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From the Publisher's Desk

By Gabriel Cruden

I got my first guitar – a warm honey-colored classical nylon string from the House of Music in Colville – for my fifteenth birthday, a combined gift from my aunt Dedria and uncle Alex, and from my mom. To make such a purchase at a time when financial resources were extremely scarce seemed an extravagance of nearly unthinkable proportion. I was stunned.

I treated the instrument with care and reverence, learning to play it under my mother's tutelage. Living in our mountain home without electricity, we read books and made music by candle and lamplight during the long evenings of winter. I learned songs by Peter, Paul and Mary, James Taylor, Donovan, Kate Wolf, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, Otis Redding, Jefferson Airplane, and others.

Over the ensuing years, music became a major part of my life in a variety of ways. I gave guitar lessons to pay for my fiddle lessons, and I learned to play other instruments as well. I went to concerts and performances and trav-

eled to foreign countries to take music courses and to attend music festivals. I joined a band. I apprenticed with a luthier, learning the rudiments of instrument building. I danced a variety of styles over the years to the music specific to those dances. More recently my children have also been learning to dance and play instruments.

Music often provides the soundtrack to my day, whether I'm working in the shop or at my desk, driving to town or across the country, or playing games with the kids. On a few occasions I've gotten out the record player or the 8-track player and DJ-ed an impromptu family dance party in the kitchen.

Certain songs evoke memories or feelings from a particular phase or time in my life. Or the music can energize and move me, or hold and carry me, or take me on a journey. Playing an instrument can be a way to express something I'm feeling deep inside, or to process a feeling and let it go. And it can be just plain fun!

Playing music with other people brings it to a whole different level

where there is a musical conversation of listening and creating together. In that experience, it can not only sound great, which is its own satisfaction, but it also carries an energy that floods me with feel-good vibes.

Whenever sharing an important event or celebration with my mother, music was usually on the menu, along with a meal. In the wake of her recent passing, I did not play my guitar, or any music, for some time. My throat was tight, and I even lost my voice for an evening. I missed her so much. And I still do. Every day.

Now, as I re-engage with the mundane and the majesty of moving forward into each new day, I play again. My mom was teaching one of my daughters some of the session tunes of Scotland and Ireland that our little River Band would play, and I play them now with my daughter, with the same guitar from my youth, bringing into the winter evening music that is at once familiar and reminiscent of what was, and also is its own new moment of creating and sharing what is.

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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 becomes integral to what we choose to strive for, and what is 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



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Finding Community

By River Lasol

Photo by Carsten Tolkmitt

Friendship is pretty amazing. This may seem like a cliché statement, one that's really obvious, but for a long time I haven't had a large number of friends and haven't therefore felt very qualified to write about it. Of course, that's really just my own anxiety talking, but it's true that I feel a little more qualified than I did a year ago (or even just a few months ago). Because, sure, I have several special friendships that I've had for many years, but I've never felt like I had a large community to be a part of.

Which, for the first time in my life, now feels true. It didn't happen at first, when I started university. I needed some time to fully find "my people." And since I learned this year that I am neurodivergent, I've felt more freedom to be myself, and generally know myself better than I ever have. All of this together with the fact that I joined more clubs at school, means that I have several new friendships beginning to bloom.

It truly is the most wonderful feeling in the world to have community. It's not only wonderful to have interesting, fun, kind friends to talk to and hang out with, but it also makes me feel incredibly supported to have so many.

Having just a few friends is not worse than having many, but I tend to be someone who likes a lot of social interaction (weird, since I'm an introvert, I know). It can be difficult to have a robust social life when you're relying

on a small number of people to fulfill that. With my newfound community, I feel like I have more people to call on when I need help with something or am looking for advice. This is practical – like having more people I could ask to help me open a jar, for instance – but also very comforting. Even when I don't actively need help, knowing that I have support systems around me makes me feel safe and content.

A big part of finding my community has been joining more clubs on campus. One club in particular is where I have found most of my new friends this semester. It's my university's Dungeons and Dragons club.

I don't know exactly who is reading this, but I can imagine that some people have a certain image or stereotype in their minds when they read the words dungeons and dragons. And I can't blame them because stereotypes can often be based on reality.

When I first heard about the game years ago, I certainly didn't think it would be something that was for me. But the more I learned about it, the more I thought I might like to try playing it sometime. This was about five years ago now, and I didn't have many friends who seemed interested. But this year I finally took the leap and decided to join several campaigns, as they are called.

I am not exaggerating at all when I say that it has already created many

treasured memories, and I have had some of the most fun times of my life while playing. Partially, I do love the game. There are a lot of rules to remember at first, but once you start getting them down it falls to the background and you get to focus on chaotically fighting monsters and roleplaying with your friends, which is the true draw for me.

Playing DnD has been full of hilarious as well as heartfelt moments and I'm so excited to have found what I believe will be a life-long hobby. But more than that, coming back to the start of this article, I'm so glad to have found this university community. I have no doubt that I will have a lot more to write about community (and also probably DnD) in the future. But for now, suffice it to say that I'm very grateful to university because of how it is allowing me to find friends and to feel a sense of belonging.

Whoever is reading this, just know I sincerely hope that you have someplace, some people, something to belong to, too. Also, I highly recommend DnD to anyone who has ever been curious but too nervous to try; just jump in and you might be surprised by how much fun you have!

Lasol 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 @riverlasol.

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Stop. Breathe. Go On. —

By Christine Wilson

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”
~ Commentary of the Talmud by Pirke Avot

“I want the kids in bed by nine, I want the dog fed, the yard watered, the gate locked, and get a note to the milkman: no more cheese!”

~ Lloyd Bridges’ phone message to his wife in the 1980 movie *Airplane*

“I just need a moment to collect myself.”

~ Me these days, and possibly all of us, when the vagaries of life scatter our brains.

At around 10 years of age when other (probably less dorky) children were inventing imaginary friends, I had an imaginary space-time continuum. Sometimes life was overwhelming. Sometimes I would just be stumped on a test in school. I adjusted my make-believe skill set based on the level of need. If it was a small bit of fear because I didn’t know an answer, for example, I would stop time to collect myself. I would imagine a textbook in my mind, try to come up with an answer, start time again, and write down what I’d found.

I never had a word for it. Now I do. We watched a quirky and obscure little sci-fi series called *The Umbrella Academy*. A time anomaly (and don’t I love those!) is threatening to end the

universe. Its epicenter is a flaming ball of energy in the Academy basement called a Kugelblitz.

Occasionally, it shoots out waves of energy into the world. As it recedes, it pulls various things back into it and out of existence. Lobsters disappear at one point. Occasionally people disappear. Sometimes people end up in a different time period.

In what can feel like an insane world, thinking of the changes we are all going through as the occasional Kugelblitz seems to me to be a sane choice. Alvin Toffler predicted this Kugelblitz era in 1980. His particular phrase for it was “the third wave” – the first wave being agricultural and the second wave industrial. The world, he said, was entering the information age and every aspect of life was going to change.

Basically, he said, the disruptions will lead to a better world. This is a real-life Kugelblitz, not the universe-ending one as depicted in the *The Umbrella Academy*. He recommended we do not take the changes personally. There will be discombobulation. Our job now is to recombobulate ourselves.

We might prefer to “go back to normal.” I do not think the Kugelblitz effect is going to let that happen. We are left with honing our Kugelblitz skill set.

If the Kugelblitz skill set were a beautifully embroidered bag, the warp and woof used to make the cloth would be the awareness that change is inevitable and resistance is futile. If I were making it, the embroidered design would be about acceptance, courage, patience and serenity.

The school of hard knocks and the gifts of wisdom we get from each other provide the gems for our invisible Kugelblitz bag. There is the gem of “collecting ourselves.” To do that, we need moments of quiet. External alterations to our lives come at their own speed and time. The moments of quiet are something we have power over. Some of you get up in the dark to have that time. Yoga, meditation, cortisol burning physical activity — all can play a role. Whatever you prefer, do them. Gems don’t activate themselves.

A Kugelblitz of mine started with the information I learned this summer about my dad not being my biological father. I have a new half-brother. Yep, still feeling it. It’s gotten either more or less complicated. My dad grew up in Hillyard. So did my new half-brother’s mother. They both had fathers who worked for the railroad. They were two years apart in age, so they would have known each other in that little

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Random Acts of Community

community of railroad kids. Maybe the people I thought were my parents really are my parents but my dad participated in some secret shenanigans when he was around 20. Kugelblitz that!

In addition to slack time management, another way I'm practicing life with Kugelblitzes is to triage my reaction. I noticed recently that there were several things my mind was processing at the same time. If we use the 0-10 scale of disturbance, I was treating them all like they were 10s. A scene from the 1980 movie *Airplane* came to my mind. I don't particularly recommend the movie. Much of it has not stood the test of time well. But I do love the Lloyd Bridges character. He's dealing with one crisis after another. A plane is crashing. The pilots are out of

commission. The plane needs to make an emergency landing.

The screenwriters do a perfect job of capturing the problem of managing our level of disturbance. Lloyd Bridges is on high alert. In one scene, he's been barking orders about saving the lives of the people on the plane. Each person gets ordered to handle some aspect of the crises. Then his wife calls and he barks the orders quoted above with the same level of intensity. He is too wound up to tell the difference between big deal and normal life.

One hard-to-explain body sensation that helps me has come from my sporadic (but sincere) meditation practice. It starts with exhaling deeply. Inhale inevitably follows exhale. Then I search around for tension. This part has

taken me a long time to get any good at. Decades, if I am honest. Almost always, my shoulders seem to be trying to reach my ears. I roll my shoulders back and breathe some more.

The next part is the one that would have been familiar to my 10-year-old self. The closest words I can find involve a sensation of sinking into myself. I discard tension and monkey mind chatter, at least as well as I can at that particular moment. Then I see what is left of myself. It's a process I go through multiple times a day. It feels to me like a way to create a private little tranquility Kugelblitz.

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

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That's What Love Does

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

I have this crazy beautiful granddaughter whose eyes sparkle and draw you in. She hangs, wearing yellow polka dot pants and a purple patterned top, upside down from trees and loves spinning circles in a cool summer dress. She sings “Let it Go” far too often and far too loudly. She thinks my sense of humor is hilarious and she frequently asks if we were born on exactly the same day. (Her jokes are on the order of, “How come you never see elephants hiding in trees? Because they are so good at it.”)

I have a grandson who astonishes me with his love of cars, trains and planes. He has an engineer’s mind and can figure out and build Lego projects by simply looking at the series of pictures though he can’t read. He goes on dates with his mother test-driving cars. He is certain that they do this because she, like him, loves cars so much. It is still a secret

from him that he is the object of her love, not so much the cars.

I have another crazy beautiful granddaughter who plays musical instruments, creates plays, writes stories, and makes school projects like “This is a lung...” out of cake or something. She explains the detailed mechanics of how the lungs work, and then has to explain why a few bites are missing. Among her many amazing qualities is how she can find every last jar of olives and consume all of them before an unsuspecting grandparent even knows she has been in the kitchen. She loves learning cooking skills from her grandmother, and she makes awesome hashbrowns and eggs for breakfast.

I have another grandson who is kind and thoughtful and wrestles with why the adult world is the con-founded way that it is. He is finding his voice and tries to see more than

one side of an issue. He likes board games and video games and composing pieces on the piano. He has quite a knack for finding all of the marshmallow bits in a box of Lucky Charms and consuming them so the box of cereal no longer has the same value and sits unattractively on the shelf.

I asked my siblings for their favorite grandchild stories. My brother Ken quoted a former CEO in his firm, Tom Werner, who said, “Grandkids are God’s reward for not killing our kids.” (Ken doesn’t have any grandkids.) My oldest brother, Bruce, sent me a funny picture of one of his granddaughters, who competes with mine for being the goofiest, most fun-loving, and wonderful of all time. My youngest brother, Greg, only hopes for some in the fairly near future. Cyndi, my only sister, told us of her grandson Frankie.

Frankie is one of those kids who could drive you crazy if you didn't love him so much. He loves ripping around the ball field and yelling at the top of his lungs. You can't corral this kid. Whatever goes through his mind needs to blurt out of his mouth. He insists on playing football with the uncles and aunts, and he definitely wants to carry the ball. The best play is to give Frankie the ball, then pick him up and run with both of them toward the end zone. It's always a blast.

Oh, but his poor mother. She chastises him with her tender, northern Minnesota accent, and wonders where he got his genetic makeup. His father tries to avoid her glance in his direction.

What makes us all laugh is that we all remember Frankie's father as a kid. He was wild, crazy, untamable, raucous and ornery. He has become one of the finest human beings you could ever meet. He works hard, long hours, comes home every evening, craves the time he has with his two children and his wife. Teaching them about animals, life, farming, equipment, everything a couple of kids growing up in the country could love to do.

But life has a way of throwing a curve ball at you when you least expect it. Frankie has a brain tumor. One

grandchild with a brain tumor is hard enough, but this is the second. My brother's grandson Jonas has a brain tumor as well. He and Frankie share the same surgery team.

The knowledge of their son's condition has devastated Frankie's parents. They've kept their feelings close to their hearts, praying over their boy, agonizing over whether to divulge this sorrow to family, or just let the kids be kids for a few moments longer. Last month, they shared Frankie's condition with family.

Recently, Frankie needed sur-

gery. The sorrow-filled, scared parents bent over their boy as he was about to be wheeled into the operating room, kissed him gently on the cheek and waved as they fought back tears. As their boy was being wheeled down the hall for an event that would change his life forever, Frankie suddenly yelled at the top of his lungs in typically Frankie fashion, "So long, suckers!"

My brothers and sister laugh over this Frankie expression. We have decided it must be a good epitaph for our tombstones – that and a

Continued on page 14...



Comin' oot!

By Tina Wynecoop

“Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It is the one and only thing you have to offer.”

~ Barbara Kingsolver

This is how it goes:

I send in my article to be published in the next issue of *North Columbia Monthly*, and I am relieved. I’ve made the cut-off date for submissions. I rest easy for a brief time and then I get concerned that there will be no subjects left for future articles. I think to myself, “I am idea’d out. Have I pumped the well of creativity dry?” This question occurs every month. No, I spurn it. I’m getting used to replacing dread with expectancy.

I don’t worry about where future “ideas” will come from. Who knows, I’ve written about magicians, husband and wife trees, clouds, slugs, highways, artifacts, a bird gathering strands of nesting material from my head, and now – chamber pots.

Occasionally a new subject quietly presents itself during a conversation or in a book I’m enjoying. For example, a couple of weeks ago my long-time friend and I were telephone chit-chatting and wondering about collectors of vintage chamber pots. Neither of us can remember why we had that conversation. Maybe it came up because I had read about a fellow whose grandfather left his homeland on account of chamber pots.

Inspired, I searched online to see what chamber pots looked like. Many were decorated with flowers and had lids; their ornateness belied their purpose! I learned they were also known as thunder pots, thunder mugs, chamber utensils, or bedroom ware. Reliance on one in the night alleviated a trip to the outhouse.

The word “chamber” is an old word for bedroom; the French delicately named these necessities *pot de chambre*. This name is the source of our word “potty.” During the search several other nicknames came up, the most interesting being “Jerry” – because the chamber pot resembled a World War I German helmet!

Humorist Garrison Keillor says his grandpa Denham Keillor “grew up in the tenements of Glasgow back when the residents leaned out the window and shouted ‘Comin’ oot!’ and threw the contents of the chamber pot into the street.” He wrote, “Grandpa got sick of being dumped on and brought his brood to Minneapolis and he never looked back. He wasn’t nostalgic about his origins. He was happy to be here.”

Well, I have to say that my grandfather Hans Granmo immigrated from Norway about the same time the humorist’s grandfather left Scotland for America. America beckoned them for different reasons, and there is a connection.

Putting up with the insult of being hit with the contents of a *pot de chambre* wasn’t what impelled my grandfather to leave his Scandinavian homeland. He departed when the King of Norway gifted the King of England a river for the royalty’s exclusive vacation holidays. On the farmland banks of that river, my grandpa and his grandfathers before him built fishing boats to sell. A finished boat was piloted downstream to the mouth of the river and sold.

Boat builders, carpenters, fishermen – all lost their livelihoods along their river *Vefsna/skjerva* which flowed into the *vefsnfjord*. The Norwegian king’s generous gift excluded them.

Grandpa, having immigrated from his farm near the Arctic Circle in Norway, passing through Ellis Island, arrived in North Dakota where he met homesteader Julia Meisenholder. She had emigrated to North Dakota from a southern state. Hans married Julia and the couple moved west to a tiny town in Washington. He had heard that Poulsbo (pronounced *Paulsbo*) resembled his arctic homeland with its fjords and mountains. (I’m fond of the distinction in meaning between *émigré* and *immigrant*, and for the first time I have a place to use these together, thanks to my grandparents.)

Crocks. I’m not thinking about the ones that have short legs, and big mouths full of chomping teeth, and slither in the wetlands. Nor about the kind you wear on your feet. These shoes are so darn comfortable that one wants to wear them year-round but shouldn’t because snow and rain fill the hole-bedecked tops.)

Instead, the memories of my Poulsbo Grandma and her Red Wing crockery, and of my other Grandma, Frankie, and her stoneware soap crock come to mind. I tell my friend that I’ve used a chamber pot and that I collect crocks. And *voilà!* I have a story to share for the *NCM* December issue.

According to Wikipedia, The Red Wing brand of crockery stoneware

was named after one of the greatest chiefs of the Dakotah Nation. “He gave his friendship to the settlers, and his name to their settlement; the land around Red Wing was rich with clay. In 1861 a German immigrant named John Paul discovered a rich pocket of clay on the land he intended to farm. A potter by trade, he used this clay to make the first Red Wing stoneware.”

My sister and I were never privy to where we were going when our parents told us to hop in the car. If the car headed toward the Colman Ferry terminal in downtown Seattle, our happiness was boundless: We were going to Poulsbo! Once there, our parents would drop us off for stays with Julia and Hans. I don't think

my sister and I ever knew where our parents went after they left us ... and it never occurred to ask or care. We were where we loved to be.

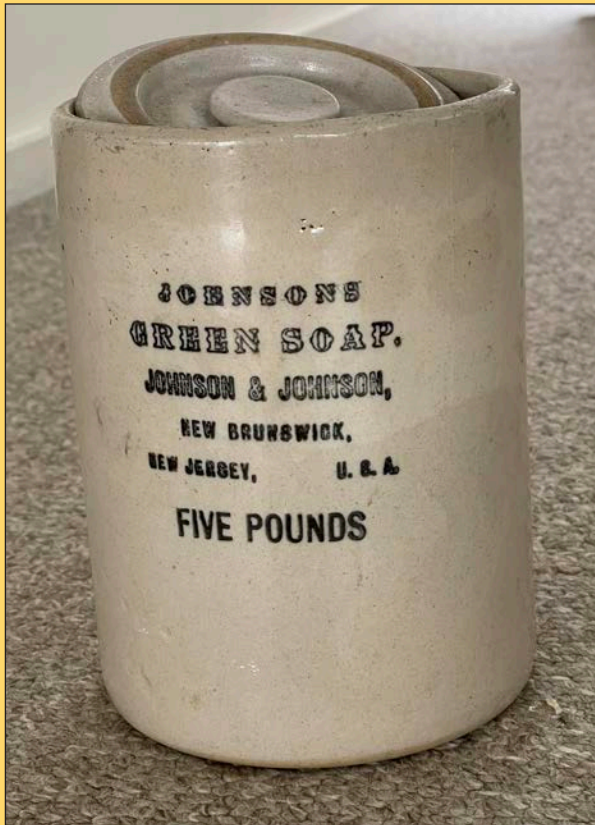
The Poulsbo grandparents built a small handsome house having views of the nearby majestic Olympic Mountains. When we stayed overnight, my sister Karen and I slept in the basement where the crocks and preserved foods were stored. I'm pretty sure the basement had a dirt floor. I know it had a wooden stairway up to the kitchen. The steps were spaced too far apart for my comfort ... I was certain I would fall between the risers to the floor. I was just a little girl. I could not convince myself to go upstairs to the bathroom when I had to pee. I probably cried a lot over

my dilemma. Poulsbo Grandma had a solution. When her five-gallon Red Wing crock wasn't being used for sauerkraut making, I was encouraged to use it for a chamber pot!

She died when I was 10; she took my love with her, and the best memories a young girl could ever have. Somehow, I inherited that five-gallon crock, and it has a place of honor by our front door. I never sit on it.

My other grandmother, Frankie, emigrated from Missouri when she was six months old. The way she told it, she remembered the whole train ride. She recalled that her father, Lee Johnson, brought along his honey-bee hives on the train. I inherited her crock, which according to the

Continued on page 15...



Continued from page 11...

second epitaph in parentheses: “At least he (she) had good brothers.”

We don't have any guarantees in this life. We may live for many days or for only a few. I suppose the point is to hold those closest who are dearest. Love them deeply, create memories with them, give them words of encouragement and hope.

Becoming a parent is one of the most hopeful things I can imagine a human dreaming of. You might get a cherub; you might get Frankie. But any good parent will tell you that you don't love a child less because they are seemingly flawed or suffer from a health condition. If anything, a parent has compassion for their child when they are suffering. So it is with Frankie. His moth-

er sits at his bedside as he is recovering from surgery, spending more time with him than ever, reading books so that his mind can recover peacefully, and he can explore the world through those books.

How do you release your child to the care of strangers who will open his body and extract a disease? How do you release your child into a chaotic world which could chew them up and spit them out? It's the same dilemma. We want our children to be safe, but we want them to thrive as adults, so we stand at the sidelines of their lives, simultaneously cheering for them and wringing our hands, hoping to hide the agony that we feel in not fixing the world before we release our children into

it.

We can't fix everything. But if you have a girl with yellow polka dots on her pants hanging upside down from a tree as your grandchild, I hope that you smile at her, invest your time in her, and tell her how important she is to you. Express gratitude. If Frankie is your grandson, I hope that you hold him even closer, read a book to him, kiss him gently and tell him of his place in your heart. That's what love does.

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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Continued from page 13...

description on the container once held green soap, five pounds of it. The glazed stoneware was emblazoned with the family's surname – the brand for Johnson and Johnson. Like Julia, Grandma Frankie's family were homesteaders. They were north of what is now Moses Lake. Her soap container sits on my kitchen counter. It is filled with sugar. I think of her every time I scoop into it for cooking and wonder why I was the lucky one gifted it 50 years ago. I'm puzzled how she could have parted with it way before she checked out in 1999.

It would have been a joy to have author Erma Bombeck be my third grandmother. Her way with words makes me laugh out loud. She traveled the world and noted:

"For years, I have been waiting for a travel book with the courage to put out a handbook (waterproof, of course) telling us what to expect in the way of restroom facilities. They all tap dance around the subject like it's not important. To women, it's right up there with breathing and a valid passport.

"Istanbul is a city in Turkey shrouded in mystery, steeped in history, rich in antiquity, and stubbornly hanging onto its old-world ambiance. And that is only the toilets. Istanbul is the ultimate restroom experience. I hardly know where to begin. Leg muscles are absolutely essential in Istanbul because all of the restroom facilities are nothing more than a hole in the cement floor. There is nothing to hang on to. Once you're down there you've made a serious commitment."

Of another trip she wrote, "If I had been enlightened, I would never have asked a man at the gas station in a small village in Africa if he would give me the key to the restroom. He looked

at me like I had just asked for the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Instead, he laughed and pointed to the bush

surrounding us. I declined."

"Grandma" Erma needed to lug a chamber pot in her travelin' suitcase.

I will close with book suggestions recommended to try to fill the gap of Loren Cruden's review column "A Good Read" in the NCM. These books are for her many followers:

- *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, by Elinor Stewart
- *When You Look Like Your Passport Photo, It's Time to Go Home*, by Erma Bombeck
- *Rebel with a Clause: Tales and Tips from a Roving Grammarian*, by Ellen Jovin
- *Between You and Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen*, by Mary Norris
- *Horse*, by Geraldine Brooks
- *The Geography of Memory*, by Eileen Delehanty Parkes, (2nd edition).

Loren probably read them all. Bless her heart.

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."



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**New Patients
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A Recipe for Love

By Tina Tolliver Matney

There is a pan of sliced onions, mushrooms and celery sautéing on the back burner of my stove. Perhaps you remember this stove. The one that has one good working burner. The back burner is the one that goes from simmer to sear in the blink of an eye and never back again until I turn it off. I liken its sauté skills to that of a cast iron frying pan placed over a raging pyre that has been built by someone who believes a half cord of wood and a good dose of diesel is the best way to light a campfire so marshmallows can catch fire faster.

This particular burner is calm until it's not and, if I'm not careful, every mushroom that is rolling around the pan in chubby joy will be reduced to nothing more than little pucks of crispy black sorrow if I turn my attention elsewhere. And we all know I am highly skilled at turning my attention elsewhere when I should be focusing on the task at hand.

On this day I am in quiet contemplation as I go about this fairly regular Sunday task of creating soups for friends in need. As I move the sautéed ingredients into the big stock pot where a mound of diced chicken awaits, I find myself thinking about

why I do this thing.

I pour enough of the nourishing bone broth into the pot to cover the chicken, set the front burner to simmer, put the lid slightly askew so the steam can escape and then set a timer for 30 minutes. I can walk away and hope that this one trusty burner will not let me down.

About two months before this soup-making session was another. And while that session was certainly not the first time I have offered a meal to a friend or family member in need, it has become a fairly regular task since that time. It seems that lately I don't have to look far to find someone I know that could use some extra love. I know firsthand how difficult simple tasks like cooking can be when life is upside down.

On days when my daughter was taking treatment, or I was just there cleaning or spending time with my granddaughters, it was a common thing for the doorbell to ring and on the other side would be a friend or family member with their arms loaded with bags or boxes that contained soups or casseroles with salads and even desserts. I can't speak for the other "Nana," but I know it was

a relief, even for me, to get a break and not have to worry about making a nourishing meal on top of the mountain of tasks we were trying to keep up with to help my daughter and her family through that time.

And so now I cook for others when I can because I know what it means to have someone who cares enough to make sure that our bodies are nourished when times are hard. I truly believe that holding a bowl of soup that was prepared by a friend might just warm the heart as much as it warms the hands and belly.

That is my hope, at least, as I return to the stock pot after the timer tells me to add the diced carrots and either noodles or diced potatoes, whatever I have on hand. I add the remaining bone broth along with a little more seasoning. And again I set the timer.

The smell of the sage never fails to make me pause, to close my eyes and send up a prayer of gratitude that I am able to do this thing for someone that I care for. And there is the reason, I suppose, why I do this. Simply because I can. As long as I am upright and able and as long as my stove is able, I will keep making soup.

I share these thoughts with you in

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hopes that you might look inside and reflect on your own ways of giving and receiving. And my bigger hope is that we might all look back on this past year and remember the moments that we might have received such gifts as these simple bowls of soup. Or perhaps you were gifted with some firewood or received a gift card to help pay for gas or food for your family. Or maybe someone simply held out a hand for you to hold or gave you a warm and tender hug. I believe these are precious moments.

These acts of acceptance are not easy for some. But hard times are common for so many people as we all struggle to make sense of why it is harder to meet our most basic needs. Whether the hard times are the result of income, illness, or tragedy that might befall a family through injury or the loss of living space from a fire, I believe it all boils down to one common thread. And that is this: We need each other.

Whether I am making the soup this week or accepting it the next, these acts of giving and receiving can be a beautiful thing. They can fill the heart with gratitude no matter which side I might be on at any moment in this great big life. In my humble opinion, the act of expressing gratitude can go a long way in healing a body that is broken or ill.

Perhaps it can also help us all heal in other ways. Perhaps it might help us see the world with a little more hope and joy in our hearts, especially during this holiday season. My wish for you all this coming winter is to consciously slow down and embrace the quiet and calmer pace that is offered to us during the dark and cold months ahead. It is a good

time to heal, to focus on our inner strength. And if you are struggling, my hope is that you will reach out and let someone take your hand for a moment and place a warm bowl of love in your grasp. Happy holidays to you all.

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

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Creative Being in Stevens County

By Marci Bravo

For a dozen years, life was a sparkling roller coaster of friends and acquaintances that zoomed down gulleys into the concrete jungle of dilapidated piers and cold warehouses filled with artists and musicians and robots that shot fire; the tracks climbed to metal rooftops and cranes, to farmhouses and photo shoots by the rocky shores.

Life corkscrewed through museums and art parties, to bike rides and peace rallies and parades, to fancy restaurants, alongside sailboats.

Life danced behind sidewalk brass bands to green rooms with touring musicians to warehouse circus acts to acclaimed operas.

Fundamentally, I was a connector, an underground socialite, a sailor, the life-of-the-party, a volunteer, a cross-pollinator, a facilitator, a student, and an assistant. And everyone else, it seemed to me, were the Artists. Sure, I could make things, be creative, stew up magic at times; but there were so many conjurers around me who were so much better at it. I was a little hering in the Pacific Ocean of creativity.

Eventually, the perfect storm of age, biology, a promising relationship, and the yearning for something different and new sounded the pleasant bell of Let's-Blow-This-Popsicle-Stand. I threw a huge farewell at a rusty old boat club with a water's edge garden and a salty bartender, spotlighting three of my favorite bands and inviting a hundred of my closest friends. Though the event had begun on a hot June afternoon, a chilly night wind grabbed and thrust out glowing Chinese lanterns over the windy bay, which we had intended to float gently toward the moon.

And then I flew off with my mate, like honking geese, into the wild unknown.

It was in a re-discovered quiet that I began to unlearn and redefine my lifestyle and select what to hone. (And let me tell you, starting from scratch and knowing not a soul is the best way to get it done.) Spokane was a graciously soft landing, and I cultivated a commitment to a cleaner and healthier life, growing a garden, foraging from nature, and practicing yoga daily.

I was fortunate to draw a small circle of like-minded friends around me, and thus I slowed my pace from bustling from one event to another in a big city to something more spacious, less hurried. And since my darling partner was working 70-80 hours a week, for the first time since I was a teenager, I started to learn how to be alone. I found myself daily under the shade of a cathedral-sized maple tree in the first dirt and grass backyard I had had in 13 years, in the company of yellow swallowtail butterflies and tall ponderosa pines.

I smiled broadly to myself and the butterflies, and thanked the Powers That Be, my Love, and my lucky stars.

All the while, I was also leaning into random acts of creativity. I made delicately balanced mobiles from dried day lily stems and fine thread that could be nudged by the slightest wavering of hot air on a baking summer day. I made illustrious meals out of cookbooks, which I had formerly used as suggestions rather than instructions. I drew mandalas and calligraphic pictures with colored pencils and pens, my roots. I illustrated animals from photographs, having been inspired by a local friend who had recently

begun showing her skills with light and shadow through charcoal and pencil-drawn portraiture. I went to art shows, met local artists and made new friends, and participated in my old favorite, marveling at life in general.

Fast forward three months, 69 miles, and one crossed county line. I sat at the kitchen table, staring out the window in a house I had never slept in, overlooking a lushly green, grassy yard I'd yet to lie in, under trees I had yet to learn were cherries and honey locust. I had arrived in Colville after three weeks at an art festival, where I had helped with the building of a 70-foot-tall art installation. The ensuing sensory overload that commenced as the festival gates had opened to the public for the last 10 days still rung in and clung to my ears. I had left the festival only 24 hours before I sat down at that kitchen table, but it could've been oceans and continents away.

The house was empty when I arrived. My partner was at work, and in this residential neighborhood, on a Tuesday afternoon in early September, there were no traffic noises, no people. In the house were boxes waiting to be unpacked, empty rooms awaiting living.

But there was something very soft and reassuring about the quiet. As though it were reminding me of something I had forgotten. I could hear my heartbeat, each swallow, the scuffing of my feet on the carpet. Through the window screen there were birds twittering, the rustling of leaves on the breeze. I sat down, looking out at the sunny afternoon beyond the panes of glass, and remembered, with relief, to stop and breathe deep.

Over the next several years I wend-





ed my way through various artistic media, some very familiar and some new – ink, chalk, textiles, everything coupled with hot glue, painting, nature art, meditative art, wood-burning, costume design and construction, mobile construction, installation, murals, clay. Everything interested me. And I got the reputation for being an artist before I was comfortable with it.

Often friends would ask how it could be that I didn't consider myself an artist. I realized how my former life, full of beauty and brilliance and creativity all around me, had overshadowed my own personal creative introspection. I had been on other people's rides, cheerleading and fanning the flames, but for many years had overlooked

my own abilities. Perhaps because Real Artists shared their creations so much more readily than I ever had the confidence to.

In my former life, I was a helper, I facilitated, I found ways to get things done, found the right people to connect. I loved watching my friends shine their individual light, and even better when different, formerly unfamiliar circles of friends joined up to make something new and exciting. (Sometimes it was art. Sometimes, as in the case of Tom and Janet, it was a family.) I think the act of Creating in itself was my motivation, and in my past life my splashes of making were a different animal to the tidal waves of music, visual art and performances

going on around me.

I remember my partner once saying, back when I was having a momentary pity party for myself having moved far from my familiar community, "You don't need anyone else to make something big and exciting. You can do it yourself." Instead of smiling at him and hugging him for his faith in me, I had been filled up with a sad loneliness, and a fear. Because honestly, I imagined it was so much easier to take direction than think it all up on my own. Truly, it was.

But now, the sea I swam in had become a much calmer pond. In Stevens County, I had room in my head to suddenly speak and listen to my own voice without being distracted

by others' sparkly inspirations. Here I was on my own, empty-handed but for my own design, and my head was full of inspiration and curiosity.

So, I didn't need to be called an Artist. I just wanted to make stuff and look proudly at the results.

The environment around me offered fertile ground to be inspired, to daydream and imagine. I hiked and snowshoed over Sherman Pass, and along the Sherman Creek Trail. I walked my dog and son up and down Colville Mountain. I biked around the Little Pend Oreille Wildlife Refuge and paddled across Boundary Lake to the poorly named but illustrious Pee Wee Falls. I spent days at Bradbury Beach on Lake Roosevelt, and mornings jogging around Colville's Rotary Trail. And I would come away with ideas, scenes and textures, patterns and designs. And rocks, and lichens and sticks.

I found this passage in the book *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert:

"Perhaps creativity's greatest mercy is this: By completely absorbing our attention for a short and magical spell, it can relieve us temporarily from the dreadful burden of being who we are. Best of all, at the end of your creative adventure, you have a souvenir – something that you made, something to remind you forever of your brief but transformative encounter with inspiration."

Yep. That summed it up.

In January of 2019, it was my dis-

covery of pottery that gave me my first consistent practice in grounding to the earth other than yoga. When I kneaded the cool mass of clay, joined it to the potter's wheel, and began the conversation between my hands and the clay to center, cone, and create, all worry vacated the premises. And what's more, the process could be prolonged indefinitely – carving, painting, hand building, shaping, sgraffito, sanding, dipping, dripping, glazing, firing. If you are looking for the endless creating with uncertain results, ceramics is a one-stop shop. For me, it was just the thing.

So, I guess I'm saying that it took me living fully immersed in a richly artistic community for a dozen years, leaving all its dazzling lights behind, and leaping into the forested unknown (with a generously encouraging partner) to find my artistic discipline. And serendipitously, it turned out that my neighbor was taking pottery lessons just down the street from our neighborhood, and I found my most meditative state in a Quonset hut down the hill.

It's been seven years, two months and ten days since I first began calling Colville, Washington, home. I've learned a lot about marriage and mothering, about starting over and saying goodbye, about friendship and community and sharing and acceptance. I have a lot to be thankful for – my husband who is forever

faithful in my abilities, my son who is my constant teacher, friends whose work inspires me and who cheer me on, and a community who sees in me more than I had ever seen in myself.

So thankful also for the glorious backdrop – the hush and rustle of wind in the trees and meadows, of the paths curving through the forests and mountains and along the rushing creeks of Northeastern Washington. That spacious soundtrack invites us all to slow down, to quiet, and to listen to our own heart's desires.

Marci Bravo was born and raised in rural Kentucky, daughter of Filipino immigrants. She received her MS in Cell and Molecular Biology at Tulane University and moved westward, spending over a decade in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has spent the last several years calling Colville home with her husband and young son, teaching yoga, making art, reveling in the outdoors and advocating for children.

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On the Move

Article & Photo by J. Foster Fanning

I am putting the finishing touches to this article for the *North Columbia Monthly* on the last day of October, 2022. October is a month of massive animal migrations. Whales, butterflies, birds, bats, caribou, and earthworms are just a few of the common migrators. Locally, we may see Canada geese, various species of duck, sandhill cranes, tundra swans, snow geese, and many other species passing through our highlands home.

Migration distances vary. The *Anchorage Daily News* recently reported that a bar-tailed godwit flew from the western Alaska coast to southern Australia, a non-stop journey of nearly 8,500 miles, in just 11 days. This godwit is a four-month-old shorebird weighing just a bit over a pound and was tracked using a real-time, solar-powered transmitter. This migration is being described as a world record. “Prior to this ... nobody really believed that non-stop migration across the Pacific Ocean was possible,” said Dan Ruthrauff, a U.S. Geological Survey research wildlife biologist who helped tag this particular bird.

As a photographer and observer of the natural world, I was fascinated by this news. How did a four-month-old, 1.32-pound bird manage to sustain a nearly 8,500-mile

flight, 24/7, averaging over 32 m.p.h.?

I learned that the chicks are precocial (born fully developed). They hatch with their eyes open and are able to follow their parents to nearby marshlands seeking their own food. Godwits are carnivores, eating mainly insects, crustaceans and mollusks, although occasionally augmenting their diet with aquatic plants, seeds and berries.

Remarkably, the young fledge and become independent from their parents at one month old. The juveniles migrate separately from the adults. Their average weight is half a pound, but they pack on extra fat for the grueling task ahead.

How does a four-month-old bird know anything about a migration over thousands of miles? Or about winter coming in? Or about how the local food sources would soon be locked up in thick ice? Yet, responding to physiological changes triggered by the solar clock, the bird’s link to its territory wanes and the migratory urge waxes. It is that waxing drive that pushes the bird to storing fat, growing specific feathers and readying itself for the unknown journey ahead.

For the young birds, migration generally starts with a few short flights southward to a staging area. That provides

a chance to stretch their wings, consume some energy and spend a few more days gorging to replace it. It also happens in the company of myriad shorebirds flocking together in ever-excited groups.

We have all looked to the sky and admired flocks of Canada geese flying in large “V” formations with, sometimes, dozens of birds in the group. The individual birds of these groups are in the process of working together.

On each bird every portion of the wing has a distinct flight role to play. The sturdy inner wing body acts the same way an aircraft wing does, with air pressure against the under surface and suction above creating lift. The outer portion of the wing, composed predominantly of stiff flight feathers, creates the aerodynamic process with the wing driving the bird forward when flapping. The wingtips from the forward birds in the V create a brief vortex of more dense, compacted air. The following birds use the updraft portion of this air disturbance, which provides a slight lift effect, thus easing their flight efforts. Throughout the flight, lead birds will fall back in the V line to rest, while fresh birds take their place. And so, they proceed. Canada

geese are powerful flyers that typically travel at 30 m.p.h. or more when migrating.

October for some of us could be called Migratober in honor of so many millions of creatures making semiannual extraordinary journeys that we truly know so little about. And so, I find myself lens pointed to the sky, lens pointed to the game trails, and occasionally lens pointed to the ground. One never knows when you’ll see a migrating earthworm getting ready to burrow several feet into the ground to avoid those approaching cold days of winter.

Kids are in school, weather is cooler, hunting seasons are wrapping up, insects are at minimum activity and late-autumn provides some good hikes and bike trails that are quite often bare of snow and empty of fellow humans. It’s a great time to wander about and catch those wildlife sightings. Lace ‘em up and grab a jacket, and don’t forget to check the weather forecast. See you out there.

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

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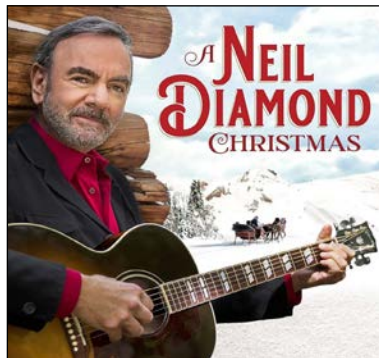
Neil Diamond's Christmas Wish

“Icon” doesn’t seem to be a big enough word to describe Neil Diamond or his nearly six-decade career. He’s one of those artists who could release triple and quadruple greatest hits packages, and you’d likely know nearly every song on every side of every album.

Though retired from the road a few years ago while battling Parkinson’s Disease, Diamond didn’t seem to have any lack of enthusiasm for continuing to make music on some level, and *A Neil Diamond Christmas* lives up to everything you’d expect from him, as tracks culled from ND’s previous four Christmas albums come together in this note-perfect, remastered package.

Opening with a warm, earnest take on “Happy Christmas (War Is Over),” Diamond makes the John/Yoko song all his own (and superior, in my opinion, to the original). “White Christmas,” taken from his ‘92 Christmas special, shows him at his most playful as the doo-wop-tinged version breathes new life into the Irving Berlin gem. It’s just really impossible to find fault with “O Come All Ye Faithful,” “Silent Night” or the

beautiful new mix of “O Holy Night,” and while Neil Diamond may be looking at the twilight of his one-of-a-kind career, the album shimmers with the enthusiasm and signature vocal sound that made all his hits ... well ... hits.



This double album may be made up of previous Neil

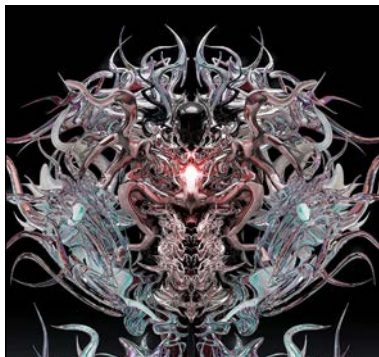
Diamond carols, but the sum of the parts is as warm and vital as anything he has done, and a perfect addition to the season.

Polyphia Plays God

I still remember the feeling I had when I first heard Edward Van Halen. It was an absolute game-changer. I felt something similar when I first heard Brad Delp at the mic for Boston.

I can’t help feeling almost the exact same thing when I hear the newest music by Polyphia.

Utterly unique and seamlessly welded from impossible guitar lines and impeccably jarring percussion, Polyphia’s *Remember That You Will Die* is an album that plays their personal recording studios as fluidly as their instruments.



Pulsing with percussive nylon-string guitar madness, “Playing God” is a gorgeous and brain-boiling guitar extravaganza, somehow clocking in between modern jazz and progressive rock. The sinewy and propulsive madness of “Ego Death” seemed not to be enough for this inventive quartet, so they had Steve Vai jump in with his own guitar insanity before exploding into the crazed control of “Neurotica” and the twisted, vocalesque “All Falls Apart.”

Having watched this band of virtuosos explain their approach and

execution on numerous YouTube videos, it’s awe-inspiring and utterly baffling to see them slow their guitar parts down and still realize they are nearly impossible to play.

While founded in propulsive metal, the band has taken the space of just four albums to arrive at this present incarnation that is as difficult to categorize as it is absolutely beautiful and cutting edge. If your present playlist is lacking in gripping, unique compositions and phenomenally frenzied guitar virtuosity, *Remember That You Will Die* must be at the top of your shopping list. This band is one perfectly conceived audio chimera, and is not to be missed.

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

The Tree of Sharing – The Spirit Is Alive and Well!

By Wendy Woods

The Tree of Sharing (TOS) has been a staple of the holiday season in our area for 20-plus years. Each year, when the TOS opens, it is a sign that the holiday season has begun and time to get into the holiday spirit. That spirit begins with community members and service agencies working together to help those in need.

The Rotary Club of Colville began sponsoring this vital community project in 2002. It is one of the cornerstone projects they sponsor each year. So, why am I telling you this? Last year I assisted with this project, as a spouse of a Rotarian. Now I am a Rotarian myself! I am hooked on their mission of service to others.

Rotary partners with Rural Resources, Colville Food Bank, EWU Early Head Start, and Addy Rescue Mission to serve children and adults with special needs. These agencies are the connection to our neighbors in need. The tags on the tree list both needs and wishes of the individuals.

Ozzie Wilkinson and Bruce Richartz have been co-chairs of this project for over 10 years. Their spirit and love of this project are evident and are why folks

like me are inspired to help. The Colville tree locations are the Ag Trade Center (main location), and these Rotarian-owned businesses: Home Sweet Home, Norstar, Re-Imagined Home, Remax Real Estate and State Farm. As you can see, there are lots of opportunities



for you to grab a tag or two!

A key person is Liz Shaw. She has been involved for 20-plus years. Liz keeps everyone in line and everything organized to get all the gifts together and, ultimately, in the hands of the recipients.

Rotarians and volunteers swarm into the Ag Trade Center from November 21 through December 14. Liz has the procedures in place to process the gifts, compare tag requests and go shopping for items the donor was not able to fulfill. Monetary donations are a vital part of this project's success. The generosity of Colville-area citizens is amazing, and we could not do this without them!

The moral of this little story? If you want to catch the spirit as I did, grab a tag or make a donation. Your heart will swell knowing you are helping others at this magical time of the year!

*This page made possible by the Rotary Club of Colville. Learn more at www.colvillerotary.org
View where all the Clubs in the district meet at www.colvillerotary.org/?p=whereclubsmeet*



Meaningful Giving of Time and Talent

By Karen Giebel

I am honored to volunteer with two organizations dedicated to improving the lives of residents in eastern Washington. One organization administers grant money to nonprofit groups in the 20 counties of eastern Washington and north Idaho. In these tough economic times, it can make a world of difference to the people those agencies serve. The other organization administers programs that assist the aging population of eastern Washington. It is enormously satisfying to play a role, even a small

role, in these volunteer situations that are so impactful in improving the lives of the people we serve.

There is another benefit, at least to me. We volunteers are a diverse group of people from all walks of life with differing ages, ethnic backgrounds, political views, religious beliefs and more. Some live in cities, some reside in towns, and some, like me, live out in the country. None of that gets in the way. We laugh, talk, share stories and learn from each other, and our lives

are richer for it. We work together and share a goal of assisting the organizations help others.

I have heard several times recently from several sources that there are few volunteers and that those same people volunteer over and over again. That's not been my experience. Many volunteer efforts are hidden from the public eye and the volunteers do not seek recognition. They are just happy to quietly go about their work and then go home. Communities

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Reflections on Life's Journey

thrive and survive – sometimes very literally survive – due to the efforts of volunteers. Groups such as our local Search and Rescue, our all-volunteer Fire Department and EMS, do directly save lives. Our community would not thrive without these men and women.

But there are also many hidden volunteer workers in every community. They mentor in schools, have booster clubs for sports, clean their churches, and work in soup kitchens, homeless shelters and food pantries. Volunteers serve animal shelters, hospitals and nursing homes and wildlife rehabilitation centers. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, Campfire kids and Sunday Schools would not exist without volunteers. Volunteers operate Rotary Clubs, Shriners, Lions Clubs, VFW

Posts; they clean litter from roadsides and mow the grass in cemeteries. That's a lot of volunteers!

Not everyone has the resources or physical stamina to go out into the community as a volunteer, but they still give generously of their time. Knots of Love have people who knit hats for cancer patients who have lost their hair. People knit and crochet baby blankets for newborns. Sewers make lap blankets for nursing home residents. Woodworkers make bird houses and bird feeder kits and donate them to kids to put together. Volunteers put together shoe boxes full of personal care items to be sent to communities devastated by floods, hurricanes and tornadoes.

We are on this earth for a very short

time and none of us knows just how long a time we have here. To me, the greatest gift to give is some of that time to help others as we journey together through life. I have a friend, a very talented seamstress, who dismantles donated wedding gowns. She then transforms the materials into burial gowns and tiny shirts and pants for babies whose time on earth was measured in just days or even just moments.

As we enter into this season of giving, might you consider giving the greatest gift of all? A bit of your time.

Wishing you all the merriest Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!

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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Moon Energy

By Brenda St. John

When I was 24 I flew to Germany and spent some time visiting a younger sister who was in the Army. Because she lived in barracks, I stayed with a friend of hers who lived off base. After spending a week living on the fringe of Army life, I remarked to Lisa that maybe I, too, should join the military. She laughed and said I would never make it.

What? How could she think that? I always considered myself a high achiever and figured I could do anything I set my mind to. So, I asked her why she didn't think I could do it. She replied, "Brenda, you aren't very good at taking orders." That baffled me on two counts. The first was, "Why would she think I can't take orders?" And the second was, in our big family, I didn't realize she paid enough attention to me to notice something like that.

After reflecting on her comment for a few decades, I decided she was probably right. I really don't accept orders without fully understanding them, the reasons behind them, and then discerning if they are worthy of being followed or not. Most things are subject to questioning.

My latest questioning has to do with our calendar. Somewhere along the line, it seems to have become mucked up. Follow me here: If "sept" indicates seven, "oct" indicates eight, "nov" could refer to nine, and "dec" is a common prefix for 10, then why are September, October, November and December months 9, 10, 11 and 12 instead of months 7, 8, 9 and 10? Also, the word "month" itself means moon cycle, and we know that a moon cycle is 28 days, so why aren't all months 28 days in length?

Well, I found an answer to the last question in Chapter 6 of the Book of Jubilees. In it, the calendar God gave to Noah after the flood was made up of 52 weeks, each week consisting of seven days, for a total of 364 days per year. The weeks were divided equally into four seasons, and the new moons were important markers. Since a new moon came around every 28 days and there were 364 days in the year, that calculates to 13 moon cycles, a.k.a. months, in the year.

According to the Book of Jubilees, God warned Noah that future generations would alter the calendar and then they wouldn't be able to properly worship Him because they wouldn't know the correct dates for the feasts, sabbaths and holy days. Much later, another day was added to the annual calendar called Resurrection Day. That day corresponds

with our April 1. Not everyone agreed with this addition, and the non-believers called those who celebrated Resurrection Day April Fools.

Getting back to the moon cycle, it is considered to be made up of four phases: new moon, first quarter, full moon, and three-quarter moon. It is said to be "waxing" as its appearance gets bigger and "waning" as its appearance gets smaller. In yoga, the energy of the sun, solar energy, is considered to be masculine while the moon's energy, lunar energy, is feminine. Different types of energy are associated with the various moon phases.

In yoga, there are two poses and a vinyasa that refer to the moon. The poses are *Ardha Chandrasana* (Half Moon pose) and *Ashta Chandrasana* (Crescent Moon pose). Both can be varied by adding a twist. The vinyasa is called *Chandra Namaskara*, which means Moon Salutation, and it goes through about 9 or 10 linked poses. For this month's article, I will focus on the asana *Ardha Chandrasana*, which is an asymmetrical balance pose.

Facing the long edge of the mat, begin standing with feet about hip-width apart. Rotate the right foot out 90 degrees and shift weight onto the right leg. Look to the right and slowly bend at the waist, reaching down toward the floor or a yoga block with the right hand. Simultaneously, slowly raise the left leg into the air such that it becomes parallel to the floor. Open the chest and slowly raise the left arm to the sky. The *Drishti* (gaze) can be either up or down. Inhale and stretch the torso and limbs away from your center. Hold for several breaths. Then slowly return to standing and repeat on the other side.

This pose is easier to learn when standing against a wall. Another modification of this pose is to start from hands and knees. Instead of balancing on one leg, the base is a knee instead. This is also a very nice pose to practice in a chair yoga class by placing the lower hand on the seat of a chair.

Half Moon Pose improves balance and stability and strengthens muscles of the legs, hips, shoulders and core. Speaking for myself, I need all the practice I can get when it comes to improving balance.

Namaste!

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



A Year On The Farm

Making Tasty, Healthy Snacks

By Michelle Lancaster

During the holiday season, poor food choices are so easy to make – eating the wrong foods and in vast quantities. I am always guilty of indulging in sweets, and I am not alone. I hope that everyone has the health and accessibility to enjoy some potlucks and family dinners and even a variety of pleasant sweets and desserts this Christmas season, within reason. This is the time of year to indulge, just a little!

That said, in my day-to-day eating habits, I find that I feel much healthier if I eat well. I like to keep spiced nuts around to provide a quick snack that helps me avoid the temptation of making poor food choices such as justifying something like fudge.

Spiced nuts are easy to make. I roast a batch in a large pan and then portion the finished product into wide mouth half-pint Mason-style jars. Those jars go in the freezer to keep the contents fresh, and then I pull them out one at a time. The container is small enough to fit in my purse or set on a table near where I read books. Very convenient.

We make the process harder than it needs to be by starting out with our own seeds and nuts. The nuts are abundant, free, and provide us with a productive winter activity – nut cracking! Each fall, my dad carefully collects walnuts from underneath the walnut tree. He removes each husk and brings the walnuts in their shells inside to dry, so that they do not mold. He collects hazelnuts and shucks them for drying, too. Once dry, he passes them

out to family members and we all get cracking, literally.

In addition to home-grown nuts, I also enjoy almonds, Brazil nuts, macadamia nuts, cashews and pecans.



You can turn these into trail mixes by adding dried fruit or chocolate. We dry cherries and grapes; both are a pleasant addition.

My standard year-round mix contains a blend of spices. Most important is the rosemary. Sometimes I substitute coconut oil for the egg white, but keep in mind that the spices do not “stick” as well to the nuts when using coconut oil.

SAVORY SPICED NUTS

- 2 tsp smoked paprika powder
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp rosemary powder
- ¼ tsp chipotle powder
- 1 Tbsp maple sugar (optional)
- 1 large egg white
- 1 Tbsp water
- 4 cups roasted nuts

Blend spices (and sugar, if using). Separately, whisk together egg white and water, then add spice mix. Fold

together with nuts, then pour onto a glass baking pan. Bake 15-20 minutes at 300°F, stirring occasionally. Cool, stirring occasionally. Package into containers once completely cooled.

These nuts taste better on the second day, after the flavors have steeped together.

For times when I need something sweet but do not want to eat cane sugar or other more processed sugars (that do not agree with my body), this sweet version of spiced nuts is really indulgent without causing indigestion. The slight maple flavor plus the cinnamon essence is an

irresistible combination.

MAPLE SPICED NUTS

- 1 egg white (or 2, if small)
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 2 tsp cinnamon (I use Ceylon cinnamon)
- 3 cups walnuts or pecans

Whisk together egg, maple syrup and cinnamon. Fold together with nuts in an eight inch by eight inch glass baking pan. Bake 25-30 minutes at 300°F, stirring every 10 minutes until mixture is sticky and mostly thickened. Remove from oven, cool and stir a few times. Spread onto a silicone or oiled parchment sheet to finish cooling. Break up into individual pieces and store in a container.

Merry Christmas everyone!

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

Tiny, Flighty, and Passing Through

Article & Photo by D.L. Kreft



November, a year ago, I encountered a flurry of small, light-colored birds that flew up in front of my pickup. Upon pausing to investigate, I recognized my first-ever snow buntings in Stevens County.

When a bird has the word “snow” in its name you might figure it is either: A) mostly white; B) lives near snow; or C) both. I’m sure you’ve guessed (or knew) that the answer here is C. They don’t mind the cold, and they blend into snow-covered landscapes quite well. Unlike the human kind, traveling in RVs to Arizona, these are authentic snowbirds.

Snow buntings can be seen in our area in the fall and winter. They are generally migrating from their Arctic breeding grounds on the open tundra to the vast acres of wheat stubble to the south of us. The wind sweeps across these open fields, keeping the snow depth shallow, exposing the ground where stray kernels of wheat and weed seeds might be found. Our local snow depths tend to be too deep, and the winter winds are not as strong. These tiny birds won’t find much in the way of food here in deep winter, so they move through rather quickly.

In November the males and females look like each

other. If you can watch one holding still, at a reasonable distance, they look like a toasted marshmallow of creamy white, a warm tan in places, with charred, black edges on their wings and tails.

Usually you must look for motion on the edges of roads and fence lines to spot them. Flocks (sometimes a dozen, sometimes hundreds) rarely stay in place very long. Their frequent movements help them cover a maximum area in search of food and never let the predators get a good bead on them. One description I read by Chester A. Reed in the *Carroll County Times* (Feb. 9, 2014) said, “They are usually found in large flocks which start up from the ground, as one bird, at the slightest noise.” I have found this to be true.

Last year, after spotting the small flock of snow buntings I eased my truck to the side of the road, careful not to slide into the snow-filled ditch. As I kept one eye on the birds, I tried to glance over at the passenger seat and carefully take hold of my camera. Quickly checking the settings (and removing the lens cap!) I quietly opened the door and stepped onto the road. The fields on either side of me were covered in snow and the bright glare of the sun made the landscape all but disappear into a feature-

A Fresh Air Perspective

less white. The toasted marshmallows with feathers were nowhere to be seen.

Pivoting and turning my head to either side I tried to locate the snow buntings. They had apparently flown at the first sound of my winter boots touchingsqueaky, dry snow.

Stepping quietly around to the back side of my truck I hoped to stay concealed and catch a glimpse of them in the nearby field. This time I saw them as they flew low over the snow in a tightly turning bunch, churring and chipping quietly with their flight calls. Was that it? Had I blown my chance for a photo? Then, with a quiet exhale of relief, I saw I had another chance.

A bare wooden rail fence stood above the snow by the road. On the top rail a small lump caught my attention. Strangely motionless, a lone snow bunting sat, warming in the winter sun. Using my truck as a backstop, I tucked my elbows close in to steady the weight of the camera and telephoto lens. After several shots I was satisfied I had gotten all I could from this location. If it flew off, I would be happy. But, never fully satisfied, I planned a different approach and made my way back around the pickup toward the front, and a little closer to my subject. It's amazing what a few feet can do in photography. Despite hundreds of millimeters of focal length and tens of megapixels of camera sensor, nothing beats being close to the subject. So, I tried.

Inching closer and crouched below the side of the truck I finally reached the front bumper. After a moment's pause to collect my breath and steady my hands, I slowly stood. I laid the camera lens into my gloved hand that rested, rock solid, on the hood of the truck. Framing the shot, checking the settings, I clicked away. Within 10 seconds the bunting flew away, searching for its migration companions. I had my shots and hoped a few would turn out.

Snow buntings are not closely related to our lazuli buntings, despite the shared bunting name. Snow buntings and several longspurs make up their own family within the greater order of *Passerines*, or perching birds. They specialize in Arctic breeding and will winter down into the northern United States, sometimes, rarely, as far south as California, Florida or Texas. When they migrate north in the spring, the males arrive weeks ahead of the females to claim the best rock pile, literally. Temperatures can still plunge to -30C at that time. Crevices in the exposed rock outcrops are where the snow buntings make their nests, out of the wind and out of sight of the predators. No wonder that, for them, winter in eastern Washington is probably rather tame.

I climbed back into the truck and quickly got it started and warmed up. I realized that I had gotten cold standing outside for so long. No matter, it had all been worth it.

The snow buntings were long gone as I pulled back onto the road. I pondered how far they had flown and where they might be headed. Back at home I found a poem, by Frank Prewett, entitled "Snow-Bunting." The final stanza reads,

*In a sudden gust the flock are whirled away
Uttering a frightened, chirping cry,
And are lost like a wraith of departing day,
Adrift between earth desolate and leaden sky.*

It summarized my day with the snow buntings. I hope I get to see them again very soon. Each back road I take in winter, I scan the road ahead for birds picking up grit and seeds. Dark-eyed juncos, song sparrows, California quail, and the random toasted marshmallow with feathers.

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 Compost, And Beyond! —

Article & Photo by Joe Barreca

“Egad,” you are probably thinking. “He is writing about compost again. Surely his brain is starting to rot.” This article is not exactly about compost, but close. In Stevens County we have a “Soil Health Stewards” group hosted by the Conservation Districts. You can check it out or join on Google Groups at ne-wa-soil-health-stewards@googlegroups.com. Recently Greg Deponete posted a link to a YouTube video where Dr. David Johnson and his wife and soil research partner Hui-Chun Su talk about their bio-reactor. This sounds like a science fiction device but there are actually many variations already in use.

I had heard of their bio-reactor before. It has been around for over a decade. But this talk was particularly energizing for me because of all the information they included beyond how to build and use a bio-reactor. I will mention some details about construction but want to start as Dr. Johnson did with some notes on the current health of the world’s soils and their relation to human health. (You can watch the video yourself by searching for “Static Pile Fungal Compost Presentation.”) Here are some bullet

points:

- The earth is losing soil at 10 times the rate of soil formation.
- One ton of soil per acre is about the thickness of a piece of paper.
- 40% of our original topsoil is all we have left.
- 60% of the world’s aquifers are being depleted faster than they can recharge.
- Farming takes 10 times as much fossil fuel energy as the food energy it produces.
- 70% to 90% of nitrogen and phosphorous fertilizer goes into rivers and lakes.
- We have about 110 documented dead zones in the oceans and they’re all related to the agricultural systems that we’re using right now.
- We have 156 species of herbicide-resistant plants.
- In 1975 the chances were about 1 in 5,000 you’d have a child with autism; it was 1 in 59 in 2018 (not causation but at least correlation).
- We’ve seen an 80% to 90% reduction in the nutrient values of food.

This talk might seem like it is beginning to be one giant bummer. But actually, it is just the opposite. Johnson goes on to show that all of these problems are unnecessary if we would just start creating soil health with biology instead of chemicals. Not only that, but he demonstrates that these methods can increase production 5 to 25 times, even on played-out soil.

He takes some time to describe the evolution of biology on planet earth, pointing out that microbes have dramatically altered the gases in the air, the carbon in the soil and their own bio-diversity over billions of years. This section emphasizes that diversity, energy efficiency, community and abundance always go hand-in-hand and evolve to reinforce each other, not just in the world of microbes, but in above-ground crops as well. Two key points are that microbes can remediate chemically poisoned soil and that the higher the proportion there is of fungi to bacteria, the healthier the soil becomes.

To picture this he cites a common strategy in war. One of the first things combatants try to do is to disrupt the communication and supply lines of the enemy. In the soil, fungi are the lines of communication and supply. Their long hyphae carry signals about supplies and diseases. But they also carry water and nutrients to a plant’s roots, multiplying its reach and resources many times. Plowing and

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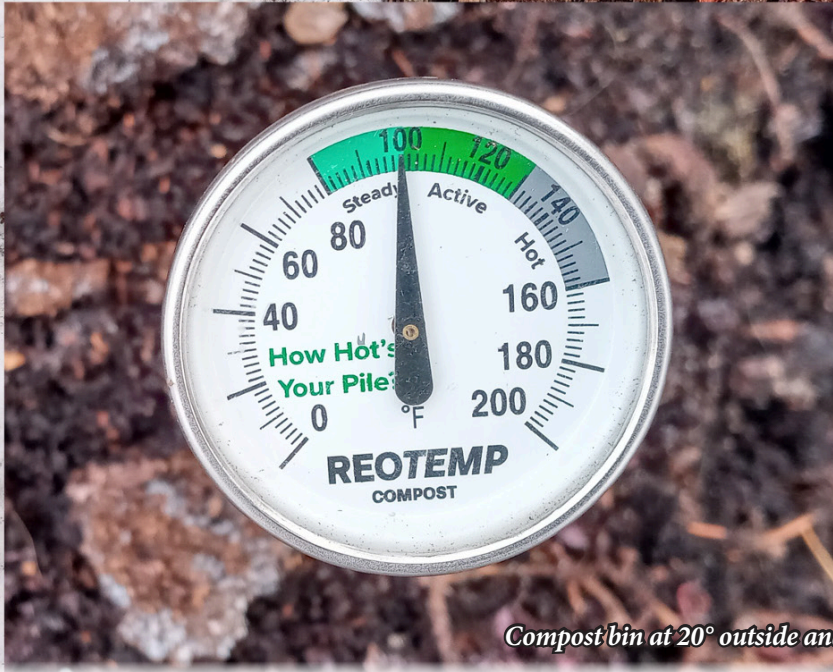
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Compost bin at 20° outside and 100° inside on November 20, 2022.

tilling break up fungus and degrade the soil.

In designing their bio-reactor, Johnson and Su wanted to develop as much fungi in their systems as they could. The key ingredients are lignins (think wood chips, sawdust, grass and leaves), moisture (they shoot for 70%) and air. They want every part of their pile of debris to be no more than 12 inches from fresh air. Manure, vegetable matter and worms are also key ingredients.

Although many composting systems boast that they have thousands of kinds of microbes and nutrients ready to turn back on the soil within 22 weeks, Johnson and Su show that if you wait a full year or more, you get four times as much diversity in the result. It is not a mulch as much as a squeezable clay-like putty. They don't think of it as a soil amendment or nutrient but as an inoculant.

They use it to coat seeds by diluting it with water and wetting the seeds. With just this coating at a rate of two pounds per acre, they saw a five-time increase in production the first year with more each following year, not just on one crop or in a greenhouse, but on multiple kinds of crops from grains to cotton and more and in multiple kinds of soil and water conditions. No minerals or other fertilizers were added to fields in these tests, but nitrogen, phosphorous and numerous other nutrient minerals increased in these soils through the action of biology alone.

Many other things were covered in this presentation,

but realizing that biology itself is the key to restoring the soil is the major take-away. Thinking about this I looked into how to build a Johnson/Su bio-reactor. This is where the differences between creating a system in California and other warm states and building one in northeast Washington became apparent.

They want the bio-reactor to be filled all at once with five-gallon buckets of wet leaf mulch or other feedstock, 75 of them. They want it to get to 160° for a few days; have worms added when it gets down to 80°; not freeze for a full year and be watered regularly in small amounts to maintain the 70% humidity. Johnson emphasizes that the challenges are constantly changing, and you need to be observant and change with them. This system definitely needs to be reworked for northeast Washington.

As of this writing in November, it is 20° or lower outside at night already. I have been amazed that the layers of sawdust and spent wine must in my most recent compost bin are melting snow on top and staying 100° deep inside. I've read that you can drive fence posts into the pile then remove them after a few days and the hole they create will keep the air passages open. I'm not sure this is going to give me a squeezable goop after a year, but it's worth a try.

Joe Barreca makes maps, grows grapes, makes wine and posts blogs on BarrecaVineyards.com. Vineyard apprentices are welcome!

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 53: Baseball

Most of the rock and gravel pile, intended for other purposes, ended up on the far hillside. In addition to providing slingshot ammunition, those materials were used every evening for batting practice. We’d toss a rock up in the air and hit it with a stick when it came down. We busted and batted rocks by the hour.

One of our projects was to mark off our own baseball diamond in the field behind the house. That home field was smaller than a standard sized baseball diamond but was complete with a pitcher’s mound and all the bases. When other kids came over, we’d play baseball until the ball would start falling apart.

Baseballs were few and far between, so after it got to be in real bad shape, we just taped it back together and played another game. We only had one bat. No one was big enough to break it, so we played a lot of baseball with our one bat and one baseball.

When Steve was young, I remember him lying in the grass watching the older kids play softball. One time, the batter hit the ball right towards him, so he hid behind a little bush. But the ball bounced over the bush and hit him right on the nose. That must have really hurt, plus his nose started bleeding, so he had to go into the house – wounded.

Back then, there were very few left-handed baseball players. Since I was a south-paw, Dad wanted me to be a pitcher. I tried pitching, but I really didn’t like it. During my high school years, I did some pitching for the Wellpinit Redskins, but I quit after that. Dad sure had some high hopes for me, but I wasn’t big enough to throw a good fast ball.

As one of the few left-handers in grade school, I had to wear a right-handed thrower’s baseball glove on the wrong

hand. Of course, the fingers didn’t match up, and that was a real handicap. Dad eventually bought me a glove to wear on my right hand. That glove was strange. It had a thumb and only three fingers, not four fingers, like today’s gloves have. I also learned to bat right-handed, since there were no lefties to learn from. I didn’t set any batting average records.

Our school played other schools during grade school and



junior high. In one grade school game against Fruitland, I made a triple play. They had no outs and runners on first and second. I was playing second base. The batter hit a line drive right to me. I caught it for one out, touched second for the second out and tagged the sliding runner for the third out. Thanks to poor base running, I had made a triple play! That was a shining moment in my baseball career – not bad for a kid my age.

One rainy day, we were playing a baseball game against St. Mary’s Junior High in Chewelah. I was pitching, and the pitcher’s mound was really slick. I wasn’t wearing baseball shoes, so I was sliding all over the mound. On one pitch, my right foot slipped, and I threw the ball right over the backstop and out into an adjoining field. Not many can make that claim to fame. That was not a shining moment.

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The Way It Was, According to Chick

Playing baseball at the grade school and junior high levels taught us that we could compete against bigger schools. That we did, and for us, size didn't count, so we usually held our own against the other schools.

When we were not playing on the baseball diamond at home, we had batting practice, using a homemade invention. We stretched a telephone wire tied high up in one tree down to another tree some distance away at about belt high. To this, we tied a piece of loose wire with an old baseball



attached to the end.

Every time we hit the baseball, it slid up the wire and then came back down. We hit it again, and it went back up the wire. This worked smoothly once in a while, but usually the ball came back swinging and bouncing down the wire, making it a very hard target to hit. We spent a lot of time trying to make that batting wire work better, but we just couldn't stretch that old telephone wire tight enough.

Another option for building up our batting skills was to bat a lot of rocks around with anything that was handy. I don't know how many ax handles or other sticks we beat up, but we smashed more than a few bat substitutes.

We also played a lot of a game we called "500." One person would hit fly balls or grounders, and whoever ended up with the ball would get points based on this scoring sys-

tem: 100 points for a fly ball, 75 points for a one-bouncer, 50 points for a two-bouncer, and 25 points for anything else. Of course, if you made an error, you lost points the same way you'd gained them. The first player to reach 500 points became the batter. Of course, we were very gentlemanly in the way we played. There was never any pushing or shoving – just a lot of bumping and crowding. The quickest scrambler usually got the ball.

Also, Dad taught another fun activity. By using a string on a long stick, we could throw an arrow a considerable distance. First, we tied a knot on the end of a string. Then we notched an arrow made of a straight piece of any kind of wood. Next, we put a nail in the front of the arrow to make it fly straight, and to give it weight; otherwise, the arrow would just flutter, not fly. Using this method, we could whip an arrow a good 100 yards. Of course, just like with our rocks and slings, it was pure luck if we hit what we were throwing at.

After the war, when all the servicemen and other families came back to the Reservation, everyone played baseball. All the communities had baseball teams for adults. These teams practiced twice a week and played games against other teams on Sunday afternoon.

When I was 9-12 years old, I was the batboy for our adult team and that was a lot of fun. I traveled with the team to all the nearby towns for games, usually with my Aunt Amy and Uncle Merritt. I had my own uniform and took good care of the bats. During those years as batboy, I learned a lot about the game of baseball and about competition, too. I thought that it was great how everyone played so hard against each other to win the game but stayed friends after the game was over. Baseball was a fun sport, but it was also serious business on the Reservation.

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Sprinkle of Cinnamon, Large Dash of Joy

Article & Photo by Aja Bridge

When I spotted a tray of cinnamon rolls on the break-room counter at work recently, I planned to use my strong willpower to walk right by. I told myself that I didn't need to consume sugar or unnecessary calories. However, a second glance told me that these doughy treats were not the average store-bought variety. Though perfectly shaped, they were extra-large, drizzled lightly with icing, and arranged on a plate rather than in bakery packaging. These were certainly homemade, and would I walk right by without so much as a nibble?

As it turns out, I cannot pass up a taste of homemade cinnamon rolls, and they did not disappoint. They were incredibly soft, with just the right amount of gooeyness and sweet, melt-in-your-mouth flavor. They were delicious, but they also tasted special, in a way that I didn't expect and couldn't quite identify.

I learned that the cinnamon rolls had been made by a local volunteer named Nancy. She left the treats as a gift for our staff when picking up for the food bank. I told her that they were undoubtedly the best cinnamon rolls I had ever eaten. She smiled modestly, saying she loves to bake and share.

Our conversation turned to the many years she spent contributing to community bake sales and cooking for neighbors in need. She learned many kitchen skills from her family; her mother was a home economics teacher, and her brother-in-law is a chef.

One of the many lessons from her mother was to prepare food only with joy, which puts those good feelings right into the food. She felt working in the kitchen with an angry or negative attitude was like mixing poison into the dough. Nancy laughed lightly and said, "I've always remembered that, so I try to only bake with a happy heart."

This revelation of her secret ingredient made perfect sense to me. I was taught many years ago that, when harvesting plants for medicinal purposes or making home remedies, it was important to be thankful and positive. Having good energy is a must when making healing preparations. I now believe that joy must also be one of those energies that can be absorbed into food.

There are ways to calculate the nutrients or calories in food, yet I don't know how to measure or quantify joy. If I consciously try to infuse joy into my cooking, will it be noticed in the final product? That is an unknown, yet I think finding ways to be intentionally joyful while cooking is worth the effort. The worst thing that can happen is, I'll have been joyful. It seems like a pretty low-risk experiment to me!

Another hectic season of holiday baking is fast approaching. I enjoy giving baked goods as gifts, filling tins with fudge and other goodies to mail to the grandparents and piling up cookie trays with all our family favorites. If I thought life was busy before the holidays, adding in decorating, shopping, wrapping, and holiday get-togethers could make all that work in the kitchen begin to feel like a chore.

However, this year I will endeavor to fill my baking time with joy. I will set aside time and not feel rushed in the kitchen. I will not set unrealistic expectations for myself. When possible, I'll recruit help from my teenagers, which fills the kitchen with laughter and chatter. When they're too busy, I'll treasure baking alone time while listening to my favorite music or podcasts. I will remind myself of all the blessings I have, as thankfulness often results in joy. And I truly hope my holiday baked goods have that secret ingredient.

NANCY'S CINNAMON ROLLS

Dough

2 pkgs active dry yeast
1 cup warm water (105-115 F)
1 tsp + 2/3 cup sugar
1 cup warmed milk
2/3 cup butter (melted)
2 tsp salt
2 eggs, beaten
7 cups flour

Filling

½ cup melted butter
1½ cups sugar
3 Tbls cinnamon
1½ cups chopped walnuts (optional)
1½ cups raisins (optional)
½ cup melted butter for bottom of pan

Glaze

2/3 cup melted butter
4 cups powdered sugar
2 tsp vanilla
5-6 Tbls HOT water

- In a small bowl, mix yeast, water, and 1 tsp sugar; set aside 15-20 minutes
- In a large bowl, mix milk, 2/3 cup sugar, butter, salt, and eggs
- Stir well and add in frothy yeast mixture



- Add half the flour and beat until smooth
 - Add the rest of the flour and beat until dough is stiff yet sticky
 - Turn onto a well-floured board and knead 5–10 minutes
 - Place in buttered glass or plastic bowl
 - Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size (1½ hours)
 - Punch down dough and let it rest 5 minutes
 - On a floured surface, roll dough into a 15”x20” rectangle
 - Spread dough with ½ cup melted butter
 - Mix together sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle evenly over dough
 - Sprinkle with walnuts and/or raisins if desired
 - Roll up jellyroll style and pinch edges together
 - Cut into 12–15 slices
 - Coat the bottom of a 13x9 pan with ½ cup melted butter (you may need an additional 8x8 pan – if so, put additional melted butter in the bottom of it too)
 - Place roll slices cut side up, close together in the pan, and let rise until doubled
 - Bake at 350 for 25-30 minutes or until nicely browned; remove from oven and let cool slightly while you mix glaze
 - In a medium bowl, mix melted butter, powdered sugar and vanilla
 - Add hot water and mix thoroughly
 - Spread glaze over warm rolls
- Aja lives in Colville, where she enjoys working with food education programs, senior nutrition, and farmer’s markets.*



Exploring Local History Museums

Article & Photos by Tabitha Gregory

Industrial machinery at the Lincoln County Historical Society Museum and an assortment of handiwork at the Newport Museum.

Early last year I set out on a project to write about the Inland Northwest's small museums. As it turned out, nearly every community – no matter the size – has one tucked away in a historical building, warehouse or community center. I found them fascinating and enchanting. I loved them all.

The museums have much in common. They focus on local history, are managed by home-grown historical societies, and possess staggeringly vast and varied collections. The financial resources available to store, much less

maintain, the artifacts are limited, and the organizations do what they can to gather and protect materials that represent their communities' histories.

Each museum interprets its collections and I invariably came away from my visits with new knowledge and appreciation for this region's past. Yet, as I reflected on what I'd learned, I felt conflicted. I found the exhibits impressive in some ways and, in other ways, frustrating. This is the challenge of history itself – the more one learns about the past, the more complicated it becomes, and the more questions arise. Here are some examples:

OBJECTS

Newport is a rail town, situated on Highway 2 just shy of the Washington-Idaho border. The town's museum, run by the Pend Oreille Historical Society and housed in an IN&W Railway Depot, is itself a historic artifact. This museum typifies the Inland Northwest's small museums in that it has amassed, largely

through happenstance and the generosity of the area's pioneer families, a collection of memorabilia, home and industrial implements, documents, books and photographs, along with a schoolhouse, chapel, icehouse, cabins and a fire lookout.

In my experience, the public often criticizes museums for not displaying more of their collections, but I doubt that's a complaint Newport volunteers hear. This museum's exhibits are like the hutch and basement shelves I remember from my grandparents' home: assemblies of needlework, musical instruments and kitchen gadgets from days gone by. Objects crowd into glass cases and overflow from cabinets. One room holds an extraordinary number of typewriters – an entire evolutionary history of the device. These artifacts delight, surprise, comfort and at times confound.

The Pend Oreille Historical Society's mission clearly centers on a fundamental understanding that *things* contain intrinsic value. The fact that someone made a thing or used it; that someone held it in their hands, drank from it, built a house with it, sold it in their store, bought it for their home – those facts are baked into the objects. What's more, the abundance of *things*



A death mask displayed at the Lincoln County Historical Society Museum.

in the museum emphasizes a people's presence in this place and proves the community's longevity. These objects said to me – as I suspect they do to community members – “We're from here. We belong here.”

NARRATIVES

On a chilly Saturday in early February, I headed out to the Spokane Valley Historical Museum, one of the few local museums in our region open in the winter. Surprisingly, an early twentieth-century building survived the ever-expanding urbanization of this agricultural valley and now houses the community's historical collections and archive. As I stepped inside, a friendly docent oriented me, then left me to wander the exhibits alone. Here and there, written labels offered bits of history.

I started out in the agriculture exhibit and learned quickly that some of my favorite hiking areas were former apple orchards and cantaloupe fields. As I continued, I learned that a century ago the Saltese Flats was a lake, that a sequence of thriving but short-lived small towns stood here, and that Liberty Lake has long drawn tourists.

As with other museums I visited, different generations of volunteers and

community members wrote the narratives, and as such, tone, style, quality and sensitivities varied. Though limited and somewhat uneven, the words chosen and explanations offered were as interesting as the objects themselves, shedding light on the way the community views its past. The labels gave me a glimpse of what the town wishes to highlight – mostly events, achievements and activities of which it is proud. Upon later reflection, I wondered about the untold stories and unanswered questions and what their absence might say about times and passages the town wishes to forget.

PEOPLE

Colville nestles in the shadow of the Selkirk Mountains and a fresh-baked-bread smell rises from the city's sawmill. Here, the Stevens County Historical Society maintains a hillside



Handmade clothing and accessories representing Tribes of the Northwest at Colville's Stevens County Historical Society Museum.

compound that includes the museum, a schoolhouse, two cabins, a fire tower and an early twentieth-century house.

An assortment of baskets, clothing and tools formerly used by indigenous people comprises the museum's entry exhibit. I was impressed because, compared to other regional museums' displays representing Native Americans, the material is voluminous and the groupings clearly intentional. Some objects originated from the Spokane, Nez Perce, Colville and Coeur d'Alene peoples, while the provenance of others was of more distant communities in South Dakota, California and the desert Southwest. I admired a bottle-shaped container woven out of corn husks, leather pouches designed for horseback travel, a stunning ribbon dress and a sturgeon-nose canoe.

As beautiful and interesting as these were and as carefully as they were arranged, I wondered if, because these materials largely came to the museum

Continued on page 41...



Homelife display at the Spokane Valley Historical Museum.

My Second Horse

By Madilane Perry

I'm sure that, if the barter system hadn't survived in Republic into the 1950s, I would not have had a second horse after the death of the first one, Minnie the Moocher.

Barter, as a way of paying bills for professional services, never quite went out of style in Ferry County. The old hospital on the main street was wood-heated, and obstetrics and other services were sometimes paid for with loads of firewood. My father was an attorney and often accepted various goods in return for legal services. On one occasion he received a freezer full of turkeys. On another, his fee was settled by a city lot complete with garage and snowmobile.

That's how I acquired my second horse, as part of one of Dad's legal fees. Actually Horse #2 was not precisely a horse. He was a Shetland pony stallion named Brownie. As a result of our acquaintanceship, I do not recommend a Shetland pony stud horse as a pet for a small child. Brownie was not exactly mean, just a bit overwhelming and devoted to showing everybody, two-legged or four, that he was the

boss. He was far too familiar with people, particularly women, and would follow my mother in and out of the cabins on our resort like a dog.

I couldn't control him and finally gave up trying.

On one occasion when I had taken him down to the lake for a drink, he decided that we were not getting back to the barn fast enough and got me out of his way by knocking me down and walking the length of my body. Mostly he stepped around me and I wasn't hurt. The single, dusty, little hoof print on my forehead had been lightly applied, just his way of demonstrating who really ran things.



Brownie the Shetland pony exiting one of the single cabins at Camp Curlew, 1953 or 1954.

It was obvious that Brownie couldn't stay on the resort, posing a hazard to all our customers' children, who were entranced by the prospect of interacting with "a real pony." He was disposed of by boarding him out with a neighboring farmer and not paying his board bill for several years.

Having become the property of people much better equipped to deal with him, he got a name change, sired a foal and often appeared in the Shetland pony races at the Ferry County Fair.

Madilane Perry, a retired archaeologist, was raised on a family-owned hunting and fishing resort on Curlew Lake. She is married to local author Ray Bilderback. They are both managed by a small brown dog.



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Exploring Local History Museums

Continued from page 39...

as donations from a few local pioneer families, the exhibit said more about the interests and aesthetics of those individual collectors than they told me about the Native communities. Despite best intentions, this display left me with a confusing set of impressions. I was unsure what I'd learned – except that it's a tricky proposition to represent another culture's history.

I walked over to the historical society's centerpiece – the Keller House, a dramatic hilltop Craftsman formerly occupied by Colville elite. The knowledgeable curator of exhibits guided me through the house, starting with a gorgeously appointed living room, the atmosphere cozy and inviting with a fireplace and vintage furnishings. Over the decades since the museum acquired the home, the former residents' distant relatives and community members donated items to enliven the rooms – Victorian clothing, period décor, kitchenware, a piano, even a full set of rare birdseye maple bedroom furniture.

We went through the dining room with its table set for a party, then into the fully stocked kitchen, and up the narrow staircase to the bedrooms and lounge. The house is a snapshot of the pioneering rich. Later, I reflected that history favors those who leave things behind such as letters, photographs, beautiful things, or a lovely house like this one. People who lived modest lives merge together over time and become, when histories are written and exhibited, “the mine workers,” “the loggers,” “the pioneers,” “the women,” “the Indians”—their individual identities, successes and struggles largely lost.

COMMUNITY

At Davenport, a farm town in Eastern Washington's Scablands, the Lincoln

County Historical Society's volunteers are undertaking a large-scale renovation of their exhibits. A committee of community members is carefully considering how to arrange artifacts that have been, for years, stashed in rows and batches without explanation. They want the museum to be more educational for visitors, residents and school kids.

Their building is a large, high-ceilinged space and, like the other museums I visited, it houses donations of all kinds of collectibles and heirlooms. The committee is laboriously mining the vast collection, selecting and grouping pieces, and drafting new labels that will tell the story of the town's founding.

Lincoln County's volunteers are integrating contemporary imagery, art and objects in a way that builds a bridge between then and now. In an exhibit of Native American objects, they've hung a huge painting by a contemporary Indian artist. With the help of modern Spokane Tribe members, they've crafted bilingual exhibit labels. In another area, this one filled with agricultural artifacts, they've installed an activity where visitors identify grains grown in the region today. Additionally, the historical society hosts summer activities – lectures and book signings. People come together in the presence of the past to socialize, share and listen.

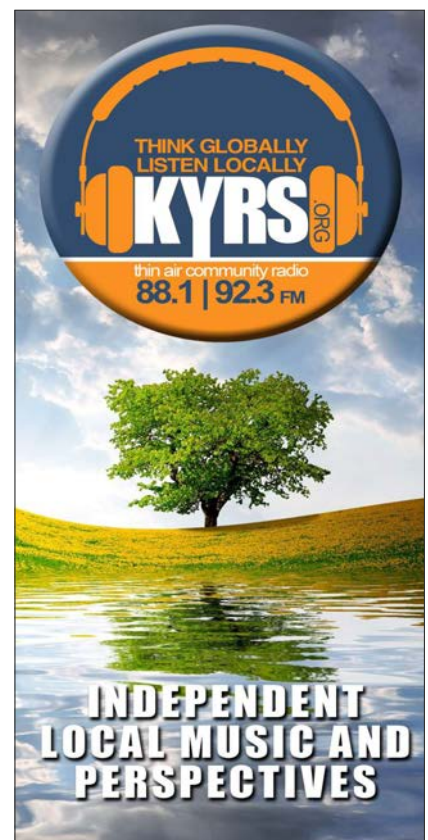
ROLES

All of this made me pause to consider the roles of local history museums. First, they diligently collect and preserve everything for which they have space, and this alone is a valuable and important job.

They also each deliver something more to community members. On my tour, I observed staff and volunteers earnestly working to connect current

residents with olden days in ways that answer questions about why the town exists and how people have persevered in these places over generations. They display well-worn objects that suggest important events, special moments and difficult times and, in so doing, prompt storytelling, encourage visitors to ask questions of elders, and invite us to compare, reflect, appreciate and understand. This creates a sense of community and builds a common ground for today's Inland Northwesterners – a high purpose in our modern times.

Tabitha Gregory lives in Spokane. She formerly worked as an executive director for a non-profit museum in rural Alaska and is the author of the non-fiction book Valdez Rises: One Town's Struggle for Survival After the Great Alaska Earthquake.



Hello from Sunny Skagway! —

Article & Photo by Becky Dubell

The definition of a “sunny day” in southeast Skagway, Alaska: finally calm winds, 41 degrees above zero, slight drizzle (mist) instead of not-so-slight drizzle (rain). Mom’s definition of mist: it missed Haines and hit Skagway. I am located 11 miles by road from the border of British Columbia, Canada, learning how to feed a new (to me) wood stove

and how to use the hot tub. I have stacked two cords of wood and will be working on splitting some kindling. If you know me, I will find the easiest way to get that job done. Mom has an electric splitter – easy-peasy!

Just to set the record straight, we have had some pretty fantastic sunny days. As you can tell from the photo,

when it is sunny, it is gorgeous. This is the view from the dining room table when it is sunny for the four hours or so that the sun sneaks in from the south and shines into the valley where Skagway is located.

Did you get to do some new traditions this year with your family? I sure did. My family in Washington had our annual “celebration of life

bonfire” the Saturday before Thanksgiving. I had my own bonfire in Mom’s driveway. Haven’t had a fire that small in years. I DID get to burn something though, and roast marshmallows and eat chili and cornbread with friends from Skagway that are acquainted with my kids and their families. Thank goodness I know how to operate FaceTime on my phone!

As I write this, Mom and I have not figured out what we will be doing for “Turkey Day.” Maybe turn it into a relaxing “Fish Day” cuz we just got some fresh fish from a friend. You might have to twist my arm. Or, maybe, go join in on one of the many invites we have received over the last couple of weeks? You might have to twist my arm again. When new traditions are being created, there are lots



of choices to be made. If you are in the same position as we are, make the choice and run with it. I am living by my mantra (below) and going with the flow. I am up here with Mom, enjoying my time, missing my kids, and we will all survive.

Was able to make it over to the Seattle area and spend time with Brenden and his family. Watched Jameson (6-year-old great grandson) in his first-ever wrestling match. I'm thinking that Jim and I, over the eight years of Brenden's (grandson) "Little Guys" wrestling, only missed about half a dozen matches and then came junior high and high school. So. It was really cool getting to see that before heading up to Mom. Bren and Emma are doing really well in their new location and new jobs while raising two fantastic kids – Jameson and Rose.

Darcy and Raymon are doing fantastic in Spokane. Darc is still with Walker's and has been for over 20 years. Raym has his business, Volume Hearing & Audiology, on Division in Spokane and has been busy since he opened the doors. I'm so glad they have the kind of jobs that allow for visits to the westside to see the kids.

Jamie, Dan and JJ are enjoying life in the Lower 48. JJ does not get as much snow as she would get in Fairbanks, so when it does show up, she is out in it right now. I think she ended up with a bit of dirt in her first snowball treat of the season! JJ had decided she wanted to be a professional gamer when she grows up. Well. Things have changed now that she is in first grade at Hofstetter with Miss Golden. She wants to be a schoolteacher at Hofstetter. You go girl! Thanks go out to you, Miss Golden.

Daddy and Ellen are really settled into their place in Springdale. Daddy has lots of tools to play with and keep him out of trouble, while Ellen keeps him busy and fed. He put up a 100-foot retaining wall this summer, on his own, with over 500 54-pound blocks, at the young age of 92. Good grief, Daddy, is it no wonder that I feel like you need your ears boxed once in a while. How in the world will I keep up with that or find the mold that you were formed from?

As you can tell, I'm all about family. Now it is time for my family up north. Mom has accepted the fact that her eyesight is failing. She realizes she has three daughters that

are more than willing to help out. I am sooooo glad that I am able to be here with her and maybe pick up some more hints on living to the ripe young age of 88. She has not kicked me out after three weeks – yet – so all is good!

I'd really like to thank Colville Do-it Center for telling me to let them know a couple weeks before I get home and they will put me back on the schedule! You ain't done with me yet, Colville! Missing your faces.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year Enjoy family and friends

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."

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Finding Much to Lichen

Article & Photos by Rich Leon

I took an interest in lichens a few years ago when our hot dry summers didn't produce very many mushrooms. It has been that way for some years now, including this past summer. After a very productive spring, my mushroom hunting came to a screeching halt in July. The rest of the summer wasn't much better.

Unlike wildflowers and mushrooms, lichens can be found in our region any time of the year – on tree trunks, hanging from tree branches, on sidewalks, on rocks, and just about every place in between. Most people probably never give them a second thought or even know what they are looking at. I have found them to be a fascinating subject.

There are some 18,000 species of lichens worldwide. They can be found in the coldest part of the Arctic, the hottest and driest places on Earth and almost every place on the planet except Antarctica. In the Arctic, lichens cover much of the ground surface. They keep the frozen ground from melting and thus prevent erosion.

I understand that many lichens are edible, but I have not tried any of them. I have tried many strange things over the years, from Witch's Butter to dandelions, made tea out

of lilac flowers and wild ginger, eaten camas and sego bulbs along with fiddlehead ferns and the new needles of fir trees. I have not yet had the urge to try a lichen. Maybe someday. Maybe.

People in some Middle Eastern countries use lichens in bread and stew. I think I'll stick with the all-American favorite: beef stew. In the Far East, people use lichens in making soups and salads that they consider a delicacy. Makes me want to run right out to my favorite burger place or maybe have a large pepperoni pizza delivered.

Maybe in the future it might be different. I can see it now. "WELCOME TO LICHEN WORLD. What can I get you today? Maybe a nice big bowl of lichen soup or one of our tasty lichen burgers?" It might sound a little far-fetched, but stranger things have happened in this crazy world. A few years ago, I never imagined eating plant-based burgers, and now there are all kinds of them in the grocery store.

For more than 2,000 years lichens have been used in treatments for certain lung and skin diseases. Lichen drugs are still used in parts of Finland and Germany.

One of the more unusual edible lichens is the horsehair lichen (top

left). It was used by some native tribes as a staple and as an emergency food. They would wash it thoroughly, pit-cook it with wild onions, roots and bulbs, and then dry it in cakes for storage. Before eating, they would boil the cakes with berries or meat.

The horsehair lichen probably got its name because it looks like the tail of a horse (at least that is my opinion, for whatever that is worth). This lichen, along with other hair lichens, is an important winter food for deer, elk and moose here in the Pacific Northwest and also for caribou in the wilds of Alaska and Canada.

Also pictured are fruticose lichen (center) and brown-eyed sunshine (right).

Lichens have been around for a long time, and there are probably kinds that have yet to be discovered. If you go out looking for lichen, be sure to take along a hand-held magnifying glass. With it you will see some really cool stuff.

Good luck and happy lichen hunting.

Rich Leon is a nature photographer, co-author of three hiking guides, avid hiker for the past 40 years and a maker of nature calendars, especially mushrooms, and can be contacted at richleonphotos@aol.com.

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