800s, this structure disproportionately benefited the South, which had a much smaller free white population than the North. At that time, the U.S. had 11 free and 11 slave states. To maintain the balance of senators in Congress, in 1820 “The Missouri Compromise” admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state.

In the House of Representatives, there was “The Three-Fifths Compromise.” This constitutional clause counted three-fifths of the

South’s slaves for the purposes of representation, giving southern states more leverage and legislative power than their free population alone would have provided. But the free state’s populations grew more rapidly, and by the time of the Missouri Compromise, free state representatives outnumbered slave state representatives 105 to 81.

The Missouri Compromise was overturned in 1854 by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which let settlers in those territories to determine, through popular sovereignty, whether slavery would be permitted. This led to the “Bleeding Kansas” border war along the Kansas-Missouri state line, a period of intense and violent conflict between pro- and anti-slavery factions. Pro-slavery gangs crossed the Missouri state line to stuff ballot boxes, burn towns, and murder Kansas farmers and citizens. Abolitionist John Brown and his followers killed five pro-slavery settlers along Pottawatomie Creek. Pro- and anti-slavery factions established competing governments in Kansas.

This lesser-known bit of American Civil War history highlights the country’s deep moral divide over slavery, which could not be peacefully

Continued on Page 7

THE ART OF SHADOW WORK



CAFÉ LUNA – SEPTEMBER 2025
MELANIE FARMER ARTIST

Cost of Living
Continued from Front Page

– the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index (CPI) – doesn’t seem to reflect reality in your life. The other major reason for this divergence is the exclusion of food and energy costs from the CPI – as if people don’t need to eat or commute. For this reason, I look at shadowstats.com, which simply measures the CPI using the method the government used prior to 1980.

Since the year 2000, the Social Security Administration’s cost of living adjustment has averaged 2.6% per year, compounding to a total increase of 88% in 25 years. This is the number they use to determine increases in social security payments to seniors. In that same time period, the shadowstats measure averaged around 10% per year ...

If you’re retired and living on a fixed income, this is a big problem. If you’re still working, you haven’t seen a real wage increase in 50 years, so it’s almost as big of a problem. How are you supposed to keep up, let alone get ahead?

The secret lies in where I started, the inflation of our currency. If currency is created, usually through banks creating loans, those dollars must go somewhere. The reason we were able to print trillions of dollars for decades without seeing the grocery bill skyrocket is because those dollars went into stocks, bonds, real estate, cryptocurrencies, and other investments.

Also since 2000, the S&P 500 has

increased more than 300%, the U.S. bond market over 200%, and the median-price home around 150%. Cryptocurrency was only a concept at the turn of the millennium, and today the global cryptocurrency market cap is nearing \$4 trillion.

Maybe all these markets will crash and revert to the mean tomorrow. Maybe one of these times, the U.S. government will no longer have the ability to print trillions (or quadrillions, as it may be) to reinflate the bubbles. When that happens, our world economy will suffer a massive debt implosion larger than any in the past.

I would love to live in a sane world where these levels of price distortion are impossible. Then I remember, “Markets can remain irrational longer than you can remain solvent,” a quote attributed to John Maynard Keynes, the famous economist who championed the insane economic policies that have led us here.

What’s the solution? More debt. Sorry, that’s not a great solution. But it’s the one our government will most likely choose, and the one you’ll be presented with. Lower interest rates, longer-term loans, anything to heap debt on you by drawing your attention to your monthly payment instead of the true price you’ll be paying, most of which will be interest to the bank.

What do I think the real solution is? We have to hit both sides of the

Island Resilience

coin: 1) Budget realistically in our daily lives, and 2) Invest steadily for the future. One strategy for hitting both of these is the 50/20/30 budget rule. I like this one because it’s similar to how I budget a business.

First, add up all your fixed costs, things like housing, auto, food – the items you can’t live without. The goal is to cover these with 50% of your after-tax earnings. You then put 20% towards savings and investments. The remaining 30% is for everything else, including guilt-free spending because you’re being responsible in the other two areas.

If you find your housing and auto costs alone are more than 50%, in the short-term, I would allocate some of my 30% bucket to those expenses so I’m sure to continue to save and invest for the future. In the long-term,

I would look to increase my income and decrease my costs. Debt has a role to play, but if you find yourself using loans, credit cards, and buy-now-pay-later more and more, you are living above your means.

The most important bucket is putting 20% to building an emergency fund and investing for the future. If you aren’t currently doing this, I encourage you to research the power of compounding. The sooner your start, the better. I’ll have more on savings and investment next month, so tune in. Your future self will thank you.

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U.S. Natal Astrology
Continued from Page 6

resolved, and the path to civil conflict. By 1860, tensions over slavery and states rights were intense, and states began to secede from the Union.

Other Astrological Influences on Current Events


The day of the April 8, 2025 solar eclipse, with Venus-Neptune-Rahu-Sun-Moon in Pisces, was marked by significant volatility in the U.S. stock market; this sharp decline and subsequent recovery were prompted by the announcement of additional tariffs on China by Donald Trump. U.S. imports have slowed, causing the economy to struggle and small businesses to suffer.

These consequences are ongoing and will coincide with a lunar eclipse on September 7, 2025. This eclipse will have an impact on all voters and individuals exercising their constitutional rights, and will



highlight concerns over imports and wealth inequality.

Pluto return for the U.S. happens every 248 years, last time in 1777. In 1776, the U.S. adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, a pivotal moment when the 13 colonies declared their separation from Great Britain. This landmark document proclaimed the colonies inherent rights and established the foundation for American freedom and independence.

We will also have a solar eclipse on September 21, 2025, with Ketu-Sun-Mercury in Leo. The Death of the Solar King refers to the idea that solar eclipses can signal the fall or end of a leader. The upcoming solar eclipse on September 21, 2025 is particularly significant due to the timing of Trump’s first six months in office.



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Medicinal seed oils are gaining popularity for their many health benefits. Even with all the recent attention, many people still don't fully understand how powerful ancient super seeds really are.

Black cumin seed (Nigella sativa) oil and seed press cake, for example, are useful for metabolic support, detoxification support, and immune system boosting. They are naturally calming and have powerful anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, and antiparasitic properties. Even the Prophet Muhammad consumed them and was the first to speak to the efficacy of black cumin seeds for many diseases and conditions, saying, “Use this black seed regularly, because it is a cure for every disease, except death.”

Come see us if you want to learn more!



Master Your Senses to Master Meditation

By Diana Diaz

Have you ever turned down the music so that you can concentrate on the road? Closed your eyes so you can hear something better?

From right where you are, take a moment and look around you. Mentally list five things you can see. Then, list four things you can hear. Three things you can touch. Two things you can smell. One thing you can taste.

Notice that when you were focusing your attention on the single sense, the other ones faded into the background. What you just did is called Pratyahara, a Sanskrit word meaning “withdrawal of the senses.”

What does this have to do with our meditation practice? It’s a common belief that in order to meditate, you must empty your mind of all thought. However, the brain thinks and the mind is full of thoughts. That’s just how it is. Trying – and failing – to force emptiness has made many think they cannot meditate.

Let’s go back to the senses. According to Rev Jaganath Carrera, the senses are portals through which input reaches the mind. They are like super-excited children on a candy-shopping spree, with an unlimited budget. They’re grabbing and demanding and pulling the parent, our MIND, in all sorts of directions: I smell cookies! Oh, it’s cold! I love that song! This is delicious! Squirrel! Not the ideal state for meditation.

Pratyahara brings attention within by withdrawing attention from ambient sound, aromas, and other external distractions. Pratyahara’s primary importance lies in freeing up the mind from sensory stimuli so that it can move within. And that’s necessary groundwork for meditation. Trying to practice meditation without pratyahara is like trying to hold water in a leaky vessel. No matter how much we bring in, it flows out again. Unless we seal off the holes, the mind cannot be still.

Health Matters

The trouble is: the mind resists blocking out all sensory input, the very skill we need in order to achieve deeper states of meditation. This is why pratyahara is practiced. It brings the senses back to their source: the still nature of the mind. Like a turtle withdrawing its head and limbs into its shell, we return to peace and tranquility. After successfully practicing pratyahara, what remains are subconscious impressions arising as memories that don’t require ANY input from the outside world. And that lays a perfect foundation for meditation.

So if you find yourself alternating between periods of meditation and periods of sensory indulgence, you likely need to practice pratyahara.

Okay, cool, but how do we practice pratyahara?

Vyasa’s commentary on the Yoga Sutras uses another analogy: the mind is like the queen bee, and the senses are like worker bees. Wherever the queen bee goes, all the other bees must follow.

Most of us suffer from sensory overload and don’t even know it. We are constantly bombarded with bright colors, loud noises, and dramatic sensations. And we have been raised to indulge our senses. We are so accustomed to continual sensory activity that we don’t know how to quiet our minds.

In preparation for mediation, one of the simplest ways to control our impressions is to remove distractors. This can be as simple as sitting to meditate with our eyes closed. We do this in life outside of meditation – for instance, when we’re driving at dusk and really need to pay attention, we might instinctively turn down the radio.

Another method of sense withdrawal is to keep our sense organs open but withdraw our attention from them. This way, the mind can stop engaging with these impressions without actually closing off. One way we can do this is by creating positive, neutral impressions to control the senses. Meditate

upon aspects of nature, such as trees, flowers, or rocks.

Positive impressions can also be created by using incense, flames, altars, or statues. Or by gazing upon unchanging, undisturbing things, such as the ocean or a blue sky. Just like we can calm digestive distress by choosing to eat the same foods for a week, we can bring our mind back from sensory bombardment by giving the senses something homogeneous – a color, a sound, a scent.

We can create inner impressions through imagination, imagining the breath as it travels through the lungs, circulates the body, and leaves on an exhale. We can also choose to focus the mind with visualization. Many meditation practices begin with visualizing a deity, a guru, or a setting in nature. These are all forms of pratyahara because they clear away external impressions, and create positive inner impressions as the foundation of meditation. When our physical senses are quiet, we can connect with the subtle, internal rhythms of the body.

Out in the world, pratyahara is about allowing ourselves to take in the right impressions and rejecting the ones that don’t serve us. Many of us are careful about the food we eat and the company we keep, but don’t exercise the same discrimination about the impressions we take in through the senses. We allow things to come to us through mass media that we would never accept in our personal lives. It may seem like just entertainment, but Ayurveda teaches us that sensory impressions are the main food for the mind, and we cannot ignore the role they play in shaping us.

The good news, according to the Yoga Sutras, is the great reward in pratyahara: “through that turning inward of the organs of senses and actions also comes a supreme ability, controllability, or mastery over those senses.”

Pratyahara is actually an education in the proper use of the senses. It isn’t deprivation, but a way to joy, and the ENJOYMENT of sensory pleasures without feeling as though we’re under their control. You master your senses, your meditation, and your life.

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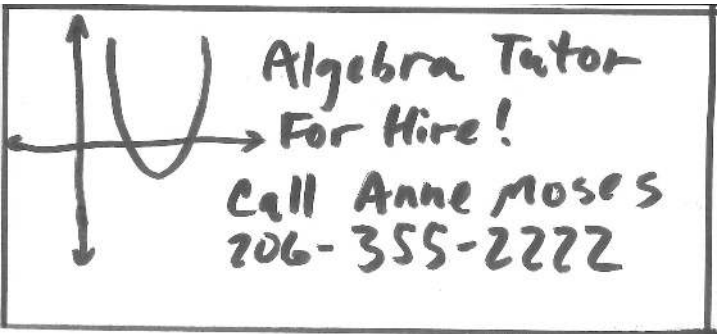
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Blistered Cherry Tomatoes

By Claudia Hernandez, Wild Roots Kitchen

September is tomato season in the Northwest. If you’re like most gardeners around here, your cherry tomatoes are the most reliable and a usually very generous.

Here is a delicious way to use all your cherry and smaller tomato varieties.

A quick sauté with garlic and herbs turns cherry tomatoes into something extra gourmet, all in less than 10 minutes. Enjoy them alongside crispy fried eggs, on a Mezze platter with hummus. with whipped feta on Baguette. Trust me, this is a recipe you will go back to time and again.

Blistered Cherry Tomatoes

Ingredients

- 2 cups cherry tomatoes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh basil, or other herbs
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

Directions

To cook the tomatoes: Heat the oil in a pan over medium-high heat, add the tomatoes, and let them cook undisturbed for about 2 minutes.

Add the aromatics. Toss in the garlic, salt, and pepper, and stir together with the tomatoes. Let them blister for another 2-3 minutes, stirring a few more times.

Serve them up. Remove the pan from heat, top with chopped fresh basil, and serve!

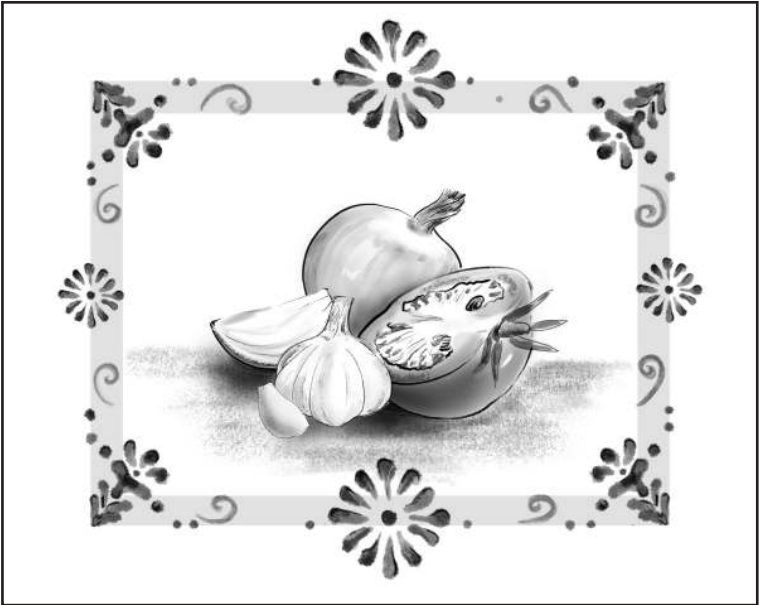


Illustration by Cynthia Sadurni

Mama Anita’s Mexican-Style Meatballs

By Cynthia Sadurni

This is a dish that shines in its simplicity. The best part is you don’t have to fry or brown the meatballs; they go straight into the broth to cook. It’s whole, hearty, and delicious any time of year, but particularly so when tomatoes are in season. This recipe is my mother Ana’s own, and it is one of my personal favorites. I prepare it very often, for my family, friends, and guests as well. It is a good option for a quick and nutritious dinner any day of the week.

Mama Anita’s Mexican-Style Meatballs

Ingredients

For the broth

- 1 lb fresh tomatoes, either Roma, Beefsteak, or Heirloom (this last option may color the broth in an unusual way if using multicolored tomatoes)
- ¼ white onion
- 1 large clove of garlic (peeled)
- Dash of pepper
- ½ tbsp salt (more to taste)
- 1 tbsp water if needed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 whole, dried chipotle (I prefer to use organic), optional

For the meatballs

- 1 lb of good ground beef (I use 90% lean; can also be substituted with ground turkey, chicken, or pork)
- 1 green onion (white and light green parts), finely chopped
- 1 raw egg
- ¼ tsp cumin
- ⅓ tsp fresh mint (1 large leaf), finely minced
- 1 hard-boiled egg, coarsely chopped
- ½ tbsp salt (more to taste)
- Pepper

Directions

Cube the tomatoes and the onion into large chunks, then place in a blender along with the garlic clove, salt, and pepper. Blend until smooth. If needed, you may add a tbsp of room temperature water so that it blends easily. Normally, this last step is not required if the tomatoes are fresh and juicy. Taste to rectify amount of salt. Add more if desired.

In medium-size pot or a Dutch oven over medium heat, add olive oil. Once it begins to shimmer, drop the chipotle and stir until it puffs up. If it doesn’t, its a sign that the chili was ruptured and the seasoned oil could be pretty spicy. This is an optional step. Even though it adds a rich, earthy and complex flavor to the broth, you can omit it and still have a delicious result. Remove the chipotle and reserve.

Carefully, add the tomato mixture into the seasoned oil. This step “shocks” the sauce, releasing more flavor. However, it will bubble quite intensely at first, and may jump a bit out of the pot. After a few minutes, you will notice the sauce turn into a richer, darker color. Turn the fire off, but leave the pot on the stove. Do not cover, as any condensation will water down the sauce.

In the same blender (it is important to leave any left over sauce or tomato pieces, as this will add complexity to the seasoning) add the egg, green onion, mint, cumin, salt and pepper. Blend until smooth, but not too long as this could begin to cook the egg.

In a bowl, place your ground meat and add the mixture from the blender. Mix thoroughly. You can use a fork, but I prefer to do it with my hands, as it yields a more thorough distribution of flavor.

Form the each meatball by taking about 2 tbsp of the mix and rolling them in your hands. You can really make them any size you want. It is no problem if they are uneven in size. Holding the mix in one hand, make an indentation with your index finger and add a piece of hard-boiled egg. (If you prefer, it is totally fine to just use just the whites) Close the meatball by pinching, and then hand-roll once more to smooth it out. Carefully add to the prepared sauce in the pot.

Once you have all the meatballs in, turn the heat back on to medium-high. Once it simmers, lower the temperature to medium low and cover. Be mindful to keep it at a low simmer and check regularly. It is okay if the sauce doesn’t completely cover the meatballs, simply flip them over halfway through cooking. If you would like extra spiciness, add the reserved chipotle now.

Simmer for 15-20 minutes, then uncover and continue to simmer gently until broth thickens a bit. You can leave the sauce as thin or thick as you want simply by adding water in small amounts.

Traditionally, my mom always served these over white rice, but brown is also delicious!

I hope that you will enjoy this taste of my childhood, and that it will bring to your table the same warmth that it brought to me whenever my Mamma served this dish!



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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



Legends of Vashon
The Story of
Tomtomtidimiddletom

By Andy Valencia

Part 1: The most amazing weed ever

There is a weed named Tomtomtidimiddletom who lives on our property. How did he get that name? That’s a long story, and won’t fit here. But he – and all his friends – shortened the name to “Tom.” But having a name, and a shortened name, is not what makes Tom amazing. All weeds have names, and most have a shortened name.

Tom started as a seed, blowing in the wind. This is the way of seeds, and as they blow along they know that most of them will land somewhere and dry out. Or get pecked by a chicken and then digested. Or land in a bit of soil and put out a little shoot which withers and dies. It’s a tough world for weeds, but seeds don’t fret. It’s just the way it is.

So there was Tom, blowing along in the wind, and looking at all the places he might land. At this point he was pretty focused. He wasn’t admiring grass or flowers or people with nice clothing. No,

when he wasn’t thinking about “dirt and water,” he was thinking about “water and dirt.” As you’ll see later in this story, weeds have a great capacity to admire beauty, but first they need to not die. Thus, his focus.

Ahead, looming larger and larger, was a big block of metal sitting on round rubber feet. “Car,” we’d say. But to Tom it was just big and metal with rubber. And then bump he hit it, and his flight in the wind was over. Home sweet home.

At first he was afraid he was a goner. He was nestled in a piece of plastic, and weeds just don’t have any way to set their roots into plastic. He looked upward, and there was a peek of light up there. And then he looked downward, and there was just a little bit of gritty dirt down there. It was even a teeny bit damp! So he sent a root downward, and then he used the last bit of energy left to send a shoot upward toward the light.

A young plant which doesn’t get enough light does that – sends a thin little shoot upward looking for more light. Gardeners call it being “leggy,” and then they’ll shift things around so the plant can get more light. Well, Tom didn’t have any gardener looking after him, so being leggy was just how things were going to be.

And then things started bouncing around! Suddenly, light was shining on his leggy little shoot, and he started to feed himself. Humans call this “photosynthesis,” and plants call it “yum.” The shaking stopped, and a little bit of dirt drifted down onto him. Tom quickly grabbed it with his roots, adding it to his precious store of dirt.

Presently, he was being bounced around again. But now he was ready. More light, more dirt, and then there was quiet again. The wind blew so hard while they bounced around! But it was quiet now, and he reached up high to gather in as much light as possible. It felt good, and he hardly noticed as the world slowly darkened. Like all plants, he now got very sleepy. His last thought of that amazing first day was that maybe he was going to survive.



Tom at home.
Illustration
by Jane
Valencia

A Cup of September

By S. E. Reid

I love September. I love the holy in-between-ness of it, the way it slinks in on tentative tiptoes. One summer day you’re over-warm and uncomfortable, and then one morning you wake up and you catch a whiff of autumn.

It’s subtle, but it’s there. Just a hint.

Before living here on these five acres, my sense of the seasons was very regimented and abstract. As a teacher, September meant something very different. I still catch myself falling into those old familiar patterns, even a few years removed from my teaching days; walking through the Back To School aisles at the big stores and remembering how it felt to approach September as though I was standing in the wings, waiting for my entrance onstage. Readyng the classroom. The deep breath before the storm.

Now, September feels different. There is still a sense of urgency, but it’s all centered around the need to prepare ourselves, our home, for the cold months. We’re stacking our firewood and trying to

eke the last bits of goodness out of the all-too-generous garden. The tumult of apple preservation – juicing, canning, drying, freezing—is about to begin, always a sacred source of stress for me. A crucible, but one that I emerge from feeling triumphant when it goes well.

I’m thinking about fall cleaning, tidying the house ahead of the long stretch of being indoors. I’m taking stock of the pantry, the cupboards, the freezer—what are we missing? And soon we’ll be sweeping the chimney, always a messy but powerful seasonal milestone.

But for now, it’s September. And September means liminal, boundary, warm days and cool nights. Trading sandals for moccasins, moccasins for socks and rainboots. Slipping my grandmother’s coat on when I need to take the dogs outside after dark and shedding my sweater in the afternoons.

Here, in September, I’m filling my cup with the spices of the season to come, while winking back at the sweet season that brought us here.

oh darling september!
teacup-steam
and yellowing leaves sun-warm;

summer clings to an unopened umbrella
while autumn peers corner-shy
yet growing
bolder;

september!
you arrive in sweet-spice and morning shivers,
you do not barrel in
as some months do

but tiptoe, delicate
on bare and brassy
feet.

S.E. Reid is a freelance writer, editor, and poet living on a patch of wooded wetland in the Pacific Northwest with her craftsman husband and her two big goofball dogs, Finn & Huck. Find more of her work at <http://sereid.com>.

Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

“If you haven’t ever tried archery blindfolded, you’ll never know what you missed.”

That’s a pointless joke!

~

This joke is from Keena:

Q. What to do you get when you cross a snake with a pastry?

A. A pie-thon, of course.

~

My dog is so smart. I asked him, “What’s two minus two?”

He said nothing.

~

I just burned 2,000 calories!

That’s the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I take a nap.

~

Q. What do you call two chiropractors who’ve got each other’s backs?

A. Vertebros.

~

I took my cat’s meds.

Don’t ask meow.

~

I’m writing a book on reverse psychology.

Please don’t buy it.

~

From Shannon from Granny’s:

Q. Why aren’t chili peppers any good at archery?

A. Because they don’t habanero.



Island poetry in
these pages

How about yours?



Submit your poems to
The Vashon Loop!

Write to: vashonloop-poetry@janevalencia.com

Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses

Cutting a Board

How long does it take to cut a 12-foot board into 12 one-foot pieces, if each cut takes 30 seconds?

Go to Page 11 for the Solution



Aries (March 20-April 19)

For most of the month, your ruling planet Mars will be crossing through your opposite sign Libra. This will be an eventful few weeks (which have already begun). Mars, your significator, will be making contact with many other points on what’s called the Cardinal Cross of the heavens. This can be restless energy and leave you feeling like you’re living in a volatile world (true enough, but this is a little extra). The pot is being stirred, particularly on matters of family and profession (closely related). Mars looking right back at you is an invitation for you to study various concepts of cause and effect as they actually express themselves in real life. Underneath this Mars drama, Chiron and Eris are moving toward their second alignment of the current, rare phase we are in-and you have but one task to honor, which is to know thyself.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

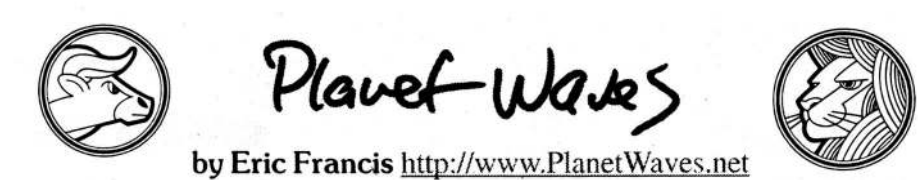
Respect the mystery that is you, and the other mystery of that which is not you. These days and seasons of your life are the time to find out, and that is a living experiment. The results may not seem conclusive; but the you versus not you distinction is more about deciding what methods work for you and which do not, and then honoring that knowledge. Self-knowledge is the freedom of existence, and herein lies the catch. Freedom demands responsibility, and accountability to yourself. For those with a weak stomach or shaky ethics, this can be daunting and unnerving. It seems easier to float along in ignorance of what is actually the beauty of your true being. We probably agree: there are far better ways to live. And at this time, you are being called to them.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

You may finally feel like you know what you’re thinking such that you can express yourself clearly. That would be a miracle, considering that your sense of who you are is going through more alterations than a dress shop in prom season. You’re experiencing just the outer first waves of a long-concealed personal revolution that has been brewing, bubbling and simmering below the surface. Now it’s making itself known, and you have to make changes that set you free from some constraints that have hemmed you in for a long time. You may feel as if your values are suddenly changing. But what is really happening is that you are catching up with yourself in ways that very likely feel very good.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are in one of the most important extended phases of building your success in many years. This will happen no matter what, though your involvement will set the tone and scale. For the time being, planets are in retrograde motion in your house of professional development. That may seem to represent a delay, but it’s actually about you refining your vision for what you want to do. There is also the element of what you must do-ideally the two will be closely intertwined. With planets retrograding back into your fellow water sign Pisces, take the time to refine your vision. Use this time to set a new standard; don’t take on anything you don’t want, and keep an ear out for what you are interested in. Later in the year, Saturn, Chiron,



Neptune and Eris will station direct, and it will be game on. So keep your mind and your other tools sharp. Be ready to allocate your resources when you know you feel the right calling.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

You gain most of your strength and effectiveness through a steady approach to existence. This is becoming increasingly difficult in a world where people fly from trend to trend, and where ideas and structures seem to evaporate the moment they take shape. Right behind that endless drama is the truth that life changes in significant ways over time. Yet there’s a difference between growth and things designed to be obsolete and transient, along with all that’s intentionally destructive. You’re now looking at the unstoppable force of Pluto all the time, gazing back at you from your opposite sign Aquarius. If you’re evaluating relationships of any kind-amorous, collaborative, formal partnerships, or confrontational, there’s a crucial factor to watch: in considering someone, what is their relationship to the group around them? Do they relate to others as a distinct individual? Can they stand up for themselves when they’re under duress? This will reveal who they are, and describe where you may or may not belong in their life.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

You will have the feeling over and over again this month that events are taking you by surprise. In truth it’s more likely that you planned and facilitated various outcomes. But why doesn’t it feel that way? You have reached the point where you must change on some elemental level. This is not about appearances or language or lifestyle. Actual evolutionary movement pushes out from deep inside you, and there is little you can do about it. But there is plenty you can do with this movement. It’s a form of raw creativity that you can harness as a force to remove what you don’t want, and to create what you do. Yet there is one requirement, which is the product of Saturn and Neptune in your most sensitive chart angle. You must be truthful in all the ways you avoided being so before. The time has come to stand uncompromisingly in your truth. It’s all you have.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

One of the sorry states of our society is the decreasing interest in whether anything is true or relevant. And most people act like things “just happen”, rather than understanding that they are made to happen by will, intent, and action. With that in mind, the planets indicate that you will need to take initiative for the next few weeks, as partners and associates seem to drift off into their daydreams. Since you’re the one with the plan, take advantage of a moment when you’ll face little resistance. You are responsible for all of the decisions and for initiating action based on the best information that you have. When you have your feet firmly on the ground and are confident in what you’re doing, you’ll have an unusual opportunity or invitation some time around the equinox on Sept. 22. Even if you seem ready, wait till the Sun

enters your sign and Mars is safely in Scorpio for good measure. Your success will give you well-deserved confidence and self-respect.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

For the next four weeks, Mars will move through your secluded, cryptic 12th house. This began a couple of weeks ago and may have come with some fanfare, a personal revelation or a sense of rising inner pressure. Have you sorted out what it was about? That would be helpful, as would be paying close attention to your inner weather. That’s difficult to do in times when everything seems to be thrown onto a screen upside down in front of us. This is not the world; it’s not your world; and it’s certainly not your inner world. That said, listen carefully any time you say anyone else has done something or is a certain way. These statements are likely to contain projections that it would be helpful to understand. These weeks can, if you want, bring some of the deepest discoveries you’ve ever made about yourself-but you have to want to know. You have to be willing to understand yourself, your fears, and your doubts. The fundamental nature of the distraction is from yourself. You have a way back into who you are and what you feel. This is also known as introspection-you’re invited to use it well.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

A diversity of factors may stir up your insecurities. If you’re aware of this in advance, you will be able to make more productive use of it. The overall theme is secrecy-what you might keep from yourself, or from others. Now, we might ask: is it possible for you to conceal something from yourself? Usually that is categorized as denial. As the month develops, you will be more aware of what you’re thinking and feeling, deep within any outer appearances. You will be making discoveries, and also remembering facets of your emotional existence that you may have forgotten. You may respond to this by emphasizing what others see; I suggest you forget that and focus your attention inward, where you need it. Keep in mind that you have a rare opportunity for inner work that will never again show up in quite the same way. Your most important relationship is to yourself.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

One of the most serious crises the world is facing is the loss of potential. It feels like the future is burning, and we can’t see 10 feet ahead of us for the smoke and haze. However, as part of your essential leadership role right now, you have the assignment of having a vision for what can be, what might be and what needs to be. This is both a skill and a gift; both are related to what I would call your practical spirituality. By practical, I mean that it involves useful ideas that you can act on, rather than theoretical concepts that sound nice. You also have an essential role as a guardian of collective resources. These may come in a diversity of forms: human, intellectual or material, to give a few examples. Our society is increasingly coming under the thrall of what I call the robot-the total influence of digital

consciousness. Your leadership role is to preserve your humanity, and the attitudes and values that protect people. It may not be easy to stay connected to your core being. But you must.

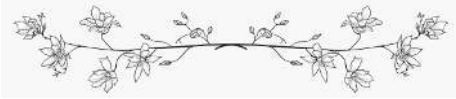
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

No matter how old you are, this is a peak threshold of maturity, especially of your mental development. This is happening in a time when the world is being driven even more insane by having thought itself outsourced to computing devices. It’s one thing to use software to file your taxes or a calculator to balance your checkbook. It’s another thing to have a software application write a text message breaking up with a partner-the text message written by a person was a bad enough approach. You must keep control of your mental processes. Chiron conjunct Eris may be making this difficult, and even painful for you. But to excommunicate your mind and live outside your body is not an option. This is especially not suitable for you, who are so completely identified with your mental process, your ideas, your concept of who you are and your actual intelligence. Therefore, do the work of thinking, of writing, and of speaking. Stay close to yourself and your ideas. Keep an active dialog with yourself.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

Everything is negotiable. It’s rarely possible to say that one single concept can lead to all of your success, but if there is one for you, that’s it. Negotiable implies a few things, such as knowing what you want and what you’re consciously willing to give up. It implies making clear statements and facilitating honest transactions. Right now the world is being run on a combination of cold, robotic transactions and systems that are designed only to take from people. Sincerity, reputation, compromise and caring about people are ceasing to be a thing-but we all still want those things. And that is what you have to offer. Saturn’s brief return to your birth sign for the last few months of the year is about remembering and firming up your commitment to yourself. Neptune will be making a similar move, and that’s your reminder to reaffirm your vision for your life-the one that took you so many years to refine and consider. Stay with these things... your life begins and ends with you.

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Math Puzzle Solution

Answer to puzzle 5 1/2 minutes



Island to Island, Forest to Forests, Pt 3

By Mabel Moses

Vashon-born and raised, Mabel Moses spent a semester on Haida Gwaii, an archipelago in BC. Upon graduating from the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry, Mabel chose to live on Haida Gwaii. Here in Part 3, we hear directly from Mabel. Enjoy! Read Parts 1 and 2 at vashonloop.com.

I came to Haida Gwaii with the intention of learning “how to do things better” or “the right way,” with the assumption that this was a concrete thing I could learn and gain. Because I knew that here in Haida Gwaii, forestry regulations protected more ecological and cultural values than they do elsewhere in BC. The Haida have more decision-making power than Indigenous Nations do elsewhere.

After a year of being here, it’s hard to put what I’ve learned into words. As I’ve let myself settle and feel more committed to being here, I’ve noticed more of a shift in the way I see myself and the way I act.

I was drawn to move here more permanently because of the community. Back then, I thought of the community here in more concrete terms: as a collection of people living in a relatively isolated place who rely on one another. It felt to me a bit like Vashon felt growing up, but with even more interesting people and acceptance for my own weirdness, and more self-sufficiency.

Now I could probably say I have community here. But what I’ve realized is that I was looking for “community” as something that was a noun. Now when I think of community, it doesn’t seem so concrete. Instead, I feel I interact with community more like a verb. I often find myself thinking that someone I know needs a ride somewhere, someone I know would really appreciate these tomatoes I just grew or deer I just butchered. I’ve found that

when others need something, suddenly it’s just this attitude of, “Well, I guess this is what needs to be done right now.”

The city and University felt so competitive and isolated to me. Everyone working on their own degrees, for their own futures. Trying to figure out who they are. I think this is important, and I do value the individualism of it all. And I’ve moved up here too to pursue my own individualistic goals. But under it all, there seems to be a baseline of not having enough.

The culture here is less transactional than anywhere I’ve been. People give and give. So much food is constantly circulating. It comes from friends, neighbors, the band council, potlatches. Any time I’ve been here without a place to stay, so many people have offered to host me. People just give, whether they know you or not. At first, this made me uncomfortable because I felt I was indebted, I tried to give back, food for food, time for time. But now I have started to become more comfortable taking. Accepting all the gifts that are given here. I’m noticing more and more that I don’t think twice about giving something when I have it.

Here, I am living life much more from the bottom up. I have trust that there are people in power who do care for the land and community, so then my day-to-day is filled with purpose, being part of what is going on. Foraging, fishing, hunting. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t think this place is some paradise free from greed or corruption, it’s not. I don’t want to pretend I’ve found “perfect” and judge everywhere else. But I didn’t realize how much all the resource extraction and competitiveness and politics of western culture was weighing on me.

I am hesitant to use big buzzwords like capitalism. However, in a real sense I feel like I may



Photo courtesy of Mabel Moses

be experiencing a culture that is built on something different than the capitalism I grew up with, from the very ground up. Here, it seems people just give for the act of giving. As I’ve been told many times, wealth in Haida culture is measured by how much you are able to give away, not how much you hold onto. And I think that culture has seeped into the whole island community here.

I want to say that Vashon has some of this culture and potential too – I know there are pockets of people who give so much. For me, however, there was such an overshadowing of the politics of the US and all the problems of the world. It’s been nice to escape for awhile.

But here on Haida Gwaii, the Haida and locals have fought against colonialism, resource extraction, so many “evils.” And underlying it all, I think it’s this culture of giving, appreciating the little things, and doing all the little things for each other that makes this place work and succeed. Putting energy into what is right, accepting and giving to people no matter what you think of them, instead of getting caught up on Facebook drama about what is wrong. It starts with that.

I want to keep thinking about this, and want to keep the conversation alive. From one island to another.

Sew Against the Machine

Continued from Front Page

unique. I styled my model, did the makeup, and designed the set using fabric scraps for the photo shoot that brought it all to life.

My entire experience in Italy deepened my craft, gave me a global perspective, and reinforced my belief that fashion can be authentic and revolutionary.

Learning to sew right now is an act of resistance. This is a call for action. The fashion industry will not continue to exploit. The system profits off our disconnect from the people and processes behind our clothes. It depends on us not knowing how to make or fix anything.

Sewing is a practice of love. Every time I teach, share, create, and save, my drive gets sharper. My hope gets brighter. Conversely, it is true too: Every time I learn, receive, witness, and release, I feel reignited. So, let’s get to the point and be real. It’s on brand for me, anyways.

Before starting Samavesi, my sustainable fashion brand and learning space, I burnt myself out working in environmental science. Collecting data on our disappearing ecosystems made me feel helpless, among other hard and confusing to process feelings. Whenever I learned something, I saw the disconnect between the reality of our

natural systems and society’s understanding and behaviors.

That’s why I started Samavesi, to empower and conserve. Every day we get dressed, we participate in a system built on exploitation, pollution, and disposability, whether we realize it or not. That’s why knowing how to sew is crucial right now.

Sewing to me is an act of love and rebellion. It’s appreciation for natural resources. It’s reclaiming your clothes and your power. Learning to sew is an investment in yourself, your clothes, and our future. Knowing how to hem, mend, upcycle, and make your own clothes is revolutionary. You save money in the long run, you lessen the stress on our planet, and you stop funding exploitation.

The last thing I’ll say, even though I could go on, and will one day write a book about all this, is that sewing is healing. From stitch to stitch, you are supporting your mental health by inducing a meditative state, reducing stress, and releasing dopamine.

So, as nothing makes sense in the world right now, I hope learning to sew will be one fun way to get your power back and be part of the fashion revolution.

It’s a movement, not a moment.

News You May Have Missed



- Big WA restaurant COVID fine upheld
- The impact of AI on entry jobs is starting to be acknowledged
- F-35 debugged in air, ultimately decides it's on the ground and crashes

Read the full stories: vashonloop.com/missed/



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Being at ease with not
knowing is crucial for
answers to come to you.

- Eckhart Tolle