



KPFD Confronts Budget Crunch and Skeptical Residents

The fire department is facing multiple expenses at its leanest time of year.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The bimonthly Key Peninsula fire commission meetings have been unusually well attended since the public first learned the fire district bought \$2.125 million worth of Key Center real estate at the end of the year with an eye toward possibly building new headquarters. (See “Fire Commissioners Defend Real Estate Deal ...” KP News, Feb. 2022.)

Beyond objecting to the rationale behind the purchases, many attendees have repeatedly asked about the impact on the district’s finances as other large expenses curtail spending at the same time.

In an interview with KP News, Interim Fire Chief Jason Learned and Executive Assistant Christina Bosch described a confluence of events that brought unusual pressure to the department.

“I think a lot of what is going on now are emotional responses to all the changes we’ve endured,” Learned said. “The (changes in leadership), stresses on the staff, overtime expenses, the budget stuff; a lot of people are talking, and a lot of rumors are circulating, and people hear that and say, ‘Hey, what is going on?’”

“Financially, we’re stable,” Bosch said. “We’re just in a position right now in the first three months of the year where we do need to be extra cautious only because our tax flow is much tighter than what we’re accustomed to. This is not unusual; I think it’s just hitting at a time when everything else is piling up.”

The budget was not affected by the property purchases, she said, because the financing was acquired well in advance and the interest payments were planned for.

“We did go over in the purchase of the properties by \$68,000 because the final prices were higher than anticipated,” she said. “However, the overage (was paid) from our general reserve fund. We did not



Reenacting a 19th-century tradition, KPFD personnel perform the “push-in” ceremony with a new ambulance at Longbranch station in February. In the 1800s, horses were unharnessed after returning a fire wagon to its station and firefighters pushed it into the bay. *Anne Nesbit, KPFD*

use operating funds to cover that.”

High overtime expenses and the upfront cost of three new ambulances also made the traditionally lean time of year more stressful.

“When we opened up the third station at Longbranch (in 2019), we budgeted in a spare day of overtime every single day,” Learned said. “The goal since (Fire Chief Morrow) was here is to have enough people on board to staff it without causing the overtime.”

Morrow started with the district April 1, 2019, and left to become fire chief of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue Dec. 1, 2021. Assistant Chief Hal Wolverton was appointed interim chief to replace him until he was put on paid administrative leave Dec. 14 pending an investigation into alleged employee complaints. Division Chief Learned was chosen to fill his place as interim chief.

Morrow hired five new firefighters before he left and started a process to hire seven more that Learned is now completing, he said.

Under Morrow’s model, every shift requires a minimum of seven firefighters, including paramedics. KPFD staffs three stations 24 hours a day: an ambulance with two personnel at Wauna and Longbranch, and an engine with at least two more plus a battalion chief at Home. Two additional chiefs can be called on and volunteers respond out of the Key Center station as needed.

“Obviously, we can’t forecast personnel injuries, we can’t forecast paid family leave, administrative leave, and during all this we got Covid, so we got people either being exposed or testing positive, all those things compounded during these last 12 or 16 months,” Learned said.

Overtime pay and compensatory days off increased nearly 48% from 2019 to 2020, and another 15% in 2021, according to Bosch.

“The original 2021 budgeted overtime was \$260,000,” she said. “In April, we increased the budget to \$471,500, but soon realized that this would not be enough and increased it again to \$564,700. We ended 2021 with overtime expenditures at \$564,500.”

Cash reserves at the end of the year were \$150,000 to \$200,000 less than usual, she said.

The district recently hired five new line personnel that are training now and is searching for two more lateral hires — experienced firefighter paramedics who can start immediately — to relieve the pressure.

KPFD has 33 line personnel, including the five new members in training.

“The new hires will take us up to 11 per shift (by June), so that will allow us to have the ability to build some buffer into staffing parameters,” Learned said.

Of the 10 new hires in the last two years, five have come from the KPFD volunteer

ranks. There are 15 remaining, but only two of them are certified to drive fire rigs and most have full-time jobs, meaning they can respond only on evenings and weekends.

“I can’t fill a shift with volunteers; that would be a violation of the contract,” Learned said, referring to the career firefighters’ union agreement with the district. “But we agreed that if none of the career members are filling a position, I want an opportunity to fill that spot with a volunteer member that can come in and pull shift that day. It’s a last ditch effort to fill that spot so we don’t have to take an engine out of service.”

KPFD also just took delivery of three new ambulances at a cost of \$600,000 after deducting the value of \$150,000 worth of grants,

funded by a loan from the state of Washington at a rate of 0.4% payable over five years.

But getting the ambulances meant paying upfront before getting funds from the loan.

“Once the payment is complete, that proof of payment needs to go to Washington state for verification, then they will release the loan funds back to us,” Bosch said. “We’re at our comfort level for debt capacity. While legally our capacity is much larger, we’re at our maximum comfort level.” ■

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GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Just when we thought things were beginning to look up yet another "something unexpected" happened. This time it's the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Did the whole world emerge from Covid isolation stark raving mad?

Reading the news with my morning coffee, the Russia-Ukraine stories feel like something from a newspaper circa 1939.

I read every word of "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," snowed-in and trying to stay warm without electricity by burning unseasoned wood in 1989. It was one of the few books on the shelf I hadn't read and I found myself engrossed in a story I thought I already knew. The most fascinating part to me was the slow slide into what became World War II and the opportunities lost that might have stopped it.

History offers many parallels, but it takes reading to recognize the distortions bandied about lately as attractive soundbites. There seems no shortage of people eager to play the role of victim or to be a victim blamer. It's a curious phenomenon of our day and a grotesque perversion of history.

My mom, not typically preoccupied with world news, said she's been glued to the television and felt worried sick. My great aunt Leida, my grandmother's sister, just celebrated her 100th birthday in Estonia where she has lived all her life. On the heels of World War II, my grandparents and their infant daughter left their families behind and fled the country by boat to Sweden as the Russians invaded the small, independent nation and declared it a vassal of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

What little they carried included a couple handfuls of Estonian dirt my grandfather scooped up to ensure that in case they perished or could never return, they would still be buried with the soil of their homeland.

The stories of their escape and their years as refugees were legendary to my sister and me growing up. But our grandfather took more pride in their hard work and success as American citizens. As a kid I remember feeling a little guilty. Why did we have so much

while our relatives left behind in Estonia had so little?

The obvious answer to that question was free-market capitalism, the ability to access money to invest and grow. In the end, authoritarian communism didn't turn out very well.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each declared their independence as did Ukraine and other former Soviet republics, signaling the collapse of the once mighty USSR in 1991.

All three Baltic states and Poland are members of NATO. The idea that my 100-year-old great aunt could see her country overrun by Russians twice in her lifetime keeps my mother awake at night.

Meanwhile, life at home feels hopeful yet different after two years of pandemic. Repeated waves of COVID-19 and restrictions affected everyone but also divided us, leaving fractured communities, friendships and families in its wake.

We are again on the cusp of re-entry March 21 when the state mandate to mask indoors is scheduled to end. Omicron is still out there but county-wide vaccination rates have continued to rise as infections fall. There is optimism that this time it will be different.

But do any of us really remember how to be together? When was the last time we invited friends to share a meal? Will my lifelong habit of sticking my hand out for a shake revive with the first new person I meet? Will I rush to tackle an old acquaintance with a big hug at the grocery store? Will I remember to hold my tongue and refrain from criticism? My patient "better half" husband can tell you that's something I've forgotten to do at home.

I can tell you this: whether handwritten or delivered with a click, your letters to the editor are the mark of an engaged community. They range in topic and length, from a single sentence to a

record-breaking anonymous lecture 1,263 passionate words long.

We don't publish anonymous letters but regularly receive them from people who want their opinions heard, at least by our staff. Anonymous writers often express fear of retribution, but anonymity also insulates them from the very type of challenge they issue.

And haven't we had enough of insulating, isolating, separating?

What will it be like to re-engage with each other? Will we remember that everyone, even people we don't care for, still belong to our Key Peninsula tribe?

In some ways it feels as if there is a homecoming just ahead. I don't know if I'm ready, but at the same time I can hardly wait. Nothing feels so good as belonging. In the end, I think that's what we all want most of all — just to belong. ■



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Windfall Donation for Communities In Schools of Peninsula

A surprise gift to the national organization brings rewards to local schools.

CAROLYN WILEY, KP NEWS

Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott donated \$133.5 million to the national nonprofit Communities in Schools Feb. 3. It was the largest unsolicited and unrestricted gift in the organization's history.

CIS of Washington received \$5.85 million and selected three CIS affiliates to share the wealth. The three affiliates, CIS of Peninsula, CIS of Benton-Franklin and CIS of Renton-Tukwila, serve a total of 85 schools.

The Key Peninsula-based CISP, which serves 17 schools in the Peninsula School District, received \$800,000.

CISP Executive Director Colleen Speer said, "We did not plan for this. Because MacKenzie Scott did not impose any restrictions on the gift, a task force composed of CISP board members and staff will be organized to determine best use of this unsolicited gift and decide how and when to allocate these funds."

The grant will allow for program expansion, Speer said, and will help sustain the existing program. Currently there are five part-time site coordinators and eight full-time site coordinators at Evergreen, Vaughn and Minter Creek elementary schools; Harbor Heights, Key Peninsula and Goodman middle schools; and Peninsula and Henderson Bay high schools.

Working with staff at each school, services are provided based on staff assessment of behavior, attendance, course work, as well as social and emotional development. The case load ran between 300 to 350 students annually before the pandemic but dropped to around 135 in the last year. Referrals are now increasing because more students are experiencing anxiety and stress.

"Trauma among students is higher than it has ever been," said Program Director Laurel Shultz. "Because of intensification of needs, we are addressing needs in a much deeper way."

CISP was incorporated in 2000 with a part-time coordinator who developed the after-school reading program at Vaughn Elementary. Speer was hired in 2003 and Shultz in 2007. The reading program was extended to Evergreen and Minter Creek along with an after-school math program

at KPMS. Within the KP community, CISP is best known for its academic after-school programs.

In 2007, the national CIS office undertook a five-year longitudinal study as a basis for expanding student support beyond academics to serving the whole child through an "integrated student support system" to "surround students with a community of support empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life," according to CIS.

IN THE LATEST TRACKING OF PERSONAL GOALS, 98% OF THE STUDENTS HAD IMPROVED ATTENDANCE, 75% EXHIBITED IMPROVED BEHAVIOR AND 88% HAD IMPROVED ACADEMICS.

The premise of providing services for the whole child requires whole-family services, so programs and partnerships were developed to

include the entire family and increase parent engagement. CIS staff are not counselors but can make referrals for mental health and professional counseling.

Speer said CISP does not hand out resources but tries to empower families

to access resources on their own, while establishing CISP staff as a "safe harbor."

Beyond the direct services to individual families, CISP initiated a school-wide support plan and offered learning opportunities for parents on topics like financial literacy and parenting. CISP has also paid for school assemblies focusing on bullying prevention. Special parent events are presented in coordination with the PTA. During school closures CISP staff provided parents and grandparents with assistance to help them meet the demands presented by remote learning.

Working from staff-developed student assessments, students choose a personal goal each year. Recording their baseline goals facilitates service delivery, allows tracking of student goals and provides feedback on progress. In the latest tracking of personal goals, 98% of the students had improved attendance, 75% exhibited improved behavior and 88% had improved academics.

"What is so cool (is) when you think about all the change over time from the

earliest days to now," Shultz said. "It's because of our people and the social capital. It really is a lot of people teaming together with similar values to make it happen. It's just the biggest win."

Pre-pandemic, as many as 130 volunteers provided individual academic support; now there are around 50. This is a result of the demands for space to comply with COVID-19 protocol requirements for social distancing. With schools open and indications that some restrictions may be lifted, volunteers will again be in demand, Speer said.

Although the grant is a huge benefit, CISP will continue fundraising to meet its five-year financial goals. "I just want to say, we could not have achieved this level of recognition nor the donation without the support of all the volunteers, donors and partners," Speer said. "It is definitely a game changer for us."

Speer echoed a statement by CIS-National President Rey Saldaña, who said on receipt of the gift, "We passed a test we didn't know we were taking."

Shultz said, "We didn't just pass, we got an A."

For more information, go to www.peninsula.ciswa.org. ■

From left to right, CISP Executive Director Colleen Speer, Volunteer and Communications Director Myka Cranford, and Program Director Laurel Shultz. *Tina McKail, KP News*





Eruç shared his boat with a red-footed booby for a few days in December. *Erden Eruç*

KP Man Rowing Across the Pacific Now Aims for Singapore

His effort to become the first person to row from the U.S. to Asia suffered a setback in February.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Solo circumnavigator Erden Eruç, 60, of Wauna, made landfall on Guam Feb. 12 after 208 days rowing from California by way of Oahu on his second human-powered trip around the world. He has rowed 6,212 miles since launching from Crescent City, Calif., last June and stopping for repairs in Hawaii in September.

“I was tempted to aim for the south coast of Rota Island on Wednesday night (Feb. 9) to drop anchor and have a good long sleep,” he wrote in his blog. “I slept a total of five hours in one-hour incre-

ments that night, then only one hour and 15 minutes during the night before arrival. The afternoon winds on Friday (Feb. 11) were gradually increasing (to 20 knots) as I descended down the northwest coast of Guam. It was essential that I fight to remain on course.”

Eruç was approximately 3,091 miles west of Waikiki Jan. 26, rowing toward Hong Kong, when he made the decision to head for Guam, 480 miles to his southwest.

Contrary winds, including an unpredictable front generated by the Tonga volcanic eruption Jan. 14, pushed Eruç too far off course to reach the Luzon Strait between the Philippines and Taiwan for him to continue to Hong Kong. Doing so would

have made him the first solo rower to make it from mainland North America to mainland Asia as he continues his second human-powered circumnavigation.

Eruç spent 80 days rowing from Crescent City, Calif. in June to Waikiki in September, where he stopped for repairs, and another 128 days rowing from Waikiki to Guam. That made 1,053 days rowing solo in his career, just one of his 15 world records.

“This crossing is the first step on my way to Mount Everest,” he said in an interview

by satellite phone from his rowboat Dec. 7 livestreamed by The Explorers Club, one of his sponsors. “This is part of my six summits project; so far, I have climbed three, what remains are Everest, Elbrus and Aconcagua.”

After reaching Singapore, Eruç plans to bicycle to and summit Everest in the fall of 2022, then bike west across central Asia around the top of the Caspian Sea to Georgia to climb Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe. From there he will pedal south to Turkey, his homeland, and west across Europe to rejoin his rowboat in Portugal. He will then row to Brazil and bike southwest across the continent to Argentina and summit Aconcagua, the tallest mountain in South America, then bike and kayak north back to Crescent City, completing his second human-powered

circumnavigation after climbing the last of the highest mountains on six continents, a goal he set with his first circumnavigation in 2012.

Eruç made his first circumnavigation in 2012 after five years and 41,153 miles. He became the first person to row across three oceans; the first to row from Australia to Africa; the first to cross any ocean from the southern to northern hemisphere; and he has rowed the longest distance across the Atlantic.

His self-righting rowboat is 25 feet long and weighs 1,500 pounds empty; he usually rows at a speed of about 2 knots. There is a small cabin with one bunk and storage under the rowing station for 26 gallons of water and 150 pounds of dehydrated food. Other than satellite communication, he is alone on the ocean. There are no support vessels, but he has a ground team that creates weather and current models and arranges logistics.

Eruç has faced tougher than expected conditions on this expedition. He struggled for weeks to escape northwest winds pinning him to the coast of California in June and July, then lost three weeks stopping in Waikiki in September to repair his solar-powered electronics and desalinator.

“The water-maker, the desalination unit, is a critical piece of equipment,” he said. “It needs to keep working for me to make a safe crossing. I have a handheld spare as well, but I’d rather be rowing than pumping. It can make about 6 or 8 liters of water a day, one drop at a time, which is pretty much what I need. I use that to rehydrate my food, for drinking, and to rinse salt from me and my clothes. Salt is a very irritating substance and basically cooks the skin if it’s not regularly rinsed off.”

After relaunching from Hawaii Oct. 7, Eruç rowed 6,212 miles over 208 days from California to Guam. *Around-n-Over*

Unable to reach Hong Kong, the new route extends from Guam southwest around Borneo, then north to Singapore, 3,200 miles away. *Around-n-Over*

is misplaced further south. These are difficult problems.”

Eruç is an ambassador of Ocean Recovery Alliance, a nongovernmental organization based in Hong Kong fighting plastic pollution. As he rows, he is producing educational content about the environment, climate change and survival at sea that he transmits to classrooms around the world. His own nonprofit, *Around-n-Over*, has already donated over \$100,000 to rural schools in his homeland, Turkey.

“*Around-n-Over* is trying to reach classrooms to inspire kids to take care of Mother Earth,” he said.

Eruç relaunched Feb. 21 to continue his journey, rerouting south of the Philippines and west around Borneo to land in Singapore, on the southeast Asian mainland, a route of 3,200 miles.

For more information, go to www.erdeneruc.com/tracking. ■

Eruç capsized in a storm Dec. 3 while strapped to his bunk.

“The boat rights itself quite readily as long as the cabin is not flooded,” he said. “The wave had to be five feet or six feet higher than the side of the rowboat. It just came rushing in, just shoved in on the port side and as it went over it snapped the lines I had used to tie two spare oars.”

The Jan. 15 volcanic eruption in Tonga, 3,600 miles away from Eruç, created its own weather system of strong southeast winds that further complicated his course.

“This was an interesting year and in fact I’m still suffering from it right now,” he said. “I have long fetch swells coming

in from the east-northeast and that’s the result of a high pressure system that left Siberia-Mongolia and extended very far east, creating a lot of strong winds, and is also due to the jet stream that



Unable to reach Hong Kong, the new route extends from Guam southwest around Borneo, then north to Singapore, 3,200 miles away. *Around-n-Over*





Eruç wades ashore at Apra Harbor Feb. 12. *Guam Sports Network*

Erden Eruç: In His Own Words
From a Dec. 7, 2021, satellite phone interview from his rowboat, hosted by The Explorers Club. Edited for length and clarity.

All told, I've spent about three years in this rowboat.

This morning, I am at a position 80 miles south of Wake Island (bound for Hong Kong). Ever since the storm that knocked my rowboat down in the early hours of Dec. 3, the winds remained at 20 plus knots and the sea state is 12 to 14 feet.

I was in the cabin the night of the storm just a few days ago. The wind was blowing hard from the southeast with swells from the northeast. The wind started changing directions to east-southeast, which meant the boat turned with the wind but was broadside to the waves. One of them crashed into the rowboat, caused some damage, cost me two spare oars. The boat went over about 150 degrees. Everything got rearranged in the cabin.

I was tied to the mattress on purpose to make sure I kept the center of mass low. The worst thing that could happen would be that I am thrown onto the ceiling on an upturned vessel; that shifting of ballast means the boat would never right itself. I basically had to stay tied down until the morning before I could do anything else.

I have not rowed since two days prior to the storm, remaining in the cabin on starboard tack. My mileage remained above 30 miles per day.

The tropical heat and humidity have made my time in the cabin miserable. Yesterday morning I woke up past midnight soaked in my own sweat.

Fortunately, the winds were finally down to 19 knots yesterday and I took care of washing. My water maker is working well unattended, unlike before Waikiki. I can remain protected from salt spray waiting over an hour while my water jugs fill with a steady stream of fresh water drips, then take care of the washing.

I don't have a support vessel; they would get bored out of their minds as I move at a walking pace. The idea is to make these crossings unsupported, without help from

other vessels taking or giving things, other than information really.

I see a lot of sooty terns; they are very active everywhere. I see frigate birds quite far out. They soar high and look out for any activity and get quite excited and noisy when they spot any action on the water. The action they are looking for is a dorado or tuna chasing flying fish. As a flying fish is being chased it breaks the surface and when it's flying the birds get it.

Mostly whitetip sharks have come to visit. They are a smaller variety, six feet, maybe seven. They stay looking for smaller fish in the shade of the boat.

My main staple is freeze-dried foods. I have 290 watts of (solar-powered) battery capacity to make water using a desalinator and a handheld camping stove to boil water to reconstitute the food. I have dried fruits and nuts and raisins, and a once-a-day vitamin pill.

If a flying fish winds up on my deck, I may add it to my breakfast; the boiling water for my scrambled eggs is hot enough to cook through that small fish. That's about the extent of my fish diet. Cooking is a long, laborious process and in these conditions

— 12-foot waves in 10 second periods — right now as I'm talking to you, I'm getting slammed

"THE BOAT WENT OVER ABOUT 150 DEGREES. EVERYTHING GOT REARRANGED IN THE CABIN."

by waves. It's just not conducive to life on a small rowboat.

I have a four-person offshore life raft and an EPIRB (distress beacon) to call for rescue, so I am set up for that kind of emergency.

I don't get seasick anymore. My lizard brain has learned the behavior and movement of this vessel. I do get sea legs when I get to land and that lasts for 36 hours or so, especially when I'm bending down tying my shoes or something. I did get seasick early on when I started with these rowboats, that was back in 2005, but I haven't since. ■

STATUS AND OCEAN ROWING RECORDS
 as of Feb 12, 2022

- Day: **208** — Apra Harbor, Guam
- Odometer from Crescent City to Waikiki: **2,646 miles**
- Odometer since Waikiki: **3,566 miles**
- Overall career total about **25,492 miles** *Ralph Tuijn of the Netherlands leads with 35,635 miles*
- Solo career total: **1,053 days**
- Overall career total: **1,137 days**

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ANOTHER LAST WORD



Their Time

An old pal of mine asked me to do him a favor a couple years ago and come talk to a freshman composition class at the university where he was a dean. It would really help him out; his department had this new thing about getting local experts to visit classes to “enrich the learning environment” or some such.

I said I only fit half the job description. “Oh, come on,” he said. “Community journalism and all that. It’ll be fun.”

I reported to the classroom at the appointed hour and introduced myself to the professor. She was an extremely fashionable woman at least 30 years younger than me and 30 times smarter. She informed me at once that while my presence may be an administrative mandate, she considered it a waste of 20 of her 90-minute class time.

“At 20 minutes you’re done, right?”

“Unless there are questions.”

She smirked.

I learned too late this was no ordinary freshman comp. class but an honors literature seminar for about two dozen topflight students from all walks of life, most of whom had earned full or nearly full ride scholarships.

By way of introducing me, the professor said there would be a delay before their usual discussion and sat down at her desk in front of the class.

I stated my name, my job and my mission to speak to them about the role of community newspapers in journalism. About three minutes in, a hand went up.

“Since print is dead, what is the point of killing trees to produce something nobody reads?”

“Why is your publication relevant when things change so fast?”

“How is your business model even sustainable?”

It was a much more interesting morning than I was prepared for, but after exactly 20 minutes the professor stood up to thank me and there was polite applause. I asked her if I might stay to observe, and she waved me toward the back of the room.

The class had just read “Things Fall Apart” by Chinua Achebe, a 1958 novel set in precolonial Nigeria that explores the effects of strict gender roles in a traditional, male-dominated society.

“Men in this story use the word ‘woman,’ or something worse, to insult other men. What does that say to the women around

them? How does a decent person respond to that toxic masculinity?” asked the professor.

Every hand in the room shot up, except mine.

“Define ‘decent,’” someone said.

“You define it,” she answered. “In the novel’s world.”

“Define ‘woman,’” said someone else.

The students engaged each other and the professor leaned back against her desk to referee.

“You think that ...,” someone started.

“Uh-uh,” interrupted the professor, shooting them a glance

The person stopped, then started again.

“It sounds like you’re saying...,” and went on from there.

I could see this class wasn’t so much learning about books or even talking about books. It was about learning how to talk, whatever the issue or provocation.

One girl said, “As a transgender woman, I have to say I see the same misogyny from the book right here in this very room.”

A young jock seated in front of me turned to her and asked, “How can you say that?”

“Do you mean, how can I say that or how can someone like me say that?”

“What are you accusing me of?”

“Uh-uh,” the professor said.

“OK,” the jock sighed. “How am I supposed to react to you people?”

“I don’t represent anyone but myself,” the girl said. “I can only care what someone like you thinks about someone like me as a person, and I can’t really afford to even care about that.”

Another student piped up asking about the distinction between fear and prejudice in the novel, and I raised my hand. The discussion raged on while, still leaning motionless against her desk, the professor slowly slid her eyes over to mine and held them until I put my hand down.

When the bell went off, the professor assigned a 500-word essay on this discussion due the next day, then turned her back on the class to sit at her desk.

The jock in front of me launched out of his seat and made straight for the girl he’d argued with. I stood up and followed. The kid was 40 years younger and 100 pounds heavier than me. I thought maybe I could grab his ankles and hope for the best.

“You and I are never going to see eye-to-eye,” he said to her. “But I really respect what you had to say.” He extended his hand and she gracefully accepted and shook it.

Meanwhile another girl slid up and planted a sloppy kiss on her cheek and said, “Let’s do lunch.” Then she looked at the jock. “Come with?”

“Sure,” he said.

“I’m going,” said another kid. “Me too,” said another. By then the rest of the class had drifted over, and we all headed out to lunch together.

“Mr. Olinger,” the professor said. I reported to her desk at the front of the room. She stood up and leaned toward me in a surprisingly warm manner.

“It’s their time,” she said.

Ted Olinger is an award-winning journalist. He lives in Vaughn.

Krisa Bruemmer

IRREVERENT MOM



Bedtime Stalling

Every night Violet’s dad reads “Go, Dog, Go!” at bedtime. Over time the story has grown, nearly doubling in length with the addition of words and lines that Violet has come up with and then memorized along with the printed text, building up her arsenal of tools and tricks intended to stretch out the nighttime routine.

In her 6.3 years of life, Violet has added lots of new words to our household lexicon; first through toddler mispronunciations that stuck, and more recently through silliness and inside jokes. Her longest standing nonsense word is “be-yo,” which Violet added to “Go, Dog, Go!” one night while her dad was at Costco. I was getting her to bed late and hoping to tidy the kitchen before he returned with a truckload of groceries, so I was trying to rush her to sleep.

Not a chance, Mom.

In my hurry, when the dogs “Go by boat,” I blurted out “Go by be-yo” and Violet squealed, dissolving into a fit of giggles so intense I had a hard time snapping her out of it. Maybe I was just too tired to function at the end of that long day or maybe I was reading so fast the word jumped out of my mouth wrong. But Violet thought it was hilarious that I, a grown-up who reads books as big as bricks, had messed up.

Ever since, she’s insisted the dogs go by “be-yo” rather than by boat. At the end, they arrive at a treetop dog party where recitation of every detail in the illustration is required, including “be-yo,” of course. “There’s presents and cakes and frosting and candles and fireworks and be-yo and they can all go there!”

After bedtime books comes “Mama Hug.” That’s when the big guns come out, Violet’s powerhouse stall tactics, like detailed reports of her day at kindergarten and questions too deep for her small age. On the last school night before Christmas break, we peered out her fingerprint-covered window and wished on stars.

“What’s your wish tonight?” I asked, expecting to hear about the golden stuffed dog she’d requested from Santa, a visit from the neighbor cat she calls Bella, or waffles with extra syrup for breakfast.

“My wish is for my school to always be safe.” A lump formed in my throat, so real it made me cough.

“Your school is safe,” I said.

Violet stared into my eyes and said nothing, her silence eerie for a kid who never stops talking.

Only hours prior, her Peninsula School District had sent out a safety notice about a trending TikTok post, a viral video about a threat to school safety the following day “for every school in the USA, even elementary.”

I’d been glued to my phone all evening. I don’t use TikTok and Violet is my only child, so parenting a kid in school is new to me. Processing that message felt like trying to decode a puzzle designed as a torture device.

“Your school is safe,” I repeated, believing the words while feeling a piece of a lie stick in my throat. Photos of the four students killed at Oxford High two weeks earlier were still flooding into everyone’s phones, our TVs, our endless screens.

“Why is that your wish tonight?” I asked Violet, trying to sound calm.

“I had a dream that evil wizards were trying to destroy my school but it was actually real and me and my friends have to stop them.”

For a moment, her bedtime wish had felt like a psychic connection, or covert information gleaned on the playground in whispers from kids whose parents watch TV news. More likely it was the result of watching animated kids save the world, stories where villains get destroyed or turn nice, where everyone who is good gets a happy ending.

I reminded Violet cartoons aren’t real and reassured her that school is a safe place to learn and have fun, to be a good friend. She smiled, nodded, and asked for another hug.

If it was a stall tactic, she got me.

Ten minutes later, I closed her bedroom door and pulled out my phone. A quick internet search pulled up a cacophony of reassurances from school districts and police departments across the nation that there was no credible threat. But the internet is also full of photos of children who were murdered at school, even elementary.

It feels impossible to assess risk these days. The morning after Violet’s unsettling bedtime wish, I woke up feeling anxious and she woke up saying she felt too tired to go to school.

“Can I have waffles for breakfast?” she asked. “Extra syrup, please!”

I tried to read her face, to figure out whether she was truly exhausted or trying to scheme her way into a day of TV and sugary treats, or whether I was looking for any excuse to keep her home.

“I’m tired and my throat’s scratchy.”

Currently, Violet’s school district asks students experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19, including a sore throat, to stay home.

I was relieved.

Krisa Bruemmer is an award-winning writer. She lives in Vaughn.

Grace Nesbit FINDING GRACE



Are the Kids All Right?

This school year has been something different. Back in classrooms, but with masks? And the shock of returning as a junior at Peninsula High School after only one in-person semester freshman year. It’s been surreal, and frankly I don’t think this is what anybody expected.

To figure out what other people were feeling after our first semester back, I asked some classmates and one of my teachers how things were going.

My Advanced Placement literature teacher Lynda Richards has four classes of English 9, with the freshmen, and one class of AP lit full of mostly juniors and some seniors. When I asked her how students seem to be handling things this year, she said she has noticed that freshmen in particular seem to not be talking to each other or in class, as much as in previous years. She also said students are still acting as if they’re in front of a computer, avoiding questions and not participating in discussions.

From the teachers’ perspective, even teaching methods have changed. Schoology, an online platform where teachers create an almost Facebook-like page, is now a standard tool where updates, assignments, resources and grades can be posted. Schoology has been monumental when a student needs to do school from home in case of exposure or a positive Covid test, but it has also eliminated the need to interact in person.

Keep in mind that when Covid first hit, our current freshmen were just halfway through middle school.

The biggest question freshmen face is: “How is high school?” James McCourt, a freshman at PHS has been having a good year filled with both fun and hard work. It has provided an opportunity for growth and

“time to really check on myself and what I need to improve on to succeed,” he said.

For James, “High school has been everything in one: emotional, fun, stressful, heart-racing. And I especially appreciate it because of being home for a year plus. And finally being able to socialize and make great memories with my friends in just my first semester alone.”

This new world doesn’t only affect freshmen.

Juniors like me were in our first semester of high school when Covid hit. We are now graduating in a year-and-a-half.

“This year has been a roller coaster,” my classmate Breanna Koch said. “It was tough going back into in-person school and having a routine again. Covid has made things very difficult, so I imagine I’m not the only one struggling.”

The very premise of routine is critical, for all ages. When that structure is instantly obliterated, a state of shock is induced.

“Hanging out with friends has made life easier though, being able to laugh with others through the hard times really helps,” she said.

But, unfortunately, with time comes age. As juniors the pressure for college and good grades is on. That brings more responsibility and a bigger workload.

“It’s stressful at times because people expect you to be a leader,” Breanna said. “It’s definitely strange having the majority of my high school experience online because there wasn’t a whole lot to experience. It all just felt like a blur; the days just mashed together.”

On top of routines being obliterated, like most teens, I developed a new routine while doing online school: stay in bed, and only get up when you need something.

Nothing about the present world that we’re living in feels normal to us teenagers. But perhaps it might become our new normal, and maybe at this point it should be. The events of the past couple years will forever be part of us one way or another. In terms of the complicated life of an American teenager, this hasn’t been the easiest situation to “thrive” in.

People always tell me that high school will be our prime years. But I don’t buy the hype. Honestly, high school is toxic and Covid has made it even worse. Instead of the normal pressure of popularity and grades, Covid has brought outsiders and their politics into our halls. Mask, no mask, vax or no, regardless of regulations, read this, don’t read that. The politics of adulthood is what thrives in high school now.

Grace Nesbit is in her junior year at Peninsula High School.

Jack Dunne FROM THE CITIOT DESK



Sittin’ on Top of the World

As some of you may recall from earlier columns, we migrated north a few years ago and continue to delight in the many ways our new home enriches us. Here I’d like to make another observation. I suppose it’s obvious to most of you, but I hope you can see the wonder with a little digging.

If you live down south, you see the sun a lot. Like, every day, for about 12 hours. Here we have actual weather that changes, and on top of that we get seasons. Of course, we knew about the rain. In fact part of our choice moving here was that it made sense to us to go where the water is. What we didn’t really appreciate was how much things change throughout the year. Wheeling around the sun is hard to ignore up here.

When you move north you slide under the sky, toward the pole, toward the axis of rotation. We spin on that axis every day, but more to my point, the tilted axis gives us these seasonal long days and long nights. And “day” becomes a relative term. These “days” the sun barely sneaks over the ridge and the light trickles through the trees, which somehow suck all the heat out of it.

Looking uphill into the feeble light, my grass casts shadows. Lawns are flat where I come from; since they don’t have much water, people often replace them with sheets of furry green plastic and think they haven’t lost much. Here they have depth, a richness that feels alive but soft and sleepy in the winter. And the nights are so long.

I love it. Being lazy and pretty retired, I can justify a lot of sitting, which is nice. Dark and wet and cold out? Maybe I’ll read, maybe have a snack.

And then comes summer. The sun pours down bright and hot, and you think that’s got to be enough for today, and it’s not. When it finally sets, then comes hours more of daylight. So relentless.

We look forward to every season up here.

When the downy blanket recedes and the sky is clear, it’s easy to see where we fit in all this spinning. The Earth is rolling us away from the sunset, then rolling us back into the dawn. The axis points us at the summer sun, and later into the cold

deep space of winter. Especially when the sun and the moon and the stars all chase each other toward the western horizon, I try to fit my own motion into the broader context of space.

Maybe take this mental ride with me. We know the orbit of Mars around the sun is outside that of Earth’s. So how is it that I can watch the sunset, and sometimes see Mars and the sun in the same direction? It must be that Mars is on the far side of the sun reflecting light back at me. So far away.

I sometimes think about this stuff the way I saw it in third grade, Earth conveniently oriented with us at the top orbiting with the other planets on a level disc. The deep night sky can transport me into the larger picture, everything in motion, where up and west and time all stretch into a landscape I can barely imagine. With a little vertigo, I grip my deck chair, trying not to fall up.

It’s all about perspective. If you keep your eyes down and your thoughts immediate, normal life can be simple and sweet. But I think looking up helps me keep my perspective.

These days, most people I see looking down are looking at their phone. Not sure how it’s going for you, but the world I see in my phone is often unpleasant, occasionally nasty, and sometimes freakin’ horrible. How many times does your phone show you something the only reasonable reaction to is: “How can people be so stupid?”

Of course, outrage is what makes our phones most satisfied, and apparently our phones must be satisfied, like baby chicks. I’m tired of filling their gaping maw with my clicks and my time. We told our kids not to waste too much time with video games. How did that work out for you? It’s especially frustrating since everyone I actually meet is so nice. If we just look up a little, like to meet a neighbor eye-to-eye, we might find the world is still kind and helpful and smart.

I think our sky can save us from our phones. My exercise program is to look “up” to the sky for at least a few minutes every day, and try to picture how I’m spinning through it. Try it. It’s hard to get it all in your head. I gave up on sit-ups a long time ago, but I’m sticking with my big perspective workout. I still look at my phone too much, but it comforts me to remember how small it is.

Jack Dunne lives gratefully in Lakebay.

See José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE online at keypennews.org/stories/imbolc,5239

Kamryn Minch

GUEST COLUMNIST



Someone Ought to Do Something

On the last Saturday of January, before the sun peeked over the mountains, I dragged myself out of bed to join my mom on her crusade to pick up litter. Not just any litter either, it was the *crème de la crème* of all trash taking up real estate along the Wauna curves.

I lost a little sleep in anticipation of walking along the notoriously dangerous road, primarily because I was trying to come up with a good excuse for not going. But then I thought about how often I drive on SR-302 and my usual apathetic acknowledgment of the trash sparkling in the ditches. On my more conscientious days I go so far as thinking “someone ought to do something about that.”

The number of times I’ve said that and variations of it to myself is impossible to calculate. Someone ought to clean this. Someone should take care of that. And an all-time classic: The state needs to figure out what to do here.

Judging by the many honks and cheers of “thank you!” from passers-by that day, many people have been thinking the same thing.

In between the moments of praise and the dumping of stale beer from crumpled cans onto my shoes, I couldn’t help but feel a little resentful. Like, how much litter would have to build up before all our adoring fans reached their breaking point and set out with trash bags themselves? But the self-righteous inner dialogue turned into one of self-reflection as I remembered that I had to be asked to do the pick-up myself; so, really, how far off on the horizon was my own breaking point?

The sentiment of wanting to make the Key a better, more beautiful place, is omnipresent, but the level of desire for making it happen is fleeting. I get it, though. Life is busy and most people aren’t constantly thinking about whether the character of our locality is attractive or not. And if they do, it probably becomes overwhelming because there’s obviously so much that needs to be done.

It also doesn’t help that public spaces live at the intersection of “who’s in charge?” and “not my problem.” Care of easements falls on everyone and no one. But what if we were to look at these areas as subject to the democratic process? Then it would be safe to assume that the sides of our roads look exactly how most of our community wants them to look – full of garbage. The

folks who have utilized the ditches as their own dumpster, those are the people who we have let take over our public spaces.

Fortunately, there are members of the community who decided that enough is enough and have taken it upon themselves to organize clean-ups and improvement projects. It takes people with real grit to do the work of arranging these sorts of efforts, primarily because it involves making phone calls, asking questions, possibly getting rejected, and also doing the work. Things that most of us aren’t willing to do without compensation.

Very rarely, though, is an idea for a small public improvement project rejected by the state, county, or even private property owners (so long as most of the expenses don’t fall on them). If you want to clean up your road, litter crews are supplied with signs, vests, bags and pick-up by the county. If there’s an ugly median at a busy intersection that needs some flowers, the Department of Transportation is happy to work with you on the improvement. All it takes is having an idea and making a plan.

I don’t want to pretend I’m some community savior. I have not personally organized any missions to improve upon our public spaces and I know myself well enough to admit that I am someone who must be summoned for such tasks. That being said, I want to be better about getting involved when I see an opportunity. If not to curb my generational guilt, then to honor anyone who has taken an initiative that most never will.

I believe we’re generally a community of creative and caring people and our public spaces should reflect that. Rewiring our brains to see the roadsides and other unkempt easements as “ours” is going to take time but starting small is better than not starting at all. So, whenever we catch ourselves thinking “someone ought to...,” remember that we are indeed that someone.

Kamryn Minch lives near Minter Creek.

Letters to the Editor

KPFD PROPERTY PURCHASE “BOONDOGGLE”

When the KP Fire District board spent taxpayer money to buy the O’Callahan’s restaurant property, it convinced me to never again vote in favor of one of their levies. The board bought the property with the idea that they could make some money on leasing it while planning to build a new headquarters. But as previous tenants of the property would tell you, it needs many thousands of dollars in repairs before it can be licensed by Pierce County.

Then the district will need to pay to hire a company to find a new tenant and manage

the property. If it was not financially feasible to keep running the restaurant as it was, it will likely be impossible to find a business that can pay off the repair debt, pay the management company, and still make a profit. The board made a terrible decision, and I am surmising that Hal Wolverton’s sudden suspension was because he spoke out against this boondoggle. (See “KPFD Rejects ILA ...” Jan. 2022)

With all sincerity, I ask Commissioner Moffett, board president, to please tender his resignation so that the fire district can find new leadership. The current headquarters in Key Center is adequate. Speaking as a former KP Parks commissioner, I can tell you that the parks district would love to have such a facility. I remain unconvinced that spending our money to build a new headquarters is necessary, and I refuse to vote “yes” on another levy until we have new leadership committed to spending tax money more wisely.

John Pat Kelly, Wauna

SAY NO TO GEODUCK ON BURLEY LAGOON

I would like to present a business case against expanding shellfish farming, specifically geoducks, in Burley Lagoon.

Based on my six years of living on the lagoon, an approval for a proposed 25-acre expansion for Taylor Shellfish Farms makes no sense. In my experience, the company has been unresponsive to a number of calls and emails. Plastics are found throughout the lagoon. Excessive noise is produced harvesting at low tide. Lights flash into my home. There is a failure to pick up debris according to the schedule of the Army Corp of Engineers Lease, and safety concerns are ignored. I have offered my boat and time to show them the violations.

Residents of Burley Lagoon are now stakeholders because we have to be actively involved due to Taylor’s operational shortcomings. Any business or franchise that cannot execute their own operational guidelines included in the lease agreement should not be allowed to change or expand operations.

Geoduck farming is a major undertaking with noisy, heavy equipment. If you haven’t been to Burley Lagoon or visited one of our neighbors, the lagoon has high banks and sound amplifies over two miles away. The end equation for Burley residents are increased property taxes for residents, Taylor Shellfish profits, and a majority of the product going to Asia.

Taylor has had many chances to be a good neighbor but the same issues are repeated year after year. Expanding Taylor’s operations on Burley Lagoon will only cause more operation shortfalls and unhappy stakeholders.

Carl Marlow, Gig Harbor

KP NEWS FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORTING

I want to thank KP News for Ted Olinger’s two insightful articles about the Key Peninsula Fire Department as they were real eye-openers for me (Jan. and Feb. 2022). It is so easy to be critical; however, it was the recent sale of prime retail land in Key Center that caught me completely by surprise. Is this the direction the community really wants and needs? How much planning effort was expended prior to the sale and were other options even considered including retail expansion? I won’t reiterate other valid concerns that Chuck Odegaard stated in his letter to the editor last month.

It appears the fire department doesn’t even have a definitive plan for the property.

This is a helpless feeling, but I will be expressing my displeasure the next time KPFD puts forth a levy to increase my property taxes; especially if it is for funds needed to support and maintain a larger facility.

Lynne C. Seavy, Longbranch

FROM A FORMER KP FIRE COMMISSIONER

I see nothing has changed at the board of fire commissioners. Their attitude seems to be the same as it was way back when I was on the board. We know best, and the people will always follow us because we do!

Buying land in the heart of Key Center for two and three times its value?

First, I do not believe a new administrative building-fire station in the very high-priced center of town is necessary. Second, if you look back at the long-range planning of years gone by, you will find the new administrative office was planned to be added onto the existing Wauna station, since it is on the main road leading on and off the peninsula. The idea was that it was too expensive to buy land for an office in Key Center and it would better serve all residents from that location.

Third, look how this purchase was financed. I will bet in the near future there will be a ballot item to approve a tax increase to pay for this “private bond” issued by the commissioners.

Fourth, we used to be able to handle future planning by a committee of residents at very little if any cost. Now we need to hire a high-priced consulting firm?

Remember how your commissioners voted in the next election and think before you OK any new taxes. Ask why a chief was placed on administrative leave in executive session. Last time that happened we never did find the reason. I know for a fact that executive sessions are misused for things they want to keep private.

Allen A. Yanity, Lakebay



Willow Mara Meyer

Key Peninsula native Willow Meyer died unexpectedly in her Tacoma home Jan. 21 of natural causes. She was 42 years old.

Willow was born in the family home on Glen Cove in the summer of 1979. She attended and graduated from Minter Creek Elementary, KP Middle and Peninsula High schools. She worked at Cost Less Pharmacy and volunteered at Northwest Harvest through high school before moving on to REI for many years, where she was promoted to the finance division. She maintained her volunteer commitment even as she developed a passion for the outdoors and traveled whenever she could, organizing friends and family for hiking and camping adventures from Quinault to Spokane to her grandparents' home in San Carlos, Mexico. She was preparing for a two-month trip to Europe when she died.

Willow was the center of so many lives. She was bright and funny, full of smiles and laughter, an exemplary granddaughter, daughter, sister, cousin, aunt, best friend and confidant. She brought out the best in everyone.

She was preceded in death by her father, Robert Cramblet; brother, Justin Meyer; and grandparents William and Norma Meyer. Survivors include mother Tweed Meyer of Wauna; sister Tara Meyer of Tacoma; brother-in-law John Sigman; step-mother Judy Riggs; her aunts Robin, Shelly, Shawn, Kim and Debbie; nieces Elvis and Sailor; nephew Jackson; her numerous cousins: Nicole, Lisa, Jamie, Marie, Chelsea, Jenny, Steve, Nicholas, Rachael, Moriah, Sam; and her lovely dog Blue.

Willow will also be remembered by her many friends — childhood friends she grew up with, adult friends she met as she got older, friends she made at work, friends she met on her many adventures and friends she made while passing through others' lives.

Willow will stay in our hearts forever. In her passing, she is still working her magic, bringing her friends and family together to support each other during this time.



The Angel Guild has been supporting the community since 1979. *Tina McKail, KP News*

How the Angel Guild Helps the Community

The Key Center nonprofit supports local schools, programs for the elderly and much more on the Key Peninsula.

CAROLYN WILEY, KP NEWS

The Angel Guild has had a positive impact on the lives of Key Peninsula residents for more than four decades, according to Carla Parkhurst, who has been coordinator at the thrift shop for 11 years.

The community benefits whether one is an Angel Guild thrift store shopper or someone who just has too much stuff, or a local nonprofit group requesting funding the Angel Guild has awarded in grants funded by its store.

Even operating on a three-day schedule under COVID-19 protocols, the store requires a minimum of 108 volunteer hours per week to keep it running efficiently, according to Parkhurst. They hope to eventually restore regular shopping hours.

Volunteer time is divided between two essential functions: the first is sorting and pricing donations, the second is staffing the store. An unseen block of volunteer hours is also amassed by those who take home games and sort through craft items

to prepare them for display. The attractive fabric packets and jars of color-sorted beads seen in the store do not arrive pre-sorted, Parkhurst said.

Angel Guild President Pat Kunzl said there are several things to consider when donating clean, gently-used items. Storage space is limited, so holiday items can't be held for the next year. "Call first, to

be sure that there is someone to receive your donation," she said. "Please don't leave donations out in the weather. It gets ruined."

Donors are encouraged to stop by the store to pick up a list of acceptable items and instructions, such as packing clothing in plastic bags and hard goods in boxes.

The shortage of storage space has a benefit for shoppers because it forces the sorters to be very fussy. They ensure nothing makes it into the store that is soiled, stained, torn, or in need of mending or buttons. Angels do not have the capacity to wash, iron or make repairs.

All items that end up in the store have been checked at least three times before getting to the shelves and racks.

Angels also keep an eye out for collectables that can be sold on eBay, and further maximize donor generosity by collecting Food Market receipts for cash donations.

Ann Larson and Toni Jacobson, both 20-plus-year volunteer angels, said it's

important for donors to consider the average age of volunteer personnel. "Most of us are between 60 and 80," Larson said. "If your grandma can't lift it, neither can these grannies."

While Jacobson was sorting through a huge, heavy bag, she said "Construction bags and body bags are too big. This one would hold three of us."

The Angel Guild thrift store is in the Key Center Corral at 9013 Key Peninsula Highway NW, open Thursday through Saturday. For more information, call 253-884-9333.

Editor's Note: The Angel Guild is a long-time underwriter of Key Peninsula News. ■

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Easter Egg Hunt for Kids!

Saturday, April 16, 2022 10 am to 11 am

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Saturday, April 30, 2022 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

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Spaces are filling up fast!

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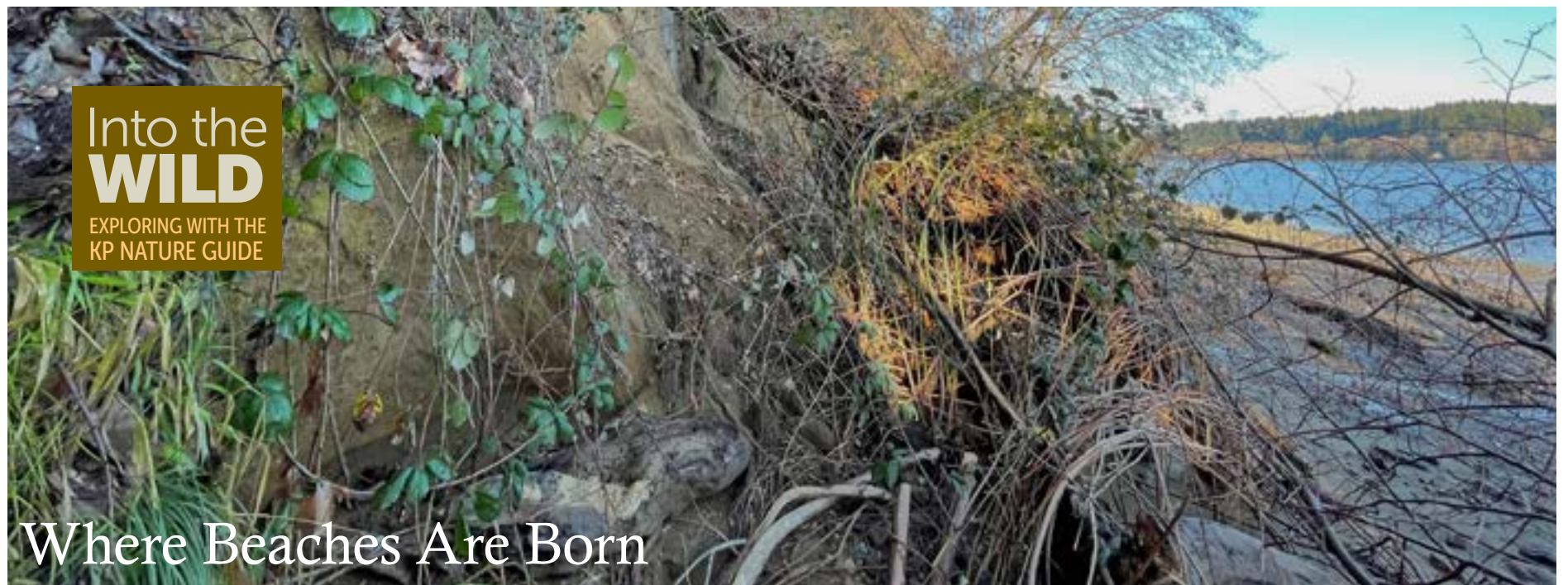
Makers Market

Vendor and Food Truck applications available!

WE'RE HIRING!

Seasonal Maintenance Worker

Applications may be downloaded from our website or picked up at the Volunteer Park office.



Chris Rurik, KP News

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Agates and oysters. A clear tide. Stories. I am south of Driftwood Annie's point, strolling Pitt Passage with two veteran beach walkers. The going is wonderfully slow.

"It changes so much, you know," says one of my companions. It is late winter and the rocks of the upper beach are wrinkled with long undulations that will disappear by spring. "Even just week to week, seems like. Or it's your perception."

Many of our beaches grow steeper in winter. Storms act as bulldozers. Our waves may not compare to ocean waves, but they are enough to send rocks scurrying; sand rises and falls through the seasons like the tide itself. We pass a row of abandoned pilings. Another beach walker, coming the other way, says that to him these pilings lean more every year.

Beaches are aikido masters. Everything on them is loose. By transferring the violent energy of waves into individual rocks that then jump, tumble, heap and fall, they prove that it is in fact possible to dissipate violence rather than pass it on to the next guy or magnify it through generations. But — and this is a big but — to achieve such a feat, you cannot remain unchanged.

As in aikido, you must realign yourself along the path of the incoming energy and contort yourself to direct it safely toward dissipation. I'm thinking of friends I have helped through trauma. It's not something you can do dispassionately. The trauma flows through you as you help them seek release; it transforms everything it touches.

Nature teaches that transformations need not be feared. If anything is to be feared, it is the thing that proclaims itself unchanging.

All around me is anatomy of the beach's latest contortions. It makes for unstable walking. Is it any surprise that anything solid here, piling or bluff, will eventually fall?

Farther down the beach we come to a terrain of crumbling bluffs. They are case studies in what geologists call punctuated equilibrium. Things stay the same for a long time, years or millennia, before change comes as fast as a punctuation mark. True for dinosaurs and true for these steep scarps of packed sand. Imbricated in their faces are layers of rock cobbles. We step around blocks of fallen sand into glistening alcoves to see treasures that have been borne and buried by long-lost glaciers and are now brought to light by waves. Above, trees lean like the hands of a hundred drunken clocks. Over decades, the bluff beneath them slumps with small landslides. Some trees sink into the beach, getting a new foliage of seaweed, while others hang on and manage to return their growth to vertical. On the elbow in one we spy a sapsucker.

This is where our beaches are born. Our geology is unique enough that research on its interactions with the sea has coined a new geological term: feeder bluff. So called because they feed Puget Sound's beaches with the rocks and sand they need to exist and perform their aikido, feeder bluffs are scattered from Neah Bay to Olympia. The Key Peninsula has more than most South Sound shorelines.

Up and down the peninsula are dozens of cells of sediment movement. Sediment in the form of sand and rock enters a beach from a feeder bluff. Waves push the sediment in punctuated pulses along shore until

it reaches a bend in the shoreline and settles. Look at a map and notice where sand spits appear. Imagine how sand moves.

A recent mapping project, available on the Department of Ecology website, shows the part in this process — feeder bluff, transport zone, deposition zone — played by every stretch of beach in Washington. For any beach you walk you can learn the source and destination of its sediment.

It's not an exaggeration to say that without feeder bluffs, the beaches we know would slowly vanish. Scientists estimate that 90% of Puget Sound's sediment comes from eroding bluffs and only 10% from rivers and streams. Rivers carry far more clay and silt than sand and rocks. Without our unique array of feeder bluffs, Puget Sound would probably be carpeted with thick and sticky muck rather than the rocks of every hue we know and love, especially in its convoluted southern reaches.

Scientists are documenting this now where bluffs have been armored with bulkheads to protect yards and homes from landslides. (As my old hydrology professor would have said: "That's not a landslide problem. That's a building problem. A building-a-house-where-a-landslide-will-happen problem.") Starved of sediment by bulkheads, beaches grow narrow and muddy. Waves come in more strongly and they are not dissipated but reflected by the bulkhead back into the water, where they cross threads with other waves and stir up a mess of ill energy.

Where I live the property owners worry about a sand spit that carries in its sediment layers of cook pits and canoe launches that go back centuries. Sea level creeps higher.

Large driftwood has become a rarity. Plans have been floated to anchor logs atop the sand spit to help it stand firm. I once shared their fear but now I'm not so worried. I don't see the spit as a static thing.

Maybe it comes from spending time with folks like my companions today. Beach walkers are a particular breed with a gaze that roves from individual rocks and bits of glass to cloud formations and wave patterns. Though they walk the same stretches of beach every week, they expect to find something new every time. They have been trained by subtle rearrangements, glinting oddities, the way distant influences appear within upheaval — the alignments left by passing traumas.

Beaches of loose rock can be buoyant. They can erode fear if you let them. Just south of my local sand spit is a quarter mile of mostly unarmored bluffs, and winter after winter as I have seen them crumble, my worries have been eased. As sea level rises, waves will lick those bluffs more and more often, providing that particular cell with larger and larger slides of sediment. Provided the bluffs are not armored, perhaps it will be enough to keep the spit's head above water.

At the farthest point on our walk, we come to the edge of a stunning natural amphitheater. The beach curves below a hundred vertical feet of sediment that has been falling in sheets and fans. The statewide mapping effort has a special term for such outsized bluffs: "feeder bluff exceptional." This is one of 15 on the Key Peninsula. It feels like a place where the world is being created. I think I might need to make a pilgrimage to each. ■

Therapy Dog Ginger and Stroke Survivor Scott Vande Zande

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

Nearly 20 years after suffering a debilitating stroke, Scott Vande Zande of Longbranch devotes his time to sharing his golden retriever Ginger, a Pet Partners therapy dog, with others. Each week they visit Swedish Hospital's Cherry Hill campus in Seattle and the Red Barn Youth Center's after-school program.

"She makes me happy each time she visits," sixth grader Kodie Henneman said. "She's really cute and amazing and awesome."

Pet Partners teams like Vande Zande and Ginger visit patients in recovery, seniors living with Alzheimer's, veterans with PTSD and others who benefit from animal-assisted therapy, activities and education.

Vande Zande has always loved dogs; growing up in Wisconsin he had a poodle. His past and present golden retrievers, Hollie, Katie and Ginger, all Pet Partners certified therapy dogs, have played important roles in his recovery while also helping others.

"I think the stroke has changed my thought on dogs, just watching them work, just watching what they do and how they can affect people," he said.

In November 2003, Vande Zande had surgery for an aneurysm at Swedish Cherry Hill. Two hours later, plaque traveled into his brain and he suffered a left-brain stroke resulting in memory loss, limited right-side mobility and aphasia, a condition that affects the ability to speak, write and understand both verbal and written language.

"All I said was 'yes, yes, yes' for days," Vande Zande said.

Shortly after returning home, a golden retriever puppy, Hollie, joined the family.

"Hollie was right there beside me all the time," he said. "It was just so special. I share that with other people that had strokes."

Vande Zande has a master's degree in engineering from the University of Wisconsin and was the production and engineering manager for Boeing's Fabrication Division at the time of his stroke.

"I was an engineering manager with 350 people reporting to me and I couldn't say a word," Vande Zande said. "I just wanted to get back to work and find a way to improve."

Aphasia impairs the ability to process language but does not affect intelligence. Stroke survivors are mentally alert but their ability to communicate may be disrupted.

Vande Zande's wife, Jan, took him for walks and asked, "Is that a mailbox? Is that a chimney? Or is that something else?" Having to answer these questions helped his recovery.

About two months after his stroke, Vande Zande returned to Boeing and was able to transfer to a job site with fewer people.

"Boeing was super," he said. "I had two great friends who were my managers and they understood it and they helped."

When he first returned to work, Vande Zande would misread emails. "I'm sure I frustrated people in my group," he said. "I felt very helpless."

"I had to go give talks at work. I wrote down what I wanted to say and I'd start going through it. I went through it so many times. I'd come to a place I wanted to change the word and I couldn't think of the word, couldn't think of the word," he said. "I did that over and over and over again and sooner or later I was able to think of the word."

Vande Zande said once he goes through that process of struggling and recalling the word, he remembers it going forward. It once took him three days to recall the word "lazaret," a space in a sailboat used for storage.

"EVERYBODY KNOWS GINGER. THEY SEE HER COMING AND IMMEDIATELY EVERYONE COMES AND PETS HER AND THEY SAY, 'THANK YOU.' "



Ginger brings the joy. *Tina McKail, KP News*



Scott and Ginger. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Vande Zande stayed at Boeing 12 more years, then retired in 2015.

"When I retired from Boeing, Hollie came to Cherry Hill with me to meet stroke survivors," he said. Therapy dogs can help relieve stress, improve mood, and provide comfort and distraction for patients and staff. "This was a very special time for us. We were helping other people."

Vande Zande and Hollie also visited Mary Bridge Children's Hospital. Then at age 10, Hollie broke her leg and sarcoma was discovered. In November 2017, about a year after they had started visiting stroke survivors together, Hollie passed away.

"Hollie was so special. She always amazed me," Vande Zande said.

In 2017, Hollie was honored by the American Heart Association as a Stroke Hero, one of only five winners in the western United States that year. Vande Zande said when Hollie won, it was the best day he can remember.

After losing Hollie, Vande Zande began taking Katie to visit stroke survivors. They joined the Swedish Patient and Family Advisory Team and began doing American Heart Association Stroke Walks together.

Eighty guests attended Katie's retirement party at Swedish Cherry Hill, including the CEO and Chief Nursing Officer, as well as Ginger.

"(Katie) was exceptional, she really was."

Vande Zande said. He has had to put down four dogs and he cries every time. "I miss all of them but I miss Katie a lot."

Ginger, who just turned 5, loves running and catching balls at the park, going out in Vande Zande's 1964 Clipper Craft boat "Golden Girl" and taking nightly walks at the Longbranch Marina. She visits Swedish with Vande Zande every week.

"Everybody knows Ginger," he said. "They see her coming and immediately everyone comes and pets her and they say 'thank you.'"

A chaplain at the hospital invited Ginger to visit a patient on comfort care who had asked to see her. "She'd trained many service dogs and they had all the pictures," Vande Zande said. "We put Ginger on the bed and I'm not even sure if she was awake but I think she knew Ginger was there."

"It's a special deal with me and (Ginger) and my dogs," Vande Zande said. "I think

they know it's their job, I really believe it."

Twenty years after his stroke, Vande

Zande enjoys photography, welding and glass blowing. He sometimes still struggles with spelling, reading the news, and fastening buttons with his right hand.

"If you look at my texting or emails, they're pretty bad. But you know what, I'm OK with it," he said. "I'm not going to complain about that." ■

"I THINK THEY KNOW IT'S THEIR JOB, I REALLY BELIEVE IT."

Groups Address Crime on the Key Peninsula

Law enforcement asks for help identifying repeat offenders.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Ongoing concerns about property crime and car thefts on the Key Peninsula came to a head in January when an alleged car thief was shot by a 70-year old SUV owner in Wauna. The incident, still under investigation, prompted two relative newcomers and a decades-old grassroots organization to take action. (See “KP Property Crime Update,” KP News, Jan. 2021.)

Matt Graham, who spent his teens on the Key Peninsula and recently moved to Gig Harbor, is a CPA and lawyer working as a tax consultant for large businesses. His father is the owner of the stolen SUV. Shortly after the incident — the alleged

should be brought to the jail.”

Jackson also encouraged the community to use the Crime Stoppers P3 Tips mobile app to report any information about local crime anonymously to the Sheriff’s Department.

“Now knowing that PCSD can put these serial offenders in jail, the next step is to help them do it,” Graham wrote.

Safe Streets, a Tacoma-based nonprofit, held a community forum Feb. 17 via Zoom with Pierce County Prosecutor Mary Robnett, Pierce County Councilman and Chair Derek Young, state Sen. Emily Randall, KP Fire Department Public Information Officer Anne Nesbit and Lakebay

Church Pastor Dan Whitmarsh. About 30 people attended. Young said that although the county has added positions

“NOW KNOWING THAT PCSD CAN PUT THESE SERIAL OFFENDERS IN JAIL, THE NEXT STEP IS TO HELP THEM DO IT.”

car thief has since been arrested on unrelated charges — Graham and his mother formed a Facebook group,

“KP Advocates for Law and Order.” They held a virtual meeting to get feedback from the community, share goals and ask for help. Although attendance was sparse, they posted a recording and Graham said hundreds have viewed it and offered feedback.

Graham said he thinks the decision to limit jail bookings during the pandemic is one of the main causes of the current increase in crime. Bookings were limited to Class A felonies, such as murder, high level assault, rape, DUIs and domestic violence.

Pierce County Sheriff’s Department Communications Director Darren Moss told KP News that the county jail had planned to include bookings for burglary and auto theft when the omicron surge hit but maintained the earlier policy instead. “We had up to 130 staff out due to illness or quarantine,” he said.

The Pierce County Jail can hold 1,700 inmates and employs about 300 staff. There were approximately 970 people in detention there at press time near the end of February.

Graham met with Chief of Corrections Patti Jackson on Feb. 17.

“One of the major revelations that came up on our call is that police officers in Pierce County actually do have the ability to bring persistent and prolific offenders to jail ... (h)owever, they must get permission to bring them in, which appears to be a complicated process,” Graham later reported in a Facebook post about the meetings. “They are working to remedy this communication gap and make clear to deputies that prolific offenders can and

to the Sheriff’s Department, they still have fewer staff than they did before the Great Recession of 2008. Of the positions that are funded, only 75% are filled. Those vacancies, he and Robnett said, are due to expected retirement, competition with other departments, and staff leaving the profession altogether.

Randall discussed recent police reform legislation and the planned changes. “It is challenging work to balance individual freedom and create a legal framework that allows our law enforcement to keep us safe,” she said.

Robnett said legislation needed to be updated permitting officers to temporarily detain people where they enter a chaotic situation when they are not able to discern perpetrator from victim.

Advice for preventing theft came from Nesbit and Safe Streets Neighborhood Organizing Program Manager RoxAnne Simon: ensure that property is well-lit, trim bushes, consider motion detectors and organize a neighborhood watch system.

Young said law enforcement is mostly a response to crime. “More than half of the people in the jail are suffering from a behavioral health disorder. Sixty percent suffered from some sort of traumatic childhood experience. Most of them live in poverty,” he said. “The more we can do early on in someone’s life to help redirect the better. Help support us in our efforts to reduce homelessness and deal with behavioral health issues.”

Tips on local crimes can be made anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS or online at www.p3tips.com/tipform. ■

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VAUGHN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 9:00 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:03 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 9:04 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 9:06 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:09 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:12 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 9:15 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 9:19 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:25 Purdy Park & Ride

VAUGHN WEDNESDAY MORNING

- 10:00 Vaughn Elementary School
- 10:03 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 10:04 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 10:06 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 10:09 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 10:12 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 10:15 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 10:19 Lake Kathryn Village
- 10:25 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 9:00 Evergreen Elementary School
- 9:05 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:07 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 9:13 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 9:14 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 9:20 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 9:22 Food Market in Key Center
- 9:25 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 9:33 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:40 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN WEDNESDAY MORNING

- 10:00 Evergreen Elementary School
- 10:05 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 10:07 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 10:13 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 10:14 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 10:20 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 10:22 Food Market in Key Center
- 10:25 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 10:33 Lake Kathryn Village
- 10:40 Purdy Park & Ride



A partnership of KP Community Council, Puget Sound Educational Service District and Peninsula School District.

TUE/WED/THUR AFTERNOON

- 4:42 Purdy Park & Ride
- 4:47 Lake Kathryn Village
- 4:50 SR 302 @Windermere Realty
- 4:52 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 4:53 SR 302 @150th/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 4:55 4 Corners gas station @SR 302
- 4:57 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct
- 4:58 Wright Bliss Road @Olson Dr
- 5:00 Food Market in Key Center
- 5:04 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 5:08 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 5:10 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 5:13 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 5:14 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 5:18 Evergreen Elementary School

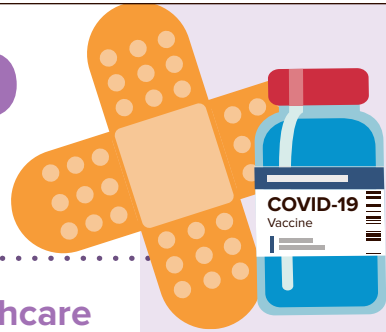


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BEFORE YOU PINCH THOSE NOT WEARING GREEN, FILL UP ON THIS BARELY-IRISH TRADITIONAL MEAL



The Truth About ‘St. Patrick’s Day’ Corned Beef and Cabbage

DAN CLOUSE

When you think of Saint Patrick’s Day, you’re thinking shamrocks, right? Along with pinching, funny little green plastic hats, the beer in your cup and the Chicago River, both dyed green, and leprechauns.

But on March 17, our Irish-American friends also think of corned beef and cabbage, probably with colcannon and soda bread on the side.

I do, too, even though according to 23andMe, I’m only 2% Irish.

That’s fine, because more than 2% of St. Patrick’s Day traditions aren’t 100% Irish either. To begin with, Saint Patrick



himself wasn’t Irish. Little Patricius was born with a monogrammed silver spoon in his mouth to fourth-century Roman aristocrats in high-rent Britannia, which makes him about as Irish as George Bush Sr. was Texan.

Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland for his missionary work in Olde Hibernia, although contrary to the pious legend, he never illustrated the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to the druids with a three-leaf clover. He didn’t rid the Emerald Isle of snakes, either. So, let’s call St. Patrick

half Irish. Like Irish Coffee.

The potatoes in colcannon were originally from South America, and the baking soda in soda bread is an American invention of the 1840s. On the other hand, corned beef has a 100% Irish pedigree. Beef from County Cork cattle was salted and exported to England for centuries before the refrigerator and Oh, Boy! Obertos, salt was the most effective meat preservative.

Since you didn’t ask, the word “corned” has nothing to do with a summer picnic’s corn on a cob. The corned

of corned beef comes to us from an older sense when corn meant “a grain,” — as it still does in England and on the spice shelf at the market in peppercorns. The large salt crystals used in preserving beef, like what we call rock salt, looked like grains.

Over time, the salt beef market crashed with changing English trade laws, and the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s killed a lot of farm laborers. By mid-century, when several million hungry Irish had landed in American cities, traditional

corned beef was a luxury as unaffordable as caviar back in Ireland.

Finding salt-cured beef brisket at affordable prices in their cities’ Jewish delis was a pleasant surprise for the new Irish Americans. Jiggs, the main character in the popular comic strip, “Bringing Up Father,” was a famous connoisseur of corned beef and cabbage, which may be why it’s still called a “Jiggs Dinner” in Canada.

Next thing you know, along with the novelty of parades, corned beef had become the main dish in American St. Patrick’s Day dinners. Who cared that everyone back home in Ireland still preferred back-bacon? Besides, March 17 was a holy day in a Catholic country, and all the pubs were closed.

Corned beef and cabbage dinners on St. Patrick’s Day were unknown in Ireland until recently. Then, like Cinco de Mayo parties to Mexico, a new American custom was retro-exported to its supposed homeland.

The hundreds of Irish cookbooks I’ve studied to research this article are unanimous in their head-shaking about American St. Patrick’s Day celebrations: “We have nothing like it in Ireland!”

They say that on March 17, everyone is 100% Irish. Alas, on March 18, some of us wish that we hadn’t been.

Sláinte.

St. Patrick’s Day Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner

Serves 4 for dinner with leftovers for next-day sandwiches. Allow 3½+ hours

Ingredients:

- 3-5 pounds corned beef from Market House Meats in Seattle. (Corned beef from many other sources is fine, but I think this is the best.)
- 16-20 ounces of Classic Coca Cola (Really! This is from Market House’s old recipe on purple paper.)
- 1 green cabbage cut into 8 wedges
- 4 carrots peeled and quartered, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 8 small potatoes

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350°. Place corned beef in large, ovenproof covered cooking pot. Add Coca-Cola and enough water almost to cover the meat.

Cook covered in the oven for 3 plus hours (an hour per pound or more; just not less, or it will be tough).

When tender, transfer beef to a large platter and tent to keep warm.

Add to broth the quartered carrots, cabbage wedges and potatoes. Simmer for 35 minutes.

Slice the beef against the grain and serve with the vegetables.

Serve with bowls of good horseradish, whole-grain Dijon mustard and plenty of Harp Lager or Guinness. ■

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Of 'Maus' and McMinn: A Tragedy in Words and Pictures

After 30 years, the only graphic novel to ever win a Pulitzer Prize is now suddenly banned in some public schools.

JOSÉ ALANIZ, KP NEWS

Some dirty comic book about the Holocaust got banned from the eighth grade English Language Arts curriculum by the McMinn County School Board in southeast Tennessee Jan. 10, because the book has cuss words and nudie drawings.

We're talking about Art Spiegelman's 1986 graphic memoir "Maus," a landmark work of comic art which, as a college humanities professor, I have taught several times and expect to teach again.

"Maus" holds a canonical place in comics history, autobiography and Jewish Studies. It remains the one work of graphic narrative to earn a Pulitzer Prize (in 1992). As

recently as 2009, the Young Adult Library Association named it an Outstanding Book for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners, and

in 2020 the New York Public Library voted "Maus" one of the 125 most important books of the last 125 years.

Spiegelman's opus deserves every accolade it gets, because without exaggeration we can say that it redefined the possibilities for graphic narrative, bringing whole new audiences to this art form, showing it can excel at addressing the heaviest, weightiest, most daunting of subjects. It proved that — despite the name — comics don't have to be funny (though "Maus" often is).

"Maus" tells the story of one Jewish Holocaust survivor's experiences in Poland and the death camps, as told by the survivor, Vladek Spiegelman, to his son Art. But the story's transformation into a work of graphic narrative alters the stakes in fundamental ways, first through what seems like an overly obvious visual metaphor: Spiegelman draws the Jews as



The use of profanity in this panel was part of the justification to ban "Maus." Art Spiegelman



KPReads

anthropomorphized mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, and so on. Secondly, Spiegelman utilizes the language of comics to explore the minutest details of Vladek's experience, down to the way he repaired footwear in Auschwitz — making himself indispensable to the people who held his life in their hands. Indeed, "Maus" makes astonishingly vivid what day-to-day life in the camps was like: the terror, yes, and the anxiety, but also the boredom, the denial, the disorientation, the back-stabbing, the banality.

Things get more serious when discrepancies emerge between Vladek's personal memories of the Holocaust and the historical record. The two get into a debate about whether an orchestra was playing at the entrance to a death camp as prisoners marched out the

READING ABOUT THE SPIEGELMAN FAMILY'S MODERN-DAY TRAVAILS AND DYSFUNCTION TAUGHT ME THAT THE HOLOCAUST WAS NOT AN EVENT CONFINED TO THE PAST, BUT ONE THAT CONTINUED TO LIVE ON.

gate (as documented by scholars). Vladek says there was no orchestra — after all, he was there, and he would have noticed. Nevertheless, over two succeeding panels, Spiegelman shows camp prisoners indeed marching to an orchestra — overriding his father's testimony. It's hard not to see such scenes over disputed facts as Oedipal one-upmanship on Artie's part; as the memoirist, he always wins.

Except when he doesn't. Part I of "Maus" ends with an excruciating episode when Vladek admits to burning Anja's diaries after her death by suicide. Artie had been trying to locate them to piece together his mother's later years and her feelings about him. Vladek brutally takes that chance away from him. "God damn you! You — you murderer!" Artie yells. "How the hell could you do such a thing!!"

This is one of the scenes highlighted

by McMinn School Board member Mike Cochran, who said at the Jan. 10 hearing "A lot of the cussing had to do with the son cussing out the father, so I don't really know how that teaches our kids any kind of ethical stuff. It's just the opposite, instead of treating his father with some kind of respect, he treated his father like he was the victim." I

"MAUS" MAKES ASTONISHINGLY VIVID WHAT DAY-TO-DAY LIFE IN THE CAMPS WAS LIKE.

read the whole hearing transcript, and all the board's arguments for removing the book reflect this kind of blinders-on, context-free, willful misreading.

The charge of supposedly salacious naked drawings? They seem to mean a panel where we see Anja's body in the bathtub after her suicide. Spiegelman himself seemed mortified by that characterization. "As offensive as those parents seem to have found my book, I found the description of my dead mother's body in a bathtub where she had slashed her wrists described as a 'nude woman' deeply troubling to me," he told a Feb. 7 online forum organized by the Jewish Federation of Greater Chattanooga. "It was hard to draw, it was hard to think about. I wasn't present in the moment she was discovered ... I would say a 'naked corpse' would probably be a more intelligent use of language."

Reading about the Spiegelman family's modern-day travails and dysfunction taught me that the Holocaust was not an event confined to the past, but one that continued to live on in its survivors and their children and their children's children long after the war, right up to the present. The unique immediacy of comics brought that devastating truth home like no other medium could.

In the meeting transcript, I found the testimony of Steven Brady, an instructional supervisor who tried to talk the

board out of its precipitate and wrong-headed decision, especially poignant. Let him have the final word:

"Every lesson we teach gives us a chance to make a change for the better for our students ... I appreciate the stand that

you all are taking to assure the public that we care about our kids, and we believe it's

important to teach our students the difference between right and wrong and help them be ethical people with compassion and morals with respect for others.

"There are many lessons that can be learned through this book about how we treat others, how we speak, things that we say, how we act and how to persevere." ■

"Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History" (1986) and "Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began" (1992) published by Pantheon.

Art Spiegelman, born in Stockholm in 1948, immigrated to the United States with



his parents in 1951. The family settled in Queens, New York. Inspired by Mad magazine, Spiegelman studied cartooning. In 1980 he cofounded "Raw,"

an underground comic and graphics anthology, with his wife, Françoise Mouly. Their success led to Spiegelman working as a New York Times illustrator, a Playboy cartoonist, and a staff artist and writer for The New Yorker.

Spiegelman won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992 and became a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2005.

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Substitute teacher Kimberly Peabody in a fourth-grade class Feb. 15 at Minter Creek Elementary School. *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

School District Staffing Shortage Improves.

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

Amid high absence rates among staff and students, Peninsula School District Superintendent Krestin Bahr sent a message to district families Jan. 12 calling on parents and community members to consider applying as temporary emergency substitutes or support staff in PSD schools.

“My priority is keeping our schools safely open,” Bahr said. “This is an all-hands-on-deck moment.”

PSD implemented a streamlined process to hire temporary workers and implemented measures to maximize classroom support, including asking central office instructional facilitators and coordinators, as well as administrators with teaching certificates, to serve as guest teachers where needed. Other central office staff were asked to help with lunch, recess and class supervision. Essential meetings for administrators were postponed or scheduled outside of school hours and meetings for professional learning were suspended temporarily.

“Some buildings have been short five or six staff and those are classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, office staff — it really did hit every piece of the building,” Minter Creek Elementary School Principal Todd Hering said, citing sickness and COVID-19-related symptoms as the reason many staff were out.

“(For) our substitute coordinator, Marina Nelson, I can only imagine every morning probably felt like a 911 dispatcher trying to get crews everywhere,” Hering said.

Under the call for emergency subs, anyone with a bachelor’s degree could apply to substitute teach within the district without teaching certification requirements. Under normal circumstances, a certificated substitute with a full teaching certificate

as well as a substitute teaching certificate can cover any grade level, while classified substitutes are qualified to work as paraeducators and to sub in the office or library without teaching certification requirements.

Each PSD school also employs two full-time “building substitutes” who provide classroom support and fill in where needed when an outside substitute is not available. Hering said every morning around 6 a.m. principals from across the district begin requesting to borrow available building subs from other schools for coverage. “This has been going on since the start of the school year, really even last year,” he said.

School transportation has been affected by the staffing shortage as well. Shelly Rajkovich, who has been a PSD bus driver for 16 years,

said that although it’s always been a struggle to main-

tain a pool of substitute drivers, particularly in the rural area of the Key Peninsula, the past few years have been challenging.

“We lost a lot of drivers to retirement; Covid pushed some of them over the edge. We also lost quite a few drivers just out of nervousness,” Rajkovich said. “Our sub pool is way down. It’s caused a lot of stress the last couple years.”

Due to the driver shortage, bus routes have had to be condensed, with bus loads from eliminated routes pushed onto other buses. “We lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 to 15 routes,” Rajkovich said.

“It is kind of starting to get better,” she said. “We just graduated four or five new substitute drivers. Once we get a nice group of substitutes, then the whole thought is to hopefully get those routes back that were combined.”

Key Peninsula Middle School office

manager Kari Trivette said it’s been “incredibly difficult” this school year to get substitute teachers. “All of our staff members gave up their planning, I can’t even count how many times, just to cover for each other,” she said.

“We even had a day where the entire district was short subs and so our district staff, the office staff, came and helped cover classrooms. Dan Gregory, our assistant superintendent, came and covered classes,” Trivette said. “I appreciate everything they did to make sure that we could stay open.”

In a Feb. 10 update on the staffing shortage, Superintendent Bahr said six classified and 35 certificated substitutes had been hired, while 31 classified and 34 certificated substitutes were in the hiring

process.

Hering said that although December and January were exceptionally difficult months and the staffing shortage has been a challenge all school year, he feels hopeful that things are improving. “It feels like we’ve turned the corner. We haven’t had the number of absences districtwide that we had even just a few weeks ago,” he said.

“These last two years have been the hardest on educators ever in the history of education as far as I know,” said Hering, who has worked in education for over 20 years. “It’s also been super hard to be a parent these last two years. It’s been the hardest to be an employee, to be a business owner, to be all those things.

“We’re going to push through this together and when we get to the other end, whenever that is, we can look back and go, ‘Man, we did hard work and we did it well,’ ” he said. “We’re here for the kids.” ■

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TOP Waiting for sailing weather to return. *Tina McKail, KP News*

MID LEFT A young Rhode Island Red rooster at Soundview Camp. *Tina McKail, KP News*

MID RIGHT A distant walker in red with dogs on the point in Mayo Cove. *Tina McKail, KP News*

LOWER LEFT A sunken derelict vessel about to be hoisted from Lakebay Marina. *Ed Johnson, KP News*

LOWER RIGHT Sunbeams light a forest path in Vaughn. *Tina McKail, KP News*