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The Many Unexpected Gifts in Passing



by Amy McGarry

Oct. 2 would have been my brother Denny's 77th birthday. Last year at this time, my sisters and I were busily preparing a birthday party for him at his assisted living facility. It would be the last time several of his best friends and some of his nieces and nephews would see him. Our brother passed

away peacefully on Aug. 20.

Aug. 20 was also the day we had scheduled our brother to be evaluated for hospice care. Since moving from assisted living to memory care in June, Denny's decline from Lewy body dementia was breathtakingly rapid. With at least one of us sisters visiting him every day, we witnessed this decline in real time.

The first weeks of August, when Denny was eating less and less and sleeping more and more, we knew it was time to contact hospice. He was unable to communicate if he had pain, and we were terrified that he was uncomfortable. By the time my sister Shannon made the phone call, the waiting list for an evaluation by hospice was over a week long. We took the

soonest appointment we could get: Aug. 20.

After my visit on Aug. 15, I texted my sisters and said Aug. 20 isn't soon enough to get hospice on board. Shannon got a hold of a miracle worker at Horizon Hospice who got the appointment moved to Aug. 18.

What a relief to finally know for sure our brother was comfortable. With Lewy body dementia the body can become very rigid, as our brother's did. Under the care of hospice, for the first time in months, his body looked relaxed. He looked at peace.

On Aug. 19, the hospice nurse told us our brother had less than 48 hours to live. I held his hand and talked to him, then left. I was always super conscious of giving him privacy. My sister Shannon held vigil at his side to the end, as is her way.

My brother's love language for his family was gift-giving. When my daughter was growing up, Denny would visit – briefly – and always had something to give us. My sister Shannon and her husband received nut roll candy bars. He sent money to his son and daughter in California regularly. He brought me family pictures and artifacts. But my daughter Alex, his favorite niece, received the most interest-

ing and broadest range of gifts.

I can't help but think of Denny's rapid passing as his final parting gift to us. He was suffering terribly. All we wanted was an end to his suffering. And he gave that to us.

He left us, his sisters, with other gifts as well. As his dementia progressed over the last two years of his life, we sisters came together to make decisions, support him, and share in his care. Before this team endeavor, our interests and focus went in separate directions; now, we had a shared focal point, thus forging an unbreakable bond. This bond was a gift. We grew to recognize and respect each others' strengths. That too was a gift from our brother. We are now closer than we have been since we lived under the same roof, which was a very long time ago.

We also were gifted an education in elder-care planning. We were forced into uncomfortable discussions with our children about worst case scenarios in aging and what they should do when we can no longer care for ourselves.

We received the gift of relationships with caregivers and residents at the assisted living and memory care facilities.

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Taste Budz Review: Gordo’s Cantina Mexican Restaurant



By Zack & Brooklyn Bolin, Facebook: Taste Budz, Instagram: tastebudz_spokane

Chewelah keeps on growing, and there is now an awesome new Mexican restaurant, Gordo’s Cantina.

What we enjoyed:

- Tacos Placeros
- Carne Asada Burrito
- Vampiro Cocktail
- House Margarita

Zack and I both ordered chef favorite items. I got the Tacos Placeros. They fill slightly toasted tortillas with tender, juicy chunks of beef cheek. Then, they’re topped off with cilantro, white onions, and pickled red onions. The meat was so tender it seemed to melt in my mouth. The combination of salty, savory meat and acidic pickled onion struck the perfect balance. The tacos are only \$10 for three, but you can upgrade and add rice and beans for \$5 more. I got mine with Rancho beans. The rice was flavorful and had a good texture.

Zack ordered the carne asada burrito, which had such a delicious, unique flavor. The burrito comes packed with savory, salty carne asada, refried beans, Mexican rice, and shredded lettuce. Then they top it off with queso fresco, sour cream, guacamole, and red burrito sauce. It also comes with pico de gallo, which Zack opted to have on the side. The burrito had so much flavor.

Not only do they have an outstanding food menu, but they have a great cocktail list too. One that we hadn’t heard of before was called “Vampiro.” Zack loves all things vampire, so of course he ordered it. It’s a mix of house sangria, soda water, and tequila with a Tajín rim. He loved it so much he never even finished his soda.

They have been open for a little while now, and we have ordered takeout but never had the chance to dine in. We sat upstairs, which is a bar area, so only 21+, but it had great views of Quartzite Mountain, and the staff was all very sweet and attentive.

With the addition of Nina’s Thai and now Dos Gordo’s, Chewelah has really grown its restaurant scene. Make sure to stop by and try out this great new spot.

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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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Tag, You're It



by Kerry Schafer

When did everybody get so old?

Obviously, I don't mean me – I'm eternally young and plan to stay that way – but everybody else in my generation and above?

My resident Viking recently reported being startled by seeing a grizzled old man in the mirror, rather than the much younger face he was expecting. "When did this happen?" he asked, once he'd recovered from the shock and begun to accept the fact that the years are catching up to us.

In addition to everybody getting old (even my youngest son is making noises about getting "old," at the advanced age of 30) an extraordinary number of people also seem to be dying. While my kids seem to be attending a never-ending series of weddings, my email and social media feeds are full of an alarming proliferation of death notices and funerals. Family members and classmates, former co-workers and bosses, and also iconic figures in music and show biz such as Betty White, Chuck Norris, Gloria Steinem, and most recently Dolly Parton, all passing out of this life into whatever comes next.

I had the shocking realization the other day, when something got complicated and I looked around for an older, wiser, mentor-type person to help me figure it all out, that the people who filled that role for me are all gone. My parents have been gone for years, and now so are most of their friends and their siblings, and a terrifying realization hit me right between the eyes: I'm it. I'm the old, not-nearly-wise-enough person in the room and there's nobody else standing behind me to answer questions or give me advice.

If you're of a certain age, you know what I mean.

I always hated the game of tag, especially being "it." And now, it feels like I'm permanently "it," until the day I die, because in this case I can't run fast enough to tag another player. There's also no option of leaving the game and running home for a lunch made by that older and wiser person known as Mom.

As if that's not enough responsibility to hold me until my inevitable demise (because not only am I now "it," I'm also "next"), I ran across a post on Instagram the day after Dolly Parton died that added a whole extra layer:

"I know it's hard to watch all these beautiful things be carried away by time and see the wrong things growing in their place. But listen. Listen. We have to be the beautiful things now. It has to be us. It has to be us. Courage."

—Author Jonathan Edward Durham (@thisoneoverhere)

I found this to be equal parts inspirational and terrifying. Not only am I now "it" in the older and wiser department, I also need to try to fill the shoes of somebody like Dolly? Hang on a blessed minute.

Much as I'd like to not carry this responsibility, I think Durham is right.

Obviously, we're not all going to be famous singers or movie stars. Most of us aren't going to become household names, found huge charitable organizations, or give millions of books to kids. But maybe being a beautiful thing in the world can happen in smaller ways.

The reactions to Dolly's passing reminded me of when my father died, far too young and a whole lot of years ago. I was in my late 20s, and it was my first major encounter with death. What really resonated for me during that time, besides the depth of my own grief, was the way our community reacted to his passing.

Dad wasn't famous or a public figure, just the plant manager at a small-town lumber mill, and yet his life touched an amazing number of people in a positive way. When I accompanied my mother to the bank to deal with his finances, the bank teller dissolved into tears. So did the florist when we went to order flowers. The waitresses at the local restaurants Dad frequented sent cards and flowers. Prayers were said for this white Christian man at the local Sikh temple.

The thing about Dad was that he treated everybody with respect, and like they mattered. He knew how to listen so you felt seen and heard. He tipped well. He worked hard and he

also played hard. He liked to laugh. People came away from an encounter with him feeling better.

We all know people like this. People who give us the gift of really seeing us or listening to us. People who know how to laugh. People who create music or art or books for the joy of creation. The barista who always gets your drink right. The woman at the check-out counter who asks if everything is okay if you miss your usual shopping day.

Take a minute to really think about who those people are to you, and then ask yourself, "How can I be that person? How can I be a beautiful thing in the world?"

Remember, it doesn't have to be big things. Small things count. Maybe they count even more.

Colville resident Kerry Schafer (who also writes as Kerry Anne King) is the bestselling author of 15 novels, the co-host of The One Happy Thing Podcast, and a licensed mental health counselor. Find out more at www.allthingskerry.com

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Sharing Our Home with Wildlife



by Bob Johnson

When we are privileged to live amidst wildlife, as so many of us are here in the Inland Northwest, we have a responsibility to disturb their habitat as little as possible. Natives are taught from childhood and newcomers are expected to learn that we should observe animals from a distance, never follow or approach them, never feed them, and control any pets we may have.

When we first arrived in northern Idaho in the summer of 2024, we arranged a short-term rental in a cottage in Garwood. There was a stony trail leading to the back of the property, framed by trees that seemed to glow when the sun caught them at just the right angle. A blue sky dappled with puffy clouds provided the backdrop – until sunset, when the blue morphed into shades of red and orange before fading to black.

And I do mean black. Living in cities, as we always had, it never got truly dark. Some sort of light, whether a streetlight or a neighbor’s porch light or a passing car’s headlights, was always peeking through our drapes. But in this Garwood cottage, our bedroom was pitch-black at night. We had to invest in a night light for the bathroom so those of us who no longer sleep straight through (okay, that would be me) could make the stroll to the commode without stubbing a toe or tripping.

On the first morning of our second week in the cottage, the lovely Michelle and I brewed a couple cups of coffee and took our seats at the kitchen table, turning them so they faced the picture window.

“Look!” Michelle exclaimed af-

ter a few minutes had passed. “A mama deer and her two babies!”

“Where?”

“Way down the path. See them?”

Ah, there they were. A proud, statuesque doe with two bespeckled fawns standing nearby. The small white spots on their light brown skin served their intended purpose of keeping the fawns well camouflaged in the forest setting. Until this moment, we’d heard animals in what we ungenerously called “the backyard” but had seen only the occasional squirrel, chipmunk, and brightly hued bird.

The doe led the fawns slowly across the trail, and then they all vanished into the brush as quickly as they’d appeared. We sipped our coffee, hoping to get another glimpse, but before long it was time for me to get to work and for Michelle to resume her job hunt. We would not see the deer for the rest of the day.

When we went to bed that night, we set our alarm so we’d be out in the kitchen, coffee brewed and chairs occupied, at precisely the same time the next morning. It proved to be a wise plan, as mere moments after we sat down, the deer appeared – this time much closer to the cottage.

We two city folk watched in wonderment as the doe nursed the fawns. One fawn was a bit more aggressive than the other, but mama made sure both received ample nourishment before the family meandered into the woods again.

“Nothing like this back home,” Michelle said, wrapping both hands around her coffee cup.

“This is home now,” I gently corrected her. (Aside to husbands: All corrections of wives should be handled gently and with extreme caution, and only after weighing all the possible consequences.)

We quickly became completely

immersed in the forest-cottage lifestyle. The sunrises. The sunsets. The animal life. We even began to feel a modicum of guilt. Were we encroaching on their natural habitat? Were we making it more difficult for them to forage? We certainly had become emotionally invested with the deer family. Each day, the doe and her fawns inched closer to the cottage. Were they beginning to trust us?

We got the answer to that question on the fourth morning of the third week when we took our seats a few minutes early, hoping to see not only the deer but perhaps other animals as well. About 20 minutes later, the doe strolled around the cottage from our bedroom side and stopped just feet away from the picture window. She did not look at Michelle. She stood still and stared directly into my eyes.

When I began to stand up, she lowered her head and raised her right front hoof about three inches above the ground, as if she were summoning her inner bull. I slowly sat back down, and she lowered her hoof, raised her head, and resumed the stare-down.

“She doesn’t like you,” Michelle said.

“What did I do?” I asked.

“She’s just protecting her fawns and thinks you’re a threat,” Michelle explained.

We didn’t see the deer family again until the day we were packing our cars to vacate the cottage. The fawns appeared first in the front yard, walking more confidently. Their white spots had faded noticeably. Their mother followed, keeping an eye on her offspring without hovering.

Until she saw me. Then the stare-down began anew. But before she could raise a hoof, we got in our cars and bade farewell to the Garwood cottage in the woods, the perfect introduction to our new lives as small-town Idahoans.

What followed, however, was more than a year of sheer torture in an apartment with a loud party animal upstairs and a clueless property manager as we weaved through a maze of bank loan applications, manufactured home paperwork, and, most painfully of all, county documents (Huckleberry Press, January 2026).

Finally, just before Christmas last year, we were able to move into our new home which, like the Garwood cottage, has a big “backyard” that acts like a magnet for wildlife. We’ve been told by neighbors that over the years there have been many sightings of the Inland Northwest’s iconic animals: black bears, bald eagles, elk, gray wolves, and moose.

Thus far, we have seen eagles and heard elk, but I have no expectations of seeing moose

(Huckleberry Press, February 2026). We’ve been on our property only 10 months, so we’re giving the bears and wolves time to find us.

Meanwhile, there’s no shortage of wildlife for us to enjoy – from a distance, of course.

Wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) are ubiquitous in our neighborhood, and a group makes its way along our tree line every day. A neighbor told us a group of turkeys is called a “rafter.” Even though I always thought of that as the only place I could afford to sit at a sporting event or, alternately, one who rafts, rafter apparently is the word used to describe a group of turkeys that includes both males and females.

Groups of male turkeys have multiple descriptive names specific to them, including gang, posse, and bachelor flock. I wonder whether Gloria Steinem, the feminist leader who passed away on Sept. 2, was aware of this special treatment for male turkeys.

We also have a Nuttall cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttallii*) who has established our yard as one of its bolt areas. We’re not sure whether the rabbit is male or female; nonetheless, we have named it Robert because the Johnson surname in our family tree will die out once my brother and I are gone, as he never had children and I had girls. Thus, we are counting on Robert Johnson Jr. to carry on the Johnson name, and given rabbits’ proclivity for reproduction, feel confident that he or she is up to the task.

Robert Jr. loves nothing more than sitting near the tree line, perfectly still and staring into our kitchen, probably hoping that a stray piece of lettuce will somehow find its way outside. There isn’t a kindergarten teacher alive who hasn’t dreamt of having a whole class of little Roberts who could sit perfectly still for prolonged periods of time.

We also have a small herd (or bevy, parcel, or mob, if you prefer) of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) that comes through every day. One likes to stare at me but has yet to lift a hoof, perhaps because she has no young to protect.

Anytime a turkey, a deer, or Robert Jr. stops by, we stop what we’re doing to quietly move to a window where we can watch them go about their foraging or wax museum routine. Humans (*Humanous stupidous*) sometimes can be annoying, but our animal friends never fail to delight.

National award-winning writer Bob Johnson and his national award-winning photographer-wife, Michelle, do their best to respect the Inland Northwest’s animals and the land they call home. Reach Johnson at bjibob@aol.com.

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Why Worry?



by Alex Chaoukouri

As my first quarter at the University of Washington begins, I can't help but be reminded of another 17-year-old heading to Seattle from eastern Washington, exactly 59 years ago. That 17-year-old was my uncle, Denny, who passed away near the end of August after an agonizing battle with Lewy Body Dementia. Describing Denny as my uncle doesn't really capture our relationship properly; he was almost like a grandfather to me.

Both of my grandparents passed away when I was an infant, so I never really got to have the experiences of warm chocolate chip cookies at Grandma's house or a fishing trip with Grandpa. Instead, I had four lovely aunts who were happy to step into the role of my grandmothers. Unfortunately for me, they had their own grandkids that they had to love and care for, and I always played second fiddle to them. With Denny, it was different. He had grandchildren, but contact was minimal and they lived far away, so throughout my childhood, he was all mine.

My uncle Denny was a very awkward fellow, someone they used to refer to as an "odd duck," but would now likely be understood to be someone on the Autism spectrum. He lived on his own in a house on a hill in Harrison, Idaho, where he took mile-long walks daily along Coeur d'Alene lake and ate a strictly zero gluten and zero refined sugar diet. He didn't talk much, was famous for his Irish goodbye (leaving without a word), and I loved every part of him. I myself am a rather "odd duck," and I never felt like I had to put on a mask around Denny. We were just two odd ducks, swimming together.

Denny would drive down to Spokane every Sunday to attend his weekly NA meeting, and

either before or afterwards, he would come by my house bearing a gift: pieces of bark, interesting shaped rocks, pieces of deer antlers. If he didn't find anything for me on his walks that week, he would bring me a can of black olives and a jar of dill pickles. One time, he even brought me a jar of ash from Mt. Saint Helens. I don't think I ever heard Denny verbally tell me that he loved me, but he absolutely showed it.

It was never just physical things that Denny bestowed upon me, but also a piece of wisdom every time I saw him. He was the smartest man I ever knew, and I like to think I'm much smarter because of him. He let me ask questions and made sure to explain everything thoroughly. One time specifically, I asked him about my relationship with the children of my cousins, and he gave me a seemingly endless spiel about the difference between second cousins and first cousins once removed. He even drew me a whole family tree. He had this immense passion for knowledge, and he wanted to share that with me.

The one day a year that I was guaranteed to see my uncle Denny was the 4th of July. That morning, my mom and I (plus a friend of my choice) would pack up our sleeping bags and drive up to Harrison, where Denny was always happy to greet us. We would go play down at the lake, and after a long, fun-filled day, we would make our way up the hill and find that Denny had grilled us burgers and hot dogs. After that, it was tradition to watch "The Princess Bride" until sundown, when we would then go sit on a rickety picnic table and watch the fireworks show that was being held down at the lake.

It was always the morning of July 5th that Denny would demonstrate his adoration for nature. The friend I had chosen for that trip and myself would climb into his truck and he would take us to see all the interesting quirks Harrison had to offer. In particular, there was a sailboat wreck he liked to take me to, which

my young self thought was the coolest thing in the world. I think that might be where I want to spread his ashes.

Although Denny's appearances in my life were always brief, his impact remains long lasting. Every time I watch an episode of "Jeopardy," I can't help but hear his voice in my ear, calling out each answer several seconds before any of the contestants buzzed it in. I close my eyes and see the way he smiled the last time he ever looked at me before he passed, the recognition on his face despite having lost his ability to remember practically anything else. When I take my first steps onto the University of Washington campus, a piece of him will be with me in my dragonfly necklace, and I hope he'll be happy to be back where he spent so much time "striking and marching" in the late '60s.

The anxiety of uprooting my entire life and moving to a new place without my parents has been paralyzing, but each time I feel like I'm suffocating, I think about this poster that my uncle Denny kept on the door to his garage, and I feel a little bit better. It was the Irish Philosophy:

"There are only two things to worry about: either you are well or you are sick.

If you are well, there is nothing to worry about.

If you are sick, there are two things to worry about: either you will get well or you will die.

If you get well, there is nothing to worry about.

If you die, there are only two things to worry about: either you will go to heaven or hell.

If you go to heaven, there is nothing to worry about.

But if you go to hell, you'll be so damn busy shaking hands with friends you won't have time to worry."

Alex Chaoukouri just graduated from Central Valley High School with honors and is now attending the University of Washington to study law.

Gifts ...continued from page 1

For me personally, this whole journey of caring for my brother was a gift. I learned about the depths of my heart. To care so deeply for another's wellbeing is one of the hardest things we do. But it's also an honor and a privilege.

I can't help but think the timing of this journey was also a gift. As difficult as it was, dividing my time and energy between my brother's care and my only child as she navigated her way through the end of high school was a gift. My brother prevented me from being a smothering parent. I couldn't obsess about my kid's last dance or last debate tournament. I couldn't hover. I couldn't feel sorry for myself for "losing" my daughter. Worrying about Denny was almost like having another child. Or, it put me in that "sandwich generation." Only instead of caring for aging parents while raising a child, it was my brother who was old enough to be my parent.

My brother's passing distracted me from the grief of the impending departure of my daughter's move to college one month after Denny passed. I've had little time to pre-grieve my empty nest.

At the time of this writing, I have just a few days to help my kid get stocked up and packed for her first year of dorm life at the University of

Washington. With shopping for a mini-fridge, a microwave, and every other little thing she might need, I have had zero time to grieve the loss of my brother. When we go shopping, I catch myself thinking, "While I'm here, I should pick up toothpaste and soap for Denny." I have to remind myself we don't need to plan Denny's birthday party this year. Instead, I spent much of September preparing for Denny's celebration of life, which was lovely and attended by a number of high school friends from his Ritzville graduating class of 1967.

I had the honor of writing and reading my brother's eulogy. Everyone knew my brother's favorite days of the year were Bloomsday and the Kentucky Derby. I finished the eulogy expressing the hope that now, every day is Bloomsday for Denny, with a Kentucky Derby thrown in here and there. I also said, as I gulped down a sob, "I miss you, brother." And that is a gift, too, a testimony of my love for and connection with my brother. The gift of grief is a reminder of all the memories and the impact he had on my life.

Happy Heavenly Birthday, brother!
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 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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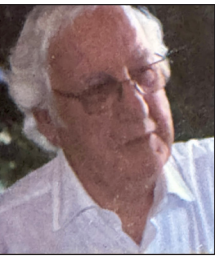




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Is It a Collection... or Hoarding?



by Ray Bilderback

The last 10 years or so have seen the growth of an industry, namely storage units. They pop up like toadstools after a rain. I got curious and a bit careless in my thinking, I suppose. I was blaming other people for the phenomenon. Couldn't they curb their impulse buying? Seemed wasteful. Those resources (the lumber, roofing, locks, concrete and so on required to build the storage units) could find better use elsewhere.

I had visions of duplexes with happy children

playing in the yard or "little houses" for senior citizens on quiet, winding, tree-lined streets. That, I figured, was the way to use those resources.

Collecting: to systematically seek and acquire, especially as a hobby

People collect pretty rocks, fossils, old bottles, books, paintings, slot machines, cars, and so on. Some of the collections can get awfully large. Those of us who watch the TV show "American Pickers" have seen collections that take up several acres of sheds, houses, and warehouses. They have massive storage problems.

Sometimes they are asked why they do it. They say it's an investment, or they want people to remember life as it used to be. Some just collect because they like the stuff.

For them it's a hobby. For most of us, it is a problem storing the stuff. A problem I have had most of my life.

Sometimes the collecting turns sour and becomes hoarding. We've all heard stories of people who buy a house from an old person and, in the course of remodeling, a cache of coins is discovered in the walls (it recently happened in Republic, Wash.). Did the collector forget they were there? Was he collecting or hoarding them? We know he wasn't archiving; that's what they do at the Smithsonian.

My neighbor down in wheat country hid his coin collection from the family. He would stock up on numismatics when their harvest check arrived. Sometimes he would get out his collection after the family retired for the night and add new coins to it or just admire it. Good thing a daughter caught him stashing the hoard. They got one check a year from the wheat harvest and they were not a wealthy family. By definition, he was hoarding.

Hoarding: to accumulate more than one's current requirement of food, etc., in a time of scarcity

Hoarding got a bad name when World War II came along. We were so busy trying to provide food for our troops and also for our friends in Europe who were fighting the German menace that we shamed anyone setting canned goods aside for future use. It was not considered patriotic. We were on short rations and living within the bounds of our ration book and we expected others to do the same. But there is always someone selling illegal goods and someone willing to buy the same.

Back to the storage question: way back when I just got out of the Navy, my paternal grandfather was still living in the old place (a small cattle outfit with pasture and hay ground). In

the house there were family pictures and letters going back to the California gold rush. There was also a gun collection that had Great-Grandfather's rifle that he packed across the plains in '52. I knew those things needed to be saved, but I was going to college and had no way to solve the problem. To make things worse, I was a grandchild and felt I had no right to the relics anyway.

Then we had a fire that burned down the house and the blacksmith shop. I should have felt relieved. The problem, how to store the relics, had been solved. They were irretrievably gone. So why do I fret some 70 years later?

Eventually, I got my father involved. We saved the blacksmith anvil and a few tools, but the bellows and the structure were gone. It had served the farm and community during the horse and buggy days and maybe that was enough.

When you are downsizing or moving into a "little house" what to store and what to save is a constant problem. Your life-long collection of books and family heirlooms that you have been saving to hand down to a younger generation can be a problem as well. Often a younger generation is also living in tight quarters, the collection of books you prized may be too large for their bookshelves, the books may not suit them or they may have a problem (have no shelf room because they can't get past a bookstore).

I found a way to prune my book collection; I have been giving books as Christmas presents. It is fun trying to match a person with a book (or vase, fly rod or, in some cases, cash. Twenty-dollar bills make good bookmarks). Gradually, I'm getting a little clear space in my own shelves. But, you guessed it, I can't get past a bookstore without going in.

It's fall and time to give the yard a little attention: mow the lawn, give it and the trees a good soaking, roll up the hoses and put them away, and find room to store the new wheelbarrow and the lawn furniture. Good thing there is still room in the storage unit.

Ray Bilderback, creator of the Reuben Brad-dock 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 Samwise: All Rocks and Leaves, No Cheese



By Sophia Mattice-Aldous

In this day and age where cats are on the leash almost as much as dogs, headed into the woods and lakes alongside their humans co-playing as weekend warriors, what is a three-month old kitten to do?

Seriously, I'm asking anyone who has an "adventure cat" they take hiking with them. This is new territory for me and especially my feline companion, Samwise, who is my one and only foster fail after coming into my life this summer. As much as I love my other two kitties, Twigs and Tich, a pastel tortie and my first orange tabby/pumpkin hybrid, I'm afraid I didn't do right by them in exposing them to the wider world. As a result, they can be just as antisocial and couchbound as their human. But, while I know how to rehabilitate myself with the help of the great outdoors, I question the sense of forcing two middle-aged cats into hiking with me just to make myself feel better about my pet rearing mistakes.

Like many things in life, I'm probably overthinking it. However, if I'm going to care for another cat, knowing what I know now, he might as well get out in the forest when he's still pint-sized and open to the experience.

And is he ever! This last weekend we ventured with my longtime friend, Crystal, to the Roosevelt Grove of Ancient Cedars in Bonner



County. The trailhead was popular that day, with numerous families taking in the waterfall and old-growth cedar trees that line the wa-

ter. With the amount of people around, I left Samwise in his pack, but that didn't stop his little eyes from dilating at the various sounds, sights, and smells. Granite Falls shoots down through the rocks and the air carries the scent of cedar, leaves, and wet stone. The trail itself is a little over two miles and has an elevation gain of roughly 300 feet, so it didn't take us long to leave the crowd behind (most were large families attracted to the lookout or sticking around the falls).

Once we were alone and found a plateau to take a short rest, it was time to unleash the beast, and by "unleash" I mean letting Samwise out of his pack with a harness and a leash. He proceeded to enact his own Ode to Joy, chasing ants, sharpening his claws on nursing logs, and trying to stuff any and all vegetation into his little gob (while I don't equate my beloved pets as my children, you can't deny that both parents and pet owners seem to repeat, "Get that out of your mouth," a lot).

Suffice it to say, besides the lack of cheese, which is one of his most coveted treats, Samwise seemed to enjoy himself immensely, and I'm looking forward to getting him back out on the trail. If there are any hikers with veteran companion cats out there, please get in touch. I sense I have a lot to learn.

Sophia Mattice-Aldous is a 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.

A Tootsie Roll History

By Cassie Patton

As the end of October approaches, out come the popular Halloween candies, such as Tootsie Rolls that taste like chocolate, but actually have no trace of it at all.

The famous Tootsie Roll as we know it today was introduced in 1896 by Jewish Austrian immigrant, Leo Hirshfeld, according to historyoasis.com. While Hirshfeld learned how to make candy in the old world, he went on to realize the American Dream by making it big in business and leaving an extraordinary mark in the candy world. Hirschfeld started out by experimenting with a "chocolate" flavored candy that would not be susceptible to high levels of heat that causes regular chocolate to melt. This mattered because the first Tootsie Rolls were delivered by horse and buggy, without refrigeration. By 1907, the Tootsie Roll was finally ready for commercial sale.

The website states that Tootsie Rolls were a big hit in the summer as regular chocolates were hard to sell. During the Great Depression (1929-1939), when things such as butter and sugar were considered a luxury of the times, parents found a way to satisfy their child's sweet tooth by stocking up on the candy. In 1943, a comic strip character was created by cartoonist C.C. Beck and writer Rod Reed, known at the time as Captain Tootsie, to help sell to kids on

the homefront. During this time, America had already been engaged with World War II for two years when the Tootsie Roll really kicked off. The Tootsie Roll also had an interesting role in the Korean War. There was a code name known as "Tootsie Roll," used to request 60mm mortar shells, but a radio operator without the code sheet took the request literally and airdropped the actual candy instead.

Along with the Tootsie Roll came the Tootsie Pop. Many may remember the commercial asking how many licks does it take to get to the center? That answer remains to be seen to this very day.

While the cocoa-flavored Tootsie Roll remains the most popular flavor, Tootsie Fruity Chews became a hit in the 1970s as they came in a variety of fla-

vors including cherry, orange, vanilla, lemon, and lime, along with a selection of other flavors around the holidays.

Cassie Patton, 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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5	3	9		8			7	

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

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

What happens when the horses refuse to pull the wagon in the pumpkin patch? It turns into a neigh ride.

Why did the man bungee jump on the first day of autumn? Because he loved the fall.

What do you call someone who imitates your fall centerpiece? A cornucopier.

What did the jack-o'-lantern do when pulled over by the police? Spilled its guts.

Who won the skeleton costume contest? No body.

What do you call a small pepper in the fall?
A little chili.

What's the best book to read in autumn?
Gourd of the Flies.

What did autumn say to summer? I'll follow you anywhere.

How do you repair a broken jack-o'-lantern? Use a pumpkin patch.

Why don't fir trees ever get the blues?
They're evergreen.

What movie best describes Thanksgiving morning? The Hunger Games.

How do you get rid of ghouls? Ghost them.

What do you call a bovine who chases birds? A scare-cow.

What was the Pilgrims' favorite kind of music? Plymouth Rock.

What is the best fall fairy tale? Pumpelstiltskin.

What did the ghost say on the first day of class? “I love going back to ghou.”

What is a jack-o'-lantern's favorite book?
Are You There, Gourd? It's Me, Margaret.

What do you call a bear in the autumn rain? A drizzly bear.

What's a ghost's favorite website? BooTube.

What was the poltergeist's favorite song?
 "You Are So Boo-tiful."

Why did the tree giggle? It heard acorn-y joke.

How did the ghost haunt three houses at the same time? She used Boo-tooth.

Why did the apple pie cry? Its peelings were hurt.

Why couldn't the farmer stop laughing? It was time for ha-ha-harvest.

What do you call a pumpkin in a suitcase?
A pack-o'-lantern.

What do you get when you cut a rectangular pumpkin pie in half? Pie R-squared.

What is a gourd farmer's favorite sport?
Squash.

**Where do pumpkins hold meetings? In the
gourd room.**

How was the month-old jack-o'-lantern like a prehistoric human? He was caved in.

Why did the jack-o'-lantern jump off the bridge? She wanted to try rolling on the river.

What is a pumpkin's favorite game show?
Passgourd.

What was the jack-o'-lantern doing at the gym? Pumpkin iron.

What do you call a pumpkin that whines a lot? A grumpkin.

Why did the apple roll down the hill? It was sauced.

**What did the apple say to the caramel
sauce? Are you sweet on me?**

Why did the apple join a gym? To work on its core.

How can you tell if an apple is a McIntosh?
Its peel is plaid.

What did the Yellow Delicious apple say to the Red Delicious apple? “Why are you blushing?”



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Salvation of the Lambs: A Case Study



by Linea Jantz

In each hand, I held a warm glass bottle of formula. A lamb nursed furiously at each bottle, tails wiggling with delight. The barn was dim and smelled of last summer’s late season hay and warm milk. When the lambs finished eating, they pressed against my legs. I ran my small hands down their curly wool. My grandma always accepted bummer lambs (baby sheep who have been orphaned or rejected by their mothers) from her neighbors. I loved them with all my little girl heart.

Unfortunately, wool prices were abysmal. One weekend I trotted down the hill to visit the sheep and they were gone. They had all been sold.

Decades later, I learned that Spokane Zero Waste, a local fiber arts and sustainability nonprofit, was looking for ways to divert wool from the textile waste stream and help farmers find new options for selling wool. Remembering my lost bummer lambs, I reached out to Spokane Zero Waste Executive Director Elyse Hochstadt for more information.

From Hochstadt, I learned that roughly 90% of sheep’s wool is burnt or sent to the landfill due to the wool not meeting textile standards. In a pre-feasibility study from Northwest Agriculture Business Center and Southwest Washington Growers Co-op, for a wool processing facility in southwest Washington, the farmers surveyed produced a combined 314,984 pounds of wool in 2023, with many noting they also had sheds, garages, or warehouses full of additional wool from the previous three to 10 years. That’s a lot of wool to potentially enter the textile waste stream.

However, studies show potential for wool to be used as biodegradable packaging padding, blown-in building insulation, replacement for plastic bubble wrap, mats to prevent erosion, weed suppression mats, seed starter pots, plant fertilizer, and tree starter sleeves. The research was encouraging but also a bit overwhelming. Without designated funding for this project and with limited time and resources, which potential wool solution should Spokane Zero Waste focus their efforts?

Hochstadt connected with Stacey Carpenter of Hop’n Ridge Ranch. Carpenter found her way into sheep farming before she even had a farm. She was housesitting when a neighbor asked her to care for a bummer lamb.

At first, Carpenter tried not to get attached. There was a good chance the lamb was going to die. However, as the lamb’s condition worsened, Carpenter decided to see if some extra love and “a good, strong name” would help him pull through. Soon, Rhett Butler was trotting around with the family dogs, having become a beloved pet. When Carpenter and her husband eventually purchased land, Rhett Butler came along too.

Years later, Carpenter owned a flock of sheep, goats, and other animals including a pack of free-ranging bunnies. Her sheep needed to be sheared each year. On average, a sheep produced 7 pounds of wool and uncleaned wool was fetching only 40 cents per pound at market. It was difficult to even break even on shearing costs with prices like that, not to mention costs for transport. So, Carpenter started looking for what she could do with her non-textile grade wool.

She had lived in Germany for a time, where farmers were using wool pellets for eco-friendly fertilizer. She wondered if the pelletizer she had originally purchased to make feed pellets could also pelletize wool. After some trial and error, she was soon pelletizing not only her own wool, but wool for other farmers and shearers. She was also able to bring in extra income by selling wool pellets to home gardeners at local markets.

Wool is capable of absorbing 20-30 times its weight in water. In the form of pellets, that wool can be mixed into the soil near plant roots where moisture will be captured (preventing potential erosion) and released slowly along with a variety of nutrients. Researchers at the University of Vermont determined that wool pellets contain ideal levels of nitrogen, small amounts of potassium, and almost no phosphorous, making them an effective and environmentally-friendly option compared to commercial fertilizers that rely on high quantities of phosphorus, which pollutes waterways and creates blue-green algae blooms. Additionally, up to 50% of the weight of wool is carbon so using wool pellets also contributes to soil structure.

From a climate change perspective, a 2024 study from Science Direct revealed that increasing soil water retention could reduce up to 32.9% of land surface warming and delay critical temperature thresholds by longer than a decade. In this age of heat waves and drought, Spokane Zero Waste decided to partner with Carpenter to get the word out about

wool pellets as fertilizer.

Spokane Zero Waste began tabling at community events, offering sample wool pellets provided by Carpenter. They implemented a Citizen Science program where local gardeners volunteered to grow plants side by side – with and without pellets – and report their findings in areas such as water usage, soil temperature, plant health and growth.

Kat Hall, the Watershed Restoration Program Director at environmental advocacy nonprofit The Lands Council, began working with Spokane Zero Waste to establish a trial plot at their Hangman Creek site in Latah. They built two fenced enclosures inside which they planted several of Woods’ rose seedlings. The seedlings in one enclosure were treated with sheep wool pellets; the other enclosure would serve as the control group. They committed to tracking the soil moisture between the two plantings. If results proved promising, they would be interested in incorporating wool pellets into future projects.

Time will tell the results of these Citizen Science efforts. I can only speak to my personal experience. I have a garden bed in full sun that I have tried multiple plants in over the years with different kinds of fertilizers and little growing success. This year, I amended the soil with wool pellets in the spring. I have killed multiple

tomato plants in this bed in the past, but this year my sunflowers are blooming beautifully and the tomato start I planted in spring has grown eight tomatoes. I also noticed that, even in this hot year, the soil held moisture later into the day than it typically has in past years.

More widespread use of solutions like wool pellets could mean less synthetic fertilizers use in agriculture and urban gardens, cleaner waterways, and less plastic alternatives. It could mean more income for sheep farmers. And maybe it would mean that someone else’s lambs have the chance to grow up to be sheep.

Linea Jantz is a freelance writer, based in Spokane, who has worked in day jobs including waste management, teacher, and paralegal.



Sample of wool pellets at the Carpenter farm. Photo by Linea Jantz.

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Absolutely stunning barndominium completely updated on 5 acres with private well and patio. Beautiful lake and mountain views add to the charm of this property. Incredible views from the primary bedroom that leads to an amazing ensuite bathroom with soaking tub and sauna. Large "Rebath" shower and bath area for the main bathroom. Top-of-the-line kitchen with quartz counter tops, large island, and lots of cupboards. Beautiful views from the expansive windows and slider from the



MLS# 46441 **\$475,000**



kitchen, living room and dining area. Radiant floor heat will keep you warm all winter. Shop has additional living area and upper loft for entertaining and guests. Completely insulated for your comfort. Deluxe covered RV set up with deck and water, Power and septic hook ups. Easy access from public roads Only 10 minutes away from the Hunters boat launch with year-round boating, fishing and kayaking. This property has a small open covered cabin for hunting on the lower part of the property.

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!



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

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 Pey 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**

Waterfront Oasis: Listen to the sounds of the Kettle River from this stunning, custom built home situated on 6.52 acres bordering the Kettle River. Large open floor plan with views from the kitchen, dining and living room. Plenty of windows to bring the beauty of outside inside. Main floor living with radiant heat, laundry and primary bed and bath. A beautifully finished basement includes wet bar, stone floors, a wood stove, bed and bath, lots of windows and an outside entrance. Two decks for your entertaining enjoyment & oversized 2 car garage. Secondary house for family and friends, that includes a kitchen, bath and huge bonus room with pool table and room for several sleeping areas and includes 2 car garage. In-ground sprinkler, huge woodshed with storage, Screened gazebo and shed. Custom wood working throughout this home, radiant heat, wood stove and a mini split is included and the pad is in it just needs to be installed. Generator stays, 220 on the outside of the garage and STAR Link service stays - you just have to sign up.



MLS# 45526 **\$799,000**

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.



MLS# 45880 **\$670,000**

Comfortable updated 2-bed 2 bath on the main floor and 2 rooms upstairs, in the heart of Kettle Falls. New flooring and paint, updated kitchen and bathrooms, large dining area with a coffee bar and appliance counter. Large corner lot with fenced in front and side yard. Detached garage with carport just needs a little TLC. Close to all amenities.



MLS# 46434 **\$299,000**

Come see this beautifully updated mobile home. Step inside and see why this home is worth a visit. Remodeled and ready to move in! Everything has been updated, new paint throughout, kitchen cabinets have been painted, new flooring, window and interior trim, plenty of windows for the natural light to shine in. Extra room off the living room adds to the spaciousness of this home. Front porch for relaxing, plenty of parking on the large lot located in the mobile home park behind Sandy's restaurant in Kettle Falls, lot rent is \$550 per month, and this 1986 home can be financed. Priced to sell!



MLS# 46346 **\$69,000**

This lot is ready for your new home! There is a 2-car garage, plus power, water and septic and concrete pad are installed. (The old home was removed.) Last home was 23'x44'.



MLS# 44032 **\$119,000**

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 are beautiful. There are plum, cherry, apple, pear and nectarine trees in the mini orchard.



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

Kettle River waterfront paradise - it's like buying your own park! Elegantly built home with an open floor plan, vaulted ceilings with lots of windows to let the sunlight and views. Floor-to-ceiling tiled wood stove in the living room with a spacious redwood deck to watch the river flow. Special crafted kitchen with Acacia wood counter tops from Africa, hickory cabinets with an abundance of counter space and storage, large dining room with a private viewing deck. Primary bedroom with jacuzzi tub, walk in shower and closet plus electric fireplace. Plenty of bathrooms for entertaining and sleep overs. Separate cabin with running water, electricity and private outhouse. Plenty of water with a private well and 2 car carport with storage room, plus a RV carport and the well house has an additional storage room. Level and private acres for your recreational needs.



MLS# 44847 **\$789,000**

Mission Lake Waterfront at its best. This custom-built home has everything you need. Beautiful gourmet kitchen with open dining that lets the views of the lake inside to enjoy while you're cooking or dining. Huge primary ensuite with screened in porch for your outdoor pleasure. Large laundry room, covered deck with access to the lake, daylight basement has 3 bedrooms and full bath plus additional storage area. Walk out and fish from your private dock. Extra-large 2-car attached garage. The house sits down from the road for extra privacy.



MLS# 45774 **\$629,000**

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.

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