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— WHERE AND HOW WE LIVE —



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TOWN & COUNTRY DAYS

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June 5-7

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<p>Sunday, June 7</p> <p>Pickleball 1pm-3pm, Happy Del Park</p>	
<p>New Featured Performances</p> <p>Andrew Matherly, Kettle Falls Jazz Band, Dexter King line dancing, Country Shuffle, KIPs Gymnastics, Bettencourt's Taekwon-Do, Veteran's Pride, On-Call Cowboys, Two Stones One Bird and the Sara Brown Band</p>	
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See more at <https://linktr.ee/timnicol>.

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The Roads All Feel Full In Cities

- JOHN ODELL, allthelandandsea.wixsite.com/wordsofwords

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, 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 become 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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20th of each month

Bozos On This Bus

By Christine Wilson

“... I sometimes feel small and clenched. ... Other times I feel utterly cracked open. ... How can I feel anything but tenderness for all of these people: Sure, one of them might cut me off later today, when I’ll have slipped back into being a separate person. ... But right now, look how everyone is doing their best, trying so hard, so imperfectly, so vulnerable and fleeting.”

~ Rob Tourtelot, “This Very Moment” (Substack)

“Compared with robots, humans take a lot of effort.”

~ Xochitl Gonzalez

“Technology should amplify life, not replace its authentic, messy beauty.”

~ Robot to Paul Solman during a “PBS Newshour” interview.

“I think we’re all Bozos on this bus.”

~ Firesign Theater, 1971

“When my son Sam was five, we were visiting a friend and Sam got his head stuck between the slats of a chair. No one even noticed for a minute until this little voice said, ‘I need help with me,’ which is a great prayer.”

~ Anne Lamott, “Hallelujah Anyway” (Substack)

“In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they’re still beautiful.”

~ Alice Walker

We are like those trees: perfect and imperfect. We contort ourselves into an “authentic, messy beauty,” which sometimes is more beauty and sometimes more messy. We forget we are part of a community and then we experience the wild ride of being interdependent. I’m not around a lot of robots, but I am assuming that being a good human takes more conscious effort.

OK, maybe it’s just me. I have big aspirations for being patient and kind and emphasizing the positive in both myself and other people. And then someone doesn’t stop for me as I cross the street, or at harvest time, they take fruit off our trees without asking. I turn peevish and mean-spirited.

The writer Rob Tourtelot was in an English grocery store at the end of a vacation when he thought about how fast our lives go by. The shock of that thought caused him to drop a flat of blueberries. Once he had extricated himself from the mess and found his way over to the manager, she said, “Ah, don’t worry about it, love. These things happen,

don’t they?”

It’s really hard to be too judgmental of other people when you recognize your own imperfections. I’ve been known to fail spotting someone crossing the street, which is humbling enough to make me want to give people slack. I’ve been in an alley near our house rationalizing my own nefarious harvesting of someone else’s hard work. I end up holding tightly to our dog’s leash and rushing past the near crime scene so I don’t violate my own standards. The hypocrisy fills me with that same “small and clenched” feeling that Rob Tourtelot describes. Our authentic, messy beauty can be really annoying.

Portia Nelson wrote a brief little poem I’ve always loved called, “Autobiography in Five Chapters.” She describes walking down a street and not seeing a hole in the sidewalk. She doesn’t even acknowledge the existence of the hole until chapter three, when she recognizes her habit of falling into it. By chapter four she figures out how to walk around it and then in chapter five she walks down a different street.

Random Acts of Community

Before there was Portia Nelson's poem, there was Firesign Theater. They were a 1970s version of stand-up comics and their stories were a little feral, as was fitting of the times. One of my favorite scenes takes place on a bus. As part of a longer conversation, a man says, "I think we are all Bozos on this bus." Hearing that, another person says that his mother was a Bozoette in high school. It became a theme for a generation.

When I read Rob Tourtelot's description of moving from feeling "small and clenched" into feeling "utterly cracked open," I couldn't help but think, yep, we are all Bozos on this bus. At any moment, I could be the Bozoette. Who am I to condemn another person? Not that I don't give it a try. The advantage of aging, I think, is not that perfection is achieved but that I am not so crippled with shame. I can notice and then do something about my attitude. To quote what a friend said recently, I have to "get over" myself.

Sometimes, and this is not a particularly noble transition state, I'm grateful that it's someone else's turn to be the Bozoette. That's sort of a gateway into feeling tenderness toward them.

One time there was a young man straddling his BMX bike in the middle of our yard, pulling Italian prunes off our tree and stuffing them in his pockets. An involuntary shriek blasted its way out of my lungs. I wonder about him now. What was his story? Who influenced him as he was growing up? I feel a kindheartedness for him. He wanted to eat fruit, for crying out loud. That's a good thing.

I would probably still react with shock if someone did something like that. I mean, really, we fuss over those trees. My husband terrifies me in the spring as he launches into precarious pruning adventures. He always survives and the effort pays off in our beautiful produce. But he's a kinder, more generous person than I am and has taught me to be

more gracious with sharing the bounty of the trees, at least when they check in with us first.

So, what is to be done with this authentic, messy beauty that is our nature? If you break down Portia Nelson's poem, there is the hole, there is the person falling in, and there is the passerby noticing. Sometimes we actually are the ones causing the hole. Sometimes we are the ones who fall in and spend some time in there, being mad at the existence of the hole before we consider doing something about it. Sometimes we are the passerby and are called to be like the person from Samaria in the New Testament parable who saw the beaten form of a so-called enemy and helped him.

My first choice would be for us to work together to eradicate the holes so there aren't any to fall into. The reality is, though, that they exist. People drop blueberries. And that's lightweight compared to the metaphorical holes we are perfectly capable of creating and falling into. Portia Nelson's poem is very short and she doesn't explain how the person gets out of the hole, but I think there are messes we can get out of by ourselves and there are messes we need collaboration on.

Then there is the wisdom to know the difference. Since I'm a therapist and since it seems to me that we are all Bozos on this bus, it might make sense to sort out our internal work first. From there we can see whatever community work calls to us, whether it's big, little, or something in between.

The late singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen wrote that there's a crack in everything, and that's how the light gets in. If I work on catching myself when I'm small and clenched and breathe in the cracked open feeling, I figure that by the time we have fruit on our trees, I'll be ready.

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



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Three Men Who Had a Chance

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

This story is factual, although the names and some of the details have been modified to protect the identities of the individuals involved.

Billy, Bobby and Benjamin were all in a rough spot. The three of them were living outside of shelter, out on the streets, and it was getting cold. All of them had lost everything they had. Family, jobs, possessions, self-respect. Life was a mess. Everything was upside down. And there seemed to be no way back.

Worse yet, they all knew that their own choices had led to this point in their lives. Which just added to their shame. So, when people drove by and shouted at them to get a life, called them pieces of garbage, or worse, they knew that on some level, maybe these people were right.

It's hard to keep your head up. Hard to keep believing. When you are alone with your own thoughts 24/7 and those thoughts keep condemning you, reminding you of everything you've done wrong, shame and guilt and remorse can be crushing.

Yet, as their lives converged, someone gave them a chance, opening the doors of an old rambling building to them. The woman who

owned the place had a need: someone to keep the wood stove burning over the winter, keep the pipes from freezing, watch over the place till it could be renovated. (Secretly, she also wanted to give them a place to start over. The woman believed in second chances.) The three men each jumped at the chance to be in shelter.

Billy lay awake at night, unable to believe his good fortune. He had finally found what he had been looking for. Someone who genuinely loved, someone who saw beyond his present circumstances and believed in taking a chance on him. Loving him, a stranger. He was overwhelmed by the woman's kindness.

Bobby lay awake at night thinking of how this place could be a good spot to entice women who needed a place to stay, since some were still out on the street and were desperate. Perhaps he could be kind to them, though it wasn't his place to offer them a room, and at the same time start a relationship that met his needs.

Benjamin lay awake at night listening to the sounds of furry creatures making frightening noises in the attic. He felt his skin crawling with parasites and insects. He paced the floors unable to rest because of the creatures in the house that haunted him. It didn't occur to him that it might be the substances he continued to use that plagued him. He didn't stop using.

Billy was filled with gratitude and actively looked for ways to pay the woman back. He had no money, but he did have time. He learned that her husband worked on plastering houses. So, every day, when

the weather allowed, he showed up and volunteered to help. Just being with them and giving back for their kindness seemed to heal Billy's mind. His negative beliefs began to fade and lose their power, simply because he was with good people. He spoke with them, curious about what made them do such things.

At the worksite, he found other people also profoundly grateful for the chance to work and earn income. Billy wasn't asking for money. He felt that simply having a roof over his head without being charged was payment enough. The other workers he found were also recently homeless, but their lives had moved forward because they had income and had maintained sobriety. They spoke often of gratitude, of kindness, of the power of grace and the beauty of living in recovery. Billy shook his head at his good fortune.

Bobby asked Billy about his volunteer work. "Why do you go there every day?" Billy explained his feeling that it was his time to give back. He felt good about doing his part and was happy to do it. Bobby thought about it and agreed to come along and see what he could do.

Bobby also found the men and women who worked on the plastering projects were good company. The conversations were often about life, rebuilding, sobriety. Bobby had a good heart, and he intended to do right. But there was a secret longing for a woman in his life. Nothing wrong with that, but as every man in recovery will tell you, relationships in these circumstances can also be your downfall.

Billy warned him about getting involved, but when Bobby found a

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young woman on the streets, he fell hard, and he brought her the substances she craved, hoping to enhance their relationship and “help” her. Before he knew it, Bobby was sucked into a secret life of hiding, dishonesty, drinking and distraction. He couldn’t get away from the young woman now, and his life revolved around this relationship rather than rebuilding himself. Caught in a downward spiral, he ended up in jail. Then it was a long and winding road with many detours before he found his way back to recovery.

Benjamin spent his sleepless days and nights imagining that he was helping the house. He worked at odd jobs around the house that didn’t need fixing, like creating

a gasket to reduce the water flow out of the shower nozzle so that he could save the house money on water bills. This annoyed Billy and Bobby considerably since it slowed the water flow and took longer to shower.

Benjamin explained why he couldn’t volunteer with the woman’s husband since he was “a professional plasterer” and needed to be paid, as he told Billy. Billy asked him, “If you are so much better than the rest of us, how did you end up where we are?” Benjamin didn’t really have an answer.

Benjamin annoyed the others by insisting that he needed to “teach” them his beliefs, which included important topics such as why the earth really was flat and they had

all been duped and that men never were on the moon. When Billy and Bobby refused to listen to his teaching, he became increasingly agitated and divisive and eventually had to be asked to leave the house. His life spiraled out of control, and he ended up in a place where he didn’t want to be.

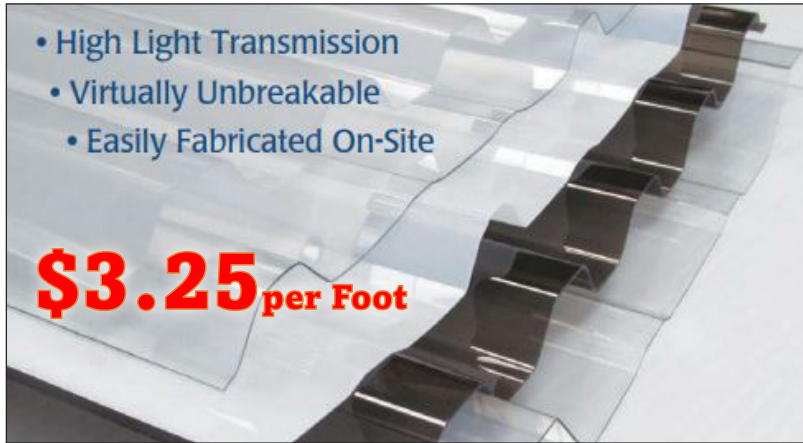
A person can be given a chance, but what they do with that gift is ultimately up to them. And in that choosing, attitude and gratitude can change everything. Just ask Billy.

Dr. Barry Bacon has lived and practiced family medicine in Colville for nearly 30 years, working in small, rural hospitals in Washington state, teaching family medicine, and working on health disparities in the U.S. and Africa.

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Kitty Whiskers Bouquet

By Tina Wynecoop

“A man need not know how to name all the oaks or the moths, or be able to recognize a synclinal fault, or tell time by the stars, in order to possess Nature. He may have his mind solely on growing larkspurs, or he may love a boat and a sail and a blue-eyed day at sea. He may have a bent for making paths or banding birds, or he may be only an inveterate and curious walker.”

~ An Almanac for Moderns, Donald Culross Peattie

One of the rewards (there aren't many) of vacuuming is finding our cats' shed whiskers on the carpet. Over the years I've saved them one by one in a tiny vase until there were enough to make a nice little bouquet from their sensory-gathering tactile hairs (*vibrissae*). This collection began when brother felines Cat and Skidder joined our family in the mid-80's.

Years before they arrived in our lives, in a totally unforeseen way, there was the black cat who accompanied me when I moved to eastern Washington. He didn't have a name, and I couldn't comprehend why he had been cruelly abandoned.

I promised it wouldn't happen to him again on my watch.

On a hot August day in 1970, we began our 300-mile journey in my compact Nash Rambler – my version of a U-Haul – loaded with everything I owned. During that trip, our relationship was severely tested.

We were hot, tired, and uncertain what the future held as we pulled into a gas station in Ephrata. When I opened the car door, my traveling companion hopped out and headed for nearby bushes. I headed for the indoor restroom. Relieved and refueled, we needed to continue on our way. He didn't agree. The method I used to capture him is just a vague



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recollection; the way he protested – by sinking his fangs into my leg – is still vivid. One would think I had hauled him out of the bushes by his whiskers!

Eventually, we arrived in Wellpinit, where I was about to begin my teaching career, when another roadblock loomed. The school's janitor informed us that the promised cottage in nearby "teacherville" wasn't available to us after all. We backtracked 40 miles and found a rental. It had been the hardware store owner's living quarters on the second floor of his business in the center of downtown Davenport. It would do. It had to do!

During the school day, I'd leave the apartment window open so the black cat could come and go. Apparently, he spent his ample free time catching and consuming grasshoppers. It was a banner year (plague) for locusts in this agricultural region and his presence helped diminish their numbers somewhat. When I returned from work there would be huge plops of indigestible grasshopper exoskeletons upchucked on the floor.

Years later, Cat and Skidder came along. We were a logging family, and the play on words for logging machinery inspired their eponymous names. It was the kittens' plaintive mewling that led our pre-teen sons to find them in a hard-to-reach corner of the garage. Until then we had no idea we had a cat. The boys watched for their mother, but she never returned to feed and care her two little ones.

Adoption was the only recourse, and it was a joy to watch each boy mother their chosen kitten. Their tender solicitude for the tiny doll-like critters tugged our heartstrings. Sadly, within a few days of adoption, tiny Cat, who was just beginning to navigate on wobbly legs, was accidentally squished underfoot by a grownup. He was Jake's kitten. Days later, Jake's classmate told him about their new litter of kittens. For sure, both sons needed their own kitty, so we brought Smokey home to fill the heartbreaking void.

The love we feel for all our cats remains fragrant in memory even though some of their behaviors turned bouquets into brickbats. A brickbat is an uncomplimentary remark. Yes, even the best families can experience dark episodes:

One day, while the boys were at school, I saw Skidder coming down our driveway with a vole dangling from his mouth. He was bringing it home for indoor entertainment followed by consumption. I was able to deter him, and it was then I saw a plethora of fleas departing the vole and crawling all over Skidder's face. Until I witnessed this appalling scene, I didn't have any qualms about letting the

cats sleep with their boys.

Our home ground was rich in wildlife, including many species of birds. We put up several nest boxes in widely spaced trees for cavity nesting birds to use. Bluebirds are cavity nesters.

While I was on a phone call one morning, along came one of our cats carrying a dead female bluebird. Bluebird's mate, a responsible father who shared duties of feeding and raising nestlings, remained high in a nearby tree outside our kitchen window for several days audibly lamenting the loss of his partner. I was filled with remorse and felt helplessly sad for him and their nestlings.

According to Spokane Audubon Society's website, "There is no greater human-caused source of direct mortality for birds than domestic cats (*Felis catus*) that roam outdoors. Domestic cats were introduced in the Americas by European colonists. Today, in the U.S. alone, an estimated 100 million cats roam the landscape, including owned and unowned cats. *These cats kill an estimated 2.4 billion birds each year in the U.S.*"

I sought solutions and there are some. One is providing a safe outdoor enclosure called a "catio" which provides space for cats to breathe in the messages carried on fresh air and bask in the sun while preventing the devastation caused by their hunting instincts.

Cats are sensitive beings. The combination of keeping the cats indoors and our sons going away to college incited a negative feline behavior that sorely tried us. They both expressed their displeasure at the boys' absences by spraying all the books on the lower shelves of our bookcases, the television screen, the recliner, the entire basement, and even the clothes I wore to work! I had been told spayed male cats do not spray. Not so. Spraying is a statement – a part of their vocabulary.

There was no "last straw" triggering retaliation. Both cats retired into old age, still much loved and loving, while teaching us so many lessons during their membership ... hence the kitty whiskers bouquet. The photo here is of Skidder peeking out of an upside-down box. How cute. The box should have been indoors.

Tina says: Growing up in western Washington was the most interesting place in the world until 1970 when I headed 300 miles east to teach on the Spokane Indian Reservation. The culture, geography, history, weather, the people, and the flora and fauna of this inland region of the state have since become my beloved "home ground."

June Random Thoughts

By Bob Gregson

Sometimes when you look around outside you spot something that unusually attracts your attention. In our location it might be an eagle lazily circling way high, perhaps thinking about snatching one of our hens, or an old biplane from Felts Field emitting the distinctive staccato thrumming sound of its radial engine.

Recently my eyes were attracted upward to examine the tall, limbless ex-trees supporting a variety of wires going down our street. In my youth I called them telephone poles or power poles; my uncle, the former railroad telegrapher, sometimes called them telegraph poles. But the best description is “utility poles” because that’s what they truly are, carrying electrical, telephone, and cable wires.

I think most of us take all those poles along our roads for granted, just part of the modern landscape. If you look carefully at most of the residential-area poles you’ll see three wires up top, a high-voltage group that provide electrical circuitry for the neighborhood. A connector from those top wires goes to a transformer lower on the poles that reduces the high voltage (well over 10,000 volts) of the top wire down to household voltage (around 120 volts). Wires from those

transformers go to your home and mine, sometimes overhead, sometimes underground.

Below the transformers on the poles are wires for telephones and cable. The electric company in the area normally installs, owns and maintains the poles, and rents space on them to telephone and cable companies, plus to the city or county for streetlights. A nearby electric company said they charge one dollar per month rent for each attachment to each pole.

A few years ago, our electric company put in a new pole along the street in front of our house to serve a small new housing development nearby. It was amazing to watch them dig the hole! A truck-mounted machine blasted water at a very high pressure down where they wanted the pole to be inserted; the machine then sucked up what the water had loosened, including gravel and soccer-ball sized rocks. In very short order they had created a circular hole about two feet wide and six feet deep (10% of the pole length plus two feet, per engineering standards). Then the three-man crew lowered the new pole into the hole with a sort of crane and filled in around it. Bingo! New pole set without anyone breaking a sweat.

That was in contrast with some pole-replacing my electric company in Seattle had to do.

During the 1920s the company had run some power lines along back-to-back property lines in residential areas where driveable alleys should have been. By the 1970s some of those poles had to be replaced – by hand, because there was no vehicle access. The crews cut down the old poles in pieces and then had eight-foot post-hole diggers and shovels to dig out

the old pole stump and insert the new. They gathered a dozen or more men to carry in the new poles and then rigged various ways to tilt each pole up to vertical and slide it into the hole. LOTS of sweat went into those situations!

The most versatile noun/verb in the English language: “slug”

Maybe that’s not totally true, but it seems like it. One specific use of that word brings frowns to some of my best friends who are West Point graduates. But before getting to that, here are MY working definitions of “slug”:

A slimy mollusk you’ll deeply regret stepping on with your bare feet at night on the lawn; a hunk of metal fired from a gun; a round object that looks like a coin and illegally works in some vending machines; a lazy shiftless person; a journalistic article in the process of writing; a certain automotive wrench; a lump of hot glass or metal ready to be transformed; a gulp of some beverage; a hard hit in a baseball game; a fist striking someone; a component piece of uranium inserted into a reactor; and a couple of physics and electronics descriptions known only to scientists.

That is an impressively diverse array!

And now to the military academy version.

West Point is discipline-heavy. Cadets have to follow strict rules of conduct and appearance, and if they deviate, they are given demerits, typically for things such as poorly shined shoes, beds not well made, hair too long, smudges on parade uniform brass, and so on.

If someone has a more serious offense, it almost always generates what has forever been called a “slug.” Those



slugs include a certain number of demerits against your monthly total quota allowed PLUS an additional number of hours “walking the area” on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.

Walking the area means walking back and forth in a central courtyard, rain/snow/shine, in dress uniform and carrying a rifle. No talking, no deviating from the pattern, no fun at all. (I have limited experience there-of.)

Minor slugs were typically eight demerits plus eight hours walking the area. For serious things that “brought dishonor to the Corps of Cadets and West Point” the slug could be 50 or more demerits and 100 hours on the area and confinement to room during all free evening/weekend hours for months. Those slugs were rare – usually offered as an alternative to getting kicked out.

Some friends and I were recently comparing notes via email, seeing the humor or ridiculousness in some slugs and equivalent batches of demerits we’d each received. We laughed though they weren’t funny at the time.

None of us had a serious slug on our record, so we compared demerit-generating offenses during plebe year that put us over the top during a month, leading to a few hours walking the area. We decided the award for “most interesting offense” – beating out “not sleeping under the sheets” and “electric device to heat a cup of water concealed in combat boot” was this:

“Improper table manners in dining hall during supper, 24 March, i.e. wolfishly eating pie out of a pie tin.” Signed by the Lt. Colonel Officer in charge for that day.

What happened to my wolfish Alabama friend was that he had a duty that kept him in the mess hall after everyone had left, and he spotted a

partially eaten pie at one of the 10-man tables. Plebes often were harassed during meals and not allowed to eat much. So, Pat did what any reasonable plebe would do – saw that chunk of pie and scarfed it down using his fingers.

The Officer in Charge saw that from a distance and cruelly levied 5 demerits. Those five put Pat over the 30 allowed for the month, so he received a “slug” that messed up his freshman

life for a Wednesday and Saturday.

Thus, we have it: “slug,” a four-letter English word of many meanings, some yucky, some cringeworthy, especially for West Point cadets.

Bob Gregson, a 1964 West Point graduate from Pasco who served two combat tours in Vietnam, left the corporate world to organically farm on Vashon Island. He now lives in Spokane, his “spiritual home,” where his parents grew up.



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Saints and Pilgrimages

By Brad Shaffer

I am not a Catholic, but I like the fact we have saints in our world. I was taught that a saint was someone formally canonized by the Catholic Church as an individual who had “heroic virtue” and led an amazing life, including performing several miracles, and this set them apart from the rest of us who apparently have only “normal virtue” and lack the ability to perform miracles. Whether we live amazing lives is up to us.

I’ve since learned that the term “saint” was first used in the early years of Christianity to denote anyone who was a believer. Several centuries later, the definition narrowed to those who were martyred for their belief. Several centuries after that, it further developed to the concept of heroic virtue and belief. It wasn’t until Pope Alexander III in 1170 that the Catholic leadership formally took over as the sole authority able to canonize a saint, with appropriate proofs regarding heroic virtue and miracles performed.

Saints had qualities besides heroic virtue, meaning that they also did things we ordinary people do, regardless of the fact they were extraordinary. They built things. They cooked and traveled and helped those needing help. They suffered sickness and did the same daily tasks we all do.

Saints become “patrons” of activities and places, such as the apostle St. James the Elder, who is the patron saint of Spain, and is also the patron saint of woodworkers and pilgrims, among other things. St. James is a favorite of mine because I am also a woodworker and a pilgrim. The qualities of the saints that attract me the most are those to whom I can relate because I do things like they

did, such as cooking (St. Lawrence), building (St. Vincent Ferrer), traveling (St. Christopher), and mountain climbing (St. Bernard). There is even a patron saint of headaches (St. Teresa of Avila). You can pretty much find a patron saint for anything us ordinary people do.

I have a tattoo of St. James the Elder on my right calf. I don’t know what he would think of it, or if he would think of it at all. I venerate the man for his life work, his following of Jesus, his virtuous living, and the fact that he was the first of the apostles to be martyred, beheaded in Rome for his beliefs.

He is the patron saint of Spain because it is said that his body is buried in Spain and kept in a crypt under the cathedral in the

town of Santiago Compostella. The legend says that, after his beheading, his followers carried his remains to the nearest harbor and laid it in a stone boat that had no one aboard. This boat sailed across the Mediterranean Sea through the Strait of Gibraltar and ended up in northern Spain. Then, the legend says, St. James appeared at the head of Spanish armies charging against their invading enemies, the Moors. Seated on a white stallion and slashing left and right with a silver sword, he became the incarnation known in Spain as Santiago Matamoros, or “St. James the Moor Slayer.”

Over the years, many people have undertaken a pilgrimage to his remains in Santiago to receive a blessing to cure a sickness or for a fortunate life of virtue greater than the

ordinary. Millions of pilgrims have followed routes through Spain to Santiago Compostella. The Camino de Santiago, or “Way of St. James,” is the second most popular pilgrimage in the world (after Mecca).

I was one of those pilgrims, walking 550 miles to Santiago Compostella, staying in pilgrim hostels, and following the precepts of the pilgrim, as St. James, the patron saint of pilgrims, would no doubt have done. A saying in Spain is that the tourist demands and the pilgrim is grateful.

Pilgrimages, like the one in Spain, are an amazing way to experience a people and culture and spirituality outside the bounds of typical tourism. In May, I traveled to Italy to follow the footsteps of another favorite saint, St. Francis

of Assisi, the patron saint of Italy, animals, the environment and ecology. The Via de Francesco, or “Way of St. Francis,” starts in Florence, meanders through the hilltop villages of Tuscany and Umbria, and ends at St. Peter’s basilica in Rome, a 350-mile journey taking many weeks to complete.

I have some space on my left calf. Perhaps I will someday put my other favorite saint there, symbolic of the many miles these legs have taken me on routes followed by pilgrims for thousands of years.

Brad is the fourth generation to live and work on the “Waite’s Lake Ranch” in Stevens County. After a career as a legal professional, he has retired to pursue photography, writing and to build beautiful things. Always a pilgrim of the world, he meditates every morning and is grateful every night.

Pilgrimages ... are an amazing way to experience a people and culture and spirituality outside the bounds of typical tourism.

Red Quill

Article by Steven Bird, Illustration by Doris Loiseau

“We live in all we seek. The hidden shows up in too-plain sight. It lives captive on the face of the obvious – the people, events, and things of the day – to which we as sophisticated children have long since become oblivious. What a hideout: Holiness lies spread and borne over the surface of time and stuff like color.” ~ Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being*

We live beside the river, in a cabin at the edge of a forest clearing. Mornings, Doris goes out to the garden.

I was just finishing breakfast when a commotion and a pitched squeal arose from the yard, a desperate mewling, like a baby’s cry. Doris called to me and I pushed from the table, dashed outside and went to her.

She’d gone to turn the water on at the garden faucet and there awoke a newborn fawn asleep in the grass. The startled fawn gained its legs and bolted, the blind velocity of its run carrying it headlong into the hogwire garden fence.

I arrived to find Doris holding the bawling fawn’s body, its aquiline head stuck through the wire mesh of the fence. The baby trembled in Doris’ grip while I pried and stretched the wire behind its ears, feeling its nervous heat against my fingers.

Freed, the terrified newborn ran toward the pine woods, shaken though physically unharmed. We watched as the shaded forest transformed the spotted fawn to sunbeams and then absorbed its light, and it was gone.

Doris asked, “Is it true deer are able to ascend to heaven while still in their physical bodies?”

*

I had no clients that day and decided to fish. The fawn occupied my thoughts while I hiked down to the river. You just never know when a

shadow might send you hustling straight into a trap. I wet a finger and poked at the sky, feeling for the now.

Standing by the river over stones under broken clouds, I contemplated the home water. The generous arc of sky above the forested reach. Big water, once, before the dams, hosting every species of salmonid native to the American Pacific and West Slope. A sense of loss worked a humbling perspective on me. Things are what they



are; we carry history with us, it’s not really the past. Concrete dams have a definite lifespan. Water is stronger than rock. Then, rivers don’t really begin or end. They converge as one in the great Tao sea, secretly well, waiting to be taken up into the sky and renewed. Oblique promise, I thought.

In the distance a black sail arose on the eddy. I’d been watching for it. The flow carried it close to my position and

then the big mayfly dun – mahogany body and charcoal wings – drifted on by.

I watched it drift downstream anticipating its death, and its death did come, in the nervous water 70 feet below me where the back-eddy converged with the mainstem current streaming off a finger of rock jutting into the flow, the mingled currents rendered to neutral velocity at the meeting place. I spotted a momentary bulge on the convergence water, and the mayfly was gone.

A riseform like that doesn’t give away the size of a trout. Sure, a splashy rise may give away a small, eager fish, but after a few years of life, they get fairly slick about their feeding habits. Might be a ten-inch fish. Could well be a better one.

Watching the water, I pulled a pouch of Drum from my pocket and twisted a smoke, lit it, exhaled. Another mayfly drake, freshly emerged from its nymphal shuck, tilted down the flow, its dark wings spread to a V, drying. And then a couple more. One was intercepted before making it to the sweet zone where I’d seen the first rise. Trout were keyed to the insects’ emergence and beginning to move up the run from their loafing hold down on the convergence. They would become more careless as the hatch commenced.

The hair-winged fraud was an old friend and a good match. It needed

to be fished downstream on this spot. I placed a cast out and across and stripped line from the reel, slaking it out through the guides to keep up with the drifting fly. Any hint of drag would mean a muffed presentation and probable refusal.

The fly reached the triangle of neutral convergence water and I quit feeding line as it began to make a natural sweep with the current, hunting across the nervous apex toward the outer seam – and then I lost sight of it in a void of glare.

A strong boil appeared where I hoped the fly was – I stripped to gather slack – and the line came tight and alive against a violent weight.

Lovely as it may be, ours is a savage, extravagantly dangerous world. Deer and fish know this. The instinct to flee is necessary and deeply ingrained in most creatures attempting to survive here. Fight or flight are prime survival imperatives, flight being the more popular mode. I was there to fight. As hard as anyone armed with a stick weighing two-and-one-half ounces, rigged with four-pound test string, may fight.

The trout at the other end of the line chose the flight option. Odd that we call this a fight, as if mute fish deliberately seek to challenge and beat us at this contrived game wherein we win no matter what and can only beat ourselves. The fish bolted downstream swiftly peeling line – the reel’s clicker emitting a painful scrawl, flushing a raven from the alders.

I lowered the rod and palmed the rim, attempting to slow it, and the trout felt the change in pressure and responded by accelerating its run, straining the rod into the butt, bringing a tortured whine from the reel, and I dared not apply more pressure to the rim and risk busting the line.

The line backing spun off toward the bitter end and the trout suddenly stopped – then reversed direction and

sped like a torpedo fired toward my position on the rocks. I tried to gather the weightless string, eschewing the reel in favor of hand-stripping as fast as I could. The backing and about half the shooting line nested at my feet when the line abruptly came tight against an immovable object.

“@#%!” I emoted.

Submerged in the deep water between the converging currents were some cow-sized boulders. I suspected the trout made a wrap around one of these. Tentatively stretching the line against the rock, probing for a miracle, I felt a subtle throb transmitted through the line. I gathered the backing and most of the shooting line onto the spool, leaving a couple pulls of slack on the water, then tucked the rod under my arm, reached into my pants pocket for the makings, rolled a smoke, lit it, and waited with the line hanging slack. The old cigarette trick. What else could I do?

I’ve considered quitting smoking a time or two. Know I should. But a smoke is like an old friend. Always there. Warm. Comforting. Never judging. A smoke would help me get through this.

The sun descended behind a far ridge. The breeze freshened, bringing the earthy joss of pine and rock. Above, squadrons of swallows dove and wheeled, hunting sedges in the deepening blue. I was finishing the smoke when the slack line began to straighten and rise.

I’m a believer in luck and welcome it when it arrives. Given its head and time, the trout swam in the right direction, unwinding the line from around the rock. It came up against the rod’s resistance, lit up and bolted – yet now lacking its initial mojo, and I was able to put the brakes on it before it reached the faster current. This made me happy. Things were going my way.

Big trout inhabit the home water

and I carry a long-handled guide net with a 24-inch opening. This trout, longer than the net opening, refused to bend into the net bag and bounced off the rim on the first pass and sped off again. I bit my lip and swore.

The trout and I waged a contest without audience, down the bank, the line ever shortening. Finally, I had its head, scooped, and the great trout folded into the net. A burst of wind rustled the pines with a sound like ten thousand hands clapping in a hall forever lonesome. It was a buck upper Columbia redband, humped and deep-bodied, the broad band running down each flank red as the final blood meridian of day, its thumbprint-sized spots black as the darkness before the world. I slipped the hook from its jaw, tailed it from the net and held it upright in the water, admiring it, until a surge of firm energy coursed into its body. I loosed my grip, the trout kicked away and the dark water reclaimed it.

The river whispered and clucked.

Headed for home, walking up the bluff from the river, I pondered these things: deer, trout, fight, flight, velocity, convergence, and the ways in which these juxtapose and connect. A spray of black-capped chickadees dipped across the trail and sought shelter among the white cross blooms of a mountain dogwood, uttering cries. I tried to put it together, concluding:

Perhaps someday we’ll understand supersymmetry. We’ll know the connectedness of everything. Maybe we’ll find the true Creation icon hidden within the ordinary, encoded, organic as grass, bark, oxygen, or water. Is not the code imprinted on the fractal skins of speeding trout? I shook my head, passing through light and shadow under the trees, deciding to let it go, for the time being.

Steven Bird is a freelance writer living beside the Columbia River. He is hopeful.

Columbia River Basin, Part 2 —

Article & Photo by J. Foster Fanning

The previous installment left off with Woody Guthrie's "Roll On, Columbia, Roll On!" Here's a bit deeper dive into the Columbia River and its vast basin. Ecologically this is a diverse region encompassing arid shrub-steppe, coniferous forests, and high alpine zones.

The headwaters for the mighty Columbia River are at Canal Flats, British Columbia. This Canadian village is about 300 miles upstream from Kettle Falls and 1,243 miles upstream of Astoria, Oregon, at the

Pacific Ocean. Remarkably, the Columbia and Kootenay rivers begin just over a mile from each other, with only 11 vertical feet difference. The Columbia flows northward about 200 miles before taking a big bend to the south, while the Kootenay does the opposite, flowing to the south for 240 miles before making a large loop back to the north.

Think about that for a moment... These two rivers are initially almost neighbors, then they flow to a separation of nearly 450 miles downstream

before meandering back together at Castlegar, B.C. By that confluence point, the Columbia (the larger river) has already covered 445 miles of flow, and the Kootenay River (spelled Kootenai in the U.S.) has flowed 485 miles.

The Canadian portion of the Columbia River Basin is dominated by the Columbia Mountains comprising four distinct mountain ranges: the Cariboo, Purcell, Monashee, and Selkirk Mountains (these last two ranges extend into the U.S.). This region is a



rugged landscape of steep mountains, dense forests, numerous wetlands and inland temperate rainforests.

From alpine tundra to rolling meadows surrounded by dense woodlands, this region has been home to a vast ecosystem diversity, although scientists report that it, like much of British Columbia, has experienced significant biodiversity loss, with 52% of monitored species in Canada decreasing in abundance due to habitat damage.

Downstream, the Columbia Basin transitions from mountainous coniferous forests in the north to warmer, drier valleys. Most of the readership of this publication is located within the Okanogan Highlands and northern Rockies. These territories have coniferous forests of Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, giving way to lodgepole pine and subalpine fir at higher elevations. Where the Columbia River flows into the impinged waters of Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake, near Kettle Falls, the water at full pool is 1,290 feet above sea level, having dropped 1,400 feet from Canal Flats.

Continuing with the subregions of this basin, we come to the eastern Cascades slopes and foothills. This is a transition zone from dry forests to high elevation conifer forests. Further downstream we enter the Palouse Prairie. This is a steppe region characterized by loess soils and rolling hills and a large amount of agricultural production.

A bit farther south puts us in the Blue Mountains, a complex ecoregion with arid shrublands, grasslands, and pine forests spanning both northeastern Oregon and extreme southeastern Washington. The Columbia Basin extends eastward up the Snake River valley and its tributaries



where we enter the Idaho Batholith, a rugged, forested mountainous region covering much of central Idaho.

Far to the southeast in our basin, we find the Owyhee Uplands (pronounced oh-WYE-hee), which are part of a vast, high and dry desert plateau spanning southwestern Idaho, southeastern Oregon, and northern Nevada. This area is known to the locals as “The Big Quiet.” It is one of the most rugged and least developed areas in the lower 48 states.

Flowing west and downstream, our journey blows us into the Columbia River Gorge, where wet coastal forests mix with dry interior flora and where the river flows between towering basalt columns and the massive rock core of dead volcanoes enlivened by waterfalls.

Our next downstream stop is the end of this 1,243-mile journey at Cape Disappointment, which was named by British trader John Meares in 1788

after he failed to locate the mouth of the Columbia River, wrongly believing it was just a shallow bay. Meares wrote in his log: “We can now with safety assert that no such river exists.”

I’ll close with some Columbia River stats: At the mouth of the river, where it flows into the Pacific Ocean, our waterway is six miles wide and discharges an average of approximately 265,000 cubic feet per second. I note how that number oddly correlates, at least in my mind, to the overall size of the Columbia River Basin, which is about 260,000 square miles, equaling approximately one cubic foot of water per second for each square mile of the basin. Wow!

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.

Bear With Me

By Tina Tolliver Matney

This life can be just downright weird some days. I've grown to embrace that aspect of myself. I don't mind being a little "odd" and I don't even mind when my grandkids call me "the weird grandma." I've always told myself they say it with affection and I'm confident that they have learned some important life lessons here on the river with this grandma who is a little bit free spirit, a little "earthy" and, yes, a little weird. It's bound to have an impact on a child when you scoot them over in the car and strap them in tight, then pile up a wall of blankets to create a safe distance from an eagle that's wrapped up tight in a towel and strapped into the other seat belt beside them.

I wonder if he ever tells that story. "That time I rode 30 miles in the back

seat of Nana's car with a bald eagle staring at me."

But just because the grandkids are growing up doesn't mean the adventures have stopped for them or for myself. Things have changed but life still doles out the weird and the adventures on a fairly regular basis.

On an early morning a couple of weeks ago, I was jolted awake by the "bear bells" tied on the door of the barn. I hung that set of Christmas bells on the barn door years ago when I had a persistent bear that was intent on getting to the chicken food that was always locked inside in a garbage can. A bear's sense of smell is pretty incredible, so I've always tried to be mindful of that. I keep my trash locked up in the shop and I don't toss out compost

anymore ... I am working on a good bear/skunk-proof alternative.

Anyway, when I heard those bells, it sounded like someone was standing outside Macy's ringing their bell with the red bucket asking for a donation. There was no mistake that something was trying to get the door open. I had to drag myself out of bed, find a flashlight and go take care of business.

And sure enough it was a little black bear sticking his nose where it did not belong, specifically the door to the owl pen. He was done ringing the barn door bells by the time I got outside, and instead, was up on his hind feet at the owl pen looking like he was having a conversation with the owl inside. Probably asking if he was gonna finish that quail or not and would he mind if he just broke down the door and finished it for him?

This particular pen is pretty sturdy, but you know bears, when they find something tasty, they can be tenacious. So that's why I was standing in my yard wearing shorts and flip flops at stupid:30 that chilly morning waving my arms and barking like a dog because I don't have a dog. I read somewhere that barking like a dog is a good defense, so I figured I'd give it a try.

And it seemed to work. I watched his little wiggly bear butt disappear into the woods. My fence is mostly down right now so he had plenty of escape routes. That's another story for another day.

I had plans to be on the road early that day to head to my granddaughter's softball tournament. I turned and went back inside, where I pushed that sweet button on the coffee pot and hopped into the shower. I didn't give the bear much thought, other than thinking I'd have to be more careful with feeding

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the raptors I care for. I'll change feeding times to early in the day and clean up scraps before nightfall. Owls are clean birds compared to eagles. Eagles make a mess of whatever they eat. Owls devour just about everything.

It was barely light outside as I was taking that first sip of coffee and giving my daily appreciative sigh as it warmed my soul and made life better immediately – and I heard it again. The bear bells. Suddenly the bear wasn't so adorable anymore.

And so, this is how I found myself back in the yard in a bathrobe, a towel over my wet hair, waving my arms and throwing cusses as far as they would go, hoping they didn't reach the neighbors upriver. Again, he waddled his wiggly butt ... still cute, I suppose ... back to the woods.

But this time I quickly dressed and drank that coffee for fortitude and marched back out to the owl pen. I knew if I left him in that pen I would worry all day, so I moved him. Let's just say that is no simple early-morning feat. But I won the battle and placed him in a more secure location. Then I had to take another shower. Owl cooties.

I was nearly an hour late once I got on the road but managed to make the first game in the bottom of the 3rd inning. Despite the stressful start to my day, it was good to step away for a while. Sometimes during long drives I have a tendency to overthink pretty much everything about this great big life. But on this trip, I made the conscious effort to just relax and enjoy the sunshine and company of family and a dear friend I took the time to visit with.

On the drive back the sky was gorgeous as darkness started to fall and

my music was perfect, setting the stage for quiet reflection as I made my way home and up the river valley where, right at my own mailbox, I had to slam on my brakes so I wouldn't hit ... the bear.

I sure love where I live.

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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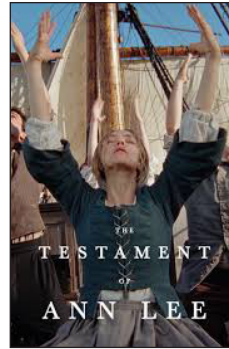
If you like musicals, dramas, or musical dramas, *The Testament of Ann Lee*, directed by Mona Fastvold and starring Amanda Seyfried as the eponymous Ann Lee, an instrumental founder of the Shakers religious sect, is not a movie to sleep on. It's one of my favorite films of the year. A musical about the establishment of a faith that, as of July 2025, had only two members left, and whose leader was touted as the female second coming of Christ? You betcha.

"Testament" premiered at film festivals last year and came to the Magic Lantern Theater in Spokane before heading to streaming services. The trailer popped up in my YouTube algorithm and caught my interest, so I thought I'd give it a shot, and I'm glad I did. In my review of *Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere* (December 2025), I acknowledged that biographical pictures can be difficult because filmmakers and people in the subject's immediate circle can be overly sensitive about how said subject is portrayed.

That tip-toeing can result in a watered-down movie where the person's complexities are ignored in favor of an "Aren't they the best?" approach too afraid to go deeper.

Since I knew very little about the coming of the Shakers to America, I can't attest to the historical accuracy of *Testament*; I went into it knowing that they are a Christian sect that branched off from the Quakers, that they made great furniture, and dancing is a part of their worship. Coming out of the theater, I found myself feeling wonderfully off-centered, experiencing the after-effects of the kind of movie that picks you up and sweeps you along in the story.

Seyfried turns in the best performance of her career thus far, displaying Lee's conviction, her grief, and her repulsion toward sex that helped shape the Shakers' belief in celibacy, while using her body to express her



connection to God and her followers through dance.

Fastvold and her co-writer Brady Corbet know better than to preach to their audience or try to wrap their protagonist in "Why can't we all just get along" sentimentality. Lee was a real person with flaws, determination, warmth and ambition that saw her and her fellow Shakers, uprooted from their home in England, looking to establish their own community in the New World. Religious violence was inflicted on Lee and her followers, which the film doesn't shy away from, but also doesn't sensationalize. Composer Daniel Blumberg drew from original Shaker hymns to write the music for the film, which, combined with Celia Rowson-Hall's choreography, is captivating.

Not every film is for everyone, but this one is definitely something worth experiencing.

***Rated R, runtime 2 hrs, 17 min.**

Classics Corner: *The Birdcage*

Usually, when Hollywood decides to remake an esteemed foreign film, the results are not indicative of what made the original story so engaging.

The remake of the 1978 French-Italian film *La Cage aux Folles* as *The Birdcage*, starring Robin Williams as Armand and Nathan Lane as Albert, is one of those rare exceptions. Released in 1996,



its cast includes Gene Hackman, Hank Azaria, Dianne Wiest, Christine Baranski, Calista Flockhart and Dan Futterman, all doing spectacular jobs with their characters. Directed by Mike Nichols, who also helmed the classics *The Graduate* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *The Birdcage* illustrates Nichols' ability to highlight the humor in

the absurd and craft believable scenes of tenderness amidst a laugh-out-loud tumult. It helps that the screenplay by Elaine May retains the wit of "Folles" while changing just enough for the remake to feel fresh.

Armand and Albert are a longtime couple living in an apartment above Armand's drag show club in Florida's South Beach, where Albert is the star and their live-in helper Agador (Azaria) assists behind the scenes.

Continued on page 25...



A Year Full of Service

By Lynn O'Connor

And so, another Rotary year has gone by. It seems to me like it's been an energetic year with lots of new members, projects to focus on, and celebrations to be had. Let's see if I can catch you up! (A Rotary year is July 1 through June 30, which is why I'm summing it up now.)

We continued with our Tree of Sharing, supporting the Warming Center, and the two food security programs, No Produce Left Behind and Backpacks to Bellies (article in last month's *N.C. Monthly*). Our partnership with Dolly Parton Imagination Library carried on, even though we lost our match funding with the state. We host a weekly speaker at our club meetings to learn more about our community and region.

Some new projects and programs we did this year: Our fundraisers included the very fun Pumpkins for Polio and a grill raffle for our food projects in partnership with NEW Hunger Coalition. Another new fundraiser was the Irish Hooley, held in March, which was a hoot(ie).

We did a Back-to-School Drive and Coats for Kids. We celebrated the establishment of a Peace Pole that the Interact Club installed at Colville High School, and the chartering of the new Northern Stevens County Rotaract Club, which will bring even more community-service-minded energy to our area.

This year's president, Sarah Groves, and her husband welcomed little Charlotte into the world midway through her presidency. Our president-elect and other leaders stepped up to help during this new phase of Sarah's life.

Recently, we had an excellent Career Fair at Colville High School. Lots of local businesses helping kids figure out how to get somewhere, lots of kids checking it all out – all organized by Liselotte Butterfield (of Norstar Heating & Cooling) and her crew. Our Epic Day of Service helped spruce up the Colville Valley Animal Sanctuary.

We added 13 new members – people who see value in serving our community and are bringing their ideas into the club. It seems like many are discovering our group, and how service gives back more than you give out.

When I go about the community, or hear about other events, I notice that there are usually Rotarians involved, going beyond the things our club does.

If what you are reading about here seems a good fit for your community-mindedness, please come and check us out. We meet at El Patron Taqueria most Thursdays at noon. Yes, you can walk into the room as a stranger (we don't bite!) and walk out with a few more friends.



Colville High School Rotary Career Fair. Drone photo by Alexis Larson of REMAX.

*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*



Mumford & Sons Back in the Ring

Always on the hunt for critical respect, the British trio known as Mumford & Sons packs as much of a restrained punch as possible on their sixth studio album, *Prizefighter*. With guest stars galore (Chris Stapleton and Gracie Abrams, just to name a few) and arriving mere months after 2025's *Rushmere*, the band seems to hold back on their signature stomping folk anthems on this outing.

Opening with "Here," M&S enlists the mighty Stapleton to take a turn at the mic, clearly hoping to mix and match genres with the country superstar. Abrams collaborating on the subdued, stellar "Badlands" is a standout track, as the album continues

to stretch out into unusual (for this band) territory.

While M&S had laid low for years prior, the rapid-fire release of current albums has certain critics complaining about an overly polished sound and approach. Yet "The Banjo Song" grabs everything M&S is truly great at, with the heavy folk stomp just brewing under the surface. "Rubber Band Man" is a smoothly driving track with Irish singer Hozier helping lean into the gravelly vocal sound.

Mumford & Sons may in fact have arrived at a place where they'll never please enormous segments of people who love them for different reasons, and perhaps the best thing they could



do is set all that aside and make the album they really want to make ... probably a few months from now. As it is, *Prizefighter* is eminently listenable, with some truly arresting tracks that could become band staples.

Charlie Puth Thinks Twice

Charlie Puth is one of those guys who could sing the phonebook and have it sell a million copies. And the reason we reference an ancient relic known as "phonebook" is because there is a wholly satisfying throwback



vibe to Puth's *Whatever's Clever* that a lot of gimmicky retro-releases just completely miss.

So, for those who were born after phonebooks, CD players or Max Headroom: Charlie Puth is one of the few modern vocalists who can stand right alongside '80s heavyweight singers such as Joseph Williams, Luthor Vandross and Daryl Hall. Cuts like "Beat Yourself Up" and "Cry" (featuring the venerable Kenny G on sax) and the album-opener, "Changes," are a world away from fabricated throwback tracks. They are songs Puth was born to sing.

Teaming up with Michael McDonald on the note-perfect "Love in Exile" feels

like Stevie Wonder was somehow at the helm, and the layered harmonies of "Until It Happens to You" (with Jeff Goldblum at the mic, of all things) are just so rich in everything that made vintage music full of optimism ... yet Puth's vocals and clever approach move them vitally into the here and now.

The long and short of it all is: Charlie Puth's *Whatever's Clever* is a collection you can have on repeat a thousand times as you're flying down the road this summer. He's the perfect singer for the nearly perfect-sounding pop album we really need right now.

Check out Michael Pickett's audio and visual work at: <https://mpcreator.com>.

A Good Read

Outsider Animals, by Marlene Zuk

Reviewed by Terry Cunningham

Marlene Zuk, one of the foremost experts on behavioral evolution, offers an entertaining exploration of what raccoons, rats, and other “animal intruders” teach us about intelligence, adaptability, and more in her new book *Outsider Animals*.

From white cabbage butterflies and seagulls, of which there are between 50 and 60 varieties of these beach pirates, to coyotes and cockroaches, which freely roam every continent except Antarctica in 4,600 types ranging from tiny to huge, almost everyone on the planet has a relationship with them. Usually, it involves food we don’t want them to get into.

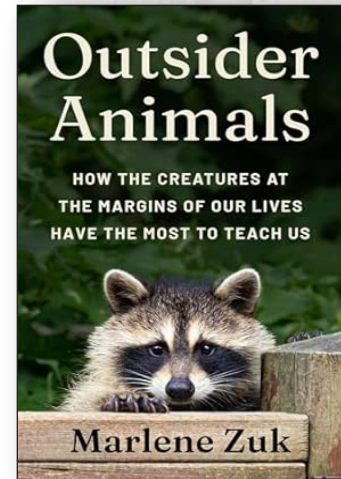
Zuk writes of how the outsider animals that we rarely or don’t want to see can be the most intriguing and misunderstood – rats, cockroaches, spiders, snakes and coyotes living in the shadows of our communities. Humans like to assign all kinds of behaviors that they don’t really have. Take coyotes, for example, considered a pest to some today, but an inspiration to many indigent people, who have many stories of the intelligent trickster canine.

Rats seem to be one of the most repulsive creatures, along with the cockroach. Rats probably arrived in the Americas with Columbus in 1492 and by 1926 they were found in every state. I think we will be living

with these creatures for a long time. They’ve been outsmarting us for centuries.

Marlene Zuk is a professor of ecology, evolution, and behavior at the University of Minnesota and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. Her books include *Dancing Cockatoos and the Deadman Test: How Behavior Evolves and Why It Matters* and *Paleofantasy: What Evolution Really Tells Us About Sex, Diet, and How We Live*.

Terry says, “As a lifetime Earthling, I am constantly stunned and amazed by our world. I had many occupations before I became an arborist, which I retired from after 30 years of very satisfying work. I always had a passion for books and I’m excited to share that with you from my home of over 40 years, here in Stevens County.”



...continued from page 22

Their world is vibrant and charming, with the occasional smattering of melodrama from the sensitive but kind-hearted Albert.

Their colorful contentment comes crashing down when their son Val (Futterman) announces he is getting married to Barbara (Flockhart), the daughter of ultraconservative Senator Kevin Keeley (Hackman). Val asks his parents to pretend not to be gay when Barbara, Kevin and his strait-laced wife Louise (Wiest) come to a dinner he’s invited them to at Albert and Armand’s home, since his fiancée

has lied to Kevin and Barbara about Armand’s homosexuality and job. Kevin has no intention of attending at first, seeing his daughter as too young to be married. That is, until a scandal rocks the foundations of his rightwing group, the Coalition for Moral Order. To divert the attention of the press, Louise posits the dinner with Val’s family could serve as an opportunity to depict an “All-American, wholesome” family planning a traditional wedding. Meanwhile, Armand and Val prepare for their arrival of their guests, redecorating the apartment in a more plain, subdued aesthetic and breaking Albert’s

heart by asking him not to attend the event, instead enlisting the help of Val’s biological mother, Katherine (Baranski).

But, of course, you know things won’t be that easy.

The Birdcage is returning to theaters for a brief time, June 7 and 10, in celebration of its 30th anniversary. If you already have a soft spot for it, the showing will be a fun reunion on the big screen. If you haven’t seen it and you want to laugh, smile and maybe even shed a happy tear or two, go to www.fathomentertainment.com and see if it’s playing at a theater near you.

***Unrated, runtime 1 hr, 38 min.**

Balancing Act — Life's Stretch



By Brenda St. John “Virtue walks the royal road between extremes.” ~ Basil the Great

Finding the right balance between work and leisure is not easy. I know it's important. After all, we are told, after six days of working to create the world and everything in it, God rested on the seventh day. Ever since then, we too have been expected to include periods of rest to balance out our lives.

Part of the difficulty for me is defining what is work and what is leisure. When I am reading a book for book club, that should be a pleasurable activity. However, sometimes I don't like the book, which makes reading it “work.” In addition, I spend many hours over late winter and early spring transplanting seedlings into bigger pots. This is not an optional task. The lives of the plants depend on acquiring more growing room and nutrients. It is very important work which I find enjoyable and relaxing. Therefore, it appears, work can sometimes be more like leisure and leisure can sometimes be more like work. (Am I allowed to wonder if God *enjoyed* His work of creating the world? Whether He did or didn't, He still rested.)

A few years ago, I asked a priest how to properly observe Sundays in addition to attending Mass. I wondered about this because I was in the midst of reading the Old Testament, and proper observance was a very big deal. However, if I were to sit around and do nothing all day, it would be a long, boring, dreadful day.

What I was told was if I LIKED to weed my garden, I could do so on Sundays. But if I HATED weeding my garden, I should not do it on Sundays. I guess that makes sense. Sunday needs to be a day set apart, somehow different from the other six days of the week, and it should somehow recharge us. How we choose to strive for balance will vary from person to person and family to family. Hopefully our choice will bring balance into our lives.

I recently introduced a new yoga asana to my class. It was a balance pose called *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana*. Translating from the Sanskrit, *Utthita* means extended. *Hasta* translates as hand. *Pada* can translate as toe, foot, or leg (in this instance, it refers to the big toe). *Asana* means pose or, technically, seat. Therefore, this is Extended Hand to Toe Pose. It's a simple pose, but, as some can attest, simple does not necessarily mean easy.

Surprisingly, in all the hours of workshops I've taken and all the yoga classes I have attended as a student, I have never had an instructor teach this pose, and therefore I had never used it in a class before. The reason I chose it recently traces back to an online sequencing workshop I

have been taking. No, the instructor did not use this pose, but it inspired me to dig out my book on sequencing to see what preparation poses were recommended for *Ardha Chandrasana* (another balance pose called Half Moon), which was my peak pose for the class, and *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana* was listed as an opening pose.

Specifically, for Half Moon, the body parts that need to be “open” include the standing leg knee flexors, hip extensors and adductors, and internal rotators. The extended leg requires opening of hip flexors and knee flexors. Other body parts were mentioned as well. Seven poses were recommended for preparing the body for the openness of Half Moon and 10 preparation poses were recommended for the stabilizing aspect. All the poses were old friends of mine, except for *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana*, so I decided to give it a go. It was indeed simple, but not easy.

Yoga poses, in general, should always contain the balancing duo of stability and ease. There is the grounding component, which can be compared to work, and a lightness component that can be compared to leisure or rest. With *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana*, the standing leg must work very hard to create the necessary stability, while the elevated leg extends outward with grace. When everything is balanced properly, there is a sense of ease. Without the proper coexistence, we will wobble and fall.

To do *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana*, start in Mountain Pose with feet together and arms at your sides. Shift your weight onto your left foot, grounding it firmly. Bend the right knee and grasp the right big toe with the right hand, generally the index finger, middle finger, and thumb.

Extend the right leg forward, keeping the spine straight and the core engaged. The left hand can move to your waist. After a few breaths, move the elevated leg out to the side. Take a few more breaths, then bring the leg forward again, soften the knee, and lower the foot to the floor. Repeat with the other side.

The class and I had fun with this pose and we will be doing it again frequently as we attempt to master it. There is still lots of wobbling. I believe that finding the perfect balance between stability and ease, work and leisure, or labor and rest, is important physically, mentally, and spiritually, both on and off the yoga mat.

Namaste.

Brenda St. John has taught yoga classes in Chewelah since 2010 and is also a Spokane Community College ACT 2 instructor.



The Quaking Aspen

by Maureen Dobson

Most mornings I sit down with a cup of tea and a magazine. Sometimes an actual paper magazine, sometimes one online. My favorite articles are usually those about country living, antiques and beautiful gardens. This is something my sister and I had in common. Decorating our living spaces with collections of cool stuff found at second-hand stores and yard sales and garden centers.

My sister is gone now. She was born a year before me and we were each other's only siblings for the first 10 years of my life. I miss her and take solace in knowing that she lived a good life.

For me, walking has become a very real way of dealing with loss and all the other things life throws at us. Alone and with others, I've been able to do some great walks all over our beautiful state. From Lake Roosevelt to Frenchman Coulee to Hoh Rain Forest. One of my favorite spots is right here in eastern Washington: Bear Lake Regional Park, on Highway 2, Chattaroy.

Walking around Bear Lake reminds me of my sister. Not only because she and her family were caretakers out there for some years (remember the Victorian home and the stairs that led down to the lake?) but also because she was an artist who often painted from nature. One of my favorite paintings of hers is a simple oil of flowers in a vase.

Hans Christian Andersen said, "Just

living is not enough. ... One must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower." The freedom to meander in the sunshine, looking at every tree and wildflower, is bliss. Nature has a way of soothing the mind, banishing, at least for a while, those things that worry us. I always come away with a sense of peace, that all is and will be well.

A few days ago, as I was walking around the lake, a chipmunk ran up to the edge of the path. She seemed to look at me as if wondering which one of us had the right of way. She decided it was her and darted across into the brush. Turning another corner, I came upon a turtle basking on some crushed reeds. Suddenly, he realized I was a little too close and quickly plopped into the water. His shell was about the size of the palm of my hand.

Once I surprised a large bullfrog sitting in the middle of the path. He shrieked the loudest EEEERP! I have ever heard and jumped a good two feet back into the water!

Wonderful summer days. The air is warm. Oregon grape grows everywhere. I wonder if anyone ever picks them. Bees buzz. Reminds me of my sister stepping on a bee when we were kids.

A few years ago, I spotted a large, brown movement in among the trees. My first thought was that it was a bear. Could there be a bear at Bear Lake? Then the creature lifted its head, leaves dangling from its mouth. It was a

moose. Then another head came up, right beside the first. Another moose. Perhaps twin yearlings. They held up park traffic for a bit before wandering off into the woods.

A little garter snake hurries alongside the path. Trying to get away from us humans, I suspect. I point out the snake to a little boy walking by. Don't boys like snakes? Well, this one didn't. He let out a scream and fairly jumped into his father's arms. Sorry about that.

One day, as I was sitting on a bench, listening to the squirrel's chirp and trying out the PlantNet and Merlin Bird ID apps on my phone (northern flickers, spotted towhees and black-capped chickadees), a passerby admired my walking stick. It has the Coast Guard insignia on it. I served, more than a few decades ago. My sister found it for me.

Last summer, out at Bear Lake, my sister's family planted, with permission of course, a quaking aspen tree in her memory. It's skinny but about eight feet tall now. I look forward to seeing it grow even more beautiful as the years go by. The leaves flutter and clatter in the breeze. They seem to whisper, "Don't forget me."

I won't.

Maureen Dobson is retired from the corporate world and enjoys researching family history, writing short stories, taking care of her defenseless potted plants and planning more walking adventures with her daughter.

Are the Grouse Still Dancing?

Article & Photo by Linea Jantz

I take my tea for a sunset walk, listening to the meadow-larks, the crunch of dry dirt beneath my feet, and the wind pushing around the grasses and sagebrush. The metal camp mug warms my palms as I burn my tongue on the first sip of Earl Grey.

I'm staying in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife office bunkhouse at Swanson Lakes so I can hike into the shrub-steppe before dawn to help with a survey for endangered Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The other volunteer and I will be counting how many (if any) sharp-tailed grouse we see and whether they are performing their mating dance in the leks. (A lek is an area where birds and animals display and engage in courtship behavior.)

The 2020 Whitney Fire destroyed huge swaths of habitat for these birds and may have taken out the area's population of the even rarer greater sage grouse. The sharp-tails are still struggling to recover. Without the big sagebrush that used to grow here, the grouse have little cover from the hawks and owls that prowl the grasslands. There is a very real possibility that I might not see any grouse this entire weekend. With that thought, I rustle into my sleeping bag on a creaky bunk and try to get some sleep before our 3:30 a.m. wakeup.

In the morning, readying my GPS unit and a travel mug of scalding coffee, I stumble blearily out the door. The view stops me in my tracks. I stand still for a moment, inhaling the cool air, staring at all those sparks from the great campfire in the sky. I feel a bit better about the lack of sleep.

Star appreciation complete, I crunch through the gravel to my fellow volunteer's truck and climb in. We sway down a dirt road to our parking location where we roll down the windows and cut the engine. Our job at this lek is to sit for at least 30 minutes and listen for any sign of grouse dancing. If we hear grouse, we will wait until they finish, then trudge through the grass and try to flush them for a visible count.

During the day, it is hot for April. But here in the dark, the wind seeps through my warm layers. My fingers sting a bit against my coffee mug. We hear the sparrows and larks begin to wake up. We watch the sun's light begin to travel

along the horizon. We don't hear any grouse.

Johnny and I hop out of the truck and hike into the meadow toward the lek coordinates to see if we can spot any grouse scat or feathers, or perhaps flush a grouse. We spot some interesting, rusted relics of twisted metal from farm equipment and appliances burnt in the fire. Wildflowers such as arrowleaf balsamroot and white shooting stars bob in the wind. That data is useful, but we find no sign of grouse.

During our downtime in the daylight hours, Johnny and I explore some neighboring lakes. We do flush a grouse during these forays, which is encouraging. They are out here. Maybe we will see them dance at the next morning's lek. We also chat with a Fish and Wildlife employee who

has just finished a habitat restoration event nearby, planting several species of native plants with the help of volunteers from Pheasants Forever.

The next morning, clouds stretch like gauze over the stars. I'm bundled into my warmest coat. Johnny slips me a much-appreciated hand warmer. For this location, we need to hike out to the lek and wait for the grouse to appear. Frost sparkles in the circle of my light.

We wait by the lek with lights off. My toes are jealous of the hand warmer cupped in my palms.

A line of light begins to green the horizon. Then I hear it – the burbling question of a grouse. And again. We

wait, wind hissing in the grass.

Then another burbling call on the other side of a small hillock. The drumming of wings and feet in the dust. And then more calls, emerging from the grass and small shrubs.

Johnny and I grin at each other triumphantly. All these factors against them – owls, hawks, wildfire damage, shrinking shrub-steppe habitat – but the sharp-tailed grouse are still out here, dancing in the dark.

Linea Jantz is a freelance writer active in Washington state conservation efforts. She is serving an artist residency through The Hive® in Spokane, collaborating with artist Christa Mattocks to develop a children's book focused on shrub-steppe conservation. More information about volunteer opportunities such as lek surveys can be found at wdfw.wa.gov/get-involved/volunteer.



A Year On The Farm

The Basil Test

Article & Photo by Michelle Lancaster

I experimented this past year with growing multiple basil varieties: mammoth, Italian large-leaf, and purple. I have been planting the large-leaf variety for ease of harvesting, but acquired some other varieties and so decided to do a little trial. Of the three varieties, my favorite is now the mammoth.

The Italian variety served as my control group, as I knew how it grew for me in the past. The leaves are fairly firm, yet not tough. As the season goes on, the deep green color holds well, although the average leaf size shrinks. The classic basil flavor comes out well. All this happened again during my trial run.

The purple basil grew well and was a firm leaf. This variety might be better suited for sale, where the firmer leaf might hold up better than more tender varieties. But the flavor was not my favorite – sharp and a little bitter. The leaves were small and the plant did not

bolt fast, but the later leaves were all small no matter what I did.

The mammoth basil was described as “crinkly leaf” and “the largest leaf you’ve ever seen” so I was intrigued. Sure enough, the early leaves looked like a piece of paper wadded up in your hand. The later leaves were almost as smooth as regular basil, but many still were lightly crinkled. The aroma was fantastic and pure. The color was lighter green than typical basil. I appreciated the large leaf size throughout the whole growing season. The leaves were very tender and the plant as a whole was not prone to bolting, which is valuable for late season basil.

This year, I am growing solely mammoth basil and love how it’s germinated fast and already has large, harvestable leaves.

I use the abundant early harvests of basil to make and freeze batches of pesto. Here is the recipe I use:

Basil Pesto

- ½ cup Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup walnuts
- 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup or less of olive oil

Add all ingredients, except oil, to a blender. Run blender for a few seconds to start chopping up ingredients, then slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Stop blending. Scrape down sides, then blend further until uniform. I usually do not end up using that much olive oil – I want a paste consistency rather than runny, so add just enough oil to achieve that. I store the pesto in 4-ounce Mason jars and keep frozen until ready to use.

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



Springtime in My Corner of Ferry County

By Karen Giebel

As I write this article from the northern part of Ferry County, it is mid-May and the lilacs are in full bloom, as are the chokecherries, and the air is seductively scented with sweet fragrance. At an elevation of about 2,600 feet, we are a tad behind those living at lower elevations, but our mountain vistas are stunning and the alpine lakes are glorious, making the slower arrival of spring worth the wait ... well, almost.

We do get itching to plant the vegetable and flower gardens, but all in good time. All the fruit trees are done blossoming; we are picking asparagus every day, the strawberries are flowering, rhubarb is ready to pull, and both radishes and lettuce are up. So, progress is being made. We just have to practice being patient, a trait I am not known for.

We and others are already noticing

the effects of the low snowpack from this past winter. On April 8, the State Department of Ecology issued a state-wide emergency drought declaration due to the mountains having about half the normal amount of snow. Even though the state received 104% of its normal precipitation from October to February, most of it was rain and not the snow, which is what we need.

Several natural springs on our property flow year-round. One in particular is my favorite and it runs down through a steep gully into a field near the road. In spring, it gushes water, overflowing its banks and flooding parts of the field before it disappears under the road, re-emerging on the other side. Many years, I have watched and chuckled as ducks would ride that stream across the field and into the neighbor's pond. Every year I video that stream, betting with

myself when it would reach the road. When we moved here in 2011, that spring was the water source for the house, yard and gardens. As a condition of sale, the prior owners put in a well – a very good well – which is now the house water.

Good thing. This season there was barely a trickle. The field was not even damp. Hubby turned the spring water on in the garden to water the fruit trees and after an hour there was no more water. None. There are 12 fruit trees in the garden and they do need water. So now Dan has a series of hoses hooked up to a couple of frost frees connected to our well and further connected to the extensive drip irrigation system he put in. There is no stream in the fields across the road and our neighbor's pond is about 1/3 of its normal spring size. This is not boding well for the heat



Photo by Tim Nicol

Reflections on Life's Journey

that summer will bring.

Speaking of gardening, we apparently made an unspoken decision to scale back the garden this year. Time or rather the lack of it was a factor, but also because we have not used even half of what I canned and froze last year. I dislike wasting food, but I have frozen fruit and vegetables from 2023 and 2024 that need to be discarded. There are enough pickles, relishes, jams and jellies to last a couple more years. I will not regret missing the hot summer months crawling around on my hands and knees working the garden. Maybe I will finally have time to sit on the front porch with my feet up enjoying a glass of homemade iced tea. Now that is something to look forward to.

Dan is going to try something different this year and plant some corn. He has dug out an area in our old alpaca pasture and is putting up a 10-foot-high fence. He's never grown corn here, but he is hopeful.

This has been a wonderful spring for songbirds, which are a delight for me. Welcoming back the western bluebirds is always a treat. I cleaned out the boxes late winter so as to be prepared. Every morning I go out with a bag of mealworms and all I have to do is shake that bag and they come flying! The barn swallows and the violet green swallows are everywhere, swooping, circling and twirling. They are welcome to as many insects as they can devour. They have nested in several of the bluebird boxes and I am eager to see the babies.

The Say's phoebe family has returned and has once again nested in the barn roof overhang, which irritates Dan to no end. They white-wash his boat, tractor, ATV and more.



Photo by Tim Nicol. See more at <https://linktr.ee/timnicol>.

Every year he threatens to alleviate them but that never happens and never will. Just spouting off steam.

I have hung two nyjer seed socks on hooks under the enormous lilac in the front garden. The soft chirping of the many pine siskins fills the air almost all day every day. Gone are the winter juncos and the chickadees but who is not excited when the hummingbirds arrive? The tiny calliope hummers just amaze me. At first, they are so skittish, but as the days go by, they become used to

my presence. So much so that I can take down the feeders to refill and the hummingbirds will perch in the crabapple tree waiting for me to bring back a freshly filled feeder.

I only hope you have enjoyed spring where you live as much as I have enjoyed life here in the Back of the Beyond in Ferry County, Washington.

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

Don't Let the Old Man In

What My Dad Taught Me About Longevity, Service, and Living Fully at 80

By Rob Sumner

There are people in life who teach you lessons without ever sitting you down and trying to teach you anything at all. My dad, Denny, has been that person for me. People are often surprised when they learn he's almost 81 years old. Not because of what he says, but because of how he moves, how he works, how he carries himself, and how engaged he still is with life. He still lifts weights, works on projects, helps coach baseball, DJs events, and stays active in ways many people decades younger no longer do.

And honestly, when I step back and look at it, I realize something important: My dad has spent his entire life quietly showing me what longevity really looks like. Not through theories, trends, or health fads, but through consistent living. The older I get, the more I realize what a gift that has been.

The truth is, my dad has always been one of my best friends. Even when I was young – probably from age 6 through high school – we were constantly doing things to-

gether. Playing baseball, going fishing, walking around the mall people-watching, working out together, or just spending time together. He was always present. Looking back now, I realize how rare that really is. One of the greatest gifts a parent can give is simply showing up consistently, and my dad did that over and over again.

But the second gift he gave me was something I probably didn't fully appreciate at the time: He showed me how to take care of your body for life. Not temporarily. Not seasonally. For life.

Lesson One: Lifetime Fitness

My dad was my fitness and weightlifting coach in junior high and high school. He helped start the weight training program at our school and provided much of the equipment we used. Looking back, I think part of the reason he did it was so he could work out too. And he did. While coaching us, he was right there lifting alongside us, teaching us,

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encouraging us, and reinforcing the value of strength and consistency.

But what stands out most is this: He never stopped.

Over the years, he simply kept going. Today, he still has a small gym at his house that he uses regularly, and when he visits me, he uses the gym at my office. Exercise was never something he “used to do.” It simply became part of who he was. That consistency matters more than intensity ever will.

Lesson Two: Active Work Matters

My dad spent his career working in sanitation. He was a garbage man. In many ways, that physical work became a blessing. Back then, garbage collection wasn't automated. He physically drove the truck, got out, lifted heavy cans into the back, dumped them, and returned them over and over throughout the day.

It was hard work, but it kept him moving. It kept him strong, conditioned, and physically engaged every day. And because he got off work around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, he was also able to coach nearly all of my sports growing up. That combination of purposeful movement and being present for family became foundational to his life.

Lesson Three: Moderation and Course Correction

One thing I've always admired about my dad is his awareness. He understands his body. If his weight starts drifting in a direction he doesn't like, he adjusts. If he notices he's getting softer around the middle, he course-corrects quickly. Not dramatically. Not emotionally. Just intentionally.

He's always had the ability to create habits that support the result he wants.

That's an underrated skill in health and wellness. The people who maintain long-term health often aren't perfect. They're simply willing to make adjustments before small problems become large ones.

Lesson Four: Service Keeps You Young

One of my dad's favorite sayings is, “Don't let the old man in.” What he means is simple: Don't stop doing things. Don't get too comfortable sitting in the chair. Because before long, the things you stop doing become the things you no longer can do.

He lives by that philosophy. Even at almost 81 years old, my dad still helps constantly. He acts as a maintenance man at my office. He cuts grass, helps with repairs, rebuilds structures, and tackles projects most people half his age

would avoid.

But it goes beyond that.

He volunteers his time helping local sports teams. He helps maintain baseball fields because he cares about kids having a good place to play. He still coaches when needed. He still contributes. And all of that gives him something powerful: purpose.

I've watched how service has kept his mind engaged and his spirit young. Through helping others, he's built relationships, connection, and meaning. That matters more than most people realize.

Lesson Five: Relationships Matter

My dad genuinely enjoys people. He likes conversation, telling stories, and yes, sometimes an inappropriate joke slips in there too. But overall, he enjoys being around others.

That's probably one reason he's spent the last 15 years working as a DJ. He loves music because music brings people together. He enjoys watching people laugh, dance, reconnect, and enjoy life.

In fact, at 80 years old, he recently DJ'd the prom for his granddaughter's high school.

That's incredible when you really think about it – not because of the DJ equipment, but because he's still fully participating in life.

What Longevity Really Looks Like

When people think about longevity, they often think about supplements, special diets, or complicated routines. But when I look at my dad, I see something much simpler – and much deeper. I see lifetime movement. Purposeful work. Moderation. Service. Relationships. Consistency. I see someone who never stopped using his body, his mind, or his ability to contribute. And because of that, he's maintained not just years in his life, but life in his years.

That's the real goal. Not simply to live longer, but to stay mobile, independent, useful, connected, and engaged while you're here.

My dad has been an incredible example of that, and honestly, one of the greatest honors of my life has been getting to watch it up close.

Rob Sumner is a doctor of physical therapy, strength specialist, and owner of Specialized Strength Fitness and Summer Specialized Physical Therapy in Colville. He can be reached at 509-684-5621 or Rob@SumnerPT.com.

The Bobolinks' Long Commute

By Cindy Talbott Roché

Why is June such a special month for me in northeastern Washington? Because it's the time of year when we can see bobolinks.

According to my friend John Stuart in Pend Oreille County, bobolinks arrive in mid-May, establish territories, mate, brood their eggs, feed chicks to fledging, and then leave. They do not stick around long at all. By July 4 they are collecting in bunches and they migrate out soon after that. One year,

John had the good fortune to witness an entire assemblage of several hundred bobolinks in a field near Cusick, all the parent birds and their offspring flocking together in late June to start their migration. It was an amazing experience.

I didn't know about bobolinks when I was growing up in the Chewelah

Valley, even though there were more bobolinks in the 1960s and '70s than there are now. I became aware of these birds just a few years ago when I saw a map that designated an area south of Chewelah as priority habitat for "bobolink breeding in converted wetlands and farmed ground" (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). Intrigued, I started looking for more information.

Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) nest on the ground (like meadowlarks)

in grass-dominated pastures, hayfields, and wetlands across the northern United States and southern Canada. What is special about them? Their extremely long annual migration, for one thing, but also their flashy colors and fun mating song.

I'll start with the extraordinary migration distance: These little birds fly as far as 12,500 miles round trip every year! These are birds that basically never experience winter. After raising their

rice fields in the American South in past times. More recently, advocates for the birds have been working to reduce the use of lethal shooting and toxic pesticides by farmers in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, and Venezuela, according to partnersinflight.org. Scare tactics are promoted as an alternative to killing the birds.

So, what do these birds look like? For male birds, the answer depends on whether you live in Chewelah or

Argentina. Why? Because we are fortunate to see the males in their breeding plumage: showy black and white bodies and wings, with a distinctive yellow patch on the back half of the head. All black on the front with a white back, the male looks like he put a tuxedo on backwards, leading some folks to refer to him as the "skunk black-

bird." Bobolinks are indeed members of the blackbird family but are smaller than any of our blackbirds. The adults range from six to eight inches long and weigh between one and two ounces.

The females are mostly brown, camouflaged with yellow-brown streaking on breast sides and stripes on her head, making her look more like a sparrow than a blackbird. Tails are short and spiky in both the males and the females. After the breeding season the males molt and become indistin-



Male Bobolink in flight. Illustration by author.

young in North America, they head south, stopping for an extended time in Venezuela before proceeding to Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina, where it is summer all over again for them.

The bobolink's species name *oryzivorus* means "rice-eating" (*oryza* is the Latin name for rice) and refers to this bird's penchant for grains, particularly during migration and in South America. Because bobolink flocks can eat large quantities of grains, numerous birds were shot as agricultural pests in

guishable from the females. The farmers in South America never get to see the flashy version of male bobolinks. Lucky us!

In addition, South Americans never hear the male's call in breeding season, which he sings in flight over his territory and from perches (such as fence posts and bushes) while courting females. Cornell Lab describes it as a metallic, bubbly, rambling song with a mixture of sharp high notes and buzzy low pitches. Others describe the song as sounding like R2D2 in *Star Wars*; I've read that George Lucas was a bird-er and modeled the sound after the bobolinks' song.

John Stuart wrote that it "sounds like a piccolo player on a pogo stick." He also shared an attempt to describe the male bobolink's song from over a hundred years ago: *olt, geezeler, geezeler, gilipity, onkeler, onkler, oo*.

If none of these descriptions enable you to recognize the song of the male bobolink, download the Merlin bird app on your phone and use the sound recognition feature to alert you when the bird is nearby.

A good source for locations to look for bobolinks is your Northeast Washington Birders group, headed by Dave Kreft. Based on my limited experience, you have a better chance of seeing bobolinks in Pend Oreille County (especially in the Cusick-Usk area) than in Stevens County, except for the population just southwest of Colville. The largest breeding population in the Pacific Northwest is on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge at the P Ranch near Frenchglen; if you go at the end of May or early June, you are almost certain to see them.

As a result of their long commute, bobolinks experience two spring-times each year, one here and one in South

America. We are fortunate that the birds have chosen to raise their chicks in the Northern Hemisphere spring; otherwise, we'd see only another little brown bird.

Cindy is a 1973 graduate of Jenkins High School. Her publications include the Field Guide to Grasses of Oregon

and Washington, *grass illustrations in Flora of North America, and botanical articles in Kalmiopsis. Her current passion project is restoring wetland habitats for wildlife on the family farm. She can be reached at grassesandmore@gmail.com or at grassesandmore.wixsite.com/grasses.*

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Biochar Is a Sponge

Article & Photo by Joe Barreca

My last article on biochar was in March 2023. You can read about “Bigtime Biochar” on BarrecaVineyards.com, but the project at Avista’s waste to energy facility in Kettle Falls did not happen. There has been a lot of hype about biochar over the years and that project was a good example. Myno Carbon wanted to make biochar from wood waste in Kettle Falls and use it to absorb stockyard waste in Pendleton and then sell the enriched product to farmers. The market did not pan out, which brings into focus the question for this article: What is biochar and what is it good for?

Basically, biochar is just charcoal without any additives or treatments that would turn it into charcoal briquettes. It can be made from grass, wood, branches, chips, etc., by burning it to drive off the volatile gases and then extinguishing the fire before it turns to ash. This leaves a residue that is almost entirely pure carbon and does not deteriorate over long periods of time.

It has been produced for centuries because it smokes less than wood when used for cooking. Charcoal has millions of tiny cells that can absorb water and hold on to it without

letting it evaporate. Those cells can serve as microbe hotels preserving diverse biology in almost any situation.

Cranking up the way-back machine, we read in Albert Bates’ book *The Biochar Solution* about the adventures of Spanish missionary Gaspar de Carvajal, who served Conquistador Francisco Pizarro as he and a contingent of 56 soldiers under the command of Francisco Orellana descended the Coca River on into the Amazon River in search of gold and cinnamon in 1542. At one point they were attacked by women warriors who Carvajal wrote were “very white and tall and have very long hair. ... They carry scimitar knives and bows and even if you shoot them with arrows in their arms they still fight as much as ten men.”

Carvajal’s journal of this trip was taken back to Spain and spawned the image that gave the Amazon River its name, harkening to the Amazons of Greek mythology. (Note: “While long considered entirely mythical, modern archaeologists and historians have confirmed that these legends were likely inspired by real women. Excavations of ancient burial sites across the Eurasian steppes {mod-

ern-day Ukraine, southern Russia, and Kazakhstan} have revealed graves of nomadic Scythian women buried alongside their weapons, battle armor, and war horses.” [Google and Smithsonianmag.com]).

This relates to biochar because Carvajal and the Spaniards passed through continuous towns and cities along over 240 miles of the river. The cities were never separated by more than three miles and had roads stretching back away from the water. (This advanced civilization of millions of people later died from European diseases.) The Spaniards noted many outcrops and cutbanks of rich black soil supporting fruit trees and field crops along the way. In 1871, at the request of the Brazilian government, Charles Hart and students from Cornell University explored mineral assets of the country and attributed the rich soil to “kitchen middens” which Herbert H. Smith described as “the refuse of a thousand kitchens for a thousand years.”

If this is beginning to sound like a civilization-wide compost pile, it is because it basically was. Analysis of the soil found shells, bones, skins, vegetable matter, pottery, wood, human waste and myriad other waste



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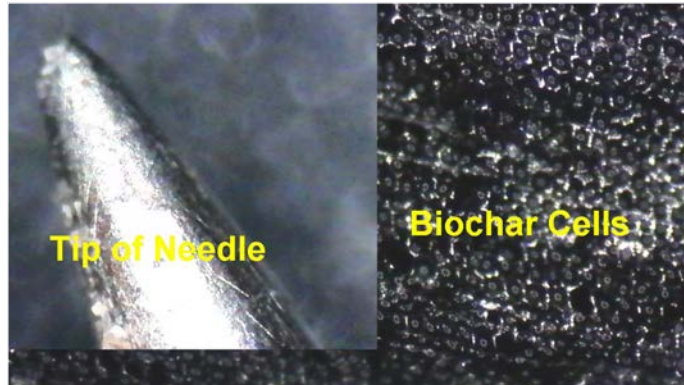
streams piled onto these middens. In our society these waste streams are all diverted to septic systems, landfills, wastewater plants, incinerators, etc. In the Amazon basin societies, everything that once was alive or came directly from the earth, such as pottery, ended up in these middens and was broken down by bacteria and fungus into its smallest organic components, from which it could become alive once again.

The dark black color of this rich “terra preta” (precious earth) comes from charcoal. Charcoal, which does not break down beyond its essentially pure carbon form, maintained the fertility of that soil for thousands of years in the tiny pores of its cellular structure.

Those pores provide water and shelter for microbes, especially bacteria. Bacteria are the chemical engineers of the microbial world. They consume whatever food source they need until it is gone and then wait for it to be available so they can multiply again or be themselves consumed by other bacteria and microbes. Once

filled with biology, biochar becomes a biome ready to happen.

Too often biochar itself is considered a fertile soil amendment. Actually, pure fresh charcoal, right out of the fire, is sterile. It does not enrich



the soil. It does help with other issues by retaining water in sandy soils, sequestering carbon and decompacting clay soils. After it is filled with biology, it becomes an even better soil nutrient than raw compost and maintains that role for years.

One immediate implication is that biochar, once loaded with microbes, needs to be added to your soil only once. It is not like manure, bone meal and other amendments that are used up during the growing season. Also, biochar needs to be immersed in rich biology to become valuable, just as it

was in the middens of the Amazon.

I used to enrich biochar by spraying it with compost tea, preferably aerated compost tea, to preserve mycorrhizal fungi. Lately, compost extract, made by rinsing the microbes from compost into water, seemed like a better idea. Delving into that idea raised the question of how much mycorrhizal fungi is going to be present in typical compost, given that mycorrhizal fungi need to be attached to plant roots to be able to feed on glucose from the plant leaves.

One suggestion is to plant squash or some other fast-growing plant on your compost to keep the fungi alive. Another is to add fungal spores to the extract.

My latest solution is to just go Amazonian native. Add the biochar right into your compost pile. It will soak up microbes like a sponge. Keep it wet and active, then work the compost into your soil.

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

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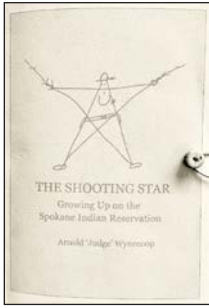
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The Shooting Star: Growing Up on the Spokane Indian Reservation

By Judge Wynecoop

Excerpts from Judge Wynecoop's 2010 book *The Shooting Star: Growing Up on the Spokane Indian Reservation*, reprinted with permission.

THE HAY SHED (...continued)

In the May issue of NCM I included the incident about the accident at the new hay shed where I was pounding a nail in a plank down low on the shed's wall we were building. I had just yelled and asked my brother Dick to throw me a bigger hammer. This time Sam (Peone) was holding the plank in place for me. I yelled at Dick because I thought he had thrown the hammer which landed on my head.

Sam was standing right in front of me and he said, "It wasn't the hammer, Judge, it was the axe!" By then the blood was flowing pretty good. We went to Chewelah to see Doc May.

A few days later, Dick, Sam, Wade and I were working on something in the old shop building by our house.

Well, some of us were working. Dick and Sam were horsing around. Sam had a big old kitchen knife, and he was pretend-

ing to attack Dick, and they were moving around while Sam was yelling, "Hyah, hyah!" and whacking at Dick, who threw up his hand in defense. Sam hacked his hand. Well, back to Chewelah to Doc May's office. This time, I got to drive. We did finally finish the hay shed and it is still standing today – 50 years later – with its built-in-sag to the roof, and all.

SKATING PARTIES

We would have skating parties on area lakes or ponds, including in our own field. In late winter, after melting had occurred, ponds would form in our field and after a good cold snap we would ice skate on them. We would have big crowds gather there at times, especially on moonlit nights. We would build a big fire, get the fire going strong and then put an old tire on it and that really lit things up.

One smaller pond was near a fence that crossed through the field. The fence posts were made of cedar. The posts kept getting smaller and smaller as more skating parties happened, since they made great kindling and it was easy to cut pieces off them. I am sure that Dad saw what was happening, but he never complained.

Once we got a fire going, kids just started showing up and a great time was had. I don't remember there ever being any trouble – just fun. On bigger ponds, or especially on

Benjamin Lake, we could get a good, long running start to get up speed, heading straight at the tule patches along the edges and leap out into the tules. When we got older, we played hockey. Strange things became pucks and stranger things became hockey sticks. Brother Chick got accused of picking out clubs instead of sticks and was known to aim more at shins than at the "puck."

COOKING RUFFED GROUSE

A hunting story I forgot to include in my book was about a trip Wig and I took. Dad was logging out by Benjamin Lake and Wig and I rode out with him and then hunted ruffed grouse on our way home. We killed a couple of them, and as it happens with young hunters, we got very hungry. Wig decided to cook one of our grouse, so we got a fire going and he found an old license plate to use for a skillet. We cut up the grouse and cooked it.



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Things were looking good until I saw what happened when Wig took a bite. To begin with, it was tough because of not being cooked enough. And when he bit into his first piece, blood and juice shot out both sides of his mouth! I was hungry enough to try most anything, but one bite was enough. Not only was the bird unchewable, it tasted like paint. I should have gotten that plate's number.

THE CAN'T SINK 'EM BOAT

After World War II was over and Uncle Glenn Galbraith was home, he and Dad bought a Can't Sink 'Em boat. It was twelve feet long, made of steel, with wooden seats and trim. It had metal tanks under the seats for flotation.

That boat was heavy, but it didn't leak like wooden boats tended to. We used it a lot down on the Spokane River for goose hunts and also on local lakes for fishing. Sometimes we left it at Cousin Jimmy LeBret's place upstream from the Sandbar. There was a nice, well-protected cove there and nobody bothered the boat, mostly because at that time there were very few people using the river for anything since it was so polluted.

There were stories of the LeBret boys having to clean off a large-enough spot on the water surface to dive into for a swim and having to come up in the same spot or risk having a face and head covered with green, frothy scum.

OLD TOES OUT

When I was in high school, I spent most of my free time hunting and fishing with my brother Chick and Uncle Glenn. Glenn was "Uncle God." We spent a lot of time out in the woods or down on the river hunting geese. What fun it was to go goose hunting on a clear, cold morning. Most generally Mom Phoebe would be up first and would have a large breakfast for Glenn, Chick, and me. Then we would load up the Can't Sink 'Em boat.

One time, though, we decided to go the evening before and camp out so we could be after those geese very early. It was the evening before Thanksgiving and very cold out. We launched at the Jim LeBret place and then went on down the river to a place known as the Log Boom. There we set up camp. We had supper, which was quite a story in itself with Uncle Glenn doing the cooking.

The basic ingredients for camp meals was a large can of Dinty Moore stew and then lots of other things were mixed in with it. Most generally I was thankful that it was dark when we ate so as not to have to look at what was on my plate.

After supper, it was bedtime. We had our sleeping bags and Glenn had a large plastic tarp. It was huge – something like 25' x 50'. It was plenty large to place on the ground under the sleeping bags and fold over, too. Probably could have covered 40 men. It was very comfortable once we managed to get rid of all the pinecones, rocks, etc. Things you discover only after you spread the tarp and lie down.

After a good night's sleep, we awoke to quite a surprise. During the night it had snowed about three inches, and it was cold!

We didn't have breakfast but hurriedly got dressed to surprise the geese before they left to feed in the wheat fields. Usually, our first move consisted of stumbling blindly through the dark toward where we thought the geese would be, then making a mad rush at them after our sneaking up had failed and firing as fast and furious as possible with the hope that a blizzard of ammunition would somehow bring down a goose.

Most generally, we found ourselves standing among a bunch of empty shells and listening to the rapidly retreating honking geese. Well, with all our hopes dashed, we'd regroup and start back to camp where at least we had food for breakfast. This time, on the way back, we came across some very curious footprints in the snow. These tracks had the toes pointing out. Since there were only us in the area, a quick check of boots determined that Uncle Glenn had put his boots on the wrong feet while dressing in the dark. Glenn was "Old Toes Out."

There was more to this story: Later in the morning, after breakfast and much laughter over Toes Out, we decided to go farther down the river and put out our goose decoys and try to lure the next bunch in. We pulled the boat up on the beach, not very carefully, and walked a way off to survey the lay of the land. After looking things over, we turned back to the boat, which was no longer there. It was about 100 feet out in the river and slowly heading downstream.

Glenn turned to me and said, "Well, there is only one guy here that can swim, so I'll build a fire."

So, I took off my clothes, down to shorts, and jumped in to get the boat. That was cold. I was immediately numb and swam as fast as possible to the boat and rowed it back to shore where Glenn had found a nice pitch stump and had a large fire going and my dry clothes ready. Such comforts, such fun, but no geese.



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They Rest Here

Article & Photos by Donna Potter Phillips

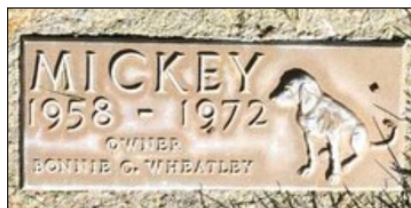
As someone who has lost more than one beloved pet – and I'd bet there is a huge group of us – we do still miss them. I tearfully miss my little mini-longhaired dachshund, Tika. I did create a memorial tombstone for her and she is resting in a far corner of my backyard in the West Plains area of Spokane. (Yes, you can legally bury your pet in your yard in Washington state, provided you follow strict health and environmental regulations; do an online search to find them.)

Here is the final resting place for my Tika, 2008-2023:



But if backyard burial is not your wish or can't be done, there are approximately 700 pet cemeteries across America. (The oldest one is in Hartsdale, New York, established in 1896.) Closer to our area is the lovely Family Pet Memorial Gardens in Colbert, Washington, showing at least 175 burials, including dogs, cats and horses.

Wandering through this cemetery (a favorite thing of mine to do) I smile at the names folks gave their pets, such as: Moqui, Spock, Donuts, Zenobia, Napoleon, Ginger Love, Oreo Cookie, Aphrodite, Lincoln, Popeye, Kullspell, Tolo Tasmay, Candle, Touchette and my favorite, Sir Lord Benjamin. To my way of thinking, a sunny day wandering in a cemetery is pure fun. And to take the munchkins and talk about death in



such a lovely, positive way is a great idea too.

When my grandson, Justin, was five years old and lived in Pullman, he came with me in the car when I went to photograph a tombstone for a friend living back east. As I explained what a cemetery is all about, he looked up at me with wide-eyed wonder and asked, "This happens in Pullman too?" Yes, Justin, people and pets do rest in cemeteries everywhere.

Donna Potter Phillips has been active with the Eastern Washington Genealogical Society for nearly 50 years. Her passion is searching out ancestors, learning family histories and helping others find their family's stories. She lives in Colbert.



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Retirement? What Is That Anyway?

Article & Photos by Becky Dubell

I am thinking that everybody retires differently. Everybody that is on this revolving planet of ours is put together a little different from the previous model off the production line. Consequently, every situa-

all these decisions. Like right now – do I want another root beer popsicle? You betcha. Oh, dangnabit – it split apart wrong. Do I still eat it? For sure! Decision made. (Time out for eating.) It was delicious as usual.

is printed on them, and when I hear someone say the phrase “It is what it is,” I hand them a card. It finishes out with: “and it will become what I make it!” I came up with this card after Jim died and it has helped me

through a lot of situations over the past 10 years.

On Memorial Day weekend I took a hard stab at being retired. When I retired on a Monday in September, I had a travel trailer by Thursday that week. Only got the chance to take her, Betty Boop, out camping one time. For the holiday weekend coming up (as I write this), we will be boondocking for three nights



tion will get handled differently. We have all learned to handle situations that come up in our lives. There are a bazillion different ways to dig in, figure it out and continue.

But ... did I happen to mention that I'M NOW RETIRED! I thought that meant that I didn't have to make

But seriously. Am I ever gonna get this new phase in my life figured out? I'm thinking this is where I will be using my mantra a whole bunch. And it's not just me using it. I have handed out about a dozen little business-size bright yellow cards in the past month. My mantra

at Kettle Falls Campground on the lake.

Now, it's been a while since I've been camping for more than overnight. At that time, 1976, it was in a 1968 Dodge van converted to a camper for a road/ferry trip from Anchorage to Phoenix. Oh dang.

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More decisions. What to take to eat. If I remember correctly, it was hot dogs and s'mores over a campfire on that trip. Not planning on a campfire this time, with our dry weather. Pull out the same propane stove – which I still have – from the last trip?

Oh wait! Betty Boop is upper class. She has a walk-around bed and a flushing toilet! Along with a propane stove and refrigerator. Oh Betty – you rock! Now for the rest of the decisions for that weekend ... oh, Samatha, where is your wiggly nose? (Am I dating myself? *Bewitched* of course.) I am thinking again. Boy, have I done a lot of thinking already which I really don't get paid for, especially since I'M RE-

TIRED.

Anyway. Thinking. Here we go. Winging it. Winging it is half the fun of camping if I am remembering correctly. Gonna use that mantra some more I am sure.

This is a time of year when stories and adventures are shared with family and friends.

My weekend will be spent with family with a break on Saturday to do the community garage sale at Country Chevrolet. I'm thinking – there I go again – I might be doing a bit of visiting that day since I haven't seen very many people

over the past eight months. Not to repeat myself too much, but did I happen to mention that I'm retired and have been kinda out of the public eye? Hope I see some of you there. The weather is supposed to be in the 70s and partly cloudy/sunny. Wonder what goodies there will be to eat? New places to eat while out and about is always at the top of my list.

Thank you for letting me chatter. My head/shoulders seem to be a little lighter regarding this retirement stuff. Realized I don't have to do stuff on the weekends only cuz – well ... I don't want to keep repeating myself. I can take off any time of the week or day and *wing it*.

I'm looking to find a new way to Daddy's place in Grand Coulee. Hope there are a few restaurants along the way that are as good as the Corner Cafe in Creston. At breakfast I could not decide which flavor I wanted in my mouth as the last bite so stacked all three on my fork and took a huge bite. Have never been on the ferry at Keller. Is that the correct name? Will be getting BB – my bike – out and wing it to see some more of NE Washington. Got any suggestions? My trips will be by Jeep (Beepers), BB or Betty Boop. Oh, good grief! More decisions. These will be guided by weather, I'm thinking. Okay. Started out with *thinking*. Think I'll quit for now.

Be good to you and yours!

Personal note: Shades of Mom and Daddy showing up. Us daughters are named Becky, Bonny and Bambi with a last name of Bundy. Can you see the similarity in there somewhere? Really was not done by me on purpose. And I am also Granny BB, so ...

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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Hometown Arts & Culture

Article & Illustrations by Marci Bravo



Usually when I think of local art and culture, several things come to mind: the lineage and millennia of the Sinixt people that have inhabited this region; the rancher and cowboy culture that brings us the Colville and Republic rodeos; summer gardening, canning and orchard picking; outdoor sports (motorized and non-motorized); our



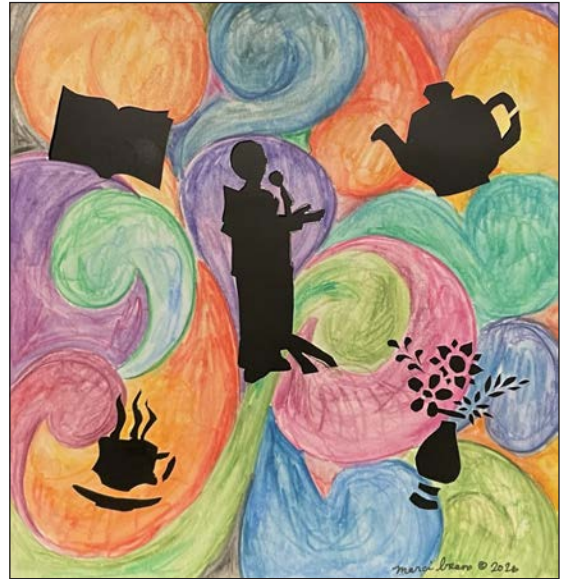
beloved huckleberry-centric desserts; the Christian evangelical faiths; country music; line dancing; textile arts; and enjoying the beauty and abundance of our great outdoors.

However, in the last two months, I have been privileged to witness or participate in less common arts and cultural events with more worldwide flavor. The Chewelah Creative District and Arts Guild have hosted

workshops that included abstract painting with an art professor from Portland, and the Japanese art form of kumikome, or fabric tucking, taught by an artist based near Sandpoint. Colville Public Library offered a free mosaic workshop last month to a full house, and more art classes are planned, including one for stained glass.

This was the first spring that I signed up to attend the Kettle Falls Friends of the Library fundraiser, a festive tea party that featured talks by local authors and the Washington State Poet Laureate, Derek Sheffield. It was

a lovely event and a worthy cause. For me, good company, homemade baked goods, and thought-provoking poetry



make for an afternoon well spent!

The most exotic recent performance I attended was a transcendent Baroque quartet which was set in the Colville



Catholic Church, whose members came from as far as Anacortes, Montreal, and Germany. It was amazing to listen to these world-renowned mu-

Creative Being in Stevens County

sicians and recognize that the pieces and instruments we were listening to were being played to similar crowds in chambers 200-300 years ago. Another Baroque concert is scheduled in June and will feature a flute, local phenom Jeff Cohen and a harpsichordist from Spain.

Perhaps the performance that softened my heart the most in May was Northern Dance Theater's ballet "Tale of Tails," a lyrical romp through an underwater world of dancers ranging through a wide spectrum of ages. The costumes – jellyfish, a crab queen, starfish and sea anemones – were lovely. The choreography and stage design spotlighted our local talent and stole hearts in the Colville High School auditorium.

If you're interested in exploring new perspectives in arts and culture, or looking forward to annual events seasoned with local flavor, you are in luck. Summer weekend festivals start soon and monthly Art Walks in Chewelah and Colville (first Thursday and fourth Friday, respectively) are in full swing. Keep watch for fun activities in Colville's Seeker's Bookstore, including Filipino-style mahjong on Wednesdays, 1-3 p.m., quilting and fiber arts circles weekly, and summer craft fairs throughout the area. Chewelah PACA has been producing wonderful plays, and Woodland Theater is readying a production of "Matilda." Personally, I'm excited to dance at the Igor and the Red Elvises show slated for the end of July (think surf rock meets Eastern European rhythm and energy).

There are also summer Powwows in the region, traditional and sacred events revolving around Native American drumming, dancing and singing. These are family-friendly events and open to the public, but first-time visitors should read up on Powwow

etiquette before attending. More information about that, as well as a calendar of events by state, can be found at www.powwows.com.

Here's to a summer of appreciating the rich and varied tapestry of humanity whether we're close to home or abroad. As John Hume, Nobel Peace

Prize laureate, says: "Difference is of the essence of humanity. ... Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace: respect for diversity."

Marci Bravo is a multi-media artist, wife, mother, teacher, friend and yogi residing in Colville. Follow her on Instagram @marci_bravo_makes.

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MLS# 44881 **\$579,000**

Peaceful setting in a very private location. Crafted log sided home with covered deck, large carport, workshop with loft, separate dry cabin, garden shed and a 14-ft door RV shop. Beautiful double fenced garden with 2 sets of grape vines. Local rock landscaping around the house. Open kitchen, dining, and living area on the main floor with easy access to the deck. Wood cabinets and built-in pantry. The woodstove will keep you warm all winter. Upper level hosts a very spacious bedroom with full bath, easy access closet with built-in amenities, there is a total of 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths. Daylight basement with patio and a propane stove to heat the home if you have to leave. There is even 220 amp in the carport for an electric car hook up. You have to see this home to appreciate the beauty!

Outstanding Lake Roosevelt and mountain views from this incredible triplewide on 23 acres of private land. Home features primary ensuite with jetted tub, tile walls and walk-in shower plus sitting/living area. Open living, dining and gourmet kitchen with expansive counter space and beautiful views. Stone fireplace and built in wood storage adds to the glamour of this home. Extra living space with 2 additional bedrooms and full bath. Large garage with an enclosed room from the garage to the main house. Front and back decks. The back deck is covered and has a fenced yard for your family. Additional 30x40x14 shop that is 90% insulated and has a wood stove. It's all here!



MLS# 45824 **\$699,000**



MLS# 45880 **\$670,000**

Peace and tranquility. Wildlife abounds w/13+ acres of seclusion on the 1310 line of Lake Roosevelt, less than 1/2 mile from French Rock Boat Launch. Lake views from all main living spaces and bedrooms. 2 bd/2 bath main floor, fully finished walk out lower level w/pellet stove, in rec room w/2 additional bedrooms (non-conforming) & 3/4 bath. This home has been well maintained including a new pressure & H2O tank! One owner. Triple pane windows in basement and upstairs slider. New flooring 2017/2026. The list goes on. Pellet and electric heat w/cooling for main living & main floor bedroom. Add the 2-car garage/shop with additional covered parking. All buildings have a metal roofs.

Small town living at its finest. This 3 bed 2 bath 1,680 sq ft home sits on almost a 3rd of an acre with a fenced yard and a 30x40 shop split in 2 with half man-cave/she-shop with pellet stove and cold room for food storage, and half for 2-car/toy parking. Covered front and back patios, plus hot tub for relaxation. This home is just minutes away from the beautiful Lake Roosevelt and Marcus Campground and boat launch.



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MLS# 45832 **\$439,000**

Beautiful, updated one-level living, only 7 miles to town, with a fenced yard, garden area and fruit trees. New mini split and new hot tub add to the comfort of this home. Expansive living room with a wood stove and open to the dining and kitchen. Primary bedroom has a new bathroom and walk-in closet. Updated laundry room and 2 additional bedrooms with main bathroom add to the ease of living. Mountain and territorial views from the front of the home.



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