

Huckleberry Press

The Community Paper of the Inland Northwest

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Sweet 16 and Never Been to Driver's Ed



by Amy McGarry

What do you think of first when you think of the age 16? Probably "driver's license." And what's the first thing you did when you turned 16? If you're like me, you went straight to the DMV and took the

test to get your driver's license. You, me, and most other 16-year-olds from Generation X and older. It was a rite of passage, one that was months, sometimes years in the making. Many of us country kids had been driving around on dirt roads since we could barely see over the steering wheel, and driving without a license was nothing unusual. It was a fact of life.

I think I was nine years old the first time someone let me in the driver's seat. If you'd driven a bumper-car at the fair, a car with an automatic transmission was hardly different, except the part about trying to *avoid* hitting other cars. But that was the whole point of letting kids drive on those country dirt roads. The chances of another car on the road at the same time were small.

Learning to drive with a manual transmis-

What do you think of sion – that was the real deal, and mandatory rst when you think of the ge 16? Probably "driver's drove trucks during harvest.

My brother, born in 1949, likes to share his memory of learning to drive with a clutch at the age of six. He was driving a tractor during hay baling season. The tractor was hauling a flat-bed trailer driving slowly through the hay-field, stopping for my dad, uncles, and cousins to buck the hay bales onto the trailer. Not yet strong enough to buck bales, my brother was put to work standing behind the wheel of the tractor, instructed to step on the clutch when it was time to slow or stop.

My initiation in learning to use a clutch was similar. It happened in the same hay field behind my grandparents' house, but I was older, maybe 11. I never learned to drive the tractor, but my dad drove a 70-something Chevrolet truck, manual transmission, of course, "stick shift" as we called it. Or just "shift," according to my mom, who for some reason couldn't be bothered to include "stick" to the "shift." Or just "clutch" as some people refer to it.

In that truck, the shift, or stick, was over two feet long with a baseball-sized bulb to grab onto. There was no diagram with directions to move the bulb to find first gear, second gear, and so on. Nope. I had to learn and memorize those positions. But that was the easy part. As everyone who learned to drive a shift knows, one of the hardest parts is the delicate timing of releasing the brake and clutch, while moving the shift into first gear. During that driving lesson, I don't think I ever made it out of first gear. Moving that stick was a colossal effort. With my short legs, I had to scoot my butt almost off the seat to reach the clutch.

Maybe that's why I never had another lesson with my father. Or maybe because our other cars were all automatic transmissions, and so, why bother? Especially when your 12-year-old friend could drive you.

We moved to Ayer Railroad Junction when I was 12. Ayer was on the Snake River and a boat basin that was perfect for swimming, and had been built a couple of miles from the junction housing. By the time I was 13, the Jarvis family had moved to Ayer. Lorna Jarvis was a year younger than I, and an experienced shift driver. If our parents didn't feel like driving us

Continued on page 11...





Good Vibes and Good Coffee



by Robin Milligan

Kelsey Fixel has lived in the Valley, Wash. area her whole life and says that it is a beautiful place to live and where she feels most at home. Now, since Kelsey and her husband, Mike Fixel, Jr., have opened MK Coffee Station, she is able to work within her beloved community as well.

"I run the day-to-day operations, and we have one incredible employee, Amber Pickens," Kelsey said. "My sisters help out occasionally, and our whole

family plays a part in keeping things running. Our daughters, Mikenna and Kennedy, are often at the shop. They're becoming little mixologists and love helping out however they can, whether it's washing dishes or mixing up kid-friendly drinks behind the scenes."

When asked if her children have their own favorite menu items, Kelsey said, "They do! They've definitely got their favorites and are always eager to sample and create new drinks. Mikenna right now is loving 'Kiss from a Rose' mocha. A drink consisting of white chocolate with a bit of cherry and rose flavor. Kennedy's go-to is one of her own creation: the 'Tooty Fruity.' I'm honestly not entirely sure what's

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Huckleberry Press

The *Huckleberry Press* began in the Fruitland Valley, nestled in the shadow of northeastern Washington's Huckleberry Mountains. Since 2003, "Huckleberry Country" has expanded throughout the Inland Northwest to the 12 counties of Adams, Benewah, Bonner, Douglas, Ferry, Kootenai, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman.

The Huckleberry Press is dedicated to celebrating and connecting people with their communities by featuring stories of people making major contributions as individuals, with new or expanding businesses, and through special, community events. Also included are small business advice, lifestyle, humor, and seasonal features. The Huckleberry Press is dated the 1st of each month

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all in it, but it's basically an intricate Italian soda that she makes herself every time. They're great at giving feedback and keeping things fun, and me on my toes."

Kelsey's go-to is a drink called "The Favorite" and is a white chocolate powder mocha with brown sugar cinnamon and cinnamon powder. "I love it Americano style and iced," Kelsey said. "It's cozy, smooth, and just

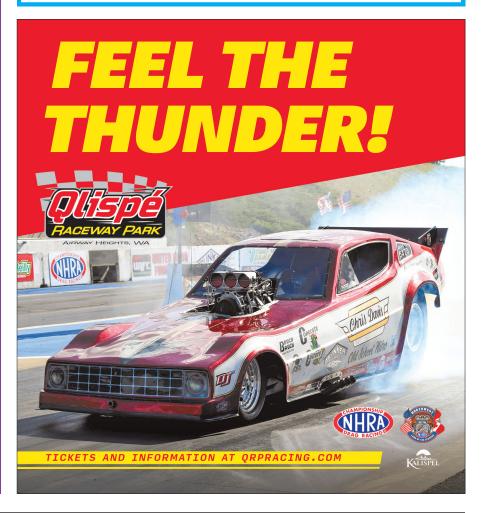
feels like home to me," Kelsey said.



When Kelsey talked about opening the business, she said, "Honestly, it was to prove to myself that I could. It was something that scared me for a long time. I wasn't sure how I'd pull it off, but the support from our community - and encouragement from the owners of Hometown Fuel – really pushed me forward. They believed in me when I was still full of fear and doubt. I started with MK Mobile Coffee, my vintage Shasta trailer turned espresso stand, and eventually felt ready to take this leap into something more permanent. I trusted the community would show up, and they have, in the most beautiful way."

According to Kelsey, what makes MK Coffee Station stand out is that everything is personal, intentional, and "made with love." Kelsey said, "We're not a chain, and we're not trying to be. We serve high-quality, handcrafted drinks, but, more than that, we serve connection. People feel like they're part of something when they stop here. It's about good coffee, yes, but also about good energy, and being part of a hometown that truly cares for its people."







Even the location of the MK Coffee Station has significance. "It is set up next to Hometown Fuel, a highly anticipated local gas station run by families who have been pillars of this community for years," Kelsey said. "They believed in me before I believed in myself. This location brings things full circle for me, back to my roots, and into a space that's deeply connected to the people I love."

Their mission: good vibes and good coffee. "That's what it all comes back to," Kelsey explained. "My goal is to make MK Coffee Station a place where people feel welcome, seen, and uplifted every single time they stop by. We proudly serve organic coffee from Roast House in Spokane. Their commitment to stainability and quality aligns perfectly with what we believe in."

Kelsey said she is inspired by her family, "First and foremost, my girls, my husband, my parents – they've all shaped me. Also, the *Fixel family, by Amber Pickens Photography*.



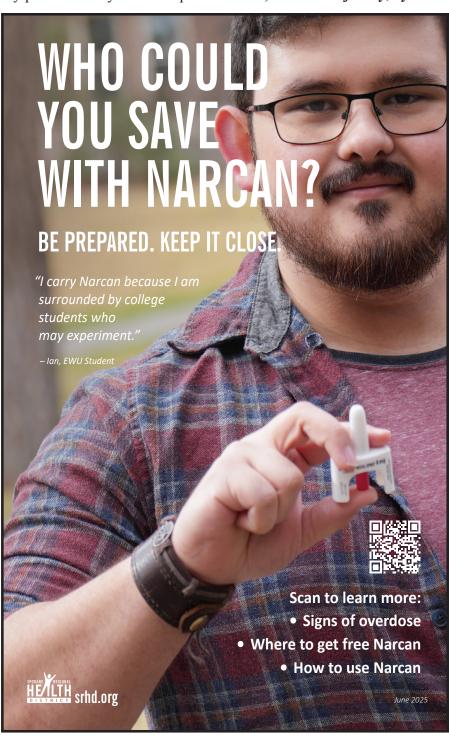
people in this community who keep showing up for each other, especially in hard times. I've been surrounded by encouragement, kindness, and resilience, and that inspires me every single day. I want them to know how grateful I am. This isn't just a coffee stand - it's a dream brought to life by the people around me. It's taken a village to get here, and I'm so thankful to be serving coffee and connection

right here in the town that raised me. Whether you're coming by for a drink, a locally-made snack, or just to bask in some good energy, you're always welcome at MK Coffee Station."

You can find MK Coffee Station on social media or visit them in person for a one-of-akind coffee experience from people who love their community, love the Inland Northwest, and love coffee.

Address: 3081 Waits Lake Road, Valley, WA 99181, Facebook & Instagram: @mkcoffeestation Email: mkcoffeestation@outlook.

Robin Milligan is an artist and entrepreneur living in Spokane, Wash. She curates art shows, runs an IT company, and teaches ceramics and painting from her home studio. When not working, Robin spends her time with her three children exploring nature, rockhounding, making art, and swimming.







The Ladies Go Shoppin



Alice had dusted the living room twice that morning and was giving up. Her husband, hoping to catch the predicted rain, was planting winby Ray Bilderback ter wheat in the adjacent field. Every time he went

by on his rounds, a perverse wind dusted the house.

Alice was in a hurry. Twice a month she went grocery shopping with Esther and it was her turn to drive. Esther would be waiting in her neat kitchen, all decked out in her goto-town outfit: gloves, nylons, flowered blue dress, hat and handbag to match.

Alice had purposefully left their new car in the garage until the last minute to keep it shiny. A new car! Tongues would wag in some quarters, "The Thompsons are showing off again. Last year it was a fancy new combine and now a new car. Well!"

Of course, the combine wasn't new or fancy. Oh, how they had scrimped and saved to get it. When you are a wheat farmer's wife, you have one paycheck a year. This year, when the wheat was sold, they had decided to buy a new car.

New? "New" was rarely in her husband's vocabulary. But there were compelling reasons to trade in the old car; it had bad brakes and lousy headlights, and just possibly quitting on her husband one night might have helped. (He had to walk home in the rain. He didn't mind the rain, but the walk rankled.)

The new car had safety glass, improved

brakes, good headlights, and the gas tank was over the rear wheels, not practically in your

Out the kitchen door in her own careful outfit, Alice encountered another problem: their milk cow was on the wrong side of the fence eating the flowers she had planted. Her husband in his haste had left the gate open. She shooed the cow into the pasture and closed the gate but not without snagging her nylons.

The day was not going well.

It was early September 1937, and the talk at the Mode Café was all about Amelia Earhart's disappearance in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean as well as some speculation on how the Social Security Act, just approved by the Supreme Court, would affect farm families. The Yankees seemed likely to win the World Series again, and we were slowly but surely working our way out of the Great Depression.

The ladies lingered over the Blue Plate Special and opted for seconds on coffee. They agreed it was such a pleasure to eat something somebody else had prepared! Finally, Esther ordered maple nut ice cream and Alice had a root beer float.

The shopping went well. With the help of the grocery boy, they loaded boxes and paper bags on the back seat and floor of the new car. Last stop on their schedule was a trip to the commercial meat locker. Before the war, home freezers were rare and very expensive. Most families rented space in a commercial

The new car had a light that lit up in the unlikely event that your brakes failed. A half

mile from Alice's house there was a small hill, and at the bottom of the hill the road ended in a T. Go left to Esther's house, right to Alice's, and straight ahead was the neighbor's pasture.

Just over the hill. Alice touched the brakes to eat off a little speed. The warning light came on. No brakes. No brakes?! Used to emergencies in the Model A and an assortment of wheat trucks over the years, Alice mumbled something unladylike, cramped the wheel and grabbed the emergency brake all at the same time. Spewing gravel every which way, they slid sideways down the hill, ending in the shallow ditch beside the neighbor's fence.

Once in Esther's yard, they inspected the new car for damage. There was none, but Alice, upon looking in the back seat, said, "Esther, come see this." Torn paper bags and upset boxes littered the floor. The ladies, still in their go-to-town finery, put empty boxes on the ground and began sorting cans, bottles, oranges and apples. Alice, still shaking from their ordeal, asked, "Esther, did you get Wheaties this time? And how many cans of tomato soup did you buy? I thought I ordered four, but now I'm not sure."

Ray Bilderback, creator of the Reuben Braddock novels, was born and raised in the Sierra foothills of California. He served in the U.S. Navy Seabees during the Korean War and taught for many years in the west. He makes his home in the mountains of eastern Washington with his archeologist wife, Madilane Perry. "In the 1930s and 1940s, where I lived, we still used horses and hand tools, canned and preserved what we grew or raised, lit our kerosene lanterns, stoked our woodstoves. In my writing, I draw from those times like water from a sweet well."



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Taste Budz Review: Prana Juice and Tea - Revisited



By Zack & Brooklyn Bolin, Facebook: Taste Budz, Instagram: tastebudz spokane

A while back, we wrote about Prana Juice and Tea; we are back to give it another shout out now that it is under new ownership.

What we enjoyed:

- ~Intuitive Smoothie Bowl
- ~Creative Smoothie Bowl
- ~Matcha Latte
- ~Chai Latte

Alicia, the new owner, has kept all the wonderful things about the menu – smoothie bowls, juice cleanses, and assorted drinks – but has also introduced some amazing, new options as well. These include yogurt bowls, soup, and even a toast bar where you can make your own slice.

Back when we went the first time, I had the Creative Smoothie Bowl which is a blend of mango, lime, raspberries, agave, tajin, and milk.

Reopened under new ownership

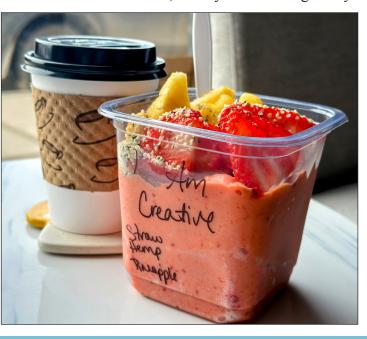
Zack had the Intuitive Smoothie Bowl and it was packed with blueberries, banana, cherry, peanut butter, yogurt, greens, vanilla collagen, cardamom, cinnamon, and milk. For his toppings, he chose bananas, strawberries, and blueberries. I am happy to report that the combinations have stayed the same. Not only do the bowls come loaded with the perfect blend of sweet and unique ingredients, but you also get to add three toppings of your choice at no extra cost. These include options like granola, hemp seeds, chia seeds, cocoa nibs, fresh fruits, honey, peanut butter, and chocolate sauce. You can also make your own bowl and even add protein powder for an awesome postworkout snack. Any blend can be made into a smoothie bowl or drink.

If you are trying to cut back on coffee but want to enjoy delicious lattes, then this is the spot for you. There are classic drinks like chai and matcha lattes, but if you are feeling funky then you can also mix things up with a Mint Chai Latte or MUD (MUD/WTR, maple syrup, milk) beverage.

Alicia continues to focus on creating a space that brings healthy local ingredients and the Deer Park Community together. When it comes to small towns, businesses can, unfortunately, come and go very quickly, but with people like Alicia stepping up and keeping these special spaces alive, the local community can continue to thrive and we customers can have awesome and tasty places to check out. Next time you are in the area, don't miss this spot!

7 South Main St., Deer Park, pranadeerpark.

Zack & Brooklyn are a married couple that love showcasing all the fun places to play and eat in the Inland Northwest. They created Taste Budz to promote local businesses and expose people to the great restaurants all around them. Keep up with them to find your next culinary destination!







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We Can Spot the Newcomers a Mile Away



by Bob Johnson

that the lovely Michelle and I have become official Inland Northwest residents. The "newcomer" tag has been retired.

One recent weekday morning, I was driving

Michelle to work because I needed the car to run a few errands. Shortly after crossing a major thoroughfare, the right lane of the road we were on was ending, requiring us to merge into the left lane.

Just as I'd done dozens of times before on that street, I flipped on the left-turn signal and slowed slightly so our car would fit neatly between two cars in the left lane. The trailing car in the left lane also was politely slowing to let us in. But as I began to move left to merge, a white Mercedes A-Class sedan, license plate number – okay, it's probably not appropriate to publish that, but we do have it – made an aggressive move around our left-rear bumper, obviously trying to cut us off.

Instinctively, I turned the wheel back to the right to avoid being hit by the Mercedes and braked hard to avoid running into the curb. Keeping a keen eye on both my rear and side mirrors, I noted that the Mercedes driver had backed off, and I was able to complete the merge.

Once safely in the single lane, I glanced back at the Mercedes driver in my rearview mirror. She was flailing her arms in the air like

I am happy to announce one of those inflatable tube dancers that busi- do some exploring. nesses use to catch your eye and beckon you to visit. She also was yelling, which I thought odd since there did not appear to be any passengers in her car and all the windows were rolled up.

> Honestly, it was hysterical. Michelle craned her head so she could see the yelling inflatable tube woman, and we both started laughing. I think Michelle may have instinctively pointed at her while laughing which, in retrospect, probably wasn't a good idea.

> As we approached the next signal, the right lane opened back up and the Mercedes driver gunned her engine and swung into it. We both turned our heads to try to get a closer look at the driver, but the window tint was dark, well beyond the legal limit; it essentially was black. She pulled up to the red light and, without even slowing down, zoomed around the corner.

> Maybe I should share that license plate num-

But it's what happened next that stamped our passports as official residents of the Inland Northwest. Almost in unison, Michelle and I said, "Must be from California."

Yes, in our new and final home, we have come to loathe what we once were. Although neither of us ever drove like that.

With that incident newly deposited in our memory banks, we awoke on Mother's Day Eve to a picture-perfect sky and the most comfortable air temperature of the spring to date. We agreed that it would be fun to get out and

We unfolded our map of the International Selkirk Loop and decided to drive up the left (west) side of it, not quite into Canada. The route circles in a pear-shaped configuration, from Priest River, Idaho, to the Canadian town of Balfour, with the town of Crawford Bay providing a "stem" of the pear across Kootenay Lake. The eastern side of the loop meanders through several British Columbia communities before completing its path back to Priest River.

Our trip on this day, however, would be devoted exclusively to soaking in the scenery in Washington – and that scenery was abundant. The experience also proved to be educational in both expected and unexpected ways.

You can pick up the loop in Newport or via one of the loop's "Super Side Trips" that runs east and then north, or south and then east, out of Colville.

In Newport, we missed the Pend Oreille County Historical Museum, but plan to circle back at some point, now that it has opened for the season. Perhaps we'll do that on Labor Day weekend, when Newport hosts one of the most brilliantly named events we've ever encountered: Bob's Car Show.

(Side note: At any coffee shop where the person taking the orders writes the customer's name on a cup, I can reliably predict how my non-fat, no-foam latte is going to turn out. When I give them my name, I watch carefully as they write B-O-B on the cup. Once they're



backwards." If they laugh or at least smile and shake their head, I know my latte is going to turn out just fine. If they look at me with a bewildered expression, I know I could be in trouble.)

Continuing north, we entered Cusick, which we learned was once home to the Diamond Match Company. The company used the Pend Oreille River to transport timber and erected a series of pilings to help sort, organize and guide the logs. Today, the pilings might be considered an eyesore – until one spots their first eagle or osprey, which have claimed the pilings as their own.

Incidentally, the nearby Kalispel Casino hosts an annual car show during the summer months. Wonder if Bob knows about this?

After arriving in Tiger, where we intersected with the road that connects Colville to the loop, we continued through Ione and noticed a rest stop ahead.

"Anyone gotta go?" I asked and, hearing no reply, we drove by, but took note of the rest stop name: Sweet Creek Rest Area. Michelle did some Googling and learned that the stop also serves as the trailhead for three hiking trails, including one considered "the easiest in the state of Washington." That sounded right up our alley, so we made a mental note to check it out on our return drive.

Approaching the Canadian border and nearing the end of our northward trek, we decided to see if we could find something to eat in Metaline Falls. After passing a couple of res-

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finished, I say to them, "Oh, you spelled it taurants that were either closed for good or were surprised to encounter twin warning closed for the season, we spotted an "Open" sign in a window of the Historic Washington Hotel.

> We ventured inside and were met by Chef Frank who recommended we try his take on a stuffed baked potato which he calls "The Volcano."

> Although short in comparison to Mount Helens, "The Volcano" (pictured) stood tall on the plate. Chef Frank takes a giant potato – of which there is no shortage in Idaho or Oregon, America's top two

potato producers – and stuffs it with butter, sour cream and chives. He then wraps it with bacon strips before baking. Once baked, the potato receives a slathering of melted cheese, simulating the lava flow of a real volcano.

We asked Chef Frank if he could estimate the calorie count of this titan of tuberous vegetables, but he just rolled his eyes.

Our appetites sated, we figured we could use a hike and returned to the rest stop, home to the Sweet Creek Falls Interpretive Trail.

signs about what lay ahead. Perhaps unwisely, we bravely soldiered on. While walking

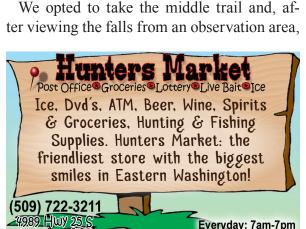
> over a slightly rickety bridge, we gazed down at the base of the falls, where visitors were getting a close-up look at the fast-moving water.

Then we noticed three small children climbing up a rather steep slope as the adults accompanying them, beer cans hand, chatted amongst themselves. If one of those children slipped, a potential encounter with a sharp rock awaited.

Yet the adults partied on, seemingly oblivious to the obvious danger.

Michelle and I looked at each other and, as official Inland Northwest residents, knew exactly what the other was thinking about those adults.

Bob Johnson is the author of the sports biography, "Mr. 900: The Glenn Allison Story," and recipient of 95 national writing awards. Now a resident of North Idaho, he and his family enjoy exploring the Inland Northwest, and Johnson is sharing his observations with Huckleberry Press readers.





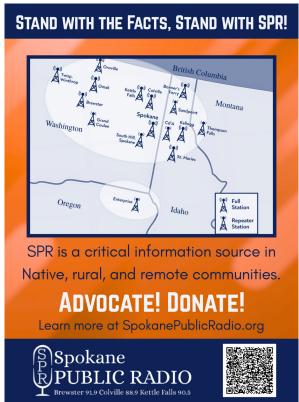












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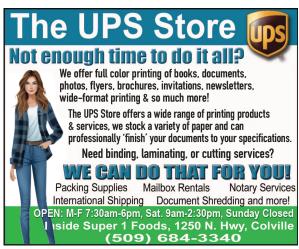
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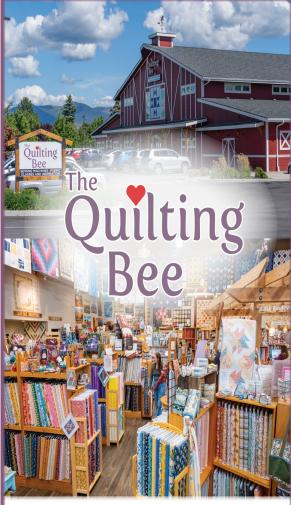
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8			7			2		
	6			1		7	4	8
						5		
	2						8	
		5	3		6	1		
	1						5	
		6						
5	8	1		4			2	
		3			1			5

Sudoku Puzzle Instructions:

Each Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically without guessing.

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces.

Every row must contain one of each digit – so must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

Puzzle difficulty level is "Medium." Good luck!

SUDOKU SOLUTION:

Below is the Solution to

This Week's Puzzle

5 4 3 8 6 4 9 2

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Jokes curated from the Internet and books, and created by Thea Cruden

Why did the student eat his homework? Because the teacher said it was a piece of cake.

How do you know if someone's a grad student? Don't worry, they'll tell you.

What did the student say when he graduated? "Finally! Now I can start making cents!"

What's the difference between a graduation cap and a hat? One has class.

Why did the graduates take a nap during the ceremony? They needed to dream big.

What did the teacher say to the graduating student who was also a great cook? "You're not just a smart cookie, you're a graduated one."

A guy goes door to door looking for work. One homeowner hands him a brush and a can of paint and offers him \$150 to paint his porch. A few hours later, the guy comes back to the homeowner and says, "I'm finished. But you should know that your car's a Ferrari, not a Porsche."

What's a groundbreaking Father's Day gift to give to your dad? A shovel.

Why did the dad bring a ladder to the bar on Father's Day? Because he heard the drinks were on the house.

Why did the dad get an extra pair of golf pants for Father's **Day?** He got a hole-in-one.

What did the grape say to his dad on Father's Day? Thanks for raisin me right.

What do you call it when Dad falls asleep during his Father's Day movie? A pop-corn nap.

Why did Dad high-five himself on Father's Day? Because no one appreciates his jokes quite like he does!

Did you hear about the insect who received his gift weeks after **Father's Day?** It was bee-lated.

How does Darth Vader like his toast cooked on Father's Day? On the dark side.

Why didn't the rude cow eat all the food on Father's Day? Because he was being a beef jerky.

How did the dad and his kids watch the fishing show on **Father's Day?** They live streamed it.

What did the baby computer say to its dad on Father's Day? "Happy Father's Day, Data."

How did the celebrity dad keep his cool on Father's Day? He had many fans.

One day Max went to see Carl. Carl had a big swollen nose. "Whoa, what happened, Carl?" Max asked. "I sniffed a brose," Carl replied. "What?" Max said. "There's no 'b' in rose." Carl replied, "There was in this one!"

What does the pig give his dad for Father's Day? Lots of hogs and kisses.

Why don't they have Father's Day sales? Because fathers are priceless.

What do you call a person who is not a dad but makes dad jokes? A Faux Pa.

What did the cheerleader bring her dad for breakfast on Father's Day? Cheerios.

What's the best thing a new dad can get for Father's Day? A

Why do sons love Father's Day so much? Because it's always on Son-day.

Where did the cow family go on Father's Day? The moo-vies.

A businessman went into the office and found an inexperienced handyman painting the walls. The handyman was wearing two heavy parkas on a hot summer day. Thinking this was a little strange, the businessman asked the handyman why he was wearing the parkas on such a hot day. The handyman showed him the instructions on the can of paint. They read: "For best results, put on two coats."

Why did the bean children give their dad a sweater for Father's Day? He was chili.

What did the beach say to the tide as it came back in? "Long time no sea."

Which animal likes to play baseball? A bat.

How do you know that the ocean is friendly? "Because it waves."

What is the favorite summer food for ghosts? I scream.

Which is the favorite picnic spot of the sharks? Finland.

Where do the sheep go for vacation? The Baaaa-hamas.

What do the mermaids use to call their friends? Shell phones.

What do the detectives find on a beach? Something fishy.

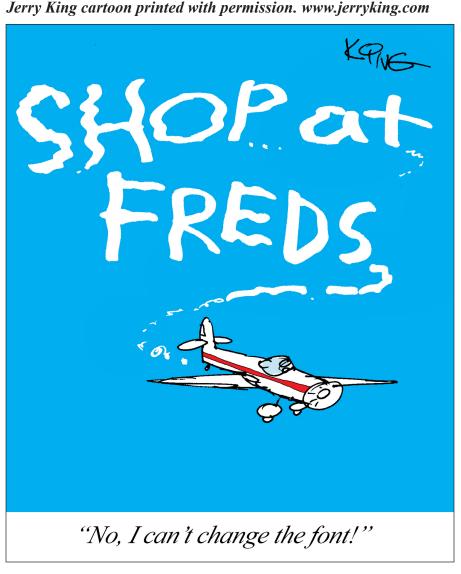
How can you differentiate between a piano and a fish? You can tune a piano, but you cannot tuna fish.

What would you pay for spending a day on the beach? Sand

Which sandwich would you get on a beach? Peanut butter with some jellyfish.

Which is the favorite vacation spot for the math teachers? Times Square.

A cruise ship passes by a remote island, and all the passengers see a bearded man running around and waving his arms wildly. "Captain," one passenger asks, "who is that man over there?" "I have no idea," the captain says, "but he goes nuts every year when we pass him."





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...continued from page 1

to the boat basin to go swimming, Lorna packed her kid siblings and me into the little Toyota truck and doubled the speed limit driving us there

Like many of us, Lorna had been taught that instead of slowing down through a curve, it's actually helpful to speed up. The part of that wisdom that she missed was that you should *not* speed up heading into the

curve, but only exiting the curve, and only with a slight acceleration. There was one big ol' curve on the way to the boat basin, with deep ravines along the sides. Every time we approached the curve, already at a speed higher than posted, Lorna would instruct her passengers, "Hold on! I need to speed up for the curve!" It was exhilarating, but I honestly don't know how we survived. Especially since this was several years before the 1986 seat belt law went into effect in Washington and no one I knew considered fastening their seat belt. (Not to mention there were no adults to supervise the swimming, either.)

So, I didn't try to drive a shift again until I was 17. I have had a lot of bad luck with cars. After I managed to total my first car, an AMC Hornet, my brother-in-law, who had a side-gig buying and repairing cars, offered to sell me a 1969 Barracuda with a manual transmission. Never mind I hadn't driven a stick shift since the hay field. It was a Friday night, and my friend and I had places to go. Here was the dilemma: my friend knew how to drive a stick shift but didn't have a license. I had a license, but had never made it past first gear (not to be confused with first base).

Yet, where there's a will, there's a way. My friend assured me he could get us from point A to point B from the

passenger seat. While my friend instructed me when to push in the clutch and when to push on the gas, he shifted the gears. Teamwork at its best! We survived that night with no accidents or police. To this day, I wonder why we thought that kind of teamwork was a smarter choice than just letting the one without a driver's license take the driver's seat. I eventually was in an accident with the Barracuda, and my parents insisted I would be safer on one of those motor-scooters with maximum speed of 45 mph.

Oh, the good ol' days. And these times they are a-changin'!

Did you know driver's ed isn't a class in high school anymore? I didn't know this until two years ago when my kid started high school and I asked her about when she would have driver's ed for a class. Turns out, by 2002, all funding for driver's education in public high schools in Washington was removed.

How could that be? Not only was driver's ed the most highly anticipated class in high school, in the '80s you could go to Saturday morning driver's ed when you were still a ninth grader in junior high school. I had a fall birthday, so if I wanted to finish driver's ed in time to get my license on the day I turned 16, I had to take early morning Saturday classes.

The only thing I remember about Saturday morning driver's ed was that the Greenacres Junior High kids were heavy partiers because they were always so hung over in class, they were green in the gills. The three of us from North Pines Junior High were bummed we had missed out on the previous night's fun. Oh, and the simulator. How could I forget the simulator? Way before driving video games, we had the driving simulators in driver's ed. We thought we were so high tech!

And who would be brave enough to teach driver's ed? I know they have a brake on their side of the car for driving practice, but that sounds terrifying to me. My former high school teacher and local author, Steve Lalonde, tells me his father was one of the first driver's ed teachers in Washington State in the mid-'60s, when Steve was a teenager.

Steve's family lived in Washtucna, also wheat farming country, so his dad's driving students came to class with a mix of driving experi-

ence. How did he handle this mix? According to Steve, "He came up with solutions to meet the needs of all of us, including an obstacle course on an abandoned section of road. The most experienced of us began timing through the course to see how fast we could do it. When we got that down, we began backing through the course. He used to put a dollar bill on the ground (a dollar was worth more in the '60s), and if a student could drive up to and stop on the bill, so he couldn't

touch it, they got to keep it. Several accomplished that."

I barely passed the backing around a corner part of my driving test.

At the time of this writing, my daughter is 15, just days before her 16th birthday. Up until recently, she had shown no interest in driving, which surprised me and didn't surprise me. It surprised me because, how can you not want to drive as soon as legally (or illegally) possible? It didn't surprise me because I have heard many reports about trends of young people these days. They are a different breed from us. Many of the behaviors we older generations deemed as normal for teenagers are no longer the norm. This includes the eagerness to get a driver's license. Only about 25% of 16-year-olds have a driver's license these days.

On the one hand, given my history of bad luck with cars, I was quite okay with my daughter's ambivalence about driving. But, as she gets more active, needing more and more rides from mom, I'm warming up to the idea of her driving. So, when she recently asked if she could register for online driver's education classes, I checked our savings account to make sure it wouldn't bankrupt us, took a deep breath, and said "yes."

Her first day of online classes is two days before her 16th birthday, so the title

"Sweet 16 and Never Been to Driver's Ed" is a bit of a fib. But close enough. Meanwhile, I'm grappling with the idea of online driver's ed classes, when we thought we were cool because we had simulators. Imagine how they can learn to drive with today's technology! Will I get her behind the wheel in the driver's seat for her first-ever practice drive before she turns 16? We don't live in the country, so, to be determined....

Amy McGarry grew up in Spokane Valley, Washington. After a 20 year hiatus, she moved back to Spokane Valley where she lives with her husband, daughter and two cats. She is the author of I am Farang: Adventures of a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand, available on Amazon.com, Auntie's Bookstore, and Barnes and Noble.



Me with my Barracuda in 1986. I'd like to think it was '68, because that's the year I was born. But it's more likely a '69.



Driver's education students using driving simulators.

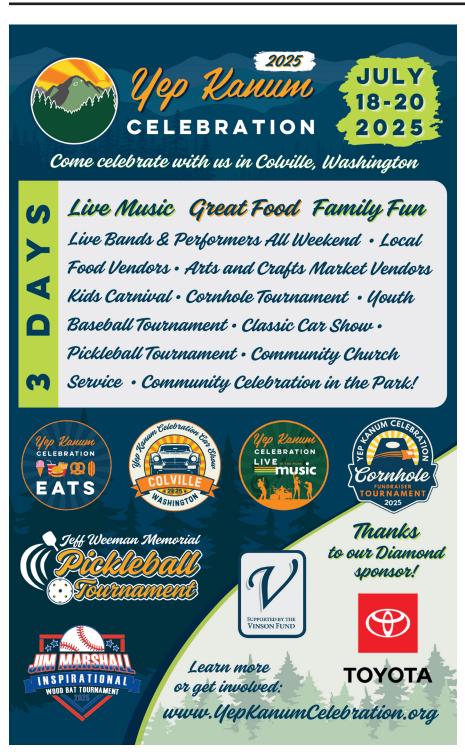


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