

THE VASHON LOOP

Vol. 23, #10

SERVING VASHON AND ITS NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES ~ FREE

October 7, 2026



Left
...
Return of
the
Curious
and
Unusual

Coming
soon to
our Isle
...

Sweethearts and Submarines

Legends of Vashon

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Navy submarines are designed to not be seen, so the recent upswing in surface sightings off West Seattle is noteworthy. In 2025 alone, West Seattle Blog readers reported at least four submarine sightings off Alki, and reports have continued in 2026.

These may be shakedown cruises, mild test runs from Naval Base Kitsap's retro-fitting programs, or normal maintenance. But stories of Silent Service brushes and incidents around the lower Sound, some officially admitted and most not, were once common. Probably the best story is about the sub hijacked while on active service in order to take a high school sweetheart for a spin around Quartermaster Harbor.

The USS Spinax was getting ready to ship out for an August 1965 deployment to Vietnam. Her captain at the time was Jay K. Davis, who had graduated from Vashon High School's class of 1947. Known as happy, smart, and a good athlete, he went off to attend Oregon State University and earned his naval commission in 1951.

The bureaucratic details of how Davis later managed to get permission for his diesel sub to visit Vashon are lost, but apparently included mooring at Dockton and inviting the public to come aboard. About 1,000 Islanders were estimated to have taken tours inside.

Some recall Captain Davis stating the visit's true purpose was to show off to his former high school girlfriend. It seems likely he possessed a dry sense of humor and penchant for mischief. And it stands to reason that a "local boy done good" really enjoyed the opportunity to power an attack-

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The Wisdom of Shorter Days

By Mike Ivaska

Last week I was diagnosed with high blood pressure.

This is due, in part I'm sure, to the stresses of life.

It also likely stems from genetics.

It also doesn't help, I imagine, that I'm a middle-aged fat guy who likes Doritos.

I've been thinking a lot lately about being middle-aged. The cynic in me would like to say I'm more four-seventh's aged than truly middle-aged. Perhaps even two-third's aged, but I don't want to think about that.

I've also been thinking a lot about fall.

As we head into fall, the days are already noticeably shorter. The temperatures are, finally perhaps, dropping. Our loved-hated, first-of-many, rainy seasons has begun. It's finally starting to feel like the Pacific Northwest around here again.

But with the shorter days and the rain comes the not-too-distant emotional struggles many of us will have. Depression is not always seasonal, but the lack of sunlight, vitamin D, and physical activity will start to catch up with some of us.

So will the approach of the holidays.

For some of us, these days will be reminders of those who are gone. For others, they will raise the stressful specter of having to travel and see family,

or having to host family in our homes. For some, the struggle of cultural values will bubble under the surface. For others, these cultural values will be the reason we won't be seeing family this year (and haven't, perhaps, for a while).

But there is wisdom in the season that is coming. A wisdom, I daresay, not unlike the wisdom that begins to settle on us in middle age.

Not until moving to Vashon Island in late elementary school did I ever learn that there were Christians who didn't "do" Halloween. The handful of Halloweens I had in my childhood home of Meridian, Idaho, were always events that brought people together. Everybody "did" Halloween, as far as I knew. As evangelical Protestants of a decidedly low-church variety, the day had nothing to do with All Saints' the next morning. And as suburbanites in southern Idaho (outside Boise), it was the first in a series (followed by Thanksgiving and Christmas) where the neighborhood suddenly exploded into unified behavior - decorating, candy-buying, and costuming.

After Halloween, of course, came Thanksgiving.

And after Thanksgiving, Christmas.

It was, admittedly, a suburban, American, white, middle-class, Protestant Christian way of keeping time. And in the years since, I have learned much about the varying cultures, histories, religions, and holidays of different people.

Through greater cultural and historical

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Illustration by Cynthia Sadurni

Black Cats, Not Just for Halloween

By Cynthia Sadurni

What comes to mind when we encounter the image of a panther, be it a leopard or jaguar? We feel awe, admiration, or maybe wonderment. We may think it majestic, mysterious, strong. So, I wonder, why should our feelings be different when we encounter a black cat? Is it because of centuries of superstition?

Let's consider this phrase attributed to the great Leonardo Da Vinci: "The smallest feline is a masterpiece." I couldn't agree more. Pay attention to how a leopard moves, and you will see the exact fluid grace in a house cat.

So why is it that black cats have a much lower rate of adoption than cats with other coat colors? I

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Bakers, Sewers, and Throwers

By Andy Valencia

Bake It

Reality TV has been with us for almost 35 years. Networks loved it because people – for free – would line up to behave shamelessly for the cameras. Viewers loved it because, well, really I have no idea. But it contributed to decades of an entertainment wasteland.

Every cloud has its silver lining, and my family has become fans of a particular type of reality TV. It started with The Great British Bake Off (“GBBO”), a show with amateur bakers attempting various baking challenges (plaited bread, pancakes, cakes, mirror glazes ...) while being judged by a pair of top bakers in the industry. As you watch the tribulations and triumphs of each season’s bakers, you learn about whole new kinds of foods. Even with something as familiar as bread, you will learn so many details of the baker’s art that you can’t help but try baking your own loaf.

Our first loaf was great! Beginner’s luck. The next one was a collapsed misery. If you’re like us, a few internet searches plus something you saw on the GBBO will get your third try back on track. Along the way, you’ll pick up all sorts of useful tips – one of my favorites is that if you need to eat dense or dried out bread, run water on both sides and then toast it.

Then you might try sourdough, or you get some of that spelt flour and try an alternative to

wheat. Pretty soon, you’ll have a rotation of fresh breads, with weeks and then months going by without having to purchase their commercial counterpart. Home-baked loaves here tend to cost us around \$2, so there’s a boost to the shopping budget as well.

Sew It

We didn’t know it, but we had caught “the bug.” Not the home baking bug, something bigger. Because we next encountered The Great British Sewing Bee. As in the Bake Off, there are amateur sewers and famous judges, including no less than a Savile Row tailor. As with the Bake Off, your view of the world changes as you learn about the details of clothing. You begin to notice how a dress hangs, or the tidiness of its pleats.

You may never sew your own tuxedo, but once you know how sleeves are inserted into the body of a garment, you might break out your little sewing kit and fix a seam that is starting to open. If the old threads are in the way, you’ll have already seen the unpicking tool (basically, a sewer’s “undo” button) in action. Even when you have to hit the web for some extra details, having seen so many amateur sewers work with many materials and techniques will give you the vocabulary to search for details efficiently.

Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. Three times is enemy action. A famous war quote from Ian Fleming, but it sort of applies to my family.

Throw It

Most people are aware of pottery, and have probably seen somebody forming clay on a

spinning pottery wheel, a skill known as “throwing.” But what’s the difference between a dish and a plate? How does a kettle gets its spout – or its handle? How does throwing 3 pounds of clay differ from 6 or 9 pounds?

The format is familiar by now – two expert judges and a gaggle of amateur potters. And yet, bakers are nothing like sewers, and neither is anything like a potter. All three groups use muscle memory, an artistic sense, and years of acquired experience with their materials. Heating to 350 degrees turns batter into a cake; heating to 1,000 degrees or more turns a clay piece into its ceramic counterpart.

That temperature is no joke; just a bit of trapped moisture will cause the piece to explode in the kiln. Thus, potters usually spend a great deal of time trimming away any unneeded clay thickness. Kiln temperatures give you that hard, smooth surface of a plate. But the piece can be painted with a glaze, its post-kiln color having no relation to its pre-kiln appearance. Stray glaze on the bottom of the piece will cause it to stick to the kiln shelf, another source of shattered pieces – even the most experienced potters admit they’re never sure exactly what will come out of the kiln.

You’re Not (Just) a Consumer

Like any other reality TV show, you can certainly sit back and watch somebody else live their life, Truman Show-style. But I hope you’ll consider the possibility that you can make or mend a shirt, bake your own batch of cookies, or possibly even make a pitcher or flower pot. We’re surrounded by a world that calls us “consumers,” why not start being defined by what you produce, instead?

You’re not on your own. Just do a search for “baking class on Vashon,” or the same kind of search for “sewing” or “pottery.” Aruba Clay Studios is run by a family friend, with regular pottery workshops. And, of course, Kavi Rana has written about sewing right here in The Loop. Hey, expert bakers, sewers, potters of Vashon – send The Loop a note if you offer classes!

What might come next? I’m hoping for welding, or maybe plumbing.

A Bridge Too Far

By Rich Osborne

Like every other Islander, I have endured the Judd Creek bridge closure.

And yes, it added five minutes and 20 seconds to my commute. Every time.

But I noticed something. Somehow, it increased my toleration of other drivers.

I found myself channeling Bobby McFerrin. “Don’t worry, be happy.”

My friend John said, “I am so tired of driving past the Jesus Barn.”

“Don’t worry, be happy.”

It appears to me that shared inconvenience gave us increased ability to allow for others’ their driving foibles.

Somebody in a white Jeep Comanche cut me

off. Don’t worry, be happy. We both made the ferry.

A cyclist blew through the stoplight at Vashon Highway and Bank Road without slowing down, let alone stopping. She didn’t kill anybody. Her risk, not mine. Don’t worry, be happy.

An older couple took the long way, kitty-corner across Bank Road, pushing their walkers. They were cute. Don’t worry, be happy.

A family of six, with two still in strollers, was so grateful when I stopped for them, crossing outside the crosswalk. Don’t worry, be happy.

The bridge is open again!

Bobby McFerrin nailed it. Don’t worry, be happy. We still get to live in the best place in the world.

Is your ferry sailing late? Don’t worry, be happy.

Feel free to whistle the melody now.

The Vashon Loop

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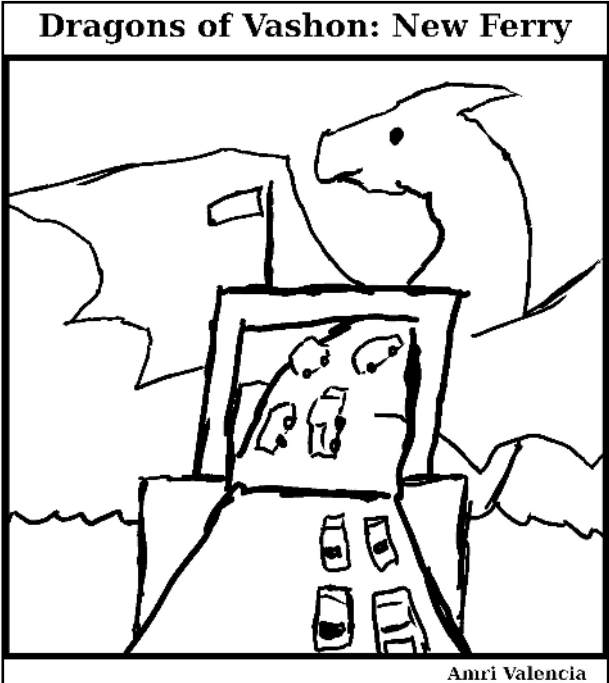
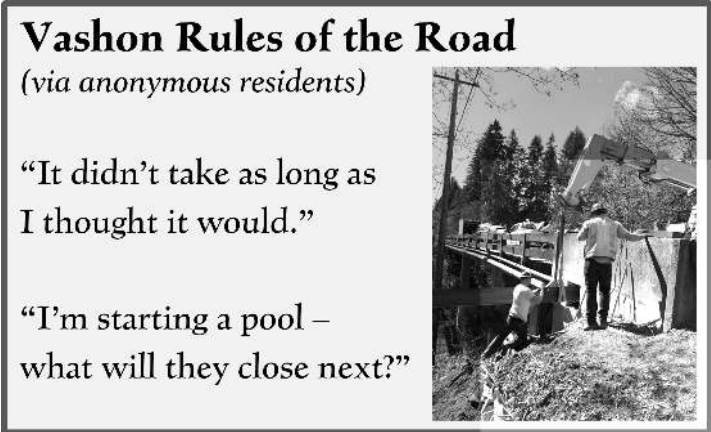
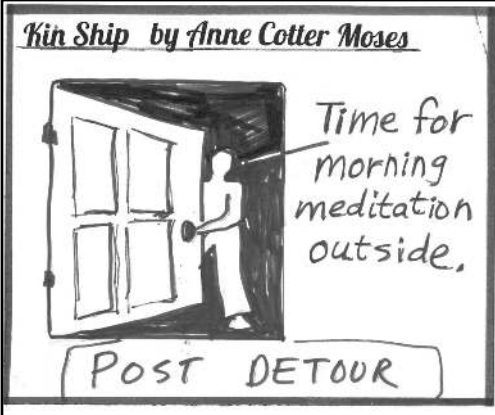
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What Does Initiative 638 Say?

By Caitlin Rothermel

In our August 2026 issue, The Loop published an opinion article, “Should We Talk About Trans Issues? Yes, and Here’s Why ...” that referenced Initiative 638 (I-638), being voted on in Washington state this November. This article was controversial. Online discussions were very critical. The Loop also received private input that was both constructive and supportive.

This month, we return to this topic with “pro” / “con” perspectives on I-638 from two advocacy groups: No Hate in WA State, a statewide coalition opposing initiatives 638 and 001, Democrats for an Informed Approach to Gender (DIAG), a volunteer-run non-profit advocating for evidence-based approaches to gender-related policy. As is The Loop’s practice, any fact-based statements in these articles are linked to source documents in the online version.

The summary below reviews what I-638 does and does not say, including quoted language for key points. The goal was to provide a foundation for considering the two perspectives that follow.

I-638, formally titled the “Defending Equity in Interscholastic Sports Act,” would establish new requirements governing participation in female interscholastic athletic competition in Washington public schools.

Its central provision would prohibit students the Initiative defines as “biologically male” from competing with or against female students in certain athletic activities designated for female students. It would also require students participating in these competitions to have their biological sex verified by a health care provider as part of the existing sports physical process.

I-638 begins with a series of findings explaining its purpose. It states that Washington law and school district policies already require students to undergo routine physical examinations before participating in interscholastic sports, and that these examinations include documentation of the



student’s “sex assigned at birth.”* According to I-638, this existing process provides “a reliable and medically verified basis to determine a student’s biological sex.” I-638 further states that protecting “the integrity and fairness of women’s interscholastic sports” requires students to compete in athletic activities consistent with “the gender assigned at birth.”*

Section 3 of I-638 directs school districts and organizations with delegated authority over interscholastic athletics, such as the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA), to adopt policies that “prohibit biologically male students from competing with and against female students” when an athletic activity has separate male and female classifications and is both “intended for female students only” and an individual or team competition.

Section 3 also establishes the initiative’s medical verification requirement. A student choosing to participate in an individual or team competition intended for female students would be required to provide, “as part of the required routine sports physical examination, a health examination and consent form or other statement signed by the student’s personal health care provider that verifies the student’s biological sex.”

I-638 specifies the information on which the health care provider may rely for this verification.

It must be based “only on one or more of the following: The student’s reproductive anatomy, genetic makeup, or normal endogenously produced testosterone levels.”

I-638 does not further define “reproductive anatomy” or “genetic makeup,” nor does it specify particular examinations or laboratory tests to perform. It does not state that a genital examination might be required; the word “genital” does not appear in the I-638 language. The verification requirement is specifically tied to participation in individual or team competitions by female students; I-638 does not establish a similar requirement for male athletic competition.

Additionally, I-638 would require school districts and voluntary nonprofit organizations that govern interschool activities to make their “policies, procedures, rules, and other requirements” conform to the new eligibility provisions.

I-638 also amends Washington’s existing public-school sex-discrimination law. This generally requires that recreational and athletic activities be offered without regard to sex and permits schools to provide separate teams for each sex. I-638 would retain those provisions but add an exception referring to its new female-sports eligibility requirements. Existing requirements for equal treatment in areas like equipment and supplies, medical care, insurance, transportation, coaching, competition opportunities, publicity, awards, and scheduling would remain in place.

I-638 indicates that other provisions concerning sexual-harassment policies, counseling and guidance services, course offerings, instructional materials, and surveys of student interest would largely retain existing state law. Likewise, I-638 does not change existing requirements for athletic facilities. Current law requires that schools provide comparable showers, toilets, or athletic training rooms for both sexes; these may be separate facilities or facilities scheduled for separate use by each sex.

** I-638 language uses both the terms “sex” and “gender” in this context; it is not clear if this was an oversight.*

Vote No on I-638

By Kim von Henkle, Chuck Weinstock, Bailey de Iongh, and Jay Williamson

The No Hate in WA State campaign is working to defeat two initiatives on the November ballot, I-001 and I-638. These harmful initiatives challenge the safety and well-being of Vashon and Washington’s K-12 kids, particularly those who are LGBTQ+.

Our comments center on I-638, which would change current law to require medical sex certification as part of sports physicals for all girls’ participation in K-12 athletics, clearly targeting transgender girls. This would be a healthcare-provider statement verifying biological sex based on reproductive anatomy, genetic makeup, or naturally produced testosterone levels ... potentially expensive as well as invasive.

The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) is the statewide association of school sports and reports that about 110,000 girls are currently involved in some sport. Of these, the WIAA is aware of 5-10 transgender girls playing sports. Since reporting is voluntary, it is true that no one knows the exact number, but it isn’t an overwhelming number or even “a lot.” Girls’ sports are not being overwhelmed by biological boys. “Biological boys” pretending to be transgender girls can and should be denied participation.

Sports should help children

develop skills, confidence, friendships, and teamwork. To be sure, safety matters, too. Rather than banning an incredibly small number of transgender girls, let’s take actions that promote safety. Here is a start:

- Parents, team officials, and sport associations: (1) carefully vet coaches, trainers, and sports medical providers, (2) report offenders, and (3) ban transgressors from organized athletics.
- Most sports involve physical contact with potential for injury. Creating actual safety starts with coaching and training that builds skills, sportsmanship, and respect for game rules. Making girls’ sports “safe” by banning transgender girls assumes all girls are some singular feminine body type.
- Game safety is the job of the referee and coaches by enforcing the rules and removing a participant who is dangerous.

The Vashon Island School District has a model anti-discrimination and gender-inclusive school policy that would be adversely impacted by these initiatives. Washington State already has a framework and toolkit for transgender and gender-diverse participation in all school athletics through the WIAA. This framework has been working effectively since its adoption in 2017. If other standards are needed, these would best be developed sport-by-sport by the WIAA and its members.

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Vote Yes on I-638

By Brian Anderson

I-638 will restore fairness and dignity to girls’ sports in Washington State by restricting girls’ sports to biological girls (i.e., females). Here are two of examples of how Washington State’s transgender sports policy undermines safety and fairness for female athletes.

- Kallie Keeler is a 15-year-old wrestler who claims she was sexually assaulted by a transgender girl (i.e., male) opponent in a girls’ wrestling match in December. Keeler does not want to wrestle any more males, but because her school could not guarantee that, she withdrew from wrestling and is now challenging Washington’s policy in federal court.
- Lauren Matthew placed second in the Girls’ 400-meter Washington State Track Championship. It was the second year in a row she finished behind a male competitor. She protested by refusing to stand on the podium during the awards ceremony.

In Washington State over the last four years, just nine males took 148 top-three finishes in high school sports (hecheated.org). Girls are also subjected to males in their locker rooms. How many girls have dropped out of sports altogether because of these policies?

If robbing hundreds of girls of their rightful accolades and opportunities is not too many, how many is? Even one is too many. These girls are the invisible victims of our

state’s policy. Girls’ sports build girls’ leadership and teamwork skills, confidence, and they are where college and professional athletes develop their skills.

Broad Support Exists to Protect Girls’ Sports

Most states, along with the NCAA, NAIA, International Olympic Committee, and other major organizations that govern athletic competition, have adopted policies that restrict female athletic competition based on biological sex. But we don’t need studies to tell us that most males are bigger, stronger, and faster than most females. This is why we have a separate category for girls’ athletic competitions.

The majority of athletics experts entrusted by our state to regulate K12 sports – the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) – don’t want males competing in girls’ K-12 sports. Last year, a majority of the WIAA Representative Assembly voted on an amendment that would have restricted girls’ sports to females. It fell one vote short of the 60% needed to pass.

Not only is Washington State’s current girls’ sports policy unfair, it’s a violation of the rights granted to female athletes. Title IX grants females the right to equal sporting opportunities “on the basis of sex,” not gender identity. I-638 would align

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Vote No on I-638

Continued from Page 3

Gender transitioning is hard in today’s world. Transgender youth are subject to bullying, isolation, and violence. Participating in a team, being with friends and peers, and learning to do one’s best is healthy and empowering. Rather than writing a ban into state law, we should continue working toward policies that protect all students while allowing young people to experience the benefits of sports.

Finally, who supports and who opposes these initiatives? Regrettably the sponsor motives for the initiatives are not really safety or fairness, but rather part of a larger national culture war agenda. The two initiatives are projects of Let’s Go Washington (LGW), founded by a hedge fund multi-millionaire. LGW has raised about \$7.3 million for the campaign with over \$2 million from its founder. The major supporters of the Initiatives are the Washington State Republican Party, Moms for Liberty WA, and the

Washington State Young Republicans. None of these organizations have a prior history of standing for issues affecting women. They do have a history of being anti-gay, anti-trans, and anti-women’s health issues.

The initiative is opposed by No Hate in WA State, which is focused on a world that is safe for kids to have the freedom to be themselves and supports ALL kids for success. The No Hate coalition includes over 150 organizations statewide plus local government, individual elected officials, churches, unions, and critically ... doctors, nurses, school counselors, and other healthcare providers who work with youth.

Please vote NO on this initiative to protect Washington’s children while preserving their ability to participate in the benefits of school sports.

For more information on the No Hate in WA State campaign, <https://nohatewastate.org>

The authors are Vashon residents, parents, and volunteers with No Hate In Washington State.

Vote Yes on I-638

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Washington’s K-12 policy with Title IX requirements.

Polls show opposition to males competing in women’s and girls’ sports. Nationally, 73% of Americans, including 55% of Democrats/Democratic-leaning adults, opposed such participation in a 2025 Pew Research survey; a 2025 NYT/Ipsos poll found opposition at 79% overall and 67% among Democrats/Democratic-leaning adults.

We need a citizen’s initiative to correct this injustice because Democratic politicians in Washington State are out of touch with their voters on this issue.

Correcting Misinformation from Opponents

- Critics claim I-638 would apply to elementary-school girls. However, I-638 requirements are tied to routine sports physicals, which begin with interscholastic sports in middle school.

- The initiative does not “ban transgender athletes from competing in sports.” It restricts girls’ sports to females. Males who identify as girls can compete in boys’ sports or in a separate “open” category, should the

WIAA create one, as they discussed last year.

- Critics have questioned why schools cannot use birth certificates to verify sex. This is because, in Washington State, the “sex” marker on a birth certificate can be changed and therefore does not necessarily reflect a person’s sex.

- Initiative opponents are distorting the requirement that a doctor vouch for the sex of an athlete. Under the initiative, a doctor can rely on genetic makeup, testosterone levels, or reproductive anatomy. A person’s sex is documented in their medical record, based on past exams. Medical associations such as the AAP recommend regular physicals for all children, including genital examinations as part of adolescent wellness physicals. The initiative does not require genital inspections or pelvic exams in sports physicals or repeated verification as opponents claim.

I will finish with one question for the opponents of I-638. Why should female athletes be asked to give up their right to fair play and opportunities in girls’ sports?

Brian Anderson is the State Coordinator for Washington Supporters of “Democrats For An Informed Approach To Gender” (DIAG). DIAG is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. DIAG is a group of lifelong Democratic voters working to restore the sex-based rights of females and prevent harm to children from unnecessary medical treatments.

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Black Cats, Not Just for Halloween

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have heard from people working at animal shelters that superstition isn’t the only reason in play. There is also a notion that black cats don’t photograph well. This begs the question: is the perfect photo opportunity more important than opening your heart and home to a loving companion? The fact is, with good lighting, a great photo of a black cat is very possible.

Did you know that a high percentage of cats euthanized in shelters are black cats? Some reports cite up to 76% higher than cats of other coat colors.

Most black cat owners will say that their feline companions are loving, affectionate, and loyal. Some people also say that they are gentle and warm-hearted as well. In my experience, black cats, indeed, make devoted soulmates (I am the proud owner of two). The fact that they take longer to adopt may reinforce these traits. When they finally find their forever home, they form deep bonds with their humans. Of our black cats, one waited 3 months and the other almost 6 months to be adopted. Once they came home, they quickly grew into devoted, loving companions.

If you would like to read more about their temperament, you can find many articles online. The website cats.com, amongst others, features some fun ones. (“8 Benefits of Black Cats and Why You Should Adopt One”, “Trusting Black Cat Finds a Purrfect Forever Home,” and many others.)

To celebrate our feline friends, and with All Hallow’s Eve around the corner, I’d like to share some observations and facts about them, as well as

some of the folklore surrounding them. Not the spooky, witchy stuff, but the positive, unknown tales of these unsung, gentle cats.

Technically, a black cat’s coat is a product of genetics. They produce high levels of a pigment that turns their coat black. The term for this is *melanistic*, derived from melanism, the overproduction of the pigment melanin. The fun fact is that most black cats are really tabbies. If you look closely, you may see their spots and stripes!

I am particularly inclined to the folklore from United Kingdom where, in general, black cats are viewed as a positive presence. Here are a few examples:

In England, a black cat crossing your path is considered good luck. They are also believed to be protectors of the home, and bring happiness to brides on their weddings.

Throughout England and Ireland, black cats are a seafarer’s treasure. They are believed to bring good luck, safe voyages, and facilitate a safe return to port. Thus, many ships would seek to have a mini-panther to watch over them. Harming the ship’s cat would inevitably summon misfortune, even terrible storms.

In Scotland, a black cat on your door step is believed to bring prosperity.

Now we travel to east to Japan, where black



cats bring both love and good fortune. Also, they were believed to be good omens for opening days in theaters, assuring prosperity and success.

In ancient Egypt, all cats, including black ones, were revered and considered the embodiment of the goddess Bastet. They were thought to bring good luck and protection.

In Türkiye, a black cat crossing your path is a sign of good fortune. Also, cats in general are respected and loved. Happily, things are changing for the better in our country. Recently, two celebration days have been instituted: Black Cat Appreciation Day (August 17th, since 2011) and National Back Cat Day (October 27th).

I hope you find this article fun and that you will have a different outlook on these kind and gentle, yet misunderstood, cats. I’ll end with this lovely English charm:

“Black cat, cross my path, good fortune bring to home and hearth. When I am away from home, bring me luck wherever I roam.”¹

May it always be so!

in memory of Inigo, my shining star that burned brightly for 16 years

¹<https://www.discovermagazine.com/why-do-black-cats-have-a-reputation-for-evil-44218>

See article at vashonloop.com for more resources.

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What Was I Thinking?

By Gates (Pam) Johnson

Now that I’m feeling better and have my health stuff semi-under control, it’s time for me to get back to a project that has been on the shelf for a few, make that several, years.

I am writing a cookbook.

One would think that a vanity project like this could be knocked out relatively quickly. I am a pretty good writer and researcher and typist and cook, so what’s the big deal? Just write down the things I have come up with, ask a few family members and friends for their favorites. Grab a few pictures from my phone. Throw them all together in a readable format. Find a printer. Boom! Project over.

If only it were that easy. First off, I had to figure out how extensive this book should be. I’m kind of known for my pies. Should it be a pie book? I’m not a great cake-baker but have had fun making birthday cakes for grandkids. Cookies? In the last 20 years, I have baked probably eight million cookies of various types. Entrees? Soups and noodles?

Wow! I know how to make a lot of food! It kind of knocked me for a loop (no pun intended) ...

I pulled out my mom’s old recipe box. Found some files with old-old family recipes. Asked family and friends if they had any favorites they would like included. One day, I was in the hot tub at the athletic club and a young man was getting into the mix with all the ladies from my water-walking class. I told him he had to give me a recipe before he could get in, so he did. It is in the book.

Another friend gave me a really intricate Norwegian cake recipe. I haven’t had the nerve to try it yet, but she swears by it. My grandkids insisted on Mimi Ramen. Had to put in the old Garibaldi favorite, barbecued crab. And the one everybody asks for, black bottom banana cream pie.

Got all the recipes entered and put in categories. When counting them up, there were 31

Island Voices

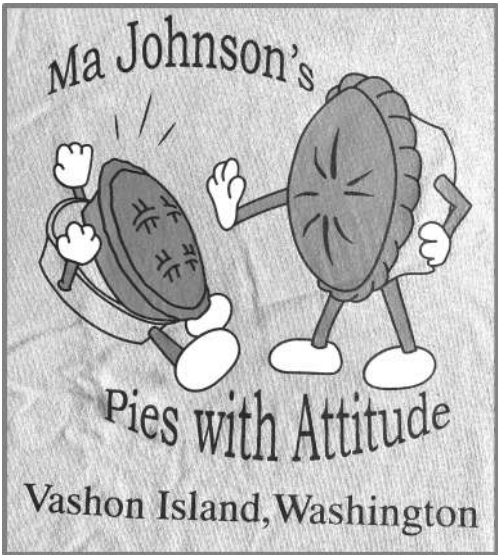
kinds of pie. Almost an equal number of cookies. Total recipes? 211. The book was big.

Of course there were a million food photos on my phone. My pal Judy also had 40+ on her phone. The next task was choosing appropriate photos, and how many. I have over 1,000 photos on my phone. And I haven’t done a lot of computer work since retiring, so I had to relearn how to create folders and copy them to a removable disk. Last night at about 3:00 a.m. I created eleven folders, named them, and put in the pictures. Now I have to get that to my editor.

The grunt work is coming along nicely, so now it’s time to find a printer. My editor suggested a place in Centralia. I contacted them, but apparently, they do not return phone calls, no matter how many voice mails one leaves them. They sent me a brochure with a lot of information, but I really would like to talk to a real person. Perhaps a different printer would be more accessible. I will give Centralia one more chance before looking elsewhere.

Cost. How much are these books going to cost me? There are lots of variables to consider. Hardcover, softcover, laminated softcover, saddle stitch binding, plastic spiral binding, metal spiral binding. Paper options too? Shiny. Matte. Thick. Thin. Oh, and including color will up the ante. Photos have to be in color. They would look stupid and flat in black and white.

Who knew there were all of these choices, and decisions to be made? I have kind of decided on a metal spiral binding, mostly because the book will lay flat when opened. I like the idea of a hardcover. Of course, my choices increase the per-book cost. My mom always said I have Cadillac taste and a hot rod pocketbook. This is a one-off project so cost be damned.



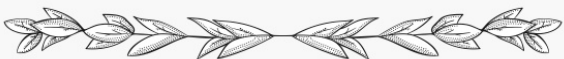
Think I will go with my “Ma Johnson Pies with Attitude” logo for the cover. My good friend Terry designed it years ago and I still love it. The attitude part perfectly represents me.

Once I decided to go ahead on this project, I needed to find out how many I should have printed. One Saturday, I posted a little note on Facebook asking if any of my friends would want a copy once it is printed. Thought it was a good idea to see how many I should order.

Response to that post and word of mouth, and a week or so later, I have over 60 copies requested. Once again, who knew? My son says I should sell it on Etsy or Amazon. That seems a little more than I want to deal with. Not out to make money, but it would be nice to cover the costs.

The idea was to have them as Christmas gifts for my kids and grandkids. It kind of ballooned from that original thought. The interest list is growing daily. Fingers crossed that it will all come together on time. As my son Jake says, “Stay tuned. Film at eleven.”

Editor’s note: To pre-order Gates’ cookbook, contact her directly or via editor@vashonloop.com.



Lost and Found

By Donna (Rocky) Liberty

Recently, a friend and I saw each other uptown and stopped to have a conversation. She asked me, “You know you’re missing an earring, right?”

Oh, dear! I did NOT know. One of my favorite pairs of earrings, and one of them missing! Yikes!

Quickly, I retraced my steps through the town. Grocery, pharmacy, pizza place, and coffee shop. No earring. Give out phone number, hope for the best.

Resigned, I went home. I knew I should not have worn that pink sweater. It had done this to me before, surreptitiously removing an earring.

By late evening, I’m lounging on the couch. We’ve experienced an influx of ants (no uncles) lately, and I’m scratching at my ankle, sure it’s another creepy, crawly invader. But lo and behold! Inside my pants cuff, yay, the precious earring.

HAHAHAHAHA!

The End

Editor’s Note: How many times has this piece been queued for The Loop, yet didn't quite get dropped in? Lost and Found indeed! Third time's the charm. Thank you, Rocky, for your good humor and patience!



Photograph by Claudia Hollander-Lucas

The Wisdom of Shorter Days

Continued From Front Page

awareness, through conscious decisions to break with the past, and through a general cynicism borne of capitalism-fatigue, the holiday seasons certainly are not what they used to be. But as a newly official middle-aged person, complete with my first “old person medicine” prescription, I wanted to remind us of the wisdom in what our culture came up with:

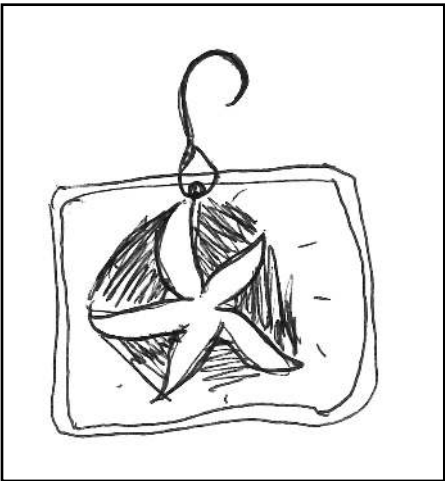
As the days get shorter, colder, wetter, and darker, we’ve learned to mark time – together! – with things that give us joy.

The first holiday we (for the most part) collectively observe is the funniest and the funnest. We make a joke of the shadows, the ghosts and goblins, and the spiders moving into our homes, by making it all a game. We dress up like the things that go bump in the night. We decorate our homes with spider webs. And as the darkness and the damp really begin to make themselves known, we “do” Halloween together with our neighbors. We dress up our kids, we dress up ourselves, and we make an exception to portion sizes on candy.

After all this, we begin planning a meal. It will take us almost a month. We will think about where we want to eat it, and with whom. Will we travel or host? Will we invite neighbors and friends? Whatever else we decide, we already know what the theme is: Gratitude. Or, in old-timey speak, Thanksgiving.

Baked right into the season of darkness, depression, and a greater awareness of being alone, our culture came up with ways to have joy – with reasons to do something with our neighbors and relatives, to be in each other’s homes.

Perhaps, despite how unfathomably serious our culture has become, and how divided and lonely, the coming days have given us some ways to fight the darkness together.



“Earring”
Illustration
by Donna
(Rocky)
Liberty



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Still She Smiles

By Suzanna Leigh

Mom is on hospice now. A lot of what I have been doing this month is spending time with her daily, working to keep her house and finances in order, and communicating with her caregivers. It is, as Carol Spangler says, a sacred time.

Mom's energy and strength are ebbing. Sometimes getting in and out of bed, to transfer to her wheelchair or to the commode, is scary for her even with help. A few days ago, as my brother Steve was helping her to get from her wheelchair to her bed, her legs gave out and she slipped down onto her knees.

And then she will surprise us! Just when we had resigned ourselves to mom being bedridden, Steve woke up at 4:00 a.m. to find her in the hall, in her wheelchair, on the way back from the dining room. She got from her bed to her wheelchair, unlocked the brake, wheeled herself down the long hall to the dining room, turned on the light, and was on her way back to bed. Perhaps she had even read some of the books waiting for her on the table before deciding to retire to her bedroom.

How is it that even as she becomes more feeble,
her spirit still fills the room?

Mom really enjoys visits from musician friends. Rich Osborne, from Music Mends Minds brings his guitar and we sing songs she remembers from decades ago. Although she has trouble hearing when we speak to her, she could hear the words to the songs. She laughs at the funny ones, and



The Magic of Music With Marj

By Rich Osborne

Many of you know Marj Watkins.

Air Force wife, writer, artist, charitable donor, and a dozen other roles in the 102 years of her life. She has a new role. She now has a performance venue for Island Musicians.

It started innocently enough. I lead "The Island Rockers" in the "Music Mends Minds" (MMM) Program at the Vashon Senior Center at 1:30 p.m. every Tuesday. One day, I was talking to Marj about it. She told me how much she missed the music.

It came to us that we should bring music to her house.

So I brought my guitar and songbook and we sang together with a couple family members.

It was awesome! She absolutely lights up while we are singing.

Someone (my wife Suzanna Leigh, maybe?) told Erin Durrett about it.

Erin brought a small group of singers from the Church of the Holy Spirit Church Choir.

mouths the words while her toes dance. The Episcopal Church Choir came to sing some of her favorite hymns, and she sang with them. When Jane Valencia brought her harp, the look of bliss on Mom's face was touching. The Threshold Choir comes regularly now, which delights and amazes her. She claps her hands and invites the singers to come "any time."

Mom's favorite comfort hold-on is a stuffed kitty with coloring a bit like Bunny, her cat that died a few months ago.

Words come hard; she struggles to tell even simple stories or share memories, stuttering, repeating, searching for the words that won't come. And yet, tell stories she does. One day she told us that her father named her after a movie star. My brother Steve looked up movie stars named Marjorie about the time mom was born and found three! Some stories may or may not be a confusion of different memories. Some stories she makes up entirely.

I asked mom if she was ever bored. She said no. She has all these people to talk to. She pointed at the wall of portraits she has painted over the years. There's her mom at about 70, my sister Jeannie as a teenager, Steve at age 13, and another of him at age three. There's my brother John at age four or five, and one of me at maybe 40. There's the Okinawan lady who came to the door to sell mom things, and a girl whose portrait she painted years ago and cannot now remember. It's not a bad thing, not

*Illustrations by
Suzanna Leigh*



Marj was a member there for many decades. I heard that it was a big hit.

Then the Threshold Choir brought their wonderful healing magical mysteries (No Beatles) to her.

Then Jane Valencia brought her harp.

Music Mends Minds returned with two ukuleles, (Laurie & B. J.). And on and on. I have had other singers ask to join us.

We will continue as long as we can.

I am now getting a background check to be able to go out to sing with other folks who are



remembering; mom makes up elaborate stories about her. "She has seven brothers," mom told me. "She is angry with her father because he pays attention to her brothers but not to her. She doesn't have a mother, so I took her in." Mom pointed to her closet. "I have plenty."

Still, Mom enjoys the company of live people most of all. When we celebrated my birthday in late August, Jeannie, Steve, and I visited with mom in the bedroom until she said she was ready for a nap. About half an hour later, after the rest of the family arrived, and we were chatting as we sat down to eat the birthday feast. Jeannie glanced at the monitor in mom's room and noticed that she seemed to be getting up. By the time Jeannie got there to help her up, she was in her wheelchair on her way to join the party!



homebound. It will take the time it takes. Then we will see how it goes. In the meantime, we will just keep singing. All volunteers. No cost.

Vashon Rotary club put up the startup money for MMM. They continue to support our program. Yay! Rotary.

It's good for us. It's healthy. It's definitely better than politics.




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All political power is inherent in the people, and governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and are established to protect and maintain individual rights.



- Washington State Constitution

Parallel Lives – The Lean Place

By Richard Odell

There comes a certain hour in September. The long march of Spring and Summer stands still. The alder leaves are now a time-hardened raiment of darkened green with flecks of brindle and gold. The broken fields are spent, whitened, at rest in the tilted sunlight. One looks upon it all and feels rich in days. And the very fullness of the hour, itself, informs you that it will not last.

Then comes the first evening too dark to take after-work coffee on the deck. Then the first cold rains. Then comes the day like today, the first of those blue-sky, October days we like to call “crisp.”

My day is open and blank, like the sky. And unexpectedly so. No work, no weekly duties press upon me, no appointments. I wasn’t prepared for this. I can’t be sitting all day looking out my window, wondering how long I have to wait to take a nap. It comes to me: this day I can do what I’ve meant to do, and haven’t done, for years now – visit a certain house no longer there.

It stood once, alone, uncrowded, across a wide field, some hundred yards in from the main highway, north of the village and south of an elementary school itself no longer there. (Some years back, tasked with driving some off-Islanders from deep in Maury Island to the north-end ferry, I thought it appropriate to give them something in the form of tour guidance along the way. By the time we’d cleared the village, I realized most of what I’d pointed out to them were things no longer there.)

It was the first house I entered in life, in my mother’s arms (I like to think), born Cesarean section some days before. I’ve no memory of it. By the time I was five months old, we were out and gone down the road to the Heights. Don’t know why we moved. My parents were renters, and maybe the place went up for sale. Maybe it wasn’t so great a house.

In looking back, my parents would call it “The Lean Place,” or such it was spelled in my mind. I assumed not because it leaned, or because we were lower middle-class, back then, but after the name of the owner and likely previous resident. In my parents’ day, houses were often known and named, around the neighborhood, in memory of past residents.

The Lean Place stood another 50 years after my family’s departure, becoming for me, in time, an unvisited roadside attraction; never overlooked, yet never “taken in,” until it was too late and it was gone. In the family archives, which I’m left with as the sole survivor, the only record of it is a single black and white photograph of my father in his sizeable, side-yard garden, hoisting my three-year old brother above the potatoes and corn.

A tennis court, strangely unassociated with any residence, replaced the Lean Place after it was finally razed. Never saw anyone engaged thereon. Decorative trees, planted long after our time there, framed, and eventually eclipsed, the court. Still, the thought, with all my passings-by, of “Why not just go there,” edged its way ever forward in mind, yet always while I was on my way somewhere. Seriously, I never expected, coming up through life, that my seventies would be spent so much on the clock.

This day there is no somewhere else. Even so, it is afternoon by the time I’m bundled up and on my way. Shadows are already cast along the east side of the highway, and on that curiosity of a sidewalk, a relic of the Great Depression and the WPA, that runs between the village and the old school grounds. I find a parking place along the shoulder where the sunlight still rests, that my car might be kept warm (the never-ending strategies of the aged!), leaving for myself a healthy, little walk uphill to my goal.

Near where a few steps and a mailbox may once have been is a busted box housing a water meter with nothing left to measure. The broad field beyond has been well kept, the autumn grass thick and mown (by whom?). I venture across, open to

view, a lone moonwalker with the whole world watching, awkwardly aware that, in a lifetime of drive-bys I have never, ever, EVER seen anyone upon this field. I have of course rehearsed my excuse should a neighbor come forth and ask me, “What the hell?” Forgive an old man who only wanted to see where his native home had been.

The little thicket of decorative trees has grown too dense to penetrate, so I flank the southern end, where a tall, red oak (how old, I wonder) dominates. And, well, there it is. A tennis court. Not much one can say about that. Not the sort of scene one feels compelled to “drink in.” True, it is solid and clean, adorned with a few fall leaves, and a dead, gray tree branch from seasons past conveying a sense of abandonment. The net is yet whole and taut, though grey lichens have begun to gather here and there along the lines.

I stand where my father’s garden had been, where the land slopes to the south, the mown grass beneath me a thick, blonde blanket over the past. In the distance, one can still see Mount Rainier through a light thicket of willows which could surely not have been there long. What a view there must have been! One can even see a patch of Puget Sound, blue as the sky, far below to the east. Strange it seems, no one has thought to replace, on this choice plot, the house that once had been. All has been left in peace.

Well, there’s that, and it’s palpable. Peace to take home, for the sojourn, here. The main highway traffic, far removed, sounds like a mountain river out of sight. From behind a high hedge, on the neighboring grounds, comes the sound of children playing, like delicate purse strings, tying the whole of time together.

I snap a twig from the red oak, as a keepsake, and make my way back across the field. And now I am cured of it all.



Building Wealth

By Stephen Buller

What is wealth? We should start by differentiating between the tangible and intangible: Tangible wealth consists of physical items like land, cars, equipment, and gold; intangible wealth consists of non-material items like good health, skills, reputation, and relationships.

In my opinion, one would be wise to value intangible wealth above the tangible – and at the same time recognize that the latter often facilitates the former. Writer Spike Milligan said, “Money can’t buy you happiness, but it does bring you a more pleasant form of misery.”

Good health may require doctors’ visits. Skills may require costly education. Reputation and relationships often involve marketing or recreational expenses. Food and shelter continue to increase in cost. One of the main purposes of money is a medium of exchange, so unless you are an expert in all things, you will need it to trade for these things and more.

That is why this article will focus on tangible wealth, something I have written about many times before, but here I will do my best to give a complete and holistic picture of what I believe it means to be materially wealthy. None of this should be taken as financial advice because the smart thing to do will depend greatly on your specific circumstances.

I divide assets that comprise material wealth into the following categories: Currency, paper assets, commodities, businesses, real estate, and gold.

I am no fan of fiat currency, but we all need it for our daily expenses – as well as our taxes. A wealthy person has enough dollars in their checking or savings account for a “rainy day.” The first step in building wealth should be to obtain an emergency fund which covers a number of months’ living expenses. How many months will depend on your risk tolerance. This takes precedence even over paying down debt.

Island Resilience

Most of us have to work for a living, which makes it difficult to dedicate a lot of time to investing. This is why paper assets, such as stocks and bonds, are one good option for most people. The downside is a lack of control over these assets. The upside is it can be as simple as investing in an index such as the S&P 500 which gives exposure to large and profitable companies. When an economy is doing well, or the money printer is working overtime, paper assets usually do well.

In a correction or crash – which occur regularly in our fiat system and even under sound monetary systems – commodities such as oil, crops, and building materials often do well. When people become risk-adverse and need to tighten their belts, the relative value of having a roof over your head and food in your belly goes up.

If you are at a stage in life where you have acquired skill and expertise in a marketable area, starting your own business can build significant wealth because it creates immediate income as well as long-term value. A business succeeds when it leverages tools, equipment, and labor to provide a product or service at a competitive price. It is not for the faint of heart, but I am a huge fan of the freedom and control running your own business can provide.

Real estate is really just another business: It involves providing a service for a price at which it can earn a profit. Real estate is usually considered a special category, however, largely because of special tax incentives, illiquidity (it takes a long time to buy or sell real estate), and because it can be purchased using substantial amounts of borrowed money. It is often a smart way to diversify one’s wealth once it has grown to a certain level.

Gold has been money for thousands of years. Though it can and has been used as currency, these terms should be segregated because, unlike our dollar, gold is a store of value. I don’t think of it as a commodity like oil because it has specific traits

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that make money its ideal use. GLD is a paper asset – easier to trade but should not to be confused with the real thing. In my opinion, gold is the true savings account. Gold is money, or the family jewels you might pass down to your heirs. It has been here since the universe formed, and it will outlast us all.

The best portfolio is diversified, not just

Continued on Page 8

I Pledge Allegiance to All Americans

Who Do You Pledge Yourself To?

By March Twisdale

As long as I can remember, I’ve seen all Americans as my “fellows,” and we are not the same. We root for different sports teams, worship differently, speak different languages, and hold endlessly diverse viewpoints. However, as Americans we all have one shared trait. Our nationality.

Our cup, as citizens of the same nation, is filled to the brim with all that has occurred in the history of our United States. The good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, the adventuresome, the shocking, the electrifying, the horrifying, the easy, the challenging, the struggles, pains, successes, and epic inventions!

From the moment our lineage enters into the country, whatever comes to pass next becomes our shared inheritance. In a very real way, we become family. By blood, by marriage, or by national kinship, we Americans are inextricably interconnected. How do I know this? The Pledge of Allegiance tells me so!

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America ...”

If you are younger than 40, you may have no memory of this. Let me paint you a picture. Imagine arriving at school, by bike, on foot, or pouring out of a bus. Kids mill about, the landscape is dotted by adults here and there, until the school bell rings, everyone lines up in front of their

classroom, and then the doors open and the day officially begins. The classroom is loud and a bit chaotic as kids hang up coats, toss lunches into cubbies, and jostle about, getting to their seats.

Then, the hubbub quiets down, in your classroom, the hallways, and adjoining classrooms. A signal goes out; a buzzer, maybe? Or, simply the clock ticking to a particular predetermined time, and everyone quiets. All adults, teachers, administrators, janitors, and even the principal, rise together, turning to American Flags prominently displayed in every corner of the sprawling campus. Students follow in kind, rising from their seats, standing respectfully at attention, as hundreds of hands are raised to hearts, eyes are lifted, and voices rise in a pledge of commitment to our nation’s central themes and promises.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America ...”

“And to the Republic for which it stands ...”

Thanks to this perfectly worded vow of national identity, our hearts beat as one, for those few moments each day, creating a great sense of community and togetherness. For those of us born awhile ago, or raised today in private schools that still do this, this morning ritual serves as a renewal of a vow we are privileged, blessed, and rightfully obligated to



honor, as American citizens.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America ...”

“And to the Republic for which it stands ...”

“One nation, under God ...”

The “under God” part was added in 1954 by Congress and with President Eisenhower’s approval, in order to specifically identify America’s belief in God, in opposition to the Soviet Union’s atheistic/materialistic ideology.

God is perceived differently, especially in a melting-pot nation like ours. Therefore, this line is clearly intended as a “social glue” holding us together. It is invitational to American children, including all family faith backgrounds.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America ...”

“And to the Republic for which it stands ...”

“One nation, under God ...”

“... indivisible ...”

Just imagine, as a child, reciting a promise, a vow, and a poem, in the form of a national pledge. No matter how many other differences we may discover, this “first thing we do together every morning” ritual affirms our commitment to work together, toward compromise, solutions, and toward a more perfect union ... because, should we splinter and turn upon one another, all will be lost.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America ...”

“And to the Republic for which it stands ...”

“One nation, under God ...”

“... indivisible ...”

“... with Liberty and Justice For All.”

Children grow up, learning the language of their people. For many decades, all American children learned to recite this pledge before they knew big words. It was through this pledge that most American children were introduced to the words: pledge, allegiance, republic, indivisible, liberty, and justice.

The meaning of these words came to life in our minds and hearts, within the context of our national identity. Our American citizen-status. Our country of birth or the country that willingly extended an invitation and embraced us through legal immigration.

It was the spirit that united us.

Building Wealth

Continued from Page 7

between stocks and bonds, or international holdings, but across all of the assets above, including the intangible ones. This may sound daunting, but I hope this article encourages you to expand how you think about wealth, or to start somewhere. Too many people today feel like it’s impossible to build wealth and so they don’t even try. Remember, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Most of us earn an hourly wage, and so it’s easy to put a price on our time. However, time is the one resource we can never get back – though we may purchase more of it with our wealth. Some people work their lives away to become materially wealthy at great expense to their immaterial wealth – and never find time to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

As with many things in life, striking the right balance between work and wealth, and play and pleasure is a never-ending negotiation. I hope this article helps you tip the scales in the direction you think best.

Sweethearts and Submarines

Continued from Front Page

class submarine into the outer harbor and throw open the hatches.

The Captain’s joke may also have been a confession; either way, meeting former teachers and classmates after 18 years must have been a hoot. With dinners ashore, laughs about watching “submarine races,” talk of old times and exotic ports of call.

The United States was still basking in victories and the Navy was at the height of its popularity and professionalism. The Spinax was an old diesel soon to be decommissioned, and bigger nuclear subs like those spotted more recently off Alki Point were taking over. These can run at a depth of 100 meters at 6 knots in complete silence, in fact quieter than the very oceans that hiss around them. Those capabilities in turn de-emphasized need for the Carr Inlet Acoustic Range (on Fox Island, just off Gig Harbor’s southwest corner) to collect sub sound signatures. The facility closed in 1992.

Even so, four years before the facility closed, the USS Sam Houston ran firmly aground off Fox Island in 1988 while undergoing acoustic testing, and had to be helped off by four tugboats, prompting a geography-challenged May 1st New York Times headline, “Atomic Craft Aground Off Washington Coast.”

Local Vashon lore then places a nuclear sub

temporarily beaching in Colvos Passage in the early 1990s. An Island family boating in the Passage recalls the unidentified vessel made it off under its own power after frantic exertions. The Navy provides no record, but eyewitness testimony seems accurate enough, and all acoustic testing was coincidentally moved thereafter to Ketchikan, Alaska.

There are also claims of near-capsizings from surprise surfacings and fishing boats dragged by their nets, along with the true story of the USS Sea Devil’s periscope popping up beside a bemused fisherman during a 1951 Navy exercise testing Puget Sound’s harbor defenses.

Mooring another submarine in Quartermaster Harbor for a community party is currently hard to foresee. On the other hand, the Navy is building a lot of new housing out near Kitsap and Bangor, with national shipyards planned to expand. There might be a Vashon High grad or two lurking under the water right now, certifying as sub-deck officers on their way to becoming new captains.

A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly.

Specialization is for insects.

~ Robert A. Heinlein



King County Permitting Office Hours on Vashon!

Do you have permitting questions that are burning to be answered?

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On the second Tuesday of each month, 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

October 13th
November 10th

Schedule an appointment by contacting Judy Brizendine at jbrizendine@kingcounty.gov



Threshold Into Autumn: Hawthorn

By Anthony Latora

As the seasons change and the leaves begin to fall, I start to notice the daylight growing shorter and the cold beginning to return. A shift in myself begins to occur – from the highly expressive, movement-filled nature of summer toward the harvesting, tending, and inwardness of fall. The fruits are ripe now, ready to give themselves to those who know how to enjoy them. Among the many plants announcing the arrival of autumn, one tree in particular catches my eye: hawthorn.

There is an old folklore surrounding hawthorn, particularly in the British Isles, where certain trees were associated with fairies and other beings of the unseen world. Hawthorn trees were sometimes regarded as trees of the threshold, and disturbing or cutting certain ancient specimens was traditionally approached with caution.

Hawthorn has a long history of relationship with people, both here in the Pacific Northwest and across the landscapes of Europe. One of our native species is black hawthorn, *Crataegus douglasii*. The leaves are deciduous and somewhat leathery, with an oval shape that can appear broader toward the tip. In spring, the tree produces clusters of small white flowers with five petals and numerous stamens. By early fall, these become small, apple-like fruits that mature from red toward a deep reddish-purple or nearly black color. The bark ranges from reddish-brown to gray-brown, and the branches may carry formidable thorns, sometimes approaching an inch in length.

Other hawthorns can be distinguished by different growth habits and leaf shapes. Some introduced species are more distinctly tree-like, while others form dense thickets. European species such as *Crataegus monogyna* are commonly cultivated and have also become naturalized in parts of the Pacific Northwest. *C. monogyna* generally has deeply lobed leaves, showy creamy-white flowers, scarlet fruits, and usually a single seed within the fruit. Other European hawthorns, including plants historically referred to as *Crataegus oxyacantha*, may have two or more seeds.

Identification can become complicated quickly because hawthorns are notorious for hybridizing. Native and introduced species may cross, producing plants that don't always fit neatly into a single field-guide description. This is one reason I find hawthorn such an interesting plant to learn in the field. The more closely you look, the less nature seems interested in fitting itself into our categories.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, native black hawthorn is commonly encountered in moist, open habitats, particularly around wetlands, streams, rivers, and moist canyons. Introduced European hawthorns are frequently encountered in more human-influenced landscapes, including urban environments, roadsides, fields, hedgerows, and valleys west of the Cascades. When identifying hawthorn, pay attention to the whole plant rather than relying on a single characteristic: the leaves, growth habit, flowers, fruit, thorns, bark, habitat, and number of seeds all become pieces of the puzzle.

Health Matters

Hawthorn contains a diverse collection of constituents, including flavonoids, oligomeric procyanidins, rutin, triterpenoids, and various other compounds throughout the plant. The cardiovascular activity of hawthorn is particularly interesting because it cannot simply be attributed to one isolated constituent. Different preparations contain different proportions of compounds depending upon the species, plant part, growing conditions, harvest timing, and preparation method.

This is one of the reasons consistency matters so much in herbal medicine. Rather than searching for one molecule responsible for everything the plant does, the herbalist can pay attention to the entire process – from the species and growing conditions to the part harvested and the method used to extract it. Standardizing our growing, harvesting, drying, and preparation practices gives us greater consistency while still respecting the complexity of the whole plant.

The flowers and leaves are generally gathered in spring when the plant is actively flowering. When working with fresh-flowering branches, the leaves, flowers, and young twigs can be incorporated into a fresh preparation. If working with dried material, the leaves and flowers are typically separated from the woody portions before preparation.

The berries arrive later in the year, generally becoming ready for harvest in early fall as they fully ripen. This timing varies by species and location, so the tree itself is the best guide. The fresh berries can be tinctured while still plump and vibrant, or they can be dried for later use. Fresh berries contain considerable moisture and can ferment if improperly handled, so they should be processed promptly after harvesting. Hawthorn berries have a tart, tangy, sour, and slightly sweet flavor with an astringent quality that leaves the mouth feeling gently tightened.

Hawthorn is traditionally regarded as a cardiac nutritive and cardiovascular tonic, particularly for supporting the healthy function of the heart and circulatory system. In traditional Western herbalism, hawthorn is often described as a slow and gentle cardiovascular tonic rather than a dramatic stimulant. Its relationship with the heart is one of the reasons hawthorn has earned such an important place in the herbal materia medica. From an energetic perspective, hawthorn is traditionally associated with states of excitation, atrophy, and relaxation, particularly where the tissues require cooling, nourishment, tonification, or gentle regulation.

This makes sense when considering the plant's relationship with the heart. The heart is constantly moving, constantly working, and yet it must also remain responsive and adaptable. Hawthorn seems to occupy a similar place within the materia medica: nourishing without being overly stimulating and regulating without simply suppressing activity.

Hawthorn has also been traditionally used for digestive discomfort, nervous tension, and states of restlessness or irritability. Its cooling and astringent

qualities can make it useful in preparations intended for red, irritated, or inflamed tissues. Externally, preparations of the leaves and berries have traditionally been used as poultices for minor skin concerns and to help soothe areas affected by small splinters or thorns.

The cardiovascular actions of hawthorn are an area of considerable herbal and pharmacological interest, but this is also where a responsible herbalist needs to recognize the limits of the plant. Hawthorn should not be treated as a replacement for medical evaluation of serious or unexplained cardiac symptoms. Persistent chest discomfort, fainting, significant shortness of breath, or unusual or persistent changes in heart rhythm deserve appropriate medical attention.

Hawthorn's reputation as a heart tonic does not mean that every heart condition is an appropriate situation for self-treatment. This is particularly important because hawthorn can interact with cardiovascular medications. Anyone taking medication for the heart or blood pressure should discuss its use with an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.

One of the simplest traditional preparations is an infusion of the flowers and leaves or a preparation made from the berries. For a traditional cup of hawthorn tea, the dried plant material can be steeped in hot water for approximately 20–30 minutes. The berries can also be prepared separately, although their dense texture means they may benefit from a longer extraction.

Tincturing is another excellent way of preserving hawthorn. Fresh berries can be tinctured soon after harvest, while dried berries, leaves, and flowers can also be prepared separately or in appropriate combinations. For a more concentrated preparation, a decoction may be used for the berries, although prolonged aggressive boiling is not necessary. Gentle heat and sufficient extraction time are usually preferable to violently cooking the plant.

There is something about hawthorn that I find especially appropriate for autumn. The tree gives generously. It gives flowers in spring, fruit in fall, nourishment to wildlife, and a long history of relationship with human beings. Yet woven through all of this generosity are thorns. Hawthorn reminds me that nourishment and boundaries do not have to be opposites. The fruit is sweet enough to invite us closer, but the thorns demand that we pay attention.

Perhaps that is part of what makes hawthorn such a fitting plant for the changing season. Summer encourages us outward – toward movement, expression, growth, and abundance. Hawthorn stands at the threshold of autumn, asking us to pause with its darkening fruit and thorn-covered branches, offering its medicine while reminding us to approach with respect. And as the light continues to shorten, perhaps that is exactly the medicine many of us need to remember.

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Autumn Birds and Venison and Oyster Stew Recipe

By Emilia Flor

Autumn is the season when the Pacific Northwest begins putting itself away for winter.

We can feel the change before we usually see it. Mornings are colder. Light comes lower through the trees. Rain taps against cedar branches and darkens the bark. Wet leaves soften beneath your boots, and the air takes on the unmistakable scent of damp earth, moss, and decaying wood.

The birds notice, too.

A Steller’s Jay lands in a hazelnut tree, its blue feathers startling against the muted greens, yellows, and browns of the forest. It pauses, head cocked, listening. It picks up one nut, rejects it, and tries another.

The bird isn’t merely feeding. It is making decisions about the future.

Summer residents are heading south while winter visitors arrive from the Arctic tundra and boreal forests. The birds that remain adjust their diets and routines. Some turn toward berries, seeds, and nuts. Others search beneath bark and through leaf litter for the insects and spiders that remain. Waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors gather wherever the changing season concentrates food.

The landscape is changing, and the birds are reading it.

The Wisdom of the Cache

Birds teach us preservation.

They don’t simply gather food; they make choices about what is worth carrying forward. A sound nut is worth the effort of carrying. A damaged or insect-eaten one is not, particularly in a climate where persistent moisture can quickly turn stored food into spoiled food.

The black-capped chickadee takes a different approach. Small, quick, and seemingly tireless, it carries individual seeds away and hides them in countless places throughout its territory. A seed disappears into

bark, beneath lichen, or into another carefully chosen hiding place. Then the chickadee is off again.

Birds teach us diversification.

If one cache is lost, others remain. Their food supply is scattered across the landscape rather than concentrated in one place. Our pantry may be a refrigerator, cellar, or shelf of jars; the bird’s pantry is the forest itself.

And then there is quality control.

Every nut or seed represents an investment of effort. What a bird chooses matters. We understand this instinct, too. We sort the harvest, save the best, and preserve what is sound enough to last.

And some of what the birds hide will never be found again. Forgotten seeds may germinate in spring, becoming part of the next generation of forest.

The harvest continues beyond the harvester.

The Landscape as Pantry

By mid-autumn, I find myself thinking about the pantry differently.

The birds have been gathering for weeks. The forest floor is giving up its mushrooms. Deer are feeding on autumn mast. And when the tide pulls back, oysters wait in the cold water along the estuaries.

The pantry isn’t really a pantry at all.

It’s the entire landscape.

Walk through the forest after rain and the senses become part of the harvest. Water beads on sword ferns. Moss glows against dark bark. Somewhere in the canopy, a red-breasted nuthatch gives its nasal, tin-horn call. Beneath it all, the forest smells of cedar, mushrooms, and wet soil.

Chanterelles emerge among moss and fallen leaves, their golden color startling against the damp forest floor. Deer move quietly through the same woods; sometimes there is only the

soft crack of a branch, the rustle of fern, and then silence.

Beyond the forest, the air changes. Wet earth gives way to salt. The tide recedes, exposing mudflats and tidal beds where shorebirds work the shoreline and gulls, crows, and eagles search for what the water has uncovered.

Oysters and Dungeness crab become part of this coastal harvest – sweet, briny, and deeply connected to the cold Pacific waters.

Forest.

Forest floor.

Coast.

Humans and birds are responding to the same autumn landscape.

We simply bring the harvest home differently.

Venison brings the richness of the forest. Chanterelles bring the damp, earthy character of the forest floor. Oysters bring the briny sweetness of the tide.

The canopy has led us down to the forest floor and outward to the tidal waters.

Now all three landscapes come together in one pot.

PNW “Forest & Coast” Venison and Oyster Stew

Historically, combining wild game with shellfish (like venison and oysters) was a staple of coastal indigenous communities and early PNW settlers. The briny depth of the oysters acts as a natural flavor enhancer, cutting through the lean, earthy richness of the venison.

PNW "Forest & Coast" Venison and Oyster Stew

Ingredients

- **The Forest (Proteins & Veg)**
 - 1 lb venison stew meat (cut into 1-inch cubes)
 - 24 oz wild-caught Coho salmon fillet
 - 1 cup wild chanterelle or cremini mushrooms (sliced)
 - 2 strips of thick-cut bacon (diced)
 - 1 small yellow onion (chopped, medium cut)
 - 2 carrots (medium diced, about ¼-½ inch)
 - 2 sprigs of fresh rosemary and thyme
- **The Coast (Liquids & Finish)**
 - 1 pint fresh PNW extra-small oysters (with their liquor/juice)
 - 2 tbsp butter
 - 2 tbsp flour
 - 2 cups beef or game stock
 - ½ cup heavy cream or whole milk
 - Salt and cracked black pepper to taste



Directions

1. *Sear the Forest Bounty:* In a heavy Dutch oven, crisp the diced bacon over medium heat. Remove the bacon, leave the fat, and sear the venison cubes until deeply browned on all sides. Remove the venison and set aside.
2. *Sauté the Foraged Goods:* Toss the mushrooms, onions, and carrots into the same pot. Sauté for 5-7 minutes until the mushrooms release their moisture and brown slightly, absorbing the rich fats.
3. *Build the Gravy:* Stir in the butter and flour, cooking for 2 minutes to form a roux. Slowly whisk in the stock and the reserved oyster liquor (juice), scraping up the flavorful browned bits from the bottom of the pot.
4. *Simmer:* Return the venison and bacon to the pot along with the fresh herbs. Cover and simmer on low for about 1 to 1.5 hours, until the venison is melt-in-your-mouth tender.
5. *The Coastal Finish:* Turn the heat down to a bare simmer. Stir in the heavy cream. Gently fold in the raw oysters. Cook for just 3 to 4 minutes until the edges of the oysters begin to curl. Season generously with cracked black pepper and serve with crusty sourdough bread.

On Back Page:

Info about Emilia’s upcoming women’s talking circle exploring holistic health.

Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

The urge to sing “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” is only a whim away.

~

Relationships are like newspapers.

Everyday there’s a new issue.

~

I have issues and fears surrounding taking elevators, but I’m taking steps to avoid them.

~

A sheepdog returns to his farm and says, “You have all 70 sheep in the eastern paddock, so my job is done for the day.”

The farmer says to the sheepdog, “Wait a minute, wait a minute! I’ve only got 67 sheep.”

The sheepdog replies, “I know. I just rounded them up.”

~

Q: What’s the best way to watch a fishing tournament?

A: Live-streaming, of course.

~

Amal and Juan are identical twins, but the mother only carries one picture of them.

Yup, once you’ve seen Juan, you’ve seen Amal.

~

I got an email the other day about a course teaching you how to read maps backward.

Of course, I think it was only spam.

~

We’ve all heard of Werewolves, nobody mentioned the Who, the What, or the Whywolves.

Let’s just take a paws and reflect on that.

~

Q: Why did the mummy lose all of his money?

A: Because he invested everything in the crypto market, and it buried him alive.

~

Q: What do you call a chicken’s ghost?

A: A poultry gheist.

~

Q: What do demons and dad bodies have in common?

A: To get rid of them, you have to exercise a lot.

~

Q: What’s a mummy’s favorite music?

A: Wrap. It’s a solid dead beat!

~

From Shannon, at the Liquor Store:

You can’t call it a murder of crows without a probable caws.

Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses

Four Houses

See Page 11 for Solution

. In each house lives one person who eats one thing and owns one pet and has one hobby. Each house is a different color.

1. Four houses are in a row.
2. Pastry making happens between rock hounding and flower arranging.
3. A cat lives in the red house.
4. The green house is to the right of the brown house.
5. The rock hounder has a dog.
6. Fish tacos are eaten in the brown house.
7. The bunny lives next to the snake.
8. The green house is furthest to the right.
9. The dog lives in between the cat and the snake.
10. The rock hounder eats ramen.
11. Burritos are eaten in the green house.
12. Hot dogs are eaten in the house next to the dog.

Question: What color house does the knitter live in?

Aries (March 20-April 19)

Even for those who love rainy weather, there’s such a thing as too soggy. I reckon this is about where you’re at lately, though the weather is what you might call astral. You’re probably still soaked from the full moon in late September, which served as a reminder of the prevailing conditions of existence: everything all at once, somehow too much, not enough, and impossible to have an accurate sense of yourself. If I had to write you one monthly horoscope that would serve you for the next five years, it would say: keep track of how you feel, what you want and who you are becoming. On what does your existence stand? What is it made of? In the digital age, most people experience their existence as groundless, and that is why so many people feel so strange right now. You do have a foundation; you need to find it, and remember where it is.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

Through most of this month and half of next, your ruling planet Venus will be retrograde. This begins in your opposing/complementary sign Scorpio, and is an invitation to reflect on your relationship situation. You might be interested to know that Venus is said to have challenges in Mars-ruled Scorpio, for example, being confused by the intensity of one’s own desires. As Venus retrogrades into an aspect with Pluto over the next few weeks, you may face challenges to your self-image or be presented with subject matter you find difficult to talk about. The only imperative is that you be honest with yourself. If you want trust, understanding and love, you will need to be open and truthful.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Later this month, Mercury will be retrograde. Sometimes I’m tempted to write a book called Mercury is Always Retrograde, because it seems that way. But actually, it’s true about 19% of the time; and if you double it to account for “shadow” phases before and after, that’s quite a bit. What changes is where it happens, and for you it’s in the work and wellness angle of your chart – Scorpio, your 6th place. On a deeper level, this is about service. The rare combination of both Mercury and Venus retrograde in the same sign simultaneously is asking you to consider who, or what, your life is in service of. I would ask: to what extent does your life serve existence itself, or nature, or humanity? What do you do in service of our collective future? How are you supporting your fellows and your neighbors at this difficult time in history? Said another way: what gives your life meaning, and do you experience it at all?

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The astrological theme of October and November is planetary retrogrades, which translates to review and introspection. With the exception of Mars, it’s going to be all-in. What you may be noticing now is that four planets and a couple of important asteroids are retrograde in your vocational angle, the 10th (Aries). You may be wondering when the time will be right to take action and move forward; I would say that the supreme virtue at this time is patience, though I don’t mean idle waiting. I mean a combination of preparation and thoughtful observation of a business world and



Planet Waves

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



digital environment that seems to collapse on itself five times a day. The far more interesting retrogrades will be Venus, and then Mercury, in your fellow water sign Scorpio. Relative to the sign Cancer, Scorpio is where we look for creativity, but that’s becoming a meaningless term. Scorpio wants fulfillment, and that’s not as simple as Uber Eats. More than anything, you want to connect – and that begins with connecting to yourself.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

As you enter the holiday season, this will be a time for deep reflection on matters of family. Emotional reality is an annoyance in the world of the data center. But your feelings will get your attention over the next few months, based on many factors (including Venus moving to retrograde movement in Scorpio next week). You now get a chance to explore your inner sensitivity, and benefit from it greatly. Move gently and notice what comes up. This could be at random times, or in moments when you’re triggered. Work with this process rather than against it. Considering the past is not about nostalgia; there really is something meaningful coming available for you now. Pay attention late at night, especially at home. Look in the basement for family artifacts, and stop long enough to experience their vibes no matter how ordinary they seem.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

Accidental discoveries will help move along your project of opening your mind to greater possibilities. As you work through prejudices you didn’t think existed, be determined to prove yourself wrong at every turn. The problem with right, as a goal, is that it contains a blind spot: right tends to omit truthful. It comes in the tendency to fixate on what you presume will be correct, often to the exclusion of all else. Many significant careers have been created by a seeming side-track, or an event that got someone out of a rut. There is a distinct pressure building in your chart designed to pop you out of certain narrow ways of thinking. You will like yourself, your friends and the entire planetary experience more when you see them for what they are rather than what you would have them be.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

Pay no mind to the impenetrable wall that seems to be staring you down. It’s nothing but a massive heap of computer code. You can see this for what it is more clearly than others, and as one born under the sign of relationships, you can see the social cost for what it is. You will not be facing this forever, but you are at a distinct advantage for looking right at it. Venus is about to station retrograde, and you can let this point you inward and toward a deeper vision of life. Venus retrograde in Scorpio is saying get real with yourself – introspection is your best friend. This may feel strange and awkward in our world where everything is projected outward. Practice going in; Venus will guide you. Go toward uncomfortable

feelings rather than away from them, and every day, ask yourself one question: What is most important to me?

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Venus and Mercury will be visiting your sign for most of the month. They will spend unusually long phases of time there because both are about to be retrograde. That term conjures all kinds of theories and responses, but on the factual level it means “sticks around for a while.” Venus rules your opposite sign Taurus. Therefore, in Scorpio, it’s known as “in detriment”, bringing out different properties than you would expect. A planet that’s out of its element will have to work harder to be itself, and so it will express itself in a more pronounced way. Venus with you also has the property of helping you feel and potentially experience what others go through when they love you. It will allow you to change frames of reference from self to other, and be a better witness. Be curious about why you treat people the way you do, and what exactly informs your prejudices. It’s only when you give of yourself that you find out how much you have.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

You have a way of presenting one face to the world while living a profoundly different reality within. The more contrast there is between what you feel and how you present yourself, the less stability you experience. Those who know Sagittarius have a clue about the deep contrasts you live with. Now you’re being summoned to devote your attention to your true inner reality. I suggest abandoning any sense of controlling your public image. With Jupiter in Leo, that will take care of itself, as long as you don’t confuse the press release (Jupiter) with yourself (your reality). You’re now being guided inward, thanks to the imminent retrogrades of Mercury and Venus in Scorpio. You will be in your element if you experience your real feelings, and practice communicating them.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Who are you? Yes, the endless debate is over your supposed purpose, how you justify your existence, whether you’ll succeed, whether you’re doing things right and whether you’re living up to expectations. What do you do about

this, assuming it or something like it is happening? Give it a voice; that will be the only way to find out what needs to be done. Stuffing it all down won’t help; trying to evade fears will not make your life any easier. These influences have always been there, competing for who you are. But there is no competition; it’s an illusion. You are who you are. The influence of Chiron in Aries the past eight years has taught you a lot, if you will remember the crucial discoveries you have made. You don’t need to live through any of that again.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

Pluto in Aquarius (2023-2044) is developing rapidly into the age of the know-nothing expert. That, and tech billionaires who remind us regularly that they just might annihilate society and this is why their product is so useful. I know I keep repeating this, but you must know when you don’t know. Let those words become like poetry, or a catchy beat that you don’t forget. The age of the expert is being fueled by the water-gobbling, suicide-inducing machine falsely known as A.I., which for you is the spiritual and intellectual equivalent of sniffing shoe polish. If I had to boil your solar chart down to several specific suggestions, they would start with: think for yourself, and set alarms for when you’re not doing so. That means questioning yourself, and taking as your mantra, “How do I know that?” I really mean it: go to the source.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

The emphasis in your chart remains in Aries, one of your most important financial houses. By the end of the month, eight of what I consider to be major influences are packed in, all moving in retrograde motion. This includes the last visit by Chiron, which first entered Aries in 2018 and will soon be in Taurus. It is often claimed of Pisces that you just don’t care about your finances; I don’t know if that’s true, though you do know there are more important things in life. Whatever the past may contain, now is the time to care. With Aries and the 2nd place (personal assets, movable property, tools of your trade), there is a more significant modern issue: your values. With every cell in your being, align yourself with what you know to be right and true, and make no compromises. Meanwhile, emphasis opens up in Scorpio, which is the angle of your chart associated with your personal vision. This is associated with your spiritual life as much as it is your core purpose on Earth – and Scorpio adds the business plan. Mercury and Venus retrograde say that it’s time for an update.

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



Math Puzzle Solution

By Anne Cotter Moses

"I Get It!"

MATH TUTORING

Anne Moses

206-355-2222



Answer: The knitter lives in a red house.

Poetry Prompt

By Iris Dawn Spring, Vashon Poet Laureate

Poetry is for everyone!

Acrostic poems are a great exercise, whether seasoned poet or new to writing, and can appeal to all ages. The first letter of each line reads out a word or phrase when read vertically. They can be sweet and simple or staggeringly complex. The use of acrostics dates back thousands of years in literature, poetry, politics and religious texts.

Try it for yourself. Write your name vertically on the page, then write each line based on the letter. There are many ways to approach it.

Remember: it doesn't have to make sense, or be grammatically correct – there are no rules in poetry. Consider: how does a title impact the poem?

Here are two examples based on the word / name RAY:

Hello, World!

R radiant robust realizing
A alive aware analyzing
Y yes! yes! yes!

Summers-end

I went for a walk
and found what I sought

R resting
A among
Y yellowed leaves.

Iris Dawn Spring is a born and raised, multi-generational Vashon Islander. She has facilitated local poetry gatherings and workshops since returning home to the island in 2017, guided by the understanding that poetry is for everyone. She firmly believes in the power of poetry as a force for social cohesion, and as a catalyst for positive change in this crazy world. She is Co-Poet Laureate with C. Hunter Davis.

Birdbrains Anthology Poetry Reading at the Land Trust



10014 SW Bank Rd
Sunday, November 8th 4-5PM
Local poets who are part of this recently published anthology will share their pieces and more.
Come and join in!

Island poetry in these pages

How about yours?



Submit your poems to The Vashon Loop!

Write to: vashonloop-poetry@janevalencia.com

Two Poems (and More) From Birdbrains

A Lyrical Guide to Washington State Birds

Birdbrains: A Lyrical Guide to Washington State Birds, edited by Susan Rich, is a one-of-a-kind Washington State bird guide. The anthology includes original pen and ink sumi-e paintings by artist Hiroko Seki, bird fact notes, and short poems/stories/memoir. Poems/prose are bird-focused rather than human centered. The bird notes include information about song, call, mating rituals, habitat, migration, climate, dark comedy, and fun facts.

This month we feature two poems, excerpts from the bird fact notes, which are written by Stephanie Delaney. Enjoy!

American Crow –

Corvus brachyrhynchos (excerpt)

Description: The all-black American Crow is a medium-sized bird with outsized intelligence, able to use tools and to recognize human faces.

Voice: The loud, descending “caaw” of the American Crow is easily recognized by nearly everyone.

IntriguingTidbit: The American Crow is known for its complex social structures, with juveniles helping to raise younger siblings and communal gatherings of up to 10,000 birds on cold winter nights. Crows also hold rituals for their dead, one of only three bird species known to conduct bird funerals.

Least Sandpiper – Calidris minutilla (excerpt)

Description: The Least Sandpiper is a small shorebird, about the size of a sparrow, with brownish upper parts, white lower parts streaked with brown on the chest. They have yellow legs and a short, thin, black bill.

Interesting Tidbit: The Least Sandpiper is the smallest shorebird in the world, weighing in at only 1 ounce. Yet, they can fly nonstop for 1800-2500 miles during migration.

To Say the Least

is to say the smallest –
is to say that’s no twitch of the eye
It’s like saying there exists
in the world of peeps
some greater, faster shoreline speedwalker.
To spot the leasts –
time-lapse stitchers of the strand
– to hear their pin-piped preet
is to count the least
among us

~ Katy E. Ellis

Katy E. Ellis is the author of three full-length poetry collections: Nature vs. Girl (forthcoming in Fall 2026), Forty Bouts in the Wilderness, and the novel-length prose poem Home Water, Home Land. She is also the author of three chapbooks. Visit: <https://www.katyeellis.com>.

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The Crows Start Demanding Royalties

Of all the birds, they are the ones
who mind their being armless most:
witness how, when they walk, their heads jerk
back and forth like rifle bolts.
How they heave their shoulders into each stride
as if they hoped by some chance
new bones there would come popping out
with a boxing glove on the edge of each.

Little Elvises, the hairdo slicked
with too much grease, they convene on my lawn
to strategize for their class action suit.
Flight they would trade in a New York minute
for a black muscle car and a fist on the shift
at any stale green light. But here in my yard
by the Jack-in-the-Box Dumpster
they can only fossick in the grass for remnants

of the world’s stale buns. And this
despite all the crow poems that have been written
because men like to see themselves as crows
(the head-jerk performed in the rear view mirror,
the dark brow commanding the rainy weather.)
So I think I know how they must feel:
ripped off, shook down, taken to the cleaners.
What they’d like to do now is smash a phone against a wall.
But they can’t, so each flies to a bare branch and screams.

~ Lucia Perillo

The work of Lucia Perillo (1958-2016) has appeared in The New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Kenyon Review, and more. A traditional poet of mostly free-verse personal reflection, she wrote extensively about living with multiple sclerosis in her poems and essays.



Rooted: A Women’s Circle for Whole-Life Wellbeing

Join facilitator Emilia Flor (Vogt) for a welcoming women’s talking circle exploring holistic health – body, nature, food, purpose and connection – through Dr. Zach Bush’s 8-Point Journey of Intrinsic Health.

Check out the link below:

<https://womenholdthekey.com/upcoming-programs/rooted-a-womens-circle-for-whole-life-wellbeing-with-emilia-vogt>

Destruction is the work of an afternoon. Construction is the work of a lifetime.



~ Frances Hodgson Burnett