



NORTH COLUMBIA MONTHLY

— WHERE AND HOW WE LIVE —



November 2021 | Free!
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By Gabriel Cruden

What can run but never walks, has a mouth but never talks, has a head but never weeps, has a bed but never sleeps?

I was fascinated with mind puzzles and riddles when I was a kid. I even ended up participating in a think tank – all of us in fifth grade – and we were given real world problems to solve using creative solutions. I remember the adults in charge getting pretty excited about our ideas, unencumbered as we were by adult assumptions and blinders.

A book my mom got for me that was very influential around that time was *The Book of Think (Or How To Solve A Problem Twice Your Size)*, by Marilyn Burns and illustrated by Martha Weston. In one section there is a story about how a man challenged a group of other men to balance a hard-boiled egg still in its shell on its end on a smooth, flat wooden table without using anything to hold it in place. The men tried and failed and

proclaimed that it could not be done. In response, the challenger smashed the end of the egg into the table and there it stood.

This little vignette has stuck in my mind ever since and often inspires me to reconsider and question assumptions and to explore other perspectives. This is true both for solving problems and as a general approach to life.

With a highly scheduled calendar and a desire to do everything and do it well, efficiency and rhythm are strong drivers. Consequently (and ironically), scheduling time to not be doing becomes a valuable component to act as counterpoint, to provide opportunity for necessary rest and renewal, and to gain perspective.

I appreciate living close to the Columbia River and being so readily able to pop down to the shore, or even just seeing the ever-changing interplay of light and clouds and mountains and river right out my office window. For me, there's

something about being near water that feeds life's flow and facilitates reflection. And I identify strongly with how it's the same river but is always comprised of new water.

The mountains, too, are significant. The storied landscape shifting with its own seasonal cycles. Climbing to the higher ridges nearby and gazing out over the valley, I feel a sense of expansive distance. A sort of pause, of taking stock, of literally being above it all.

Whether it's remembering to stop and consider things from another's point of view, or asking myself what assumptions I am bringing to a situation and seeking to reassemble reality into a new way of seeing and understanding, or physically finding perspective by changing where I am in that moment, I find value in doing so. Every time.

And the answer to the question above?
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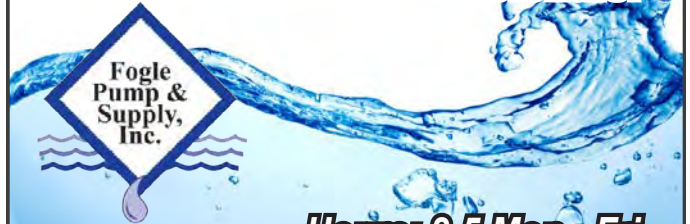
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A Note from the Publisher:

The *North Columbia Monthly* is a free monthly magazine distributed throughout northeastern Washington and is a vehicle for sharing stories that we can relate to or imagine or feel. It is about *where and how we live*. In emphasizing these kinds of stories, it is my hope that the idea of connection, common ground, and community will be infused into our consciousness and is integral to what we choose to strive for, and what becomes considered the norm.

I believe that we can all have different perspectives, different viewpoints, different ways of being, *and* I believe that we can find connection and build community around the things we share in common.

Thank you for reading. I hope you feel enriched for having done so.

~ Gabriel



November 2021

Vol. 29 ~ Iss. 7

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The *North Columbia Monthly* is available for free at over 500 locations in northeastern Washington and online. Subscriptions are \$24/year to cover postage and mailing envelopes.

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Cover Photo

Bull moose duel. Photo by Joanie Christian.

See more on page 38.

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Kept In There Cooks Have Everything Needed Stored

- JOHN ODELL, WordsOfWords.com

Learning to Prioritize

By Mayah LaSol

Never in my life before have I had so much to think about as I do right now. There's schoolwork (including midterm exams), and extracurricular activities and clubs, and making friends, meal planning, driving, communicating with professors, Covid protocols, trying to stay in touch with people who moved out of state, and the impending winter, predicted to be harsh. The list goes on and I'm not even living on a college campus. Such is my new university life, which may sound pretty bleak.

It really is a wonderful life. I am so grateful to be learning so much and meeting new people and expanding my view of the world. I have also had a lot of reality checks in the past few months and they

all really boil down to one thing: I need to figure out my priorities and stick to them.

I was feeling majorly stressed about all of my upcoming exams and papers last week but then my mum made the comment that if I prioritized better instead of expecting everything of myself, I would be way more capable of handling everything.

This gave me pause and led me to realize that I honestly *was* having unfair expectations for myself. I wanted to read a book every week and put up a review of it on my Instagram account. I wanted to spend extra time outside the classroom practicing ballet. I wanted to experiment with my newfound hobby of sewing. But none of those things are sustainable while I'm in six academic classes and five dance

classes. They just aren't!

With as much as I love all my activities, admitting they cannot fit into my schedule right now was hard. It was also a huge relief.

I decided to sit down and make two lists. I made one list of things that I have to do every single week with no exceptions. Like my homework, attending classes, eating meals, and showering. These are non-negotiable in order for me to be successful and stay sane. The other list was all of the things that I *want* to do – like sewing, watching movies, reading books and writing poetry.

It surprised me how much the making of these lists decluttered my mind and also meant that it was easier to figure out what to do when. It's so much easier to plan your day when you have a concrete list of just what you *need* to do. But the craziest thing is that even though I'm in the midst of midterms, I'm still writing this article! Creating two separate lists and prioritizing my schedule actually meant that once or twice this past week I have had extra time to do something fun!

Now, of course, I'm on a slippery slope because I don't want to start expecting to do more and more and end up feeling pressured again. But it's also *because* I admitted that some things weren't essential that I have somehow found a little bit of time in my schedule to suddenly do them anyway.

This might not be the case every week, and if you try doing these lists when you're overwhelmed it might not work out that way for you. But I have to admit that I'm really happy I had time to write this article and really happy that I'm learning how to prioritize.

Mayah is a teen reader, writer, bookstagrammer, and all-around arts enthusiast who geeks out over books and cats. She shares book reviews and poetry on her instagram account @mayahlwrites.

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Replenishing Our Connections

By Christine Wilson

“Obedience. Conformity. Cognitive. Cuing. These were the words used by psychologists in the 1950s, and Harry Harlow didn’t like them. He wanted to talk about love. He was at a conference one day, and every time he used the word ‘love’ another scientist would interrupt and say, ‘You must mean proximity, don’t you?’ until at last Harlow, a brash man who could also be strangely shy, said, ‘It may be that proximity is all you know of love – I thank God I have not been so deprived.’”

~ Lauren Slater, *Boston Globe*, March 21, 2004

“The apparent repression of love by modern psychologists stands in sharp contrast with the attitude taken by many famous and normal people.”

~ Harry Harlow, *The Nature of Love*, 1958

“To believe in this living is just a hard way to go.”

~ John Prine

“We all need a little tenderness. How can love survive in such a graceless age?”

~ Don Henley, “The Heart of the Matter,” 1989

“It takes a strong back and a soft front to face the world.”

~ Roshi Joan Halifax

Before COVID, isolation was already getting to be a serious topic of concern and conversation in my field, but now the pandemic has shot it to the forefront of discussions about well-being. Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, former U.S. Surgeon General, wrote in an article published by the *Harvard Business Review*, “Loneliness and weak social connections are associated with a reduction in lifespan similar to that caused by smoking 15 cigarettes a day and even greater than that associated with obesity.” We social creatures may be experiencing what the brain researcher Bruce Perry calls “relationship poverty.”

There is now a flood of research about how to heal from this. It is, with intentional effort, a fixable problem, or a collection of fixable problems to be identified individually and addressed. When people learn distrust at the beginning of their lives, they can develop a form of post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) that wears them down and turns itself into depression. Trauma-oriented therapies such as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) are being shown to help overcome this source of the problem. In life outside a therapy office, initiating in-person contact with others is tricky but important in these tumultuous times. It can be easier with a friend who also needs “friendship bravery training.”

There is a silly little show we have been watching where a character is trying to learn how to be kind to people he doesn’t like. He keeps thinking he’s failing because each time he gets to know them better, he accidentally starts liking them. It’s a brilliant piece of writing, really, and makes me more willing to admit we’ve been watching it. OK, this streaming series is called *Lucifer* and there’s a lot of silliness and debauchery in it, so I’m not saying I’m proud. I was heartened,

however, by the message that there’s usually something we can find to like about even the most difficult of people.

When I was four days old, my mother was sent home by her doctor with the message: “Feed infant and remove to crib to let her fuss it out.” I know this because for some reason my mother saved the note. This belief was the result of decades of misinformation about child rearing. Hugs and kisses and spending time with your infant would be unhygienic, it was believed, and would, in general, ruin your child. I’ve talked to people who grew up in the 1950s and who were told that their mothers did not follow that belief system. Those mothers seemed to be part of the “normal people” crowd that Harry Harlow is referring to in the quote above.

We weren’t all that lucky. Those of us who were raised with that older perspective grew up mistaking normal love for neediness, as did the generation of par-

Random Acts of Community

ents who were brought up in that manner before us. In sharp contrast, more recent parenting information includes all kinds of information about hugs and kisses and placing your baby where they can feel your heartbeat. You cannot “spoil” a child in that first year. Children are naturals at seeking soothing from others. When their needs are met, they learn to trust that people will be there for them. They generalize that trust to other people. It’s more work to repair that as an adult but any therapist can tell you people heal from distrust all the time.

Harry Harlow is the subject of a book I am currently obsessed with. Titled *Love at Goon Park*, it is the story of his research in the 1950s. “Proximity,” which was the closest thing to love that parenting experts were willing to support, did not make sense to him when it came to raising children. Neither did the notion that the bond between infant and parent was only about food. He went about doing research with rhesus monkeys to prove his point. It was all happening at the same time as Sir John Bowlby was publishing his remarkable work about attachment theory. Together, they shifted the conversation away from a sterile “child as small adult” approach to one of a more loving bond and the inoculation this gives a child when coping with the vagaries and hardships of life.

So, here we are, at the beginning of the inside season. It is the time of year where

gardens have been put to bed, boating and outdoor swimming are done, bikes are put up, and the mountains aren’t quite ready for us to strap on boards and snowshoes or climb onto fat bikes. The outside distractions are gone and the long hours of sunlight are disappearing. We find ourselves inside houses, either inhabited by other people or emphasizing our isolation or, sadly, both. It’s time for us, in Don Henley’s words, to get down to “the heart of the matter.”

Replenishing our connections to the people we care about can take focused, stalwart effort. This can be true no matter how we feel about the world inside our homes. Why does this matter? Because “when under stress, we regress.” There are plenty of stressors in our lives, and I don’t know anyone who isn’t having some iteration of a hard time right now. Our hearts and minds will find a way to feel soothed, no matter if it is good, bad, or ugly.

November feels to me like a perfect time to connect with other people who bring us joy or to whom we can offer comfort. I got a call from a childhood friend recently. She wanted to find out about my life, share about her life, and let me know how much she loves me. This was not, growing up, even close to a sappy person. I learned my first swear words from her and we caught some cookies on fire together, but sentimentality was not her thing. She’s learning

about relational soothing like the rest of us. It was definitely a happiness-making afternoon.

Not everybody we will have contact with this month will bring us joy. Not everyone will feel joy from us. Finding relational soothing and fostering love can be hard work, but it is good work, the best work in my not very humble opinion. Setting down our devices, sharing meals, walking outside together, even starting a Zoom book club with one other person you enjoy – the ways to promote connection are limited only by our imagination and humans can be amazingly imaginative. Seeking support in relational soothing is necessary and, fortunately, doable.

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Beauty Beyond Telling

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

I'm standing in my kitchen, the palm of my right hand firmly placed on my forehead. I'm trying to wrap my mind around what just happened. I don't know quite what to make of it.

A few moments ago, a small boy and I were lying under the piano, enraptured by the majestic melodies flowing from the internal workings of the instrument as my wife Shelley belted out a glorious tune. The music enveloped us, and we looked up together at the workings above us and smiled. Moments later he was crawling around on the floor pretending to be a puppy, sniffing out stink bugs and other creatures needing his attention. His parents are here this evening to practice some music. As they do, the young boy falls asleep. I look at the husband and wife and wonder why they started their family so late in life. No matter, life's

circumstances never can be completely understood.

After the musical practice, folks are preparing to leave. As I wash the table I am distracted by the conversation I am overhearing. Something about our work on homelessness. The woman, who is not exactly a close friend, more of an acquaintance, is looking intently at some literature about Hope Street. She seems considerably more interested than most. She comments that she is so excited that we are working on this project. Could we tell her some more?

Shelley outlines the goals for Hope Street Restoration and why it is important to give homeless people life skills and work. The woman seems to be emotionally connected to the topic. She whispers to Shelley, "I feel like I've been stalking you on Facebook." Then, she begins telling her story.

It turns out that her daughter is homeless. Has been for years. Living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, dealing with abuse and addiction. Then she had a child and struggled to know what to do with that child. She finally came to the realization that she could not care for the child in her present circumstances. The mother spoke of the miracle of adopting the child and making him completely their own.

Then it dawns on me. The young boy now sleeping quietly on the couch was born in addiction and chaos. The joyous, carefree child crawling on our floor, smiling under the piano, hunting for stink bugs, is the child of a wayward daughter for whom these parents grieve every day. I had no idea of their silent suffering. No idea.

And suddenly it feels brilliantly clear to me: People can do things simply for

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love that would otherwise be unimaginable.

Homelessness is messy and fraught with pitfalls and soul-wrenching missteps. But the thing that surprises you is that the more you work on homelessness, the more it feels like you are working on family.

Which brings me to my second point. Every other day I wonder how much longer I should be working on some of the projects in my life. I've got a mountain of projects I would love to accomplish – Hope Street, health clinic for people without insurance, medical school in South Sudan, bike hostel, helping the health department with Covid home visits, etc. I tell myself that I need to slow down. I shouldn't be working this hard at this point in my life. My life feels out of balance far too often. And then, every other day I have some affirming event that undeniably tells me I need to work just a bit longer.

Someone shows up at the workplace and calls down a blessing on us. Someone else shows up unsolicited and asks if we could use a pneumatic nailer. And some nails. What about a scroll saw? A treadmill? A bicycle? And some hip waders? A cross bow? Some fishing rods? On and on. People in their own ways supporting us, cheering us on.

But this interaction with a young boy and his parents ... this is stunning. A beautiful child, whose life would have been so different if left to fend for himself in an abandoned building, on the streets, or sleeping in a vehicle. And because there are two people who love him enough that they could not walk away, his life will forever be so much better. Love wins.

I believe love can be like that. Strong and beautiful, overruling the judgments of the brain, making the most outstretching decisions. Because a chance to love a child is so important.

Which brings me to my third point. Someday I will lay down the many du-

ties of my life, the tasks that call me to complete as many as I can from the list that I keep written deep in my soul within the ever-shrinking years I have left. But not today. Today I will savor this moment and the thought that it was for this child and this family we chose to work on homelessness. Though they are not exactly close friends, I suspect that this will change. The fact that we are working on homelessness is shouting to this family, "We noticed people who look like your daughter." Their broken and beautiful girl whom they can't understand but can't forget either because they can never stop loving her.

Now they look to us to surround their grandson with good people and good music and good influences so that his life will be light years different than it would have been. All of this tells them, "Though you do not know

her, you loved our daughter and people like her. They mattered to you." Suddenly we are dear to them. You can't help but be drawn to people who love your children, who love what you love.

The man who came by and blessed us this week was awesome. The guy who brought us a truckload of goods to help us with our project was so encouraging. And the boy whose life I touched today, lying carefree and smiling, washed in the glorious music flowing from the heart of the piano above us, well, that was beauty almost beyond telling.

Barry Bacon is a physician who has lived and practiced family medicine in Colville for 28 years. He now works in small rural hospitals in Washington state, teaches family medicine, and works on health disparities in the U.S. and Africa.

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Standing on Life's Roadside

By Loren Cruden

As the proverbial prince and pauper discovered, direct experience can be an influential eye-opener. For example, my experience waiting tables at the Golden Carrot restaurant in Grand Rapids, Michigan, at two eateries in Heidelberg, Germany, and at the Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye where I also occasionally bar-

tended, instilled a subsequent tendency to tip generously when eating out. Likewise, after hundreds of miles of hitchhiking, mainly in my younger years, I now tend to pick up people with their thumbs out when it feels reasonable to do so.

Such as the big, bearded, densely-tattooed, rough-looking guy north of Kettle

Falls who huffed up to my car when I pulled over, slinging his duffel in back and climbing in to shake my hand and tell me his name. He thanked me for stopping and I told him it was no problem – I had put in plenty of roadside time myself. I asked where he was from. He replied that he and his brother had been living outdoors since becoming homeless. He outlined, in a candid, matter-of-fact way, how they'd struggled to cope with this summer's extreme heat and smoke in those al-fresco circumstances. We touched on other topics as well before I dropped him off.

Most of the hitchhikers around eastern Washington to whom I've given rides over the years have been in situations similar to this – homeless or living on the margins. Some have been in the process of working their way out of addiction or personal catastrophe; some were on the downward slide, losing ground. For others, it was simply the practical status quo. Most were men.

Hitchhiking was and is the most economical (and, perhaps, ecologically sound) way to get around, but such a means of transport is not always an easy ride. I have had horrendous experiences hitchhiking: been stranded, propositioned, assaulted – even dragged down a highway, once. And more than once had men expose their privates or grab at me. As a woman, experience suggests that it is riskier to *be* the hitchhiker than to pick one up. (Though a young man and woman – tourists – I gave a ride to in Scotland did steal my 35mm camera while chatting with my son and me. A shame: scam artists like these give hitchhikers a bad name.)

As well as nightmare moments, I have also had excellent experiences hitching from point A to point B. Such as blissfully riding up California's winding, scenic coastal highway on the back of a superbly driven motorcycle, or getting an early morning lift from a lyrical Irish postman on the Dingle Peninsula. I did a

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Lynn Ahrens, Kristen Anderson-Lopez, Benny Andersson, Billie Joe Armstrong, Howard Ashman, Sara Bareilles, Lionel Bart, Jerry Bock, Leslie Bricusse, Jason Robert Brown, Johnny Burke, Martin Charnin, Mindi Dickstein, Anthony Drewe, Jack Feldman, Stephen Flaherty, Matthew Gerrard, Zina Goldrich, Green Day, Sheldon Harnick, David Hein, Marcy Heisler, Jason Howland, Herbert Kretzmer, Jonathan Larson, Alan Jay Lerner, Frank Loesser, Frederick Loewe, Robert Lopez, Alan Menken, Tim Minchin, Robbie Nevil, Anthony Newley, Benj Pasek, Justin Paul, Tim Rice, Irene Sankoff, Dick Scanlan, Claude-Michel Schönberg, Stephen Schwartz, Marc Shaiman, Richard M. Sherman, Robert B. Sherman, Glenn Slater, Stephen Sondheim, George Stiles, Charles Strouse, Jeanine Tesori, Björn Ulvæus, Jimmy Van Heusen, Frank Wildhorn, Scott Wittman

November 12 – Opening Night, 7:00 PM
November 13 – Second Performance, 7:00 PM
November 14 – Final Performance, 2:00 PM

Directed by Sean Taboloff
Musical Director Dani Cartledge
Production Team Jennifer Clark, Colleen Rader, Stazya Richman, & Nancy Christopher

Tickets after October 18 Meyers Falls Market or Colville Chamber of Commerce. \$15 each - Seniors/Students \$12

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lot of hitchhiking in Scotland and Ireland before finally getting my own car. Never once did any of the drivers there who picked me up behave in a less than kind, interested, or courteous manner – and all were fascinating conversationalists.

As a shy person I tend not to initiate conversations with strangers. But some of the drivers I met in various places around the world had memorable things to say. Like the old man in County Meath who told me about the discovery of Vikings buried in his back garden, and the several drivers around Northern Ireland who related haunting stories about the Troubles. Or the guy near Santa Barbara who plied me with donuts and regaled me with anecdotes about the *CHiPs* TV series he'd been part of, and the German tourist driving a rental car in Donegal who described the distinctive psyche of Berliners and then, weeks later, on the Isle of Skye, had more to say when I encountered him again.

I've gotten lifts from long-haul truck drivers (none of whom gave me trouble), a VW van full of hippies tripping on acid (a Magical Mystery Tour kind of experience), a militant Basque separatist in Spain (worrisome), and a scary-looking biker in Washington, D.C., who said nothing at all, just rumbled his low-ride Harley across town with me perched on the back.

The pandemic put a damper on my picking up hitchhikers. Not that I had

been doing much of it recently to start with; nonetheless feel a twinge now, driving past. The world can seem such a large and largely indifferent place when standing or trudging alone on a roadside, vehicles whizzing past, spraying mud or dousing the ride-petitioner with toxic fumes, drivers glaring or glancing away – or through you: an erasure.

I've spotted stoic hitchhikers, whimsical hitchhikers, desperate hitchhikers, cheerily smiling hitchhikers, hitchers with signs, with dogs, with companions, with astonishing luggage; and have also noted the presence of people merely hiking – not hitching – along the road, for exercise or because it's their way of getting somewhere. Or out of disdain for or resignation to the fact that few drivers will pull over for them.

I remember as a teenager standing in searing heat on a highway entrance ramp outside Reno with my thumb out for hours before plodding into the city to spend most of my remaining money on a bus ticket that would take me only marginally closer to home. And, a few years ago as an old lady in eastern Washington, standing on a country road beside my broken-down car, its hood up, my thumb out, no cell phone signal, while people drove past, ignoring my plight.

As a driver I know the insulated feeling of being behind the wheel, cocooned in my protective metal and plastic carapace – my controlled domain: music playing,

temperature set just right, tires humming, momentum sweeping me along toward my destination. Things to do, places to be, people to see, appointments to keep. Rural landscape flowing past – familiar curves and views, a relaxing freedom to the combination of enclosure and spacious context.

Suddenly, a hitchhiker on the shoulder, thumb out.

It's easy to not stop.

To not hit the brakes, break the momentum, find room to pull off the road, shift stuff into the back seat, allow a stranger into the confined personal space, the vulnerable domain. It's always a risk. Anything can happen.

And yet.

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

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The Popular American Robin

Article & Photo by J. Foster Fanning

About the time you pick up this November issue of the *North Columbia Monthly* the ubiquitous American robin will be in the final stages of departing on its seasonal migration to points southward. A member of the thrush family, the American robin (*Turdus migratorius*) is a migratory songbird and, according to Partners in Flight, the most abundant bird in North America with approximately 370,000,000 individuals.

For many people, especially children, the American robin is a favorite and readily identifiable bird with its orange breast, although in song and story it is often described as red. Look for a black-to-grey head with white eye arcs and a white throat with black streaks. The bill is mainly yellow with a variably dark tip, the dusky area becoming more pronounced in colder months. The male and female birds are similar, with the female tending to a duller coloration and a brown tint to the head and upperparts, and less-bright underparts. Juveniles are paler and have dark spots on their breasts and whitish wing coverts.

Are you old enough to remember the

popular Doris Day song, “When the red, red robin comes bob, bob, bobbin’ along, along..”? (She recorded it in 1953 but it was written by Harry Woods in 1926.) With robins being such a popular bird it should come as no surprise that native peoples since long ago had many legends regarding robins. “Opeechee” to the Ojibwe tribe of the Great Lakes and “Wit-tah-bah” to the Miwok people of the great central valley of California, the robin was “Gwi”ckwe” to the Algonquin peoples.

In many Native American cultures robins are portrayed as capable and industrious birds, frequently rewarded for their steadfast work ethic. Some tribes associate the color of a robin’s breast with fire. Other legends emphasize the caring parental behavior of robins and in some tribes it is considered good fortune for a pregnant woman to see robins.

On this continent there are seven subspecies of the American robin. These subspecies intergrade with each other and are often difficult to differentiate. They are: the eastern robin (U.S. and Canada); the Newfoundland robin (eastern coastal Canada); the southern robin

(southeastern U.S.); the western robin (west coast U.S. and Canada); the San Lucas robin (Baja Mexico); the Mexican robin (southern Mexico), and our local bird, the northwestern robin of the Pacific Northwest. The robin is the state bird of Michigan, Connecticut, and Wisconsin.

Research involved in writing about wildlife often leads into unexpected areas and occasionally reveals unique, evolved features of the subject species. In the case of robins, it is their ability to hunt by acute hearing. This is a trait I’ve written of in certain owls but in the case of the robin it is the ability to locate earthworms underground. Anyone who has watched a robin on the ground has probably observed it taking several short hops and then cocking its head side to side or forward to detect movement of its prey underground. Another unique mannerism of the American robin is its tendency to sing at the approach of storms and then again as the storms dissipate.

In the right conditions robins may have three successful broods in one year. But life can be tough for nestlings, and many do not survive to the end of autumn. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, “Despite the fact that a lucky robin can live to be 14 years old, the entire population turns over on average every six years.”

For us northerners, robins are noted as the harbingers of spring — the early bird. Visible throughout towns and cities, robins are also at home in more rugged,



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mountainous areas right up into the Alaskan wilderness.

In closing I'll note a book by a First Nations Sechelt artist, Charlie Craigan, *How the Robin Got Its Red Breast: A Legend of the Sechelt People*. It is a story of "Long, long ago, when the world was new, as the winter sun was setting, and the land was locked in ice and snow, all the creatures

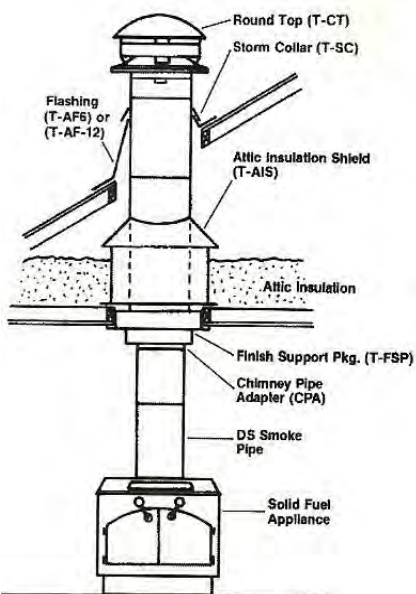
believed that the warmth they had enjoyed throughout the long summer was lost forever and might never return. They were cold and afraid." And in this story our then-common grey bird attempts to fly beyond the world and into the heart of the sun to save all other creatures from the bitter cold...

May the warmth of the sun be with you

even through the cold months ahead. And remember, Robin Red Breast will return again soon.

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 fosterfanning.blogspot.com.

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Never Too Old to Ride an E Bike

By Tina Tolliver Lago

There was a time in this great big life, not so very long ago, when I felt like I had all the time in the world to live life to its fullest and leave no goal unaccomplished. I suppose that is just a part of being “younger,” but it seems like it was only yesterday that I carried that carefree feeling with me.

I don't think the term “bucket list” had even been coined so many years ago when I spent some much needed “girl time” with a good friend of mine. We sat by the river and sipped iced tea while we bared our souls in the way that, for me, can happen only with the most trusted of friends. These kinds of soul-sharing moments don't happen often in my life, but when they do, I tuck them into my heart where I can revisit them when I need to or want to. And while this particular afternoon was most pleasant with the river, the warm sunshine adding to the

friendship we had taken care to nurture over the years, there was a part of that day that has stuck with me all these years as I have reflected on it many, many times.

This friend was several years older than me but her active lifestyle and her timeless beauty along with her empathy and honesty were what drew me to her as a friend and a confidante. I honestly never thought of our age difference, until she was gone. Her passing left a huge void in my life and I truly miss her.

In the ten years that I was blessed to have her as my friend we talked often on the phone, sometimes for an hour or more at a time, and when we made plans to meet up for visits, hikes or a bike ride we would set aside an entire day for each other. This particular day was one of those times when we chose to just be still by the river and talk.

And it was on this particular day that

she shared with me that she had been struggling with pain that had slowed her down considerably. Then she dropped this heavy emotional load with tears in her eyes: “I am facing my own mortality. It's suddenly here, staring me in the face and I'm tired now, tired of pushing it away and trying to keep it at bay.”

I had no words for her in that moment. I did not understand how this woman who I had known as only strong and brave was suddenly telling me that she felt like her life was near its end. But as we talked and cried her strength and bravery began to come back to the surface. She just needed to say it out loud, she said. She wasn't sick, she said, she was just starting to feel “old” and she didn't know what to do with that feeling.

I guess what brings this memory back to me so much lately is that I realize I am now about the same age that she was at

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that time. And I am feeling those same feelings. I am wearing the thought of my own mortality like a heavy coat lately. And I don't like it. I'm suddenly thinking about the things I will never do or the things I used to do that I'll likely never do again. My bucket list has never been long but I'm suddenly staring at it with a sense of urgency. And sadly, I've crossed a couple of things off that I know will never happen.

While this might be realistic thinking, it most definitely holds too much negativity for me to wallow in it for long. The events of the past couple of years have knocked me around a bit as I'm sure they have done the same to many others. But I'm not ready to be knocked down to the point where I won't get up again.

My husband and I took a little road trip to Idaho, where we had plans to rent a couple of electric bikes to ride on the Centennial Trail along Lake Coeur

d'Alene. Those plans took twists and turns over a long walk downtown instead of a bike ride. We stopped for a cup of coffee and a truffle while we talked about the bike ride we didn't take and how we'd still like to try out some ebikes because we've been talking about getting them for a while now. Just a few minutes later we found ourselves out in the back parking lot of a downtown bike shop laughing and wobbling about on two brand new ebikes that are now in our very own garage waiting for our first long ride.

Perhaps that was a bit impulsive but in our defense we decided that buying the brand new stove for the kitchen could wait. And by "we decided" I think my words were, "Who needs to cook on more than one burner when we can be out bike riding instead?!" I may have crossed "run a marathon" off my bucket list but I have added "ride all the paved and gravel trails possible in my lifetime."

My mortality is still ahead of me, like it is for us all. But I am working hard to shake off that heavy feeling because, all in all, I still feel good and I can still move. I can walk or pedal and I can swim and dance. And I can still sit by the river and be still while I reflect on the friendships that I miss and the ones I still hold tightly to.

And if a bucket list is truly about goals then the one at the very top of my list is to live this great big life in such a way that my friends and family never doubt how much I love each and every one of them. That is a goal worth working on every single day.

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.

Postmarks

By Tina Wynecoop

First published in the Friends of the Little Spokane River newsletter April 17, 2013. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Kay Ringo, who lived on a farm called “Buckeye” near the meandering Little Spokane River, wrote several books about the area she came to love. Thanks to her passion to record its history, readers can go back in time and gain a clearer sense of “the way it was.” She focused her published writings on the local mill town, Buckeye, as well as on the Little Spokane Garden Club, post offices in the area, and her pioneer family. In 2012, just four years shy of a century, she published her last history book, based on letters written by her aunt and uncle, about pioneer days in Washington Territory, 1879-1886.

Postmarked letters are a researcher’s valuable resource and postmarks led Kay to many historical discoveries, including first-person accounts of our

Colbert area recorded during the last fifteen decades. The post office story is twined with Kay’s – for in her life the post office was a center of community and communication. This was also true for our family when we made our home here in 1976 and our address was Route 1, Box 319, Colbert, Washington.

There weren’t many homes in the area

Whitetail deer were rarely seen, and wild turkeys were non-existent. Occasionally we would receive a notice in our mailbox telling us there was a package too big to deliver and we would drive the six miles to pick it up in Colbert, at the old wood frame building that had served as store and post office since 1890. Talk about stepping back in time!



This 1940 photo of the Colbert Post Office from Kay Ringo’s collection looks just the same as it did when we picked up our packages there in the 1970s and ‘80s.

at the time. We enjoyed and still do look forward to the daily half-mile walk to get our mail. For many years our rural mail carrier made deliveries on two-lane dirt or macadam roads lined with wild rose bushes and vast fields of farmland.

to “Dean” because mail dispatchers would confuse Colbert with other rural towns with names beginning with “Col.” Harry Dean was an engineer for the Great Northern Railway and owned land next to the tracks that ran through

In 1890 a fellow named William Guyer moved his store and post office to this new little town being built along Little Deep Creek. It was not called Colbert, yet, but Dagoon. Then Henry Colbert bought Guyer’s store and property and was appointed postmaster in 1902. The name of the P.O. was changed to Colbert. Then the name changed



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Colbert. Thus the name was changed, temporarily.

Dragoon, Colbert, Dean, and then Colbert once again was a sawmill town, having hotels, shops, five sawmills, three livery stables, two saloons, two blacksmith shops and a general store. By 1886 only the store was still standing — and still operating as the post office.

Kay and her husband, Howard Ringo, moved to the Buckeye area in the 1960s. Her daughter, Kayanne Wendel, in her eulogy given at the recent memorial service honoring her mother, wrote, “Soon after moving to Buckeye Farm they began the remodeling project of the old house and this sparked her curiosity and interest in the history of the area. This led to researching and writing a book about the history of Buckeye. Writing about history was a special interest and passion of hers, connecting the present with the past.”

Whenever I was doing my own research about something to do with our Little Spokane River Valley, usually for an article for the newsletter, I knew I could ask Kay Ringo questions. She was a wonderful resource and it gave me

special pleasure to visit her. She found something interesting to appreciate in everything, including her visitors. She was what I call “a gentle beam of living love.” She loved the outdoors, loved to travel, loved her extensive family. Her humor permeated her relationships, and she could carry on a joke for a long time.

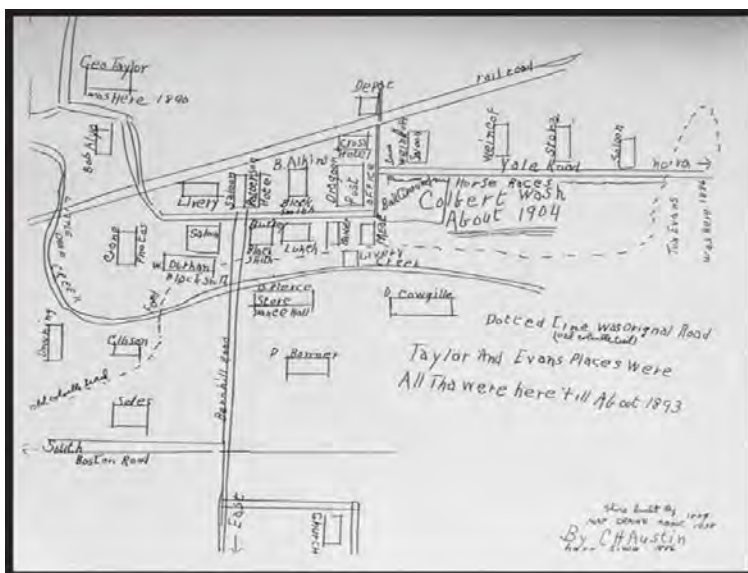
Let me take you back to Christmas Eve,

table she remarked, “If someone doesn’t eat that sandwich I am going to wrap it up and put someone’s name on it and put it under the tree.” The sandwich disappeared and Kay didn’t give it another thought. The sandwich was wrapped in blue foil paper (by someone else) and placed under the Christmas tree with Kay’s name on it. Imagine the laughter on Christmas morning when the ribboned gift was opened!

The saga of that toasted cheese sandwich is history-making in itself, and of course Kay wrote a story about it, imaginatively having the sandwich tell the story of its 16 years of travels to Montana, Idaho and Oregon, disguised as a Christmas present — always coming back every other year as a Christmas gift to the beloved owner of Buckeye Farm — sometimes by mail delivery postmarked “Colbert.”

Tina says: Growing up in western Washington, I thought it was the most interesting place in the world until I moved in 1970 to teach school on the Spokane

Indian Reservation. The culture, geography, history, and flora and fauna of the eastern part of the state is now my beloved “home ground.”



*This map, drawn by Clarence H. Austin, is from Kay’s book **The Milltown: Buckeye, Washington, and Surrounding Area, 1889-1912.** (When researching this article in 2013, I drove by the old store. It is still standing, but cosmetic changes to its siding and porch and windows make it unrecognizable.)*

1970, when all the family was gathered at Buckeye Farm. A meal was served and there was one toasted cheese sandwich left on the platter. As Kay cleared the

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APPENZING

Submissions for Events, Meetings & Opportunities

Please send listing submissions for events, meetings, and opportunities for inclusion in the print edition and online at ncmonthly.com to: ncmonthly@gmail.com.

Events

Nov 2: Election day.

Nov 3: Vitalant Blood Drive, Colville High School, 9-2.

Nov 4: First Thursday Art Walk, downtown Chewelah and Trails End Gallery, 5:30-8 pm.

Nov 6 & 9: Vitalant Blood Drive at the Ag Trade Center, Colville, Nov 6, 9-2 and Nov 9, noon-5.

Nov 7: Daylight savings ends. Set clocks back one hour.

Nov 8, 9 & 10: Spokane Nonprofit Network meeting (virtual), Monday, noon-1 pm, Ferry & Stevens County Nonprofit Network meeting (virtual), Tuesday, 2-3 pm, and One River (Pend Oreille County) Nonprofit Network meeting (virtual), Wednesday, 2-3 pm, and for anyone involved with or interested in nonprofits. Visit washingtonnonprofits.org or call 509-675-3791 to get registered (free).

Nov 11: Veterans Day.

Nov 12-13: Deck the Hall Craft Bazaar, presented by the Arden Homemakers Club at the Arden Community Hall, 636 Hall Rd, Colville, from 9-4 both days. Coffee & desserts available. For more info, call 509-690-0281.

Nov 12-14: Woodland Theatre presents All Together Now! Showtimes Friday and Saturday, 7 pm, Sunday, 4 pm. Tickets at Meyers Falls Market in Kettle Falls 509-738-2727 or Colville Chamber of Commerce. 509-684-5973, \$12 Seniors/Students \$15 Adults. Audience members will need to be masked for the performance. See ad page 12.

Nov 21: Park Avenue Players present One Act Festival, 6:30 pm, Chewelah Center for the Performing Arts, 405 N 3rd St. E, Chewelah. Call 509-935-8595 for more info.

Nov 25: Thanksgiving Day.

Nov 30: Giving Tuesday. Visit givingtuesday.org for more info.

Meetings & Opportunities

Library Events: Check out library events at ncrl.org (Ferry Co.), thelosc.org (Stevens Co.), pocld.org (Pend Oreille Co.) and sclcd.org (Spokane Co.).

Create Arts Center, at 900 W 4th, Newport, is offering coffee in the garden, live music, classes for a variety of arts, crafts, music lessons and more. Visit www.createarts.org for more info and a full calendar of events and lessons.

Northeast Washington Genealogy Society: Learn more at newgs.org.

Deer Park Business Referral Group/Deer Park Power Tips, Tuesdays, 8 am. Email sandiebrown27@gmail.com for info.

Business & Professional Women meeting, second and fourth Wednesdays, 6:30-7:30 pm, Freckles' Gourmet BBQ, 18 North Clark Avenue, Republic.

Al Anon, Wednesdays, Noon, Thursdays, 6 pm, 887 S. Walnut, Colville.

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Spotlight on The Rotary Foundation

By Lynn O'Connor

Adenea Thompson has been writing articles for this fine publication based on Rotary International's monthly themes. These are reminders to Rotarians about the Areas of Focus we have identified as the path to peace, along with a few other popular and necessary efforts: membership and youth services, for instance.

November is Foundation month. Rotary International has an associated Foundation created to support the efforts of Rotary clubs all over the world. It has grown from an original donation of \$26.50 to a value currently of over \$1 billion (US) and is one of the most prestigious and highly respected foundations in the world, and its stated purpose is "to do good in the world."

The three main focuses of The Rotary Foundation are the PolioPlus program, humanitarian grants programs, and educational programs.

In 1985 Rotary started on the path to eradicating polio, which was endemic worldwide and reporting about 1,000 cases a day, or 350,000 cases each year worldwide, including Canada and the US. Today, Rotarians are euphoric because there have been only two cases of polio so far this year! At this time last year there were 140 cases, all in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Rotary Foundation helps with the funding of this effort.

For humanitarian and educational programs, Rotary has a complicated system of grants: the new Programs of Scale grants (\$2M to programs with strong partnerships), Global grants (1,359 grants totaling \$95.6M so far), District grants available by region to local clubs (490 grants totaling \$33.6M), and 339 disaster response grants (another fairly recent program) totaling \$8.4M. Ninety-one percent of funds

are spent directly on the projects. The Foundation has the highest rating on Charity Navigator and has earned this rating for the last 11 years. Rotarians have chosen fighting disease as their #1 priority (\$59.4M spent on disease-related projects), with the rest funding our other Areas of Focus

(peace & conflict resolution, education, growing local economies, saving mothers and children, providing clean water, sanitation and hygiene, and supporting the environment).

That paragraph was for the numbers folks. Now for the stories. It is Rotarians who design, fund, implement, and complete the projects where their hearts take them: local members in Puerto Rico helped people rebuild their lives after Hurricane Maria; a grant in Durango, Colorado, installed more than 200 solar lights in remote, off-the-grid Navajo homes; members built networks of doctors to help refugees in Berlin, Germany, and here at home, for the last two summers, District grants have helped local Rotarians in the No Produce Left Behind project where we buy produce at the end of the Farmers Market days and deliver that food to the

Food Pantry network, helping our local farmers as well as those in need of nutritious and delicious food.

You can find considerably more details about The Rotary Foundation, including our annual report, by going to www.rotary.org/en/about-rotary/rotary-foundation. Rotarians have every right to be proud of their Foundation, and so many are happy donors. You can help, too! Just find your local Rotarian or visit the Foundation webpage to see how you can get involved.



Rotarian Lynn O'Connor at the Colville Farmers Market.

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

LISTEN UP

Reviews by Michael Pickett

Lindsey Buckingham Speaks for Himself

Years ago, I spoke briefly to Lindsey Buckingham. Actually, it was more of a quick, loud shout between songs from the last row of The Wiltern theater in LA ... but I made him laugh, and I've put that on every job résumé since 1992.

In all seriousness, the only reason I would ever attend a Fleetwood Mac show is if Buckingham is on guitar. Nothing about Stevie Nicks' bleating voice or the laconic rhythm section really inspires the way Buckingham's solo work does, and his new eponymously titled album absolutely underscores this truth.

Subdued-but-pulsing gems like "Scream" and the perfectly fingerpicked "Blue Light" sound like companion pieces to 1992's *Out of the Cradle*, while "Swan Song" and the percussive "Power Down" show the inventive, Americana-tinged pop-rock sensibilities that Buckingham

brought to Fleetwood Mac all those years before.

Frankly, had Lindsey Buckingham not been asked to leave Mac a few years ago, this album might not have seen the light of day, and that's a gift if ever there was one (as is the fact that he survived a massive heart attack just a few months after leaving the band).

Buckingham's signature fingerpicking is like the comfort of a fire pit in a backyard oasis under starry skies, and his composing has rarely been better. While it's likely that Lindsey will eventually make his way back to the Mac



at some point, this album is a bright spot in a fantastic career, and his signature sound is as vital as it was 40 years ago.

Tony Bennett Reunites with Gaga

At the ripe young age of 95, Tony Bennett may be grappling with the effects of Alzheimer's, but as soon as he steps up to a mic, he transforms into that crooner we've known for decades. And say what you will about Lady Gaga's meat-dress and unsettling early image, she is one of the most talented artists on the planet. You give her a piano and have her sing, and she's absolutely untouchable.

Hearing their chemistry again on *Love For Sale* – after 2014's *Cheek to Cheek* – is an unexpected and welcome farewell for Bennett, who will likely retire from recording after a mind-blowing 61 albums. While Gaga

has only seven albums under her leather belt, she's still a seasoned vet and the Cole Porter duets here are fantastic.



Check out the moving, incendiary "I Get a Kick Out of You," with its mood-shifts and breathless, wistful telling here. It's a match made in recording studio heaven, and as you find your way to the lush "Dream Dancing," it's clear that Gaga is a perfect foil for Bennett's iconic persona, bringing him back to the music.

Years ago, I saw a show at the Paramount Theatre in Seattle. Gold facades and opera-house acoustics were unbeatable there, and the whole experience was intimate and magical. I imagine this duo's treatment of Cole Porter classics warming a venue like this indelibly, and I hope they can do a few shows to make this collaboration truly complete.

Check out Michael Pickett's music, free at pickettmusic.com.

A Good Read

Reviews by Loren Cruden

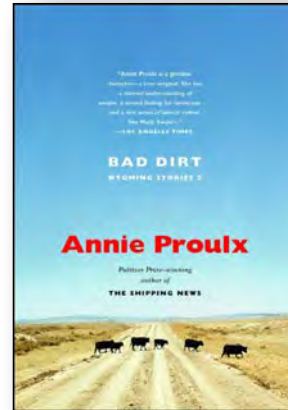
Bad Dirt, by Annie Proulx

Annie Proulx's 2004 short-story collection, *Bad Dirt*, was her second roundup of Wyoming tales. Clearly at ease with Wyoming's mountainous horizons, wind-abused plateaus, outrageous weather, isolated towns and hardcore, irascible inhabitants, I imagine Proulx may even chuckle to herself as she writes.

Characters are saddled with names like Fiesta Punch and Mercedes de Silhouette (ranchers), for example. Or Creel Zmundzinski and Orion Horncrackle (game wardens) – or Budgel Wolfscale, for heaven's sake; and of course there's Frank Frink. Various places and characters recur, popping up again in, say, a story about a beard contest after earlier appearing in one revealing a highly unconventional tactic for dealing with poachers. Stories involve polo, oldtimers, incomers, bad marriages – even an alcoholic six-year-old. Proulx takes the shine off Western romanticism the way a sandstorm strips paint from a house, but still there's that wily chuckle, barely contained. As with her books about maritime Canada's vanishing

but tenacious way of life, *Bad Dirt* is about what it takes to hang tough.

The collection's final recurrence of Elk Tooth inhabitants takes place in "Florida Rental." At the Pee Wee bar, "No one blinked when five Tibetan monks in their blood orange robes came in and ordered tea. The monks were all small and catty and gave off an aura of muscular strength like rodeo riders. After they left, Hard Winter Ulph said, 'Wouldn't want to git on the wrong side a them boys.'" I won't spoil the story by hinting at what unfolds. Just that it isn't about monks and it made me want to give Amanda Gribb, the bartender at the Pee Wee, a high five.



Red Sky at Noon, by Simon Sebag Montefiore

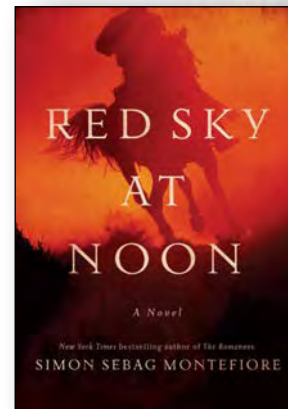
If epic love and fraught journeys across war-ravaged Russian steppes during World War II float your literary boat, *Red Sky at Noon* provides just the ticket. It has Cos-sacks, convicts, noble horses, bloody sabers, fierce women, degenerate aristocrats, Nazis and Communists, Fascists and Partisans, traitors, spies, peasants and – naturally – Stalin (and his daughter). All firmly rooted in authentic Russian history and culture and voiced in Montefiore's eloquent storytelling style.

Such as: "The swab of sun had turned the sky a pinkened yellow yet the horizon behind them was jet black with a slow-billowing plume of smoke so solid in appearance it resembled the domes of a dark cathedral."

At the center of this vast, menacing theater of war rides a small band of Soviet cavalry made up of criminals from the gulag, including Benya, a Jewish political prisoner, their fates governed from afar by men who "...had the clammy pallor of the bureaucrat who never saw the sun, a condition known to Stalin's familiars as 'the Kremlin tan'."

It is a classic tale of a decent man's struggle to remain humane within the unholy trinity of gulag, war, and dictatorship. The Russian steppes – immense, engulf-

ing – present the perfect scale for this. Desperately swimming the Don River, "...the black water enveloped him amid the sheeting rain that was so thick it seemed as if the river itself was raining upwards into the clouds." Everything is excessive and the single-minded will to survive rises to meet it. "The woodpecker tapped; skylarks swooped; howitzers boomed on the Don."



Other recommendations:

Michael Hughes – *Country*

Caitlin Horrocks – *Vexations*

Jayne Anne Phillips – *Quiet Dell*

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

Apple Pie and Dad

By Karen Giebel

I reach out my hand to pluck an apple from the tree and I hear his voice on the wind as it rustles the drying leaves on the tree, "Man, that was good! That apple pie is as good as any your mother has made." The voice I hear in my mind is my dad's, gone almost half of my life now. It's always autumn when he comes back to visit me. Always outdoors and apples are always involved.

When the air turns crisp in October, dad memories start to come back, but November is what I call "Dad Month." November is how I picture my father. Hunting season opens and he is wearing that muted red and black woolen jacket and leggings with the matching hat that had the old ear flaps. I see him taking his gun from the glass-fronted cabinet where it had resided since last autumn. He sits down with a cleaning kit and an old rag and sets about getting ready to provide food

for his family. Dad enjoyed the hunt but mostly he enjoyed traipsing through the snowy woods with his buddies on those cold, clear days when the sun was low in the sky. With four females in the house, hunting was the perfect excuse to escape for some male bonding time.

My mother was a good cook, but it was her baking that really set her apart from others. Her specialty was pies, especially apple pie. It is said that cooking for your family is a way of showing your love for them. We all enjoyed mom's apple pie but, make no mistake, every apple pie she baked was a gift of love for my dad. To see his face light up when a warm piece of apple pie was placed in front of him is a memory I cherish.

That pie was unadorned. No whipped cream, no cheddar cheese, no ice cream. Just the best apple pie in the world made by the woman he loved. When that slice of pie

was finished, dad would look up at mom and say "Man, that was good!" I learned to cook standing beside my mother in our old farmhouse kitchen, but I don't recall ever being shown how to make a crust or even the filling. Pie baking belonged to mom.

To make those apple pies, first we had to drive to the orchard to pick apples. That was a yearly adventure we four kids eagerly anticipated. On a Saturday when mom was at work, dad would load us into the Ford Country Squire station wagon with the fold-down third seat in the back and off we went down winding country roads, past grape vineyards and old barns until we arrived at Chadakoin Farms.

Out came the bushel baskets and, with much delighted squealing, off we ran into the orchard. Cortland and McIntosh apples were what we picked, and we ate as many as we could while tossing apples into the baskets. Bushel baskets full, dad

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Reflections on Life's Journey

would chuckle and turn his back as we kids stuffed apples in our pockets and under the car seats. At the farm stand, we stood in awe watching the cider press as it turned windfall apples into an amber-colored, sweet, tangy, once-a-year treat.

Seeing how apple pie made my dad so happy, I decided as a young adult that I would start to bake pies and bring them home to my dad to make him smile. For sure, my first attempts were not met with any kind of compliments. Dad would eat a piece of my pie and, as I eagerly watched for his reaction, he merely nodded and said, "Thank you."

Slowly, my skill level improved and I made a crust that was edible. Dad looked at me and said, "That's better." As the years passed, I improved enough that I heard, "That's pretty good but you still have a ways to go."

Finally, I was told "That's almost as good as your mother's." The last apple pie I ever made for my father proved the winner. He took a bite, then another, then looked up at me and said the words that come back to me every year. The words that 32 years later, I still cherish. He said "Man, that was good! That apple pie is as good as any your mother has made."

November and Thanksgiving. There was nothing my father cherished more than having his family gathered around a table groaning under the weight of all that wonderful food. Food that he worked so hard to provide for us. To cap it all off, there were pumpkin, mincemeat and pecan pies

and, of course, my mother's apple pie. I can still see him sitting at that table, beaming at his family and all that bounty.

Yes, November is Dad Month. My father passed away the day after Thanksgiving in 1989 following a decade-long battle with emphysema. He died at home surrounded by his wife and children.

To this day, I can still hear his voice in the

wind as it rustles through the drying leaves of the apple tree. "Man, that was good!"

I wish you a Thanksgiving blessed with bountiful food, family and, of course, apple pie.

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

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Twisted High Lunge

By Brenda St. John

“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.”

~ C. S. Lewis

I seem to have a spring in my step again. I had not realized that I had slipped into a slump over the past year and a half, but now that yoga classes have finally resumed since the lockdown began ages ago, I am feeling happier and more light-hearted than I have in a very long time. And based on the comments I hear from my students, they are feeling the same way. Unfortunately, it is only a brief reprieve as we have already been notified that Winter Quarter classes will revert to online only. But, in the spirit of living in the present moment, I will enjoy what we have now.

Why do we feel happier, lighter, and spring-ier (is that a word)? It has to do with yoga postures that make us stand straight and tall (no slouching), open our hearts (shoulders back and down), create body strength (which boosts self-confidence), and deepen our breathing (which creates calmness while reducing anxiety). What a combination! Could we bottle this up?

When a person decides to set time aside to practice yoga, there are hundreds of asana from which to choose. Where to begin can seem overwhelming. A person can focus on a specific part of their anatomy or practice for the whole body.

I thought for a moment about poses which combine all the qualities listed above, such as no slouching, heart-opening, strength-building, and slow breathing, and the one I am sharing this month is Twisted High Lunge, which is also known as Revolved Crescent Lunge. The Sanskrit name for this asana is Parivrtta Ashta Chandrasana. Looking at the attached sketch, it is evident that the spine is straight, the shoulders are back and down, and there is a great deal of effort being exerted. We can only assume that the person is breathing slowly and steadily, as is appropriate with all asana.

The simplest way for a beginner to achieve this posture is to begin in Table Top pose, meaning on hands and knees. Then step the left foot forward between the hands. A nice prop here is to place both palms on blocks. Slide the right leg back, tuck the toes, and lift the right knee so the leg is straight. The heel should be oriented vertically. The left knee should have a 90-degree bend. Both feet should face forward.

With the back leg strong and active, assure that the hips are square by drawing the right hip forward and pressing the left hip back. Both hips should be parallel with the front edge of the mat. At this point, the chest is lifted and facing forward. Thus far, the asana is called High Lunge or Crescent Lunge.



It is a powerful, strength-building, hip-opening pose for the spine and legs. Shoulder strength can be gained by raising the arms overhead. If the legs aren't ready to hold this posture for a length of time, a person can drop the back knee to the mat and untuck the toes of the back foot, which is Low Lunge.

To take the pose into a Twisted Lunge (high or low), move the right hand closer to the left foot. Keep the spine elongated. Then sweep the straight left arm up until it is overhead, twisting the spine sequentially from hips to neck (like climbing a spiral staircase). Draw the tailbone toward the floor. Hold and breathe slowly and steadily. To come out, spring the right foot forward into Ardha Uttanasana (forward fold with a flat back). Place the hands on the mat, return to Table Top, and then step the right foot forward between the hands to repeat the sequence.

The beauty of yoga is that it is a life-long practice. People of all ages, from children to super seniors, can practice yoga by attending classes, watching videos, or reading books. I went to my first yoga class at age 50 and it turned out to be a life-changer (thanks, Heidi!). Since then, I have partaken in many online and in-person workshops and accumulated a huge library of yoga books, most written by famous yogis. Many of these authors are also medical professionals. The knowledge is out there, and my passion to learn more and more about yoga inspired me to accumulate as much of it as I could.

Although it is totally impossible for anyone to know everything there is to know about yoga, I continue with my quest for yoga knowledge. It is now my great joy to share whatever knowledge I have with others.

Namaste.

Brenda St. John has taught yoga classes in Chewelah since 2010.

Thanks Meal

By Michelle Lancaster

How do homesteaders entertain themselves at mealtime? They count up how many items on their plate they grew! The ultimate goal, of course, is to have grown everything on your plate. That challenge is easily met in summer months with the garden bounty, so we give extra points for winter meals that are homegrown. In the same way that we stock up on winter feed supply for our livestock, we can prepare for short- or long-term situations by creating plans to build up our winter food supply, finances, and emotional wellbeing.

A local acquaintance recently grumbled about becoming sick of canning and preserving food once fall arrives. She wondered, do we all feel that way? (I do!) We are so excited in springtime to dig in the dirt and plant vegetables, but months of the rush to preserve food at the peak of ripeness without wasting food wears a person out.

I regretted the resentment toward having a bounty of food to preserve after another lady commented. She canned excessively one year, then for the next four years struggled with cancer and ensuing job and housing situations. That excess food helped bring her through those hard times. She said, "Embrace it, you never know what God has planned."

Recently, a close friend of our family lost his job. This job loss was preventable by others, not something our friends planned to have happen. Their large family will be alright because they have hope and faith and are diligent workers and will find work where they are wanted and appreciated. The community will help them through this difficult time.

Situations like these can create a variety of emotional responses. Before peace and understanding, the mind may jump to negative thoughts. Anger. Fear. Frustration. Helplessness. I learned in

school that being prepared meant I did not need to fear or worry about upcoming situations. By knowing my topic ahead of time, I could enjoy rather than fear public speaking. I learned the value of being prepared.

Later in life, I struggled with finances when, no matter how much we cut farm expenses, we could not pay all our bills. In that situation, I felt like there was no way to dig ourselves out of the hole, let alone

build an emergency savings fund as Dave Ramsey suggested. We prayed and prayed, then a providential phone call changed our lives, presenting opportunity for a completely unexpected life change that allowed us to stop creating debt and pay off what we owed. I can't describe that feeling, other than to say it's the complete opposite to fear or frustration.

Stocking up on food and living within your means – that is all good and well, but still means nothing if you have no desire to live, or live in fear or feel helpless or alone. The past couple years have challenged us all, in a multitude of ways. I cannot speak for others, but I crave the company of like-minded people. I miss the easy camaraderie of friends and acquaintances as we pass each other in our daily lives.

Coming up with ideas on how to be a human and form emotional connections with others is quite baffling these days. Even so, we can find ways to make a difference. A local friend volunteers

for Rural Resources by delivering food to local families. She is able to talk with and check in on them on a regular basis. Everyone benefits from the interactions.

Another friend and I volunteer to help a homeschooling group. We work with a group of local children and expose them to the fiber arts. I was not confident about my ability to teach, but my friend encourages me, is very good with children, full of ideas, and has become an important mentor in my life. The leader of the homeschooling group asked us about where the kids could volunteer and develop community service skills – if you have any good ideas, please contact me!

Life can be confusing and disheartening at times. Winter provides time for reflection and restoration. Embrace the cold and dark season instead of fearing or begrudging. If you don't know where to start, start small. Next time you go to buy a treat, put the money in the piggy bank instead. Stock up on staple foods that you can create a variety of meals from. Find a friend you admire and ask them to help you – people like to help, but don't always know who to help until you ask.

I have relied on my family and friends on almost a daily basis. Now it's my time to step up and help a friend. We wrapped up a box of apples to take them and have some extra dried fruit we can share. In those times when I think I am going overboard with my preparations, I pretty much always end up finding a use for the excess. On a lighter note, I guess that means I better close out my article and go finish canning the apple pie filling I have made...

I believe we are here on this earth to make a positive difference. Happy Thanksgiving to you all!

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





Article & Photo by Joe Barreca

A while back we watched *Shang-Chi*, a Marvel blockbuster with lots of digital effects showing scenes set in Shanghai and a hidden village deep in a bamboo forest. There was a lot of FX involved in the forest but they must have started with images of the real thing. The real thing showed acres of 100-foot-high bamboo stalks so thick you could barely walk through them. In Shanghai there was a martial arts fight on bamboo scaffolding covering the side of a high-rise building. This was bamboo like I had never seen it before.

In my vineyard and those nearby we use bamboo as part of our trellises and for net-setting poles. It got me thinking about growing bamboo on the farm. What does it take to grow it? How does it affect the soil? What can it be used for? And just what is it?

Fundamentally, bamboo is grass – very big grass. I tend to think of grass as covering a prairie. Its large root mass in relation to its above-ground size gives it the ability to spring back after being eaten or mowed. Properly managed, it creates some of the most fertile farmland in the world. As pasture it gives us livestock and meat. As grain it gives us baked goods and sprouts. Do those attributes still apply to super-sized grass?

Not so much. There are close similarities. Bamboo comes in two basic types, clumping and running. Clumping is like the fescue in most lawns. It grows in bunches and spreads slowly. Running is like spreading brome, commonly referred to as quackgrass. The biggest varieties of the over 1,000 species of bamboo are clumping types that can reach 100 feet in height and 12 inches in diameter (Wikipedia). Like corn (also a grass), they need rich soil, warm temperatures and plenty of water. They don't grow here. What we can grow are running types which are much more forgiving of temperature and soil types.

Therein lies a problem. Think quackgrass on steroids. Running types are considered an invasive species. Some

types of bamboo can grow three feet in one day. Their runners can go 20 or 30 feet underground. Once a stand is established, it is nearly impossible to eradicate by non-toxic means. I needed to talk to someone who actually grows bamboo. Fortunately my neighbor Rufus Cabral (pictured at right, with his bamboo grove) is that someone.

We buy bamboo poles and stakes of different sizes from him on occasion. We don't have to do that very often because bamboo lasts. In fact, it is resistant to many things that wood is not. Deer and insect pests seldom bother it. Sun and water in this dry climate have little effect.

When they are young sprouts, most varieties are edible after boiling off the cyanogenic glycosides, mild toxins with a bitter taste. Stalks reach full height in the first year but take four or five more years to leaf out and harden. The mature stalk can live for 10 years or so. The leaves emerge in the spring and hang around until the next spring, then fall off as new leaves emerge. Like grass, the stalk (culm) has nodes, which can be cut to form cups or used as floats.

Finding bamboo fishing net floats on beaches in Alaska was one of the things that piqued Rufus' interest in bamboo. Among the hundreds of uses of bamboo there are food, medicine, livestock feed and many fiber uses such as paper, eating utensils and construction materials. Bridges, houses and furniture can all be made from bamboo. Rufus points out that the mature wood is 40% silicon. This makes it hard on saw blades. Carbide is recommended.

Bamboo is strange in other ways. It can bloom and have seeds, but only very infrequently, happening on all stands of a species at once which then all die. Since bamboo regenerates quickly and enriches the soil while it rots underground, this is more of a survival tactic than a catastrophe. Rufus described how the roots, when they become blocked by dry hard clay, exude moisture to soften the clay so they

can move through. Yet when employed to stabilize erodible stream banks, a common use, they can't cross under the stream itself.

Rufus grows a variety found at the 10,000-foot elevation in the Himalayas and several others. But common types know as "fishing pole" and "yellow grove" died here.

The Cabrals got starts from a nursery on the east coast. Trying to get new starts transplanted into pots that can survive the winter has been more challenging. One of the biggest issues, the expanding nature of running bamboo, has not been a big problem. The new sprouts are big and obvious, so it is easy to mow them down and contain the bamboo patch.

As for bamboo being good for the soil, maybe it is. The mulch of the leaves and density of the root system may fertilize the soil. But since the groves are so thick and persistent, nothing much but bamboo grows in the center of the groves and only grass near the edges. Essentially, if you have a steady use for bamboo poles or use it as food or feed, it is a dependable crop. It also makes good wind breaks and stabilizes erodible soil. But if you change your mind about that, it can become a big problem.

Bottom line: Consider your options carefully. You don't want to make a bamboo-boo.

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



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Growing Up On The Spokane Indian Reservation

By Robert Wynecoop

Excerpt from Robert "Chick" Wynecoop's book, printed in 2003 by Tornado Creek Publications, reprinted here, with permission.

Chapter 43: Corrals and Barns

We needed good corrals when we were branding and ear-marking the calves. We also used the corrals to hold the cattle while we sorted them before hauling them into town for sale. Dad had originally built a corral across from the house and wanted to add onto it. I think he had done most of the work on the old corral by himself.

The first corral was in a poor place and too small, but we continued to use it. The cattle didn't want to go into it because it was near the house, and they generally avoided tight places. They could be forced into a corral only with our great effort. Sometimes they would break back and at a full run scatter us

kids everywhere. Uncle Bill and his son Bob sometimes came over on horseback to help us corral the cattle.

After old Mose Phillips' house burned, the little house next to it was abandoned. Dad bought the property, and the land provided the perfect place for a better corral. The old hay shed had been down several years and the rain and snow were ruining the hay. It was time for a major change.

Dad decided to move the cattle operations over to Mose's old place. He bought a Quonset hut from Dix Steel to use as a hay barn. When it was completed, our cattle business was moved to this new site. The new barn was a lot different to work in than the hay shed. The metal Quonset barn had no air circulation and collected heat, so it made for a real hot, dusty workplace. We tried to fill the barn as fast as possible to get out of that miserable hot box.

After we moved the hay operations into the new barn, we needed corrals to go along with it. Dad hired Smelly (Melvin Peone) to help build us a series of corrals, lanes, and a chute to use for loading cattle for shipment.

Because Dad wanted a big corral, we had to dig lots of post holes and cut countless poles. To make this big job easier, Dad had bought a post hole digger that was attached to a chain saw. The auger was tall, with the saw shoulder-high to the operator and his helper. Because the saw was so high, it was hard to apply pressure to make it dig deep.

We kids created a new way of getting the job done. We hung onto the handles and pulled down. The holes were still hard to dig, and it really got tough when you hit a rock. If you were inside the handles when you hit a rock, the saw was so strong that it spun and knocked down whoever was trying to hold onto it. That was one tough job, trying to hang onto that auger/saw. After some scary mistakes we learned to stand back and give the saw plenty of room.

Dad wanted us to use burned trees that had turned into pitch for fence posts because they were strong and wouldn't rot. Since these were hard to find we used a lot of western larch for fence posts. Once we started to get some posts in the ground, we cut lodgepole pine for corral poles. There was one nice stand of good lodgepoles not far from our house. Armed with double



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The Way It Was, According to Chick

bit axes, we cut poles and loaded them into the back of our faithful Reo truck.

After we'd dug many holes by hand or with the auger, and cut and hauled many poles, the new corral started to take shape. We built two corrals and a loading chute the first year and added another corral later.

From the lower end of the middle corral, we added a wing that ran to the barn, and where the wing met the corral, we added a gate. When the gate was open the wing was closed and the cattle went into the corral. If the gate was closed, the cattle walked straight through and didn't go into the corral.

This simple wing made it easier for us to catch the cattle. Once they rounded the corner past the barn, they could only go into the corral or run over anyone who was chasing them.

They chose to run us over more than a few times.

With the completion of this nice new corral, we invented another game. Once the top pole dried, we'd walk the top pole around and around the corral. The

not fun to fall and end up straddling it. I still think about that kind of pain and hope never to experience it again.

About the time we were building the corral, yodeling became popular, so we tried to learn to yodel. I can remember

Judge holding onto the top pole, leaning back, singing a western song, and trying to yodel. He thought he was pretty good; at least he must have thought so, because he did a lot of it. I will make no further comment on his yodeling skills.

Chick passed away in 2018. His grave overlooks the family ranch. His career was in forestry. The family placed his ashes in a Smokey Bear cookie jar and asked his brother, Judge, to dig a post hole to contain it. He did.

The jar was gently lowered in but there simply wasn't enough room for all the memories and sadness.

His stories continue...



Wig and Judge in the finished corral. Photo courtesy Phoebe Wynecoop.

corral had to be 70 to 80 feet on a side and about six feet tall, so it was just perfect for pole-walking. We were pretty good at walking that top pole, but it was

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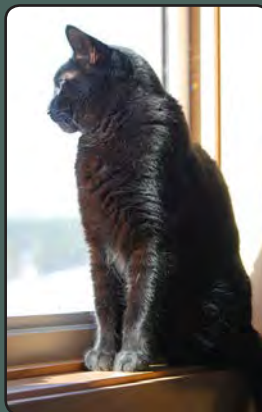
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Solitude

Article & Photo by D.L. Kreft

I like people and enjoy being in groups. I'm far from being an introvert. Just ask my friends. Both of them. But with certain activities I tend to be a loner, and introspective. I like taking my time and not being rushed by the momentum of the crowd. I like staring at a mountain valley and taking it all in; the color, the air, the sound of grass and leaves in the breeze.

"I would rather sit on a pumpkin, and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion."

– Henry David Thoreau

In my teen and early adult years I could be described as melancholic. I was often prone to seasons of self-criticism and taking to heart the cruel words of others. Solitude was my haven, where there was no one to judge or compare against. The danger was dwelling too long in the solitude. If one is not in the best frame of mind it can be a sad and lonely experience that is unrewarding and counterproductive to health. I'm not a fan of Jean-Paul Sartre. I am not a humanist (we have shown humankind cannot rise above the sum of its weakest links) and certainly not an atheist (I do not have enough faith to be one).

But I found this quote to be insightful.

"If you're lonely when you're alone, you're in bad company."

– Jean-Paul Sartre

I learned the value of observing things that were outside myself when I was alone in the forest or open rangelands. I listened intently in the quietest places, my head almost hurting in the silence. I suppose it was the gradual awareness of my own pulse in my head that surprised me. There is nothing new in this. Poets and philosophers have expressed the need to regularly experience some measure of solitude. I found walking anywhere alone in nature to be the best medicine for what was ailing me.

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, There is a rapture on the lonely shore, There is society, where none intrudes, By the deep sea, and music in its roar. I love not man the less, but Nature more."

– Lord Byron

These days it seems harder to find healthy solitude. Being "connected" is too easy and often too convenient. We can share things with people around the world whom we have never



met, in a fraction of a second. This can be very rewarding and broaden our perspective. But it lacks eye contact, voice inflection, human touch. In the next instant we are bombarded with advertising, unsolicited offers of riches, news reports that depress and discourage. How odd it is to find that people 60 or 70 years ago found themselves in the same hurried and harried mood.

"We live, in fact, in a world starved for solitude, silence, and private: and therefore starved for meditation and true friendship."

– C. S. Lewis

I believe that there is nothing wrong with technology that solitude cannot repair. I was visiting the Little Pend Oreille Lakes early last winter. I had been searching for white-winged crossbills and had the great fortune to locate and photograph a few on Flodelle Creek. I drove a little further and, ironically, came to Coffin Lake. That name itself is solitude. I walked down the short trail to the edge of the lake.

The late afternoon sun was low in the sky, putting my shoreline in shadow and the opposite in a wonderful "golden hour" light. The lake surface was frozen smooth. The quiet was making my

head almost hurt. A lone, half-submerged log extended into the frozen lake. Its length drew my eye to the opposite shore where the yellow-orange tamaracks and deep green firs made me stop and stare.

I found myself in solitude and surrendered to the moment. My ears slowly attuned to the sound of distant splashing and thin ice cracking. A family of otters was playing at the outlet of the lake. Their happy socializing was still a solitude for me. I stayed until the evening cold drove me back to my truck. There hadn't been a single vehicle on the highway during my visit, no whine of rubber on highway or engine roar. The funny thing is I couldn't wait to get home and tell my wife about the experience, to break with the solitude and re-enter my life, refreshed and strengthened.

"Solitude is fine, but you need someone to tell that solitude is fine."

– Honore de Balzac

Now that he is retired, Dave is enjoying life as a nature photographer, writer, and administrator of the Northeast Washington Birders Group, @NEWABirders, on Facebook.

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To Be or Not To Be

By Becky Dubell

Do I sound like I'm gonna be on an important topic? I had first thought that I'd like to share my last "trip around the sun" with you but then I had a second thought about all the ups and downs of this last trip. I am still going to make this up and down list for myself because I need to get to the point where the "up" outweighs the "down." The "down" is just screaming at me while the "up" is only whispering.

Have you noticed that when someone uses their soft voice your body takes a pause and really listens? Me personally, I'd like to hear more of what the soft voice has to say. I'm thinking we can all say that 2021 has been an interesting year and would like to hear more of the whispering. I'm going to listen more for the whispering to "fix it," like, I'm gonna be a Great Granny again! That fixes a huge pile of "down"!

So ... my "to be or not to be" is pertaining to living in a kinda remote part of northeast Washington. It also gets me back to my mantra listed below. I can be upset (cons) or not upset (fix it) about what is going on in my little section of this huge world.

Why live in northeast Washington?

Pros – All seasons with beautiful country – lakes, rivers, mountains and back country.

Cons – Can get pretty crowded.

Fix it – Make new friends with fellow outdoorsy folks.

Pros – Warm weather during the summer.

Cons – Mother Nature likes to throw curve balls now and again.

Fix it – Be thankful, in person, of the firefighters. Make new friends with them.

Pros – Small-town country living with few big stores.

Cons – No big box stores with "everything possible" on the shelf.

Fix it – Take a deep breath. Place a special order. Make new friends at stores.

Pros – *Cheers* sitcom "Where everybody knows your name." Well, most everybody.

Cons – "Where everybody knows your name."

Fix it – Appreciate your neighbors looking out for you. Make more friends.

Pros – Waves from people driving down the street.

Cons – Trying to figure out why they are waving at you.

Fix it – Appreciate that we have polite and friendly drivers out there.

Pros – Restaurants with super food.

Cons – Restaurants with super food, especially desserts.

Fix it – To heck with it! Enjoy the desserts! Fixed Becky style!

Pros – Live out in the boonies ... well ... 10 miles.

Cons – List got added to while gone from the house.

Fix it – Another trip into town and might as well get a dessert!

Pros – Trees that clean the air we breathe and turn colors to give us beauty.

Cons – Leaves falling from those trees that we need.

Fix it – Watch JJ land in the middle of the raked pile of leaves.

Pros – Have the world available to us with technology.

Cons – Have the world available to us with northeast Washington sketchy technology.

Fix it – Try again later or make a trip to town for WiFi. Make a friend of the guy next to you doing the same thing. Maybe a dessert?

Pros – Full moon over Kalispell on a clear wet night.

Cons – Full moon over Kalispell on a clear wet night glaring off the wet pavement.

Fix it – Flash my high beams at the moon and chuckle. I have a new friend even though he didn't dim his light, thank goodness.

Personal note:

I had to add this last one cuz the northeast Washington technology bit me on my backside. My article did not send to Gabriel when the button was pushed to do so. Now I have to try again or go downtown. Saw this moon on my way home from dancing tonight. It was GORGEOUS! Maybe that is why the internet would not work for me. It knew I would need to share with you. There. I fixed it and made a new friend.

The more I think about it, the more serious I am about making that "up and down" list and really listen for the whispering voices. With the busy holiday season just around the corner it is a good time to just sit back, take a deep breath and remember. Maybe a gift to my family?

Becky is a mother, grandma, and great-grandma who is all about family and friends, loves northeast Washington, and follows the mantra: "It is what it is and it will become what I make it."

The Division of the Day

By Bob McGregor

This story is dedicated to Herb Munroe, a true visionary in helping bring the community college to rural northeast Washington. Disclaimer: the date and the name of the student have been changed.

April 26, 2009, started not much different than most of my teaching days except my teaching day was going to start in Republic with an 8:30 a.m. math lecture class. It was a beautiful morning and the drive over Sherman Pass was spectacular. I arrived early, and so went across the street and purchased an espresso, a great way to start the perfect day.

The class went well. After class, Angie, one of my top students, stopped to chat. She had missed several classes in the past week and wanted to talk. She explained she had cancer and would be missing much of next week also. She said this was her

third bout with cancer and she frequently suffered a serious side effect from the pain medication. When I asked her what it was, she replied, "It sometimes makes my heart stop." She said that coming to class made doing the math easier and doing the math helped take her mind off the pain.

It was heartening to hear that math helped and heartbreaking to hear that a bright, young, married student was dying from cancer. She hoped she could make it through the quarter, then later said she knew she could beat it, even though it had spread throughout her body.

Driving back from Republic to Colville, with the trees in the soft green of spring, the temperature in the low 70s, a good soft rock station playing on the radio, and a stream gushing down the side of the road, I thought how Angie's life was

much like the water in that stream, rushing headlong on its brief trip to the Columbia River, while most of the rest of us are like the rocks and pebbles in the stream. We get moved inextricably on our way; some are washed away, a little at a time, and some are taken in great segments during floods, then maybe pause for a while. I don't think we get to choose whether we are the water or the rocks, nor could I say which is better.

Today everything around me was glorious, but even a stop at Sandy's for a hot fudge sundae couldn't make it a perfect day.

Bob McGregor, originally from North Dakota, taught science and math in North Dakota, Alaska, and for the Community Colleges of Spokane in Colville. He is happily retired.

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Leaving Yourself Open to Serendipity

By Joanie Christian

Perhaps you can relate to my dilemma: Sometimes the hubby and I try to pack too much into a day or a trip. Admittedly this is almost always my fault as I'm a stop-and-smell-the-roses kind of person when we travel. It takes us forever to get from point A to point B.

Luckily, my husband shares the same interests, or at the very least he humors me in my whims. Some of those times, we look at each other afterward and say, "What in the world were we thinking ... what possessed us to always try to fit 10 pounds of mud in a 5-gallon bucket?" And then we crash, sleep, recover. And repeat. While this pattern sometimes does nothing but leave us whooped, there are times that our haphazard approach leads to some incredible life experiences. And so we have learned to embrace it.

A couple weeks back, we drove to Ya-

kima to pick up some tires we bought on Craigslist. Our oldest son lives in Yakima, so our "plan" was to drive over, visit, stay the night, load up the tires and drive straight home later the next morning. Didn't happen.

Before leaving Yakima, I wandered around my son's yard photographing birds, visited a favorite Yakima coffee shop and bakery, and meandered around the arboretum. We left Yakima later than planned, but time with loved ones is always worth it.

Since my fairly recent conversion to bona fide "bird nerd" status, I rarely travel anywhere without checking my Ebird app to see what bird species have been spotted in the area. The app also allows you to track your own personal bird spotting history. Ebird sightings are fed into databases to give scientists and ornithologists insight into bird populations, behavior and migra-

tory patterns. Each year, the information is used to create fascinating animations of the fall and spring migrations of a number of bird species. With eyes and ears all around the world, layperson bird watchers are contributing in a big way to bird research, providing information on a scale that scientists have never had access to before.

Ebird showed recent sightings of barn owls near our planned route home. We hadn't seen them before, so off we went in search of them. It took us a while, but we finally spotted some. Barn owls nest in lots of places ... tree cavities, barns (of course), church steeples, haystacks, river banks, and even drive-in movie screens. In this case, they were in a cliff dwelling.

It was the middle of the day when they tend to not be active, so we could barely see them as they sheltered in the shaded





“I’d rather regret the risks that didn’t work out than the chances I didn’t take at all.” – Simone Biles

cavity, but occasionally two owls would peer out near the opening. As we watched them, I could see some movement about 20 yards to the left. A huge honeycomb was attached to another cavity that looked like an old owl burrow. Bees were busily buzzing around it. There were no stellar photos of owls that day, but sometimes it’s not about the photo. We left feeling very privileged to have seen the owls and the unique honeycomb.

I’d also been seeing posts of big bull moose at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, and as we approached Spokane at the end of the day, I glanced at my husband to see if he was game for adding yet another rabbit trail to our day. Bless his heart, he humored me once again.

We’ve been to the refuge several times, and always see something interesting. This time we made it all the way through the auto loop without seeing anything other than a cat! Thinking we’d been skunked as we exited the TNWR auto loop, we came upon a couple of cars pulled over, so we stopped, thinking it might be a moose.

Not just one but two bull moose — and they were aggressively dueling right at the edge of the road! We watched as they ignored the cars and gave their all to the battle. Fall means moose rutting season in the inland northwest, when the bulls compete for the chance to breed with the females. The bulls fought out to the road, back to the trees, into the meadow, back into the trees, and got tangled up in a fence of wood and barbed wire, and it took them a bit to get out of that. Dirt was flying through the air.

The bulls spun around over and over, locking horns from the side, then pushing each other back and forth. The sound of the clashing antlers permeated the air, providing an urgent soundtrack to the battle we were witnessing.

They were pretty evenly matched in body and antler size, and it was a draw for quite a while. Finally, one bull ended up on the ground and the other was going at him for a minute or two. I was concerned the downed bull wasn’t going to get up. But he rose and fought some more.

Shortly after, it was clear who had won, and he joined the waiting female at the edge of the trees. The loser was *very* reluctant to leave the female to the other bull, and he forlornly gazed in their direction across the meadow. For the slightly smaller bull, it just wasn’t his day. But I have no doubt that someday it will be. The winner and his intended literally walked off into the sunset.

The battle was magnificent, intense, and brutal. We left the refuge in awe of what we had just seen. We were going to get home so much later than we’d planned, but we didn’t mind. We knew we had witnessed something few are privileged to see.

We pulled into our driveway late at night, and crashed with visions of dueling moose in our heads. Filling our day up and over the brim has resulted in so many incredible experiences we wouldn’t have had otherwise.

Joanie Christian, a freelance nature photographer, has lived in NE WA for 40+ years. View her work at joaniechristian-photography.com.

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