

MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2021

Meet NASA's Jessica Meir

*From Caribou to
the Space Station!*

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*A Pictorial History of
WOMEN'S SKIING*

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Holly Martin—*Winter in the South Pacific*

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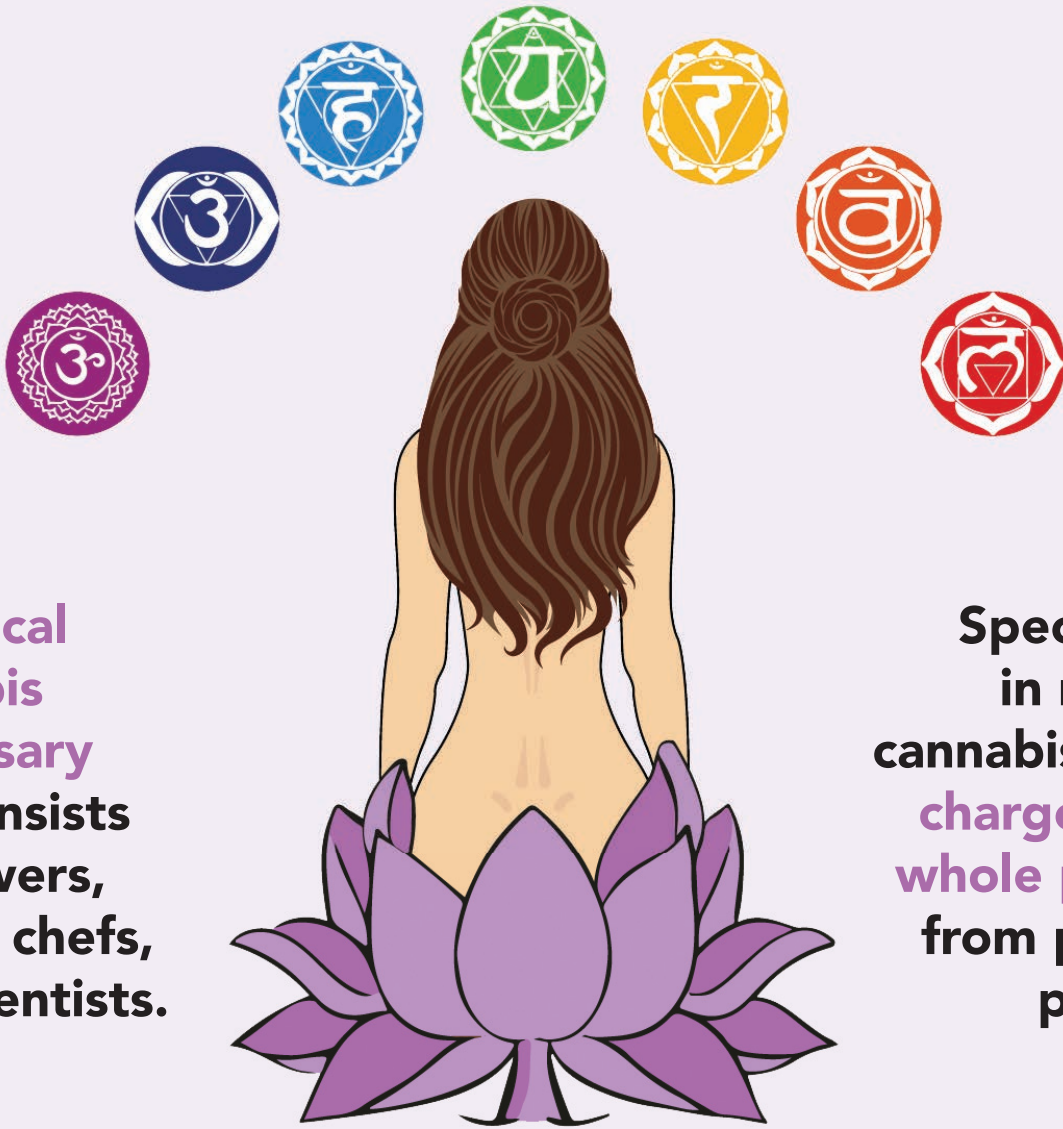
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Photo courtesy of NASA

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How to celebrate yourself on this holiday, while isolating.



It is not what we are missing that defines us—it is what we have. It isn't the past that counts—it is what is in front of us.

Women have changed this world. When World War II happened, American women jumped into action. They helped to create all the materials the country needed. They went to work.

Women have unique abilities. They find answers, get things done, make decisions, and create joy!

I encourage every one of you, during this February month of love, to find a way to bring out the best in yourself and in others. During this pandemic, so many elderly folks are suffering because their friends and family can't visit them, and many of them don't have the ability to communicate using avenues such as Facebook or Twitter.

I want to encourage us all this month to sit and find the art of writing letters.

Send a note to any nursing home. Lift up the hearts of the lonely and ill. This action will truly bring love your way. When we give love, it's like a ball that bounces back into our hearts.

When my Mom would suggest things for me to do, I would sometimes say, "I don't have the time."

She would quickly respond, "Make the time."

I didn't realize at the time that she was nourishing me. She was teaching me how to fill my heart with what matters. So, I ask each one of you to make the time. Your heart depends on you!

I look at the cover of this magazine, showing astronaut Jessica Meir. My heart fills to the brim with the amazing accomplishments of women. I can see the Maine girl she describes—someone who had big dreams and believed in her heart she could make them happen.

She did! And we all know in our hearts that women will continue to change the world.

Yup . . . we got this!

We all have dreams. Not all of them will bring us to the moon, but they can all bring us to a light that shines as big as the moon.

I applaud each one of you this month. You have taken on a difficult pandemic year, and with love and devotion, and with hard work, you stepped up to places you didn't know you could go.

How proud I am for each and every one of you!

Mary Frances Barstow
Publisher

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Maine Women Magazine neither endorses or critiques the women featured in our magazine based on their belief system or political viewpoints. We wish that political and personal differences be respected and used to start conversations based on curiosity and learning. We believe in freedom of speech.

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Cover photo
courtesy of NASA.

| LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

The content of this magazine is wonderful. However, the designer of the magazine should get an award for presentation and design. It is such an amazing job. The ads are even presented with style!

—Shirley Sheppard

If you would indulge a brief word from a fan: Your feature on Linda Greenlaw is one of my favorite biographical narratives I've ever read.

—Dwight Sheppard

I have read a lot of magazines; never have I been so addicted to a publication. The stories you find amaze me every month. Thank you. I raise my glass to *Maine Women*.

—Beatrice Smith, Ellsworth

Every month I immediately turn to "Questionable Advice." I would love to see a profile on L. C. Van Savage.

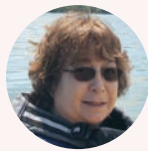
—Jean Valsici, Belfast

Do you know how great it is to read a publication, that just makes me feel good every month? I love keeping up with Holly Martin's story. And your story on sea glass has given me a new hobby!

—Kathy Moss

We love to hear from our readers!
Contact us at mary@mainewomenmagazine.com.

| CONTRIBUTORS |



Pam Ferris-Olson, PhD, worked as a freelance writer/photographer/editor/educator prior to relocating to Maine in 2016. The breadth of her

experience with natural resources, storytelling and women, and a passion for the ocean inspired her to found Women Mind the Water. She is a visual artist who enjoys kayaking.

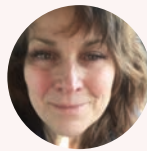
Liz Gotthelf lives in Old Orchard Beach with her husband. She enjoys hula hooping, volunteering at a local horse barn, and finding Fiestaware at thrift stores.



Sheila D. Grant is a freelance editor/writer/photographer, and the author of two books. Her work has appeared in the *Boston Globe*, and been recognized

by the Maine Press Association and the New England Outdoor Writers Association.

Bonnie Hellwege is a native New Yorker with a 20-year career with CBS Records. She has served as an ombudsman in both Waterville and Belfast for the last 15 years and is a hospice volunteer. She enjoys improv, living with her dog Tug and cat Pretzel, and spending time out in nature.



Lisa Joy is a mother, grandmother, gardener and nature lover—any activity outdoors especially where Atlantic Ocean, mountains or a perfect water skiing

lake is involved. She moved back to Maine 15 years ago. A writer since first grade, she began her career in print and broadcast media before various marketing communications roles for global companies then as a consultant.

Susan Olcott is a freelance writer living in Brunswick with her husband and nine-year old twin girls. She loves to write about all things coastal, edible, and any story full of life. Every person has a story to tell and she thrives on writing and sharing them.



Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough who flosses daily.

Glenn Parkinson wrote *First Tracks – Stories from Maine's Skiing Heritage*. He has been a skier since he was three. He is currently President and Historian for the Maine Ski and Snowboard Museum.



Julie Ross Mackenzie has had a diverse career in media, writing for TV, radio, and advertising. She initiated the drive for a

permanent tribute to Rod Serling in his hometown of Binghamton, New York. Her Emmy-nominated series highlighted his early years, genius, and a rare interview with his daughter. Julie lives in Hallowell with four-legged independent thinkers and writes clerical fiction.

Christine Simmonds

grew up in Coastal Maine. She was a teacher for many years, but she was always told she had missed her calling as a writer. Now she enjoys being able to dig up local news for *The Courier-Gazette* and investigate fascinating stories for *Maine Women Magazine*. She enjoys spending time with her family and her cats and attending CrossFit classes.



Lynette L. Walther is the GardenComm Gold Medal winner for writing, a five-time recipient of the GardenComm Silver Metal of Achievement, and recipient of the National Garden Bureau's Exemplary Journalism Award. Her gardens are in Camden.

CORRECTION: We inadvertently omitted a photo credit for the January 2021 article, "Intuitive Eating," on p. 41. The photo was taken by Marissa Elise. We regret the error.

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Holly Martin lifting her chain over a coral head as her boat swung into the wind. *Photos courtesy Holly Martin*

In the Tuamotus

Notes from the Southern Hemisphere

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW AND HOLLY MARTIN

Holly Martin, 29, is sailing around the world, on her own, and she is at present on the other side of the world—the warm side. With the help of satellite phones and occasional Wi-Fi connections, she is sharing her experiences with us armchair travelers back here in Maine, who are sailing through the depths of winter.

The boat on this voyage, the *SV Geckø*, is a Grinde, 27 feet long and 10 feet wide, that was built in Denmark in 1983. After buying it in Connecticut and giving it a thorough overhaul, Holly set out in the fall of 2019 from Round Pond Harbor on the Pemaquid Peninsula in Maine. Last March, she passed through the Panama Canal only to encounter the unexpected—a pandemic. Understandably, travel restrictions increased, and resupplying became more difficult. After a stint in quarantine off the Perlas Islands, she was eventually able to get underway again. She made the long voyage alone across the Pacific. Her destination: Nuka Hiva, one of the small, isolated volcanic islands in French Polynesia. For most of the 41 days of that stretch of sailing, she was out of sight of land. Now exploring a remote archipelago northwest of Tahiti, she is waiting out the cyclone season before heading on this spring to the next destination, New Zealand, about 2,600 miles away.

I was able to send some questions, and Holly sent back the following thoughtful and thought-provoking responses. Thank you, Holly!

MARY:

Do you see evidence of ocean pollution or climate change? We hear so much about this subject in Maine.

HOLLY:

Ocean pollution and climate change are two major topics of worry in the Pacific. I'm currently in the Tuamotu Archipelago of French Polynesia. The Tuamotus are a large system of reefs that lie a couple hundred miles northwest of Tahiti. The average elevation of these reef ecosystems is a few meters. Many of these reefs have passes that are accessible by sailboat. The passes have extreme current, so it's important to enter at slack tide—unless you want to try to fight up to 12 knots of current and standing waves. Every atoll has a small town with a local population. Some scientists have estimated that by the 2100s, many atolls will be impacted by sea level rise. Many will begin to be uninhabitable. Where will the residents go? As I sail between reef villages and

meet the friendly and generous locals, I'm saddened to think that I might be witnessing the ending days of many villages and ways of life.

Inside the coral reefs, there is a relatively small amount of trash. The locals are clean and respect the environment around them. However, the outside of some of the reefs are speckled with the usual water bottles, flip flops, and other bits of plastic debris that litter most beaches around the world. There are also hazards to navigation in the form of containers that fall from ships. At the beginning of December, a cargo ship near Hawaii lost approximately 1800 containers overboard in rough weather. There are no ways to detect a lurking container in the ocean. Often only a small corner sticks above the waves. Containers don't show up on radar and there's no way to track them, or even to know how long they float after they fall from a ship. Hitting a container at sea can cause extreme damage to your boat that often leads to sinking.

MARY:

Have you noticed any differences between how you navigate versus how sailors in the French Polynesian atolls navigate? For example, I have read about people of Micronesia who are able to sail without instrumentation, using constellations that differ from the Western ones that reference Greek and Roman mythology (Orion, Avriga, Vela, Centaurus, Pegasus, Hercules, etc.) or the Cross.

HOLLY:

When I was in Tahiti, I had the pleasure of touring a re-creation of one of the traditional sea-going boats that Polynesians have been using for centuries. I had tied my dinghy next to it on the dock and was waved aboard by a crew member who was tensioning the rigging. There were no official tours going on, but he was interested in passing on the mostly forgotten knowledge of his ancestors. He explained that this particular boat—a large wooden catamaran—had made several ocean passages from Tahiti to New Zealand and Hawaii. When underway, the crew only navigated using the stars, the winds, and the currents. He explained that the captain had a handheld GPS for safety, but he never gave



Top: An anchorage in Tahiti. Bottom: The village of Makemo atoll with the pass in the background.

hints to the crew about their course. They never got lost.

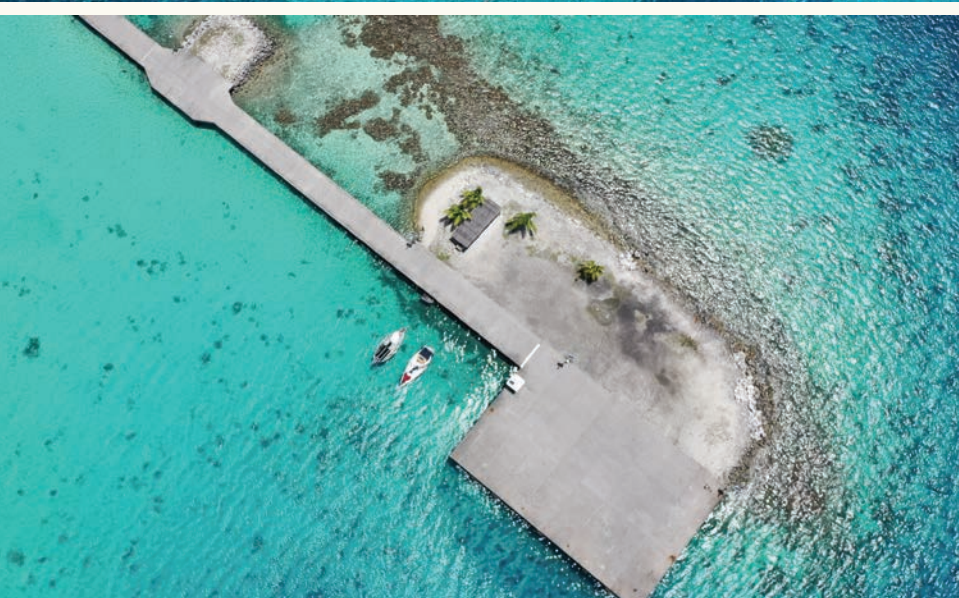
Carved into the deck around the tiller was the Tahitian compass. Each point that we would call North, South, East, West, was represented by a different Tiki god. The compass points in between each had a different carved symbol. I learned that the Tahitian word for this kind of boat translates to “village” because everyone has to work together to keep it running.

MARY:

Have you seen or encountered on your travels any high-speed racing vessels like the trimaran *MACIF*, which is about 100 feet long, used to set speed records? What are your impressions of this high-tech “need for speed” approach to sailing?

HOLLY:

I haven't personally encountered any large ocean racing boats, but I have met sailors who competed in high-speed races. Having worked on many different kinds of boats myself (traditional schooners, charter boats, school boats, research ships, and others), I've come to find that each type of sailor tends to glorify their own brand of sailing. I've heard pretty much every kind of sailing called “not real sailing” by one group or another. Having these sentiments poured into my ears for years has caused me to make up my mind: *Every* type of sailing is real sailing. I'm happy that the beautiful ocean has so many different ways to be enjoyed. I believe there's a type of boating for everyone. Whether you prefer a rowboat or a Volvo ocean racer, the important



Top: Holly used her drone to take this photo at Fakarava atoll. *Center:* The supply ship in Makemo atoll, Tuamotus. Holly's boat is the one at the right with the American flag. *Bottom:* The pier where Holly tied her boat in Makemo.

part is that you're experiencing the best 71 percent of our planet.

MARY:

Airline pilots often refer to invisible but well-known routes in the sky that are like roadways to them—that is, well traveled and much-used direct routes that pilots and air-traffic controllers rely on for efficiency and safety. Are there similar shipping lanes in the ocean that you are using, and if so, do you have to watch out for tankers and other types of boats? Or do you not use those routes, to avoid tankers and other types of boats?

HOLLY:

Invisible shipping lanes crisscross the ocean, bisecting every major ocean. Much like the skyways or sky highways, the shipping lanes are also well-known to marine traffic. Most charts have these shipping lanes marked clearly. For a sailor in my type of sailboat, it's wise to steer well away. Cargo ships average between 15 and 20 knots, and a collision would sink a little boat in minutes.

Once you get more than 50 miles away from land, however, these shipping lanes begin to blur. The ocean becomes a giant canvas of ships and sailboats worming around in all different directions. As a single-hander, one of my most important tasks is to spot ships and avoid collisions. I have a system called AIS [automatic identification system] on my boat. All commercial traffic is required to transmit their position on the AIS network. My VHF [very high frequency] radio picks up signals from these ships. I set an alarm that beeps if a ship is going to get within 5 nautical miles of my boat. Luckily, most sailors also transmit AIS signals as well. Knowing that I have this guard alarm allows me to sleep much more restfully at night.

MARY:

Where are you now and what is it like?

HOLLY:

I was in Fakarava atoll in December. Since then, I sailed to Makemo atoll where I stayed for both my birthday and Christmas. The lagoons inside most of the atolls in the Tuamotus are quite large. In fact, it can take a full day to sail from one side to the other. Depending on the wind direction, some anchorages have better protection than others. So, if the wind picks up from an adverse direction, I have to move my boat. Sometimes, the logical anchorage is far away from the village. There are advantages and disadvantages to each anchorage. Closer to the village, I have available wifi, grocery stores, and village life, but it can be noisy. Secluded an-

chorges are magical. The fishing is good, the water is pristine, and the beaches are deserted. But communication is limited.

From Makemo atoll, I next headed to Hao atoll. When I arrived outside the Hao atoll pass, I was not able to get through the pass into the lagoon because of adverse weather, so I headed for the next atoll: Amanu atoll. I spent New Year's Eve in a secluded anchorage on Amanu atoll, and I am still there. I plan to head back to Hao atoll when the weather is right.

MARY:

Any New Year's Resolutions?

HOLLY:

I don't have any giant New Year's resolutions. I'm already living the life of my dreams. The past 10 months have been my happiest ever. I believe self-improvement is a lifelong process, and I give it attention almost every day. This year I've learned many lessons from the Polynesians. I've never encountered a more generous and gentle group of people. A small family living on an atoll spends 250 US dollars a month on food. The rest is supplemented by fish and fruit. Many of the men go



fishing every day to provide food for their families. Some have small skiffs, but many free dive with a spear gun. I've been gifted so much fish, fruit, and eggs by the countless people I meet along the way. I always try to find something I can give in return—freshly baked cookies, sunglasses, a story. However, their gifts are given freely and with joy. They expect nothing in return; they're giving because it's right and

beautiful. As soon as I set foot on a new island or in a new village, I know that I have friends waiting to be met. People here are friendly and open. They're as interested in my culture as I am in theirs. From them, I'm learning to give more, to slow down and talk to the gang of little kids on bikes, and to copy the women by plucking the fragrant frangipanis and tucking them into my hair. •



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Talk about a glass ceiling!

Caribou native Jessica Meir could be the first woman to walk on the moon.

BY AMY PARADYSZ

Jessica Meir, 43, was recently chosen to be one of 18 astronauts on NASA's Artemis Team, a group training for the first human missions in half a century to orbit and land on the moon. Ultimately, one of the nine women on the team will take those next large steps for humankind.

Meir could thus be the first woman to walk on the moon, fulfilling a dream she's had since she was a kid in Caribou, the most northeastern city in the United States.

Whether or not Meir gets the moonwalk assignment, she has already made history. On October 18, 2019, during her nearly seven-month mission at the International Space Station, she and Christina Koch participated in the first all-female spacewalk—an event made more dramatic by the failure of a power unit and some last-minute contingency planning.

Meir had anticipated a post-mission press tour with visits in Maine. But by the time she came back to earth, landing in Kazakhstan on April 17, 2020, the first worldwide pandemic in a century had hit, and the tour was canceled.

Two days after NASA named Meir to the Artemis Team in December, I interviewed her via Zoom for *Maine Women Magazine*. We talked about everything from ground-breaking research to how to make a charcuterie board in a zero-gravity environment.

Hello! You're the Maine woman everyone is talking about right now! Congratulations on being named to the Artemis Team.

Oh, thank you so much. It is an incredible time to be an astronaut. I'm still basking in the glory of my recent mission to the International Space Station, and this is the next step forward for NASA. It's something that I've been dreaming about my whole life as well. When I was in first grade in Caribou and we were asked to draw a picture of what we wanted to be when we grew up, I draw an astronaut standing on the moon in a spacesuit and with a flag—that iconic Apollo image.

Your first-grade teacher probably didn't think that was really going to happen.

We're still in touch, actually. Her name is Marty Belanger, and I got an email from her the other day.

Wow! The last mission you were on, you were part of the first all-women's spacewalk? What was that like? Did that feel like the realization of that dream you've always had, of walking in space?

I actually wrote in my Caribou High School yearbook that my future goal was to go for a spacewalk. Luckily, I've checked that one off.

And you might get to do it again!

I hope so! We have so many incredible opportunities at the Space Station, contributing to all the science. Really, just being there, being in space—that was my dream. But, on top of that, the vision that I'd always had was of being in a spacesuit, looking back on the planet. When you're in your space suit, you're really in your own self-contained life support system, just looking back at the earth through the thin veneer of your helmet visor.

That spacewalk was almost at the beginning of my mission. We almost describe it as being a newborn. You get up there, and you've had years and years of this really specific technical training, and you're totally ready to support any of that. But what you can't prepare for is how it feels to go about everyday tasks in microgravity. You feel like you're reborn in terms of understanding how to feed yourself, how to go to the bathroom, how to move around—

You're a scientist 24/7.

Right! All these basic life functions that fade into the background when you're here on earth suddenly become really time-consuming and require a lot of mental capacity. I was at that early phase, getting used to everything, and I knew I had to get ready for my first spacewalk. Spacewalks



Photo courtesy of NASA



In the Integration Building at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, Expedition 61 crewmember Jessica Meir of NASA runs through procedures Sept. 11 aboard the Soyuz MS-15 spacecraft during an initial Soyuz vehicle fit check. Meir, spaceflight participant Hazzaa Ali Almansoori of the United Arab Emirates, and Expedition 61 crewmember Oleg Skripochka of Roscosmos launched in September 2019 on the Soyuz MS-15 spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome for a mission on the International Space Station. *Photo courtesy of NASA/Victor Zelentsov*

are, absolutely, the most challenging thing we do, both mentally and physically, and the riskiest thing that we do. They demand all your concentration to make sure that you know all the tasks at hand so that you can accomplish the mission and to do so safely.

What is the mission, besides walking?

It's kind of a misnomer; you aren't really walking. We don't really use our legs in microgravity. We're actually using our hands to move around from one hand-hold to the next.

Spacewalks accomplish a variety of tasks. In general, any type of maintenance activity or upgrade that needs to be performed on the outside of the Space Station.

That day, we were upgrading the battery capacity of the Space Station to lithium-ion batteries. It was a planned maintenance upgrade of the power system. Partway through that, we had a failure of the BCDU, the battery-charged discharge unit—a vital component of the power relay architecture in terms of getting the power from the solar cells and distributing out to the Space Station. So, we had to replan. We thought we were just going to be doing battery upgrades, but instead we had to do a contingency spacewalk and pre-

pare to change out that unit instead.

As you can imagine, this really demanded all my concentration, particularly because it was my first spacewalk. I didn't have the capacity to think about the historical significance. But, after we knew that we had completed the job safely and successfully, then I had time to process what it meant—and I think that I have continued to process it over the past year. It means so much in terms of what we've achieved, not because of our personal achievements but paying tribute to the generations of women who pushed those boundaries when we truly didn't have a seat at the table. I hope they're the ones who are reveling in this.

Are you the first person from Maine to go to space?

No, there are a few others. There's another current astronaut—Chris Cassidy, who is from York. Actually, we were in space together. He launched to space toward the end of my mission. He's flown before, on the shuttle and the Space Station—we overlapped for about eight days. That was a great moment for Maine, when both Maine astronauts were up there together.



NASA astronaut and Expedition 62 Flight Engineer Jessica Meir strikes a superhero pose in the weightless environment of the International Space Station. Photo courtesy of NASA

I understand that you were also the first woman with Swedish citizenship in space?

Yeah, my mother is Swedish, and I have dual citizenship. So, I was the first Swedish female, but, of course, I'm a NASA astronaut.

And on your father's side, you're Jewish. Did you celebrate Hanukkah in space last year?

I didn't have a menorah, but I had menorah socks that became quite popular on social media.

When you looked back on earth, what was that moment like? Did it change your perspective?

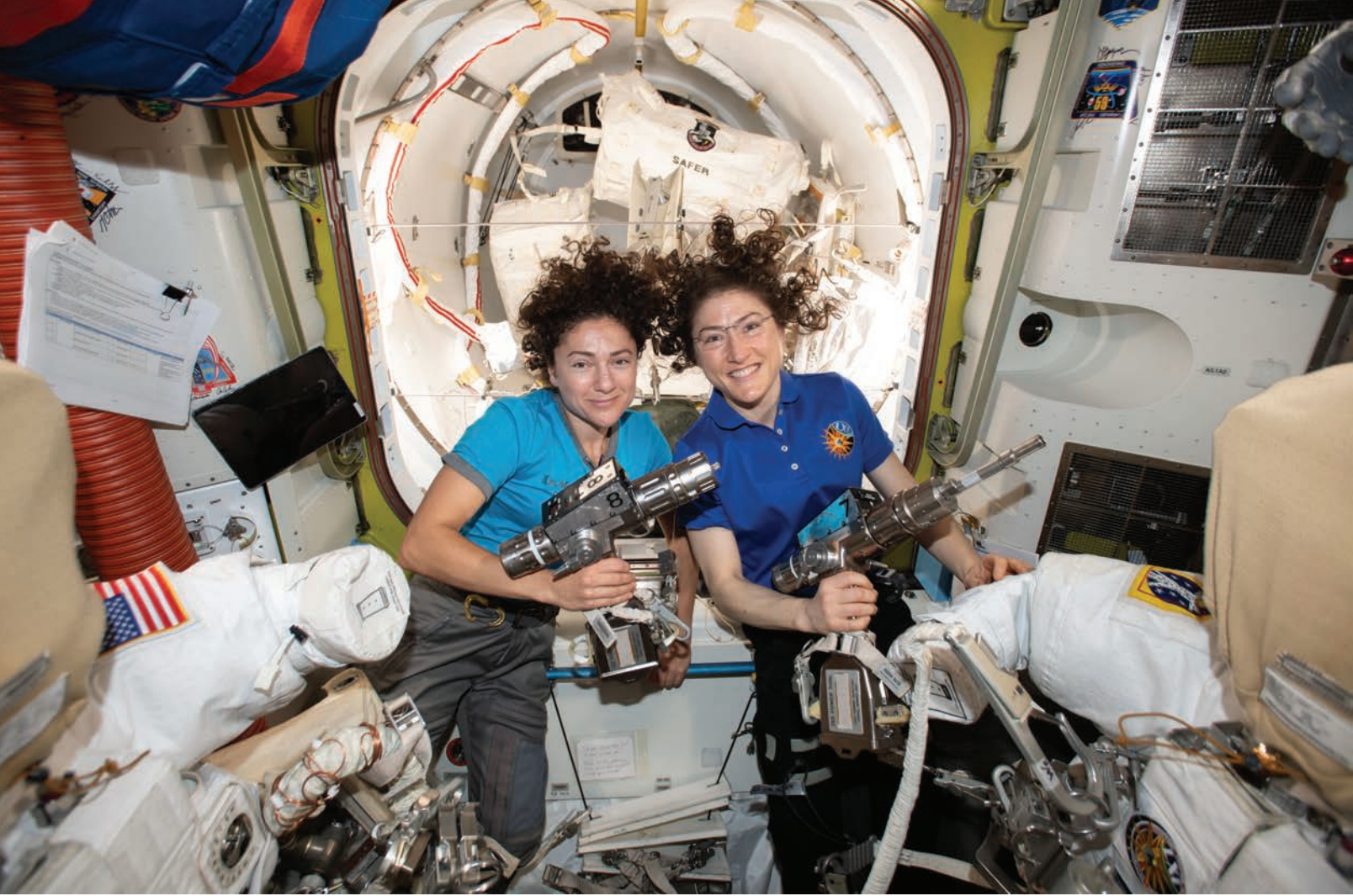
It does. Other astronauts had told me that it made them care about the planet and the environment so much more. For me, protecting the environment has been very important. But it resonates even more loudly when you see with your own eyes how tenuous the band of the atmosphere is, how fragile it is. From the Space Station, you can see how the color of blue changes with the atmosphere—it's thicker and a darker blue, and then it gets thinner and thinner with altitude and fades out into darkness.

Incredible.

Yes, it made me think a lot about—deeply about—how interconnected we are. You look down and see interconnected land masses and contiguous oceans, none of the manmade political boundaries, and it's difficult to not see that we are in this together. We are one. That perspective shift is so important, especially now with everything that we're dealing with. Thinking about environmental issues and protecting our environment, together, for all people. Thinking about this global pandemic that is affecting everybody on the planet. Thinking about the civil unrest that we've experienced here in our country this year. We can remember to take a step back and gain that perspective, to remember that we're all in this together.

I understand that you've spent your career studying extreme conditions.

That's right. My scientific research was looking at the physiology of animals in extreme environments. Deep-diving animals like emperor penguins in the Antarctic and elephant seals in California. Then the other extreme of high altitude: I studied the bar-headed goose, the species that migrates over the Himalayas twice a year, flying at an altitude where there is



just half to a third of the oxygen that we have at sea level. My work centered around environments with low levels of oxygen.

Like space? What did you find surprising in space?

How it felt to be weightless all the time. Weightlessness makes everything so much more fun. Maybe you've just finished a meal or an experiment, and you can start bouncing up and down or twirling around or doing somersaults. It makes people more playful.

Did you feel joy?

Absolutely, and I'm glad you used that word. Everybody who watched that docking of the Space Station when I first came through the hatch described it as a look of genuine and complete joy. And that really was how I felt, pretty much the entire seven months.

How did you stay in touch with people back on earth and maintain relationships?

The whole world was getting used to video conferences, I guess, while we were in space, but we've been doing it at NASA for a while. We get weekly family conferences with our loved ones . . .

I bet you stayed in touch with your mother. I copyedited the Maine Bicentennial Community Cookbook, and she sent in a recipe of a chickpea salad.

Yeah, that's one of my favorites! I make it all the time. I think most people who know me have had it. We thought that would be a good one.

That's awesome! Were there any foods you enjoyed—or didn't enjoy—in space?

I think people have this perception that we eat that kind of freeze-dried astronaut ice cream all the time. But NASA's incredible food lab at the Johnson Space Center is always developing new foods and fine-tuning the menu. I was eating Turkish fish stew, braised red cabbage, sweet and savory kale, butternut squash, couscous with nuts. All kinds of different things—and we share with our Russian and European counterparts so that we can have even more variety.

We can have fun with food. I'm a little bit of a foodie, and I was

flown some fancy cheeses in one of our cargo vehicles that came up as a surprise. But how do you make a charcuterie board when everything floats? I used condiments to make them stick. I used honey, and I used some jam. I used mustard for some sausage and salami slices.

You also communicated with students back on earth?

Absolutely. One of my first educational opportunities was with my school system in Caribou. That was one of the most meaningful for me.

How does it feel being a role model for girls and young women interested in science careers?

It's sort of shocking when you realize that you're on the flip side. My entire life I had looked up to astronauts and scientists and so many other types of people. For astronauts, it was that iconic blue flight suit.

Usually worn by a man?

Yeah. For me, when I became an astronaut and started wearing this flight suit and doing talks and interviews, sometimes I almost had to pinch myself. Wait a minute, that's me? How did I get end up here? I think that's a good story to remember for everyone. We all came from the same kind of roots. We're all just people. We worked hard to get where we are.

It seems like everyone on the Artemis Team is highly specialized. How would you describe your specialty?

Now that we're doing longer-duration missions, everybody is doing a little bit of everything. Just because I'm a scientist doesn't mean that I'm only doing science. I'm also fixing the toilet, changing the light bulbs, going for spacewalks. That's the way that our training has really evolved to be more comprehensive despite our individual backgrounds. With the moon missions, I think we might return a little bit more to having specialists. All that stuff is still being worked out about the members of the team. We have test pilots, just like the early astronauts. We have medical doctors. We have life scientists, physicists, chemists . . . I'm sure we can put the right team together for each of the missions, depending on what the objectives are.



Opposite top: NASA astronauts Jessica Meir (left) and Christina Koch are inside the Quest airlock preparing the US spacesuits and tools they will use on their first spacewalk together. The Expedition 61 flight engineers are holding the pistol grip tools they will use to swap out a failed power controller, also known as a battery charge-discharge unit, that regulates the charge to batteries that collect and distribute power to the International Space Station.

Opposite bottom: NASA astronaut and Expedition 62 Flight Engineer conducts cardiac research in the Life Sciences Glovebox located in the Japanese Kibo laboratory module. The Engineered Heart Tissues investigation could promote a better understanding of cardiac function in microgravity which would be useful for drug development and other applications related to heart conditions on Earth.

Above: NASA astronaut Jessica Meir waves at the camera during a spacewalk with fellow NASA astronaut Christina Koch (out of frame). They ventured into the vacuum of space for seven hours and 17 minutes to swap a failed battery charge-discharge unit (BCDU) with a spare during the first all-woman spacewalk. The BCDU regulates the charge to the batteries that collect and distribute solar power to the orbiting lab's systems. *Photos courtesy of NASA*



Jessica U. Meir works with survival gear that will help sustain her for three days in the wilderness. As the first phase of their extensive training program along the way to become full-fledged astronauts, eight new candidates spent three days in the wild participating in their land survival training, near Rangeley, Maine. *Photo courtesy of NASA*

What's the timeline on the Artemis team?

We've been preparing at NASA for a long time now. We're building the Orion capsule. We've been building the space launch system. Astronauts have been involved through all these phases, offering the crew perspective, testing out the new suits that we'll be using and aspects of the control interface in the capsule. And as things get closer with the first mission and we understand more about the specific mission architecture, assignments will come.

Do you know for sure that you're going?

Somebody in our office is going. We don't know who is going when yet, but they'll be making these assignments, probably, about two years before each mission. Then we'll start mission-specific training.

And there are things that you'll be researching in space that are meant to improve life here on earth?

Absolutely. All the experiments we're doing on the Space Station have multifaceted benefits. For example, you can grow larger and more pure crystals of protein in space, which has important implications for pharmaceutical development. If you can identify a binding site, you can identify a binding site for a particular protein that is an important part of any disease pathway. Alzheimer's. Parkinson's. Various forms of cancer. We've been successful at growing some protein crystals that we wouldn't be able to grow on earth, and that has led to development of drugs.

Some of the experiments I did on my mission look at cardiac cells and look at myostatin—an important component in the muscular and bone systems. We did some experiments with mice showing that when you inhibit myostatin—when you take away

that gene, which is an important inhibitor to muscle growth—or you block some part of that cycle, you can have more muscle production and higher bone density. Mice that had those alterations in space flight during my mission were able to preserve their muscle mass and bone density, unlike the control mice. That will be important for future space travel. Right now, we offset that muscle and bone density loss with exercise. We have an incredible suite of exercise equipment up there, which is why we're able to come back healthy. Those pieces of equipment, though, are really big. We won't be able to have those on the Orion space craft, and we need to be more creative in something that will still maintain those physiological systems. We might need to augment with some kind of therapy, like the one I just discussed.

Even more important than those benefits for astronauts, there are bone and muscle degenerative states here on earth, like osteoporosis and variety of other disease states, that could benefit dramatically from this kind of therapy.

I love that component of science that we do on the Space Station. It's not just about space. You can see direct and tangible benefits back on earth.

We'll be rooting for you here in Maine.

Thank you. Growing up in Maine was such a wonderful experience. One of the biggest things is being able to share this with everybody—especially the people who were so fundamental in getting me to where I am today—but also sharing this with the whole planet. I had many appearances and trips back to Caribou planned, and none of that has happened given the restrictions we're under now with COVID-19. But I'm optimistic that we'll get on the road to recovery with a vaccine, and I'll be back in Maine soon. •

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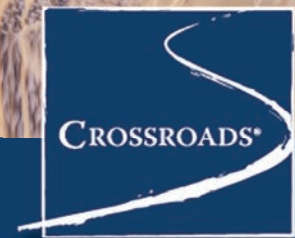
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Karen Getz, right, with daughters Rachel (seated) and Claire, as well as furbaby Oscar. *Contributed photo.*



Karen Getz and the Maine Crisp Company

A Family Enterprise—Making Healthy Snacks

BY SHEILA D. GRANT

Karen Getz, owner of the wildly popular Maine Crisp Company in Waterville, is the first to admit that her “food hobbies” tend to rise into full-blown businesses. Over the years, her love of wholesome foods has led her to master artisanal, wood-oven breads, make distinctive homemade cheeses, and create the gluten-free Maine Crisp product line.

Karen grew up just north of Pittsburgh, the youngest of three girls. Her father was an engineer and her mother, a department store manager.

“When I was very young, I can remember my parents gardened and did canning. My mother was a very good baker. My father made homemade beer, and I would put the cap on it.” But it was years later, in



California, that Karen said she truly fell in love with good food.

Karen attended business school in Pittsburgh and majored in accounting at Duquesne University, “but I didn’t finish my degree,” she added. She went to work for one of the earliest microbreweries in the nation, owned by a couple who returned to the United States, after two decades in Germany, with their own brew master in tow. A former, shuttered brewery was refurbished into a brewery and German restaurant. “I managed the front of the house. My [future] husband worked upstairs, and he would come down for lunch. . . and then afternoon snacks . . . and then dinner,” she said with a laugh.

Steve Getz, Karen, and their two toddler-aged daughters eventually moved to California for about a year. The many markets there, the fresh food, and especially, the breads, opened Karen up to really good food.

“The company that Steve worked for then got sold to a company on Long Island, so we got shipped back east,” she said. “We moved back to Pittsburgh, and he commuted.” Unable to find the kind of bread they’d come to love in California, “my husband and I built a wood-fired oven. What was nice about it was that we could use it for different things, as well.” The pair mastered cooking everything from a roast chicken to a chocolate soufflé in the oven, and they learned to create a whole rye bread dough, but to bake it off as “more of a sourdough-style bread.”

A friend had given them a copy of *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*, by Wendell Berry, which Karen said, “gave us a rosy-colored idea of what farming could be. We were dreaming about farming, driving by farms, reading every farming magazine, attending farming conferences.”

They bought a farm in Vermont. “We raised our daughters on the dairy farm,” Karen said. “Neither one of us had a background in that. When you’ve got to get up and be responsible for this every day, whew! Whose idea was this? I was dumbfounded. You have an animal, and you’re responsible for it, for the grazing land, for milking it, and for turning that milk into a product to sell that people will love.”

“So, once the girls went off to college, we had a heart-to-heart—do we really want to continue? The way we made cheese was extremely difficult and traditional,” Karen explained. “Our cows were 100 percent grass-fed. We would milk them in the morning. I made cheese every day of the week from April through November, when the grass ran out and the snow set in. It was a great way to make cheese, and doing it every day, you come up the learning curve quite fast, but it was exhausting. Both daughters had helped out on the farm, as well.”

The couple also honed their business skills while in Vermont. Karen worked for a food co-op in Middlebury as a manager and buyer, “so I got to evaluate products and bring things in that I thought customers would like,” she said. She gained valuable experience in evaluating packaging, presentation, and flavor.

Steve went to work for the Organic Valley cooperative to which the couple sold milk. He traveled all over New England, and the couple set their sights on Maine. While traveling in Aroostook County for business, “we saw the fields of buckwheat growing at Bouchard Family Farms,” Karen said. “In 2013, we moved to Maine. I knew I wanted to open a specialty food business, making something with buckwheat and blueberries. . . I thought, ‘I’m going to do something gluten-free.’”

Because Steve was on the road so much, Waterville was a nice central location. The business grew slowly, “because it was in my home kitchen for two years,” Karen said. “I could only do so much. It took



Top: Karen and Steve Getz, food entrepreneurs. *Contributed photo.*
Bottom: Karen Getz teaches daughter Rachel some cooking skills. *Contributed photo.*

eight hours to make three cases of crisps, so it wasn't much of a business. It was a time-consuming hobby! I thought, 'I've got to figure out how to close it or grow it because I can't keep doing this.'"

Getz opened a storefront, selling baked goods, granola, and coffee to entice customers in to sample the crisps. "We started with wild blueberry and cranberry," she recalled. "And when I was working on cinnamon maple, I made them try it and give me feedback. It was a nice way to develop the recipe and introduce a new product. People could smell things baking so they'd say, 'Sure, I'll try it!'"

Maine Crisps are made with buckwheat from Aroostook County. Despite its name, the high-fiber, high-protein pseudo grain contains no wheat or gluten. As many Maine ingredients as possible are used, "and as much organic as possible, at a price point that works for us," said Karen.

As production demands grew, the storefront closed. These days, Maine Crisp Company is an all-hands-on-deck operation for the Getz family. Eldest daughter Claire joined the business

in 2017 and is the production and quality manager. Steve took on sales and marketing in 2019. Younger daughter Rachel also came on board that year. "It was to be temporary, but she's still at it," said Karen. "She was in production for about eight months, but she was an art major, very creative and visual, so now she works on our social media and marketing materials."

In recent years, the business has acquired a "big slicing machine" that has boosted production from 50 cases a week to 55 cases a day. The Maine Crisp Company has seven employees in addition to the Getz family.

"The crisps are twice-baked," Karen explained. "They start as small loaves of bread which get sliced and re-baked. It's that slicing that was the most difficult part. I don't use any gums to hold for binding, so they want to fall apart. Finding this equipment to slice them without their falling apart was critical."

Maine Crisp now has products in a direct distribution program with Hannaford, sold at 17 locations in Maine. In October, they got into 44 locations of Whole Foods throughout the north Atlantic region. "We have numerous small independent businesses and some premium retailers like Eataty," said Karen. "We are in Los Angeles, as well, and have a small distribution in San Francisco Bay-area markets. And we are going to be onboarding with UNFI, out of Chesterfield, New Jersey, which will open up a lot of retailers to us—some retailers can't take direct deliveries."

Karen remains responsive to customer feedback. "We had a lot of requests for a dairy-free version," she said. "I use organic nonfat milk powder in the three flavors, but people with celiac disease can't have dairy, either. So, I took out the milk powder and did a blend of ground walnut flour and buckwheat. The walnut replaced the milk as a protein [necessary to the rising process]. Beans would have worked, too, but I'm a lover of walnuts, and I tend to make what I like to eat."

Tweaking a new recipe takes time, but what takes nearly as long, she said, is converting those small-batch experiments to production-scale recipes once the right formula is discovered.

"I do have other flavors that I would like to try, and I do have some ideas for other products," Karen said. "But I haven't tried them yet. I have to find time. There are always things working in my head. One time, for Valentine's Day, we did some chocolate crisps for a local pop-up event, and we sold out. I would love to bring those to market. They were just so tasty!"

Currently located at 10 Railroad Square, Waterville, Maine, the Maine Crisp Company expects to close soon on a larger facility "just across the bridge in Winslow," Karen said. "We have a dedicated baking team now. They do a great job, so we wanted to find something close because we didn't want to lose any of them. We were fortunate to find this space. We are definitely going to need more employees for that."

"We're committed to being here in Maine," she added. "I feel truly thankful that I get to work with my daughters—and we all get along and still like to see each other!"

To learn more about the Maine Crisp Company, visit www.mainecrip.com. •



In 1555 Olaus Magnus wrote *A Description of Northern Peoples*, a book about the history, customs, and folklore of Sweden. The book included many wood block prints which are the earliest published images of skiers. Among them is this one, the first published image of a woman on skis. In all the many images in the book, she is the only character who is smiling.

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF *Women's Skiing*

BY GLENN PARKINSON

In June 1870, Swedes arrived in Maine and settled in New Sweden, Maine. That year, 150 winters ago, the Swedes dealt with snow the way they knew: with skis. They were the first skiers in the state of Maine.

Maine's ski history goes back 150 years, but skiing itself has a history that goes back thousands of years. For most of that time it was utilitarian. As the Swedes knew, it was a way to get around in the deep snow of a Maine winter, a way to go to the store or for kids to get to school. In the next few pages, we will look back at how skiing changed over the years. Beginning with the first published image of a skier, we will follow the trail of the sport as it grows and becomes an established sport in Maine, for women as well as men.

2



⬆ This photo of Bertha Files and a friend was taken in the 1890s, outside of Bangor. Bertha graduated from Bates and taught history at Bangor High School.

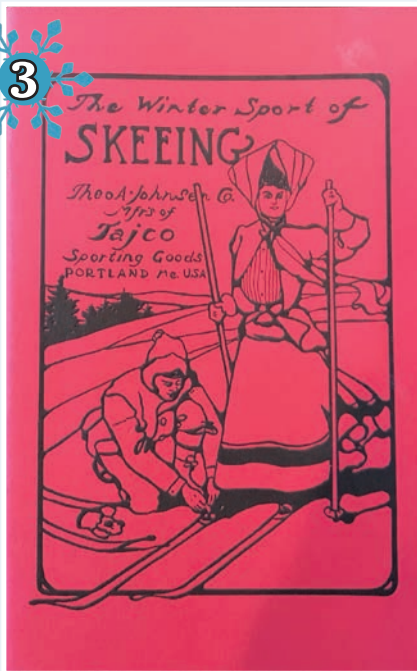
In December 1903, *Country Life in America* magazine wrote, "No Sport is more invigorating or better develops all the muscles of the body than a day's run on skees."

⬇ Maine is known as "Vacationland," but where did winter vacations start? Surprisingly, the Brits were among the first to take winter sports vacations. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes mystery series, wrote articles about his holidays in the Alps, which spurred the trend. In 1911, *A Winter Sport Book* was published with quotations and artwork that showed strong, active women.

5



3



⬅ In 1905 Theo Johnson started making skis in Portland under the name "Tajco." Few people skied, so he wrote a book, *The Winter Sport of Skeeing*, to explain the sport and sell more skis. This was the first ski book in North America.

Johnson wrote, "Any skidor will tell you that skeeving is the most exhilarating, most fascinating, most healthful and most delightful of all winter sports, and that indulged in sensibly and not to excess, it is the ideal outdoor pastime for everybody, young and old."

Johnson's enthusiasm and expectations for the sport were right, but he was early by decades. He closed his business in 1907.

4



⬆ This photo is from the 1905 book *The Winter Sport of Skeeing* by Theo Johnson. The photo was shot in a studio in Portland against a hand-painted background, probably by Johnson himself. The model's hat is held up by wire to create the image of speed. She is skiing with leather toe loops to hold her to the skis, and she is wearing high heels.

The Maine Ski and Snowboard Museum in Kingfield invites you to visit. There you will see Theo Johnson's book and many photos and artifacts, including little Polly's skis. The current exhibit is "50th Anniversary of the Tall Timber Classic Races at Sugarloaf," the only World Cup race to be run in Maine.

For more information on Maine's skiing and snowboarding past please go to: www.maineskiandsnowboardmuseum.org.

6



▲ In 1925, Polly, from the Sanford area, shows off her first pair of skis.

By the 1920s, skiing was starting to gain a foothold, and throughout the mid-1920s, festive winter carnivals brought many people to the sport. The Great Depression in 1929, however, effectively stopped the growth of outdoor winter recreation.

▼ Maine companies Paris Manufacturing, Tubbs, and Bass Shoes were among the country's top ski equipment makers. This catalog from 1926 shows that women were as apt to be skiers as men.

Skiing was teetering on the edge of the mainstream. It was not quite a common form of recreation, but it *almost* was. This Paris Manufacturing catalog recognizes that liminal status and says, "Are winter sports a fad, soon to be forgotten? Let us hope that no sport that calls both young and old, too much accustomed to the confinement of winter months with its accompanying colds and sickness, out into the open, into God's great outdoors, to enjoy anew the helpful sports of our younger days, should perish."

7



8



▲ After the Great Depression, it took years for most people to have time and money for leisure and recreation. But by the late 1930s, skiing was an established sport in Maine. Snow Trains brought skiers from the cities to winter playgrounds like Fryeburg, Rumford, and Greenville. The sport was pursued with excitement and enthusiasm by people ready for healthy, outdoor fun.

“Anger. Love. Worry.” Repeat.

*The Joys of Communicating with Family,
in Susan Conley’s New Novel, Landslide*

BY REA ESTES

Susan Conley’s novel *Landslide* (2021) takes place partly on a small island off the coast of Maine—“possibly the most beautiful place in the world”—where the Archer family lives from the spring to fall. Other parts take place in a small coastal town a short skiff ride away, where they stay with relatives in the winter.

In town, the two teenage sons—Charlie, 17, and Sam, 16—navigate high school and dawning maturity. They find friends, lose friends, find their way, lose their way, in an ebb and flow that all can recognize. And in this town, which is their father Kit’s hometown, Kit is a fisherman from a long line of fishermen. He operates his trawler and has his birth family and close relations close at hand: his father, sister, uncle, cousin, and others.

The boys’ mother Jillian, from whose perspective the story is told, is also from Maine, but she is from further away, from a mill town, and she has been away to Europe for a while before her marriage. Jillian makes documentary films about the devastating changes to Maine’s culture and economy. For her current project, she interviews townspeople about the steady and alarming decline of the fishing industry.

Vast environmental, societal, and market forces form the background to all the characters’ lives. Prices for fish are falling, quotas are inequitably distributed, outsiders are taking over, the ocean is warming, and catches are smaller. These factors make it almost impossible for independent commercial fishermen to make a living anymore, let alone think of passing the business down, as in the past. Still, fishing remains a deeply ingrained way of life. For the men who do it, the work has its own satisfying rhythms of ebb and flow, of going out and then returning.

With all that disrupted, little makes sense anymore. Kit, who has suffered a terrible accident at sea, is recovering slowly

at a far-distant hospital in Nova Scotia. Jillian is at home, alone with the boys. The island is both home and a trap. The town is both supportive and stifling. Her growing sons are loveably familiar—and increasingly alien, inscrutable, and unknown to her, and she to them.

There are many things to care about in this novel, but what one ends up caring the most about is communication. A main theme is how families use language, touch, glance, and gesture—to see and know each other, to read each other and connect—or not.



Susan Conley Photo by Winky Lewis

The novel reminds us that especially in times of trouble and change, it’s important to keep talking, just when talking gets to be the hardest of all. Nothing good will come from giving in to silence, privacy, and the closed door; from leaving or threatening to leave; from clamming up in the face of hostile, hopeless feelings (both in others and in oneself); in short, from *bailing out*. But Conley in *Landslide* acknowledges that the answer to distant, tense, and conflict-ridden relationships is not quite as simple as “keep talking.”

Why? Because there are so many wrong, unhelpful ways that people keep talking: thinking one thing and saying another; pretending; repressing emotions; keeping too much hidden, secret, and private; lying; arguing; yelling; giving speeches; judging and indicting; making false assumptions; being distracted, impatient, inattentive, inarticulate, and indirect; being stubborn, mean, or passive aggressive; not listening; speaking in code; biting one’s tongue; walking on eggshells; blaming; guilt tripping; and infusing one’s every utterance with pernicious negativity and depression. The well-meaning characters are all rich in poor communication strategies that are not working. Consequently, they often don’t know each other or feel known by each other.

What holds out hope are hard-to-achieve new chances for growth, such as through what one character calls “radical empathy”—for oneself and others. It becomes clear in the book that, no matter our age, we are all ideally on quests for greater self-awareness, or at least capable of growth. We are able to improve how we communicate by learning durable, positive mental habits, ones that will serve us and others well.

Landslide shines particular light on the difficulty of interacting with young adults, who are, by their very nature, in the process of separating and becoming more complicated, less transparent.

Teenagers and their wild ways are familiar figures in literature. “Vain, ignorant, idle, and absolutely uncontrolled!” sputters Elizabeth, describing her 16-year-old sister Lydia, in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1797), for example. In the same novel Darcy rails at how, in his extended family circle, the young Wickham grew to show “vicious propensities—the want of principle.”

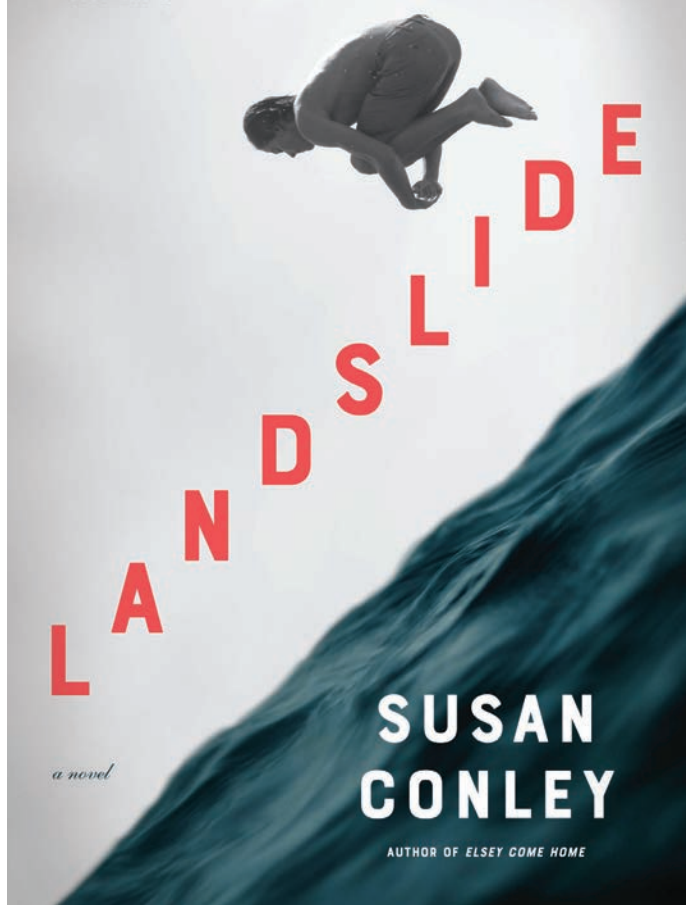
The compelling and urgent question that hangs over self-absorbed teens, in literature as in life, is whether their delinquent misbehaviors are a phase to be lived through or an indication of intractable, hard-wired problems. Will experimental bad habits resolve and disappear? Or will they continue and worsen in adulthood, to the detriment of the teens, their families, and society? Will a troubled, reckless “yute” age poorly, as Lydia and Wickham do, or become a solid citizen, like Darcy’s younger sister Georgiana does? Of Georgiana, Elizabeth predicts with optimism, “I dare say she will [turn out well]; she has got over the most trying age.”

Certainly, many degrees and nuances of success and failure exist, with many ways to define or measure those terms. “Turning out well” is not one thing. But there remains that deep-seated hope that one’s children fulfill their potential, achieve health and happiness, listen to their better angels, and avoid getting side-tracked or tripped up. *Landslide* looks perceptively at this landscape of love.

In modern neurological terms, kids are in danger while they come to look and feel more like grown-ups but while they still have, as the novel alludes to, “unformed frontal lobes.” How can a parent help to improve a teen’s mental-health outcome and be a guide onto a good path? What factors can a parent control and what factors does a parent have no control over? These high-stakes questions are at the heart of *Landslide*. To constant “normal” baseline parental worries, the world of the novel adds the family’s close knowledge of traumatic accidents; the present day’s easy availability of alcohol, marijuana, and drugs; and the region’s economic distress that affects all residents, from young to old. The suspense is all too real.

Landslide by Susan Conley is published this month by Knopf. She is also the author of *Elsey Come Home* (2018), *Paris Was the Place* (2013), and *The Foremost Good Fortune* (2011). Ms. Conley is on the faculty of the Stonecoast Writing Program at the University of Southern Maine. She lives in Portland, Maine. •

“Funny, moving, and deeply insightful.
Susan Conley has knocked it out of the park.”
—LILY KING



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REMODELED KITCHENS: A PROCESS

BY LIZ GOTTHELF

Kitchens have evolved over the years. Once just a place to cook your meals, they are now also a space where people gather.

“Many people spend a lot of time in their kitchens,” said Jessica Enmann of Hancock Lumber.

Jessica has been working in kitchen design for eight years. After graduating with a degree in architecture, she found herself looking for a job during a slow economy. Every time Jessica applied for a job in the field of architecture, she found herself competing against people with 30 years of experience. She took a job in kitchen design as a stopgap and fell in love with the field of work.

“It’s really rewarding. People come in, and they may have a hundred different ideas or no ideas at all. I enjoy trying to help them figure out exactly what they want,” said Jessica. “It’s a lot of fun to see how it all comes together and how we can make our customers happy.”

Many people who come to Jessica to have their kitchen renovated do so because the space is just not

set up in a way that works for them, and they want a room that is more efficient.

Typically, in older homes the kitchens are closed-off rooms, said Jessica.

We all know that the image of the traditional set-up has changed. No longer is the hostess of a party invisibly off cooking a meal, separated from guests. People are looking to open things up, maybe getting rid of a wall that divides a living room or dining area.

Kitchen islands have become popular and serve multiple purposes. “It’s a central area in the house for socializing, homework, and meals,” said Jessica.

As people gravitate to the kitchen for eating meals, some are ditching the separate dining room. Others are opting to keep the traditional dining room, if they have space, and using it for special occasions while eating most of their meals in the kitchen.

Along with a more open setup, many are looking for an airier look and are replacing upper cupboards with shelving.

Bottom cabinets can be replaced with modern fixtures that are more functional and provide better storage.

“You can get rid of those clunky, blind corner cabinets where you have to get on your hands and knees and dig into the back,” said Jessica. These can be replaced with attachments that maximize space including lazy Susans, corner drawers, and roll out shelves.

Here in Maine, the classic farmhouse look is popular, as is the simple, clean design of Shaker cabinets. “The classic white Shaker cabinet is definitely the most timeless,” said Jessica.

White is always in style, but colors like blues and greens are making an appearance, and wood is also being used to add warmth and texture.

Granite has taken a back seat to quartz when it comes to countertops. Quartz looks similar but doesn’t have to be sealed and isn’t porous like granite, so it’s easier to maintain. It also comes in a larger variety of colors. Soapstone countertops are also a frequent choice.

Stainless steel appliances continue to be favored, particularly in fingerprint-resistant finishes. The latest trend is for appliances in black matte. Bright colored appliances are also popping up in modern kitchens, as are those with special accents, such as rose-gold-colored handles.

When Jessica works with a client, the first thing she asks is if they have a contractor they’re working with. A lot of contractors, especially the good ones, will probably have many other jobs lined up in advance and thus not be able to work on your job for awhile.

“Most people don’t realize that contractors are often in great demand and short supply, each with a waitlist of clients who have engaged their services. People may think that they’ll get the process done in a month or so. But a lot of contractors are booked six plus months out,” she said. So, it’s good to find one you like, who comes with good recommendations and has good reputation, and get on that person’s list.

The staff at Hancock Lumber uses a computer-aided design, or CAD, program that is dedicated to kitchen design. Staff can plug in the measurements of the customer’s kitchen and then create a realistic three-dimensional rendering of what their kitchen would look like with the products and design they’ve selected.

“For most customers, this picture is extremely helpful,” said Jessica. When a customer is walking through the showroom, it’s hard to imagine what the products or designs would look like in their space. Once the rendering is drawn up and they get a clear visual image in mind, the customer can



determine what would work best for them.

Regardless of what you decide, getting a kitchen remodeled is a process.

The room will need to be cleared and all its contents packed away. Electrical and plumbing work can take time, and in the meantime, you’ll be living without a kitchen and eating takeout, microwaving food, grilling outside, or cooking elsewhere with small appliances like a slow cook-

er, portable electric coil, waffle iron, Griddler sandwich press, or toaster oven.

“Be prepared to have your life turned upside down for a while!” said Jessica.

Hancock Lumber has several locations, including eight kitchen showrooms—seven in Maine and one in New Hampshire. For more information, visit www.hancocklumber.com.



Photos courtesy Naissa Isaro

Pricillia Isimbi

Two Sisters Tackle Tough Subjects

Founding CivilTEA Helps to Promote Open and Productive Dialogues

BY SUSAN OLCOTT

“Remember you are always the head and not the tail,” our mother would tell us every morning,” says Naissa Isaro, 21. “She reminded us that whatever you do, you have to put your head into it. You have to lead,” adds her sister Priscilla, 22. Naissa and Priscilla have taken that advice and are now using the leadership skills their mother imparted. They are co-founders of CivilTEA, a series of peer-to-peer led dialogues about topics that can be difficult to discuss, like race, sex, and religion. They founded CivilTEA when they were just 16 and 17, undaunted by their age, their gender, or the fact that they are immigrants from Rwanda living in Maine.

Naissa and Priscilla came to Portland when they were 2 and 3 respectively, as asylum seekers with their moth-



er, Sylvie, Aunt Sada, and Naissa’s twin brother, Nathan. “Our mom came here with young babies from Africa. She gave us an example of proving people wrong and showing that you can do anything,” says Priscilla. Her priority was to find opportunities for her children and to instill in them the confidence to pursue their passions. Sylvie was fortunate to get a good education growing up in Rwanda, where education is often limited for young girls. She sought out a similar experience for her girls and found a good fit in the Cathedral School in Portland and a good friend in Sister Theresa, the Head of School.

Both girls went on to attend the Maine Girls Academy (MGA) for high school. At MGA, the Principal emphasized that, “actions speak louder than

words.” In school, they learned valuable leadership skills and also were presented with opportunities to engage in the community around them. For Naissa and Priscilla, it was important to create and develop ties to the immigrant community in Portland. “The community here is really tight,” they both say. “It is like we had a little Rwanda with us in Portland. And our mom worked hard to maintain traditions like sending traditional lunches with us to school.” They wanted to be a part of broader efforts to engage with the immigrant populations.

One of those opportunities came when Naissa was invited to participate in the Seeds of Peace summer camp in Otisfield, Maine. Seeds of Peace is an international organization that works in 27 countries on peace-building initiatives. The Seeds of Peace Camp is designed to cultivate that process in young students by teaching them how to have open dialogue about difficult topics, where people’s opposing views can keep them apart. “We spent hours each day learning to resolve conflicts,” says Naissa. “It was really hard, but I had great mentors there that gave me the tools I needed,” she adds. Priscilla was invited to attend the next year, and it was around this time that the sisters got the idea to take their experiences in improved communication skills beyond the summer program and into the schools.

Priscilla and Naissa recognized an opportunity to introduce the same concept of open dialogue to their peers. They also recognized that teenagers don’t always feel comfortable discussing topics like sexuality, race, and cultural differences. That’s where the idea of incorporating tea came from. It was inspired by a school tradition of “Tea Day,” a day where students celebrate the life of Catherine McAuley, the founder of their school, by sharing a cup of tea together. “It’s a very inclusive tradition that we have always enjoyed,” says Priscilla. “We decided that that when you have uncomfortable conversations, we wanted people to have some kind of comfort, and what’s better than having a warm cup of tea



Naissa Isaro speaking on the Gather panel.

in your hand,” she adds. “We want to say, ‘Pull up a chair and have a cup of tea with me’ to our fellow students.”

They started by meeting with people in school leadership and with interested students, both to choose topics for the year and to select student facilitators for each dialogue group. Six topics were selected for the year—three per semester—and a training day was organized for the student leaders. In those training workshops, students learned many of the communication techniques and “rules to protect a safe space for dialogue” that Naissa and Priscilla learned at the Seeds of Peace Camp.

They also organized a panel of community members to represent different sides of each topic, ahead of the dialogue sessions. “We wanted people to share personal stories,” says Naissa, “So, we decided to keep the groups to ten students and also to separate students into age groups that might have shared experiences.”

Following the Seeds of Peace model to spread the peaceful work, Priscilla and Naissa introduced CivilTEA to four other high schools in Maine that are now holding these dialogue sessions. Naissa also returned to the Seeds of Peace Camp to be an Educator and then was awarded a Gather fellowship

to expand CivilTEA to other schools. “We will always be part of the Seeds family,” says Priscilla. “And we will always be there when they need us to participate.”

One of the goals of these CivilTEAs is to have open dialogue and to have as much listening as there is talking. “It is so easy to talk and to hear your own voice and feel like you’re correct, but we always say, “listen, listen, listen. You may have heard what someone said multiple times, but you may have missed one word that is crucial to your understanding. That is how you become more inclusive,” says Naissa.

The two sisters have kept improving their communication skills, and they joke about their ability to silently communicate during CivilTEA. “We can look at each other and have full on conversations without having to open our mouths,” says Priscilla.

But, as is true for most siblings, these two don’t *always* get along. “We butt heads a lot,” says Naissa. “We are both very stubborn, and we see why many siblings don’t work together. “Sometimes, we have to take off our sister hats and put on our business hats. Then, afterwards, we can go back to being upset with each other,” says Priscilla.

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Cheverus High School students speaking at a fall 2019 workshop.

A testament to the closeness of Priscilla and Naissa's relationship is their decision to live together when they both headed off to Emmanuel College in Boston. While busy with coursework International Relations (Priscilla) and Business Administration (Naissa), CivilTEA is still very much a priority for both sisters. They hope to expand the program to more grade levels, including their colleges and also to areas beyond New England.

They both want to come back to Maine. "We love Maine," says Naissa. "There's a tight community here that we are a part of." And Priscilla likes the accepting natural environment here. "I love the fresh everything here—the nature, the air. It is so easy to lose yourself and just be you here."

But, she adds, "we would still like to see more support for immigrant communities throughout the state, and we want to come back here to do the work."

Their mother is also in Maine.

"She still takes care of us even though we are on our own," they laugh. They both return again to the model their mother has set for them. "My mom is a short woman," says Naissa, "but I've never met someone so steadfast and resilient." Priscilla agrees, adding, "She is also the funniest person I know. If you ever have a chance to have a conversation with her, she's sure to make you laugh." Their mother's sense of humor informs Naissa and Priscilla's willingness to talk about difficult subjects. And her determination gives them the drive to do the challenging, worthwhile work that is CivilTEA. •

"Our mom came here with young babies from Africa. She gave us an example of proving people wrong and showing that you can do anything."

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BIG HEARTS IN LITTLE PACKAGES

BY BEVERLY LESSARD

By the November of my granddaughter Jocelyn's kindergarten year, she had a boyfriend. "No one in school likes him," she explained to her mother, "so I decided to make him my boyfriend." Jocelyn smiled and skipped away, never giving it another thought.

By the time Jocelyn was in first grade, she had formed a club for all the kids no one would play with. For those children standing around at recess waiting for an invite, Jocelyn was it.

She created a wonderful circle of friends, with only one problem. When her four-year-old brother Jesse wanted in, she realized that according to her original charter, she had no choice. But she welcomed him graciously, and they put their heads and their hearts together.

By the time Jocelyn was ten years old, she was nominated to be a member of a peer committee to help other students with any conflicts. Today, her career as a diplomat continues to shine.

Less than a hundred miles away, another grandchild was showing his heart as well. At age six, Chase picked the winning team for that year's Super Bowl. His dad gave him a hundred dollars of the prize money and asked him what he'd like to do with it.

Chase knew. He had his eye on a new video game, but the rest he wanted to donate to cancer research in hopes that they might find a cure for his grandpa. His parents helped him address the envelope, and they walked to the corner so Chase could drop his wish into the mailbox.

Two years later Chase was nominated by a friend for "Champ of the Week," a special feature in one of the newspapers in Leominster, Massachusetts. The article included a picture of Chase wearing an American Flag tee shirt, with a list of questions posed by the reporter and answers by Chase. The fourth answer caused a lump to form in my throat.

"What's the matter?" my husband asked, sitting down next to me.

"Read halfway down the first column," I managed to whisper.

Halfway down the first column, the reporter had asked Chase what he would do if he had a million dollars.

"I'd buy food for kids who don't have food," he replied.

His reply transported me back to my hippie days, when all the love we had for each other was going to change the world. I admit we were young and idealistic, but we knew we were right.

With one heartfelt answer, my grandson gave me back the dreams of my youth. Like Rick and Ilsa in Casablanca, I had my Paris back.

Maybe his generation will be the one to change the world. Maybe they will bring about the global peace that no generation has yet to do. Maybe they will be the "can do" generation, where everyone is fed and everyone is invited to join the club.

My husband finished reading Chase's interview and smiled, his eyes welling with tears. "Wonderful grandchildren we have, aren't they?"

"Yes," I agreed, leaning in for a hug, "and now all you need to do is live a few more years, if only so Chase will know that his \$50 donation worked." •



PART II OF II

Taking Shelter, Finding Home

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LISA JOY

Emergency shelters provide vital resources, sanctuary, and community, which can make the difference between death and life. They improve quality of life for hundreds of homeless individuals in Maine every day. The Maine Housing Authority's website lists 42 shelters throughout Maine, a handful of them faith-affiliated. For the women in this article, one such haven provided a steadying hand and the practical and emotional foundation to begin new chapters—for two—on solid ground.

Women represented roughly 30 percent of homeless individuals nationwide in 2019, the same year that Maine women comprised the highest percentage (38 percent) of any state's homeless women population.

Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness

In Maine as of December 7, 2020 . . .

- 82,000 households didn't have enough to eat; up 17 percent from October
- 45,000 households were behind on rent; up 80 percent from October

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

After 11 years of fundraising, a shelter in a residential Bangor neighborhood opened its doors to a particularly vulnerable niche population. Since 2003, the privately funded Shepherd's Godparent Home has been serving pregnant women and teens and those mothering newborns. Its ministrations have been well received, and not only by clients.

"When the house next door went on sale in 2017, our neighbors urged us to buy it," said director Barbara Ford. "How often is that the case for a shelter?"

Equally telling was the response of a local businessman. After hearing public testimony about the degree of impact the shelter had on one woman's life, he bought the house for sale next door and gifted it. The three-room residence soon housed new mothers with older children and families escaping domestic violence.

"Godparent Home changed my life. It saved my life," said **DEE**, 26, who stayed in one of the original nine bedrooms for a shorter time than she or staff expected. Despite this, her ties with them endure.

"The house mom I call 'Gram' is the nicest lady. I still go over for dinner, and we grocery shop together. She sat with me while I cried and didn't know what to do. She was always



Dee and Destiny

there for me, and so was Barbara. That's my family now," she said.

Dee embraced the shelter's help with budgeting, daily prayer time, and early morning hours for household chores.

"Their routines helped me schedule my life, which before was so chaotic. They also have really good people that work specifically with trauma who helped me a lot in group and individual sessions. They were there for me when nobody else was," she said.

Born in Bar Harbor, Dee has traveled a long road since first leaving home at age 11, due to family abuse. She was 15 when her first child was born, and 19 at the birth of her second. Due to homelessness and drug use, she lost custody of both children (who still live with different family members) and relapsed after completing her first rehab program. Her drug use turned into drug trafficking, and she was arrested and jailed. After release, she began associating with drug dealers new to the area and soon was sex trafficked by them. Just 22, she feared for her life while moving in-state and interstate for a

year and a half until a sting operation in 2017 broke up the trafficking ring. For roughly five months, she stayed in a “safe haven” bed for trafficking and domestic violence survivors in Portland.

In 2018, while jailed in Penobscot County, a Bible study volunteer encouraged her to start going to church again. After her release, she did, and soon learned of Godparent Home, which she began visiting on weekends.

“I’d just found out I was pregnant and was scared to be a single parent and recovering addict bringing a child into this world with no support system or place to live,” Dee said.

Days before graduating from a second rehab program and facing life on the streets again, a room opened up.

“God made it happen because there was no room available for weeks after I applied,” Dee said.

Just five months into her stay, she received an unexpected call from public housing saying that a voucher for the chronically homeless had come through for her.

“I had no thought of leaving the shelter so soon, as I’d become a positive role model there,” said Dee.

But she trusted that things were unfolding for good reason, and moved into her very first apartment in August. She credits spirituality as “100 percent” important to her ongoing support and recovery.

“I prayed to get out of where I was at. I kept praying and kept on getting better results. I turned my life over to God and He provided for me. This home is safe for me and better than I’ve ever had it,” she said.

Dee has been drug-free since October 15, 2019. Family members caring for her six-year-old began allowing her to video chat with her daughter over a year ago. She began a college course for substance abuse counseling last month.

“I’m grateful now to be able to reach out when I’m struggling and know that it’s okay not to be okay all the time,” she said. “There is hope, help, and something bigger out there. I don’t have to settle, and I’m not alone.”

Maine Housing Authority (MHA) funds 36 shelters with a total 1,128 beds

In 2020 . . .

- Demand for emergency housing increased overall.
- Shelter stays were longer, as public housing was in short supply.
- Non-congregate spaces (e.g. hotel rooms) were in much higher demand due to shelters’ social distancing requirements.
- MaineHousing contracted with up to nine hotels, and, at press time, was funding 237 rooms at three hotels in Bangor, Lewiston, and Portland. It intends to continue such funding as long as needed.
- **New Hope for Women** brokered a 15-fold increase (3,058) in “bed nights” for domestic violence survivors at hotels, B&Bs, and cabins in Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, and Waldo counties.



Mackala, Niko, and Kai.

MACKALA, 23, a native of Ellsworth, also left home for the first time at age 11 and tented for several days.

“My parents weren’t fit to be parents,” she said. “They thought drinking and smoking pot with their children was a good idea.” They also taught her and her four brothers how to hunt, fish and camp.

She began working at 12 raking blueberries and selling vegetables. Her K–12 years were a maze of schools in at least six communities, as she moved back and forth between relatives in Texas and one parent’s home or the other. But living with them never worked out for long. One attempt resulted in a severe facial injury from a drunken beating.

At 13, she began staying with a friend whose parents were teachers. The interview for this article took place in that home.

“I slept in a closet room upstairs,” Mackala said, “Or I’d sleep in a tent near the high school or just fall asleep in the woods. I wore the same outfit for weeks on end.”

The calm, Christian household was a sanctuary on and off for almost a year, but the call to “have fun” was strong. She began couch surfing, living with adults she hardly knew and sneaking into bars with her mother’s stolen ID. She lived with a boyfriend for a year, breaking up with him two weeks before learning she was pregnant.

“I was so scared,” she said. She called her friend to ask if she could stay with her until she figured something out. “I came here, to this house, and started looking online for programs to help single moms,” she said.

Shepherd Godparent Home accepted her quickly—a pregnant 17-year-old “deep into drugs and failing high school.”

“They helped me stay sober and quit smoking cigarettes,” Mackala said. “They got me counseling, and I took patience and anger management classes.

She had private rides to and from school and OB-GYN appointments, and staff worked with her high school to keep her pregnancy private. They learned that she had been a cook (“under the table”) and was taking a vocational cooking class.

“They got me a class as well, and I practiced cooking for the other girls,” she said. “They taught me how to knit and crochet, how to put diapers on a baby, how to swaddle and hold it different ways. I also went to church, which helped me find myself.”

Church members took an interest in her well-being, invited her to talk with them, and offered to pray for her.

“That was the first time I felt I could open up,” she said. “It helped redirect my anger and irritability.”

After graduating high school with “all As and a B,” she soon was homeless again, moving with her young son to a domestic violence shelter. Three years ago, she had her second son with a different father. After another domestic violence incident, her friend’s parents invited her to stay with them.

Godparent Home had taught her about finances and saving for the future, which came in handy when the couple said she could start buying the home from them and told her what would work as a mortgage. For Christmas a year ago, she asked if they would adopt her, and that process is in the works.

“My goal is to oil a floor or paint a wall—do something to make this house beautiful—each day until my last day, so my

“Godparent Home changed my life.
It saved my life.”

children have my affection, hard work, and commitment to look back on,” Mackala said.

She attributes her arthritis to pushing herself too hard from a young age.

“I want them to learn differently than I did about working for something they want,” she said.

One phrase that she wants to erase from her vocabulary is “Oh, I’m used to it.” Instead, she wants to substitute, “I’ll do better than this,” or “I know it will get better,” she said.

And things are better. Her current relationship of a year is with someone “quiet and collected.” She began working as a preschool teacher’s aide at a local YMCA daycare this past September. She’s in contact with her biological parents and brothers and “really good friends” with her oldest son’s father now.

She’s learned that it’s better to be homeless and safe than to be in her own place if it’s unsafe. “You can be homeless in your own home,” she said. “Living with domestic violence is a form of homelessness because when your home is no longer safe, it no longer feels like home.” •



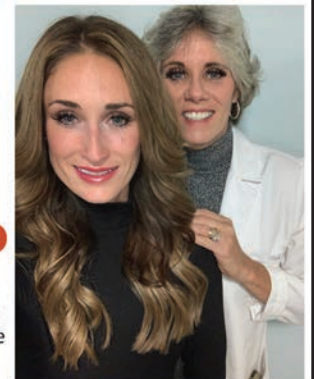
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A Pillow From A Poet: May Sarton

A Captivating Purchase

BY JULIE ROSS MACKENZIE

African violets bounce and weave in a box as a woman carries them down the stairs from an antiquarian shop.

It's lunchtime. My stroll along the brick walkways of Portland ends at F.O. Bailey in the Old Port. It never sold anything living, at least to my knowledge. I worked in the area at the time and frequented the place, imagining history and ownership, enjoying the attractions that thrive on ancestry.

I enter, immediately struck by the countless visitors milling about along aisles, carrying small items and gesturing, faces reflecting both fascination and delight.

No signs, or any indication as to what's going on. Finally, I ask and get my answer.

"May Sarton. A Maine poet who passed away recently. These are her things up for sale."

A poet's personal belongings to be purchased?

Well, that sure took a moment to sink in. As a writer, my reading of poetry is shamefully rare. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William Carlos Williams are the two who come to mind, but that's usually it. Right then, I knew I needed educating, and what better place to get to know a literary figure than with the personal possessions left behind?

I start my exploratory wanderings, looking over what May might have kept on her shelves, windowsills, closets or in drawers throughout her home. I see plants, scarves, books and more books, linens and tchotchkes. The usually somber shop is hosting the festivity of a street fair, and it shows in every reflection and dangling tag.

Just being around her possessions, glancing through her writings, and having the privilege of purchasing a couple of items prompted a renewed, creative vigor as I sat down at my desk that evening. I had placed a pillow of hers close by. Soft to the touch and about eight inches in diameter, it was striking with its two green and black stripes encircling a center rosette. Looking closely at the stitchery, I remember noticing short strands of fur. She was fond of cats, so it made that day's acquisition much more genuine and precious.

Coincidentally, I found out later the book I purchased mentioned the very same pillow.

As I held it, I thought about what I had discovered about her, very reluctant to go back to my writing. Instead, my imaginings carried me to her, awaiting my visit, very much alive.

"I love your house," I whisper as I enter. The walk up from the beach has ended in flowers, with the promise there would be more to take my breath away. There is a stillness except for the sound of waves and a soft meow from the four-legged angel at my feet.

"Hello, there," I say. May smiles at my attention to the cat. Uncertain of how she would receive me, I smile in return. As I look to the grassy field to my right, I see a house, solitary in the distance. It, too, was sun-bathed and flowery.

What sort of home would a poet have? I picture texture in abundance and a fragrance that changes with every room. Intermittent light is as conversational as the silence. All in the right colors, patterns serene in their own melody. Couch cushions are dimpled from the comfortable chats and side tables doiled, topped with books and magazines. Wooden floorboards lay in line with scatter rugs like islands, and more books are docked and stacked along the wainscoting.

Treasures abound. They have long gone unnoticed but are part of the necessary tableau.

She offers me a place to sit and asks if I would like a cup of tea. Entranced, I nod. She promises to return as she walks inside. I look beyond the panes at a sight only heaven could host, the tinkling sounds of silverware on saucers reaches my ears as a cabinet closes. Suddenly, my mind goes completely blank as I consider the prospect of our upcoming conversation. I am at a loss for words; I cannot even imagine one syllable to come. The comfort of my visit and tranquility of joy has turned into a lion's roar enough to frighten me until she returns with the steaming cups, cream and sugar, and a smile matched only by a dish of something round.

"Feel free to put a throw over yourself, the breeze from the water can be chilling," she suggests. A soft quilt finds itself around

my legs and over my lap. It is her way of extending a comforting reassurance.

The tea is perfect, a blend steeped to a richness that toasts such moments. I compliment her on it. She encourages me to try some homemade biscuits, warm and ready to be awakened from their folds. My pillow sits with others on a divan that embraces her. I take in what she is wearing. With old-school casualness, she sports a blue cardigan the color of the sea and gray dress slacks. Her hair is a silvery white, chronological dignity in every strand. Her eyes are alert to what I am seeing. She continues to smile, more enigmatic now.

Our conversation mingles with the sunlight and the occasional call of a seabird. There's no doubt I'm in the presence of extraordinary talent, yet someone who is not afraid to reveal her humanity. We concurred there are times in our daily lives that are anything but poetic and no matter how much magic we weave into those moments, they can be stark and sometimes immune to creative whimsy.

We continue our exchange as she successfully puts me more at ease. The tea is as warming as her words, simple sips making me as content as the cat who has approached her with purrs and affection. After a pat and murmurs, she reaches down. Now placed next to her, it's obvious May loves her fur person, and the feeling is mutual. As I gaze upon the creature who is looking at her adoringly, I see myself falling under a similar spell.

She smiles and extends the round pillow to me, suggesting that I tuck it alongside for added comfort. I take it, pat it into place, then change my mind. I would rather hold it close, a part of her pressed



against me, my heart, and a simmering hope as I return to my writing and those words abandoned during a most companionable reverie.

Ms. Sarton was born in Belgium in 1912. Finding refuge and inspiration at her beach house in York, Maine, she passed away in the summer of 1995. •

AINSWORTH, THELIN & RAFTICE

welcomes new associate. Kayla R. Raftice joined the firm mid-January. Kayla graduated from UMaine Law School in May 2020 where she served as co-chair of the Women's Law Association and secretary of the Student Bar Association. During law school, Kayla also interned for both the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine and the Cumberland County District Attorneys Office. In 2016, Kayla graduated from the University of Maine in Orono, magna cum laude.

Kayla lives in South Portland with her fiancé, Chase, and their eight-year-old rescue dog, Jobie.



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Learn more about Attorney Kayla Raftice at www.atrlaw.pro

Gal-entine's Day

BY CHRISTINE SIMMONDS

It is February, which means the most dreaded of holidays for people who are single: Valentine's Day. The day when all the country celebrates romance and love, and every other woman in your office gets flowers and chocolates delivered to her in the middle of the workday.

There is some good news this year, though. Because of the raging pandemic, this Valentine's Day you are probably working from home. This change in venue means you will not have to pretend that Sandra's flowers are so beautiful, and her husband is so incredibly thoughtful for sending them to her, instead of

waiting until she got home, so she can flex to everyone in the office that she has a husband. (Aw, Sandra, those are so beautiful! You are so lucky. This interruption to gawk over your delivery is not a waste of my work time at all! Of course, I want to hear you read the card out loud.)

The other good news is that the spike in cases from Christmas and New Year's means you are actually being safe and responsible by staying home. People who stay home on Valentine's Day this year are role models for everyone. Yay you!

While you are being incredibly selfless by isolating yourself on this holiday, here are some ideas for really making this a true Gal-entine's Day and celebrating yourself.

TREAT YOURSELF

It has been a rough year for everyone. We are all missing our friends and family members. Zoom and Google Meet are just not the same as actually being together. But you made it through 2020, and even through the first month of 2021. You are here, you are alive, and you are important!

So, remind yourself of just how important you are. Since you do not have a significant other to spend money on, buy yourself something special. You deserve it, girlfriend.

That reading pillow that you have wanted for years but was just



a little out of your causal spending price range? Time to splurge.

The earrings you fell in love with at your local jeweler? Make them yours.

Maybe you read my November article about Ka-ora Bracelets and really connected with one of those. Add to cart, ladies!

Perhaps there is a luxury tea or coffee or chocolate you have been dreaming about trying. Now is the time.

Just be sure to purchase your Valentine's Day gift for yourself early enough that it arrives in time, and you can fully enjoy it on the day of.

FAMILY TIME

If you are a single mother this Valentine's Day, honestly, bless you. Single moms make the world go 'round (not to take away from the single dads out there rocking it.) My own mother was a single mom for seven years of my early childhood, and I honestly would have lost my mind if I had to do that.

As a single mom, you have to do it all: cook, clean, pay the bills, calm the nightmares, and help with the homework.

So, this Valentine's Day, make it about you and your kids! Plan a special activity together. Make each other Valentine's Day cards. Find a craft online and make it together. Pop some corn and watch a movie. (I highly recommend *Soul* from Disney/Pixar if you have not seen it yet.) Maybe show them your favorite film from when you were a kid!

BAKE WITH YOUR KIDS

Baking with your children is always a special treat. Children as young as two or three can help with adding ingredients, stirring and kneading, and even peeling or chopping fruit (with supervision). They can help roll out dough and cut out cookies. Older children can help with more advanced baking tasks.

Cooking with children is also an incredible learning activity. It helps with skills like following directions and math. When I taught preschool, we cooked with the kids about once a week.

The best part about this plan is that you get to eat whatever you make after. Nothing tastes sweeter than a treat your kids helped to make.

AT-HOME SPA DAY

An at-home spa day is the ultimate in pampering yourself. Use this COVID-19 Valentine's Day to really go overboard with this one. Take a bath, light some candles, and put on relaxing music. Don your fluffiest bathrobe and drink a glass of wine or beverage of choice. Paint your nails and apply a face-mask. Self-care is important, and this holiday is the perfect excuse to really buckle down and let yourself know how much you care.

WATCH SOME TRUE CRIME

There is a certain stereotype about women and their love of the true crime genre. It is not that we secretly yearn to kill anyone. It is instead about our own feelings of safety and comfort. There is just something cathartic about watching a dramatic re-enactment of a murder. Why? Because it is not happening to you.

Sure, you are single on Valentine's Day. Things could always be worse. You could be dating someone horrible, such as a violent criminal. Instead, you are alive, safe, and comfy at home. So, celebrate your own safe single life by curling up in your favorite pajamas and watching some true crime docs.

ORDER TAKE-OUT

Order some take-out from your favorite restaurant and enjoy. For extra bonus points, combine this one with any of the other activities here.

Ordering take-out from a local restaurant helps your neighbors and the local economy and supports small businesses as well. Eating it at home limits your exposure to other people and makes it OK to wear sweatpants.

CALL FAMILY MEMBERS

Instead of feeling lonely on this day of romance, spend some time connecting with your family. Make some phone calls or set up a video chat with your loved ones. Give your grandmother a call and tell her about your day. Set up a Zoom session with your sister. Catch up with your aunt on the other side of the country!

Talking with family members is a great way to remind yourself that you are loved. Valentine's Day does not have to be about romantic love. It can be about familial love instead.

Feel free to substitute calls with your friends if you prefer. They love you too.

SNUGGLE YOUR PETS

If you are like me, you have too many pets, but you love them all. Who needs a partner when you have a dog? Take some time to show your pets some love on Valentine's Day. Give them a special treat and enjoy their affection.

Personally, I will be enjoying a glass of my favorite wine while I watch some true crime and cuddle my cats. I honestly cannot think of a better way to spend any day.

Whatever you decide to do this year to honor and value yourself, remember that you are important, you matter, and never compromise yourself. •



Gemma Astor & GEMSTONE TATTOO

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Photo by Gemma Astor

Gemma Astor lives in a cabin in the Rangeley woods with her husband and Bandit, a lop-eared rabbit. Sometimes during quiet moments in the little house, Gemma reads about the divine feminine and spirituality, as she refers to this subject. These books help her see her art—particularly her painting—as a devotional offering.

The 39-year-old uses her artistic talents in a way some might find unexpected. Gemma is a tattoo artist who maintains a shop, Gemstone Tattoo, in Portland. Gemma acknowledges that tattoos aren't for everyone. Still, she cautions people not to rush to judgment of those who have them. "Tattooing is a powerful way to honor yourself, claim your body, declare something, or heal from something," the lifelong Mainer said.

Where once tattoos belonged to a subculture characterized by bikers, sailors, people in the military, and some harder-edged elements of society, Gemma says modern tattooing belongs to everyone. In her practice, which is predominantly female, clients range from 18 years old (the minimum legal age in Maine to get a tattoo) to well into their 70s. Gemma, who went to high school in Kennebunk, got her first tattoo upon graduation. She said it was a rite of passage among her friends.

From an early age, Gemma had wanted to be a painter. It had not occurred to her to become a tattoo artist. Her dream was to attend the Rhode Island School of Design. Instead, she went to a school in New York City where she learned that big city life was not for her. Upon returning to Maine, she spent a year taking art classes at the University of New England before deciding to take her creative expression in a different direction and try her hand at tattooing.

Tattoo art requires skill in drawing and allows for colorful and bold imagery, but the images are designed within the context of body art, to be drawn on skin, which is a living organ. The skills involved in tattooing require a different set than those for painting and drawing, although tattoos begin as original drawings that Gemma creates. She loves her work and her clients but admits that tattooing can be "a tough gig. It's quite intimidating, or it can be as a woman. The profession, like so many, is a notorious boys' club."

The art of tattooing is not taught in school. Instead, the craft is learned through an apprenticeship. To be successful, a novice tattoo artist needs to find a position with someone who is talented and who has sound business practices. In Maine, tattoo artists must possess a valid license which is renewed every September and maintain current bloodborne pathogens training. Tattoo shops are subject to regular inspections by the state health department.

Gemma served a two-year apprenticeship in a shop in Portland. She expresses an enormous amount of gratitude for those years. A portion of her apprenticeship was spent strengthening the muscles in her hand, to be able to hold the tattoo machine and skillfully draw lines. The reward for such practice was

getting to give someone a tattoo. Gemma was nervous the first time she took this step, "It was an emotional culmination of a lot of work and waiting to be able to do it." That first tattoo was a little scorpion embellished with flowers. Gemma gave it to a friend whose horoscope sign, like Gemma's, is Scorpio.

Gemma feels honored that clients have chosen her to share this personal experience. The people who patronize Gemstone Tattoo come there for a wide variety of reasons. They come to memorialize a deceased pet. They come to celebrate a child's birth, or their own rebirth after undergoing gender reassignment surgery. Her clients come to celebrate joyous milestones, and they also come to change the narrative of darker moments.

"People have navigated major loads of depression or suicide or self-harm scars," Gemma says. "The tattoo is sort of a butterfly moment where they get to change the story, to adorn themselves with a totem of strength or

empowerment." The tattoo refocuses attention. Rather than the scar, the story is about the tattoo.

When a person is thinking of getting a tattoo, Gemma urges that person to view it as permanent. While there are procedures to remove tattoos, the success rate varies, and Gemma has heard these procedures can be extremely painful and expensive. She advises clients to select a design that will have an enduring meaning rather than something that may be regretted in the future. She discourages, for example, choosing a tattoo with the name of a romantic partner. The truth is that relationships may not be permanent, but the tattoo will remain, long after the romance may have faded.



Gemma Astor created this tattoo for a client who missed the garden left behind when she moved to Maine. *Photo courtesy Gemma Astor*



Gemma's painting of Chanterelle mushrooms found in the forest near her cottage in Rangeley. Photo courtesy Gemma Astor



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Gemma's designs often reference nature, particularly botanicals. One she is particularly proud of is a large floral piece she did for a client who works as a nurse practitioner. After settling in Maine, the woman realized she missed the plants and flowers that thrive in the place where she grew up. A garden filled with blue chicory and pink mountain laurel rises up from the waist and drapes over one shoulder. Images of fuzzy white willow buds and yellow trout lilies are also present in the tattoo. It is a permanent ode to the woman's youth and summertime.

In addition to specializing in botanical-themed tattoos, Gemma has created a line of versatile apparel bearing botanical images—lupine, pine, and rockweed. It's "a nod to the earthy, rugged, and adaptable nature of life as a Maine woman," she says.

The pandemic of 2020 was a mixed blessing for Gemma. It forced her to close her Portland shop for five months, which was difficult. But it consequently gave her more time to paint and to develop as a fine artist. Painting was her solace during the forced period of unemployment. Painting was a "place to escape fear, especially those first few months. What kept coming through felt so organic. It needed to happen." She found in painting an outlet to express intimate feelings of connection with nature and the Maine woods. One can almost smell the earthy, moist forest floor in her painting of Chanterelle mushrooms, for example. It is clear that Gemma intimately knows and loves the woods.

Gemma's husband urged her to find a means to exhibit her work. One gallery, Carver Hill Gallery in Camden, offered to display her work. An exhibition of her paintings at the Camden gallery is being planned for some time in the summer of 2021.

So, after all these years, Gemma has rediscovered the path she once dreamed of but didn't follow—that of being a painter. At the same time, thanks to her tattooing experience and expertise, she doesn't feel compelled to limit her artistic journey to a single path. "I feel really rooted as a tattooer. I feel really grounded in my business. But it's time for me to explore painting. It's a devotional offering that I can't achieve in my tattooing."

For more information: Gemma prefers to be contacted via email at her address gemstone-tattoo@gmail.com. The web address for her shop Gemstone Tattoo is www.gemstonetattoo.com.



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Romance?

BY BONNIE HELLWEGE

Valentine's Day is approaching. That means red foil-wrapped chocolates, roses, hearts, Cupids, big red kissing lips. Endless planning for romantic dinners with Champagne, dancing, an evening of unspoken desires, or maybe spoken—I guess it depends with whom you're spending the evening.

First, some questions. Who is St. Valentine? Who or what is Cupid? What makes dinner romantic? Is it the "love intent," candles, wine, getting dressed up? Well, what the heck is romance? Is it a noun, verb, adjective, or all.

I started doing research. Holy mackerel! There's more than one St. Valentine, and they all got killed as martyrs and were associated with the church. Then there's this pagan celebration that took place way before St. Valentine's Day on February 15 that is so raucously rated "XXX." Some say that celebration prompted the choosing of February 14. Very confusing. Then there's Cupid. Is it a baby with wings, a boy toddler? He is the son of the love goddess Venus and the god of war Mars! Now, there's a match made in heaven! Oh, the bow and arrow. If you get pierced by one of Cupid's arrows, you will become wrought with uncontrollable desire, I assume for another person. How did this little archer get involved in a celebration of sexy romance with a celibate saint? I'm shaking my head.

Moving onto romantic romance. It starts with the Latin word "romanicus," then it moves into Old French, something something European medieval chivalry. Lots of stuff about knights and maidens, and gentlemen throwing their cloaks over puddles. Does anyone wear a cloak? Dracula? Oh, I also read that he's considered oddly sexy and romantic? Sorry, I got completely lost, then lost interest. All in all, it seems to be about attraction, love, desire, and definitely sex and red satin fabric.

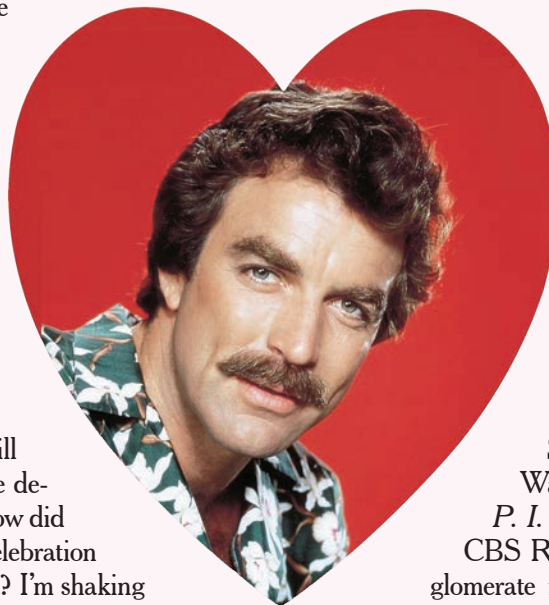
I decided to delete all that research from my iPad and define romance according to St. Bonnie. Actually, I think I like St. Boneldo. So here goes. I am not what Webster would call romantic, or "a" romantic. The men in my life did not

romance me. My first longtime boyfriend thought romance meant riding on the back of his motorcycle while my feet and legs went numb and I ate a variety of flying insects. My second boyfriend was Irish and only shopped at the "stuff from Ireland store." Everything he gave me was either green, clover, Claddagh, or Belleek. The first Christmas gift I received from my husband was a new range. Maybe cooking meals for him could have been romantic, but grease splatters! Ouch! I'm not trying to burst anyone's bubble. But I can only share my experiences. I don't write fiction.

Recently someone asked me that annoying question, "if you could have dinner with anyone alive, who would it be and why?" I lifted my head, rolled my eyes, and stared into oblivion. After about 30 seconds there he was. OMG! Overwhelming my mind's eye. The epitome of romance, maybe because of all my recent research. Magnum, Jesse Stone, Peter Mitchell, Matthew Quigley, Frank Reagan! A mustachioed Atlas, supporting the world of romance! TOM SELLECK! Finally, romance defined, at least to me, and so age-appropriate.

I have always been a fan of Tom Selleck. I met him back in 1984 in Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii. *Magnum, P. I.* was on CBS television. I worked for CBS Records, all part of the CBS Inc. conglomerate family. CBS Records had this massive worldwide convention that year at the Waikiki Hilton. The international division was hosting a party at the property known as "Robin's Nest," the estate where the show was filmed. We're all standing around partying, having an absolute uproarious time, when all of a sudden a helicopter comes in and lands! I had very long hair, was holding a drink, the wind from the chopper blew my hair across my face and I had no idea what was happening. Lots of cheering. I finally gathered up my hair and there he stood. That Titan, in practically daisy duke shorts, white no less, with a Hawaiian print shirt. Seriously?! I think I may have dropped my drink. My memory is still clouded.

OK, I've regrouped from the memory, although I admit my heart is still aflutter. Hierarchy staff was looking for



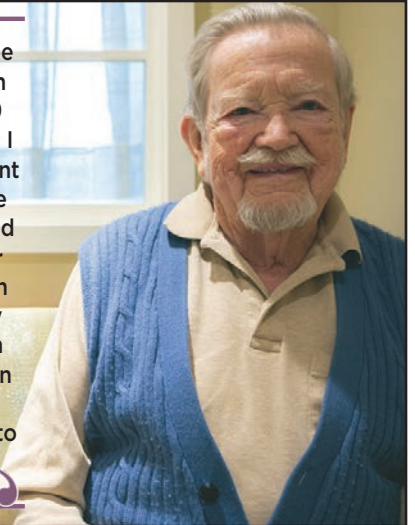
my boss, the President and CEO of CBS Records Group, for photos and a meet and greet. I found him, yanked him over to meet Mr. Selleck and other cast members. Mesmerizing. That's the word. Thick, another word. Tom Selleck was thick. His hair was thick curls, his mustache was thick, his eye bows, arms, and exposed thighs. He was tall, muscular, and imposing. He generated this dimple-embedded smile, from behind piercing brown eyes, as he shook hands. Anybody got a fan? We were introduced. His massive hand engulfed mine as he shook it. He towered over me, and I'm 5'9". After an invitation, the next day I attended a taping of the *Magnum, P.I.* show. I didn't have any interaction with him, I just watched and observed. What I saw was this extraordinarily handsome, breathtaking manly man exuding a very kind and gentle nature towards everyone on the set. He seemed fun, happy. I felt like I wanted him to be my friend more than any romantic entanglement. So, over these almost four decades I have watched him in movies, television, interviews, moderately following his career. Didn't matter if he was a cop, investigator, cowboy, or an architect. For me, he never lost that quizzical spark hidden behind that massive mustache and dark eyes. I even took out a reverse mortgage assuming he would come knocking on my door to sign papers. Instead, some guy from Scarborough named Jerry showed up. He was nice, but no Tom Selleck!

In closing, I conclude that whatever romance is, or whatever is romantic, and whatever is required to achieve it, is interpreted by each individual. I never experienced the real deal in real life. But I sure have had the full package fantasy. In answer to the annoying dinner question: Tom Selleck. And why? Because I think he would be a really good friend.

By the way, since he plays the police commissioner in New York City, and rocks that three-piece suit as much as he did those daisy dukes, I would absolutely meet him atop the Empire State Building for a tête-à-tête. He has aged so gracefully. According to St. Boneldo, it doesn't get more romantic than that. Happy Valentine's Day. •



I am a native of Maine going back three generations. I retired as an attorney in 1995 and came to The Park Danforth in 2009 along with Ellie, my wife of 58 years. Ellie and I were originally living in a market rate apartment and we couldn't have been happier. I lost Ellie in 2017 and moved to a government subsidized apartment at The Park Danforth about a year later. One of the appeals of The Park Danforth was the ability for me to remain in this lovely community with friendly people even though my situation had changed. The staff have been super attentive, and I have never regretted moving to The Park Danforth. My only advise to other people considering a move to The Park Danforth is.....Don't Wait!



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The Chewonki

It's not the program that changes kids. It's the relationships. The more caring adults in a kid's life, the better," says Izzy Jansen, 30. That's the big goal of the Chewonki Waypoint Program. Izzy is a coordinator for this unusual long-term mentorship program for students grades 7-12.

Izzy works with three groups of students in grades 8, 9 and 10 in Regional School Unit 1 (Bath, Phippsburg, Arrowsic, and Georgetown). Students join the program by submitting a short application. They are then picked at random to participate, although each grade's group is limited to 20 students. Students are encouraged to apply regardless of financial need, as there is money to support students who cannot pay for the program.

Once a part of the program, they will be together until they graduate from high school. That's six years of mentoring by Waypoint staff and volunteers and six years to develop leadership and mentoring skills of their own, a primary goal of the program.

Each group meets every other week after school throughout the year to work on the theme for that grade level. The 7th graders start out by discussing relationship building. Each year's theme builds a different skill until the final year, when 12th grade students learn how to be mentors for others. At each meeting, there is a core lesson as well as a team-building activity. Students often take the lead for part of the lesson, like when they do "shout-outs" to celebrate each other's accomplishments.

A person with a large purple backpack is sitting on a rock, looking out over a calm lake. The background shows a dense forest of trees under a clear sky. The person is wearing a dark jacket and a black beanie. The backpack is very large and full, suggesting a long hike or trip. The lake is still, reflecting the sky and the trees. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Waypoint Program

A long-term mentorship program for students grades 7–12

BY SUSAN OLCOTT

Many lessons include learning outdoor skills. During COVID, more meetings than ever have been held outside. Building outdoor skills fits well with Chewonki's strength as a Wiscasset-based non-profit educational foundation with a focus on outdoor education.

Chewonki has been around since 1915 with a variety of educational programs on site as well as outreach to schools, but Waypoint started just a few years ago. Waypoint is one of six programs around the state that are funded for the first six years by the Emanuel & Pauline A. Lerner Foundation, as a part of the Aspirations Incubator. The focus of all these programs is on mentoring and relationship building in Maine's rural communities. "Waypoint, with its six-year model, gives us an opportunity to work more deeply with students in our lo-

cal community than we ever have before," says Emma Balazs, Director of Maine School Programs.

Mentorship is crucial to the overall mission. Students build relationships with their mentors over the years. Volunteers connect with students through simple activities like attending basketball games, theater performances, or parent teacher conferences. COVID has thrown a wrench into some of those opportunities, so instead they might have tea by a bonfire or go for a walk. Participating in the students' lives is critical. The relationships built through the program often go beyond just the students and include the entire family. "Izzy has been an incredible source of encouragement to not only my daughter, but also to our family during a difficult time in our lives," says one parent.



Photo by Austin Muir

Throughout the program, “Students learn to think more critically about their own leadership styles and notice that there are lots of different ways to be a leader,” says Izzy. Part of the process is pushing yourself beyond what you think you can do. In a typical non-pandemic year, students would have several day-long trips as well as a culminating overnight expedition. “The overnight is outside of the comfort zone for most of the students,” says Izzy. “The first year, it’s on Chewonki Neck, which is just a mile from campus, but you feel really remote, and students get to try cooking over a campfire and sleeping in a tent.” While the students can’t do overnight trips right now during the pandemic, they are able to do plenty of shorter expeditions to build skills and confidence.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. As one 8th grade student put it, “Waypoint is a great community, and a great place to learn more about your community. Everyone there always makes you feel welcomed and safe. It always makes me happy, even when I’m not in the mood.” Another mother of an 8th grade student says that, “Our experience exceeded our expectations because my otherwise shy daughter looked forward to the groups each week.” The small group setting with adults that the students can trust and feel close to helps to make them comfortable enough to push themselves further.

The Chewonki Waypoint program is clearly reaching young people throughout the state and helping to develop leaders within schools and communities. “The dream,” says Izzy, “is for these students to go on to be mentors for the next generation.” •



Photo by Izzy Jansen

Izzy Jansen



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MAINELY TEETH

Oral hygienist Amber Lombardi drives miles for smiles.

STORY BY AMY PARADYSZ | PHOTOS BY GOOD MAINE

As Oral Health Coordinator for the Opportunity Alliance, Amber Lombardi was providing preventative care at Southern Maine schools—until the COVID-19 shutdown.

“I wasn’t sleeping, thinking about these hundreds of kids who I wasn’t going to see,” Lombardi says. “Some of these kids have emergent dental needs. Infections in their mouths. Rampant decay. Things that physically affect their whole body, how they eat, how they sleep. It was hard for me to accept that they wouldn’t get care.”

Rather than come to that acceptance, she ordered a trailer to be outfitted as a mobile dental office and went into practice as an independent practice dental hygienist, continuing to work with the Opportunity Alliance.

“This has been a dream of mine for the last 13 years, at least,” says Lombardi, 35, leading the way into her small but fully functional clinic on wheels. “I had been looking into it, and I said to my husband Mike, ‘I know we’re in a pandemic and that this is the most insane thing I’ve ever said to you. But I need to do this, and the time is now.’”

In some ways, Lombardi was destined for this work. She’s the only child of Marc and Judy Craig, a dentist and dental assistant. They saw patients in their Cheshire, Connecticut, office six days a week and went on emergency calls on Sundays. Marc Craig also traveled regularly to help run a dental clinic in Jérémie, Haiti, and he brought along his daughter once she was a teenager.

“That was my first real taste of public health work in action,” Lombardi says. “After high school, I took a gap year down there. I spent time in feeding clinics, weighing babies, and teaching about breastfeeding. I did eye exams. I would go into the mountains and do checkups with the doctors. We transported bodies for burials. The mission was to take care of the dying and to treat people who no one else wanted to treat. I was inspired by how they do healthcare in Haiti, treating people in homes and in the streets.”

More trips to Haiti punctuated her life in the family dental practice. Meanwhile, by the time she was 23, she was married and had a son. Less than two years later, she had a daughter born prematurely with special needs. Under those stressors, her marriage was failing and would ultimately end in divorce.

“When I told my dad I wanted to go to hygiene school, he suggested that I just work for him for the rest of my life,” Lombardi says. “I felt trapped.”

She drove up to Maine to apply to the new dental program at University of New England.

“I read about Maine’s demographics and about the immigrant population in Portland, and I felt like this was where I was supposed to be,” Lombardi says. “I went home and told my ex-husband that I was going to Maine. I said, ‘I need to do this, this is my dream.’”

And he let her go.

“Sometimes you just have to start over again,” says Lombardi, who moved to Maine in 2013. “I knew that I was starting over, with no money, no job, and two kids under the age of five. But I also knew—and this has never been lost on me—that I had opportunities that other people don’t have, have never had, and I knew that I had to use them to better myself to help other people.”

Three months of random temp jobs were followed by a position as a receptionist for Maine Medical Pediatrics Gastroenterology, where she referred patients to clinics all over Maine and asked a lot of questions that didn’t pertain to gastroenterology.

“But my daughter kept getting sick,” Lombardi says. “Her lungs were really weak. She ended up at Maine Medical Center, and I had to use up all my sick time—literally just across the skywalk at the same hospital. They told me they were going to have to let me go.”

Lombardi accepted a part-time job at a medical call center—and opened the door to people willing to help her and her children. The YMCA. Then the Boys & Girls Clubs and Our Lady of Hope. Nonprofits stepped up with childcare. With food. With winter coats.

“All these local grassroots organizations helped build me, helped build this,” Lombardi says, gesturing to the mobile dental clinic.

Not that dental school went as planned. First, Lombardi hadn’t taken her dental certification boards in Connecticut and had to redo her clinical hours in Maine. Then she had a big interruption—twice. She broke a wrist, which meant stretching her clinical hours out over two years. And then, a month before the board exams, she shattered her wrist again, breaking a bone that had a blood supply and putting her in a cast for a year.

Finally, she graduated in 2018 with a degree in oral hygiene—rather than dentistry.

“After the accident with my wrist, the longevity of my career was compromised, and I had to make a really hard choice,” Lombardi says. “Either I went back and did the full dental program after the hygiene program or I could focus on this. On public health.”

While at UNE, she’d immersed herself in public health, including leading a health program with a dental component at

Amber Lombardi, 35, of Portland is all smiles in her new dental health clinic on wheels.





Lombardi's focus area is children's oral health, nutrition and preventive care.

Cumberland County Corrections Facility. She volunteered at Preble Street, at Greater Portland Health, and at Milestone Recovery.

"I wanted to learn about what federally qualified health centers did, what nonprofits did, what it looked like to fund a clinic in a school," Lombardi says. "I needed to really understand the system enough to change it. Because every time I'd talk to someone, they'd say, 'But this is how it is.' And I just cannot accept that this is how it is, that dental care has to be a luxury, that you can only have great dental care if you have great insurance, if you have stability."

Her first job out of college was, in fact, running dental clinics out of public schools. Meanwhile, she enrolled in the public health master's program at Southern New Hampshire University and collected \$50,000 worth of dental equipment in hopes of starting a dental school clinic at the Cumberland County Jail in Portland.

"I had this whole dream," Lombardi says. "But it didn't work. See, I need this trailer. I can pull up, treat their inmates and pull back out."

Every setback, she says, propelled her forward. Even the part-time job at the medical call center, where she kept a tally of how many people called with tooth pain and how many ended up at the emergency room.

"I wanted to give them advice, but, legally, I couldn't," Lombardi says. "I knew, when I was at my lowest, that when I was able to, I would help those people. It lit a fire under me to have a mobile clinic."

Like her father—who is approaching retirement and planning a move to Maine to work with his daughter—Lombardi also does house calls and accepts patients that many others would turn away.

"I'm hoping to go help grassroots organizations," Lombardi says. "Like Maine Needs, Presente Maine, and the Maine Access Immigrant Network. My idea is that I'll be able to go into housing developments or outpatient clinics or church parking lots. I want to bring care to people and focus on Medicare/Medicaid and people who don't have insurance or who need a sliding scale fee. And, once my dad comes up and works with me, we'll be able to offer more extensive dental care."

Lombardi says that when she accepted the whole "it takes a village" mantra, the village was there for her. No one more so than Mike Lombardi, who became her husband in 2016.

"If I could put photos on the wall of how many people helped me get here to do this, my walls would be covered," Lombardi says. "Everything that I did, when I think about it now, it all happened the way it was supposed to. All the hard stuff had to happen for this to be what it is now. I'm really proud of it, and I hope that I'm in the community for a long time."

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SOPHIE HALPIN

Adding Value to People's Lives at Back Cove Financial in Falmouth

By R. Cook

As long as she can remember, Sophie Halpin has been passionate about protecting the environment and promoting social responsibility. At 28, Sophie has found a way to combine her passion with her skill as a financial advisor to help investors integrate their financial goals with their personal beliefs, concerns, and interests.

Sophie recently became the second financial advisor in Maine to obtain the Chartered SRI Counselor™ (CSRIC™) designation. This graduate level program provides investment professionals with a foundational knowledge of sustainable, responsible, and impact (SRI) investing to help clients find investment options that better match their values around issues such as mitigating climate change, addressing human rights issues, and prioritizing diversity of leadership.

"More than ever, investors want to use their money for the greater good by supporting companies concerned about the environmental and social impacts of their businesses," says Sophie. "As the SRI field grows rapidly to keep up with investor demand, it still lacks industry standards and can be difficult to navigate."

Sophie can also help investors steer clear of so-called "greenwashing" companies that want to jump on the SRI band wagon, but do not have a real commitment to those goals.

So how did this young woman who wanted to protect the environment end up becoming a financial advisor at Back Cove Financial in Falmouth?

Sophie said her journey began as a student at Deering High School in Portland where she joined an environmental club and really began exploring the Maine woods. There she developed a true appreciation of Maine's beauty and natural resources. Sophie went on to study Environmental Science as well as Green Building and Community Design at the University of Vermont before completing a year of volunteer service with AmeriCorps. Then she moved south to work for the Conservation Voters of South Carolina before coming back home to work for Maine Conservation Voters.

Although passionate about the work being done at the non-profit, Sophie found herself looking for the next step in her career in hopes of having a greater impact and a new challenge.



She began talking through possibilities and hopes with her mom, Sarah Halpin. Sarah, who is now a partner at Back Cove Financial, encouraged Sophie to pursue a career as a financial advisor. "My mom thought I had the right mind and personality to be a good financial advisor who could add value to people's lives," Sophie said. "The opportunity to build close relationships with clients, find solutions to their challenges, and join a field where there is always more to learn really excited me."

As the Halpins discussed working together, Sophie knew that she wanted to focus her business on helping investors use SRI investments.

Sophie, who now lives in Brunswick with her partner Alex, believes the enormous challenges that Mainers have faced in 2020 will make investors of all ages more interested in SRI options.

"Investing in companies that are well positioned to be successful in a more sustainable and transparent economy isn't just an ethical choice, it's smart risk management for your assets," says Sophie. "Climate change is increasing dangerous storm events that threaten our communities and we continue to see poor air and water quality caused by pollution threaten public health. This is happening during a unique recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and calls

for transparent labor practices, fair wages, and more rights for workers. Companies that can find the best solutions to these issues are going to attract loyal consumers now, while demonstrating that they have the flexibility and potential to outperform in the future."

Sophie also believes more people are learning that they can invest in companies who share their values without sacrificing the earning potential of their portfolios.

In Maine in particular, Sophie sees a perfect synergy between people who deeply care about our forests, coastlines, lakes, rivers, and mountains and companies that have increasingly adopted environmentally friendly practices.

Fortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has not prevented Sophie from moving forward with her career goals. She meets with her clients via Zoom and serves their needs, but she admits there is no substitute for face to face meetings.

Like her fellow Mainers, Sophie and Alex spent much of their time in 2020 camping and hiking. She said the couple made it a point to explore parts of Maine they hadn't experienced before. This winter, they will do their share of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities.

As she turns the page from 2020 to the promise of 2021, Sophie is confident that she will see more investors who want to boost their portfolios with more SRI investment options.

"As people work to make more sustainable and socially responsible choices in many aspects of their lives, it's just going to keep growing," Sophie believes.

Back Cove Financial is an independent, locally owned wealth management firm located on 56 Depot Road, Falmouth, Maine 04105. The firm is dedicated to creating an environment that is respectful, trustworthy, and empowering. Their professional advisors offer comprehensive wealth management to individuals and retirement plans. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser.

Sophie Halpin can be reached at 207.541.9500 and sophiehalpin@backcovefinancial.com.

FASHION IS LOOKING UP

Fresh Ideas from The Grasshopper Shop

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

Tired of lazy sweatpants and hoodies this winter? Looking for a more fashionable ensemble to change things up? The Grasshopper Shop of Rockland has you covered. The stylists there suggest two new looks to help give you a boost, combining comfort with presentability.

For these outfits and more, visit the Grasshopper Shop at 400 Main St. in Rockland.

This first outfit embraces both comfort and fashion, keeping you warm with an elegant cashmere shawl.

The durable Blundstone boots—created in Tasmania—are equally appropriate for nature walks and city blocks.



OUTFIT #1:

Zacket & Plover Cotton
Cashmere Shawl in Charcoal

Liverpool Jeans' Abby Ankle in Joplin

Blundstone Women's Heel #1671
in Black

Joy Susan North South Bag in Metallic

Joy Susan Aria Ring Bag in Black

Brighten things up during these cold, gray months with a beautiful Lulu-B coral sweater. For trips out, complement it with a Joy Susan Aimee front flap bag in red.



OUTFIT #2:

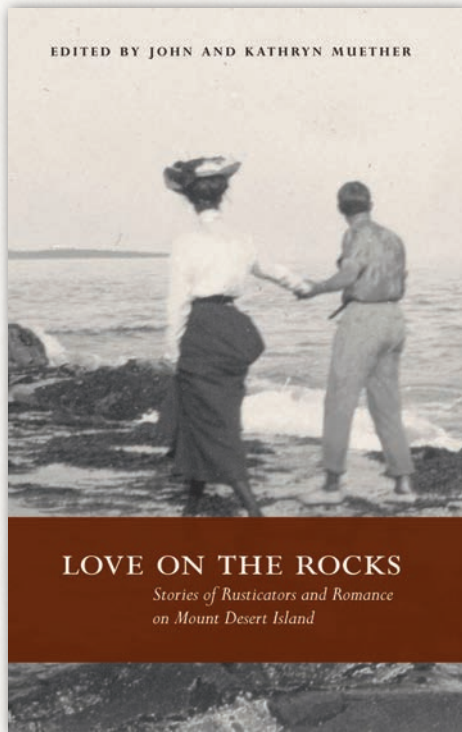
Lulu-B Button Detail
Sweater in Coral

JAG Jeans'
Cecilia Skinny
Night Breeze

Joy Susan Aimee
Front Flap Bag
in Red

Clarks Camzin
Mix Boots
in Dark Taupe

Kork-Ease Viki Boots
in Grey



Love on the Rocks
*Stories of Rusticators and Romance
 on Mount Desert Island*
 by John and Kathryn Muether
 \$15.95

Love on the Rocks celebrates Mount Desert Island in its golden age—the late nineteenth century—when it was a summer playground for wealthy out-of-staters, a place for the rich to meet their future husbands and wives.

This era in Maine history spawned a new genre of fiction that was commonly known as “The Bar Harbor Novels,” romance stories about the rich falling in and out of love during their summer sojourns.

After Newport, Rhode Island, the Bar Harbor region was the resort of choice for wealthy eastern Americans until the great fire of 1947 destroyed many homes and forested areas. The area dominated tourists’ itineraries when the population of the town and the island swelled each summer. The impact of the 1947 fires is still detectable in the Park.

Dramatic and romantic, these short novels helped intensify the area’s popularity. *Love on the Rocks* includes selections by authors such as Jane Goodwin Austin, Constance Cary Harrison, F. Marion Crawford, journalist Ervin Wardman, and Boston businessman and amateur poet and hymn writer, Edward A. Church.

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Bright red stems of Arctic Sun® *Cornus sanguinea* provide colorful winter contrast and interest in the landscape. *Photo courtesy Proven Winners*



Colorful fall foliage of Arctic Sun® *Cornus sanguinea* is just one reason to plant this native cultivar. *Photo courtesy Proven Winners*

A Pop of *Valentine Color* in the Winter Garden

BY LYNETTE L. WALTHER

There's a quiet solitude to winter. Our monochromatic landscapes lie hushed by a blanket of snow. It's easy to imagine the slumber going on, both above and below the frozen tableau. The beauty of its simplicity is hard to deny.

But there! What was that? A flash of red pierces the veil. Perhaps it is a cardinal flitting past, or a red-bellied woodpecker. Whatever it was, it demonstrates the power that a glimmer of bright color has on the garden in winter. Maybe in this month of Valentine's Day we've got red on the mind. We are bombarded with scarlet red hearts and bows and roses everywhere but in our gardens. And we want that touch of red to arouse our senses.

Now imagine where just such a flash of red could go to light up your landscape as it hibernates, both with or without snow. Forget roses for the moment, unless they are the florist kind. This is the dead of winter, and there's a different sort of Valentine red in the garden now. Whether it is mixed with evergreens or deciduous trees and shrubs, a colorful red twig dogwood shows its true colors this time of year.

Arctic Sun® *Cornus sanguinea* has bright red, orange, and yellow stems that enliven the landscape with or without snow. Even the fall foliage of this variety is colorful, making it a sought-after native cultivar in all seasons.

This variety is compact (three to five feet), making it a good fit for most landscapes. Largely trouble-free, Arctic Sun® works well as a hedge or in rain and cutting gardens. It can stabilize banks, too. *C. sanguinea* has fairly good deer re-



Above: Goblin® Red Winterberry Holly *Ilex verticillata* is a hardy dwarf variety with loads of brilliant red berries is perfect for smaller landscapes. Photo courtesy Proven Winners

Right: A fragrant landscape rose would be perfect for any Valentine. At Last® is a compact and hardy landscape rose. Photo by Lynette L. Walther



sistance but isn't quite as good as *C. sericea*. Still, it's a really useful plant that's hardy to USDA Zone 4 and grows in full sun or part shade, even in slightly wet or boggy areas.

Arctic Fire® red dogwood has beautiful red stems and a compact habit. It simply pulsates with color in the winter sunlight. This dwarf variety reaches just three to five feet, rather than the eight to 10 feet of conventional red twig dogwood. Its smaller size makes this variety a great breakthrough for smaller gardens or residential landscapes. It tolerates a wide range of soil and light conditions. You may want to plant a few extra to use in winter arrangements and holiday décor. It is native to North America and cold hardy to Zone 2.

Scores of brilliant red berries make Winterberry holly an awesome plant for winter landscapes, but many homeowners don't have room for a traditional variety. Berry Poppins® winterberry holly solves that, with a dwarf habit that can be used nearly anywhere. Native to North America, this deciduous holly loses its leaves every autumn, but it makes

up for that with a heavy berry display that truly shines in the winter landscape. A male pollinator is required in order to set fruit; use Mr. Poppins® winterberry holly. Other Winterberry hollies include Little Goblin® Red and Berry Heavy® and an orange-berried variety, Little Goblin® Orange.

We still need evergreens and other color in winter. *Physocarpus* and *Heptacodium* are more subtle options for winter interest. Their berries are great, too. *Viburnum*, *Callicarpa*, and *Ilex verticillata* have lots of personality in colder months. Not only do these landscape additions add color, but they provide winter shelter and food for wildlife.

While winter color is a great addi-

tion to any landscape, when it comes to Valentine flowers, there's no substitute for a rose. This year we have a new choice, a delightful addition to rose selections—a fragrant, disease-resistant, and cold-hardy landscape rose. At Last® is special enough to be designated as a Proven Winners' Rose of the Year. At Last® rose grows about three feet tall and three feet wide with masses of delicate apricot blooms. And deadheading is not necessary. It is hardy to USDA Zone 5, and like all roses it grows best in full sun.

This rose is spectacular as a specimen plant, but it also makes a great mass planting or hedge. Of course, we'll have to wait for summer for this one to shine. •



SMOTHERED BEEF AND ONIONS



Photos courtesy Jim Bailey

BY JIM BAILEY, THE YANKEE CHEF

Here is my all-time favorite dish. Well worth your patience and time, the preparation of true Smothered Beef and Onions results in fall-apart beef and the great taste of seasoned onions with beef gravy blanketing the entire dish.

In the classic preparation, you can use any type of stew beef because you simmer the meat until it's tender anyway. Here, I cut out this lengthy method and spice it up a bit. I present you with a dish that still is representative of classic Smothered Beef and Onions my grandfather and father made all the time, but with a pepper kick coming right alongside three different onions, with good tastes hitting you from every angle. Enjoy.

INGREDIENTS

Peppered Beef and Onion Shreds Marinade:

- 1 teaspoon cracked pepper
- 2 teaspoons sherry
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- Whisk all together well in a large bowl.



- 8 ounces cubed beef
- 3 tablespoons beef broth
- 2 teaspoons sherry, optional
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic in oil
- 1/2 small yellow onion, julienned
- 1/2 small red onion, julienned
- 8 green onions, cut into 2-inch segments

DIRECTIONS

- Add the beef cubes in the marinade that includes 2 tablespoons of the oil and let soak for at least 2 hours, if not longer.
- Meanwhile, whisk together beef broth, 2 teaspoons sherry, and tomato paste. Set aside.
- Heat remainder 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Remove meat from marinade and add to skillet with the garlic. Discard marinade.
- Stir fry meat until no longer pink in the middle, about 4-5 minutes, depending on how large the beef cubes are.
- Add the onions and cook 2 minutes longer, stirring constantly.
- Add the tomato paste mixture and cook one additional minute, stirring constantly, until thickened. Remove and serve hot. •



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QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

My husband and I like to make Valentine's Day plans together. Do you have any fun (safe) date ideas this year?

—Allison

Well, Allison, I'm a geezer, and geezers often (but not always) love the old-fashioned stuff sometimes, so that's where I'm going with this. A box of good Valentine's candy—like from a “candy shoppe” and not from a stacked-up pile in a big-box store—is always a hit. A letter (handwritten) with a list of “let me count the ways” from each other is also always a hit. Rose petals all over the marital bed are lovely, but they have to be cleaned up later. Lit candles are majorly dangerous. Best of all, ask your husband out to a great dinner without his knowing you've hired a barbershop quartet to come in during dessert to sing a couple of love songs, including, “Let Me Call You Sweetheart”! There won't be a dry eye in the house or the kitchen.

My husband made a snarky remark and immediately apologized, but I'm still peeved. I was getting ready to leave the house, and he commented on how long I was taking. I can tell he regrets it. Can I forgive him, even though I'm frustrated?

—Stacy

For that one tiny observation you're holding a grudge? Stacy, are you serious? You've got to be kidding. Do you ever read the newspaper or watch the news? Spouses do and say far, far worse things to each other routinely. You can “tell he regrets it”? Isn't that enough Stacy? Forgive him? Yes. You actually want more apologies? That's cold. He should forgive you for taking so long to get ready to leave the house and taking so long to forgive him.

This Valentine's Day looks to be a lonely one. I've lost someone I love, and I have been having a hard time. It doesn't help that I haven't been able to connect much with our friends for solace because they are quarantining. How can I get through this?

—Mia

Hello Mia: I'm so so sorry for your loss—a pain that will never go away but can be compartmentalized.

I think one of the hardest things people who are grieving have to hear is words coming from well-meaning and caring friends, and most are so hard to hear and so cliché. Even though you know they truly mean well, you're left with wanting to scream “STOP! DON'T SAY THAT!” And, of course, we can't do that, can we?

Having said all that, I'm going to give you a quotation from an author named Harriet Hodgson who suffered a loss such as yours and who's written many books on the issue of grieving.

She said, “If your grief is new and raw, please watch for signs of avoidance. Let the simple tasks of daily living comfort you. Find comfort in hobbies and helping others. Most important, find a middle pathway between occupying your mind and excessiveness. This path will lead you to a new life.”

I personally believe and know this, Mia. Right now, you don't have to do anything, but do ease yourself slowly into Harriet Hodgson's thoughts—they will comfort you, and they do work.

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We talk for a living, and now we're asking all Mainers to wear a facemask in public to combat COVID-19.

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Remember, we talk all day, so if we can wear one, so can you.



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What You'll Need.....

- 3 oz MEDCo Classic Lemon-Aid
- 1.5 oz Black Tea
- Squeeze of Fresh Orange Juice
- A Dash of Cinnamon
- Honey to Taste

Directions.....

- Add All Ingredients to a Shaker
- Shake Well
- Garnish With Star Anise and a Cinnamon Stick

*Serve Warm or Chilled



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