

THE VASHON LOOP

Vol. 23, #06

SERVING VASHON AND ITS NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES ~ FREE

June 7, 2026



Summer is coming!



Vashon Gas: The Journey of Your Gallon

By Caitlin Rothermel

On June 4th, 2026, the price of gas on Vashon was about \$6.60 for a regular unleaded gallon. But where does the money go?

The greatest expenses come at the start, for crude oil production and transportation, followed by oil refining. At about \$4.00 per gallon, these factors make up more than one-half of your spend.

Recently, this cost area has increased in response to geopolitical instability in Iran and other areas of the Middle East. The U.S. doesn't rely on Iranian oil, but, worldwide, global oil markets have reacted to concerns about supply disruptions, shipping routes, and potential threats to future production.

Next, refining. The cost to refine oil is actually higher in West Coast states than other U.S. regions. Geographically, the West Coast operates as its own, relatively isolated fuel network. We also produce specialized fuel blends, to meet our air-quality requirements, which are more strict than the rest of the country. This translates to our state having somewhat higher and more volatile fuel prices than other states.

After refining is another round of

transportation that translates to about \$1.20 per gallon and eventually brings your gas to Vashon. In Seattle, where gas on June 4th was about \$5.90 to \$6.10 per gallon, you would expect this second transportation phase to be less expensive.

What about the gas station itself? What is its direct income? It's hard to get a precise estimate, but one industry source estimates that independent stations gross 10¢ to 15¢ per gallon. However, this profit falls to 3¢ to 7¢ after operating expenses – mainly, credit card fees – are taken into account.

Next are taxes. The Federal gas tax is 18.4¢ per gallon. This has not been raised in 32 years. In 1993, President Clinton increased the tax from 14.1% as part of a deficit reduction. Back then, gas was \$1.10 per gallon.

Washington State's gasoline excise tax is currently 55.4¢ per gallon, and it was increased most recently from 49.4¢ in mid-2025. This tax is about to get higher. Starting July 1, 2026, the tax will rise annually by 2%, to 55.6¢ per gallon, to adjust for inflation. Expect similar summertime increases each year going forward.

Interesting fact: Depending on how it's measured, we have the second- or third-highest gas taxes in the country – topped only by California,

Illinois, and Pennsylvania. In lower-gas tax states like Alaska, Arizona, and Texas, per-gallon taxes range from 9¢ to 20¢.

Last are costs attributable to the Climate Commitment Act (CCA). Passed in 2021, the CCA was established with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by placing a price and incentive structure on carbon pollution occurring due to fuel use. To date, the program has raised more than \$4.3 billion in funds.

Specifically, the CCA is a "cap-and-trade" market system, designed to sell carbon allowances to companies that supply gasoline and diesel in Washington. Sold at auctions, held several times per year, as well as in private sales conducted between companies, these allowances are currently priced at just over \$65 per metric ton of CO₂. To control volatility, state legislation has put

Cash or Credit?

By Stephen Buller

Here on Vashon, as the weather changes faster than Superman in a phone booth, swinging wildly from blue skies to downpours multiple times a week, I try to keep my focus on the silver lining: Summer is right around the corner. Maybe sunshine brings out the optimist in me.

Summer means many things in this part of the world – among them, long days, late nights, barbecues, festivals, and tourism. If you're a Vashon resident, you know the streets will get busier, and the faces of drivers at four-way stops will take on the look of someone trying to recall rules from driver's education decades past.

If you're a business owner, hopefully your sales get busier, too. But whether you're running a business or patronizing one, you're likely interested in saving money, and you can do this by intentionally choosing your payment method at checkout.

Nearly three years ago, I wrote an article "Is Free Money Free?" about the "Cash On Vashon" movement which aimed to increase cash transactions with local businesses to decrease their processing fees. With "busy season" here for many, as well as changes in the monetary

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The Ambiguous Gift of Place

By Mike Ivaska

What does it mean to be "from" somewhere?

Do the places we are from still exist? If so, in what sense? And if not, should it matter?

Like any good, self-respecting longtime Islander, I have been known to wax philosophic about the way Vashon "used to be." Even as I sat to write this article in my favorite coffee shop (Cafe Luna, of course!), another patron and I began discussing the history of businesses on the Island – including the relatively long history of the coffee shop itself.

And as our conversation trailed off, I was forced to laugh at myself. Why does all this "how Vashon used to be" matter to me? Why are we longtime Islanders like this?

I was recently sent a brief article that argued geography has four dimensions – length, width, height, and time. The author was trying to argue that places also have times. For himself, an expat, the America he was born in no longer exists. It existed, and it exists in his memory. But the present geographical region wherein he was born and once lived is now a different place. The name is the same, but the reality has changed, having succumbed to that unstoppable fourth dimension.


The author, I'm sure, was making social or political commentary, though it was not explicit in the piece. But he did get me thinking. Was he right? It was a rhetorical argument, of course. He knew that when we speak of geography, we speak of places and not times. Just because a place has changed, that doesn't mean it's not still that place in some sense. If I paint my house, it doesn't stop being the building where I live.

In his book, "The Land," Old Testament scholar Walter Bruggeman explores the ambiguity of place in the Bible. A loss of place is first of all tragedy. Think Adam and Eve getting kicked out of the Garden. The promise of place grants us hope. Think elderly Sarah and Abraham wandering through the Promised Land. But the possession of place is a mixed blessing. What begins as excitement can devolve into apathy. What begins as gratitude can devolve into selfishness. In the language of the

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Gas on Vashon: Where Does Your Cash Go?



Crude oil production	\$2.97 (45.0% of total)*
Refining	\$1.09 (16.5%)*
Distribution, transport, and retail	\$1.20 (18.2%)*
Federal gas tax	\$0.184 (2.8%)
WA State gas tax	\$0.554 (8.4%)
Climate Commitment Act	\$0.602 (9.1%)*

* Approximate cost breakdown per gallon of regular gas

100 Smiles Per Gallon

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

Imagine it's 2006 and you're looking to buy a subcompact car for parking in tight spaces and weaving through some of the heaviest urban traffic tangles in North America four times a day. A connoisseur of fine engineering, let's say you're also a bit large, at 6' 8", and tip the scales at 350-ish pounds. The rest of your hierarchy of crazy vehicular needs would seem to rule out every subcompact option.

Best-in-class crash safety ratings are a must for your family, and you need ample rear space for car seats for two kids under four years. You'd prefer a combined fuel economy over 30 mpg, demand the lowest total cost of ultra-reliable ownership of any car on wheels for 400,000 miles, and want its handling to make you smile as wide as a Mazda Miata convertible. The interior should be huge, as it must occasionally swallow two mountain bikes, a surfboard, or 8-foot long pieces of lumber. Ideally, you'd also like to convert it into a tiny camper in 5 minutes or less.

Though not yet 6-foot 8 nor 350-ish, I was basically that car shopper in 2005. Prospects were looking dim, then Honda announced it would bring its internationally popular Jazz into the U.S. market and re-name it the "Fit."

The March 2006 issue of Car and Driver magazine did a seven-car subcompact test, "\$15,000 Cheap Skates." The Honda Fit won the bake-off by 25 points in a "cakewalk." It averaged 35 mpg, scooted from 0 to 60 in an acceptable 8.7 seconds, and received the kind of praise I was looking for:

"Despite its midget proportions - the least

width and length, riding on the shortest wheelbase - the Fit will swallow an amazing 42 cubic feet of household miscellany when its rear seats are toppled. And they fold quite cleverly, without removing the headrests, into a deep well, making the cargo floor as flat as a trailer park."

Forty-two cubic feet of storage is bigger than the bed of a Ford Maverick pickup's 33 cubic feet, and the Gen 2 Fit's capacity expanded that to 52.7 cubic feet.

But something else jumped out - far, far out - and on first reading I was sure it was a typo: the Fit did the emergency lane-change maneuver at 71.4 mph. If true, that was the fastest speed ever recorded for a street-legal vehicle sold in the U.S.

By comparison, a Toyota RAV-4 could only perform the same maneuver at a maximum of 56 mph as it flirts with rolling over. A Porsche 911SC Turbo or Corvette Z06 will do it at about 68 mph. A 2005 Ford GT, a racecar lower than a Labrador on sticky rubber, had just done the same test at an impressive 70.1 mph. How, then, was it possible for a five-foot tall econobox on lowball tires to beat that?

Having geeked out on car design in high school, I suspected the Honda Fit must have a very low polar moment of inertia, close to or below the magic 1,000 kg/m2 design milestone.

Polar moment? When you see a figure skater go into a spin, she'll lower her body's polar moment of inertia by pulling her arms in and even tucking her head down so she'll spin faster. Likewise, it's much easier to spin a short 20-pound dumbbell than a long 20-pound barbell - same with stopping.

Honda decided to build the 10.6-gallon fuel cell into the center of the Fit's chassis, so most of the Fit's mass sits not outside its tires, but much nearer

its center. Combined with a short wheelbase, fairly low center of gravity and weight, this makes it extremely good at changing directions. World-class good.

In effect, the Fit is a cheap mid-engine supercar with a tall roof, and it really does drive like a Mazda Miata. (Sadly, without a convertible top.) This plays right into lots of other good things.

In Europe, every vehicle must pass the 45 mph ISO 3888-2 Standard "Moose Test." Prudent roll-over hating Swedes developed it in the 1970s as a benchmark for a vehicle's handling dynamics, capabilities, and limitations. You approach traffic cones at 45 mph, lift throttle, steer around, and go back into your original lane. Then you try to do it faster.

It's not about crashing into a moose, more about avoiding one suddenly looming in the road, as Swedish moose love to do. The test gained fame when a 1997 Mercedes-Benz A Class flipped onto its roof at a mere 37 mph, leading to an embarrassing recall and Electronic Stability Control. Twenty years later, the Fit (again, "Jazz" internationally) still has one of the highest Moose Test scores ever recorded. For driving on Vashon, just think "Deer Test."

The Fit also has Magic Seats. For real, that's what they're called. They pivot away, they clamshell, fold down, and come all they way out. You can fold the front seats all the way forward and use the passenger side as a recliner. You can fold everything flat and turn the whole thing into a tiny camper in 5 minutes. People are buying insulated window inserts online. It defies most description, so I'd recommend watching videos.

What you can't buy is a new Fit because Honda discontinued them for the U.S. in 2020. Seventy other countries get them, but not us, with Honda mumbling something about CR-Vs and demographics. This is not good. Honda plowed about \$100 billion into an electric vehicle apocalypse, then pulled the plug on new factories in the U.S. and Canada, writing off a first \$16

Summer 2026 Rowing Classes

For many Islanders, summer means fun on the water! And with summer just around the corner, Vashon Island Rowing Club summer rowing classes may be just what you're looking for - not only for fun, but fitness as well! With classes and camps for both adults and youth, there is something to fit both your budget and schedule.

For youth ages 13-19 years, four 2 week rowing camps (including a women/non-binary camp) will be held during June-August. Sessions run Monday-Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Cost is \$300. No previous rowing experience is required. For exact dates, see <https://www.vashoncrew.com/youth-summer>.

For adults ages 20+, there are two class options: Intro to Rowing and Learn to Row. For details, see <https://www.vashoncrew.com/adult-program>.

The ITR (Introduction to Rowing) classes are offered in June and July and consist of 4 Saturday sessions from 10am-noon. Cost is \$150. This is a great way to learn the basics before committing to a longer program.

The LTR (Learn to Row) classes offer a more in-depth rowing experience with more time to practice your new skills. Classes meet MWF from 5:00-7:00 p.m., plus optional Saturday mornings, for 4 weeks in June-August. Cost per class is \$400.

For questions, contact info@vashoncrew.com

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The Vashon Loop

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Vashon! The DSHS Van will be here



Wednesday, June 24th
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

At the Vashon Food Bank
17928 Vashon Hwy SW

Thursday, June 25th
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

At the Presbyterian Church
17708 Vashon Hwy SW

Vashon! Sign up for health insurance and fix problems!

¡Regístrate para un seguro médico y solucione problemas!



Meet with Miguel from King County Public Health

at Vashon Library (inside at the back)

Wednesday, 12:30-3:00 pm
June 17th

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

2026 Salish Sea Early Music Festival

Early chamber music on period instruments

We're pleased to announce our 15th annual Salish Sea Early Music Festival on Vashon Island.

Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit

15420 Vashon Highway SW
Suggested donation: \$20 to \$30
(Free will donation; all welcome)

~ All Concerts Mondays at 12:00 NOON ~

June 29th: The Treble Viol

- Annalisa Pappano, treble viol
- William Simms, baroque guitar and theorbo
- Jeffrey Cohan, baroque and renaissance flutes



The Treble Viol, the smaller cousin of the viola da gamba, will be showcased in a diverse selection of 17th and early 18th-century Italian, English and French and German music alongside both renaissance and baroque transverse flutes and lute. Composers to be represented include Buonamente, Lawes, Cima, Dornel, Lully and Cheron.

For more information: (206) 567-4488
www.salishseafestival.org/vashon



Software: Free as in Beer

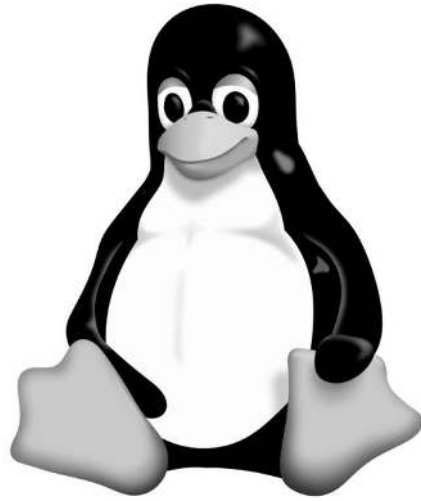
By Andy Valencia

This article was going to be about saving money when you need to buy a PC. I'll write about that next month, because it's hard to save money when your operating system is waging war on your pocket book. We need to talk about Microsoft Windows.

Most people do need a connection to email, messaging, something to play music, watch some videos, and work with electronic documents. You'll need an OS, a web browser, maybe a media player (Spotify or YouTube in the browser often suffices), and an office suite with word processor, spreadsheet, and maybe something to do slides. It all needs to work reliably - no crashes, but also every single time you sit down at the PC, it's ready to go.

I was amazed when I recently saw a friend's PC with Windows 11. That home screen is a garish, distracting nightmare. Are those ads being pushed? If AI is so great, why do they need to force it upon you? And everybody has the story of having to go away when an update suddenly starts. Whose PC is it?

To add insult to injury, lots of people had to buy a new PC - Windows 11 refuses to install on many older PC's. Better yet, some people got Windows 11 installed, only later to have an update run, and then announce that their PC was now unsupported. If this happened to you, keep that hardware until you read next month's column.



Enter Linux. Yes, the OS that powers most of the services you use in the world: web servers, the cell network, even those machines using all that electricity to do AI things for you. Linux is free - as in beer - and lets us software types look at how it works. It is remarkably reliable.

But what's it like on a humble home PC? Its past reputation is that it's powerful, but not user-friendly.

A picture is worth a thousand words, and a demo video is better yet. This video from the Linux Mint project shows how far Linux has come as a perfectly usable desktop OS: "Why Linux Mint Is The Ultimate Windows 11 Replacement in 2026:" <https://vashonloop.com/goto/mint>

Of course there's a web browser. You can keep using Chrome, but Firefox lets you use the "uBlock Origin" ad blocker. It has had more



and more trouble supporting Chrome, make of that what you will. Try Firefox with the full uBlock Origin, and you'll wonder why you ever lived without it. Many people install both Chrome and Firefox, then figure out which one is best for which task. I know one person who runs Chrome for banking, and Firefox for everything else.

Linux has a comprehensive office suite - LibreOffice. It has a word processor, Writer, that most long-time Word users say is more familiar than what Microsoft has done to their own product. Take a look at this demo video: <https://vashonloop.com/goto/writer>

Sheet is LibreOffice's counterpart to Excel, and Impress is their slide show editor/presenter. Like Writer, they'll be familiar to a Microsoft user, and they can even import your current Word/Excel/PowerPoint documents.

For graphics, GIMP is a very powerful editor - all the images you see here on the pages of the Loop are

cleaned up, cropped, and scaled using GIMP. You might find it overkill, so of course there are simpler alternatives. Many people are happy with MyPaint.

Try one, or try them all. Install them, and use them. If you don't like the app, uninstall it, then go look for another. Your cost to install? Free. Your cost to keep it or update it? Also free. That's true of the OS itself, as well.

Ready to try Linux? There's a how-to on YouTube. If you're not quite ready to try it yourself, every family seems to have that go-to tech person. Let them take a look:

"How to Install Linux Mint - Complete Beginner's Guide ... - YouTube:" <https://vashonloop.com/goto/install>

Vashon Fix-It hosts "repair cafes" where people who know how to do simple repairs on tools help their fellow Islanders. Maybe something like this could help people get their old PC switched over and running with a shiny new Linux install? There could even be a few PC's at the meetup to let people try it before making a decision. If something like this comes together, you'll see it here in The Loop.

As inflation bites harder and our taxes take more and more, many people are beginning to question \$150 t-shirts, \$18 pastries - and let's just not get started on gas prices. Software people around the world have been laboring for years to create free, affordable, and reliable software options for the average user. Maybe it's time to let them help you.

Vashon Gas: The Journey of Your Gallon

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in place an \$80-per-ton ceiling on 2026/2027 allowance prices.

In essence, companies must purchase state-issued carbon allowances to "pay for" the CO₂ emissions that will be generated when the fuel they sell is ultimately burned.

Importantly, the increased gas costs paid by the consumer due to the CCA are not strictly a tax, because fuel companies build CCA costs into overall prices.

The plan of the CCA is to gradually decrease the total number of allowances sold over time on the way to Washington achieving "net zero" greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Net zero means that any greenhouse gases still emitted will be offset by an equal amount of greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere, resulting in no net increase overall. We will see.

The revenue generated from CCA allowance sales is deposited into state accounts and appropriated by the Legislature for transportation, energy, climate, and environmental initiatives. But there are issues.

The first is mission creep and

budgetary shenanigans. Both CCA supporters and critics are concerned that program revenue is being treated as a general funding source, "to backfill already funded projects and programs," rather than focused on developing relevant projects with clear, planned outcomes.

Two recent examples: In the 2026 supplemental budget, Governor Ferguson requested to use CCA revenue to fund the state's Working Families Tax Credit. Likewise, legislation approved in 2026 directed hundreds of millions from surplus assets of the overfunded LEOFF 1 retirement system for retired law enforcement officers and firefighters into the CCA, to repay prior fund transfers and stabilize the account's finances.

The second issue is whether the underlying plan is feasible. In January 2026, state officials disclosed that a data-entry error had substantially overstated emission reductions attributed to some CCA-funded projects. A report that initially estimated 8.6 million metric tons of greenhouse gas reductions over these projects' lifespans was later corrected

Vashon Rules of the Road

- If you are driving below the speed limit and a driver comes up behind you - making you feel unsafe - slow down 10 mph more.



to approximately 308,000 metric tons - only 4% of the original amount.

Critics have also argued that Washington cannot adequately evaluate the effectiveness of the CCA because statewide emissions inventories have been released years behind schedule.


It is not possible to explain the price of gasoline through any single factor. At the same time, the list of

things we are paying for with each gallon continues to grow and now extends beyond the traditional costs of producing, refining, transporting, and selling fuel. The next time gas prices rise, you will almost certainly hear someone attribute it to a single cause. Reality, as usual, is much more complicated.

Can't stop drinking and want help?



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
 Online Meetings: SeattleAA.org
 AA Phone: 206-587-2838
 Local Vashon Contact: 206-849-1980



Your nervous system will always choose a familiar hell over an unfamiliar heaven.
 ~ Kathy Overman




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Pets are People Too

Cat and Woman Aging Together

By Suzanna Leigh

Beside me, Steve holds his cat Bunny gently, wrapped in a blue bathroom towel. We are driving to the Fair Isle Animal Clinic. The glow of love emanating from the two of them fills the car.

This may be Bunny's last day. When Steve called me first thing this morning, he was sure she had passed in the night, nor could I detect a heartbeat or a breath when I touched her lying on Steve's bedroom floor. She was very, very still, splayed out in front of the bowl of water Steve had brought her.

Then Steve spoke and she raised her head. Steve called the vet and now we are on our way.

Bunny came to us in 2011, when my brother John moved his bookstore into the basement of mom's house so that he could take care of our aging dad. Bunny, whose rabbit-like tail inspired her name, was already eight years old then. She stayed behind when John moved out again after dad died. She is now just short of 23 years old!

I joked that Bunny watched mom turning 100, then 101, and forgot how to die. Cat and woman kept on aging together. I thought Bunny figured you don't die; you just keep on getting older.

As Mom's appetite waned, so did Bunny's. As mom spent more time sleeping, so did Bunny. Mom could still get in and out of bed with a little help, and Bunny could still jump up on Steve's bed.

Until last night. Bunny couldn't even get up onto her feet, and this morning she wasn't moving.

As we drove to the vet, Bunny limp in Steve's arms, I could feel Bunny's loyalty to Steve, to the family. I knew that even when she leaves her body, she will not leave Steve.



It's Finally Here

By Gates (Pam) Johnson

Tomorrow morning at o'dark thirty I will be off to the hospital for my hopefully first and last cancer surgery.

Seems like it has been a long journey to get here, but in reality it has been about two months, give or take. Those months have been filled with super highs and super lows. Things that had been planned before the diagnosis had to be completed. New things had to be scheduled. Routines had to be kept the same and yet changed. It has been a learning experience.

My kitchen remodel was completed, but work on the deck had been scheduled. Materials were ordered. Old deck boards and stairs were getting worse by the day. The job had to be done, and so it was job forward.

One good thing about having an ongoing construction project right out my back door was it was a huge distraction. When left to myself, it was easy to fall into the "poor me" headspace. One can only cry so many tears before they become boring. So, I would cry a bit, then buck up and keep on moving.

The new TimberTech deck boards are beautiful. The crew removed benches from the old deck, which seemed to add a lot of square footage. As they were finishing the project, the wisteria on the trellis over my deck came in full bloom. The whole thing is glorious. I plan to spend a good portion of my recovery in a chaise lounge on the deck under the wisteria, sipping an ice-cold lemonade and reading a good biography.

Oh, if anyone has a good read to recommend, let me know.

An unexpected positive that surfaced was my Island family circled the wagons around me. Of course, my relatives are uber supportive, but friendships that grew apart came back together. Friends I haven't seen or talked to in a few years stepped up and offered support: a place to recover if needed, watering the garden, making broth as I will be on a liquid diet for some time, running

Island Voices



Illustration by Suzanna Leigh

The vet confirmed our suspicions. Bunny was in pain. She would not get better, though she might linger a few days.

We buried Bunny behind the azalea hedge three hours later.

Mom, on the other hand, was telling stories to Noelle, one of her caregivers, when we got back! She hadn't been able to tell her stories - to get the thoughts together or the words out - for months! Now she was telling a story from her childhood with details she hadn't shared before, one word or phrase at a time. I'm not sure how much was memory and how much was embellishment, but hey!

After an early Mother's Day Celebration with five days of visits with family and friends, I thought Mom would be exhausted, but no! Her appetite and liveliness are back - at least for a time!



errands, just calling and keeping in touch to see how I am doing. It is amazing!


My pool pals threw me a party last week. A very good friend is worried about me losing a lot of weight. (The doctor told me to eat and drink everything I wanted before surgery. He said that was the only time a doctor would ever tell me that.) Sharon planned a "Fatten Gates Up" dessert-only party. The desserts overflowed. Sandie thought to bring to-go containers so everyone could take home some delights. And so many people showed up to support me! I am still dumbfounded.

My daughter-in-law will take me to the hospital. My son will pick me up when I am discharged. My nephew and niece will take care of my house. My daughter will keep everyone appraised of my recovery. My best friend from high school will be on a liquid diet as long as I am. My heart is full.

This is short because there are about eight million things to get done today. The lists are long, but things are getting checked off. Early dinner. Nothing to eat or drink after midnight, except a small sip of water to take morning meds. Two anti-bacterial showers to take.

With luck, I will actually get a little sleep. Then tomorrow, off to the races.





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The White Lizard Bites

By Suzanna Leigh

James and I were still living with the evangelical Jesus-loving Pilgrims in a mansion on Hilo Bay when it happened.

One day while James was in school, I hitchhiked into Hilo to buy some watercolor paints and a roll of rice paper. Karl and his partner, who had so generously put us up that first week we were in Hawaii, were getting married, and I wanted to make a painting for them as a wedding present.

When I stuck out my thumb for a ride back to the Pilgrim's mansion on Hilo Bay, a man in his forties pulled over and offered me a ride. I think his name was John. He was curious about the Pilgrims, and asked for the phone number. I gave it to him, and he wrote it in his little black book. I thought no more about it.

That night, I dreamed of a white lizard. In my dream, the lizard bit my thumb but drew no blood, and I was unharmed.

A day or so later, the phone rang at the mansion and it was for me. It was a woman, probably about middle-aged, from her voice.

"John needs Jesus," she said. "He is waiting for you in the gazebo in Lili'uokalani Garden."

Hm. I hung up and paused. The garden park was less than a stone's throw from the mansion, and very beautiful. It would be a pleasant walk, but no. I felt no calling to go "save" this man I had met only once. I went on with my day and forgot about it.

The next day, I had a visitor. It was the same woman who had called and asked me to go "save John for Jesus." She was dressed smartly in white: white dress, white shoes, white purse. We went to the mansion's conservatory to talk privately.

"I found your name in John's little black book," she told me. "I have been living with him for 27 years. I left a marriage to be with him. If you had gone to him yesterday, I would have shot you."

I told her I had no interest in John. "I don't need a boyfriend," I told her, "I have Jesus." It was true. When I missed Davey, the man I left on Vashon, it was to wish he could experience with me the joy of worshiping in song with the Pilgrims. That ache of loneliness was gone, the one that would attack me like a wolf at the door ever since my husband Bill left with his girlfriend.

I don't remember the woman's name. I do remember she told me she had decided to leave John and to make her life right with God, to go back to her Catholic roots. And I remember the dream of the white lizard.

I learned that "call no man father except God" meant pausing to listen to that "still small voice," rather than following the expectations of any group or person. And I learned to pay attention to dreams; a dream saved me and my children several years later.



Illustration by
Suzanna Leigh



Parallel Lives – Lois

By Richard Odell

Some among us get trees like a disease. Big boys are especially prone, but big girls get it too, sometimes. The psychosis might simmer for years, before it really starts to roil.

I'd always been a plant guy, and I liked trees well enough. Wanted to see more of them, hated to see less. But around the age of forty, I was completely taken in by them, in all their countless forms. And like many a fool before me, I sought to make a livelihood of them.

Sometime before this fevered delusion took over, I fended off my mother's suggestion I grow Christmas trees in the field surrounding her Island home, where I shared residence off and on since returning from California. I saw the glut coming, and thus the one and only smart business decision in my life would be to simply avoid the business altogether.

It didn't last. With multiple layers of irony, I would later plow ahead, planting saplings, seedlings, and cuttings on once fallow ground. I scoured roadsides and commercial landscapes for seeds and cuttings. I took biweekly trips, with camera, paper bags, and scissors to the Arboretum in Seattle (Sorry, folks, statute of limitations, and all that). I stuffed a refrigerator with sandwich baggies bearing seeds and moist sand. I gathered containers. I had big plans.

As to those layers of irony: The field surrounding my family home, where now I sought to enculture decorative trees, was a remnant of what had once been someone's fifteen acres of currants, and before that, fifteen acres of cherry trees. I know the mentality: "I'll get it right, this time," we tell ourselves. As to the rest,

it was now given over to alders, Himalayan blackberry, and a handful of houses.

The homebuilders were something of a mystery to me. I had grown from infancy to maturity in but one house, and had returned to that same house in my thirties. I would have been happy to stay there. These others, they'd build a house, live there a few years, then sell and move on. Subsequent owners displayed the same curious restlessness. The broken fields of my youth were now the greenswards of perennial strangers.

The nearest of these new estates, built by known locals who once lived below us along Cunliffe Rd., was at this time on its third set of residents since the builder quit the scene – to build another house, somewhere – just a few years before. This latest couple (always it was a couple, and always childless), in their early forties, maybe, had a professional aura. Briefcases. Late-model Mercedes. Never home much, as far as I could tell.

They stayed nameless to me – which was fine by me – until one late spring afternoon, the woman hailed me from across our shared, but undefined, border, as I dug away at the encroaching turf around some birch saplings.

I joined Lois – turns out her name was Lois – near the backside of our shed, satisfied her inquiry as to the property line, as I imagined it, added a few pointless, random factoids about the history of our properties, and then, perhaps in response to my revealing the nature of my own work, she invited me on what proved a rather perfunctory tour of her garden. It was brief and to the point, involving a narrow border along one side of the house, plugged rather

thinly with new, mail-order bedding plants, some of which arrived – I'm fairly certain – already in bloom.

There wasn't much for either of us to say. She made no pretense of being a gardener, and there was little on display on which I could think to append my own two bits of insight. This seemed, in tone, her overarching attempt at being neighborly, and my own passive acquiescence to the charade. Our total lack of contact resumed unabated, with little notable change in their habits, or mine, other than the rather curious disappearance of the Mercedes, and the equally curious clamour of saws and hammers, out of sight, that arose for a brief spell in the fall.

Then one gray afternoon, some weeks after Christmas, Lois's voice again broke over my shoulder as I was hacking away at the relentless sod. I turned, and was caught up short by the sight of her in a wheelchair.

I spread my hands in inquiry as I approached her. I was informed: she had contracted an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis, and, subsequent to that, her husband had left the scene. She offered no details on her husband's decampment, and I didn't delve, but I've seen it a number of times: the one spouse leaves the other when the chronic affliction sets in.

She asked if I might help her plant a tree, something for which I seemed a likely candidate. It was a young Serbian spruce, if I remember right, a fine choice for the landscape as it is for a living Christmas Tree, which indeed it was. I might have thought it strange, that in the chill echoes of a hollowed out domestic life, she had hoisted the festive arbor, but maybe not so.

Anyway, we planted the spruce where we thought best, jointly admired it a long moment, and then

she invited me in for tea. I'm a coffee drinker, but okay. Following her, as she wheeled up the gangplank which was her newly built ramp, and entering through the kitchen, I thought I knew what to expect further in, having been on sociable terms with the homebuilder: Modern Scandinavian. Clean, straight lines of bare wood. But, oh, far from it, now.

The living room entire was draped, hung, festooned, and layered over with autumn leaves. In sandwich and quart-sized plastic baggies, pressed autumn leaves of every sort. Reds and golds everywhere, on walls and tabletops and chairs. She knew the names of some. She queried me for the rest. I did the best I could.

The samples went far beyond the native ranks. She asked of various trees she'd seen about the Island. In one case, unable to verbally describe the specimen, she did a wonderful impersonation, with stretched arms and torso, of a cottonwood tree.

I think I drank two cups of tea.

There'd be more trees between us as the year went round, those urged upon her by friends, along with one more living Christmas tree. It was our only point of contact—a failure on my part, to be sure. And one February afternoon, with me there, knocking the dirt from my boots while she regarded a newly situated Japanese Maple, she simply remarked, "That makes me happy." We let it go at that.

I never got to say goodbye. Family came when I wasn't looking, and scurried Lois away to California. Thirty years and seven rental houses later, without a sapling to my name, I've half a mind to get lost one of these days, wind up in her old driveway, apologize to whoever's about for the unintended intrusion, and regard the growth of her happiness, before I back away.

The Ambiguous Gift of Place

Continued from Front Page

Bible and of faith, what begins as a blessing can devolve into temptation and sin.

Over the decades I have lived on Vashon Island, my emotions have run the gamut. I remember the childhood excitement when my family first moved here. I had never lived somewhere so beautiful and wild. Going through my teen years, Vashon was both the place that defined me and the place I swore I would one day leave and never return. In my young adult years "in the city," it was the town I yearned for and longed to return to. And in the decades I have been back, it is the town I have come to grumble about as it's changed.

In biblical terms, the Island has been my Garden of Eden, my Egypt of slavery (the teen years!), the Promised Land of my wandering, and the ambiguously treated (by me) place of abode. My temptation and sin, perhaps, have been to live as though this place has been mine.

So, do the changes Vashon's gone through mean that this Island is now some other place?

Well, for starters, the Vashon of my memories is partly a myth. It glows with the golden light of selective memory. And if change and new faces means a place is no longer that place, then my own family's arrival to the Island forty years ago means we destroyed Vashon for someone else, too.

Having said that, of course, there really have been some beautiful things about Island living that are no longer true. Or, perhaps, they are no longer true for me. The quiet refuge experienced by others

feels loud and busy to me. Familiar names and faces are gone. The businesses have changed. The cost of living is high. But I deny, contrary to that article my brother sent me, that time has completely erased the place that I love. The fourth dimension has done its work, but place is still place. Home is still home.

One of the ways I have learned to experience Vashon again is to see it through the eyes of those who are experiencing it for the first time. True, for some our Island is merely a product. A thing to be bought and consumed. But for others, it's the paradise I once knew – and continue to know in my better moments, when I quiet my own soul just enough.

Above all, I have been gifted to experience this place through my child.

I still remember, in one of my grumpier seasons of thought about the Island, driving through town with my family. I was being, quietly to myself, the grouchy middle-aged man I've sometimes become.

"This place has changed."

"That restaurant is gone."

"I liked it more when things were like ___."


But as we approached the main intersection, going past some of the new places to eat and seeing some more and less familiar faces walking around, my daughter spoke from the back seat.

"I love Vashon," she said.

And I realized, she was getting to see for herself – for her own generation, in its own iteration – the Vashon that I've always loved.

Mike Ivaska is the pastor of Vashon Island Community Church.





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The Rule of Law

By Michael Shook

In previous pieces about Communism, we saw how its foundational Marxist doctrine renders the individual null and void, and declares that humans are infinitely malleable. Such a doctrine readies the ground for a system that is free to ignore the sovereignty, both individual and collective, of the people living within it. Such a system is equally free to employ coercion of all kinds, including physical violence, to force the people to do as they are told.

It is important to note that said coercion and violence are not anomalies, or rare instances of officials acting extrajudicially. They are an explicit, defining aspect of Communism, as developed by Marx, and refined over time, especially by Lenin. The state is the embodiment of the ideal – a classless, property-less, society of equals – and the individual exists not as a unique person, but as a historical actor of no singular importance, whose life is of value only insofar as it is directed by the state to bring the ideal to fruition.

Thus, law in Communist countries represents, enhances, and protects the power of the state and dictates the behavior of the citizenry.

The contrast with democratic countries could not be more revealing. In democracies, law protects the rights of the citizens, to whom it is beholden, and from whom it receives its legitimacy. It also provides a framework to deal with those who infringe upon citizen's rights.

Individuals play a central role in both systems – in democracies by their affirmation, and in Communism by their negation.

The recognition of the individual, and all attending rights and responsibilities, is ancient, manifested rudimentarily even before classical Greece, and evolving through the centuries. The most significant moments of that evolution occurred in Western Europe, particularly in England. There, a turning point was reached when King John signed the Magna Carta, in 1215.

This document acknowledged and affirmed that the power of the monarch was limited and subject to the rule of law. It made clear that the monarch could not arbitrarily seize land, and that merchants were free to conduct their business without fear of confiscation of goods, among other stipulations.

While the laws applied only to barons and nobles, the Magna Carta was nonetheless a vital step in the codification of principles of personal liberty, the right to own and dispose of property, and to engage in commerce as one saw fit.

Unfortunately, the document was ultimately disregarded by both the crown and subjects, and was thus legally a nonstarter. Yet it symbolized a way of thinking about governance that has influenced law since then.

As law continued to evolve, property rights were recognized as integral to an individual's efforts to direct his own life. The ability to create wealth through entrepreneurial endeavors, the right to keep and dispose of that wealth as one chose, and the right to engage in commerce with others without undue interference from the government unleashed the creative potential of vast swaths of the populace.

The sovereignty of the individual and the right to private property are fundamental to democracy, and to the flourishing of the capitalist economy that has brought unprecedented wealth to the world, on a scale unimaginable only a few hundred years ago.

However, even casual readers of the news will be aware of the current desire, voiced especially by those under the age of 50, for socialism. They want to separate socialism from communism, believing that socialism (and democratic socialism) is a kinder beast.

Yet Marx explicitly stated that socialism and communism were the same thing, socialism being the sapling which grows into the tree of communism.

Nevertheless, hard-core socialists persist, along with many more casual supporters. The capitalist system, they say, is irretrievably broken, indeed inherently faulty from the beginning, and causes too much suffering for too many. With the personal fortune of Elon Musk being a bit more than three quarters of a trillion dollars (!), chased by Jeff Bezos and many others, it is hard to argue against the need for a major adjustment of some kind.

However, socialism is not the answer. A democratic socialist is still a socialist, and the ideology underlying both is the same.

"But," the cry is often heard, "what about the Scandinavian countries? Aren't they socialist?"

In a word, no. Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and their (non-Scandinavian) neighbors, Finland and Iceland, all have capitalist economies, and robust ones at that. In fact, Sweden has 43 billionaires out of a population of just 10.5 million citizens. Their percentage of "dollar" billionaires (net worth measured in United States dollars) is higher than the U.S. – 4 per 1 million citizens vs. 2 per 1 million. When "kronor" billionaires are factored in, the numbers are in the hundreds, and together those two groups own the equivalent of 70% of Sweden's GDP.

Sweden also wants to keep its wealthy people from fleeing, so there are no inheritance taxes, and taxes on other forms of wealth are kept low, especially on profit from share sales and dividends. It seems to work. Their wealthy generally stay in the country, and importantly, invest in Swedish startups as well as established companies. The top tax rates are indeed high across Scandinavia (Sweden 52%, Norway 47%, Denmark 57%), but there is considerable variation according to income, which makes the average tax bill lower. Value added tax, and certain corporate taxes help create a

hearty revenue stream whereby their social safety net can be funded.

In contrast to Scandinavia's embrace of personal wealth – one could call it the "carrot-first" approach – New York City is employing a "stick" tactic, and plans to confiscate private property. An example of the city's operant philosophy is close at hand in the person of Cea Weaver, "housing czar" of NYC, appointed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani. Both Mamdani and Weaver are members of the Democratic Socialists of America. Regarding their attitudes toward private property, one may refer to some of Weaver's public statements, declaimed within the last decade:

"Seize private property!" (June 2018)

"Private property including and kind of ESPECIALLY homeownership is a weapon of white supremacy masquerading as 'wealth building' public policy." (August 2019)

"... We are going to transition into treating [property] as a collective good and toward the model of shared equity ... It will mean that families ... are going to have a different relationship to property than the one that we currently have." (posted January 2026)

Not surprisingly, Weaver has said she regrets these comments. Her racism aside, it is clear where she, and the party she represents, stand on the concept of private property, and her regret is no more than crocodile tears. If doubts remained about their policy course, the Mayor removed them in a speech on May 26th of this year, stating boldly that the city will pursue "... aggressive legal action to remove negligent owners ... [and] for buildings that have suffered chronic neglect, we will work to transfer ownership to responsible stewards."

It is not clear how the city of New York believes it can "remove negligent owners... [and] transfer ownership," since the properties are assumed to be legally owned. Taking property because one disagrees with how it is being used is unconstitutional. However, the threat of "aggressive legal action" is not an idle one, and property owners stand to incur significant costs as they defend themselves in court. This is coercion of an insidious kind, and bodes ill for business in New York (and, not incidentally, the city's tax revenue). If any pro-confiscation court decisions hold up under appeal, there could be a cascade effect spreading to other cities and states.

Such an outcome is, at present, unlikely. But the broader concern is that, via an embrace of socialist ideology, ever more tentacled arms of bureaucracy are formed, which will only serve to slow the gears of commerce. And it is the West's system of commerce, rooted in private property, and bolstered by the vigorous rule of law, that has procured a greater boon for humanity than any other economic system in history. It is foolish to gamble it away on the fantasies of socialism, democratic or otherwise.

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Correction
Last month, in our article, "Nadja Vol Olchs - Vashon Wilderness Program's New Executive Director, Part 2," we had a typo in naming the two who introduced Gratitude as a core routine into the nature connection field. They are Jake and Judy Swamp.

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Cash or Credit

Continued from Front Page

landscape reinforcing these benefits, it's past time we revisit the concept.

In my previous article, I wanted to draw Vashon shoppers' attention to the cost of credit card processing and encourage them to use cash with local businesses, while reserving their credit card rewards for Amazon and other large retailers. Using cash has other benefits, including helping shoppers to budget, reducing the likelihood of impulse purchases, and avoiding late fees and interest.

Things have changed over the past three years. Buyers are more aware of processing fees and that the cost always falls on the consumer. Sellers have had more time to weigh the costs and benefits of accepting cards as payment. And both of them have seen everything get more expensive.

From the buyer's perspective, think about the business you're patronizing and consider simply asking if they prefer cash over card. You might be the kind of person who tips 20% without thinking but gets hung up on a 2% cash-back reward because of all the hype the banks have created around it.

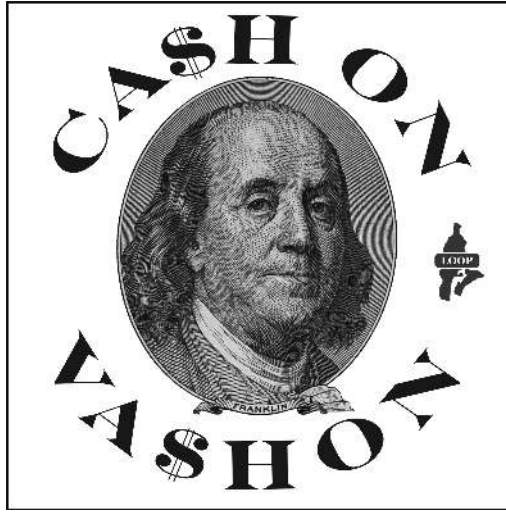
From the seller's perspective, consider incentivizing customers to use cash with a discount, which may be more compelling than adding a fee for using a card. More and more businesses are offering a 3% (or other) discount when someone pays by cash or check. This creates a positive reason for customers to change their behavior, instead of making them feel like you're charging more.

From a banker's perspective, they want people to use credit cards because they make money from it. Even the most diligent and responsible among us have received a late fee and interest expense. A product doesn't sustain for this long if it doesn't earn a profit.

From an accountant's perspective, there is no free lunch. Every cost must be paid by someone, and in business, the final cost falls on the consumer, whether we're talking processing fees, tariffs, energy costs, or any other input. The Fed may be able to create infinite dollars, but they can't print prosperity.

The original value of the credit card was its

Island Resilience



convenience – a clever technology small enough to fit in a wallet which effectively granted the average consumer a line of credit at any store that accepted the card. When you think about it, that was a huge value add to consumers who didn't have to carry around large amounts of cash or build credit with individual stores. And the banks charged enough fees and interest to cover unpaid balances and still earn a profit.

But I would argue the rewards programs were a net negative to society, adding nothing of value while adding administrative and technology costs to manage them. In the short term, one individual might earn more rewards than another, but these programs simply shift expenses from people with rewards to those without. In the long run, they increase overall costs to everyone. These programs were marketing campaigns for the benefit of the banks.

As someone who believes there is a lot wrong with our banking and entire monetary system, I encourage everyone, owner and consumer, to think more about the value of a product, where they want their money to go, and the method of payment they choose to give or accept. Especially when we have Strawberry Festival to look forward to.



A Bread for Resilience

By Andy Valencia

Westphalia has an important place in the history of Western Civilization. Currently a part of Germany, it was the site of the accords which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Setting aside politics, it is also the home of Westphalian pumpernickel. Germany is well-known for its dark breads, but this one is getting new attention, even here on Vashon Island.

In a world of refrigeration and same-day Amazon deliveries, it's easy to forget how survival was not a given for the poorer parts of society in the 15th century. The food one set aside during the growing season could be what permitted survival in the winter that followed. That food had to nourish, but if it spoiled, a family could starve. The genius of Westphalian pumpernickel was that, with cheaply available Middle Age technology, one could prepare loaves with excellent fiber and nutritional value, and a shelf life of at least six months.

Thus, many people are mastering anew the techniques to make this bread, and setting aside loaves, which keep for half a year. It's made with a few cheap ingredients, and is stored without refrigeration, canning, or

vacuum-packing. It'll keep you fed no matter what happens in the bigger world.

Why does it keep so well? Why is it so nourishing? It comes from how it's cooked, so let's walk through that first.

You'll need a bread pan; 9- by 5- by 2.5-inch pans have worked well for many bakers. It either needs a tight-fitting metal lid, or else you'll need aluminum foil. Stainless steel cookware has become very popular due to concerns with plastic toxins and microplastics, so you'll need butter or lard plus cornmeal in order to coat the sides and bottom. An organic non-stick coating!

Start with rye-based sourdough starter. If you haven't made a starter for yourself, turn back to The Loop's March 2026 issue for a tutorial, "Fresh – Yet Ancient – Bread;" it's on vashonloop.com if you don't have the paper copy. Or buy some starter. But if you make it yourself, you'll never worry again about empty shelves in the baking section of the market.

Next, get rye berries, and grind them into a consistency a little bit finer than cornmeal. If you don't have a food mill, blast them in your blender, then sift it to that cornmeal consistency; some prefer it a little



finer, but you want a meal, not a powdery flour.

How much to grind? Simplest is to grind enough to fill your bread pan to right near the top. Now dump it in a mixing bowl, mix in a pinch of salt. Add boiling water a bit at a time, mixing it in until you have a thick batter that is a little hard to stir. Now, let it cool down as the hot water softens the rye. When it's cool to the touch, mix in a half-cup or so of your starter, and stir it all together.

Westphalian pumpernickel is not "fast food," and here we wait again, to give the sourdough starter time to process your ground rye. This is not like the white flour rising with commercial yeast; give it at least 12 and up to 24 hours. You'd like to see some bubbles from the yeast action,



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To avoid the 3% fee, you must purchase and reload your ORCA card either online or at a non-ferry ORCA vending machine (no fee is currently charged for these transactions).

Why do you need to do it this way? Reloading an ORCA card at a ferry terminal is treated as a card transaction and is therefore subject to the same 3% fee.

So, to avoid the 3% ferry fare surcharge, buy tickets with either cash or the ORCA card – but if you use an ORCA card, avoid loading the card in the "wrong" place.

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and the dough should have that characteristic sourdough smell. The dough will expand some, but not dramatically like its white flour counterpart.

Smear a thin layer of butter or lard on the sides and bottom of your bread pan, then sprinkle cornmeal a pinch at a time until you have a nice dusted coating on all the surfaces. Pour in the mix, right up to the top. Pumpernickel will stick to aluminum foil, so now do the same butter or lard treatment to the part of the foil that will cover the top. Or if you have a lid, do it to the inside face of the lid.

If you found a stainless steel bread pan with a snug metal lid, fantastic. They can be hard to find (in which case you'll need to seal the pan with aluminum foil). This seal is VERY important – if the dough's moisture vents out during cooking, the loaf will scorch. Many people use more than one layer of aluminum foil, just to get a truly tight seal all the way around. The foil with the treated face goes down against the dough, tucked all around the edges. Then consider a second, outer wrapping of foil to really seal in the moisture.

Put your loaf into the oven, and set it to 300°. The loaf will heat up along with the oven, getting the dough to a more uniform starting temperature. This isn't the baking temperature, so be sure to stay nearby and wait for the oven to reach 300°.

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Vashon Brewing, Cherrywood Smoked Porter

Note from the Editors:

Years later, Cliff's Beer will still come up in conversation. For many, it was the only beer some would buy, and we still remember sadly finishing our last growler of his IPA. It joined the long, sad list of lost Island institutions.

Still having his number, on a whim we texted and asked if he'd write and share a bit on how he made his beer? He answered promptly, not only dusting off his notes, but updating them to better fit the needs of an individual brewer!

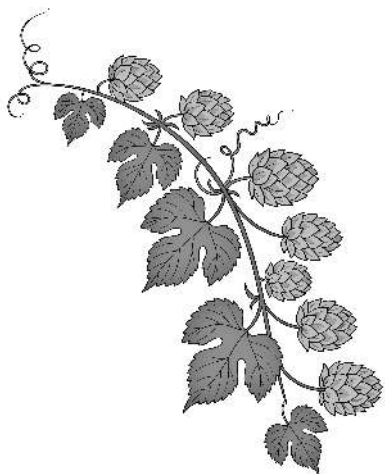
We're forwarding this recipe to The Loop's personal brewmeister, so count on a progress report in a couple of months. We also hope to hear from other brewers on Vashon.

By Cliff Goodman

I was recently asked by The Loop to share a favorite recipe of mine from my days of running Vashon Brewing, aka "Cliff's Beer."

The first recipe that came to mind was my smoked porter. Originally smoked with alderwood chips, it was later re-launched using cherrywood chips to smoke the malted barley. My wife was very upset with me for changing her favorite beer, but ultimately agreed it was a good change.

I shared this recipe because it was tasty, fairly easy and forgiving to brew, and remained popular until we closed the brewery and retired. Be sure to let The Loop know if you have any other favorites you'd like them to publish!



Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence; true friendship is a plant of slow growth and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity before it is entitled to the appellation.

~ George Washington

A Bread for Resilience

Continued from Page 7

Now, lower the temperature to 220°, and note the time. It's going to bake in there for at least 18 hours, with 20 a typical duration and some bakers going the full 24 hours. Most ovens automatically shut off, often after 12 hours. Disable that, or remember to be nearby so you can turn it back on immediately.

While your bread's baking away, let's turn to all the amazing science and chemistry those 15th century bakers discovered through years of experimentation and observation.

Rye itself is a wonderful grain. Much harder than wheat or barley, it germinates and grows well in poor soil and bad growing weather. It was often grown alongside wheat, so the farmer would still have something to eat and sell, even when the wheat failed that season.

But rye is not just a hardy wheat; while it has gluten, much of its baked consistency comes from pentosans. This is a plant fiber which is remarkably efficient in binding to water. A rye loaf can feel moist, but the water is bound in a way that keeps it from being available to mold. This is the first of the reasons that this rye-based bread stores so well.

The second line of defense is that sourdough culture. Its reaction with the milled rye and water creates both lactic and acetic acids. The environment created by these acids is hostile to the molds and bacteria that would otherwise grow and spoil the bread.

The final preservation mechanism comes from that long, low-

temperature bake. Known as the "Maillard reaction," it breaks down the rye's starches into melanoidins, which give black German bread its dark color and sweet, molasses or chocolate flavor. The melanoidins add a final defense against spoilage, since they also dampen bacteria and mold development.

The sourdough plus slow bake have one extra benefit. Phytic acid is present in most breads, and it binds to nutrients like iron, zinc, magnesium, and B vitamins. In fast-baked bread, this acid remains, making these nutrients relatively unavailable. In Westphalian pumpernickel, the acid is broken down, resulting in a loaf of bread with much higher food value.

When it comes out of the oven, pop it out of its tray and let the loaf cool for 24 or even 48 hours. Hopefully you're looking at a dense, dark loaf with that earthy black bread smell. Admire its rich color and dense structure, but don't cut it yet! Let it cool entirely, and then wrap it tightly in foil, plastic wrap, or even beeswax cloth. Let it sit for two days as it reaches the ideal texture. Now you can unwrap your bread and finally taste it.

How to eat it? Its density lets you cut very thin slices, so start by nibbling a thin slice just as it is. Germans with their dark breads will love it immediately - if your palate is trained by fluffy white breads, it'll be a bit of a shock. Add some butter to your next nibble, and then on another part, try a nut butter. Many people swear by garlic butter.

Cherrywood Smoked Porter Vashon Brewing

Recipe adapted for a 5-gallon all-grain homebrew batch

Note on Water

This recipe assumes you will use distilled or reverse osmosis water. The high Ph and chlorine levels in District 19 water make it unsuitable for brewing unless you take steps to remove the chlorine, adjust the Ph level of the water and account for the high residual alkalinity.



Brewing Method

This recipe assumes you are an all-grain brewer. You can still use the recipe if you use malt extract or dried malt, you'll just need to make that conversion yourself.

Ingredients

- 9 lbs US Pilsen Malt, 1.3° Lovibond (L)
- 1 lb US Vienna Malt, 3.1° L
- 15 oz UK Dark Crystal Malt, 58° L
- 10 oz UK Chocolate Malt, 333° L
- 6 oz, US Roasted Barley, 473° L
- 0.4 oz US Warrior Hops, 15.5% AA, first wort hopped
- 0.25 oz US Calypso Hops, 12.0% AA, first wort hopped
- 4 oz smoked malt*
- 2 grams gypsum (calcium sulfate)
- 1 gram calcium chloride
- SafAle S-04 yeast

* I used to smoke my own malt in an electric smoker using cherrywood chips, so substitute a smoked malt that is as mild and sweet as you can find.

Brewing Instructions

- Start with 5.7 gallons of water for the mash. Heat water to a strike temperature of 170° F before mixing in the grain. Add gypsum and calcium chloride.

- Add grains and stabilize the mash for 60 minutes at 145° F. Heat 3 gallons of sparge water to 170° F.

-Pre-boil volume will be 7.4 gallons, boil for 60 minutes. Batch volume will be 6.1 gallons; ferment at 65° F.

Expected Stats

- Original Gravity, 1.056
- Final Gravity, 1.012
- International Bitterness Units, 29
- Alcohol by Volume, 5.8%

Now take another slice and toast it. With a little bit of a crunch, you'll probably find it much more bread-like. Again, try butter and nut butter.

Finally, in my own life I have regular vegan fasts, with my breakfast often being oatmeal. Here's a place where the pumpernickel bread makes a huge difference. I cut small cubes of it, and mix them into the oatmeal. They add a chewy extra texture, but that Westphalian pumpernickel magic shows up hours later. When I'd usually feel a glucose sugar crash, the nutrients from the pumpernickel

sustain me all the way to lunchtime instead.

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

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What's Your Flavor?

By Anthony Latora

One of the first doorways we walk through when getting to know an herb medicinally, alongside sight, smell, and even touch, is taste. What if I told you that through taste alone we can gather much about how an herb may act within the body?

This is very much true. Not only do we find this in Western herbalism, but also within Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Ayurveda, with many similarities woven between these systems. Though there are countless healing traditions throughout the world, we'll stay with these three for simplicity's sake.

In Western herbalism and TCM, there are five classic flavors: sweet, salty, sour, pungent, and bitter. Ayurveda adds another category, more akin to a sensation within the mouth, known as astringent. Astringent is not the only mouthfeel recognized, either; there are acrid, mucilaginous, earthy, and diffusive qualities, to name a few. But for now we'll focus on the five flavors alongside astringency.

You may be thinking this all sounds a little far-fetched and wondering how taste could possibly reveal so much. Well, come take a walk with me and let's see.

It's safe to say that most everyone is familiar with sweetness. It's the flavor we associate with honey, syrup, and carbohydrates. Yet the sweetness found within herbs is often more subtle, like the nourishing sweetness of grains, roots, or starches. Sweet herbs tend to nourish, moisten, and soften tissues while generally carrying a cooling nature. These herbs often display demulcent, emollient, and nutritive actions due to their sugars, starches, and mucilaginous polysaccharides.

Sweet herbs commonly have affinities with the mucosal membranes of the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and urinary systems. They are used to relieve excess dryness, weakness, and depletion within tissues. Though nourishing, in excess they may contribute to stagnation and dampness through overbuilding. Herbs such as licorice, marshmallow, and burdock all carry varying expressions of sweetness.

Salty herbs often feel closer to the mineral kingdom than the plant kingdom, especially within Ayurvedic tradition. Sometimes this taste is deeply mineral-rich, like celery, while other times it is

Health Matters

unmistakably salty, like kelp. Interestingly, traditions differ in how they interpret this flavor. In TCM, salt is considered cooling, moistening, heavy, and downward-bearing, while Ayurveda often sees it as warming due to its burning sensation upon wounds and tissues.

In simpler terms, salty plants help replenish minerals within the body by providing potassium, magnesium, calcium, sodium, iron, silica, and other trace minerals, depending on the species. This flavor has strong influence over the kidneys, circulation, nervous system, and structural tissues, lending a strengthening and nourishing quality overall. Nettles and horsetail are excellent examples of mineral-rich herbs within this category.

Next are sour plants and again, we find differing perspectives between traditions. Ayurveda often considers the sour flavor warming, much like vinegar stimulates warmth and digestion, while Western herbalism may interpret sour herbs as cooling to excess heat patterns. These seemingly opposing views can both hold truth when we consider the differing effects before and after digestion.

Sour flavors stimulate digestive secretions, awaken appetite, and enhance salivation, yet post-digestively may have cooling or settling effects within the body. This flavor is commonly associated with acidic constituents such as ascorbic acid, malic acid, citric acid, tartaric acid, and oxalic acid. Hawthorn berries, rose hips, hibiscus, and sumac are all classic examples of herbs and foods that carry this tart and awakening flavor.

Our fourth flavor is pungent and this shows up in herbs that are spicy and aromatic. Their primary role is to warm the constitution, stimulate appetite, digestion, and circulation. Many also possess antimicrobial or antiseptic qualities. Pungent herbs are especially useful where there is coldness, sluggishness, dampness, or depression of fluids and energy within the body.

Pungent herbs are known to promote sweating, stimulate circulation, eases gas and clears mucus from the lungs. These herbal actions are facilitated through the presence of volatile oils, sulfur, resins, and pungent alkaloidal compounds such as allicin, piperine, gingerols, and capsaicin. Fennel, black pepper, garlic, and ginger all express this warming

and awakening flavor in their own unique way.

Now we arrive at bitter, a flavor many have grown disconnected from in the modern diet. Bitterness is thought to have evolved partly as a way for humans to detect potentially toxic substances, while simultaneously activating innate detoxification and digestive responses. Bitter herbs trigger a wide cascade of physiological actions, most notably stimulating gastric secretions, digestion, liver function, and gallbladder activity.

Interestingly enough, bitter receptors are found not only within the mouth but throughout the gastrointestinal tract, lungs, and other tissues, continuing to stimulate physiological responses as the flavor moves through the body. Over time, bitters tend to have an overall cooling and drying effect upon the system.

Bitters strongly influence the immune, hepatic, cardiovascular, and nervous systems. Many possess alterative and detoxifying actions that help reduce damp stagnation and support metabolic function. These actions are often linked to phytochemicals such as sesquiterpene lactones, iridoid glycosides, alkaloids, polyphenols, flavonoids, diterpenes, and triterpenes. Oregon grape, dandelion, yarrow, hops, and gentian are classic bitter herbs containing different combinations of these compounds.

Finally, astringency. As mentioned earlier, astringency is experienced more as a sensation than a flavor. It reveals itself through puckering, tightening, and drying of the mucous membranes and tissues. This effect largely comes from tannins, compounds that bind and tighten proteins within tissues, increasing tone and structure where there is excess laxity, inflammation, or seepage.

Other mildly astringent constituents include proanthocyanidins, flavonoids, phenolic acids, and certain resins. Astringent herbs primarily affect the mucous membranes, connective tissues, and venous side of circulation. Oak, horse chestnut, raspberry leaf, and yarrow all display varying degrees of astringency.

Taste can become a doorway into understanding the language of plants, how they express themselves through flavor and sensation, and how they move through the body. Taste is more than preference alone, and if there is a particular flavor you find yourself drawn to regularly, perhaps it is trying to tell you something about yourself. By slowing down and truly tasting an herb, we begin developing a relationship not only with its chemistry, but with its nature.




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100 Smiles Per Gallon

Continued from Page 2

billion loss this April.

Hope you like Hondas the way they are, because in the interests of solvency, all new designs are delayed until after 2030. Dear Honda: Bring. Back. The. Fit!

I went out and bought a Honda Fit, and miss it. Not a perfect car. The ride is jouncy over bumps, the ground clearance is a little low for rugged roads, the roof pings like a tin can when it rains. The fuel filler lid can stick, the rear bumper covers scratch easily and often look like they've been chewed on by a flock of sheep.

But there are ten cupholders and, with normal maintenance, the mini-ride will really last 400,000 miles, in surprisingly good shape when not rear-ended.

The Loop's other editors, Andy and Jane, wrote a fun kid-oriented series "Tomtomtidimiddletom" about some sort of tree growing in their first Fit. That car was totaled after a rear-ending, so they just bought their second 2nd Gen.

For many fans like them, there is no better car, with cult resource sites like FitFreak.com and influencer devotees like Scotty Kilmer and Car Wizard on YouTube (links included at VashonLoop.com). Word has gotten out and the party has finally started on prices, but you can still get a 1st Gen in decent condition for under \$5K.

And the 6' 8", 350-ish guy? That's my bouncer friend, Scott. Just saw him in Tacoma on Wednesday and took his 2016 Fit for a spin. I didn't ask his exact weight. No one does.

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Math Puzzle

By Anne Cotter Moses

The Hungry Cat
 A cat ate 100 mice in 5 days. On each day (except the first) he ate 3 more mice than he did the day before. How many mice did he eat on the first day?

See bottom of page for the Solution

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Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

Three From Debbie at Ace Hardware:

Q: Why do the French eat only one egg for breakfast?

A: In French, one egg is un oeuf.

~

Q: How many nihilists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: It doesn't take any, because why should they change the light bulb? It's only going to die anyway.

~

Q: How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: it only takes one; the light bulb has really got to want to change.

~~~

Did you hear about the explosion at the cheese factory in Paris?

Yup, they found de brie 60 kilometers away!

~

An original from Chad, a librarian at the Vashon Library:

Did you hear about the ferry worker who was a martial arts instructor?

He based his entire style of martial arts on the ferry system.

"Vash on, Vash off."

~~~

Three From Elric

Q: Why can't a man living in the U.S. get buried in Canada?

A: Because he's still alive.

~

Q: What's on your hand?

A: Your fingers

~

Q: What's on your face?

A: This one has various answers, but one is your nose.

~~

Q: What part of the body can you most rely upon?

A: Your fingers. You can always count on them.

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

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Math Puzzle Solution

By Anne Cotter Moses

He ate 14 mice on the first day.

Answer to puzzle

News You May Have Missed



Read the full stories:
vashonloop.com/missed/

- After a century of trust, Princeton polices their exams
- How much does it need to cost to eat for a year?
- EV bus operators face "wild west"

Aries (March 20-April 19)

Some form of that claim may have been made to you; there was something that injured your confidence or shook you out of your truth, though you may have forgotten it. Chiron's arrival in Taurus on June 19 will turn over the soil and expose your deeper reality. When you uncover your personal truth, your sense of injury may return - and you will need to work through it. Chiron is about healing through raising awareness. Its presence in your 2nd solar house, Taurus, will take you deep into matters of self-esteem and the ways it may have been compromised. Remember: Chiron's job is to bring what is in the dark up to the light, where it can be healed. When that happens, you may agree: you knew what was right and true for you all along. And you still know.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

Chiron's arrival in Taurus on June 19 is the best news in the world for our outrageously disembodied age. Chiron's presence describes a healing process, and that can come with either a crisis or a critical moment of choice and adjustment. For the past seven years, Uranus moving through your sign has infused you with qualities quite unlike any version of yourself in the past. You may have internalized many things you've resisted in the past, whether you've wanted it or not. Unlike Uranus, Chiron is a grounding influence. While Uranus tends to electrify and drive people and situations out-of-body, Chiron is here to bring you back in. That is, into your senses, into your feelings and into your desires. As the most physical of all the signs, you will value coming back into the real world of sound, touch and scent. You might feel like you're putting on a leather glove that someone ran through the washer and dryer, but you will soon find your way back into yourself.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Uranus is fully underway on its seven-year journey through Gemini. It has joined the ultra-slow Sedna, which entered Gemini last year for the first time in 11,400 years. This is about your ultra-sensitive awareness of your surroundings, and who you are within them. The two are inseparable. If you're feeling unusual or uncomfortable in the world we live in now, let your mind spread out and get a feeling for what underlies everything. This combination of factors, never before experienced by humanity, is giving you the ability to see and feel into the invisible. And you have this gift right when it matters the most. There is one and only one conjunction of Uranus and Sedna in Gemini, on May 24. (The two planets came into close but not exact alignment back in September, and will do so again on Feb. 7, 2027, so the energy will be available for a while.) Whatever you are doing, the enhanced awareness described by this pairing can help you. There is no "the news." Go deeper. Keep your mind open and flexible. You will receive the information and observations that you need.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Within a corporate context, there are two kinds of power: formal and informal. In astrology, one is represented by the 10th place (formal power) and the other by the 11th (informal power or social influence). With a cluster of slow-moving planets lighting up Aries, your 10th place, you may be driven to succeed like never before. The notion of building a reputation seems ridiculous when



Planet Waves

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



people who know nothing are suddenly famous for nothing. However, you have an old-school approach to life that I suggest you maintain. Saturn among these factors says stick to the program and build a little at a time. Neptune is inviting you to use some of the power of illusion to weave your myth and enhance your image. But then there is Taurus, your 11th place. This is much more tangible. Aries can have a weird, elusive and ego-driven quality. Taurus in your 11th is about durable relationships, conducted in person. Chiron's arrival in June will suddenly light up the potential of what is, in truth, the best house in your chart. Therefore: emphasize human connection, especially with old friends and colleagues. Look for opportunities to exert your influence informally.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

Pluto moving through your opposite sign Aquarius is confronting you with forces outside of your control. Two developments in June arrive along with real-world events that will shift your perspective. The first development is that Chiron enters Taurus, your 10th solar house, on June 19. You will pull focus in an area of your life where this has verged on impossible the past seven years: your career. Uranus cut a swath through the usual order and organization of your 10th starting well before the 'pandemic'. Chiron's arrival represents an event or opportunity that will help you get your priorities in order. While Taurus in the 10th is about value (as in worth), the more significant issue is value (as in establishing priorities). More than anything this is about self-leadership and self-accountability. The next event is Jupiter arriving in your sign on June 30. This is the turning point in the year for you, coming with the feeling of your ears popping and your mind clearing; the sensation that you are suddenly you again. And that is just the beginning.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

You are too hard on yourself, at the same time you keep finding yourself in situations where you seem to have no control. There's a relationship between these two things but you might not be in a position to see it. First, you have to decide if you want dependence or independence in certain contractual or collaborative situations. Either one can work for you, but they come with different requirements. The essential choice is between leading and following. Which will it be? If you're experiencing stress, setbacks or friction, you're trying to make a compromise between the two scenarios. This is not a situation where you can have the best of both worlds. They are different frameworks of existence. There is one thing that they have in common, which is the working for an agreed-upon goal; and the implied responsibility of communication. Whether you're a leader or a follower, an independent agent or a functionary, you're an essential node of communication. Nearly all difficulty can be ascribed to either a failure of words, or a failure to use words precisely.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

From your viewpoint, it must seem like the world has gone mad, nobody can show up on time, follow logic or tell up from down. The problem seems to

be the chaos of society, but the net effect is that nearly everyone is confused about who they are; your grounding in who you are is what you must focus on. Aries is your opposite sign and therefore the location of information about relationships. It's also a hall of see-through mirrors, and the question is what part of what you're seeing or experiencing is your reflection and what is coming from other people? You're not well served by counting on others for the discipline and time-framing element of what you're doing. While Venus is the traditional ruler of Libra, you cannot look to Venus for equilibrium or balance. That must come from Saturn; you have some claiming back to do, as others may be in possession of your ability to stay in balance.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

You're arriving at a turning point in your relationships, which I suspect you will welcome. Let's go back in time to 2018, when Uranus entered your opposite sign Taurus and people started acting a little funny. Funny about commitments, and about what they wanted, and who they were. Contrary to past history, a new kind of flake factor entered your relationships in a significant way. That was Uranus moving through Taurus, which was even weirder for them than it was for you. That transit is over; Uranus has moved on to Gemini, where at least words count and you have some negotiating power. Later this month, Chiron enters Taurus, which comes with the gift of focus. You get a few months of Chiron in Taurus this year, then it retreats back into Aries, and then returns to Taurus next April. What surfaces over the summer will give you a look at what you'll be addressing for the next few years. There are people who to you may seem injured or in need, but they are in truth teachers who will bring you closer to yourself and your dharma or deeper mission. If you show up fully, the results will be worth your effort and seeming inconvenience.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Pattern recognition is the literacy of the electronic age we now live in. All day long, you read things: ingredient lists, instructions, emails, and the occasional letter that comes in the mail. You're doing this so often you take it for granted. Not only that, you're often legally responsible for what appears in print in front of you. Imagine you're watching a foreign film, in Chinese. You're doing fine as long as the subtitles are on; you can read along with the dialog. Without pattern recognition, this is nearly all of us in the electronic age. We are looking at a world of text and sounds which make no sense. Rare events in your environment house, Gemini, indicate that it's more important than ever. You no longer live in a world of categories and separate events. You exist in a holistic universe of patterns that you can no longer afford to have be a blur. You will learn to see them through ongoing, careful practice - just like you learned how to read words.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Despite all that is going on in the world, and the worldly nature of the mighty sign Capricorn, your most important territory is within. We have

all over the past decade or two been transformed into around-the-clock public figures standing in the glare of television cameras and microphones. But that does not describe the real loss, which is of our sense of inner being; of inner existence; of a private sanctuary. The loss of the very idea of privacy is so overwhelming that it has nearly everyone anesthetized. Aries, the sign of self, is located in your most private chart angle, the 4th place (the bedroom and the kitchen). Yet Aries is the scene of the worst infiltration. For you, the digital influence is the closest to home of all the signs, deep at your core, where you know who and what you are. You may be confused, or feel that your confidence is being undermined. Yet you may, if you wish, summon the essential power to tell truth from lies. As for the external world: please read the Sagittarius for this month as if it applies directly to you.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

In the eternal words of Fritz Perls, it's time to lose your mind and come to your senses. You have a great mind, sometimes a little too good for your own well-being. Because your thoughts are not neutral, neither are your perceptions. But it's easier to witness this if you are using your senses rather than your mind. Your senses will be more honest about the contents of your mind and the nature of your desires. Then there is what you express. That is even more important, because it's the tangible expression of your consciousness. The expressive angle of your chart is now lit up by the once in a lifetime conjunction of Uranus and Sedna in Gemini - the first of its kind since the most recent Ice Age ended. So we might say this marks the end of a personal creative Ice Age for you. The thing about creativity that makes it so daunting is that it's about daring yourself to be someone you never were before. That is the risk; that is why both art and gambling are covered under the same house, which for you is Gemini. Dare to be real. I can't promise you that you'll be safe, but safety isn't everything.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

What is the most embodied form of your ideas? I get the appeal of daydreaming, though now is not the time for that. If you're thinking of a bridge, reach for a pencil and paper. If you come up with the title of a novel or movie, write it down in a place you can find it. Then take at least three steps to test it out. In this example, that might mean going from the title or concept to a one-paragraph treatment. One line on a scrap of paper or digital note does not mature with age. It is more likely to wither or be forgotten. Pisces may be a visionary sign, though you must observe your tendency to idle fantasy. At long last, Chiron arrives in your 3rd place of language, your mental state and your need to communicate. For you, this is earthy Taurus - which in most ways is a whole other critter than misty, imaginal Pisces. To you, Taurus can feel way too dense, but that translates to the real and solid. What you have in common with Taurus is Venus: a feminine orientation on creativity. Taurus can take the form of male creative virility, but there is always that factor of being submissive to the work.

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Sonnets to Orpheus, Part I

Sonnet 1

There stands a tree. What pure over-climbing!
Oh Orpheus sings! A tall tree rings in my ear!
Then all falls still but even in the silencing
are new signs and portents that draw near.

Creatures press in quietly from their clearly
absolved dens, untussled bushes and nests
free from predation, at their curious best.
Not quiet from stifled fears, instead sincerely

Out of simply hearing. Urges for jeering
shrink in spellbound hearts, and where before
there was no proper shelter for throngings

Is now a cottage to fulfill deep dim longings
with open entrance, porch and trembling doors;
You raised to them a temple for the hearing.

~ Rainer Maria Rilke

Translated by Marc J. Elzenbeck



The Lake

By S.E. Reid

Editor's note: For your summer reading pleasure, we have an island tale by local author S.E. Reid. Ferris Island is "located right at the elbow where Puget Sound meets the Salish Sea. The inhabitants are normal folk, just like you and me...except that the place where they live has some strange hidden corners and a very unusual history." Find more Ferris Island tales at <https://talebones.substack.com>. Enjoy!

Howdy there. Geez, sure is busy in town today. One glimpse of spring sunshine and folks around here lose their minds. Saw some crazed kid out there wearing shorts. Shorts! It ain't even above fifty degrees yet!

Anyway, yep, I'd like to renew my fishing license, please. I ain't immune to the sunny weather in my own way, though you'd never catch me dead in shorts in early March.

Name's Hank Hollister. Sure, here's my ID.

Senior discount? Now, what's that supposed to mean?

A joke, son. I never turn down a senior discount. Half the fun of gettin' old is taking the perks where you can get 'em.

Endorsements? Nope. No Dungeness or two-pole for me, thank you. I'm a single-minded fella. I leave the open-water fishing to the younger folks these days. Too many eerie tales for my liking, saltwater fishing around Ferris Island. I didn't get to be eighty-five years wise takin' stupid gambles. The halibut and salmon and crab at Hoodman's is fresh enough every day and I don't have to risk my neck for it.

But trout, now that's a different story. You ever see that trout in Lake Damascus? It's damn near perfect. Sleek and shiny, big bright eyes, plenty of four-pounders and I've seen even bigger some years. And the meat! Next time someone tells you that they think trout tastes like mud, you give 'em some Damascus-caught trout. You watch 'em eat it, see their eyes light up. It's sweet and flaky and... ah, stop me, I'll talk about it all day long if you let me—

Oh. Yes, Discovery Pass too, please.

It's even better smoked. The trout meat, I mean. Smoked Damascus trout on good toasted bread with a slather of butter, maybe a little sprig of dill if you're feelin' fancy, or parsley. Squeeze of lemon.

Dammit, I knew I should have eaten lunch before I left the house. I'm always gettin' myself into trouble that way.

You know why those trout taste so good, don'tcha? It's the water in that lake.


Funny thing about lakes on islands; they're

Claudia
Hollander-
Lucas next to
placard of her
poem,
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usually filled up with rainwater that runs down into the lowest point and collects. And sure, that's true of Damascus, too. But there's also a really big hole in the bottom of that lake. An aquifer, the smart folks call it, but really it's just a big hole. It's tough to say exactly where it is or how big it is, but you can feel it when you pass over it, even in a boat. Out in the middle of the water like a cold-spot in a haunted house. The wind shifts when you cross it, and when you put your hand in the water it's icy cold, no matter the season. Even when the sun shines directly on it the depths over that hole are dark, strange dark, like it's eatin' up the light.

How deep is it? Impossible to know for sure unless someone's crazy enough to dive it, and no one's tried that I know of. I've heard some folks say two hundred feet, but that sounds pretty implausible to me, especially on an island like this. Even so...it's deep. I threw a weighted line down there once, when I was a younger man, just to see if I could get a vague idea of the depth. That was an eighty-foot cord and it never hit bottom, never even hit a snag or a slope.

And while sure it's a little spooky, it's worth it, because those are the healthiest fish you ever saw and the lake is an active home for all kinds of critters thanks to the water that comes up from underneath. Trout, of course, but I've even seen bass in that lake and other little panfish and minnows. Plenty of otters and herons, waterfowl and such.

I sometimes wonder what's down there, deeper down. What kinds of critters prefer the shadows and the deathly chill, close to the floor.

If there even is a floor.

The secret to fishing Lake Damascus is just to stay awake and aware and stick to the shallows. That's the trick. You can find plenty of good trout around the edges with no problems at all.

What kind of problems? Well...it's easy enough when you're fishing to get kinda sleepy, kinda lazy. Sit back in your boat with a cooler of beer and let the twitch of the pole tell you when you've got a fish-on. But you can't do that in the middle, out there, over the aquifer. Not the same as you can other places, other lakes.

Son, you can give me that look all you like, but I've heard enough stories. Folks out there fishing, drifting along on a sunny day, line in the water, just trawling slowly right over that big hole like an open throat, a low mist risin' around them while they snooze...and some folks disappear out there, without a sign. Boat and all. Doesn't happen often, but it's happened enough over the years to make the savvier folks cautious.

Whether they go down into the dark or away into the mist, who can say? No one's come back to tell us all what happened. They just vanish.

A Poem by Claudia Hollander-Lucas

In summer, the forests are alive with aerial sounds that include the song-life of birds – and with poetry.

Here is a poem I wrote last spring for a Poetry Festival in Port Angeles themed "The Music of Summer." A beautiful placard of the poem was made by the Art Center and installed nearby in Webster's Woods for the year starting last June. The placard contained a QRCode so people could hear me recite the poem in context of a hike in a beautiful forest. How perfect is that!

two ears two spirals

ears born to funnel
to funnel in lofting whorls those
sounds overhead in voices made
unlike our own; ears to absorb
the hoots, trills, and caws
of abundant life, its radiant
pleasure to feed bones and belly
by forces that have their own heat.
We may stand silent as Quakers,
or as pilgrims who don the trusting
mantle of an intricate path – here.
Here is to become wrapped in a nature
at the very heart of it all, its chiming
in steady beats to call us awake
in each rounded breath, under
the spell of possibilities
possibilities unmeasured.

~ Claudia Hollander-Lucas

*Claudia Hollander-Lucas is a visual artist, writer, book-maker, and long-time Islander whose artwork can be found near and far in public and private collections. Visit her website and press called *We Live In The Woods* for details: claudiahollander-lucas.com.*



But listen...if you stick to the shallows you'll be alright. And let me tell you, that damn trout is worth it.

What? Oh. I got to talkin' again. Never do learn.

Here, let me write you a check.

You still take checks, don'tcha?

S.E. Reid is a freelance writer, editor, and poet living on a patch of wooded wetland in the Pacific Northwest with her craftsman husband and her two big goofball dogs, Finn and Huck. She loves to hear and tell stories about nature, history, ghosts, and God, and when not writing she loves to cook nourishing food, read widely, and tend to her vegetable garden. You can find more of her work at <http://sereid.com>



**Where liberty dwells,
there is my country.**

- Benjamin Franklin