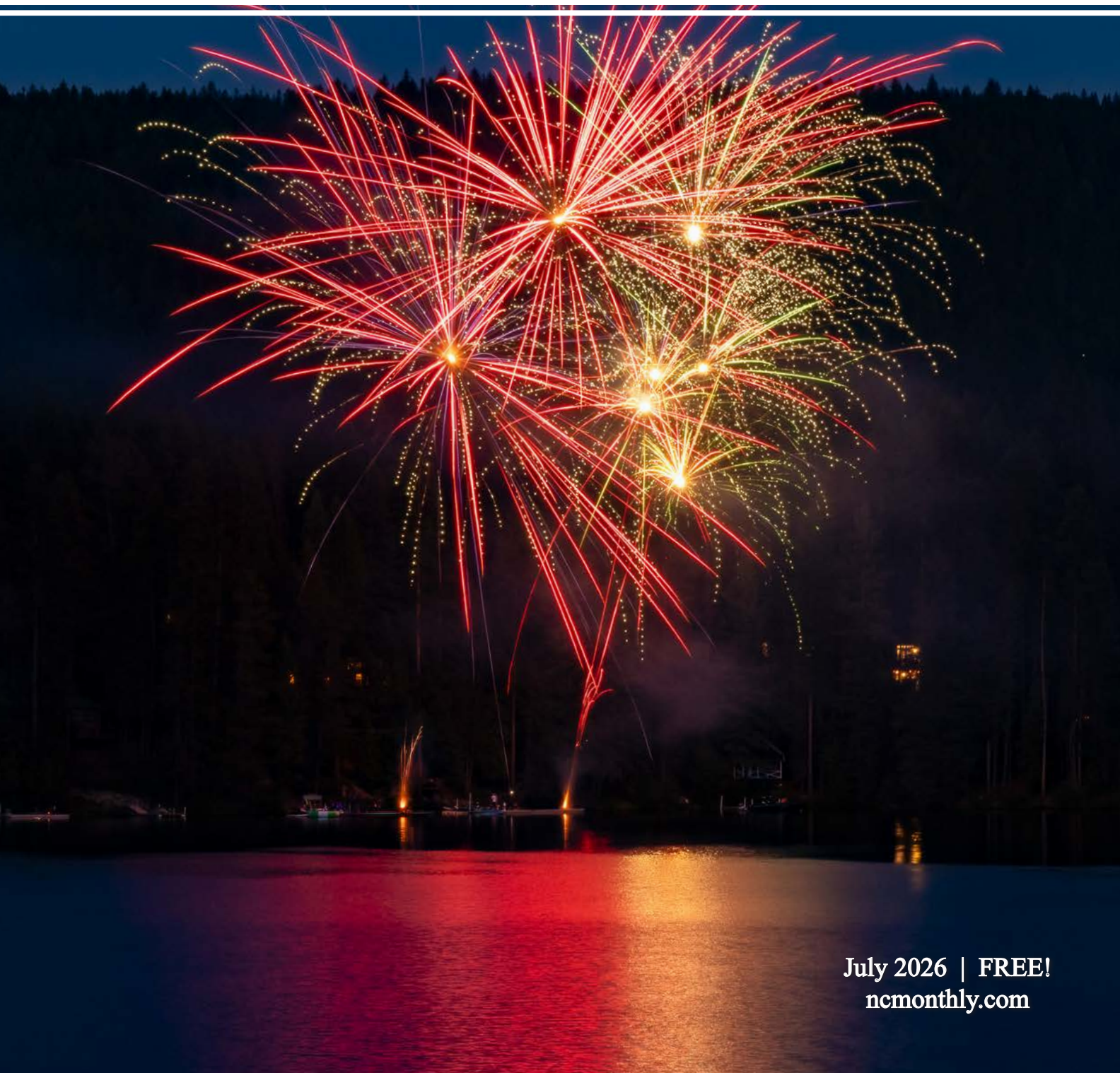




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A Note from the Publisher

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

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

~ Gabriel

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Play

Research Shows It's a Necessary Part of a Balanced Life

By Christine Wilson

From somewhere in the ether, I heard my late father's voice the other day: "Ease up a little," he said.

"Why do you work so hard?" called the grasshopper. "The sun is shining! The fields are full of flowers! Come and sing with me!" ~ Aesop

The ants were streaming past him with grains of wheat on their back. One of them said: "We are storing food for the winter. When the snow comes, there will be nothing to eat. You should do the same." ~ Aesop

"Angela Carter called the spirit of the fairy tale 'heroic optimism,' a better phrase for the promise of a happy ending. Others identify it as blind hope, or wishful thinking, the life principle in action." ~ Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*

"Play is fundamentally important for 21st century skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, and more. Further, it can relieve stress and support emotional regulation. Play is not just for children – evidence indicates that it is critical for adults, too."
~ Brookings Institute

"Overall, greater inclinations towards intellectual but also emotional strengths and lower towards strengths of restraint seem to relate with playfulness." ~ Springer Publishing

"An investment in play is an investment in human flourishing."

~ The National Institute of Play

Having recently been diagnosed with celiac, my first thought as I reread the ant and grasshopper story was: "Yikes; grains of wheat! I would starve to death if I hung out with the ants." Then I realized I'd starve to death if I hung out with the grasshoppers as well. But I bet the grasshoppers were more fun.

I was afraid of the ant and the grasshopper fable in my youth. Idle hands are the devil's playground, after all. I felt a lot of pressure to accomplish things, to see what needed to be done and just do it.

Actually, I didn't even need to see what needed to be done. Even still, I can be awake at two in the morning scanning my life for unfinished tasks. I've actually had to give myself lectures about not getting up and finishing something. To be honest, sometimes the best I can do is remind myself that I'll wake up the household. Whatever works, I guess.

I can still hear my aunts as they watched my young self embroider something at family gatherings. They chatted among themselves about what

a fine wife I'd make some day. That promoted my own personal fairy tale's heroic optimism. My adult life seemed impossibly far away but their comments added to the plan for me to be good at accomplishing things.

Of course, that also generated a little smugness within me. I knew how to be productive and loved the praise for being that way. It seemed to me that the rascally grasshopper needed a good talking to. I was happy to escape any of those lectures.

Random Acts of Community

It turns out, however, that people are wired for play. We learn, adapt, and connect with others through play.

I'm thinking it's similar to what I've learned about self-soothing behavior, since that, too, is built in. When people don't consciously create healthy ways of self-soothing, some bossy part of the brain will find a way to create something soothing, healthiness optional. I think of it as the brain detecting an emergency. Burn the house down and then rebuild later. That's probably why I eat too many cookies if I'm not paying attention to whether I am stressed or not. I achieve the soothing goal; I just might regret it later. Conscious, intentional planning after the fact is a bit too late, unless one learns the lesson and applies it to life.

I'm not sure if play is operating in the same part of the brain as self-soothing behavior, but in my observation, it operates by the same rules. I made my first pie in grade school and my first bread at 12. I embroidered my first bit of cloth probably in first grade. It might have been a bit dicey in the skill department, but I was proud to have done it. It wasn't just productivity, though. I found it delightful and am guessing now that it activated my play button. I still find cooking and anything involving thread to be great fun. I just have to watch for any accomplishment-or-die pressure to sneak in. Total buzzkill on the playfulness.

What I'm thinking these days about the ant and the grasshopper is that they are both right. There are interpretations out in the worldwide web that involve scolding the ant for being too serious and lacking charity toward the grasshopper. Balance is, as always, never still, even in the interpretation of these old tales. When my childhood friend complained to her professor, Dr. Lindeman, at Whitworth, that she wasn't getting

enough time to read novels, he pointed out that there are seasons of our lives that require more of one or the other. She was in college and her reading time was taken up by her coursework. Lo, these many years later, she is a retired librarian and reads only what she feels like reading.

I have worked over the years with people who are more on the play side of things. I've negotiated between parents and their children about the balance between video game playing and taking out the garbage. I watched a fourth grader spin a Rubik's Cube into order in a matter of seconds, after which, when I asked him how he got so good at it, he said he had more free time to play than I did. Getting his chores done and his homework turned in were more difficult for him. He had to work on that balance.

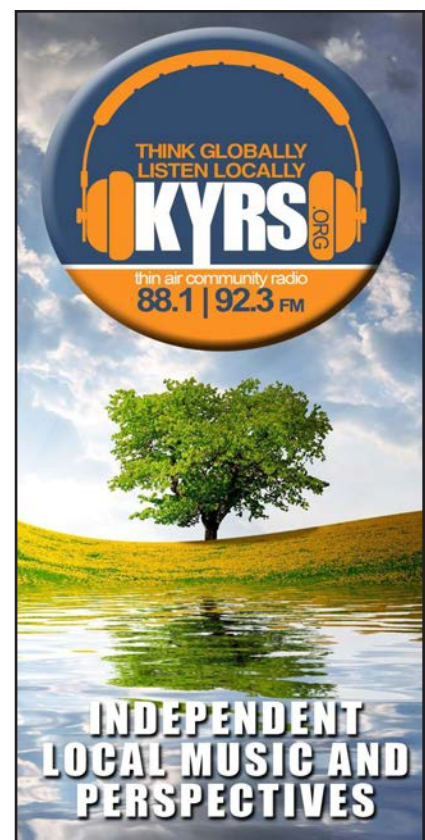
When I first heard that research was being done on play, I thought: "Wow, they've run out of legit research projects." It is not a big surprise that it took me a while to understand the significance of play in our lives. Bessel van der Kolk and other brain researchers are pretty convincing that life isn't all about the three Rs. The information I was taught by my learning theory professor in graduate school is being confirmed. Music, recess, PE, and art classes don't just give our brains a chance to let the academic information sink in. They fill in the gaps regarding all the other things we need as adults in this complicated world, including problem solving, social skills, empathy, and the ability to synthesize various pieces of information. Innovation relies on the playful mind.

There is actually a National Institute for Play. Seriously. You can go to their website (nifplay.org/science/play-style) and take a test to see what kind of play style you have and that works for you.

I don't know what my father would have thought of that quiz or about all the attention now being spent on play. What I do know for sure is that when I was in graduate school, he told my brother I was too ambitious. Now I think maybe he was just recognizing that I needed to lighten up.

My results with that play quiz made me laugh. I'm better at creativity than organization. I'm not saying it gives me an excuse to be disorganized, but I'm planning on using it that way anyhow. And when I get too focused on achievement, I can turn to creative endeavors when I hear my father's request that I ease up a little.

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



When a Barn Falls

‘Broken’ Does Not Need to Equate With ‘Defeated’

Story by Dr. Barry Bacon, MD • Photos by Shelley Bacon

When a barn falls in the meadow and no one sees it, is there a sound?

There is a beautiful old barn in northeast Washington not far from where we live. For the past ten years, we have witnessed its slow lean into oblivion, the death spiral of a barn. I have wondered over those years if I could hook onto the corner with a bulldozer or two and bring it back to an upright posture, extend its life for a few more years. But, alas, it was never my place to suggest such things.

In recent months, the lean of the barn took on a decidedly worsening stance, until it was at about 45 degrees from vertical. I would drive by and gape at the old structure, wondering how it could withstand another storm, another blizzard, another winter. Then one sunny day last month, the barn crumpled in a moment as my wife looked on. There was no going back. There was to be no salvage. It had reached a tipping point beyond which there was no return. The old

barn now lies in a heap of rubble never to be awakened again.

An allegory of our lives, I suppose. We bend until we can't anymore. Then we crash. There is no putting Humpty Dumpty together again. We break beyond repair.

It can happen to any of us. Mental illness, physical disease, addiction, grief, stress, abuse. We take it until we can't. We are human, flesh and blood, and though we steel ourselves against life's onslaughts, we break.

I sat with a group of men recently and we spoke of our brokenness. This is not something of which men often speak. We expect ourselves to be strong, resilient, unflappable, macho, pressed into a mold of our own and society's making. Out of our own trauma, we grapple with life's judgments about who we are supposed to be – minimize the pain, be strong, don't whine, be a man. We find ourselves years later medicating through life's pain, never having learned how

to feel what we need to feel, how to love ourselves, and how to forgive ourselves so that we can heal.

As I listened to the men speak of how they deal with their pain, what messages they find which bring healing and which do not, unexpectedly I flashed back to a time in Malawi, me a young physician confident in his own abilities. The face of a young child emerged from my memory. An eight-month-old boy, the hope and joy of his parents, brought to our hospital with a fever, irritability, uncontrolled crying and dehydration. A blood smear proves he has malaria.

And I know what to do. I know how to save him. IVs, quinine, acetaminophen, sips of juice and fluids, and he's going to get better. Only he doesn't. He should be getting better but he's worse. We had the right diagnosis, and we treated him correctly, but something is wrong. The mistake I made was that I stopped looking.

In medical school, instructors



taught me to ask, “What is the one disease that fits this clinical constellation of findings?” But they never taught us about Africa. In Africa the question is, “And what is the other condition this patient is suffering from?” So often it is the other disease, the one you didn’t think of, that will kill the patient on that continent. In the case of this young child, it was meningitis. The child had malaria but also meningitis, which I failed to consider.

We like to speak of our successes. We are tempted to talk of others’ failures but not our own. To speak candidly of our own failures is too difficult, unless we are in a safe place.

Here in this circle of men, I found a safe place. Not because they are better men, but because they are broken. Their failures, their personal pain, their brokenness is written on their faces. So, I can tell them the stories of my mistakes and feel safe here. I could make excuses, I could blame others, blame the lack of medicines or equipment or testing or specialists, but ultimately, I could only look in the mirror to see who was responsible. And then, in time, I had to forgive

myself. And make one promise to my patient. I will learn from my mistakes.

I carry the memory of that eight-month-old boy with me from that day in 1988. To forgive ourselves doesn’t mean we forget. The work of recovery is like that – accountability with forgiveness. Reconciliation with grace. Restitution with kindness.

The men sat in the circle with a look of welcoming and understanding pain on their faces. Doctors don’t talk like this. We don’t admit our failures. We hide. We close ranks, circle the wagons, remain silent. The truth is that we are human. But somehow it terrorizes us to admit it.

The circle of men spoke freely of their own journeys. We can talk of the things we regret among men who know it themselves. Men can speak honestly of love for their families. They dream of reuniting with their children and of being good fathers. Being the father they never had. Laying aside revenge. Letting go of what needs to go. Forgiving others and especially themselves. Looking in the mirror and seeing something beautiful, a work in progress, not perfection.

An opening of our lives to healing. Faith in a future that is better.

The room went silent after I spoke. Out of respect, I suppose, but also from sorrow for the child whose life was gone. I dwelt on the hard and careful journey of self-reflection, sorrow, guilt, a deep inner writhing of soul, remembering for decades this one child, for which I must find and receive grace but also never forget. Everyone who has worked the steps of recovery has known this angst.

There is a point at which a barn can hold back no longer. It bends and creaks and strains and then it breaks.

There is a point at which a man can hold back no longer. He bends and creaks and strains. And then he finds himself in a circle of men who hold him up, pull him to his feet and walk alongside him. It’s not too late. He doesn’t need to break. He can heal.

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.



Embraced

The Fascinating Octopus and the Healing Power of Hugs

Story and Photo by Tina Wynecoop

“An octopus body is boneless, like Jell-O wrapped up in a sack. It’s easy to squeeze [hug] with no kneecaps, no knees, no skull, and no spine in its back!”

~ Thor Hanson, *The Escape Artist*

The Salish Sea’s fragrant marine climate beckons me. It is the mermaid’s alluring siren song, and I hear it. The poet William Merwin observes, “All life is one, yet every single life is unique.”

Is the mermaid a real sea creature or unique to my imagination? I followed her song with its big dose of salt air when my friend and I booked tickets on one of Alaska Marine Highway’s ferries. The *Malaspina* regularly navigates the Inside Passage between Bellingham, Washington, and Skagway, Alaska. This ferry is not a luxury cruise ship by any stretch of the imagination. There is accommodation for those on limited budgets to tent camp on the ship’s outer deck instead of paying for an inside berth. Standard cruise ships, because of their mammoth proportions, cannot navigate the inside passages. I knew what I wanted was to be hugged by the natural land formations and seascapes, not perched above them dressed to the nines and eating sumptuous meals. I didn’t want to miss anything along the way.

As the *Malaspina* approached the San Juan Islands at the end of a memorable trip, I rose at dawn to stand at the rail looking to the west to catch a glimpse of an island I’d grown to love: Patos Island. Until that morning I had only “visited” Patos Island in a book about this lovely, remote

dot in the archipelago where Helene Glidden and her 12 siblings lived while her father served as the Patos Island lighthouse keeper from 1905-1913.

If anybody asks this writer, I’ll tell them I, too, am a professional lighthouse-keeper; always have been. To quote a wise woman, “I’m proud of my dust. It shows I have better things to do with my time.”

Helene had a lively imagination and an uninhibited sense of adventure. She describes an event I want to share with

you. A powerful storm blasted the island, and she and her siblings knew wonderful things (victims) washed up on the shoreline as a result. She writes:

“We rounded a point of land and began to explore a lagoon. Here, in shallow water, lay a large octopus. Screaming with delight, we scrambled back to the beach to hunt for sharp poles with which to torment him. This was great sport to our wild, cruel young natures. We lunged at the huge creature, sticking our sharp poles into his body. The eight long arms tossed and curved in a most frightful manner. We failed to notice that at each thrust of our poles the octopus had moved a little nearer to where we stood in



the water. Our danger dawned upon us. The octopus, with a slow, snakelike twist, wrapped one long sucking tentacle around my leg ... and then two, and three more tentacles

encircled me, up and around my body ... I noticed that the octopus was retreating toward deeper waters, pulling me with him..."

A librarian/storyteller, and I was one, will leave off at a crucial point in the story to lure a potential reader to check out the book. If you want the rest of her story, I recommend that you get the book from your public library. What? No copy on their shelves? The library can request the book through Inter-Library Loan (ILL) from anywhere in the U.S. This a free service our wonderful public libraries offer. Also, copies are available online. The book is *The Light on the Island*, by Helene Glidden, 1951.

I am appalled at her tale of torture. She deserved what happened next. Still, the octopus cruelty aside, I must say *The Light on the Island* is way near the top in my list of favorite books.

Of course, in that early morning light, I just *had* to be at the ferry's railing to salute Patos Island and photograph it as we neared Bellingham's port (shown on facing page).

If Helene had access to current information, she could have approached this same giant sea invertebrate with respect and admiration simply by viewing the 2020 documentary film *My Octopus Teacher*, with underwater photography about the daily encounters between a human diver and an octopus in the kelp beds at the tip of South Africa – a wondrous film. Having viewed it, Helene would have treated her storm-tossed octopus with respect and kindness.

Which leads me to tell you of a novel that has captivated me and many Inland Northwest readers: *Remarkably Bright Creatures*, by Shelby Van Pelt, 2022. This spring, the editors of the *Spokesman-Review* hosted the novelist for an evening program. More than 800 people attended the event – an amazing turnout by any author's standard.

The book's storyline is narrated by a 70-year-old widow, an aquarium janitor named Tova, and by Marcellus, a Giant Pacific Octopus who, in alternating chapters, recounts the nearly 1,400-plus days of his captivity. One reviewer praised the author for doing the impossible by creating "a perfect story with imperfect characters that is so heartwarming, so mysterious, and so completely absorbing you won't be able to put it down because when you are not reading this book, you will be hugging it."

The movie of the same title was released in May, starring Sally Field and the octopus Marcellus. Of course, the book should be read before seeing the movie. For me, the octopus

was the movie's star, not in any anthropomorphized way, but because the close-ups of the real live aquarium-bound creature were vivid and unforgettable.

In my field guide *Marine Wildlife from Puget Sound Through the Inside Passage*, Steve Yates states that the world's largest octopus (the Pacific Giant) has an arm spread up to 20 feet (7 feet is more common), can weigh from 90-600 pounds, "lives in caves and crevices; can squeeze through very small openings." Author Thor Hanson adds these PGO details: The creature "has three hearts, blue blood, eight arms, 2,000 suction cups and can open a jar. What else can an octopus do?"

Well, let me tell you about the octopus' expertise with the Rubik's Cube!

Alisa Opar, features editor for *Audubon Magazine*, reported in the April 2007 issue that a Rubik's Cube was a favorite toy of a Giant Pacific Octopus named Mavis in residence at the Weymouth Sea Life Park in England. "Scientists tell us that octopuses (or octopi or octopodes – take your pick of acceptable plural forms) may be the most intelligent of all invertebrates. They have both short- and long-term memory and can find their way through mazes."

And I might add to the reading list the glorious photographs of the octopus and other sea invertebrates in the book *Spineless: Portraits of Marine Invertebrates* by Susan Middleton, 2014. My branch library has a copy. Worth borrowing! (Remember ILL.)

Having arms is such a gift. Having two of them works well for most humans. Having eight, like the octopus, is certainly a being's abundance. You may have noticed the word "hug" shows up in this article several times. Hugs are wonderful! Hugs are healing, comforting, wordless expressions of love. I've received a lot of hugs these last few days since my best beloved "checked out" in June. He was a wonderful hugger, remarkably bright and funny – hardworking, a good son, brother, uncle, cousin, husband, father, grandfather, *and* my companion. Judge introduced and shared with me his north Columbia homeland. He embraced huckleberries with a passion and they reciprocated. I miss him, but I know he, too, is embraced ... fully.

Tina Wynecoop has said that western Washington, where she grew up, was the most interesting place in the world – until she moved 300 miles east in 1970 to teach on the Spokane Indian Reservation. She says the culture, geography, history, weather, people, and flora and fauna of this inland region have become her beloved "home ground."

Railroad Art and Other Observations

Vintage Nails, Pups with Personality and a Truck on a Truck

By Bob Gregson

Railroad freight cars of all sorts often have graffiti painted on their sides ... as anyone who encounters trains in one way or another certainly has observed. Recently, I was the first car in line when the railroad crossing arms came down and the flashing lights with sound effects became noticeable. The train was a long one, maybe a hundred cars headed east through Spokane Valley.

Three diesel locomotives led the pack. One was labeled “Kansas City Southern” and the other two “Canadian Pacific.” That piqued my interest. Why would a railroad apparently doing business from Kansas City to points south be related to a Canadian railroad?

The internet provided the answer. In 2023 the Canadian Pacific bought Kansas City Southern (KCS) for \$31 billion, creating the first transnational single-line railroad in the U.S. The combined group, including a Mexican subsidiary of KCS, goes all over Canada plus south through Kansas City to the Mexican border, where it branches east to a Gulf of Mexico port and west to a port on the Pacific Ocean – 20,000 miles of track overall.

Some of those miles run right through the center of Millwood in the Spokane Valley ... several times a day ... which creates significant traffic backups on Argonne Road, a major north-south way of bypassing Spokane to and from the I-90 freeway.

So, there I was in Millwood. Stopped for what seemed a long time, watching empty grain cars,

empty phosphate cars, standard boxcars, flatcars set up for hauling plywood, and a few flatcars loaded with ocean-going containers, all slowly headed northeast. And MANY of those cars had amazing graffiti-art spray-painted on their sides. Some of those murals were absolutely things of beauty.

Questions: Where did those artists do their thing? Why? How do they evade railroad security staff? Spray paint is not cheap. Do the artists first have to clean off the area they’re going to paint? They must haul ladders into the rail yards because some of the art reached up over 12 feet off

“Where did those artists do their thing? Why? How do they evade railroad security staff?”

the ground. Quite a kaleidoscope in brilliant colors. I came away highly impressed with that moving display of artistic talent.

Nuts, bolts, nails and stuff

Much of the population in the northeast quadrant of our state lives in small communities and rural or semi-rural areas where a degree of self-reliance is common. By that, I mean many of us are more likely to at least ponder fixing something or building something as opposed to calling a repair or remodeling company. I have urban friends who live in nice homes where they may not even own a screwdriver or pair of pliers. I

don’t know if they even change their own light bulbs. Hard to believe, but true.

Generations of my family branches, all blue-collar, lived through typical American lean times and the Great Depression. They had to do for themselves. It was not an option to pay someone to fix a sticking front door or deliver a load of firewood. So, collecting tools and hardware and straightening used nails for future carpentry projects was par for the course.

That mindset was passed on. Our house has a three-generation collection of all manner of nails, screws, bolts, nuts, washers, and a wide array of tools – two-man crosscut saws, a keyhole saw, scythes, and a Pulaski, to name a few. These treasures were used and passed down, and I’ve added some over the years. It’s a joy to find just the right screw/bolt/nut/washer in the collection instead of heading out to a hardware or big box store to pay exorbitant prices for small metal objects.

On the other hand, I have straightened thousands of 8-penny nails only to realize they will never be used. Our nearby son owns a nail gun, and it’s a great labor saver. I guess I hang on to the old hand tools as potentially useful in case of power failure or nail gun breakdown. But those five pounds of straightened 8-penny nails from countless recycled 2”x6” crates – more than 3,000 lineal feet of boards for garden raised beds – will no doubt go to the recycler. After I’ve been recycled! You just never can tell when basic stuff like regular nails will be

needed.

Dogs

A couple months ago this column introduced readers to my sister's new/old dog, Franky, a chihuahua mix. I'm happy to report that sister and dog have been doing wonderfully together. He's a 10-year-old bundle of pure energy and love. Relentlessly chasing and chewing up his tennis balls by the dozen.

There's one irritating habit Franky enjoys, which, through pure osmosis – they've never met each other – has moved to our dog, Barney. That has to do with dogs waking their person at bedside earlier than she/he would like to be awakened. Franky seems to prefer "first light." Barney makes his pitch about 6 a.m. He puts his paws up on the bed and says enough to ensure that the sole woozy occupant (me) becomes definitely awake. Then he goes back to his nearby bed to rest until my shaving and dressing is done.

It's not as if he needs to go potty. He may have gone out earlier on any given day because Bonnie is a very early riser and lets him out when she opens the chicken houses. So, it's not the sign of an urgent need when he excitedly makes it his duty to get me up.

Then I, accompanied by Barney, feed and fill waterers for the chickens, then leash him up to accomplish his highlight of the day – the morning walk on our quiet street. It's not really a walk. It's a slow-moving reconnaissance mission where he stops every 20 feet to extensively sniff whatever it is he sniffs: other dogs, squirrels and maybe the occasional deer or skunk. After a block of sniffing we turn around and slowly head back on the other side of the street, repeating the process, while I wave at any passing cars. So, I wave, he sniffs, we return home. For me there's oatmeal with our terrific homegrown raisins and another

day is off to a fine start.

Trucking Humor

A very long truck-trailer combo passed my view recently ... the type of low trailer that typically carries road graders or bulldozers or other big, heavy construction machines. This trailer had a small load of palletized bags near the middle, and at the very rear there was a yellow and black plastic dump truck, a kid's toy about

18 inches long, firmly tied down with two bungee cords.

Gentle humor like that is greatly appreciated during this challenging time in American history!

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.



The poster for the 2026 Garlic Faïre at China Bend Winery is framed by a decorative border of grapevines and clusters of grapes. At the top, a yellow banner reads "China Bend Winery" in a black script font. Below this, a red banner features "2026 Garlic Faïre" in a yellow, stylized font, with "Saturday August 15" written underneath in white. The central text, "The Organic Wine & Gourmet Food Event Where Garlic Is King!", is in a green, serif font. In the center is a large illustration of a garlic plant with several white garlic heads. Three red circular callouts provide event details: "Noon - 5:00 Admission \$10", "Live Music Murphy's Legacy Country Rock", and "Bring Your Lawn Chair or a Blanket". A red rectangular box at the bottom center lists the event's features: "Featuring Gourmet Foods, Live Music, Arts & Crafts, and Lots of Garlic!". Below this, the winery's tasting room hours and location are listed: "Tasting Room Open Daily Noon - 5:00 ~ Closed Mondays Drive In or Boat In Bed & Breakfast at the Winery!". The bottom-most section, in a yellow box, provides the address "3751 Vineyard Way ~ Kettle Falls, WA 99141", contact information "On the Northport-Flat Creek Road along Lake Roosevelt (509)732-6123 ~ www.chinabend.com ~ winery@chinabend.com", and the instruction "Drive In or Boat In".

Mani/Pedi

Story and Photos by Tina Tolliver Matney

It all started because I bought a new skirt. Just like that phenomenon that happened one time when I bought a new towel which led to a complete bathroom remodel. This new skirt led me down a prissy path of ridiculous primping and fussing the likes of which I've not experienced since I put on a dress for my niece's wedding two years ago. Unfortunately, that dress was hardly worthy of the occasion, but I wore it anyway.

I was still reeling from the shock of losing my house and most of my clothing. After the fire, I had bought essentials to get by but there was nothing fancy about any of my new things. My clothes were – and still are – more appropriate for hiking, biking, or chopping down trees. I didn't have it in me to go out and buy a fancy new dress. Honestly, I've never had that in me. So, I made do and felt that, with a little extra polishing, I would be presentable enough.

The weather made me extra grateful that day that I could spend a good amount of time in the basement of that big, elegant house and pretend I was the flower arranger, because I was the flower arranger. It all worked out and no one scoffed at my attire, at least not to my face. The 110-degree heat of that day hammered home my philosophy that if one is going to go to a summer wedding then one should be as comfortable and cool as possible so one does not require an ambulance exit.

Fast forward to last week, two years after the wedding, when I was preparing to attend a baby shower for the same niece at the same elegant home on another warm summer day. This time I wanted to make myself just a little more presentable, a little more "refined." And by "refined" I mean I wanted to look less like a swamp witch whose fingers and toes were starting to look more like the talons of the owl

that is currently in residence.

I bought a white skirt to wear with a pretty blue linen top and treated myself to a new pair of leather sandals. Problem was the sandals are open toe and my toes ... well again ... owl.

The shower was on Saturday and by Friday I conceded defeat in finding an appointment for a pedicure in the greater Tri-County area. I know, I didn't plan ahead. Well, I didn't with my toes, but I did plan for my hands. About a month ago, on a late-night social media and doom scroll session when I should have been sleeping, I ran across an ad for "press-on gel nails." I had admired my daughter's lovely press-on nails and she told me they were durable and easy to use. Let's just clear up right now that "easy to use" is a very loose term here.

I'm sure I have never spent a Friday evening with so many cusses flying past my burning lips. I'll tell you why my lips were burning in a second.



Vanity has a price. That entire evening was exhausting, all for the sake of silly vanity.

I scrubbed my toes and beat the cuticles into submission so I could slap some polish on them to partially hide the evidence that I am indeed a hippie chick from the sticks. Then I did the same to my fingernails. My nails, of both toe and finger, have never been my favorite features. If only “dirt” were a color. My cuticles are always dry and my hands are the same. I wanted to make my hands lovely for this occasion. Honestly, I have no idea why this was important to me, but it was.

So, I settled in and squinted at the teeny-weeny writing on the instruction sheet. Then I opened the package to get started. This is when every bit of static electricity in my body and in the house made its way down to my hands. When I opened the little plastic box, I suddenly had 24 gel nails stuck on my hands and arms. After I attempted unsuccessfully to return them to the little plastic tray, I got started with the “10-minute application process.” Did I mention how long these things were?

As I started applying them, I gained

confidence pretty quickly because they truly were easy to put on. Until I got to the middle finger on my left hand when I realized what a mistake I had made. I would have to apply the nails to my right hand with a left hand that suddenly had about a half inch protruding from the end of each finger. But I finished my left hand anyway and took a little break to admire my work. Then I tackled my right hand.

This is when the cusses flew throughout the house. Deep breathing helped a little and after about 45 minutes I finished the right hand. The pointer finger on my right hand had a bit of a left-leaning crook. Arthritis is a fickle finger twister. When I held my hand up to admire my work I could see that the left-leaning crook now had a right-leaning fingernail attached to it. But all in all it wasn't a bad job and my hands suddenly looked a little less rugged.

I was pleased with a job semi well done and had strategically planned out my upcoming morning. The chores were already done in advance. I decided to head to bed early so I could take extra time getting ready. I worried about the bra and zipping anything

that might need zipped. This is where the burning in my lips had begun to concern me a little bit.

Oil I had bought was supposed to “energize” my lips just enough to plump them up a smidge. It was the first time I'd ever used such a product, recommended to me by a friend. I'm not sure we're still friends, and I'll never use it again. This great big life is big enough without plump lips. I suddenly looked like I'd been kissing the honeybees.

When I brushed my teeth, it felt like my mouth was on fire, so I wet a cloth to wipe the oil away. And that's when it happened. My pointer fingernail somehow managed to catch my nose post and it went flying. It took a couple of really bad words with it. Maybe I'll find it someday. My hope is that when I do, I will remember that being a chick from the sticks is really more my style anyway.

Tina Tilliver Matney 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.



TALENT WANTED

If you are skilled at writing, photography, or sales and would like to contribute your talents on a contract basis, please submit a letter of interest, resume, and work samples to publisher@ncmonthly.com or P.O. Box 893, Kettle Falls, WA 99141.

Cherry Season

Story and Photo by Steven Bird

“I love cherry season,” Doris had said.

The river is massive at high spate – up into the trees and bushes – sensible proportion lost beneath the flood. The quicksilver expanse of water dominates the drive to town. I need a few things from the hardware store.

A low pressure front moved in with the full moon bringing cumulus clouds to stack against the mountains, rising and spreading to ranges of light and dark, impossibly high, and it is hard to discern where

the mountains of solidity give way to ranges of cloud too ephemeral to support the weight of a mouse, for all their immensity. I imagine myself placed upon the highest summit, only to drop through thousands of feet of vaporous void. I grip the wheel, fix my eyes on the road; the road is narrow and winding. I laugh, thinking: No sir. Illusion of grandeur. Wouldn't be enough of you left to sew into mukluks if you fell that far.

Highest volume spring runoff since 1948. Bad enough there's a lot

fewer people with the extra bucks to hire expensive fishing guides these days, add to that the potential clients scared off by high water at prime time. That'll take a considerable chunk of the yearly plunder off the table. Sucks.

But hey. The blessing on the flip side is the abundant nutrient carried down with the spate is sure to stoke the river food chain, ensuring future business. I'll roll with it. I have other irons on the fire. There's always more than enough work to do around the place. And, in spite of high water, fishing is remarkably good, evenings, trout and the aquatic forms they feed on are not the least put off by an abundance of water. Me and the eagles and ospreys have it pretty much to ourselves. Gas is up and cash may have flowed in another direction this year but we can always eat trout.

When I get home from town Doris says: “Steve Shmidt called you. He just got done reading your book and wanted to congratulate you. Said he's ordering a few more copies to give to friends. Said he loved it. He invited us over to pick cherries. Remember? Their trees are loaded this year – they have Bings and Queen Annes. He said we've got to get them now or the crows are going to swoop them. The trees are at the edge of his lower hay field. He said to just go out there and pick all we want. He's going to mow the field tomorrow.”

Doris is not one to miss an opportunity to pick fruit. There is a five-gallon bucket waiting by the shed door, ready to go.

I consider the news. “Wow! Steve Shmidt read my book and liked it!



Had no idea his reading tastes run to the absurd. ... Sure, let's go get the cherries. Be good to can a bunch."

"What I'm thinking," Doris says.

The field is large by mountain standards, about a hundred acres. The Shmidts' private landing strip runs die-straight through the middle of it. Steve's plane is parked down at the far end; there is a crew of Black Angus standing in the shade of its wings swatting flies with their tails.

The two ancient cherry trees stand like escaped thieves far from the huddle of ranch buildings beyond the meadow and airstrip, up close to the forest edge. A long fruit ladder leans into one of the trees. The grass on the meadow is high, fat and tender with the year's surplus rains. Mixed native grasses, redtop and fescue, flowers of purple vetch sprinkled here and there.

I stop to break off a sheave of redtop and examine its seed. It is ready. Tomorrow the exuberant abundance will be cut flat, winnowed into rows to dry, and machines will gather it into bales that will feed those Black Angus in winter. I stop to wonder if it is decided or coincidence how some souls are born to a watered country of fecundity, while others are born to lands of desert and deprivation. Is this heaven? The place at the table promised for pious living in a past life? Or just the luck of the draw?

A murder of crows watch from the firs beyond the field. Lucky for humans the crows like their cherries slightly riper. Their raucous calls erupt as we approach the tree. I call to them in crow language and they cease their scolding and fly away.

The branches are heavy, the dark orbs of fruit hanging in fleshy clumps. Exposed hearts of a loving Earth. Doris reaches to pluck one, a Bing of darkest purple. She offers it to me and I pop it into my mouth

and chew and the tangy-sweet explosion over my tongue is delicious beyond description or thought. It doesn't take long to fill the bucket, meanwhile eating our fill of sweet cherries.

Doris' lips hold a lovely blush of cherry stain, while my entire mouth is purple well beyond my lips and onto my cheeks and chin. I give her a kiss. I am a manic, happy clown trudging through the tall meadow

grass carrying the bucket toward the pickup. Five gallons. I feel like a king.

"Let's bring the Shmidts a bottle of wine, and I'll make them a thank-you card," Doris says.

"Sure, that sounds like a good idea," I say. "And I'll offer to take them fishing."

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

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From the Brink: Bald Eagles Soar Again in Northeast Washington

Story by J. Foster Fanning • Photos courtesy Tina Tolliver Matney

Bald eagles are found exclusively in North America, and due in part to that the bald eagle was chosen for the Great



American bald eagle at rescue site.

Seal of the United States on June 20, 1782. It represents the characteristics of strength, peace and freedom of our great nation. The American bald eagle is also on U.S. currency, passports, the presidential seal and the logos of various federal departments. National Eagle Center curator Alex Lien states, “Bald eagles can be found in every aspect of American culture throughout the past 250 years.”

Before 1900, the United States was home to approximately 200,000 nesting bald eagles. At that time, they were still widely distributed, but their numbers had started to decrease due to unregulated hunting and habitat destruction. The rapid decline of the species became most acute in the mid-20th century. By 1963, indiscriminate

shooting, loss of nesting habitats, and poisoning from pesticides such as DDT left only about 420 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states. Our national symbol was in danger of extinction throughout most of its range.

A lifelong resident of the Kettle River Valley near Bristow told me how, as a grade school child, she would diligently watch for bald eagles but would rarely see them. Over a decade later, she and her sister kept a running list of the growing numbers of bald eagles returning to the valley. Now we are fortunate to live in a time when a drive along the shorelines of a local river can yield numerous sightings of the Ameri-

can bald eagle. In Washington State alone we have an estimated 3,500 to 4,500 bald eagles during the winter months, with about 1,500 breeding pairs residing in the state year-round.

The 1972 ban of DDT had an enormous positive impact on bald eagle survival. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty

Act managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to provide protections for all eagles. And right here in our region, the Kettle River Raptor Center has made a very positive contribution to the local recovery of our national symbol.

For her final English class paper in high school, Tina Matney – that grade school student referenced previously – wrote about the bald eagle’s ongoing recovery. In the years that followed, her fascination with eagles and raptors in general grew until she found herself with the skills and abilities to earn a Washington State Falconry Permit.

One day she took her red-tailed hawk for a check-up visit with her vet, Dr. Ed Kowitz. He had just patched back together a similar hawk. Tina was enlisted to finish the injured hawk’s rehabilitation in her falconry



Tina Matney and Craig Hinman with rescue eagle.

pen and release it into the wild. “And that’s when I realized how the process of rehabilitation of a raptor was more engaging to me than the falconry,” Tina remembered.

The Kettle River Raptor Center (KRRC) came together around 2001 with a group of like-minded people with various, relevant skill sets. Other local residents heard about the center and began dropping off all sorts of injured, lost or orphaned critters – fawns, bobcat kits, songbirds, a bear cub, and even a baby skunk. “That was a bit overwhelming,” Tina said. The group decided to make raptor recovery the prime focus.

About that time, Colville National Forest’s lead wildlife biologist, Jim McGowan stepped in and authored a grant to fund the planning and construction of holding pens and a large flight pen, which he, Chris Loggers, Craig Hinman and other volunteers built.

A few years after the center was up and rolling, Tina, who was the unofficial spearhead, got her “hands slapped” by Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife for doing wildlife rehab without yet getting the right license. “That was when I just buckled down and got it done, obtaining a license and a permit,” Tina said.

Through attrition, Tina became the soul of the center for the next decade, coordinating rescues and transports and rehabilitating dozens of birds, many of which were eagles. Then, Tina’s daughter was diagnosed with cancer, and not long after that, a fire destroyed Tina’s house and most of

her belongings. (Fortunately, the flight pen remained intact.)

She was staggered by the challenges. “When my house burned down, I had to take some time off. That prompted a decision that I was going to close,”



Dr. Ed Kowitz and Tina Matney with rescue eagle.

she said heavily. But two events altered that course.

First, in the dead of winter two wildlife officers came knocking and handed Tina an injured owl. “I can’t accept this,” I told them. My license lapsed. They looked totally dejected and told me there was no one else.” In the end the owl was successfully rehabbed and released. And once again Tina studied for, tested and achieved her license.

The second event started with a call from the Spokane Audubon Society. “They had a call for a bald eagle down near Colville and wanted to know if I could rescue it. That opened the door to sharing resources and information,” Tina said. The network expanded to include veterinarian Mark Schrag

at the Hunter Veterinary Clinic in Spokane, who is also a member of the Spokane Audubon Society.

According to Chris Loggers, retired USFS biologist, rehabilitation of wild raptors takes a lot of time, energy and money. Tina, who is a volunteer, occasionally has to bankroll the center’s expenditures. Costs include maintenance, medical supplies, fuel for transport, and renewal of license and permits. “KRRC relies totally on donations,” Tina stated. If the donations don’t arrive the funding comes out of Tina’s pockets.

The center has admitted a total of 45 bald eagles. Ten died of injuries or illness (mostly lead poisoning from ingesting bullets). Twenty were transferred to other facilities. Fifteen were successful rehabs and releases. Additionally, the center was called regarding 30 other bald eagles who were rescued and taken directly to other facilities. Dozens of owls, falcons, and hawks also have passed through the center’s doors, and most have been successfully reintroduced to the wild.

Tina highlighted her gratitude to the “many volunteers, those who helped start this operation, those available on short notice, those who donate time and energy, and my family for putting up with me.”

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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Movie Review by Sophia Mattice-Aldous

Now Showing: *Obsession*

Considering my affinity for the horror genre, this may sound like hyperbole to some, but so far *Obsession* is easily my favorite movie of 2026. And that is saying a lot because it has been a cornucopia of a year for well-made films.

This one had been in my periphery while scrolling through YouTube and I saw that people were talking about it, though I did not watch any of the review videos or trailers. I wasn't planning on watching it in a theater until a friend said that he had gone to see it on a whim without knowing anything about it and it left a good impression. I thought I would do the same and I am ever so glad that I did. I had such a solid viewing that I went back to the theater and watched it again, something I haven't done in years. The second time it was just as tense in its terror and savvy in its simplicity.

Bear (Michael Johnston) has an infatuation with longtime friend and coworker Nikki (Inde Navarrette), but he is painfully timid about revealing his feelings. He is given contradictory advice by his coworkers Sarah (Megan Lawless), who has her own crush on Bear, and Ian (Cooper Tomlinson), who operates on the idea that the best way to communicate romance to a woman is to tease her, as if they are

still in grade school.

After a failed attempt to tell Nikki how he truly feels, in his frustration Bear makes a wish on what appears to be a novelty trinket he bought as a gift that Nikki will love him more than anyone else in the world.

And does she ever. Almost immediately.

The premise is uncomplicated, but *Obsession* says a lot about the complexities of relationships. Most of us know what it's like to yearn for someone we can't have or to be on the receiving end of that longing and not return the person's affections. Most of us who have dated have experienced, at one point or another, a relationship that we knew deep down wasn't going to work. Maybe



even those around us told us as much, but we came up with excuses about how good it could be, how no one understands, how everything would be so perfect if the other person changed in some way or if we just cast our gaze away from the red flags flapping furiously in the wind of our ardor.

Those relationships can end in hurt and heartbreak when we don't have the courage to be honest with ourselves and the other person. When we don't have the strength to break away from our own codependency/fantasy of what we think life with that person

should be. And how seeing someone as we want to see them and not as they are, can strip away their autonomy and, in extremes, their consent.

It is all uncomfortably relatable, and director, writer and editor Curry Barker takes those concepts and turns them up to 11. The jump scares here are earned, as they tie into post-wish Nikki's downright creepy behavior, and the heavy indication that underneath this new, seemingly fawning exterior, Bear has trapped the real Nikki inside her own body, where she is terrified at what is happening and her inability to stop it.

The performances are terrific, with Johnston at first sympathetic and relatable. Then he becomes more and more troubling with his insistent denial to himself and the people in his and Nikki's social sphere that anything is wrong. Eventually, his choices lead to a character reveal that is both sad and repulsive.

Navarrette puts in a stunning portrayal of a woman taken over, one minute seemingly normal, the next screaming, sobbing, pouting, pleading, raging and moving her face and body in ways that are deeply unsettling. She will probably continue in the long, exasperating tradition of actors who should be nominated for an Academy Award for their performance but are ignored because the genre is horror.

Obviously, if you don't like horror films then you're not going to go see *Obsession*. But if you do like them, or you can at least stomach them for the sake of well-made cinema, then this is why we go to the movies, baby.

***Rated R, runtime 1 hr., 49 min.**



Young Adults Build Community Through New Rotaract Club

By Haley Hubbard, Northern Stevens County Rotaract Club President

I have been familiar with Rotary my entire life. My grandpa, Gordon Nelson, was a very proud Rotarian. He always made sure to show off the many projects the Colville Rotary Club did for our community. I remember taking many walks with both of my grandparents on the Rotary Trail while it was being developed.

As a Colville resident, I take pride in where I live and want to be an active part of my community. Being influenced by my family and their volunteering, it felt natural to say yes to help form a Rotaract Club. "Rotaract" comes from "Rotary in action," and it's for young adults.

The Colville Rotary Club paved the path for our Rotaract Club to be chartered last fall. We continue to find our footing with finding the best time to meet and balancing our own schedules and lives while dreaming up new ideas to help our community, being social with fellow young adults, and growing our leadership skills. We have yearly dues of \$50 per member, we meet monthly, and we have the Colville Rotary Club sponsoring us and including us in many of their projects.

We have completed our first project of our own as well. We hosted a Volunteer Fair in Colville in early May, and we hope to host another

in the fall. Also, we recently joined Colville Rotary to help during the Epic Day of Service to complete outdoor projects at the Colville Valley Animal Sanctuary.

While we continue to grow as a club, we ask the community to spread the word about us, request our help with one of your community projects, or refer someone you know who is between 18 and 40 years old and who would like to be part of our club.

Contact information: rotaractclubofnsc@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook for updates: @Rotaract Club of Northern Stevens County.



Rotary, Rotaract and Interact clubs of Colville doing a joint grounds enhancement project at the Colville Valley Animal Sanctuary on their Epic Day of Service volunteer day. Photo courtesy Rotary Club of Colville.

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Rotaract



Club of Northern Stevens County

*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

Keith Urban's *Flow State*

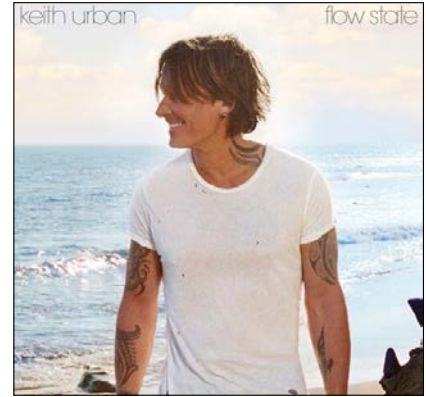
Australian icon Keith Urban seems to have accidentally eased away from his country sound and landed squarely in the soft-rock of the '70s and '80s.

For those who despise the term "yacht rock" (can't stand it, personally), think more in terms of "How Much I Feel" by Ambrosia, "Just the Two of Us" by Grover Washington Jr. or Bill Withers, or "Baby Come Back" by Player ... only with a playful vocal twang courtesy of Urban, who put the whole album together almost by accident.

Having set up a new studio with long-time producer (and Giant mastermind) Dan Huff, the two agreed

that breaking the space in with some vintage pop-rock songs would be a fun way to get sounds rolling out of the new facility.

Two songs became four, four became six, and as Urban would come off tour and assemble a recording band, what initially looked like a hobby EP project became a full-blown album. While the vintage tracks that are at the core of *Flow State* are penned by other artists, "We Go Back" is a superb original collaboration with veteran crooner/songwriting genius Michael McDonald. Sitting nicely in the mix of soft-rock gems, the track may be the best on the entire album.



While Keith Urban hasn't abandoned the country music that made him a superstar, this album is a clever, light-hearted hobby project that might be the perfect soundtrack for the summer of 2026.

Jarod James Nichols' *Maximum Blues*

With perhaps the best guitar face (that scrunched-up, ultra-grimace face that electric axe-slingers make when lost in the middle of an onstage, face-melting guitar solo) in modern music, Jarod James Nichols has been



on the rise for the last 16 years. His full-throttle heavy blues approach to wringing gorgeous sounds out of vintage electric guitars is an artful audio assault, both live and in the studio.

With the "No Cover Charge Podcast" exploding online, this fellow Musicians Institute alumnus may be as recognizable as a guitar-slinging interviewer as he is a high-intensity performer, but don't let that fool you into thinking *Louder Than Fate* isn't a phenomenal rock album. It is.

Leading off with the power-riffing "Let's Go," Nichols' vocals are as strong as his guitar work, while "Ghost" borders on Alice In Chains-inspired southern metal. The

more subtle "Show Me" feels rooted in Nichols' love for blues, and "Looks Like That Felt Good" could be a nod to the venerable Gov't Mule.

With *Louder Than Fate* being Nichols' fourth album, his heaviest set yet is as perfectly played and created as one could hope for. Somewhere between heavy blues and vintage metal, Nichols is working toward taking his place among guitar icons like Gary Moore, Warren Haynes and Zakk Wylde ... with a brand-new Marshall Amplifier endorsement underlining his status as a true up-and-coming rock god.

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

A Good Read

Human Errors, by Nathan Lents

Reviewed by Terry Cunningham

My choice this month is the brilliantly written book *Human Errors: A Panorama of Our Glitches, from Pointless Bones to Broken Genes* by Nathan H. Lents.

I've joked for years about needing an owner's manual for the human body to explain the maladies of modern human existence. This book comes pretty close. Lents is a professor of biology and, with his resources and colleagues, he has created a must-read version of human existence. Written with humor and an easy-to-read style that had me wanting to see what was on the next page, Lents offers a perspective on where we came from and where, in his view, we will end up by keeping on the current trajectory.

He asks, how would an engineer go about designing a human body? Good question. One place to start is with the facts we can gather about the history of the mammal. For example, why do we breathe and eat through the same tube?

Lents writes that human bodies were especially good at developing bones when needed, like in ankles and wrists, but unable to discard bones, so we have some unneeded extras. Other conclusions he reaches include that mammals in the wild have very successful births and healthy offspring compared to our birthing procedures and that, unlike other mammals, modern human bodies no longer produce certain vitamins and amino acids due to the development of greatly varied diets.

Of course, the most powerful and interesting part of the human body is that incredibly delicate tissue we call the brain, protected in a bone chamber sitting

at the top of the human for the best operating position. But this organ making all the decisions can make our lives better or worse, depending on many factors. Lents writes that each brain comes with hundreds of cognitive biases that can be helpful or harmful in the thousands of decisions made every day.

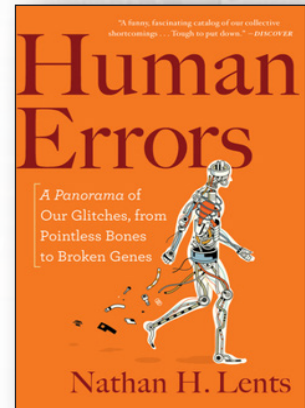
The chapter titles show the author's range. They are:

1. Pointless Bones and Other Anatomical Errors
2. Our Needy Diet
3. Junk in the Genome
4. *Homo sterilis*
5. Why God Invented Doctors
6. A Species of Suckers

Epilogue: The Future of Humanity.

Lents is a professor of biology at John Jay College of the City University of New York and also the author of *Not So Different: Finding Human Nature in Animals*.

Terry Cunningham, who calls himself "a lifelong Earthling," has been a Stevens County resident for more than four decades. Now retired after 30 years as an arborist, he says he's constantly "stunned and amazed by our world," much of which comes to life in books.



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Inchelium Red Garlic: A Sleeping Ethnography

By Shannon Rosenbaum, Director

There’s a well-known concept in language revitalization wherein the language itself is considered “dormant” – awakened through instruction and consistent effort. Much like this language concept, the history of Inchelium Red Garlic has been dormant, or “sleeping,” with little-known origins beyond initial discovery in Inchelium, Washington (according to WSU Food Sovereignty).

Classified as *Allium Sativum*, Inchelium Red is a soft-neck, artichoke-type culinary delight that can be braided beautifully for storage once harvested.

For those of us that dropped cloves last fall, “Inchee” is getting closer to harvesting as July comes on.

I was fortunate to get my hands on some cloves through the Inchelium Red Garlic Revitalization Coalition last October during an event at the Colville Tribes Greenhouse. At that time, I planted them in my own garden – where they have grown beautifully despite a mild winter – and am looking forward to integrating our latest cloves into the community garden.

Developed and maintained by some of our elders at the Senior Meal Site, the Inchelium Community Garden served many last summer with fresh produce and was a visual focal point of our town.

This summer, we at the Inchelium Cultural Research Center are working with guidance from elders to prepare the space and develop a program for our Summer Youth employees to maintain the garden. Through this experience they will learn how to grow and when to harvest, and about contemporary and traditional plants and medicines. It’s an exciting avenue we’re moving down, addressing the cultural and historical importance of traditional harvesting and contemporary agriculture, the former having been present in *ncà?liwṃ* (Inchelium) since time immemorial.

Further, our very own Colville Reservation – WSU Extension office in Nespelem has been working hard to bring this legacy back into the tribal districts, with workshops and garlic distributions throughout the year. This summer, staff is working to gather oral histories from local tribal members and descendants with the hope of adding depth, and ultimately “waking” this sleeping ethnography.



Inchelium youth separating garlic cloves to be planted at the Colville Tribes Greenhouse, fall 2025.



Local high school student, Jessi, with her Inchelium Red Garlic braid

A Year On The Farm

Floating the Kettle River

A Great Month for the Swirl of the Rapids...and Ice Cream

By Michelle Lancaster

Why do I enjoy floating the Kettle River? Well, you would have to join an experienced group and float the river to really understand.

A trip to the river starts by gathering up enough people for safety in numbers and because two cars are needed for the trip. One car gets dropped off at Eye Beach, while the second vehicle continues north to park in Orient close enough to walk to the bridge. We hop out and blow up tubes. I have seen others float by in kayaks as well. I used Badger water-safe and fish-safe sunscreen to help protect my skin from the hours of direct sun. I do not have a photo of floating the river, because I never take along electronics.

Each summer, I hear comments about the status of the Kettle River. Is it too high, too low, too cold, or just right to float? I have also heard rumblings from people who live in the area and are concerned with the increased traffic during summer. My hope is that people respect the privilege of floating

the river so that the opportunity is there for generations to come.

Imagine floating on top of cool but swimmable water that is so crisp and clear you can see every rock on the ground underneath. Like snorkeling without having to put your head under water. I grew up with this kind of water, so have never been able to tolerate the muddy or seaweed-covered swimming areas that other regions have. I cringe at the idea of seaweed or milfoil brushing my toes under murky water. What if that sensation is not just plants, but something more ominous? With the Kettle River, that is not a concern. The water is crystal clear!

Floating time varies based on how fast the river is running. We usually go sometime in July, when spring thaw is well over and the river has lowered some without being too low. Expect to be on the water a few hours. Some areas of the river are shallow enough to hop out and walk. Others require swimming or floating. The mild rapids are a blast – strong enough that you should always pay attention, but slow and short enough you do not feel like you are completely losing control. In a moment when someone up front hollers “Butts up!” you better pull your rear up out of the water or else risk getting a good smack from a boulder just under the surface.

Groups of people can tie their tubes to each other’s, keeping the group together for accountability and ease of visiting. I bring along a big jug of

water and simple snacks like jerky and granola bars without any wrappers that might fall out and create waste. Supplies get tied down in a group cooler or personal bag in case the tubes get bumped or flipped. There is a nice beach mid-way that we often stop at and stretch out on, eating a lunch or walking around for a few minutes, playing in the sand.

From there is the last stretch of river before the end beach. People do not float past there; the rapids are too dangerous is what I have heard. There are two openings to reach the beach. I prefer to try for the first one, so I have a backup plan if we mess up.

Then we jump out and pull the tubes onto the sand to deflate them and carry everything back up to the parking area. We sit and play in the water as two people take the first car back up to Orient to collect and bring both vehicles back to the beach. Then we all hop in and moan about our sunburned spots where we missed applying sunscreen. Someone inevitably asks, “Ice cream?” and we inevitably reply, “Yes, off to Sandy’s for a double swirl!” Only after strenuous activities like the hours-long float down the Kettle River can you possibly imagine consuming a whole double (or triple!) cone at Sandy’s. Always a refreshing end to a fun day.

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



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It's Time for Flowers!

By Brenda St. John

"I want creation to penetrate you with so much admiration that wherever you go, the least plant may bring you the clear remembrance of the Creator."

~ Basil the Great

When it comes to gardening, I tend to save the best for last. Maybe I feel pressured to take care of other things first, but for whatever reasons there might be I plant my flowers last. I do put in a small group of starts and seeds before it's warm enough to plant the vegetables, but the rest of the flowers get planted after all the vegetables are in, this year in late June.

My flowers are very diverse, much like my yoga students. Some bloom early; some bloom late. Some of my yoga students catch on very quickly; some have more difficulty remembering the nuances of various asana. Some of my flowers bloom for just a short time and then are done for the

season. Some start blooming early and will continue to bloom until frost. This reminds me of students who take a class or two and then disappear for a year or forever, while others come back week after week for years at a time.

No matter, everyone together makes for a beautiful garden. My flower beds would be boring if all the flowers were the same – the same leaves, the same color, the same size, the same scent, and all blooming through the same season. It takes a variety of flowers to create interest for the senses. The pollinators also like the wide range of flowers. So, too, the yoga students all bring something different to class.

"My flowers are very diverse, much like my yoga students."

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My flowers all seek the sun. They stretch and turn with the light. Many close up at night. Likewise, we yogis keep returning to our mats because this is where we find mental clarity, inner peace, and glimmers of our true self.

The blooming season is temporary. The flowers will not last forever. Because of this realization, we learn to appreciate beauty without clinging to it. We realize that everything changes, and we practice gratitude for what we have.

No matter how carefully I prepare my flower beds, weeds will eventually emerge. So, too, no matter how I try to live my life, problems, disappointments, and obstacles will eventually arise. The goal is not to create a weed-free garden or a problem-free life, but to learn how to respond when challenges appear.

These problems might start as a negative thought and quickly turn into fear, anxiety, jealousy, pride, or some other emotion which does not serve my best self. If I recognize the weed or the thought quickly, I can remove it while it is still small. However, if left untended, it can grow into a bigger weed or a bigger problem that is harder to remedy.

Weeds steal sunlight, water, and nutrients from the flowers, and likewise negative thought patterns consume energy which I would rather devote to positive thinking. Recognizing the weeds in the garden is easy, but the gardener must pay attention frequently in order to remove them while they are still small. The yogis deal with personal challenges by staying present in order to

recognize problems while they are still small. This would be our diaphragmatic breathing and the quiet mind that comes from staying in the present moment.



A good yoga asana that has many corollaries with life is Lotus Pose. (Unfortunately, it does not grow in my garden.) Also correlating with life, I can only do Half-Lotus Pose because I do not have sufficient hip mobility to do the full pose. Lotuses are flowers which grow in mud yet blossom into one of the most beautiful of flowers. They thrive despite imperfect growing conditions. Like the lotus, we can unfold to our fullest potential despite whatever difficulties we encounter.

To practice Lotus Pose, sit on the floor with both legs extended forward. Bend the right knee and place the right foot on the left thigh, sole facing up. Bend the left knee and place the left foot on the right thigh, sole facing up. Keep the spine straight and shoulders back and down. Rest hands on knees, palms facing up or in a mudra. Hold the pose for several breaths. To practice Half Lotus, follow the instructions above, but keep the left leg straight. Lotus should be avoided by people with knee, hip, or ankle injuries.

Just as a flower garden flourishes because of healthy roots and prepared soil, so too do we thrive when we have a strong foundation and utilize all the resources we have available.

Namaste.

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

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Stepping Up to the Plate

Life Can Throw Us Curves. Sometimes, You Just Gotta Swing.

By Rob Sumner

My son recently wrapped up his junior high baseball season.

He's a good baseball player and, more important, he genuinely enjoys the game. That's what makes it so much fun for me as a dad. Over the years, we've spent countless hours together working on baseball. We've hit in the cage, thrown bullpen sessions, taken ground balls until the sun went down, and talked endlessly about the game.

For me, it's one of the great joys of being a father. It's fun for him. It's fun for me. That's a double win. But baseball has a funny way of teaching lessons when you least expect it. In one of his final junior high games, he struck out three times.

Ouch.

If you've ever played baseball, you know that feeling. There are days when nothing seems to go right. To his credit, he handled it well. He didn't pout. He didn't make excuses. He took it in stride. But I know him. I know it bothered him.

As parents, coaches, and as human beings, our natural tendency after disappointment is to immediately start looking for what went wrong. Something had to be broken. Maybe his stance was off. Maybe his swing mechanics needed work. Maybe his timing was wrong. Maybe we needed to change something.

Naturally, we reviewed his at-bats. We talked about the game. We looked at what happened. What we found surprised me. There wasn't a mechanical flaw.

His stance was fine. His swing was fine. His approach wasn't fundamentally wrong.

In fact, there wasn't really anything to fix. The pitcher simply did a great job of keeping him off balance. He mixed speeds well. He created hesitation. He created uncertainty. And the result was: My son didn't swing and was called out.

The issue wasn't knowledge, technique, or ability. The issue was action. In the moment, he didn't pull the trigger. And, as I thought about that afterward, I realized how often this same thing happens in our own lives.

"The issue wasn't knowledge, technique, or ability. The issue was action."

Most people don't suffer from a lack of information. We know we should walk more. We know we should strength train. We know we should eat more protein.

We know we should go to bed earlier. We know we should stretch. We know we should drink more water. The problem usually isn't knowledge.

The problem is action.

We often convince ourselves that if we just learn one more thing, find one more technique, listen to one more podcast, read one more book, or discover one more secret, then we'll finally get the result we want. But knowledge alone doesn't change anything.

In fact, gathering information can be deceptive because it feels productive. It stimulates the brain. It creates excitement. It gives us the feeling that we're mak-

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Forever Young-ish

ing progress. But learning about exercise isn't exercise. Learning about nutrition isn't nutrition. Learning about mobility doesn't improve mobility.

Only action creates results.

And that's the hard part. Action requires discomfort. Action requires effort. Action requires consistency long after the excitement wears off. My son's strikeouts weren't caused by a lack of preparation or instruction. They weren't caused by a bad swing. They happened because, in a split second, he didn't act.

But here's the best part of the story. My son and I talked about what happened. We agreed that nothing was broken. There wasn't a swing overhaul needed. There wasn't some magical technique we had to discover. We didn't need a new stance or a new approach. What we needed was action.

So, we made a decision for the next game. The pitch didn't have to be perfect. He wasn't going to wait for the ideal moment. He was going to be aggressive and attack the first hittable pitch he saw.

The result?

Two hits in the next game. One of them was a bases-loaded double that sailed over the center fielder's head. Nothing mechanical changed. No secret technique was discovered. No dramatic adjustment was made. The only thing that changed was his willingness to act.

And isn't that true for most of us?

The reality is that most people already know enough to improve their health, fitness, mobility, relationships, finances, and overall quality of life. What they often lack isn't information – it's execution. The people who move forward aren't always the smartest, most talented, or most informed. They're simply the ones willing to step into the batter's box and take the swing.

Because, in the end, we only get credit for action.

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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What Does a Yellow-headed Blackbird Know That We Don't?

By *Cindy Talbott Roché*

“Wow. Those are yellow-headed blackbirds! I've always seen those in alkaline bulrush ponds surrounded by grasslands,” commented my husband's friend from college days who had worked on various wildlife refuges in Montana, Wyoming and Alaska. We were walking along Cottonwood Creek in the Chewelah area, near where it flows into the Colville River, on a bright May afternoon. Blackbirds abounded: red-winged, Brewer's, and yellow-headed, in a loose flock over the hayfields and pastures. There were no bulrush ponds in sight in the verdant valley surrounded by glacially rounded foothills.

But the comment gave me pause to remember that a few months earlier I had noticed saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) growing in the ditch along Highway 395 near the old magnesite plant. A couple of years ago I found alkali grass (*Puccinellia distans*) near my brother's grain bins. I assumed it had arrived on a vehicle tire because this particular alkali grass is spreading in Washington along highways that are salted in the winter.

What do yellow-headed blackbirds, saltgrass, alkali grass, and bulrush have in common? They are frequently associated with alkaline soils. I'm familiar with saline/alkaline soils in the drier climates of eastern Oregon and Washington where annual precipitation is 8 inches or less, but Chewelah gets around 20 inches a year. Because high rainfall flushes the salts out of the soil, I didn't expect it here. But I should have. Anytime that water evaporates from the soil surface, it leaves the salt components behind,

just like evaporating sweat (or tears) leaves a white crust on your skin.

According to the Stevens County Soil Survey, the soil found along the Colville River where we saw the yellow-headed blackbirds is Colville silt loam. This is a very deep, poorly drained soil that formed from mineral particles that settled out of water. The surface layer (A horizon) is silt loam in texture, so the series name is “Colville silt loam.” Loam soils have a combination of clay, silt, and sand content that is particularly favorable for farming. A silt loam soil has higher silt content than a loam soil, so is a

bit heavier, hard when dry and sticky when wet. A silty clay loam is even heavier and stickier.

Typical horizons in a soil pit for Colville silt loam would look like this:

A (0-17 inches): dark gray silt loam, calcareous, strongly alkaline

B (17-27 inches): gray silty clay loam, strongly alkaline

C1 (27-38 inches): light gray silty clay loam, strongly alkaline

C2 (38-54 inches): light gray silty clay loam, moderately alkaline

C3 (54-60 inches): white silt loam, mildly alkaline

Have you ever been to the field



Yellow-headed blackbird. Photo by Robert Korfhage.

with a soil scientist? I have and it's interesting to see how they read the history recorded in the soil.

They dig a hole (soil pit), looking for different layers, and take samples of the soil at different depths. In addition to the shovel, their tool kit includes a book with color charts, a small sieve, a squirt bottle with water, and a little bottle of acid. They wet the soil and roll it around with their fingers to determine the soil texture (silt loam, for example). They compare dry and wet samples to the color charts.

To test for alkalinity, they drop hydrochloric acid on a dry sample of soil. (This is also called the "on farm fizz test.") If the soil effervesces (fizzes), it is alkaline. The acid reacts with the carbonates to release carbon dioxide as gas bubbles. If you can see bubbles or hear fizzing, the soil contains carbonate, likely in the form of calcite or dolomite. You can easily re-create this acid-base reaction with baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) and vinegar (acetic acid). When combined, they neutralize each other, and you end up with carbon dioxide gas (the fizz) and water.

Gardening sites online will tell you that soils are either acidic or alkaline, inferring that alkalinity is simply high pH. In the pH scale, numbers below 7 are acidic (like lemon juice, pH 2 or 3) and numbers above 7 are basic (like ammonia, pH 11). This is somewhat misleading. While all alkaline soils are basic, not all basic soils are alkaline (just like not all rectangles are squares).

What exactly is alkalinity? It's a measurement of the concentration of carbonate salts. The carbonate salts (calcium, magnesium, and sodium) in alkaline soils buffer against chang-



Soil scientist in action. Photo by Cindy Roché.

es in pH by neutralizing acids. The source of these acids can be fertilizers that contain sulfur, decaying plants (humic acid) and leaching by high rainfall.

Buffering, by the way, is a good thing because it provides a more stable environment for the plants and animals. Crops such as alfalfa, barley, oats, and wheat thrive in alkaline soils, often producing higher yields than on other soils. Alkaline soils often reduce the availability of iron, nitrogen and sulfur, which can limit plant growth. They may be more prone to compaction, which reduces root penetration and water infiltra-

tion.

How do yellow-headed blackbirds tell where the soil is alkaline? I have no idea, except they may recognize the plants that thrive there, much like a botanist can.

Cindy Talbott Roché, a 1973 graduate of Jenkins High School, has written for the Field Guide to Grasses of Oregon and Washington, and provided grass illustrations to Flora of North America and botanical articles to Kalmiopsis. She's presently working to restore wetland habitats for wildlife on her family farm, and can be reached at grassesandmore@gmail.com or on grassesandmore.wixsite.com/grasses.

The Song Sparrow

A Song of Survival, Gratitude and Belonging

By Juan Juan Moses

On a blistering March day, I heard it announcing its arrival, a trill of six or seven notes. Its crystal-like sound broke the gray and still wintry day. I was on my hands and knees, scratching the cold and bare ground, despairing over the imaginary garden that only the mind could see. The wind blew my hair in all directions and covered my eyes, but my ears pricked up at the song. My heart leaped: Isn't it a pleasure my old friend has returned for the season! Suddenly, the gray sky gave way to a season full of promises, another day of hard work rewarded by colors and abundance ahead, another

chance to start anew.

Song sparrows, the modest, most unassuming birds, who have no colorful plumage to wow, no colorful personalities to impress, no particularly noted intelligence to set them apart from other birds, nothing to catch the eyes and distinguish themselves but for a brownish-reddish chest streak, find themselves a special place in me. And it's not just because they can sing – yet, oh how they can sing!

I owe them a debt from a ghost of the past. Maybe it's collective debt. But the debt is personal.

In 1958, China started a campaign

to eradicate four pests: flies, mosquitoes, rats and sparrows. Sparrows were included in this list due to the government's misguided belief that the birds were eating precious grains, competing for precious resources with an already starving citizenry. As in any overzealous, top-down government campaign devoid of reality, reason or science, an entire nation was mobilized to kill the birds, by any means necessary, including banging pots and pans to prevent birds from landing. Birds were literally falling out of sky, dying of exhaustion.

People needed no encouragement



Song sparrow. Photo by Joanie Christian.

to raid the nests to kill them for the bonus of a rare treat of a fried bird.

According to research published by Cato Institute on Jan. 7, 2026, by 1960 the country had managed to kill approximately 2 billion sparrows.

I was born a couple of years after the Great Chinese Famine of 1959-61, when tens of millions of people died. The ghost lived on. Always hungry, always present. Mine was a colorless, songless, joyless, and sometimes dinnerless childhood.

Neighbors continued to raid birds' nests out of hunger, out of necessity. At around 4 or 5, I had my first and only taste of one. I did not know what kind of bird it was. Neither did I care, as a child. But someone fed me a deep-fried fledging. I could still feel the crunch of its delicate bone in my mouth. I ate the whole in one bite. It tasted good. It was an act of caring and generosity on the giver's part. And for some reason, I believe it was a sparrow.

It had started as an extermination of sparrows. But who knew exactly how many birds were exterminated in this fashion? How many were collateral damage? Into the late 1980s, as young adults, friends of mine still could not go past birds without fantasizing about the taste of them.

So ... this March turned into April and rainy May and gentle June. On the Pend Oreille River most migratory birds have come and gone. Black-eyed

juncos have long since departed their winter ground. The adorable buffleheads have wooed us with their huge flocks, lazing down the river with the current. The magnificent hooded mergansers, with their Roman soldier helmet of a crown, stopped me in my tracks several times and made me drop my jaw and tools. I once even heard a loon, its haunting call lingering on the quiet evening water. For days I did not believe I heard that and thought I was hallucinating.

But they all have moved on to their summer place. And I probably won't hear loons again this year, as summer water becomes busy with human traffic. Ours is but a stop on their way to elsewhere, affording us a short-lived window into the spirit of this world. A moving feast for our own soul and spirit.

But the song sparrows stay. They sing through the rain, through the stinging spring cold, through the wet gray days, through the drying hot summer wind, through everyone else's flight through this paradise. From a patch of bare hard clay in March, we eked out a garden that now flourishes under our attentive care. The song sparrows have witnessed and kept us company through it all, always flitting not far away, their tails bobbing up and down as if on a spring. And they sing. They have asked nothing from us but to sing through this day, gray or pink or gold.

Recently, I have been thinking a lot about reincarnation. I also think a lot about what I would say to this country if I were to write a letter to it on its 250th birthday.

I think I have found the answer to both in the little sparrow.

I want to be reborn as the bird that can sing as brightly in the downpour as in the blazing sun, as crisply in the first ray of morning sun as in the last ray of the evening, in a place that I don't have to fear I have nowhere to land or my nest be raided to give a taste to a starving child so she knows what meat tastes like.

Happy Birthday, America. You made me a mother that envies her own children for having the great fortune of being born to you.

Juan Juan wakes up every morning and pinches herself with gratitude that she was reborn into this great country and lives in a bountiful place called the Pend Oreille River.

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Way To Go!

By Tina Wynecoop

Publisher's note: This story is a reprint from the February 2019 edition of the North Columbia Monthly and is shared at Tina Wynecoop's request in honor of her husband, Judge Wynecoop, who passed on June 9, 2026.

Continued excerpts from Judge Wynecoop's book, The Shooting Star, are planned for future editions.

Editor's note: Way, according to Wynecoop, is a greeting used among interior Salish speakers and is a type of "hello," a welcome, an acknowledgment of fresh thinking.

Heard about Crazy Alen the Scandinavian immigrant? He logged in Minnesota's northern forests where winters are cold – bone-chilling cold. He wasn't always crazy. The writer of his obituary said, "He could cut wood better than many men ... He used a bucksaw and would pull so hard he often pulled the man on the other end off his feet. He liked to play jokes on the other loggers ... he didn't hurt anybody. He would put pepper in their snoose or sew their stockings closed or nail a board over the hole in the outhouse."

One winter when it was so cold outside "you could spit and it would bounce," the old logger felt death closing in and played his best joke. He left his cabin door open and lay inside on the floor, his extremities spread out wide. He died. "The cold came in and froze him hard as granite. The camp boss had to dismantle the cabin to get him out because Alen's body would not fit through the door." It was impossible to think of Crazy Alen's last exit without smiling, "smiling at death, laughing at death." (from *The Winter Room* by Gary Paulsen)

My logger husband laughed at death when his tribe's newspaper editor inadvertently placed an article about him in the obituary section of the paper. Word of his "passing" spread as swiftly as ice forming on a shallow lake in the deep of winter. Calls of condolences began coming in. The editor sincerely apologized.

The logger has already made plans for his own exit – when the time comes. How, he wonders, can he move

into a cemetery already filled with so many of his kin? The cemetery overlooks the meadow of his family's cattle ranch, a cherished landscape where, in their youth, he and Chick, one of his six brothers, helped build fence lines to keep the cattle in place. This took a lot of posts and a posthole digger. The posthole digger became their third "brother" as they strung barbed wire on posts placed deep in round holes.

His daily breakfast of oatmeal reminded him that an empty Quaker Oats container would work just fine to hold his ashes and would easily slide into a posthole among the family headstones. Being a thoughtful man, his plans extend to his immediate family: His wife and children are invited to "hop in their own oatmeal boxes" and join him, one atop the other.

We will honor his wish for his urn. ... We just may have our own, unique plans on "the way to go." It would be hard to top his.

Then there is Chick's recent passing. It is a tender and solemn time, yet a burst of Indian humor graces his transition as well. How useful humor is! Chick is just a spare 15 months younger than his brother. They grew up farming and fencing and roaming the reservation together. He chose the Forest

Service as his profession. When his family began making arrangements after his passing, his daughter suggested the family's Smokey Bear cookie jar would serve as the perfect urn for his ashes. Over the years it held sweet treats, and now it is filled with Chick's ashes, ready for its final assignment. Placed on the altar during his memorial service in Minnesota, it brought a ray of humor during a somber time. The cookie jar will travel with family for burial at his birthplace at Wellpinit in early summer 2019. The posthole



Judge Wynecoop huckleberry picking.



digger will prepare the ground for his final resting place.

Across the Columbia River near Inchelium resided a man esteemed by his community on the Colville Indian Reservation. Carl Putnam led a long (101 years) and productive life. He outlived his wife for whom he built a stone monument resembling a small version of their home. He placed her urn within and created an extra niche to await his own remains when that time came (in late 2018).

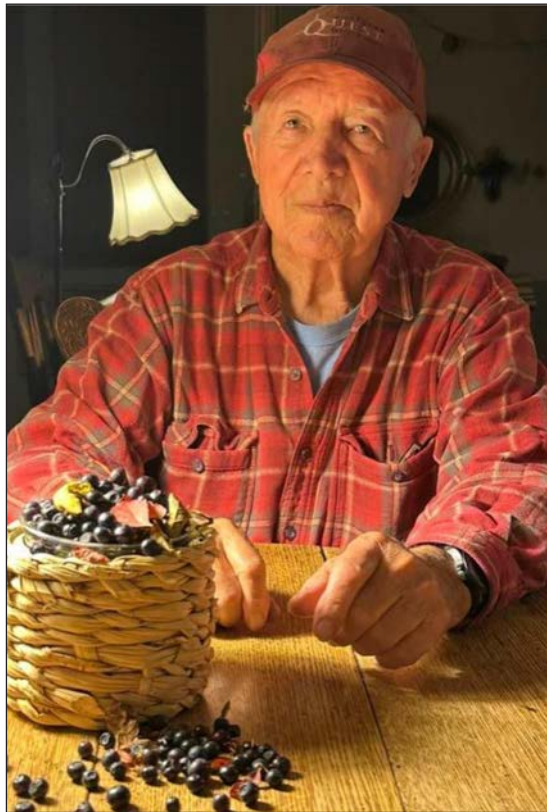
After Carl's memorial service, his family discovered, to their surprise and delight, that the monument held a plastic peanut butter jar with a red cap. Tucked inside the otherwise empty jar was a letter with a personal message to his three children ... and three pennies. He closed his letter to them with "Ha! Oh, by the way, I didn't leave you peniless!" Alongside the peanut butter jar was a 15-inch length of PVC pipe designed by Fogle Pump. The pipe was closed on one end and had a screw-on cap on the other ... just the right size for his ashes.

My friend Sandy and her husband Doug lived by the sea in the San Juan Islands. Doug died unexpectedly as the waves lapped quietly along the shore below their cabin. His body was carried off-island by a Washington State ferry to the mainland, and his ashes were ferried back to the place he had spent so much of his life. A water burial was planned.

His family borrowed a motorboat from a moorage halfway around the island and headed to the predetermined site near his longtime home. Midway to the destination, the boat began taking on water. A new plan had to be made, and quickly.

Mooring as close to the cabin as possible, the ceremony

was done from shore. Sandy carried the container and, as she waded into the salty water, she lost her balance and fell in. It looked funny. Could the other mourners laugh? She laughed. We knew then that we had license to laugh, too. She sprinkled his ashes. Some didn't sink, remaining on the surface as if refusing to say farewell to the place and people he loved. We all laughed until tears ran down our legs. Hilarity eased our loss. What a way to go!



Judge Wynecoop with a sampling of his harvest.

Recently, I learned about Greg Boyle, the founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. He is a Jesuit priest who works with gang members and addicts. He speaks of their "lethal absence of hope" which often results in untimely deaths. Boyle presides over many funerals and yet not all the funerals are about loss. He says that his wonderful mother (92) was never afraid of death. As she lay on her deathbed, surrounded by her family, they overheard her say, "I've never done this before!" Greg said, "Like it was skydiving - she was kind of exhilarated by it." She moved on then to the next place, having shared her sense of wonder with her family - humorous, dramatic, lively. What a way to go!

And, "What you are feeling when you miss them is not their absence. It's their presence.

Death is just one more new place to go," author Sy Montgomery reminds us.

My son-in-law, Paul, describes his own mother's passing: "She decided it was time to spin her cocoon."

Metamorphosis is apt and lovely imagery.

Well, that's the end of my stories. And I ask, "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians, KJV)

Stovepipe Bats

By Madilane Perry

Basically, I like bats. This interest has not always been good for bats, but I think my attitude and actions have improved significantly through the years.

When I was a small child, my parents operated a resort on Curlew Lake which included a large dancehall built in the 1920s. It housed a maternity colony of bats. I was told at the time that they were Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) and I have found nothing to contradict this, so L.B.B.s they have remained in my mind.

The bats were in residence in the late 1940s and early 1950s when dances were still being held in the

dancehall. Some dancers objected to them, but most ignored them. That phase of the colony didn't last long. The dancehall was closed and locked, its dance floor and contents were covered in burlap, and the structure was left to the bats.

I was allowed to visit it occasionally and was permitted to handle any bats that had fallen to the burlap. This was probably very bad for the bats, who were already probably in trouble or they would have been roosting in the rafters. I don't think either parent was aware that I was damaging the bats. I was fascinated by their incredibly soft fur, their fierce little faces and, above all, the warm, translucent, living leather of their wings. These visits came to a stop with the first report of a rabid bat in the Okanogan Valley.

Since then my relationship with bats has been mostly devoted to trying to avoid sharing close quarters with them.

I think that part of the maternity colony eventually moved into the attic of my log cabin when the roof of the dancehall collapsed. I can live with bats in the attic but bats in the living room heating stove are too much.

The bats moved into the stove back when I was still using oil heat. I had turned the oil off for the summer when I began hearing noises in the chimney. The noises increased over several weeks. I figured out who my noisy housemates were when I observed two sets of little black claws hooked over the edges of the old flapper-style damper mounted on the side of the stovepipe. Two bats were roosting on the back side of the

damper. This would give them access to the living room if they tipped the damper open. I did not want sooty L.B.B.s from the chimney flying around a largely white-painted room.

About two o'clock one noisy morning I had had enough. I didn't understand how something as small and soft as a Little Brown Bat could make that much noise, but I was going to stop it. Turning on all the interior lights and opening two layers of front doors to the dark, friendly night, I put on leather gloves, opened the stove, and started grabbing bats. I'd never known an L.B.B.'s sharp little teeth to break my skin but I remembered the possibility of rabies and was being careful.

I grabbed and launched out the front door seventeen L.B.B.s. The two on the damper escaped into the living room but soon found their way out the door, which I closed behind them. I had tried to be gentle when grabbing bats, but failed at that at least once, as there was one dead bat outside the door in the morning.

My penance for initially mistreating bats has been to install a commercially made bat cote in the gable end of a storage building on my place, which has a probable maternity colony above its ceiling. It took the bats about three years to decide that the facility was adequate and move in. Judging from the accumulation of guano on the windowsill below the "bat house," they are still there.

Madilane Perry, a retired archaeologist, was raised on a family-owned hunting and fishing resort on Curlew Lake. She is married to local author Ray Bilderback.

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HaPpY FoUrTh Of JuLy

Story and Photo by Becky Dubell

250 years old! HaPpY BiRtHdAy USA! Here is Mom's birthday song for all of us:

I don't know but I've been told
Someone here is getting old
The good news is we sing for free
The bad news is we're all off key

(And are we ever – especially Mom.)

I'm thinking this country has my dad beat in age. Daddy will be 96 in a couple of weeks and is still able to do a squat all the way to the floor and back up. I had decided, quite some time ago, that I need to still be doing those squats when I reach his age. I'm really hoping that he will soon reach the point that he can't do them as easily. As of right now I have to continue showing people how my dad does those dreaded squats!! Ask anybody who knows me well how much I HATE them. I really don't want to have to continue doing them for the next 25-plus years.

But ... I would not mind being in the same kind of shape my dad is. May have to rethink my plan.

I went down to Grand Coulee with Daddy to help with a garage sale. It was a really easy one. Was all free – 100% off. Started with enough to fill a large dumpster. After two days it had shrunk down to one pickup bed-full. Had made a call to the Legion Hall – they were having a sale on Saturday – and boy did he take an overloaded pickup truck down the road.

We kept a tote full of some free stuff to put out with Daddy's garage sale items – guy stuff, ya know. That's not on the calendar yet. He has a single-car garage that still has to be gone through. Oh. Can't forget about the two enclosed trailers.

There were two items that I wanted to make sure got a good home for free – about 14 gallon glass jars with metal lids (Ellen loved those olives) and a very large canvas tarp. Got it done! Had a guy come back the next day because he had a dream about our wooden rocker that spoke to him. It fit in his small trunk and good thing he was only around the corner.

I have noticed a few things while spending time with Daddy. One thing that really hit me was his voice. Let's see if I can explain it. I showed up on a Thursday night. I LOVE it when he gets to talking about his life. He was raised on a farm in the early '30s as basically an only child, so lots of stories. (My modern-day description is "a little Houdini" – 10 years after his sister – oops.) We



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headed to bed at 10 p.m., after about five hours of stories.

When he started sharing stories, he felt like his voice was being forced out with a lot of coughing and clearing of the throat. Was like that until his voice was done trying to work and he quit at 10. In defense of his voice, you need to know that he had not had much company for about two weeks.

The next morning, we started with more stories. You've most likely heard the phrase, "Use it or lose it." (Mom always said that about her chair exercising.) Well. It also relates to the vocal cords. We had never heard of that. Daddy told stories most of Friday and Saturday with very little throat clearing or coughing and no feeling of forcing his voice.

His new daily routine includes dictating his stories to the computer each afternoon after working in the garage in the morning. His stamina and muscles are getting better and his voice is staying strong. (Personal note: Voice staying strong is good. More muscles for squats? Don't know about that yet.) I hope sharing this with you has

made an a-ha moment in your life. Vocal cords need exercise, too!

The CanAm Spyder is still in Daddy's life. He had thoughts of selling it when Ellen sold hers after she determined she was not comfortable riding any longer. She asked him to keep his just in case he wanted to take it for a spin. Well. As you can tell from the photo it seems to be a good call on Ellen's part. Thank you very much, Ellen! I don't know whose grin was bigger after his short jaunt, his or mine. His plan is to take it for a ride down to Wilbur, about 20 miles up and then down the road. I think that is a good sign since that's his first name. Maybe just



a daughter Becky thing!?

Did you enjoy the longest day of the year?

Safe 4th to you and yours.

Becky Dubell 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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A Growing Garden Frustration

By Karen Giebel

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?"

Well, dear old Mary's silver bells and cockle shells are probably doing a lot better than we are this year.

Things started out just hunky dory with both the new raised beds and the revised raised beds. Plus, Dan promised to keep our garden smaller and more manageable this year, which had me jumping up and down with happiness. The strawberry bed he planted last year is full of beautiful, ripening berries and the few we've had so far are a delight. I planted one raised bed with two types of lettuce, a Tom Thumb variety and a larger romaine, which we really like. Another bed is planted with chives, lovage, Swiss chard and zinnias.

I'd never tried lovage before, but a friend gave me a taste at her house and some seeds and I was all in. It's delicious and tastes like a combination of celery, parsley and cilantro. I am eager to try it in soups and salads when it is full grown, which can be five to six feet high. Our asparagus is done for the season. Thankfully, Dan planted just six tomato plants this year instead of 47 like he has done in the past. "Remember, dear, there is just the two of us."

Six pepper plants will give us more than enough and I can freeze or dehydrate what we don't use fresh. In a separate garden, he has some corn and winter squash coming along nicely but no pole beans to make it the traditional Three Sisters. For herbs, I have my usual parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme, along with basil and more chives growing in large pots. Last year's dill self-seeded and was going strong. Notice I said "was." More on that later.

I was quite pleased with our reduced garden but then Dan had a moment and back-slid seriously. He came in the house and said there were all these empty holes in the garden cloth, so he felt compelled to plant a row of beans. I sighed and said, "Well, OK."

Then he paused before saying that there were a lot more empty holes so he planted a 30-foot row of cucumbers. That had me snap my head up and stare at the wall, breathing deeply. Our basement shelves are still full of pickles from last year and the year before.

"You did what? I have no intention of making another pickle until every one of those are gone."

We have sweet relish, dill relish, sweet chunks, dill spears, dill chips, bread and butter pickles plus pickled beans and asparagus. Honestly, the man can't help himself. I think he needs a 12-step program. If you're looking for cukes this summer, hit me up. I may be able to help.

Here comes the frustrating part for both of us: Dan came in and announced that something was eating the strawberries. Every time a berry was turning red, half of it had little teeth marks in it. So, he placed four mousetraps baited with peanut butter in the bed. The next morning one trap was missing. Missing? No mouse is running off with a trap on its head.

The next morning, another trap was missing and we searched all over for whatever was caught in a trap – without success. But the good news is whatever they were learned a lesson: No further strawberries have been eaten, and the remaining traps are still there.

But there's more. A couple days later, in comes Dan saying all my dill was

gone. All of it! Eaten down to stubs. I just stared in disbelief. It was planted next to a fence that faces a field. What could have done that?

We don't see rabbits around our place but looking out into the field I did see ground squirrels, specifically Columbia Basin ground squirrels, standing on their mounds and whistling away. I swear they were laughing at us.

They had moved in a few years ago and hubby had been doing target practice that kept them under control ... until now. The people across our dirt road moved several years ago and their field is now overgrown with waist-high weeds and probably a hundred ground squirrels which we can't do a thing about. They have burrowed into the road and LuLu and I see them on our daily walks.

A quick internet search shows that ground squirrels love herbaceous plants – like perhaps dill? Plus, they enjoy a fruit snack like strawberries. They are certainly big enough to run off with a mousetrap.

The traps will be removed because we don't want to torture any animal and poison is never a good option, so we're back to target practice, which at least is quick. Not sure what the long-term plan will be, but we'll have to come up with something. Every morning, I stare at the lettuce because that and the Swiss chard will be next on their grocery list followed by tomatoes. So, Mary, Mary, that's how our garden grows.

And that's life up here in the Back of the Beyond in Ferry County, Washington.

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

Summer is here and we have homes to sell!

Call or Text to BUY, SELL or get your FREE Market Analysis!



MLS# 45824 **\$699,000**
 Outstanding Lake Roosevelt and mountain views from this incredible triplewide on 23 acres of private land. Home features primary ensuite with jetted tub, tile walls and walk-in shower plus sitting/living area. Open living, dining and gourmet kitchen with expansive counter space and beautiful views. Stone fireplace and built in wood storage adds to the glamour of this home. Extra living space with 2 additional bedrooms and full bath. Large garage with an enclosed room from the garage to the main house. Front and back decks. The back deck is covered and has a fenced yard for your family. Additional 30x40x14 shop that is 90% insulated and has a wood stove. It's all here!

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



MLS# 45910 **\$334,900**



MLS# 45880 **\$670,000**
 Peace and tranquility. Wildlife abounds w/13+ acres of seclusion on the 1310 line of Lake Roosevelt, less than 1/2 mile from French Rock Boat Launch. Lake views from all main living spaces and bedrooms. 2 bd/2 bath main floor, fully finished walk out lower level w/pellet stove, in rec room w/2 additional bedrooms (non-conforming) & 3/4 bath. This home has been well maintained including a new pressure & H2O tank! One owner. Triple pane windows in basement and upstairs slider. New flooring 2017/2026. The list goes on. Pellet and electric heat w/cooling for main living & main floor bedroom. Add the 2-car garage/shop with additional covered parking. All buildings have a metal roofs.

Single family residence ready for you to move in and make your own. This 3 bed 2 bath has a large living room, a large kitchen and dining area. Sits on a large, partially fence lot with plenty of room to garden or entertain. Mud/utility room, enclosed front porch, and newly redone covered back patio with ramp if you need to bypass the stairs. Many upgrades have been done: The back patio/porch was repaired/rebuilt, new exterior paint, a new hot water heater, and more. Alley access with plenty of parking, RV parking and boat parking. The home is located in the small town of Marcus, WA and just minutes from Marcus Island boat launch and Lake Roosevelt.



MLS# 45921 **\$260,900**



MLS# 46031 **\$279,000**

This home is located in the Deep Lake recreational area. 3 bed, 1 on the main floor and 2 upstairs with main floor bathroom and upper bathroom, Rustic setting with a creek right off the deck. Lots of space with 2 living areas. Laundry is on the main level. 3.27 acres with creek and woods for your backyard enjoyment. Needs a little TLC to make this your own.



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

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

Over 3,000 Sq. ft. 4 bed/3.5bath on a large corner lot - within an hour of Spokane, with golf course & ski hill as a part of your new community. This home highlights custom craftsman build including a theater stage and full screen wired for sound, lights and projector for all your family and entertaining possibilities. Chewelah's Peye Creek babbling through the front yard, under your very own bridge, lighted pathway and established native and elaborate landscaped yard. Fully fenced back and side yard in addition to a 2-car attached garage with workshop. This home has it all and the room and design to accommodate a multitude of living enjoyment and options! Come see it today!



MLS# 44403 **\$535,000**



MLS# 46027 **\$650,000**

Charming 1911 farm home with new 28'x32' shop and functional barn. Additional outbuildings all on 28 acres. Just about 5 miles from Bradbury or Daisy boat launch and day beach. Bay and dormer windows along with elegant dining room. Year-round pond w/ the Quillisas-cut Creek running through. This home has been restored and preserved and is ready for its next owners. All updated windows. Updated wiring and plumbing in 2009. Re-roofed in 2018/19. Basement is partially finished and includes utility room and canning storage. Wood cook stove, front door screen, front porch swing and greenhouse.

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



MLS# 45832 **\$425,000**

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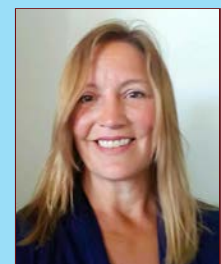
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Summer Sketches

Article & Illustrations

by Marci Bravo

July is...

... the sputtering of sprinklers in gardens and lawns at dawn.

... the early morning chatter of twenty different songbirds dipping in and out of sight at the bird feeders and perches, splashing in the birdbath, and playing hide and seek in the service-berry branches while I sip my morning tea and count my blessings.

... cherry trees ripe for the picking.

... blue- and red-stained sticky fingers and smiles in berry patches.

... hustling to get errands and outdoor chores done before the scorching heat of the afternoon arrives, and all I'll want to do is escape to my cool studio, shade trees, or the shore of a nearby



A female American goldfinch of needle-felted wool and beads. Made by Marci Bravo.

Creative Being in Stevens County

creek, river or lake.

... weekend town festivals, live music and dancing in the sun.

... the smell of grilling barbecue hanging in the air.

... watching our talented local youth perform at the Woodland Theater's summer production.

... the sensation of slow sunburns tempered by the cold river.

... the quiet sound of a paddle pushing through the water's surface and then the sharp intake of breath and loud splash as I lose balance and fall off my board, and my laughter joining my son's and husband's as I resurface.

... the gentle whirl of gliding fishing line from a reel and the satisfying, watery plunk of a good cast into the lake.

... the top Billboard hits of the '90s wafting from my neighbors while we work in our yard or wash cars and exchange jokes from opposite sides of the street.

... the calls of pickup basketball games and the light clacks of paddles and merry chatter during open-play pickleball games at the Jeff Weeman Park in Colville.

... happily moving kids through yoga poses in the cool shade of the pavilion stage at Yep Kanum Park, and then turning up the music for a dance party.

... the delight of making chalk mandalas at the Farmers Market on sunny Wednesday or Saturday mornings with my creative community.

... the thwump of my foot against a soccer ball and the frantic shuffling of my dog's four paws through the grass in pursuit.

... simultaneous awe and anxiety at the flash and boom of Independence Day fireworks during our driest season.

... the smooth rolling of metal chain guided by a derailleur and the crunch

of tires over pine needles and packed dirt as we bike up a forest road.

... art walks and gallery openings with friends.

... slurping up melting popsicles.

... the subdued flap-flap-flap of a low-flying bat over our tent as my son and I settle into our sleeping bags for

a backyard sleep.

What other flavors, smells, and sensations color July? What memories will we create?

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

2026
Yep Kanum
CELEBRATION

JULY
17-19
2026

Come celebrate with us in Colville, Washington

3 DAYS *Live Music Great Food Family Fun*

Live Bands & Performers All Weekend • Local Food Vendors • Arts and Crafts • Market Vendors Youth Wrestling Tournament • Pickleball Tournament Youth Baseball Tournament • Classic Car Show Community Church Service

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Yep Kanum Celebration East Shore COLVILLE 2026 WASHINGTON

Yep Kanum CELEBRATION LIVE music

Jeff Weeman Memorial Pickleball Tournament

JIM MARSHALL INSPIRATIONAL WOOD BAT TOURNAMENT 2025

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Learn more or get involved:

www.YepKanumCelebration.org



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