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## To Eat Everything They Help

- JOHN ODELL, [allthelandandsea.wixsite.com/wordsofwords](http://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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# Thinking for Ourselves

By Christine Wilson

*“We don’t belong to the same boat; it’s the storm we share. We all belong to the one road; it’s up to you to get there.” ~ “Tonnta” by Amble*

*“My husband and my father agree with each other so much, they start thinking it’s the truth.” ~ Jane Smiley in A Thousand Acres*

I was raised with the threat of being taken or brainwashed by Russians. The town was Richland, WA, the decade was the 1950s, and the Cold War was not all that cold. When the Bay of Pigs incident happened in 1961, we were a possible nuclear target. I had the impression at the time that some stranger was going try to sneak information into my brain that would make me turn against my country. We wore dog tags in case, from what I recall, we were hard to

identify after a bomb dropped on us.

At some point in middle school, we had a lesson on propaganda. We learned about all the different approaches these mysterious strangers would try on us. We were assigned the task of role-playing such an attempt. I can vaguely picture the classroom, but the topics we picked are lost to me now.

The messages used repetition, catchy slogans, emotional appeals, and testimonials. At the time, we

watched cigarette ads on television – “Winston tastes good...” Your senior citizen relatives and friends can finish that with “like a cigarette should.” We don’t believe it now, but that doesn’t matter. It sticks in your head.

Now, the internet and the barrage of social media posts pound us with attempts to make us think a certain way. Our brains haven’t changed how they process information, though. As one of those senior citizen types, I can tell you that aging requires more intentional effort, especially on the things that don’t come naturally or easily. Now, it takes no effort at all for me to eat cookies. Or pick up my phone. Or smile at people I love. Easy peasy. Taking care of myself is not easy peasy.

This world in general is requiring more intentional effort, no matter what your age. When we were all first exposed to the internet, there was a tsunami somewhere and photo-shopped pictures were flying around fast and furious. Our nascent ability to fact-check was causing us all kinds of problems. I remember seeing an ocean wave rolling over the top of a 30-story building and some crazy-looking deep-sea fish washing up on a beach. All fake.

After 9/11 a photo showed up of a man standing on a balcony at the top of one of the twin towers while a plane headed for him. There were so many things wrong with that picture that it didn’t take long to reject it. I

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# Random Acts of Community

started with the fact that the camera wouldn't have survived the collapse of the building. From there, I thought about how noisy a plane would be at that distance. The little research I found at the time showed it to be the wrong kind of plane. We were all so heartbroken by the attack that, in my opinion, the picture circulated as a metaphor for how caught off guard we were. It was a subtle ending to a kind of naiveté we didn't even know we had.

Our brains are still trying to catch up with the onslaught of information. I would love to say that the propaganda lessons from my youth made me immune to the modern attempts at propaganda, but alas, it is not so. I am still susceptible through the upgraded versions of repetition, slogans, emotional appeals, and testimonials.

The good news is that the information age has also generated a whole collection of people who are working to help us navigate this world. Specialists in "media literacy" are easy to track down online.

One of my favorite terms in this field is card stacking. If you have seen John Wick movies, you know he is an assassin and there is a ton of gratuitous violence in those movies. Early on, though, he gets a puppy. He is so sweet with this dog that you could take clips of the sweetness and say that he's a really nice guy and anyone who says otherwise is an idiot. Card stacking for sure.

Bandwagon appeals use our pack-animal nature to pull us in. Many of us can remember ways we were susceptible to that in our youth. I wanted to dress like other girls and can remember shopping with

a friend in high school. She had her mother's credit card. I (a) didn't have one until I was 39, (b) couldn't have afforded the clothes, and (c) was so much taller than my friend and my other peers that there probably wasn't anything that fit in the store. Besides, my mother sewed our clothes, so that would have been a hard no anyway. The bandwagon didn't seem all that welcoming to me.

Testimonials are another way we are inundated with information meant to influence us. This is called "grey propaganda," because it can be a little hard to sort out. If you respect someone and they tell you a certain thing, it is easy to associate that general respect to a specific product or belief.

I was told by an Orvis fly fishing teacher that trout are lazy. They prefer a pool to settle into and wait for food to float into their mouth. It might be a bit of anthropomorphizing, but I think about trout sometimes when I don't want to work that hard to figure something out. Just let information float in. Alas, that is not what our world needs from us these days.

The media literacy types have lots of suggestions, none of which allow us to be lazy trout. The most important one from my therapy-focused perspective is emotional intelligence. When we can identify and regulate our emotions, we can keep ourselves from getting hooked and being convinced of something we might otherwise question. Part of emotional intelligence is intellectual curiosity, whether that applies in our households or out in the world. The tallest tidal waves are maybe 100 feet tall and a 30-story building would be about three times that height.

Curiosity is what helped me get that particular falsehood.

I think another way to combat our modern propaganda is to accept nuance. Think of someone you love. Are they perfect? Are we? We bug each other and love each other anyway. In terms of our local community or in the wider world, there is usually something that we can agree on. You don't have to love everyone or everything about the people you do love. We don't all belong on the same boat, as the Irish band Amble says, but the storm is hitting us all. Nuance can do two things. It can help us look into the details, whether they are good, bad, or ugly. That can keep us from painting an idea with a broad brush. The other is that we can find common ground with people who are in some ways different from us.

If we didn't agree with ourselves, we'd change our opinions. The advantage of questioning what we think and who we talk to is that it gives us wiggle room for developing a broader sense of humanity. I was talking to an urban psychiatrist once about a client's medication and he said: "Why does he live in Colville? He seems so competent." We had words. I like to think that by the end of that conversation he had a more nuanced sense of rural life.

The inoculation process in our current era is far more complicated than a fear of being kidnapped by Cold War enemies. Instead of a dog tag on any of our wrists, we have the storm to remind us to pay attention with curiosity.

*Christine Wilson is a retired psychotherapist in Colville and can be reached at [christineallenwilson@gmail.com](mailto:christineallenwilson@gmail.com) or 509-690-0715.*



# In Pursuit of Better Things —

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

There are places of great beauty in the world. There are a few spots of such unsurpassed beauty that they can only be described as glorious. One such place is Patagonia. With its glaciers, fjords, pods of porpoises, jagged mountain peaks and spectacular waterfalls, it is truly an astoundingly beautiful experience.

Another such place can be found in the mountains of Costa Rica, in the cloud forest of Monteverde. There you'll find a modest-sized seating area where you can observe the hummingbirds feeding, whizzing inches from your head, in colors of iridescent blues, purples, reds and greens splashed and striped in exquisitely tailored suits. One can

hardly describe the three-dimensional experience of these brilliant creatures unbound by gravity zooming unimpeded in and out of our line of sight, around, above and below us, a constant whirr of sight, sound, wings nearly brushing our cheeks, taking our breath away.

There is another paradise where I allow myself to travel, a place that lifts me away from the present to another dimension. It is a song called "Gabriel's Oboe." It profoundly affects me, in part because my son played this instrument. More than this, the song enraptures me and moves me to another time. I hear him, I feel him as the angelic strains find their way into my soul and touch an emotional chord deep inside. I hardly dare to go there, yet sometimes I must, because I miss him so much. Strange though it may seem, this is a place where I visit him, I imagine him. Always wondering, always longing for the thing I cannot have. In that moment, I hear him speaking to me, and then I must let him go.

Finally, there are our Friday night suppers. A bit more mundane, but beautiful in their simplicity. A sim-

ple formula of soup, bread, and ice cream. Companionship. A place to ask questions. Have a healthy dialogue about the world. Connect with other people. A place to feel at home, welcome, and belonging. Smiles around a friendly table. Second helpings when you need it. Finest dishware. Plain clothes. Treated like royalty. Unexpectedly welcome. Someone saying, "I hope you'll come back." Joyful chatter of people connecting.

Sometimes a stray cyclist from around the globe shows up and wonders aloud about the meaning of this place where strangers gather on a Friday night around a long table and laugh and share stories and look strangely like they all belong. And they are wondering why someone would travel across the country on a bicycle.

Far too many people are overly worried about the zombie apocalypse. Our social media sucks us into a vortex of fear and anxiety. It is the nature of salesmanship that we stay riveted to the things that drain us of joy and release adrenalin and cortisol, the hormones of stress, leaving us exhausted, worn, angry,



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shaken and feeling inevitably alone and uncertain.

Science clearly demonstrates that our brain wiring is dependent upon peace. When we are loved, when we consistently receive messages of belonging and acceptance, our brains respond by creating synaptic connections with other places within the same organ which release dopamine. This chemical is what makes us feel normal. Without these early dopamine connections, our brain development goes awry, and we don't feel whole, but we can't understand why. Downregulate stress, and our brains develop differently. Though a child's brain is considerably more pliable than an adult's, there is evidence showing that an adult brain can also heal.

What are the factors that correlate with the healing of our mind? Messages of hope. Pursuit of beauty. Exercise. Eating good food. Companionship. Belonging. Words of encouragement. To name a few.

We are seeing the power of such things, simple and ordinary though they may seem to be, in the men and women who are in recovery housing. Thought processes change. Priorities change. Healing of relationships, pursuit of education and meaningful work, compassion for others, a desire to give back in some way. All of these are evident as men and women progress in their sobriety.

We must pursue better things if we would heal as individuals, as families, as communities, as a nation, and better yet as a world. There are so many places where we inevitably see things that cannot help but release cortisol and adrenalin and escalate stress responses. What

is needed is a place where we give ourselves permission to heal. Our minds can heal when we feed them something different from usual social media fare.

I believe we can find places of beauty, of calm, of peace, and give space for this healing to take place.

I am convinced that we can.

*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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# Gail Morin: Grand Coulee's Grand

By Tina Wynecoop

*"When the People speak a person's name that person never truly dies."*

*"They say, no one is gone until the last time their name is spoken."*

~ Joe Two Trees

Perhaps your family's ancestral roots in the upper Columbia River landscape appear in the above lists highlighted by Gail Morin (1940-2023), author of over 100 volumes, including her six-volume *Fur Trade Families of the Pacific Northwest*.

She notes in her introduction that the records resulting from her research are from "witnessed events, notes for baptisms, marriages, burials, employment history, censuses, BIA probate records, council minutes, military draft and enlistment records, social and legal newspaper articles, obituaries, old biographies, etc."

Her family explained that her research was inspired by the gift of census information from a relative. "I hear you are working on the family [tree]. We are related to everyone on this census," he said. She took that last statement and ran with it. Over 30-plus years, and eleventy-thousand citations later, her research about the descendants born of the "confluence of cultures" between Indigenous women and European men continued to expand and be available through her publications.

Reviewers state that Morin's "'whirl of books' are extraordinarily wide-ranging, impressive, absorbing – an astonishing collection. Her whole body of works deserves a full alleluia."

Her December 2023 obituary said, "She is known for her huge generous spirit and

deep kindness. She voluntarily gave so much to people she'd never met." (This includes me.) "Her passing is tempered by the knowledge of how much she is loved and by the depth of her legacy that has touched thousands.

"Gail, a life-long learner, earned her master's degree in education. She taught at the Nespelem and Grand Coulee schools. She was a member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Her greatest love, including research, was spending time with her children and grandchildren. She enjoyed bowling, growing tomatoes in her garden, sewing, or just sitting on her deck, Diet Pepsi in hand, watching the river go by."

I, too, sing her praises. This month's column is a shout-out, as they say, about someone who has achieved grand accomplishments.

Gail was also the mayor of her

hometown, Elmer City, which sits on the eastern shore of the Columbia River, a few miles upstream from Grand Coulee Dam. Before the dam was even a pipe dream, a small community sprang up around what was originally called Seaton's Ferry Landing, which accessed routes into the territory of the well-known Chief Moses (Half-Sun), for by the late 1800s "ferryboats now laced the Columbia like thongs on a baby-board," according to historians Robert Ruby and John Brown, whose insights reflect their cultural sensitivities.

Thomas Seaton's cable-barge ferried people, livestock, mining equipment and supplies. Later the little community was renamed Elmer City, after Seaton's son Elmer, and was officially incorporated in 1947.

Chief Moses and his people frequented the store there in those days

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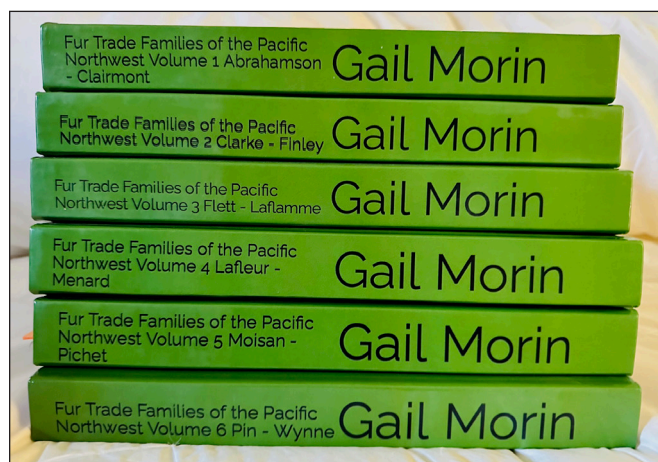
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# Lady of Research — Home Ground



and were friendly with the Seaton family. A family member recalled that Chief Moses once told Thomas Seaton that, “Since half the river the ferry crossed over was on the tribe’s side, they should ride for free.” To this Seaton jokingly responded that the tribe’s people could ride for free but would have to get out and walk at the halfway mark.” In the end a deal was struck: Tribal members could cross at half fare.

Just as the ferryboats on the Columbia impacted the original inhabitants, forts and missions were part of this “confluence of cultures.”

I know I speak often, in my *NCM* columns, of my coming to the east side of the state, but I’ve found another tie-in. A century-and-a-half after Fort Colville (yes, the spelling is correct) was established upstream from Kettle Falls, I emigrated to the Spokane Reservation’s small town of Wellpinit. Like Gail, I was a schoolteacher and the first graders I taught had surnames found among the 250 names listed above: Flett, McCrea, Wynne, Wyncoop, Abrahamson, Etue, Desautel, Peone, Provost, Raymond, Seyler, Sherwood, Tonasket. Little did I know at the time, 1970-72, that my students

that first day of school. Memorably, what stands out, besides not knowing what I was doing, was my encounter with Trina. Some of her baby teeth had given way to the newly emerging ones. Her hair was pulled into a cute little topknot; her smile was adorable and engaging.

I asked her name for my attendance records. I wanted to tell her my name was Tina, since I was eager for some small point of familiarity/connection in this region where I knew no one. I refrained since it was (I thought) protocol to be addressed as “Miss Granmo” or “Teacher.” Then I asked her parents’ names. She gave her mom’s name and then said her dad’s name was Smelly. I was so surprised!

Her dad’s surname, I learned from Gail Morin’s vol. 6, was on the list of ancestral fur trade names. Smelly’s cousin, Judge (another nickname), said Smelly’s given name was Melvin. The other brothers had nicknames just as hilarious as Smelly. Gail’s work would have expanded to a seventh volume if she had included all the nicknames tribal people acquire throughout their lives. (I’ve since learned I was bequeathed *three* nicknames by my new community.)

carried ancestry with the early fur traders, gold seekers, homesteaders and the Hudson Bay factors revealed in Gail Morin’s books.

Neophyte me from west of the Cascades met my fresh-faced students

On the October calendar is an event titled “The Fort Colville Summit” commemorating the fort’s bicentennial (Oct. 18, 10-3, Mistequa Hotel, Chewelah). Gail’s books will be part of a roundtable discussion. The event is coordinated by historian Joe Barreca and will focus on the lasting impact of the fort on the lives of the first inhabitants, whose descendants are here still. Author/naturalist Jack Nisbet will be the keynote speaker and moderator.

I hope I have piqued your interest in Morin’s books. The fur trade family volumes are available on Amazon as well as on the shelves at the Inchelium Cultural Research Center ([www.incheliumcrc.org](http://www.incheliumcrc.org)). There’s a ferry (Gifford) east of Inchelium waiting to carry passengers across the river just as in the early days when ferryboats “laced the Columbia like thongs on a baby-board.”

Gail Morin is a luminary whose ancestral research expands the range of traditional genealogies and histories in so many ways. Her lamp continues to shine light on the deep and profoundly impactful history of the fur traders and their families in the Pacific Northwest. Of these ancestors, and for Gail Morin, I second actor Ted Danson’s observation that, “A lot of people have come before us, and a lot of people will come after us.”

Alleluia!

*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.”*



# What My Smart Watch Doesn't

By Tina Tolliver Matney

When I bought this “smart” watch, I really had no idea how much it would overstep its timekeeping capabilities and be in my business.

I'm pretty sure there are days it sighs bigger than I do at the sad and pathetic attempt I may or may not make to close my move ring. Or my exercise ring. Or my stand ring. Seriously, I was standing in line at the post office one recent morning when this thing pinged so loud, I felt like everyone and their dog could hear it.

I looked at my wrist to see, “It's time to stand!” With an exclamation point. I muttered slightly out loud, “I've been up since 4 a.m. and I haven't sat down, what do you mean it's time to stand?! You need to pay better attention.” Of course it wasn't listening. It never

listens unless I'm talking to Siri on my phone and my watch decides it should chime in on the conversation.

Recently I asked Siri to find “fuel near me” because someone (that would be me) forgot to gas up the pickup before heading across the border (because borscht) where fuel seems cheaper to the metrically challenged. If you aren't metrically challenged like me, you already know that fuel is not cheaper in Canada, because it turns out a liter is a lot less than a gallon.

So anyway, while my phone was rattling off two petrol stations in Christina Lake and asking me if I would like directions, my watch was muttering, under my sleeve, the Webster's definition of a “fool.” I snorted a little as I pointed my rig to the nearest

petrol station. My not-so-smart and slightly-hard-of-hearing watch needs to mind its business. Which is basically to keep time, ping me if a man likes me on whatever dating app I'm currently trying – that's a story for another day – encourage me when I beat my exercise goal, and that is just about it.

I don't need a watch to tell me my sleep patterns are concerning. I've known that my entire adult life. And when my watch told me that I'd stopped breathing between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. I'm assuming it didn't mean the whooooooooooollllle three hours. I don't need it to “contact 911 or someone I trust” when I trip over the cat. Or when I trip over the running board getting into the pickup. Or when I sidestep a snake or a pile of bear poo on my walkabout. And I certainly don't need it to warn me I'm going too fast when I'm coasting down off Kelly Hill on my bike.

Someday I'll take the time to sit down and figure out the ins and out of this watch that, so far, hasn't impressed me much.

When I walk with my friends, I like to keep track of my steps and calories burned. You know, in case there's a cake when we're done. But what I don't like is having to put my hand in my pocket to muffle the monotonous breakdown of my “split pace” and my average minutes per mile or how many snakes I sidestepped.

I don't even know what split pace means! Does it mean I tripped more than usual? Stopped to suck on my inhaler because the smoky air quality was probably a few points over my lung limit? I don't know. I suppose I could ask the watch, but I'm not going to. Talking to my wrist just

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# Know — This Great Big Life

isn't something I'm comfortable with.

I've had a few occasions when I had to take a call from my wrist because my phone was taking a break from me ... playing hide and seek somewhere in my cabin, or my rig, or somewhere on the property. I can't even imagine how awkward I must look, with my hand to my ear, yelling into my wrist, because I always figure if I can't hear the person I'm speaking to then I need to talk louder. This is an age thing, just you wait.

My daughter had this conversation with me just the other day. She did the little pinch-hand signal thing, like you would do to a child who was being too loud. I was in a crowd trying to hear my little sister on my phone and apparently everyone in the ballpark knew how many paint samples I'd picked up at the paint store and where I'd eaten lunch and how terrible their iced tea was.

The signal from my daughter did the trick, made me realize I was talking in that voice that I used to use in a classroom full of rambunctious second-graders who were eager to play with the glue and glitter. Those are the kinds of signals I'm accustomed to. The human kind. The pinchy hand to lower my voice.

Or the eye rolls from the grandkids when I break out my ukulele and start singing, "Down by the Bay." Or when my sister or a friend locks eyes with me and silently nods an exit from a crowded room or an uncomfortable situation. Those are the signals I really pay attention to.

These past few weeks have been particularly unsettling for so many people. Communicating with each other has been a challenge. I don't have answers to what it will take to fix what is broken in our world. But I do know that in my own circle of friends and family, I simply must try harder. And by try harder, I mean I have to find ways to keep communication from breaking down.

Some of us think differently and for me that's OK. But it's not always easy to convince who I'm talking with that it's OK if we don't see eye to eye. I sometimes feel and see anger and frustration when we can't find the common ground on a subject. That's usually when I change the subject. Food is always a safe topic, unless someone tries to get me to eat sushi.

But in all seriousness, I find myself more frequently having conversations about things I never thought I would be having with people I love. Family

and close friends. We don't always agree, but I'm relieved and grateful that we can continue to talk and not allow our differences to scar our love and loyalty to each other.

Some days ... some events ... cause me to worry that there could come a day when there will be a divide too deep. I will do my best to make sure that never happens. I know families and friends who no longer see or hear each other. They've stopped talking. The signals all got crossed and relationships have ended, leaving nothing but silence and "sides" that won't allow for differences. That just breaks my heart.

Maybe there's room in this great big life for these smarty-pants gadgets, but I'm still not persuaded that the watch I wear on my wrist needs a voice. I don't want to pay that much attention to myself. I have my own voice, and I simply want to focus on and stay connected to the people I love.

*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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# Thoughts of a Small Town Girl

By Annelise Walsh

Growing up surrounded by pine trees and the roaring sound of the Columbia River did not prepare me for the culture of the big city. The pine trees were replaced by towering buildings, and in place of the river was a never-ending flow of traffic. Now I have a hard time knowing which way north is.

North was always easy to find when I only ever traveled up the highway toward Canada or down to Spokane. If you were ever lost, you could just follow the highway because it was going to get you somewhere, eventually. Now I use GPS to guide my friends to the largest road running through the city, which you still need directions for, because no one ever knows how to get anywhere.

I miss the backroads. Taking random side roads where you get lost but eventually find a way back home, filled many of my days. No matter where I drove, as long as I could see one of the mountains surrounding Colville or Kettle, I knew I could make it home. Nothing here in Virginia is familiar, and if you take the wrong road you could end up halfway to West Virginia with a very confusing way back. I miss the simple days.

Here at school, there is always something to do, which is the opposite of home. Here, there is nothing short of 15 events per week, and someone somewhere is always doing something or going somewhere. It makes me miss the small bowling alley or hanging out at the park with friends. Back home, walking around Walmart is considered a hangout and usually ended with the greatest conversations in the parking lot. Here, you go in and out of Walmart as quickly as possible, and then sit for 15 minutes waiting to turn onto the long road that is constantly stagnant with traffic. I miss knowing people.

The people here are very different. You might meet someone with a Southern sweetness, where they say hi and talk to you even if you do not know them, or with Northern sweetness, where you ignore each other until it gets uncomfortable and you are forced to give a half-hearted compliment. For the real sweetness back home, I miss the church grandmas.

Following behind a tractor on Highway 395 taught me how to have patience during snail-pace traffic ... mostly. I have learned to appreciate every tree, leaf and moment in na-

ture because I can no longer walk into the backyard and hear the birds flit from branch to branch. I miss my childhood.

If growing up in our little hometown has taught me anything, it has taught me to appreciate where I am from. No matter where I live, I know that I will always have my roots in the mountains, forests and rivers of the Pacific Northwest. The ways may seem simple, but in the hustle of city life, the longing for something real and natural has caused me to know that the only road that really matters is the one that leads me back home.

*Annelise Walsh grew up in north-eastern Washington and now attends Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.*



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# Black Earth: Fertile and Flammable

By Cindy Talbott Roché

*“A wide glaciated valley opened out beyond, where the puny Colville River wound through patterns of green fields and black plowed earth.”*

~ Jack Nisbet, *Purple Flat Top* (1996)

In 1965 my parents bought one of those farms with “green fields and black plowed earth,” where the Colville River flowed slowly toward the town named for a little water snake: Chewelah. In our part of the wide, flat valley, though, the river didn’t wind or meander; it was channeled into a straight line like an irrigation ditch. Except in this case, it wasn’t an irrigation ditch. It was a drain ditch, created in the early 1900s to route excess water away from cropland.

The sluggish river was a bit of a novelty, but not as much as the black dirt. Our neighbors warned us right away never to burn stubble on that ground because the soil would catch on fire and continue to burn until the winter rain and snow saturated it.

Flammable soil was a curious thing. But it was great for the garden; my father scooped up buckets of it with the front-end loader on the tractor and rototilled it into our garden. It produced fabulous vegetables.

However, there were problems for the cattle that grazed on those pastures. Some of the young cows and calves got sick and died, so we had to move the cattle onto the upland parts of the farm. After a lengthy investigation, the local veterinarian diagnosed the problem as Blackleg, which is caused by an anaerobic bacterium (*Clostridium chauvoei*). Cattle are infected by grazing on grasslands where the soils harbor the bacteria.

The cows either inhale the spores or ingest them in soil particles on the vegetation. Fortunately, the disease does not transmit from cow to cow and there was a vaccine for it.

After high school, I left home to work and go to college. Like most of my classmates who went off to college, I came back to Chewelah only to visit. Eventually I earned three degrees in natural resources, learning

which started about 2 million years ago, when the climate became wetter and much colder. Massive amounts of ice accumulated and merged into a solid layer over the northern part of North America, extending into what is now northern Washington. Individual glacial periods lasted for several thousand years, followed by lengthy periods of drier and warmer conditions, when plants and animals (woolly mammoths, mastodons, timber buffalo) recolonized the land. These colder/warmer cycles occurred at least eight times, perhaps as many as 20.

Each successive glacial advance incrementally lowered the mountains and widened the valleys. During the most recent advance (the Wisconsin glaciation), lobes of ice filled the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Okanogan valleys. By geologic standards, the ice advance and retreat were extremely rapid: between 17,500 and 15,000 years ago the Colville lobe advanced from the Canadian border to its southern limit near the town of Springdale. In another 2,500 years the Colville Valley near Chewelah was ice-free again. The most recent glacier scoured away most of the remains of the plants and animals that had colonized in the interglacial time, as well as the debris of previous glaciers.

As with the previous glaciers, the most recent one melted from south to north. Melting glaciers produce water (obviously!) and it needs to go



*Profile of Saltese muck. Photo by Adam Cares.*

about soils and the plant communities they support. Decades later, based on what I’ve learned about geology, soils, and plant ecology, I want to know more about this black earth. What is it, how did it come to be, why is it just in some places in the valley?

The black soil, I learned, is a gift of the “wide glaciated valley” that was carved during the Pleistocene Epoch,

somewhere. With a wall of ice blocking meltwater from draining north, and the south end plugged by a terminal moraine, a lake filled the valley at Chewelah.

The process of soil formation started in and around this lake, using the assorted raw materials provided by slow-moving ice: rocks scraped off the surrounding mountains, outwash sands and gravels, and fine-grained sediments. Added to this glacial debris were ash from Cascade volcanoes, diatoms (the skeletal remains of floating, one-celled algae) from the lake, and organic matter from aquatic plants.

Gradually, as the ice continued melting northward, the water found an outlet into the Columbia River and the lake at Chewelah started to drain. This wasn't a flood situation like when Lake Missoula broke loose and created the channeled scablands. Instead, the river meandered at a leisurely pace from one side of the valley to the other. Even as the lake shrank during the Holocene (the warmer geologic period that followed the glaciation), water levels fluctuated. The lake expanded in wet years and shrank during droughts. On a smaller scale, the pattern occurred seasonally. Even today, shallow water covers part of the valley every spring, which some locals have dubbed "Lake Chewelah."

A variety of soils formed in the old lakebed, including the black earth. The color is from organic matter (carbon) from decayed plants. Soil scientists recognize two types of black soil in this valley: Saltese muck and Bossburg muck.

Saltese muck is easily recognized by its black, fluffy appearance; it feels soft underfoot. It is made up of fibric



**View of black soil from Cottonwood Creek Rd. Photo by Robert Korfhage.**

plant material (commonly called peat). As the word "fibric" implies, peat is well-preserved fiber that can be identified to its botanical origin. Like a giant sponge, peat soil stores massive amounts of water when saturated. The peat can be found from the surface down two to four feet, followed by a layer of grey volcanic ash from the eruption of Mt. Mazama 7,700 years ago, then more black peat down to a bluish clay layer that may be as much as six feet below the surface. The bluish clay is compacted glacial lake sediment with iron content in reduced form.

Bossburg muck is also black, but solid and dense; it feels harder underfoot. Bossburg muck is more than 60% volcanic ash, mixed with "sapric" organic matter, in which plant remnants are so highly decomposed that the plant fibers are no longer recognizable (thus it isn't peat). This muck has a much lower water-holding capacity than the Saltese. When flooded, Bossburg muck readily saturates, deflects excess water, and then forms wide cracks as it dries. The profile for this soil reflects the history of fluctuating water levels in "Lake Chewelah" during the Holocene: the "black muck" is deposited in layers between sandy loam and silt loam, indicating periods when the water was shallow enough to support veg-

etation and allow it to decompose. The mineral soil layers accumulated under deeper water.

But in the permanently saturated soils (Saltese muck), the decay process depleted oxygen from the water and conditions become anaerobic. More water meant less oxygen, less decay, and biomass accumulating. Based on the soil depth, it had to have been waterlogged for most of the 10,000 years of the Holocene. The saturated soil provided conditions for persistence of spores of the anaerobic bacteria that causes Blackleg. The flammability of the soil is explained by anaerobic conditions that led to accumulation of so much poorly decomposed organic matter. After many years, I finally understand the significance of the things I remembered from my childhood, and they all tie together.

*From her start in Chewelah and the Colville National Forest, Cindy earned degrees in Forestry and Range at WSU and Plant Science at the University of Idaho. She wrote Extension Bulletins, edited the journal for the Native Plant Society of Oregon, became a botanical illustrator for the Flora of North America and lead author of the Field Guide to Grasses of Oregon and Washington. Her current passion project is restoring wetland habitats on the family farm.*



# More Random Thoughts...

By Bob Gregson

**Thought #1:** Perusing the newspaper the other day, the captioned picture of a new entree from a Spokane-area restaurant jumped out: huckleberries. Where does the restaurant get adequate quantities of huckleberries routinely to include the dish on the menu? All sources say most WA/OR/ID/MT huckleberries grow on public lands where commercial picking is illegal. And there is not a single huckleberry farm in the whole US of A, according to online sources. Other places in our region also advertise fresh or frozen huckleberries at well over \$10 per pound, or included in other tantalizing restaurant desserts.

Something doesn't add up with all these commercially available hucks. Are there a lot of huckleberries on private lands where crews can find them? Or are businesses fibbing about where they were picked? There was something in the news recently about law enforcement disrupting a crew illegally picking more than 100

gallons of huckleberries on public lands near the Canadian border.

**Thought #2:** This time of year brings to the forefront gently falling leaves, which in turn often stimulates thoughts about fading love or fading lives as the greenery is fading away, especially when one hears that old sad song performed by Nat King Cole, "Autumn Leaves." Many of us can recognize and sympathize with those emotions about seeing those leaves "drift by the window, the autumn leaves of red and gold."

But another aspect, for me at least, is the present-day absence of the smell of burning leaves. I fondly recall that faint smell from my small-town youth before science came along showing that smoke in the air is bad for you. I loved that smell. Yes, it's FAR better for the environment and everyone's health to compost leaves or chop them up with a mower and use them to mulch the garden. We here at the farmette, in fact, do all of that on a large scale. All our leaves

from the 14 newly mature trees serve to blanket the raised-bed garden over the winter.

I admit: It is truly an unhealthy quirk about missing that burning leaf smell. But I do. There's something compelling about the smell of distant burning leaves on a crisp evening at dusk ... and it ties in with the smell of my grandpa's pipe.

Agreed, the smoke from crisp autumn leaves and meerschaum pipes certainly LOOKS similar to cigarette smoke, but it has always seemed vastly different from all the indoor second-hand smoke we used to encounter in movie theaters, on airplanes, in all restaurants, and elsewhere, back when it was seen as cool to smoke.

For me, it took just one Lucky Strike cigarette in my teens to eliminate THAT sense of being cool!

**Thought #3:** Mice. It's that time of year when the little critters want to take over the chicken houses, or the barn and live under one of the seven freezers or refrigerators there.

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During early autumn, it seems mouse heads of household from all over the neighborhood contact mouse real estate agents and rent or borrow spots in the best places feasible, like right up against the motor of a freezer or refrigerator, burrowed into the insulation around it.

Then those mouse families with all their relatives arrive on the scene as it begins to get cold at night. They take up their new quarters inside and multiply. Last year the eight traps inside the closed-up barn cumulatively yielded at least one mouse every day for over two weeks during the first wave. It was a similar yield about a month later. Lots of crunchy-style peanut butter was consumed by the mouse families during the process.

One amazing day there were three young ones all caught at the same time in one standard Victor trap, from Lititz, PA, where they've been making those iconic traps since 1899. Three young mice went for the peanut butter at the same time. I sent a picture of that situation to the Victor company, but they never responded. I had hoped that they'd pay thousands for a picture of their product catching three mice at the same time in their 126-year-old trap design! It was not to be. Maybe that happens frequently? I've tried several different types of traps and find that the old standard is the best for quick action without any suffering by the trapees.

It certainly gives me no joy to end the lives of critters, any critters, but it's important and even crucial sometimes to avoid mouse/rat infestations. They get a deep burial in the garden and feed the worms and microscopic creatures that contribute to creating good soil. Part of the cycle of life.

**Thought #4:** All our forest fires during the last several decades seem like they should have destroyed every forested and grassland area in the Pacific Northwest. Especially east of

the Cascades. But they haven't. That seems remarkable when you watch the news that lists all the fires and the acreage they've destroyed. And homes and other buildings wiped out.

The *Spokesman-Review's* "This Day in History" feature often mentions incredible fires that swept through this area in the 1920s, and it's probably true the same thing happened in the late 1800s, like the Great Spokane Fire and others where nearly whole towns burned down. So, the good news over the last hundred years is that forests and grasslands and homes and commercial buildings do come back or are replaced after such devastation.

Mother Nature and the human spirit can often prevail. But it's clear there are limits. "Modern culture" has made many serious mistakes about such things, including ignoring the preservation of salmon runs on the Columbia and Snake rivers, nuclear waste still festering at Hanford, chemical mistakes that have had profound negative effects on newborn babies and other aspects of the biosphere like honey bees, and inhumane treatment of entire groups of our fellow man, to name a few terrible mistakes.

Which takes me back to the BLT concept mentioned here several months ago. Let's do things singularly and collectively that more fully take into account the ideals of Beauty, Love, and Truth. Can't go wrong with those foremost in thought.

And I'll just stick with fond memories of leaf and pipe smoke, even while I now know better.

*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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# Tales of a Garbage Witch

Article & Illustrations by Marci Bravo

I was six when I learned the consequences of not planning a Halloween costume ahead of time. My mom had arrived home from work (I was a latchkey kid by then, and her clinic was only a mile away) and spontaneously decided that this was the day she needed to give me that booster shot I was due for.

Fifteen minutes later, I was sitting in the backseat of her navy-blue Cadillac Seville, my right thigh throbbing at the injection site, when I saw a gaggle of costumed kids running up a sidewalk to a neighbor's house.

"Momma!" I exclaimed. "Is it Halloween?"

My mother gasped, regretting aloud her last-minute impulse to inoculate me.

"I don't have a costume, and I don't know if I can walk," I moaned, cheeks already shining with tears.

"You'll be fine, Anak," Momma said, using the Filipino term of endearment. "We'll make you a costume. What do you want to be? How about a witch?"

"Yes, a witch!" I said, picking what I thought was an easy one.

We bustled out of the car and into the house. Momma found her witch's hat from last year, but I didn't have any black dresses.

"Don't worry," my mother said, opening a low cabinet in the kitchen. "I can make you a dress from this!"

With a flourish, she pulled and tore a black trash bag from its roll and snapped it open. Flipping it upside down, she quickly cut three holes out for my arms and head, cinched it at my waist, and laid the pointy black hat atop my head.



"There," she said, smiling, eyes shining. "You are a garbage witch!"

In my adult memory, I can only remember endless belly laughter between my mom and me, though I don't know if that was what happened between her and my first-grade self, or just what happened later, every time we recounted the scene. Sides aching, tears in our eyes, we recall that ridiculous image of a miniature garbage witch with a plastic orange pumpkin, reluctantly hobbling on her sore leg into a chilly and damp Halloween night in Kentucky.

In Stevens County, I became a mom myself, of a defenseless newborn and a generously cooperative husband willing to be my costuming canvas. Some might describe a few of those early costume projects as overzealous (yes, darling husband?), but those sleep-





# Creative Being in Stevens County

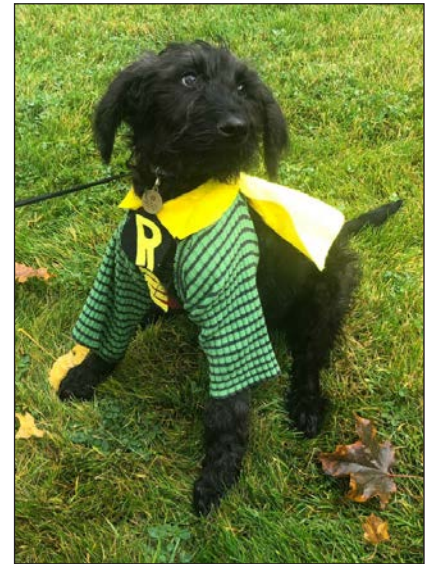


less weeks were worth it. They were my annual forays into sweet, creative oblivion before I discovered and then threw myself into the joys of clay.

I was often inspired by whatever was around us – the quail that cheeped and squeaked each day in our backyard, the

night sky, and the precious sun – and then, as my son grew older, whatever was obsessing him – noisy trucks, electronics, sharks and bugs.

By the time he was five, my son's attention had moved onto more industrialized pastures, deciding that

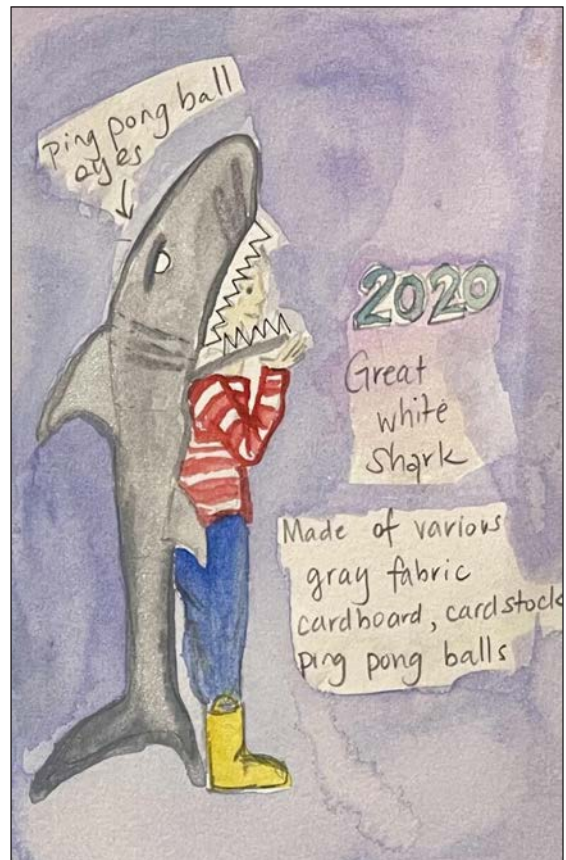


a multi-media artist, wife, mother, teacher, friend and yogi residing in Colville. Follow her on Instagram @marci\_bravo\_makes.



the “best” costumes were those not made by his mom, but instead made by the artisans of Walmart and Amazon. “Real costumes” he called them, ones that looked more like the ones his friends wore. A bit reluctantly, I brought him to the big box store where he chose a polyester, muscle-stuffed Batman costume with molded face helmet. I had to admit, he looked pretty cool. And by then, we had just gotten a new puppy, and so I made tiny Kaslo a costume to go with it – Robin.

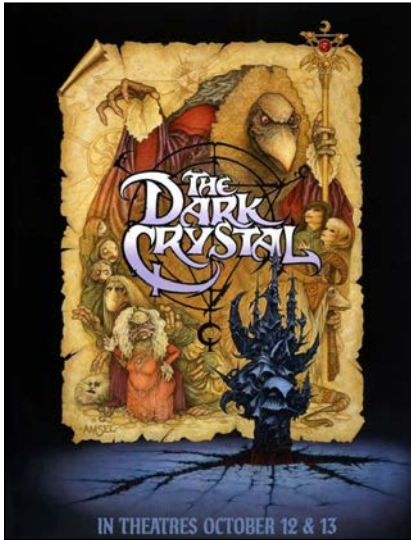
Marci Bravo is





Movie Reviews by Sophia Mattice-Aldous

## Returning to Theaters: 'The Dark Crystal'



If you grew up in the 1980s and '90s and always wondered what it would be like to see some of your favorite childhood films on the silver screen, an opportunity to do so is on the horizon. For a special, 70-year anniversary celebration of the Jim Henson Company, Henson's 1982 dramatic fantasy masterpiece, *The Dark Crystal*, returns to the silver screen Oct. 12-13.

Set in the fictional land of Thra, the story is about Jen and Kira, two beings known as Gelflings on a journey to bring balance to their world by restoring a magical crystal and

overthrowing the Skeksis, a greedy, cruel, ruling class.

The movie's plot is run-of-the-mill, but compared to certain film and streaming fare today that ties itself in knots trying to be clever, that simplicity can feel refreshing. And, of course, the amazing visuals of Jim Henson's Creature Shop are not to be underestimated. At the risk of sounding like an overly nostalgic geezer espousing how, "Movies were better back in my day," I maintain that the animatronics are truly a unique visual treat.

**\*Rated PG, runtime 1 hr, 33 min.**

## Classics Corner: 'The Night of the Hunter'

It's hard to believe that 1955's consummate thriller "The Night of the Hunter" is the only film that actor Charles Laughton ever directed, but I'm grateful for what he left us.

Robert Mitchum is the stuff of movie legends as the publicly devout, but privately dark-hearted, preacher Harry Powell, who comes sweeping into a small town and soon has the

residents eating out of the palm of his hand. That includes a young, soft-willed widow (Shelley Winters) whose two little children are privy to a dangerous secret Powell is determined to uncover at any cost.

The words "fable" and "fairytale" are often applied to this movie's tone and cinematography, and rightfully so. A scene of the two siblings drifting downriver in a boat at night as we look at them through a gossamer spider's web hanging from a nearby tree is gothically gorgeous.

While the visuals are more than worth the watch, it's the sadly relevant truth in the movie that gives it emotional weight. Quite often it's not strangers that put children at risk, but the people who are supposed to help them.

**\*Not rated, runtime 1 hr. 32 min.**

*Sophia Mattice-Aldous is a longtime*



movie buff and a Murrow News fellow at The Newport Miner and RANGE Media through a program administered by WSU. Please email questions, comments and suggestions for film reviews to [sophiamatticealdous@gmail.com](mailto:sophiamatticealdous@gmail.com).



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## Peace Rises

By Lynn O'Connor

The Colville Interact Club recently planted a Peace Pole at the entrance to the high school and had a dedication ceremony.

Peace Poles carry the message "May Peace Prevail" in the languages of the world. Peace Poles act as beacons of hope, inspiring people to come together and work toward a more peaceful world. There are now over 200,000 Peace Poles, located on every continent. They have been planted over many decades. (For more on that, see [www.peacepoleproject.org](http://www.peacepoleproject.org)).

The story of the Colville Peace Pole starts in May 2024 at the Interact Club's spring retreat. Each spring, Interact selects a theme to guide our work for the incoming year, and that year they chose to focus on peace building.

Themes are chosen from among Rotary International's seven areas of focus, which are: community economic development, education and literacy, environment, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, disease prevention and treatment, water sanitation and hygiene, and maternal and child health.

T-shirts this year state: "As a humanitarian organization, peace is a cornerstone of our mission. We believe when people work to create peace in their communities, that change can have a global

effect." We also selected two peace projects: to learn about peace literacy (which is a set of conflict resolution skills) and to put a Peace Pole somewhere in our high school.

Within all Rotarian districts, there are peacebuilding clubs. One of their goals is to gift Peace Poles to Rotary clubs, with the understanding that the receiving club will then gift a Peace Pole to another club and so on.

The local group chose the languages English, Spanish, Russian, and Japanese because they are languages spoken at the high school.

This pole was made possible by a generous member of Rotary District 5080's Peacebuilding Club and his wife. They will now pay the project forward by donating a Peace Pole to another club, possibly the Sandpoint Interact Club, with whom they have a close working relationship.

I believe that the world now belongs to our young people, and we need to leave them the best world we can. One way we can do that is to eradicate polio. In October, the Rotary Club will have a booth on Saturdays at the Farmers Market selling "Pumpkins for Polio." Rotarians

have been growing pumpkins all summer and will present them for the sale. Come and support this effort!



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

# LISTEN UP

Reviews by Michael Pickett

## Sub Urban Mines His Depths

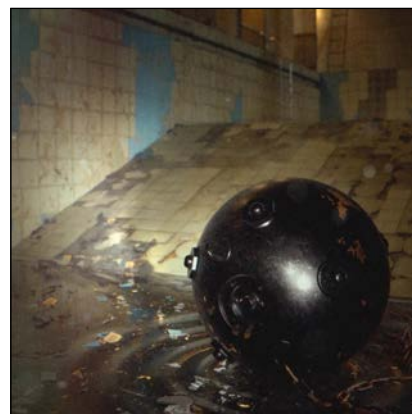
One hundred of us stood in a dark, converted 19th-century brothel and waited for the headliner to take the stage. The underground club buzzed with hardcore Sub Urban fans, excited for the upcoming album release that night, and sharing conversations like long-lost friends. The kind of fanbase/community that Sub Urban has built makes his new album, *If Nevermore*, an almost instant hit.

The show opened with the new “Mycelium Eyes” and the crowd already knew the words to this high-velocity, retro-modern track. Mostly gone are the breathy, eerie vocals and semi-sinister carnival bells, as this synth-heavy track starts and stops through abrupt

twists and turns. “Skinny Loser” and “Stay Still” also depart from the former Sub Urban audio formula, an admirable and risky move only a real artist would make.

While Sub Urban almost completely disappeared for most of 2024, it was more like a wind-up for what was to come. Record label agendas and significant-other intrusions were left behind to unearth tracks like the off-kilter waltz of “In Sunder” and the breathy “Fill This Empty Mall With Water and Ivy.”

As his set wound down, the most striking thing was the raw, real connection fans have with this artist and his work. As my son exchanged a few words,



jokes and some merchandise ideas with the artist, it was clear from the radical new sounds on *If Nevermore* and the immediate hit it was with his fans that Sub Urban is just getting started.

## Envy of None's Changing Tides

It's hard to know if Alex Lifeson is working hard to be completely unrecognizable in his new role, or if he's always had these wondrous six-string soundscapes that he wanted to explore. Regardless, the former Rush guitar god finds no shortage of even more

beautiful melodies and ways to layer ideas on Envy of None's sophomore release, *Stygian Waves*.

It seems almost undignified to call “Not Dead Yet” catchy, yet it's unbelievably memorable, as Lifeson's chameleonic guitar creates gorgeous foundations for Maiah Wynne's subtly soaring vocals. The groovalicious, percussive “Under the Stars” also showcases Wynne's beautiful voice, while the mildly jarring “Thrill of the Chase” explores unpredictable twists and turns from just about every band member.

As you arrive at the laid-back electronica of “Raindrops” and the beautiful “The End,” it's nearly impossible not to be engulfed by the waves Envy

of None creates with a fully-engaging, wildly-varied signature sound. In many ways, it's a world away from the progressive brilliance of Lifeson's former gig, but no less imaginative and incredibly well produced. The album is heavy on melody and texture, woven together by Wynne's gorgeous voice.

While Envy of None could have easily been an outfit designed to show off Lifeson's crazy guitar chops at every turn, it's nothing less than a fully formed, immersive band experience, with Lifeson's former signature sounds camouflaged at every turn. This second effort may just be better than their debut.

Check out Michael Pickett's music, free at [pickettmusic.com](http://pickettmusic.com).





# A Good Read

## *Playing Possum: How Animals Understand Death*

By Susana Monsó

Reviewed by Terry Cunningham

Last winter, my neighbor's horse Little Girl died. Her pasture mate, guardian and best friend, the mule Rooster, displayed a human-like response, staying with her corpse day after day and appearing to be grieving. My neighbor wasn't at home the day I found Little Girl.

I hadn't noticed the animals in their usual pasture, so I stopped to check on them. I saw Rooster and he seemed agitated. He was pacing back and forth between the house and a place out in the field, so I followed him, and he led me to Little Girl, who was old and hadn't been feeling well. There she lay, motionless on the snow. Rooster was obviously aware that something was wrong with Little Girl. Did he actually know this was death or just that something wasn't right with her behavior?

I heard a book review on just that subject, so took that as a sign. Susana Monsó's book, *Playing Possum: How Animals Understand Death*, was originally published in Spanish in 2001. The author translated it herself and, in the process, made a few changes.

She is a philosopher by training, and her special studies in cognitive abilities give her a unique perspective when attempting to delve into the minds of animals. *Playing Possum* is a systematic approach to thanatology, the study of death and the many things connected to it, including bereavement. The author applies the study of thanatology to the animal world and the amazing behaviors that they have evolved to display in their reactions to death.

It's impossible, of course, to know exactly what animals are thinking. Monsó suggests three basic factors for understanding death. First, experience – in the animal world death is a very common experience. Second, emotions directed at or about the death. And third, cognition of irreversibility and non-functionality. Animals know the difference between living and dead.

Animal thanatology is a difficult subject to research. There are limited opportunities to study animals' response to death in their natural habitat. Animal behavior in captivity is easier to study, but the behavior is altered due to the change in environment. Monsó was able to observe ant funerals, elephants hoarding ivory, rats burying their dead, and orcas and primates keeping

their dead infants with them. There is homicide, suicide, and infanticide in the animal world.

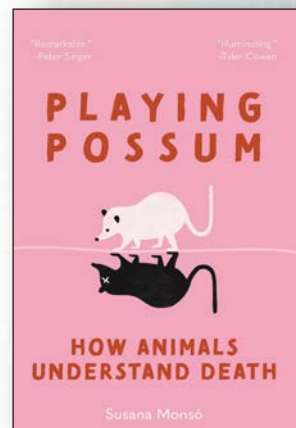
The opossum (North America's only marsupial) has mastered thanatosis as, when threatened, it lies stiff on its side and takes on the complete role of a carcass. It will even release the odors of a rotting carcass. The tongue will turn black, heartbeat and breathing are reduced to almost nothing and it won't move even if touched, yet it also remains aware of what's happening around it.

How does an opossum know that a predator will perceive it as dead? What abilities has the predator developed for this perception? The opossum is not the only creature in the animal world to feign behaviors; it's just the best at it.

The book covers some aspects of death that are very difficult to read, but the author lets you know when gruesome details are coming, in case you don't want to read them.

Monsó has studied and worked at five European institutes of higher education and is a co-founder of the Philosophy of Animal Minds and Behavior Association. She says that "in my free time I enjoy acting in plays of dubious quality, playing board games, and reading novels with badass female characters. If I could belong to a different species, I would choose to be a humpback whale."

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."



# Xenoestrogens: Modern Life's Hidden Disruptors

By Rob Sumner

*The content of the North Columbia Monthly is strictly for informational purposes only and should NOT be used as a substitute for professional medical diagnosis, advice, or treatment. Please, ALWAYS seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health provider with all questions that you have related to, or about, a medical condition.*

I can't count how many times in my clinic I've sat down with women who are struggling with symptoms of hormonal imbalance – things such as irregular cycles, heavy bleeding, weight gain, mood swings, or infertility. Conditions such as PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) and estrogen dominance are appearing with increasing frequency.

For years, I treated these cases in isolation, thinking they were just individual problems. But as time passed, I couldn't ignore the pattern. The number of women – and even men – with signs of high estrogen seemed to be multiplying.

That's when my awareness opened to something bigger: Our environment is laced with chemicals called xenoestrogens – synthetic compounds that mimic estrogen in the body. Once I started looking for them, I realized they were everywhere.

## What Are Xenoestrogens?

Xenoestrogens (pronounced zen-oh-ESS-truh-juhns) are manufactured chemicals that disrupt the body's natural hormone balance. They are not true estrogen, but because their structure is similar enough, they bind to estrogen receptors in the body and create a state of false estrogen dominance.

This disrupts everything from menstrual cycles to fertility to fat storage, and it's not just women who are affected. Men exposed to high levels of xenoestrogens often experience low testosterone, increased fat gain, reduced fertility, and mood disturbances.

Unlike with natural estrogen, the body can't easily metabolize or eliminate these chemicals. They build up over time, storing in fat tissue and continually altering the body's hormonal map.

## Where Are Xenoestrogens Found?

The shocking truth is that xenoestrogens have infiltrated nearly every corner of modern life. Some of the most common sources include:

- Plastics: BPA, BPS, and phthalates found in water bot-

tles, food containers, and packaging.

- Pesticides and herbicides: chemicals sprayed on crops that make their way into our food and water supply.
- Personal care products: shampoos, lotions, deodorants, cosmetics, and sunscreens often contain parabens and phthalates.
- Household cleaners: many contain chemical compounds with estrogenic effects.
- Processed foods: additives, preservatives, and soy-based fillers.
- Non-organic meat and dairy: hormones given to animals transfer to humans through consumption.
- Receipts: thermal paper receipts often contain BPA that can be absorbed through the skin.

Once you're aware, you see it everywhere – on the kitchen counter, in the grocery store aisle, in the bathroom drawer.

## Why This Matters More as We Age

Xenoestrogens are particularly concerning for people over 55. As natural hormone production declines, the body becomes more vulnerable to imbalances. The "false estrogen" effect of these chemicals can tip the scales toward:

- Increased fat storage around the belly and hips
- Higher risk of estrogen-related cancers (breast, uterine, prostate)
- Thyroid disruption
- Increased inflammation and joint pain
- Fatigue, brain fog, and mood instability
- Accelerated aging at the cellular level

The result is a population that is exposed, overloaded, and struggling to detoxify.



## My Awareness Shift

When I first started noticing how many of my clients were struggling with high estrogen symptoms, I thought the problem was purely medical. But the more I dug into research, the more I realized that our daily environment was quietly driving the issue.

Now, when a client sits down in my office and says, “I can’t lose weight no matter what I do,” or “I feel swollen and bloated all the time,” or “My hormones are all over the place,” one of the first things I ask about isn’t just their diet or exercise. I ask about their plastic use, their cosmetics, their cleaning products, and even the receipts in their purse.

## What Can We Do?

Here’s the good news: While xenoestrogens are everywhere, it’s possible to dramatically reduce your exposure and give your body space to heal.

### Eliminate plastics wherever possible

- Use glass or stainless steel bottles and containers.
- Never microwave food in plastic.
- Avoid plastic wrap directly touching food.

### Be selective about personal care products

- Switch to shampoos, lotions, deodorants, and cosmetics labeled paraben-free and phthalate-free.
- Use mineral-based sunscreens instead of chemical sunscreens.

### Eat smarter

- Prioritize organic produce when possible to reduce pesticide exposure.
- Choose grass-fed, pasture-raised meat and organic dairy.
- Limit processed foods with soy isolates and additives.

### Handle receipts carefully

- Decline receipts when possible.
- If you must handle them, wash hands immediately after.
- Store receipts in an envelope, not loose in a purse or

wallet.

### Detox

- Stay hydrated to support natural detox pathways.
- Eat cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts) to help the liver metabolize estrogens.
- Consider sweating through exercise or sauna therapy to promote elimination.

## A Step-by-Step Guide to Change Now

Here’s a practical order of operations:

- Start eliminating plastic that touches your food.
- Each time you buy a personal care item, go paraben-free and phthalate-free.
- When buying cleaning supplies, look for natural, non-toxic products.
- With food, choose organic when possible, especially for high pesticide produce such as strawberries, spinach, and apples.
- Say “no thanks” to receipts when you can, and handle only as necessary.
- Support detox daily: Move your body, hydrate, eat detox-supportive foods, and make time for rest.

## Final Thoughts

Xenoestrogens don’t announce themselves, but their fingerprints are everywhere – in the rising rates of PCOS, estrogen-related cancers, infertility, and metabolic disorders. The good news is that once you know what to look for, you can reduce your exposure and help your body restore balance.

I didn’t see it at first. But now that my eyes are open, I can’t [ital]not[end ital] see it. And I want the same awareness for you, because protecting your hormones means protecting your quality of life – for today and for the years still to come.

If you are reading this and want my free Xenoestrogen Detox Checklist, email me at [rob@sumnerpt.com](mailto:rob@sumnerpt.com).

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

# Working Together

By Brenda St. John

*“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.”*

~ Psalm 133:1

I enjoy my yoga students so much! They often share yoga and non-yoga information with the class which frequently leads to discussions about a topic that benefits the entire group. A bond has formed where the students learn from each other and trust each other. It is very heartwarming.

Early in summer, someone brought up their inability to practice Savasana without quiet, instrumental background music. They needed something to listen to. Other students chimed in with agreement, and I soon discovered that a good portion of the class was

unable to keep their mind still when the room is silent.

Well, since that is what yoga is really about, I knew I had work to do. After all, according to Patanjali’s Sutra 1.2, the definition of Yoga is, “Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha,” which translates as “Yoga is the stilling of the fluctuations of the mind.” Therefore, we spent the remainder of the summer using a guided breathing exercise, a guided meditation practice, and a brief period of silent meditation during each class.

By the last class of those classes, the silent meditation went for five

minutes. Now, five minutes does not sound like much time at all. However, when an individual who is new to meditation tries to keep their mind quiet for five minutes, it can seem like an eternity. Afterward, I asked everyone how it went, and the resounding answer was that it was easy!

It’s a funny thing, but meditating in a group IS much easier than meditating alone. There is a shared energy that deepens the experience for each person. Individuals find it easier to relax and focus when surrounded by other, like-minded people. Studies show that when

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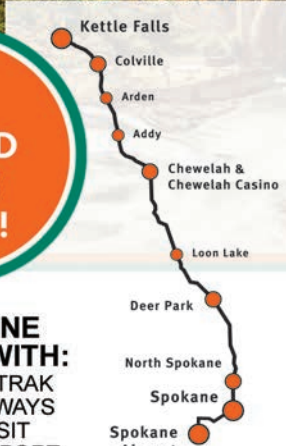
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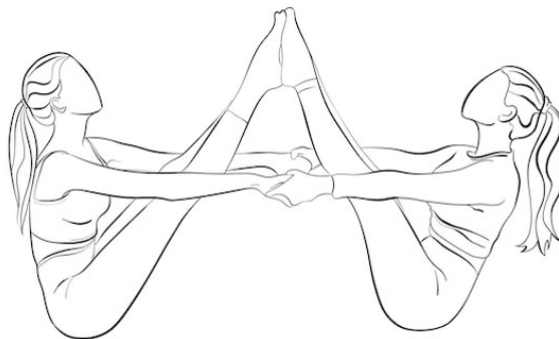


people meditate together, participants' brain waves can synchronize, which also enhances the meditative state.

I frequently attend an energy healing clinic in Sandpoint (7B Wellness Center), and their staff has told me that the more people present in the room, the more beneficial it is for everyone. I'm sure it is exactly the same principle as meditation. Working together amplifies positive results.

My horses modeled the epitome of "working together" to me over the summer. On many days, the two mares stood side-by-side, nose to tail, and swished their tails to chase the flies off the other horse's face. It was remarkable to me how they were very effective with this practice of helping each other.

In classes, we have practiced "partner yoga" in the past, which is a way to work together to help both yogis achieve or improve a particular yoga asana while having some fun with new variations. One example is Navasana, also known as Boat Pose. This is a core-strengthening pose where practitioners balance on their sit



bones, lifting their legs and torso to form a "V" shape, resembling a boat.

In Double Boat Pose, the two partners begin by sitting on the floor facing each other, about two or three feet apart, with knees bent and feet on the floor. The next step is to lift their feet and press the soles against their partner's soles, knees still bent. This becomes the "anchor" point for the two boats. Both partners then reach their arms forward and either hold hands or forearms on the outside of the legs. This hand connection requires trust and gentle pulling to counterbalance each other.

Then both partners lean back simultaneously, engaging the abdominal muscles to lift their torsos away from the mat. Spines are

straight and chests are open to maintain proper alignment. While keeping feet pressed together and hands clasped, the two gradually straighten their legs upward to form "V" shapes with their bodies.

The pose can be modified so that the shins are parallel to the floor, if desired, based on strength and flexibility.

However, the two people must work together, because if one person dominates, the pose falls apart.

Hold the pose for 5 to 10 breaths, breathing in unison to enhance the feeling of collaboration.

Exit the pose gracefully by bending the knees on an inhalation, lowering the feet back to the mat while maintaining the grip of the hands for control, then sit upright and release the hands. Shake out your legs or gently fold forward for a counter stretch.

This sequence is generally accessible for most fitness levels, with practice.

Namaste.

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

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# A Year On The Farm

## Other Uses for Sourdough

*Article & Photo by Michelle Lancaster*

I am an infrequent bread-maker. Fickle, perhaps. I make bread when I feel like making bread. So, the issue of keeping sourdough starter fresh pops up. Many experts advise that people like me should not keep a sourdough starter. “Impractical,” they say. Other experts recommend discarding excess sourdough when feeding starter, as a waste product. I, not an expert, have found a third option: non-bread sourdough recipes.

Sourdough starter is not just for bread! I use sourdough at least a couple times a week, as the base ferment for almost all the flour-based foods I make. My most frequently made sourdough products include pancakes and pie crust.

Pure sourdough pancakes, without added leavening, require the batch to be made well before use, so that the starter has time to ferment and release bubbles naturally. Sourdough pancakes are simply freshly active sourdough starter with an egg and a splash of milk. I blend them together and add either more milk or a little flour to achieve pancake batter consistency. The batter then sits out at room temperature for at least an hour, often closer to two hours, to develop air pockets.

When the batter is light and fluffy, I cook pancakes on the stovetop. The first half of the batch is made into 6-inch pancakes that can be reheated in the toaster. The second half is made into plate-sized pancakes, two for each of us, to eat immediately, along with fruit and maple syrup. I make pancakes on a weekly basis, so that even in the hottest summer months my sourdough starter stays fresh.

Pie crust is another of my favorite sourdough uses. I had to make up several recipes before figuring out how to best incorporate sourdough into a crust/biscuit-type recipe. The trick I figured out is to use sourdough in place of buttermilk!

I start pie crust like a normal recipe – a bowl of flour, a dash of salt, grated butter sifted in by hand. Instead of adding water, buttermilk or vinegar, though, I substitute sourdough starter. Starter is poured into a liquid measuring

cup, then topped off with water to make a pourable paste. The liquid mix gets poured over the flour and butter mix, lightly incorporated, then covered and refrigerated so the butter re-hardens.

When ready to make a crust, I roll out the cold dough on a floured countertop and prepare like a normal crust. If made fresh (an hour or less after mixing) the crust will have no noticeable sourdough taste. If the dough is stored in the fridge or rolled into pie crust to freeze for future use, the starter will continue to work in the wet dough and will sharpen in flavor over time. I prefer both the taste and increased digestibility of the more-fermented dough. As a bonus, sourdough crust cooks up just the same as a regular pie crust.

Sourdough products cook well with cast iron, glass and stoneware. Making pancakes helps soothe out the seasoning on cast iron pans. Cast iron muffin tins do not need to be seasoned or lined. I simply cut out circles of pie crust using



a wide mouth canning lid ring, then cut strips of dough with a butter knife to line the edges. The tart-like crust pops out easily once cooked. Stoneware can stick a little on the edges, so I try to lay the crust into the pan without crimping the edges.

Sourdough starter can be used for many items beyond bread. Pancakes and pie crust are my two mainstays. Additional products include sourdough pizza crust, muffins and pasta, and drying sourdough starter to freeze for future use. I am happy to share fresh starter with anyone that would like to give sourdough recipes a try.

*Michelle Lancaster homesteads with her family on Old Dominion Mountain in Colville. She writes at [Spiritedrose.wordpress.com](http://Spiritedrose.wordpress.com).*

# Pinching Those Pennies

By Karen Giebel

Many years ago, the Ford Motor Company had a television advertisement stating, "Ford, where economy originates." My parents, especially mom, could pinch a penny 'til it cried. My family name is Castleberry and we kids coined the phrase, "Castleberry, where economy originates."

We were a family with four kids and my maternal grandparents, so the need to economize and carefully guard those pennies was essential. Well, I learned from the best (thanks Clare Ruth!) and my husband has been known to refer to me as a tightwad. It's not so much a real need to have a strict budget, but I see no point in needless spending.

I love a good bargain and shop the sales. Rarely do I pay full price for clothes. That way, I figure if there is something that I really want, I have saved enough from bargain hunting to justify spending on that something. But lately, with the costs of living still on the rise but my retirement dollars not rising, I decided

to take stock of the many ways I do save money and see if I can mindfully and intentionally save more without sacrificing too much of my lifestyle.

Leftover food is turned into delicious frittatas. I simply dice up pretty much any vegetables and a few small pieces of meat if there are any and toss them onto a pie plate. Season, add some shredded cheese, whisk 5 eggs, pour over the vegetables and bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Delicious! That hunk of cheese that has seen better days takes on a new life when shredded. I have even used leftover rice and potatoes. Vegetables that are on their way out, I put in a zip bag in the freezer and when it's full I make a vegetable stock for soups.

Dining out is a rare experience for us. I enjoy cooking and I'm pretty good at it, so we decided to not buy restaurant meals that I can make better at home. When we travel, even just to Spokane, I pack sandwiches and fruit. I know there are plenty of folks who don't enjoy cooking, but

creating a weekly menu and mastering a few simple tasty recipes will leave dollars in your wallet.

Meatless Mondays are a trend, but adding a second meatless meal each week is not only healthy, it's a big money-saver. If you use canned soups, try stirring in cooked white beans, leftover rice or small pastas to make them thicker, tastier and filling.

Take stock of how much bread you use every week and then take action. One of my biggest complaints is the cost of a good loaf of bread. I mean, bread is flour, water and yeast, why is it so expensive? If you think baking bread is out of your realm, let me assure that it is not. If I can bake bread, and I do, so can you. Even my husband can turn out a loaf of sourdough. A loaf of tasty homemade bread will cost mere pennies. Your house will smell fabulous and your family will love you for it. On the next dreary, rainy, cold day, and there are lots of those coming, turn off the television and turn on the

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# Reflections on Life's Journey

oven. You'll be glad you did.

Despite what TV ads tell you, only a few basic supplies are needed to clean house. An all-purpose liquid cleaner, a toilet bowl cleaner and distilled vinegar. I use vinegar in a bucket of water to mop floors. Vinegar has some disinfectant properties too. Mix a cup of vinegar with a cup of water, put it in a spray bottle and clean smudges on stainless steel appliances. But my favorite is using that spray bottle to clean windows. Sparkling and no streaks. Skip the expensive paper towels and use a squeegee on those windows with a rag to wipe off the squeegee.

Speaking of paper towels, consider ditching them and using cloth hand towels instead. My spouse suggested

that one years ago and it works for us. It has been quite a few years since I've used any spray-on furniture polish. Instead, a damp rag does a great job and the furniture looks just fine.

There are still things I need to work on. I plead guilty to running a half-empty dishwasher. I am also guilty of running the washing machine and dryer for just a few items. Definitely guilty of over-usage of electricity in general. I am determined to cut our electric power use by 25%. Don't know how it will work as the days get shorter and darker, but I am going to try. Starting with every time I go to turn on a light switch, I need to stop and ask myself if I truly need the light or is it just more convenient or a habit. Do I

need all the overhead lights on or just a reading light?

My husband says I have a hot/cold tolerance of plus or minus one degree. It pains me to admit it, but he's right. My comfort zone is 72 degrees. 71 is too cold and 73 is too hot. It's time for me to use those throw blankets that are neatly folded on the sofa and to actually walk into the closet and put on a sweater.

My plan is to continue looking for ways to cut spending without sacrificing comfort. I'd be interested in hearing your suggestions. Wishing all of us a very happy fall, y'all!

*Karen Castleberry Giebel blogs about life and food at [www.thejourneygirl.com](http://www.thejourneygirl.com) up in the back of the beyond in Ferry County, Washington.*



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# Being Here

By Joe Barreca

I have been writing about regenerative agriculture in the *North Columbia Monthly* for five years, and for the last three years have been writing in the *Silverado* about the establishment of Hudson's Bay Fort Colville 200 years ago. This summer, those two passions converged as I attempted to understand a Salish language word by visiting the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, British Columbia.

I learned a lot but can't claim that I know Salish well or even come close to speaking it. Salish is a big language group with tribes speaking dialects in northeast Washington, parts of British Columbia north of us and even on the west coast. The word that intrigued me is in the *nsyilxcen* dialect spoken by the Penticton Band of the Okanogan Nation.

The word is *Tmix*<sup>w</sup>. But I should backtrack a little to how this got started. In 2019 Friends of the Trees

and other groups held the first Global Earth Repair Conference in Port Townsend. I managed to attend and some time later got a link from Global Earth Repair to a podcast by Jeannette Armstrong, an Okanogan elder, about *Tmix*<sup>w</sup>. It seemed to be a very important native way of understanding our duties as humans to reinforce the cycles of nature.

The first messages I reported about regenerative agriculture focused on soil health and bringing it back to life. As studies, experiences and conversations evolved, it has become clear that regenerating is about symbiosis. No plant or animal lives without continual cyclic exchanges of air, water and nutrients with the environment and other organisms. The more variety there is in any biome, the healthier it is. In fact, most organisms incorporate microbes, mycelia and parts of other living things with different DNA

than their own in their cells, guts and roots.

*Tmix*<sup>w</sup> seemed to mean something similar. The last part, *x*<sup>w</sup>, is used in *nsyilxcen* to indicate anything that is cyclic in nature, which would be basically everything in nature. The word itself has to do with the land. Jeannette's brother, Richard Armstrong, is the traditional Salmon Chief at the Salmon Ceremony hailing the salmon to come back home. He reminds us that, "Everything comes from the land." The word for man is *sqəiqəitmix*<sup>w</sup>. See the *Tmix*<sup>w</sup> part at the end. We are part of the land.

There is no direct "English" word for *Tmix*<sup>w</sup>. Jeannette Armstrong treats it as something you participate in and learn about rather than translate. Some of the many implications are shown in the illustration: spirits of ancestors and spirit of the bear and other animals. "Water is

## tmix<sup>w</sup>

## Spirit of the Bear

• Support the Cycles of Nature

**Everything  
comes from the  
Land**

**SPIRITS OF  
ANCESTORS**

nsyilxcen Language

**water is the path to become that place**



the path to become that place” is a quote from her talk.

At the En’owkin Centre, Chad Eneas talked to us about water and said that our economy makes water something other than a part of the land. We pipe it, dam it, bottle it, sell it and treat it as a chemical. The water on their tribal land comes down mountain valleys and keeps everything alive. It is sacred water. Salmon return through free-flowing rivers.

I mentioned to Chad my observation that we are mostly air. This sounds like a joke at first, but when analyzed, our bodies are 96% made of elements in the air, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and water. Chad pointed out the window of the En’owkin Centre toward some black cottonwoods, a sacred plant on their land, and said we continually exchange air with those trees and all other plants and animals. We inhale oxygen from them, and they inhale carbon dioxide from us. We are part of the same living system. There is no conflict between science and the native understanding of nature.

Every breath we take has been recycled millions of times between plants and animals over billions of years. We are keeping each other alive. We are saturated with the history and actually the future of every other living being.

When I say, “I am still here,” I am thinking “I am still alive on the earth.” When the Sinixt tribe puts “We are still here” under their tribal logo, I think they are saying, “We are still in this place where we have always been.” But if you think of each breath as coming from the plants around us and going back



to them, of each drink of water we take, and much of the food we eat, as coming from the land and going back to the land, you have to admit that we are not just in this place, we are this place.

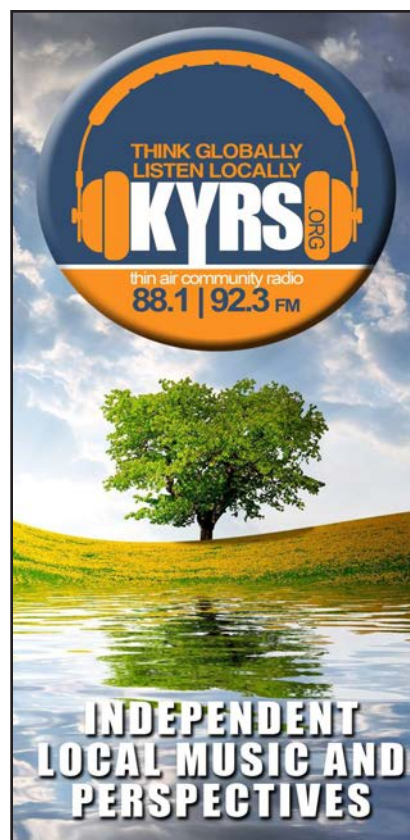
It’s not something we have a choice about or even need to be conscious of. Jeannette Armstrong invites everyone to participate in *Tmix*™. If we do it consciously with the intent of learning from and regenerating the abundant nature of the land, we can help repair the earth.

It’s a little like the Zen saying, “Be Here Now.” In Buddhist terms, it probably means something more like, “Pay attention to what you are doing and what is going on around you.” I know if I am doing one thing and thinking about something else (which I often do), I screw up. But if I relax a bit, take a deep breath, and realize that the earth has my back and is keeping me alive, I feel at one with everything.

Try it. Take a deep breath and enjoy *Tmix*™.

*Joe Barreca makes maps, grows*

*grapes, makes wine and posts blogs on BarrecaVineyards.com. Vineyard apprentices are welcome!*



# 10 Life Lessons on the Ranch

By Thomas Self

*This article was first published on the newsletter page of the Waterloo Ranch website. The photo of Thomas was commissioned by Eat Local First and taken by FotoMataio at Waterloo Ranch.*

When old and new friends and acquaintances learn of our ranching lives, I almost always get an envious, “Wow, that’s the dream!” kind of reaction. I usually just nod and say something like, “Yeah, it’s hard work, but it’s rewarding and we’re enjoying the ride.” And while that’s a genuine reply on my part, I’m sometimes simultaneously thinking about the pervasive naivete about ranch living.

The truth is that, despite a new romanticism and a revival of interest in the agricultural life, there are some hard life lessons in this line of work, and if you don’t come to this work as an adult with some familiarity with these lessons, this lifestyle is likely to chew you up and spit you out.

With the unique challenges of winter around the corner, it seems like a good time to reflect on some of these lessons and share them with our North Columbia community.

## Ranch Life Lesson #1

In the words of Thomas Sowell, “There are no solutions, only trade-offs.” Problems constantly arise here on the ranch, and we can always be sure that the “solution” to any problem will not turn out to be a pure solution at all. Best-case scenario, our solutions come with a handful of second- and third-order negative consequences – some foreseeable, and some less so. The cliché “no good deed goes unpunished” comes to mind way too often out here. Endeavoring to do the most good and

the least harm is truly an everyday, maddening riddle.

## Ranch Life Lesson #2

The easiest way of doing something is usually fraught with downsides that render the method inadvisable. What we end up doing instead is far more tedious, strenuous, and downright frustrating. In fact, sometimes the least harmful way of doing something is so incredibly inefficient that you feel as if you’re making zero progress. Farming and ranching truly require that you remind yourself often to “enjoy the process.” Farming and ranching is a job, and there are aspects of all jobs that just suck.

## Ranch Life Lesson #3

The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry. And sometimes it feels like the word “often” in this saying should be replaced with “always.” The reality is, sometimes we don’t know what we don’t know, and sometimes there’s just a lot that is quite literally unknowable. In particular, the co-operation of Mother Nature and the animals is almost never granted, so for every Plan A, there must be (at least) a Plan B, C, and D.

## Ranch Life Lesson #4

To paraphrase a quote by someone named Simone Elkeles, opinions are like buttholes – everyone has one, but they think each other’s stink. We will occasionally be confronted with an issue that prompts us to seek out advice from locals, online forums, and online searches. Sometimes this is helpful, and sometimes it just isn’t, but it’s a worthwhile exercise. You will get a very wide variety of guidance, with most everyone

completely assured in the veracity of their claims and highly suspicious of all others. At the end of the day, all you can do is take everything with a healthy dose of skepticism and make the decision you feel is best based on an informed-as-possible risk-reward analysis for your own situation.

## Ranch Life Lesson #5

Don’t let perfect be the enemy of the good. In fact, it’s healthy to acknowledge that there is no such thing as perfection. This isn’t to say that we should stop striving for the idea of perfection, and it’s not to say that we should absolve ourselves of the responsibility of maximum effort and perseverance. It’s simply to say that your genuine, best effort *must* give you a clean conscience, or inevitable shortfalls and failures will keep you unhappy much of the time.

## Ranch Life Lesson #6

You will never be finished. In the wise words of Søren Kierkegaard: “To be thus constantly coming to be is infinitude’s deceptiveness in existence. It is enough to bring a sensate person to despair, for one feels a constant urge to have something finished, but this urge is of evil and must be renounced. The continual becoming is the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain.”

It’s easy to set benchmarks and then tell ourselves that we’ll be in a good place when we get there, but the truth is that the to-do list never gets shorter and there’s never really a moment where you accomplish so much that you experience a sort of sublime relief. It’s great to be motivated by a sense of accomplishment, but ultimately, our *paths* must bring





us joy.

#### **Ranch Life Lesson #7**

Inaction can be the best course of action. Action has a way of helping us cope with feelings of helplessness in tough situations, so there is a strong urge to do something, almost anything, that is sometimes best suppressed. Not every intervention is purely beneficial, and at times it's a net harm, so take some time for sober consideration.

#### **Ranch Life Lesson #8**

There is a famous design principle: Keep it simple, stupid. Complexity and exoticism have their places in the world but ranching and farming (and life) are plenty challenging without adding a lot of zero-return (or low-return) elements to your system.

#### **Ranch Life Lesson #9**

Numbers don't lie, but many lies

are told using numbers. In fact, there's even a famous book entitled *How to Lie with Statistics*. A good command of mathematics and an eye for context (or missing context) will help you spot dishonesty and/or delusion when it comes to all sorts of agricultural topics, and it'll keep you honest with yourself when it comes to true net gains (or losses) on the ranch.

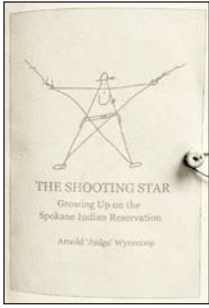
#### **Ranch Life Lesson #10**

Take a few minutes each day to simply look up from your work in the outdoors and appreciate your place. I don't do this as intentionally or as often as I should, so it usually happens spontaneously, and I'm reminded of how lucky we are to be raising and growing our own food (and food for the community) in such a beautiful place. The way the light hits the mountainsides, and the colors of the river, are never the same

from day to day, and the incredible quiet impresses me every time I stop to listen. It's sort of an accidental mindfulness exercise on my part, but it can really recharge me in the middle of a hard day's work.

Now, this list of life lessons might seem overwhelming negative, but #10 makes it all worth it. The challenges make life infinitely more meaningful. This journey has been wonderful in so many ways, and we continue to be excited for our future here on the ranch. Thanks for letting us share it with you.

*Thomas Self is a restaurateur and owner, founder, and operator of Waterloo Ranch and the Locally Grown Grub food wagon. He has lived in Louisville, KY, Rome, Italy, and Seattle, WA, and has been a resident of Stevens County since 2022. Both the ranch and food wagon are based out of Rice, WA where Thomas lives with his wife, Jennifer, and his son, Noah.*



# *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.*

## **Rock Rolling**

In the spring of the year, well, actually a little before that, we would head for the Spokane River. Along the river spring comes much earlier than up north at Wellpinit. We would hunt woodchucks or go to the sand slide and shoot at rocks we would turn loose. Rocks made great targets going down the sand slide. We were “Tennessee Jed” making the bullets whine off the rock surface. “Tennessee Jed” was a radio program character.

We also rolled a few tires down the sand slide – a large sloping hill with an angle of about 45 degrees and about a quarter of a mile from its top to the river below. Tires would leap and bounce and wind up well out into the river.

Another fun thing we did was to climb the rock bluffs along the river. We broke and rolled rocks, and they would make spectacular, leaping, crashing runs down the hillside. One time several of us were rolling rocks and after a while we grew tired of it, so brother Steve and I started down.

Halfway down and all at once, a rock about two feet in diameter came roaring past. Sonny Campbell was with us that day and he was still way up above us rolling rocks. I think Chick was with him, or maybe Dave. Steve and I first got behind a big yellow pine, but rocks were hitting it about halfway up. We were scared and took off as fast as we could go downhill and came to a small bluff about 10 feet high – we went over it, mostly stumbling, but were safer there. I started shooting and yelling and the rock rolling stopped.

Some of those rocks went clear down and landed on the road. Sonny got chewed on good! But we should have let him and whomever he had with him know our plans.

## **Broken Arrow**

We would have picnics on Easter Sundays at the river. This one time we were at a nice spot along the river and we were shooting at bottles we had gathered along the roads. Someone would throw the bottle as far as he could while others would be shooting at it. Usually, it was safe in flight but when it hit the water it was “dead meat.”

We had another game going of shooting, with a bow and arrow that Wig had, at targets we had set up against a punky old pine tree. Later, as an adult, Wig gained the name “Broken Arrow” because he was sitting in his family home in Reardan, fiddling with his bow while watching television. He had an arrow in it and was just drawing the bow back and then easing it forward, pretending to shoot. Well, it slipped, and the arrow stuck in their couch. His wife, Jan, saw it happen, walked right over, grabbed the arrow, yanked it from the couch and broke it over her knee!

Sometime after that, Wig and I were shooting at targets for a while and Wig shot an arrow, but it didn't go anywhere. Well actually it did: It split and part of the arrow went into the web between Wig's thumb and pointer finger, and it was stuck there very firmly. It seems the arrow had been damaged by a previous shooter hitting a rock with it.

Jan took him to the Wellpinit Clinic and was able to get the doctor to come

over from his home and take the arrow out. After repairing Wig, the doctor told Jan that he had been an Indian Health doctor for 25 years on assorted reservations around the west and this was the first time he had ever treated an arrow wound!

## **Halloween Stuff**

Halloweens were a grey area as to whether something was morally right or not. Once, several of us tipped over an outhouse and Joe Andrews, our tribal cop, caught us. The outhouse was damaged, so we got to rebuild it.

It was great fun cruising around in the dark pushing over outhouses. And someone always managed to pull the blocks out from under the culverts that were stored in piles at the south edge of the government agency. If done right the culverts would roll down the hill.

Usually someone would manage to roll one or more of the government vehicles out of the agency square and down the hill toward the Catholic Church.

As we would be looking for tricks to pull, Joe Andrews and a deputy would be patrolling around using their spotlight to sweep across fields looking for us. We had to hit the ground fast then!

During one of these Halloweens, my best friend Banjo and I had been up at Uncle Roy LeBret's store and were heading home to have supper before going out tricking. We never really tried for treats, although this time we got one: The pop truck was at the store, and as we left we just casually grabbed a case of pop from the truck and went over the bank below the store, down across the



# Poetry of Place

## Alaskan summer, a family's memories flowing through haiku.

By Ellen Shaw

Autumn's arrival seems to start slowly but then suddenly picks up its pace. As the leaves begin their gradual and lovely change, I found some moments of the summer imprinted on my mind. Much of my summertime was spent in closeness with my four grandchildren and their parents, out in the sunshine and fresh air of Alaska. Those moments have been crystallized in haiku below.

Haiku is a form of traditional Japanese poetry. Its simplicity allows one to capture a fleeting moment, an insight,

or a flash of enlightenment. With minimal words, haiku has as its focus a single image or idea, often about nature. However, haiku can be written on any subject.

Why don't you give it a try?

The format of haiku is simple: three lines, this way:

Line 1 contains 5 syllables.

Line 2 contains 7 syllables.

Line 3 contains 5 syllables.

The absence of a title is a common practice in haiku poetry. So here we go...

Boisterous and calm,  
confident and wondering,  
grandson of my heart.

For perfect lattes  
mix muddy clover in pail;  
grandchildren at play.

Tender six-year-old  
opened for sick and hurt insects  
a bee hospital.

Wings shining, she lands,  
tickles lightly my knee,  
large-eyed dragonfly.

Father's words many.  
Daughter smiles and nods slowly,  
feigns interest quite well.

Upturned face welcomes  
cooling, moist mist from above,  
rain for skin and soul.

## Fall Figures

By Lynn Rigney Schott

### Harvesting Onions

I love the sound of their names:  
Sterling, Patterson, Red Zep, Walla Walla.  
Wonderful mouthfuls as I scoot through the rows  
gently pulling & placing them in baskets  
beneath a bright cathedral of sunflowers,  
gladiolas for stained glass windows.

There is a single syllable inside us all  
if we could only hum it in tune.

### As Though We Need Some News

A chorus of crickets welcomes  
the coll evening, clouds breaking

up like sunflowers opening.  
Into the dark a bat sends sound –  
it returns in the shape of the world:  
shed, tree, barn, house.  
In the absence of a happy ending  
am I prepared to be content?  
Imagination is a gift to the future.

### Fall Crocus

They emerge without fanfare  
nudging up through the mulch  
like the ghost of a mushroom  
pale, fragile, speechless  
in clusters along the fenceline  
& over there by the rhubarb.  
In summer's slow retreat barely-  
purple petals open briefly  
before the lush season closes in smoke  
& yellow leaves & red will give  
themselves to warm the ground.



Presbyterian Church and on down to  
our place below the Quonset hut barn.  
There was a pigpen there, so we put the  
case of pop in the pig house lean-to and  
covered it up with straw, etc.

It was orange pop. Neither of us liked  
orange pop and we were also worried  
to death about being caught. I guess we  
drank a couple of bottles, but you can  
guess what happened. The cold weather

came and froze the pop, busting the  
bottles and ending any pop drinking.  
Boy, I lost a lot of sleep over that prank!  
It turned into a crime in my nights. (To  
be continued...)



# Fall Gatherings

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*Article & Photo by D.L. Kreft*

Autumn is a time of many gatherings. We see gatherings in nature and in our own communities, initiated by waning sunlight and cooler temperatures. However, many humans seem to have a distorted sense of seasonal timing, especially those tied to their smartphones (*mea culpa*). Some of us find ourselves looking out the window, puzzled, astonished at how early the sun is setting these days.

Just a moment ago we played in the fullness of summer and could get outdoor projects done into the late evening. Daylight savings time makes the transition more difficult. Perhaps we'll fix that in the very near future.

We don't usually think of plants as being gatherers. Instead, we think of them as being things to gather. Of course, they don't physically gather together, but

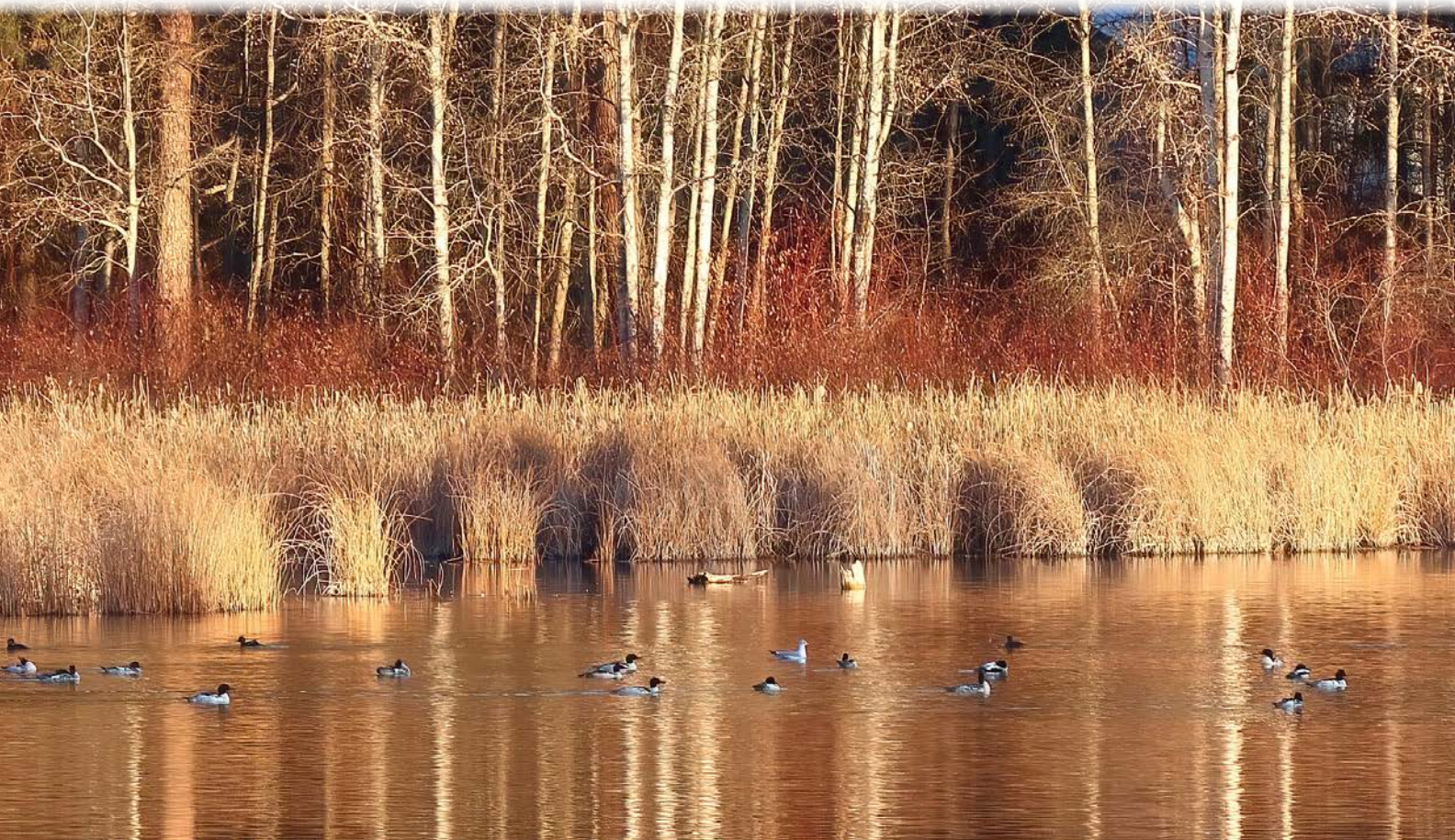
they gather what they need to survive. Many plants begin their transition into winter survival by drawing in nutrients from their leaves. These nutrients are stored in stems, trunks and roots in the form of sugars, complex carbohydrates. When spring arrives, the sugars are accessed to provide energy for rapid new growth before leaves are out and able to produce more energy for the plant to grow further. Yes, plants are gatherers. They would cease to exist if they weren't.

Animals are expert gatherers. The seasonal abundance of seeds, leaves and fruits are harvested and stored by many species. Squirrels, mice and bears all compete for energy-rich foods, especially those morsels dense with fat that pack the most energy per ounce.

Birds that do not migrate south will

often store seeds, nuts and even insects, hedging against bitterly cold and snowy winters. Black-capped chickadees are considered memory geniuses. Scientists have studied them and found they can store and recall up to 5,000 locations of food they have cached – each day! Now where did I leave my cellphone two seconds ago?

We humans are also expert gatherers, or at least we used to be. When individual survival depended on the ability to gather and store foods, along with dry firewood, we became very good at it. Individuals and families who practice this cycle of gathering and storing will tell you it is for the assurance of knowing that their food is clean and nutritious. Most will acknowledge that it satisfies a deep urge within them – to gather in the time of abundance in preparation





# A Fresh Air Perspective

for the time of scarcity.

Fall is the time to gather in other ways. People are generally social, and fall is a time when gatherings seem to be more important. Many gatherings revolve around the celebration of harvests and the reminder that we may need each other to survive the winter. Social ties are renewed. Now, there are exceptions, and the occasional curmudgeon will say they don't need any of it. But you may see them in the corner, watching, and maybe smiling as the assurance of "normal" covers them like a warm blanket.

Even in the animal kingdom there is social gathering. Elk and deer mingle in the fall, coalescing as the breeding season begins. Gathering for them is a social thing, increasing the opportunities to mate before winter. They are designed to be in peak condition in the fall to help ensure conception, and then to give birth the following spring when the most nutritious grasses are in abundance.

Elk, being larger, have longer gestational periods and therefore begin their breeding season earlier, in September. Their smaller cousins, the mule and white-tailed deer, have shorter pregnancies and breed later into the fall. Though their timing for breeding is different, the timing for calving and fawning gathers into the same time period of late May and into June. It all begins with gathering in the fall.

We can't overlook the gathering of migrating birds. These days of early fall are often marked by the urgent honking of Canada geese, streaming overhead in their shifting V-formations. If you are lucky, and they don't see you, you might even be close enough to hear the rushing of air over their pinion feathers, amplified by each powerful stroke of their wings.

Shorebirds, ducks, geese, cranes and swans gather in lakes and wetlands where food and security are available. Starlings, robins, finches and sparrows gather into flocks. The more eyes that are looking, the more likely the group can find food and spot predators. Together, they will follow unseen maps to their wintering grounds. If they fail to gather in the autumn, they may fail to return in the spring.

A while back I had a special time of watching a small raft of common mergansers on Mission Lake, and one stray ring-billed gull that had joined them. Can you spot the gull in the photograph? The afternoon sun blazed low in the October sky and illuminated the stark white trunks of aspen trees against the darkness of the dense forest behind them. Amber stems of cattail

and bullrush packed together along the shore, creating a wall between water and woods.

Out on the lake, the brilliant white flanks of the mergansers marked their presence. The males were in full breeding plumage, clean and distinct in their appearance. Fall is when many ducks, geese and swans begin their courtship and pair bonding. These bonds will last through the bottleneck of winter and the hastened rush of spring migration. But it must begin in the fall. We are prone to thinking that spring is when life begins. I think it begins with the fall gatherings.

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



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# RETIRED!

Article & Photo by Becky Dubell

THAT'S ME! Twenty years on my feet was enough. I retired from working at Henery Hardware Do-it Center one month before my birthday.

I guess that means I am not going to be in the store much and will miss seeing my customers and friends. Jerry, who I had been working with for 19 of my 20 years, told me that I would come back and be in shopping real soon. I'm thinking, "No way. I've been here 20 years. What more could I need?"

Well, the best-laid plans ... it took only four days. Needed RV levels for Betty Boop, my new (used) travel trailer, which was purchased three days after retiring. The store had the levels in stock so

now I won't be falling out of bed – hopefully. Will be testing it out at the KOA campground. Will set up right next to my daughter Jamie and her family – the experienced RVers in the family. (An addition – daughter Darcy is now joining us!) I shall see if this Classic Cruiser is more comfortable than a tent on the ground – which I haven't used in over 40 years!

I've been home from Alaska for about three months and am trying to remember what I can cross off my very own honey-do list. Almost have my tiny house done in the decorating/set up department. Still have construction that needs done.

I finally got BB, my CanAm Spyder, out of my side of the shop/ga-

rage and took her for a couple of rides with a big smile on my face. Have detailed my GMC to put it up for sale since I really don't need two vehicles. I've got Mom's little Jeep Renegade that fits me really good and is comfy to drive. It contains a lot of Mom memories.

Watched my great-grandson play soccer with my daughter, son-in-law, grandson and family. Got signed up with Rural Resources again as a volunteer driver. I guess I have accomplished more than I thought. Guess I can cross things off my honey-do list. Is there anybody out there, guy or gal, young or not, that would like to take on a new honey-do list? I happen to know where that kind of list exists!

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I've only been retired – did I happen to mention that I retired? – a little over a week and I don't think I've been home, at my house, for a full day yet. Here is to hoping that I can spend some time getting things organized in my home space. I have moved into what I call my tiny home – one bedroom – and really am in need of downsizing. Who needs, or can fit in, three coffee tables plus two loveseat recliners, one love seat, four armchairs, two sleep-number beds, two dining tables with six chairs, and all the bookcases and shelves.

The list seems to be endless. The idea is that, since I have all this free time on my hands, this downsizing can get done. I've been told, and want to really believe, that it can be done. I heard somewhere that it is possible to eat a full-size elephant by taking one bite at a time. Well ... this is one huge elephant ... wish me luck.

As this article is developing itself, I'm really realizing how much I am going to miss seeing all of you people. It is (sorry – was) really easy for me to see up to 400 faces on the Sundays and Mondays that I worked.



My kids say, "Go to Walmart." Had not been shopping there in quite a while. Well. Went there to pick up a prescription for a friend, and you know the pharmacy is just inside the door to the left. I saw Chris and Shannon that I had not seen since before I left for Alaska in December. Then saw Mike, who I worked with at Colmac 20 years ago, and had not seen for about three years. The errand that was to be about 10 minutes turned into about 30. It was really cool. Hate to admit that my kids might be correct. To see someone you haven't seen in a bit, just go to Walmart.

You know this thing we call our

life that we have all laid out and planned for ourselves? I'm gonna make sure that mine is laid out on a bounce house. Cuz with one slight misstep things can go katty-wompus and I'll look forward to where it will settle back down and then ... wait for the next misstep. Gonna have fun and go with the flow.

Personal note: HaPpY ReTiRe-MeNt RhOnDa! Gonna have to compare notes sometime!

*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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# There's Gold in Them Thar Hills

By Rich Leon

Gold has been used as a form of currency and a symbol of wealth and power throughout history. It was one of the first three elements known to humankind, along with silver and copper.

You can look for gold in many ways – pan for it, dig with a pick and shovel or use a metal detector. I won't be trying any of those methods. That is because I am not looking for the precious metal, but a much different kind of gold.

What I will be looking for in the mountains around the Spokane area is the Pacific golden chanterelle (*Cantharellus formosus*).

It is a popular, edible mushroom native to the Pacific Northwest. It is known for its golden color, funnel shape and fruity aroma, often compared to apricots. Unlike most wild mushrooms chanterelles are bug-free. Instead of true gills, it has forked veins that run down the stem. It can be found growing in forest types from old growth to pine and Douglas fir, spruce and

western hemlock and everything in between.

Golden chanterelles taste unlike any other wild mushroom. They are highly sought after by professional chefs as well as the average mushroom enthusiast. They have a mild, earthy flavor and when thoroughly cooked, have a melt-in-your mouth texture.

It takes one to two weeks for the mushroom to reach full size. Most mushroom hunters would rather not wait that long, so they harvest them when they are small. If you are a first-time picker, please cut them off level with the ground so as to not disturb the mycelium.

Chanterelles keep very well, unlike some other mushrooms that start to go bad even before you get home. You can keep them in a paper bag in your fridge for up to two weeks. If they start to look a little dry you can mist them with a little water.

If you are still a novice at mushroom hunting, there are two things I would recommend. The first is to go out with someone with more experience who can show you what's an edible mushroom and what's not. We don't have many poisonous mushrooms in our area, but there are a few. It is a very good idea if you learn what they are.

The second thing is to get an up-to-date mushroom guidebook for the Pacific Northwest. One very good one is *Fruits of the Forest*, a field guide to Pacific Northwest edible mushrooms, by Daniel Winkler. It has a very good section on chanterelles, plus some very good photography, and in the back of the book are some interesting recipes. His website is [mushrooming.com](http://mushrooming.com). Other sites can also be helpful.

Now that I have given you some information about the golden chanterelle it is time for me to head to the hills and try my luck at finding this delicacy. I am a little worried I may not find much this year due to our very dry weather. Maybe I could do a little rain dance. I could run naked through the woods if it would bring some rain. On second thought, not a good idea. Good luck trying to explain to the park ranger what I was doing.

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



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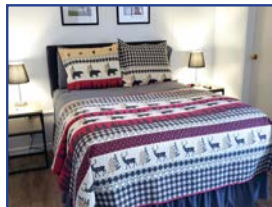


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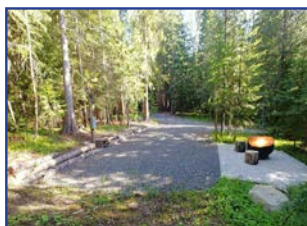


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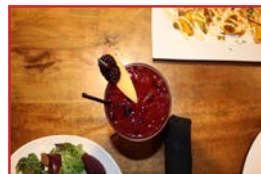
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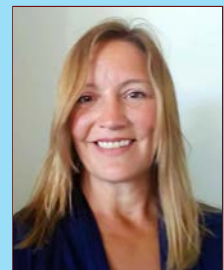
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