

THE VASHON LOOP

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SERVING VASHON AND ITS NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES ~ FREE

May 7, 2026

When Your EV Dies on Vashon

By Andy Valencia

EV's are in most ways simpler than their internal combustion engine cousins. There really just need to be batteries, a controller to send power to the wheels, and a charger. But these parts work hard, since we want fast recharges and even faster acceleration. Stressing electronics means failures will show up eventually. And there's always the chance that somebody just crashes into you and breaks something.

Either way, your car is out of commission. Then what? A trip to the EV "hospital," of course. But no local mechanic on Vashon has the facilities to do these highly specialized repairs. Like so many other things which don't exist here on-Island, you must look off-Island instead.

This was what faced one Islander we found. His Tesla was involved in an accident bad enough to disable it. A tow truck hooked it up in the manufacturer-approved fashion and headed to the ferry, only to be turned away by the ferry workers. The Tesla owner tried a second time with another tow company, and was turned away again.

At issue was a new policy for Washington ferries, as of November 2025. Damaged and inoperable EVs - including hybrids - may be required to supply special documentation in order to board. Specifically, a technician must fill in and certify that the vehicle's systems have been rendered safe, typically including that the high-voltage system has been disconnected. Unfortunately, nobody seems to know how to get such a technician onto Vashon.

Do an image search for "EV fire on ferry" to get idea of what's on our ferry system's mind. You just want to tow your dead EV



Artist's conception of a fire on a ferry.

onto the boat, cross, and be on your way. WSF wants to help you with that, but they also don't want their boats getting singed in the process. Thus, the new policy.

Where to find a technician? We asked WSF. Although they told us that they had focused on outreach to tow companies, we have yet to find one that remembered any contact from WSF on this

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The Vashon Loop is published monthly

Parallel Lives – The Red Alder Staff

By Richard Odell

Open, broad, and brightly lit were the highlands of Vashon-Maury in the fifties, but now the farms were in recession. The black and white photos from the old Brownie camera yet provoke wonder. Was it really so far to the nearest tree, back then? Alders, comes the answer. Always, where the terrain was left open, there soon would be the alders (or the Scotch broom [or the blackberries (things would get messy)]).

What business did we have, far apart from the house, that day, where the field began to slope down toward the highway? I was the tagalong, with my father and older brother. I was tall as the grass. The talk was over my head. Our cottage was nestled in the northeast corner of what had once been 15 acres of currants, and before that, 15 acres of cherries. What remained, in this hour, was a blank canvas of blonde grass. To the west stood visible the Olympics, bright and sharp. To the east, the dusky blue foothills of the Cascades.

Ignoring speech unengaging, I stand in fascination before a little army of alder saplings. It must be the month of March. No leaves are yet present, but something is bulging forth in these spikes little taller than myself. Along the tense stems and buds, faint brushstrokes of red and green blend into one another. That is all I recall.

It could not have been long after this moment that I am riding in the back seat of our blue '55 Ford, my father at the wheel, heading south to the village. Passing by Jack's Corner Store, where Cedarhurst Drive branches off from the Main Highway, I spy through the window to my left another battalion of alder saplings marching down a bare slope. The one moment touches the other.

Strange to learn, as a child, how a certain thing, here, can now also be over here. Countless things would I fail to absorb, in life. I would flunk shop class. Shakespeare would escape me til my 60s, but these alders, here, intrigued me.

Along about this same time: I am standing at the foot of my parents' bed, morning sunlight streaming through the mullions and lace curtains, and upon my mother who stands before them, cup and saucer in her hands. My father is in bed, sitting upright against the headboard, the morning paper splayed across his lap. I have brought to the foot of the bed a question for him. His answer I clearly recall: "Rome wasn't built in a day." I think he must mean "roam" (my having no idea what "Rome" is) since my question was something on the order of, "When are we going on that hike you promised me?" Not just now, apparently. Thus, in my mind, "Roam wasn't built in a day."

Shortly thereafter (likely the same day) from above me as I sit absorbed in one thing or another, a hand descends, bearing a stout alder sapling, freshly stripped of its bark, and squared at the ends.

With my new staff, now, I can hike as I please.

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Photo by Richard Odell

Qigong on Vashon

By Caitlin Rothermel

For a practice built around slow breathing and gentle movement, qigong has had a surprisingly turbulent history. Originating in China and thought to date back more than 2,000 years, qigong has moved into favor, out of favor, and eventually back into favor again.

During the "qigong fever" of the 1980s and 1990s, tens of millions practiced it publicly across China. Reasons for this popularity included a growing interest in spirituality and traditional culture (after a long period of repression in those areas). Qigong was also considered a health practice that was believed to improve well-being without medication at a time when the country's healthcare system was under stress. Qigong was also inexpensive, communal, and very likely just made people feel better.

But some qigong organizations grew rapidly in size and influence, leading the Chinese government to see them as challenges to their state authority. That tension culminated in a 1999 crackdown on certain qigong organizations, including the Falun Gong, a movement with a charismatic leader that styled itself as a spiritual religion (and is now headquartered in the United States).

Today, qigong is again legal in China, although public instruction remains regulated by the state. Worldwide, qigong is now practiced by millions of people, including here on Vashon.

Beginning this May, Vashon is invited to gather outdoors near the pond in the Japanese Garden at Mukai Farm & Garden on Thursday evenings at 5:30 p.m., where instructors Arlette Moody and Lynelle Sjoberg will lead qigong classes.

Qigong is not one fixed system. It has been described as a way of working with "qi" - often translated as life-force energy, and pronounced "chee" or "ji."

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I Strongly Support Our Country's Actions in Iran, and Yes, This is an Island Issue

When I first wrote about my support for our country's actions in Iran, it was mid to late February. A la my "cancel culture series," I was following through on the promise I made to my fellow Islanders back in January. Each month, I would explore harms caused by cancel culture and share my thoughts on a "hot topic." Pushback be damned.

My January and February articles drew comments of appreciation and gratitude from Islanders I have known for years and those I've never before met. I was stopped on the side of the road, in town, and I received appreciations by text and through social media.

But then, my article submitted for the March Issue of The Vashon Loop wasn't published. Why? Because the topic of our American war in Iran was judged to be an international issue. Not "Island enough."

The Vashon Loop has a policy of focusing on Island issues. As a policy, this has value and is the prerogative of the good people doing the hard work of publishing our Island's only Island-owned newspaper. As such, I am not arguing against their policy.

However, I believe the judgment was flawed. The topic of the American war in Iran is an Island issue. Thrice over, in fact, as I will explain.

(1) Contrary to popular opinion, Vashon Island is not a small planet circling the sun with frequent ferries to Earth. We are actually a part of Earth. Similarly, almost all of us are Americans. A small number of people are visiting from abroad, foreigners here due to a temporary work visa, immigrants on the legal pathway toward citizenship, or foreigners living here without legal documentation. But the rest of us? Americans, all.

Letter to the Editor

And guess what? We, as Americans, are at war with Iran. Like it or not, this is our war. As such, the argument that my thoughts about the war are not an Island issue, fails to pass muster. (Pun intended.)

(2) Want further evidence that my thoughts about our American war against Iran is an Island issue? You need only walk or drive through Vashon town on any of a growing number of days when the main intersection becomes not a theater of war, but a theater of street activism. Between Indivisible Vashon and Vashon for Palestine, "Islander opinions of our American war in Iran" have been thrust quite literally into the public square.

My opinion on this topic is relevant to our shared "Island life" specifically because of Islanders waving upside down American flags and anti-American/Israel flags while making loud, cacophonous, non-melodic noises designed to demand the attention of all Islanders. Their public expression, their free use of speech in the public square, and their organized activism makes my opinion on the same topic absolutely "Island-relevant."

(3) Keep Vashon Weird. What does this mean? It means, keep Vashon truly diverse.

My "cancel culture series" is positioned within a frame not of my making. It is other Islanders who are actively organizing with a goal of converting Vashon Island into a one-way thinking monolith of political hegemony. This seemingly well-intended goal has resulted in the suppression of our Island's true diversity in the name of political correctness and communal virtue signaling. Whether intentional or accidental, this concerns me. Deeply.

So, yes! My views on our American war in Iran are absolutely an Island issue, if only for the fact that so few Islanders who share my views feel safe

doing so. And yes! It bothers me that Islanders with family currently serving in the military are reticent to acknowledge their loved one's role in the current conflict.

If you're still wondering, "Why is March offering this series?" I'll tell you. It's because I'm not the only Islander with The Clash running through my head, on repeat: "Should I stay, or should I go?"

In my opinion, our Island is not being unified by those claiming to do so. We are enduring a form of conversion therapy. We are witnessing a politicized social contagion. We are being pressured to join up, shut up, or leave. This is not unity. It is ideological warfare designed to claim territory.

Here's the crux of the issue. If people are contemplating leaving our community as a direct result of cancel culture tactics, how can my willingness to speak up on topics bearing the brunt of such suppressive strategies not be Island-relevant?

My series is custom-made and designed for Vashon Islanders. I want those who believe everyone thinks like them to know, this is not the case. I want those who have "gone silent" to see my words in print and think, maybe I should speak up also? I want those who will suffer financial or career devastation, should they speak up, to at the very least know they are not alone.

For me to remain an Islander, I need the pendulum to begin to swing back toward the healthy diversity, the free exchange of differing viewpoints, and the delicious buffet of contrasting ideas and perspectives that used to be normative on Vashon. This is what inspired me to raise my children on Vashon Island, and I'm not ready to give up just yet.

For the sake of that goal, I will continue to write my Cancel Culture series, so long as The Vashon Loop chooses to publish it.

~ March Twisdale



The Vashon Loop

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

Contributors: Eric Coppolino, Stephen Buller, Daniel Hooker, Anne Cotter Moses, Michael Shook, Gates (Pam) Johnson, Suzanna Leigh, March Twisdale, Cynthia Sadurni, Anthony Latora, Dr. Marli Parobek, Rocky (Donna) Liberty, Richard Odell, Nadja Vol Ochs, Deborah H. Anderson

Comments: editor@vashonloop.com
Placing ads: sales@vashonloop.com

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Meet with Miguel from King County Public Health
at Vashon Library
(inside at the back)
Wednesday, 12:30–3:00 pm
May 20th

You can also renew or sign up for the **PSE Discount Program**
Se habla español

Call or email Miguel Urquiza
206-477-6965
or 206-491-3761
miguel.urquiza@kingcounty.gov


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

Vashon Opera – Hansel & Gretel

Vashon community, you will not want to miss the Vashon Opera production of Hansel & Gretel, coming to the VCA May 29th & 31st. If you are not an opera fan, please keep reading. This production might change your perspective.

This opera is suited for the entire family. Engelbert Humperdinck (not related to, nor has any connection to the British pop singer) wrote this opera as a gift to his sister's children. Many melodies are based on child-like folk tunes. He built from these tunes a sweeping, lush, rich, bombastic orchestral score in the tradition of Wagner, one of his teachers.

Jim Brown, Music Director and General Director of Vashon Opera assembled an amazing orchestra and Allison Pohl, Artistic Director and Stage Director for this production, has selected the voices from near and far, perfectly suited for each role. Some of our local talent includes, Anita Spritzer, local celebrity drag queen, as the delightfully wicked witch. The storied Tacoma Youth Chorus will perform as a choir of guardian angels. Vashon Opera founders Jennifer and Andy Krikawa, play Hansel & Gretel's stepmother and father. Our titular stars are making their Vashon Opera debut. Hansel, Laurel Semerdjian, mezzo soprano, is praised for her deep, velvety voice. She has performed many roles throughout the United States. Gretel, lyric coloratura, Emma Petersen, has also performed throughout the US and Canada.



Qigong on Vashon

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Broadly speaking, qigong draws from martial arts, Tai Chi, meditation, and traditional Chinese medicine. It combines breathwork, coordinated movement, and body awareness with the goal of improving balance, flexibility, relaxation, circulation, and overall health, including the health of the body's organs and energy systems.

This variety is part of what drew Arlette and Lynelle to qigong. Arlette has a background in dance, Pilates, and martial arts, and found herself circling towards qigong through movement practices she was already exploring. "I did it unknowingly," she said. "I'm a dancer. I've done martial arts. I love movement. And the more I started to play with this, the more I would come up with repeatable patterns that were tied with breath."

Lynelle came to qigong through yoga, Tai Chi, dance, and an ongoing interest in movement and the body. "I consider it energy medicine."

Although qigong has roots connected to martial arts, both instructors emphasized that the classes are slow, accessible, and definitely non-combative. Instead, much of the focus is on breathing,



coordination, posture, relaxation, and awareness. According to Arlette, "Everything is about getting the benefit of the movement internally. It's all slow - it's all smooth ... Chi flows best when you're relaxed, so a lot of qigong is practiced with 50 to 70 percent effort."

That emphasis on relaxation may be one reason qigong often attracts older adults, although younger people are increasingly interested. Arlette noted that qigong is an excellent example of a movement practice that can be sustainable over a lifetime. "A big thing for people, especially as we age, is learning how to relax and how to move in a relaxed way." This is important "so that we're not blocking blood flow and creating

too much tension in our muscles." Lynelle said, "Qigong makes you slow down and become more mindful, more present about what you're doing ... you're learning about how your body works and key movements that calm the nervous system."

Arlette contrasted qigong to a conventional gym workout, where "We use this machine and pound; everything is all about breaking a sweat." Qigong is more like a moving reset, "You walk out feeling reinvigorated, able to let go of stuff you're always thinking about and worrying about."

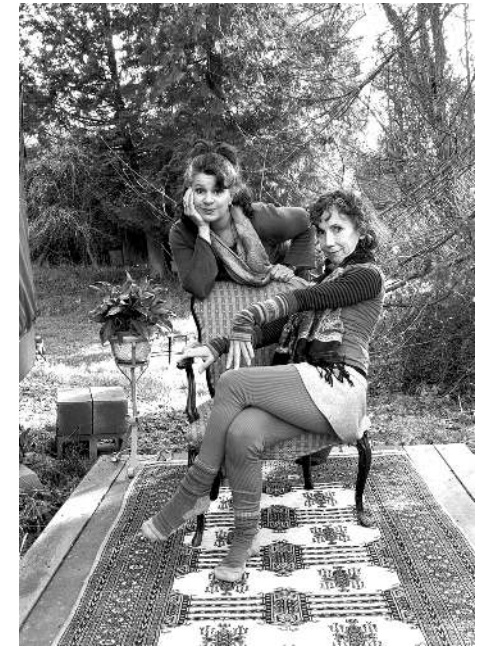
Lynelle agrees that qigong is very meditational: "You're using the mind to direct the body and then you're letting the chi just kind of take over once it gets going in the right direction."

Qigong is also accessible. Unlike some movement practices, qigong generally doesn't require specialized clothing, equipment, or athletic experience. "You don't have to lay on the ground, you don't need your special yoga mat, you don't have to have a certain level of anything," Arlette said.

The qigong classes, previously held indoors, will meet starting May 21st outdoors near the decorative

pond at Mukai Farm & Garden. The location, with its grasses, water, and quiet open space, feels particularly suited to a practice centered on slowing down and paying attention.

The suggested class donation is \$20-25. You can show up for class, or, if you would like to receive more information or join the mailing list, contact Arlette or Lynelle at arlettekenquet@gmail.com or lynellek.s@gmail.com.



Arlette Moody (standing) and Lynelle Sjoberg (seated)

Some Notes on Stealing Cars

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Imagine it's May of 2022. You're a 15 year-old boy in Chicago named Merritt. You're sitting in your bedroom in front of your laptop wearing a mask all day on Zoom, pretending it's school.

Your teacher, also in their bedroom on Zoom, sits in front of a fake digital shelf of books and is being fully paid to ride herd on your thumbnails. She's even more bored than you are, but makes you ask for a hall pass to use the bathroom in your own house or she'll report you absent. You're pretty sure she's sneaking White Claws during Social Studies, but even if they believed you, no one would care.

Then your buddy texts you a TikTok video called "The Kia Challenge." It shows how to steal Kia and Hyundai cars using nothing more than a flat-head screwdriver and a regular USB cable. Gain entry, pry back the steering column cover, slide the USB's end plug over the inner ignition post for a perfect fit, twist carefully to the right.

No hot-wiring required, no engine immobilizer, works on most models from 2011 to 2021. Gone in 60 seconds. You text two words back: "Tonight bro."

The Kia Challenge started in Milwaukee, where car thefts exploded. By some reports, thefts in nearby Chicago increased 800%. You

become one of the #KiaBoyz and send a video of your joy-riding to your cousin in Auburn. He in turn helps claimed car thefts in King County skyrocket to 17,959 in 2022, mostly in a frenzy during the latter half of that year.

Combined with a perfect storm of policy and pandemic, this made little Washington the third-highest state for total vehicle thefts in the entire US. How? In our state's case, there was a special contributing factor.

Effective July 2021, the state legislature passed RCW 10.116.060, which officially limited when law enforcement officers could pursue a fleeing vehicle. Pursuits were prohibited unless there was probable cause for a violent felony, sex offense, escape, or DUI. Simple vehicle theft did not qualify, so officers had to terminate pursuits even when they observed an obviously stolen and reported vehicle.

Car thieves quickly learned that, if a police car was following them, they could simply drive away and wouldn't be stopped for speeding. Even kids on Vashon were well aware and began engaging in some fast nightly joy-riding.

Predictably, professional thieves were also inspired to take advantage of lax policy and lowered staffing. The storm culminated during the Taylor Swift concerts in Seattle on

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When Your EV Dies on Vashon

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subject. We don't know how to find a technician, and WSF pointed us to the tow truck companies. None of them seem to know, either.

We then contacted the local Toyota service people, and once they understood the issue, admitted that they weren't sure what to recommend to an Islander in this situation. It's been kicked up the management chain at Toyota, but we've heard nothing else by the time of publication.

Tesla was even worse, since we never actually talked to a human. After bouncing around their phone system, we were asked to rate their robotic service ("awful"), and then the call was disconnected. We reached out to their North America press contact - again, there's been no word by time of publication.

We're still hunting rumors of an entrepreneur in the Seattle area who offers a mobile service to come to your disabled vehicle, safely disconnect its high voltage system, and fill out the needed paperwork. So far, we've only found a few defunct web sites, plus a mobile EV battery service which - so far - does not want to provide this service.

The Loop will keep looking, and we'll provide updates as we discover

better options. In the meantime, if your vehicle's health systems tell you to visit your dealer, drive over while your car's still in good working condition. If you have any reason to think your car isn't safe - do not drive it onto a ferry! If a fire is going to happen, a ferry is one of the very worst places for it.

Even as The Loop researched this article, we noted that WSF's own Wenatchee vessel, converted to be a hybrid EV, has entered service. Holding 864 battery modules spread across a pair of compartments, we wondered what sort of safety systems would be built to protect battery banks at this scale.

Unfortunately, WSF could only point us to their general information page for fleet electrification, which does not address this issue. Industry literature makes it clear that fire suppression for large battery banks is an area of ongoing research. We'll update you as new information becomes available.

Gasoline-powered engines have been around for almost two centuries, building up a body of experience in how to safely and efficiently use them. The high energy density of modern batteries has already picked up stories of burnt phones, laptops, and cars. Safety practices are in flux - can you use a USB power bank on a plane? How many spare batteries can you pack? How many EV's will your ferry carry at once? (An April 2024 policy limited Alaska Marine Highway System ferries to two EV's per run.)

Your EV may feel like a mature product, but in some ways you are still an early adopter. Good answers will emerge, and in the meantime bring patience and flexibility to any surprising situations that come up. If you have a good story to share, let us know! editor@vashonloop.com



What's Next After You Get the Big C Diagnosis

By Gates (Pam) Johnson

It's been a rough few months. In December, I had major back surgery that would hopefully help my foot neuropathy, but would take a year to heal. Okay. I can deal with that. Not fun, but chances are good that life will get better because of the surgery. A couple of months go by, then a check-up showed things were progressing nicely. Excellent. I could resume most normal activities.

Then in late February, the hammer dropped. I went to a new dentist because of some tooth pain. He checked me out and said he didn't like what he saw, so was sending me off-island for an extraction and biopsy. The results came back sooner than expected. Squamous cell carcinoma. Boom. The cancer journey started.

Once I got the diagnosis, the waiting game began. And the referral game. Dentist-oral surgeon-cancer surgeon-oncologist. I was referred to doctors at Swedish, which wasn't my first choice as I had a bad experience with them before. The past is over and gone, so even though I was not looking forward to schlepping to Seattle's Pill Hill, I followed up.

The cancer surgeon said I would need surgery, but first needed to see the oncologist. Surprisingly, they got me in pretty quickly. The oncologist said we would need to wait for a test on the biopsy that I had, to look for something called PD-L1. If I got a high percentage of PD-L1 on the test, I would qualify for an infusion protocol.

Hurry up and wait. It took about a week to get the test results. My oncologist called to say my percentage was 100% and that I am an over-achiever.

Next step was scheduling an infusion of a drug that adheres to the cancer cells and kills them. Sometimes it mistakes healthy cells for cancer cells and kills them too. Of course, there are many possible side effects that probably won't happen, but just to cover their bases, they have to tell me. It took about a nanosecond for me to say, "Give me the infusion."

The infusion nurse called me a bit later and asked if I could come in the next day. Less than 24 hours after being notified of the test results, I was getting infused! That's what I call service.

I was not sure how I was going to get to the

Island Voices

appointment the next day. My son was up to his ears in work. My daughter-in-law was in Spokane with her brother who was in the hospital. My daughter works and lives in Chehalis. My granddaughter lives in Woodland and also works. My nephew and niece both work full-time. Time to start asking my friends. Thank heavens for family and good friends.

My cousin Glenn took me to the first cancer surgeon appointment. My good friend and old middle school co-worker Susan was very familiar with Seattle driving. She had a doctor's appointment in Seattle. It worked out that I went with her to her appointment in Northgate, then we jetted to my appointment at Swedish. When asked if she could take me to the infusion appointment, she shuffled a few things and said "sure."

Infusion day arrived. My appointment was at 10:50 a.m. The ferry line was backed halfway up the hill. It didn't move for the longest time. The boat was late. My anxiety, already nearing the explosive point, ramped up the longer we waited without movement. I called the hospital and said we would probably be late, but they said it was okay.

They also sent me a priority load, but the ferry system won't take an email, only a printed copy. Obviously, Susan does not keep a printer in her car, so that did no good right then. When we finally got on the boat, the ferry worked directed us to the upper deck. Susan grabbed my disabled parking pass (from my back surgery) and waved it at him. He let us park on the lower deck (to be closer to the deck restroom and elevator). Quick thinking, Susan!

We made it to the hospital only a few minutes late. Part one of the appointment was a blood draw. I'm a little needle-shy because my veins don't always cooperate. They sat me down in a little cubicle and a tall young man with frosted blonde hair tips, Raul, came in to do the draw.

I told him my veins weren't the best, but he had a calm demeanor and said it wouldn't be a problem. He tied that thing around my arm and started feeling for a vein. Next thing I knew, he was filling up the tubes. I did not feel a thing! He filled up seven vials, then sent me on my way to the next stop.

Part two was meeting with a case manager and my oncologist. They were running behind, so Susan and I sat quite a while waiting. Finally, the case manager came in and gave me a bunch of information and forms and stuff. Good thing Susan was there to hear it, because I was in anxietyville and didn't hear a lot.

The doctor came in, said a few more things and had me sign something (which I did not read), then sent me upstairs for the infusion.

Once upstairs, Susan and I were ushered into a nice, private little room. There were two comfortable chairs. Mine was a recliner and Susan had a chair with a footstool. Nurse Michael came in, asked if I was comfortable, and brought me a heated blanket.

I told him about my stupid vein problem. He wrapped my arm in heated towels, then went to get the IV supplies. Supplies in hand, Michael started searching for a suitable vein. Thought he found one, but it blew out so he had to find another. He left for a minute, then came back with this weird light thing on a rolling stand. A vein finder. Who knew such a thing existed? Susan came over for a closer look, which was fine because it was fascinating.

Michael turned it on and a green light showed on my arm. You could see big veins, little ones, crooked ones ... it was crazy! He found what looked like a good choice. I closed my eyes, felt a tiny little poke, and we were in!

Once the IV was established, the medication was ordered and mixed. That took about half an hour. Two more nurses came in to hook up the saline and medication and set up the drip. The nurses were Joseph and Mary. That felt a little prophetic. Anyway, the med started to drip, I felt nothing, and we were set.

The nurses asked if we were hungry or thirsty. Michael brought me a ginger ale and a glass of ice. Susan went to the little kitchen area and got a vegetarian sandwich. There were various sandwiches, pudding cups, veggie sticks, crackers, and all kinds of beverages, all free. I have to say this place really takes good care of their patients!

The next step is another infusion on May 6th. Surgery on May 28th. It will be a big one, seven to eight hours, then three days in the ICU, followed by five to seven more days in the hospital. If everything is good after the surgery, I will have a year of infusions every six weeks. And, if all goes according to plan, I will be considered 99% cured.



How Do You Make a Grandmother Cry?

By Rocky (Donna) Liberty

How to make a grandma cry. Take a labor of love, add in animal instinct, throw in some time (thyme), fate, and Voilà!

She was ten years old and the apple of my eye. I would die for my grandchild if necessary, but luckily, it hasn't come to that yet. Happily, I made her clothes, toys, quilts, and many other items to show my love and affection.

It was the spring of her tenth year. My back was injured, so I was home from work for two weeks. For several months I had been collecting the materials - yarn, thread, muslin, everything I needed for this project. And now I could work on it.

For eight days and nights, I sewed diligently to create the two dolls. Both Raggedy Ann and Andy measured exactly three feet tall, with bright orange hair. Embroidered hearts that said "I Love You." Sweet smiling faces and soft bodies, perfect for cuddling. I was immensely proud they had turned out so well!

My granddaughter adored the dolls. She loved them. I managed to



Raggedy Andy & Ann - crafted by the author



get a few photographs of her holding them before she took them home. I envisioned she would keep and treasure them always.

Well, after having the dolls for approximately 6 months, the family decided to relocate. All dolls, stuffed animals, and toys were put on the top bunk in preparation for the move. The cats, getting the idea that change was afoot, took action.

My daughter called me the next day. "I had to throw out all those dolls. The cats peed on everything."

This news was like a gut punch.

NO. No way! No, no, no. All that work, all that loving effort, destroyed in a flash. The injury. The injustice. Tears of rage. Head to brick.

Sadly, my daughter was right to toss them. Inquiry after inquiry, we found out pretty much nothing in this world can get that smell out - short of burning.

My granddaughter will turn 30 soon. She hasn't wanted a second pair of dolls ... yet. Oh, best laid plans of mice and men.

And that is how to make a grandmother cry.

MELANIE FARMER

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Love us when we are dirty, not when we are clean. Anyone will love us when we are clean.

- Dmitri Shostakovich

Memories of a Banyan Tree

Introduction to a Spiritual Boot Camp

By Suzanna Leigh

James and I landed in Honolulu in late February of 1974. No one to meet me, of course. Culture shock; people in shorts, brightly colored shirts, long muumuus, fragrant plumeria leis around their necks. The very air smelled different.

I knew no one.

I sat on the edge of a fountain with a panic headache for three hours, gathering my courage to call my friend Hoagie's brother Karl, while James played around my feet.

Karl and his partner Marilyn graciously gave me a place to stay in their Honolulu house for a week while I got my bearings. I visited the University of Hawaii where my sophomore year had been interrupted six years before. I went to the beautiful Japanese garden at the East West Center on campus, where the koi were still swimming in the pond. I ate papaya at the student union, remembering how the taste of that sweet orange slice of papaya settled my stomach the day I learned I was pregnant.

I visited the Crossroads Church where Bill and I had planned to marry, before I learned I couldn't marry in Hawaii without my parent's

permission until I was 20. I was 19, and my dad did not give permission. Although we did eventually marry, I still carried the emotional scars six years later.

At last, I was ready to move us on to Hilo, on the Big Island, where I planned to continue my interrupted college education at the community college. Also, my friend Ananda lived somewhere on the Big Island.

How can I describe the big Banyan tree that greeted us at the hotel where we stayed that first night in Hilo? It was as big around as the living room in Lindy's house on Vashon, and its many trunks were like a close-knit family of trees.

It was time for me to find my community. I called the chamber of commerce and asked about Christian communities. They gave me the address of the "Pilgrims," and James and I hitchhiked to the stone mansion on Hilo Bay where the Pilgrims lived. When we arrived, women were hanging a quilt on the line and singing the same songs I learned when I worshipped with a Pentecostal group on Vashon. I fit right in. James and I moved in with about 20 other sisters and brothers, mostly about my age, with a few children.



Remembering a Banyan Tree in Hilo -
Illustration by Suzanna Leigh

It was communal living. The brothers went out to work, while the sisters stayed home, kept the house, cooked the meals, and read the Bible. I enrolled James in kindergarten. Most of my housemates were hippies from the mainland, hungry for ... something. For a spiritual experience.

Many were living in the jungles or on the beaches when Ken found them. Ken told them of Jesus and worked minor miracles. They fed him hashish brownies and he didn't get

high! He brought back to life a child who had ridden his trike off the stone bulkhead into the bay and drowned. He led us in joyful singing and worship. He cast out demons. Ken gathered us together like a shepherd gathering his sheep and became head of a community of young evangelist fundamentalist Christians living in a donated mansion.

I felt cared for, and safe. I learned the truth of "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven ... and all these things will be given unto you." Here I was in a tropical paradise, with almost no money, living in a mansion on Hilo Bay!

There were times when I was homesick, of course. I gathered shells and coral bits and put them in a baby food jar on the window sill by my bunk. Whenever I missed Vashon I would pick it up and look at it, and its beauty would comfort me.

Eventually, Ken moved us to Kona, the side of the island where Ananda lived and where Lindy settled when she came to the Big Island. I would hitchhike up to Captain Cook to visit them whenever I felt spiritually claustrophobic in the restrictive community of the Pilgrims.

I learned many spiritual lessons that year, which I would later test.



Dismal Fruits

By Michael Shook

Over the last two months, we've gotten "thumbnail" sketches of both the innate desire of humans for a perfect, usually communal, society, and of the father of modern Communism, Karl Marx. Now it's time for a look at some of the fruits of the ideologies of Marxism and Communism.

For all Karl Marx's faults - his dogmatism, egocentricity, and narcissism, his contempt for the individual, and so on - he changed the way we think about economics, about social relationships (helping pave the way for modern sociology), and critiqued accurately capitalism's worst propensities (especially the way wealth cyclically becomes concentrated in the hands of the few).

The above concepts are intertwined. Marx's understanding that labor is the foundation of all value helped workers realize their own worth and was instrumental in the labor rights and union movements of the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries. It also led to the realization that, stripped of a social context - that is, absent meaningful community economic relationships within which to labor - workers in the new industrial jobs became alienated from what they made, and from themselves. They were mere cogs in a machine.

Marx's writing on historical materialism and class struggle brought into focus how profoundly humans can be shaped by their living conditions. Inadequate food, shelter, clothing, and lack of education - in short, poverty - all contribute to what too often becomes a culture of despair, and of humanity degraded.

Such conditions were not an abstract feature in Marx's life and, surrounded by the juggernaut of the full-blown Industrial Revolution of the 1800s, he was radicalized. The scale, sheer depth, breadth, and speed of the changes wrought by mass industrialization were something never experienced before. (The onslaught of computer, smartphones, and AI technology we are currently dealing with is analogous.)

Bearing this in mind, we can understand better why Marx's reaction was one of anger, frustration, and determination; anger that such events should happen to people, especially through no fault or action of their own; frustration because of the overwhelming power bearing down on the populace (including him); and determination to expose, confront, and change the whole dynamic.

Unfortunately, his mindset blinded him to any possibilities for change beyond violent revolution. Fixated on his own vision, and trying to make sense of the economic chaos swirling about him, he was unable to imagine capitalism ever changing in significant ways.

Yet that, of course, is precisely what happened. The changes were not easy, and the resistance encountered by workers' efforts to organize was fierce, unrelenting, and sometimes deadly. But eventually the tide turned, legislation was passed giving workers rights, and "guardrails" were instituted to prevent abuse of power by corporations.

That these remedies have been battered, and in some cases, nearly lost, does not diminish the productive impact they had, and continue to have.

In this process, capitalist nations adapted and thereby not only survived, but flourished under the regimes instituted. In contrast - despite Marx's insistence on historical materialism's inevitability (and thus, the proletariat's victory) - Communist nations, nations for which Marx and Engel's (and Lenin's) doctrines are gospel, have collapsed, or changed into something no longer recognizably Communist. This is the case with Communist China and Vietnam. Why?

On a mundane level, scholar Michael Aaron Cody succinctly identifies three conditions essential for any system - plant, animal, or political - to function. One, there must be internal variation. The system must allow for different approaches, risk-taking, and different outcomes. Two, there must be feedback. The results of the different approaches must be visible, measurable, and consequential. Three, there must be selection pressure. Successful approaches must be given room to propagate and unsuccessful approaches allowed to die off.

Under Communist doctrine, none of the three essentials are encouraged. To the contrary, they are actively discouraged. Those living within the system are not just expected, but required to conform to whatever dictates are handed down. Individual initiative is regarded as threatening to the Party, just as accurate feedback is regarded as threatening, because whatever does not conform to "the plan" has the potential to undermine the entire enterprise. Absent those two necessities, selection pressure is effectively nullified, since to acknowledge some action has failed again threatens the Party doctrine.

On a human level, Marxist/Communist

ideology fails because at its heart lies the belief that humans are infinitely malleable. Essential to Marxism is the belief in a reductive, deterministic process of human life, as if a person could be taken apart, put into a mold, and, by applying enough pressure, out would come a "new man."

This man would be void of any impulse toward acquisitiveness and eager to subsume his individuality in the greatness of the collective. It is astonishing to consider that someone of Marx's intellectual acumen - and many, many others since him - could not see the fallacy of such an idea.

In a final irony, Marx was dismissive of the notion that individuals, and ideas issuing from individuals, could affect history. He believed it was history itself that implacably marched forward, from one dialectic explosion to another, to find its rest when the last cataclysm was seen through, the proletariat victorious, and humanity gloriously experiencing its full and unequivocal freedom. Yet, it was his ideas, so carefully rendered in volumes of writing, that in fact affected modern history in profound ways.

Marx died in relative obscurity in 1883, two months shy of his 65th birthday, his dream of a revolution of the proletariat still only that. In the years that followed, his writing would be the basis for political movements that altered human history like few others ever had.

Sadly, those movements, though ostensibly begun with the intent to create a worker's paradise, were so violently murderous that the death toll (so far) of people living under Communist systems is difficult to comprehend.

It is appropriate to at least note the numbers (all approximate): Soviet Union - 61 million. Communist China - 50-60 million. Cambodia/Khmer Rouge - 2 million (from a country of 7 million). North Korea - 1.6 million. Cuba - 100,000. About 140 million people. All sacrificed in pursuit of the perfect Communist society.

As the great Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski wrote, "Marxism has been the greatest fantasy of [the twentieth] century." And, one might add, the most deadly.

Next month, we will examine Communism, capitalism, and the rule of law.



Going After Vashon: Encouraging More

By Deborah H. Anderson

I had an opportunity recently to get some closure about my years as a pastor on Vashon. I was one of the first full-time female pastors, and for sure the first soccer Mom pastor.

It was sweet and gentle, and I was able to forgive many. Forgiveness is easier when the next happy chapter has finally begun. This past week, a traumatic funeral was followed by three days of a church conference that was deep and rich and full of singing and joy and connection; my whole life finally makes sense.

This column is about observations and encouragements I have wanted to make for several years. As my little fake sports car - a Nissan Versa that I absolutely love - whizzed up and down I5 this past week, getting its fabulous 50 miles to the gallon, I had a lot of time for some before and now musing.

Ultimately, the mismatch between me and Vashon was in the context of "cutting edge" and "pioneering." I love the next hill, the stretch, the reach, the "what if?" That is not Vashon. Vashon is comfortably 15 years behind most everything, everywhere. Quiet and cultivated familiarity. Heading up the Vashon 500, as a friend deems it, the hill up from either ferry dock, do you not breath a sigh of relief and grip the steering wheel a little less?

That would normally be okay, but not in this day and age and season. Today, the world needs more from Vashon than a hideaway where "over-market price" is celebrated like a new kind of lightbulb and homogeneity is the rule of thumb. The place where Island time and organic linen fit loose and suspenders run deep and comfy.

What kind of more is needed from Vashon?

Well, it needs every real estate agency to invest at least ten percent of their profits into real, genuine, affordable housing, tiny houses, land with hook-ups, and better landlord maintenance of property used as passive income, so people can live in healthy, thriving abodes.

More is the School District breaking free from single-focus aspirations and using hundreds of children and teens walking on and off the ferry each day like a white flight scheme to garner extra money for the district.

More is supporting Island parents as the backbone and circulatory system of a healthy educational experience, instead of as consumers who must be managed or approached with caution. More is supporting teachers who work tirelessly to bring creative educational techniques to students who have a bandwidth of challenges and expectations about learning that need to be satisfied.

More is no shaved corners in commerce, whether it's permits or protocols. May I be the first to say, more is recognizing that if Strawberry Festival returned to a celebration of this

community, with marching bands and local strawberries and drill teams and all that celebrates this community, residents might follow the lead and invest more in local businesses, despite the costs.

More is doing the shadow work as a community that contributes to cliques and tragedies and greed.

Once upon a time, I was going off and advisory board, having been told that, though imminently qualified, I would not be allowed or asked onto the permanent board. When the new executive was hired, a member of the advisory board came to me and said, "Deborah, don't go after her. She's a good choice."

Two things about that statement. Somehow, my vision for deep and wide in regard to Vashon culture and daily life was seen as "going after" people. Whether speaking out about adolescent substance abuse and too many suicides of all ages, Ritalin thefts at a daycare, a treasurer at a church embezzling funds, or whatever death-inducing practice was sucking "the "more" out of Vashon, bringing attention to or calling out, was somehow "going after."

On Vashon, we know our homeless people by name. That is such a precious gift. They are not nameless statues with cardboard at the edge of town begging for money. If the deficits of Vashon were remediated, it would be a shining example of dominant culture creating vibrant, life-giving equity, inclusion, diversity, met needs, high bars for health and safety, and economic stability.

The arts are great and that is where Vashon excels as a small rural community. But Vashon needs to be more. The world needs Vashon do be an example, not an isolated getaway. The country, the world, is in dire straits. Get after it, Vashon! Work together, all 10,000 of you. If IGA is paving its parking lot, it is definitely time. Get after it! You've got this!



Some Notes on Stealing Cars

Continued from Page 3

July 22nd and 23rd of 2023, when a rave featuring drifting cars and tire smoke took over a main intersection for a night on Capitol Hill. The lone officer who initially responded had to carefully retreat when teenagers climbed onto his cruiser's hood and roof to jump up and down on it, significantly damaging the vehicle.

Subsequently, 434,000 citizen signatures were easy to gather for Initiative 2113, which read, "This measure would remove certain restrictions on vehicular pursuits, allowing them upon conditions including an officer's reasonable suspicion a person has violated the law and poses a threat to the safety of others."

When the non-pursuit policy was rolled back in early 2024, the effect was immediate and has resulted in steady declines in property theft, particularly for vehicles. The vote to adopt 2113 passed 77-20 in the House and 36-13 in the Senate.

In 2024, the National Insurance Crime Bureau reported Washington that vehicle thefts dropped 32%, the most of any state, with neighboring Nevada and Oregon as other big improvers.


The decline accelerated in 2025 with Washington thefts dropping by 39%, still ranking us 9th nationally in total theft volume. The Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metro area saw a 41% reduction. While still very high nationally on a per capita basis, it's heading in the right direction, and indicates that common sense law enforcement can effectively and quickly deter crime.

Recent WA state restrictions on Automated License Plate Readers due to privacy concerns, signed into law on March 30th, have the potential to encourage more car thefts. It's complicated, but on balance, the law only seems like a mild enforcement negative over time. Unfortunately, the higher car insurance rates we've all experienced in the wake of the crime wave seem unlikely to ever go back to where they were.

For the record, Kia and Hyundai fixed their vulnerabilities in 2022. The older models are aging out, no longer the juicy targets they once were. To attract teenage thieves now, owners might have to put signs on the windows that say, "Steal Me."

What happened to Merritt? Through enthusiastic practice and increasing rewards, Merritt became a specialist. He established organized crime contacts, supplying Chicago-area chop shops with cars on request. He built a reputation as a smart go-getter and works out of a repair shop front near O'Hare Airport. He bought a brand new Mustang and is investigating ways to hack its standard FordPass Connect app and software-controlled security features.

Once ready to defeat its anti-theft lockdown switch, Merritt wants to make some viral videos and launch the #MustangChallenge.



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Meet Nadja Vol Ochs

Vashon Wilderness Program's New Executive Director, Part 2

By Jane Valencia

In Part 1, printed in our March issue, we heard the story of how Nadja Vol Ochs came into nature connection work and onto the Island. In Part 2, we learn about her role as new executive director for the Vashon Wilderness Program (VWP).

Stacey Hinden had been VWP's first and only executive director in its 20-year history, when Nadja stepped in. Stacey mentored Nadja and taught her the ropes of the position in a transition that took a month:

"What shoes to fill! What Stacey did with me that month was incredible. You never get that when you start a job, you just get plunked in, boom, 'There you go, bye, I'm out,' But her humility, her grace, and the whole team - everybody was just so welcoming and warm.

"I feel like that got me off and running so smoothly, and plus having been an executive director at two other organizations - a farm and an art school - I had a lot to draw on from those experiences. A lot was familiar territory. But it was also new and fresh."

Nadja has been with VWP now for a good nine months, in what she considers to be a year focusing on grounding.

"I think by the end of the cycle, the program year, I'll have a sense of what can I refine, what can we improve on, what can continue to foster."

First and foremost, she is getting to know the program families, as well as in the larger community.

"Being there at the beginning of programs, talking to the parents, and offering time to just walk, talk, and hear where their needs and challenges are. Is it with ferry commuting to the Island, or carpooling needs, is it curiosity about our core routines? Do y'all know what 'sit spot' means, things like that." [Please see the accompanying article by Nadja on the far right.]

"Listening to the community - and then looking to where can we shout from the rooftops, 'Hello Tacoma families, hello other areas, West Seattle.' We're trying a couple camps in West Seattle this summer, just to meet more families off-Island and bring them out here." Reaching more urban families is a particular intention.

Nadja strongly believes in partnerships and the resilience they cultivate for organizations and communities, and is at work establishing new partnerships for VWP, both on and off-Island.

Services for Vashon Children

Recently, VWP partnered with The Land Trust and the Vashon Heritage Museum to present a free World Storytelling Celebration, "Once Upon a Place." And, off-Island, VWP has just launched a new program in partnership with Parks Tacoma and the Tacoma schools for their "Beyond the Bell" afterschool activities. VWP will also be offering a multi-location fly-fishing camp in partnership with Emerald Water Anglers.

Other new themed offerings for summer camp are a Teen "Shadow Camp" with an overnight at Camp Sealth, and, in West Seattle, a "Hidden Worlds Camp," which "invites children to explore the tiny, magical ecosystems all around them - both real and imagined."

I noted that a couple of these new camp offerings involve the waters. Might there be an expansion of the water curriculum in VWP's future? Nadja lives part-time on a boat, after all!

Cultivating a relationship with the water is indeed a compelling thought to Nadja:

"There's so much more we can do with the waterways, and the sea, and being surrounded by it." Noting that the nature connection work began in the forest, Nadja says, "A lot of the core routines are tied to forest, and less to ocean. There's something calling here to weave some of our practices that are related to the water. My sit spots, sometimes, are on the water."

Again, partnerships may be a way to grow water-centered offerings. Nadja notes, "The Vashon Land Trust is working on the watersheds, and with the salmon, and doing land conservation work, and so, I think, the work is to listen in and see where we fit in with all of that. And then consider, what are the resources our staff needs to learn to teach more Salish Sea connection. How might we weave that in - currents and tides."

I note that Nadja has a lot of skills, including mentoring. Is she interested in doing more mentoring with VWP?

Nadja is definitely interested. In addition to co-mentoring this summer's Hidden Worlds camp and "Nature's Canvas Camp," this year she led a bird walk with the Vashon Bird Alliance. Inviting others into her passion for the birds is something Nadja loves to do. However, in service to developing a full grasp of all the pieces of the organization, this year

Core Routines and Sit Spot (and Gratitude, Too)

By Nadja Vol Ochs



We asked Nadja to explain what a nature connection core routine is and to tell us a little about the two routines referred to in the article.

Core routines or routines of connection are simple, repeatable practices that help people build a meaningful, personal relationship with the natural world and themselves over time. Rather than one-time activities, they are experiences we return to again and again, allowing skills, awareness, and connection to deepen naturally through familiarity and presence. They are similar to how many people settle into routines such as meditation, yoga, journaling, or any other consistent practice every day.

The sit spot is a beautiful example of this. By returning regularly to the same place outdoors, participants begin to notice subtle changes in that place, shifts in light, sound, weather, and animal and insect activity. This practice strengthens observation skills, attention, and sensory awareness, while also fostering a sense of belonging.

Over time, the place becomes known and personal, transforming from "a place in nature" into a relationship. It invites curiosity, patience, and reflection, which are key foundations for both ecological understanding and emotional connection.

Gratitude, as a core routine, offers something equally powerful, but more relational. Time and time again, as we share gratitude as a community through all layers of the organization, we are drawn into each other's lives, perspectives, and stories. This practice connects us not only to nature, but to one another, anchoring the experience in positivity, hope, celebration, challenges, or joy. It helps participants recognize what they value, name what they notice, and feel part of something larger than themselves.

Together, these routines create a rhythm of connection: to place, to self, and to community. Over time, they nurture both awareness and care, which are at the heart of meaningful learning and relationship with the natural world.

Nadja has deliberately keeping mentoring to a minimum.

"There are so many things I learned at Wilderness Awareness School, and just what I love to do in general, that would be great to offer." Basketry and making natural pigment dyes are just two examples.

VWP's curriculum continues to include nature skills such as tracking, bird language, edible plants, elemental living skills, and natural history and heritage. An addition in recent years has been to include some Twuhshootseed language learning.

Continued on Page 8



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By Anne Cotter Moses

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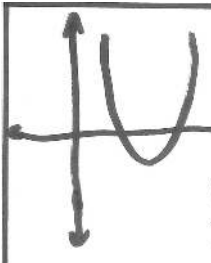
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Social Money

By Stephen Buller

Capitalism is under attack by many even though it is the economic system that has brought us more prosperity than any other. Why, then? Because, at a time when the wealth divide is vast and daily expenses are stretching budgets to the limit, "capitalism" doesn't seem to be working for most Americans.

It's easy (and right) to blame our government for high taxes and irresponsible spending. The mistake is in thinking government can solve that problem if only it has more employees, more tax revenue, more power.

You don't hire a serial arsonist to put out a fire.

Government is an important part of society, but it should not be viewed as an entity which creates prosperity. It should be viewed as a necessary expense to protect the rights of its citizens. The more we look to government to solve our economic problems, the more the government will create a host of new ones.

I'll argue that Americans are struggling right now not because of capitalism, but in spite of it. I think affordability problems stem from irresponsible government spending, which is only possible through a terrible monetary system that has been a bane on the world for more than half a century.

The Federal Reserve manipulates the price of everything by dictating interest rates, and they facilitate unpopular or unsustainable social programs by inflating the currency supply. No one likes taxes, but they're necessary to fund government. Inflating the currency supply is far worse because it is abstract, a stealth tax that most citizens are completely unaware of.

Let's look at the good of capitalism by recalling its full name, "free market capitalism." The beauty of capitalism is a free market where two parties can voluntarily engage in commerce and come away from the transaction better for it.

Government should regulate commerce so no one sells dangerous products or otherwise infringes on others' rights, but should otherwise allow individuals to transact freely. Today, you can't buy

Island Resilience

a candy bar without paying a special "sin tax," and you can't complete many simple projects on your own property without six months' wait and thousands of dollars of permitting.

I believe the free market is one of the most powerful tools humans have for raising prosperity for all. It allows people to specialize in their area of expertise, capture greater overall value than if they generalized, and trade the difference to acquire other wants and needs. It allows people to respond to the demands of their communities and solve problems.

But there's one, big kicker: The only way an individual can capture the value of their labor is through sound money such as gold and silver, a medium of exchange which is also a store of value - unlike the US dollar and all fiat currencies that, by design, lose value over time.

In addition to facilitating individual freedom in the vocation you choose and the products you purchase, a free market is more efficient than any governor, lobby, or committee. A free market puts people and capital to work in the areas of highest demand through a process called "price discovery," the process of finding the best price for a product through many people buying and selling it.

One bureaucrat trying to set the perfect price for a product - or a wage - across hundreds of millions of people is impossible. But one person deciding whether a gallon of gas is worth \$6.50 on any given day is easy. When millions of people make billions of decisions every day regarding how to spend their money, the basic economic principle of supply and demand goes to work.

Each person acts in the marketplace as best serves their individual needs, and if the demand for a particular product drives the price up, entrepreneurs will enter the market, increase supply, and prices will drop. If prices drop too low to earn a profit, supply will decrease, and prices will adjust.

But shouldn't the government do something to "stimulate" the economy in down times? I would argue no, and that this always makes it worse in the

long run. When the government regulates markets and manipulates money, prices are warped, bubbles are blown, and recession is inevitable.

Our government knows it can't tax us for all its fraud and waste, so it prints dollars and expands the currency supply further through financial derivatives. We should care that they steal our purchasing power through inflation to fund unpopular programs. And we should recognize this is much harder to do under a sound money system, such as a gold standard.

Above all, we should recognize the brilliance and value of a free market. It allows us to choose our vocation and what we purchase with the fruits of our labor and facilitates the most efficient and prosperous society possible. We should fight for freer markets instead of blaming them for our woes, and we should move to sound money, so individuals can save and invest for the future without fear of the value of their labor eroding over time.



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Meet Nadja

Continued from Page 7

Twuhlshootseed (commonly referred to as Lushootseed) is the indigenous language of the first people of our Island and the Puget Sound region. David Turnipseed, a language instructor with the Puyallup Tribal Language Program who has children in one of VWP's weekly programs, has taught aspects of the language, and various words and phrases, to VWP's staff. The staff continues to pursue their learning in order to share Twulshootseed with the children.

Nadja ponders the challenge of learning a new language and making it stick.

"There is lots of technology for learning language, but you're not talking with people. Weaving the language into play is something that we have a huge opportunity to pursue. When one of our mentors dressed up as a bælups (raccoon), I thought, yes, this is amazing. This is what makes learning fun and engaging.

"What our style of mentoring really does well is that we're teaching you the words where you're experiencing the language. The more we can weave those experiences in, the more the words will stick."

Songs, words, and phrases used again and again build that familiarity.

"Anything we can learn to tie us to the context of and the peoples of the place," is what is sought in this venture."

In closing, Nadja wants to express her gratitude to the community she's gotten to know, and for the layers of support that VWP enjoys. This brings us to VWP's core routine of practicing Gratitude.

"In this time, there's so much heaviness In the

culture regarding what's going on in the world and the politics. But we can ground in gratitude. That's something that we practice at VWP. And whenever I'm in a conversation that doesn't start with it or end with it, it feels like something's off. It becomes so natural to be grateful, to live in gratitude and have that attitude of gratitude stick in you. That's something that I feel like our community supports so well. I couldn't live without it."

Gratitude as a "core routine" was introduced into the nature connection field by Jake and July Swamp field and is a cultural practice in nature connection schools worldwide. That said, the practice of gratitude is cross-cultural and ancient, and Nadja notes that, these days: "Psychologists use it, therapists use it. You can read about it anywhere. It's tied to religions. All kinds of aspects of gratitude practice weave in and out of our social sphere and spiritual ways of being.

"When you kindle that gratitude fire, it just keeps going. Just to hear the kids' gratitudes and those of our team is connective. It's not divisive -



Nadja in the meadow at VWP. Photo by Dawn Stief.

we need connective practices in our culture right now. Gratitude is regulating. It's grounding."

As Nadja completes her first year as VWP's Executive Director, she finds that there is so much to be grateful for. And, indeed, it looks like her boat is well-launched!

Visit Nadja Vol Ochs and VWP at vashonwilderness.org

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Mental Health Matters

By Dr Marli Parobek, DNP APRN

Mental Health May is upon us. A great time to address how to achieve great mental health. Let's dive in. We are all familiar with what is considered good physical health, such as diet, exercise, and avoiding risky behaviors. We are told constantly by medical professionals, the media, politicians, and family and friends how to be physically healthy; however, few discuss what it means to be mentally healthy.

Positive choices are essential to becoming mentally healthy. Consistency is the key. Knowing that it is okay to fall short because "the sun will come out tomorrow" and we can start fresh.

Firstly, good mental health starts with taking in a diet of good nutrition. The nutrients of mental health can begin with appreciating the beauty of small things in our lives, such as spring flowers, warmer days, or hearing birdsong. When we digest the surrounding world with enthusiasm, our attitude changes for the better. We tend to appreciate it rather than criticize it. A steady diet of gratitude is integral for good mental health.

Our minds and attitude can be exercised just like the body can be exercised. Our physical body needs movement to develop muscles and maintain flexibility; similarly, our mind can develop

Health Matters

resiliency. Good mental health relies on resiliency. Resiliency is the stamina to withstand life's challenges and to have that "can do" attitude. When we "Keep Calm and Carry On," we extend ourselves beyond our comfort zone. By stretching our resiliency, we learn to face life's challenges and to emerge on the other side with a positive attitude.

Practicing thankfulness produces reciprocal joy. Considering giving a hearty "thank you," which lifts our countenance and shows appreciation. For example, showing gratitude to strangers with simple gestures such as holding open the door, waving to someone walking on the side of the road, or giving a helping hand. An authentic smile and random acts of kindness go further than an expected, formal response.

Good mental health, like good physical health, starts with avoiding bad behaviors and embracing great expectations. Run from the Debbie Downer inside you. No one benefits from the person who looks for the worst-case scenario and brings everyone down with them. When we project hope, others sense it and want to take part in positive change.

Everyone should have their own little world to protect them from the big world.

~ Erich Maria Remarque



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Humble Nettle

By Anthony Latora

As the days stretch into longer light and the warmth in the air begins to carry the fragrance of new blooms, nettle rises from the somber earth. For many, this plant is known through accident, or by the warnings of caregivers who remember its sharp, lingering sting. Yet what if that very sting has long been used as medicine in its own right?

Plant lore tells of people who deliberately welcomed the sting, finding relief from arthritic pain and stagnant joints. This practice, still used today, invites a different relationship with the plant, and, beyond the sting, nettle offers far more. When cooked, steamed, dried, frozen, or tinctured, the formic acid compounds in its hairs are neutralized, leaving behind a nourishing plant. With practice, one can find themselves harvesting by hand with courage and respect.

Nettle grows with opposite leaves and square stems, reminiscent of the mint family. Its deep green leaves range from rounded to lance-shaped, each edged with fine serrations and tapering to a point. The entire plant is covered in fine stinging hairs.

Often forming dense stands, nettle spreads through a network of underground roots, sometimes

reaching heights of two to three feet, and in ideal conditions, much taller. Its flowers emerge from the leaf axils along the main stem - male flowers tending to grow shorter and above the females. By mid to late summer, clusters of green seeds begin to mature.

In the Pacific Northwest, nettle thrives in wet to moist soils, often near streams, rivers, and low-lying areas. In drier environments, it stays close to year-round water sources. Since nettle can bioaccumulate nitrates and heavy metals, it's important to harvest from clean, trusted places—away from industrial sites and agricultural runoff.

While harvesting nettle, it is worth considering the timing of gathering. As nettle begins to flower and set seed, the leaves and stems concentrate minerals such as silica and calcium, forming cystoliths—minute, stone-like structures that serve in mineral storage and aid in the scattering of light within the leaf. Though not toxic, their presence lends a coarser quality to the plant and, in larger or repeated amounts, may bring mild irritation to the throat or place subtle strain on the kidneys, particularly for those with sensitivities in those systems. For this reason, the early tops are often favored, offering tender leaves suited

for both nourishment and remedy.

Within the plant are a range of constituents, not limited to formic acid in the fresh hairs; acetylcholine, choline, histamine; and a wealth of minerals - calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, silica, and sodium - alongside vitamins A and D.

Living in these wet environments, nettle expresses qualities that mirror its habitat. It acts as a diuretic, moving water through the body while tonifying tissues and supporting the elimination of metabolic waste. Its mineral richness helps replenish electrolytes and contributes to maintaining the blood's slightly alkaline pH.

Taken as a tea, nettle can gently reduce acute or chronic bleeding and tone the urinary tract. Despite containing histamines, it has long been used to ease seasonal sensitivities, supporting the body in regulating inflammatory responses while lightly drying excess mucus.

If a stronger astringent effect is needed, particularly with an affinity for the urogenital system, the root of the plant offers a more focused action.

Nettle is not only mineral-rich but also abundant in chlorophyll and protein, providing a surprising source of amino acids. This balance - cooling minerals alongside building nutrients - makes it especially useful for restoring and supporting the blood and tissues. For those recovering from

strain or injury, it offers an accessible form of nourishment that can be gathered, stored, and used throughout the year without reliance on expensive commercial supplements.

Rather than reducing herbs to, "use this herb for that," it is more useful to understand their qualities and how those qualities meet patterns in the body. Nettle reveals itself as a cooling, drying, and tonifying plant with a clear affinity for the urogenital system and mucosal tissues. It supports the movement of water, the reduction of inflammation, and the replenishment of minerals.

For those carrying excess fluid or metabolic waste, for those seeking recovery and rebuilding, or for those navigating seasonal sensitivities and environmental stressors, nettle offers steady support.

And like all good plant allies, it asks that you gather it with awareness, and from places you trust.

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Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

From my friend Micolino:

Q: Were did Noah stow his bees?

A: In his arc hives.

~

From Amelia at the Library:

Q: How do flowers whistle?

A: With their two lips.

~

From David at Ace Hardware:

Q: How do you protect your bagels?

A: You put a little lox on them.

~

In the IGA Market, someone threw a jar of mayonnaise at me. I caught it, then screamed at the guy, "What the Hellman, you missed the Best Foods! Next time you better get closer, or ketchup.

~

From Miss Ally by way of Caitlin:

An Englishman, a Frenchman, a Spaniard and a German are sitting in a room, when a man enters and asks, "Can you see me?"

They responds, "Yes." "Oui." "Si." "Ja."

~

American cats say, "Meow." Chinese cats say, "Mihow."

~

My Dog Falkor told me a joke today. He asked me, "What do you call a Dog in a submarine?"

A subwoofer.

~

I did some research on my Indian relatives in North Carolina, I got excited when I heard a cousin was a

Medicine Man.
Turned out he works as a pharmacist for Rexall.

~

Last night someone broke into my house and stole a dozen eggs. Police found a clue

– a saucepan partly full of water. The police said that they suspected poachers.

~

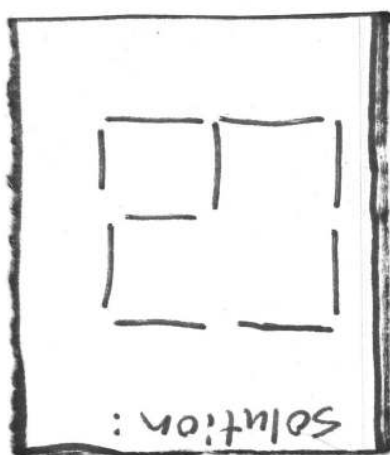
Geology rocks, but Geography is where it's really at.

Do you have a joke you'd like to see in the Llaughing Llamas Chronicles? Submit yours for consideration at: vashonloop-jokes@janevalencia.com.



Math Puzzle Solution

By Anne Cotter Moses



Mamá Anita's Shredded Carrot Soup With a Twist

By Cynthia Sadurni

It seems that most people think of soup as an autumnal or wintery dish. Once the warmer weather comes, it discretely disappears until the cold begins anew. For me, this is a very interesting approach, since I grew up having soup every day with dinner, to the point that it doesn't seem like the main meal of the day without this comforting, liquid companion.

Not all soups have to be the hearty fare of the fall and winter, though. There are many light and nutritious options that can be a perfect companion to any meal and can pack much needed nutrients after a long day of work or fun. This recipe is precisely that. My mom has been making it for as long as I can remember, and is a favorite in our household.

Mamá Anita's Shredded Carrot Soup With a Twist

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup white onion, finely chopped (leek can also be used and gives a more mellow flavor)
- 1½ cups shredded carrots (you can find this already packed in most supermarkets)
- 1 cup sliced cremini or shiitake mushrooms, stems removed
- 4 cups chicken broth (you can substitute beef broth for a heartier version, or veggie broth)
- Salt to taste (depends on how salty your broth is)
- Dash of pepper
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 lemon finely sliced to serve, plus half a lemon whole



Directions

In a cooking pot, sauté the garlic and onion until soft, then add the mushrooms and continue to stir them over medium heat for another minute. Add the shredded carrots, mix well, and continue to stir for one minute more.

Add the broth and enough water to cover all the mix and have about half an inch extra.

Add the paprika, cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes or until the carrots are soft. At this stage, you can add the salt and pepper, let cook one more minute. Give it a taste and add more salt if needed.

Ladle into bowls to serve, add a twist of lemon into each bowl and garnish with the lemon slices. Enjoy!

This soup is quick and simple, yet delicious and light enough to enjoy any time of the year! I hope that you enjoy making it as much as I have sharing it with you. Buen provecho! *

*This is the Mexican equivalent of bon appétit.



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Aries (March 20-April 19)

It's been said you miss too much these days if you stop and think. But you must. And not just think, but feel, and use all of your senses. The sham of robot cognition filters out all of the bandwidths of thought and communication that lead humans to understand what we are trying to get across to one another. Uranus entering the language and mind angle of your solar chart will make you want to push the literal and the allegedly provable. Yet your most accurate perceptions and your most meaningful creative acts will come from setting aside what can be proven, measured, quantified and evaluated by logic. As of this writing there are still eight major influences in your Sun or rising sign, and most of them are slow-movers that are driving the entire society forward. Never underestimate the influence that the digital environment is having on your self-concept and your experience of your body. Full-spectrum thinking is the only way through our current wild maze with your humanity intact.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

You are famous for your conflicting values, though few would ever call you out on this. It's difficult for you or anyone to notice because you present such a steady and consistent exterior – even to yourself. I've known the health conscious Taurus who can't stop smoking, and the one who cannot reconcile loving to stay up late, wanting to get up early and always needing enough sleep. Whatever form this takes for you, it slows you down by instigating inner conflict. Your ruling planet Venus and Uranus simultaneously entering the angle of your chart associated with attitude and values is going to disrupt this whole process, which may be annoying at first but which will be liberating as soon as you allow it to be. Find a way to go back in time 10 years and make contact with the person you were then. Look for artifacts of what in truth was a prior lifetime. You will be amazed how much you've changed, or rather, been forced to adapt in ways you would never have volunteered for. Then you will have an idea what you need to recover and retrieve and bring into the present moment.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

You have a language you use to communicate with yourself, and it's a language no other person can understand. You have your own words, concepts and symbols that serve as dependable inner references. Uranus entering your sign will shake things up for you, adding a diversity of new viewpoints. It's almost as if Gemini goes from the sign of the twins to the sign of sextuplets; you will have to take a more circumspect view of yourself and the world. That means seeing things from multiple viewpoints, and going beyond the world of dualism. And there's something much better: the mysterious,



Planet Waves

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



distant planet Sedna has already taken up residence in Gemini. It will soon be met by a conjunction from Uranus and come under full activation. Sedna is about environmental awareness. By that, I mean full-spectrum sensitivity to the total environment around you. Uranus plus Sedna will open you up to a much wider community, and the desire to be closer to people. To roll with this is not about categorization or data; it's about seeing the patterns in your life and in the world around you. That will be your superpower.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are among those with a rich inner life, with what I would call a strong inner voice. One way your tendency to be interior is depicted astrologically (beside being a hermit crab in its shell) is you have Gemini as your immediately preceding sign. Such describes what's going on in the often-hidden interior of your awareness. I know your mind seems like it's "in your head" but that's not really true. It's far larger than you are; it filters your perception of all the space around you, all the people, and the entire perceivable universe. With the arrival of Venus and Uranus (joining Sedna, the ultra-strange planet of environmental awareness), it's about to become a lively place. With the thunder and fanfare currently happening in your house of career and reputation – that would be Aries – you will get the juice you need not just to aspire to great things, but to do them.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Your social life is about to become the most interesting it's been in a long time, perhaps ever. Fortunately you like the attention, you can handle all kinds of people and you're not put off by those who are a little weird. As this new cast of characters arrives, be sure to evaluate them carefully. Sort out who is trustworthy and who is not from direct experience. This is essential because the main influence shifting the story is Uranus entering your 11th place. That said, there is an equal if not greater concentration brewing in one of your best houses – Aries on the 9th. The real opportunity here is for you to experiment with who you are, both privately and publicly. Uranus in Gemini is your opportunity to experiment with the many new expressions of your being in a social context and test them out.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

The word "disruptive" gets used too much in our digital era as some kind of net positive when it's pretty much all we get. As an earth sign, you have those days when enough is enough. That said, you know you need a shakeup, and

Uranus crossing the midheaven angle of your solar chart will give you just that. This will be exciting and you may finally feel like you're in tune with the times. You're likely to experience the temptation to go forward in all directions, and to do 10 things when two or three are usually enough. The ingredient you need – which everyone will benefit from, but you must put to immediate use – is awareness and sensitivity (the sensory kind) directed at whatever you consider to be your business community. Take the time to stop, look and listen, and to let your subtle senses provide you with something far better than the usual data the world operates on. This will feel like more than a hunch but you have the ability to tap into something deeper than worldly knowledge. Use it well.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

Depending on how you count, there are eight major factors in your opposite sign Aries. It's more than most people can handle, but as the human blow torch you have amazing energy reserves and more flexibility than you imagine. You need a wide mental space to process it all, and larger concepts that allow for the wildly random quality of the environment. The arrival of Uranus in your fellow air sign Gemini will help you broaden your perspective by a few dimensions. The combination of Venus, Uranus and ultra-strange, ultra-slow Sedna (11,408- year-orbit) is offering you a vast library of ideas, concepts, and paradigms. It would be better if you are guided the desire to make something, or to go somewhere. You need the approach that emits love, not that vacuums it in. To create is to offer, not to withhold. You dearly need to live in a bigger world, and you'll be much happier there.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

It may seem like the whole world is demanding your attention and total submission to what you must do. You may at times think you were born for a life of frozen margaritas, but the problem with that way of existence is that it's irrelevant. You are not irrelevant, and you're being called to participate in the urgent challenges of our time. Meanwhile on another wavelength, you may think that the world has you in its crosshairs or is in some way singling you out. That is not true. Rather, what you're really feeling is the need to express your particular calling or the particular talent that you have to offer. So what is this thing you're being called to do? The chances are that you know, but have a problem similar to what many others face: getting out of your own way. Part of being something other than a miniature model of yourself means confronting the world in a new way, and allowing it to confront you. How frightening is that?

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

You have managed to keep to yourself for a long time. By that I mean you have used your capacity to live in a kind of "world apart", perhaps of a creative activity or some special kind of fun you like to have. What's about to happen is that you're going to be drawn out of whatever that inner environment is. This may come as a shock, a surprise, or an invitation to adventure. What they have in common is the sudden involvement with other people and ideas that are unfamiliar to you. It's an opportunity to go from the art studio to

the gallery or the installation, where people can see what you've created. If your current state is not creative in that sense, then the invitation could be to turn a personal game into an outer world adventure of some kind. Get ready for the presence of a diversity of new people in your world, who will bring what seem like wild ideas and unusual opportunities. Be patient and perceive, and walk the line between trusting and skeptical.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Gemini is your 6th house, what traditional astrologers call the house of work and well-being. It has an extremely strong service ethic. The earliest roots of the 6th go to military service and battlefield medicine. Of all the signs, Gemini is a great one to have on the 6th place. Despite your practical and earthy nature, you have exceptional communication talents. In one expression of your soul, you're a kind of earth gnome or hobbit who knows how to stack up treasure. You are equally comfortable in the world of data, ideas, communications, and our current cosmos of fleeting data. Uranus arrives in Gemini to stay for seven years, preceded by Venus, reminding you to stay grounded in positive affection and love. It has been preceded by the very strange planet Sedna, which is about heightened environmental sensitivity. Uranus will rapidly accelerate your information metabolism. For this to happen safely, you need to utilize your heightened perception (a gift of Sedna).

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

You're about to enter the most creative phase of your life so far. A lot of energy is coming your way, entering your life by way of one of the best houses, the 5th (for you, Gemini), which is about creativity, pleasure, play, children and your inner child. Uranus is joining the ultra-slow-moving planet Sedna, newly in Gemini; Uranus will be there for seven years, Sedna for about 60 years. Sedna describes an intuitive, even telepathic, connection to the environment – which in the case of Gemini is the mental environment. Uranus will ramp this up and for you, drive the experience of rapid inputs and outputs. In a creative environment, it will help you understand something about what you want to create. Any form of pattern recognition is a modality of art. As a great philosopher once said, "No society has ever known enough about its actions to have developed immunity to its new extensions or technologies. Today we have begun to sense that art may be able to provide such immunity."

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

Home has never been more important, for you or for the world. Home is the environment where you live, where you rest, and probably where you work. It is your headquarters. Uranus is now arriving on your home angle – the 4th place, which for you is Gemini. Most people's homes are designed for luxury and comfort rather than for utility. I suggest you lean into your use of home and the arrangement of space for wider purposes. There's something more – a much wider concept of what home means. I can offer two ideas. First, your little patch of the Earth; the part of the planet you call your own. Expand and allow all of that to be home. What is going on around you? You live in a mental environment more than any other. The thing that defines how you perceive these seemingly different things is your consciousness. That is your actual home. And you have much influence over what happens there. Take care of it and it will take care of you.

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Mukai Haiku Festival 2026



By Dr. Jade Keala Agua, Executive Director, Mukai Farm & Garden

Our 7th Annual Haiku Festival brought together a vibrant community of poets from near and far. This year, the Festival received 190 submissions representing 9 different countries, with an inspiring 65% of entries from youth poets.

Below, is a selection of this year's haiku. Submissions can also be found online here: <https://mukaifarmandgarden.org/7th-annual-mukai-haiku-festival-submissions/>. There are so many wonderful ones! A selection is on display in the garden through the end of May.

As we celebrate 100 years of Mukai Farm & Garden, we chose "Food" as one of the themes because we're inviting our community to support the restoration of the historic Fruit Barreling Plant. This project will bring the building back to life as the Vashon Island Food Hub—supporting local farmers, reducing food waste, and creating space for food access, education, and community connection.

To learn more or contribute: <https://mukaifarmandgarden.org>

Editor's note: Author info below is preserved as submitted to the Haiku Festival.



Coming Next Month:
Making Cliff's Beer

Category: Mukai Centennial

Waves, wildly-windy
Ancestors whisper: Welcome
Kiss. Tadaima!

*Jessika Satori
Washington*

Garden path unfolds
Stone to stone and tree to tree
Her footsteps echo

*Julia Mark
Seattle, WA*

strawberry achenes -
a century of stories
in the old estate

*MARIA TOSTI
Perugia, Italy*

Category: Food

stone soup simmering
strawberries stain our hands red
Rufous stops in flight

*Ma Ra
Vashon, WA*

wrapped in white mochi
red hearts raised on new found fields
taste sweetly of home

*Brit Myers
Vashon, WA*

I wish I could taste
the barreling plant berries
back in better times

*Carrie Sikorski
Vashon, WA*

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editor@vashonloop.com

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Parallel Lives – The Red Alder Staff

Continued from Front Page

Some call it red alder for its inner iron, which bleeds red in the air. Indeed, my very important new staff, which I now carry everywhere, has turned orange and red in my grasp. What a sight! And now the fullness of that day spent with my new possession, "The Day of the Red Alder Staff," can almost be summoned to mind. Almost.

What became of my Red Alder Staff? When did I drop it last, and where?

An alder's lifespan is roughly that of man – threescore years and ten, or so. Alder careers can vary greatly, depending on where they're sited, even on the same island. Those trees blessed with abundant water, and a grove of their own kind, will grow long, brontosaurian trunks, while those with drier, more ascetic lives stay stout, with knobbish profiles developing with age.

Either way, past age fifty, their end signals its slow approach. Their circulation recedes. They are blunted at the top by the wind, reduced piece by piece, as the earth drags them slowly towards herself. The mighty ones, with all their watery weight, might meet a precipitous fate, crack at their feet in the face of a strong wind, fall long and hard from great heights, while the tough old ones, having survived a life of denial, will abide more stubbornly, even beyond death, until the winter rains fill their rotting carcasses and topple them at last.

The alders which grew at the edge of my childhood fields are lost to my view. But those alders along the slope across from Jack's Corner Store (now a realty office), which I have long neglected in ten thousand passings, can yet be

sighted, and have recently struck me by their gray images. As with a loved one not seen in years, I'm shocked by how they've aged, and now are dying. It might seem they are dying young, to one who never witnessed their youth, for they have led the drier life, remaining small. But they are old; decrepit Ents, blunted, in need of canes. Will they even bear leaves, this spring?

And I, too, am beginning to topple. My ears ring. The landscape blurs. My feet are confused by uneven terrain, and I catch myself pitching one way or another a dozen times a day. The lichens of time adhere themselves to my scalp and body; unwitting parasites, they will fall when I fall, at last.

An alder's life – and death – is filled with purpose. Within the gray atrium of winter alders, we see the rising, green profiles of those which will take their place: the Douglas firs and the Western red cedars. Fed thus far in their young lives by copious leaf fall and the nitrogen which the alders fix in the soil, the evergreens will, once the alders have fallen, feed on the marrow of the dead, while the upright relics will mutely feed successive orders of wildlife.

And of us? Of myself, as I near the end? To judge by my own experience, any clarity of human purpose has largely escaped us, over time; replaced by theories, fantasies, vague hopes, and even hopelessness. The intellectual idols of our Age, worshipers of the Glorious Accident, who prophesy the Black Hole, would deny any Foreseen Purpose to the lives of alders or to ourselves. With all the result of chance, a human life would thus have no more objective value than a tree or an amoeba.

Small wonder, the once common phrase, "The Miracle of Life", is now scarcely heard. I think we fail to appreciate the generational corrosiveness of this failed theory – and it is a failure – which has permeated every discipline, every classroom, and

almost all popular art, for more than a century, now. Our highlands are no longer broad and brightly lit. I dare connect this to the suicides that rise in numbers, even on this once sheltered island. Friends of friends, friends of my friends' children, the best friend of my former ward. To these I would add the overdoses. I learn of them not by reading The Loop or The Beachcomber or the local Facebook, but by sitting in the same chair at the same kitchen table every night. The news comes through the door.

Young alders, turn away from the Black Hole. O, woman of Samaria, lead us out to the Well. "Come and see."



"You never know what worse luck your bad luck has saved you from."

~ Cormac McCarthy