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What's Inside

Cover: Ponderosa along the Columbia, by Joanie Christian.

See more at joaniechristianphotography.com.

- 6 Random Acts of Community**, by Christine Wilson
- 8 Life Matters**, by Dr. Barry Bacon
- 10 Home Ground**, by Tina Wynecoop
- 13 Reflections on Life's Journey**, by Karen Giebel
- 14 December Random Thoughts**, by Bob Gregson
- 16 In Nature**, by J. Foster Fanning
- 18 This Great Big Life**, by Tina Tolliver Matney
- 20 A Fresh Air Perspective**, by D.L. Kreft
- 22 Silver Screening**, by Sophia Mattice-Aldous
- 23 Being of Service** (*Sponsored page*)
- 24 Listen Up**, by Michael Pickett
- 25 A Good Read**, by Terry Cunningham
- 26 Forever Young-ish**, by Rob Sumner
- 28 Life's Stretch**, by Brenda St. John
- 29 Poetry of Place**, by Loren Cruden
- 30 A Year on the Farm**, by Michelle Lancaster
- 32 A Botanist's View**, by Cindy Talbott Roché
- 34 Down to Earth**, by Joe Barreca
- 36 The Shooting Star**, by Judge Wynecoop
- 38 The Stalk**, by Thomas Self
- 40 DIY Tombstones**, by Donna Potter Phillips
- 42 Family Ties**, by Becky Dubell
- 45 Inchelium Cultural Research Center** (*Sponsored page*)
- 46 Creative Being in Stevens County**, by Marci Bravo



Heal Us Giving Some

- JOHN ODELL, allthelandandsea.wixsite.com/wordsofwords

A Note from the Publisher

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

I believe that we can all have different perspectives, different viewpoints, different ways of being, *and* I believe that we can find connection and build community around the things we share in common. Thank you for reading. I hope you feel enriched for having done so.

~ Gabriel

Proudly printed in the USA by the independent, employee- and family-owned *Lewiston Tribune* and TPC Printing, of Lewiston, Idaho, using soy-based ink with recycled printing plates on recycled paper.



January 2026

Vol. 33 ~ Iss. 9

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Subscriptions

The *North Columbia Monthly* is available for free at over 500 locations in NE Washington and at ncmonthly.com. Subscriptions are \$36/year to cover postage and mailing envelopes.

North Columbia Monthly

P.O. Box 983, Kettle Falls, WA 99141
509-675-3791 | publisher@ncmonthly.com
www.ncmonthly.com

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How to Be Imperfect

By Christine Wilson

“The problem with hope is that it feels like a very easy word, very convenient and sort of kumbaya, but I’m interested in the kind of hope that holds up to scrutiny, the kind of hope that does hold up to the worst things that happen to us, that holds up to our worst days. ... It’s much harder to come by. You can’t just feel hope and then let that feeling pass over you with joy and pleasure. You have to take it into the real world. You have to see that hope in action. Hope is the correct response to consciousness. I can’t afford despair. I don’t think humanity can afford despair. I wouldn’t have a problem with despair if all it did was make me a better human or a better dad or whatever, but despair for me just sinks me deeper into the couch.”

~ John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars*

“Continued improvement is better than delayed perfection.”

~ Mark Twain

“This is a giant block of whatever is most difficult for you to carry and trust me on this, you’ll carry it more times than you can count until you decide that’s exactly what you want to do most & then it won’t weigh a thing anymore.”

~ Brian Andreas, *Traveling Light*

“Cogito, ergo sum.” (Translation: I think, therefore I am.)

~ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, 1637

I have settled on my best-ever New Year’s resolution. My goal is to be imperfect. Done and done.

The teenytiny problem I encounter on this plan comes after the fact. What am I going to tell myself about my inevitable imperfections when they crop up?

I am not opposed to thinking, per se. It gives us our expansive collection of choices. We can navigate our way out of the messes we find ourselves in. We can double a recipe in order to share a meal with friends. Rational thought can lead to well-paying jobs. Who doesn’t love those ideas?

Thinking is a big part of Western culture. Descartes set into motion the idea that what we think is the basis for our sense of self and our sense of self is the basis of confidence. We have a thought, ergo we exist. Un-

fortunately, we aren’t taught to say, “I have emotions therefore I exist.” We also don’t get to say, “I have body sensations therefore I exist.” It’s like trying to balance on a one-legged stool. I suppose you could do that for a while, but eventually it gets exhausting.

Years ago, I had a friend who worked long and hard to put together a presentation for his philosophy class. Unfortunately, when he nervously got up in front of his class and began, the professor lost control of the discussion and the budding philosophers told him that, before he could make his presentation, he had to prove to them that he existed. He spent the entire class period arguing with them about whether he was real. I suggested that maybe he could have slugged one of them in the arm

and asked if he felt it. That seemed like proof enough to me. Perhaps he would have had to go up and down all the rows of students before they relented, but it might have worked. His experience was my introduction to the dark side of thinking yourself into paralysis.

Soon after I wake up each day, I think about my plans. I have things I want to do for fun, I have work I want to accomplish, and I have external demands on my time that I need to meet. My thinking brain sets about 10 times as many goals to achieve as I have time to achieve them.

That thinking brain imagines a perfect result. And then there is planet earth. I mess up. Some unforeseen intrusion shows up in my life. Life appears on life’s terms, such as the other day when I opened the

Random Acts of Community

back end of my car and saw that my car tabs had expired in May. Oops.

That is where my feelings come into play. Panic, for example. Also, my body sensations. A racing heart and a cortisol dump. And then the feedback loop begins. The panic, the racing heart, and the cortisol start a conversation between my brain, my feeling heart, and my guts. Not only is our brain a meaning-making machine, it thinks it's the boss. I've started off the day with a set of expectations. I have all these physical and emotional responses to the obstacles reality throws my way. My brain hates all that interference.

I scold myself. That triggers a shame response. That might make my stomach hurt. Why did I not get the gift of organizational skills? How could I have spaced out that word MAY next to the 2025? Aren't I too old to be making mistakes like that?

Don't feel sorry for me, though. I've been paying attention for a very long time. Plus, you might also recognize it in your own life. It's just part of the human condition, especially in cultures that value the perfect. At some point after that college fiasco that my friend endured, I came up with a plan with another friend of mine. We wanted to write a book called *The Courage to Be Mediocre*. We never got around to it, which is kind of perfect when you think about it.

So, this year, I want to be curious about my imperfections. Having incorporated the model of thinking about ideal outcomes and perfect performance, I have set three sub-goals to pay attention to. The first one comes from an old Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, in which Hobbes

explains the Serenity Prayer to Calvin. Calvin asks what it means. Hobbes looks at him in his distinctly Hobbes-ish manner and says, "It means to lighten up." For someone who has lived the Indigo Girls line, "You know me, I take everything so seriously," that is a noble and mammoth aspiration.

Secondly, I like the idea of expecting mistakes. I want to reiterate my joy in learning that healthy attachments are not about getting it right all the time. They are based on doing the best we can and then repairing when we mess up. For me, a good example is repeating the same thought over and over again – a family trait I have felt badly about. Some time ago I received a loving, verbal gift from a friend as I started to worry that I had told her something before. She said: "Oh, we aren't going to have to worry about that, are we?" Too bad my father had already died, or I could have practiced patience on that front with him.

So, don't waste any time being in denial of imperfections, shocked by them, or feeling less than the rest of the human race when they show up. I will try not to repeat myself. I will definitely repeat myself. And

my aspiration is that I will lighten up about it and send a message to my father in the great Radio Shack in the sky, where I am sure he is repeating himself about some electronic adventure he's had in his life.

Thirdly, and this is so trite as to be annoying, learn from imperfections. Thinking you have to be perfect is a little distracting. It sets in motion no end of defensiveness, shame, hostility, and a sense of separateness from the rest of your community. We all fall short. What is our plan for facing that inevitability? We can expect those moments and be curious. I for one will never love my imperfections but we can at least repair breaches created with others and with ourselves. That allows us to keep developing ourselves and to strengthen our sense of community. 2026 seems like a good year to fine-tune that goal.

I'd say I hope I make a lot of mistakes so I get the practice, but I think that part will take care of itself. And now my car tabs aren't due until November, so there's that.

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



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Investing in Things That Matter

By Dr. Barry Bacon, MD

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”
~ Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953

It's 6:40 a.m. I'm just climbing out of bed, pulling on a T-shirt and jeans. It's a misty, quiet morning with cloud cover overhead, resulting from another “atmospheric river” stretched from the ocean to the mountains. A young being standing on two feet catches the corner of my eye, motionless and quiet at the door, wearing his pajamas.

It's my 10-year-old grandson, hoping I will notice and invite him in to snuggle for just a few minutes with “Nana” and “Papa” before hustling off to school. He's a big kid but still loves being held and cuddled. I open the door and pile in next to Nana, breathe in his hair, his skin, his smile, the wonder of why he loves cars so much but doesn't like girls.

I smile, knowing this stage of life won't last long. Hormonal surges and time will create their inevitable metamorphosis from childhood to manhood. These days are numbered, and our roles as grandparents are changing. “Don't waste these moments,” I tell myself.

A bit later, I sit next to him as he

scrolls through a *Motor Trend* magazine. He offers up data nuggets about the Ford F150 (his favorite) compared to other vehicles in its class, and about the *Motor Trend* Car of the Year and why it was chosen over other similar vehicles. He cites comparative data that he has memorized but can't fully grasp until he himself is a driver and feels the acceleration of a V8 engine under his control. For now, he dreams. Except when he is at Papa and Nana's house and he has the chance to steer an old clunker out across the field. Under Papa's guidance, of course.

Later that Friday evening, we listen to stories, tell a few of our own, sing some songs, and talk about life. Stories about how kindness matters. How life's sorrows don't need to overwhelm us. How Nana's homemade bread is the best. How homemade ginger cookies really are a health food, seen in the proper light. How school is important and we shouldn't waste the time there, that his controlling German teacher really is a good teacher because she stops “total mayhem” from happening

and insists on the students doing their work.

He agrees. He appreciates quietness. He's a serious student who does well in math and science and history. And he really likes cars. (Did I mention that?)

Children can be clingy, whiny, goofy, belligerent, messy creatures who need a lot of guidance over a period of decades. One thing about being a parent (or a grandparent) – once you step into that role, you will never stop being a mom or a dad. That beautiful title follows you forever. You never stop hoping, believing, praying, weeping, whatever you have to do to keep nudging your children toward sanity and a beautiful life. You never stop cheering for your children when they are succeeding. You never stop mourning when your children are broken or lost. And you're never too old to tell a good story and draw one of life's lessons from it.

Back at home, I asked the guys in recovery what they thought Dwight Eisenhower meant by the words above. They were thoughtful. It's the end of



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World War II, the middle of the cold war. General Eisenhower has seen so much devastation. So much investment in weapons that brought destruction. So much that led to hunger, homelessness, poverty and death for millions. He must have wondered at the waste. He must have put the two together – clearly the investment in weapons must be the cause for so much suffering. In that light, he was reflecting on how investment in more weapons worldwide was stealing from the bread and clothing that provides for our future. And how investments in the one rob from the other.

Which is why, on Saturday morning, as I am making toast for the 10-year-old and his seven-year-old sister, both of whom sit at the counter awaiting the glory of enjoying Nana's bread toasted

with butter and other fixings, the gentle chatter of their voices in the background as they consider the various attributes of each of the remote-control cars they are studying, I smile again and recognize the investment I am making. An investment that builds up and doesn't destroy. An investment in their future, and therefore the world's. Love. Kindness. Mercy. Wonder. Creativity.

We are the medicine for our children and our grandchildren. Humans who receive a consistent message of love, belonging, nurturing, in a supportive, peaceful environment have measurably different brain wiring than those who experience anxiety, neglect, anger, violence. Children in the latter group, as Dr. Gabor Maté has written, lack the dopamine connections which give

them a sense of wellbeing and connectiveness, and set them up as considerably more likely to experience addiction.

I look out at a darkening, flat gray sky and think of how dull and monotonous my life would be without children and grandchildren. I reflect on the futility of life and find plenty of cause for despondency. I look at my grandchildren and see in them belief in a future and hope. I find that, in the end, they are my medicine. And that an investment in my grandchildren is an investment in a more beautiful world, and in myself.

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.



Happy New Year!



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For Land's Sakes: Julia, Elinore,

By Tina Wynecoop

"We have always walked this land."

~ Albert Sam (Spokane)

"A single woman homesteader was not unique. ... They claimed roughly 12 percent of all homesteads in the western states. Though their personal reasons for homesteading varied widely, the desire for independence often dominated the letters, diaries and memoirs they wrote."

~ Barbara Bogart, Wyohistory.org

I wish I had asked her, "Grandma, how did you and Grandpa meet?" Sadly, the desire to know more about her early years awoke in me when too many years had passed to find out. I do know Julia, born in 1880, was a woman homesteader in the Dakotas and married an immigrant Norwegian bachelor in 1909. I was 10 when she died in 1956.

Although I often stayed with my grandparents, I was aware only of the "here and now." Did Julia write letters, a diary, a memoir? Do they still exist in a distant relative's treasure trove? I am the youngest of her youngest child, William, who was born in 1920. As last twigs on her family tree, there are few relatives to ask about her action-packed history.

Yet, in a way, I "witnessed" my grandmother's homesteading experience through her cooking, sewing, gardening, the fruit and nut trees, her chickens ... just by being in her shadow those too few years.

I loved her dearly – though not the basement where I sometimes slept. The wooden stairs leading to it were wide-spaced. I was sure I was going to fall through their openings in the dark on my way to and from the bathroom upstairs. Her solution for my times of need was to set out the 5-gallon Redwing stoneware crock she made sauerkraut in. When it wasn't being used for preserving cabbage I could "use" the crock instead of climbing the scary stairs to the real toilet. Her woman homesteader's practicality met my need. (I inherited the crock after my dad's passing – a memento of my connection to Julia. Inheriting her stories would have been even better!)

Anyone has access to the letters of my Julia's contemporary, Elinore Pruitt Stewart (1876-1933), who wrote about her own homesteading experiences in Wyoming. Elinore, recently widowed, and her young daughter, Jerrine, left Denver for the sage-covered land of southwestern Wyoming in 1909. She had a claim to file.

During those eventful years of homesteading, Elinore Stewart wrote 26 letters to a Mrs. Coney, her former employer in Denver. One can tell

from her letters that adventure suited her in this new landscape where "the stars were bright [and] presently a long, quivering wail arose and was answered from a dozen hills. It seemed just the sound one ought to hear in such a place. When the howls ceased for a moment, we could hear the subdued roar of the creek and the crooning of the wind in the pines ... so, we rather enjoyed the coyote chorus and were not afraid."

Elinore's dauntless spirit, her self-reliance, and her courage opened a window to glimpse the homesteading life my grand-

mother undertook in the Dakotas. Stewart's letters are published in *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, University of Nebraska Press (first published in 1915). My copy sits in my "best-thing-I-ever-read" bookshelves.

I hadn't been planning to write about women homesteaders at all for my *NCM* column until searching for an illustration or old photo of an Indian rodeo rider to use for another writing project, when I came across a 1913 Brisbane, Australia, newspaper article, a reprint in the *American Agriculturist* about homesteading on the Spokane



Indian Reservation! Homesteading on the Spokane Indian Reservation! No way! It was written by Miss Olive Lender of Chicago, a self-described “city girl” who took up homesteading on a remnant of territory in eastern Washington that had been demarcated to corral the original inhabitants.

The Spokane Indian Reservation was established in 1881 by executive order of President Rutherford B. Hayes, thereby forcing the residents to exchange 3,000,000 acres of their ancestral territory for a new homeland of approximately 158,000 acres. What a take! Two decades later, once allotments had been parceled to the Spokanes, the rest of the reservation was opened for homesteaders.

Regardless of the intentions of the federal government, Miss Olive Lender’s reasons for homesteading were more personal. She wrote this in “City Girl on a Farm” for the *American Agriculturist*:

“I was fortunate enough to draw a homestead on the Spokane Indian Reservation in the state of Washington. I was a thorough tenderfoot, a product of ‘good old Chicago town,’ and had never even inspected a farm or ranch any closer than from the window of a moving train. Naturally I was most enthusiastic and moved out on the land fully expecting it to pay me a fair income at the end of the first year.” [To “prove” a homestead, one had to be 21-plus or head of household, file at a local land office (paying fees), live on and improve the 160 acres (build a home, farm) for 5 years, and then “prove up” with witnesses to get the final title, or buy it after 6 months for \$1.25/acre.]

Olive continued, “My first week on the ranch was a combination of being half frightened to death, homesickness, and adventures. The only Indians that I had ever seen before were of the side show variety. ... I had no protection of any kind. I also had no house, not even a tent. A few pine boards balanced on the limbs of a couple of small trees were my roof and the mountain scenery was my side walls for a week or so. I was almost afraid to sleep.”

The record of her experience as a homesteader is a fas-

cinating period piece, offering a glimpse of the challenges such women faced. Read the rest of the article online at this link: trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/291312276.

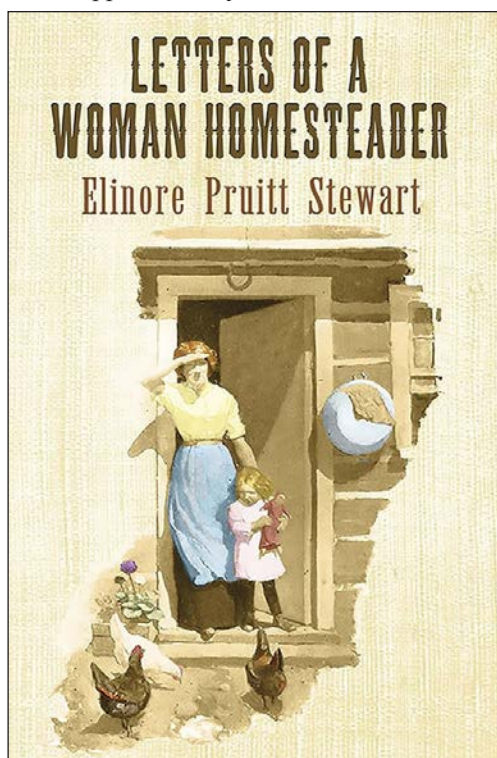
When the Spokane Indian Reservation was being “allotted,” a local newspaper’s headline on January 25, 1909, bemoaned, “Spokane Indians Gobbled Best of Spokane Reservation.” It went on in its lament to quote Clair Hunt of Colville, who was a special allotment agent in the United States Indian Service:

“The Indian allotments varied from 80 to 160 acres each depending on the character of the land, a total of 637 [actually 639] allotments being made.”

In 1910, my husband’s mother, Phoebe, received the last tribal allotment, #639. Phoebe was one year old and would have been too young to comprehend the impact of the Homestead Act and the Dawe’s Act on her people. I suspect she learned plenty about them while growing up on her mother’s allotment in the rugged, forested land north of Wellpinit where winters were severe and deep snows made travel difficult.

Depending on the season, she and her siblings went to school on horseback or by horsedrawn sleigh. Some winters the family left the allotment and lived in the blacksmith’s building in Wellpinit to be closer to school. Phoebe received her diplomas from Reardan H.S. and from The Cheney Normal School. She became the first tribal member to return to her people as a certified schoolteacher – and a single woman, at that! Later, a younger brother also returned from college to teach on his reservation.

At that time, if a woman teacher married, she had to relinquish her teaching position. Phoebe and her husband lived on his mother’s allotment where he built a log home. Close by lived their extensive families. Chickens, dairy cows, vegetable gardens and hard labor sustained the family in the way native subsistence rounds had provided not that long before.



Continued on page 12...

...continued from page 11

Phoebe kept journals. One entry described a disastrous night on August 14, 1937, when, the Indians who were supposed to learn to survive as agriculturalists at the elevation of 22,000 feet lost their gardens to a heavy frost. Lost also were the deer and salmon – not by severe weather but by over-hunting and dam building. Electricity was generated from Little Falls Dam in 1911 on tribal land, yet not available to the tribe until 1939. That day was noted with gratitude in my mother-in-law's journal. Was she a woman homesteader? Her situation was different but the demands on her were the same. We are grateful she kept journaling until her 99th year.

I'm mindful of author Ursula K. Le Guin's concise observation in her book *Out Here*: "We are and shape each other, I and you. We ply a hard trade, and we take our due."

Insight from another Julia, Julia F. Parker, born 1928 (Coast Miwok/Pomo), the renowned basket weaver, is de-

scribed in the book *Scrape the Willow Until It Sings*. Parker was speaking with one of the many groups of middle school children that came through the Yosemite Museum when one girl thoughtfully asked if she preferred to be called an Indian or a Native American. She answered, "I would rather be called Julia. We are classified Native American, but you, too, are *native* American because you were born here like me."

I wish it were that simple, the generosity of thought, which characterized and still typifies the first residents' descendants who are still here – at one with this land. For the land's sake ... and for all.

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."



This reproduction of the original watercolor by Ace Powell was on Pheobe's wall for decades.

Reflections on Life's Journey

Dona Nobis Pacem – Grant Us Peace

By Karen Giebel

I imagine that if I were to stand on my front porch at the stroke of midnight on December 31, I could hear, in the wind, the collective sigh of millions around the world thankful that the past year has ended. In a world full of anger, strife, warfare, hostility and mistrust, I'm finding it increasingly difficult to find peace. But I haven't given up. I just need to try harder and keep hope in my heart.

We live in the time of faster-than-the-speed-of-light media who, millisecond by millisecond, bring us all the bad news it can find because bad news pays and draws the viewer in to stay for more developing aspects of the latest horror story. That's why I am so grateful to this publication, whose goal is to find common ground and promote unity.

I live in a world that appears overwhelmed by division and negativity, so it's more important than ever to choose kindness, compassion and understanding.

Dona Nobis Pacem is a Latin phrase meaning "Grant us peace." It was a direct plea from the Lamb of God in the Catholic Mass. I remember so well learning

this simple "round" in my middle school chorus and performing it at a school concert. Yes, back in the day we sang religious songs in our public schools.

The words are sung twice in every line with a simple melody that remains hauntingly beautiful. The words have far transcended parochial meaning and have become a quiet but powerful message of hope and tranquility. I first sang these words 60-some years ago and they remain as compelling to me today as they did back then. So simple: "Grant us peace, grant us peace, grant us peace." Peace in our hearts, our families, our homes, our communities, our countries and our world.

I would hope in the coming year that credence not be given to the bitter noise, angry rhetoric, finger-pointing and, yes, violence. Instead, I envision a world where we unite and work to be the change toward peace that we wish to see.

So often in this past year I have heard the phrase from all sides of the political and faith-driven spectrums that, "This HAS to stop now!" To me, those words carry no meaning at all unless there is

action through sincere, thoughtful communication seeking common ground.

In my 72 years on this earth, not one decade has occurred where there has not been a war somewhere on this planet. My wish is that my grandchildren and my grandchildren's children will know a peaceful earth that I have not experienced.

As we enter the year 2026, I say with all my heart, "*Dona Nobis Pacem – Grant Us Peace.*"

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



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January Random Thoughts

By Bob Gregson

Thought #1: Now is roughly the season when, traditionally, seed catalogs came to our doors in the mailman's pouch ... an exciting time to see the pictures of newly-developed, bright red tomatoes that were guaranteed to be huge and not crack or get blossom end rot. And exotic plants from somewhere in Asia that grew berries unlike any others. And the new hybrid, sweetest corn ever. Those descriptions were obviously written by professional ad writers and pictures set up by professional photographers. So enticing!

Early in our farming career we fell for some of those exotic things in the seed and nursery catalogs. Especially unusual variants of trees or bushes that might be OK in our

USDA climate zone, like paw paws, avocados, high bush cranberries, and more. When we bought the farm on Vashon Island, we inherited a banana tree growing in the partially underground greenhouse. It died our first winter there. That should have been an early lesson, but it was not.

We were new to the growing-commercially game and wanted to experiment and come up with unusual fruit and veggie varieties to make the fledgling farm a financial success – an impossibility according to the prevailing thought. Small farms could NOT survive, it was believed. We had to make it work since we did not want to go back to corporate careers.

Several expensive and time-wasting lessons emerged from that attraction in those early years. One big lesson was that heirloom tomatoes, especially, were considered “heirloom” in almost all cases simply because newer varieties were so much improved in various ways ... though maybe not in taste. The expensive part of our early experimentation was the choice of unusual trees and fruiting bushes, which simply did not pan out.

But it was still great fun to sit by the fire of the wood stove (we heated our farmhouse exclusively with alder and old hazelnut wood cut on the property) and go through all the pretty pictures in those catalogs, dreaming how the farm would look next summer.

Two things in the fruit line did come out of that quest for the exotic: several nice fig trees and later, in Spokane, two hardy kiwi bushes.

Thought #2: Hardy kiwis! What a surprise they became, many years

later.

Hardy kiwis can survive and thrive in this area. They are good to 40 below zero, they are rambunctious vines, the tart-sweet fruit is grape-size and voluminous. No fuzz on their skin so all is edible, tasting just like the full-size kiwi grown in milder climates, mostly New Zealand. And they are about as healthy a natural wonder as can be imagined. A synthesis of scientific findings from various sources indicates that kiwi fruit, including the hardy kiwi, are known to boost the immune system, support digestion, reduce inflammation, and stabilize blood pressure. At the same time, the polyphenol compounds in this fruit are also shown to help slow the aging process and protect the cardiovascular system.

That's a seriously amazing endorsement. Everyone in eastern Washington should have hardy kiwis in their back yards. But there is a catch. It takes a male to pollinate a female vine. And, apparently, years of frustration to get them to “mate.”

We planted one of each in our yard in Spokane in 2012. The female kept dying back then coming to life the next spring; the male just sat there, in partial shade, looking sickly, and simply didn't produce blooms. Finally, about three years ago the female became vibrantly healthy. Why? Who knows. This past spring, it bloomed profusely and SO DID the male! Bingo, a crop of probably 30 pounds, though so much of it was hidden in the foliage we harvested only about half of that. Grape-sized fruit in large clusters ripened in early November. Excellent taste if you like the regular kiwi sweet-tart fruit from the grocery store. The hardy kiwi is

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soft-skinned with no fuzz, and probably not at all commercially viable since it wouldn't travel well. But it is great raw and made into a marmalade-type jam. I'm suddenly a big fan. And carefully watching to see if it is making Bonnie and me younger....

Thought #3: We've watched local (Gonzaga) and regional (Mariners, Seahawks) sports teams do well this year. Some folks are fiercely loyal to these groups, even highly emotional about their successes and failures. I am a little guilty of that. And wonder why it is that such loyalty exists in me and others. It's clear that Casey, the batter from Mudville who famously/poetically struck out, was a local hero, well known to his fellow Mudville residents. No doubt so was the rest of Casey's team, like the "town teams" so prevalent in the U.S. around 1900. We have strayed far, far away from the concept of a town team in favor of teams we usually know very little about.

The truth is, there is seldom a Washingtonian on ANY of the teams noted above. It's nice when there is, like having Yakima's Cooper Kupp as a Seahawk, but when you consider the typical rosters of those three sports entities, you see that local/regional team players are from all over the world – almost never from here. Especially true for Gonzaga basketball, which has a robust recruiting program that casts its net wide.

Thus, when we root for a Seattle-based team, or Spokane's Gonzaga, we are rooting for a group of geographical and personal strangers to go out and beat other strangers who are temporarily living in places like Los Angeles or Atlanta.

Obviously, sports team attachments have to do with our personal relationships to places and friends and histories. Those attachments are often a fun mix of emotions we



conjure up about those teams and their cities. It's interestingly mysterious how attachments like those can generate emotions which will make some of us cry or jump up and down and hug each other.

Thought #4: It's such a joy seeing the garden all put to bed for the winter and covered with snow. The last of the carrots and beets and potatoes are out of the ground; one inch of chicken house litter is applied on all growing areas, followed by sprinklings of kelp meal and rock dust, then all is covered by a three-inch deep blanket of leaf mulch.

For the first time, we have enough leaves from all of our trees to make up that blanket. Hooray! The soil is the key to everything, and it will be soft, wormy, and recharged by next spring.

So, what new variety of tomatoes or corn will YOU try next year? Suggestion: go for hardy kiwis.

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.



Kettle River

Aftermath of Flooding

Article & Photo by J. Foster Fanning

The 2025 December floods in the Pacific Northwest broke many records and had a huge impact on many, many thousands of people, with evacuations, properties flooded and power outages. Washouts and landslides forced closure of many roads, state routes and interstates, disrupting commercial and private transportation. Livestock went missing and untold wildlife drowned or were forced out of normal habitat. And when recovery began, a second storm system hit and delivered more of the same, and in some cases, worse. This will be a very long and expensive process of recovery.

Our highlands region is not immune to flooding and subsequent damages. Floods of 1995, 2017 and 2018 brought severe impacts. For example, the 2018 flood in the Kettle River drainage hit Grand Forks, BC, hard and flooded downtown, impacting 1,500 properties, forcing 3,000-plus evacuations, and damaging more than 400 homes due to rapid snowmelt from hot weather and rain. The 2018 flood

caused significant financial loss, displacement, lawsuits blaming logging, and major changes like floodplain naturalization.

When we think of the aftermath of a flood, our thoughts usually focus on property and infrastructure damage, significant health hazards like contaminated water, and the community disruption with displaced residents. While these are indeed significant problems, the impacts of flooding go far beyond.

Flooding impact to livestock is a critical issue due to drowning, injury, loss or displacement and extreme stress, potentially leading to disease outbreaks. Flooding destroys fences, barns and feed, disrupts supply chains, contaminates feed and water sources with mold, bacteria and toxins, and reduces forage, causing nutritional deficiencies and reproductive issues. Recovery efforts include managing disease, ensuring clean water/feed, repairing facilities, and addressing long-term herd rebuilding.

The major flooding across the Pacific Northwest in December 2025 overwhelmed and shut down some water treatment facilities, resulting in boil orders.

Flooding often severely impacts soils by causing erosion, depleting nutrients, compacting structure, and disrupting beneficial microbial life, leading to reduced fertility and crop yields. Excess water suffocates plant roots, while floodwaters can carry contaminants and leach nutrients, alter soil chemistry and make it difficult for plants to grow, sometimes creating long-term issues.

Floods impact wildlife by displacing animals, destroying habitats, drowning young, disrupting food chains, and introducing pollutants, leading to death, injury, or forced migration. Long-term ecosystem changes make it difficult for some species to adapt. There is also increased human-wildlife conflict as animals seek refuge in drier areas. Stream bank stability, in many places, will be susceptible to erosion

for many years after the flood passes. Undercut banks and destabilized tree roots are long-range problems.

Prior to our record-breaking Kettle River flood of June 10, 2018, the upstream riverbank of my property had a large cluster of mature cottonwoods, all inter-rooted, forming something of a bulwark which protected the bank for decades. The flood undercut the cluster of tree roots, and during a high-water episode several years later, all of those cottonwoods tumbled into the river flow. Each year since then the river has slowly eaten away that streambank a few inches or more every spring during the freshet.

The floods of December 2025 will have significant negative impacts on fisheries. The salmon habitat and life cycle is damaged in rivers like the Skagit, Nooksack, Snoqualmie, Snohomish, Stillaguamish, Puyallup, Chehalis and more. The firehose-like river flows scour away salmon eggs from their underwater gravel nests and wash young salmon downriver prematurely; fish eggs are often smothered in sediment due to increased erosion and siltation. Habitat degradation due to pollutants like agricultural pesticides, industrial chemicals, debris, and sewage degrade water quality and harm fish.

Social scientists who study the long-term effects of flooding on the impacted human population note lingering health issues, including respiratory and infectious diseases. Mental health issues such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression follow severe property damage, infrastructure failure, impacts to schools and hospitals, and economic disruption causing food shortages and higher costs. These flood impacts disproportionately impinge

on vulnerable populations. This is a very difficult time for those severely struck.

A big thanks to all emergency responders who helped our communities at risk during these recent events. Stay safe out there.

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

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Welcome Home

Article & Photo by Tina Tolliver Matney

There's a battle going on inside me. Not a tragic one. Not one where I'm fighting a serious illness or anything physical or mental. I'm not saying those things don't happen from time to time ... I mean sheesh! Look at my track record. Wait, let's not. I've grown quite adept at ignoring those kinds of things. I'm pretty good at mentally "duct taping" the warning lights that go off in my body like I used to do in my old car.

Perhaps what I'm experiencing lately would best be described as more of a "scuffle within myself." It all started a few days ago when I was basking in the joy of my very first lazy Sunday morning in my new house, sitting on my new sofa with my coffee ... and my cat of five years curled up in my lap.

That might sound lovely to most of you and believe me that's really all I was focused on until I texted a photo of my cat and me to my daughter, thinking she would think it was a sweet moment shared by her tired mother. But instead, her immediate response was "It's Pip! On your new furniture! IN YOUR HOUSE!!!"

I did a little eye roll and tried to explain to her that the cat had spent almost all her time outdoors and I had relaxed my new rigid rule of not allowing the cat into my new house. It was a statement I think I made to everyone who would listen after dealing with horrendous allergies from the sweet dog I had adopted last summer and then had to "unadopt" and send back to Montana when those allergies and

the bacterial pneumonia that ensued threatened to kill me.

After I started to feel better and realized how sick I had been for so long I made some strict proclamations about living with animals inside my house. And that was the first of my new intentions for the New Year that I broke before the New Year had even started.

Not only did I open the door and let her in the first time she pushed her cute little wet nose up to the window and meowed like she really missed me, but I sat down with my coffee on that brand new sofa and welcomed her into my lap where she fell asleep, essentially trapping me in a rather uncomfortable position. I suffered through the first quarter of a football game with kinked hips and an empty coffee mug.

That was how New Year intention #1 flew out the window and wafted downriver with the recent windstorm.

Intention #2 fizzled before it even started when my son and daughter-in-law stopped by earlier in the fall and were standing in what is now my "living room." Again I opened my mouth and made a bold proclamation: "I'm leaving my television out in the art studio." They both looked at me and said, "Why?" "Because I don't watch that much TV and I don't want to clutter up my little living room," I said.

But both gave me that look that should have told me right then that I should stop saying things I do not mean. And sure enough, the second night that I slept in my new house, I wrestled the 43" smart Aleck television across the carport and set it up on a cardboard box that had bold lettering on the side that said, "Lovesac

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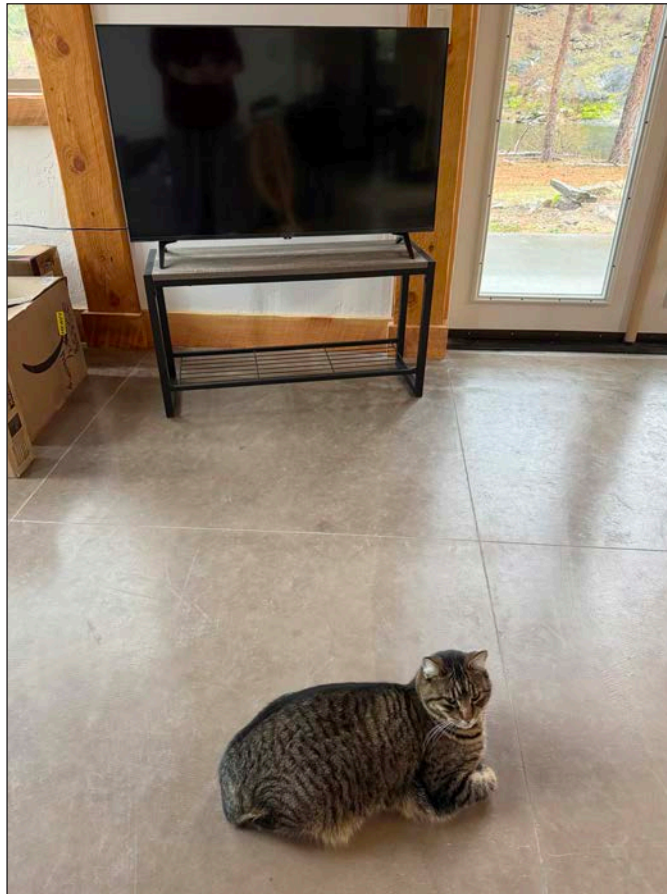
OK, it just said Lovesac Sofa ... but it still needed to be put together. The thing was, it was really quiet out here. Over the summer, I had fallen into a routine of turning on the local news while I made my evening meal. And by evening meal I mean I generally opened a can of soup or dumped salad out of a bag over in “the shack” because washing dishes was a pain. In hindsight I guess I can concede I had grown lazy when it came to feeding myself.

Anyway, after the news, I would flip over to an old series I had always wanted to see, and pretty soon, one series led to another and here I am with a television the size of Texas I was never going to have in my house. But it doesn't end there.

The television I had was not originally mine, so I had decided to pass it along to a nephew. I had also called somewhat of a truce to that battle inside me by putting the television OUT of the living room and into what would be the “den” or office/craft/TV room. Designating room purposes is not as easy as it sounds, especially if you only have two empty rooms with flexibility. But I felt that adding the television to that rather multi-purpose room was a good compromise.

Well, to make a long story shortish, I now have not just one but two televisions in this house. One in the TV room and one ... gasp ... still in the

living room where it wasn't supposed to stay but it turns out my nephew doesn't want one that “small.” So if you



come into my house and I'm cooking dinner with Gilligan and Mary Ann fighting off a giant spider in a cave playing out on a 43" screen in the living room, just know I fought hard.

There have been other battles of course. Isn't that life? Making choices, then living the experience and perhaps thinking, “Nah, I don't wanna do it that way”? But aside from those battles is the even longer list of all the good that has happened this past year. As 2025 comes to a close, I can now say “I am home” just as my builder promised.

Tom and Patty told me I would be

living in my house before winter and they, along with everyone who worked so hard to make this happen, made good on that promise. I can't even begin to express the gratitude I feel for all these people who stepped into this great big life with the common goal to build a house for me. I may have blown a couple of New Year's intentions already, but there is one I intend to keep for the rest of my life. And that is to turn my gratitude outward into this place we all call home and do my very best to help others feel safe, fed and warm in times when life tosses them around.

It is my opinion that most everyone could use a hand now and then. Whether it's simply an offer to deliver some groceries or taking part in a work party to clean up storm or fire damage ... or raise a wall on a new home. There is always a way to give from one's heart. So many of you have done that for me, and I hope you know how grateful I am.

My wish for you in this coming year is that you will have an abundance of joy and peace, enough to shine out into the world around you. Happy New Year to you and yours.

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.

A Feathery Christmas

By D.L. Kreft

What had been a calm, but chilly morning abruptly turned bitter. A pre-dawn breeze swept the open landscape around me, finding every opening in my clothing and every square inch of exposed skin on my face, neck and hands. With nothing to block its assault, I zipped my coat as high as it would go, slightly pinching the end of my beard, adding insult to injury. My birding partner shivered and muttered something I couldn't quite make out, but somehow, I understood. We were following a 126-year tradition, along with eleven other local birders – the annual Christmas Bird Count.

Proposed by ornithologist Frank Chapman, the first “Christmas Bird Census” occurred on December 25, 1900. A mere 27 participants set out to take a quick inventory of birds in their local areas on Christmas Day. They recorded 89 different species with a total of about 18,000 individual birds being counted. Though mostly concentrated in the northeastern states, there were a few counts in the Midwest and even as far west as Pacific Grove, California.

Nowadays over 83,000 volunteers cover 2,800 count circles in the Western Hemisphere and Pacific Islands. The count period is now extended to about one week before and one week after December 25 each year. The farthest-north count circle is on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island in Canada. The farthest south is conducted on board a U.S. NOAA research vessel in the Drake Passage at the south-

ern tip of South America. There is a count done at the tip of the Aleutian Islands and even in Guam and Saipan in the western Pacific. The volunteers now count as many as 2,600 different species and tally an astounding 40-60 million individual birds.

A count circle is typically 15 miles across. The circle is divided into several sectors along roadways and ridgetops. Volunteers meet up in the morning and split into teams to cover as much of their sector as they can. It can be a full day of driving, standing, walking, listening, and staring through binoculars and spotting scopes. The findings are recorded on a species list form. The teams are often a mix of experienced and beginner birders who share a passion for finding, identifying and appreciating wild birds.

At the end of the day, they gather and share their findings, encounters with rare birds, and sometimes humorous stories of birding misadventures. And those stories just might be what keeps this annual tradition going and growing.

On our day, we had 13 hardy souls to cover the seven sectors in our count circle. Heading out at 7:30 a.m., we began our systematic scouring of every county road and city street in search of wild birds. We always try to have at least two people in a vehicle so that one can spot birds and the other keeps an eye on the road and traffic.

Some of us have covered the same sector for years and



A Fresh Air Perspective

know every house with a bird feeder. We also know every field where ranchers are feeding hay and birds gather to sort through the scattered stems for last summer's harvest of dried insects and seeds.

However, the very best locations for sheer numbers of birds are two of the least "wild" places you could find. Experienced birds and birders both know that the best places to hang out in the winter are the local landfill and wastewater treatment ponds. I've done both on our local CBC and they never disappoint. Where else can you find daily offerings of food that many birds use to survive? When the rest of the landscape is iced over, wastewater treatment ponds tend to have open, unfrozen, water where ducks and geese can rest and forage. Our sector this year included sewage treatment ponds and we tallied eight different species of ducks and over 700 Canada geese.

At the landfill, which receives daily influxes of garbage containing food scraps, heavy equipment spreads the banquet table open to all comers. Hundreds of ravens and crows, along with dozens of bald eagles, could be seen swarming over the exposed remnants from our

affluent lifestyle.

The payoff comes at the end of the day when the teams gather back and report their tallies. In total we logged 51 different bird species (about average for this count circle) with 4,396 individual birds tallied. We meet indoors around tables and chairs pulled together and lean in close to hear the stories of the day. There is warmth and camaraderie in familiar faces and voices, perhaps a bit like birds of a Christmas feather gathered together.

Our data would be uploaded to the national CBC database and contribute to knowledge about trends in bird diversity and numbers that researchers and policy makers can access.

Christmas Bird Counts occur in Colville, Chewelah and Newport in northeastern Washington. There are more in the greater Spokane area and north Idaho. For more information, check out the Audubon web page at audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count.

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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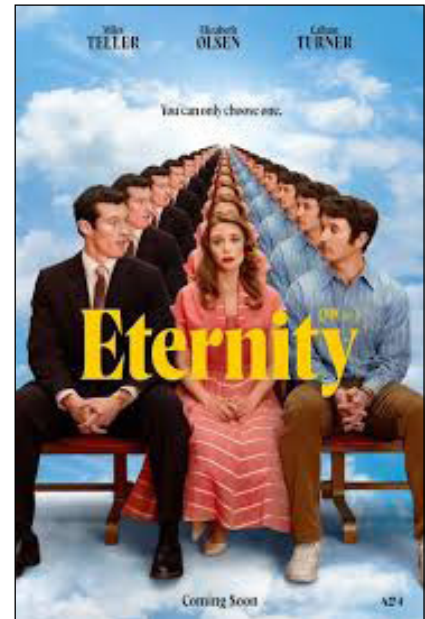
It's hardly a philosophical hot take to acknowledge that we all have different ideas of what awaits us when our time to die comes, whenever and however that may be.

But what if death was another step to eternity, not the final one? What if we had to make the choice about our soul's final resting place?

That's the gist of "Eternity," a romantic dramedy directed by David Freyne where souls have one week to decide where to spend eternity. Joan (Elizabeth Olsen) comes up against the inconceivable choice between her husband, Larry (Miles Turner), and her first love, Luke (Callum Turner), who died young in the Korean war and has waited decades for her to

arrive at this afterlife junction, so he can spend eternity with her.

Romance gets a lot of guff because it's easy to turn it into a Hall-mark movie with no personality and no stakes. "Eternity" avoids that pitfall, embracing the spirit of its screwball predecessors without resorting to the saccharine. It's easy to believe Joan has a deep history of love for both of these men, and the viewer understands the difficulty of her decision. Supporting cast Da'Vine Joy Randolph and John Early shine as Larry's and Joan's afterlife coordinators, bringing true wit and warmth to their performances, a missed aspect of many romantic comedies where the sidekick characters are written

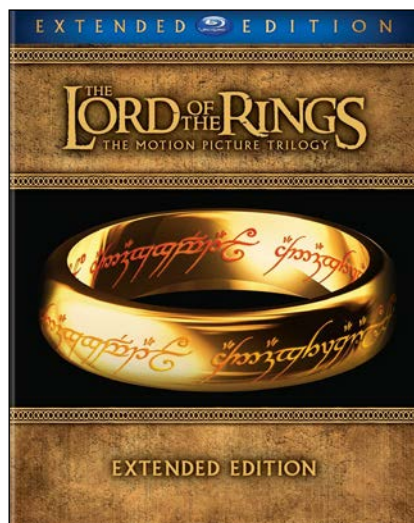


more as tropes than people.

***Rated PG-13, runtime 1 hr, 53 min.**

Classics Corner: 'Lord of the Rings' Trilogy

Hang on to your hats, nerds. Peter Jackson's adaptations of J.R.R. Tolkien's classic *Lord of the Rings* books return to the big screen starting with



"The Fellowship of the Ring" Jan. 16. There will be multiple showings of it plus "The Two Towers" and "The Return of the King."

All three are the extended versions. Order yourself a large popcorn and drink and settle in to join some of the best characters in literature and film on their epic quest through Middle Earth to destroy The One Ring.

What can I say about this award-winning, charismatic and moving trilogy that hasn't already been expounded upon multiple times? Nothing, really. Except that the mood outside can be frightful, but stories that unite us and inspire the better parts of our humanity are indeed delightful.

If you've already seen these films

then this will be a wonderful cinematic reunion. If you haven't, much less on the big screen, now is the time to treat yourself (just make sure you go to the bathroom beforehand; they're long movies).

For information about dates and times, go to fathomentertainment.com/releases.

***All three films are rated PG-13 and the extended editions run approximately three hours each.**

Sophia Mattice-Aldous is a long-time 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.



The Rotary Club of Colville would like thank our wonderful community for a very successful Tree of Sharing program. Every single tag was taken from the trees and generously shopped for by you. You warm our hearts with joy.

Celebrating Vocational Service Month

By Liselotte Butterfield (Norstar Heating & Cooling)

January is Vocational Service Month across Rotary International – a time dedicated to recognizing the value of meaningful work and the impact our professions can have when used in service to others. One of the most significant ways the Rotary Club of Colville demonstrates this commitment is through our long-standing organization of an annual Career Fair.

For many years, this event has taken place each October at the community college and has consistently welcomed multiple school districts, typically serving around 700 students each year. In 2026, however, we are excited to introduce some meaningful changes designed to improve the experience for

both students and participating businesses. Our next fair will be held **April 17, 2026**, and, for the first time, the event will be hosted at **Colville High School**.

While students from neighboring districts have always been invited, this year's structure offers an enhanced flow: visiting schools will attend earlier in the day, and Colville High School students will participate during the final couple of hours of the school day. This schedule allows every student a dedicated opportunity to explore career options and interact with industry professionals in an engaging environment.

A major focus for 2026 is a **hands-on, interactive format**. Instead of a traditional, booth-style event, we're encouraging exhibitors to bring demonstrations, tools, equipment, and job-related activities that allow students to truly experience what different vocations are like. Whether it's trying out tools from the trades, exploring healthcare technology, engaging with business and financial professionals, testing equipment from public service sectors, or learning about careers in tech, arts, or natural resources, our goal is to make career exploration real, engaging, and memorable.

This fair has always been about creating meaningful connections, between students and mentors, between businesses and future workforce members, and between our community and its next generation of skilled professionals.

We welcome any **business, trade, or organization** interested in representing their profession to join us. Your involvement helps shape the future of our local workforce and provides invaluable guidance to students discovering their paths. If you're interested in participating or would like more information, please reach out to the Rotary Club of Colville – we would love to have you involved.

Vocational Service Month reminds us that our careers are more than jobs – they are opportunities to serve. By investing in the career journeys of our youth, we strengthen not just their futures, but the future of our entire community.



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

LISTEN UP

Reviews by Michael Pickett

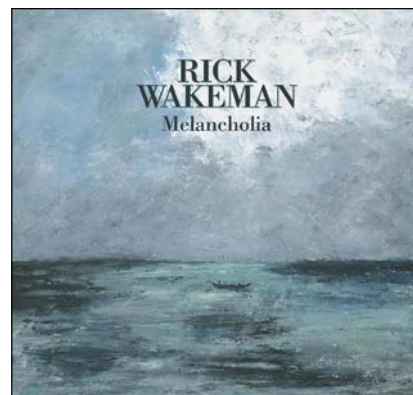
Rick Wakeman at One Keyboard

For anyone who has followed Yes or Rick Wakeman for the last half-century-plus, it should come as no surprise that the keyboard wizard can go from prog to solo piano without breaking a sweat, and beautiful, introspective piano is exactly what his new album *Melancholia* offers for fans of the caped keyboardist.

Since famously laying down the beautiful piano work in Cat Stevens' 1971 hit "Morning Has Broken," Wakeman has often stepped out from behind the massive bank of Yes keyboards, and in the new album you can hear some trademark arpeggiation in "Reflection" and the stately "Pathos."

It's obviously more subdued than such classic Wakeman excursions as *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* or *Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe* (though you should check out all of those too). What the visionary composer-player offers here is the result of his wife's encouragement as he sat at his Steinway, and these pieces subtly nod to loss, fitting nicely alongside 2017's *Piano Portraits* and 2018's *Piano Odyssey*.

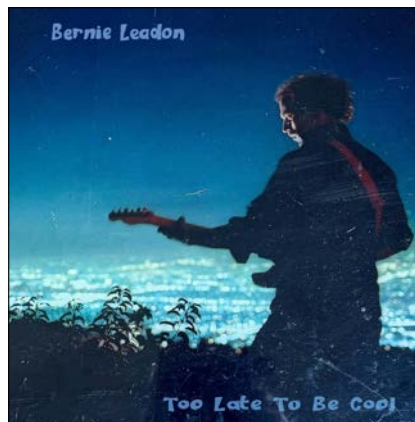
Wakeman has not lost a step in the nearly 60 years he has been both a rockstar and piano virtuoso, and the new tracks such as "Sea of Tran-



quility" and the moving "Garo" show that there is an incredible wealth of music and melody still flowing from this prog icon across parts of two centuries and dozens of iconic albums.

Bernie Leadon Flies Solo Again

The idea of new music from Bernie Leadon is far more cool than his album title implies. Having piloted the Flying Burrito Brothers and co-founded the Eagles, Leadon is absolutely woven into the thread of



vital American music.

With *Too Late to Be Cool*, Leadon teams up with legendary producer Glyn Johns, laying down these new tracks direct-to-tape. You can truly feel the warmth, immediacy and laid-back joy in tracks such as the gently grooving, harmony-laden "Zero Sum Game" and the almost Doors-ish "Take It As It Comes." Leadon's gravelly vocal delivery could not be more perfect on these intimate live-performance tracks.

If the groove for "Telescope" was heavier, it would be a Zep tune ... but with Leadon's signature laid-back, soulful oversight, it's a behind-the-beat track that takes Jimmy Buffett-like observations and puts

the listener right in the room with the band (thanks again, Glyn Johns). "Everyone's Quirky" is absolute gold, and may be the best cut on the album, with its almost Mancini-ish overtones.

Over 21 years, Bernie Leadon has let these songs slowly come together in his head and in front of audiences, and what really makes this album cooler than about 90% of everything else in modern music is that it's real. No digital fixes. No auto-tune. This is what real, risky music acts used to do in studios ... and it's why a lot of Leadon's work has stood the test of time.

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

A Good Read

The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs,

by Tristan Gooley

Reviewed by Terry Cunningham

With the new year, how about a fresh way of looking at the natural world? I love to venture into my natural surroundings wherever I happen to be, a park, a trail, the mountains, any place that helps distract me from the ever-confusing reality of the modern world. Tristan Gooley has given me even more reasons to seek that natural world, raising my awareness of more of nature's signs that exist all around.

I used to consider myself well aware of the world around me, but reading *The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs* has brought my attention to conditions under the ground and on the ground, what's growing, what's in the sky, and what's living in the area that I hadn't considered as a source of local information.

Information such as the pH of soil because of the vegetation flourishing in it, the insects and other creatures that might like this type of vegetation, and the signs of water due to the trees growing there.

Gooley, who lives in the United Kingdom, has traveled all over the world and has hiked in many environments, from deserts in Africa to remote Borneo, making close

observations and taking notes. He has written seven books on his observations and the signs of nature, from forecasting weather to what animal tracks or scat you may be looking at.

In places such as the UK, where humans have worked the natural environment for generations, the signs can escape your attention because their existence is well established, like rocks out of place or flowers normally found in gardens growing wild. The book includes a section for the urban adventurer.

You the reader can be prepared with the ability to navigate and even tell time by celestial observations wherever you are on the planet. You can find a place to comfortably camp by the vegetation attracting or repelling insects. Just a walk around your neighborhood may have signs that you may find interesting. This book is so full of information you'll probably find yourself marking pages and taking it with you on your walks as a reference. I have already changed the way that I'm looking at my Pacific Northwest home.

It took Gooley decades of traveling and paying close attention, doing research and documentation, to gather the information for his books, which include *The Hidden Seasons*, *How to Read a Tree*, *The Secret World of Weather*, *The Natural Navigator*, *How to Read Water*, and *The Nature Instinct*. He's a *New York Times* best-seller.

Gooley has led expeditions on five continents, climbed mountains on three of them, and is the only living person to have both flown and sailed solo across the Atlantic. His pioneering outdoor experience includes research among tribal peoples in some of the remotest regions on earth.

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."



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How You Won't Fail in January

By Rob Sumner

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Every January, the same thing happens. The gyms fill up. The diets start. The goals are declared. And yet, by February, most of those same people feel tired, defeated, and right back where they started.

Why does this happen?

It's not a lack of motivation. It's not because people don't want to change. It's because most people start the year in a deficit – and they don't even realize it.

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, something happens in nearly every household across America. The focus shifts from structure and consistency to celebration and indulgence. People say, "I'll start after the holidays."

Those five words sound innocent. But they quietly give permission to let go of the very habits that keep us grounded – our movement, our meals, our sleep, and our mindfulness.

During those six weeks, the average adult gains 5 to 10 pounds. Energy levels drop. Sleep becomes inconsistent. Sugar and alcohol creep in more often. Healthy routines fall apart.

So, by the time January hits, we're not starting from neutral – we're starting from behind. That's why the first few weeks of the new year feel so hard. You're not just trying to build new habits, you're trying to dig out of the hole you created during the holidays.

If you're reading this and realize you've slid backward, good. That means you're aware. And awareness is the first step toward change. The only place to look now is forward.

January shouldn't be about guilt – it should be about *renewal*. It's the month to take ownership, to rebuild, and to set the tone for the rest of the year. To do that, I suggest that you need a plan that's simple, sustainable, and based on the only two things that truly matter in creating long-term change: time and nutrition.

These two pillars are the foundation, whether your goal is to lose weight, lower your blood pressure, get stronger, or simply feel better again. Let's break them down.

1. Your Time: Build the Habit of Movement

If you want to change your health, you have to change your schedule. If movement isn't scheduled, it's optional – and optional habits don't last.

Many people fail at exercise not because it's hard, but because they leave it up to chance. They say, "I'll work out if I have time." If you want to succeed, movement has to become non-negotiable.

Mornings work best. Morning movement wins because it's predictable. You don't have to rely on motivation later when you're tired or busy. When you move in the morning, you start the day with a win. You set your mindset, your energy, and your focus before the world has a chance to distract you.

You don't need a complicated program. Start with what's achievable and consistent.

- A brisk 30-minute walk around your neighborhood
- A short bike ride or treadmill session
- An online aerobic or yoga class at home

It's not about the perfect workout, it's about consistency. When you move daily, your body adapts. You feel better, sleep better, think clearer, and crave healthier food.

Once this habit feels automatic, you can build from there. Add strength training twice a week. Increase your intensity. Mix in hikes or sports. But first, just move.

2. Your Nutrition: Simplify and Prepare

If your movement builds your body, your nutrition fuels it. And just like with movement, you can't leave it up to chance. Two powerful nutrition habits you can build right now are:

- Control what's in your house
- Prepare your meals

Look around your kitchen and pantry. Consider that all those chips, cereals, crackers, frozen meals, sodas, desserts and other processed goodies are invitations to slide backward. If it's easy to grab, it's easy to overeat.

When unhealthy food isn't around, you don't need superhuman willpower. You simply eliminate the

temptation before it ever becomes a decision.

Cooking your own food is one of the most powerful health tools you'll ever have. You control the salt, the sugar, the oil, and the quality of the ingredients. Plus, when you make extra portions, you've just created your own meal prep system without even trying. Leftovers save time and keep you on track when life gets busy.

Here's a simple structure to follow:

- Protein: chicken, fish, lean beef, eggs, beans, tofu
- Vegetables: fill half your plate with color – greens, peppers, broccoli, carrots
- Healthy fats: olive oil, avocado, non-roasted nuts, seeds
- Smart carbs: sweet potatoes, rice, quinoa, fruit in moderation

Plan one day a week to batch cook. Grill some chicken, roast vegetables, boil eggs, and make a pot of rice. With just an hour or two of prep, you'll save days of stress and dozens of poor decisions.

Building Your Base

Movement and nutrition form the base for every successful health journey. When your time is structured around movement and your environment supports clean eating, success stops feeling like a grind and starts feeling natural. You're not fighting yourself anymore. You're aligned with your goals.

This base creates momentum. And momentum creates belief. Once you build these habits, your energy will improve, your mood will lift, your confidence will grow, and the gap between who you are and who you

want to be will start to close.

Remember: The past six weeks are gone. You can't redo them. But the next six weeks? They're completely in your control.

January doesn't have to feel heavy. It doesn't have to be a punishment. It can be the restart your body and mind have been waiting for. Invest in what you can do right, today.

A Month of Hope, Not Regret

Here's what I know after years of working with clients in every stage of life: It's never too late to start again. So start *now*.

Don't wait for motivation – it's unreliable. Build structure instead.

Don't chase perfection – it's unsustainable. Chase consistency instead.

Don't aim for fast results – aim for habits that will last a lifetime.

If you build the habit of moving your body and fueling it with real food, everything else follows.

If the holidays knocked you off track, forgive yourself. To reclaim your health, get moving in the morning, clean your environment and prepare your meals. Then repeat.

That's how the foundation is built – one day at a time. You don't need a perfect plan. You just need to start.

Because January isn't about regret. It's about reconstruction. And this year, you can build something better than what you had before.

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.

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Yoga and My Favorite Tree

By Brenda St. John

“Planting a tree is the easiest way to align yourself with the cosmic rhythm.”

~ Amit Ray

In the spring of 1995, on our youngest child's first birthday, my husband, children, and I planted a weeping birch tree in our backyard. We took a picture of Katie standing next to the newly planted tree, and she and the tree were the exact same height. In hindsight, I wish I would have taken a picture of Katie standing next to this tree on her birthday every year, or even every fifth or tenth year, but the photo op never occurred again. This spring Katie will turn 32. She grew to about 5½ feet tall. The tree, on the other hand, grew to about 35 feet tall.

This morning, while walking in the back field with my dog, I was admiring the tree from a distance. It is planted at the same elevation as the daylight-basement level of our house, which has two stories above it, and the tree is significantly taller than the peak of the roof. Hence my estimation of its height. It has been a good tree over the years. It was planted with the intention of blocking the view of the highway from the deck and patio (and vice versa), but it has turned into much more than that.

We mark the progression of the seasons by observing the tree. We notice the first signs of green appearing in the spring and then the filling out of the leaves. In the heat of summer, we place chairs under the tree to enjoy the outdoors in its peaceful shade. In the fall, we comment on the changing colors, and later we rake the fallen leaves and use them as mulch for the

garden. In winter, we have a clear view of its beautiful branches. Between five and seven feet above ground level, six major branches spur out nearly horizontally from the trunk, and some of those major branches also have fairly large branches.

All in all, our cats agree that it is a great climbing tree. They climb in it often, especially when being chased by the dog (whom they bait) but rarely do they climb higher than about 10 feet. Now that the leaves are gone, I can see three nests, all in the top 10 feet. The tree provides safety (for cats), shelter (for birds), and shade (for me).

There are many good reasons why Yoga has a pose depicting a tree. Trees are strong and resilient. Yoga calls us to be strong in body and spirit and to be resilient to whatever life throws our way. Just as my tree has weathered many storms due to its deep roots, I, too, can survive the storms of life. The tree has been experiencing upward growth, a quality for which we are all called to strive. The tree has good balance. No matter if the winds come from the north, south, east, or west, this tree always stands straight and tall.

To practice Tree Pose (called *Vrksasana* in Sanskrit), begin in Mountain Pose with big toes touching and heels about an inch apart. Shift weight to one foot and bend the opposite knee and place the sole of that foot below or above the knee of the standing leg. The hips must be kept level. Press the sole of the foot into the inner leg and

press the inner leg into the sole of the foot. Raise the arms up overhead, out to the sides, or to the heart center. Find a steady gaze (the *Drishti*) and focus on grounding while balancing on one leg.

Opening the aerial knee wide to the side is nice but is not the focus of the pose. If you have trouble with Tree Pose, try rotating the foot of the aerial leg such that the toes point more toward the front of the standing leg rather than downward toward the floor. This reduces the external rotation of the hip, which helps to realign and stabilize the pelvis.

A smaller version of the pose is to place the ball of the foot of the bent leg on the floor with the heel just above the ankle bone of the standing leg.

There are some other variations a person can make to their Tree Pose if desired. One option is to turn it into a Twisted Tree. Ground down firmly with the standing leg and foot, then rotate the upper body in the direction of the bent knee. Hold for about five breaths, then unwind back to center.

Another option could be called Windy Tree. From whichever version of Tree Pose you prefer, bring slightly bent arms in front of you and begin to wave arms, wrists and hands in a freestyle manner. Allowing each hand to cross the centerline of your body is also a brain exercise which helps with focus and concentration.

Other options include adding a Side Bend to your Tree Pose or closing the eyes. Make sure to practice Tree Pose on both sides!

Namaste.

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

Poetry of Place

Selected poems reprinted with permission from Eating Diamond, by Loren Cruden

First Thought Mountain

The land describes itself to me
in winter, in quiet,
in the way each snowflake
touches it.
Contoured by moonlight,
by clouds filling the low places,
by wind in the heights
taking of the rock, grain by grain.
There is no mistake
in these shapes
that guide the flow of light
like riverbanks, the sky moving
in crevices, along bluffs,
then lying in stillness
upon the fields,
renewing the land
even in winter.

Winterkill

No blame –
it just happens;
I hear coyotes exulting
over their discovery
and in the morning
the dog starts
bringing home bones
one by one
like the days
until spring.

We Stayed

We stayed on the water
long enough to see the
herons finish their day,
hunker on rocks offshore,
necks folded, unspeaking together.
We stayed,
waves lifting and
lowering the dinghy,
to see the rose and gold and
heron-blue light
cupped in ripples,
seals glistening and sliding in
and out of
that flickering
in the blue shadow
of Knoydart's hills.
Evening wind in the
darkening season, the space
between island
and mainland, the fullness
bereft between my son's visit
and leave-taking;
a coolness – my shudder as we
drifted toward Mallaig,
losing grasp of the day, a place
farther than great-granparents or
crossings Hebridean.
We stayed until the tide went out,
the colours draining westward.

And Now I Love Beets

By Michelle Lancaster

Beets were not something my family ate when I was growing up. They were on the “thanks, but no thanks” list, along with other root crops like turnips and rutabagas. That is, until a friend prepared a meal containing a simple dish of roasted beets tossed in olive oil, thyme, salt, and pepper. I could hardly get enough – they were delicious!

At the same time, I had some health issues I was working through and was researching ideas to help my body heal. Beets popped up as a mineral- and vitamin-packed food high in antioxidants and promoting lymphatic cleansing by thinning bile. Beets are also high in oxalates, so best eaten in moderation. Beets: a healthy food to eat on occasion that will provide some variety to a meat

and potato diet.

As I planted and harvested beets, I found that they were quite easy to grow. My favorite variety for its ease of processing is Crosby’s Egyptian, a large, round, deep burgundy beet. I also like the Cylindra beet for beet fries, as they are long and slender. I grow two harvests from one planting. The beets that grow the fastest are taken out as an early harvest to allow the smaller beets the rest of summer to develop for winter crop storage. My friend Nancy confirms this method works for her as well.

Then there is the question of how to cook beets. Besides roasting, here are some other beet recipes I have tried out:

Beet fries (pictured right) – Early harvested beets are good as beet

fries, which are simply beets cut into lengths, roasted, and served with feta dip. Feta dip can make a beet fan of almost anyone, so here is the recipe: In a small pan, brown 2 minced garlic cloves in a teaspoon of oil. Add in ½ cup mayonnaise, ¼ cup buttermilk, ¼ cup feta cheese, 1 tablespoon each of fresh dill and chives (if dried, use a bit less). Add salt and pepper to taste, stir to blend. I like to leave the feta a bit chunky, but you can also blend this up into a smooth creamy dip.

Pressurecanning – The first harvest is large enough that I pressure-can a couple batches. It’s a convenient way to store beets out of season. The canning process makes the beets a lot milder in flavor (and I’m sure somewhat less nutritious). If I am in a hurry to add

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A Year On The Farm

veggies to dinner, I open a can of green beans and a can of beets for a little quick variety in the meal.

Beet brownies – Add beet puree to brownies for a deep dark brown color and added moisture. Yes, the beets add an earthy richness to brownies and the beet flavor is prominent. Next time I may try just adding beet juice to the brownie recipe.

Borscht – This is my new favorite soup. My parents have been visiting Canada a lot the past couple years, and if you travel to places such as Grand Forks, you can hardly go to a restaurant or market without seeing the word borscht. Borscht allows me to use up some of the ample winter ingredients we stock – chicken, broth, root crops (including beets), and sauerkraut. The flavor is unique and delicious and warming on a cold winter day. My version uses fresh beets; I prefer the look and flavor of fresh beets in borscht. The soup becomes vibrant red!

Root cellar beets – I inadvertently created a root cellar by placing fodder beets in soil in a 5-gallon bucket in my basement with a second 5-gallon bucket on top to hold in moisture. They hold up really well and are easy to access when needed.

Other processing: I froze some cooked beet pieces, puree, and juice to test them out this winter. Because beets store so well in whole form, I do not see much value in freezing beets, unless you want to use them out of sea-

son and do not want to lose the health value like in canning. I want to try the beet juice with soda water; I think that would make a nice drink. I also would

tabolomics activity.” [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8565237](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8565237) and “Eat Your Beets: Why They Belong in Your Diet, How This Vibrant Root



like to try dehydrating beet puree to see if I can make a beet powder to use as a natural food coloring.

Pickled beets with pickled egg are a common Amish food that we saw when we lived in Maryland, but they were not appetizing to me. I also have not tried fermented beets, as I hear they do better if cooked first and I haven't wanted to mess with extra steps when having fresh beets stored in the garden or basement is so convenient.

So far, I am pretty thrilled with the variety that beets have provided for my diet and I look forward to trying them in more recipes.

Want to learn more? See “Beetroot as a functional food with huge health benefits: Antioxidant, antitumor, physical function, and chronic me-

Vegetable Helps Your Health.” nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/nutrition/drop-the-beet.

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



Pearls in the River

Article & Photos by Cindy Talbott Roché

I had heard there might be freshwater mussels in the Colville River, so when I was on the farm last May, I looked down into the water, hoping to see them. The water was high and so muddy there was absolutely no chance of seeing the bottom of the

channel. I looked again in August: still too muddy. Conditions were slightly better in October, so when I saw something suspicious in about three feet of water, I waded in and retrieved it.

It was just a half shell, but I hoped

that would be enough to identify which mussel species it was. With the help of experts on iNaturalist, I learned it was a western pearlshell mussel (*Margaritifera falcata*). My first freshwater mussel! (Or the remains of one.) Actually, it was better that it was just a half shell, because, if it had been a living mussel, I would have had to put it back in the river.

Why? Because I had no desire to contribute to the demise of the western pearlshell mussel in north-eastern Washington. Once abundant and widespread in the state, it has been eliminated from much of the mainstem Columbia and Snake rivers and populations are declining severely in the Sanpoil, Kettle, and Little Spokane rivers, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In the Colville River, dredging was a major catastrophe for mussels. Pollution (from agriculture and other sources) and dams (especially annual drawdowns of the water level) are the main reasons that many historical sites no longer support mussels at all, and others have local populations that no longer successfully reproduce (WDFW; U.S. Geological Survey).

Speaking of reproduction, this is a particularly fascinating aspect of the life cycle of freshwater mussels.

First, you need to know that these mussels are sedentary creatures and obtain their food by filtering suspended particles of plankton, bacteria, miscellaneous organic matter and algae from the water. During reproduction, the females also filter sperm out of the water that has been released by the males (or in the case

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of hermaphrodites, by themselves).

The fertilized eggs develop into embryos that the females brood in special gill chambers until they grow into larvae, called glochidia. She then releases them into the water, either individually or in a gooey mass that looks like food to passing fish. This attracts fish who provide the only mobility in the life cycle of freshwater mussels. The glochidia glom onto the gills or fins of passing fish as if their lives depended on it. Which it does: if they aren't able to find a host fish, they die.

Once safely attached to a fish, they spend several weeks as hitchhikers before dropping off and sinking into the sediment at the bottom of the river, where they grow to maturity. Documented host fish for western pearlshells include Chinook salmon and trout (cutthroat, rainbow, and brown).

This association with fish allows freshwater mussels to colonize new areas. Adult mussels commonly live their entire lives within a few yards from the spot where they first landed after dropping from their host fish. In the case of western pearlshell mussels, this can be a very long time indeed. In suitable habitats, they live for decades. According to USGS, some have been documented at over 100 years old.

It would be hard to overstate the importance of freshwater mussels (there are several species in Washington state) to the health of river ecosystems, according to USGS. Western pearlshell mussels filter and clean the water, increase populations



of other macroinvertebrates (important food for native fish), and reduce populations of bacteria that are detrimental to fish. They are also a food source for riv-

er otters, great blue herons and many other species. As documented by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, mussels were culturally important for local tribes, especially for food in the winter when other sources were scarce. The shells were used for ornaments and trade.

According to WDFW, all the native species of freshwater mussels in Washington are currently imperiled, but there are actions that can be taken to improve mussel habitat for the benefit of entire river ecosystems – including communities that rely on clean water. People can plant trees to shade the streams, minimize pesticides and fertilizers from entering the water or sediment, fence livestock out of streambanks to prevent trampling and contamination, and avoid disturbance of known mussel colonies.

Protecting freshwater mussels protects far more than a single species, according to WDFW. It safeguards the health of rivers, fish, wildlife and

the communities that depend on them.

For more information, I recommend two publications, both available online as downloadable PDFs: “Conserving the Gems of Our Waters” (xerces.org/publications/guidelines/conserving-gems-of-our-waters) and “Freshwater Mussels of the Pacific Northwest” (molluskconservation.org/Library/Maps/pdfs/Pacific_Northwest_Mussel_Guide.pdf).

Cindy is a 1973 graduate of Jenkins High School. Her publications include the Field Guide to Grasses of Oregon and Washington, grass illustrations in Flora of North America, and botanical articles in Kalmiopsis. Her current passion project is restoring wetland habitats for wildlife on the family farm. She can be reached at her website, grassesandmore.wixsite.com/grasses or via email at grassesandmore@gmail.com.

Implications

Article & Photo by Joe Barreca

As the area of our knowledge grows, so does the perimeter of our ignorance. – Neil deGrasse Tyson

When my wife, Cheryl, and I were in Lamington National Park in Queensland, Australia, we learned about red bull ants. They have nothing to do with the energy drink, but they do have unusual powers. “They are characterized by their extreme aggressiveness, ferocity, and painful stings. Some species are known for the jumping behavior they exhibit when agitated” (Wikipedia). If you step on one, they release a pheromone and the whole colony runs to that place in attack mode. It is best to leave quickly, which we did when necessary.

Ants are usually characterized as a very low life form without much intelligence. Yet, the interactions of individual ants result in the emergence of complex, organized patterns at the colony level (insectlore.com).

As humans, we tend to think of ourselves as superior. We expect ants to get out of our way, which they usually do. But there is another way to look at ant behavior, the migration of birds, the colonies of bees, the intelligence of octopuses, and many other creatures in our environment. It is sometimes called pervasive universal consciousness, or PUC.

The implications of the PUC model are profound, challenging deeply held assumptions about individuality, free will, and the nature of reality. If consciousness is indeed universal, it implies that all living beings – and

even inanimate objects – are interconnected through a shared field of awareness (wisdomschool.com).



“What if consciousness is not something special that the brain does but instead is a quality inherent to all matter?” (scientificamerican.com).

Among the implications of PUC are that decades of research trying to pin down consciousness to a specific area of the brain have been useless. But they go beyond that. “Modern physics is searching for a unitary field of consciousness to explain the coherence of the laws of nature. Such a universal consciousness is proposed as existing behind all time, space and energy. It is the ultimate frontier of knowledge” (vedanet.com).

If you are about to doubt that this is a valid way to understand the universe, don’t expect science to back you up. Although science demands replicable proof and peer review, the basis of peer review itself is doubt. As a scientist, if you just send your studies to people who think the

same as you, you have not done your job. Send them to a skeptic first.

Since I am not a scientist, I often see things that make me skeptical, but about which I know little to nothing. One was titled “Spellers.” These turn out to be autistic people who have motor disabilities that don’t allow them to speak out loud or type. They communicate by pointing to an alphabet one letter at a time. This allows them to have someone write what they are thinking. They think very clearly. Several were featured who were getting college degrees. Many were telepathic with their assistants (telepathytapes.com). Admitting this hap-

pens implies that society has been shortchanging a growing part of the population for years.

These kinds of abilities are often grouped as PSI (or psychic) phenomena. PSI research includes anecdotes of precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance, synchronicity, memories of past lives, out-of-body experiences, and other unusual experiences (Google AI). In that vein, it is instructive to look at studies going on at the University of Virginia Department of Perceptual Studies. A study there that caught my attention was of children who remembered who they were in past lives. In many cases researchers were able to figure out what those past lives were and confirm that what the children were saying was true.

The immediate implication is that this life is not our only shot. It indicates that the Vedic and Tibetan traditions that you can literally be

born again may be valid. That was a big relief. I am hoping to rectify some screwups from my younger years. Of course, the years ahead don't look particularly promising either, so that might not be such a good thing.

That Department of Perceptual Studies has other research on out-of-body experiences (I have had two brief ones), near-death experiences, vision at a distance, and after-death communication. All of these studies challenge the material universe as we understand it.

Somewhere on the border between the spiritual and the material is quantum entanglement, famously called "spooky action at a distance" by Einstein. One implication that has been confirmed in numerous experiments is that two linked particles stay linked at all distances from each other. Making a change in one is reflected in the other faster than the speed of light can convey information. Harnessing this ability is the holy grail of quantum computing, but other implications seem to be possible as well, such as quantum teleportation.

Before we go completely "beam me up Scotty" I need to retrace what got me going on this line of thought. It was a review of the 2025 film *The Age of Disclosure*. I had no idea what that was about, so I looked it up. It's about UAPs (unidentified aerial phenomena), known to us older folks as UFOs (unidentified flying objects, flying saucers... whatever you want to call them). There was a splash earlier in 2025 when video was released by the Defense Department of objects seen by pilots doing seemingly impossible maneuvers at

incredible speeds in the air and underwater. *The Age of Disclosure* has interviews of the pilots themselves talking about their experiences.

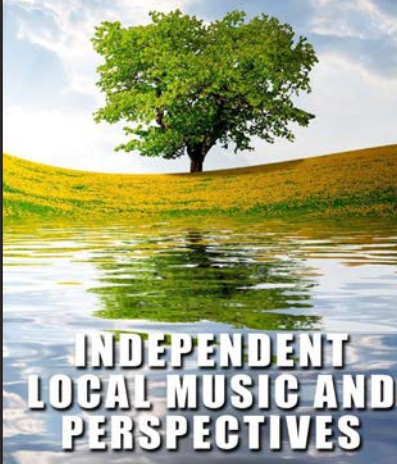

The implications here are literally out of this world. Besides defying physics as we understand it, there are a host of alien abduction accounts, crop circles, and the study of exo-politics, "diplomacy with visitors from other planets" (Oxford Academic). This is necessary because we have gone way past flying saucers. There are all kinds of UAPs and their passengers in the literature.

This implies two things right off. First, just as our technology seems to be developing in leaps and bounds, we would expect theirs to

evolve too. Secondly, if they were out to destroy us, we would be gone already. Of course there are conspiracy theories on this.

Which brings me back to the ants. We might fancy ourselves as advanced beings that your average ant would barely have a concept about. But there is a lot going on where we are the ants and that we have no concept about. A bit like an ant, I am not imagining what I could do about any of this, so I am going on about the business of food and lodging and sometimes, late at night, pondering the implications.

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



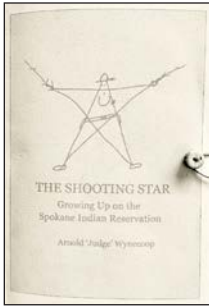
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The Shooting Star: Growing Up on the Spokane Indian Reservation

By Judge Wynecoop

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

PLANE CRASHES

Besides the Willys Jeep that came to the Reservation following World War II, there was the sudden interest in learning to fly small aircraft. This all started when Joe Andrews decided he wanted to learn to fly with the help of the GI Bill. When Joe got going, Dad got real interested, too. He had always wanted to be a pilot. Dad went a step further and bought a used Piper Taylorcraft airplane. It had two seats, side by side.

Then Walt Moomaw, the head for-
ester, jumped in. The three of them

shared the Taylorcraft to cut down on the cost of renting planes.

Our field below our home became the landing strip. It worked fine early in the spring and summer, but the alfalfa kept growing!

I had been doing some disking in the lower part of the field below our home, which is about where the landing strip ended. When finished, I had parked the disk right at the end of the makeshift runway. A couple of days later Joe Andrews and his passenger tried to take off and the alfalfa by this time was probably 14

inches tall, so it created too much of a drag on the plane's undercarriage. They were late getting off the ground – too late!

The undercarriage hit the disk, the plane went up and then over onto its nose and prop. I witnessed it. I was horrified. The pilot and passenger weren't injured, but there was some damage to the plane, as you can imagine. I don't believe they used that strip anymore, at least not until we harvested the alfalfa crop.

The other crash occurred later, after Dad had seen that this airstrip

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the town of Inchelium. There had been some recent changes at the landing site involving the power lines – a new one had been installed. As Wig came in for a landing, he saw the power line change too late and hooked the line with the copter's tail rotor. No matter how hard he tried, he could not get the copter away from it. He told me later that, in trying to escape from the power line, the copter got to swinging back and

wouldn't quite work, and he built a good long airstrip farther down in the field where the present hangar is. It extended to the property fence near the powwow grounds. One time a plane came in for a landing, over the powwow grounds, and a bunch of us were watching it. A commercial pilot was at the controls of this small plane. (I think it was the same Taylorcraft after it had been repaired.)

The plane came gracefully down, but while still 50 or 60 feet in the air, it stalled and fell straight down, landed on its wheels, and then flipped over onto its top, causing all of us to rush to their aid, fearing a fire starting. Everything was fine – no injuries – just a couple of white-faced aviators.

Dad bought a Piper Super Cub, which he loved. It was fun to get to go with him on assorted trips looking for our cattle or to Spokane, Deer Park, Davenport or Wilbur. He said he had to get gas, which was an excuse to go flying. That Super Cub had lots of power, especially appreciated after the alfalfa field takeoff that failed.

A few years later, Dad traded the

Super Cub for a Piper Tri-Pacer, which was a four-seat plane with more power yet, and more useful for longer flights. By this time, brother Wig (George) had become a pilot also, which led to the two of them branching out into helicopters. They flew during the summer for BIA fire watches and the helicopter worked better for that. They bought a Brantly helicopter and used it for a few years, but it proved to be too small for their operation, which had expanded to include crop spraying – something Wig did since he had ties with grain growers all over the area, thanks to his insurance business.

Wig had close calls – well, to tell the truth, Wig was a close call. He loved to just come close to treetops. To work better for the crop dusting and fire flying, they sold the Brantly and purchased a used Bell helicopter. It looked just like the copters used for air evacuation in the Korean War (like those seen on "M*A*S*H").

Wig was very good at flying that copter. In 1972, he was flying on a fire on the Colville Reservation near

forth and then up and down, slamming the copter to the ground.

Luckily for him, when the copter hit the ground, the "bubble," or canopy, flew off and Wig immediately hit the quick-release seatbelt latch and flew out of the copter onto the ground. That quick reaction saved him because he had stored two jerry cans of aviation gas behind his seat, and the copter was on fire. One of the cans had ruptured on impact and the burning fuel spilled over his left shoulder and side.

Wig was taken to the hospital in Colville and was "not that worse for wear," as he put it. He was in the hospital for many days. It sure scared a lot of us and Mom made him promise to stop flying on fire patrol, since she had just lost Dad a few years before.

Now, that metal airplane pedal car in my photograph still belongs to my sister-in-law, Kay Wynecoop. It has never left the ground, never crashed – but it did transport her little brother around and it did survive the Reservation fire a decade ago.

(To be continued...)

The Stalk

Article & Photo by Thomas Self

It had finally rained in shrub-steppe country. I'd made my way back to the truck after my rushed fence-crawl and hunched-scurry from mound to mound, ending with the bucks and does being spooked. I'd managed to go undetected, but a very rare and very loud truck with a tractor on a trailer had rumbled down the wilderness gravel road at dawn just as I was closing in. They'd headed north, and I'd snuck out of the grass southward to get properly geared for what was clearly going to be a much wetter and much longer pursuit.

I changed to a dry pair of pants, swapped soaked camp shoes for trekking boots, cinched up some gaiters, grabbed my pack, and belly-crawled once again under the fence in the brown brush. I stayed low, bow in hand, and stopped at each mound once again for a peek through my binoculars over the high blades of grass.

The rain had passed but dark clouds remained overhead. The wind was coming from the south and was expected to be coming from the east by late morning. It was still just a bit after dawn and the northeast seemed to offer the best path; so I veered hard east to keep my scent from being blown directly to them and then continued northward.

The pace was agonizingly slow. I was fairly certain they weren't far ahead, and I knew that at any given moment I could be a single step away from being fully exposed. It was quite an open country even before the fire years ago, but with much of the sagebrush gone, it was just broken basalt outcroppings along drainages, and undulating, sparse, late-summer grasslands all the way to the horizon. If you were near enough or high enough you could see the lush green along the meandering creek, or the glare off one of the rippling lakes, but otherwise it was a 50,000-acre sea of brown and black under a vast sky. The places to hide were few and far between.

By around 10 a.m., I'd been inching my way through the meadow for nearly three hours, and I was only about a mile deep in a crow's flight. I took another slow, hunched step out from behind a bunchgrass mound and saw the bucks and does grazing about a half mile away on a low ridgeline to the northwest. I got to my knees slowly and waited to see if any of them were looking my way.

They were all intently grazing, so I moved quickly to the next mound and crouched down behind the grass. I could see them through the swaying grass, and as long as I remained mostly still and silent, and as long as the wind was good, I knew I could watch them at that distance

without worry of being spotted.

They were easy to lose in the landscape without frequently looking through the binoculars, so I used the glass as much as my eyes could tolerate it. There were three bucks in view, and they were all west-northwest of me. The does were more to the north, and I was worried they might get wind of me, but I was stuck until they either chose to bed down or feed over the ridge. There was one more mound between them and me and then it was wide-open, flat, short-grass meadow all the way to the next fenceline they'd crossed and the ridgeline they continued to graze. I just sat there, watching and waiting, with an occasional squeeze of powder from a container into the air to see if the wind had changed. The powder drifted north toward the does each time, but they still showed no signs of catching my scent.

The bucks continued to graze farther up the ridge. One of them fed out of sight westward, and I watched the other two feed into the taller grass and disappear. I wasn't sure if they went to bed there, or if they kept feeding uphill, but I knew it was almost time to move.

It was nearly noon. The wind was transitioning from southerly to easterly as predicted. I felt that at any moment my scent could be picked up by the bucks. I wanted to head west and then approach from the south, but the bucks had gone out of sight only about 10 yards north of the next fenceline, and I knew that I wouldn't be able to reliably shoot through the five-strand fence. I needed to cross that fenceline far to their west or east, out of their earshot, and then get to their north to make sure the wind wasn't at my back. Both options were risky, but without knowing whether the bucks had bedded, the expeditious route due north seemed the way to go.

A couple of does remained on the northern ridge, and I waited a bit longer to see if they'd feed over, but they were in no hurry. They had wandered far enough from the bucks and I decided that spooking them northward or eastward was a lower risk than continuing to wait with the bucks downwind. My anxious sit of two and a half hours was over. I hoisted my pack onto my shoulders and set out northward.

I passed the last mound and moved into the flat meadow as the does put their heads down to graze. With light steps, I picked up the pace, trying to quickly and quietly get close enough to the fenceline and the ridge where the topography finally put me out of the does' line of sight.

I made it to the fence undetected, found a section with



the least amount of noisy vegetation, and decided to cross there. I took off my pack for the belly-crawl under the wire and wiggled my way under on the sharp rocks. I slowly dragged my pack under and gently brought it back over my shoulders, grabbed my bow, and nocked an arrow.

I headed a bit north of the fence and then turned west toward the spot I'd marked as the bucks' last visible location. I needed to make a gentle climb of about 500 yards. My pace was so slow and deliberate that my thighs became shaky. Each time I started to lift my back leg I carefully scanned the ground for the quietest vegetation or the quietest rock for my next step, occasionally waiting for a wind gust as cover before committing to a move.

I continued up the low ridge and came to an even rockier section with very little cover. I stopped at every single step and peered ahead intently until I finally saw antlers through the grass below. I felt my heart drop to my stomach as my mind raced for a plan to get less exposed and in closer range without spooking him. He was bedded down and looking north and hadn't noticed me through the grass to his northeast. I hunched low and headed back down the rocks until he was no longer in sight and then started

back toward him from his east-northeast.

It became clear that the rain had sparked huge hatches in the cracked ground as I began to get covered in clumsy hatchlings. The flies got worse as I inched my way to the mound of grass and brush that the buck was bedding behind. By the time he came into view again, my hands, neck, and face were covered, and I was fighting the urge to wave them away and scratch.

The buck was still looking north and didn't seem to have noticed my approach by sight, sound, or scent. I could still see only his head and tall forks and brow tines through the grass. I needed a clear arrow path and his vitals in view. I'd reached the very edge of the mound and was ready to draw at any moment if he stood up. I stood there, with maddening itches, debating my next move.

I pulled my rangefinder from its pocket and put the laser on the buck's head but the grass was too thick for a reliable reading. I put the laser on a thick bunchgrass patch just to his north and it ranged at 40 yards. I took that to mean he was 30 to 35 yards from me and made a mental note of the bow sight pin I'd need to put on him when it was time

Continued on page 41...

DIY Tombstones

By Donna Potter Phillips

The sun shines on 622 gravesites and tombstones at the Evergreen Cemetery near Colville. Many more burial sites have no marker or stone; three have homemade markers. These three all date to the early 1900s. This led to the question, is it legal today to create and place your own homemade grave marker? Or do something unique for your cemetery memorial?

Yes, I learned, it is legal to make and install your own tombstone, but only with prior approval from the cemetery and by following all their specific rules.



Consider this marker in Evergreen for two siblings, created no doubt by a grieving parent. It reads: "DAVIS, boy, aged 1 Mo., died Oct 1903, and girl, aged 2 Mo., died Nov 1906."

There are several other markers for the Davis family. The Evergreen Cemetery caretakers stated (on the [www. NEWGS.org](http://www.NEWGS.org) website) that the parents of these children were most likely Edward Davis and Fannie Olivia Dickerson ... but neither of them rest near their children.

Consider the flat-in-the-ground homemade stone for



Mary Ward. It's hard to read, but the stone states: "Mary Ward, age 20, borned January 13, 1886, in McDowell County, Georgia, died April 11, 1906."

Consider this upright homemade marker. Scrubbed a bit to make it easier to read, it states:

"Geo. Anderson, borned March 26, 1892, died Jan 5, 1912." An interesting note is that the inscriber ran out of room

on the front side of the stone for the full name "Anderson" and so the "on" is wrapped around to the side.

The homemade grave markers for both George Anderson and Mary Ward have similar carved letters. The unique feature of each stone is in the wording: They both say BORNED. It

seems likely that the same person, George's father, William Gaither Anderson, made both markers. George was Mary Ward's nephew. "It is suspected that George died of typhoid fever," states the NEWGS website database.

If the idea of crafting your own tombstone doesn't ring your bell, how about the idea of sharing forever a favorite recipe on your tombstone? That is also perfectly legal!



The Northeast Washington Genealogical Society welcomes help from individuals or groups to maintain Evergreen Cemetery. Contact them at info@newgs.org or via their Facebook page or call Lora Rose 509-684-5690 (home) or 509-675-1138 (cell).

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

...continued from page 39

to draw. I needed him to stand up, maybe by making a little doe sound, or I needed to take two to three steps up the mound with bow at full draw until my bow sight pin could be on his vitals. Waiting for him to stand up could take seconds, minutes, or hours, and I wasn't sure how long I could tolerate the flies. I knew that even a quiet doe imitation could spook him.

I looked down at the mound edge at my feet, noting the twiggy brush that would make for a noisy and potentially unstable ascent at full draw. As I weighed my options the buck looked right in my direction through the grass. I remained frozen despite the torturous flies. He seemed to be asking himself whether my silhouette had been there all along, and it was several minutes before he finally seemed to put his wonder to rest and turned his head back to the north.

As I continued to watch and wait, I saw an antler moving over the high grass at the south side of the mound. It was one of the other bucks, feeding his way around toward me. My heartbeats reverberated throughout my whole body as though someone was beating a kettledrum behind me.

I couldn't see his full rack and wasn't sure he was a legal buck with three antler points or more on at least one side, so I reluctantly made a couple of soft side-steps to the north to stay out of his view and stay on the first buck, who seemed a bit more unsettled but still bedded. He turned his head back and forth anxiously and then wriggled a bit to work his way into a standing position.

I immediately drew the bow in anticipation, brought the string to my nose, and set my sight pins on him as he slowly rose. He stood broadside and turned his head to me. I was steadying the bow and just about to pull the trigger when he bounded off, all four hooves leaving the ground simultaneously in typical mule deer fashion.

I came out of full draw but kept the arrow nocked and followed him northeastward around the mound and made a doe sound to try to stop him once he was back in sight.

He stopped broadside and looked at me one more time, but he was out of shooting range, and he and several other deer hopped off out of sight without another look back.

It had been nearly seven hours since I first saw the bucks and does rise out of their beds just before sunrise. It was the last day of the hunt, and I had nothing to show for my six days in the grass and rock but some cuts and bruises. I felt extreme regret and disappointment mixed with some pride for the longest and most strategic open-country archery stalk of my short seven years of hunting.

The slow and circuitous hike back was full of vivid replays in my mind of the final moments of the stalk. I stewed over the moves I could've made that might've made him freeze a tad longer. I stewed over the arrow that I should've let fly, an all-but-certain kill shot at that range, minor unsteadiness aside.

But in all that self-deprecation, I was excited to recount the stalk with my hunting partner back at camp, my wife back at home, and my son some day in the future when he learns to speak. I vowed to come back the following year and redeem myself despite giving up on shrub-steppe country archery for a time years ago.

It's cliché among hunters, but a meat harvest, though bittersweet, is the ultimate reward, and beautiful mounts on walls as mementos of feats of suffering make for lovely, primitive art, but the time with friends at camp, the sublime quiet of dawns and dusks in vast, serene landscapes, and the experience of honing a now-rare primal skill are what bring me back to public forests and grasslands each year. Like many other hunters, I'll be counting down the days until I get to come back.

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.



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Happy New Year —

By the Queen of Procrastination?? (Becky Dubell)

That would be me. I'm challenging someone to take that crown off my head and hide it from me. You are more than welcome to it. Just ask Gabriel. Got a message from him today that he needs my article today. I heard on the radio, on the way home from a wrestling match for my great-grandson, that it is the Winter Solstice. Can't be so. That would make it the 21st of December. Article was due yesterday. Good grief Becky. Just because you are retired does that give you the right to forget what day it is? I guess so cuz it happens ALL the time!

It is the time of year that most of us make a list of resolutions. What I'm thinking is that I really need to concentrate on just one, single, New Year's Resolution. I really have to lose my Queen of Procrastination crown. I'm asking for help.

Gabriel, make my due date the 15th of the month. We've talked about this before. You are the boss - I'm my own worst boss. If any of you out there see me on the street, get nosy and be a buttinski. Check to see that I've got the article in the works. Maybe even give me some ideas. Make me become accountable.

I really don't know why it is always a last-minute thing that I do. I might

have picked the habit up from Jim. He had one habit that drove me absolutely crazy. He would finish a gun repair project around noon that had to be in the mail that day. It would be moved onto his mailing bench at 4:15 p.m. to be wrapped and into the post office/UPS by 5 p.m. Problem is, we live 20 minutes out of town. But, he always seemed to make it.

A friend says that Jim "liked the sense of urgency." I guess that, after knowing him for over 50 years, I probably picked up his habit and decided to carry it on. I'm also thinking that 10 years of carrying on this habit is taking it a bit too far. I'm thinking again - even though I don't get paid for thinking - that this habit needs to go away! Would you agree?

Are you working on what's on your New Year's list yet? I usually have about four things that I would like to work on. I've heard that, if you want to accomplish a project, it needs to be done in small bites. Kinda like this: You can always eat a full cow but only small bites at a time. While writing this, I've decided that "small bites" might help me lose my crown.

For the last two weeks, I've spent a lot of time trying to put my house back together. Going from 1,500 square feet

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down to 600 is a bit overwhelming – understatement of the year! Been trying this system: Set the timer for one hour. Move into the room. Ding-ding goes the timer. Move to another (or same) room. Set timer. I was amazed at what I accomplished without feeling totally overwhelmed using my one-hour time limit.

Looking back, I'm thinking it was staying focused on that one room only. I said "No" to shiny bauble distractions. (Note: A "shiny bauble" distraction from the current project is when you go into another room to answer the phone, get something to snack on, change the radio station, etc., and find something there you could do.) My resolution is to be all set up in my house by the time it warms up. Tackling the shop is next on my list.

I'm gonna add something to document my resolution list projects. With the camera/phone that I've got, why not take before and after pictures? That would set an example of why it should stay like the "after" photo. Right now, any flat spot in my shop is under about 3-4 feet of stuff that really needs its own location.

The whole place is one of those shops where what is needed is always on the bottom in the back. This just happened a week ago. Needed a PVC coupling and of course it is 10 at night. Climbed over a stack of totes. Found the plumbing tote. Lid came off. With Randy holding my belt, stood on my head to pull stuff out of the tote. FOUND IT! Put tote back. Plumbing got fixed.

What I am hoping is your resolutions are a little easier than mine are. Maybe I can handle mine cuz, if I have not told you before, I'm now retired! If you are willing to trade projects,

you can just let me know and I'm sure we can work something out. Though, if you are considering, I will not be showing you the before picture.

The Christmas season has passed us now. Did you come up with any new traditions? The obvious one was the warm weather and looks like rain for Christmas. I'm thinking – been doing that a lot in this article – this was only the second Christmas without snow since we moved here over 40 years ago. I'd spent the last four Christmas seasons in Skagway with Mom and getting back to my family traditions has been really good and familiar. Love it!

Improvement on a tradition at my place: Purchased "trees" from Kettle Falls fundraiser, four feet, made out of rebar and strung with lights. Think

outside the box and what do the trees look like at this angle? I see the three wise men. Dancer and Prancer came to visit and made a perfect frame for the "cross" in the background.

Continuing tradition now that I am back home for the holidays: Each family member (3 years to 74 years) decorating 13 gingerbread houses – a loud and fun time.

Thank you for letting me chatter. Hope you have a bunch of visiting to do.

SAFE & HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOURS

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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Let's Talk About the 'Gif' – Gifford-Inchelium Ferry

By Shannon Rosenbaum, Director

From cables in the past to high-powered engines in the present, communities up and down the Columbia River have developed many ways to get from one side to the other. Prior to the Grand Coulee Dam, the Columbia was smaller in our area, and arguably less difficult to cross. But in the time before modern vehicles, roads and bridges, the speed of travel was much slower. Consequently, many small, family-owned ferries and landings were built to support river-bordering communities.

Highlighting this phenomenon, a published book we carry at the Inchelium Cultural Research Center (ICRC) opens with a map showing all the local ferries of eastern Washington, seemingly placed every 10 miles of river.

Sources indicate that the advent of the "Gif," and many other smaller ferries, began in the late 1800s, with continued western conquest in conjunction with the expansion of the mining industry. A few photos document this early form of transportation, while maps from across the many decades abound, highlighting the numerous metal mines in our neck of the woods.

Most of the mines are no longer active, yet many of the small communities formed in that era still stand and are reliant on ferry boats for transport, calling into question both the antiquity and overall efficiency of such transport.

There have been many community conversations regarding "the boat," as we call it, ranging from frustration about the hours of operation, costs of fuel and maintenance, or the carbon footprint, to those of sentiment, feeling "at home" when boarding the boat, and the attraction of many tourists each year, photographing their experiences as they journey

across the river.

For example, while heading to Spokane in September, I saw fire crews from all over the country taking photos together on the boat, paying homage to their time together fighting our fires. I felt so grateful for their protection.

Thus far at the ICRC, we maintain a small collection of photographs documenting the multiple ferries that have



Gifford Ferry, 1941-1942, Nugent Family Collection.

served our region. Since technology has increased our abilities to photo-capture our stories, histories, and progress, we are seeking added photo evidence of our beloved boats, hoping to add depth to our collection and as a resource for those organizations that have reached out for pictures.

If you have any photographs of the "Gif" – or the Daisy, Balcolm, or other local ferries – and would like to share them, drop in to the ICRC Tuesday through Thursday, or touch base through our email at Incheliumcrc@gmail.com.

Creative Being in Stevens County

New Year's Evolutions

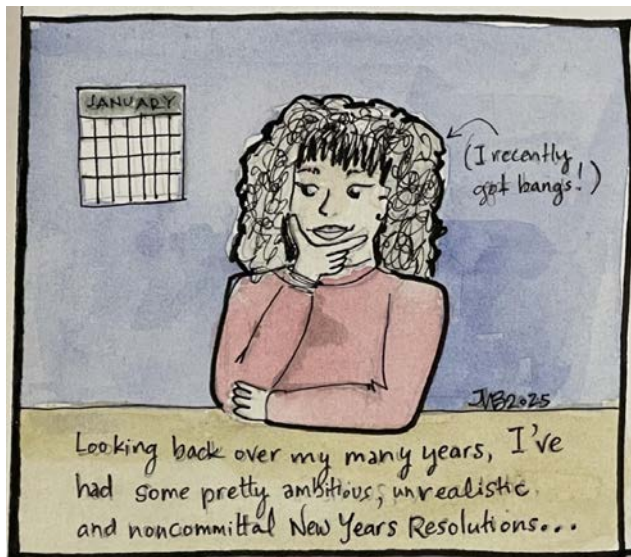
Article & Illustrations by Marci Bravo

The beginning of each new year feels like a blank page, clean and crisp and promising. This new-book smell of a month allows me to shift my perspective, zoom out, and for a moment (quick, she has ADHD!), I can imagine a multiplicity of directions I might take, different versions of myself I would like to develop, nurture, and become. I have made silly, superficial resolutions and deeper, more resounding ones, in gradients dependent on the time in my life, my level of self-awareness, honesty, and mental health.

I appreciate the ritual of writing down the behaviors, beliefs and habits that I need to let go of and watching them burn into wisps of smoke in a New Year's bonfire.

Rather than resolutions, I prefer to choose a word, theme or quote that embodies a direction to move in for the year. I am a work in progress, always evolving, changing and growing, and I want some agency and intention behind it. I find it extremely helpful to write the intention down in many places in my life – bathroom mirror, journal cover, by the front door – that I will see and remember daily (because, honestly, I can start something new with the greatest enthusiasm and still forget about it by the end of the next weekend, if I don't).

Do you have an intention for 2026? A direction you'd like to aim for? A hope you want to inspire in our com-



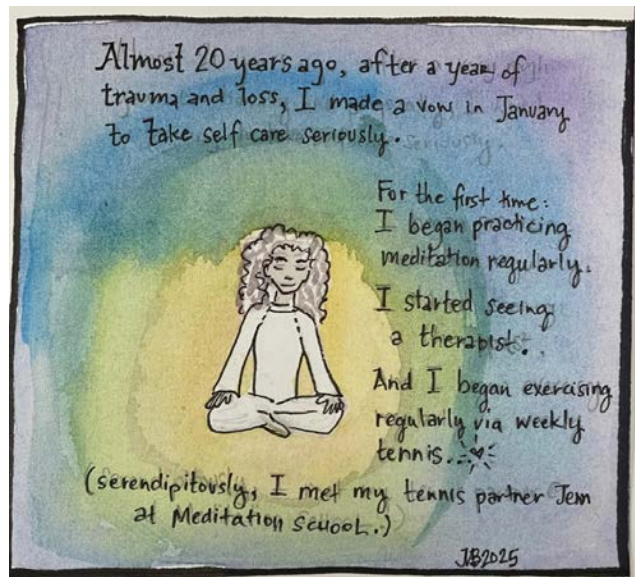
munity or world at large?

Here's my hope for all of us...

May each of us enter the new year with the universal understanding that we all belong exactly where we are, as we are. May we recognize our own innate power and wisdom to accept and adapt and support one another in life's most constant certainty, that rapscallion called Change. May we each be inspired to create a habitat of

belonging, encouraging ease and warmth in the hearts and minds of those in our reach.

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



After an overscheduled 2024, I resolved to be more intentional with my time in January 2025. I committed to shifts volunteering at Fort Colville School, but had to practice my boundary-setting in other areas. In the summer, for instance, I stepped away from pottery for four months, to make room for travels with family, garden maintenance, and large-scale painting. The extra breathing room and skill-building led to a job to repaint the sign for Wipa's Thai to Go in Colville!



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