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**MARCH 2019
ISSUE DEADLINES**
AD SPACE RESERVATIONS:
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WHAT'S HAPPENING LISTINGS:
Thursday, January 21st



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Love Takes Some Learning

By Christine Wilson

"I have heard that one who is good at preserving life does not avoid tigers and rhinoceroses when he walks in the hills; nor does he put on armor and take up weapons when he enters battle. The rhinoceros has no place to jab its horn, the tiger has no place to fasten its claws, weapons have no place to admit their blades. Now, what is the reason for this? Because on him there are no mortal spots." ~ Lao Tzu

"He was kind to objects. With people he was a little afraid." ~ Emily Fridlund, A History of Wolves

In February, attention is often turned to love. True love, romantic love, idealized love. Songs, poems, greeting cards, ads, and tales of perfect lives with princesses and princes all focus on this rose-tinted perspective. It's a charming image and has its appeal, on the face of it. The inevitable real-life fault line does not lie very far from the surface, however, and if we aren't prepared for the heartbreak and disappointment inherent in the loving of humans, the whole notion of shiny "happy ever after" love is a terrible set-up.

That includes opening your heart to romantic partners, family members and friends, which, to borrow a phrase from Zorba the Greek, is "the full catastrophe."

When I was first a therapist I noticed a pattern I eventually came to think of as the *collapsed ideal*. People would describe meeting some amazing person, depicting him or her as able to "finish my thoughts" or "agree with me about everything" or "always want to know where I am; they care that much" or "share the same past hurts as

I have." It sounds like a positive start, yes?

What would happen, all too often, is that a couple of years later they would return to therapy, describing a relationship in which the other person was not letting them finish sentences or each of them could not tolerate the other's differing points of view or the partner kept too close tabs on them, or they were both stuck in their past wounds. Friendships can also trigger a wide array of discomfort and let's not even get started with family triggers (it's not that long until Christmas, folks!).

I was raised, as many of us were, to believe we were fragile. Relationships are fragile. Any feedback that was less than positive was anxiety-producing. I was so very happy when I discovered I was not as fragile as I had thought and that relationships are fragile only when you treat them as such. Keep in mind the nature of a hot-house plant. Without wind, there is no chance for strength building.

I think our feeling heart never forgets that we are pack animals. No matter how

hurt we get or how isolated we try to be or how determined to avoid more hurt, there's always a longing. As I have stated before, I do believe pets can fill much of that ache. However, the thing about non-human animals is they don't talk back and we give them so much grace when they mess up. We can use those experiences to develop grace for fellow humans and that can be a skill we can use to navigate our fears and losses.

Over my years as a therapist, it has been rare for me to hear tales of childhoods full of training in emotional intelligence. I think most parents do the very best they can but most of them were limited in their lessons regarding managing emotions. One of my mother's lines was that, if I wanted to discuss anything on an emotional level, I was "just borrowing trouble." I've heard other mantras of emotion repression, including "don't talk back," "you are too sensitive," "we aren't going there," "why do you have to make such a big deal about everything?" and "can't you just forget about it?"

Let me reiterate my point here, which

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Random Acts of Community

is that the parents who spoke those lines were most likely raised in an environment at least as emotionally limiting as ours. If, for example, you were raised in a war zone or with two violent alcoholic parents or people living hardscrabble lives, the seemingly less traumatic disappointments of our childhoods can be misinterpreted as trivial. Emotional intelligence is a fairly new consideration, as is the luxury of happiness and well-being in general.

Most people in the field of psychology will tell you it is rare to be born naturally tough. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Brene Brown stated that all the people she knows who are able to be vulnerable and open-hearted had to learn how to be that way. Experiencing discomfort, hurt, rejection or betrayal gives us choices. We can collapse into a powerless state or we can “rise strong,” as Dr. Brown would say. It’s actually a continuum, like most things are, and there are many grades of powerlessness and strength.

A first step, I think, is to make the enormous paradigm shift that vulnerability and imperfections are not signs of weakness. My years in Wyoming still resonate with lessons about life. The culture I surrounded myself with at that point may not have covered all aspects of emotional intelligence but they definitely taught me how to keep from taking things personally. “If a person criticizes you, Christine, they are either wrong or right. If they are right, change yourself. If they are wrong, forget about them.” Fix what you can and let go of the rest.

I think it is our nature to want some sort of mastery over our life and that we adapt emotionally, just as we do physically. If we have been hurt, we will find a way to stop hurting – try not to bang our sore thumb, avoid foods we know upset our stomach, etc. Emotionally, we find ways to accommodate our hurts as well, and if we don’t set intentions for positive ways to do so, our unconscious mind finds a way that may have side effects we suffer from.

If friends have disappointed us, our first instinct, typically, is to avoid them. If our heart has been broken by an old partner, we may swear off love. If our family members have hurt us, we might avoid family gath-

erings. Shantideva, whose eighth-century teachings are just as relevant today, pointed out that we could cover the world with leather so our feet don’t hurt or we can figure out how to cover our feet so we can go anywhere. That’s the equivalent of Lao Tzu’s elimination of “mortal spots.”

There really are people in our lives that we do not have to be around. Baby steps are usually the way to go. Just keep in mind, in this month of celebrating connection, that we were not born with all the skills

and emotional strength required. We are teachable, we can heal from our past, and we can help each other.

I think my favorite lesson in this regard is that we don’t have to have it all figured out in order to love or to communicate. We can find people who want to be brave enough to figure it out with us. Happy Valentine’s Day!

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



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The Things That Matter

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

I sit on a comfortable couch in a spacious home beside a beautiful young woman. Her children sit among us and on top of us, variously engaged in the activity we are sharing, or crawling on the floor pretending to be Thomas the Train, or wailing for more food, depending on the age and attention span. Her dark eyes and quick mind and sense of humor remind me of someone I know well. And when she smiles, she reminds me of myself. It's

eerie and unnerving and wonderful.

Her children like me a lot. Again, depending on the age and attention span, I am to them a wrestling partner, a snuggler, a Thomas the Train consultant or a basic transport vehicle. Each of them seems committed to vying for my time, often at the same moment and with the same sense of urgency.




This evening we are looking through some faded family albums. Page after page

of nostalgia, photos of people dressed like they were living in the '70s, hairdos and clothing styles long since replaced. A picture of a young family dressed for church standing on the porch of an older farmhouse. A boy and a girl sitting in the doorway to a weathered barn, a baby goat in their arms, a wily dog at their feet. A dismantled Subaru in various stages of reconstruction, a teenage boy at the wheel. A strikingly beautiful, dark-eyed woman, straight-jawed and with an easy smile. Enough to take your breath away.

We reminisce for just a moment about the significance of the old Subaru. First experiences at driving out in the pasture. A brother rolling it down the hill. Tearing the vehicle down and rebuilding it. Another brother who, on first attempt at driving, became confused between the clutch and the brake, and, after careful consideration, dove out the side rather than risk tumbling down an embankment, leaving his bewildered driving instructor (a.k.a. this author) wheeling along in the misguided jalopy's passenger seat.

I'm overwhelmed for just a moment, a flood of memories, arguably chiseled by time, mellowed and aged as they are. But there is this sentiment that wells up inside. A mixture of pride, joy, contentment and satisfaction. That despite all of the sorrows and stresses and miles that have occurred from that day to this, that in those moments, living that good life of baby goats and dogs and children in a farmhouse in northeast Washington, I was the richest man alive. I was so blessed. How could I have asked for a better life than what I had?

I turn to the dark-eyed young woman at my side, children wandering in and out of our conversation, and I realize that I need to say something to her. I shouldn't take this moment for granted. Life gets away from you sometimes, so you have to grab the chance when you can, because days slip away on you and life happens when you least expect it to, and some things



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need to be said in the moment.

I bend a little closer to her and tell her how much I love the striking beauty in the picture, her mother, and how lucky I am to have been that man. I tell her how grateful I am that she, my daughter, continues to honor us with her presence and that of our grandchildren, the ones prattling around at our feet and in our laps.

Looking through the old photo albums, I am struck by something else. There are certain photos which someone lovingly kept straightened and protected for all of posterity, and there are many others which she didn't keep. Despite the countless hours I spent there over the past 28 years, there are only a couple of images of the place where I worked all those years. One of an old hospital and another of the clinic.

Maybe that is telling me something. The things worth holding onto, the things

that bring us joy, are the remembrances of children with goats and dogs in a green field beside a farmhouse and a dilapidated Subaru in stages of dismantlement with a blue sky and a beautiful woman smiling beside a flowering plum tree. That's worth remembering.

You have to understand this: I come from a long line of weirdos and scallywags and scoundrels and misfits and abusers. My family history is fraught with wildness, good and bad people, sinners and saints. I chose to live my life differently. Abuse has raised its ugly head far too often in the past generations of my family, yet has been for so many of those years glossed over and squelched, with about as much effectiveness as trying to hide a skunk under the rug. Abuse has produced its expected harvest of dysfunction, addiction and mental illness. Little wonder.

In contrast to those past generations of

ugliness, this is the gift I have been given: The next morning, when I open my phone, I find this message: "I love you Dad. It was nice to have some time with you while you were off at home. We are glad you are coming to visit us soon."

She wants us to be part of her life. She wants her children to know us and to love us, to hear our wisdom and enjoy our company and share in our laughter. It's not that we are so great but, somehow, she thinks that we are.

As a man, to experience being loved and respected by your daughter is such a gift. I'm struck by this one singular thought. I am still the richest man 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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A Quest to Renew the Natural Home

By Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

Canoe-maker Shawn Brigman crosses boundaries of all kinds as he strives to develop a sense of place. A Spokane tribal member who also has ancestral connection to the Arrow Lakes/Sinixt, he and his family have called North Columbia Country and its rivers their home for a very long time.

"Traditionally, the Salish people connected on rivers that thread through the valleys of the region," he explains. "Villages were connected by travel on water. The international boundary has had a big impact on the region's culture. It is like a dam. It cuts us off from each other."

The boundary also stops him from gathering materials the way his ancestors once did. White pine, the traditional material for the outer layer of the sturgeon-nose bark canoe, grows north of Kettle Falls, in the cooler and wetter mountains, mostly above the boundary. Accessing that, and other materials, can be complicated.

"I once had a U.S. border agent refuse to let me cross with a freshly cut cottonwood tree limb. I had harvested it in B.C. to make a scaled model of our traditional dugout canoe. The agent saw it as firewood."

Brigman has not allowed setbacks like this to restrict him. He leads workshops for tribes throughout the Interior Plateau, on both sides of the international boundary, and speaks widely on the importance of forming a sense of place-based regional architecture. This sense of place includes anything in what he calls the "built environment." For him,



anything constructed by human beings is architecture.

For me, as a long-time student of the natural and human history of this region, Brigman's perceptions are refreshing. I have long struggled with the lack of photographic

record of the region's earliest architecture. Our collective understanding of the ancient forms has come slowly. Brigman has scoured archives, searching out sketches, tracing shadowy profiles of structures in grainy photographs and interpreting diagrams.

At the center of this cultural renaissance floats the sturgeon canoe, once so essential for transportation, fishing and harvesting. Whether it's this canoe, or the traditional tule-mat tipi lodge, or drying racks for salmon, or winter pit-houses, Brigman insists that the materials and forms once commonly used by his

ancestors are not just for museums. He believes these forms can also inspire modern life.

He found an example of ancient culture alive in the contemporary world when he spent a semester abroad at the University

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North of the Border

of Copenhagen in Denmark.

"I lived right in the center of the city and during architectural study tours saw Danish cultural heritage and their unbroken sense of place everywhere: in interpretive signs, sculptures and architecture," he said. "I came back determined to explore how this could be possible here. I don't think it is just about being indigenous. Fostering cultural connections with this place can benefit everyone in feeling more at home."

Educated at WSU (Pullman), the University of Idaho and, most recently, at Gonzaga where he did a doctoral degree in leadership studies (Salishan art and architecture), Brigman has been well-prepared for his mission: to increase tribal and broader public awareness of the Salishan way of life.

"In June 2018, I caught my first sturgeon (Salish word: *cmtus*) near Kettle Falls, for traditional food purposes," he said. "But I also wanted to examine the form, shape and relief textures of the fish, with its bony scales, or scutes. I want to manifest the shape of these scutes into relief carvings on paddles and on sturgeon-nose canoes. I now attempt to incorporate sturgeon/scute geometry into my own contemporary Salishan sturgeon-nose canoe designs."

"Traditional art forms and the natural materials used by my ancestors are the essence of my work. It's about getting out on the land and remembering or re-learning these materials. When an implement is finished (like a tule mat lodge or a bark sturgeon-nose canoe), it is amazing to reflect back and know that all the materials were once alive and nourished by water and land. Now they have been processed into a beautiful sculptural

and functional form.

"A house doesn't have to be a sewn tule-mat tipi to be inspiring, place-based architecture," he explained. "It's the innovation and sustainable use of natural materials that can guide our choices. Like straw bale and hemp block construction, and using local wood from responsible sources."

For Brigman, the forms and shapes of traditional indigenous architecture are poetic. They express beauty that deserves to be repeated. "The frame of a tule-mat longhouse speaks the same language as the frame of a fish smoke-drying rack; the carved ribs of bark canoes are the same carved principles of bow-making or funnel fish-basket making."

In today's North Columbia Country, most of our built environment has moved far from the region's natural materials and indigenous forms. It often emphasizes function in a way that removes poetic principle from our daily lives. I appreciate the thoughtful work of Shawn Brigman and other artists like him,

those who strive to reconnect culture with the place where we live.

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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- Dennis Woods, CSM retired, author of *Black Flag Journals*

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Almost Everywhere

Article and Photo by J. Foster Fanning

All of us highlanders are familiar with the term “snowbirds,” referring to some of our retired neighbors who head south for the winter. And we know the name originates with migratory birds, but specifically it appears to be the very prolific dark-eyed junco that inspired the name “snowbird.”

“Junco” was first used by naturalists to describe these birds in the 1850s. It is derived from the Latin word *jonquil*, a widely cultivated narcissus with small fragrant yellow flowers.

When researching the dark-eyed junco species, I knew they are frequently sighted in the Okanogan and Columbia Highlands, but this bird’s territory in fact covers a vast area from the Atlantic to Pacific oceans, from the Arctic Circle to middle Mexico. *Junco hyemalis*, a member of the *Passerellidae* family, is known to breed in forests across most of North America and at elevations fluctuating from sea level to more than 10,000 feet. And while these large sparrows are most often found in coniferous forests, including pine, Douglas fir, spruce and western larch, some have also adapted to deciduous forests such as cottonwood, aspen, oak and maple.

Modern ornithologists estimate the current population of the dark-eyed junco at 630 million birds. This, combined with their docile manners, and their attraction to our backyard bird feeders, makes the dark-eyed junco one of North America’s most recognized and most studied songbirds.

Ornithologists have discovered these birds are capable of interbreeding to produce viable offspring with slightly differing physiological traits, enabling the evolutionary adaptation of the birds to occur rather quickly, similar to the Galapagos finches.

According to the fossil record of North America there were no juncos north of the tropics prior to the continent submerging under a massive ice sheet. As the glaciers

melted and retreated northward, a singular junco species began spreading north from its ancestral home in southern Mexico, eventually colonizing new territory across the broad expanse of North America.

In time, these adaptive interbreeding birds separated into five main population groups in five divergent regions. Geographic segregation and breeding within regional groups led to variations in looks, behavior and genetic makeup as these birds adapted to local environments, food sources and challenges. Now, 15 subspecies of dark-eyed junco are recognized within the scientific



community. These are usually divided into the slate-colored junco, white-winged junco, Oregon junco, pink-sided junco and gray-headed junco.

Ellen D. Ketterson, a distinguished professor of biology and director of the Environmental Resilience Institute, says of the dark-eyed junco, “These birds really allow you to study them.” Which is something she has done extensively. “But while common and widespread, juncos also exhibit extraordinary diversity in color, shape, size, and behavior across their range, making them ideal study subjects for biologists interested in ecology and evolutionary diversification.”

Want to observe a dark-eyed junco? Look for a medium-sized sparrow with a pink bill, dark eyes, white belly and dark-centered tail with white outer feathers. Females resembles

male but are usually paler. Juveniles are heavily streaked brown with darker heads, white bellies and white outer tail feathers. As the bird darts off, it is prone to giving a sharp, tweeting call as it flashes the white outer feathers of its tail.

Juncos feed mainly on insects and seeds. They practice an interesting foraging method in which they fly up to a seed cluster on the top of a grass stem and ride it to the ground, where they pick off the seeds.

The junco adapts to the demands of winter by increasing its oxygen-carrying capacity. Then the birds, especially the males, begin to sing when the days get longer and that signals a rise in their testosterone levels. Ornithologists have studied the preening oils of juncos and found these birds can differentiate

between male and female by the aroma of the oils.

The average lifespan for a dark-eyed junco is approximately three years, although there is record of a junco in captivity that lived until eleven years old.

Dark-eyed juncos are unique within the sparrow group in that they nest on or near the ground in forests. During winter they usually gather in flocks and often mingle with other species. When disturbed, the entire flock suddenly flies up to

perch in a tree and calls in annoyance at the disturbance.

A group of sparrows, juncos included, has many collective nouns, including a “crew,” “flutter,” “meinie,” “quarrel” and “ubiquity” of sparrows.

Winter conditions often cause birds and other wildlife to gather into concentrated areas, which is great for observation, but remember that winter is also a time of hardship for these foraging creatures. Best to structure observations that don’t disturb the wildlife. Lace ‘em up and get out there. Good luck...

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>.

Peter Griessmann: Wood in the Veins

By Loren Cruden

Interviews for the *Monthly* always begin with asking why and when the interviewee came to live in eastern Washington. I sometimes imagine a map with these many journeys from all directions marked on it, the end result a tapestry of community's strands. Peter Griessmann's strand has a longer stretch to it than most. His mother fled Hitler's Germany and his father was of German descent. They met in Argentina, where Peter was born. The family moved north when Peter was ten.

"In 1968 I arrived in Oregon with my mother, father and brother, settling in southeast Portland. My parents divorced three or so years later and my mother essentially raised us two children in Portland.

"German was my first language and then Spanish, which is what we spoke in Argentina. In Portland I learned English. When you're young you're like a sponge. Having German and Spanish, English came relatively easy. I had my stresses but the sixth grade teachers, when I arrived, decided to make German and Spanish part of the classroom. They had empathy.

"I watched a lot of TV, too, which I hadn't before – cartoons and things – and picked up English from that. I have very little accent. If I'd learned a couple years later I'd have much more of an accent. Conversely, when I speak Spanish I have very little Yankee accent.

"I left to do missionary work in Colombia and, coming back to the States in 1980, returned to Oregon State University and did two degrees in forestry: one in forest management and one in silviculture. I was offered a job at Ohio State University. I didn't get out of college until about 1988 and there weren't many jobs around then. I got the position at OSU as an extension forester working with landowners in forest management and stewardship (which was a new word back then), and worked with the forest products industry – meaning sawmills.

"I'd recently married and started raising a family. After three years we realized how much we missed the West.

"Looking for work in the Northwest, I sent out only two résumés. One was for a position with Washington State University, in Colville, as an area extension forester for Stevens, Ferry, Pend Oreille and Spokane counties. The other position was in Medford, Oregon, with Oregon State University. Both places offered me positions within two days of each other. My wife and I thought about where we wanted to go. I didn't like Medford very much so we moved to Colville in 1991 and have been here ever since.

"In Ohio I'd been around all those amazing hardwood species – got to learn about the ecosystem there, the incredible diversity in those eastern forests. I loaded a big trailer full of milled hardwood lumber and towed it west. Our business started with selling that wood."

Listening to Peter, I kept noticing his hands: dense, grained, work-toughened. I asked how he'd come to be, as he called it, a "wood guy."

"I grew up in a family where my grandfather in Argentina – my father's father – and my father were both cabinetmakers. They ran a shop in Buenos Aires. Wood has been in my veins since I was born.

"But you know how it is with kids and parents. I thought, 'I don't want to work in a wood shop.' What turned me around was going with the mission to Colombia when I was almost twenty years old. I saw what Colombia had in terms of biodiversity and natural resources and fell in love with environmental things. I knew I wanted to do something with forests. When I went back to Oregon State, that's when my forestry management philosophy started.

"When we moved to Colville I had all of that background and was getting interested in the wood part of it. That's when I realized, in my late twenties, early thirties, what a great learning experience I'd missed out on with my grandfather and my dad. To this day I have pangs about it. My grandfather was an incredible worker – the stuff he knew. I grew up around really high-quality work. I understand now what goes into building things well, paying attention to

details because it matters.

"The good news is that my grandfather was alive long enough that I still remember hanging out in the shop – I was pounding nails when I was probably a year and a half old. My grandfather did marquetry as a kind of hobby, and did it extremely well. He would even make portraits with it. I remember him showing me some of that. I was eight or nine years old. Through osmosis I picked some things up. My father being a cabinetmaker, I had helped him on occasion, but not enough to really take it on yet. When the light bulb came on was when I started the business. I began reading, and picking up things from anybody around. I'm still doing that; it never ends."

I was curious about where Peter sources the wood for his business, Haus of Hardwoods.

"When we first started, the wood we'd brought west sat around while we figured out what to do. In 1992 we got serious about selling things. I had contacts from my time in Ohio, buying direct through mills or from brokers and distributors. During the mid- and latter nineties we started to cut wood slabs here and there. It's funny how trends go, because back then I could hardly give one of them away. Today everybody is into them.

"In 1999 I purchased the property we're at now, down on 395 south of Colville. It's in the middle of nothing, between Colville and Chewelah. Everything is done there, cutting and machining; there's a big shop. It grew organically almost, people asking for things."

Q: What aspect interests you the most?

Peter: "It's hard to say just one thing; it's a combination of many factors. The gratification of creating and completing and then admiring what you've created is the main thing. I get immense gratification from taking a raw product – maybe a tree that came down in a windstorm and was about to be ground up into chips – and now that log is turned into a table or countertop – or a floor that's being walked on.

"I'm around youth a lot and see eighteen-

year-olds, and want them to just catch fire with something, not waste time onscreen. The point is identifying opportunities and taking advantage of them. I think that is declining these days: work ethic; having a passion for something, having it drive you; taking ownership of whatever you do in such a way that it becomes part of you.

“When I started with extension work here in ’91, I lived that drive. I did twelve-hour days – in a salary position. A ‘soft money’ position; every year I got a letter saying, ‘If we don’t get the funding, you’re out of here.’ That’s why the business started, to have something more stable. My wife ran it during those early years. I did it on weekends, evenings, anytime I could.

“With the extension work, I interacted with folks – a lot. Thousands of people: workshops and meetings and tours. That part excited me because of the interaction; it was very dynamic and creative – landowner-based education.

“I pioneered the Accredited Logger program, which is now a statewide program, and the Big Trees contest, and we started progeny sites in the valley, experimenting with different trees to see how they would grow. There’s a big program still in place called Coached Management Planning, to help landowners write their own management plans and understand forest health, cutting systems, and ecology – also a little entomology to help them understand bugs.

“That was my life for fifteen years. It was great! Then you reach the summit and say, okay, now what? I went to the Conservation District for a year, went back to WSU for three years, which involved going to Argentina several times to work on a project there. It was going well until 2008 when the world economy went into a tailspin and the funding stopped. So I went full time into our business, and here we are.”

Q: With climate change’s impact on our forests, what does the future look like to you?

Peter: “Natural systems are dynamic. Humans are part of that equation and humans are now living in areas where we didn’t have much presence before. The forests are in a stressed state and we’re creating some of that with how we’re pushing into them. There are always cyclic changes, bark beetle



epidemics and crashes. Our human horizon is usually only ten or fifteen years at the most, but the natural horizon is hundreds of years. We’re trying to encapsulate everything into the human timeframe and at the same time manage forests for a hundred years down the road – and do it politically.

“It won’t work, because while managing for the long term there’s no 10-15-year payback to justify the funding. So our human timeframes are way off and out of sync sometimes with what the environment really needs. Until we get those two to meld somehow it’s going to be really tough. Our grandchildren will reap the consequences.”

Q: What about the future for wood products; will they be out of range for anyone but the wealthy?

Peter: “These are niche-y products but not unobtainable. Some things, like the slabs, draw people emotionally. Some things, like hardwood floors, are a utility product. A lot of folks just look at price. But, if comparing by actual value it makes more sense – may

even be cheaper in the long run – to invest in something with a higher price tag. From the standpoint of impact to the planet and the resources used to manufacture and distribute and so on – all that goes into a product – value is the better choice. But price is always the hard part up front.”

As always with interviews, I asked Peter what has kept him in the North Columbia area. He laughed and said, “Five kids. But really, for me it’s the lifestyle here. I love to ski and water ski; and this area, unlike any other I’ve seen (and I hope it stays this way) has a kind of ‘unsettled’ feel to it. I like the rural openness. Retirement is a word that means nothing to me; I’m probably going to be working until I fall over. Whether it means doing this or something else, I don’t know. But I’ve enjoyed it.”

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.

Way To Go!

By Tina Wynecoop

Editor's note: Way, according to Wynecoop, is a greeting used among interior Salish speakers and is a type of "hello," a welcome, an acknowledgment of fresh thinking.

Heard about Crazy Alen the Scandinavian immigrant? He logged in Minnesota's northern forests where winters are cold – bone-chilling cold. He wasn't always crazy. The writer of his obituary said, "He could cut wood better than many men. ... He used a bucksaw and would pull so hard he often pulled the man on the other end off his feet. He liked to play jokes on the other loggers. ... He didn't hurt anybody. He would put pepper in their snoose or sew their stockings closed or nail a board over the hole in the outhouse."

One winter when it was so cold outside "you could spit and it would bounce" the old logger felt death closing in and played his best joke. He left his cabin door open and lay inside on the floor, his extremities spread out wide. He died. "The cold came in and froze him hard as granite. The camp boss had to dismantle the cabin to get him out because Alen's body would not fit through the door." It was impossible to think of Crazy Alen's last exit without smiling,

"smiling at death, laughing at death" (from *The Winter Room* by Gary Paulsen).

My logger husband laughed at death when his tribe's newspaper editor inadvertently placed an article about him in the obituary section of the paper. Word of his passing spread as swiftly as ice forming on a shallow lake in the deep of winter. Calls of condolences began coming in. The editor sincerely apologized.

The logger has already made plans for his own exit – when the time comes: How, he wonders, can he move into a cemetery already filled with so many of his kin? The cemetery overlooks the meadow of his family's cattle ranch, a cherished landscape where, in their youth, he and Chick, one of his six brothers, helped build fence lines to keep the cattle in place. This took a lot of posts and a posthole digger. The posthole digger became their third "brother" as they strung barbed wire on posts placed deep in round holes.

His daily breakfast of oatmeal reminded him that an empty Quaker Oats container would work just fine to hold his ashes and would easily slide into a posthole among the family headstones. Being a thoughtful man, his plans extend to his immediate family: His wife and children are invited to "hop in their own oatmeal boxes" and join him, one atop the other. We

will honor his wish for *his* urn. ... We just may have our own unique plans on "the way to go." It would be hard to "top" his.

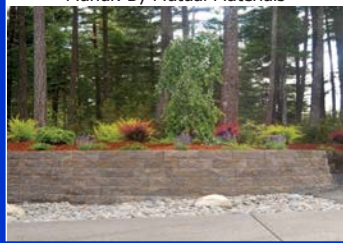
Then there is Chick's recent passing. It is a tender and solemn time yet a burst of Indian humor graces his transition as well. How useful humor is! Chick was just a spare 15 months younger than his brother. They grew up farming and fencing and roaming the reservation together. He chose the Forest Service as his profession. When his family began making arrangements after his passing, his daughter suggested the family's Smokey the Bear cookie jar would serve as the perfect urn for his ashes.

Over the years it held sweet treats, and now it is filled with Chick's ashes, ready for its final assignment. Placed on the altar during his memorial service in Minnesota, it brought a ray of humor during a somber time. The cookie jar will travel with family for burial at his birthplace at Wellpinit in early summer. The posthole digger will prepare the ground for his final resting place.

Across the Columbia River near Inchelium resided a man esteemed by his community on the Colville Indian Reservation. Carl Putnam led a long (101 years) and productive life. Outliving his wife, he built a stone monument resembling a small version of their home. He placed her

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urn within and created an extra niche to await his own remains; that time came in late 2018.

After Carl's memorial service his family discovered to their surprise and delight that the monument held a cleaned-out plastic peanut butter jar with a red cap. Tucked inside the jar was a letter with a personal message to his three children ... and three pennies. He closed his letter to them with "Ha! Oh, by the way, I didn't leave you penniless!"

Alongside the peanut butter jar was a 15-inch length of PVC pipe designed by Fogle Pump. The pipe was closed on one end and had a screw-on cap on the other ... just the right size for his ashes.

My friend Sandy and her husband Doug lived by the sea in the San Juan Islands. Doug died unexpectedly as the waves lapped quietly along the shore below their cabin. His body was carried off-island by a Washington State ferry to the mainland, and then his ashes were ferried back to the place where he had spent so much of his life. A water burial was planned.

His family borrowed a motorboat from a moorage halfway around the island and headed to the predetermined site, off his longtime home. Midway, the boat began taking on water. A new plan had to be made, and quickly.

Mooring as close to the cabin as possible,

the ceremony was done from shore. Sandy carried the container out into the salty water, and as she waded she lost her balance and fell in. It looked funny. Could the other mourners laugh? She laughed. We knew then that we had license to laugh too. She sprinkled his ashes. Some didn't sink, remaining on the surface as if refusing to say farewell to the place and people he loved. We all laughed until tears ran down our legs. Hilarity eased our loss. What a way to go!

Recently I learned about Greg Boyle, the founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. He is a Jesuit priest who works with gang members and addicts. He speaks of their "lethal absence of hope" which often results in untimely deaths. Boyle presides over many funerals and yet not all the funerals are about loss. He says that his wonderful mother (92) was never afraid of death. As she lay on her



deathbed, surrounded by her family, they overheard her say, "I've never done *this* before!" Greg quipped, "like it was sky diving – she was kind of exhilarated by it." She moved on then to the next place, having shared her sense of wonder with her family – humorous, dramatic, lively. What a way to go!

And "what you are feeling when you miss them is not their absence," author Sy Montgomery reminds us. "It's their *presence*."

Death is just one more new place to go."

My son-in-law, Paul, describes his own mother's passing: "She decided it was time to *spin her cocoon*." Metamorphosis is apt and lovely imagery.

Well, that's the end of my stories. And I ask, "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians, KJV.)



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WHAT'S



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APPENZERS

Events

Feb 7: First Thursday Art Walk, 5:30-8 pm, downtown Chewelah.

Feb 7-8: Colville Jazz Festival, Colville High School. Thursday: Senior Citizens' Ball, presented by CHS Key Club and CHS Music Department, free admission, 5 pm. Friday: Jazz Festival concert, presented by CHS Music Department, \$12 adults/\$8 students and seniors, 7 pm. Both nights include performances by special guests from the WSU School of Music and supported by a grant from the Vinson Fund."

Feb 8: CrossCurrent in concert at Woodland Theatre, Kettle Falls, 7 pm. See ad page 5.

Feb 9: Foodstock at Northern Ales, Kettle Falls, 3-10 pm featuring a big line-up of bands. Cash and food donations benefit the Kettle Falls Community Chest food bank.

Feb 10: Northport Lions Club BINGO at the Northport School Cafeteria, Noon-4. Early Bird, Regular, Fast Pick and Blackout with a \$500 Jackpot. Proceeds benefit Public School Employees Union Group and Northport Dollars for Scholars. Refreshments available. Must be 18 or older to play. Call 509-690-2158 for more info.

Feb 10: Cutter Coffee House Concert, 2-5 pm, at the Cutter Theatre, 302 Park St., Metaline Falls. Donovan Johnson and friends entertain in a relaxed atmosphere. \$5 cover. See ad page 11.

Feb 12: The Opioid Epidemic in our Communities, a free conversational forum, 6 pm, Rendezvous Theater, Spokane Community Colleges - Colville campus. Sponsored by American Association of University Women. See ad on page 33.

Feb 15-17: Chewelah Arts Guild's Community Arts Show, 1-5 pm (12-3 pm on Sun), at the Chewelah Civic Center. Attendance and participation are free. Artist Packets available at: www.chewelahartsguild.org, or at Valley Drug Co., Jean Bean's Coffee, Flowery Trail Coffee

House or at the Chewelah Library.

Feb 16: Colville Library Improvement Club book sale, 10-1, downstairs in the library.

Feb 18: Presidents Day.

Feb 23: PAVE Parent Training, 9-4, NEW Alliance Counseling Services, 165 E. Hawthorne Ave., Colville. RSVP required. See ad page 8 for details.

Feb 23: Savage Bearcat's Dinner & Beer Pairing (5:30 pm) and concert with Scotia Road (7 pm), Cutter Theatre, 302 Park St., Metaline Falls. See ad page 11 for reservations.

Feb 24: 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.

Feb 28, Mar 2: Wild & Scenic Film Festival, 6:30 pm both nights, in Colville and Chewelah. See ad page 5 for details.

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

5th: Paige Culley: Shapes, 7:30-9:30 pm

14th: Melody Diachun Afternoon Tea and Jazz, 2:30-4:30 pm

15th: White Buffalo Storytelling: Stories of Immigration, 7-9 pm

22nd-23rd: Monty Python's SPAMALOT, by Rossland Light Opera Players, 7:30-10 pm both nights, plus 2-4:30 pm on Saturday.

26th: Motus O Dance: Prisoners of Tehran, 7:30-9:30 pm

Music at Northern Ales, 325 W. 3rd Ave., Kettle Falls, northernales.com, 509-738-7382:
1st: Christy Lee and the Broken Rosary Thieves, 7-10 pm

7th: Sara Brown, 6-8 pm

9th: Foodstock, 3-10 pm

15th: Open Mic, 7-10 pm

21st: Justin Johnson, 6-8 pm

Music at Republic Brewery, 26 Clark Ave., Republic, republicbrew.com, 509-775-2700.
16th: Norman Baker, 7-10 pm

Meetings & Opportunities

Feb 13: Northeast Washington Genealogy Society meeting, 1 pm, LDS Church basement, Juniper Street in Colville, entry at the back of the building. Visit newgs.org for more info. All visitors are welcome.

Innovia Foundation, serving Eastern Washington and North Idaho, is accepting scholarship applications to help students achieve their higher education goals by attending colleges, universities or vocational schools. Most applications are due March 1. Visit innovia.org/students for more info.

Broadband Survey: Visit <https://tinyurl.com/WSUBroadbandSurveyStevens> to participate in a county-wide survey to help uncover internet service (broadband) needs in Stevens County and on the Spokane Reservation. The survey is designed to determine what internet services are available in your community, whether you have internet in your home, how you use it, and the barriers to obtaining adequate service in your community. The survey is confidential and will help provide data for grant applications.

Library Events: Check out the extensive calendars of library events at ncrl.org (Ferry Co.), scrlcd.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, 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 9-3. Call 509-685-AVET (2838).

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, crtsl1@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 Mondays, 11:30 am, Nazarene Church, 368 East Astor, Colville. Call 509-680-8674 for more info.

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

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

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

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

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, third Tuesday of each month, Arden Community Center, 7 pm. www.PanoramaGem.com.

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LISTEN UP

Reviews by Michael Pickett

Kamasi Washington in High Orbit

A possible contender for the How-Many-Genres-Can-I-Weave-Under-My-Soulful-Saxophone-Stylings Award, Kamasi Washington wasted absolutely no time creating an instantly welcoming sound on the brand new *Heaven and Earth*.

Split into two distinct parts, the album has a warm, 1970s production feel through the sprawling “movements.” “The Earth side of this album represents the world as I see it outwardly,”

Washington says. “The Heaven side of this album represents the world as I see it inwardly.”

The concept doesn’t seem that complex, but the results are anything but simple.

Lush orchestral beds, choral swells and cinematic sweeps are all present on the album opener, “Fists of Fury” (of Bruce Lee fame), before Washington’s gorgeous sax lines take

the helm on pieces like the dense-but-restrained “Tiffakonkæ” or “Hubtones.”

The Heaven side of the album launches with the epic, gorgeous “The Space Travelers Lullaby,” where Washington mines the composer side of his persona to full effect. “Street Fighter Mas” drops a slammin’ soul groove before “Journey” and the up-tempo “The Psalmist” take the album beyond the jazz stratosphere.

If there’s one thing Kamasi Washington isn’t short on, it’s vision (followed closely by sprawling execution). Jazz concept albums aren’t necessarily rare, but they are typically not as epic as the Washington creations. His role here is possibly closer to film director and action star than laid-back jazz saxophonist/bandleader; and the net result is a massive album in *Heaven and Earth* that hits like an intergalactic ‘70s jazz/soul soundtrack for the ages.



Twenty One Pilots Dig Deep

There is no good reason that Twenty One Pilots should be successful, according to most critics. That’s why it’s so satisfying, after a nearly three-year wait, to have them mostly return to form on the genre-defying, instantly-gripping *Trench*.

With a Grammy under their belt, and no end in sight for their genre-warping, clash-of-styles approach to record-making, this 14-track collection once again takes aim at familiar themes of unrest and depression.

Opening with the jagged grooves of “Jumpsuit,” the album maneuvers through a barrage of styles on “My Blood” (EDM-tinged rock), “Smithereens” (off-kilter melodic pop) and “Cut My Lip” (heavy-handed reggae-rock) until you’re left to wonder what exactly happened on

the Beach Boy-infused show-closer, “Leave the City.”

Twenty One Pilots is an act about as close to fearless as any current music maker, and *Trench* is a record that sounds like a band that may never make another album

(yet you hope they do). If critics have learned anything in the last ten years since the group’s *Blurryface* debut, it’s that all bets are off on what will or won’t be popular in the “new music industry.”

Trench is Twenty One Pilots’ exclamation point on indie-music sensi-

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A Good Read

Reviews by Loren Cruden

Tinkers, by Paul Harding

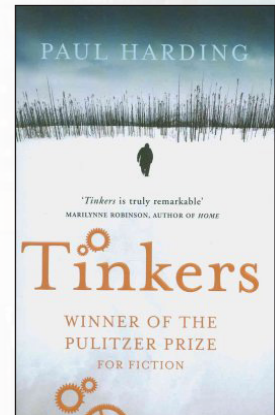
Paul Harding, in this striking debut novel, writes from the unmoored point of view of an old man dying, from memories that stretch even prior to his own life to include those of his father, an epileptic backwoods tinker in Maine. Son George, in his old age, adopts some tinkering himself – repairing antique clocks: “...he knew where the old money lay, dozing, dreaming of wool mills and slate quarries, ticker tape and foxhunts. He found that bankers paid well to keep their balky heirlooms telling time.”

This is a story of time’s capture and escape. Harding’s prose evokes both as it precisely ticks along, then floods the senses with transcendent abandon, as during the tinker’s seizures. “It was as if there was a secret door that opened on its own to an electric storm spinning somewhere out on the fringes of the solar system.... If death was to fall below some human boundary, so his seizures were to be rocketed beyond it.”

The world of this story is full of clocks and gal-

axies, hidden doorways in and out of life’s ticking regularity, worlds in miniature and escapes into eternity. It is full of people disappearing in and out of their own sense of substantiality. “...a move of the head, a step to the left or right, and we change from wise, decent, loyal people to conceited fools. Light changes, our eyes blink and see the world from the slightest difference of perspective and our place in it has changed infinitely...”

Even before checking the author blurb, I could tell this book was written by an Iowa Writers Workshop alumnus: It has that characteristic liminal beauty, close detail and terse humanity. A quotable book, yet reaching beyond the sum of its compactly written parts. Lastly, *Tinkers* is a hymn to fathers and sons – and continuity’s fragile endurance. “The sea turned grey and its surface rolled like a membrane. When we dived for shells, it parted for us without resistance and sealed itself behind our up-pointed toes.”



Finding Sgt. Kent, by Raymond Hutson

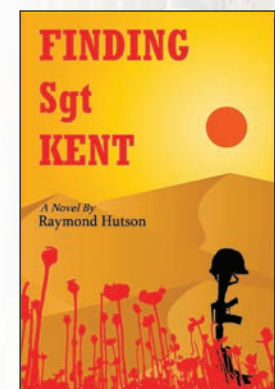
Combat memories are juxtaposed with and sometimes superimposed upon a war veteran’s civilian life in Spokane author Raymond Hutson’s new novel, *Finding Sgt. Kent*. Kent’s wars were in the Balkans, the Gulf and Afghanistan, an eighteen-year career as a sniper. He won medals, got wounded, lost comrades and came home with PTSD. A psychiatrist at the VA hospital in Spokane urges him to find his place in civilian society by finding his family – and discovering who his dead parents were, as people. This quest, meant to be a healing process, unfolds as anything but: each encounter opening old if not creating new wounds.

The soldiers in the story embody individual impacts of war; various civilians are emblematic of contrasts with the military mindset. “Seems like nothing in this life calls for [perseverance] – everybody shoots from the hip, so busy texting and complaining, we don’t look at each other anymore.” The story’s cohesion, depth and flow come from the portrayal of the main character, Sgt. Kent, who comes across as very real and full of heart as well as trauma. Hutson, never a soldier himself, spent a decade medically treating eastern Washington veterans. His descriptions

of Spokane, Addy and Colville feel very real also. (It’s not often I read a novel mentioning the Acorn Tavern.)

Visiting familiar places, Kent is alienated by the new online culture, its trivializing, factionalizing influence going against his Army conditioning toward acute solidarity. His sensitivity to hostility triggers survival instincts: Kent is both inappropriately vulnerable and dangerously reactive, and discoveries made during his family search make him even more so. Throughout the book Kent’s view of reality is that of a sniper: methodical, calculating, hyper-alert to his surroundings. It gives the character’s portrayal great credibility and draws the reader into a soldierly consciousness and its isolation from ordinary life. “Now I was on a mission. I function best when I have a point to work toward.... Understand the mission, identify the target, preparation, execution.” His civilian mission, however, is one that necessarily begins within, and is a less than orderly endeavor.

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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The Sum of Parts *on a theme by Jane Kenyon*

By Susanne Griep

I am the gaping doorway, the disappointment of things passing.
I am a black lace mantilla draped over the back of an empty church pew,
a coiled bracelet of plastic pearls left behind on a park bench near the swings.

I am my great-grandmother's pink-checked apron, threadbare at the pockets.
I am indigo in a fading rainbow, an empty vase on the window sill,
a handful of daisies, spry, and stinky-sweet.

I am broad shoulders, freckled hands and soft sagging
brown skin curves the northern winters turn pale.
I am a violin sweeping the heart out of arching phrases
you didn't know were straining inside, wanting release.

I am a Druid priestess living long ago on deer trails, lichens and moss.
I am a Mayan woman filling earthen jugs; one with water, the other, grain.
I am the quiet in the woods. A broken wing. The wounded soldier.

I am a cactus waiting in sand and rock to burst into flower.
I am the ceaseless creek song over stones,
the cool wet banks where tall cedars live.

I am a red fan, a spicy enchilada,
a mariachi band in a tiled courtyard under a full moon.
I am a warm slice of apple pie ala mode
set down on the counter in the florescent light of an all-night bus stop diner.

I am bare feet stepping into a small emerald lake.
I am the garden window, the goldfinches and chickadees at the feeder.
I am old-time roses flowering from canes and thorns,
blooming thick, early, mid-summer and late.

First Thought Mountain

By Loren Cruden

In winter the land describes itself in quiet,
in the way each snowflake touches it.
Contoured by moonlight, by clouds
filling the low places, by wind in
the heights taking the rock grain by
grain; there is no mistake in these shapes
guiding the flow of light like
riverbanks, the sky moving in
crevices, valleys, along the bluffs and
lying in stillness upon the fields,
renewing the land
even in winter.

Unfinished Sentences

By Loren Cruden

Evening clouds backtracking the day:
clouds and walking – gestures trailing the
half-speech of yearning, life
caught on grief's thorn.
Into the winter forest each tree
stilled in its last thought of autumn,
hearing nothing but my footsteps in
this after-hours gallery, evening star
poised above the ridge, and trees
waiting like pilgrims at their destination.
I walk and sit until
the cold becomes a grace.

What's in a Name? . . .

Just About Everything

By John Bowlby

Einstein, Plato, John Dillinger,
Abraham Lincoln, John Wilks Booth.
John F. Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald,
Socrates and Babe Ruth.

The body lives a number of years,
but then one day it is gone.
But a name could live forever
or certainly go on and on.

The good or evil that men do
lives after they have been interred.
The record states what they were and
does so with each and every world.

We have been given a measure
of time to walk upon the Earth.
To love and to live, to take and give,
and to show what we are worth.

And when we die we will leave behind
our wealth and maybe some fame.
We will leave the Sun, Earth and sky,
and take with us only our name.

And those that we leave behind will
not remember that which we had.
But were we staunch givers or takers...
were we good or were we bad?

There is no great love in leaving money,
it simply must be left.
And some will leave much more than they
would have because of greed and theft.

But there are some who will not leave
much more than they had when they came.
Because they know, and they try to show,
that you only leave your name.

We Got Service!

By J. Merrill Baker

The thing about Friday, for us, is that it started out on Wednesday. We woke up to a flat truck tire. \$224 at the friendly tire place because our particular tire model is discontinued. And, of course, this was just a few weeks before we would be able to mount the snow set of tires. Sigh. We got the tire, because we would still need to replace the flat one eventually.

So, by Thursday evening, we had a new tire on our truck, and a slightly smaller budget for the holiday. I'm not complaining here because the silver lining in our rain cloud arrived. We got a credit for the damaged tire! It still had some reference to a guarantee on it buried in the friendliest-of-tire-places' digital database. Granted, it had to be searched for in several databases in two states, but these folks are FRIENDLY. We get treated very well,

often, and we are grateful! A happy customer is the best advertising, right?

When Friday morning arrived, we're up early with hopeful expectations staring at a computer screen over our coffee cups to discover the weather forecast. Nope. Nada. We could NOT connect to the internet. Was it snow on the dish?

A phone call to our service provider determined the satellite reception was good, but the router had ditched us into a vast cyber-field that we could not enter except through smartphones, which was sad for us as we only had one that was "smart." The other one may have android software but it got us nowhere. Had our router finally bit the dust?

Secretly, I think there is an evil cyber-monster that patrols looking for the digitally weak-and-somewhat-connected, and preys upon their addiction for information. For connection. For belonging.

The satellite service provider could help us *belong* with a \$200 solution, something that included both a router and a modem and eventually 5G. Really?

Here I was still thinking how a "router" was a bit for a special saw, when I learned it is an electronic gizmo that does its own magic and connects local networks into a spread of invisible connections to make for a larger internet, which we know was invented by Al Gore. And that a "modem" is a device that encodes digital computer signals into analog telephone signals, and vice-versa, allowing computers to communicate over phone lines. So, what are the satellites for? They must facilitate the bouncing signals that go around the planet. I think maybe Saturn has this and it looks like the rings?

Next step, call the cell phone service provider. This is an excruciating patience-tester for people like us, having

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Living in NE WA: Lessons Learned

experienced things being handled in a succinct, simple and efficient way, with old-style user-friendly language.

You **MUST** take notes, especially the name of which Plan you are on, and realize immediately that it is an “old” one; they change daily. Oh, the operators will commiserate and sympathize with you – you poor unconnected person. It is now obvious you **NEED** them. They transfer you over to a “special loyal-customer section,” explaining kindly the loyal-hearted deals they can offer you, a special unconnected person, in your hour of need. They are friendly.

Having spent 5.5 hours on the phone about the phone, learning about “hot spot” versus satellite dish (meaning we did not need to pay two different companies for the same type of service), we eventually ended up with a new phone plan, a new phone (a very smart one, with an IQ of at least 180, probably flosses your teeth for you), a request to trade in our old flip phone for some variable credit with the phone company who already pro-rated the new phone plan and the free phone – we just pay the taxes.

Your bill shows the minimum charge each month, then they credit this amount back, but by the way, it may take six months until you see the credit. **WHAT?** They sure take our money quick enough. Wonder why we have to wait for six months? Maybe that is their calculated learning curve with the new smartphone until we will need another newer, smarter one? I really wanted to say no. But we

were offline. Not connected. Not belonging. And they were friendly.

Being not connected is especially bad when you hear about other grandmothers visiting their little grand-people via something called “Face Time” because they actually get that up-front-and-personal with phones that can almost brush your teeth for you. And the grand-toddlers are phone-savvy from watching videos in the shopping cart while mom wheels around for groceries.

For the price of phones, you almost need a second mortgage. (But yes, the payments are conveniently rolled into the monthly phone bill, which you may need that second mortgage for after all if they forget about the refund they promised. There is the option to downsize your living quarters in order to afford the next smart model!)

Friday was an adventure, and we ended up feeling that we may have gained ground in the smartphone arena. Here we were with a new learning curve with our new smartphone, hardly any kicking and screaming, and it was costing us roughly the same as before.


They should just make an “app” for the next phone plan and automatically upgrade you every six months but lower the costs now, because they will all end up outdated. People like me who think my phone is an investment and should last several years and wondering how they (the phones) became outdated have been taught to go back to writing letters (thank you Louise!). It’s likely they won’t miss

our satellite or modem or router purchases anymore. So, I need another book of stamps from the post office.

Saturday morning was ambushed by a flurry of us getting used to how to use the hot spot and passwords, and connecting to our lone phone hot spot until the new one arrives. Yes, they could magically connect us from their office in Timbuktu, but we would not pick up the new smarter-phone until Tuesday when the post office had us sign for it. (I got my stamps too.)

Monday was a holiday of course. These things only happen to you over three-day weekends and when you can’t access anything digital very well. Attitude is everything in these moments. Like during solar storms, or even wind and rain storms. The kind that may or may not bring silver linings. Look for them, are they in the cloud? We got service!

J. Merrill Baker is a retired semi-technical observer in an ever-increasing battle for relevancy.




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Along the Mountain Path: Fresh Renewal

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

“Earth, ourselves, breathe and awaken, leaves are stirring, all things moving, new day coming, life renewing.” ~ Pawnee prayer

Each day as we awaken, we begin again. Each time we come to the mat, we begin again. If we can come to the practice of yoga with no expectation but the joy of discovery, we will renew ourselves. Things change.

When you feel unsure of where to begin your practice, begin with breath. We start each class with a simple centering practice, balancing the body and watching the breath. I call it the three-part breath.

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet on the floor. Balance your head so the chin and forehead are approximately level, and you have a gentle curve in your neck. Take your arms out about 30 degrees from the sides of the body, in external rotation, palms resting up. Realize that you are supported by the earth and it's okay to relax.

Now notice the weight of your body on the floor and the feeling of the parts of you that are touching the floor. Begin with the feet. Feel the balance across the ball of the foot and the weight of the heels. Open the soles of your feet to receive the surface they are resting on.

Take your attention to the pelvis, and begin to gently rock side to side across the pelvis, snuggling in to the floor and letting the buttock muscles relax. Feel the sacral plate as you pass over it and, finally, land on the sacrum. Think about your spine

growing up from the tailbone to the base of the skull, and that energy continuing through your brainstem to the crown of your head.

Then, realize that your intentions, both conscious and unconscious, travel down from your brain, through the spine out to the nerves so that you can physically manifest the intentions of your mind. Feel the weight of the upper back on the floor, and let the space between your shoulder blades be open. It is the back of the heart, and the root of the neck. Feel your shoulder blades resting on the floor, and pressing into your back like two compassionate hands.

Feel the openness on the front chest, out from the breastbone, along the arms to the hands, so that the energy of your heart can be freely expressed by your arms and hands. Your head is resting on the floor and gravity takes your brain into the back of the skull. This helps you to come into “back brain” consciousness, where you feel your body rather than just thinking about it.

Your eyes rest deep in their sockets, and you can take your inward gaze down toward your heart, go inside, and simply notice how you feel. Now, observe your breath, the length and fullness of your inhalations and exhalations. Inhalations bring in oxygen and prana to stoke the fires of life, but they also turn on the sympathet-

ic nervous system, which is the “fight or flight” response. Exhalations cleanse and relax us. They turn on the parasympathetic nervous response, and help us to relax and let go. So, now, begin to lengthen the exhales, with the intention of deepening and balancing the breath. Long full exhales make space for full inhalations.

As your breath deepens and balances, notice if it is expanding fully into the low lung. Look for a rise and fall, or sideways expansion, in the low abdomen. Is your breath moving fully in the midlung? Look for expansion and release in the ribcage. Is your breath expanding freely in the upper lobes of the lungs? Look for a gentle expansion and release around the collar bones.

Now, take a moment to notice how you feel, and see if anything is already changing. Roll to your side, come to Tadasana, and realize that you have already begun. As you move into and out of asanas, keep coming back to the breath. Use long full exhalations to release resistance in the body and in the mind. Take the time to enjoy the movement, the stirring, the change.

As you journey up the mountain path, watch “all things moving, new day coming, life renewing.”

Namaste.

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

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The Backyard Philosopher

A Life Full of Others' Lives

By Linda Bond

As I write this article, I am just a few days away from my 72nd birthday. I am not a fan of parties or celebrations, but I do indulge in an annual walk through memory lane. On hearing my history, most people are amazed at the variety of my experiences, but no one is more amazed than I.

As a child, I spent some time on a reservation just outside Auburn, Washington, and I also moved constantly, following my father's work – all laboring jobs. He graduated from grade school only and then worked on a farm before hitting the road at age 16, traveling the rails, getting to see the country. He learned about life from the ground up and I loved hearing the stories he told. And I loved moving – meeting new kids, seeing new environments, learning new things.

My mother did finish high school and her command of the English language was greater than most, at least when it came to spoken English. Her use of grammar was impeccable. Listening to her, as well as reading the King James version of the Bible, meant that I, too, tended to use proper grammar, which became important in my school and work years.

As I revisit my past, I realize that what I cherish the most from all of my varied experiences is the perspective I have gained concerning the lives of others. When we work or socialize within a particular group, we tend to absorb the ideas and

opinions of that group. The more limited our group experiences, I have come to think, the more limited is our perspective about what it means to be human.

My first job began when I was a senior in high school. I had become fascinated with the music of my day (most young people were) and I began taking care of a fan club for a British group who had come over from England. That led to my becoming a booking agent in the music industry. There were only three females in that role at the time – one in Canada, one in New York and me. To be fair, I was licensed as a secondary on a man's registration (my boss), but still, it was an early indication of how my life would break apparent barriers. Later, I would manage a local rock band.

Over the years, I worked as a bookkeeper at a meat cutting/restaurant supply business. I went from that to being the Eastern Washington representative of the State Energy Office, which involved traveling throughout the region and speaking to groups, assisting people making grant requests, serving on various committees including one to develop materials for teachers, and learning to apply basic computer programming. Once our communities became actively involved in energy planning, I suggested the office be closed.

I went to work for a temp-office and started my own small business, which I kept for thirteen years. We provided office

support for business leaders, politicians and vocational rehabilitation counselors. One of my clients became my next boss. He owned business property in Spokane and on the west coast and I took on the job of collecting rents and paying all the property bills.

My final (I think) career jump has taken me to Auntie's Bookstore in Spokane; I am starting my eighteenth year with this dream job. I have done so many tasks at Auntie's – working in the freight room, handling our co-op program, preparing the newsletter and book reviews, and introducing authors at events, as book club coordinator and computer tech person – always wanting to learn more. I enjoy working in coordination with national publishing houses as well as small presses and now self-published authors.

As an avid member of the Sierra Club as well as local environmental groups, I helped obtain "Sole Source" designation for the Spokane Aquifer. I am a photographer and writer and helped start and now lead the Inland Northwest Writers Guild for beginning and lightly-published authors. I find that my life experiences offer a wealth of ideas for my own writing as well as helping others.

I have been fortunate to have rubbed elbows with rich, poor, conservative, liberal, educated and illiterate, men, women, business owners, janitorial staff, private sector and government workers, as well as musicians, artists and authors – in short, people on all sides of many issues and holding a wide range of beliefs. I have gained respect and admiration for many kinds of people, and have traded my opinionated self for a willingness to listen, to be slow to judge.

More than anything, I want to understand others – to gain new perspectives. And for that, I am eternally grateful.

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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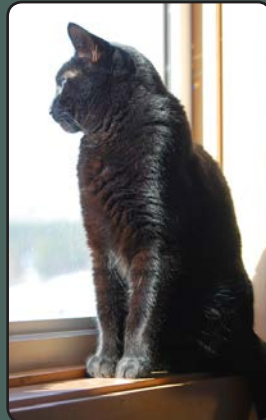
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A Year On the Farm

A Recipe for Clean Clothes and Dishes

By Michelle Lancaster

In the movie *Miss Potter*, Beatrix Potter's mother admonishes her for wanting to invite her publisher to the house, saying, "I wish you wouldn't bring tradespeople into the house ... they carry dust." Aha! This is why my house is always dirty!

Movies and magazines depict spotlessly clean, beautiful homes. Apparently they do not photograph working farm homes. My floor is never "clean enough to eat off of." As the ladies in my fiber group can attest, we always have "fiber bunnies" floating around under our chairs, runaways from our time spinning and knitting. Cats shed and dogs run in with muddy feet. A clean set of coveralls means an inevitably messy situation the following day. Things can't stay clean, it's impossible. No amount of scrubbing stops it (although the one first day after a cleaning, I so love and enjoy the atmosphere of the home!).

After years of spending an exorbitant amount of money on commercial soaps, I finally plunged into the world of DIY laundry soap. Now, I have made my own body bar soap for many years, utilizing extra tallow and lard from butchering. I have gotten to the point where I travel with a small bar of my own soap, appreciating it much more than conventional fragranced chemical options.

Then I found a very simple laundry soap recipe, one I was willing to risk trying. We have now used this recipe for several years. My husband, the one who actually does most of the laundry, found that our clothes got much cleaner than with the commercial laundry detergent.

My parents had experimented with soap options for their dishwasher, so I tested this basic laundry soap in our dishwasher with good results. The cycle completes with no excess foam at the end and the soap does not etch and ruin dishes. I am more willing to use the dishwasher, knowing the homemade soap is inexpensive, not laden with chemicals, and actually effective.

I also use the soap base (Kirk's Original Coco Castile soap, effective even in hard water) in bar form for my manual dish-washing. I leave a bar by the sink in a little soap dish and wipe the sponge across the top to lather it up.

Here is the recipe for low-suds liquid soap for laundry and dishes:

- 1 bar plain soap, grated
- 1 cup borax
- 1 cup washing soda
- 2½ gallons water, separated

Simmer one-half gallon of water in a large pot on the stove. Add grated soap and stir until it dissolves. (Trick: I don't like how grating soap gets soap particles in the air, so I pre-soak the bar of soap in water overnight. Then when I grate, the bar is much softer and moist, so no soap particles go floating off.)

Add borax and washing soda to the dissolved soap and water mixture. Whisk gently until all solids are fully dissolved. Fill a large bucket with 2 gallons of cool water. Pour soap mixture into

water and whisk together. Set aside to cure for 24 hours.

Add 20 drops each of orange and rosemary essential oils (optional, or pick a scent of your liking). Use an immersion blender or large whisk to blend the soap for 2-3 minutes. Add water if necessary to reach a nice pouring consistency. Transfer to smaller jars, or re-use your old laundry and dish soap containers.

If solids separate from liquids, shake container before pouring. I've found that the addition of a little commercial soap will help emulsify the blend and prevent separation.

Use 1/3 cup per load of laundry and 1/4 cup per dishwasher load.

The reason for each main ingredient: Soap breaks down dirt and oils, and the washing soda and borax act as water softeners and detergent, helping bind and wash away grime.

Note: You can use vinegar in the rinse cycle, to help remove any excess soap. *Vinegar is an acid and should NOT be added to the soap recipe or it will counteract the effects of the soap ingredients.*

My house is still not spotlessly clean, but my clothes and dishes are!

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

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Opening the Eyes of Love

By Gabriele von Trapp

It is my experience that love finds its course to us in unexpected ways; in an expression, a moment, a single gesture, a thought, or through the hardship of a little worm.

My adult son Eric portrays himself as

a rough and tough guy. He rarely shares his feelings, does not show affection freely and has been known to carry a big chip on his shoulder. His softer side is hidden deep within and he comes off as callous and hard-edged. There have been times this brute was hard to love.

Two years ago our family planned a

vacation together on Maui, Hawaii. We asked Eric to go and we were all pleasantly surprised when he agreed. He had never been to Hawaii before because, after all, vacationing in Hawaii is for sissies. He did not like crowds and felt uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings. The first few days were spent getting him relaxed and adjusted.

After a week on Maui, we started to see a change in Eric. He was having fun, he was relaxed, he played and frolicked, took the chip off his shoulder and became outgoing. He had a gentle and peaceful demeanor about him and he even commented on how pretty the flowers were. "What is going on here?" we asked ourselves. This was not the man we've known.

The crux of our suspicions became clear one afternoon when we were all lounging out on the lanai. The sun was bright and beating down on the concrete patio. Eric noticed a small worm basking on the hot surface and went over to encourage and nudge the half-fried worm to a shaded area, all the while talking sweetly to the little creature. We could not believe our eyes or ears! Here is this gruff and tough guy who would have never had a second thought about the welfare of a worm. Somehow and unexpectedly, love pierced his hardened core and warmed his steel-cold heart.

Needless to say, Eric has never been the same. He has been loving, kind and tender since his experience in Hawaii and, not surprisingly, he has an unrelenting desire to go there again. Our time together seemed to have opened his eyes to the beauty and fulfillment of being loved and loving.

In her teenage years, my daughter was a master at exhibiting and expressing unloving feelings toward me. She was brutal and relentless. She willfully moved out of our home and in with a local family at the tender age of 16 and with a tremendous amount of hate in her heart. It tore me apart to have to drive past her "new" home and family on my way to work every day. I could barely accept that she preferred another family to her own and I felt deep



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resentment toward this family for accommodating her. She seemingly did not care about how much pain she was causing me. I felt like she had thrown me out of her life.

I struggled to accept not being loved by my daughter and it was challenging to not let my gaping anguish affect the way I loved her. Although all I wanted was to have her home, I decided to set my pain aside and provide for her needs in her new situation. Without an ulterior motive, I purchased a car for her so she had mobility and was able to work and go to school. It was not just any car. It was a darling, classy, fiery red sports car which took a bite out of my finances. It fit her persona perfectly.

I could have used the car as a ploy to get her home, but I genuinely wanted to be a support to her, even under the unfavorable circumstances. I did not let my pain, anger and resentments determine my actions.

Though our relationship was still strained, I also wanted her to have a good education. I realized she was not able to create this opportunity for herself at the time. It gave me great joy to tell her that she would be able to "live her dream" and go to the cosmetology school of her choosing. She was overjoyed at the opportunity but it did not change her loveless feelings toward me. I did not expect or anticipate her feelings would change and it was not my motivation.

Now, as an adult, she has looked back through those difficult years and has admitted: "Mom, I can't believe you did what you did for me even after everything I put you through." I am grateful that she was able to see that my love for her was unfa-

ing and unconditional. Those words said "I love you" in a very big way.

There have been too many times in my life I have felt unloved.

Because of unfortunate circumstances, my childhood lacked the love and security needed for a child to thrive. My need to be held, loved and cherished had not been met and I inevitably convinced myself that I was unlovable.

The perception of being unlovable threaded itself through the fabric of my life, affected my relationships and needled itself into the fibers of my own family. Although I had been assured through many relationships and friendships over my lifetime that I was truly loved, I just did not believe it. It was a self-destructive force that was hidden deep within my subconscious thinking and I made no efforts to expel the notion.

Through no intentional effort of my own, I have recently found the time and oppor-

tunity to take a good look at myself and my history. In doing some soul-searching, I have had a significant revelation: I never learned to love myself. I've been kicking my own butt for years and I was not nurturing myself. My self-perception was so distorted I had lost sight of who I am: a lovable person. What an insight!

The change in my self-perception has impacted the world around me as well. Wherever I go people are now spontaneously smiling at me and friendlier than they have ever been. I have a new spring to my step and I feel light-hearted. I am spreading the love that I am feeling and I am grateful that the eyes of love have been opened for me. I would dare to say the timing is perfect!

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.



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Cooking on All Four Burners

By Karen Giebel

I'm Karen and I like to cook. It's been two hours since I last cooked. There ... I said it aloud and I won't apologize. Ha! In this day and age of fast food, ordering takeout meals, ordering meals online for home delivery, food from a can, microwavable food from a box and dining out at restaurants, I often feel that I'm an anomaly. For me, it's not just providing nutritious and delicious meals, but about feeding my soul and making memories to last a lifetime.

Cooking and baking from scratch is something I have enjoyed doing since helping my mother in the kitchen when I was just a tot. Those are some special memories of one-on-one time with mom. Both of us wearing aprons and me, standing on a kitchen chair at the sink, being taught to peel potatoes or stirring in nuts and raisins for a batch of cookies. Watching out the kitchen window at the dogs playing in the yard or exclaiming "there's another one" as we saw, in the distance, a freighter chugging its way up Lake Erie.

"The need to feed" is well documented as a way to nurture and to show our families and friends that we love them. Perhaps that's why we have such extravagant spreads of food on Christmas and Thanksgiving. We celebrate birthdays with special dinners and birthday cakes. What child doesn't feel loved when that cake with brightly burning candles is placed in front of them? When there is the birth of a child, we bring the new parents a nice celebratory casserole. When there is a death, that same casserole recipe

is brought out to bring comfort and say, "We're sorry for your loss."

My dad was raised in a coal mining camp in northern Georgia. The company store provided their groceries and grandmother canned or dried what fruits and vegetables she could find. They ate well, but with little variety. If you wanted meat, you had to hunt it.

Determined to do better for his wife and children, dad bought a few acres and raised every kind of fruit and vegetable you could imagine. We were beyond well fed! Fresh raspberries, apples, pears, peaches, cherries and concord grapes. Corn, tomatoes, beans, peas, potatoes, swiss chard, onions and more were brought into our house and mom froze and canned produce that fed us all year long. I never had a store-bought fruit or vegetable or food from a can.

I guess you could say we were spoiled by all this homegrown goodness but I didn't realize it at the time. I do remember a friend's mother buying cans of green peas and thinking, "They must be rich if they can buy vegetables in a can!" On a rare occasion I would have dinner at a friend's house and eat canned peas. Oh my! That's not what peas taste like. That's when I began to realize that I was the rich one. Following in my mother's footsteps, I have been preserving home-grown foods my whole life.

These days it's my husband supplying us with fresh produce from his large and getting-larger-every-year garden. He keeps me on my toes trying to find new

ways to use up all those wonderful vegetables. Last year he planted two rows of Swiss chard – for just the two of us.... I sautéed chard with onion and vinegar. I cooked it with garlic and balsamic vinegar. I made creamed chard. Steamed and drizzled with olive oil, salt and pepper. I made omelets and frittatas and stuffed chicken breasts with it. Then I froze two bushels of it. Bless his heart....

This year he decided that if one yellow crook-neck squash plant was good then 10 would be even better. I cooked squash in all the old ways I knew, then I started experimenting with pretty good results. Finally, I gave up. My neighbors started turning their lights out and locking their doors when they spotted me coming.

But my point is, fresh is best. Home-grown can't be beat. Just have fun with it. Experiment. Get your hubby, sisters and kids involved. It's a wonderful way to make memories. Sometimes it will be a total disaster, but most times, you'll have a fabulous new treat for your dinner table.

I am still learning. Early on there were some pretty awful meals, but due to my fascination with good food and the cooking process itself, I just persevered until I became totally comfortable in the kitchen. Cooking and baking to me are creative art forms. I rely on my cupboard palette of herbs and spices as I flavor and season whatever food is before me. Learning which herbs compliment each vegetable or meat requires research, tasting and testing.

Having traveled quite a bit throughout



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Europe, I discovered that though we eat many of the same meats and vegetables, each country seasons their foods uniquely. Hungary, for example, uses lots of paprika and not just one kind like we see in stores here. They have many different varieties of paprika and each recipe calls for a certain type.

My husband and I are adventurous eaters. We find different ethnic foods wonderful and I attempt, usually successfully, to re-create them at home. What we also found in Europe is there is still an emphasis on home-cooked meals and quality in restaurants. Yes, there are fast food places, but not nearly to the extent we find here in the USA. Europeans generally enjoy sitting around the table with their families to partake in their meals.

Even though I worked full time as an RN, I still took time to cook our meals from scratch. Often I would cook a week's worth of meals on the weekend, so I just had to pull something out of the fridge

later and heat it up for supper. Roasting a pair of chickens or baking a big pot roast provided the means to make several meals. Leftover chicken became tacos and leftover pot roast became a hot roast beef sandwich.

Why make a dozen meatballs if I could make five dozen and freeze them in family-size packages? It certainly was better than hitting old burger grease on the way home from a softball game or practice. Tossing together a salad and cooking a vegetable takes but a few minutes and my kids ate nutritious and tasty meals.

Cookie-baking memories with my children are treasured. My daughter, the chocoholic, would never entertain the thought of making a cookie that did not contain chocolate. My son, who was into dinosaurs in a big way, had so much fun making brontosaurus cut-out cookies that we decorated with red Santa Claus coats and hats for Christmas. Teaching children to cook also helps them develop

organizational and planning skills. Plus, it's a fun way to sharpen their reading and math.

For me, cooking is therapeutic too. I laughingly say I solve the entire world's problems working in my kitchen. The rhythmic action of chopping and dicing fruits and vegetables quiets my mind. Carefully considering what spices I'll use to season the pork chops on this day requires focus and that de-clutters my sometimes overly active brain. Decorating a cake requires concentration as I focus on details, and that concentration silences the noise of a too-busy world.

I'm Karen and I like to cook. It has now been four hours since I last cooked, so I'd best get busy. Tonight, it's marinated elk steak on the grill, a new experience for me! Now, what does one serve with elk?

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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