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**JANUARY 2020
ISSUE DEADLINES**

AD SPACE RESERVATIONS:

Friday, Dec. 20th

WHAT'S HAPPENING LISTINGS:

Friday, Dec. 27th



See Nature Of White

- JOHN ODELL, WordsOfWords.com



From the Publisher's Desk

By Gabriel Cruden

I met a woman in her early 60s at a conference recently, and you could tell right away that she was a get-things-done sort of person, but creative and constructive in her problem-solving rather than a bulldozer. We enjoyed a ranging conversation, including finding people we knew in common from places we'd both lived. She had led an active life, making a career of projects rather than staying in any one discipline or sector. I felt an immediate resonance with her approach and energy.

Toward the end of our chat, I learned that she had been diagnosed with macular degeneration just the week before. She did not know how quickly it was going to progress, and, while it was clearly a shocking and unhappy revelation for her, she seemed to be taking it philosophically.

"I've done everything on my bucket list already and so I'm okay if I don't get to travel and see the world anymore," she remarked. "I've started noticing how blind people get around and I've been paying attention to braille." I was impressed. Adapting and finding the best way forward – just as she did in her project work.

As I drove home, grateful that I had functioning eyes to get me there, I mused on how being a sighted person has, for as long as I can remember, been a defining feature of my identity and of so much of the work I have done, and still do. I have wondered what blindness would

be like for me and how well I'd adjust to it in comparison to losing one of my other senses. In fact, in college, I used to experiment with how successfully I could walk across campus with my eyes closed. While doing so underscored how much I used and appreciated my ability to see, it also heightened my awareness of how uniquely useful and complex my other senses were.

I took an immersion college course in sign language and became fascinated with not just the language and its structure, which doesn't follow sentences in a linear translation and is more like image-based Yoda-speak, but also with deaf culture. By the end of the course I was all fired up to become a sign language interpreter. The next quarter's course load, work, and life precluded pursuing it at the time and then I never came back to it. But it did reinforce how much I prized my ability to see.

Having a very keen sense of smell and taste, it's hard for me to imagine being without one or both of those senses. When I try to project what that experience might be like, I picture it more as an absence of something rather than greatly impacting how I move through the world. I would certainly not wish to lose either one – standing in the yard overlooking the river and eating a sun-warmed peach picked directly from the tree is pure delight. But I'd still be able to do my work and attend to my responsibilities and chosen recreational activities with very little modification.

Quite recently, however, I realized that doing things, whether sighted or not, could definitely NOT happen in the same way if I didn't have a sense of touch. That epiphany triggered a fundamental shift in self-perception. When I was walking across campus with my eyes closed, I was feeling the pavers, the sidewalk, the stairs, the gravel path. When I play my guitar by firelight, I'm finding my way across the frets with my fingers. There is, in fact, so much that I do with my hands, in particular – these incredibly well-designed and versatile appendages – throughout every day.

Further, in addition to their utility, there is what is communicated through touch. When I hold my beloved's hand in mine, it's not just her hand that I feel, but her very beingness. And within that, so much can be said, understood, and felt, through my hands. The more I consider it, the more I realize that my sense of touch is foundational to every aspect of how I live and feel whole as a person. And my hands seem most instrumental.

Perhaps I'm just making strategic adjustments to my sense of identity in recognition that I'm far more likely to lose eyesight as I age, rather than my sense of touch, but whatever the reason for the revelation, it has also served to remind me of how easy it is to take for granted that to which I am accustomed, and to pause and be grateful. This breath. This body. This moment of being alive and sharing this place with all of you.

A Thousand Words: publisher photo.



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Hope Can Shape the Arc

By Christine Wilson

“I do not pretend to understand the moral universe. The arc is a long one. My eye reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by experience of sight. I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice.” ~ Theodore Parker, pastor, 1871

“The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.”

~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“We are the arc benders.

~ John Pavlovitz

“Yet here she is, asking for trouble. Acting like what she does might matter.”

~ Richard Powers, Overstory

Theodore Parker had been an abolitionist fighting against harsh critics who believed themselves to be justified in supporting slavery. Nearly a century after Parker’s observation about the moral universe, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s words, in that era’s version of a retweet, became so embedded within this country’s psyche that they are carved into stone at the National Mall in Washington, DC. President Obama had those words woven into a rug, which lay on the floor of the Oval Office for eight years.

Some have worried that we can use this sentiment as permission to remain inactive. If it is moving toward justice and if it is a slow process anyway, what is the rush?

Things will be fine. I’ll just binge watch my current favorite show and you can let me know when we get there. It’s all too big for me. That’s where John Pavlovitz comes in. He took those words and created a call to action. How does that arc of the moral universe bend toward justice, anyway? His answer is, “We are the arc benders.”

In Reverend Pavlovitz’s book *Hope and Other Superpowers* he expresses the view that we all possess these superpowers. It’s not about saving everything and everybody all the time everywhere. It’s about, to use the words of Clarissa Pinkola Estes, “Stretching out to mend the part of the world that is in our reach.” Also, in my not-very-humble opinion, we often underestimate our reach.

Martin Seligman, in the research on optimism he described in *Learned Optimism*, writes a brief statement on hope. It made me laugh when I first read it because he seemed almost embarrassed, and definitely apologetic, for talking about such a lofty, non-scientific word. Things have changed since that book came out and people are speaking more openly about this lofty notion of hope. It is being quantified by researchers. Speakers and writers are unabashedly giving us a path to the hopeful life. Maybe that is part of the arc-bending process.

When Pandora opened her famous box,

and all those horrible pestilent and egregious miseries escaped, there was one thing left at the bottom of the box. It was Elpis, the spirit of hope. Pandora was apparently not much for kindness or making life better for people so she slammed the lid and Elpis got stuck in there. Apparently that is where we arc benders come in.

There are various ways to think about hope. A person could sit around and hope for something to work out, but a fat lot of good that usually does. There are occasional times when inactivity pays off, but it is not the inactivity that makes that happen; it’s the events that happen while we are being inactive. It might be luck, but more often it is the activity of others that creates an outcome.

I just read the story of the Virginia woman who lost her election in 2017. She had tied with her opponent and the election board of Virginia literally picked the winner by pulling a name out of a bowl. Talk about your “every vote counts” lesson. She accessed her inner Elpis and ran again. This time she won. Maybe she ascribed her efforts to the famous quote by Oscar Wilde, which was specifically about second marriages. He described the willingness to marry again as the triumph of “hope over experience.” She did have a rather specific experience in which she knew she was one vote away

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from winning, which may have made hope more accessible.

It takes more effort to have hope when the possible outcome is less visible and the chances may be more limited. Humans have the capacity to imagine a positive outcome. However, we also have the capacity to imagine miserable defeat. At some point a few years ago, I watched a small child crawling around a restaurant floor. He would crawl under a table, try to stand up, hit the table, fall over, and crawl away. For some reason, he kept choosing to attempt his stand-ups when he was under a table. His grandmother wondered aloud why adults can't persist like that. I offered my theory: "Too many knocks on the head."

Years later, I think there is more to it than that. What we tell ourselves about those knocks on the head makes all the difference in the world. We create stories about our lives and the meaning of our experiences, which leads to confirmation bias. One of my favorite Jack Kornfield quotes is, "We tell

ourselves interesting stories. We just need to not believe them so much."

So maybe our metaphorical head-banging isn't about the bad luck of getting bonked as much as it is about managing the circumstances of short tables. It usually comes down to the famous Serenity Prayer and sorting out what we have control over and what we need to practice serenity about.

So, here we are, smack dab in the middle of the holiday season. There are messages of hope all over the place. I personally like the emphasis placed on this during the month of December. I think of it as similar to birthdays. It would be nice if we all went around celebrating the birth of our beloveds all year long and many of us do, in small or large ways. But it is helpful that there is a day dedicated to celebrating them in case we missed a chance here or there.

This season of hope is like that for me. It would be good if we went around bending that arc toward justice all year long, and I believe we ought to be doing that. But let's

just make a special effort this month to ponder hope, remember that it is a superpower unlike any other, and inspire others to set their superpower into action.

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 Hitchhiker

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

I rounded the corner on my way into town on a gorgeous fall day in Stevens County. (Come to think of it, most fall days are gorgeous, and not many roads are straight in our part of the world.) I was driving the old beat-up Honda Accord I'd given my son. I thought I'd put a few miles on it, keep it running, save some gas, while awaiting his release from prison.

I noticed at the base of the hill that one of my neighbors was standing at the roadside hitchhiking into town. I pulled over to give him a ride. As I stopped, I realized this wasn't my neighbor after all. In fact, it was someone I had never seen before. He was an older man, perhaps in his 80s, white hair and beard, ambling slowly with a cane and carrying a small

bag. I threw my things in the back seat and he climbed in.

He thanked me for picking him up, and then began talking with me as though we had known each other for years. He was friendly and engaging, and he soon began telling me his life story, and asking me about myself. "Do I know you?" he asked. "I have short term memory loss. Thirty seconds or so," he explained.

He told me he had moved to the area within the last year. I asked him where he was going. I was late for work, but figured what's a few more minutes, and I agreed to drop him off on the other side of town.

He reminisced about his life here years ago, told of his cabinet business, then of his move to Florida for a few years. Now he was back in the area. His son lives

nearby as well. "You'd really like my son Jerry," he offered. "He really likes rocks. He bought a blue one not long ago for around \$75." I explained that I like rocks too.

Just then his phone rang. "This is my son. I should take this," he said. His son was checking on him, but seemed reassured that someone was taking him to town. "What was your name again?" I reminded him. "I have short term memory loss," he explained. "Thirty seconds or so."

We continued our conversation. He was interested in what I was doing. He plied me a bit more about life, what was important, my work here and abroad.

Then my phone rang. A patient called, worried about his daughter, suffering



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from depression. Where could he take her to get help? I responded with some ideas, said goodbye, then apologized for the interruption. "Oh, no trouble," my passenger said. I explained the dilemma briefly. "Oh, we should stop and pray for his daughter right now. What was she suffering from?" I reminded him. He offered a simple prayer for the suffering teenager. I thanked him.

"You know, it's good that we met," he mused. "I want to give you this." He handed me a copy of a stapled set of papers. It was an abbreviated treatise on his life and the lessons he had learned over the course of that life. He had distilled the things that matter into a few short pages. I thanked him. Yes, I agreed, it's good that we met.

I dropped him off at his intended destination. We said our goodbyes, and I secretly hoped that I would meet him again. I turned the Honda around and

headed for the clinic, to patients waiting. I wondered how much trouble I would be in for spending the extra moments dropping off my hitchhiker.

No one at the clinic said a word, but someone borrowed the papers the gentleman had given me. I had looked at them only long enough to determine that they held the essence of what he had discovered would lead to a righteous life, a good life, before someone whisked them away to see what the old man had discovered.

The old-timers speak of chance encounters with heavenly beings, angels they picked up at the roadside, or who stopped to help them with a problem, only to disappear and never be seen again. I'm not sure if angels disguise themselves as white-haired 80-year-old men hitchhiking with their canes waiting for someone to pick them up. I don't really think so, but what do I know?

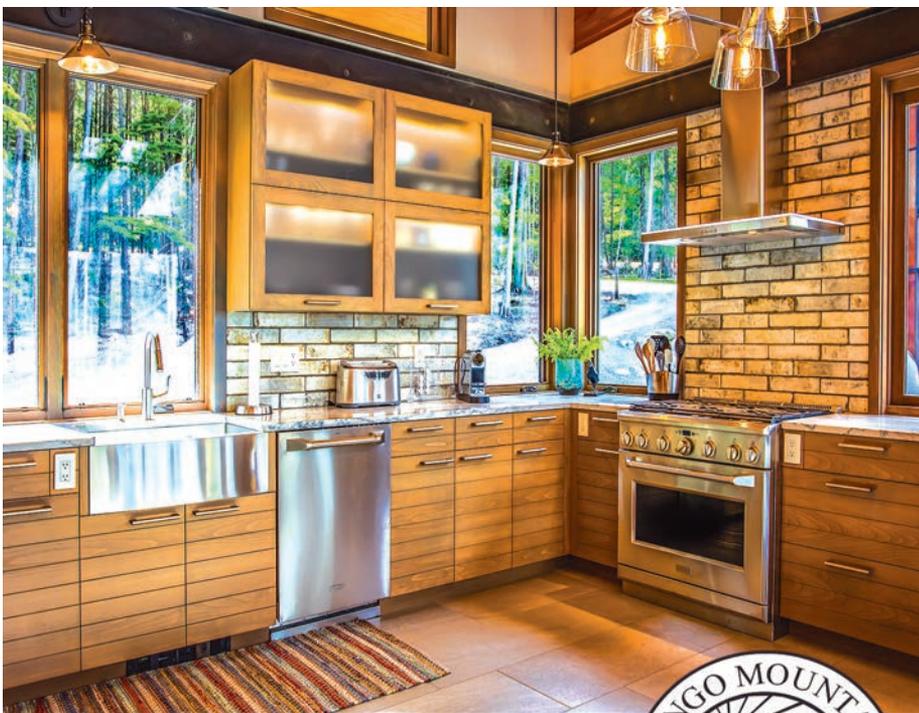
What I do know is that I am glad for

the encounter, glad to have met him, to have heard a bit of his life story, to be blessed with the distillation of decades of wisdom regarding what matters in life.

By the way, on the back of his life treatise there was an illustration – a pair of angel wings.

I've thought a bit about my chance encounter with the guy who can't remember my name. If I were to offer advice, it would be this: If you happen to see an old guy with a cane hitchhiking along a Stevens County road, stop and pick him up, get to know him. He might not remember your name, but you'll remember him. He might be an angel, or he might just be my neighbor. Either way, you can't lose.

Barry Bacon is a physician who has lived and practiced family medicine in Colville for 28 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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Submerged by Water and Time

By Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

In the fall of 1978, a B.C. government archaeologist doing survey work in the Kettle River valley heard from a local fisherman about a dugout canoe scuttled under the water's surface, just upstream of Cascade Falls and the Highway 395 border crossing.

The archaeologist, Michael Freisinger, went to look. A set of log skids in the riverbed surrounding the boat suggested to Freisinger that the dugout had been intentionally submerged for storage. Although the sides of the canoe were smashed and broken, presumably by high water events surging through the falls, it was still about 70% intact.

The 21-foot canoe had been carved from a single ponderosa pine log, with the butt end of the tree forming the bow. This, Freisinger observed, was a common

technique to increase balance and buoyancy, making a dugout "front-heavy" so that when loaded it would not sink at the stern. The canoe had a sizeable hole drilled through the top of the bow, suggesting that it might have been towed by people or a horse when heavily laden.

Cascade Falls is a narrow rock canyon that once served as an ecological boundary, stopping the Kettle River's annual ocean salmon run from ascending beyond this point. At the base of the falls, the Sinixt had a productive fishery, K'lhaxem ("end of fish going up"). The river above the falls was less productive without the salmon, but the semi-arid valley could be counted on for deer, mountain goat and sheep, as well as the fresh green shoots of balsam-root sunflower and various other root crops.

In his summary report, Freisinger quotes John Work, Hudson's Bay Company manager at Fort Colville (adjacent to Kettle Falls) in the early 19th century: "Dougouts and sturgeon-nosed canoes of bark were used on the numerous rivers and lakes of the district ... In many areas these craft provided the principal means of travel, even after horses came into use." Freisinger refers to the clear markings of a metal adze on the canoe's interior, and to a location nearby marked as a campsite used by the 1860-61 British Boundary Commission. With these clues, Freisinger estimates the canoe's birth at about 1875.

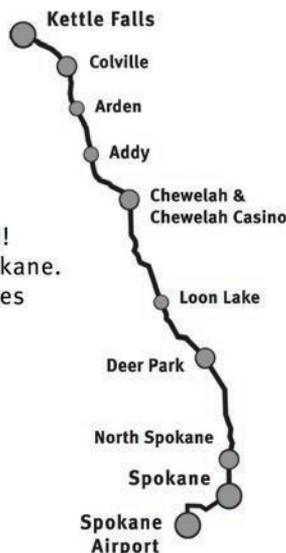
The boat's survival over a century, stored as it was in the Kettle River, formed a remarkable window into the indigenous use of the middle and upper Kettle River valleys. Placed just above an ancient portage around Cascade Falls, the canoe would have been ready and waiting for anyone wishing to transport dried fish, or pick up stores of dried meat from successful upstream hunts and bring them down to be carried below the falls to larger Sinixt villages. With the international boundary established but not yet strongly enforced, the Sinixt would have been able to pass freely along the Kettle, paying little mind to the 49th parallel, even after it was drawn in 1846.

The Kettle River is bisected more than once by the international boundary as it winds its way through ponderosa pine forest and bunchgrass prairie.

Freisinger's report details dozens of places where indigenous people lived and processed resources, all the way to present-day Grand Forks, Curlew, Midway and Rock Creek. On cliffs and bluffs, he found plentiful evidence of meat-processing camps. Closer to the river's floodplain, he found intact storage or root-cooking pits. Just east of the confluence of the Granby River in present-day Grand Forks, he found the remains of what had been a significant burial site.

This site had already been excavated by

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B.C. mining historian Bill Barlee in 1965. Barlee removed two human remains, buried in the flexed position common to the Sinixt and covered by stones; 1,742 dentium shell; a soapstone pipe; a quantity of red ochre (used for painting pictographs and ornamenting the body), and fragments of a wooden bracelet.

By the time Freisinger did his survey, the skeletal remains of twenty people had also been disturbed and removed at the confluence of the Granby and Kettle Rivers, right in Grand Forks. No doubt, many cultural items commonly buried with the deceased also left their intended resting places.

The Kettle River arcs down below the boundary west of Grand Forks. There it intersects with Curlew Creek, water that flows out of Curlew Lake past the town of the same name. Though Freisinger did not survey sites in the United States, he corresponded with Washington State resident and researcher Madeline Perry, who confirmed a dozen sites around the lake, and more along the Kettle. Place names in the language shared by the Skoyelpi, the Sinixt and a third smaller band identified in the historical record as the *Snxwiya7llhp* ("Kettle River Indians") began to complete the picture of a well settled and prosperous valley.

Upstream of Curlew, the Kettle River flows in British Columbia near Midway, north past Rock Creek toward Beaverdell. Freisinger surveyed multiple sites along this winding, picturesque portion of the Kettle, where he found a pictograph, multiple pit house depressions and more signs of food cache pits, bone fragments and fire-broken rock, all evidence of a settled culture.

Having been teased initially into reading Freisinger's report by the intriguing detail of a waterlogged canoe, I completed my journey through the indigenous Kettle by looping back around to the place where Christina Creek joins it after flowing out of Christina Lake. Deep in the report, I found a brief account of a foot trail used by the Sinixt to connect overland through the mountains, east to the Arrow Lakes. Poring over maps, I could only theorize

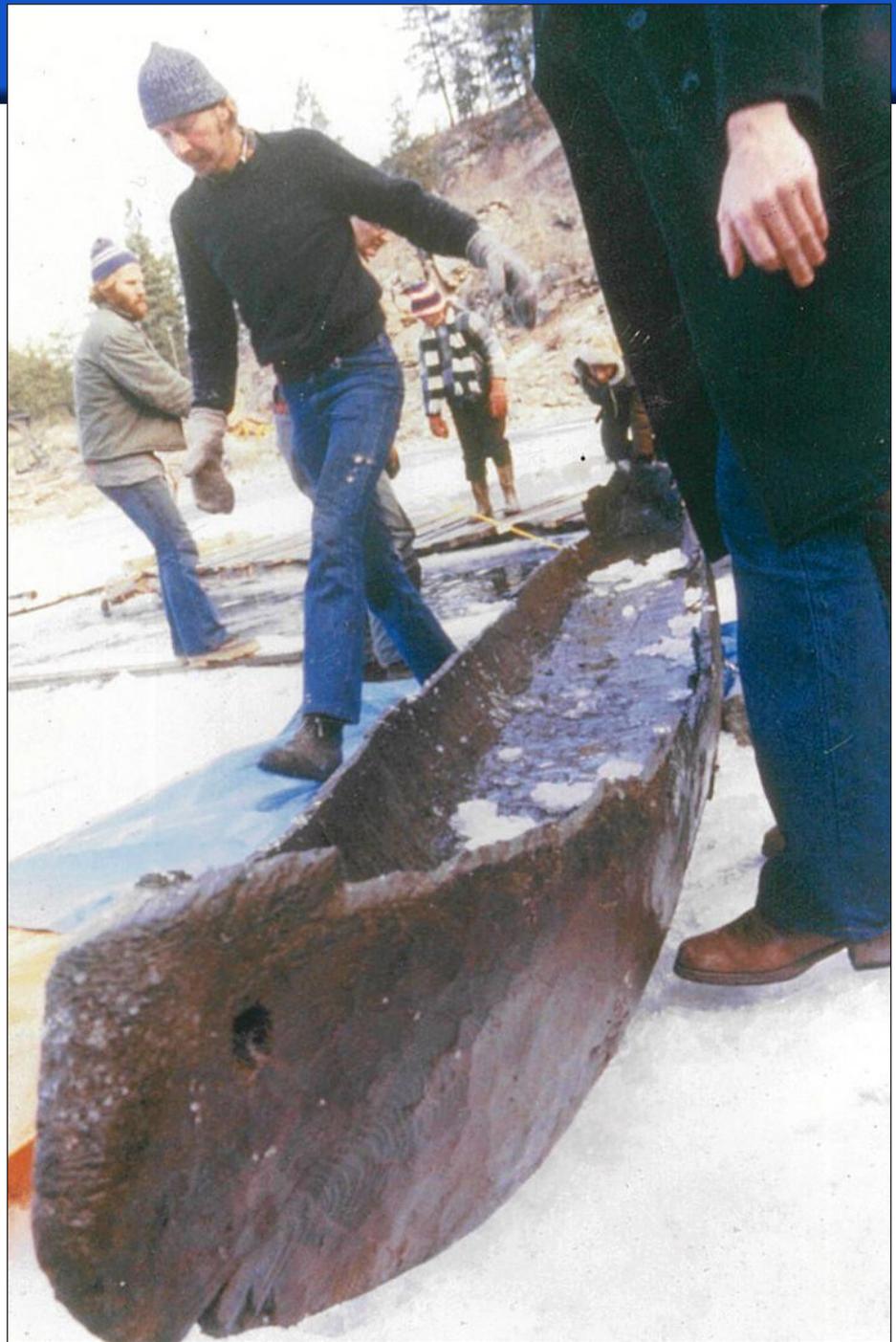


Photo courtesy the Boundary Museum Society.

how they crossed the imposing Monashee mountain range. A now-abandoned rail line follows the McRae Creek drainage north and east, emerging on the west shore of Lower Arrow Lake considerably north of Castlegar.

Smelters, sawmills, agriculture, gravel pits, housing developments and highways have recently and dramatically altered perceptions of the region's natural geography. Freisinger's report opens up a nearly forgotten world of foot trails and canoe transport. In this season of long nights, the

report sheds some light on the rhythms of a different time. Then, ecological currents flowed more freely. No artificial lines on maps obscured the natural connections that waterways always foster.

Explore a map of Freisinger's report findings at www.edpearkes.com/2019/11/the-submerged-canoe/.

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

The Art of Solitude

By Loren Cruden

Social animals that we are, through the ages there has also been recognition that a little solitude can be beneficial. Solitude's chrysalis is the classic venue within which individuals incubate vision, commune with nature/the divine/the muse, and make use of uninterrupted intervals in which to create literature, music, art, and clarity of insight that may in turn nourish and inspire society.

Solitude that is punishment, as in prison – or is not really solitude, as when people pop in and out of each others' online pockets like virtual gophers – is not what I'm talking about. The solitude I'm referring to is not confinement or a vacuum calling for distraction. It is both peaceful and rich in potential.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us – or we find it not." And John Muir claimed that "Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness. All other travel is mere dust and hotels and chatter."

Emerson's quote is a reminder that experience is profoundly influenced by what we bring to it; and Muir, in his pawky Scottish way, noticed that bringing along too much – including human companions – occludes direct interface with the primal. (He did lug a lot of cast-iron frying pans with him into the heart of the wilderness, however.) Direct interface seems all the more valuable and rare in this age of the vicarious and virtual; unmediated primal experience isn't a product of technology.

Contemplative solitude has roots in all cultures. People realized long ago that having even one other person present changes one's experience of what is encountered. The altering influence that goes on when in company most obviously manifests as commentary: "Wow – what a gorgeous sunset but – dang! – those power lines are going to spoil my photo. Do you remember that guy from Seattle who saw a wolverine near here? Or maybe it was a badger. Didn't your mom move to Seattle recently; how is she getting on?" and so on until the sunset becomes no more than a fading scenic backdrop to conversation.

Commentary fractures, hijacks, and dilutes attention: off the associative mind goes, pin-balling along, carrying attention with it. Shared experience plays a vital role in our wellbeing as individuals, families, societies, and world citizens, of course. But commentary does tend to package and dispose of experience, quickly turning focus back to human-to-human interaction or, as Muir less charitably put it, "chatter." Little time may be given to wordless appreciation – solitary or shared – that engages whole presence rather than just the talking part of the brain.

In solitude, attention naturally turns to the environment for signals and signs, input and self-reflection. Sensory encounters linger, extend, awakening curiosity, awe, consideration, connection. The luxuriously uninterrupted moment widens, rewarding stillness and silence. The poet Ryokan describes this state of receptive attention:

*In the mountain shade
water in the moss
drips between rocks,
I feel a glimmer
of clarity.*

And:

*Dancing butterflies –
for a while my journey
forgotten.*

And:

*The warbler –
its morning voice
covered with rain.*

Jewel-like experiences open when internal or external chatter pauses long enough – moments, days, weeks, months – for the mind to quiet, to notice what is subtle, integral, suggestive, particular, and revelatory.

Many early Christian monks in Ireland were keen hermits, setting up solitary huts in the forest or on small inhospitable islands. For the gregarious Irish to do this seems uncharacteristic, but it was embarked upon with great enthusiasm and hardiness. Some lone monks even set off across the sea in wee coracles, having weird adventures and ending up in unexpected faraway places. As is typical of the Irish, hermit monks often wrote poems or poetic accounts of solitary experiences, such as (translated from Gaelic):

*A wall of forest looms above
And sweetly the blackbird sings,
All the birds make melody
Over me and my books and things.*

*There sings to me the cuckoo
From bush-citadels in grey hood.
God's doom! May the Lord protect me
Writing well, under the great wood.*

I can imagine Thoreau appreciating the spirit of this poem.

Retreat in nature has an honored place in most world religions. Even if seekers such as those in monastic communities are not in solitude, silence is often a component of their day to day, a kind of semi-solitude. Taoist monks had a tradition of solitary wandering – retreat on the hoof, so to speak – and there have also been non-religious recluses all over the world such as the one described by William Butler Yeats in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree":

*I will rise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
and a small cabin build there, of clay and*



*wattles made.
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the
honey bee,
and live alone in the bee-loud glade.
And I shall have some peace there, for peace
comes dripping slow,
dropping from the veils of morning to where
the cricket sings;
there midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a
purple glow,
and evening full of the linnet's wings [and so on].*

What were these solitary Chinese wanderers and Irish hut-dwellers doing? Well, judging from their writings, pretty much the same thing any of us do when alone hiking along a path or sitting under a tree: taking in, enjoying, and becoming a conscious, appreciative part of what's around us. This human impulse probably didn't change over thousands of years. Unlike other ground-level imperatives such as looking for food or shelter or invading/defending territory, communing with what's around us isn't just survival-driven. It is also about valuing intimacy with habitat for its own sake, beyond familiarity's obvious survival practicalities. Ryokan's warbler and, many decades later, Yeats' linnets were not seen through the utilitarian lens – bird = food – but more along the lines of that particular noticed bird in that specific receptive moment = delight. A different but no less vital form of nourishment.

American poets Gary Snyder, Mary Oliver, and Wendell Berry, among others, have written beautifully – and from firsthand experience – about the essentialness of solitary time and the relief of “coming into the peace of wild things” when the weight and noise of the world become too much. But of course there are pitfalls to solitude – even intermittent solitude. The most apparent of these is eccentricity, especially as a person ages. Spend enough time

alone and eccentricity almost always creeps in. Having been born eccentric, into an eccentric family, I had a lot of experience with this even before getting old or spending significant time alone: It was good preparation.

When I was around 20 and stayed alone for some weeks on a road-less mountain in Spain, living in a dirt-floored hut, I was reminded of several things. The first was that, like one of my donkeys, Antonio, I was afraid of the dark. Secondly, that despite the darkness-fear the longer I stayed the more urge there was to elude human encounter, and thirdly that – as with feral cats – this wariness could not instantly be reversed. I also discovered how meaningless time became in the presence of unhindered opportunity to linger in the moment.

Eccentricity can take many forms, including ones that veer into pathology – for which continued solitude is no remedy – but in most cases ordinary eccentricity (if we can call it that) can be moderated through socializing now and then, perhaps making a pact with select friends or family to candidly let you know if they think your eccentricity is getting out of hand. It may be difficult for a person to judge those things for herself; whatever one gets used to tends to feel normal if there's nothing present for comparison.

Eccentricity does afford an interesting vantage on the mainstream – can offer insight and productive food for thought – as long as the outsider remains grounded in a healthy sense of connectedness to something, rather than just adrift in isolation. Contrast doesn't have to be alienating; it can simply be difference. And, in turn, difference and outsider perspective can be crucially instructive to the mainstream.

The other pitfall of extended solitude has to do with accommodating needs other than one's own. There is a great and sometimes healing ease and luxury to looking after no one but yourself: eating when and what you like, sleeping and waking to your own

Continued on page 14...

The Art of Solitude, Continued...

rhythms, not worrying about how you look, and being able to think what you think and feel what you feel without anyone else being affected or projecting an opinion about it.

Of course this also means that no one is there to offer contrast, support, comfort, entertainment, suggestions, cheeriness, help with what needs doing, or necessary feedback on thoughts, feelings, and actions – any of which may become destructive or over the top in the absence of such feedback.

One's ability to generously respond to the needs of others and open one's personal routine and territory to the presence of others can become impaired when solitude is a way of life. Getting set in one's ways, including one's views, is a likelihood to be wary of. The very definition of imposition may become inclusive of anything involving other people. This is when solitude becomes limitation.

Having animal companions is one way people instinctively try to keep balance – keep affection, care-giving, interaction, and mutuality alive. The art of solitude vitally rests on furthering – not narrowing – connection, whether solitude takes the form of a spiritual retreat, a hiking trip in the mountains, living alone in a cabin in the woods, undertaking a traditional vision quest, or just eating lunch in the park and relishing solitary moments in the day-to-day. When solitude has spacious intent – is or becomes more than severance – it is easier to retain flexibility and healthy balance within it.

Part of suitability for solitude is having an awareness of those balances and an ability to effectively respond when they're off-kilter, and part of this awareness arises from knowing oneself in an honest and compassionate way. Consciousness of beauty may be something carried into solitude – as Emerson might hope – or perhaps sprout and grow as part of time alone. But when solitude enables clarity and equanimity about oneself to be accompanied by compassionate connectedness to others (and one's environment), and, vice versa, when realization of connectedness brings acceptance of oneself, that is a worthwhile achievement in this world.

In my early 20s, after hut-dwelling in Spain, when I first moved into a homemade house with a field in front and a forest behind, I had no clue that I'd spend the rest of my life living in such places and – after my son was grown and gone – spend so much of it alone. I had no idea of the remarkable scope of that way of life and the treasures as well as challenges it would contain. There have been decades of treasure and challenge since then. The most cherished gift, of course, was my son's companionship, but I also came to deeply love the textures of solitude, including that of darkness. No other way of life could suit me as well despite the

hardships – and certainly because of some of them, too. But, as Ryokan says:

*I don't regard my life
as insufficient.
Inside the brushwood gate
there is a moon;
there are flowers.*

Or Goethe:

*My greatest wealth is the deep stillness
in which I strive and grow
and win what the world cannot take
from me with fire or sword.*

These poems and quotes, and others like them, drifted into my life during those solitude-infused years. If there is such a thing as a community of recluses, I think it may be in writings that speak to one another of a core need – even if obscured by civilization's

technological smoke and mirrors – for a home-place within nature and some solitary moments in which to gain perspective about that relationship and oneself. Fulfillment of this, for me, was realized within many of the places I've lived, but perhaps most profoundly during my years on First Thought Mountain, by Orient. I remember when a cougar came to my house in the middle of the night and, waking me, calmly sat beneath my open bedroom window as I sat on the sill marveling at her presence. Only a few yards of space separated us. Why was she there? She showed no sign of injury, disability, or sickness – what did she want? I didn't need to know. The timeless space of encounter was complete in itself, didn't require explanation or tacked-on meaning.

After that night I never saw her again – was left with just the tracks in the dirt under the window and the haunting memory of that beautiful, expectant feline face upturned in the no-man's-land of 2 a.m. stillness. Two solitary gazes meeting; different species, different lives, curiously resonant puzzles acknowledging each other.

*The birds have vanished into the sky,
and now the last cloud drains away.
We sit together, the mountain and me,
until only the mountain remains.*

Li Po

Loren Cruden writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, available at www.LorenBooks.com, and provides Home Pet Care in the north Stevens County area. Photos by Gabriel Cruden.



The Stuff of Life

By Tina Tolliver Matney

Making a will isn't at the top of anyone's list of fun things to do. It's a subject I have avoided for far too long. It may seem a little odd that during this season that is supposed to be full of good tidings of great joy I have chosen to put "making a will" at the top of my list. And while it's not fun it has certainly driven me to truly consider this great big life of mine, my family, and the house full of stuff that will be left behind when I depart this earth.

I really don't have much in the way of monetary wealth that I can disperse among my loved ones. I have a home, some "stuff," my land, and an investment account that has gone up and down so much the past several years I've chosen to open the quarterly statements just once a year so that I keep my disappointment over its demise to a minimum. I contribute what I can each year after insurance/taxes/more insurance/a lot more taxes and, basically, it's such a piddly amount I wonder if it's money better spent on some good chocolate and maybe a new pair of cute boots. Perhaps I would be wealthier had I just sewn the money into my mattress.

The best thing about being where I am at this stage in life is that I know my kids love me for who I am, not because they'll get stuff when I'm gone.

Of course, I say that in jest, sort of. The problem I face is that it's "stuff" that I do have, things I have to decide how to disperse among my loved ones. Stuff that I love, stuff that I've created, stuff that has been handed down through generations before me.

OK, there's not a lot of that kind of stuff. The one true heirloom that was handed down on my mother's side happened to be a silk pillow that my great-grandmother made and my grandmother gave to me. She chose me out of about a bazillion (no one keeps track of how many there are in this huge family) she said, because she knew I would cherish it. And I did cherish it. Until one night when one of the kids carelessly tossed it on the floor

and the cat mistook the pretty blue silk pillow for a sisal rug to sharpen his cat claws. There was no saving the pretty blue shredded silk.

Other than just a couple of lovely antiques, most of the things I truly cherish belonged to my dad. I have a canvas bucket and canteen that were part of his work gear. A ratty set of deer antlers that sit over the fireplace. Some of his flannel shirts that keep me warm on chilly days. A cribbage board he made with old toothpicks he used as score markers sits on my dining room counter. I don't know what kind of wood he used and it's not necessarily anything special to look at, but I cherish it just because he made it with his hands. It's part of who he was.

I've made a point the past few years, since his passing, to hand down some of his things, as well as other heirlooms to my own children. They loved their "Grumpa" dearly. Last Christmas I turned Dad's fishing creel into a gift for my oldest son. I filled it with small gifts and goodies, knowing that, even though it had hung outside for years on my porch, it still smelled of the fish it had once held. The look on my son's face was all I needed to know that he would cherish that old fishing creel as much as I did.

This year I will pass along one of his old wooden nail barrels to my daughter. I remember as a kid digging through the barrels in Dad's shop looking for nails to hang pictures in my bedroom or putting up curtains in the shed my older sister and I had turned into an outdoor sleeping area. I loved the barrels even then. I'll fill it with some small gifts for her and top it with a round piece of glass so that she can use it for a plant stand or a little side table.

One day I'll pass along "the bean pan" to my daughter as well. As a child it hung by the back door of our home all year long. Its main purpose in life was to hold the pickings of green beans that we would snip and snap for my mother to put into jars and preserve. She gave it

to me one summer when I had planted a huge garden. The bean pan still carries fresh green beans from the garden to the kitchen. But over the years it has become a vessel to hold yarn or river stones or even apples on the counter, any place where I can display it and look at it on a regular basis.

I do love old things that I know were part of the lives of my parents or my grandparents. And it warms my heart that my own children appreciate such things as well. We don't always have the opportunity to choose the legacy we will leave behind. And I suppose it's true that some people just don't care. But I do. And I hope you do too.

The holiday season is upon us and, while creating a will and putting some thought and effort into it might seem like too much to do on top of everything else, I'm finding it has freed up my mind and made more room for the business of living this great big life to the fullest.

My wish for you this holiday season is that you find the joy, the peace and the love you deserve every moment of every day. Happy holidays to you and yours.

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





Merging in Powerful Surrender

Article and Photo by Claudia Castro Luna

On the second of eight stops along the Columbia River for my project *One River, a Thousand Voices*, I drove north to Pateros from Wenatchee along US Highway 2 under intermittent rain and a tumultuous sky. The apple orchards on the banks and hills along the river told of the changing season as rust-tinged leaves held on to stems, defying autumn winds that rattled perfectly pruned branches.

This section of my journey involved school visits in Okanogan and Brewster, a reading in Pateros and a community writing workshop in Twisp. I had visited all of these places before, but on this trip, my awareness of the river made me keenly cognizant of the role the Columbia plays in sustaining thriving cities, towns, commerce and agricultural production – some of it with global reach. Only a powerful water source could coax blush from the thousands upon thousands of apples fruiting in this harsh terrain where butterscotch hills lean into toffee canyons.

It took me far too long to reach Pateros from Wenatchee. I stopped at every opportunity that presented itself to snap photos and to watch raindrops fall

upon the river's current. The magnitude and life-giving power of this river overwhelms me whenever I am in its presence. It is not just the river at my feet that is flowing by, but all the tributaries that have merged with it. Mountain rills roil yet in its current and the meander and rapids of the many streams that feed it add to its pulse. Gratitude and prayers bestowed on it for thousands of years to this day by Native peoples float, ever present, over its waters.

My plan was to spend some time in Pateros and find the Methow/Columbia confluence before heading north on WA 153 to Twisp where I would spend the night. Pateros is right on the river. A shopping area at the entrance of town is at water level; one could almost say that Pateros floats on the Columbia.

Autumn evening winds had picked up and leaves swirled and fluttered as I pulled into the bakery that would become my headquarters while I was in the area. I warmed myself with a cup of coffee and headed for the bakery's outdoor seating area, that is to say the river, whose banks along this stretch are paved, providing for a pleasant promenade.

As I stood under an oak, witnessing what I understood to be the merging of the two rivers, I confronted yet again the shortcomings of my imagination. Never did I conjure the meeting of these waters as amicable surrender. If I did not know two rivers were merging in front of me, the thought would never have crossed my mind, such was the exquisite tranquility of the moment. I squeezed my coffee cup, as I would someone's hand, as if to ask, "Can you believe it?!"

Just then, a woman on her afternoon walk stopped to say hello and remarked on the two white specs gliding farther afield in the placid waters. White pelicans, she said, a rare sighting this far upriver. I took it as a good sign.

The following days came and went in a flash. I shared and wrote poetry with young people, had a meaningful writing workshop in Twisp, marveled in the fall landscapes. I also observed the Okanogan/Columbia confluence and, on my return to Wenatchee, the Entiat and Chelan rivers folding themselves into the Great River of the West.

Learn more and follow the journey at www.rivervoiceswa.com.

One River, Many Voices

ASPARAGUS FIELDS IN ROWS

Dennis Held

Asparagus fields in rows lining
the highway outside Walla Walla
my first time released from the Midwest.
I saw a man standing alongside the road
hitchhiking and thought, why not,
let him throw his pack in the back,
with a long knife attached to the outside
where I could see it. He was Native
and tall and husky and said he had just
gotten out of the joint but not to worry,
he wasn't going to kill any white guys.
Not today, anyways. Then he laughed.
He was grateful for the ride down
to the Dalles where his family was camping
out on the branch of the Columbia
and I could stick around if I wanted.

I wanted to but was afraid,
for no reason afraid,
would have been welcomed
as the source of the ride
but still was afraid.

Let me sing you my grandfather's
salmon song he said, and he rolled
down his window and started
to wail. I'd never heard its like.
It pierced me, it filled the car
it covered the air around us
with protection it brought
the salmon to the song
it brought the salmon home.

UNTITLED

Tyson Landers

Okanogan High School

fast and cool
silver and black
emotions flow
downstream
as if they were
all a dream

Jailbreaks in Conconully

By McLean Taylor

The following account is taken from the newspapers of the day, Washington State Penitentiary Archives, and Lambert Florin's *Ghost Towns of the Old West*.

The mining boomtown and county seat of Conconully needed a jail, so a wooden structure was constructed of two-by-six timbers and the necessities – 24 pairs of handcuffs and 3 pairs of ball and chain shackles ordered. The lure of easy money in the Okanogan mining towns drew hard cases and habitual criminals to the region.

Unlike the inmate whose friends broke in so they could partake in a game of stud poker, most of the incarcerated presented a challenge to authorities. A *Seattle Times* (July 1990) article looking back on this bit of history stated that “any criminal with half a brain usually could escape within 24 hours.” Whether or not the 24 hours is accurate, the building became noted for its jailbreaks.

1905: The last week of November, 43-year-old J. D. McLean, convicted of arson and perjury, found a red-hot poker worked well to burn around the padlock hasp of his cell door. A few evenings later, McLean was captured at a restaurant in Loomis, Washington.

1906: On a Sunday evening in late March, 19-year-old horse thief Tom Melville broke out. He promptly stole another horse, along with chaps, saddle, spurs and a gun to aid in his getaway.

To prevent possible assistance to Melville, Deputy Sheriff Thomas began a roundup of suspected horse thieves and cattle rustlers. He deposited three suspected horse thieves

– Archie Griffin, Charles Clark and Clark's wife – in the Oroville jail while the hunt for Melville continued.

The following Saturday, during their jailer's absence, Clark and Griffin forced out their cell bars and the trio bolted. During the night, when they were attempting to follow the trail through McLaughlin's Canyon down to Tunk's Creek, Griffin slipped and fell off the canyon cliff. Clark found Griffin lying in shallow water, his neck broken. Hiking eight miles up the river, Clark asked a rancher to call the sheriff so that someone could retrieve

in bed, armed, and ready to shoot anyone who entered. Thomas hollered to Melville that the house was surrounded and he had five minutes to come out or they would shoot him through the walls. When Melville did not appear, a shot, aimed purposely high, penetrated the wall. Out walked Melville with his hands in the air.

On April 5, after eight days and four hundred miles on horseback, Deputy Sheriff Thomas was back in Conconully with his escapees once again locked up.

Ten days later Melville broke free again.

He eluded the posse by hiding under a canvas in Mr. Duncan's freight wagon from Riverside to Ophir. Melville remained at large for some weeks. Details of his next capture are unknown, but he arrived at Walla Walla State Penitentiary to start a five-year sentence on May 31.

1907: In June, an escape was foiled. Sheriff Thomas of Conconully and Sheriff Parsons of Oroville were awaiting the arrival of penitentiary guards from Walla Walla to collect 29-year-old

John McLain, sentenced to life in prison for second-degree murder. Realizing the once-bearded McLain was now clean-shaven prompted the sheriffs to inquire about the location of his razor. He refused to respond. Consequently, his cell was searched and a 4-inch piece of sharpened steel, possibly from a shoe shank, plus a heavier piece of steel were found. How McLain obtained the weapons is unknown.

1909: The timely arrival of a wanted poster probably prevented a bank robbery and spurred Sheriff Thorp to arrest Frank LeRoy (alias Charles Ray, alias Andrew



The Conconully Jail, courtesy Lambert F. Florin photographs collection, Org. Lot 261, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

Griffin's body before the coyotes found it. The Clarks were captured about a week later in British Columbia.

Two days after the Clarks' capture, Melville solicited dinner and shelter at the Madden Ranch at Tunk's Creek. He divulged his identity, then threatened Madden if he told anyone. Madden didn't talk. However, his neighbor recognized Melville and alerted Deputy Sheriff Thomas, who rode up to the Madden ranch the following dawn. The sheriff called out to Melville to come out.

Instead, the rancher appeared and advised the deputy that the wanted man was sitting

Morgan) playing pool in the Morris Saloon. A gunfight ensued. Despite being an ambidextrous shooter, LeRoy's aim was not as good as Sheriff Thorp's, who wounded LeRoy in the shoulder and the hand. It was November and the cells were cold, so the bed-ridden LeRoy was housed in the heated office quarters. Nine nights later, supposedly barely able to lift his head, LeRoy took tools from a closet, stole clothes and a blanket from the sleeping jailer's room, and crept into the darkness. He surfaced in Ruby, where he held a citizen at knife point to obtain more clothing. Three days later, Sheriff Thorp found him hiding in sagebrush near Malott.

1911: Around late October, George Stucky was jailed on morality charges. Noticing the warmth in the building was waning, he volunteered to get kindling for the fire. Permission was granted and the cell and jail doors unlocked for him. When he failed to return, the sheriff investigated but Stucky had nearly an hour of freedom before the posse was mounted. Stucky disappeared.

According to the *Semi-Weekly Spokesman Review* of November 4, 1911, this was the "first prisoner to escape" jail since Thorp took over from Sheriff Thomas in 1908. Does this mean he didn't count anyone recaptured?

1912: One evening in early spring, the only two occupants of the jail, B. H. Marsh (bigamy) and Fred Bongard (grand larceny), asked the sheriff to mail some letters for them. In his absence, they pried up a floorboard and used a jackknife to cut through a smaller board. Dropping through the enlarged opening, they crawled under the jail and followed a dry ditch from there. Quickly discovering the escape, the sheriff formed a posse which, despite the deep snow in the hills, found no trace of them.

Without weapons or provisions, it was expected that the prisoners would head to British Columbia. Marsh, however, was free for a year before he was captured in Santa Ana, California, and Bongard remained

at large.

On October 18, in the sheriff's absence, Acting Jailer Cloud gave 17-year-old George Haines and 19-year-old Dick Tinemto (a.k.a. Timautwa), the opportunity to get water and wood. Once his back was turned the fleet-footed cattle rustlers took off. They covered quite a distance in the five minutes before their escape was noted. Cloud called



Frank LeRoy, courtesy Washington State Penitentiary files of the Washington State Digital Archives.

out to Dale Thorp, the sheriff's son, and his friend Harold Cutts, who were nearby. Armed with rifles, the two teenagers pursued the youthful escapees and located them two miles away. The lads marched their prisoners back to lockup.

A month later, Sam Sly and George Donahue (both with perjury charges) broke



Matthew Considine, courtesy Washington State Penitentiary files of the Washington State Digital Archives.

out. An acquaintance, released from jail a few days earlier, was suspected of being responsible for their tools (and the horses, blankets, provisions and arms) for their getaway.

1914: While being escorted to jail, 20-year-old Eugene Biart jumped from a moving train between Malott and Okanogan. He was captured at his brother's home in Win-

throp on March 26. Three weeks later, as he was awaiting trial on burglary charges, he made another attempt. He had succeeded in removing one bar from a door leading out of the cell when his efforts were discovered by the jailor. A few hours later, he was charged with second-degree burglary and sentenced to the state reformatory.

Although the county seat was moved from Conconully to Okanogan in December 1914, the reputation of the jail did not improve.

1915: The notorious Renwick McCammon had already spent six years in Walla Walla. A previous conviction listed 42 robberies in Spokane, of which 22 were committed within 24 hours. He was wanted in many jurisdictions and a few states. He was captured in September after a number of burglaries in Okanogan County towns, most recently in Oroville,

and locked up.

McCammon and his partner, Matthew Considine, attacked and stabbed the jailor. Taking the jailer's weapon and keys, they freed the other inmates (except for two they didn't like) and hightailed it.

McCammon and Considine were arrested a few hours later and charged with jailbreaking and murderous assault. The trial became a sensation when, under oath, Considine pled guilty, saying he had single-handedly overpowered the jailor and escaped. He explained that McCammon simply followed him out of jail. McCammon was exonerated.

Considine's sacrifice was for naught. Two months later, on November 12, McCammon was caught selling cigars stolen in Endicott. Tried in Whitman County, he was quickly removed to the state penitentiary.

Some escapees went on to further crimes while others were never heard of again. Sheriff Fred Thorp became a U.S. marshal.

Taylor moved to the North Columbia-Kootenay region 20 years ago and discovered a history of interesting and intriguing characters and believes their stories should be shared and celebrated.

The Tiny Owl with Great Ears

Article and Photo by J. Foster Fanning

One evening as I sat on the deck listening to the sounds that mark the coming of night, a bird call reached me that I hadn't heard in a long time. One that brought a smile.

Imagine blowing a note over the open top of a half-pint Coke bottle. A soft yet sharp, slightly raspy, repeated "toot ... toot ... toooot ... toot." The pattern pauses for a moment and then repeats itself. I was once again close to the company of a northern saw-whet owl.

At about three ounces in weight and standing eight inches tall, *Aegolius acadicus* is one of the tiniest raptors on the North American continent, and many make their home here along the Columbia River and in the Okanogan Highlands. They are about the size of an American robin.

At one time in our not too distant past, the rhythmic rasp of a whetstone sharpening a saw is a sound that many people would have recognized. Old-timers found a comparison in describing the voice of this small owl to that whetstone saw sharpening and the name stuck.

Identifying features of this owl are a round, light, white face with brown and cream-like streaks, a dark beak, and yellow piercing eyes. It bears a resemblance to the short-eared owl, similarly lacking ear tufts, but the northern saw-whet owl is much slighter. The underparts of this bird are pale with dark shaded areas. In contrast, the upper parts are reddish brown highlighted

with white spots. And although these owls are quite common in our area, they are hard to spot.

The calling sound mentioned above is generally heard April through June when they are looking for mates, but these birds will occasionally vocalize year-round. Unique to this miniature owl is its incredible hearing ability, which is very sophisticated due to vertically asymmetrical ears and an unusual shape of its ear openings. Ornithologists have discovered that a sound reaches each ear at a marginally different time and with differencing intensities, thus allowing the northern saw-whet owl to very precisely localize its prey. Such accurate sound localization allows this minuscule predator to hunt in complete darkness.

The northern saw-whet owl is native to North America with a very wide dispersal across the upper tier of the continent. It can be found in dense thickets of conifers, most frequently at an elevation from eye level to around 20 feet up. Saw-whets are often in danger of being preyed upon by larger owls and other raptors. Thus one of their survival strategies is absolute stillness if they sense danger.

Although saw-whet owls are fairly common migratory birds without any strict pattern, they were once thought to be rare and non-migratory by scientific researchers. They exhibit a preference for mature forest with an uncluttered understory

for foraging, deciduous trees for nesting, thick conifers for roosting, and a riverside habitat nearby.

Diet preference for northern saw-whet owls is mouse-sized mammals, hunted at night from low perches along forest edges. The most common prey are deer mice, shrews, voles, shrew-moles, bats, and juveniles of chipmunks, gophers and squirrels. During migration, they supplement their diet with birds such as chickadees, juncos, waxwings, wrens and other small birds. If necessary, they will eat beetles, grasshoppers, moths and other bugs. During the nesting phase, while the females are incubating and brooding, the young males provide nearly all of the food for the growing family.

Researchers suggest that the females probably choose the nesting sites, although males occasionally participate by perching in possible sites while giving their toot ... toooot ... toot call. Opportunists, they nest in previously excavated holes, usually those of northern flickers or pileated woodpeckers. But these little birds are also prone to taking residence in nest boxes (hint, hint). Peeking inside the nest we'd find woodchips, twigs, moss, grass, hair and small mammal bones. We may even find that this bird is occupying the abandoned nest of another species. The chosen nest holes are usually 10 to 40 feet off the ground, approximately three to four inches wide and 12 inches

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deep, with an entrance hole two to three inches across.

Northern saw-whets usually brood monogamous, meaning that during the brood period the male focuses entirely on his mate. But things can change when prey is abundant and some males might have more than one mate. Depending on their latitude and elevations, males start giving their toot-toot-toot call as early as February, often before the females arrive at the breeding areas, and continue the courtship into May.

When a female hears a male calling, she responds with a high-pitched tsst, tsst, tsst call or a series of shrill whistles. Thus begins the dance wherein the male circles her in

flight a dozen or so times prior to landing alongside her and bestowing a bit of food (kind of a “take you out to dinner” routine). In our highlands area it’s estimated that some males maintain territories throughout the year as a pair with a female, but each year they may change mates.

Like the barred owl I wrote about last month, northern saw-whet owls are preyed on by many of the larger owls, hawks and falcons. To camouflage themselves, they roost about 10 feet off the ground during the day in dense conifers, often concealed by foliage near the outward edge of a branch. If discovered by flocks of songbirds, this small owl is often mobbed by the flock in an effort to drive the predator away. This is one

of the best ways to find these well-hidden tiny owls. Evading detection is a skill at which this owl is quite accomplished and, consequently, is often overlooked. To quote Ken Hoffman of the Audubon Society, “I’ve seen a few dozen saw-whets in the wild, but probably thousands of them have seen me.”

The leaves are gone, the snows are yet to fall heavily. It’s a good time to get outside and see what can be found. Remember, look closely!

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://foster-fanning.blogspot.com>.

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A Community Caring Through the Tree of Sharing

By Adenea Thompson

Nearly two decades ago, a handful of community members came together because they saw a need. That need was the Tree of Sharing. After signing up over 500 individuals, they ended the season with exhausted volunteers and exhausted funds. Realizing help was needed they joined forces with the Rotary Club of Colville.

Today, Rural Resources Community Action, Addy Rescue Mission, Colville Food & Resource Center, First Step Day Care, and Early Headstart help sign-up those in need. All names are kept anonymous. The tags identify needs and are hung on what is now a forest of Trees of Sharing, housed at Key Bank in Colville.



Volunteers (from left) Ozzie Wilkerson, Laurie Kyle, and Bruce Richartz.

Hours & Location

The Tree of Sharing is inside Key Bank, 211 S. Main, Colville and is open Monday - Thursday, 9-5 & Friday 9-5:30 until Dec. 13

How to Donate

By Mail: Checks may be mailed to Colville Rotary Charitable Foundation, P.O. Box 281, Colville, WA 99114

Your donation may be tax deductible.

In Person: Key Bank at 211 S Main in Colville

Questions: Email Adenea Thompson: a.thompson@wsu.edu

Once you're done shopping, remove all price tags and bring your tag(s) with your chosen unwrapped gift(s) to Key Bank before **Friday, December 13**. If you are too busy or prefer not

to shop, the Tree of Sharing will gladly take a donation, in person or by mail.

It takes a lot of work to see this event through, with anywhere between 7 and 30 volunteers for each step. The number of tags varies from year to year. One of the highest years was 2009 with 708 tags. In more recent years, between 400-500 individuals have needed help to celebrate a happier holiday season.

After the tags are generated and hung on the trees, volunteers work in shifts for the weeks the Trees of Sharing is open. Once all the gifts are collected, tags and gifts are matched and volunteers go on a last-minute shopping spree for the remaining tags. Then families are contacted so they know their gifts are ready for pickup.

The Rotary Club of Colville is grateful to the community organizations and the local businesses, families, friends and volunteers who take this great opportunity to join together and give back to the community. Your generosity will make all the difference in the lives of those in need. Rotary encourages you to stop by and say hello and pick up a tag this year. We are all in this together!

*This page made possible by the Rotary Club of Colville. Learn more on FB @ColvilleRotary
To view a list of all the Rotary Clubs in the district, visit district5080.org/clubdirectory*

WHAT'S



MORE LISTINGS & DETAILS AT NCMONTHLY.COM!

APPREZENN

Events

Dec 1: Northport Lions Club BINGO at the Northport School Cafeteria, Noon-4. Early Bird, Regular, Fast Pick and Blackout with a \$500 Jackpot. Must be 18 or older to play. A portion of this session's proceeds benefit the Community Swim Support Group. Call 509-690-2158 for more info.

Dec 3: Giving Tuesday.

Dec 3 & 9: Pesticide Recertification Classes, 3-6 pm, WSU Stevens County Extension office, 986 S Main, Colville. Email nils.johnson@wsu.edu or call 509-684-2588 for info.

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

Dec 5-8: Holiday Artists' Shop, featuring the works of local artists, available at CREATE, 900 W 4th, Newport, WA. Visit www.createarts.org for more info. See ad page 5.

Dec 6: First Fridays Open Mic Night, 8-10:30 pm, Meyers Falls Market, Nov - May.

Dec 6: Deck The Falls Tree Lighting & Redneck Christmas Light Parade, 5 pm, downtown Metaline Falls, featuring the Santa in the annual parade, hosted by the Pend Oreille Patriots, fireworks, free hotdogs and hot beverages from the Cutter & the NPOV Lions, and 'smores round the bonfire. See ad page 7.

Dec 6-8: Keller House Christmas Tours of the festively-decorated home and yard, 700 N. Wynne St., Colville. Live music. Mitten Tree for donating to area children. Call 509-684-5968 for tour times and more info.

Dec 6-8 & 13-15: Elementary Holiday, presented by the Pend Oreille Players, 236 S. Union Ave., Newport, WA. Fri-Sat shows at 7 pm, Sun shows at 3 pm. Visit pendoreille-players.org or call 509-447-9900 for more info. See ad page 28.

Dec 7: Kettle Falls Lady Lions Christmas Craft Fair, 9-3, Kettle Falls Middle School. A canned food donation for the food bank is encouraged.

Dec 7: Deck The Falls Arts & Crafts Faire, 10-3, at the Cutter Theatre, including lunch in the "Room at the Ramp." See ad page 7.

Dec 7: Rekindle the Spirit of Christmas 25th Anniversary Celebration in Rossland, B.C. featuring parade, senior luncheon, live music, activities, drawings, tree lighting and party with free pizza. Visit tourismrossland.com for more info.

Dec 7: Free Diabetes Awareness Powwow, 1-5 pm, Camas Center for Community Wellness, 1821 Le Clerc Rd N, Cusick, including family friendly games and activities, prizes, health screenings and information, guest speaker Elaine Miles and a roast turkey dinner. Call 509-447-7146 for more info.

Dec 7: Music on the Menu fundraising event featuring dinner and music by Upper Columbia Academy music groups, 5 pm. Call 509-675-5003 to RSVP and for more info. See ad page 41.

Dec 8: NCPR's Silent Auction. Email ncpr.wa@gmail.com for info.

Dec 8: Joy to the World concert at Abundant Life Fellowship Church, Chewelah, 2 pm, featuring Lake City Strings, Lirico Chamber Singers, and Hannah Kimball-Fuller, soprano. Tickets \$15 at Valley Drug and Akers United Drug, Chewelah; House of Music, Colville; and online at chewelahrtsguild.org. Presented by Chewelah Arts Guild.

Dec 8: Northport Lions Club annual Christmas Party, 4-6 pm, Northport School Cafeteria, 404 10th St., Northport. Hot cocoa, cider, cookies, treats for the children, and free pictures with Santa!

Dec 8: Free Community Concert at The Cutter, 6 pm, open to everyone to sing along as a choir, duet, or soloist. See ad page 7.

Dec 11: One River Nonprofit Network, 12-1:30, for anyone in the region involved in or with an interest in nonprofits. Held at the Hospitality House, 216 South Washington Avenue, Newport. Visit washingtannonprofits.org, call 509-675-3791.

Dec 13-15: Elf Jr., The Musical, presented by Stagetime Theatre School and the Chewelah Center for the Arts, 405 N 3rd St E, Chewelah. Call 509-936-4268 for more info.

Dec 14: Candy Cade Lane Children Gift Buying event, 9-2 at the Colville Public Library. Gift wrapping included. Call 509-680-0325 for more info. See ad page 43.

Dec 14: Veterans For Peace and Public Policy Forum: "U.S. Militarism pollutes world, and frauds, wastes and drains economy. Alternative? Support Extinction Rebellion Leadership," at the Kettle Falls Public Library, Noon - 4 pm. In association with Stal-sqil-xw, Veterans For Peace Chapter #004, Poor Peoples' Campaign. Potluck lunch, snacks, non-alcohol beverages offered. Email info@stalsqilxw.org for more info.

Dec 14: Colville Chamber Gala Dinner Dance and Christmas Tree Extravaganza raffle, starting at 5 pm, Spokane Community College, Colville Campus. Trees and raffle tickets at Sandra's Furniture on Main Street in Colville. Call 509-684-5973 for more info. See ad page 46.

Dec 15: Dances of Universal Peace, 2-5 pm, lower level of the UCC Church, 2nd and Maple, Colville. Donations appreciated. Potluck following. Call 509-684-1590 for more info.

Dec 21: Winter Solstice. **Dec 23:** Hanukkah. **Dec 25:** Christmas Day. **Dec 26:** Kwanzaa. **Dec 31:** New Year's Eve.

Dec 31: Free New Year's Eve Fireworks Show at the Ag Trade Center in Colville, including games and crafts, dinner, and dancing. See ad page 33.

Music at Northern Ales, 325 W. 3rd Ave., Kettle Falls, northernales.com, 509-738-7382 (Note: calendar was not updated at press time - visit their website for current info):
20th: Open Mic, 7-10 pm

Music at Republic Brewery, 26 Clark Ave., Republic, republicbrew.com, 509-775-2700.
14th: Holiday Sing-Along & Ugly Sweater Contest, 6-7 pm
20th: Laney Lou and the Bird Dogs, 7:00-10 pm

Trail & District Arts Council has a packed calendar of events at trail-arts.com.

Meetings & Opportunities

"Shingleworks," a display at the Cutter Theatre, 302 Park St., Metaline Falls, by local artists who have re-imagined the weather worn cedar shingles from our old roof, creating whimsical and wonderful works for this collaborative community art project.

The South Stevens County Chamber of Commerce, first Thursday of the month, 11 am, visit SouthStevensCountyChamber.org to find each month's location. **The Chewelah Chamber of Commerce**, Fridays, 7 am, Chewelah Casino, 2555 Smith Road south of Chewelah off Hwy. 395. **The Colville Chamber of Commerce**, Tuesdays, noon, Eagles Lodge 608 N Wynne Street. Details at www.colville.com. **The Kettle Falls Chamber of Commerce**, Thursdays, 7 am, Sandy's Drive Inn. For info, call 509-738-2300 or visit kfchamber.com. **The Northport Chamber of Commerce** meets the first Wednesday of each month, 6 pm, Northport City Hall, 315 Summit Ave, Northport.

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

Celebrate Recovery, a 12-step program, meets Fridays, 5:30 pm, Mt. Carmel Health Education Building, 1169 East Columbia Avenue, Lower Level, Colville, WA (across street from emergency room). A light meal is served. Call 509-935-0780 for a ride or more info.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

MORE LISTINGS & DETAILS AT NCMONTHLY.COM

The Northport Times

NORTHPORT - DECEMBER 2019: As is my custom, I will on occasion, walk about the town and investigate any new business in this location. Today, as I ventured about, I happened upon an establishment which is not new, but it is one which perhaps may not be noticed by the weekly shopper. This place caught me quite by surprise with the diversity offered here.

More often than not, when seasoned sailors come to town, they are seethy and quite ruthless. So when word got around that an old sea-dog was to open an Irish pub, the more upstanding citizens naturally abstained from the doors. Providence had it that right about noon, as I was feeling hungry, I found myself passing in front of he sailor's Northern Pub of Ale and the overwhelming aroma of bratwurst filled my senses. Upon entering the building it was evident that this was no ordinary tavern.

A truly authentic Irish restaurant, offering the finest of freshly brewed beers and quite an amazing menu of foods to satisfy even the most refined palate.

Quite pleased with my adventure, I then made my way down to the ferry landing to observe travelers, during this beautiful time of year, making their way across the mighty Columbia River.

—Viola Murphy

CALL HOSTING PARTIES TO CONFIRM LISTING INFO. THE NORTH COLUMBIA MONTHLY WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ERRORS OR SCHEDULE CHANGES. VISIT NCMONTHLY.COM FOR DAILY LISTING UPDATES OR TO SUBMIT A "WHAT'S HAPPENING" LISTING.

LISTEN UP

Reviews by Michael Pickett

Adam Lambert's Downbeat Swagger

Ever the charismatic and controversial inheritor of the Elvis mantle (he does kinda look like Elvis), Adam Lambert has hopped between being the greatest American Idol (who didn't win), the most flamboyant tenor of the last decade, and the frontman of one of rock's most iconic outfits (Queen, as if you didn't know).

So why in the world would Lambert take the time to release an EP (actually one-half of his

fourth full album release since destroying all the competition on the American Idol show over a decade ago)?

In a word: necessity. Not for cash or promotions, but the necessity of staying vital as an artist. While Queen gives Lambert the opportunity to soar over some of popular music's greatest creations, it doesn't give him a chance to create in the same way that you do when you're making

your own stuff.

Cue up the explicit "Superpower," and the familiar soulful tenor kicks into high gear over a groove that feels somewhere between Michael Jackson and Nine Inch Nails. The funk and confidence surfaces again on the swaggering "Loverboy" and "Stranger You Are," while Lambert channels his best Elton John vibe on the retro-ballad "Closer to You."

Can this guy even sing a bad note? Many Freddie Mercury fans like to say "yes," but the correct answer is: "hell no!" Easily one of the greatest voices of the last 100 years, Adam Lambert absolutely shines on this first act of his upcoming full-length release and is not to be missed.



Infinite Eve On The Rise

It can be more challenging than ever to make hard rock and modern metal sound dynamic. In a quest to make music loud, producers often sacrifice warmth, "air" and other certain subtleties in order to blast out of cell phones and satellite radio unapologetically.

Infinite Eve hasn't sacrificed a molecule of artful attention to detail in that regard, and pushed the boundaries of modern metal without having to dumb down their mix or delivery.

"Eve can sing ballads as well as soaring rock melodies, which makes it easier to produce a dynamic sounding rock tune," enthuses guitarist/composer Paul Warren.

"Also, using space in writing rhythms is very important in letting a song breathe and not just become a wall of constant sound that causes ear fatigue."

Referring to vocalist and bandmate Eve Naylor, Warren is one half of the collective mastermind behind Infinite Eve and the band's hard rock EP opus, "The Story."

While the gorgeous and inventive "Little Birds" is a perfect point of entry into this five-song release, the title track truly showcases Warren and Naylor's greatness, deftly navigating music that snarls and soars in the space of just a measure or two, with gut-punching guitars and sky-high vocal



melodies. Warren and Naylor have created a stylized sound that, in the hands of lesser artists, could easily turn into a bag of jackhammers. Here, Infinite Eve finds the perfect ebb and flow to create modern hard rock that is as artful as it is uncompromising.

"We already have more songs in the pipeline," Warren adds, "so we're looking forward to getting more recorded and out to the fans as quickly as possible." Find "The Story" at infiniteeve.com and fasten down the breakables for an epic hard-rock ride.

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A Good Read

Reviews by Loren Cruden

Don't Tell Me You're Afraid, by Giuseppe Catozzella

This one's a guaranteed heartbreaker, but I couldn't put down Giuseppe Catozzella's true-story novel, *Don't Tell Me You're Afraid*, a first-person narrative about Somalian Samia Yusuf Omar. She emerged from war-ravaged Mogadishu to run in the 2008 Beijing Olympics and died in the sea of Lampedusa four years later (at age 21) a refugee desperately trying to reach Europe and run in the London Olympics.

The story of her life in Mogadishu takes place within the war's capriciously brutal grip, but is also a portrayal of tender family and extraordinary friendship. Samia had no professional coach or running gear or place to train, and lacked an adequately nutritious diet, yet her unquenchable drive took her to victory as an amateur in Somalia – the fastest woman in the country – when still a young teenager.

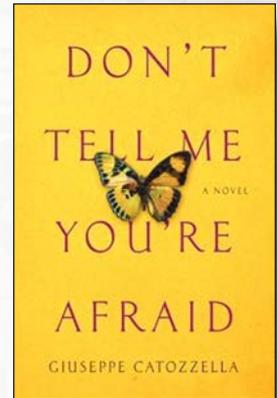
After Beijing, where she lost badly (“My legs, compared with those of the other women, looked like two dry sticks.... The others looked like bodybuilders compared with me.... I was the shortest, the thinnest, and the youngest.”), Samia became a symbol

of courage and determination for Muslim women all over the Mideast and Africa.

Catozzella, an Italian man – the book's English translation is by Anne Milano Appel – is bold in using a first-person African girl's voice for the story, but effectively pulls it off (for this reader, anyway). Much of the feeling of veracity no doubt comes from extensive talks the author had with Samia's closest sister, Hodan, and a woman who was with Samia during 30 days of her year-and-a-half nightmare as a refugee.

“...if we were survivors, all we could think of at that point was reaching our destination. Only the destination. Everything else was eclipsed.”

A race – and Samia almost made it.



The Narrow Road to the Deep North, by Richard Flanagan

Tasmanian author Richard Flanagan's 2013 novel, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (named after the classic book by Japanese haiku master, Basho), takes a while to settle its flow, a willful juking about that feels particularly Australian. Even after the narrative gains more extended coherence, Flanagan's story moves here and there – from 1943 and the notorious Thai-Burma Death Railway to before the war and to the protagonist's troubled post-war life in contemporary Australia.

Whether in the fore or background during each of these time periods the protagonist's obsession with his uncle's wife remains ever present.

Flanagan unveils humid scenes of tropical heat and light: the vulnerable flesh of war and love dancing cheek to cheek. So much of what it is to be human is contained in these scenes, opening continents of meaning – or its absence (“The world is, he thought. It just is.”). Permeating this is the gradual, disquieting realization that even the most war-divided people, beneath their masking cultural, racial, class, or personal otherness, are much the same as one another.

Dorrigo Evans, the main character, rapidly rises from humble Tasmanian beginnings to become a surgeon and commanding officer in the Australian army. His men, imprisoned in a POW camp in Thailand, are “from the fringes, slums, and shadowlands of their vast country: drovers, trappers, wharfies, roo shooters, desk jockys, dingo trappers and shearers.” Desire pulsates throughout, revealed in the hunger of starving POWs or the human drive to be exalted by purpose – or simply survive.

Also portrayed is a desire that can grip lovers, feeding on discontent:

“...the invisible, nameless, terrible wanting that she feared might be the very essence of life.” As Basho wrote, “Even in Kyoto/when I hear the cuckoo/I long for Kyoto.”

Though acclaimed by the post-war Aussie public, Dorrigo doubts himself. And finds that “Wealth, fame, success, adulation – all that came later seemed only to compound the sense of meaninglessness he was to find in civilian life. He could never admit to himself that it was death that had given his life meaning.”

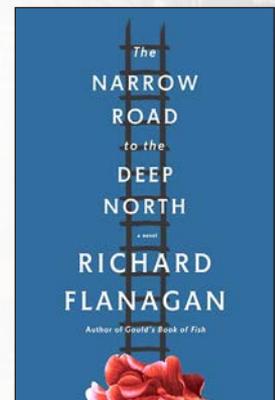
In contrast, his lover's defining experience: “Occasionally, she remembered a room by the sea and the moon and him, the green hand of a clock floating in the darkness and the sounds of waves crashing and a feeling unlike anything she had known before or would ever know again.”

Other recommendations from the C-D shelves:

Stephan Dau – *The Book of Jonas*

Jennifer Egan – *Visit from the Goon Squad*

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



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~ Poetry of Place ~

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Personal Gothic

By Jean Handwerk

The heroine was gutsy—principled and outspoken.
She had soft auburn hair and flashing wise hazel eyes.
Lithe-limbed and sure of thought, she proved
More than competent in bed and boardroom ...
Just the kind of woman I'd like to be.
My empathy was total. I was she completely in my mind.

The book lasted only two quick hours,
But in that time I bested evil men and rerouted fate,
Finally finding love with an exemplary soul.
It ended as a beginning, with more to know
And future pages to turn. I couldn't wait.
I prepared for bed, eager to dream the next chapter.

I did not recognize at first
The dark-eyed stranger in flannel nightgown
Staring wide-eyed back at me in the mirror
As I brushed my teeth.

Maybe

By Jean Handwerk

As you wake today,
I'll rub your back and kiss your ear.

At lunch you'll bite my silly note
Tucked between the lettuce and the cheese.

The sexy card in your mailbox—
Unsigned—will be from me.

I'll surprise you at the door
With cucumber slice eyes and carrot stick mouth.

Your bedcovers will conceal
A dozen chocolate kisses.

Maybe I'll say I love you.
Maybe you won't need me to.

Divorce

By Jean Handwerk

Now that all is said and done,
What have I learned from
Living with you?

That not enough money is bad,
But some is enough, and
More isn't necessary.

That I've been too much an ant
And you a grasshopper,
Both unrecognized and unappreciated
By the other species.

That I would have traded every ring
And homemade meal you gave me
For a little sharing of your soul.

That sometimes what you want the most
Can't be given by the one
You want if from the most.

Feeding the Horses

By Gabriel Cruden

I walk on firm and saturated earth
the snow coaxed into the soil by rain.
There is no dry grass swish
or frozen crust to mark my passage.
But the moon sees me, through its gauze of clouds,
and my thoughts keep step in the darkness.

I breathe in the chill murmur of winter
and follow its revelation of transformation.
The moon in its phases, the clouds in their guises,
the interplay of light in all its filters and angles.
The seasonal shifting and all that moves in tandem,
the cycles of life, and death, and rebirth.

As I swing over the gate, I turn to constants,
the gravity of my boots meeting solid earth with a satisfying clump.
Not a duality but an alchemic assemblage,
each mixing of elemental moments, unique and the same as snow.
In that knowing, moments become recognizably precious,
and for each new breath, I am suffused with gratitude.



Mountain Meandering

Wildlife as My Teacher

Article and Photo by Patricia Ediger

Living in the mountains of rural north-east Washington has given me so many wonderful opportunities to view the wild creatures that live in our fields and forests. We have, of course, observed the abundant white-tailed deer and wild turkeys, but we have also seen black bear, a cougar now and then, countless varieties of songbirds, quail, grouse, red-tailed hawks, owls and many small, furry critters.

Years back a young moose showed up in our front yard, temporarily disoriented and disturbed from its forested cover by activities going on farther up the mountain. She looked definitely out of place.

The bald eagle, one of my personal favorite birds of prey, rarely makes a showing up here. Farther down our mountain, however, near the mouth of the Colville River, along Lake Roosevelt or down winding country roads that border farms and rivers, we often see bald eagles. They, along with osprey, are seen hunting fish or small mammals and scavenging carrion for food.

Here in the rural areas of northeast Washington, the eagle lives year-round with the abundant availability of fish and game. I imagine that for most folks, like myself, the soaring of an eagle high in the sky will cause a stop in daily activities to thoroughly enjoy the spectacle. For instance, one winter morning, while driv-

ing into town, I spotted a family of eagles resting in the trees along a county road near Colville. I had my camera equipment and took advantage of the moment to capture a few shots of them on the trees covered in hoarfrost. This family consisted of an adult with three offspring ranging between one and four years of age, in my estimation.

Another time I observed a family of eagles standing on snow-covered ice at the mouth of the Colville River and “disputing” over an available deer carcass. I stopped my car and quietly walked over to hide behind a tree to watch. I saw and heard the interesting exchange of “eagle speak,” wing-flapping and aggressive jumping as they established seniority over the prey.

Truly, the eagle is a bird majestic in appearance but not so in its habits. The eagle is a powerful predator and will steal food from ospreys and other smaller birds, even targeting some smaller fowl for food. Not my favorite attribute for sure. However, I still find myself intrigued, hoping for a sighting on any outdoor adventure. I not only consider it a privilege to live in an area that provides such opportunities but also to have the time to slow down and enjoy it all and perhaps learn the lessons that the wildlife can teach me.

While of course I admire their specif-

ic beauty and grace, I am fascinated by the eagle’s singular ability for flight. They can reach altitudes of over 10,000 feet by rising on the winds. When it rains, most birds head for shelter. But the eagle can soar above the rain clouds. Wouldn’t it be amazing, when the rain clouds of trials and stresses come into our lives, if we could just soar up on the wind, to enjoy that freedom and space, where our troubles could become less oppressing or at least be seen in greater perspective. Perhaps that is one of the allurements for some to hang glide or even sky dive – or climb past obstacles to the top of the mountain and be rewarded by the view from above.

Which leads me to another quality I especially appreciate and admire: the eagle’s golden eyes, penetrating and intense. Scientifically, that eye is among the strongest in the animal kingdom, estimated at up to nine times stronger than that of a human being. An eagle’s vision is keen enough to spot a rabbit up to 3.2 kilometers away (about two miles). Their retinas have a deeper fovea (a cone-rich structure in the back of the eye) which gives them a visual acuity of 20/4. This allows them to hunt even tiny prey from hundreds of feet up in the air.

Inspirationally, it speaks to me of the ability to see or observe keenly, to have insight and circumspection, perhaps vi-

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sion for what lies ahead. The blessing of vision, to see one's way ahead, is something I think we all desire. Sometimes the path before us is unfamiliar, sometimes we feel lost or unsure of which direction we should take. A bit of good "eyesight of the soul" would help to make walking that road easier, I think, with a little more

confidence and peace.

The truth about eagles though is that they usually fly alone. Whereas we humans can choose to walk together. We might not individually have the strength of eagle eyes, but we potentially have the combined strength of our own and of those who walk with us. And in that

walking together, we might even find ourselves soaring together too.

Patricia Ediger is a freelance photographer specializing in wildlife, nature, and landscape photography. See her work at her gallery at the Old Apple Warehouse, Kettle Falls, WA and at patriciaedigerphotography.com.



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Becoming Yourself

By Karen Giebel

I was somewhat of a rebellious teenager. Strong-willed, like both of my parents. Mostly, I was quietly rebellious, just tentatively reaching out to do what I wanted to do without making a fuss. But there were times when things got a little noisy, as in when my parents caught wind of my acting in ways that did not agree with their strict religious and moral beliefs. Let me clarify that I was the noisy one, not my parents.

All through my 30s I seemed to quietly continue to rebel against what school, work, relatives, siblings, church, my then spouse and my community wanted me to be, all the while searching for the real me. Though to tell you the truth, I could not have identified to you that I was searching for myself.

Finally, around the age of 40, I started to be done, completely done with what others thought my life should be. I have always been an optimistic person but that is when I finally became happy. It took me all those years to learn that lesson for myself, but it took a cat – yes, a cat – to open my eyes and heart to letting others be their true selves.

Bandit is one of five barn cats that were unceremoniously dumped here when we bought our property near Republic, Washington, in 2011. She and her siblings were just weeks old when we arrived. They were all beautiful and have unique personalities that, to this day, entertain me and often make me laugh.

But Ms. Bandit was special. A gorgeous black and white domestic long-hair, she had a spunky, spitfire, devil-may-care side to her that her mother and siblings lacked, which probably led to her life-changing injury. One day I walked outside to find her perched on top of a birdhouse 20 feet off the ground on the side of the barn. I

have a picture of her regally sitting there waiting for an avian meal. I have no idea how she got up there nor do I have any idea how she got back down. She was a champion mouser and no rodent was safe from that cat.

One Sunday in 2013 my husband hurried into the house and said that Bandit was badly injured. Her right front paw appeared to be crushed. Not knowing what was wrong, he had watched her hobble and hop down through the field and into the barn, where she jumped up onto the



stack of hay. I ran outside, collected her, and then called our veterinarian, who just happened to be at her clinic even though it was Sunday. My spouse and I agreed that if Bandit's injury was so severe that her leg required amputation, that we would have her euthanized.

When I arrived at the clinic, I told Dr. Doris what my husband and I had discussed. Dr. Doris took a quick look and said she thought she could save her leg but she needed to sedate Bandit, shave the leg

and examine her.

I had no sooner arrived back home when our vet called and said the injury was severe and required amputation. Of course, I threw everything my spouse and I agreed upon out the window, broke down in tears and said, "Go ahead and amputate, I'll take care of her."

My husband, of course, was furious: "I have never had a cat, I don't like cats and I don't want a cat in the house!" But the rebel in me came out. I ignored my husband to be me.

Our two dogs loved our barn cats; loved to chase them, that is. So I had my work cut out for me. How to acclimate both my spouse and our dogs to this feisty little Bandit who would permanently become an indoor cat. I set up a kennel on top of a table, lined it with soft blankets and added a litter box. Then I brought her home.

She was frightened and confused. I had to help her into the litter box and encourage her to stand and figure out how to balance herself upright.

My spouse was easy. I simply got up before him as usual, picked Bandit up, carried her to our bed and tucked her under the covers with him. He reached out, wrapped his arm protectively around her and fell in love. The dogs, on the other hand, took several weeks before they finally accepted that Bandit was now part of their pack.

As Bandit healed and grew more confident in getting around inside the house and becoming comfortable with the dogs, her spunky side started to come back out. We had convinced ourselves that Bandit would need special care and consideration and would never be able to care for herself outdoors. We have cougars, owls, coyotes and more that we just knew were waiting for this little three-legged kitty that my husband affectionately nick-

named “tri-pod.”

Bandit would sit at the door and meow to go outside but we were convinced that we knew what was best for her. One day she escaped and we were frantic trying to catch her and return her to the safety of our home. Though she could do only a three-legged hop inside the house, it seemed that she could run like the wind outdoors.

We gave up after several hours, but as the temperature outdoors dropped and darkness fell, there came our kitty up to the door meowing to get back inside. We did not learn from that adventure and worked even harder to keep her confined.

In 2014, we moved to Bavaria, Germany, to a house out in the country facing a hillside cow pasture. We bought our little princess a pink collar and leash. I would take Bandit outside in the yard to hop about or secure her leash to the deck so she could be outdoors. Bandit, to put it mildly, was not amused. She would cry, glare at me, sit in the window and stare up at the hillside and scratch at the window. It didn't help that our neighbors had two cats who loved being on that hillside all day every day, hunting for mice. Yes indeed, her wild child, spunky spitfire self was back in full force. There were mice in that pasture and she was going to go out there come heck or high water.

Finally, after much discussion, my husband and I reluctantly agreed that Bandit needed to be herself. We told ourselves that this decision might result in Bandit having fewer years but those years would be happy ones, and we let her go. For the two years we lived in Bavaria, Bandit owned that pasture every day. She would sit patiently for hours waiting for a mouse to appear. We just laughed, knowing that with only one front paw she would never be able to catch a mouse, but we applauded her trying.

Of course we were wrong. One day I glanced out the window to see Bandit running down the hillside with something dangling from her mouth. I ran to the back door and let her in and she promptly dropped that little mouse at my feet. But it was the look on her face that

said it all. Eyes wide, mouth opened, teeth showing in what can only be described as a full “this is the best day of my life” grin!

That's the day I finally and completely understood that every living thing needs to be exactly what it is meant to be.

My 41-year-old son, a college graduate with a great job, has tattoos up and down both arms. He dyes his hair jet black and wears black clothing. That is not how I want him to look, but that is who he is

and he is happy. We all need to be who we were meant to be. I guess the apple didn't fall far from the tree and I reflect on the quiet rebel who is my son.

Bandit continues to thrive as a very spoiled indoor-outdoor champion mouser and I am grateful for the life lesson she taught me.

Karen Giebel blogs about life and food at www.thejourneygirl.com up in the back of the beyond in Ferry County, Washington.



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Forward Head Posture

By Brenda St. John

When I was a child, my parents continuously reminded me and my siblings to stand up straight. I suppose their parents said the same to them, and hopefully parents are still saying this to children today. It's great advice because, as it turns out, there are a multitude of health benefits from standing up straight, and one is that it reduces the risk of developing Forward Head Posture.

Forward Head Posture is a term used to describe the postural problem of carrying the head such that the ears are forward of the shoulders. According to a research article published in the November 2016 *International Journal of Physiotherapy and Research*, 66% to 90% of the population has this condition, which occurs in people of all ages.

There are many reasons behind a person developing Forward Head Posture. Some are medical but often it is the result of a habit of poor posture. In recent years, the term "text neck" has been coined to reflect the habitual bent-neck posture associated with looking at a cell phone or playing video games for hours each day. Another new term is posture iHunch.

Forward Head Posture eventually leads to pain in the neck and shoulders, but the consequences can extend much further. The neck can develop arthritis or nerve damage, which limits cervical range of motion. Lung capacity becomes reduced and heart problems can arise. Research indicates Forward Head Posture can also lead to TMJ (jaw pain), disc degeneration and fibromyalgia, among other health concerns.

Yoga helps correct Forward Head Posture by strengthening the abdominal and back muscles, opening the chest, and improving posture. Increasing the strength of the lower abs is a key factor.

A beginning exercise for this would be to do Pelvic Tilts with the feet off the ground, knees above hip joints. Begin in Constructive Rest Position (pictured). From there,

bring your arms into Cactus (or goal post) position, which means elbows are in line with shoulders, but bent 90 degrees so the hands are on either side of the face. Lift the feet until the knees are directly above the hips, but no higher. Bringing the knees forward toward the chest would cause the lower back to flatten toward the floor, which would negate any benefits.

Once in position, practice Pelvic Tilts by moving the pelvis back and forth between Anterior Tilt (flexion) and Posterior Tilt (extension). You are alternately creating an arch and a flattening of the low back. If having trouble keeping the legs lifted, try the same movements with the calves resting on the seat of a chair.

Another component to correcting Forward Head Posture is lengthening the front of the body. One particularly effective posture I learned from Julie Gudmestad of Gudmestad Yoga in Portland,

"It is through the alignment of the body that I discovered the alignment of my mind, self and intelligence." ~ B. K. S. Iyengar

Oregon, is to lie down over a rolled-up blanket. Begin with a twin-size blanket made of a heavy fabric such as a Mexican blanket or an Army blanket. Fold the two short ends together, then fold the new short ends together, and then roll up tightly along the longest edge. (To substitute for a blanket, lay one bath towel on top of another, and roll up along the long edge.)

To get on the roll, especially if hyperkyphotic, lie down parallel to the roll, and then roll onto the blanket from the side. Coming into position this way breaks the pattern of flying down vertebra by vertebra, hump first, and head moving ever forward. Bend the knees so the feet rest on the floor and bring the arms to Cactus position if accessible. For some people, the arms won't rest all the way to the floor, but as long as there is no pain, the position is safe. If Cactus is inaccessible, open the arms out wide in a T.

Other modifications are to place a block under the head if there is hyperkyphosis (hunchback) or to place a small rolled-up

towel behind a flat neck to create a normal curve. The benefits of this posture are maxed out after about three minutes. To come out, bring the arms in, then roll to the side to come off the blanket. This pose is conducive to good breathing because it lifts the diaphragm and provides more room to breathe.

Typical crunches are horrible for people with Forward Head Posture. The actions of lifting the head and rounding the shoulders reinforce the poor postural condition, which includes a collapsed chest. We need to maintain an open heart, both physically and spiritually.

A third component of correcting Forward Head Posture involves strengthening the back muscles. Salabhasana (Locust Pose) is a nice beginner back bend to use for this purpose. Lie on a mat, belly down, with arms at your sides and palms facing the sides of the body. The legs should be neutral (kneecaps down and toes pointing straight back).

On an inhalation, lift the nose, neck and shoulders off the mat and away from the ears. Simultaneously lift the legs using the inner thighs. Lower down on an exhalation.

Repeat a few times, and work on holding the pose for a minute or longer. As you lift, press the pubic bone down. If a person needs a modification, a folded blanket could be placed on the mat such that the hip points are on the blanket but the pubic bone is not on the blanket.

Someone trying to correct Forward Head Posture should practice all the above exercises frequently, as well as Mountain Pose with a harness. Developing awareness and sticking with it are two of the Niyamas (the second limb of yoga according to Patanjali), specifically Svadhyaya (self study) and Tapas (discipline).

Namaste.

Brenda St. John has been teaching yoga classes in Chewelah since 2010 through the Community Colleges of Spokane's Act 2 program.

Home on the Range

By Joe Barreca

If you met Chris Wujek on a mountain trail, your attention would immediately go to his companions: 2 llamas, 22 goats, 4 sheep and a yak. Technically these are “pack animals,” which are allowed to graze on trails, and certainly do, but more realistically this is a coherent group that depends on each other for survival. They follow Chris, without being tied with ropes or fenced at night. During the summer months and early fall Chris can live on milk from the herd, biscuitroot, wild greens and berries, without packing much more than some spices for himself, and salt and kelp for the herd. But he loves coffee and wheat, so some extras usually come along, especially if he’s close to town.

Surviving in this style is human tradition going back thousands of years. Doing it with animals whose ancestors come from around the globe is a more modern twist. Each animal has a role to play.

The toughest characters, in terms of what they will eat and how long they can go without water, are the llamas. A member of the camel family, llamas can extract more nutrition from their feed than even the thrifty goats or sheep. The yak prefers grass but will eat Oregon grape, young fir bark and needles, and dry grass seed heads when more palatable forage is covered with snow. So will the goats and the sheep, although the sheep are more flexible on forage than the goats. Goats are the least hardy of the animals because of their lack of wool, but are the most personable and curious.

Ironically, the llamas are afraid of the goats and, given the chance, will stay at the back of the pack train while the goats stay right behind Chris. Llamas are also the most protective of the group when it comes to warding off predators. So bringing up the rear while Chris is in front suits the whole group.

Chris’s role is much more than meets the

eye. He picks out prime places to graze and camp. Although he doesn’t carry a gun, he protects the herd. Cougars have killed a couple of his goats but he also drove off a cougar by throwing an apple at it. He kept the carcass of one goat for himself; the other went to the cougar. Especially in cool weather, he can hang goat meat and eat off of it for some time.

He has trained the herd to be wary of fire but also to take advantage of its warmth at night. He sleeps with the animals, carrying only a felt blanket and a tarp for cover. He also has some chickens that ride in cages on the llamas when they travel, hang out around camp eating scraps, bugs, etc., and roost in the trees at night. So you can add eggs to Chris’s diet.

While the role of plants feeding the herd is obvious, the benefit of the herd eating the plants is not. Deer eat down the Oregon grape plants on my farm when the snow gets deep. But Oregon grape is very tough. It bounces back in the spring, sur-



vives from just its roots when dug up and pops back in the forest after the ground is covered in wood chips.

Similarly, grass rebounds after being eaten but less so if eaten repeatedly. The nitrogen and other nutrients in animal urine and manure promote healthy soil, and where animals expose bare soil, they create sunlit space for seeds to grow. This is a pattern than Chris knows well.

He was not born into a nomadic herding family. He studied lessons taught by Andre Voisin, Joel Salatin, Greg Judy, and Allan Savoy, a Zimbabwean ecologist and livestock farmer. Savoy originated the holistic management system, which has turned large acreages in Zimbabwe and other overgrazed parts of the world into thriving grasslands that support large herds of livestock.

Chris did something similar to an overgrazed ranch near Umatilla, Oregon, with a group of friends using rotational grazing. Rotational grazing is the practice of moving livestock between pastures as needed or on a regular basis. Over the course of seven years Chris and his partners turned land that an agricultural agent had written off as having no legumes but a lot of houndstongue and hemlock (invasive species that the agent suggested be killed with herbicides) to a lush bottomland pasture. They did this by moving the cows every day.

This experience aided in Chris developing a keen sense of what animals would graze on in a given amount of time. In the right-sized paddock, they will eat down thistle and other weeds. Too big a paddock and they leave weeds behind. Too small, and they have to be moved during the day. After a patch is grazed, the grasses bounce back and eventually crowd out the weeds. Unfortunately, bringing the ranch back to life also brought its value back higher in the real estate market. It was sold out from under the young herders.

Having experience is one part of the formula for surviving as a herder. Having the right animals is another. Chris likes long-haired cattle with significant horns, like Highland cattle. They can protect themselves and ward off the cold. He wants to reduce the number of goats and increase



the number of sheep for similar reasons.

This is not an occupation that needs mountain trails to exist. Chris sees endless opportunities in the lowlands. Overgrazed and undergrazed land both exist in abundance. Animals are born on the trail from equinox to equinox, so there is plenty of milk. But winter pasture without baled hay also works.

On private land, Chris deploys a solar-charged electric fence. This keeps the animals concentrated in an area, often just a fraction of an acre, so that they eat both the plants they like and those they don't prefer but will tolerate. It also gives Chris a chance to attend to other business such as looking for a shepherdess.

The herd enjoys a wide variety of grass, shrubs, and trees (including the bark during the winter), Himalayan blackberries, all thistles, knapweed, and many more that Chris doesn't know. Many toxic plants can be eaten in smaller amounts, including houndstongue, poison hemlock, and hoary alyssum. Nettles can be found year-round. Fiddlehead ferns and bracken ferns are good for both herd and herder. Chris

is familiar with a wide range of edible wild plants. For instance, he collects Wapato, also known as Indian potato, from shallow waters of Lake Coeur D'Alene in Idaho by dancing barefoot in the water until the tubers rise to the surface. Biscuitroot, bitterroot and wild onions are all part of his meals. Groceries are not a big expense. He has a small truck and trailer to move his animals and a cell phone, but not much else.

From an environmental point of view, this is a fantastically good lifestyle, good for the health of the herd, the health of the land, the ecological economy and Chris's personal health. But what struck me most dramatically about his work is how much he enjoys it. Chris is one happy dude. Living without a lot of media (although he can be found on Kyle Chamberlain's website at resiliencelandcare.wordpress.com), money, possessions and projects really means that "seldom is heard a discouraging word" and you really can be at home on the range.

Joe Barreca makes maps, grows grapes, makes wine and posts blogs on BarrecaVineyards.com.

All the Colors of Life

By Linda Bond

I can remember a time when my life was a daily struggle. Not because I was poor (which I was), but because I was driven to engage with life. I didn't have a particular goal in mind, but I was driven all the same. As a child I loved the outdoors, climbing trees, playing with my dog. I was also curious, so I looked forward to the school year when I could learn about new ideas. As a young adult, I was an avid dancer and loved going out with friends. But I continued to be fascinated by everything – science, history, people, segments of our culture. If it was a part of people's lives, I wanted to understand it.

A Working Life

I began working as a senior in high school. After holding a number of interesting jobs in the music industry and other professional areas, I spent several years with Washington state government, traveling around eastern Washington for speaking engagements, meetings and training sessions. All the while, I was a volunteer with environmental groups and served on a few organizations' boards and committees.

I loved my work and found it very satisfying. But it seemed I was on a path of ever-increasing responsibility and activity. Windows of opportunity for rest and relaxation grew ever smaller.

When I became owner of a small business, I had staff to pay and had to work at daily tasks myself. On top of all that, I was the manager. The result was 15-hour days for most of the week. In short, my life was my work. Fortunately, I had good health – which helped me sustain the pace – and an understanding and supportive husband. I had friends but very little spare time, so there were no movies and very little TV. I read part of a book each day while eating and occasionally got away with some crocheting. In short, there was a lot of work and little fun to my days and nights.

Finally, I got the opportunity to work at Auntie's Bookstore in Spokane. At first, I worked in the freight room – physical labor – and getting lots of exercise. However, I found everything fascinating and began to volunteer to take on new tasks. Once again I was working long hours – enjoyable but leaving little time for resting, meditating and enjoying nature.

Semi-Retirement Changes Everything

In 2012, after nearly 40 years of working, I reached retirement age. Being able to draw Social Security benefits, but still needing extra money to help pay our bills, I chose to continue working half-time. The truth is I love working at Auntie's and I love having access to so many wonderful books. I enjoy leading book groups, working with the Writers Guild, and preparing book reviews of new items being released. But I am also left with plenty of time for leisure activities.

So now I get to see a couple of films each week; I get to read more books of the kind I particularly enjoy; I even get to indulge in TV time. I stream workshop presentations online and follow the political happenings of our great democracy. I even have some time to try out a new recipe in the kitchen when the mood strikes.

Learning to Take It Easy

Over the past few years, I have found a new joy in down time, when I can just sit on my porch and watch the birds and squirrels race around in the sun, or listen to the rain as it falls around me. Because I no longer work full days, I can sleep in and "glide" into my day after a satisfying bout of daydreaming. When I see something interesting, I can run into the house and grab my camera to capture it – perhaps to share with others on social media. Some days I ride the bus across town just to check out any changes that have occurred.

But my favorite thing of all is to follow the flow of each day as it comes to me. The unexpected used to be a hassle, keeping me from my obligations. Now the unexpected is a gift that leads me to new adventures and experiences.

If you're coming up on potential retirement, I urge you to take advantage of the opportunities it offers. So long as you continue to have interesting activities in your life, you can safely let go of the pressure of obligations and begin new journeys of discovery. I am so thankful that I have left the "driven" me behind. I think it's time to float a while, don't you?

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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A Year On the Farm

Abundance

By Michelle Lancaster

Someone recently asked me what gifts I am getting my family for Christmas. I explained to her that my family tries not to do purchased gifts anymore. We have come up with a lot of alternative ideas.

Last year's Christmas season started off with an unexpected treat for me. I received a hand-knit sweater from a friend. I had given her some yarn in exchange for a portion of the yarn back as a knitted project (I suggested gloves or socks or something small). Instead, she spent months knitting a beautiful full-length sweater alternating stripes of natural silver-gray wool yarn from my sheep with a blend of pink and white yarn. I keep warm during the winter months, snuggling up in my new sweater!

In a world where kids already get a lot of bought gifts and I am not sure what to get them, my husband and I decided to go a different route. We hosted a kids Christmas party. (The gift for their parents is a full day free of kids!) We went for kid-friendly foods like the ever-popular meat, cheese and cracker tray or homemade individual pizzas (rolling out their own dough is a cherished yet messy event).

The kids came up with their own dessert – a bowl filled with fresh snow, drizzled with homemade grape juice concentrate. I loved their ingenuity – proof that kids minus electronics can equal creativity. As a project, I had the kids draw Christmas cards for their parents or grandparents, then showed them how to address an envelope and put on a stamp. That was pretty interesting, as I am pretty sure none of the kids had sent a “snail mail” card before. (I felt so old, and I am only in my 30s!)

My nieces and nephews did receive a gift, too. They each got a marshmallow shooter made by my dad (mini-marshmallow-sized PVC pipe with carved wood mouthpieces and a bag of mini marshmallows). Very popular with the kids, though a little messy to clean up after.

My parents also came up with an alternative gift idea for the whole family – a sort of white elephant gift exchange using items from home (we each picked items that we did not want anymore, then wrapped them and put them

in the center of the living room to pick from).

The game was surprisingly popular with the kids and entertaining for the adults. I worried that the kids would get upset if their gift got “stolen” by someone else as part of the game. But they thrived on being able to open more than one gift (each time a gift got stolen, they got to open another gift, a heavenly concept for kids!).

Some of the so-called white elephant items were really desired gifts – particularly the “holy toast” stamp that you imprint on bread, then toast for a smoky image to appear, and



the goofy portrait of a gangly dog (a lab, accidentally painted with too-short legs, so that he looked like a wiener dog) that my sister had painted during an art class. What she thought was a joke gift became a treasured win (after several steals) by one of my nieces to hang on the wall of her bedroom. My other nieces were so disappointed to not win the dog picture!

Christmas is about much more than gifts, of course. Really, gifts are somewhat a corrupted idea that we keep trying to pull away from – from “things” toward “experiences.” Our clan thrives on creating new memories together. After having lost so many loved ones, those of us still around find the bond of family and friendship and time with one another the most special of gifts.

Much of our time revolves around food, including the making of recipes reminiscent of my childhood. I live in a house next to the house I grew up in. My neighbor (the previous owner of my house) used to make us a version of Chex Mix every Christmas. She would take a coffee can, cover it with fresh aluminum foil, then fill the can with Chex Mix and put a bow on top of the lid. I loved the taste of that mix,

and so used a note from my childhood that I had written down and part of the modern Chex Mix recipe to re-create her recipe.

I also like to make family favorites like my Grandma Sandi's frozen cranberry balls and cheesy French bread, recipes that instantly make me think of her.

During the day, when we are not eating, my dad will hitch up the trailer to the tractor and load the edges with straw bales so that we can go on a hayride around the loop (about 6 miles). A smartphone and Bluetooth speaker blast out bluegrass music for the adults to

tap their toes to as the littlest kids dance in the middle.

When we return, half frozen, mom and dad heat up that fall's press of fresh apple cider or hot chocolate from our Jersey milk (yes, brown cows really do give chocolate milk!). The kids love to have a bonfire and roast marshmallows or make s'mores. A few years ago, I made mini mozzarella balls, then froze them. (Making mozzarella is a popular pastime to do with holiday guests, by the way.) We would put a frozen mozzarella ball on each roasting stick and roast them over the fire like we would a marshmallow: until the outside is browned and the inside is softened. Instant “homemade smoked mozzarella” – delicious!

After the festivities, as we all return home, the house becomes so quiet. I go through a negative withdrawal period, missing the bond of our crazy family. We connect on Facebook, sharing photos from the season, sending wishes for the new year and hoping we will all see each other again soon, the best gift of all.

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

It's Smile Season – Like Always

By J. Merrill Baker

The time has “flew!” It really has. Where did the past year soar off to? Still, we don't feel suspended in amber, though time has sometimes felt like we were slogging through molasses and, at other times, time has miraculously evaporated into thin air. Empty space. The stuff made of black matter or difficult-to-name space molecules or quantum energies, something we common folk do not normally acquaint ourselves with.

Dr. Seuss nailed it: “How Did It Get So Late So Soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flew. How did it get so late so soon?”

Yes, I am a fan of Dr. Seuss, and I especially love the “silly” because it is something that makes me smile and smiles

are worth sharing because we certainly feel better when we do. Most people like cheerful people. Babies and dogs like cheerful people.

Seems more people are drawn to smiles than grimaces, right? And don't many folks like to be mad at “The Grinch” at Christmastime? His heart was two sizes too small? (Dr. Seuss wrote that in 1957!) Younger generations may not have Scrooge in their memories (unless it is Donald Duck's uncle), but the concept is certainly understood. Stingy: giving or sharing as little as possible, such as “until his redemption, Ebenezer Scrooge is the classic example of a very stingy, heartless miser.” We prefer smiles over grimaces and look for constant inspiration to reassure us that there is still time to smile.

Oh, a word from Wikipedia here, “smizing,” as in “smiling with the eyes.” Really!

We, the ever-patient husband and I, find ourselves stunned at the surreal realization we will be celebrating our thirtieth year of matrimony. Shortly after we'd met, I wrote “In every way/Here, it's now/Forever Today” at the start of a poem that launched this journey together. It does seem time has suddenly spoken up and reminded us we are still wrapped in its magic. I'm not sure exactly when the choice to make our lives simpler happened – maybe it was the near-call with the “hospital vacation” – but suddenly you find yourself analyzing all the complications of work and personal obligations, the over-thinking of everything, and you get more real. You ask yourself questions like “What do I really want?” We suggest that you ask yourself that now, don't wait!

It is already mid-November as I write this, with simple thoughts about a Thanksgiving meal shared with our close neighbors, and by the time you get to read this our meal will have been shared, blessings will have been counted, and our 30th celebrated, all in our quiet and thoughtful manner. Surely, we will be considering the Christmas holiday and the simple ways we can enjoy any time we get with the various and sundry characters we deem family. Some are friends, some are actually blood-related, but all are “smile-worthy.” We like that in people. We probably “smize” when they are around.

I am very good at “being in the moment,” no matter how fleeting or how long that moment lasts. I chalk it up to having been born by c-section at some orchestrated convenient appointment in a hospital surgical room, so the doc could enjoy his three- or four-day Fourth of July weekend. I would have probably been born on July 4 instead of the convenient-even-if-I'M-not-ready-just-yet date of July 1! I was still accused of being



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Living in NE WA: Lessons Learned

a “firecracker,” and yes, like my mother would accuse me, “You’re independent as a hog on ice!”

Independence is important to me, even if sometimes it doesn’t go over well. I can commiserate with my mother when I have the only granddaughter I know that was kicked out of kindergarten. Well, sent home. For being too stubborn, um, independent. It’s called “willful” now, I think, and she’s almost nineteen and still, well, “willful.” At least she hasn’t had her spirit fully tarnished by believing others’ expectations apply to her. She appears to respect the fact that she has her own opinion of things, yet allows for others to have their own thoughts whether or not she herself agrees.

I am glad this attribute is there, because it is very hard to laugh at yourself if you are taking yourself – and others – too seriously! Having been exposed to “rebuke,” she is a survivor. Oh: re·buke / rəˈbyoʊ ok/ A verb, to express sharp disapproval or criticism of (someone) because of their behavior or actions; “she had rebuked him for driving too fast.” I absolutely appreciated the following statement from a friend that I have turned into a famous quote on her behalf: “I have seen much love and forgiveness come from those who are rebuked. I wonder if you have to feel the lack of love and forgiveness to understand the power it has to *the giver and receiver*, and that to give and receive it is essential to a whole spirit.” (Thank you Louise!)

A whole spirit, exactly what we strive

for in our holiday celebrations. Actually, it is exactly what we strive for every day we are alive! Please slow down (avoid any rebuke!). The small artful wave to oncoming drivers? It’s friendly. We never saw that living anywhere else. Appreciate the fresh crisp air, the friendly people that live here, the local hardworking

farmers, all the wonderful reasons you live here, and be kind, the Grinch’s heart grew three times its size, Ebenezer was loved at last – there’s hope for us. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to us one and all!

J. Merrill Baker: a whole spirit and Dr. Seuss fan!

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Herbs for Conception, Pregnancy, Birth & Lactation

By Faye Stewart

The information presented in these articles is based on tradition and personal experience and is not meant to be in any way prescriptive or a substitute for consultation with licensed health-care providers.

The mention of sex herbs may seem a little racy, but sex is a traditional feature of conception. Psychological and relationship issues have a lot to do with sexual dysfunction or low sex drive, as do things like fatigue, substance abuse, certain medications, and debility from illness. But a few herbs may be worth mentioning in this context.

Damiana (*Turnera diffusa* or *T. aphrodisiaca*) may be used by males in particular for anxiety, depression, inhibition or intellectual-distancing issues around sex. Damiana is a plant of the southwest and Mexico; its leaves are the part used. It perks up the appetite – maybe for sex as well as food – and its alkaloids seem to have a testosterone-like effect. Infusion dose is 1 cup 3 times daily or 30-60 drops of tincture once or twice a day.

Women should avoid damiana if pregnant or lactating and neither sex should take it if inflammation or overt pathology is present. Damiana is generally rated a urinary antiseptic, antidepressant, laxative nerve tonic.

Virginia snakeroot is sometimes recommended in cases of sexual dysfunction related to emotional distraction.

Ptychopetalum (potency wood) is reputed to increase sex drive for men. General stimulants for either sex include cubeb br., kava-kava, cumin and ginger rt. Yohimbe bk. – short-term use only – may improve blood flow to the pelvis and increase sperm motility and testosterone (as may cotton root bark).

Herbs supporting conception in more standard ways start with hormone normalizers for women, of which chaste tree is queen. Other herbs that may help pave the way to pregnancy include don quai, fenugreek seeds, lemon balm, false unicorn rt., red clover fl., saw palmetto br. and black haw.

False unicorn's properties include estrogen precursors that discourage miscarriage. It is a good uterine and reproductive tonic in decoction or tincture – a half-cup decoction or 15-30 drops tincture 3 times daily. If false unicorn is called on to help prevent threatened miscarriage the dose is 15 drops tincture every half-hour.

If a woman is coming off birth control pills a formula of equal parts black cohosh rt., chaste tree br., licorice rt., and motherwort may be a hormone re-balancer as an infusion several times daily for the first two weeks after coming off the pill, cutting back to once a day during the third and fourth weeks of use. This post-birth-control formula should be taken *before*, not *while*, trying

to get pregnant.

Herbs for pregnancy itself start with herbs to AVOID while pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or lactating. These include but are not limited to: barberry, aloe (internally), blessed thistle, goldenseal, angelica, beth rt., black cohosh, blue cohosh, motherwort, chickweed, juniper, male fern, mandrake, chickweed, damiana, devil's club, feverfew, pennyroyal, poke rt., ginseng, licorice rt., rue, sage, southernwood, mugwort, myrrh, parsley, prickly ash bk., rhubarb rt., tansy, Thuja (cedar), sarsaparilla rt., shepherd's purse, wormwood, spike-nard, uva ursi, valerian rt., vervain, squawvine and raspberry lvs. (during the first two trimesters) and yarrow.

Pregnancy's herbal friends, on the other hand, might include ginger rt. or anise seeds for morning sickness, alfalfa for edema, nettles for iron, oat straw for calcium, dandelion, alfalfa and yellow dock for multi-nutrients, lavender for calming, and squawvine and raspberry lvs. for uterine toning in the final weeks of pregnancy (only). Herbal massage oils, relaxing herbal baths and herbal sachets for sweet dreams are additional allies for a pregnant woman.

Raspberry leaves are an excellent uterine and lymph tonic as the due date approaches and will increase lactation afterward; infusions are the preferred form, 2 cups daily. The aerial parts

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of squawvine (*Mitchella repens*, AKA partridgeberry) can be taken in tincture or infusion to tone the uterus and strengthen the lining in the final weeks of pregnancy. The dose is 1 cup of infusion or 30-90 drops of tincture up to 3 times daily. Squawvine is mineral-rich – it also acts as a male tonic for the prostate and is remedial for painful, scant menses.

For experienced midwives, your kit of herbs for emergencies might contain tinctures of beth root and black cohosh to strengthen contractions and a combination tincture of blue cohosh, shepherd's purse, alfalfa and ginger to address excessive postpartum bleeding. (Cinnamon or bayberry bk. tinctures also help reduce bleeding.) Blue cohosh has been known to decrease maternal blood pressure, however, so it is not used if there is hypotension. Angelica rt. can encourage the expelling of a reluctant placenta. But none of these applications are for an untrained, inexperienced practitioner, midwife or not.

Lactation-promoters feature chaste tree br., raspberry lvs., borage, anise seeds, fenugreek seeds, caraway seeds and fennel seeds. Seeds, especially, are best taken as infusions – the fluid intake itself, as well as the herbs, boosts lactation. At weaning time *Salvia* (garden sage) is mama's helper for drying up the milk supply.

Though not a specific for pregnancy or labor, I always brought along lavender flowers to births I attended. Laven-

der eases stress headaches and nervous exhaustion and imparts an atmosphere of peace – though its gentle scent veils a surprisingly rigorous antiseptic action.

We sometimes gave newborns a relaxing herbal bath using a weak infusion of lavender, lemon verbena, rosemary, mugwort, thyme and rose petals in

womb-temperature water. These lovely herbs, antiseptic and aromatic, can be a fragrant, soothing herbal welcome into the world.

Faye Stewart has gathered, gardened and enjoyed working with herbs for decades. She ran a medicinal herb business for 15 years.



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Warmth is Worth The Work

By Samantha Brown

'Tis the season to sit tight on my mountain top and wait for spring. People down below are usually quite busy running from store to store shopping, which is fine and all, but it makes for a very hectic endeavor whenever I decide to venture far from home. Anxiety, people ... it's a real thing. So, I buckle down

and try my darnedest to avoid all the tinsel-town traffic.

Having built my own home, I can say that it is a time of true comfort. My chores diminish in the garden and around the property and I am left with the list of projects I dreamed about having time to complete throughout the

previous nine months. My home is now offering me all the warm shelter and amenities one could hope to have, but I must make clear that living off-grid and generating my own electricity has its limitations.

At this writing, I am sitting in my living room in front of my warm fireplace and remembering my very first winter here on my humble little mountain top. It offered me very little comfort. Maybe just enough to keep a girl going, if I'm being honest. The comfort and warmth I felt at that time had to come from the dream of a brighter/warmer tomorrow. This little house I was building ... with a happy family free from the rest of the world and its worries, warm and content with what life was offering them. That was sixteen winters ago, but it feels like only yesterday.

It was a race against time. With a newborn crying in the background, I stuffed sheet after sheet of fiberglass insulation into the slots between the exterior wall framework. It was snowing outside and very cold inside. My husband was working 60-plus hours a week at the local Les Schwab Tire Center, in the middle of their seasonal rush. When he was lucky enough to be home, he was completely exhausted from his long day of intense manual labor. As weak as I may have been, having barely gotten home from the hospital with our new daughter, I understood what was required of me.

When setting out on this adventure six months earlier, I had all the faith in the world that it could be accomplished. I had visualized every step and made the calculations, but my lack of pessimism seemed to blind me to the many obstacles and limitations that would inevitably stand in the way – mainly money and time.

My calculations did not account for the rapid inflation of the price of building materials that took place right after Hurricane Katrina. It seemed as if they had all tripled overnight. This meant that only a third of the cottage would be accomplished within that summer's building budget. We would have to go

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without siding and the decorative touches for an unforeseen amount of time.

The hardest sacrifice at this point was the lack of a refrigerator. Being off-grid made the purchase of any appliance a little more costly. Everything we planned on adding had to run on propane – not only the refrigerator but also the cook stove and, God willing, eventually a hot water heater. I was making do with a cooler and a shopping list short on things requiring more than moderate chilling.

I was fortunate enough at this point to have acquired my small cook stove. It was a welcome improvement after cooking over a campfire for so many months. I was still doing dishes in a bucket after hauling in the water. I almost looked forward to the snow, if only for the additional water that would be available for washing. All of these things that sound so difficult when spoken out loud did not bother me. I really had no complaints past the physical fatigue and the crying baby.

In all of this, I am not going to pretend that I was patient. I was not. I was

beyond eager. I had this perfect little dream trapped in my mind. Most of the time it felt as if it would never come into fruition. Every day was a struggle between my imagination and my reality. At this point in time my reality was quite literally starting to freeze.

If I failed to act fast, there would be no real struggle remaining. I would just freeze. It doesn't seem to matter how big the fire is if the walls can't hold the heat. The fireplace did provide a small circle of comfort for me to place my baby, while my hands kept themselves busy. With every new sheet of insulation, I quite literally felt the increase in my home's temperature, and that is what kept me going. Trading discomfort for comfort is such an effective motivation.

In that struggle, however, I discovered that my heart was full. So many people have waited a lifetime to do the things I had chosen to do early. How did I find the courage to make such a bold decision, you might be asking? The short and simple answer is that I thought it was the way it got done. I wanted a home for my family, and this seemed like it was the

only way to get it. I didn't over think that one, surprisingly.

Maybe sometimes you need to just take an idea and run with it and hope it will all work out in the end. For my little family, it did. Just as it had worked for my parents, and their parents. It's simply the way things are done around here – or so I thought. It took many years before I realized that nobody does it this way anymore. I guess I can't really say nobody, as I'm sure there are people out there just like my husband and me, scattered across the mountain tops all over the Pacific Northwest.

If you are there and you are reading this, I just want to say, hold on, keep going, be patient. Time has a way of bringing all our dreams to fruition, so long as we keep pursuing them. I am sitting in front of a very warm fire, after all, in a home built to withstand the coldest of days ... because I remember the coldest of days.

Samantha Brown is a "home-grown, off-grid homesteader who enjoys capturing and sharing glimpses of our way of life."



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Family Traditions 2019

By Becky Dubell

I love a lot of things about this “job” that I have and one of them is taking the time to visit with my people and getting to know a little more about them and their families. If you can’t tell, I’m into family! In previous years my December article for the *Monthly* has been about family traditions celebrated throughout the year. So, here we go again...

I have started a couple of new ones: All the girls (JJ and myself included) get “kinda” matching slippers and the boys get a tool that is a little on the weird side for Christmas. I added taking AntMan for a ride on November 21, which was Jim’s birthday, maybe just down the driveway, but then again...

Norm: Definitely family time – parents, kids, grandkids. Everybody is home for days. Games. Fireworks. Food. Visiting. No work allowed.

Gordon: Lots of food and family for Thanksgiving. Christmas is for presents and playing only – some may still be in PJs. Stockings have the required pop tart and toothbrush each year – Santa has been chewed out when the pop tart is missing. Easter basket gets a second toothbrush each year. (Gordon is the husband I’ve written about before: He has now given his wife 38 different Valentine roses – metal, glass, paper, etc. – which are now displayed in a curio cabinet.)

Scott: New Year’s Day: Pickled Penguin Motorcycle Ride. Started by a member of AA to celebrate no hangover after the New Year’s Eve celebration, a road trip if the roads are good enough or maybe just around the yard. The gathering and motorcycles wheels turning are the important things.

Laural: Seafood Christmas Eve before heading out to look at the Christmas lights while keeping eyes open for Rudolph’s red nose because that means it is time to go home and open presents.

Amber: Grandma hugs at Thanksgiving and sugar cookies that look like they came out of the magazines.

Katie: German Pickle tree ornament somewhere on the 8-foot tree. The finder receives a special extra gift.

Jeanette: Christmas tree is a live tree, representing the birth of Jesus, which is then planted after the New Year. Grandma’s Lefsa!!

Judy: Sledding! Sledding! Sledding!

Kim: December 1st – cookies and candy for neighbors. Always Lifesaver Books under the tree – 18-year-old daughter in the military got onto Santa for not including it in her gifts.

Lori: Christmas Eve, mom gets to choose a gift for opening – always pajamas and a special hand-made gift representing the year. Christmas celebration is solved for our split family – the weekend before Christmas is spent at mom’s. Christmas Eve and Christmas morning celebrations at dad’s, the required call to Santa with instructions on how to find them, hoof prints in the snow, eaten cookies and all. Been celebrating this way for 25 years!

Karen: Know it is Christmas when mom’s cranberry salad shows up.

Karen and Curt: Wax floors at the Chevron in Northport on

Christmas Day – 19 years so far. When I asked “Why?” the answer was “Why not?” I’m guessing they get to spend “husband/wife” time.

Twilla: First Sunday of every month is family open house/potluck. If you can make it, great. If not, will miss you and see you next month. And, of course, Ammonia Cookies with me for Christmas.

Arden Community Hall: Wednesday night music/dance/potluck.

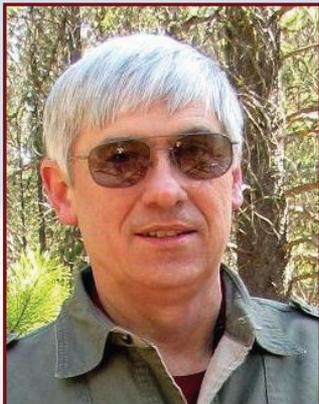
Me again: Bonfire/potluck the Saturday before Thanksgiving – snow or shine. Get together with family and friends for a rip-roaring fire, good food, visiting, marshmallows for roasting and I get to burn my tree/yard trimmings!

Whatever you celebrate throughout the year, do so with joy and all your heart and soul.

Merry Christmas and a Safe Happy New Year!



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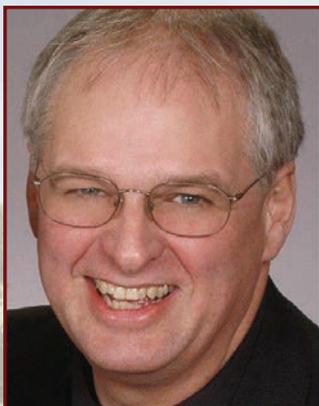
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