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## The End of an Era? Two Degrees of Separation from Taylor Swift



by Amy McGarry

As a young child, on a Sunday afternoon in the fall, I would be playing in my room and I'd hear the loudest, awful, swearing coming from the living room. I thought, "We just got home from church.

How can he be taking the Lord's name in vain like that?" He, my dad, would be watching football of course.

The only time my dad commandeered the family TV was for the nightly news and football games. With only one TV in the house, as per the norm in those days, I never got to watch my Monday evening shows in the fall. I adored my dad, and sometimes I'd play in the same room as he was watching football. But I had no interest in the game.

That all changed in my late 20s when I was temporarily living with my sister Marcia and her family in Tacoma. She had three teenage boys at the time, who all played on their high school football team. The boys attended a small, private school, and if I remember correctly, they were all starters on the team at some point.

I began attending their football games, and lo and behold, I enjoyed watching! I started learning the rules and even the science behind the game. But mostly I just felt so proud of my nephews and what they could do on the field.

I spent a lot of time with those boys as they were growing up and each one of them was dear to my heart. I was especially close to the youngest, Corey. Unlike his older brothers, he inherited the McGarry genes, making him short and stocky.



Coach Corey with Auntie Amy.

He played center. His height, or lack thereof, was the bane of his existence. His dream of playing professional football was dashed every teenage year he didn't get taller.

Corey's really really smart. Like, engineer smart. Like Ivy League smart. But Corey wanted to play football. No matter how talented you are, if you are only 5'7" and a slow runner, it's tough to even get on a college team. Corey chose to go to college at Willamette in Oregon where he could play football. I was living in Spokane when Willamette's football team came to play Whitworth, so my parents and I got to watch Corey play one college game, which was exciting for me, but you can imagine how my parents felt.

Speaking of my parents, my mom, may she rest

in peace, was full of clever aphorisms. One of her most repeated ones was, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." My mom was a wise one.

Corey got a job out of college as an assistant coach for the Philadelphia Eagles. His dad's cousin is Andy Reid. If you are not a football fan that name means nothing to you. Even though I had seen his family Christmas picture countless times on my sister's refrigerator, I didn't know about Andy Reid. But football fans know Andy Reid.

In 2012, Reid took the head coaching job with the Kansas City Chiefs and brought Corey with him. Patrick Mahomes was drafted with the Chiefs in 2017. If you're a football fan, the rest is history. If you're not a football fan, and are still reading this, here's what happened: With Mahomes as quarterback, the Chiefs won lots of games and started getting a lot of attention. All of a sudden, thanks to Mahomes and his "unorthodox" playing style, "record-setting statistical dominance," and his ability to make "seemingly impossible plays," football became even more exciting for me to watch.

For one, there was the crazy chemistry between Mahomes and the young, handsome Travis Kelce, which led to unbelievable pass receptions and more records. In the early days, there was the speed of "The Cheetah," Tyreek Hill, and the stellar defense of "The Honey Badger," Tyran Mathieu.

Those early Mahomes days my daughter would run up from her room, especially if she's not aware I'm watching football, and ask, "What happened?

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# When the Process Is Preposteous



by Bob Johnson

daughter — on a pretty good-sized chunk of land would be a snap.

Man, were we wrong.

Among the county (which shall remain nameless) and its permitting rules, the bank (which shall remain nameless) and its inability to work out one minor funding issue with the builder (which shall remain nameless), the electric company (which shall remain nameless) and its inaccurate quote regarding amperage, and the clueless property manager (who shall remain nameless) at the apartment complex (which shall remain nameless) where we were renting while all these other nameless people and companies were defying logic at every turn, my patience was waning as quickly as my blood pressure was rising.

Let's begin with the clueless property manager because, well, clueless can be funny if you're not caught in the crosshairs of it. We'll call him Ryan (which isn't his real name but might rhyme with it).

We thought putting up a couple manufactured homes — one for the lovely Michelle and me, the other

for our grown daughter — on a pretty good-sized chunk of land would be a snap.

We had a two-bedroom apartment and among the three of us we have two cars, so we'd always park one car in our garage and the other in the lot. But because Ryan didn't regulate outdoor parking, there were residents who would use their garage for storage and then park two, three or even four cars outside. There were times when we had to walk almost a full city block on icy sidewalks just to get from one of our cars to our apartment.

One day, I decided to ask Ryan about the lack of logic in his parking policy. His response was that it was fair for everyone.

"Everyone gets a garage," he said.

"Shouldn't those with a two-bedroom apartment — who are paying more — get two guaranteed parking spaces?" I responded.

I wish I could have taken a picture of the bewildered expression on Ryan's face. It's possible he felt he really was treating all residents equally.

Then I offered an easy, logical

solution: one garage for a one-bedroom apartment, and one garage plus one designated outdoor parking space for a two-bedroom apartment.

"What do you mean by 'designated?'" he asked.

"You know — like, maybe, number the spaces and assign them?"

"Oh, that would be a lot of work," he said.

I couldn't argue with that.

"Besides," he added, "changing a policy like that is a process."

Okay...

Our next encounter with Ryan involved an ongoing noise problem with the resident who lived just above us. We ended up nicknaming him "Montana" because for the more than a year we lived there, his truck had the same Montana license plates on it. We had gotten our plates changed as soon as we moved to the Inland Northwest, but maybe we were the silly ones for following the law.

Anyway, "Montana" liked to throw loud parties that lasted into the wee hours of the morning — 2, 3, 4 a.m. Each time we were awakened by drunken yelling and loud music, we would walk upstairs and politely ask him to quiet things down so we could sleep. Usually, it would take at least a half-hour for the partygoers to disperse. And the next day, I would tell Ryan what was going on.

"I'll get that handled," he promised on more than one occasion.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> time we had to deal with a sleepless night, all of us were livid. It was the first of the month, so the three of us marched our rent check to the leasing office to confront Ryan. When we were just about to enter the building, I made eye contact with him through the window and saw him duck into his cubicle.

We handed the check to the nice woman at the window and asked to speak to Ryan.

"He's not in right now," she lied.

"Okay, we'll talk to you."

We laid out all the problems we'd had with "Montana" over the previous three months — the seven incidents we'd reported and the eight others we'd let go because of Ryan's inaction.

"We're really sorry you're going through this," the woman said. "I'm the assistant manager, so I know what's been going on."

"So, if you know what's been going on, why hasn't anything been done? How many complaints do you have to get about

a tenant?"

Ryan must have told her what to say if we asked that question.

"It's a process," she said.

"Well, it's a process that isn't working," I replied.

We were so glad to get out of there. Granted, returning to apartment living can be a challenge when one has lived in and is waiting for their next house. But clueless property managers like Ryan don't help matters.

As we would learn, however, Ryan was not alone when it came to ineptitude. He was just the best at it.

Getting the project approved by the county was an adventure. One employee would tell us we needed to fill out form A, and then a second employee would correct the first and tell us we needed to fill out form B. The forms kept coming, we would dutifully fill them out, and then we were informed that the permit had been denied.

Somebody in the permitting department of the unnamed county was convinced that we were trying to place a rental property on our land, which is not allowed, rather than trying to give our daughter her own independent living space to hasten the possibility of presenting us with grandchildren, whom we presume will be cute.

Finally getting the permitting person (we nicknamed him "PP") to sign off on the project took yet more paperwork, photos, and even an affidavit. One day at the county office, when I was dropping off a fifth set of forms and expressed our dismay, the nice lady behind the counter tried to console me.

"Don't worry," she said. "You'll get there. It's a process."

There were similar adventures with the bank and the builder. The builder wanted a larger chunk of money from the bank than the bank's policy would allow. It was a matter of less than \$2,000 on a \$350,000 project.

"We've had challenges with this builder before," a person at the bank told me. "Just be patient. It's a process."

Later, once the bank and the builder buried the proverbial hatchet, we were told that the builder was ready to proceed but would do so only after the house had electricity flowing. Months earlier, I'd taken a copy of the project drawings and other paperwork to the electric company, a representative assessed our needs, and I paid them \$9,000 and

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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.

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# Why I'm Not Making Resolutions of 2026



by Kerry Schafer

Just for fun, let's start this new year off with a little pop quiz - don't worry, you can't fail this one.

Which of the following is most like you when it comes to the idea of New Year's resolutions:

- A. Excited! A brand-new year means a brand-new slate, and I love the idea of resolutions!
- B. Annoyed. This again? Has it really been a whole year since the last time we did this?
- C. Guilty. I should resolve to do something, but I've failed to keep my resolutions so many times in the past that I honestly dread trying - and failing - again.

D. Dismissive. Bah, humbug. Jan. 1 is just another date on the calendar and the whole "new year" thing is essentially meaningless.

Personally, I'm a mix of everything but dismissive. I love the idea of a brand-new year, a clean slate, and the feeling of starting over fresh. But resolutions? No thank you, not for me. Yes, I've tried them. No, they did not work out well. Will power is not one of my strong suits. I've been one of those people who suddenly flooded into the gym at the first part of the year in a flurry of good intentions, only to drop off by the end of February (to the great relief of the regular gym-goers).

In the past, I've resolved to forswear sugar and to faithfully exercise, to be more organized and consistent, to meditate daily and write daily, and worry less. All of these resolutions landed me in a vague feeling of failure and inadequacy.

If you also have made resolutions and failed to keep them, welcome to a very large club of the Guilty and Inadequate. You are not alone. The majority of New Year's resolutions fall by the wayside. Here are a few reasons why I think that is:

- 1) Resolutions are usually based in some sort of "should" oriented belief: I should be in better shape, I should be healthier, I should eat better, I should

be more organized, I should be kinder, I should just be better all around. Any decision, action, or plan based on should has ties to guilt and/or trying to please somebody else. Guilt and people-pleasing are notoriously bad motivators.

2) Resolutions are often unrealistic. Basically, we set ourselves up for failure. No, we are not going to hit the gym every day, after years of not going to the gym at all. Even dedicated gym-goers miss a day every now and then because life happens. We're probably not going to cut all sugar or fat or processed foods out of our diet for the rest of our lives. If, like me, you've got a long-time habit of clutter or not being organized, you're not magically going to manage a consistent habit of perfect organization and zero clutter. I know from experience that I am not going to write every day, or meditate every day, or walk the dogs every day. Something is bound to come up to throw me off the Every Day Plan, and then guilt will creep in and derail forward progress.

3) Once we miss a day at the gym, or eat or drink the thing we swore off, or don't do the thing we promised ourselves we were going to do, then we believe we've failed. Our perfect New Year with its clean slate is already sullied, we've fallen short, so we tell ourselves we might as well slip back into the old habits and admit that we are still the same flawed person that we were last year.

Stay with me here, there is good news. This shiny, sparkly new 2026 can yet be filled with better health and useful habits and new routines. We can meet wonderful new goals and become happier and more organized and productive. But I've learned over the years that it's helpful to approach the year in a different sort of way.

Forget all of that nonsense you've been taught about the road to hell being paved with good intentions and know this: so is the road to positive change and personal growth. Intentions are a powerful mindset tool that can lead to wonderful results.

I love to sit down with a notebook or a journal on Jan. 1 and write out answers to some very helpful questions. Here are a few that you might consider trying out for yourself:

1. How do I want to feel this year? What actions or activities might lead to feeling that way?
2. When I arrive at Dec. 31 of 2026, what do I most want to have accomplished?
3. What would feel good and satisfying to pursue in the areas of my physical and mental health? Is there anything that would be fun, rather than drudgery?
4. What am I particularly grateful for in 2025?
5. What would I love to see more of in 2026?

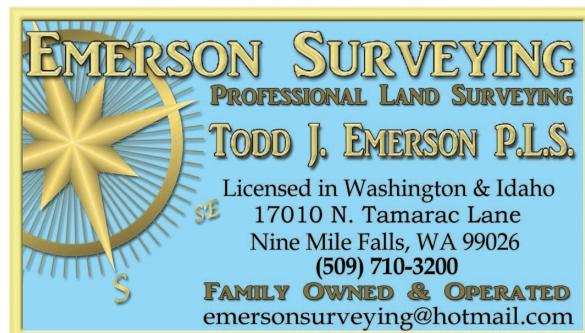
Another fun exercise to help understand what you really would love to accomplish this year is a journaling variation of a visualizing technique used by athletes, public speakers, and other highly successful people to help them see and feel success in advance. It's a powerful mindset process that helps us to shift into the mindset of possibility which is much more effective than guilt or "should" based motivation.

Imagine that it's already the end of 2026, and you're looking back at the year behind you. Take your pen and your paper, set a timer for five minutes, and write about your aspirations as if they have already happened, without stopping to pause or think until the time is up. Keep the pen moving. If you can't think of anything to write, just write "I don't know what to write" until something comes to you. Try one of these phrases to get started: "I'm so proud of myself for..." or "2026 was such an amazing year because..."

Read through what you've written, and you'll likely have a much clearer focus and direction for the months ahead.

Here's to a year full of happiness, love, and success!

*Colville resident Kerry Schafer (who also writes as Kerry Anne King) is the bestselling author of 15 novels and the co-host of The One Happy Thing Podcast. Find out more at [www.allthingskerry.com](http://www.allthingskerry.com).*



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# Our Summer Adventure



by Ray Bilderback

Most of us have memories involving trains. Maybe someone read "The Little Engine That Could" to us or told stories of early train trips. My experience was different, so I'm told. When I was very young, we lived in a cabin near the narrow-gauge train tracks.

It wasn't a very active line because we were deep in the 1930s depression. But the train did come by about 20 feet from the cabin, and when it did (according to some family sources), I would crawl under the kitchen sink. Unreliable family lore, of course. I was never such a scaredy cat.

We read train stories to our children and they got to see the real stuff when we visited the grandparents in Sprague. So, when we started planning a family adventure, the subject of trains came up. "Can we take a train ride?"

AMTRAX left Spokane in the wee hours (about 2:30 a.m. when we caught it) so we did not reserve a compartment, choosing instead to sit upright for the ride to western Washington. Staying awake paid off for us, the moon was full when we crossed the Columbia River, giving us an unforgettable view.

The wait was short when we got to Seattle where we hooked up with a ride to Oakland, Calif. This time we had a compartment with four bunks, crisp white sheets, and a window on the passing world. We also had an attendant that saw to our needs and seemed anxious to treat us like royalty.

Once the train got underway the "clack, tuh-clack, tuh-clack," set up such a rhythm that we took a nap until our attendant rapped on our door. Supper time. We were somewhere south of Portland, Ore.

If you haven't had dinner on the train, you're

in for a treat. It was a white tablecloth affair with fine cutlery. The works. I don't remember the meal, but I do remember the service.

It was dark when we crossed into California. Occasionally we got a glimpse of the Sacramento River bathed in moonlight, but once again, the rhythmic "clack, tuh-clack, tuh-clack" got to me, and I must have napped an hour before the children woke me. There in the light of the still-full moon was Mt. Shasta. It was so beautiful that the children woke their mother. In my mind, Mt. Shasta is just as majestic as Mt. Fuji. They both dominate the view for many miles around. Fuji I could see most days from my barracks window in Japan.

Even a mountain the size of Shasta eventually fades from sight. We contented ourselves with moonlit glimpses of the Sacramento River until the "clack, tuh-clack, tuh-clack" did its work. This time, it even got the children.

We arrived in Oakland positively worn out. The children's mother slept much of the trip, but we had not. She was so tired by the end of the school year that we had to remind her to eat and drink water. I once took her on a three-day fishing trip to British Columbia at the end of the school year. We rented a cabin and a rowboat. The cabin had a wood stove for cooking. There is something about a woodstove that draws me. Maybe it's just an elusive memory, but it pleases me. I cooked and fished, and she slept the whole time waking only to be fed.

We took a bus to San Francisco. Jason stretched across the back seat and (you guessed it) he slept. A couple of kids sitting alertly kept looking back at him. Evidently city kids need to be more alert.

Our hotel was The New Beresford, a small, comfortable establishment that catered to embassy employees and their families (at breakfast the next morning we were the only people speaking English). True tourists, we spent

the afternoon riding cable cars and gawking at tall buildings. It was a whale of a lot of fun.

Next morning, we traveled by bus to Berkley and the Japanese Trade Center. The center was half marketplace and half museum. I got to act as tour guide, reliving my time in Japan.

Back in our part of San Francisco, we rented a car for the trip across the Golden Gate Bridge to my aunt's house. Renting a car was unexpectedly painful. The only credit card we had at that time was Chevron. The first car rental company turned us down for lack of "a proper card" but one tried harder and we drove back to the hotel. Just inside the door, our well-behaved rascals raced to be first at the elevator. Their mother, wanting to avoid a scene, tried to stop them, tripped and sprawled halfway across the little lobby floor. No damage done, but the clerk, after finding her unharmed, did not retain his composure any faster than she did. So, we all had a laugh and gained a friend.

That night we planned to have dinner and take in the sights that only Chinatown can provide. I didn't relish the idea of driving at night in unfamiliar territory, so we decided to leave the car parked and take a taxi. I complained to the driver about the hassle involved in renting a car. He was puzzled, "If you've got a car, why did you hire a taxi? I never will understand tourists." He shook his head and chuckled. He was having fun with the country bumpkin.

Our driver entertained us with stories about San Francisco, and we made good progress most of the way into Chinatown. But two blocks into Chinatown, we stalled. Traffic was bumper-to-bumper in both directions. A pair of blocks ahead there were flashing lights, firecrackers and music. We waited a few minutes and then a few minutes more. Our driver had gone quiet. No talk about foolish visitors. And we were stuck.

Stuck.

On the sidewalk the crowd was four-deep and moving toward the celebration. We paid up and joined the happy flow. All about us there were rumors of dragons in the street.

Dragons.... I love Chinatown.

*Ray Bilderback, creator of the Reuben Bradock 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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# Hit the Trail with Soph



By Sophia Mattice-Aldous

On Thanksgiving Day, I pressured my brother, William, and 71-year-old mother to walk through side ways rain, wind that tries to push your nose through your brain if you're silly enough to face it, and ford several puddles that had ambitions of being ponds.

So, how has your holiday season been?

Per usual, I'm getting ahead of myself. This spur-of-the-moment decision came when the three of us decided to go for a walk in Leadbetter Point State Park on the Long Beach Peninsula. My brother had decided he wanted to spend his birthday week, which also happens to be the week of Thanksgiving, by the ocean and invited mom and I to accompany him. Of course, we said "yes" as our family has always had an affinity for traveling to that part of the state long before William and I were born. Unless it's dangerous storm conditions, we always go for a hike or walk on the beach every day we're there. This Turkey Day was no different. Donning our rain boots and coats, we sallied forth to the Willapa Wildlife Refuge, ready for the salty sea air and to pique our appetites for Thanksgiving dinner.

Quick aside, but if gray, continually wet weather isn't your jam, visiting Long Beach in the winter is not for you. No shame in knowing what you do and don't like, and if you don't like wrapping yourself up in the sartorial equivalent of saran wrap, then visit in the spring and summer. There are more people during the warmer seasons, but the weather is more enticing for getting outside.

We had the wildlife refuge mostly to ourselves, except for a few trekkers who we exchanged holiday greetings with. We read all the educational plaques highlighting the habitat and the over 300 species of birds that nest in Willapa Bay.

Then we came to the fork in the trail after a roughly two-mile jaunt. We could hook a left and head back to the parking lot or keep going on Weather Beach Trail that would lead us into the forest, out to the dunes,



down the beach, and back into the forest again to round out the loop. Acting like the grandiose nature girl I was pretending to be, I challenged mom and Will's preference to head back to the car.

"What are we going to do, just go back to the cabin and stare at our cell phones until dinner?"

Challenge accepted. We struck out on the trail, not minding the soggy grass and occasional mud puddle. No fighting over politics whilst eating pumpkin pie for us; these hobbits were on an adventure. Then we came to our first puddle. It was long, but shallow. No problem, why buy rain gear if you're not going to use it? We continued, the trees heavy with thick green moss and the sound of the surf not far off.

Then there was another puddle – a little longer, a bit deeper. You can see where I'm going with this. By the time we rounded a corner and came to the puddle that was just a couple ounces from being a swamp, we could either go back the way we came or press on.

"We've come this far," I announced with much hubris and little foresight. "It's probably not that deep if we find the right spots to step."

Oh, I was a naïve, summer child in a coastal winter world. As I took a step on what I thought was a firm knot of grass and dirt, my foot sunk right through it with a loud plop, followed by a rush of cold water that cascaded over the top of my boot. I looked behind me and saw mom and William commit to the bit, following their very lackluster guide (me) onto the flooded trail.

We would do this again at least several times.

"Are we having fun or what?" I asked cheerily, a sunny tone of voice that did not match our current situation.

"I think we've reached the 'or what' part," mom quipped as William linked arms with her and helped her navigate the pool we were wading through.

Allow me a humble brag on the resilience of my family. We were only halfway done and almost as wet as said ocean that was through the trees off to our right. There could

have been finger-pointing and several rounds of the blame game, all rightfully directed at me. There could have been grousing and short tempers. Instead, we sang sea shanties, playfully cajoled one another, and William even found some whale bones on the beach (which we could not recover from the sand and tide, despite our efforts, and probably for the best).

The closest we came to any sort of behavioral warning was when we were pushing through the last portion of the flooded trail, unbeknownst to us. I was applauding mom and Will for their pluck and good spirits.

"If this water comes up to my nips, Soph, I'm going to run you down and tickle you until you piss your pants," Will said.

I give thanks that the day did not end that way.

*Sophia Mattice-Aldous is not a doctor, personal trainer or dietician, so if you're looking for that kind of exercise and health column, it's not this one. However, she is a lifelong Washington resident and reporter with an affinity for The Great Outdoors who thinks fitness should be fun, and that looks different for everyone. For her, it's going outside. If you have questions and/or comments, including hiking suggestions, email [sophiamatticealdous@gmail.com](mailto:sophiamatticealdous@gmail.com).*

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## End of an Era?

...continued from page 1

Are you okay?"

"Touchdown Chiefs!" I would respond, as she'd roll her eyes, shake her head, and walk away.

In July of 2019, Corey came out to visit family here in Washington. Almost the first thing out of my mouth when I saw him was, "When can we see a game?" I was sort of joking, because I didn't know if that was something he could help with.

He looked a little surprised, but smiled big and said, "Anytime! Just check the home game schedule and let us know when you want to come visit Kansas City."

I immediately went online and found a game in October, booked a flight for my family, and waited for the big day. As I had never been to an NFL game, let alone on a coach's ticket, I had no idea what to expect and lacked the common sense to ask. No worries. I like surprises. And what a surprise it would be.

After we landed in Kansas City, we met Corey at the training complex. He walked out to meet us, spread his arms wide open and said, "Welcome to Chiefs Kingdom!" He proceeded to give us a tour of the complex, starting with his office. He even showed us the spreadsheet he was working on where he documents plays from video. Apparently, that's what an assistant offensive line coach does. Who knew?

Game day was an insane whirlwind that I hardly remember. There may have been some pre-game tailgating involved. Thank goodness for the photos, not only to remind me, but for the proof.

I do remember we had to wear lanyards holding our VIP passes around our necks. I didn't know we'd have VIP passes! I remember going straight down to the field while the Chiefs were warming up and standing on the same turf, just yards away from Patrick Mahomes. I remember thinking I might be bad luck because the Chiefs lost that game and they almost never lost those days.

If you're not a football fan and are still reading this, KC went on to make the playoffs every season, 2018 through 2024, and went to the Super Bowl five times. While Mahomes got most of the credit for this success, I knew the truth. The Chief's success was due to the intelligence and diligence of the offensive line assistant coach, Corey Matthaei.

It's with a heavy heart that I write this, because this season marks the end of the Chiefs

playoff streak. The Chiefs are out of the running for the first time since 2018. There's talk of Kelce's retirement. It might be the end of an era. I know that some of you readers are cheering this news. I get it. I even get how some of you, even some of my family members, don't like Patrick Mahomes and like Travis Kelce even less. Even I got tired of hearing how much fun my sister had at all those Super Bowls and how she just happened to be riding the same elevator as Patrick Mahomes and talked to him. I admit, I was jealous that Corey



The short guy on the far left is assistant offensive line coach and my nephew, Corey.



Post-game photo of Travis Kelce. Long before he met Taylor Swift, I was this close. I didn't meet him, but I did meet Andy Reid's wife, Tammy. I used to see her family's Christmas photo on my sister's refrigerator, so we're practically related.

and his family met Taylor Swift after the Super Bowl. She called it. Haters gonna hate, hate, hate.

Speaking of, my husband insists that it's Taylor Swift who is bad luck, not me. In his mind, the Chiefs started going downhill when Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift started dating and proceeded to get worse after they got engaged. I'm not sure where he gets this expertise. He doesn't even watch football, only futball (soccer).

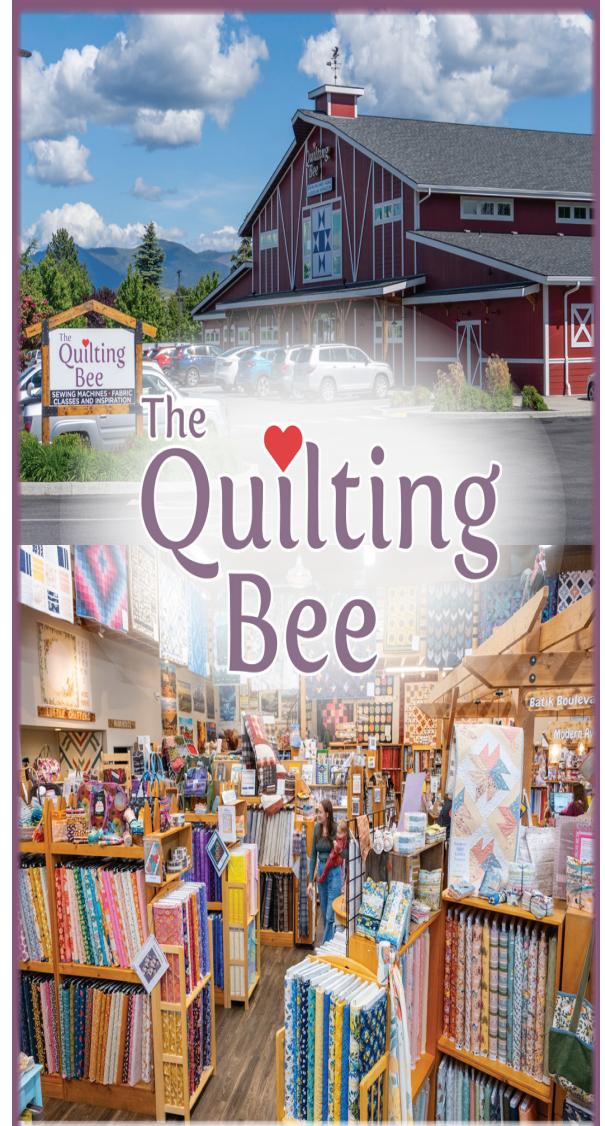
I think it says more about his feelings towards marriage in general. For me, I blame it on Mahomes having three kids. Which probably says more about my feelings towards having kids in general. Most importantly, the downfall has

nothing to do with offensive line coaching. Anyway, I'm just gonna...shake it off.

As my wise mother used to always say, "Every dog has its day." What a day it was, what a run! I don't know what the future brings, but if this is the end of an era, thank you for the memories, Corey. I'm proud of you!

Now, Go Seahawks!

*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.*



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	4			6		9		
			8		9			6
9						3	4	
		4		5	1	7		
	5						9	
		7	4	3		8		
	2	8					5	
7			5	6				
		9	8			1		

### 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!

5	6	9	3	8	4	2	1	7
7	3	1	5	2	6	4	8	9
4	2	8	1	9	7	6	5	3
9	1	7	4	3	2	8	6	5
3	5	2	6	7	8	1	9	4
6	8	4	9	5	1	7	3	2
2	9	6	7	1	5	3	4	8
1	7	3	8	4	9	5	2	6
8	4	5	2	6	3	9	7	1

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# Berry Funnies

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

**What kind of fish do penguins catch at night?**  
Starfish.

**If January threw a parade would February march?** No, but April may!

**What's a New Years resolution?** A to-do list for the first week of January.

**What is at the end of January?** "Y."

**What does the Easter Bunny say on New Year's Day?** Hoppy New Year!

**What is the first month of the year in Transylvania?** Janu-eerie.

A man walks into a bar and orders a drink. He notices that pieces of meat are nailed to the ceiling and asks the bartender why.

"If you can jump up and pull a piece down, you get free beer all night," the bartender replies. "But if you fail, you have to pay the bar \$100." The bartender asks, "Do you want to have a go?"

The man thinks for a minute before saying, "Nah, the steaks are too high."

**How many seconds are in a year?** 12. January second, February second, March second...

**What do you call a nice ghost on a cold January night?** Casp-burr.

**Why shouldn't you kiss someone on January 1<sup>st</sup>?** Because it's the first date.

**What do you tell someone you didn't see at New Year's Eve?** I haven't seen you for a year!

**What's the easiest way to keep your New Year's resolution to read more?** Put the subtitles on your TV.

Two people went on a blind date.

Person A: When's your birthday?

Person B: January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Person A: What year?

Person B: Every year.

## Grammer school

Student: Can I go to the bathroom?

Teacher: It's "may."

Student: No, it's January!

**What do you have in December that you don't have in January?** The letter D.

**What happened to the woman who stole a calendar on New Year's Day?** She got 12 months.

**Which month does the Brady Bunch like most?** JANuary.

**What did the chimney resolve to do for the new year?** Stop smoking.

A guy sees an advertisement for a "Talking Centipede" in a pet-shop window for \$100. He buys it, takes it home, opens the box, and asks the centipede if he wants to go for a beer. The centipede doesn't answer. Thirty minutes later, he tries again, shouting, "Do you want to go for a beer?" The centipede pokes his head

out of the box and says, "Pipe down! I heard you the first time. I'm putting on my shoes!"

It was their first date, and she'd shown the patience of a saint as he babbled on and on about his hobbies, his pet peeves, his driving techniques, and even the standards he used to choose his barber.

Finally, he came up for air and said, "But enough about me. Let's talk about you."

She breathed a sigh of relief.

He went on, "What do you think about me?"

Teacher: "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "No, listen carefully... If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples, and another two apples and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Six."

Teacher: "Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven!"

Teacher: "Johnny, where in the heck do you get seven from?!"

Johnny: "Because I've already got a cat!"

In light of the rising frequency of human/grizzly bear conflicts, the hikers, hunters, and fishermen are advised to take extra precautions and keep alert for bears while in the field.

We advise that outdoorsmen wear noisy little bells on their clothing so as not to startle bears that aren't expecting them. We also advise outdoorsmen to carry pepper spray with them in case of an encounter with a bear. It is also a good idea to watch out for fresh signs of bear activity. Outdoorsmen should recognize the difference between black bear and grizzly bear poop. Black bear poop is smaller and



contains lots of berries and squirrel fur. Grizzly bear poop has little bells in it and smells like pepper."

A guy goes into a company for a job interview. The interviewer asks him, "What would you consider to be your biggest weakness?" The guy thinks for a minute and says, "I'm honest with everyone. I don't know how to be anything other than completely honest, no matter what someone asks me." The interviewer says, "I don't really see how honesty could be considered a weakness. In fact, I think it's a great strength!" The guy looks the interviewer right in the eye and says, "I don't really care what you think."



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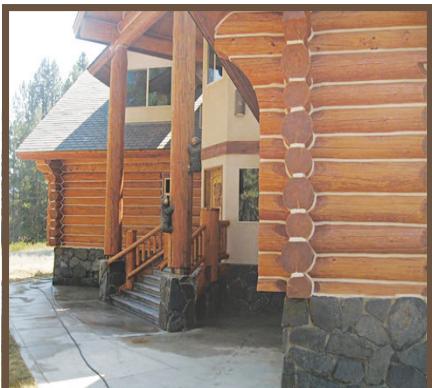
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## When the Process

...continued from page 2

change to get us hooked up.

On the day someone from said electric company came out to get the current flowing, he told our contractor that we needed twice as much juice for the house, and as soon as we paid an additional \$7,000, he'd come back out.

At that point, I really felt I knew what it meant when someone once said, "You can't fight city hall." Worse, the electric company had placed us back at the end of the line for installations, even though I paid the extortion — uh, I mean additional — money that same day.

I tried to plead our case over the phone, and the woman interrupted me and said sternly, "Sir, it's a process."

The next day, I was chatting with my day-job boss about some of the challenges he'd faced in building several multi-million-dollar family entertainment centers over the years. He was saying how, when it comes to construction, no project ever comes in on

budget or gets completed on schedule.

"Bob," he said, "the one thing I've learned over the years is that construction is a process."

I really like my boss, but at that point I wanted to tell him that he could stuff his process where the sun don't shine. But, as a writer and editor, I knew that would not have been grammatically correct. Nor wise for my ongoing employment.

Now, finally in the house and waiting for the movers to arrive with our "stuff," our next task is to transform the house into a home — to make it truly ours. I am anxious to take on the various projects on the to-do list, but the lovely Michelle encourages me to take baby steps.

I'm hoping that's not code for, "It's a process."

*Award-winning writer Bob Johnson and his award-winning photographer wife, Michelle, love exploring the Inland Northwest and sharing their experiences and observations with Huckleberry Press readers.*

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# How Murals Contribute to Community and Business Presence



A mural can be more than decoration. For many businesses, it serves as a visual landmark that shapes how customers experience a storefront and remember a location.

According to Americans for the Arts and the Project for Public Spaces, murals help transform blank walls into focal points that invite foot traffic, encourage photography and contribute to a sense of place. Studies cited by the organizations show murals are often among the most recognizable and widely shared elements of a business's brand.

Unlike temporary signage or digital advertising, murals offer long-term visibility. Once installed, a mural can remain in place for years, working continuously without recurring advertising costs, according to the Outdoor Advertising Association of America and Americans for the Arts.

Behind the finished artwork is extensive planning and skilled labor. Professional muralists typically begin with evaluating wall conditions, preparing surfaces and designing work that fits both the building and its surroundings, according to contractor guides from Fixr and HomeGuide. Exterior murals require specialized primers, paints and sealants to withstand weather, sun exposure and temperature changes.

The work itself can be physically demanding. Muralists often spend long hours on ladders or lifts, working outdoors in varying conditions while maintaining precision and focus, according to occupational safety guidance from OSHA and arts industry reports.

Pricing reflects the time and expertise involved. Industry sources such as Fixr, HomeGuide and California Mural Arts report that professional muralists commonly charge between \$20 and \$50 per square foot, with highly detailed or technically complex projects ranging from \$50 to \$100 or more per square foot. A 100-square-foot mural can represent a \$3,000 to \$5,000 investment, depending on design complexity, surface condition and access.

Most of the cost goes toward labor, with remaining expenses covering materials, equipment, preparation and design. When



Mural and photo of mural by Robin M. Milligan.

calculated by hours worked, professional mural pricing aligns with other skilled trades, according to Fixr and data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Arts advocacy organizations note that muralists and other visual artists often face pressure to work without pay or for "exposure." Americans for the Arts, Artists U and Creative Workers Bill of Rights initiatives have documented unpaid labor as a persistent issue in public-facing art, including murals. Advocacy groups emphasize that creative labor should be compensated in the same manner as other professional services.

Despite these challenges, research suggests murals provide measurable benefits. Studies on placemaking and visual marketing indicate that murals can increase foot traffic, strengthen brand recognition and encourage customer engagement. The Outdoor Advertising Association of America has found large-scale visual installations tend to outperform traditional advertisements in recall and attention.

Murals also contribute to neighborhood identity. Communities that invest in public art often report stronger local economies, increased tourism and higher levels of

community pride, according to Americans for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Businesses commissioning murals typically work under formal agreements outlining design, materials, timelines and payment schedules. Deposits ranging from 30% to 50% are common and help secure materials and schedules, particularly for projects affected by weather and access constraints.

For many business owners, a mural represents both an aesthetic choice and a long-term investment. When professionally executed, murals can differentiate a business, enhance public spaces and signal a commitment to the surrounding community.

*Robin Milligan is an artist and entrepreneur living in Spokane. 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.*

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# Taste Budz Review: Kindred Public House



By Zack & Brooklyn Bolin, Facebook:  
Taste Budz, Instagram: [tastebudz\\_spokane](https://www.instagram.com/tastebudz_spokane)

If you haven't already heard, there's a new kid on the block: Kindred Public House. It's a sister restaurant to Cascadia Public House, and it does not disappoint.

What we devoured

- ~Short Rib Street Tacos
- ~Bulgogi Beef Lettuce Cups
- ~House Margarita

Zack and I both ordered the short rib street tacos; they sounded too good to share. Local tortillas made by De Leon's get stuffed full of tender, juicy braised short rib. Then for a touch of freshness, they top it off with pickled red onion, cotija cheese, green salsa, slaw, and cilantro. I could eat these every day for the rest of my life. The meat is so rich and flavorful when you first bite in, but then the refreshing flavors of the slaw and salsa cut through the richness, making a perfectly balanced plate. Zack, of course, ordered his without red onion, which they were happy to accommodate.

We knew we couldn't only try one item, so we decided to also order the bulgogi beef lettuce cups. Bulgogi

is a Korean marinated beef that combines sweet and savory flavors. The meat was extremely tender, but the crispy romaine lettuce and rice noodles added a perfect crunch. They top it with a flavorful – but not too spicy – chili aioli, plus fresh veggies and peanuts. The dish packed so much flavor while still being a light and refreshing meal.

The interior of the restaurant is cozy and casual. They have an excellent bar area with an awesome mural covering the wall. They also have regular seating. They have a few TVs up with sports on. Even though they are new, their service was extremely fast, and the staff was exceptionally friendly. We went out on Black Friday; the restaurant was packed, and we still had margaritas in our hands within minutes of sitting down.

Just like with Cascadia, Kindred offers a wide range of menu options with an emphasis on accommodating dietary restrictions, including vegan, gluten-free, and vegetarian. They even offer vegan calamari made with locally sourced deep-fried oyster mushrooms.

The whole menu sounds absolutely delectable! We can't wait to go back and try more. Whether you are looking to have a date night or just grab some drinks and delicious snacks, Kindred will exceed your expectations. Make sure to stop in and show this new business some love next time you're in the area.

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Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificate Data, 1990-2022, Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), November 2023. // Created: January 2026

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# A Toast to Mocktails

By Cassie Patten

Happy Prohibition Month... not! This month not only marks a new chapter and a new year, but this month also marks the 106<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, making alcohol illegal nationwide. The dry spell ended in 1933 with the ratification of the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment.

Inquiring minds can't help but wonder if this is how the mocktail, also known as a virgin cocktail, came to be? For those that don't know, a mocktail is a fruity drink mixed with a wide variety of syrupy bases to mimic an alcoholic drink. One example is the famous Shirley Temple and its often repeated, although unconfirmed story of invention: The child actress, Shirley Temple, was dining at a restaurant with her parents. As Shirley's parents were having an Old Fashioned, Shirley started to get a bit antsy and short-tempered, since she was not old enough at the time to indulge in alcoholic beverages. So, in order to pre-empt the starlet's little temper, the waitress came up with a drink that looked somewhat similar. The Shirley Temple consists of ginger ale and grenadine, topped off with maraschino cherries. Another popular drink is the Italian Soda, often served at coffee stands today, made with club soda, half-and-half, and any choice of flavored syrup.

While non-alcoholic mixed drinks were a popular option during prohibition, non-alcoholic fruit drinks have existed for centuries, particularly in the Middle East, where beverages such as sharbat – made from fruit juice and water – were popular. During the middle-ages, physicians elaborated on the mocktail, where they would begin to incorporate spices and herbs, to make a non-alcoholic tonic. The purpose of the tonic was to help alleviate various ailments, and the tonics were often referred to as temperance drinks, which



some credit as the foundational beverage for modern mocktails.

When we finally made our way to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, about two decades before prohibition would be signed into law, Protestants, along with women's rights advocates, labor reformers and public health advocates started, the temperance movement, which would go on long after prohibition was ceased. Protestants believed alcohol was to blame for societal problems such as unemployment, crime, poverty, and domestic violence, and they hoped this movement would help people to drop the bottle and turn their lives over to the divine. In the final few years of prohibition, members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union published recipe collections promoting non-alcoholic drinks such as "Prohibition Punches," in hopes of making prohibition cool.

Today, mocktails can serve as a way to feel comfortable during social gatherings where some may be drinking alcohol, without drawing attention to those that are not. Mocktails can also be helpful to recovering addicts, and for others, it is simply a tasty treat.

*Cassie Patten, born and raised in Washington state, says she has always enjoyed writing about any topic possible. When not actively writing, she can be found baking up a sweet treat or watching football.*

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