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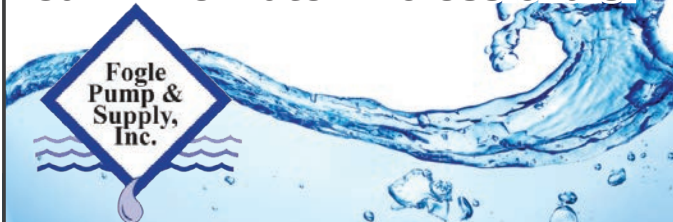
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FEBRUARY 2019 ISSUE DEADLINES

AD SPACE RESERVATIONS:

Friday, January 18th

WHAT'S HAPPENING LISTINGS:

Thursday, January 24st



Create A Bungalow In Nature

- JOHN ODELL, WordsOfWords.com

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From the Publisher's Desk

By Gabriel Cruden

With family visiting for the holidays, we took time to play games, prepare and partake of delicious meals, enjoy child performances of music, dance, magic tricks, and general silliness, and catch up with each other about what's happening in our lives. One evening, we went 'round the table to share an intangible thing we'd would wish for. Many heartfelt and moving wishes were expressed, and I found myself reflecting on them later, picturing what our world might look like were they to come true.

I also felt heartened as I considered the strong threads of connection between our 'round-the-table wishes and the purpose and intent behind this publication. We each have our sphere of direct influence, and then the ripples emanate from there. My hope is that in sharing stories and thoughts that grow from the lived experience of our region, and doing so in a manner that does not ask anyone to agree but just to be open-minded to the perspective of

others, we can feel a sense of community and connection that transcends personal differences.

Four years ago I launched the rebranded *North Columbia Monthly* with this notion in mind. Every month I hear encouragement and appreciation from readers who send postcards, letters and emails, or call on the phone or talk to me wherever I happen to be when out and about. In addition to telling me about their favorite writers – and there's a whole range of tastes – the dominant theme to their feedback is that they are finding meaning and a sense of connection.

Hearing this, I feel such gratitude that this experiment in community-building seems to be rippling in a positive direction. I also hold such gratitude for all the people who submit content, who choose to advertise, who participate in the production and distribution, and who take the time to read.

So much about community strikes me as a collection of agreements that then dictate

choices and behaviors. I feel so very humbled and happy that people in our community are choosing to support a publication that is dedicated to lifting each other up, to learning and challenging ourselves, to talking about the hard things in a productive way, and to celebrating the good stuff.

As we continue into 2019, I welcome feedback and suggestions on how to keep refining and improving the *Monthly*, both in concept and in delivery.

Along the latter lines, I have heard from some readers that the type size is challenging and that some even make use of a magnifying glass. In response, I have increased the font size by one point, which doesn't seem like much, but it makes the articles about 20 percent longer, and so other adjustments have been made to accommodate the change so that it can be sustained.

Thank you to everyone out there actively seeking to send your own positive ripples. I believe in them.

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Inspiration Toward Personal Transformation

By Christine Wilson

"Contrary to the ancient myth, wisdom does not burst forth fully developed like Athena out of Zeus's head; it is built up, small step by small step, from most irrational beginnings." ~Bruno Bettelheim, child psychiatrist

"I think things will get better but maybe it won't be in a hurry." ~ Olivia Hooker

Olivia Hooker was born on Feb. 12, 1915. As a six-year-old, she hid under the family dining room table with her three siblings while a mob bashed into their Tulsa house and took an axe to their piano. The family was African American and a black neighbor boy had been (falsely, as it turned out) accused of assaulting a white woman. It was 1921 and such false accusations were not uncommon. Her father's clothing store was lost in the ensuing chaos. This was one of her first memories.

Olivia Hooker was 103 when she died in November. After her terrifying childhood experience, she could have given up on life

and developed a powerless state of mind. Instead, she became the embodiment of **resilience**. She trained to be a teacher and then went back to school to get a PhD in order to become a professor. She was the first African American woman to enter the Coast Guard and ended up having a training center named after her.

She must have been an optimist, because it doesn't appear she doubted her ability to achieve these goals. Not her gender nor the color of her skin nor any other cultural force kept her from pushing toward her dreams.

Another person, born on the same day that Olivia Hooker was, had rheumatic fever

at age two and, as an adult, was diagnosed with lypoproteinosis, a rare disease that causes, among other problems, bumps to grow where there is no hair. Experimental throat rebuilding saved his life. The medical problems did not break his spirit, despite the tracheotomy tube he breathed through. His voice was harsh; that did not keep him from waxing philosophical whenever he had a mind to.

Shelden Wilson had limited social skills, little money, and difficulty finding a niche for himself until he found employment at Hanford Nuclear Reservation. His **perseverance** allowed him to interact well enough

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Random Acts of Community

to keep that job until his health forced him into an early retirement. He was able to marry and have three children, the middle one being me.

He was deathly afraid of illness and guarded his throat as though his life depended on it. Each time he thought he might be catching a cold, he gargled with salt water until the symptoms abated. I have always assumed he used his stalwart nature to scare away any marauding germs. He transformed his life from being a sickly, shy, nerdy child to become a stalwart worker and quirkily successful human being.

Derek Black was born while his father's best friend was making a run for president. Derek's father had to leave the campaign trail to be with Derek's mother while she delivered the red-haired, blue-eyed boy. The family friend running for president was David Duke, considered one of the most notorious white supremacists in the country. Duke gave up his position as grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan and turned the job over to his best friend and Derek's father, Don Black.

Derek Black was raised in an insular world, surrounded by people who believed only white Christians should be allowed to live in the United States. He helped his father with the internet hate site Stormfront and started a radio show promoting Holocaust denial and bigoted beliefs. Then he decided to get an education.

He went to a small college and surrounded himself with exceptionally bright peers, many of them with backgrounds he had considered inferior. His first girlfriend was Jewish. His first good friend was a Peruvian immigrant. He went to Shabbat dinners on Friday nights.

Within a couple of years, he had to break it to his parents that he was disavowing the tenets of the family. It was a devastating shift for him and came about, in my way of thinking, because he was such an **open-hearted** person. He had a close relationship with his parents, who nurtured him with love. He took that love out into the world and made connections with other loving people, who helped him see that there is more than one way to be an American and a person worth loving. Eli Saslow's biography of Derek Black, *Rising Out of Hate*,

shows his willingness to be open to other people and his ability to love fully created the person he became.


The last tale of transformation belongs to Dr. Tara Westover. Raised by survivalists in the hills of Idaho and given limited opportunities to educate herself, she left for Brigham Young University in her late teens, having misrepresented her educational experiences, and kept going with her education until receiving a PhD in history from Cambridge University.

Her childhood exposure to the outside world was limited, to say the least, and when she started college her social skills were, according to her description, full of huge gaps. She would get to her classes early and pretend she was studying. Really, she was eavesdropping on conversations between fellow students so she could learn how to chat. Slowly she crawled out of the narrow world of her childhood.


Having read her book and listened to her speak in Spokane last year, I can say she is one of the most curious-minded people I know of. Her **curiosity** started her on the trajectory that pulled her away from most of her family and led her to study history and to explore her inner world as well as the world outside her early experiences.

I believe we all have the ability to transform the aspects of our lives we are unhappy with. I believe that transformation does not happen from passive observation of life; these four people inspire me with their intentional effort. I am sure there are other characteristics we could use to describe an ability to improve the quality of life, but resilience, perseverance, curiosity and openheartedness are a good start as we set intentions for this New Year.

Christine Wilson is a psychotherapist in private practice in Colville and can be reached at christineallenwilson@gmail.com or 509-690-0715.



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A Reason to Hope

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

I've been taking out old plumbing pipes from a turn-of-the-20th-century house in a well-worn corner of Spokane that some call "Felony Flats." I'm worn out, fatigued from wrestling with uncooperative galvanized pipes corroded well beyond their usefulness, and replacing them with pex plastic pipes. Some may consider this to be an inefficient use of my time. I understand that sentiment. All I can say is, it depends on your perspective.

While working, I received a call asking if I knew of any housing available for a woman who is living in her car. She's had a rocky few months, dealing with mental health concerns and some other behaviors that have left her in this predicament. I have little to offer her. Maybe a small hut.

She seems excited about the prospect of what I would consider to be much less than desirable. Having weighed her options, she believes this is the best that she can hope for. I am embarrassed that I have so little. But from her point of view, anything to get her off the streets and out of the cold looks pretty rosy. We agree to a time and place to meet and I get back to the business at hand.

Pex, especially in a roll, can be unwieldy. You have to wrangle it into the shape that you want, but it has a bit of a memory, wanting to go back into the coiled shape of the container it came from. For someone as amateur at plumbing as I am, it

represents a bit of a workout. But once you get the hang of it, pex goes up quickly and is more forgiving than galvanized or copper.

I finish and turn on the main water supply, slowly letting the pressure build up. Pow. Water is shooting everywhere. I turn off the water supply and fight my way through the spray. I spot the culprit. One connection that I forgot to crimp. Whoops. I push the joint together and crimp it in place. Water flows properly. This old house is back in business again.

At the end of the day, I check emails. One in particular catches my eye. A friend is asking for advice about a life change. What do I think? Is it the right move? His dilemma is clear. If he takes this new job, he will be saying goodbye to some of the skills he has learned in his training. Is it wise to do this at this point in his career? His teenage sons need him, but he wonders if he will be stepping into a future where some of his hard-earned skills will be lost.

As I consider this conflict between career and family, I look around the quiet bedroom, walls still a 1970s green, wide dark wood trim, a single bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling. A poster of Audrey Hepburn on one wall, a small boy dressed in an oversized suit looking upward expectantly from another wall. In the closet is a makeshift metal stub stick-

ing out from the wall where six belts are hung in order. A motorized bicycle named "King Lear" rests below well-ordered sets of button-up shirts and professional-looking trousers. I miss the one whose personality and presence these represent. But alas, the house is empty except for me. I am here on a mission, not profound or well thought out. It is a mission to keep hope alive.

This is the house that Shelley and I bought for our son. When he was about to be released from prison in 2015, this is what he asked for. A run-down, gutted house in a less desirable part of town to call his own space, to become a man, to prove himself, to find his way. From here, he would work, learn, love, and find life again on the outside, with the rest of us.

Much has happened since then. In 2017, the powers of justice decided that they weren't done punishing him. Seventy days after his release in May of that year, while he was flourishing on the outside, four U.S. marshals showed up at his legal appointment and said they were bringing him back into custody over something that happened in October 2016, while he was still incarcerated. It broke our hearts, and his as well.

The legal events that have occurred since then are either hard to understand or nonsensical. We are flabbergasted at trying to comprehend how additional

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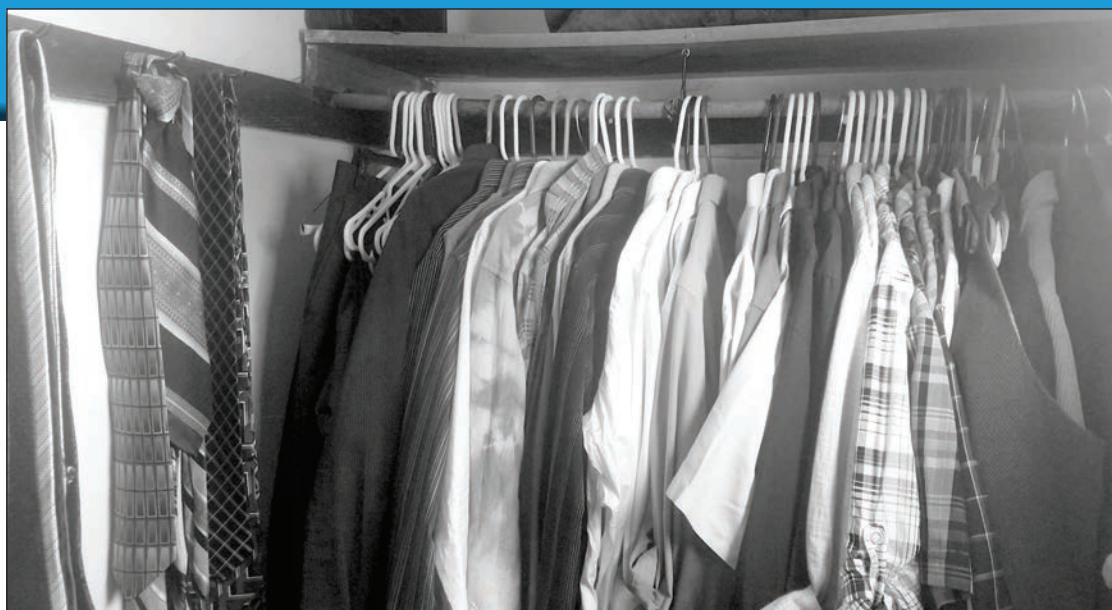
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time serves any justice, but we can't change it. Not that we haven't tried. Despite the painful situation, I needed my son to know something with certainty. In a system of throw-away people, I needed him to hear it from me: "I'm still your dad. Whether you are in for a short time or long, your mother and I will be here. We are your family. We believe in you. We know the good life you are capable of living. Your house is yours. It won't be taken from you, it is your heritage, your inheritance. We will work on it for as many days as we can until you are free again. Nothing can take it away from you."

Which is why I sit in this quiet room looking at the wall hangings and pondering their meaning. Who is this wonderful person that I call my son? Why can't he be free? Why can't he be here with the rest of us?

I pause and respond by email to the colleague who is considering a life change. It is clear now what I will tell him. He is asking for wisdom. I will speak from the wealth of wisdom-invoking experiences that I wish I never had. But life does that to you sometimes, throws you a left-handed curve ball that you didn't see coming, and leaves you to scramble to make sense of what is left of your life. It isn't perfect.



In fact, it's hard. But it's good. I get to love my son in a way that very few people have the chance to do. I can say things to him in a way that very few people can say them. When I say to him, "I'm not going anywhere. I'm still your dad. I'm proud of the person that I see," I can see the peace that those words bring. And as I pull wretched corroded pipes out of his basement, it is with a glad heart. Except that I miss him. The only thing that would make it better is if I could share this moment with him.

Which is why I felt that I could respond to my friend about the next steps in his life. Here is what I wrote:

"It seems that the nature of life is that you have to say no to some things and to some people so that you can say yes to someone else (your family). It's always right to question those decisions and to look at them, weigh them, but when they are made from love, they are always right."

One might ask whether fixing the old plumbing in my son's house is a good use

of my skill set. I have answered that. Absolutely, it is the best use of my time. Because in doing so, I keep hope alive.

Barry Bacon is a physician who has lived and practiced family medicine in Colville for 27 years. He now works in small rural hospitals in Washington state, teaches family medicine, and works on health disparities in the U.S. and Africa.

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Tracking Grizzlies

Article & Photo by Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

A few days after the first snowfall last year, I came across some especially large bear tracks on my neighbor's impressively flat, smooth asphalt driveway. Had a grizzly moved into our area?

The sun had warmed the snow too much to give me a straight answer, though someone with more extensive tracking experience might have been certain. Grizzly tracks are larger than a black bear's. The toe

pad impressions form a straight rather than curved line. The claws are much bigger, with the track for the tips farther out from the toe pads than with a black bear.

In any case, soon after that the bear – grizzly or black – moved into hibernation.

On walks, I regularly see the backside of black bears as they scatter into the bushes, sometimes with a cub. Other rural dwellers report seeing or hearing them in an almost casual way, like discussing the weather. News is especially frequent in the spring, just after the animals wake up, and immediately before they tuck in for the winter. In April, I see commanding piles of the first, coal-black scat on paths close to the water. Shiny and dense, the early spring scat clears the bear's digestive tract. As the weather warms and food sources in the high mountains increase, bears largely disappear from daily life on the valley floor.

Grizzlies are not as common on the shorelines around the West Arm of Kootenay Lake as black bears, but in recent years that has been changing. The space-loving grizzlies have lots of habitat to choose from. On both the south and north shores of the narrow arm, mountains rise sharply. The forest marching up these steep slopes disappears quickly into wilderness. Those of us living down in the valley feel civilized, but it's only an illusion.

Grizzlies feed on horsetail, grasses and sedges in moist areas around small lakes and river headwaters. Powerful climbers,

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they can range across ridge tops, talus slopes, avalanche chutes and sub-alpine floodplains. If the eating is good, a grizzly needs only about 15 square miles of habitat. If food is scattered, the bear can need up to 10 times that area to survive.

The spring after I saw the tracks, my neighbor reported seeing a bear out his window, standing in the moist bottomland. The bear had somewhat of a shoulder-hump, my neighbor said, but he couldn't be sure it was a grizzly. The bear disappeared soon after.

Through the summer, a grizzly was seen a few times, crossing back and forth through the narrow waters of the West Arm. Then, in September, a juvenile male grizzly showed up in nearby Kokanee Provincial Park. Drawn by fish spawning in the tidy channels managed by provincial fisheries staff, the grizzly was the first seen in the park in two decades.

Trails closest to the channels were closed, to give the bear room. Several weeks later, close to the end of October, someone on the sparsely populated south shore spotted the grizzly swimming back toward that side.

Biking on the gravel side roads in October, I passed pile after pile of rapidly digested fruit. Italian prune plums, pits and all. Apples. Mountain ash berries. Elderberries.

Human beings who haven't gathered their orchard fruit by the beginning of October are always likely to lose it, as well as a branch or two from the weight of the climber. But it seemed like there was more scat than usual, and the piles were larger.

In early November, the community notice board picked up in a more urgent way. One neighbor lost all his chickens, with two layers of fence around the coop torn and flattened. The door to the coop had been neatly ripped off as if it were cardboard. Another neighbor spoke of finding the remains of two Canada geese on a trail near the shoreline. A third said a bear had bent back the wire fencing around his garden and taken apart his compost to search for something edible. One morning, I found my bird feeder swatted down, emptied of black oil sunflower seeds.

All the signs were there of a creature ambling around with an unabashed desire to fill a gnawing hunger. I sensed something

different from previous years, a largeness of presence that confirmed to me that a juvenile grizzly had found himself a home territory. The bear's needs were practical, immediate and unconcerned with the concept of ownership.

Neighbors walking dogs in deeper woods began to carry cans of bear spray. I took to taking my walks in mid-day, on the main road, or along the open shoreline.

Grizzly bears once ranged freely across North America. Now they find the open space they need in only a few states in the Pacific Northwest. Even in British Columbia, they no longer thrive, and have been all but eliminated in areas that are intensively farmed or urbanized. Recently a mother grizzly and two young female cubs wandered into the Pass Creek valley, near Castlegar. There they found unfenced, free-ranging chickens. After a few complaints from residents, the conservation officer captured, tagged and relocated the bears to a wilder place, about 19 miles away. He urged people with livestock to install some electric fencing.

Within days, the females returned to feed



on more chickens. Eventually, a resident had a direct encounter with the mother bear, felt threatened and killed her. Soon after that, reluctant wildlife officers destroyed the two young bears, while also making another impassioned plea for people to install electric fencing. It sometimes feels as if I live in another sort of borderland, one where the needs and desires of people come up against the freedom of the wild.

Eileen Delehanty Pearkes lives in Nelson, B.C. Her recent book on the Columbia River Treaty, A River Captured, was recently released by Rocky Mountain Books. For more of her explorations of the western landscape, visit www.edpearkes.com.

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Still Waters

Article & Photo By Jack Nisbet

Curt Stager is a writer and educator who seems to be interested in every aspect of natural history. He travels widely in pursuit of research projects, many of which involve the interface of humans with the environment. In his most recent book, *Still Waters: The Secret World of Lakes*, Stager examines specific lakes on several continents with a combination of hard science, historical perspective, and clear-eyed storytelling.

At most of these lakes, Stager and his students take core samples from the bottom sediments, then use the extracted cylinders as timelines to read the history of the lake back thousands of years. By tallying the microorganisms suspended in the mud they create a picture of how the lake waters and the surrounding climate have changed over that period, and by comparing those communities with what lives in modern lakes they can begin to think about the entire system – not only those incidents of algae blooms, fish kills and oxygen depri-

vation trumpeted in newscasts, but also the unique living fingerprint that develops and continually changes in each isolated body of water on our planet.

Stager begins his investigations at Walden Pond, a 335-acre Massachusetts kettle hole created by a receding glacier a bit more than ten thousand years ago, then made famous when writer Henry David Thoreau spent parts of two years there in the 1840s. It turns out that Thoreau recorded some keen observations about life within the lake, which Stager compares to both present-day conditions and what he discovers in his core samples. Walden Pond's life history reveals often surprising connections to the long-term human occupation of the region.

More surprises are in store as Stager's research takes him much farther afield: from Israel's Dead Sea, to East Africa's Rift Valley, and to Siberia's Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest freshwater body of water in the world. He then returns to his home ground

of upstate New York, where he finds that local conditions, and local knowledge, have just as much to offer the inquiring student as any of those more exotic destinations. Pay attention to where you are, Thoreau and Stager and any number of local fishermen repeat. Study what you know to find out what is really there.

That seemed like good advice to follow, and as winter closed in last December I decided that one way to reflect on the way a lake interacts with its surroundings would be to experience it from the top. I would wait for some of my favorite ones to freeze over, then experience them from the icy topside.

I had my first real skate of the season on Mud Lake in Ferry County. The lake covers a modest 23 acres in open country a few miles north of Republic, not far above the former gold-producing mineworks of Knob Hill. When I parked to have a look at conditions just after dawn one morning, deep and sonorous sonic waves pinged back



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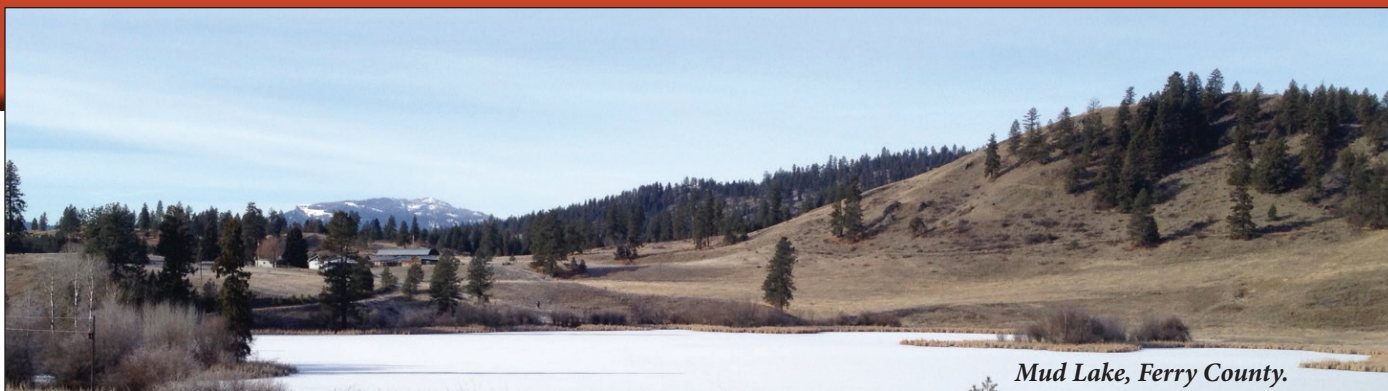
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Mud Lake, Ferry County.

and forth across Mud Lake's rough round shape like the song of a humpback whale.

The sounds drew me down to shore, then out onto a surface absolutely covered with large hoarfrost crystals, outsized snowflakes from some alien moon. Beneath those crystals the surface held a fine pebbly grain that reminded me of finished leather. The grain lent a grayish, opaque cast to the ice, so that no matter how hard I swept my hand back and forth I could not tell exactly how thick it was. A few clear fractures spanned the breadth of the lake, so I stepped gingerly out to see if I could get a read off one of them. Surrounded by singing ice, I determined three inches of thickness along the face of one large crack. I retreated to the frozen shore and sat down to lace up my skates.

Proceeding with caution, I pushed off from the bank and sliced small circles through the crystal layer, my blades sliding easily over the ice's pebbled texture. I steadily lengthened my arcs until they stretched up and down along the shoreline, cutting figure eights. In time I ventured further into the white void, crossing the suture lines of those grand cracks with nothing more than a slight bump.

It was a bluebird morning, and the temperature held at seven degrees Fahrenheit. The sun lay just off the horizon, casting the

shadow of a tall sharply bent Douglas-fir snag beyond a rim of cattails and far across the ice. I whizzed past a rock promontory where a northern shrike perched motionless on a hawthorn branch, waiting for something smaller than me to move.

My second skate took place a couple of days later along a narrow shoestring lake compressed within an ice age flood channel in Spokane County. This odd body of water, not more than two hundred yards wide but a mile long, is flanked on both sides by working railroad lines. It always froze early, and as I stumbled down through the riprap from one of the railway grades I saw smooth black ice interrupted here and there by white seams. For some distance out from shore, clumps of vegetation peeked up through the ice, greenery that meant tricky warm water and skate-catching tendrils. I made for a clear area, where more than two and a half inches of black ice engulfed explosions of tiny white bubbles. The surface was like glass and did not crack or warble no matter how hard I stomped on it.

Skates on, I hugged the shore for the first few minutes, steering clear of the clumps until I navigated a passage out into the body of the lake. From there it was clear sailing, and I had reached the blackest part of the lake when a long freight train chugged

through the coulee. Each car's rumbles reverberated across the ice as if the lake's surface were the membrane, the skin, of a living thing.

When I arrived home that evening I had a message from a friend that included a link to a website that follows Swedish mathematician Marten Ajne as he skates across thin black ice on Lissma Kvarnsjö, a beautiful shoestring lake outside Stockholm. The lake absolutely crackles as Ajne glides across its inky surface, shooting laser shots of sound in every direction. A drone camera following him from above reveals cracks spidering out with every new step where his weight takes on the dome of fresh ice.

It looks as though he is feeling the sink and rise of this plastic surface through his toes, and Curt Stager would certainly understand what Ajne is experiencing. Every lake in every season, past and present, always has more secrets to reveal.

Still Waters: The Secret World of Lakes by Curt Sager is published by Norton. There is a copy at the Spokane Public Library.

To see Marten Ajne skate on black ice, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3O9vNi-dkA>

Jack Nisbet's latest book is *The Dreamer and the Doctor*. To find out more, visit www.jacknisbet.com.




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Please Hold...

By Loren Cruden

A funny feeling comes over me when I get put on hold. Intention's urgency and momentum thwarted, I am set adrift in outer space, my sole connection to Earth a thin, manically repeated tune-phrase interrupted by an implacable, always female voice reciting, "We value your call. Please continue to hold. All our representatives are currently busy; the next available representative will be with you shortly." Away I drift, the earth receding, shrinking to the size of a blue pea as the tune-lifeline tinkles on.

So, instead of personal New Year's resolutions this January – since I can't imagine any – I've devised a list of suggestions for replacing the usual "Please hold" messages and their irritating tunes. Why not, instead, try:

1. Audiobooks. The recorded menu could say, for instance, "For Charles Dickens, press one; for Donna Tart, press two; for Lee

Child, press three; for essays or biographies, press four," and so on. Each time you call, the reading picks up where it left off the previous time. This would be especially suited for calls where maddeningly long holds are typical.

2. Personality quizzes. The recording asks questions and the caller presses numbers corresponding with multiple-choice answers. Such as, "When you enter a room full of people, where do you go? Press one if you stride to the center of the room; press two if you drift to the edge; press three for spiral movement; press four if you tend to shout 'Fire!' and run away," and so on. At the end of the quiz the recording tells you what kind of a person you are and offers references to self-help books.

3. Appropriate theme tunes. For businesses that insist on music for their hold recordings, instead of an ill-chosen repeat-

ing tune segment there could be a medley of meaningful, atmosphere-building songs relating to the business or agency. Such as, for a bank: "Money For Nothing," "Oh Lord, Won't You Buy Me a Mercedes-Benz," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Money," "Lawyers, Guns and Money" and "Give Me Money (That's What I Want)"; or, for a DSS medley: "Brother Can You Spare a Dime," "Nobody Knows You When You're Down & Out," "House of the Rising Sun" and "If It Weren't For Bad Luck I'd Have No Luck At All." For the IRS, of course there's always "Taxman." General-purpose medleys could include songs such as "Hold Me Tight," "Got a Hold On Me" and the ever-encouraging "Hold On, I'm Comin'."

4. Audio Monty Python skits. Say no more.

5. Excerpts from *The Great Courses*. Learn while you wait! Perfect for phone calls to schools. ("For Mayan Civilization, press one; for Astrophysics, press two; for Nuances in Robert Crumb's Depictions of the Female Form, press three," etc.) Again, this recording automatically picks up where it left off during your previous call. Another kind of "Great Courses" hold-messages could be used by restaurants ("To hear about the gourmet vegetarian option, press two," and so on.)

6. Lighthearted quizzes. Such as matching a recorded series of accented voices to their places of origin; matching impressions of famous voices to their names; or matching animal vocalizations to their species. Or,

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EAVESDROPS

*What people have written about
the north Columbia region*

"The Columbia River average water volume flow is...second only to the volume flow of the Mississippi River. This is enough water to cover the entire state of Washington to a depth of four and one-half feet."

~ The Pacific Northwest, by Dale A. Lambert

perhaps when calling law enforcement or prison offices, matching famous criminals to their crimes. ("For serial killers, press one.") These quizzes may be particularly appropriate for callers needing a bit of mental stimulation or those who have had a bit too much to drink.

7. Astrology. Ideal for New Age or Alternative types of businesses. The hold message would offer weekly forecasts based on the caller's astrological sign. ("For Virgo, press one," etc.)

8. Hostile sounds. Businesses or agencies wanting to actively discourage people from calling or staying on the line could play recordings of off-putting sounds such as fingernails scraping across a blackboard, squeaking Styrofoam, someone murmuring baby talk to a hamster or small pig, needle-skip or needle stuck on a record, laugh tracks, public safety announcements, or the sound of distraught elephants trumpeting at really fast or slow speed.

9. Affirmations. Earnestly enunciated affirmations with pauses between so that callers can repeat them aloud could, like number 7, be a winner for some businesses. ("For self esteem, press one; for prosperity, press two; for health and happiness, press three; for smiting your enemies, press four.")

10. Psychoanalysis. A monotonous, slightly sinister voice asks questions such as: "What did you dream about last night? Press one for all your teeth falling out; press two for needing to pee and not being able to find a bathroom; press three for having to take a test and being naked in the classroom; press four for all of the above." Or, "How are you feeling at this moment, as you

wait on hold? Press one for #%&*!!; press two for despair; press three for unsettled by my tone of voice; press four for concerned that a brain tumor is developing while your phone is held to your ear; press five for lost in space."

I've noticed that sometimes individuals unconsciously perform a kind of idiosyncratic, live "please hold" thing during breaks in phone conversations – while they're looking up something. For instance, one of my close family members does a quiet, jaunty, "Doot-dee-doo" thing during these intervals. The receptionist at a place I phoned made funny little chuffs like a tea kettle or tiny train while digging up information for me. My son – purposefully to entertain or annoy me – sometimes warbles or hums tunes interspersed with a chirpy "Please hold" while I wait for him to track something down. It occurred to me that a cool Hold recording could be made from a collection of sounds people habitually make when filling pauses. Such a recording might have

anthropological as well as comedic value.

I'm told that being put on hold is an opportune time to practice mindful present-moment techniques and equanimity exercises, but these intervals seem to me more conducive for thinking out plans for large weddings or invasions, reviewing long lists of resentments and slights, deciding what you would name a pet iguana if you had one, doing leg lifts, humming loudly to drown out Hold tune-segments, wishing you could tell the operator you're not getting any younger (or simply going ahead and dying on hold with the satisfaction of knowing that *now* they'll be sorry), seeing how many state capitols you can remember the names of, plotting an article about being put on hold, gazing blankly into space or – oops – at last! Back to Earth; gotta go!

Loren Cruden writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, available at Meyers Falls Market in Kettle Falls and www.LorenBooks.com, and provides Home Pet Care in the north Stevens County area.

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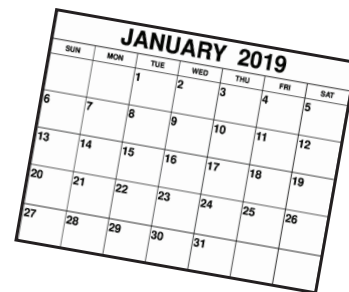
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APPENZERS

Events

Jan 3: Community Blood Drive, 10 am - 12:15 pm, at Community Colleges of Spokane, Colville Campus. Stop. Call 509-232-4435 for more info or to make an appointment.

Jan 3: First Thursday Art Walk, 5:30-8 pm, downtown Chewelah.

Jan 6: Northport Lions Club BINGO at the Northport School Cafeteria, Noon-4. Early Bird, Regular, Fast Pick and Blackout with a \$500 Jackpot. Proceeds benefit Lions Club community projects. Refreshments available. Must be 18 or older to play. Call 509-690-2158 for more info.

Jan 12: Colville Library Improvement Club book sale, 10-1, downstairs in the library.

Jan 13: Dances of Universal Peace, simple, meditative, joyous, multi-cultural dances, 2-5 pm at UCC Church, lower level, 2nd and Maple, Colville. Donations appreciated. Potluck following. Call 509-684-1590 for more info.

Jan 19: Frock Swap, 6-8 pm, 149 Hwy 395 S., Colville. Bring clothing, scarves, and jewelry (no tears or stains) and then pick out something for yourself. Leftovers will be locally donated. Light refreshments provided and snacks welcome but not required.

Jan 19: Masquerade Ball at the Murphy Mansion in Northport, 7-10 pm.

Jan 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Trail & District Arts Council calendar of events. Details available at trail-arts.com.

18th: Bushel and Peck, 7:30-9:30 pm

30th: Snowed in Comedy Tour, 8-10 pm

Music at Northern Ales, 325 W. 3rd Ave., Kettle Falls, northernales.com, 509-738-7382:

18th: Open mic, 7-10 pm

25th: Murphy's Law, 7-10 pm

Music at Republic Brewery, 26 Clark Ave., Republic, republicbrew.com, 509-775-2700.

19th: Jeff Scroggins & Colorado, 11 am - 12 pm

Meetings & Opportunities

Jan 9: Northeast Washington Genealogy Society "Round Table Discussion" meeting, 1 pm, LDS Church basement, Juniper Street in Colville, entry at the back of the building. Visit news.org for more info. All visitors are welcome.

Jan 19: Public Policy Forum, Book Review, Part 2: America: The Farewell Tour, Chris Hedges, 2018. In association with St'al-sqil-xw, Veterans For Peace, and Poor Peoples' Campaign, at the Kettle Falls Public Library, 12-4 pm; lunch and snacks offered, non-alcohol beverages. Email info@stalsqilxw.org for more info.

Library Events: Check out the extensive calendars of library events at ncrl.org (Ferry Co.), scrld.org (Stevens Co.), and pocld.org (Pend Oreille Co.).

North East Back Country Horsemen, meets third Saturday, potluck, 6-8:30 pm, Clayton Grange. Visit NEBCHW.com or call 509-598-0333 for more info.

The Greater Springdale/Loon Lake Chamber of Commerce meeting is the first Thursday of the month at 11 am at the Stevens County Fire Protection District 1, Station #7, 52 West Aspen in Springdale. **The Chewelah Chamber of Commerce Weekly Meeting** is Fridays at 7 am at the Chewelah Casino, 2555 Smith Road south of Chewelah off Hwy. 395. **The Colville Chamber of Commerce meeting** every Tuesday at noon at the Eagles Lodge 608 N Wynne Street. Details at www.colville.com. **The Kettle Falls Chamber of Commerce** meets on the first and third Thursday of each month at 7 pm at the Kettle Falls Visitor Center. For info, call 509-738-2300 or visit kfchamber.com. **The Northport Chamber of Commerce** meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at the Northport City Hall, 315 Summit Ave in Northport.

Deer Park Business Referral & Networking group meets Tuesday mornings, 8-9 am for breakfast at Paulines, Deer Park. 509-276-8556.

The Stevens County Veteran's Information and Referral Line is available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (except holidays) from 9 am to 3 pm. Call 509-685-AVET (2838) for more info.

Celebrate Recovery, a 12-step program, meets Fridays, 5:30 pm, 138 E Cedar Loop in Colville (enter from downstairs parking lot). A light meal is served. Call 509-935-0780 for a ride or more info.

Narcotics Anonymous is a recovery group that meets every Monday at 215 S. Oak in Colville (County Commissioner's Building, brown door) at 7 pm and Thursdays at 401 N. Wynne St. in Colville (The Youth Center) at 7:30 pm. The third Monday of every month, we celebrate "clean" birthdays with a potluck and cake at 6:30 pm.

Colville Multiple Sclerosis self-help group meets the first Friday of each month in the lower level of the Providence Health Education House, 1169 E Columbia, Colville, at 1 pm. All those living with MS are invited. For info, call 509-684-3252.

Friday Night Rebels has an AA meeting weekly on Fri. from 7 - 8 pm at the Providence Mount Carmel Hospital Health Education Center-lower level (1169 E. Columbia Ave, Colville).

Rape, Domestic Violence & Crime Victims, help is available. Confidential, 24 hours a day at 509-684-6139 or toll free 1-844-509-SAFE(7233).

Looking for breastfeeding support? Reach out to a La Leche League Leader! Contact Courtney at 509-680-8944, crtsl11@gmail.com, or on Facebook, "La Leche League of Colville."

Foster Parent Care Givers Needed: Children in Stevens, Ferry, and Pend Oreille counties are in need of safe, nurturing families. Contact Fostering WA at 509-675-8888 or 1-888-KIDS-414.

Child Advocates Needed: Join Stevens County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) investigating child abuse and speaking up for a child's best interest in court. All training is provided. Call 509-685-0673.

Overeaters Anonymous meets on Mondays at 11:30 am at the Nazarene Church, 368 East Astor, Colville. Call 509-680-8674 for more info.

Caregivers Group meets at Parkview Senior Living the last Thursday of each month, 3:30 - 4:30 at 240 S. Silke, Colville. Call Nancy at 509-684-5677 for info.

Fire District 10 volunteer firefighters meet on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 7 pm at the FD10 Fire Station on Aladdin Road. FD10 Commissioners meet at 3 pm at the Station on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. The Friends of FD10 meet at 4:30 pm, following the commissioners' meeting. Visitors and new volunteers are welcome.

Camas Valley Grange No. 842 meets the second Saturday at 5:30 pm at the Grange in Springdale.

The NE WA Amateur Radio Club meets the first Saturday at 11 am in the Valley Fire Training Center in Valley, WA.

Girl Scouts is more than just cookies and camp! Activities for girls ranging from ages 4-17 and adults from ages 18-100. For information, call Debbie at 1-800-827-9478 ext. 246.

PFLAG: Parents, Families, Friends and Allies United with LGBTQ meets lower level of First Congregational United Church of Christ, 205 N. Maple, Colville, last Tuesday, 6:30-8 pm. Call 509-685-0448 or email info@newapflag.org for more info.

The Panorama Gem and Mineral Club meets the third Tuesday of each month at the Arden Community Center at 7 pm. www.PanoramaGem.com.

Colville Piecemakers Quilt Guild meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at the Colville Community Center (HUB), 231 W. Elep, Colville at 6:30 pm. Visit colvillepiecemakers.webs.com.

Colville Valley Fiber Friends, (CVFF) meet every Monday at the Ag Trade Center, 317 W. Aster, Colville, noon - 3 pm. All interested in spinning, weaving and other fiber arts are welcome. For more information, contact Sue Gower at 509-445-1796.

Cross Borders Weaving Guild meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the VFW Hall, 135 Hwy 20, Colville. Email woodtick50@aol.com for more info.

Register for Career & College Readiness classes, 12-3 pm, Mon-Thur at the Spokane Community Colleges, Colville Campus. Open to anyone. Get resume help, interview coaching, basic computer skills, job exploration advice, career assessments, college prep skills, personal development in time management skills, increasing emotional intelligence and other soft skills for finding new job opportunities. \$25 per quarter (scholarships available). Call 509-685-2120 or email kari.hubbard@scc.spokane.edu for more info.

Colville Toastmasters meets on Tue, 5:30 pm, Health Education Center, 1169 East Columbia, across from the hospital in Colville. Visitors encouraged - come see what we have to offer those who want to boost confidence and sharpen communication/leadership skills and be a part of a life-changing program with a free mentor to help guide you! Call 509-690-7162 or email eleanor.mattice54@gmail.com for more info.

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LISTEN UP

Reviews by Michael Pickett

Oscillian Jumps Back

A little under three years ago, '80s retrosynth music became a thing. That is, *Stranger Things*, *Thor 3*, *Deadpool* and a host of other popular visuals loaded their soundtracks with massive and unrepentant slabs of analog synths and familiar sine-wave patterns. It was like seeing someone in a Members Only jacket at a rave.

Flash-forward to 2018, and the very inventive Swedish solo project, Oscillian, lays down *Escape from Antarctica*, an album that could easily have supported the *Blade Runner* sequel or *Stranger*

Things 3 (we can hope!). Throbbing with vintage synthesizers and an occasional vocal nod to Nine Inch Nails, this self-released album is everything an aging *X-Files*-*Blade Runner* fanatic

would want in a creepy-cool soundtrack, but is hip enough to make high-schoolers grab some acid-washed jean jackets.

Opening with the slightly eerie "Frostbite," Oscillian mines every cool '80s synth sound available as the album follows with the gripping vocals of "Infinite White" and the movie-ready "Aurora

Australis." If one didn't know better, it would be easy to say Klayton from Celldweller was behind the scenes (and at the mic) for some or most of this album.

As it is, this is such a well-conceived set of cinematic sounds that "retro" isn't something that comes to mind at all after the first four tracks. It's just great, compelling music that is fueled by familiar, warm analog sounds and a penchant for elegant, wry composing.

While "synthwave" (or "darkwave," "retrosynth," "chillwave" ... whatever you want to call it) is now a hot genre among artists like Celldweller, Gunship and others, you still have to be able to write and record things that sound good. *Escape from Antarctica* absolutely fits the bill, and if Oscillian can remain relevant past the lifespan of most retro-marketing fads, it will be a solo project worth following well into the dystopian, android-infested future of its dreams.



Alice in Chains: Foggy Days

Everything has been said about William DuVall stepping into the massive shoe-prints of the late Layne Staley, but we'll say some more: *Rainier Fog* is a fantastic album, and DuVall is the perfect co-vocalist (Jerry Cantrell keeps pretty busy on vocals too) to keep AIC moving forward. Since grabbing the mic in 2006, DuVall has done nothing but lend a soulful, sinister edge to the vocals of a band that might otherwise be lost to us.

It is either really hard, or just second nature, for the guys in Alice to turn incredibly sludgy metal power-chords and intricate harmonies into one-of-a-kind, memorable

songs. Yet that's exactly what they've done for most of three decades now, and with former Rush producer Nick Raskulinecz helming the project, there is a more focused roar to the overall sound here.

Check out album-opener "The One You Know" for a blast of ballistic Alice In Chains riffage and note-perfect vocal harmonies. This is a sound that's been imitated but absolutely never duplicated, and with the surprisingly accessible classic-rock sound of "Fly" or the almost Zeppelin-y "Maybe," AIC seems poised to stretch out into more vintage territory (though it's hard to argue



that Alice's brand of grunge-metal isn't already firmly and properly established in the "vintage" section).

Some will undoubtedly still argue that Layne Staley was the real voice of the band. This ignores the fact that Jerry Cantrell was at least 50 percent of that vocal sound at times, and it also glosses over the fact that there would be no Alice In Chains without a solid and sinister vocalist at the helm. William DuVall is both and more, and *Rainier Fog* is a great addition to the AIC canon.

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A Good Read

Reviews by Loren Cruden

Eight Whopping Lies, by Brian Doyle

I enjoy Brian Doyle's writing for its verve and celebration of nature. More religiously inclined readers – of his nonfiction particularly – might appreciate the earthy gusto of his Catholicism, which at times surfaces gently and at other times breaches large as a whale.

Doyle's style could strike a reader as either disarming or maddening: run-on sentences racking down the page like a stream in flood. In *Eight Whopping Lies*, Doyle's final book, an entire essay comprises a single run-on sentence. In another, about his father (a writer also) Doyle tells us: "... you could be in any room upstairs even unto the attic and hear the first hesitant strokes as he began typing, and then the sprint and rattle and rollick as he hit his stride, and when he really had it going you would hear an impossibly short pause between the end of one page and the start of another, a break so brief that you could not *believe* he could whip one sheet out and whirl another in so fast unless you saw it with your own eyes which we did sometimes peeking from the door of the study into which no child was allowed when Dad was typing for fear you would interrupt his thoughts which were no kidding Putting Food on the Table..." Which joyfully goes on for another six or seven lines before the sentence ends.

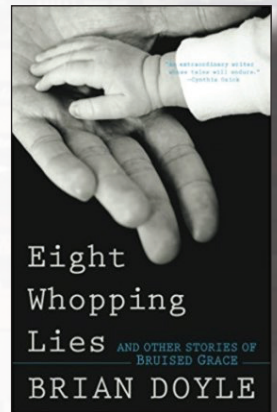
Doyle is fun to read, his descriptions rash and original, his feelings fully felt. My favorite of the book's 38 essays was "Bird to Bird," about

his grandmother's final days. "She was a hawk one day and a gull another and a heron the next depending on the light." Doyle's imagination is intricate and startling. The essays recall childhood, chess, school atomic-bomb drills, fatherhood, things he noticed and pondered and things he either cared or was furious about. Doyle is often whimsical at his most serious and deadpan at his most hilarious. He is also sentimental and preachy at times. But he savored the small, cherished the ordinary, and wrote about them with robust delight.

"The things that we remember the best, the things that matter most to us when we remember them, are the slightest things, by the measurement of the world; but they are not slight at all." Neither was Doyle's heart or talent.

Recommendation from the E shelves:

Jennifer Egan – *A Visit from the Goon Squad*



The Other Side of Madness, by Emalee Gruss Gillis

Emalee Gruss Gillis, who lives in Spokane, was in Togo, Africa, at the end of her stint in the Peace Corps when, out of the blue (or perhaps out of stress), her first psychotic break occurred. She roused from catatonia three days later in a hellish Ivory Coast insane asylum. *The Other Side of Madness: Adventures on the Path to Living Well with a Mental Illness* is an unwinding of this story and Gillis's quest to understand and heal what unfolded during and after that initial traumatic episode.

Undiagnosed, untreated both in Africa and initially following her return to the States, Gillis received earnest but baffled support from parents and other family members who struggled to comprehend what had befallen her brain. Fear, isolation – and episodes that sometimes seemed a direct line to God and sometimes just merciless insanity – left her humiliated and confused. "I lost my dignity in a locked cage, lost control of what pills went into my body, was diminished by the places that defined me, lost financial control, and was molested in my vulnerability." Gillis's experience percolated with questions: What was happening? Were the episodes completely delusory or were there elements of mystical truth within them? What is real and how can it be recognized?

These questions and others, such as about pertinent differences between Western and African approaches to interrelationship, turn this memoir of mental illness into an exploration of culture and religion as well. Gillis's style is direct, candid, sharply felt, sharply described, full of intelligence without distancing through abstraction. She tells a story of raw vulnerability *with* vulnerability – and

with courage.

The eventual diagnosis and treatment of bipolar disorder answered some of her questions, but not fully. "I want to believe that in the history of humankind there have been some genuine spiritual experiences.... But it is safer for me to think that no one has ever had a genuine spiritual experience. That way I can discount mine completely.... [I]t feels clear that my best path on this journey through life, regardless of whether there is a God or not, is to simply follow love." Which Gillis does, from the strong center of her marriage – and inclusion, perhaps, of some of the ways of connecting learned in Africa.

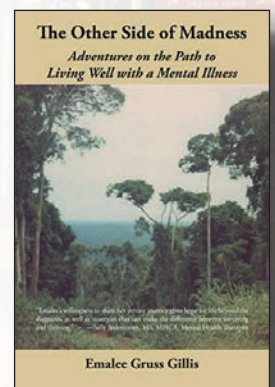
The book's epilogue provides substantial, specific strategies for how to not just survive, but also thrive despite mental illness. Gillis's thirty years of evolving experience offer a beacon.

Gillis will be a featured speaker at the Coeur d'Alene TEDx Talk, "A Toolbox for Bipolar Disorder," January 12.

Other recommendations from the G shelves:

Aja Gabel – *The Ensemble*

Loren Cruden writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, available at Meyers Falls Market in Kettle Falls and www.LorenBooks.com, and provides Home Pet Care in the north Stevens County area.



Shut the Front Door

By Tina Tolliver Matney

It seems that this year has been so full of disaster, fear and heartache it's just about all I have been able to focus on lately. My mind has been hard-pressed to remember the good days, the happy moments and whether there was any laughter and joy mixed in. Surely it wasn't all bad. It wasn't all floods, fire, sickness and heartbreak.

It was the heartbreak recently that sent me flailing into the deep end of the pity pool where it seems I wallowed around in my own sorrows for days on end. Pity parties like that are an epic emotional roller coaster that leave a person feeling downright sick and exhausted.

However, I don't like feeling that way and my new life journey of living alone just isn't going to work if I'm not healthy and on my game. And by living alone I mean I share this place with two dogs, three cats (possibly four or maybe a raccoon is eating the leftovers), eleven chickens (Monday I had 12 ... again ... raccoon issue?), two owls and a wood rat that has built a multi-level condo in the woodshed (and I suspect has several relatives visiting).

Living alone with this many critters on this property requires a good amount of stamina. But my stamina seems to have gone missing. I fear it was sucked from my lungs with the summer forest fire smoke. Or perhaps it's just because my exercise lately has been nothing but a fast-paced daily walk from the back door to various outbuildings to do morning chores before I finally wind up in my car to go to work. I fear my right leg is more toned than my left because it presses on the gas pedal a little harder these days because I'm always late.

My exercise bike sits upstairs and beckons regularly, but I tell it that 3:30 a.m. is just too early to even think about trying to pedal anything, and 4 a.m. is no better. I wonder if there will ever come a day when I can again sleep like a normal person. My yoga mat just mocks me. Actually, it stopped mocking me because I rolled it up in a tight cylinder and shoved it to the back of the closet.

I am confident that if there is to be a productive and happy future here, I'm going to have to figure this issue out real quick. I'm not getting any younger and my back has been telling me that every single day. I heard that a new gym has opened up in town and, while I considered that as an option, my budget now requires that I pinch pennies so tight that they scream for mercy. My daily exercise will have to be carried out here and I'm just going to have to make it a priority.

I'm not even sure what sits in the number one priority slot at this time, but I can tell you it sure isn't me. Just a few days ago, as I was sipping my special weekend coffee that I call my "Mug of Love," with its genuine whipped cream and fresh-grated nutmeg, I realized I was just staring at the river in quiet contemplation. It was a moment of realizing that I had put my own needs on the back burner, something I've been known to do on several other occasions in my lifetime.

Before that I had been racing through the mornings and making sure every animal got their loves and walks and treats ... except me. It was also then that I realized I now have this new opportunity to test my ability to really and truly take care of myself. I've no doubt in my mind that I can manage to take care of these furry companions while I find my feet and spread my own wings and figure out how to make this situation better for all of us. The fear of not being able to handle things by myself has been real though.

A few nights ago I came home from a very long day and finished up all of the outside chores before I put on my pajamas while I made some tea. I had parked my car near the door so that I could bring some large

bags inside. I planned to stash away some dried foods so that if I become a starving artist I could live on pea soup or rice for a while. Anyway, I forgot I had the order in my car, so while the tea was brewing I went out in my slippers to grab the 25-pound bag of split peas. Perhaps I shut the door a little too hard. I had locked myself out of the house.

And so there I stood, calm as a cucumber because I knew I had a spare key hidden and even though I was in my slippers I would be able to get to it easily. I congratulated myself for keeping my cool and barely cussing. I was back in the house with my future sustenance in no time, with the spare keys lying on the counter because I didn't want to get my slippers any wetter than they already were. You probably know where this is going.

Now in my defense, my door handles have always been a bit of a challenge. They open from the inside even if they are locked. So yes, I stepped out the very next morning just to feed the cats and perhaps I shut the door a little too hard. It was snowing. Hard. It was dark. Once again I had my slippers on. And I could see the spare keys from the lovely French doors where I stood whimpering like a child knowing that every door in the house was locked.

I whimpered more while my resolve threatened to turn to panic. But I remembered another time I found myself in a similar situation in the pouring rain with nothing on my feet but a pair of flip flops. I won't tell you how I got back in the house but one of my windows is going to need a little repair. I did it and again there was minimal cussing because I really am trying to tame my mouth so I don't scare the animals. They don't like cussing or panic. It seems that when I whimper they think I'm speaking their language.

I now have a keypad lock on order. Lesson learned.

Another incident that very same night shored up my confidence that I've got the guts to make this work. On my way to bed I could hear water running. Not like the normal "stuck toilet" sound, but real honest-to-goodness gushing that I determined was coming from a faucet outside on the corner of the house. I had the smarts this time to grab my chore boots.

The water was shooting out of the faucet. I immediately thought it was a broken pipe and stood there shouting loudly, "OH MY GOSH!" That's really not what I shouted but you get the point. Then I wondered if maybe the faucet had been frozen when I took the hose off last week and now maybe it just thawed out ... so I reached my hand out calmly and turned the spigot and like a miracle the water stopped.

Dead silence.

And then I said to no one except the dog, "Fixed it!" Then we went back into the house through the unlocked door before locking things up tight for the night and going to bed, feeling just a little better about things than I had that morning.

And while it's easy for me to think of nothing but the challenges, the fear and the heartache of the past year, I am finding a few reminders of the good things the year held as well. But if ever a door needed to be shut and locked it will be the one that closed 2018. Each day that goes by now is just one more day that I learn something new about myself, about this place, and these furry companions that share this great big life.

Tina is a mother, grandmother, artist, rescuer of owls, eagles, hawks and other wild creatures, children's book illustrator, gardener and hobby farmer who makes her home on the Kettle River. Check out the Kettle River Raptor Center on Facebook.



Not A Rat At All

Article and Photo by J. Foster Fanning

Early American colonists in New England originally referred to this mammal as “musquash,” which reportedly was the name local Algonquian language gave to what we now know as the muskrat. The muskrat is one of several North American animals whose name has Native American origins, including the Abenaki name “moskwes,” the Lenape name “temuskwus,” and the Powhatan name “mussascus.” English-speaking Americans combined that sound with their word for a rodent that used a “musky” odor to mark its territory. So at first the Anglo name for this creature was musk-beaver, then, due to a resemblance to rats, later altered to muskrat.

In creation myths of several Native American tribes, Musquash plays the role of Earthdiver, being the only animal to succeed at diving to the primordial ocean floor to bring up earth for the Creator to use as the foundation of more land.

In some Algonquin traditions, Muskrat is a female figure who becomes the mother of humankind. Muskrats are considered lucky animals in other tribes, and some folktales include muskrats bestowing wealth or hunting success on humans who treat them respectfully. And Moskwes, it was once said, could predict the weather (the higher it builds its den the colder the coming winter).

The muskrat is the largest species in the subfamily *Arvicolinae*, which includes 142 other species of rodents, mostly voles and lemmings. Muskrats are mistakenly referred to as “rats” in a general sense because they are medium-sized rodents with an adaptable lifestyle and an omnivorous diet. They are not, however, members of the genus *Rattus*.

Muskrats are renowned for their short, thick fur, from which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police winter hats are manufactured. These medium-to-dark brown or black creatures have a belly with lighter

counter-shading. The fur, as with other cold-climate mammals, has two layers, which helps protect them from icy waters.

They have long tails covered with scales rather than hair. These tails are slightly flattened and vertically aligned to aid them in swimming. This is a tail shape unique to muskrats. When traveling across land, their tails drag on the ground, creating easily recognizable tracks. An adult muskrat is approximately 16–30 inches long, half of which is the tail, and weighs three to four pounds.

This critter, found throughout the Okanogan and Columbia Highlands, has a semiaquatic existence, spending most of its time in the water. Given the muskrat’s evolved ability to tolerate a buildup of carbon dioxide, they can swim underwater for up to 20 minutes at a time. Special ear flaps close to keep water out. And while their hind feet are semi-webbed, it is their tails that function as the main means of propulsion while swimming.

Muskrats tend to form family units consisting of a male and female and their young. During the spring there are often territorial disputes as well as fights over potential mates. Frequently these small but fierce combatants are injured or killed in these fights.

Muskrat families build nests to defend themselves and their young from cold and predators. In streams, ponds or lakes, muskrats tunnel into the bank, creating an entrance six to eight inches underwater. In marshes, layered plant nests made from vegetation and mud are pushed up. These push-ups are commonly three feet high. In cold, northern areas, once winter conditions set in, muskrats keep the openings to their burrows closed by plugging them with vegetation that may be replaced daily, depending on forays to the outside. It is

not uncommon for muskrat push-ups to be swept away in spring floods. Muskrat ingenuity leads them to build feeding platforms formed of bent and stacked foliage in wetlands and waterways. These creatures assist in maintaining open areas in marshes, which in turn helps to provide habitat for aquatic birds.

Muskrats are native to North America, found over most of Canada, the United States and a small part of northern Mexico.

In the early 20th century, the trapping of the muskrat for its fur became an important industry. During that era, the fur was trimmed and dyed to be marketed widely in the U.S. as “Hudson seal” fur (which sounds a lot better than rat fur). It was at that time that the muskrat, a prolific breeder, was introduced to Europe as a fur resource. Females can have two or three litters a year. Many of the low-elevation European countries, such as Belgium, France and the Netherlands, now consider the muskrat an invasive pest, as its burrowing damages the flood-preventing dikes and levees. In those countries, muskrats are trapped, poisoned and hunted to keep the population down.

Fortunately, in the Okanogan and Columbia Highlands there is plenty of room for the ubiquitous musquash. With fresh snow on the ground, it’s a good time to wander out into the hills and vales, checking out tracks and making wildlife observations. Also, mark your calendar for the annual Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb 18-21, 2019. It’s a fun and helpful event to be involved in. You can find more information at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

J. Foster Fanning is a father, grandfather, retired fire chief and wannabe beach bum. He dabbles in photography as an excuse to wander the hills and vales in search of the perfect image. Learn more at <http://fosterfanning.blogspot.com>.

Tally Up!

By J. Merrill Baker

Whew ... we made it. All the way to another year!

Taking inspiration from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it." Or Thomas Paine: "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." And we do. We will go forward, whether we are ready or not, despite the challenges ahead. End of a year, or the start of another, it is time to "tally up!"

What happened to last year? Does anyone else go through their marked-up refrigerator calendar to review? (I suspect this is how those Christmas letters get launched.) "Yes, we had little Chrissy's 5th birthday the day after dad's dental appointment and a week before our oil change in the Rambler."

Reviewing our calendar, I realize that

our youngest grandchild turned 14, while the eldest is now 29. Did I mention a great-grandchild or two? We also added "bonus" kids, the stepchildren we fold into the family. We feel pretty fortunate to see all of our "kids" happy and thriving. Kids add to your longevity; I am sure there are studies that say so, or maybe it just feels like that. Grandparents wish to be involved in their future; we think we can contribute our hard-earned knowledge and save what is left of humanity.

Each month I mark up a refrigerator calendar, noting our appointments, birthdays, and whoa – I just now realized that this has been my method for almost fifty years. I've also used my Dollar Store datebook and incorporated the "memo" function on my smartphone. I admit, it probably takes all three of these reminders to keep me on track, so I must reference my "KISS" note (Keep it Simple

Sister!) to ponder my situation for improvement. Discover new ways to tally up. And that's how I start my New Year.

The holiday season tends to bring out the charity in us, but also sometimes the grouch. Mother. She specifically disliked those happy Christmas letters about someone's exceptional offspring graduating Harvard or their young progeny attending a super preschool for the extraordinarily gifted. Did anyone get a letter excitedly exclaiming how uncle Joe was released from prison on a work furlough or cousin Ethel managed rehab while attending classes on the internet?

I consider us the sandwich generation – sandwiched between caring for our children and our aging parents, burning candles at both ends.

Mom would lecture her grandkids. I think she really meant well. I did see her charitable actions on many occasions,

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Living in NE WA: Lessons Learned

but they usually came with a lecture, *especially* to her grandkids. "You can't fix money problems with money." She would help pay for auto repairs or put something toward a student loan, even though she was on a fixed income. She was thrifty. She expected her grandchildren to be thrifty too.

Exactly WHAT constitutes a "Happy New Year"? I think waking up in the morning, still breathing, may have something to do with it, but I am grateful for small miracles, heck, any miracles are noteworthy! Of course, that depends on your definition of a "miracle." My mom hiking up our very steep icy snowbound road when our car wouldn't make it all the way up to deliver her ... that was a miracle that held our awe for days, and obviously our memory for years! She did take a three-hour nap afterward.

Every new year gets launched with the holiday season and, before you know it, we will be right back here, starting another New Year, wondering how it went by so fast. Yes, we can tally it all up with a refrigerator calendar. Plus, we kept track of the budget, even with the surprises of car and equipment repairs, windshields and weddings.

Consequently, this holiday season has been more thrifty than I anticipated. Mom would be proud. With her practicality, she modeled how to live while moving forward. And showed how you can still be generous while being thrifty.

We have local options. For groceries, we can participate in a food-co-op,

(www.AzureStandard.com) that delivers to our area monthly (free to join,) or local, seasonal farmers markets (will we EVER get an INDOOR one?) Some of us out here in the countryside can barter our raw milk for chicken feed or an extra hand with our harvesting, or feeding our animals while we are gone for three days. We can help each other out. We share resources and information, and we talk about the weather.

We can see for ourselves from the climate and local weather that the Grand Solar Minimum has arrived via a "quiet" sun. Our favorite professor, James McCanney, wrote about this back in 1980, in his book *Principia Meteorologia: The Physics of Sun Earth Weather*, detailing the effects of electrical conditions in the solar system on space weather, and ultimately the weather systems on earth. Hence the strange weather patterns increasing on our planet.

In our area, the pioneer families still talk about when the Columbia froze over and they walked across the river! Just in case, we suggest building permanent greenhouses and getting cold-resistant chicken breeds, maybe even those hardy Scottish Highlander cows. The colder climate impact here may not be as severe as for other areas because of the onshore weather systems from the Pacific Ocean. Another reason I love where we live, and my greenhouse will be permanent, it is on my new year calendar!

Inspiration from Pythagoras: "Take courage. The human race is divine."

I like that. Even if the human race has forgotten that, in general, we are all on the same planet. We humans will start here, at home, in our own neighborhoods. Here in the Inland Pacific Northwest, we try to keep our chickens' water from freezing, and our roads cleared. That is what we do this time of year. We will continue to count our blessings. It cheers us, gives us hope like discovering a windfall of cash in an old winter coat. The possibility of an unexpected small miracle has unleashed our imagination, if only for a moment.

A tiny miracle, my Christmas cactus was blooming brilliantly for Thanksgiving. Well, that is its job. It was blooming early. Maybe my amaryllis will make it this year? I am, if nothing else, always hopeful. After all, there are now three of them and we feel abundant.

To Life!

J. Merrill Baker, recalcitrant yet grateful ruralite.

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Finding My Bonanza

By Karen Giebel

The summer before I turned six years old we moved from little Dunkirk, N.Y., to the next town over and even smaller, Fredonia. At some point, and who knows the mind of a small child, I found myself sobbing in my mother's arms. "I didn't want to move to Fredonia!"

Mom: "Where did you want to move?"

Karen: "I wanted to move to a ranch in Texas!" Sobbing and sobbing and sobbing.

My mother, bless her heart, did not laugh but gathered me in her arms to console her even-then wild second daughter.

I had, like many little girls growing up in the early 1960s, fallen in love with Little Joe Cartwright on the TV show "Bonanza." His adventures and his pinto pony swept us all away.

Some dreams take longer to fulfill than others.

I grew up in Fredonia. Loved our rural life and the freedom it allowed me. Freedom to roam the fields. Freedom to spend days swinging from grape vines over the creek. Freedom to explore the Pollywog Pond and to sled endless winter days down Powder Puff Hill.

In 1971, I went to nursing school in Buffalo, N.Y., and life changed. I graduated as an RN in 1975 and took a job at a large and prestigious teaching hospital. Married, bought a house in the suburbs and raised my babies there. I was content but longed for country living.

In 1994 things changed again and I spent the next many years sorting things out and trying to see where I needed to be. I had the best friends in the world. We laughed.

We went to craft shows and we were the "ladies that lunched." We attended the symphony orchestra and enjoyed musical theater. We went on excursions across the border to Toronto. We shared secrets, hopes and dreams. But ... I wanted more ... so much more. I needed adventure. Someone to hike with, golf with, SCUBA dive with, sail with, garden and more. As good as my life was, I still knew there was a ranch in Texas with my name on it.

At the same time, I had a career that I loved beyond measure. Nursing was not only in my blood, it was my blood. I had my dream job as a clinical risk manager for a company that owned 35 skilled nursing facilities. Helping to ensure the residents received the care they deserved and coaching the staff to be the best they could be was the highlight of my 40+ years as a registered Nurse. I would gladly have spent the rest of my working years with that group, happy to dress for success, including the high heels, matching coordinates, sweater sets, the whole nine yards. I loved it.

And then, out of the blue, this guy dropped into my life. Really? Some man? Convince me. He hiked, golfed, was a SCUBA diver, sailed, had a motorcycle, knew how to cook and loved dogs. Uh... Oh....

As time went on, this guy said that when he retired, he wanted to move back to Washington state where he had lived for 20 years working for a major airplane manufacturing company before being transferred to New York state. He wanted to retire up in the mountains of northeast Washington where he had hunted, camped and fished for many years.

And he said to me, "Come with?"

All I knew about Washington was Seattle and I knew I wasn't going to live there. But we flew out to SeaTac, rented a car and drove east. As we went over Snoqualmie Pass, my jaw dropped seeing that majestic beauty. I began to think that maybe Washington would be my ranch in Texas. When we arrived in Republic, I took one look at this tiny frontier town nestled in the San Poil Valley, overlooked by the Kettle Range, and I knew this was my little girl

vision of a ranch in Texas. I said "yes."

We bought a house with many acres of land, surrounded by even more unspoiled acres, many miles from town. And here we live with our two big old dogs, four barn cats and two indoor/outdoor cats. We also bought alpacas. Lots of alpacas. We built fences and shelters and planted fruit trees in the old orchard. We started a large garden that gets larger every year even though there are only the two of us. Our goal is to grow as much of our own food as possible. I can tomatoes, salsa, chili sauce, peaches, pears, pickles, relishes, chutney, jams and jellies. What I don't can, I freeze.

I traded in those Michael Kors designer heels for sturdy hikers and muck boots. I drew the line at wearing "tire chains" on my boots to deal with the ice. That lasted until the first time my legs went out from under me that first winter. Falling on ice is very painful after age 40! I am now the proud owner of three pairs of those "tire chains." I switched out my black velvet fur-trimmed gloves for tough leather work gloves that are as dirty on the inside as they are on the outside. I have not looked back.

Since retiring in 2017, I spend my days working even harder, caring for all the animals and the garden, doing the yard, finishing the inside of our new home, writing my blog and working on my cookbook. My husband and I hike the hills together, exploring all that the back of the beyond in Ferry County has to offer. We boat and fish on Lake Roosevelt. At night we stare in awe at the Milky Way while listening to the owls hooting and the coyotes calling. We watch the deer and wild turkey as they stroll through our fields.

It used to be when I looked out my kitchen window back in suburbia all I saw was a six-foot-high stockade fence. Now my view is the huge, craggy, granite face of my beloved Mt. Elizabeth and the surrounding hillsides covered with Ponderosa pine. I am home.

Never give up on your dreams. Some just take longer to fulfill.

Karen Giebel is a "happy, optimistic retired RN living out my dreams with my husband Dan in the back of the beyond in Ferry County."



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Along the Mountain Path: The Brain

By Sarah Kilpatrick, E.R.Y.T.

"Yoga is an aware, compassionate relationship with the Self."

~ B.K.S. Iyengar

"Present moment, wonderful moment."

~ Thich Nhat Hanh



The human body is filled with energy channels. The ancient yogis described these channels as "nadis," subtle energy channels, and there are classical yoga charts showing many small lines all over the body. B.K.S. Iyengar said that basically all of our nerves are nadis. They channel electrical current from our brain throughout the whole body. Our blood vessels channel blood and lymph throughout the body as well, feeding and cleansing our cells. We are filled with movement and communication. The brain is the communication center, and the physical position of the brain affects our consciousness.

Yoga is a technique for balancing the energies of the body, and for balancing the energy of the mind.

When we stand in Tadasana, in correct, balanced posture, the brain rests in the center of the head, and is balanced front and back. When we recline, with the head level on the floor, and the eyes relaxed, the brain rests in the back of the skull, activating the "back brain," which is the part of the brain that experiences the body through physical sensation. We

can be present with the sensations of the present moment. If we take the eyes up toward the brain, or tip our chin up, we come more into the front brain where we interpret the body. We excite words and imagination, taking us away from direct experience. If we have our head dropped forward, looking at our phone screen, we are in the front brain, perhaps to the exclusion of the physical world. We are ignoring the needs of the physical. We may just get tense or experience a headache or stiff neck, or we may cause an accident.

Yoga is a practice of union and integration. We are encouraging communication and cooperation between front and back brain. Properly aligning ourselves requires the attention of the front brain. We use our knowledge and our eyes to observe the proper positioning of the body. As we ride the waves of breath into the pose, we move more into back brain consciousness, feeling the sensations of stretch, relaxation and resistance. We listen to the messages of the body before moving more deeply into the pose.

Yoga is not mind over matter. It is cooperation between mind and matter.

In recuperative poses, great emphasis is placed on head positioning. Judith Lasater says, "We are manipulating the nervous system to a desired result." When we drop the brain into the back of the skull, and when the eyes rest toward the heart, we are fully receptive to the physical experience. We can relax into the back brain. In active yoga, we must stay awake to what we are doing, and how we are doing it. You are the driver! If you don't pay attention, you may get hurt.

Erect posture, with the head supported and in balance, really does help us to pay attention and to learn. We can be more alert, present and "level-headed." When we are ready to rest, paying attention to head and eye position can help us to relax and refresh ourselves. Balance in the nervous system helps us find peace and to come present with the moment.

As you journey along the mountain path, may you be awake to each precious moment of your life.

Namaste.

Sarah practices and teaches at Mt. Path Yoga studio, 818 E. Columbia Ave., Colville.

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The Backyard Philosopher

The Beauty of Trees

By Linda Bond

I love trees. All kinds. Deciduous (leafy) trees are found all over my neighborhood. In the spring, I enjoy watching them put forth new buds, which soon turn into small leaves, only to grow larger and take on their natural colors – some yellow, some green, some red. Of course, by this time of year, all the leaves are gone and we are left with bare branches, forming an artistic latticework where crows, mourning doves, owls and other birds find a place to rest in their daily wandering. Squirrels make excellent use of these denuded limbs as they travel to and from the ground, culminating in highways to carry them home to their nests at dusk.

Then there are the pines and firs and spruce trees. On a windy night, I love to listen to them sway to and fro, whispering to each other – perhaps sharing news of their day. These, too, form perches for crows and others. From them I often hear our mourning doves cooing to each other, and listen as our crows call to others blocks away. Are they counting the distance with the number of their caws? Are they asking questions about food that has been found, or telling others of the bounty to be had in our front yard after the morning toss of dog food pellets onto the lawn?

The trees know. They have lived for many years watching the

seasons come and go. I sometimes walk out to our big red maple (it's called a Crimson King I am told) and, placing my hand on the rough bark, I like to listen to the past and wonder about the future. I sometimes share my reverence for these forest friends, and others tell me they, too, love trees. But most of us have not known the true value of communing with the forest. Until now.

Forest Bathing

Since I work in a bookstore, I have ready access to new books, many bringing new ideas with them. One such book is *Forest Bathing – How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*, by Dr. Qing Li. This book is all about the Japanese art and science of Shinrin-Yoku, which translates into “taking in the forest atmosphere,” or “forest bathing.” Perhaps because many Japanese people live in such cramped quarters, nature appreciation has been a motive for their pursuit of arts such as bonsai growing, flower arranging and now forest bathing. While this practice started in Japan in the early 1980s, it was not until 2004 that it began to be studied scientifically to identify benefits that might be derived from soaking up the sounds, smells, and sights of forest walks.

Recent research has shown that not only is the immune system improved, but hormones can be balanced in the body and sleep patterns improved. Mood states are improved. Practitioners experience an increase in energy, decreases in anxiety, depression and anger, and a reduction in stress, with most becoming more relaxed.

In our wooded region, you can experience a kind of forest bathing for yourself. Find a wooded area off the beaten path or even a city park. In Spokane, we have an arboretum that I enjoy whenever possible. As I stroll among old giants, I think about what they have seen in their long lifetimes and what they would share with me if they could. Sometimes I can find a good spot to sit beneath one of the sweeping deciduous trees, lean back against its bark, close my eyes and listen to the breeze sifting through the leaves above. This brings me peace and tranquility that I can carry back into my more blustery daily life. An occasional visit to my bark-covered friends helps to improve my life immensely.

The Ecosystem of the Forest

The next time you visit a forest, I encourage you to look around. To notice light streaming through the tree branches and striking the ground. Or the way that the sun sparkles and turns the leaves to gold. To think about all the microbial life, fungi and flowers living off the rich soil under these old giants. To think of the larger species – deer, wild cats, bear, perhaps beavers, and other animals. We may come to understand that in a very special way, all this life is supported by our tree friends. I think of them as a gift like none other and seek to enjoy their company as often as possible, and I'm better for it.

Linda Bond is co-founder and leader of the Inland Northwest Writers Guild and Outreach Coordinator at Auntie's Bookstore in Spokane, WA. Write to her at lindathewriter@gmail.com.



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We Hatched a Business!

By Michelle Lancaster

After attending the annual Women in Ag conference in Colville, I resolved to explore the idea of off-farm egg sales as a possible income source. Thinking of it as a New Year's resolution, I started researching the rules. My husband and I asked ourselves the big question: "Do we want to be subject to government regulations?" Living in Stevens County most of my life, I see a common theme among the people: Less government is better. Did we want to become involved?

In the past, we sold eggs without the need for a license, under the state exemption – by selling eggs from our own flock of hens at our farm (place of production) direct to the consumer (the person who will be eating the eggs). But not many people beyond your neighbors are willing to drive to the farm each week to buy eggs, especially country folk who more likely than not have their own laying hens. If we wanted to expand, we needed to seek out a new market, off farm.

We decided on a trial year – the length of our initial license. I started by purchasing 25 chicks in the spring to raise as our next batch of layers and we decided to keep our older hens instead of rotating stock (they were still young enough) for a total of around 65 hens up to 3 years in age.

Next, I read the rules online at the Washington State Department of Agriculture's website. I called the department that specifically handles the "egg handler-dealer" license. They emailed me a packet of more rules to read through and advised me to contact the Department of Revenue (DOR) to set up a business license and trade name.

I thought I'd be sharp and set my first day of business as August 1, so that I would have time to compile all the supplies/equipment and have time for the license and required egg seals to arrive in the mail. That idea started working out well. I had labels and cartons ready to go well before my deadline. My license even arrived on time (email, then a hard copy in the mail). Then I contacted the government's egg department. The conversation went like this:

"Hello, I would like to pay for my egg seals." "You can't buy egg seals unless you have a

business license." "Great, I have my business license now and can pay by credit card." "We only accept checks." "But you told me to call on the day my license was active so I could pay!" "I will send you the form to print off to enclose in an envelope with a check for \$2.68." "But you didn't say that before! I would have mailed the check a couple days ago in order to get it to you on August 1st!" "You can't pay for the egg seals before the active date of your license." "I know, it would have been in the mail and you would have gotten it on the 1st and could have sent out the egg seals on the 1st so I wouldn't be waiting indefinitely to be able to sell eggs."

I felt like the dumb one there, trying to have a logical conversation with the government. Either way, my logic did not matter – the check sat around in some government office for two weeks before even being deposited. I lost three weeks of sales waiting for a silly little official seal.

In the meantime, before August 1, the Department of Revenue sent me an ominous looking letter declaring that I must file my taxes quarterly. Quarterly!? Thankfully, Women in Ag ladies *to the rescue* advised me that I could call and have my taxes changed to annual reporting. I contacted DOR and pressed option #3 for a tax specialist (wow, a nice perk!). The kind lady stated that as long as I earned less than \$1,050/month, I could change my tax filing to annually, starting January 1 of next year. She also walked me through the online tax form. Small win and the gov't gained a bit of respect from me. A friend and fellow off-farm-egg-seller helped me sort out the initial tax filing and I still have a couple questions, but now that the first filing is done, I have a little more time to sort out the particulars.

Now, the last step: the eggs and the cartons. We had purchased new cartons (yikes – probably our biggest cost besides feed). Thankfully, the cartons were pre-labeled with all the required warnings, so all we had to add was our name and address, an egg seal and a best-by date. I started by using business cards, a quick way to provide the required information. Then I purchased a custom stamp, quite affordably, that contains our

name, address and a couple cute chickens.

Now, as is typical with government information, each brochure or packet included some of the information required for operating our business, some pages seemingly contradicting others. I asked the regional inspector for several clarifications, hoping our eggs were being sold in a proper and legal manner after all this time and effort. Luckily, we have a basement and utility sinks with clean well water for cleaning the eggs in a place separate from the "domestic living" areas. We also have an extra small fridge, because these eggs have to be kept in their own refrigerator. Our large cooler, with ice packs, holds around 15-18 dozen eggs for transport to the store. Therefore, our set-up costs for the business were low (around \$150 initially, plus the chickens/housing/feed/more cartons and labels down the road). I am tracking all the expenses to give us an idea of what our cost per dozen will be at the end of the year.

We were limited by the number of laying hens this year, so selling to a grocery store worked better for us than committing to attending a farmers market. There is a high demand for local eggs that I and others could be supplying. So, after all this, I am excited about the potential for our chickens to bring in a little extra income on the farm and the excitement of our community in supporting local farm products.

Michelle Lancaster homesteads with her family on Old Dominion Mountain in Colville. She writes at Spiritedrose.wordpress.com.



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The List That Brought It All Home

By Gabriele von Trapp

It is baffling to me that most of the New Year's resolutions I made in the past never came to fruition. I consider myself a resolute person, so what was the problem?!

My resolutions were not much different than most: eat better, exercise, lose a little weight, get rid of bad habits, save more, volunteer more and become a better person. In the past I created lists to help me stay on task and mark my progress, but it became clear that the same items appeared on my list year after year and the list became longer and longer. Had I not made any progress? Had life gotten in my way? Were my aspirations unrealistic? Was it too much work? Perhaps. This time I intended to get to the meat of the matter.

For me, January is an excellent time for a little introspection. The days are shorter, my activities have waned, my social life is not as robust and I have more time to my-

self. I stoked the fire, sat at my disheveled desk, set to work with pen and paper. It was time to "get real."

I began my self-examination by jotting down all the negatives and positives. One side of the page was filling up quickly and I struggled to find attributes to list in the plus column. I was being honest with myself and came to realize what was hidden under many layers of justification and disillusionment.

What I discovered wasn't pretty. It was crystal clear, if ever so subtly, that I had a tendency to be unkind and lacked empathy. I also had an inclination to be self-centered and self-seeking, which, when I thought about it, consistently led me to pity myself; poor me, poor me. I discovered old resentments, remorse, anger, fear and blame. I recounted all the times I insisted on my own way, which usually led to discontentment and unhappiness. Self-confidence and self-reliance were

my "go to" but they never seemed to solve any of my problems. Through self-examination I realized that I had often made thoughtless decisions that steered me in the wrong direction and affected my health and well-being.

What the harsh heck?! I had opened a can of worms to say the least. Gulp! I needed to swallow my pride or wallow in it. Needless to say, I was not prepared for such a painful and uncomfortable process.

For the sake of not being overly self-critical (I will add that to my list of resolutions) I chose to accept my shortcomings. It was time to do a little house cleaning.

The emotional laundry was soiled and piled high in my closet, the "personal power" bill had not been paid, the sink was plugged and wouldn't drain my resentments, old cobwebs stretched from the corners of my history and the grass on my side of the fence wasn't as green as my neighbor's. My house was a mess and

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Inner Landscape

nothing was in order. I felt overwhelmed.

"Where should I start?" was the question. I realized that I could not change the past. Whew, what a relief! That would have taken a lifetime of cleaning and would never present itself as spotless. I had no control of what would happen tomorrow, so I could lay it to rest and I made that bed. Today was the only thing that mattered and what could I accomplish in one day? A lot! To start, I had to drop my "self" in the privy and flush it down the drain. In doing just that, I had already cleaned a good portion of my house.

I began feeling more buoyant as I discarded self-pity in the trash and took the heavy bag to the curb to be collected. Unhappiness, remorse and blame were sucked into a vacuum and I plunged out my resentments and cleared the plugged pipe. Emotional laundry took some time, but I persisted load after load. Most of the items are now neatly folded and placed in a drawer that I shut.

Unkindness had burned a hole in my favorite shirt, but I craftily sewed on a

patch from a swatch of fabric that a forgiving friend had given me. The cobwebs of history stretching from corner to corner were difficult to reach. I decided to leave them hanging as a reminder and I could get to them some other time. They were harmless and would be visible only if the sun shone on them anyway.

Disillusionment was easily freshened with a quick spritz of reality. It had left its impression in the dust on my desk, so I used a clean rag to wipe the film away. Adding a little elbow grease made the clean slate shine and I could see my true nature.

Now anger and fear were tough nuts to crack. I had to take a chisel to them. When I was finally able to pry the stubborn shells open and dig out the nutmeat of the matter, it registered that they were two in the same shell. I swallowed those words.

I also realized that I had arbitrarily misspelled self-seeking. I threw the phrase on the dung heap. When it landed on the steaming mound it scrambled and spelled seeking-self. It will make great fertilizer

when I add it to the depleted soil of my field of dreams, which I will do before I plant the seeds of my best intentions. The grass was still greener on my neighbor's side of the fence. All I needed to do was water my side thoroughly, add a little fertilizer and let nature take its course.

As I stood back and reviewed the work I had done, I realized I had to get back to listing those New Year's resolutions. In cleaning house, I had lost the weight of burden, exercised some self-control, flushed a few bad habits, voluntarily saved myself some grief, ate a healthy dose of humility and became someone better equipped to move forward into the new year.

My list of resolutions for this coming year is clear: continue to take a personal inventory, keep a clean house and don't forget to turn that dung heap.

Gabriele von Trapp lives by Deer Park where her memories, dreams and reflections fuel her vigorous engagement with the present as she forges an ever-evolving future.



Happy New Year!

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Up With Resolutions

By Gretchen Cruden

There are those among us who refuse to make a New Year's resolution. Why be forced by some arbitrary date and time to make a life change? I am not one of them. I love reflecting and growing in this way, and really love the sense of the new start January 1 demarcates. To each their own.

Many of us are so good at recycling the same resolution year after year. Walmart has the masses fully dialed in and sells accordingly. One moment the aisles are chock-full of artificial trees and holiday decorations and the next moment it is December 26 and time for organization tubs and weight loss drinks. This year we will do it! Who's with me?

But what if instead of recycling our resolutions, we upcycled our resolutions? While there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to improve our bodies, our minds, and our spirits, there is something wrong when, for some, we can't love the one we are with – ourselves.

Many years ago, I sat next to an impish 12-year-old on a long school bus ride. True to preteen form, she talked nonstop about her life – what she loved about it and what she hated.

Abruptly, she asked me, "See this scar? I hate this scar. I absolutely hate it!"

How could I not see her scar? It jagged up the side of her nose in bold contrast to her soft features. It was clear to me that that scar mapped a journey from self-confidence to self-consciousness for her.

I asked her to tell me about it.

Her story unfolded as she spoke of being a young and adventurous child who happened to be curious about how cars could magically "float" in the pit of a mechanic's shop. She looked over edge of the pit and promptly fell in. A quick rush to the ER followed, and many stitches to close the wound. A wound she had inflicted upon herself.

Her eyes welled up as she said what she hated the most about the stupid scar was that she had done it to herself.

I smiled at her and pointed to a good scar I have on my arm. It is the result of being kicked by a saucy milk cow who had no patience for my novice hands at 3 a.m. in a cold dairy barn. For me, it was an ugly reminder of my ineptness for many years. That is, until I decided to upcycle my thinking. Yes, I was a terrible milker in the

beginning, but that scar came to represent my absolute delight in trying new things, my desire to push myself, and my intense work ethic.

After all, hadn't I wrapped my arm in my jacket and finished my milking before stumbling to the house? My scar became beautiful to me.

I looked deeply into the sparkling eyes of that young girl and told her I absolutely loved her scar. I told her that her scar was such a beautiful testament to her adventurous side – that it showed she was a curious person who would go to great lengths to find truth. That kind of truth-seeking is rare, I told her, and should be valued.

If she were to magically erase the scar from her face, that would mean she would also have to agree to magically erase a part of her that defines her – her innate sense of curiosity.

She looked at me and ran her fingers over the scar. Her face softened.

Perhaps, as I set out in great resolve to change some part of my life this year (again), I will take a moment and ask myself if there is a new lens I might view foibles through. Practice a little upcycling of my resolutions instead of recycling my thoughts. Perhaps I can love my imperfections for what they represent.

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New for 2019

By Becky Dubell

With the New Year now under way, I'm thinking "What am I going to do new and different this year?" That seems to be the thing to do around the end of the year – out with the old and in with the new. Me, personally? I don't think I have taken the time to plan that far ahead even though I do have appointments on my 2019 desk calendar already!

Maybe by the time I get to the end of this article I might have slowed down enough to get something figured out.

In the meantime, I asked a few others, "What would you like to accomplish in 2019?"

Beki: Bathroom remodel in the spring.

Sandy: Daughter Gracie (19) is graduating from Grand Canyon University in April with her Psychology major. Running Start at CHS and moving back to Colville to work in her field.

Gordon: Resolves to dance with Randy's girlfriend while Randy has to be on stage with his guitar. You go Gordon!

Carol: Sell existing house to buy new house and go on a diet.

Scott: After what has now been 10 months A NEW HOUSE come springtime (along with the mortgage payment).

Aaron: A new nephew (number four). More time with family and friends.

Rich: See no snow (hey, this is northeast Washington). Spring-time house remodel.

Andrew: Triple the traffic in the store and get the son potty trained (have fun with that).

Jennifer: Gramma this year? Fingers crossed along with the eyes and toes! Get out and about more since moving back home.

Denise: Make it though this year one day at a time.

Susie: Grandson is turning one this April and Gramma is making the trip.

Mom: Do more walking and organize a WOW (Women of Wisdom) group in Skagway and ... planning on jumping out of an airplane for the fifth time for my 84th birthday. (Watching her do that on her 82nd birthday was enough stress on my heart!)

I'm thinking I would like make each day a little better than the day before. Whatever you choose to toss out or bring into your life, here's hoping you do it with gusto and a happy heart.

HaPPY NeW YeAr!

Personal Note: On "Mom's Traditions" from last month – add the 19 ornaments she made for this year and 24 that she has made for an "adopted" granddaughter in Skagway. Pushing 400 ornaments pretty hard!



"Mist Riders." Carlton (left) and Marcia Regula. Photo by Stephanie Ludlam. See more at kaleidoscopestudioandwriting.com.

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