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December 2018

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**JANUARY 2019
ISSUE DEADLINES**
AD SPACE RESERVATIONS:
Friday, December 14th
WHAT'S HAPPENING LISTINGS:
Friday, December 21st



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- JOHN ODELL, WordsOfWords.com


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Balancing on the Fulcrum

By Christine Wilson

"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self." ~ Ernest Hemingway

"Let me never fall into the vulgar mistake of dreaming that I am persecuted whenever I am contradicted." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's there are few." ~ Suzuki Roshi

My childhood was full of "Don't get too big for your britches," "Don't act conceited" and other worried thoughts about feeling dangerously good about myself. From my experience, those messages are reflected in the history of many of us, and not just in my age group. I can still cringe when I see people bragging about themselves.

However, this overly humble side of things is maybe not cringe-worthy, but definitely annoying in its own right. Searching for the line has been something I've worked on throughout my adult life.

I recently stumbled upon a blog by a young woman named Courtney Seiter. She has a drawing

of a teeter-totter with the fulcrum right in the middle. A confidence character is on one side and a humility character on the other. The teeter-totter sits above the water line, with *confidence* hovering over a watery eddy of arrogance, and *humility* hovering over self-deprecation.

The image resonates with me, since teeter-totters played a big role in my sense of self as a child. I was bigger than most of my peers, so sitting on a teeter totter across from friends was, well, a balance problem. If I wanted to give the appearance of joining in, I'd keep my feet on the ground and create balance with tight quads. Otherwise, I'd

have dropped to the ground and sent them flying. I don't think that ever actually happened but the picture stays in my mind at the dark end of my imagination.

There are laws of physics involving balance, fulcrum and torque, all well beyond my level of expertise. If I'd understood fulcrums as a child and had a way to shift the location of the teeter-totter pivot point according to weight value, I'd have been able to balance perfectly. Win-win. Instead, I just tried not to think about it, as children often do.

Seeing Seiter's drawing, lo these many years later, has given me a chance to reacquaint myself with this image. I do enjoy a good metaphor. They usually have a way of collapsing when too closely examined, but let's just look at this one without the skilled attention of a physicist, okay? Imagine that in the case of balancing confidence with humility, that fulcrum would rest smack dab in the middle. With that point being absolute center, we can feel good about ourselves and maintain a gracious attitude toward others. In that steadiness, we can

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Random Acts of Community

appreciate our skills, our opinions and our place in the world while making space for others to do the same.

One of my childhood friends had a favorite insult for arrogant people. She'd call them self-satisfied, with a specific look of condemnation on her face saved only for that offense.

It would be nice to feel satisfied with oneself but the term self-satisfied implies overshooting the goal, into smug superiority. I often agreed with her on that judgment and spent a lot of time being appalled at arrogance. Actually, I still do, although the nuances thereof are much more complex than I understood when standing next to my friend with her disapproving look and her hand on her hip.

Apparently, we all are capable of what researchers have called the Dunning-Kruger Effect, which is defined as occurring when a person thinks they are superior to others. Research about automobile drivers, for example, shows that almost everyone thinks they are more skilled than other drivers. The researchers called that "illusory superiority." It has a nice ring to it, don't you think, other than the reference to illusion? Unfortunately, it is a form of cognitive bias, which has a tendency to close one's mind and assume we have it figured out. Hence, the Suzuki Roshi lesson about seeing the world and other people with a beginner's mind allows for us to be in the moment, fresh and curious. For any of us, in my humble opinion, once our mind is closed, into the eddy of arrogance we go.

On the humble side, the eddy we fall into has its own version of cognitive bias. "I'm not as good as others." "I don't deserve good things." "Who am I to think I can accomplish this?" We all have an inner critic; some of us have perfected it over many years of practice. Personally, I've even thought smugly (ironic though that is) that I am better off being overly humble than the other way around. Balance just crops up everywhere, doesn't it?

Epictetus was a slave in Rome, banished ultimately to Necropolis in what is now Greece. He became a Stoic philosopher with many students, one of whom recorded his teachings. I have no idea how good his equilibrium was on that teeter-totter of which I speak, but he apparently said, "If anyone tells you that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make excuses about what is said of you but answer, 'He was ignorant of my other faults, else he would not have mentioned these alone.'"

Seventeen hundred years later, Alexander Pope said that "A man should never be ashamed to own that he has been in the wrong, which is but saying in other words that he is wiser today than he was yesterday." Now, there's an admirable spin on self-reflection.

A couple thousand years after Epictetus, and about three hundred years after Alexander Pope, a rock and roll philosopher named Don Henley wrote about being "strong enough to be weak."

Apparently, our species is still thinking about humility, confidence and finding a way to accept and learn from our own misdeeds and shortcomings.

The fulcrum must be dead center to live that way. We might, for example, hold on to a belief that becomes solid in our mind and then along comes someone to challenge our belief. There may be something about their diverse perspective that helps us shift a bit. What a shame to miss that opportunity.

In this holiday season I offer up hope for a

personal and cultural fostering of the balance between confidence and humility for the New Year and beyond. On a daily basis, we can learn from each other by listening to and honoring other opinions or observations. This season is a time of open-heartedness; we have a chance to take that into the next year.

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



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Employment Opportunities

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

Every day I get an average of six job offers. They come from all over the country. Communities, government agencies, hospitals, medical facilities, looking for doctors who do what I do. There are desperate offers, lucrative offers, some embarrassingly so. Guarantees of

up to \$300,000 and more a year with a signing bonus of up to \$100,000 to come and work in beautiful California, or Florida, Minnesota, Missouri, or Maine. I find it fun to at least browse these offers and dream.

Some of the hardest offers to turn down are those proposed by my daughter, herself a family doctor in California. Don't I think

my grandchildren would like to see more of me? Wouldn't it be fun to work closer to each other, maybe as colleagues? Hmm. It's a pretty tempting offer. And I ask myself the obvious question: Why do I stay?

I don't make as much in Northeast Washington as I would in other parts of the country, but I am paid well, and I could never complain. Who would I complain to? No one in Northeast Washington would feel sorry for me. But if it's not money keeping me here, then I have to ask myself, what is it?

It's always interesting to me to see what is out there. I looked at several jobs in the Spokane area a year ago working for hospitals, clinics or urgent care offices. The interviews were fascinating. It was clear that some places genuinely saw my value to their organization and others seemed to be thinking, "What could a hick doctor like you from a small town bring to our illustrious organization?"

In one interview, I felt like I was being psychoanalyzed by the CEO. "That's an interesting answer," she mused in response to my statement that I am capable of providing the level of care required by their massive medical facility. "I'm intrigued to know why you responded that way."

I laughed to myself because of course she has no idea who I am or what I have done for the last 30 years of my career in the way of providing full-spectrum primary care in a variety of settings. She is used to doctors who practice on a much more limited scope, who fit neatly into a box. The implication was that I couldn't possibly be competent in all of those areas.

I reminded her politely that they were the ones looking for a doctor to hire and not the other way around. She should be convincing me that working for her multimillion-dollar healthcare corporation with its mission of profitability and shareholder reward was really what I wanted to do with the rest of my career. I must say that her attitude helped me clarify who I am and why I am committed to the small communities of Northeast Washington.

Working for a big corporation and padding the pockets of shareholders may be a more lucrative career, but it is not a calling that I aspire to. In fact, it is, in my opinion, one of the things that are terribly wrong with our healthcare system. There's a lot of money to be made, but the unfortunate truth is that patients get lost in the scramble and they can't find their way through the messy system we

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have inherited.

There are other reasons why I didn't take a high-paying big corporate job, besides the presence of annoying CEOs. After all, there are plenty of small towns all over this country whose representatives are calling and texting and emailing me out of desperation, hoping that I will come. So why do I stay? Why not keeping moving down the road, as I was encouraged to do by another administrator?

Short-sighted administrative types aside, it's still a valid question. What keeps professionals working and fulfilled in rural areas? Since they have so many options, why would they choose to stay rather than enjoy the amenities of a more comfortable life? Is it just the bottom of the professional barrel who end up here simply because they have nowhere else to go? Or why would you willingly throw yourself into the messiness of being on call for years, admitting patients to the hospital, covering the emergency department, running a fulltime practice and delivering babies in the middle of the night?

The answer came to me in an unexpected way. It was 8:30 on a Thursday morning. I was standing beside a patient's bed. Her hair was mussed up into a tornado, her teeth missing in an unvarnished smile, her speech hesitant and friendly, her sense of humor still intact, nudging at us through a clouded mind. Her liver is at the end of its rope, propped up by vitamins and ammonia-reducing compounds that use the gut as a poor substitute for what the liver alone was designed to do.

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to go home.

She looks at us and we talk over the plan for her care. We have saved her life, again. We are glad that she is better, but the next steps are crucial. We encourage her, we are pulling for her, we are hoping for good things for her life, but she must change in order to survive. We finish up on the plans for home when it suddenly dawns on me. Wait a minute, we have a care coordinator. We can ask her to call our patient, make sure she is getting better, improve the follow-up if for no other reason than to reduce her need to end up back in the hospital.

Her face darkens. "I don't have a phone. I don't have water either, or electricity." I probe a bit more. The place where she is staying has no windows. All of the glass is broken out. She and her mother have moved into an abandoned house in the middle of town, and this is their existence, on the edge of society. They have burned too many bridges to find their way back.

I sit in silence for a moment. I want so much to save her life, but I didn't expect this. There is still something clearly likeable and human about her, but this is not living, this is not human. This is barely existing. With the complexity of her medical problems mounting as a result of her failed liver, she is one step away from the abyss. She is 36. How can it be that there are people living here like this, in worse conditions than where I work in Africa? All I know is I feel compassion for her. She is the age of my daughter. Maybe she will listen this time.

I know we can't fix everything. I am painfully aware that we can't save everyone. Our worst enemy is so often the messages we find planted between our ears. But I can list for you the people we have brought back from the edge of death and given them a chance to really live. It is good medicine, it's what we do.

To celebrate such a life restored to humanity, to self-worth and gratitude, is amazing. That is what I want for this woman. And that is why I stay here in Northeast Washington and serve the small towns. My work isn't done here. Hers is another chance to save a broken life.

That, and I guess because it feels like home. There's something really rewarding about coming back to your own place, looking over the meadow at the pine forest with the misty clouds settling on the valley floor, the stars coming out, the bugling of a wapiti in the distance.

So, what will I do with the job offers? Because they keep coming. Every once in a while, I see one that catches my eye, and I nudge my job consultant (the one that I'm married to) and ask her, "What do you think? Family practice opportunity in sunny Philadelphia?" I already know what she is going to say. "Dear, let's grow old together here at home."

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

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Fault Lines

Article & Illustration by Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

As winter began in December 1872, an earthquake rocked the already shaken world of the upper Columbia River landscape.

The quake would have been hard to ignore. According to some accounts, over one hundred aftershocks continued for days. The trembling

interrupted the flow of the Columbia River near Fort Shepherd (13 miles upstream of the border), where the sandy banks gave way and bridged the water, and near the confluence of the Chelan River, where a high cliff that had been on the right bank of the Columbia moved

to other shore. For those curious to know more about the quake, Jack Nisbet has written well of it in a 2006 *Inlander* article and in his book *Ancient Places* (2015).

The quake fascinates me as an expression of natural forces with unusual timing. Precisely when indigenous spiritual leaders were struggling to maintain sovereignty over their homeland and restore their well-being, the Earth spoke its own powerful message of upheaval and change.

Following the establishment of the Yakama Indian Reservation in 1855 and the unsuccessful Indian Wars, many dispirited indigenous people had begun to accept the finality of the changes that I wrote about last month. The old way of life was ending. The U.S. government had overwhelmed tribal leadership. It was establishing or planning more reservations, including one along the upper Columbia River.

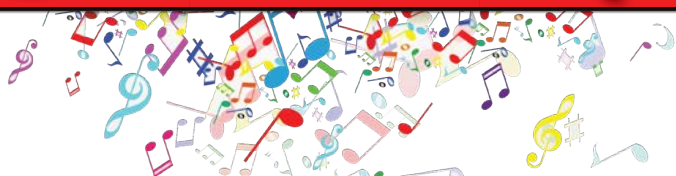
Amid these events rose a prophet named Skolaskin. Born around 1839 into the San Poil tribe, he arrived during impacts from another natural disruption, this one at Mt. St. Helens. A major eruption in about 1800 had sent six inches of ash drifting across North Columbia Country. This terrified the tribal people, who called it "dry snow." The fallen ash contributed to a famine the following year. In 1831, the volcano reactivated and sent more dry snow, on-and-off until 1857.

Skolaskin grew to adulthood and then watched other San Poil tribal members be chosen as leaders. His rise as prophet would be slower, after the volcano finally went quiet and a mysterious illness had left him partially crippled. During the illness, he lost consciousness and awoke, having had a dream about the way forward to restore health and happiness to his people.

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Northwest Smoke

By Jack Nisbet

For the past couple of years, a team led by Washington State University anthropology professor Shannon Tushingham has been delving into the mysterious world of North American native tobacco. With the cooperation and assistance of the Nez Perce tribe, Tushingham carefully selected pipe fragments from several archaeology digs in traditional Nez Perce territory. These fragments were examined through a non-destructive method of mass spectrometry that involved soaking them in water and then testing the residue left behind. Recent results proved, on a molecular level, that Plateau tribes were smoking some sort of tobacco from the genus *Nicotiana* at least 1,200 years ago, long before the arrival of any fur traders or explorers.

The article that Tushingham published about her findings, "Biomolecular archaeology reveals ancient origins of indigenous tobacco smoking in North American Plateau," appeared

in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and attracted media interest as far afield as Europe.

The paper validated tribal oral histories as well as the earliest written records of white visitors to both the coast and interior of the Northwest – records that stretch back into the eighteenth century, and provide tantalizing hints about the role tobacco played in those tribal cultures.

In the summer of 1787, the British trading ship *Prince of Wales* dropped anchor among the Queen Charlotte Islands (now known as Haida Gwaii) off the coast of British Columbia. There, ship surgeon Archibald Menzies, an accomplished botanist, collected samples of a peculiar tobacco he found growing in the garden of a Haida man and sent them back to England. A couple of years later, two American sailors described the Haida practice of pounding green tobacco leaves together with limestone, then chewing quids of this mixture "as big as a hen's egg." Neither Menzies nor the sailors realized that Haida Gwaii lay hundreds of miles north of any known range for wild tobacco.

In 1792, a British surveying expedition under the leadership of George Vancouver dispatched a small boat that explored about a hundred miles up the lower Columbia River. Along the way, Lieutenant William Broughton saw Chinookan people smoking something through pipes made of carved wooden bowls attached to elderberry tubes two feet long. That same year, in the Rocky Mountains high above the Columbia's source lakes, Hudson's Bay Company trader Peter Fidler offered fur trade twist tobacco to a gathering of Pikani Blackfeet and Kootenai people. In return, Fidler accepted a pipe from

a Kootenai man stuffed full with "his tobacco, all of their own growing."

The Lewis and Clark Expedition encountered tobacco throughout the course of their westward journey. Meriwether Lewis collected plants from an Arikara man's garden near the Mandan villages on the Missouri River in 1804, smoked with Shoshones and Flatheads on his way across the Rockies in the fall of 1805, and bartered with Cathlamet people for tobacco "of their own manufacture" over the winter of 1805-1806.

North West Company fur agent and cartographer David Thompson heard so much about Kootenai tobacco gardening on a lush plain that straddled the 49th parallel near modern Eureka, Montana, that he named it "Tobacco Meadows" in spring 1809.

Two summers later, in the early stages of his epic float from Kettle Falls to the mouth of the Columbia, Thompson pulled ashore at a village located at the mouth of the Nespelem River. The agent shared five feet of trade tobacco with the people there before pleading that his stock was depleted. The Nespelems told him that "they now intend to pull up a little of their own tobacco for smoking, though not yet ripe." Thompson was in a hurry, and launched his canoe back on to the river without seeing what kind of garden, and what species of plant, they might have been cultivating on the present-day Colville Reservation.

Another North West Company trader, Alexander Ross, described homegrown tobacco as one of the most esteemed trade items at the The Dalles on the lower Columbia when he visited there in 1812. Several years later, Ross interviewed long-time Snake River fur

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agent Donald McKenzie, who swore that the Shoshones he dealt with preferred their own native tobacco to the company twist.

There is a fabulous story current among these people, and universally believed, that they were the first smokers of tobacco on the earth! That they have been in the habit of using it from one generation to another since the world began. That all other Indians learned to smoke and had their tobacco first from them. That the white people's tobacco is only good for the whites: and that if the Shoshone would give preference to the white people's tobacco and give up smoking their own it would then cease to grow on their lands and instead a deleterious weed would grow up in its place and poison them all.

Scottish naturalist David Douglas was botanizing on the lower Willamette River in 1825 when he stumbled onto a "little plantation" of tobacco. Without hesitation, he uprooted some specimens and headed back to his camp. Along the way he met the owner of the garden, who recognized the source of Douglas's samples and was visibly displeased. But when Douglas expressed interest in his growing methods, the man answered several questions, describing how he would search for a decaying snag and burn it slowly before planting his seeds in the ashes. He allowed Douglas to keep the plants and seeds he had pilfered, and within a year those specimens made their way back to London. There the seeds were sprouted and cultivated in what was to become Kew Garden.

The tobaccos collected by Archibald Menzies on Haida Gwaii, Meriwether Lewis in the Mandan Villages, and David Douglas on the Willamette River have all been identified as a species presently called *Nicotiana quadrivalvis*. Its native range centers in California and barely extends into southern Oregon, so it is clear that the plant moved north via a tribal trade network and careful gardening long before any white traders arrived on the scene.

There are many species of tobacco native to North and South America, but none in Europe. Smoking, chewing and dipping became popular on the Continent from the moment Christopher Columbus sent some tobacco back from the Caribbean Islands. Spun into ropes called "twist," tobacco brought west by early fur traders had been developed from South American species, mostly *Nicotiana rustica* and *Nicotiana tabacum*. These agricultural cultivars display large leaves and a powerful nicotine kick. A much smaller species known as coyote tobacco, *Nicotiana attenuata*, is native to the arid Intermountain West as far north as British Columbia.

While this multitude of species presents

confusing possibilities as to exactly what sort of tobacco different tribes were smoking during the period of contact, it is clear that such use was tied to ceremony and ritual rather than the health-sapping habit that it later became.

Josiah Pinkham, who works in the Nez Perce culture office and consulted on Tushingham's study, sees her results as an opportunity to talk about the complex relationship of tobacco and people through the ages, and to directly address the public health problems caused by commercial tobacco and the high rate of smoking habits in native communities today. Written records from early traders can shed some light on the subject; oral traditions such as the Snake River Shoshone story related to Donald McKenzie

can delve into the broader context of how people and plants coexist on their home ground.

Tobacco is a powerful plant, one that should be treated with both respect and a great measure of caution. Those ancient Nez Perce pipes reveal lessons about the plant that can help us understand it better today.

For more about Shannon Tushingham's to-

bacco article, see Becky Kramer's article in the Spokesman-Review issue of October 20, 2018.

Jack Nisbet's book *Visible Bones* contains an extended essay on Northwest tobacco called "Smoke." This December he is visiting libraries around north central Washington with his latest title, *The Dreamer and the Doctor*. For more information, visit www.jacknisbet.com.



Indian tobacco Nicotiana quadrivalvis, Edwards Botanical Register, 1827. This Indian tobacco was grown in England from seed collected by David Douglas in the Willamette Valley in 1826.

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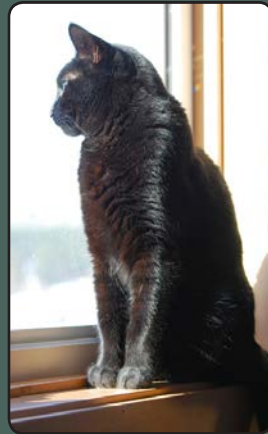
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It's Not the Fall but Landing...

By Loren Cruden

Back in September, relieved at having made it through our Mordor-like summer, I was hanging a stained glass piece in a clearstory window about fifteen feet up when the extension ladder I was perched on began to slide out from under me. Primal pit of the stomach horror and the nanosecond thing where the mind assesses options and, coming up empty, goes down with the ship.

Or ladder, as the case may be. What a crash!

Sprawled on the floor, it was immediately apparent that I was not going to just tough this one out. My vision was askew – double, triple? – and the level of excruciating-ness in various bodily regions suggested that simply waiting a bit was not going to do the trick. (At least I hadn't landed on the cat.)

I crawled to the kitchen – the equivalent of crossing the Gobi desert – and, grappling for my phone, managed to blindly punch-in my son's number, his sequence being a kinesthetically easy pattern. The next piece of good luck was that Gabriel was home and answered. I said something eloquent like "Hurt bad. Need to go to hospital." Which must've freaked him out, since he knows I don't go to hospitals.

We live about thirteen miles apart but as time dragged on with no sign of him I wondered if his car battery was dead or he'd decided to take a shower first or feed the horses or edit a few articles. Taliesin, my cat, came over to where I lay groaning on the floor and anxiously poked his whiskers in my face. Probably wondering if I was still capable of using a can opener.

After an estimated thirty minutes or so, I heard Gabriel's car pull in. On the way to the hospital I asked what had taken him so long. "I got there in nine minutes," he said. Roughly half the time it usually takes.

"Oh."

The emergency room was alarmingly busy, with only one doctor on duty. I was there, mostly just waiting around, for four hours (by official reckoning, not mine), watching gurneys rushed past bearing life-threatened patients. My own injuries turned out to be a fractured kneecap, fractured eye socket, torn rotator cuff, sprained rib, sprained wrists and a couple jammed fingers. Not too bad, considering.

Nonetheless, when I got home, I couldn't do anything. Couldn't read, write, walk, drive, watch a movie, play an instrument, prepare a meal, get my mail.... So I sat listening to music with the cat on my lap and imagined how it feels for people who live full-time with the loss of such things. Empathy for them would have been facile, presumptuous. What I felt was respect and, in the weeks following, nudges of perspective whenever I got grumpy, frustrated or fed-up with my situation.

One thing that tended to edge me toward grumpiness was being admonished by so many people for being on the ladder in the first place. (Part of the reaction was suspicion that men in their mid-sixties don't get chastised for climbing or having accidents on ladders. And I thought about that 60-year-old Russian guy who summited Everest and smoked a cigarette at the top.)

It wasn't like I'd defied the ladder instruction booklet or was balancing on one foot or boogying to loud music or got distracted by an eagle flying by the window. Or, being so ancient, forgot I was fifteen feet off the floor.

One person sent me a letter concerned that the accident may've been due to a subconscious urge to hurt myself. Wow. If nothing else, this made me reflect on the perfect accord, conscious and subconscious, between my body and mind

regarding pain.

Two nights after the accident, at about one in the morning, my bedroom smoke alarm started emitting a piercing shriek every twenty seconds. It has done this before, regardless of fresh batteries. The detector was fifteen feet up the wall. I struggled out of bed (I had to wear an unbendable full-leg brace 24/7 due to the knee fracture), found a flashlight, and hobbled outside and around to my basement door, going in and shutting off the bedroom's power at the breaker box, hoping this would silence the alarm. Then lurched back up the slope and into the house, where the alarm imperviously continued its shriek every twenty seconds.

I considered beating it to death with a broomstick but that would've involved a ladder and the use of dysfunctional body parts; so instead I located ear plugs, got back into bed and put a pillow over my head. This hurt my fractured eye socket so I took the pillow off. Taliesin was suffering from the shrieks, too, and had no ear plugs.

We endured together on the bed for the next six hours. I couldn't walk or drive us anywhere – couldn't even try sleeping in the car, due to the leg brace. When it got light out, I phoned a friend who came over, disconnected the detector and pulled out its battery. The alarm gave a chillingly wild final shriek before plummeting to the floor.

While my friend was on the ladder – which I held steady and braced with my feet – I was so terrified of his falling that I was shaking. Clearly, trauma residuals. I discovered a new sensitivity to the word "fall." This was unfortunate because we were in the midst of autumn and people, in

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EAVESDROPS

*What people have written about
the north Columbia region*

"Between four and eight boats or bateaux were manufactured each year at Fort Colville for the Columbia River brigades and expresses of the Hudson's Bay Company. The boats were lineal descendants of Viking craft, the pedigree having passed through the northern islands of Scotland."

~ David H. Chance in People of the Falls

the American way, kept referring to the season as fall. During one conversation the woman talking to me kept going on and on about fall, and each time she said "fall" I'd flinch. It was fall this and fall that and how much she loved fall and how this fall differed from last fall and what she planned for next fall; and I'm going *flinch, flinch, flinch*, feeling increasingly dizzy and nauseous.

A couple weeks after being strapped into the original, unbendable brace, I graduated to a 24/7 complex, high-tech, full-leg contraption (you wouldn't believe what that puppy cost; probably made by Gucci) with adjustable hinges. When Gabriel saw my new look he exclaimed, "Robo-Mom!" Over a number of weeks, I was instructed to gradually increase the degree of bend. But sleeping in either brace was like lying down in a partial suit of armor. Only two positions were possible, and shifting from one to the other was tumultuous, discommoding Taliesin.

The second brace developed a hinge chirp; it made me sound like a budgie wherever I went. (When the chirping first started, I thought it was a bat trapped in the basement.) My clothing combinations got weirder and weirder as I tried to find ways to wear the brace with garments that were easiest to get on or off and that best prevented the brace from sliding downward, which it did to one degree or another no matter what. (Like my ladder.)

There were other difficulties, too, like having to put socks and shoes and undies and leggings on without bending the knee or stressing the damaged shoulder, rib, wrists or fingers. I'm sure someone like Sarah Kilpatrick could've come up with special yoga names for those contortions. Like "Toe Salutation" or "Cursing Lemur" or "Roadkill Snake's Final Moments."

As temperatures got chillier, clothing options became more challenging and my fashion look got really strange. I was thankful for Eastern Washington's relaxed dress code.

Throughout the ordeal I had a lot to be thankful for, not least the sympathy, support and practical help received from family and friends, and the kindness and skill of many of the doctors, nurses, PAs, receptionists, technicians and aides encountered

along the way. Even the ladder lectures, I know, arose from sincere caring. Now, with fall behind me and winter unfolding, I'm earnestly intending, when the time comes, to do *spring* gently. (With a parachute if necessary.)

Best wishes to all for a safe and happy holiday season.

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

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A Tiny Rose and a Powerful Gift

By Tina Tolliver Matney

Gifts of the heart don't come to you wrapped up in paper with pretty ribbons or bows. They aren't something you can hold in your hand or place on a shelf. You can't see them or smell them or run your hands over them in loving memory of the person who gave them to you. They are gifts that you may not even realize you have until you are jolted to a memory of someone you once knew or perhaps still know but have lost touch with.

Gifts of the heart are, in my opinion, the greatest gifts we can possibly hope to receive while we make our way through this life. I've received a few such gifts over the past three years as I've sadly had to say goodbye to more family and friends in my life than I care to count.

One particular recent day marked two years since a good friend of mine died. I spent a good part of the day reflecting on how our friendship had evolved. I recalled the time I had spent with her throughout her long illness and the time I took to be with her right up to the moments before she took her last breaths. It was a sad and often heart-wrenching time, and some days it was hard to endure. But it was also a time when I was privileged to witness the true gratitude and peaceful heart of someone who knew her time on earth was coming to an end. That part of her journey was a beautiful thing to behold and something that I will keep with me always.

Sadly, on this very same evening, after thinking about my friend, I got a message that yet another of my childhood friends was being sent

home from the hospital with hospice. His prognosis is dire and he most likely will not live much longer. This news was, and still is, hard to comprehend.

The very next morning I went to my jewelry case and found a rose necklace that I have kept tucked away for so many years. I opened the clasp and put it around my neck. A tiny pink rose hangs on a tarnished gold-tone chain, so fine and old that I fear it will break one day soon before I have a chance to replace it with something more substantial. The rose itself is so small and light I don't even feel it against my skin, until I reach up to hold it in my fingers. I can feel each little porcelain-like petal as I reflect on the day I received it and the meaning it holds for me still, after all these years.

This tiny treasure was tucked into a birthday card when I was just a child in the fourth grade. This boy had come all the way downstairs in our little school to hand it to me during a party that my teacher had arranged for my birthday and another friend's birthday. It might seem insignificant to anyone else. But to me, all those years ago, it meant so much and brought a smile to my face. I remember my friends had gathered around and there were murmurs of his "love" for me and that now I had a "boyfriend." I knew better. I was really young, but to me it just meant he cared enough and liked me enough to let me know in his own sweet way.

I have hung on to that little necklace for nearly fifty years. But it is not a sentimental token of a childhood crush. For me it has much deeper meaning that is connected not only to that boy who is now a man fighting for his life, but also a connection to all of the other children that I grew up with. I kept this little necklace because it is a reminder to me that our childhood in that tiny town was truly a gift.

We grew together and grounded our deep roots of friendship that have carried us through so many stages of life. Many of these friends are still here, having chosen to either stay or return after time away to this beautiful place where we all raised our own families. Some have even moved back here to retire. Some are far away, yet through the wonders of social media we are still bonded and connected.

This is the gift that this little rose necklace has given me all of these years. Sweet memories of a simple childhood in a tiny town with friends that I hope will take my hand when I'm near the end of my own journey, and tell me they love me, and that it was a pleasure to know me. Because that's how I feel about them, and in particular the boy who gave me this little rose necklace. His time here may be short, but I know him well and he has touched so many lives with his service to his community and his inspiration to always find the bright side, always do the right things, and always take care of each other.

And to never ever be afraid to say, "I love you."

As the holidays fast approach, my wish is that each and every one of you reading this will take the time to reach out and connect with your friends from long ago as well as your current friends and family. Friendships can be casual and friendships can be so deep and meaningful that you nearly drown when they come to a sudden end.

I encourage you to give yourself a gift this year and touch the heart of someone you haven't seen or heard from in a while. You might be surprised at how warm your own heart can make you feel on a cold winter day when you know you've made someone smile.

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.

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The Magpie's Bold and Varied Life

Article and Photo by J. Foster Fanning

Researching the magpie was a lot like peeling an onion, only with the onion I expect the multiple layers. With the magpie it came as a pleasant surprise. These easily identified corvids (members of the jay and crow family) thrive in varied habitat scattered worldwide and are the national bird of South Korea.

There are three separate species of magpie worldwide, the European (ancestral) magpie, the black-billed and the yellow-billed. It appears that after the ancestral magpie spread over Eurasia the species crossed the Bering Land Bridge into North America. Fossil evidence indicates that the North American black-billed magpie arrived and adapted into its current range around

three to four million years ago during the mid-Pliocene, and the yellow-billed lineage split off rather soon thereafter due to the Sierra Nevada uplift and the beginning ice ages. Black-billed magpies average 19 inches in length and weigh in around half a pound, and are the larger of the two species.

Within Native American folklore, the magpie spans a role from a gossip and busybody whose yammering ways annoy people and other animals

alike, to the complete opposite, portrayed as loyal companions, protectors and providers for humans. This broad and conflicting interpretation could be, in part, because magpies are so clever some can be taught to speak as parrots do.

In some northern European cultures (especially Great Britain) it has been common for folks to salute a single magpie, and if there are more than one some people recite the famous rhyme: "One for sorrow, Two for joy, Three for a girl, Four for a boy, Five for silver, Six for gold, Seven for a secret never to be told." Saluting magpies? It may seem a bit strange to us who haven't grown up in such a culture which has a superstition that saluting a bird could ward off bad luck. Yet since magpies mate for life, in many parts of northern Europe observing a single magpie is considered an omen of bad fortune and acknowledging it is a way of showing the proper deference in hope that the bird won't pass on some of the misfor-

tune following it.

Black-billed magpies (*Pica hudsonia*, also known as the American magpie) are easily distinguished from their close cousins, ravens, crows and jays, by their size and their notable black and white color patterns. Look for unusually long tails spanning at least half of their body length, and short, rounded wings. Like many birds, the feathers of the tail and wings are iridescent, reflecting a bronzy-green-to-purple. They sport bold white bellies and shoulder patches and their wings flash white in flight.

These are vocal, boisterous birds. Typical calls include a series of loud, harsh "chucking" notes as well as a whining "maug, maug, mauuggg."



A wide distribution of habitat usually goes hand-in-hand with a variable and opportunistic diet, and in the magpie we find one of the most varied. They are truly omnivores, consuming wild fruit, grains, vegetables, insects (they are known to find beetles by flipping cow dung), eggs from other birds' nests, and small mammals such as squirrels and voles. Carrion is also a main food source, as are the fly maggots found in the carcasses of large animals. Magpies boldly steal meat scraps from the kills of coyotes and foxes. They will land atop large animals, such as cows or moose, and pick ticks off them. If magpies find abundant food sources, they will cache and guard food for short periods of time.

Lewis and Clark encountered magpies in 1804 in South Dakota when leading the Corps of Discovery. Their records report the birds as being very bold, even to the point of entering the tents or taking food from the hand.

Magpies formerly followed American bison herds, frequently interacting with the bands of Plains Indians that hunted the bison, so they could scavenge carcasses. When the bison herds were devastated in the 1870s, magpies switched to the new beast of the west, cattle, and by the mid-1900s they populated the emerging towns and cities of the North American West.

The black-billed magpie varies between being a partial migrator to a permanent resident. Some birds may move short distances south or to lower elevations in winter, while others may erratically wander into different areas after the breeding season. The typical range of these birds is from coastal southern Alaska to New Mexico

and across Canada and the midwestern states. They are typically found close to water in relatively open areas with scattered trees and thickets, including open forested meadows in foothills, ranchlands and farm shelterbelts. Sagebrush habitat, streamside thickets and parklands are favorite areas.

Black-billed magpies were considered detrimental to game-bird populations and domestic stock during the first half of the 20th

century and were systematically trapped or shot. Bounties of one cent per egg or two cents per head were offered in many states. In Idaho the death toll eventually amounted to an estimated 150,000 birds. The agricultural use of DDT also took a toll on their populations. Many magpies also died from eating poison set out for coyotes and other predators.

Today wildlife managers understand magpies better and they are protected as migratory non-game birds under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Their populations are subsequently increasing.

Lace up the boots, slip on an extra layer, take the field glasses and leave some tracks out there...

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

WHAT'S



MORE LISTINGS & DETAILS AT NCMONTHLY.COM!

APPENZERS

Events

Nov 30-Dec 1: Junk Drunk Holiday Shopping Market, Ag Trade Center, 411 W Astor Ave, Colville, featuring fun vintage, home décor, gifts, handmade, stocking Stuffers. Also serving festive food and drink.

Nov 30-Dec 2: Deck the Falls in Metaline Falls! Nov 30, 5 pm: Redneck Christmas Light Parade, Santa arrives to light the tree in Busta Park, hotdogs, 'smores and beverages are free. Dec 1, 10-3: Arts & Crafts Faire at the Cutter Theatre, featuring local crafters and vendors. Lunch at the "Room at the Ramp" available. Dec 2, 6 pm: "Celebrating The Silent Night," a community concert and sing-along, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the most beloved of all Christmas hymns.

Nov 30-Dec 2: Keller House Museum Magic of Christmas Tour, 700 N Wynne Street, Colville. Fri 4-7 pm, Sat & Sun, 2-7 pm. Call 509-684-5968 for more info.

Dec 1: Kettle Falls Lady Lions Christmas Craft Fair, 9-3, Kettle Falls Middle School. Cans of food for the Food Bank welcomed.

Dec 1: City Sidewalks, Chewelah, 10-4, enjoy crafts, candy canes, treats, caroling, festive foods and much more!

Dec 2: "Joy to the World" Christmas concert with Spokane Choral Artists performing sacred and secular music, from 14th century songs to classical pieces and modern pop and film music, and Bridges Home, from Coeur d'Alene, playing Americana, roots, and Celtic music, presented by Chewelah Arts Guild at Abundant Life Fellowship Church. Visit chewelahrtsguild.org for more info.

Dec 2: Northport Lions Club BINGO at the Northport School Cafeteria, Noon-4. Early Bird, Regular, Fast Pick and Blackout with a \$500 Jackpot (60 number threshold this month). Refreshments available. Must be 18 or older to play. Call 509-690-2158 for more info.

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

Dec 7-8: The Haran School of Irish Dance presents A Winter Recital at the Woodland Theatre in Kettle Falls, 7 pm. See ad page 4 for more info.

Dec 7-16: A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens, adapted by Chris Demlow, at the Pend Oreille Playhouse, 236 S. Union, Newport. Fri & Sat shows, 7 pm, Sun shows, 3 pm. Visit pendoreille-players.org or call 509-447-9900 for more info.

Dec 8: 6th Annual Candy Cane Lane Children Gift Buying – two gifts for \$5, wrapping included – Colville Public Library, 9-2. Call 509-680-0325 for more info. See ad page 7.

Dec 8: Music on the Menu, featuring the Upper Columbia Academy's music department and special guests, 5 pm. RSVP Shelley Bacon at 509-675-5003 for more info. See ad page 10.

Dec 8: Colville Chamber Christmas Gala Dinner and Dance and drawing of Christmas Tree winners. Horse and buggy rides from Heritage Court, noon-2 pm. See ad on page 34 for more info.

Dec 8-9 & 15-16: Shoshana's 23rd Annual Holiday Craft Show, 616 South Ave., behind the Matteson House Bed & Breakfast, Northport. Large selection of locally made quality crafts and gourmet foods. Refreshments served. Call 509-732-8863 for more info. See ad on page 2.

Dec 9: NCPR Silent Auction, 405 Center Ave. in Northport, across from Tony's Market, noon-4 pm. Proceeds go to scholarships for students. Auction items donated by Northport and Colville businesses and local community members.

Dec 9: Northport Lions Club annual Christmas Party, Northport School Cafeteria, 404 10th Street, 4-6 pm. There will be hot cocoa, cider, cookies and treats for all the children and free pictures with Santa!

Dec 15: Annual Colville Christmas Bird Count. Participants to meet at 7 am at the Colville Public Library, downstairs conference room, before spending the day in the field. New participants are welcome! Call 509-675-6591 or 509-684-8308 for more info.

Dec 15: Breakfast with Santa: See Santa fly in to Colville Airport at 8:30 am by the Colville Washington State Pilot Association, and then escorted to the Colville Elks Lodge by the Colville Fire Department. Breakfast served 9-noon. Bring the kids and enjoy a hot breakfast with Santa.

Dec 15-16: WinterLight, Northern Dance Theatre's Christmas Dance Concert, Colville High School auditorium. See ad page 30 for more info.

Dec 16: Dances of Universal Peace, simple, meditative, joyous, multi-cultural dances, 2-5 pm at UCC Church, lower level, 2nd and Maple, Colville. Donations appreciated. Potluck following. Call 509-684-1590 for more info.

Dec 18: Community blood drive, 11-4, Deer Park Physical Therapy & Fitness Center, gym entrance, 707 S Park St., Deer Park.

Dec 21: Winter Solstice.

Dec 25: Christmas Day.

Dec 31: New Year's Eve Fireworks at the NE WA Fairgrounds, starts at 4 pm with games & crafts, dinner at 6 pm (donations accepted), fireworks kick off at 7 pm.

Dec 31: Party for a Cause, presented by Africa's Tomorrow, featuring food, drink, dancing, live music, auction, guest speakers and more, at the HUB, 231 Elep Ave., Colville. Must be 21 or older. See ad page 14 for more info.

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

1st: Dean Brody: Dirt Road Stories, 7:30-10 pm

2nd: Studio Labelle Dance Productions presents, 6-7 pm

4th: Sultans of String, 7:30-9:30 pm

12th: Rotary Carol Fest Club of Trail, 7:15-9 pm

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

6th: Patty O'Ferrel, 6-8 pm

7th: Christy Lee and the Broken Rosary Thieves, 7-10 pm

13th: Sara Brown, 6-8 pm

14th: Bottom Dollar, 7-10 pm

20th: Joe Petrucelli, 6-8 pm

21st: Open Mic, 7-8 pm

21st: Chipped and Broken, 8-10 pm

27th: Michael Pickett, 6-8 pm

28th: Planetary Refugees, 7-10 pm

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

10th: Black Lillies (ticketed concert), 7-10 pm

15th: Holiday Sing-Along & Ugly Sweater Contest, 6-7 pm

Meetings & Opportunities

Nov 14: Northeast Washington Genealogy Society meeting, 1 pm, LDS Church basement, Juniper Street in Colville, entry at the back of the building. NeWGS vice president, Norma Yost will delve into the wealth of knowledge found at the Digital Public Library of America. Visit newgs.org for more info. All visitors are welcome.

Dec 10: Citizens for a Clean Columbia General Membership meeting, 5:30 pm, at the Kettle Falls Community Center, next to the Library (605 Meyers St., Kettle Falls). Open to all. Refreshments will be served. Call 509-685-0933 for more info.

Dec 15: Public Policy Forum, Book Review: The Man Who Killed the Deer: A Novel of Pueblo Indian Life, Frank Waters, 1942, and America: The Farwell Tour, Chris Hedges, 2018 In association with St'al-sqil-xw, Veterans For Peace, and Poor Peoples' Campaign, at the Kettle Falls Public Library, 12-4 pm; lunch and snacks offered, non-alcohol beverages. Email info@stalsqilxw.org for more info.

Donna Cox and Terrin Mace of Raggedy Rose Vintage are the featured artists at the Tri County Economic Development District (TEDD) Gallery at 986 Main, Suite A, Colville. The public is welcome to view the art (and maybe take care of a little Christmas shopping) Monday-Friday from 8-4, through Dec 28th.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LISTEN UP

Larkin Poe: Sisters Singing Their Way Up

Reviewed by Michael Pickett

It takes a lot to stand out in today's musical landscape. You can have PR, pyro, a million Twitter followers ... but at the end of the day, if you don't have a sound worth hearing, you may end up a cautionary bad meme tale on someone's social media newsfeed.

Rebecca and Megan Lovell of Larkin Poe have the sound. They started making short, roots-music EP albums as far back as 2010. Along the way,



collaborations with producer T Bone Burnett, Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and others began to establish the sisters as a vocal harmony force to be reckoned with. As the sisters have grown, signed record deals and partnered up with other artists, their sound has solidified more with every release.

2018's *Venom & Faith* finds them sounding like hard-hitting, seasoned veterans at the ripe old ages of 27 and 29. Combined with a riveting Phil Collins tribute on social media, the sound of these sisters drove legions of new fans

to the new album.

"Bleach Blonde Bottle Blues" lays down some driving southern rock, and "Sometimes" and "Blue Ridge Mountains" push the tempo up while keeping the whole thing both swampy and refined. The secret weapons here are the big, beautiful-but-edgy vocal sound and instant-classic songwriting with super-savvy production that makes the album modern-but-soulful. Even with sparse instrumentation on many pieces, like "Honey, Honey" and "Ain't Gonna Cry," the sound is so full and gripping that you feel like it's part of a movie soundtrack.

Larkin Poe is an act that can cover nearly any tune, make it their own, and make it so riveting that you can't shut it off. *Venom & Faith* is a slammin' offering from start to finish.

In the Presence of Wolves: Highly Progressive

Reviewed by Michael Pickett

Progressive rock is always fighting for its place at the table of acceptable music. While people laud artists who can play three chords and bleat marginally-inspired lyrics over the same riffs, prog-players are always slagged for having 10-minute songs that rival Tolkien for lyrical content.

Even with Rush, Pink Floyd, Dream Theater, Radiohead and others pushing the boundaries of prog-acceptability, bands in this genre still paddle against a Foo-driven current.

Enter *In The Presence Of Wolves* with *Of Two Minds, Stages 1-2: The Ape and the Cage*. Clearly not interested in three-minute songs, this Philadelphia quartet made a sizeable splash with a crowd-funding campaign that was as humorous as it was illustrative of their

prog-prowess. With a surge in interest from their online presence, *In The Presence Of Wolves* soldiered right on with the sound they heard in their heads.

"As We Speak" opens the album and feels fairly straightforward and driving, as rock songs go, with plenty of room for vocal melodies to do the story-telling. By the time "The One Who Fell to Earth" hits, the intricate, knotty guitar and percussion lines are at full-force underneath incisive vocals. As the album covers a wide palette of songwriting choices, the tour-de-force title track starts with subdued acoustic guitars, explodes with

odd-meter metal, breaks down into beautiful bass explorations and the list goes on.

Of Two Minds, Stages 1-2: The Ape and the Cage is a fantastic study on how to simply leave conventional music industry standards in the dust. Bands have been doing it since Pink Floyd

and Zappa had record label execs scratching their heads in the '60s, and *In The Presence Of Wolves* is a fantastic progressive rock unit that deserves to be heard.

Stream Pickett music free on Apple Music, Spotify, Rhapsody and Beats. Just search "Pickett magnetic feedback" and enjoy a whole album's worth of music!



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A Good Read

What We Lose, by Zinzi Clemmons

Reviewed by Loren Cruden

Author Zinzi Clemmons' mother was South African, her father American, and she was raised in Philadelphia. Much about her novel, *What We Lose*, closely mirrors this background. The story is about the search for a niche.

The main character, Thandi, loses her mother just as she is coming into adulthood and her own maternity. The story – easily read in an afternoon – is presented as a series of short episodes or observations. Some, as has become a literary trend, include photographs or charts. The writing is reminiscent of Sandra Cisneros' style: quirky prose portraits and scenes.

Thandi, from an affluent mixed-race family, longs to have her solidarity with gritty urban African Americans recognized. "My naivete, my feeling of rejection, made my identification all the more strong. I only desire to belong, and I idealized this [African-American] group as one does a storybook character or a superstar, or anything one doesn't know firsthand yet loves like an old friend." Despite this longing, the men she gravitates toward are white. But she finds no solace of belonging on either side of the racial divide.

Her mother's presence-then-loss colors everything. Thandi comes to the kind of realization often marking the boundary between childhood and maturity: that some things in life are irrevocable. Nonetheless, her mother remains subliminally influential. "She taught me that men don't always need, but they love, a woman who can cook and keep house. It wasn't sexism, she said (such a disavowal, I noted, was usually a signal that it was); domesticity was harder to find in a partner now, because of feminism, and just like a job candidate who can code HTML, it was something that set you above others."

Thandi's story is told frankly, as in a diary. Clemmons touches on many of the usual things – adultery, motherhood, friendship, falling in love – but sometimes from perspectives I've not seen elsewhere. Such as: "I never told my mother that, until then, I had thought of cancer as a disease of privilege. I hated how it had been elevated above and beyond all other diseases. I hated the ribbons, the bracelets, the ubiquitous awareness campaigns, the constant sponsorship.... [Mother] told me that, surprisingly to her, most of the people in her chemo center were black...."



Memory Theater, by Simon Critchley

Reviewed by Loren Cruden

Philosophy professor Simon Critchley has written many books, but *Memory Theater* is his first work of fiction: a novella. Not that this small book doesn't stretch its category a good bit. Fictive elements dance with autobiography in a quickstep of philosophy and mischief.

The plot revolves around a stack of mysterious boxes sent to the protagonist (a philosopher) and the protagonist's resulting imperative to construct a "memory theater."

A memory *palace* is a device whereby memories are systematically associated with objects placed in a visualized location. One can then mentally "walk" around in the "palace" in order to access specific memories. A memory *theater*, on the other hand, is a visualized place stocked with evocative images viewed as if the rememberer sits on a stage looking out upon tiers of these dramatic images, their symbolisms triggering memories. Both mnemonic systems are very old and have been known to produce remarkable results. (Predating by centuries the Sherlock Holmes memory palace as depicted in the recent TV series.) Critchley's philosopher says, "All is in all nature. So in the intellect all is in all. And memory can memorize

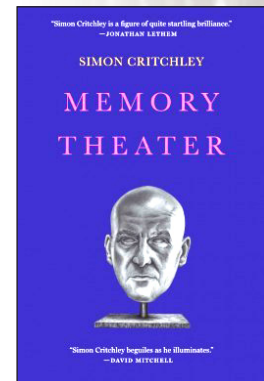
all in all."

The protagonist feels driven to physically, not just mentally, construct a memory theater, and in the process comes to regard whole cities, towns and landscapes as memory theaters: "... a spacial network of memory traces, but also a vast predictive machine." He becomes caught up in visual and auditory hallucinations and the conviction he is about to die. "Hunger had long ago left me. I felt as if my body was light and bird-like, as if I were full of air, like a medieval female Flemish mystic."

You can almost hear Critchley chuckling as he writes. He's a funny guy – and English. Even the glossary at the end is witty. Yet there are seductively deep philosophical waters beneath the tipsy waves; depths through which big human questions cruise like restless sharks, timeless questions and ever-renewable ways of pursuing the existential jackpot.

Other recommendations from the B&C shelves:
Pat Barker – *The Silence of the Girls*

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



Anticipation of First Snow

Article and Photo by Karen Giebel

Snow ... up here in the northlands we start thinking that word to ourselves well before the first frost. Quietly, we start looking around ... thinking. Mentally, we draw up the lists. "To do. Must do. Must remember. Can't forget." We watch the summer birds leave, one ... by ... one. The days grow shorter and the nights have a crisp bite to them, further signaling that "it" is coming.

Apples, pears and plums ripen. Deer become emboldened and venture close to our homes, eating everything they can find to store up fuel for the winter. And then comes the first frost. You wake up in the morning to grass that crunches underfoot and puddles with crisp crackling surfaces. In quick succession the frosts continue. Closer together. Deeper. Then daily, and the afternoon sun no longer warms.

The lists lengthen and the pace picks up. No longer silent on the subject, we speak about what needs to be tended. Pull the garden. Place the storm windows. Pack the shelters with straw. Set up the heated water buckets. Tons of orchard grass for the alpacas stacked and covered. Find sweaters, jackets, hats and insulated boots. Patio furniture stowed. Chimney cleaned. Cords of wood cut and stacked. Snow tires on. Oil changed in the cars, trucks and tractor. Ice melt bought. Snow shovels out. The lists go on and on, and as fast as we work, there is always more to be done.

And when? This week? Looking upward, we say, "Those look like snow clouds." And, "The air smelled like snow this morning." For us northerners, yes, we can smell the change and know when snow is coming. We first see it on the tallest mountain peaks and quietly acknowledge it with each other at the grocery store, the bank, the feed store, and wherever else we gather. No other season announces itself so dramatically as does winter.

Then one morning there is no more time to prepare. I open the door at 5 a.m. to let the dogs out and there it is. Snow. Blanketing the

up the lower hill to the dense hawthorn thick-et, I know the deer are safely bedded down and, for some unspoken reason, I am content.

"Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree, how lovely are your branches." The faintest rose glow in the distance heralds the start of a new day. My beloved Mt. Elizabeth remains stunning in her majesty, but now foreboding and no longer enticing me to climb. The crabapple tree is still loaded with brilliant red fruit, nourishment for Bohemian waxwings, turkey and quail. So gorgeous it made me gasp!

Last year the snow came early. A full month early according to history. This year, by mid-November, we saw only a dusting. Not nearly enough to call it a "snow." At the time I write this, we are waiting and, while waiting, the preparations continue. Setting up "Hotel Cat-a-fornia" for our barn cats with their heated mats and water bowl. Repairing the chimney in the workshop that last winter's heavy snow destroyed. Checking my stores of herbal tea and cocoa. Assessing the containers of flour, yeast and sugar for days of bread-making ahead. Do I need more yarn? Dusting off my sewing machine and checking my supply of yard goods.

Waiting for the first snow.

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



yard and drifting down with those impossibly large fluffy flakes so that the dogs are fully covered in the few minutes we are outside. The air is silent and I smile a quiet smile. It has begun.

The willow tree that provides the only shade during our blistering hot summer bends her leaf-less, snow-laden branches down. Looking

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The Gift of our Giving

By Joanie Christian

My articles usually center on nature and photography, but that is just one layer of my busy, full, blessed, and sometimes sleep-deprived life. By night and weekend, I am a photographer and writer. But by day, I am a nurse working full time at the Washington State University (WSU) College of Nursing.

My role involves finding clinical rotations for nursing students at sites in eastern Washington and Idaho to prepare them to enter the healthcare workforce and provide care in our communities. Their rotations are in both urban and rural areas, giving students an opportunity to experience health care in a variety of settings and obtain a well-rounded educational experience. Some of these rotations have been in the tri county area: Colville, Loon Lake, Springdale, Usk, Newport. Though rural clinics and hospitals are short-staffed, they continue to sacrifice and “pay it forward,” giving their time and expertise to support a student.

When I started with WSU five years ago, the plan was to learn my role for three months, and then begin seeking rotations for students the following semester. That plan was short lived however, when just one week into my new job at WSU, Caitlin Shino, a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) student, lost her placement due to her mentor’s resignation. And so I went to work fumbling through unfamiliar territory to find a replacement rotation for her. Rockwood Quail Run (now Multicare) saved the day, and she was placed with a great provider there. It was an excellent rotation for Caitlin, and she went on to do other rotations with Rockwood, including a rotation with Rockwood Neurologist Dr. Scott Carlson. The neurology clinic was impressed with Caitlin to the point that they offered her a job after graduating a few years ago. She has been there ever since.

Fast forward to now. More WSU nursing students are doing rural rotations than ever before, thanks to a federal grant focused on addressing health care shortages in rural and underserved areas. Some students have gone on to become employed here in our little corner of northeast Washington. But no matter what their post graduation career plans are, the ultimate goal is always to provide students with the best educational experience possible so they are well prepared to deliver quality health care in our communities for years to come.

A long-time treasured friend has had several months of concerning health issues that eventually led to a recent and very devastating diagnosis of ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. It’s one of those events where all the trivial things in life fall by the wayside and cause us to focus on the things that truly

“At the intersection where your gifts, talents and abilities meet a human need; therein you will discover your purpose.”

~ Aristotle

matter. The people we love. The impact we have on others. The difference we make in this world. My friend has had these priorities solidly in place *long* before any terrible disease came into her life. And I know her well enough to know that she will continue in the same way, no matter what lies ahead.

I spent a morning with her not long after her diagnosis, a morning I will not soon forget. Her large living room with a central seating area had been rearranged so that one love seat was repositioned at the far end of the room right in front of the picture window overlooking a little lake. She spends much of her days in this spot, watching the birds and wildlife, finding a sense of joy and peace there.

And so we spent the morning in that very spot, curled up under a blanket, looking out at the pond. Sometimes unashamedly holding hands in unity and shared grief as we talked. No dancing around the elephant in the room. Just openness, honesty and love. There were tears and laughter. Sadness and joy. Despair and hope. Reflections on our shared experiences raising our sons. Reminiscing about the past and pondering the future. Discussing the complexities of the human body, and the promise of rapidly advancing scientific developments.

As we talked about the many difficult things in life, scenes in nature continued to unfold in front of us, infusing a quiet tranquility and palpable presence of the divine into our space. Striking hooded mergansers swam about. Canada geese squawked and flapped their giant wings in a beautiful slow motion like dance. Various waterfowl came skittering in for a landing on the lake, sunlight glinting off the water spraying into the air as they landed. A kingfisher hovered above the lake, then quickly plunged in a nosedive after a fish.

It is times like these that I am most aware of the power of the natural world to bring calm to a heart full of cares. I was once again reminded of the wonder in this world that is ever present, even in the midst of heartache and suffering. She shared that during some particularly tough times when her family has struggled with the gravity of her diagnosis, they sometimes go to my photography website and look at my nature images, and it gives them a sense of awe, comfort and peace. I continue to learn of unexpected ways that my work positively impacts others. It alters my motivation for the artistic path I am on, creating a constant internal dialogue about how I can use my gifts to bless people in new ways.

My friend shared the long road that led to her eventual diagnosis. After multiple appointments with specialists, her diagnosis was confirmed at a second opinion appointment with Rockwood Neurologist Dr. Scott Carlson. She sang the praises of Dr. Carlson and his Nurse Practitioner. As I listened to her story, goosebumps began to appear on my arms. I instinctively knew who she was talking about. Caitlin. MY Caitlin. The very first FNP student I placed in my job at WSU. It was at this moment that the work I do as a placement coordinator came full circle in a very personal way. The students I have been placing are not just getting trained to provide healthcare in our communities. They are diagnosing, treating, and caring for the people I love. The people YOU love. Family. Friends. Colleagues. Neighbors.

Dr. Carlson and Caitlin not only provided my friend with skilled care; but also compassion, dignity in outlining treatment options and involving her as an active partner in her own care, and instilling hope as they discussed recent research and advancements. With them, she was a person, not a diagnosis. They were everything you hope a provider will do and be during people’s toughest life challenges, and I’m grateful that my friend is on the receiving end of that as she faces the difficult road ahead.

As our time ended that morning, we both felt uplifted, a strange and surprising irony given the heartbreaking circumstances. But it gave me hope. Hope that love, kindness, grace, connection, respect and faith have the potential to transform even the worst of circumstances into something meaningful. Hope that the seeds that we plant do indeed grow into something, though we sometimes don’t see it until years later. Hope that when we use our gifts, we can meet the needs of others.

As I get older, I am discovering that seemingly unrelated things are not really random at all. There is an interconnectedness in our life experiences, and sometimes the pieces fit together in ways we don’t expect. We have the power to make a difference. At work, in our communities, and at home with the people we love. We can do this in small ways and in big ways. One day and one person at a time. Using whatever gifts we have each been given.

Joanie Christian, a freelance nature photographer, has lived in NE WA for 40+ years. View her work at joaniechristianphotography.com and follow her paddling adventures at stillwaterpaddling.com.

Living in NE WA: Lessons Learned

Making the ‘Going to Town’ Plan

By J. Merrill Baker

“Going to town” out here means driving an hour each way, plus the running around to shop, get to appointments and drop off or retrieve equipment from the repair store. We plan and we write lists, and even if we leave the list at home by accident we might remember what we wrote down. Being rewarded this lifetime with a husband that peruses the ads for sales (was I good in a past life?) I am learning to utilize coupons. (Or is it that he is being punished for his past life, and I reap the rewards?) Regardless...

When did shopping mean that you needed to remember exactly where you parked? Somewhere past age 50. It is a test, along with recalling your PIN number at checkout, to see how well your mind is still working. One friend always parks in the same place every time and so can always find the car. I like that idea.

Surely you’ve seen those folks, with a full shopping cart, wandering the parking lot looking for their car? Honestly, we only had difficulty when we had a newer car, and would look for it instead of the truck we’d driven in that day. You have to laugh at yourself. And we have realized that we do this more often than we like to admit.

We discovered that we have to consciously be in the moment when we get out of the car. Take a breath. Observe, look around. Note where we are parked. In fact, we will go over our list before we even get out of the car to see if we need to strategize the attack on the store aisles. It shouldn’t feel like a military exercise, should it? But, being conscious of where we parked, which aisle, which vehicle we drove, and what we came there for, well, it isn’t rocket science but it is a reality check for sure. It helps us to stay focused and find our car again when we come out of the store.

You don’t think of these strategies when you are in your 20s or 30s. Maybe not until your 50s either. But learn them now – it is easier if they are habits. Trust me. I’m older.

And did I mention coupons? I have to write down the shopping day specials. They are almost like happy hour for elder folks. And, bonus: I now know how to use the notes feature on my cell phone, and I realize that I can just use the camera to capture the shopping day specials in a photo!

You don’t plan on running into your neighbors who live a mile from you when you’re out three hours from home, but that happened more than once in a big box store in Spokane. Should we have thought to car pool (does anyone out here do that anymore)? Sometimes we actually remember to call before we go and see if there is anything we can pick up for them, and they return the favor. Good neighbors are part of what we love about living where we do.

One year, when the need came, we hadn’t yet taken our snow blower to the repair shop. Only a well-armed (literally) grandson could yank the rope to start it, and he lived three hours away. Somehow the season quietly slipped by and we discovered we had managed to do okay after all.

But the next winter, on our way to experiencing 150 inches of snow (30 inches more than the previous year), we chose to save our backs and get it repaired. We discovered if you do this often enough (have equipment that gets repairs delayed), you get on a first-name basis with the talented, skilled and mechanically inclined in your area!

The guy I married is just too busy with other projects to have to deal with this snow-blowing contraption. I’m pretty good with a snow shovel, but I am almost dangerous with an automatic snow

shovel that you can practically render art in your driveway with. If we had a plane, I could carve out a landing strip! Imagine my surprise to learn a key ingredient for this machine to run well is called avgas, as in aviation fuel. And, you can procure such gas at the airport. While a bit more costly, evidently it burns cleaner and runs better than regular does.

This snow blower, while it doesn’t fly, does start right up now. I’m thinking about getting some of those antlers and a nose on it like folks put on their cars during the Christmas season. Just for fun.

OK, now, did we replace our windshield wipers? Yes, got them on sale at that big box store, just for this time now. I love the windshield to be clean, inside and out, to view this wonderful countryside. That hour-long trip, each way, into town reveals the changes along the road; maybe the elk are out along the highway, (what a granddaughter called “the BIG deer”) and the progress of the hayfields. Is there food for the goats? How about a shelter up for the horses for winter? Are the pumpkins harvested? The shorn sheep, the newer calves, those little bitty black bovines! We check to see if the young pigs are out, and how much they have grown. We look for the longhorn cattle, novel to see, each and all small pleasures.

There is much to appreciate. I wonder if the folks that live along the highway realize they are entertaining the rest of us? From their “Fresh Eggs” sales to their pick-a-theme inflatables. Granted, I am not a fan of “yard art,” but you must admit that people can have fun with it. How many half-flattened witches on brooms did you see mounted on a telephone pole or two during Halloween? The point is to laugh, maybe even out loud. I also appreciate the red noses on the deer crossing signs during the Christmas season. They make me smile, and we could all use a bit of that in our days.

We tend to take ourselves as a species pretty seriously, which I can understand up to a point. We would like to continue. Still, none of us are getting out of this alive, and anything we can do in the meantime, especially if it involves humor, might hold us all together for a bit longer. When was the last time you had a deep belly laugh?

My daughter laughed when I actually helped an elderly lady find her car in the parking lot at that large box store, because at the time, with her on the phone, I was looking for my own car. *Your time may come, and I wish you helpful strangers!*

I tossed out some of the old bread and a bit of spilled kitty crumbs when the lone turkey came around. I called her Grizelda, just for fun. She only wanted to scratch and peck for food, her sustenance. She did not take offense at me calling her Grizelda. She probably doesn’t hear human language, or notice kindness, just the crumbs and bread. I notice it, and sure, I am entertaining myself, but we do not know how tough Grizelda has it, and we do not know if she actually has it pretty good; other neighbors may be putting out nibbles for her as well.

We are free to imagine that what we do in the world may be a goodness, and I think that says something too.

May this season be filled with the moments that bring you feelings of gratitude and may your imagination inspire you to find – and do – good in our world.

Onward!

J. Merrill Baker is a perpetual ruralite, parking advisor and countryside observer.



Mountain Meandering

Photos & Text by Patricia Ediger

One of my greatest joys about living in North-east Washington is the many opportunities to see the abundant wildlife that inhabit this region. Our woodlands are home to many diverse species of critters, including the black bear. Growing up in southern California, my only experiences with bears were visits to the zoo, plus the many fictional bears I recall from childhood like Smokey, Winnie and Baloo.

When we moved to Northeast Washington and began building our homestead high on a mountain outside Kettle Falls, my husband and I and our three young sons lived for a few months in a small shed with a loft and an outdoor privy that we put up for a temporary stay. I remember feeling vulnerable living on the very edge of the wilderness, especially at night with only the moon or stars for light, concerned about close-up encounters with bears or cougars or some other curious nocturnal critter. Neighbors had told us that a bear path ran through our property.

During those first few years we would often see black bears, sometimes cinnamon-colored ones, traveling single file across the meadow, and a few times they made their way onto our property, only to be chased off by our faithful Labrador. Seeing the bears from a distance of 500 feet was a novelty. Even seeing them snooping around the garbage cans was entertaining, from inside the house of course.

Riding alone on my horse around our mountain was a bit risky, but I did my best to warn bears of my presence by singing and bringing along my dog. I really was not interested in seeing how my horse would react to a chance meeting with a bear on the trail. I do have some real fear of meeting a bear face-to-face. Being an avid hiker, I have been aware of the need to be cautious and aware of my surroundings while out in the wild and prefer to hike with a companion. One hears stories!

So, what a surprise to discover that I would have absolutely no fear when I had the opportunity recently to photograph black bears up at Neets Creek, Ketchikan, Alaska. We were up there visiting my husband's extended family and had caught a ride on a float plane, courtesy of my husband's cousin who helps manage the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) Fish Hatchery during the salmon egg harvest.

Forty miles north of Ketchikan, the resident black bears feast upon the spawning salmon as they travel upstream. Adjacent to the salmon collection tanks is a small strip of land on which the SSRAA constructed two observation sheds for viewing the hungry bears as they fish for salmon. There is no fence between the sheds and the creek, merely a small, low, flimsy barrier that reads "Bears Only." Within 40 feet of the sheds, several bears of different ages come in and out of the opposite forest into the creek and make quite a show of chasing, fishing and feasting on

these egg-laden female salmon – their favorite over the male salmon.

On this particular morning, I had the space pretty much to myself, along with my husband, to photograph to my heart's content. This is a special location sought out by many tourists who pay to be flown or boated in to view the bears, but on this day I was mostly alone.

The bears moved along the shore, climbed over rocks, suddenly plunging into the creek – heads completely immersed – and then came up out of the water with large salmon wriggling in their powerful jaws, holding onto the fish with huge paws sporting claws over three inches long. Hauling their catch out of the creek and onto the boulders, they greedily opened up the fish and licked up the bright red eggs. Seagulls ventured close by, waiting to clean up any leftovers.

With the 600mm lens on my camera, I spent a few hours in the company of these amazing, powerful and agile creatures, quietly observing without a bit of anxiety. Perhaps they have become so accustomed to being observed, or more likely just consumed with fishing, but the bears would just look my way, sniff the air, then go about their plundering. I respected their space and they respected mine. Just as with any imagined fear, the actual experience is a great cure.

I am thankful to have shared this moment in time with these wonderful beasts. On our own mountain and beyond I look forward to viewing these and many more creatures of the wild, with respect and awe.



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Along the Mountain Path: Legs

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

“It’s not the letting go that hurts: it’s the holding on.”

~ Judith Lasater, PhD



Consider your legs. They are half the length of your body and carry a third of the body’s supply of blood. They are the support for the pelvis, the “basin” out of which the tree of the spine grows. Balance in the big muscles of the legs goes a long way toward balanced and easy movement.

There are three major muscle groups in the thighs. The back of the thighs is filled with the hamstring muscles, which attach on the sitting bones, and go all the way down below the knee. When the hamstrings contract, the knee bends. The front of the thigh is covered by the four quadriceps muscles. They attach up on the iliac crest of the pelvis, and come down to the tibia. The sartorius, the longest muscle in the body, comes down to the inside of the tibial tuberosity.

The kneecap is situated in the tendon that attaches the quads to the tibia. When you contract the quadriceps, they lift and firm the kneecap. Contracting the quadriceps also lengthens the hamstrings. The inner thigh is filled with the adductor muscles, which draw the legs together. The adductors also stabilize the legs, especially when we stand on one leg, which happens with every step we take.

Hamstring muscles are often tight. The activities of walking, sitting, running, bicycling – everything that bends the knees tightens the hamstrings. If they are very tight, they pull the pelvis down in back and distort the lower back.

Everyone can benefit from hamstring stretches. My favorite is a passive stretch at the wall. Sit, facing the wall, knees bent, feet on the floor. Move in as close as you can while keeping the feet on the floor, and place a roll support under your lumbar spine, to support your lumbar curve. This also grounds your sitting bones, where the hamstrings attach. Take your right foot up the wall, square the foot and firm the quadriceps. This will lengthen the hamstrings. Stay for two minutes or more, with full balanced breath, then put the left foot up the wall, right foot on the floor and repeat. When you stand up, you will feel more freedom in the back of the legs, even if it didn’t feel like a big stretch. Remember to lengthen the hamstrings respectfully, backing off if the sensation is too strong, especially on the sitting bones or the backs of the knees.

Sitting in virasana is a good way to stretch the quadriceps. Remember to keep the feet square

and get some support under the sitting bones. Lunges are also good quad stretches, both high and low lunges. Warrior poses strengthen the hamstrings and stretch the quadriceps.

The quadriceps muscles are strengthened by conscious use. They are “lazy” muscles and will not contract unless you “turn them on.” You can heighten awareness of these muscles by sitting in dandasana, legs outstretched; flex the feet to contract the quads, and then let go. You can watch them contract and release. Do this frequently to support your knees.

A good way to strengthen your adductor muscles is to lie on the floor with a block between your thighs and a block (turned sideways) pressed between your open palms, with the arms stretched overhead. (If this is too much for your shoulders, support the upper block on a bolster or blankets.) Flex your feet, firm your

thighs and roll the inner thighs onto the block. Keep a natural curve in your neck, eyes relaxed toward your heart. Keep the palms pressing and feel how the entire core of the body is activated. Stay for two minutes or more, feeling what you are doing and what it is doing, and keeping your breath deep and steady. When you stand up, there will be a noticeable sensation of grounding and steadiness in the legs and pelvis.

Wide-angle forward-bending poses, baddha konasana and basic standing poses lengthen the adductors.

As you journey along the mountain path, be mindful of and thankful for your legs. They truly carry you through your life and deserve your attention!

Namaste.

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

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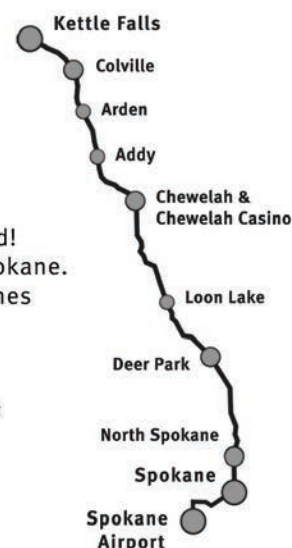


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The Backyard Philosopher

The Life We Share

By Linda Bond

The seasons come and the seasons go; time flows in a never-ending stream, carrying us toward our future and everything it can bring to our lives. Each of us comes into life with potential, perhaps even purpose. Our lives touch the lives of others. We learn from each other and pass on the lessons we have learned, nurturing those who come after us.

The other day, I was sitting quietly on the front porch, listening to and watching the rain fall as it splashed lightly in puddles on the street. I was mesmerized by the little wavelets created by each drop that fell into a puddle nearby. As I thought about these drops, I began to relate them to people – each life causing a ripple that flowed outward and connected with the ripples created by others.

When looked at in this way, it soon becomes impossible to see where one person ends and another begins.

The Best of Everyone

Each of us is unique, yet we have much in common. We all care about our loved ones, we suffer when hurt or sick, we hope we are living a good life and honoring what we believe to be right. No matter what we see going on in the world today, I try to remember that most people feel they have good reasons for their choices, decisions and outlook on life. Just because some portion of society is louder than the rest does not mean it is a majority.

As I watch the people getting on and off the bus on my daily trips, I see very little that is negative. Mostly, I see kindness and thoughtfulness: younger passengers give up their seats quickly



as soon as they see someone older needs to sit; a stranger offers to help a mother lift her child's stroller off the bus while she carries her child in her arms; one or more passengers come up with a needed quarter to help someone pay the fare when they are short the exact change.

I hear so many stories about social media and all the hate that is spewed out toward others daily. But I have also noted it is a place to share the good news of the birth of a child, a new house being found to buy after a long search, or remission of a terrible illness.

People follow each other's daily life events, sharing the pain, congratulating the "wins," re-posting joyous news. We share photos of the funniest animals, the cleverest jokes, the most beautiful sunsets. Each day, among the bitter and angry postings, I am sent reminders of nature's awesome plants, birds and baby animals. Sometimes I even post a few shots of the critters in my own front yard.

Sharing the Best We Have

What a world it would be if everyone thought to share something joyous each day. It's amazing what healing can be accomplished when we stop to think of something kind to say to another, or listen to someone talk about a problem they are having that they hope to solve.

And the most interesting thing to me is that often the healing goes both ways – as we share our humanity, we are enriched by the experience

in unexpected ways. We learn that we can only share the love we can find in ourselves to share. And the more we give to others out of our own stores of compassion, the more we receive to replenish what we have given.

Everyone Has Something to Give

I am often tempted to think of myself as a "giver" of good things – smiles, greetings, occasional small gifts – or that I even go out of my way to be a nice person. Imagine my surprise when some stranger shows up at my workplace and, after chatting for a few minutes, thanks me for my time and hands me a token of their appreciation. Perhaps it is a picture from their hometown, or a small pin celebrating spring for me to wear on the shirt that the stranger said "matched my eyes beautifully."

It is a joy to receive these thoughtful gifts from the hands of others, and to be reminded that I am not the only person in the world who is a "giver."

What a beautiful world we live in and what remarkable people share it with us. I hope I never forget that my life is interconnected with all others, so that I may offer the best that I have to give and be willing to receive the best that others have to offer as well.

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

Lessons from the 'Lowly' Shepherd

By Michelle Lancaster

Have you ever noticed how many Christmas songs croon about shepherds watching over their sheep by night? Nativity sets often include a shepherd standing in the back of the stable, a lamb across his shoulders. Classroom skits dress up children in raggedy clothing as the shepherd or a fluffy white costume with a long tail and pink ears of sheep.

Shepherds of Christmastime were categorized by some in society as disreputable, dishonest and despised. Shepherds play a very important role throughout the Bible, yet society still tried to lessen or condemn their role. The hymn "The First Noel" sings, "Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay ... keeping their sheep." I take comfort in knowing that God used some of the poorest in society to fulfill such an important role in history – the first announcement of the birth of Jesus!

As a shepherd myself, I wondered why such a low-status occupation played such a defining role in the brief Christmas tale. Less than one chapter in the Bible's Book of Luke contains the birth scene, and over half of that tale includes the lowly shepherds! These shepherds were among the lowest class of individuals in that period of Israel's history.

Not much different from shepherds (now known as sheep farmers) of today. If you are a part of the agricultural industry, odds are you will have been classified at some point by someone as a lesser individual, sometimes in a brawn vs. brains kind of way. Modern society relegates modern farmers to a lower class, regardless of the fact that many farmers do obtain high levels of experience and education and provide for one of the basic necessities of life – food.

Perhaps, though, my lowly role as a farmer may have some greater meaning or impact in life than I can imagine. Maybe someone reading this article thinks they are not important, but we all have potential, as this story illustrates.

A few years ago, I first heard the beautiful rendition of the Wexford carol performed by Celtic Women. Part of the carol goes like this: "Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep their flocks

of lambs and feeding sheep to whom God's angels did appear, which put the shepherds in great fear. 'Arise and go' the angels said, 'To Bethlehem, be not afraid. For there you'll find this happy morn' a princely babe, sweet Jesus born.' With thankful hearts and joyful mind the shepherds went that babe to find."

One of my secret habits on the farm is singing out loud, for all the animals to hear. This song I could listen to and sing over and over again, year-round. Like the shepherds of the song,



I am reminded to have a thankful heart and joyful mind in my daily occupation and not to be shamed by any irrational social stigmas, intentional or not. Singing joyfully sounds like a lot more fun than worrying about social status.

That would be true if your celebratory song is a secular one or from any other religion, at any time of the year. Let's sing!

The shepherds were told they would find Jesus in a manger (the Greek word *phatne* for "to eat" or "fodder"). From the hymn "What Child Is This?": "Why lies He in such mean estate where ox and lamb are feeding?" A manger is still used today on farms, though we are more likely to describe the equipment as a feed bunk, hay rack or feeder. Fodder is food fed to animals, particularly dried hay. There is a type of hay grown in our area called oat hay, and our sheep verify it makes both an excellent winter fodder and soft, warm bedding. Our animals sleep on bedding of straw (which is the same as oat hay, but the oats have been removed in the field, before the remaining stem of "straw" is cut and baled).

Maybe little baby Jesus slept on something warm and comfy like oat hay or straw.

This season offers us all the opportunity to look around and see how we can help others. Tunnel vision of my own daily concerns can easily consume my life. In my religion, the story of the shepherds reminds me to joyfully obey the direction God sends me.

The popular Christmas song "The Little Drummer Boy" illustrate this theme. The lyrics chime, "Little Baby ... I am a poor boy too ... I have no gift to bring ... that's good to give our King. ... Shall I play for you ... on my drum? ... Mary nodded. ... The ox and lamb kept time ... I played my best for Him. ... Then He smiled at me ... me and my drum."

I am also reminded to think of others – the lowly and poor – and work at extending the Christ-mas spirit year-round. This does not need to be dramatic. Perhaps a visit to those staying at the warming shelter. Visiting a housebound or lonely friend. Inviting someone over for Christmas dinner to make sure they feel involved in a family some-

where. Helping a farmer friend perform a task.

Take on the spirit of the lowly shepherds, following their calling with joy and humbleness.

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

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The Heros of Snowmageddon

By Gabriele von Trapp

The Inland Northwest has seen its share of extreme weather events, but for me perhaps none as memorable as the winter of 1996.

Winter started early that year with several inches of snow by mid-November and then, on November 19, a record-breaking ice storm hit the region. An inch-and-a-half of freezing rain fell, heavily encrusting trees, roads, buildings, vehicles and power lines. Trees and power lines came crashing down everywhere under the immense weight of the ice. Over 100,000 people lost electricity, some for over two weeks, through the Thanksgiving holiday.

My three children and I lived in Tum Tum at the time, in a cozy, wood-heated home. We spent a few days enjoying the winter wonderland and banged sticks on tree branches to break the icy crusts to relieve the bending boughs from their heavy burdens. We were awestruck by our glistering landscape and our uninhibited family enjoyed camping by our wood-fired stove. We had everything we needed as we waited for the power to come back on.

After more than a week of such camping, we grew a bit weary of the circumstances. We were ready to do something different. With extra time to do some thinking, I conjured up a great idea. I was going to take the children to California for Christmas. None of them had flown before and our extended family would be delighted to have us there. It would be a week of winter in a sunny and warm place, an awesome Christmas gift, in my opinion.

The four of us boarded our plane at Spokane International Airport on December 22 and headed to Boise, our first of two layovers before reaching our destination of San Francisco. Each child carried a backpack filled with lighter clothing in anticipation of warmer weather, which made travel easier, not having to check baggage. We were on a grand adventure and the children were wide-eyed and anticipatory.

We landed in Boise and were delayed due to ice buildup on the wings of the craft. After an hour of deicing, we were on our way to Reno, our second layover destination. Though too late for our connecting flight to California, we landed in Reno safely – in the middle of a horrendous

snowstorm.

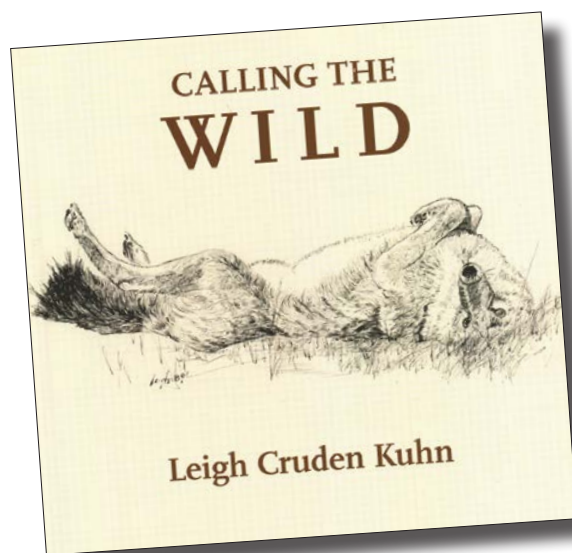
The Reno airport was packed with holiday travelers, shoulder-to-shoulder, standing room only, stranded by the weather conditions. All outgoing flights had been grounded. Many people had been waiting for some time, marooned, and passed the time festively drinking and, consequently, many were inebriated. It was a high-spirited atmosphere to say the least. My great idea of taking the children to California for Christmas didn't feel so great anymore.

My eldest (11) needed to go to the restroom. There was no way I was going to let that child out of my sight in a sea of intoxicated strangers, nor was I going to leave behind the two younger children. I might never find them again!

I instructed the children to hold hands so that we could weave through the crowd. I kept saying, "don't let go of each other, don't let go!" It was unnerving for me, but we finally reached the ladies room and squeezed in together. My son was not happy about having to use the ladies room but I would not have it any other way.

After over four hours of trying to comfort my restless, worn-out and hungry children, we final-

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Inner Landscape

ly boarded our flight to San Francisco.

The weather in the Bay Area was exactly what I anticipated: warm, sunny and pleasant. We visited with family and enjoyed our Christmas celebration. I took the children to the Golden Gate Bridge, Golden Gate Park, the California Academy of Sciences and Lasarium, a live laser concert, the Japanese Tea Garden and Fisherman's Wharf. It was a week packed with fun activities and the children and I enjoyed this special time together. We had no problem forgetting what it took to get there.

On December 29, after our whirlwind week in the Bay Area, we boarded our (direct!) flight to Spokane. The trip had been a success after all.

We disembarked in Spokane in late afternoon. As we walked out of the terminal to the economy parking lot we were overwhelmed with a wintry scene. It was a snowmageddon! The snow was almost four feet high and the airport had barely been plowed. Apparently the greater Spokane area had received a record-breaking snowfall that had continued the entire week we were gone.

We pushed through the snow. All the cars were completely covered, with not even an antenna or license plate showing. It was a vast field of mogul upon mogul, hump after hump of deep white fluffiness. Where had I parked the car?

We were wearing sneakers and light jackets. The sun was beginning to set and the temperature was dropping rapidly. We walked from mound to mound brushing off snow, looking for a speck of blue. The children were beginning to get very cold but they did not let me give up. Their poor little hands and cheeks were red and swelling. I dug in their backpacks and pulled out stinky socks for their hands and well-worn shirts for their freezing heads. I was beginning to lose hope and my concern grew. What should I do? We continued our search.

As I pulled armload after armload of snow off, car after car, with only one thousand or more to go, we suddenly spotted a patch of blue. I felt that an angel had been sent to our rescue. I pushed off more snow excitedly and, incredibly, it was our car!

Getting the children in was a monumental task. We all pushed and heaved the white blanket mightily with our sock-covered hands to clear enough snow to open a door. Once in, I started the car and then ran to the back to clear the exhaust pipe and then proceeded to remove more snow from the windshield, back window and trunk, which created a huge mound in the back of the car. I realized that I would not be able to back out. I dug frantically with my bare hands to

clear a path for the tires. I was cold, worried and exhausted, and nightfall was upon us.

I finally got in the driver's seat and buckled in. I threw the transmission into reverse and floored it. We slid this way and that and I turned the wheel back and forth, never letting up on the accelerator. We cleared the snow berm thanks to the front-wheel drive. We were free!

We were indeed happy to get home that night. We lit the wood stove, ate a quick meal and settled into our nicely-warmed beds. It was so good to be home.

We can now look back at the winter of 1996 and say, "We made it." I was so proud of my young children who never complained, whined or cried through all of the adversities we encountered that winter. Living in the Inland Northwest has made them hearty, resilient, resourceful, brave and self-sustaining, and appreciative and respectful of the winter season.

Now that my children are adults, I have noticed something about them. Brave as they were in '96, they do not travel for the holidays. Christmas is always where our home is.

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

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Rings of Time

By J. L. Brian

My old peepers aren't what they used to be. Hell, they never were very good. Born with astigmatism in both eyes, I still remember the humiliation of being forced to wear optical prosthetics and being dubbed "four-eyes" when I was just five years old.

I squint as I count the rings and marvel at their number.

I first encountered you eight short years ago, in late autumn. Focused on the river flowing languidly past your location, I walked by your

towering presence with only a glance in your direction. At that time, you were just another figure in a world filled with similar ones.

Late spring of 2011 is when I recognized your individuality. It was your exposed roots that caught my attention. I looked you up and down. I hope that didn't make you uncomfortable, and that you noted I carried no implements of harm. I was only trying to gauge how securely you were anchored to the earth that nurtured you and which you enriched in

return.

We humans nearly always take your kind for granted, rarely taking the time to contemplate your generous contribution to our wellbeing. You pull pollutants from the air, produce oxygen, drop needles and cones to replenish the soil of a hungry planet. Your lofty height, abundant branches and cool shade provide sanctuary for creatures large and small.

My wife and I were beneficiaries of the shade you cast as the sun sailed high across the midday sky. So were the small insects that seemed to float effortlessly in front of our ever-aging faces. Sitting beneath you, studying your naked roots, I knew you were lower than the high-water line. That the lazy river flowing below you had at times flooded, challenging your ability to remain upright, saturating the ground that held you so securely.

Throughout the following summers I studied the intricate shape of your unprotected roots. I wondered how deeply your taproot was set, how far into the embankment your large feeder tendrils meandered. I took photographs of the beautiful pale green lichens that festooned a few of your bare roots. I think those lichens liked you, and so did I.



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In the shelter of your shade we spent many pleasant hours studying the river, noting with pleasure the creatures that floated on, swam beneath or traveled along it. One of our favorite sights was the bald eagle that flew low above the water, south in the morning and north in the afternoon. One memorable day, the beautiful bird dropped from the sky, dipped its talons into the water and rose with a large fish in its grasp. To our amazement, the majestic raptor landed in a tree directly across the river from our location and spent 20 minutes feasting on its catch. If eagles had lips, we could have heard them smack!

Spring of 2018 brought a torrent down the Kettle River drainage. Records and the ever-dwindling number of humans left to remember say it was the highest flow in more than 80 years.

Worried after viewing footage of entire embankments filled with gigantic trees collapsing into the raging water, I grabbed my camera and made the nearly two-hour journey north to your location. Once in the vicinity, I drove slowly along the highway, across the river from your home. I felt relief when I saw you still standing at attention.

A few minutes later I stood at your base. The

peril you faced became undeniable when, trying to walk, I found my shoes sinking into the heavily saturated earth uphill from you. Hydraulic loading, the phrase flashed through my mind. The embankment upstream had already disappeared into the river along with dozens of your kin. I hoped it was my imagination that seemed to detect you now had a slight lean in that direction.

2018 has been a year of general paralysis in my life. I have been on hiatus, contemplating my mortality as well as mortality in general. If this year had a theme, it would be "to be or not to be." The loss of one of my own, someone more dear to me than I could have ever imagined, kept me away from you until late summer. My sorrow multiplied when I saw that you had succumbed to the forces nature unleashed upon you.

Your passing blocked easy access to the river. My eyes watered as I cut your remains out of the way. Looking at your uprooted stump I counted the rings ... 118, if I got it right. My great grandfather was twenty years old when you set those first hair-like roots and began your journey. The changes in the world over the course of your life seem incomprehensible though I know you sensed them in your own

way.

Some will scoff at the idea of bio-communication, but I firmly believe that you and all of your kind are more than just physically in touch with the world you live in. How could it be any other way? I have read of experiments that documented a physical response when one of you are treated well or threatened. This quantifiable reaction is simultaneously evident in other members of your kind, even those very remote to the location of the test subject.

I wonder if you sensed your peril through bio-communication as the ground beneath your relatives dissolved and they disappeared into the violent flood. Did they send you a final message? Tell you goodbye?

I like to think you knew I respected you, appreciated your generosity, thought you were brave and marveled at your tenacity. I miss you and mourn your passing. I hope somewhere downstream one of your cones releases a fertile seed so this world will not lose your precious, irreplaceable contribution.

Farewell, my friend!

J. L. Brian has authored more than 100 short stories and lives in the Clayton area with his wife Judy and their two dogs, Peaches and Snoopy. He can be reached at jlbrian.author@gmail.com.

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Special Traditions 2018

By Becky Dubell

I'm thinking this is my favorite article of the year to write. I get to spend time with people in my life and learn a little more about what makes them tick and at the same time learn more about myself. What makes them, and me, who we are.

Norm: The family has a new project each Christmas Day. A few projects from years past have been wooden spoons with paintings of "What was important to you this last year?" which becomes like a totem; a canvas painting of whatever you want to share; take a cloth banner for each family, and a paint color for each family – every family hand with paint on it to be applied on every banner becomes a piece of art to hang in the home. Wonder what this year's project is going to be?

Andrew: Open one gift Christmas Eve, which was a new ornament to hang on the tree. Being the youngest of seven, by the time he was able to hang one of his own on the tree it was pretty full – wonder how big the tree had to be? This tradition is being carried on.

Lee: Mom kept a very clean house. Christmas Eve was the only time a fire was allowed in the fireplace. The popcorn popper (a wire basket on a long handle for the fire) was brought out along with a Coke for everybody – only one fire in the fireplace a year and only one Coke a year.

Tammy: A new tradition involving a three-year-old granddaughter who likes licking cookie frosting. Started with Halloween cookies this year, and it has been decided it will continue for whenever cookies are needed. You go Grandma!

Nina: Loves opening one present on Christmas Eve with the granddaughters.

Me: Baking Ammonia Cookies with Twilla has been expanded on.



We are adding Jamie and JJ to the mix. Before the big day, we have to teach JJ how to make little balls for the cookies by practicing making balls with play dough. We will see how that works! Watching for the cedar boughs that hang around town, put together this year by the Kettle Falls Community Chest Food Bank volunteers.

Phylliss: Nutcracker collection on display all over the house for the season.

The sisters: Cut down the tree, string the popcorn, cut the paper for the paper chains and make popcorn balls with colored syrup. Good family time!

Carol 1: No tree until Christmas morning because Dad decorated the tree on Christmas Eve. Not much fun waking him up for the Christmas morning festivities.

Candy: Spending time at Grandma's where the icicles go on the tree one at a time and ... come off one at a time to be saved for next year's tree (boy do I know that one). "Special cookies" that are made for special events and have been for the past 53 years.

Carol 2: Look forward to that pomegranate in the stocking.

Dee Dee: The German Pepper Nut Christmas Cookie and the fresh clam dip! Her son looked forward to the jar of baby food that showed up in the Christmas stocking, the Easter Basket, the birthday gift and the "whatever day" gift until he was married.

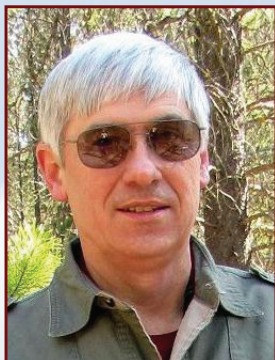
Carol 3: Her daughter gets a coconut for Christmas every year. How many ways are there to disguise a coconut in a wrapped package?

And ... now, Mom: Every year she sends a handmade ornament to each grandchild, their spouses and then each great grandchild and now the great great grand. She has been doing this for 40 years now and I'm really afraid to let her know the total 'cuz I'm afraid she's gonna quit doing it. OK. Here goes ... Darcy's family: 83. Jamie's family: 56. Corey's family: 62. Cody's family: 53. Caylee's family: 29. Rosa's family: 52. Drum roll and calculator please ... 335 ornaments! I was impressed before I knew the number, but now? Wow! Oops, forgot some. My sisters and I gave her a bad time one year that we never got the ornaments (we know she liked the kids better than us, right?). So she gathered up the pictures of each year's ornament and made and sent all the previous year's ornaments to us so we would shut up about it. So, add about 30 more to that total!

Whatever your traditions are throughout the year, new and old, with family and friends, enjoy the warm feeling you get in your heart and hugs to all. Merry Christmas to all involved in my life!



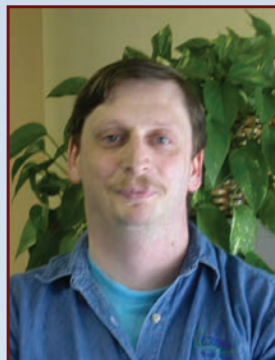
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