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THE VOICE OF THE KEY PENINSULA

May 2021 Vol. 48 No. 5

Appeals Court Opens State Shellfish Farming

A successful suit by environmentalists means shellfish growers must provide their own environmental impact statements to demonstrate their operation is safe.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

After a years-long battle, a ruling by the federal district court of Western Washington was unanimously upheld by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in February affirming that shellfish farmers must apply for new permits to plant or harvest this coming season.

For environmentalists, the decision represented a victory. For shellfish farmers, it spelled potential disaster.

"I am not against shellfish farms," said Gig Harbor resident Laura Hendricks, the executive director of the nonprofit Coalition to Save Puget Sound Habitat. "I just don't want them taking over every inlet and beach on the Sound."

Hendricks said the shellfish industry's identity as a sustainable and environmentally friendly industry is based on biased information and lobbying. When the coalition was unsuccessful blocking new shellfish farms through its public education and outreach efforts, it decided to pursue court action. She reached out to the Center for Food Safety, a larger nonprofit that traditionally focused more on agriculture than aquaculture.

The two organizations joined forces, each filing lawsuits that were argued simultaneously in the district court. The coalition's suit centered on Puget Sound while the CFS suit was statewide, and included concerns about the use of pesticides on shellfish farms in Willapa Bay. The plaintiffs said that when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reissued Nationwide Permit 48 in 2017 to shellfish farmers in Washington they failed to comply with the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act.

U.S. District Court Judge Robert Lasnik agreed with the plaintiffs and in October 2019 criticized the Corps of Engineers' evaluation of the impact of the shellfish industry

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YOUR STORIES:

The KP Takes on Coronavirus, Continued

A year ago, readers gave us their thoughts about COVID-19. This month, we asked some of the same readers how the pandemic has affected their lives.

The first thing that came to mind when thinking about how to put perspective on this past year was the realization that, wow, it's



Tricia Endsley

already been a year! Remote learning was a challenge in itself. We were forced to cancel vacations and our high school senior didn't have the graduation he expected. But even with all that, somehow we've adapted and pushed forward. We saw our community come together to provide a memorable drive-through-style parade to celebrate the high school seniors. I've had the privilege of seeing individuals and families in the community come forward to help others in need. And even though my family didn't have the epic vacation we'd planned, we still appreciated the time we did get to have with our family. Overall we've learned to just take each day as it comes and not worry about tomorrow.

The past year has been utter chaos, from seeing a division like I have never witnessed in our country, to watching my son



Kelly Gamble

literally lose every bit of the normalcy and structure that played an integral part in his success as a student with special needs. To put it bluntly, maybe no one has dealt with a pandemic such as this before, but I doubt that we could have done any worse. People have lost loved



"We're learning how to multiply fractions right now and divide them.

We just finished reading 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.' It's the perfect amount of work," said Evergreen Elementary fifth-grader Allison Taylor. **Read the full back-to-school story on page 3** *Vanessa Taylor*

ones, jobs, businesses, homes. Children have lost their ability to experience a normal childhood. I don't believe we've even begun to see what repercussions are coming our way from this whole ordeal. This country has failed miserably.

Working as a grocery checker during Covid for a little over a year now has had its challenges. It is not easy to wear a face mask all day.



Penny Grant

It makes it difficult to breathe and hard to understand what others are saying, let alone talk so others can hear you. Indi-

viduals continue to be skeptical about the whole ordeal. Some refuse to wear a mask and some double up on masks. I get many customers with different views and opinions. It is hard on everyone. I just wish it could be over and done with and we could see people's faces again. I miss that personal interaction. It would be nice to have choices, such as if we want to wear a mask or not, if we want to be in public without having so much fear. Keep respecting others and their opinions; we all have them. And be there for someone. We all need some sort of support.

As a local business owner (Bayside Animal Lodge), I was in the posi-

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UNDERWRITTEN WITH SUPPORT FROM:

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NewsMatch/Miami Foundation

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ONE STEP AT A TIME

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

I could hear this morning arrive before opening my eyes. A solo American robin performed his clear, full-throated first call that pierced the dark silence in the seconds before sunrise. A song sparrow, a goldfinch, a towhee, Townsend's warbler — each bird seemed to sing politely one after another before the trees erupted in birdsong and wild chatter all at once from all directions. It seemed every single bird had something important to say. Whatever thoughts I had about snuggling back under the covers to sleep a bit longer were useless.

Spring is here and there is much to do.

In the years before Covid, spring signaled the time for KP dwellers to come outside and play.

We looked forward to the KP Livable Community Fair in early May at the KP Civic Center. For the uninitiated, it was a one-day gathering of local and area nonprofit exhibits, a chance for all sorts for people to meet and learn more about all the cool things happening out here and how to get more involved. Complete with food and live music, it was always a crowd pleaser. Outside on the lawn was the extraordinary Lakebay Fuchsia Society annual plant sale. There were even years when the long-running community event boasted an outdoor fish pond stocked with trout and kid-sized poles. The six-hour fair did exactly what it was billed to do: It made the KP more livable in every way.

Longbranch Improvement Club members and guests traditionally celebrated the opening day of boating season that same weekend at the Longbranch Marina. There was a big buffet breakfast, good drinks, great friends and a regatta that was so much fun it wasn't the end of the world if there wasn't much wind.

For me, the point of both long-time favorite springtime events was about being together, working together to put the show on, learning about what's happening in the community and having fun making fresh memories to hold onto when things go very wrong.

As families, friends and as a community, we have endured much of what has gone wrong this past year.

Our memories of those times shared

as "before Covid" help battle the despair and longing for face-to-face connections we still desperately miss today.

That combination of sunshine and months-long — maybe year-long — absence rekindles our spirit with a genuine desire to be a little social again after an extended and unusually wet winter. Even the self-described hermits among us will admit it is good to be out and about.

Being around people laughing, smiling, giving each other hugs, is contagious in all the best ways. Seeing a face light up and hearing the words, "I've missed you," feels really good after a long absence.

But there is still far too much we can't do, at least not yet. It's both confusing and frustrating. Take it from a retired Lakebay gentleman among the first to be fully vaccinated: "I keep waiting for something to be over. I've done everything I've been told, but nothing has changed."

Our desire for normality won't end the pandemic. We are in a fourth wave of COVID-19 that is spreading among more and younger people, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. Hospitalizations are again increasing; the death rate has fallen from its peak, but has reached the level it was at the beginning of the third wave in November.

Pierce County has already slipped back into Phase 2 restrictions; King, Snohomish and Spokane counties are on the verge of doing the same. The current positivity rate in Pierce County — 7.1% — is as high as the last wave in January. The target level to begin stopping transmission is less than 5% for at least two weeks.

We still need to wear masks, social distance and follow guidance for gatherings. And we need to get vaccinated.

Almost 481,000 county residents have been vaccinated against Covid, less than half the population. In some

areas, including on the Key Peninsula, the vaccination rate is as low as 20%.

The evidence is clear, according to TPCHD: "In areas where more people have gotten at least one dose of the vaccine, case rates are lower." Covid infections have plummeted in long-term care facilities because of their very high vaccination rates. Everyone 16 and older is now eligible for a Covid vaccine.

There are more providers getting more vaccines to more people now than ever. But vaccination rates are slowing.

What memories will we carry with us from this time? Well, that's up to us. ■



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School in the Time of Covid: Students on Going Back, or Not

After a year out of the classroom for most of them, our children are working hard to find some kind of normal.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Peninsula School District opened its doors to the last of its online students in mid-March for those who wanted to return. Not everyone did.

Of its 9,000 students, 1,889 chose to continue remote learning instead of returning to the classroom, according to PSD.

The district has been holding in-person classes for high-needs students since July and welcomed back kindergartners and first-graders at the end of September. Other elementary students returned in January and February, and middle schoolers returned Feb. 25 followed by high schoolers in March. All facilities require social distancing, masks and daily health checks, and have divided students into separate cohorts with alternating hybrid schedules, combining in-person with remote learning to keep class sizes small for distancing.

As Pierce County slipped back to Phase 2 restrictions to combat a fourth wave of COVID-19 in April, PSD reported five cases in students or staff originating in its schools compared to 54 cases originating outside school since Sept. 8. The Tacoma School district had eight confirmed cases in April alone.

“We’re learning how to multiply fractions right now and divide them. We just finished reading ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.’ It’s the perfect amount of work,” said fifth-grader Allison Taylor, 11, part of the morning cohort at Evergreen Elementary School.

Taylor’s in-person school day starts at 9 and ends at 11:30 a.m., then continues online with a specialist in the afternoon when the second shift arrives for in-person instruction. “We’re all in the same class but at different times,” she said.

“It’s different because you still have to wear masks, and the whole distance thing, and there’s not like a full class, but it’s better than online,” she said. There are eight students in her morning group. “I miss being able to just see everybody and it being normal.”

Taylor has always liked school, but said she is uncertain about moving on to middle school next year.

“I’m used to elementary, I know how to do it, but I’ve never done periods with different teachers and all that stuff,” she said. “I wanted it to be normal for my first year so I could figure everything out. It

would be amazing if it went back to normal before middle school, but it probably won’t.”

Eighth-grader Dylan Shipman, 14, elected to continue remote learning rather than return to Key Peninsula Middle School in-person. “A lot of the aspects I liked before Covid weren’t going to be there,” he said. “I just figured I’m two-thirds of the way through the year, why not just finish it off instead of having another change?”

As with elementary, the district instituted substantial schedule changes across all grade levels to accommodate hybrid and remote learning, and to maintain safe numbers of students in classrooms.

“On Mondays and Thursdays my school starts at 8:15 and goes to 11:30; I have all my Zooms in that first part of the day, and then you have time to do the work,” Shipman said. “Tuesdays and Fridays I have Cougar Academy (home room) and then a three hour chunk of time until my fourth, fifth and sixth period, and that goes from

12 to 2:45. Wednesdays was probably the biggest change: We went from having no Zooms to all-day Zooms, six classes all day, from 9:15 to 2:45. I have some club activities and an ASB (Associated Student Body) meeting usually too on that day, so that takes up most of the day.”

But staying remote brought even more changes than Shipman anticipated.

“All my teachers are new and from different schools: I have Goodman, I have Kopachuck, I have Harbor Ridge (teachers),” he said. “The only teacher I did have is now in Cougar Academy instead of social studies, so I don’t even have him.”

The same is true for his online classmates, he said. “I’m with kids from all over. My classes got way bigger. On average, we have about 30. Before, with just KPMS kids, it was about 22 students.”

Shipman said that he and his classmates lost out on activities they were looking forward to over the last year, but that these latest changes weren’t necessarily bad.

“I really miss my old teachers but I love my new teachers,” he said. “I didn’t really think switching teachers and having new kids halfway through the year would be something that I liked, but it’s kind of a

positive for me. Hopefully some of those students will go to high school with me, so when I’m walking into a new school for the first time I’ll at least know some of them.”



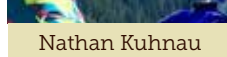
Grace Nesbit

Grace Nesbit, 15, a sophomore at Peninsula High School, also decided to finish the school year online instead of returning to in-person learning. “There are a lot of pros and cons to each, but I figured that the safety precautions were not set up with high schoolers in mind,” Nesbit said. Her online classes keep her extremely busy, she said, and she just finished the swim team season where she earned her first athletic letter, and plans to start water polo soon.

“I still would really like to go back; I just think it’s better to be safe than sorry. I feel like right now that if people get their vaccines that will help a lot, things can start opening up more and start going back to normal.”

Nesbit’s classmate Nathan Kuhnau, 16, elected to return to in-person learning at PHS.

“Personally it’s harder for me to learn online because at home I have a lot of distractions. As soon as we got back I saw a big increase in my grades and my overall mood getting more excited about going to school,” he said.



Nathan Kuhnau

“We have to sit 6 feet in between each desk,” Kuhnau said. “I’m not the most social person, but it feels weird not to have your friends sit next to you. (But) we can go long as we can be back and be with our friends.”

Living through the pandemic changed some of Kuhnau’s personal relationships, he said.

“I was lucky, I had a pretty solid friend group when we got shut down. We made a couple of group chats to talk to each other and make sure we were all doing OK and that no one was going through something

they weren’t talking to us about. Before the pandemic all of our conversations were



Deven Meddaugh

about sports and that kind of stuff. Now we’re always checking in, you know, just ‘How you doing?’”

PHS senior Deven Meddaugh, 18, said the safety rules don’t interfere with the school day too much. “We all went back thinking it was going to be like prison, like no one’s allowed to talk at lunch, that kind of thing, but it didn’t end up being like that. Masks, honestly, aren’t that big of a deal,” she said.

“This whole Covid thing and all the changes has been going on long enough that nothing really surprises me anymore. It’s just too disappointing to focus on everything that’s been taken away from us,” Meddaugh said. “I feel really grateful for the teachers that are back. It’s really nice to know and hear that they genuinely want to know how we’re doing.”

Emily Muterspaugh, a 17-year-old senior at PHS, said “I mentally prepared myself to continue the entire year virtually and didn’t get my hopes up in case we never

got the chance to return, but it feels great to come back and have a chance to redeem any form of a senior year experience. At this point, I think everyone does their best to act normal and to not talk about their experience with the pandemic too often; we’ve been desensitized to it in a way.”



Emily Muterspaugh

Muterspaugh takes college-level courses through Running Start but is still on campus for two in-person classes and for the tennis team.

“I’ve been playing tennis since freshman year and this is my first year on varsity,” she said. “It’s the closest feeling I’ve had to a community since the pandemic started and it’s an awesome feeling to be a part of a team again.” ■

“BEFORE THE PANDEMIC ALL OF OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE ABOUT SPORTS AND THAT KIND OF STUFF. NOW WE’RE ALWAYS CHECKING IN, YOU KNOW, JUST ‘HOW YOU DOING?’ ”

“IT WOULD BE AMAZING IF IT WENT BACK TO NORMAL BEFORE MIDDLE SCHOOL, BUT IT PROBABLY WON’T.”

YOUR STORIES FROM PAGE 1

tion of having to essentially close the doors for nearly four months last summer and temporarily laying off some of my employees. These times not only try men's souls, but also bring a great deal of eye-opening experience. The loyalty and selflessness my employees have shown me and our customers is something I am very proud of, and I am happy to say they have all been able to come back to work, albeit a little bit at a time. I also want to acknowledge our amazing community, from phone calls from customers who just wanted to check in on us, to those who sent cards and enclosed little "gifts" to help us get through the toughest times. We are not the first type of business that may come to mind, so the support and outreach we received from our neighbors has been overwhelming and humbling. Thank you for seeing us through this year. Without you – I don't even want to think about it.



Robert McCrossin

Those luscious homegrown veggies

I described last year were no match for 12 months of book indulgences and British TV-mystery bingeing. When a full-time job opening for Amazon popped up on my screen, I clicked on it. Could I possibly get paid to get into shape? Amazon hires anyone with a pulse who can pass a drug test and then lets the job itself thin the herd. Within days I had a badge and a start date. It's an understatement to describe the work as exhausting and not just because I'm 66 years old. Being out of shape, I'd predicted an aching back and jelly arms but they never appeared. What tripped me up after three weeks was developing a benign condition that indicated 10 hours on my feet was too much. Although I had to resign, it was just what I needed, along with my vaccination, to re-enter the post-Covid world. The experience was invigorating and life-affirming. I lost eight pounds and am on my way to gaining strength for a planned expedition. And if Amazon ever introduces part-time shifts in Bremerton, I'll be first in line.



Susan Mendenhall

I don't figure anyone will be very interested in my opinion. Washington State has bad politics, bad policy, and bad science. I am currently in South Dakota where people and businesses are flourishing and life makes more sense. Just my two cents. That and \$10 will get you a cup of coffee in Seattle.



Doug Paterson

One year later I have learned to trea-sure the life I live and the community where I belong. I am grateful for my 10 acres where I can be roaming out in the fresh air in the strictest lockdown. I am grateful for the technology that has allowed me to see and hear members of my far-flung family and distant friends even when I can't visit their homes and hug them. I am thankful that my husband and I have been employed all this time when so many others have been plunged into poverty. While I recognize names of people who have been very sick and some who have died, I am grateful that those I love have maintained their health this long hard year. As spring blossoms, I have a renewed sense of how lucky I truly am in this life I live.



Maureen Reilly

Mixed emotions are pretty much how I would describe living through this. It was a year of isolation, loneliness and fear of the unknown. But it was also a time of self-reflection, stepping out of my comfort zone and starting a new business. I got very good at talking to myself and, yes, even answering back most of the time. Many of the friends I once saw regularly were seen from a distance. My asthma made me extra cautious. The funny thing is, I started spending time with long-lost friends I hadn't seen or spoken to in years thanks to Zoom. That was truly a gift. I look forward to a good hug with a friend, going out to dinner, entertaining and taking a trip



Kim DeCamp Robinson

to pretty much anywhere. These were all things I used to take for granted, but not anymore. I continue to be grateful for my health and for this community.

I can't believe it's been a year since this Covid pandemic hit. It's been a crazy time to say the least and there have been a lot of ups and downs.



Anaya Thompson

The world suffered tremendous loss,

some close to home. Through all of the madness came a time for people to slow down and reprioritize what's important: family and friends. This year kept me from my family in California and my job as a health care worker became hugely stressful. Covid hit my household. I've missed out on hanging with my friends and hugs. Despite all of the downs, my relationship with my kids and my boyfriend have gotten stronger. I'm thankful for Zoom, FaceTime, TikTok and my co-workers. I definitely look forward to a time where we can all have a big old fashioned block party. I feel blessed. ■

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A geoduck farm on Case Inlet at low tide. *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

SHELLFISH RULING FROM PAGE 1

on eel grass and other marine vegetation, the use of pesticides, impact of marine debris and the lack of data on subtidal areas.

“The record is devoid of any indication that the Corps considered regional data, cataloged the species in and characteristics of the aquatic environments in which commercial shellfish aquaculture activities occur, considered the myriad techniques, equipment, and materials used in shellfish aquaculture, attempted to quantify the impacts the permitted activity would likely have on the identified species and characteristics, or evaluated the impacts of the as-yet-unknown regional conditions,” he wrote.

In June 2020, Lasnik vacated NWP 48, finding that the Corps’ errors went to the heart of the Clean Water Act and National Environmental Policy Act. He allowed planting through the remainder of the 2020 season and harvesting through March 2022, but required that any further activities be allowed only with a new permit, including individual permits or a new lawful nationwide permit.

Taylor Shellfish Co. and the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association appealed the case; the Corps did not join. The appellate court heard the case Feb. 2 and nine days later issued its opinion with all three judges upholding the district court rulings.

“The implementation of the decision will be devastating to many growers,” said Margaret Pilaro, executive director of the growers association. Most of the farms employ fewer than 10 people. All are family-owned and most have been in business for three to five generations. Pre-Covid, the industry provided about 3,000 family-wage jobs, she said. With 85% of the shellfish going to restaurants, most farms had no market for their product last year.

If the companies can’t get new permits approved soon, they will not be able to

plant this year, Pilaro said. Sixty percent anticipate layoffs. If they can’t plant next year, up to two-thirds may not have viable farms.

“We depend on shoreline management to balance multiple uses,” she said. “We welcome regulation. Shellfish can’t grow everywhere, and the water quality has to be superb.”

Kent Kingman, owner of Minterbrook Oyster Co., said that smaller companies are the most likely to be affected by the decision. He managed to keep all of his 25 employees working through the pandemic, and doesn’t think the court decision will impact his business. He applied for an individual permit before Lasnik issued his decision and expects to have it

in time for planting this season. With NWP 48 vacated, all shellfish farmers were required to apply for new permits by December 2020 to continue to harvest. There are nearly 900 permits in Washington, though in some cases contiguous parcels may be qualified to be lumped together. In mid-April, there were 750 permits pending, according to a spokesman from the Corps.

The Corps issued a 2021 NWP 48 and, according to Pilaro, some growers chose to apply as the only path to planting this year. But according to both the coalition and CFS, the 2021 NWP 48 is as problematic as the one vacated. CFS has already announced its intention to sue the Corps for violating environmental laws when it reissued the NWPs.



Each permit application also requires certification from the Washington State Department of Ecology, which adds to the concerns of shellfish farmers. According to a published communication

in April, Ecology typically gets 400 requests a year, and the impact of the court decision triples its workload. Gov. Jay Inslee’s proposed 2021-23 budget includes one-time funding to add 2.5 staff to the current staff of 5 who review and issue Section 401 decisions.

Dave Risvold, environmental biologist with Pierce County Department of Land Services, said that the ruling will not affect the processes for permitting at the county level. But he noted that all applications have pointed to NWP 48 to document that their activities have minimal environmental impact. Applicants will have to bear the additional burden to provide that evidence themselves.

“What we need is for the Corps — along with other expert agencies — to conduct a real cumulative impact analysis for Washington,

and for each bay-waterbody,” said Amy van Saun, senior attorney for CFS.

“CFS stands with the shellfish growers who are doing the right

thing, who are actual stewards of the tidelands and grow their shellfish alongside healthy and biodiverse wildlife. The use of pesticides and massive amounts of plastics do not fit that bill. The Corps needs to act to limit these more harmful aspects of shellfish production,” van Saun said. ■

“I AM NOT AGAINST SHELLFISH FARMS; I JUST DON’T WANT THEM TAKING OVER EVERY INLET AND BEACH ON THE SOUND.”

“WE DEPEND ON SHORELINE MANAGEMENT TO BALANCE MULTIPLE USES. WE WELCOME REGULATION. SHELLFISH CAN’T GROW EVERYWHERE, AND THE WATER QUALITY HAS TO BE SUPERB.”

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Vicki Husted Biggs

A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE



Frustration

After spending a few hours working in the yard this week, I found myself feeling irritated. Instead of the usual calming effect of physical work, I felt mounting resentment and anger. The more time I spent pitching debris into the wheelbarrow, and the more trips I made around the yard with shovel and rake, the more I felt a seething presence of something ugly growing in my gut. I wanted to use those garden tools to smash something. Finally, I had to take a break and confront this demon. It was not pretty.

The demon self-identified as frustration. I had so many projects planned simply to maintain some semblance of order on the property. In addition, I had some ideas for making a few changes to my outdoor space. All of these things would take time and money plus elbow grease, and I was feeling short of all ingredients. I allowed myself some self-indulgence (also known as a pity-party). Why was my life so hard? Didn't I already work more than 40 hours a week? Wasn't I responsible? Why wasn't anyone helping me?

I decided to turn this confrontation with frustration into a positive by doing a little research and writing about it. I was surprised at the amount of material I found on the topic of frustration with very little searching involved. The broad and universal theme of frustration is more than can be addressed in this column, but I did learn a few things.

Underlying the feeling of frustration there are usually deeper emotions at work. Anger is the classic partner to frustration, along with anxiety and fear. A person's inability to obtain what they want, or to change circumstances that are beyond their control, are common. Frustration can be internal, or can be the result of external circumstances.

Writers use frustration as the main motivator for their characters all the time. Moving a storyline forward with a character's quest for change, revenge, battle or death is accomplished by using the character's frustration over a given circumstance. Frustration is a strong emotion that can be expressed in many ways, illustrating a state of mind.

As I reflect on what I have learned, it is obvious that many people are currently experiencing frustration at a high rate. It can go without saying, I think, that people

are exasperated with Covid restrictions and all that goes with it. After an evolving discussion as a society over the last year, we see that circumstances are largely the same. Vaccinated or not, we still need to be cautious, we need to wear masks and we need to keep our contacts to a minimum. Economic fallout continues to affect families. Adding to the frustration, we have learned that the virus is mutating to stay alive and thwart our efforts to diminish its viability.

Writing in 'Psychology Today,' Toni Bernhard, J.D. gives us the following tips for dealing with frustration: Remember that you are not alone. Others have faced similar circumstances to yours. Your frustration is not set in stone. We cannot see the future and solutions to your problem may well be found. Work on developing patience by trying to extend your tolerance for irritations and annoyances. Contact someone you know who will let you vent without judgment. Administer self-compassion immediately. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to others.

As the author of my own story, I can become more mindful of the narrative I am telling myself. I can tell myself to be patient with my progress towards my project goals. I can remember to call the friend to whom I can say literally anything, and find comfort in that action. I can remember that others in similar circumstances found a way to work through hardships successfully. I can remind myself that my current perspective does not prevent change from happening. I can substitute positive images for negative ones. My frustration will be the motivational force in my own story.

Vicki Biggs is a longtime social worker. She lives in Home.

Phyllis Henry

COAST TO COAST



A Bridge for Troubled Waters

In the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol at the memorial service for William (Billy) Evans, the Capitol policeman who was recently killed, the U.S. Army Quartet sang "Like a Bridge Over Troubled Waters." The ceremony was solemn, serious and dignified — a mood that could swallow the moment when President Biden picked up a fatherless child's fallen toy from the floor and handed it back to her.

In the spring of 1973, when I lived in Washington, D.C. for three months in a

studio apartment at 3rd and C Southeast, I walked the three blocks to the Capitol nearly every day. On Tuesday nights one of the military bands, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, provided a concert for the people sitting on the steps of the Capitol. No one checked the identity of the audience; there were no concrete barriers or barbed wire separating the citizens from their Capitol building. We listened and applauded, reveling in the music and majesty of the special Tuesday nights.

While in Washington I walked through that Rotunda many times, staring in awe at the ceiling, checking out the famed acoustics spot, impressed that our country could own and freely display the paintings and statues. Hoping to spot one of my Senate heroes, I wandered, avoiding tourists, and basked in the joy I felt to be in this hallowed building, my Capitol of the United States.

Several Capitol Police recognized me as a frequent visitor to the Senate, where I went several times a week hoping to spot my heroes, Sen. Ted Kennedy, Sen. Joe Biden, Sen. Walter Mondale, Sen. Hubert Humphrey, Sen. Edmund Muskie, Sen. Adlai Stevenson. When I was a delegate in Miami for the 1972 Democratic Convention, a rumor spread that if one was faltering in dedication to George McGovern, that information would be forwarded to Warren Beatty, and then he would phone the wavering delegate to encourage him or her to stay with McGovern. Standing 10 feet from Sen. Kennedy was more exciting than any phone call from a mere Hollywood celebrity.

After the Jan. 6 invasion of the Capitol, I felt only sorrow. Windows were broken, paintings were defaced, furniture was scratched. Traditionally senators autograph the inside of the desk they use while they serve in the Senate, and the thought of rough hands rummaging through items in these desks brings on that kind of sorrow where the throat constricts and the pain courses through the body. Some things are sacred. Leaving excrement on the floors of that building symbolic of our country's glory is not sacred.

Putting barriers between our government and its citizens is criminal. No wonder many people don't respect their government officials. Nearly 50 years ago on Tuesday nights on the Capitol steps, a supporter of Strom Thurmond might have sat next to a devoted follower of George McGovern, with no need for loud voices or cudgels. Back then I traveled alone from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial at dusk, and when I arrived I walked up the marble steps and

then, standing behind the giant statue of Lincoln, I read the words inscribed on the walls: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." I thought those words were true.

My three months in Washington D.C. will probably never be duplicated, or even imagined. The city then had an old-fashioned southern charm. It was a city where in 1909 the Japanese wanted to send the gift of cherry trees, a gift not only of trees but the gift of relaxing walks under the trees, and the ability to inhale that lovely scent. The trees are still there, but with the environmental warming each year, they bloom earlier, and sometime in the future they too will be dead and gone — or covered with barbed wire to discourage vandals.

I miss my old world of gentility and courtesy, and, more importantly, for my grandchildren and for all children everywhere I mourn this dearth of gentleness. With limited TV coverage, as a child I never saw anyone killed, other than the bad guys in the Roy Rogers movie, and even they died without any bloodshed. Like the battle to save us from COVID-19, I believe the "gentleness gene" must be supplied by our governments, national, state and local, and we must never forget that "good and fair government" is an empty framework and has no real identity until the offices are filled with officials willing to pick up a dropped toy for a child.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.

Krisa Bruemmer

IRREVERENT MOM



Dog People

I am not a dog person. I've never had a pet, not even a goldfish. I've never wanted a pet, aside from a few minutes in the late '80s when I was a small girl looking at a fluffy white bunny during the Vashon Island Strawberry Festival. Even then, the moment my mom asked who I thought was going to clean the cage, with pee-soaked animal bedding and pellets of poop, I decided that the red-eyed fluffball was creepy and gross and asked for a snow cone instead.

When my daughter Violet was 3 years old, we watched "Homeward Bound," featuring the epic journey of Shadow the golden retriever, Chance the bulldog, and Sassy cat. Violet ran around the house yelling, "Shadow!" and begged to watch the movie

again and again. Then she started asking for a dog of her own.

I explained the poop and the pee, the inevitable chewed up furniture and toys, and the hassles that I imagine come with a dog, all the annoyances I've experienced as a non-dog person in a dog-loving world.

"They sniff butts, Violet. We don't need a butt-sniffer in our house," I said, shuddering at the thought of the Burton Coffee Stand on the island where I grew up, where dogs often outnumbered humans and the pups' manners were beyond sub-par. Even though Burton was just down the road from our house, I'd sometimes drive all the way to town to grab a coffee to avoid the mongrels crowding the nearby stand.

"Dogs are a lot of work, almost like babies," I told Violet. "You have to walk the dog, teach the dog things, who even knows what else?"

Fast forward a year to Violet as a 4-year-old, telling me her dream is to be a veterinarian. She's going to ask her dad to build her a house in our backyard where she will live with her 30 dogs. I vomit in my mouth a little when she says this.

"I'll pick up the pups' poop with a pooper scooper. No big deal!" Violet says. "How about if I learn everything about dogs and get prepared, then can I get one?"

"Only if Dad builds a fence and gets a work-from-home job, because I don't want the dog to be my responsibility all day every day."

This may sound selfish, but I imagine some of my fellow parents can relate. I want all of my daughter's wishes and dreams to come true, and I do want to watch her fall in love with her very own dog, but at the same time I'm hesitant to give up more hours of my day, to invite more chaos, more mess.

Then Violet turned five in a world shut down by Covid. Along with the pandemic came a work-from-home job for her dad, as well as endless hours at home, much of which Violet filled with elaborately demonstrating what a responsible puppy parent she could be. She helps out around the house and takes care of her stuffed animals as if they were real. She hums while making our beds, sings while Swiffering the floor. Every day she brushes, feeds and reads to her favorite toy kitty, Vanilla. Every night she snuggles her, tucks her in, and tells Vanilla how much she loves her, that she's "the best kitty in the whole wide entire world and universe."

"Vanilla peed on the carpet Mom!" Violet yelled from her bedroom the other day. "I'm on it! I just need spray and paper towels. Don't worry about a thing!"

Clearly I am not as clever as this

5-year-old, this kid who has been plotting against me on the dog front for years. Violet has managed to convince her dad, her grandparents, her friends, her friends' parents, her old preschool teacher, and even the staff here at our local paper that she's ready for a puppy of her own.

For the past month, Violet's dad has been outside building our fence. By the time this paper hits the stands, there will be an 8-week-old chocolate lab living in our house. I worry the dog will chew up my Doc Martens, snag my dresses, or escape from our yard. But even worse, I worry that Violet and her new puppy might manage to turn me into a dog person.

"You're gonna fall in love with a dog!" Violet sings as she giggles and spins around the living room. "Mom's gonna love our dog!"

Although it makes me cringe to admit it, she's probably right.

Krisa Bruemmer lives in Vaughn.



Lynn Larson
STEPPING BACK

Time of Digging

Meriwether Lewis marveled over the camas prairie he came upon in June 1806. "The quawmash is now in blume and from the colour ... at a short distance it resembles lakes of fine clear water, so complete is this despection that on first sight I could have sworn it was water."

The camas (*Cammasia quamash*) bulb was the most important of all the bulbs and roots sought by Native people in Puget Sound. Every group traveled in May and June to the prairies that were openings in the forest, joining friends and relatives to dig and process camas, a carbohydrate-rich dietary necessity. The largest of the prairies was the Nisqually Plain, an immense prairie at the head of the Sound. This undulating, open space developed on the glacial outwash deposited during the recessional stage of the Vashon glaciation 14,000 years before present.

A warmer period between 7,500 and 4,500 years ago allowed a suite of prairie plants like lupine, camas, sunflower, chocolate lily, buttercup, Garry oaks, enormous bracken ferns and berries to become established. The prairies persisted beyond the climatic period of their creation by the active land management of Native people. The prairie soils are well-drained, dark brown to black in color because they are infused with charcoal from repeated burning by Indians every few years. Women regularly tilled and aerated them through gathering activities

that required digging sticks.

The soils are considered to be anthropogenic, that is, produced through human intervention. Low intensity fires suppressed Douglas firs, increased the nutritious blue bunch grass for horses and deer, and encouraged berries and new oak trees. Burning also fertilized the bracken root crop, the second carbohydrate source for Native people.

Camas, chocolate lily bulbs and sunflower roots were cooked in the same way that bear and beaver were prepared: in an earth oven. Camas was layered between salmonberry, alder brush and skunk cabbage leaves above heated rocks dropped into a pit. Dirt was spread over the whole. Heal-all and hedge nettle, both herbs, or fireweed could be laid over the camas to add seasoning during cooking. A fire built on top of the dirt was kept burning for three days and nights, when the earth oven was opened.

The thick syrup collected in the skunk cabbage leaves was a delicious drink. Cooked camas was stored in baskets for winter until prepared for meals. Then, it was boiled with fresh or dried salmon until the chunks were tender and a thick gravy was formed. Some Native women dried camas cakes in the sun. The cakes were soaked for half a day and flavored with nuts when eaten. They lasted for years, the finger ridges of the preparer a reminder of the woman who baked the camas and shaped it into cakes.

The bracken fern, another staple for Native groups throughout Western Washington, grew to prodigious size on the prairies, as high as seven feet. The roots were dug in the fall and sometimes winter and were the basis of bread. To make bread, bracken fern roots were pounded, mashed in a stone mortar and mixed with deer tallow. The dough was then shaped into small cakes that preserved for some time, but were more likely to be eaten steadily because the bread became unpalatable after a while. When eaten fresh, the roots were dry roasted, the outer skin scraped off the long root, and the root pounded and pounded before being cut up and eaten with salmon eggs, fish or meat.

Because it was essential to their diet, the Native people of the Key Peninsula dug camas. Did they travel across the Sound to the prairies of Steilacoom, Spanaway, and what is now Joint Base Lewis-McChord? Undoubtedly. Villages broke up in the spring, families loading their canoes with their belongings, crossing Carr Inlet or Balch Passage to the Nisqually Plain. The opportunities for socializing, politicking and visiting during the large prairie congregations were as essential as digging camas.

In the fall, Native groups from the Key Peninsula and other groups throughout Puget Sound traveled to the Nisqually Plain, the chief source of acorns in Puget Sound.

Were there prairies on the Key Peninsula? I think there were, but there is little contemporary evidence to prove it. Hogs enthusiastically rooted up camas, and between the settlers' grazing practices and fire suppression, few prairies relative to their historic locations are extant anywhere in southern Puget Sound. Prairies were reduced in size within 20 years of fire suppression and invaded by non-prairie species. Scot's broom was one of the first plants to encroach, along with Douglas fir, and Evergreen and Himalayan blackberry. One can still see prairies near Olympia and Hood Canal and on JBLM, where the Army has actively maintained the remainder of the Nisqually Plain on the post through controlled burns. They have also allowed bluebirds, a prairie species, to be reintroduced.

Closer to home, I am thinking of scraping away the duff near the Garry oak tree on the fringe of my pasture and looking for those well drained, charcoal infused soils holding the memory of a prairie.

Lynn Larson is an anthropologist and archaeologist who lives on Filucy Bay.



Anne Nesbit
SIREN'S SONG

Helping Your Homeless Neighbors

You don't have to be on the Key Peninsula long to realize we have a twin crisis of people experiencing homelessness and unsheltered people suffering mental illness. And it's getting worse.

Pierce County has resources, but residents have found getting those resources to engage on the KP has proven difficult. We have mental health practitioners on the Key but we do not have a county MHP who will respond immediately to our area in an emergency.

Anyone suffering from mental illness needs to be approached with respect. If the individual is dangerous or threatening, call 911.

But while police may be able to remove the person from the situation for 48 to 72 hours, it's only a Band Aid.

If there is no threat, what can we do?

Remember that your words matter. We have all felt the positive and the negative effects of word choice ourselves.

Everyone wants to feel respected and be shown kindness. These values come

CONTINUED PAGE 8

NESBIT FROM PAGE 7

through in our conversations and our word choice. It's important to treat a person who is homeless or in crisis with dignity. I have often had very positive results by introducing myself and asking their name. Ask "What do you need?" instead of "What are you doing here?"

Ask about their hopes and dreams instead of asking how they ended up like this.

Very often a kind word and a listening ear can de-escalate an uncomfortable situation. Everyone is deserving of respect and most of all hope. Sometimes attention from a stranger is all it takes. Think of the power of being the one who could bestow that hope.

Most researchers agree that the connection between homelessness and mental illness is a complicated, two-way relationship. Affective conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, bipolar and anxiety disorders are among the most common types of mental illness in the homeless population.

An individual's mental illness may lead to cognitive and behavioral problems that make it difficult to earn a stable income or to carry out daily activities in ways that allow stable housing.

Several studies have shown, however, that individuals with mental illnesses often find themselves homeless primarily as the result of poverty, cutting off avenues to treatment, and a lack of low-income housing. The combination of mental illness and homelessness also can lead to other problems, such as substance abuse and violent victimization that serves only to reinforce the problem.

I often hear people focusing on the mentally ill person as the problem, instead of what got them there. If the problem is illness, what's their path back?

There are community partners trying to resolve these issues. The Key Peninsula Fire Department is working with other entities to create a survey to assess medical services offered on the KP and who is accessing them. Then we will find where the gaps are and what prevents people from accessing the resources that are present.

These resources may help in the meantime: Catholic Community Services 253-383-3697; Shared Housing Services 253-272-1532; Bischoff Food Bank 253-884-1997; KP Community Services 253-884-4440. As always, your fire department is available. Feel free to contact me there at 253-884-2222 or info@keypeninsulafire.org.

Anne Nesbit is the prevention and public information officer and volunteer battalion chief for the Key Peninsula Fire Department. She lives in Lakebay.



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OBITUARY

Lawrence J. Balzer

Lawrence J. Balzer died March 19 at home in Lakebay. He was 88 years old.

Born in Shepherd, Mont., in 1932, he moved with his family to Washington at age 9. He spent his youth in Yakima where he worked alongside his family on a farm growing everything from apples to hops.

Larry joined the Navy in 1951 and served during the Korean War. Following military service, he went to school to learn heating, ventilation and cooling systems. He hired on with Boeing where he worked until his retirement in 1997 and moved from Tacoma to the Key Peninsula. He was active at the KP Community Services where he volunteered for 12 years and enjoyed every moment.

He was a great person to his family. He dearly loved his grandchildren; they were his life.

Larry leaves behind his partner of 40 years, Irene Neumiller; four children; 13 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Obituaries are printed as a service to community members. Limit to 300 words and provide high-resolution photographs. Submissions will be edited. Send to editor@keypennews.org.



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Letter to the Editor

ONE YEAR LATER

Thank you for the wonderful tribute to Ted and Joanna Ralston (“A Song for Ted and Joanna,” July 2020).

Not a day goes by when I don’t think about them. I think the tragedy of their deaths was so extraordinarily horrendous, it is something that can’t be forgotten. It can never be reconciled, no matter how many years go by.

But remembering how wonderful and vital they were brings back the good memories. I’ve seen the pictures before but in conjunction with your article they were so splendid to see. It is so bitter to have lost them, but it is so sweet to remember who they were, how they selflessly reached out to others, how very special and rare they were individually and as a couple, pursuing the things that mattered to them and enriching everyone along their way.

And how very thankful I am to have known them.

Sue Dixon, Edmonds

News Briefs



New Health Clinic on the Way

STAFF REPORT

Peninsula Community Health Services has leased office space off the Key Peninsula Highway at 11901 137th Avenue Court NW, north of Key Center, in the building formerly occupied by Art Beads. The clinic is remodeling with plans to open for medical and behavioral health and pharmacy services in October 2021. PCHS has applied for funding in the state capital budget and hopes to add a seven-chair dental clinic to the site.

PCHS is a Federally Qualified Health Center with clinics in Kitsap and Mason counties and was founded more than 30 years ago. Services include primary medical care, obstetrics and gynecology, behavioral health, substance use treatment, pharmacy, school clinics, community outreach and

insurance navigation. It also has mobile programs that deliver medical and behavioral health and dental care.

The PCHS mobile dental team is available at the Key Peninsula location several times a month. For more information call 360-377-3776 or go to www.pchsweb.org. ■

A Familiar Face Returns to Key Center

DANNA WEBSTER, SPECIAL TO KP NEWS

The restoration of O’Callahan’s Pub and Grill is in full swing. The plan is to return to the thrilling days of yesteryear, 2005.

After rescinding a sales agreement for an Indian restaurant and a gas station, the owner of the iconic corner property at KP Highway and 92nd Street NW, Greg Calahan, has been jumping through the many hoops of business restoration.

Cleanup inside and out was first on the list, travel to Olympia to navigate the state liquor and business licensing process was next. Overhaul and replacement of refrigeration and electrical equipment proved challenging.

According to Calahan, the business is a work in progress and the property remains available for sale. But in the meantime, he will run it for a year, seek a good manager, and bring back the familiar floor plan, stage, fireplace and kitchen. “I’m moving forward to open up as soon as licensing is done,” he said. ■

Another Break-in at the Lakebay Post Office

STAFF REPORT

The Lakebay Post Office was burglarized April 3 at approximately 3:30 a.m. It was the second successful break-in of the post office in the last 22 months.

Pierce County Sheriff Public Information Officer Sgt. Darren Moss said video surveillance showed a white male 20 to 30 years old wearing a black hooded sweater and a black balaclava mask dropped off at the rear of the post office by an unknown vehicle. The suspect walked directly to the video camera mounted outside the building and spray-painted the lens.

After entering the building through the unlocked lobby door, regularly left open for boxholder access, the intruder sprayed the lobby video camera with paint before breaking into the locked office. Keys for post office boxes and other items were stolen.

John Wiegand, U.S. Postal Inspection Service public information officer, said the burglary was more sophisticated than the recent break-in at the Belfair post office in Mason County April 17, and that the

two incidents are unrelated. The Belfair burglary had no loss of any kind.

“Lakebay had some mail and what we refer to as ‘postal assets’ stolen from the facility,” Wiegand said. “They have or are still working on the process of rekeying any boxes that were or may have been affected.”

The Lakebay post office was burglarized in June 2019 (“Lakebay Post Office Break-in Under Investigation,” KP News, August 2019).

“Particularly in our area, we’ve had a pretty good success rate on burglaries” Wiegand said. The postal inspection service solved a string of burglaries in 2020 at four post offices in Kitsap County and one at the Allyn branch in Mason County, resulting in multiple arrests associated with a criminal ring.

“We have some good leads we’re following up on this one too. We’re making progress,” he said.

There was no response to KP News inquiries on how long the Lakebay Post Office lobby doors will remain locked outside of normal business hours.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is offering a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction for the April 6 burglary of the Lakebay Post Office. Contact the US Postal Inspection Service at 1-877-876-2455. ■



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Fire District Explores Options for Building Its Future

FD 16 prepares for a levy lid lift, a possible bond, and new and improved facilities.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

The headquarters of Key Peninsula Fire District 16 may move to a new home — someday.

“This is just the start of the process and it is going to take some time,” said Fire Commissioner Stan Moffett. “We haven’t made any decisions yet other than to explore the possibilities.”

The current headquarters located in Key Center is unmanned as it lacks overnight facilities. Training exercises regularly take place as people drive through the parking lot where Moffett cited both space and safety as concerns.

“The building has pretty much reached its tenure and remodeling is not an option,” Moffett said. “If the board determines that building is feasible, it would lead to putting together a bond because we don’t have the resources to build a new station like that without one.”

The board asked Chief Dustin Morrow, hired in early 2019, to begin formulating what a bond program would look like.

“Our organization has been working from behind for a long time,” Morrow said. “All we’ve done is react. There has been no planning. The process we’re talking about is buried in a 10-year forecast but we did not have everything in a strategic plan moving us forward. Now we are making decisions based on a 10-year plan with contingencies laid out for various outcomes, and we still have some pieces to finish.”

Some of those pieces include additional staffing of both career and volunteer personnel, the kind of thing that would come with a successful lid lift levy, a measure Morrow said will be put to voters August 3. The regular fire levy authorized at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value is now down to around \$1.23. Morrow said lifting the lid would generate about \$1 million dollars a year for the department.

Annual increases in district levy revenue are restricted by a property tax limit that reduces the maximum collected as property values rise. The result is that most taxing district levy rates fall below the authorized level. A levy limit can be increased only by a “lid lift” approved by voters.

“But buildings are big ticket items that are supposed to be 30- to 40-year placements in the community,” Morrow said.

“The department is out of space, headquarters (is) falling down around us, and it’s time to do something about it.”

The board of fire commissioners secured a right of first refusal to purchase just over 3.5 acres in Key Center for what could become the site of the new fire district headquarters. Morrow said discussions are underway on how to finalize that purchase and the district is investigating short-term financing as a bridge to a bond.

If the board chooses to put a capital bond before the community, and it passes, the Key Center fire station would relocate

to the new building at that site.

The board selected the Bremerton archi-

tectural firm Rice Fergus Miller, Inc. to conduct preliminary feasibility studies to assist the board’s development of a capital facilities plan, following a unanimous vote at its regular board meeting April 13 held via Zoom.

The bond would also include a bona fide fire station on Herron Island, plus additional development on the mainland side of the ferry terminal for a vessel dedicated to emergency response independent of the island’s private ferry system.

“The fact is the people on Herron Island are paying the same amount of taxes as everyone else (in the fire district)” Morrow said. “They deserve a responsible individual that is planning emergency services out there. The bottom line is that it’s going to take time. But I want to be transparent about the issue: They deserve it just like you and I do.”

The rest of the bond would fund major upgrades to the remaining fire stations that are long past their life cycle and need to be replaced in some cases — mostly traditional systems like heating, cooling, safety, security, lighting and roofs.

“In a short period of time we’ve matured this organization to get away from being reactive and all over the map, to being largely centered now in a plan with some appropriate forecasting and responsible decision making,” Morrow said. “The last piece is really just the lid lift and the bond question. If we get those two things, I’m telling you, we are going to be above water for a long time.” ■

“OUR ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN WORKING FROM BEHIND FOR A LONG TIME.”

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An echo azure moth stands out in a field of green. *Chris Rurik, KP News*

Naturalist's Notebook

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

SKY-FLAKES IN MOTION

On the first day of spring over 60 degrees, I find a currant decked out with pink pendant blooms. It radiates a fragrance of heat, sweat and pollen. A constant buzz surrounds it, every bee and fly for miles having come to get a piece of the action. Then, among the blunt buzzing bodies, I see baby blue wings drift open and closed. A butterfly no bigger than a guitar pick tests a flower. In this madhouse of odor, such grace is mystical. It is the first butterfly I have seen this year. When it startles and tumbles into flight, it looks just like Robert Frost described it: a “sky-flake” in motion.

It is an echo azure, one of our earliest flyers. There are several species of “blues” that live around Puget Sound, and each tells a different story about adaptability. The echo azure stands out as a generalist. Its caterpillars munch on the developing flowers and berries of salal, huckleberry, cherry, madrona, violets and others. Adults nectar at all of those plants and more and use mud puddles and dung for nutrients. Echo azures have two full generations per year, and from year to year it might choose a different host plant depending on which has the heaviest flower and fruit sets.

Compare that with a nearly identical butterfly that cannot be found on the Key Peninsula any longer — if it ever could. The Puget blue depends solely upon lupines, especially a Puget Sound prairie species called sickle-keeled lupine that thrives alongside camas in traditionally managed prairies. Such a specialist can be just as successful as a generalist.

Yet a century of agriculture, landscaping, development, fire suppression and the spread of plants like Scotch broom, has reduced the Puget blue's range to less than a dozen isolated populations.

Incidentally, traditionally managed prairies tend to have far more species of butterfly than the damp patchwork of forest and landscaping that covers the Key Peninsula. I do wonder if we once had such prairies here.



ASK THE KP NATURE GUIDE: BIRD HEARING VS. DOG HEARING

Q: Do birds hear as well as dogs? — Violet Bruemmer, Vaughn

A: That's a hard question to answer! Basically yes, birds do hear as well as dogs — but they hear differently.

Let's start with our own hearing. We hear noises in a wide range of frequencies, from very low earthquake noises to moderately high whistles. But our best hearing is in the middle, in the range of human voices. Makes sense, right?

Birds and dogs hear much of the same range, but their best hearing is tuned to different things. Dogs hear far better than us in high frequencies, and they can hear noises far too high for our own ears. For birds, it depends. Different types of birds

are tuned to different things. Many hear low noises better than we can. Some, like owls, have far more sensitive hearing overall. Birds use sound for many reasons and have adapted accordingly.

A cool thing about birds is that the nerve endings in their inner ears, which serve to turn vibrations into information, continuously regenerate. Ours don't. So while we and our dogs lose our hearing as we get old, a bird's hearing is forever young.

“THE CUTEST LITTLE SONGBIRD KILLER”

Beep ... Beep ... Beep ...

A reader tells me she has been hearing this clear, high note repeated near her house. At first she thought it was an alarm, or the dying battery of a game camera, or a crashed alien spaceship. But when she paid closer attention, she found that the hidden source of the sound was moving up and down her street. It seemed to be in the trees.

She got a recording with her cell phone, and I could confirm; it was a northern pygmy-owl.

This terribly cute pompom of an owl is a rarity in the Puget Sound lowlands. Even in their mountain haunts they are elusive and difficult to spot. Unlike most owls, they are active during the day, sneaking around tree-tops to keep an eye out for passing meals. They like to hunt for songbirds. They also eat small mammals and large insects, as well as the occasional lizard.

Amazingly, this reader's pygmy-owl is not the only one on the Key Peninsula this spring. Birders have recorded one at Penrose Point State Park, and here on our farm near Glen Cove I have had to drop my pruning shears several times to run into the forest, having heard that slow sequence of

Into the WILD

EXPLORING WITH THE
KP NATURE GUIDE

Mission for Kids: Lazy Gulls

Hey kids, I have a mission for you. You know how seagulls always seem to have extra time on hand? Here's my challenge. Go to a beach, find that one seagull that isn't doing anything, and watch without disturbing it. I bet it's not doing nothing. How is it standing? What is it paying attention to? How is it using the world around it? Think about life as a seagull. What do you eat? What chores do you have to do? And when you're done with those things, how do you entertain yourself? Send me your ideas at nature@keypennews.org.



crystal beeps. Never have I heard pygmy-owls here before. In fact, there are only three prior records ever on the peninsula.

A miniature invasion of miniature owls! Does it have to do with heavy snowfall in the mountains? An abundance of certain local prey? In springtime, long sequences of daytime beeps are likely to be coming from male owls advertising territories. A territory can be as big as a square mile. Keep your ears open. Could we possibly have lowland nesting pygmy-owls this year? On the peninsula? It's incredible to imagine. ■

The KP Grows Up to Have Its First Pediatrician

A serendipitous new home.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Dr. Van (Mimi) Chau began working as pediatrician in January at the Key Center Medical Center where her colleague, Dr. William Roes, said she is the first pediatrician ever to practice on the KP. Chau, meanwhile, said it is her dream job: She loves her work, has always been interested in getting to know a community and connecting families with local resources, and the office is practically around the corner from her home.

Chau grew up near Boulder, Colo., with her younger brother. Her parents were both refugees from Vietnam. “They were boat people,” she said. Her mother’s family lived in a refugee camp in Thailand before moving to their sponsor’s town in rural Oregon. Her father and his family arrived in Los Angeles from a camp in Indonesia. Her parents met when her mother’s family moved to L.A. to find work. The couple married and moved to Boulder when her father found a job there as a jeweler, using skills he had learned in Indonesia.

Chau did well in school. “I had great mentors and teachers who believed in me,” she said. She now serves as a mentor with the program that helped her in high school. After graduation she went to Stanford.

During her orientation weekend on campus she met another freshman, Chris Rurik (KP News staff member). They hit it off, but both had other serious relationships and it wasn’t until their senior year that they began dating. He grew up in Gig Harbor and spoke of his love for the family property on the Key Peninsula where he spent many happy days. He told Chau that he wanted to settle there.

Chau always loved science and the lifelong learning it entails. She considered pre-med, but “as a first-generation immigrant and college student I didn’t really know that there were other things to study, that I could be something other than a doctor,” she said. She discovered anthropology.

“I was the only Asian woman in my high school. I knew race affected my life, but it was hard to put words around it and talk about it,” she said. “Studying anthropology was a way to learn the vocabulary around social forces that you don’t even realize affect you, but they do.”

For her thesis she studied skin whiteners in Vietnam. The project allowed her to visit and explore her family’s country of origin and to meet relatives who had remained



Dr. Mimi Chau wraps up her day in Key Center. *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

there. She lived with her grandmother and went to beauty salons with her cousin, where they got their hair done and talked with customers — Chau speaks Cantonese and Vietnamese. In Vietnam, “whiter skin means you take better care of yourself, that you don’t have to be outside in the sun. It’s a class thing,” she said.

During her senior year, she returned to Vietnam and worked in a girls’ shelter. “I spent time with them, ate with them, taught them English,” Chau said. “It was transforming. I realized I didn’t want to sit in an office and write about them or other subjects. I wanted to be with them and do things with or for them.” To her that meant going to medical school.

Chau returned to Boulder for a year to do her pre-med requirements. She and Rurik maintained a long-distance relationship for a while, until he followed her there. He found work and she entered medical school at the University of Colorado. She chose pediatrics, although she briefly toyed with the idea of becoming a surgeon. “I liked the satisfaction of getting in there and fixing things,” she said. But she loved the integration of care, the teaming with parents, teachers and others, that is a part of caring for children.

After medical school came a three-year residency. She

and Rurik, now married, wanted to be on the West Coast, and she decided to enter the program at Seattle Children’s Hospital.

When it came time to look for work, she focused on jobs in the area. Chau interviewed with Community Health Care, a clinic network based in Pierce County. The interviewer noted that Rurik had grown up in Gig Harbor. He said they were in the process of buying a building and taking over a practice nearby. “Have you heard of Key Center?” he asked. Chau and Rurik nearly fell out of their chairs. “It felt like everything was aligning,” she said.

The residency training at Children’s is highly regarded, but Chau said that being a new mother — her son George recently turned 1 — has made her a much better pediatrician. “I give so much more credit to parents now. I am so much more graceful,” she said.

Chau works in the clinic Thursday afternoons and every other Wednesday morning. She is available by phone when she is not in clinic to answer questions and is at other CHC clinics the rest of the week. She hopes to spend more of her clinical time in Key Center as the practice grows and staffing allows, and to become involved in community programs. She said that she has felt welcomed both by the clinic and by the community, but “George is the star. The librarian and the postmaster love him.” ■

CHAU INTERVIEWED WITH COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE, A CLINIC NETWORK BASED IN PIERCE COUNTY ... “HAVE YOU HEARD OF KEY CENTER?”

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Lisa Bryan, KP News

RoxAnne Simon is Paying it Forward on the KP

People experiencing domestic violence, hunger and homelessness on the KP have grown in numbers in the last year and she's doing something about it.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

RoxAnne Simon might be a relative newcomer to the Key Peninsula by the standards of some old timers, but that hasn't stopped her from having a big impact on the community.

She and her husband of 17 years, Gerry, were living in Tacoma in 2005 when she informed him that they were moving to the KP.

"I ride motorcycles. I have an '05 Yamaha Silverado Midnight Road Star and I have a '99 Honda Shadow Ace Tour. I knew this place from a motorcycle group we were riding with, visiting Joemma and Penrose," she said. "We happened to find property (near) Joemma Beach. We don't have neighbors; we have trees. It's quiet and when it's dark it's dark, you can see the sky, you can see everything and nothing."

Since then, RoxAnne and her family have become the definition of community.

She volunteers for the Peninsula Violence Prevention Coalition, the Washington State

Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the KP Community Council, the Tacoma-Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness, the Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Homeless Coalition, and the KP satellite Rotary, including its diversity, equity and inclusion arm, and she's also placing free food pantries on the KP to feed anyone who is hungry.

And then there's her day job: working for Safe Streets out of Key Center.

"It's a small nonprofit, 15 or 16 employees, doing community mobilization," she said.

"Usually we get a call when a community is having issues with crime, or sometimes they want to know what they can do to prevent it. We cover all of unincorporated Pierce County."

Safe Streets facilitates the work of the Pierce County Sheriff's deputy community liaisons on the KP, but also runs a youth leadership program, local road cleanups, and even assists people growing food gardens.

"We're not the experts, but we can help find the experts. I just like working with

people on the Key Peninsula, helping where I can. Because I live here," she said.

RoxAnne grew up in the military. "I was born at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, but when I turned 8, that's when we started traveling." The family moved every 18 months for years: Spokane, Okinawa, Chicago, San Antonio, back to Okinawa — "I graduated high school there" — Colorado, North Carolina, Ohio, back to Colorado, South Carolina, Germany.

"That was with my stepdad, who was Army," she said; her father was Air Force.

"It was great. We got to see so much. All six of us siblings, all biracial, all growing up together," she said.

"Biracial marriages were illegal in the Sixties, so when my dad got orders back to the South my mom didn't go. They ended up divorcing. It wasn't until 1967 until the Loving case — that's when interracial marriages became legal. When we came back to the States it was '68, and their marriage was legal, and we were in San Francisco, where it was even more legal. But we lived in Marin County, that's where people of color lived," RoxAnne said.

"Because there was this white person in

our car we got pulled over a lot and Mom was asked if she had been kidnapped by this Black man and his kids. We knew where we could and couldn't go. We knew not to travel at night. Things that other people never had to deal with," she said.

"I was in a meeting here yesterday and someone commented 'Well, it's better here than in the South,' and I said 'No, it's better hidden here than in the South. Except in some areas, where it's not hidden at all.'"

RoxAnne left the South for good when she ended a challenging marriage in South Carolina and drove cross-country with her four children to her mom's place in Spanaway in 1993.

"We stayed with my mom for a bit, my sister for a bit, and in my car for a longer bit till I found a job. We were sleeping in the car into '94. When I talk to my girls about it, they don't recall that. They blocked it out, and that's good," she said.

"I got a job working in the office at Inland Technology (where she later met her future husband, Gerry), and then we found a house in Spanaway. My son was at Spanaway Elementary. I didn't know that they knew about our circumstances, and

they showed up at our house with all kinds of items that we needed. It just floored us. From then on it became ‘pay it forward’ whenever we could.”

The pandemic has affected that work, but the problems haven’t gone away, she said. The numbers of people experiencing domestic violence, hunger and homelessness on the KP have all grown in the last year.

“Out here, it’s easy to hide,” she said. “People that are couch surfing aren’t counted, whether it’s students or adults. Some that are fleeing domestic violence are well hidden, so we don’t know. Moms or dads aren’t going to ask for help because they are afraid their children are going to be taken away. So they are not counted, and they don’t get anything.”

One way to assist people in those situations is through the Little Pantry food drops RoxAnne and her team are setting up on the KP.

“We have one so far, I got that from Building Beyond the Walls in Buckley,” she said. The Little Pantry is a small, freestanding roadside cupboard to stock nonperishable food items that are free for the taking.

“The one that we placed is on Chuck West’s property (at the corner of KP Highway and 64th Street NW),” she said. “A lot of people are really interested but nobody wants one in their neighborhood, and that’s kind of depressing. My concern is that people eat. We’re not in competition with the food banks — they’re not open 24/7. That is why there are stewards for the Little Pantry to make sure it is stocked and the area around it is clean.”

RoxAnne’s team includes her husband Gerry, son Clathyn Williams III, granddaughter Karma Jaydin Williams, son-in-law Robert Hill, friend Angie Mattison-Lindbom and Chuck West.

The first Little Pantry has been up since

Feb. 28. “Chuck said let’s bolt it to his fence, so no one can mess with it,” RoxAnne said. “A ton of food has come and gone since then; I couldn’t tell you how much. Stuff is gone every day.”

Perhaps the best thing about the Little Pantry, according to RoxAnne, is that it provides a service when and where it’s needed.

“If you’re going to offer someone help, have that help available now,” she said, whether it’s for a person experiencing

homelessness or substance abuse or something else. “Sometimes people will say, ‘Well, they just don’t want the help,’ and that’s not true. There aren’t the services out here (on the KP), and they don’t want to leave what they know.

“Everybody’s different in some way; everybody needs something in some way. Nobody is better than anybody else. If you think you are, that’s your issue.”

For more information on Safe Streets or The Little Pantries, send an email to rsimon@safest.org. ■

IT HASN’T BEEN THAT LONG

Mildred Loving and her white husband Richard Loving were sentenced to a year in prison in 1958 for the crime of marrying each other in Virginia. U.S. anti-miscegenation laws predated the American Revolution. The Supreme Court unanimously overturned the Loving conviction June 12, 1967, striking down all state laws banning interracial marriage. In 2015, the Court cited Loving v. Virginia as precedent for holding that states are required to allow same-sex marriages under both the Equal Protection Clause and the Due Process Clause of the Constitution. June 12, the date of the Loving decision, is known as Loving Day, an unofficial celebration of interracial marriages. In 2014, Mildred Loving was honored as one of “Virginia’s Women in History.”

Lisa Bryan, KP News



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'Students of Distinction' 2021

Two Local Diamonds With a Bright Future

Standout KP seniors made a difference at Peninsula High School.

CAROLYN WILEY, KP NEWS

Peninsula School District and the Greater Gig Harbor Foundation annually solicit nominations from PSD staff to identify graduating seniors for excellence in academics and leadership. Selected students are recognized as Students of Distinction.

Twelve students from Peninsula High School received the award, including two from the Key Peninsula: Riley Schuller and



Haley Barnesson and Riley Schuller (below) *Kamryn Minch, KP News*



Haley Barnesson. Both live in Lakebay and are being recognized in the Science and Technology category. Schuller was also a nominee in the Career and Technical category.

Schuller was nominated for her work in physics and math. She is a National Honor Society member with a 3.942 GPA and her transcript includes AP and honors classes, as well as Tacoma Community College running start courses in precalculus, calculus, engineering graphics and physics. She has been accepted to the honors program at the University of Puget Sound and will major in physics. Her plans include becoming a college professor, unless she can land her dream job as a roller coaster designer.

"I'VE KNOWN SINCE THE THIRD GRADE THAT I WANTED TO BECOME A DOCTOR, SO I HAVE TAKEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE TO HELP ME ACHIEVE THAT GOAL."

Schuller credits Jack Newton, PHS science teacher, as a main influence in her chosen career path. "He is the reason I want to get into physics," because he "showed me how amazing math and science could really be. I want to thank him for pushing me to explore the wonders of our world through physics."

In his recommendation letter, Newton wrote "Riley was one of the few students who took advantage of optimal enrichment assignments to increase her understanding of physics concepts."

Erin Rossing, PHS math department chair said, "Riley has an insatiable curiosity and is driven by the pursuit of knowledge. She also exhibits the ability to see connections in the application of math concepts that were far beyond the class instructional level."

"I'M JUST OBSESSED WITH LEARNING ... I HOPE TO SOMEDAY TEACH OTHERS THE KNOWLEDGE I HAVE."

But there is more to Schuller's interests than math and physics — art and design are her creative outlet.

PHS Fine and Performing Arts Department Chair Christine Buchanan said "Riley displays a creative vision that goes beyond the scope of a typical high school student" and praised her mastery of ceramic sculpture, the potter's wheel and stained glass. She also cited Schuller's leadership in PHS art club and her volunteer work with Winterfest and Two Waters Arts Alliance.

Buchanan also commended Schuller for her willingness to defend people who may be subjected to hate speech and bullying.

In her spare time, the scholar athlete has been on the bowling team since her freshman year, was team captain for two years, and was a Student Athlete of the Month in 2020.

"I'm just obsessed with learning. Sit me down and teach me anything, I'll be interested. I hope to someday teach others the knowledge I have," she said.

Haley Barnesson has been accepted to five colleges, but is still debating her selection. She will follow a pre-med program and plans on becoming a trauma surgeon.

"I've known since the third grade that I wanted to become a doctor, so I have taken every opportunity available to help me achieve that goal," she said.

Barnesson earned varsity letters in community service and sports medicine while maintaining a 3.938 GPA. Her diligence in five advanced placement and honors courses earned her a college board AP scholar award, and certification in three courses.

Her favorite teacher is Brad Collins, she said, who teaches biomedical science, human body systems and medical terminology. "Haley has always been very good at science and her curiosity and creativity show in her work ethic and her drive to do well," he said.

Collins also called Barnesson "a consistent leading force" in the PHS Health Occupations Students of America club, where she served as an officer for several years. She is the first PHS student to compete and win in state HOSA events, earning an opportunity to participate in the HOSA International Leadership Conference in June 2020.

Web Sommer, athletic trainer at PHS, supervised Barnesson's work as a student athletic trainer, where she accumulated over 400 volunteer hours. "Haley's ability to work not only with student athletes individually but also large groups was evident as I placed her in charge of conducting class-size impact concussion testing," Sommer said.

"Haley went on to job shadow doctors at St Anthony Hospital, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital, podiatry in Gig Harbor and an RN at Tacoma General Hospital," Sommer said. "Haley has a lot of compassion for others and is respected by both students and staff at PHS. She is a quiet leader who has a great deal of potential." ■


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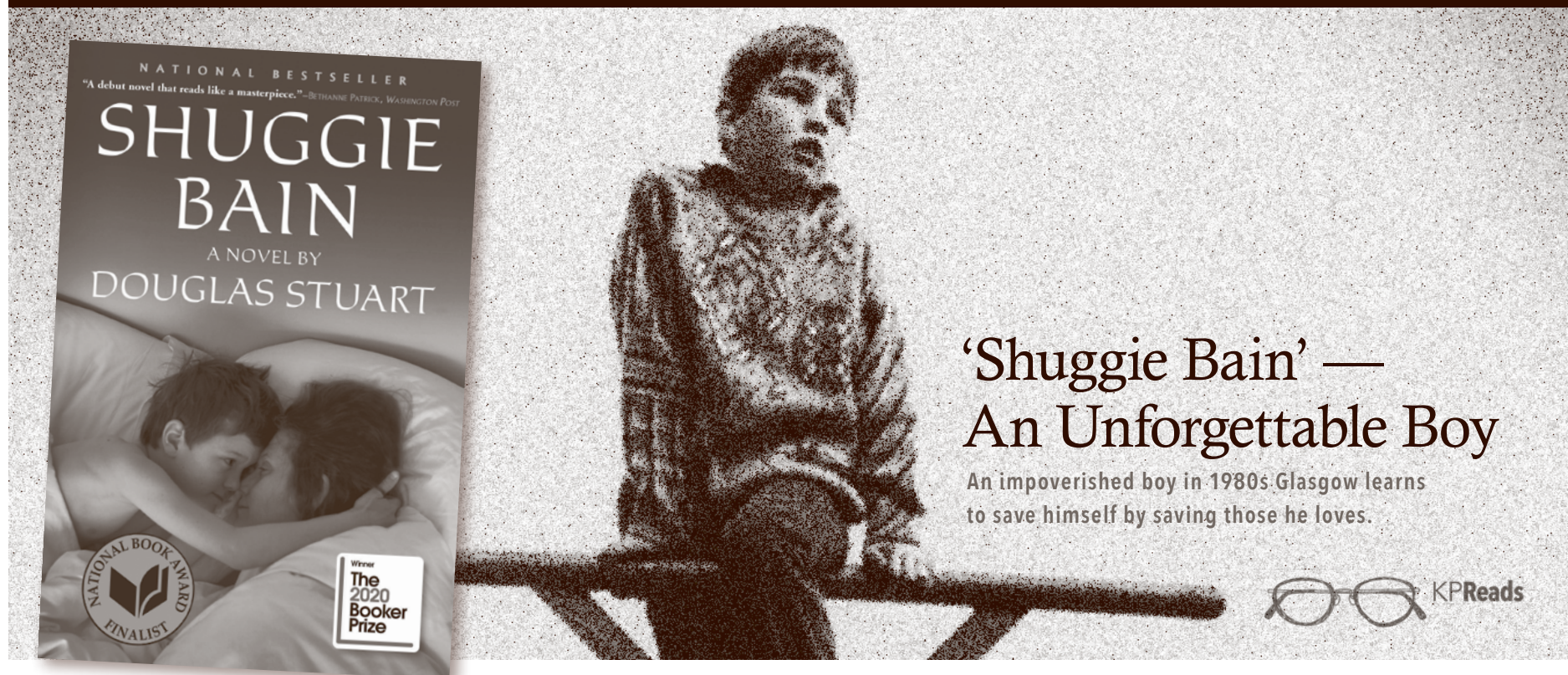
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AN UNCOMFORTABLE CHILD IN AN UNCOMFORTABLE WORLD — WITH A HAPPY ENDING



MAUREEN REILLY

Many of us went to school with a Shuggie Bain. Depending on what school you attended, there might be several pupils like him in each class. They were easy to identify because of the pinched, dazed look of the perpetually hungry and sleep deprived. Their clothes were threadbare, ill-fitting and none too clean. The more fortunate among us were uncomfortable around them and stayed clear in the casually ignorant and cruel way that children have. In my hometown Shug is the familiar version of the first name Hugh and Shuggie is the affectionate diminutive.

This debut novel by Douglas Stuart is set in the poorer parts of Glasgow in the 1980s. Heavy industry was no longer the lifeblood of the area and the coal mines were being shut down because the cost-revenue ratio had turned upside

down. Unemployment reached record numbers, discontent was high and the high latitude predilection for alcoholism ran rampant. This transition away from a traditional economy was inevitable but incredibly painful for those who could not adjust in an impossibly short time. Glasgow lost its shipbuilding and steel industries and nearby coal pits in a few short years. It took decades for the city to recover and reinvent itself.

Shuggie was shunned by his ne'er-do-well father and people of all ages in his

neighborhood because there was something “not right” about him. He was also abandoned by his siblings, who could only survive by leaving. From a very young age, Shuggie was responsible for his alcoholic mother, Agnes, who was obsessed with mourning and trying to recapture the beauty of her youth and the happiness she thought it brought her. Her vanity and insecurity were the despair of her hardworking, strait-laced parents, and both attracted and then drove away the men who made her problems worse. She was never able to understand the superficiality of her concerns or recognize the havoc she caused in the lives of her defenseless children.

Shuggie had to be persistent and resourceful just to get enough food to scrape by on a mostly empty stomach and keep the lights on. He managed to do all of that while attending school intermittently and eventually made a friend he supported through many of the same struggles he faced himself.

There is no apparent rhyme or reason to explain why some members of any family succumb to addiction. Although this book is set in a big city, it highlights problems found everywhere, including isolated rural communities. Addiction cannot be explained by good parents or bad, by a lack of boundaries or by harsh discipline. It manifests itself in many “normal” families to the sorrow and puzzlement of all

the relatives. Alcoholism was quite prevalent in the maternal side of my large, extended family. I am not only familiar with the parts of the city described in the book but also with some of the characters. The children suffer most of all, and it takes an extremely strong individual to survive, never mind thrive, in a home ravaged by a parent’s addiction. Agnes is real and she is in every community, but so is Shuggie, though in smaller numbers.

Since it was published, the book has been the subject of heated discussion in the Scottish social media groups I have joined. Some of us are expats and some still live in our native land. Some folks refused to finish reading it because they found it too depressing, some people denied that it bore any resemblance to the Glasgow they prefer to remember, and some of us were spellbound all the way through. I recognized areas of the city and street names and I could picture the places the various characters lived and visited.

“Shuggie Bain” is not a comfortable book because Shuggie was an uncomfortable child in an uncomfortable world. He earned my admiration and respect by never giving up on himself, never becoming bitter or angry, and by radiating hope all through his young life in circumstances that would have felled many adults. The overwhelming feeling that has stayed with me since I turned the last page is one of peace and hope. Shuggie will be all right because he is a strong person and a good one who takes the time and effort

to care about others in the midst of his own struggles. I would be proud to call him my friend. ■

“Shuggie Bain” by Douglas Stuart, published by Grove Press (U.S.) in 2020, 448 pages.

This debut novel by Scottish-American Douglas Stuart won the 2020 Booker Prize, making him just the second Scottish winner of the prize in its 51-year history. The novel was also a finalist for the 2020 National Book Award for Fiction. The manuscript was rejected by at least 30 publishers.

Stuart was born in the Sighthill housing estate in Glasgow in 1976. He called it a time when Thatcher-era economic policies “decimated the working man,” moving industry away from the west coast of Scotland and leaving mass unemployment and widespread substance abuse.

He received a bachelor’s degree from the Scottish College of Textiles and a master’s degree from the Royal College of Art in London. Stuart received no formal education in literature, which he wanted to study in college, saying he was discouraged by a teacher who told him it would “not suit someone from his background.”



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IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE TO START YOUR OWN FROM SEED THIS YEAR



All About Tomatoes

What other fruit so fraught is so well wrapped in warmest memory?

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Tomatoes. For some, the memory of the first bite of a garden-grown vine-ripened tomato ranks right up there with a first kiss. Or the birth of a child. For others, great tomatoes have always been a part of life. That's certainly the case for Dee Hendrix of Lakebay. But that in no way diminishes her passion for them.

Hendrix grew up in Eastern Washington where her family had a small farm that provided much of what they ate. She grew up eating her mother's heirloom tomatoes. Hendrix met her husband in 1981 and they bounced around for a few years, she said, but they visited the Key Peninsula, fell in love with the area and moved here in 1989. They lived just across from the Lakebay Marina until 2004 when they bought their current place. She named it My Mother's Garden in honor of her mom.

"It's a great place for a garden," she said. "It gets good sun, and the owner ran sheep and a cow there before we moved in." She developed a local reputation for her tomatoes when she sold them through the local farmers market and Fresh Food Revolution. Those days are gone, but she still loves her heirlooms and has plenty of valuable advice.

Hendrix has some favorite varieties — heirloom tomatoes that have been around for 50 years or more — from the 20 or so she has grown. The Mortgage Lifter,

so named because it helped Radiator Charlie pay off his mortgage, is one. She also loves Aunt Ruby's German Green, Kellogg's Breakfast and Martino's Roma. Jerry McCourt, an inveterate gardener, is a Stupice and Brandywine fan. And Hendrix admits that a good hybrid like Sungold or Sweet Million can hold its own in the flavor department.

With our short growing season, it is important to pay attention to "days to maturity," which is more of a guide than an absolute. For tomatoes it generally means the time it takes from setting out a seedling until the first tomato ripens and it can vary from 65 to 90 days. A shorter time may assure a plentiful crop before fall ends the season, but weather conditions also impact the maturity date.

A year that is sunnier than usual makes a difference. Janet Dowling, who has been growing tomatoes for 40 years, said the May 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helen led to the worst tomato season in her memory. "The sun was unable to break through the clouds of volcanic dust for the entire summer," she said.

It is too late to start your own from seed this year. To get a plant that will mature and produce seed you should start in mid-February, Hendrix said. But she had advice for next season. She uses cell pack trays, and if she knows the seed is good, she will place just one seed in a cell. If it's old or she has any doubts, she'll plant three or four and then thin them when they germinate. Once they have three sets of true leaves, she transfers them to a 4-inch pot, planting them deep, since the stem will develop roots if it is buried. "A 4-inch pot should be big enough for the plant to grow until it's ready for the garden," she said.

Seedlings are available through garden stores, at some farmers markets, and

from local gardeners who

have extras if they

are willing to part

with them. Look

for plants that

are not leggy and

are medium to dark

green. Plant them deep.

"There is no point in

planting in the garden until

the soil is at least 50

degrees — the plant

will survive if you

plant it sooner and

it isn't freezing, but

it won't grow," Hendrix

said. She places a black

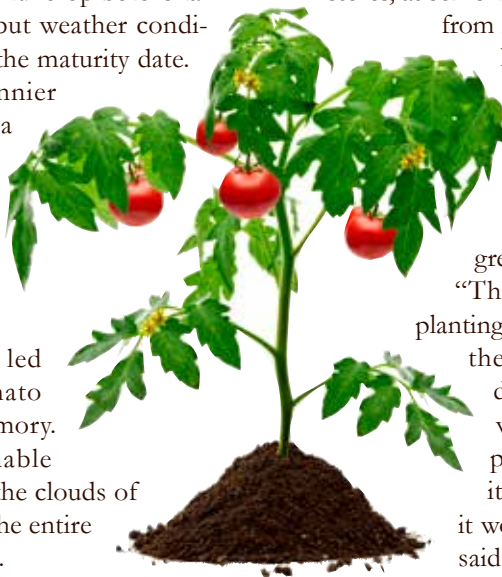
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ground cover over the soil to warm it, cutting holes for the plants. McCourt uses old tires as planters and says they also work well to warm the earth. Catherine Kosel, who cans at least 80 quarts of tomatoes each year, uses a big hoop tent over the plants to keep them warm and to keep the inevitable fall rains from ruining a late crop.

Hendrix said that a key to a good crop is to prune them. Every other branch, she said, is a sucker branch that does not produce flowers. Prune those and there will be more sun for the developing tomatoes. She also thins the plants by pulling some leaves in mid-August.

Some tomato varieties are determinate — they are bushes, only grow to a certain height, and the fruit ripens at the same time. Others are indeterminate — they are vines and will keep growing. "Flowers in August won't get ripe," Hendrix said. "So cut the plant off at the top, give it a haircut, and the existing tomatoes will get the message and grow ripe and sweet."

Once you've eaten a vine-ripened tomato, it is hard to go back. Commercial varieties were bred for a consistent red color, improved shelf life and uniform size. It turns out that when you select for those traits you eliminate genes that make the tomato sweeter and more flavorful. Hendrix, for one, never eats a store-bought tomato. ■





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SAY IT OUT LOUD! STRAWBERRY LEMON BRIOCHE ROLLS WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING!

Mother's Day Breakfast — Strawberry Lemon Brioche

KAMRYN MINCH, KP NEWS

Despite everything you've ever been told, it doesn't take much to impress a woman, especially after she has become a mother. It's the little things that ultimately catch her eye, like swept floors, an empty dishwasher, and neatly folded laundry. But if you think doing your chores isn't enough for your Mother's Day celebration and you really want to blow mom away this year, forget the charm bracelet and macaroni portraits, it's all about breakfast in bed!

Say it out loud — strawberry lemon brioche rolls with cream cheese frosting. Served warm with a big cup of dark French roast coffee and a hefty glass of mimosa, sans OJ, this breakfast is sure to put mom in a proper food coma so you can get to work scrubbing the bathroom floor.

This recipe offers the perfect balance between sweet and tart and lacks the density that's often a characteristic of other sweet rolls. It's also very versatile, so if strawberries aren't your mom's favorite then raspberries and blueberries are excellent substitutes.

If at first this recipe sounds intimidating, then good. Baking is a terrifying process and it's a miracle we're even able to get bags of bread at the store. But if you really love your mother, your wife, the goddess in your life, you'll ignore these feelings of doubt and trust that the process will work in your favor. I even forgot to add the eggs into my dough the first time I baked them and they still turned out amazing. These rolls are difficult to mess up.



First and foremost, before getting started keep in mind that timing is the most important factor when executing the perfect breakfast-in-bed operation. To make these rolls you'll need part of the evening before Mother's Day to prep the dough and assemble the rolls. If you wait to make these the day of, then mom probably won't be eating breakfast until noon. But maybe that's a good thing.

Strawberry Lemon Brioche Rolls

3½ to 4 cups all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon cardamom
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon instant yeast
¾ cup warm milk (about 30-40 seconds in microwave)
2 tablespoons honey
3 large eggs, at room temperature
½ cup (1 stick) of salted butter, melted
2 to 3 tablespoons of lemon zest (2 to 3 lemons)
¾ cup of granulated sugar
6 tablespoons of salted butter, softened plus more for greasing pan
4 cups of fresh or frozen strawberries (I used 3 cups of frozen and 1 cup of fresh)

Cream Cheese Frosting

1 stick of salted butter, softened
8 ounces of cream cheese (softened)
1½ teaspoons of vanilla extract
3 cups powdered sugar (sifted)

START THE DAY BEFORE

In a mixer bowl combine 3½ cups of flour, cardamom, cinnamon, salt, yeast, warmed milk, honey, eggs, melted butter and 1 tablespoon of lemon zest. With dough hook attachment mix ingredients for 4 to 5 minutes, occasionally stopping the mixer to scrape side of bowl. The consistency of the dough should be sticky but not wet; add 1 tablespoon of flour at a time until dough reaches this consistency.

After all dough is mixed thoroughly, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set in a warm place to rise for an hour or until it doubles in size.

In a small bowl mix the ¾ cup of



From the kitchen of the author. *Kamryn Minch, KP News*

granulated sugar and remaining lemon zest. Prepare a 9-inch by 13-inch baking dish by greasing it with butter. If you're using frozen berries, allow them to thaw and drain the excess juice.

When the dough has doubled in size, lightly dust your work surface with flour and turn out the dough. No need to knead, just use a rolling pin to stretch it out into a 10-inch by 16-inch rectangle.

Take the 6 tablespoons of softened butter (15 seconds in the microwave gets it just right) and spread it onto the surface of the dough with a rubber spatula. Sprinkle the lemon zest sugar mix onto the surface and press gently into the butter. Sprinkle the 3 cups of berries.

After your filling has been liberally applied to the dough, it's time to roll. Take it slow and keep it tight along the 16-inch edge. Using a sharp knife, divide the log into 12 to 15 even pieces. Place each piece into the greased pan. The rolls will be a little slimy and want to fall apart, but don't worry, once they're in the pan they will hold their form. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and place in the fridge overnight. Leave a stick of butter out of the fridge for the frosting in the morning.

Make sure all the dishes are done before you go to bed.

In the morning take the pan of rolls out of the fridge and preheat the oven to 375. Bake rolls for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown. While the rolls bake, make the frosting.

In the mixer with the whisk attached, cream the stick of butter you left out overnight. You may have to stop the mixer a few times to scrape the sides of the bowl. After a few minutes of beating the butter, add the 8 ounces of cream cheese (note: take the cream cheese out of the fridge the same time as the rolls to let it soften). Continue mixing and scraping the bowl until the cream cheese and butter are a creamy consistency. It's very important to get it as creamy as possible.

With the mixer running, add the vanilla extract and slowly spoon in the sifted powdered sugar. Stop the mixer and scrape the sides when the powdered sugar builds up.

After the rolls are finished baking, let them sit for 15 minutes to cool before spreading the frosting. Add fresh berries on the top and serve to mom right away! (Don't forget the mimosa.)

This recipe is an adaptation based on "Raspberry Lemon Brioche Rolls with Whipped Ricotta Cream" published on the blog halfbakedharvest.com ■



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KP Volunteers Unite for Roadside Cleanup

MATTHEW DEAN, KP NEWS

A group of KP residents have organized online to deal with roadway trash on the Key Peninsula.

The first “Key Pen It Clean” event was started by Sierra Fairley in mid-December 2020. The group has conducted nine cleanup events since, picking up garbage across the KP on Wright-Bliss, Creviston, Lackey and Herron roads. The biweekly events have drawn up to a dozen participants according to the current organizer, Patty Reidy Fisher.

Before each cleanup, Fisher chooses a section of road based on trash accumulation and community input through Facebook.

“I pick a road, and I measure it out in third-of-a-mile sections. Two people take a section and go down one side at a time, one person collects trash, one person collects recycle,” said Fisher. “It’s not the most glamorous job, and it’s hard work. You’re out there bending, climbing, jumping ditches, so it does get a little bit physical.”

After cleanup is complete, Fisher collects the garbage bags and takes them home for sorting and eventual pickup by Pierce County.

Fisher and her regular volunteers are hopeful that their efforts will inspire others to clean up their own neighborhoods. “Our long-range goal is to have more people involved, whether they join our events or they decide to adopt a stretch of road on their own,” said Susan Mendenhall, an administrator of the Key Peninsula community Facebook page. “We want the community to be able to come up with ideas for keeping the KP clean and supporting beautification projects.” The community page has provided a venue for volunteers to organize and for residents to express their appreciation. “When we did Creviston, about 100 people posted thank you (messages) and a bunch of people liked the post,” said Fisher. “Quite a few responses. That was nice.”

There are several organizations committed to cleaning up roadside trash on the KP,

but most are sponsored by the county’s Adopt-A-Road program. Pierce County suspended official Adopt-A-Road litter pickups in March 2020 due to COVID-19. Pierce County Public Works has continued to support unsponsored cleanup efforts by disposing of the accumulated trash, but no longer supplies equipment. Key Pen It Clean has worked to gather their own vests, garbage bags, and signs, but safety is a concern for the group as they work on stretches of KP roadway with low visibility. “There are roads that we haven’t finished due to these concerns, and some that we haven’t even attempted yet,” Fisher said.



The load collected by “Key Pen It Clean” volunteers April 17 along 94th Avenue NW. *Patty Reidy Fisher*

Several other local organizations conduct road cleanups as well, including the Key Peninsula Business Administration, Longbranch Improvement Club, KP Lions Club, Herron Island ferry crew, local businesses, churches and youth clubs.

Safe Streets, a local community mobilization nonprofit,

connects neighborhood groups with Pierce County to provide equipment and free trash disposal.

Stan Moffett, a Key Pen It Clean volunteer, articulated a frustration with litter that many KP residents share. “It’s like anything else — it’s 20% of the population that’s doing 80% of the littering. It’s pretty much the same people all the time. My wife Mary and I have been cleaning up our stretch of road for seven or eight years now, and we know these people intimately by what they throw out.”

Moffett, who also participates in the Adopt-a-Road program, expressed his support for the county’s program as well as the more informal Key Pen It Clean events. “Key Pen It Clean is fulfilling a need by going out every other week. Volunteers can come out as their time permits. They don’t necessarily need to make that long-term commitment to adopt a road, and either way it’s certainly very helpful for our community. That’s ultimately what we care about.” ■



Eagle Scout Luke Fritsch. *Kamryn Minch, KP News*

Flag-Flying Boy Scout Earns Eagle Scout Badge

KAMRYN MINCH, KP NEWS

What does it take to become an Eagle Scout? Between earning at least 21 merit badges and demonstrating scout spirit and leadership within the troop, the journey can take up to six years to accomplish. For Eagle Scout Luke Fritsch, reaching this milestone meant taking it a step further by completing a project that required resourcefulness and quality craftsmanship.

The new flag pole at the Key Peninsula Civic Center, installed by Luke, stands tall and sturdy. To begin the process, he sourced a tree from family property to cut down, purchased the paint and all the hardware himself. But he didn't stop there. In addition to the flag pole, he laid

out new colorful pavers and painted sign posts along the designated parking area. He also noticed that the picnic table, originally built by his own Boy Scout Troop in June of 2013, was weathered so he decided to refinish it.

"The civic center has had a great relationship with Boy Scout Troop 220," said KPCCA President Tim Kezele. "Through the years we have watched Luke go through the steps of the scouts. He has helped numerous times at the center with work projects and community events. Making Eagle Scout is the final step in the scouts. The KPCCA thanks Luke for this lasting contribution to our community center." ■



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TOP LEFT This resident male green-winged teal will soon fly east to breed in the prairies, and return in September. *Christine McKail* **TOP RIGHT** A cottontail rabbit prefers to blend in. *Ed Johnson, KP News* **MID LEFT** A photographer's dream: orca airborne over Henderson Bay. *Ingrid Shumway* **MID RIGHT** Douglas squirrel litters are typically born in May. *Christine McKail* **LOWER MID** Pileated woodpeckers rely on large, dead or dying trees. *Christine McKail* **LOWER RIGHT** A sure sign of spring, rufous hummingbirds have returned. *Christine McKail*