



Santas, Rev Your Engines!
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Holidays Past & Present

A Beatle Memory

By Jane Parks-McKay

The Beatles landed on U.S. soil and appeared on “The Ed Sullivan Show” on Feb. 9, 1964. Millions of us had a favorite Beatle. Mine was George.

We were living in Huntsville, Alabama, where my Dad was working on the space program. We knew Mom and Dad didn’t have a lot of money, so I didn’t expect much for Christmas that year.

Our family tradition was for my little brother and me to wake up early, put on our robes and walk out to the family room where the Christmas tree was, and where Santa had visited mysteriously over-night.

As I walked down the hall that Christmas morning, I heard music playing. When I came to the family room, I saw it: a brand new phonograph with a Beatles record playing. I was so surprised. I will never forget the tenderness of the moment. For years, Mom said she never forgot the look on my face that morning.

I played that album over and over until Paul Revere and the Raiders came on the scene. Then I fell in love with Mark Lindsay, the lead singer.

Eventually, we moved to California and I grew up. Once, on a business trip, I drove past the old Alabama house. Even though it looked past its prime, I could still feel the memories of a bygone time where we kids on the cul de sac cooked up all sorts of things to get us into trouble.

From time to time, I get nostalgic. A few years ago, I Googled the house’s address. The home had just been sold. I called

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THE SHORTEST DAY — The 21st could be the most important day of December. It’s the Winter Solstice, the shortest day and the longest night of the year, and the start of longer days on the march toward summer. Old Home Beach, Trinidad, Solstice eve, 2018. Ted Pease photo.

Humboldt Home for the Holidays

By Ted Pease

“Low-key” seems to be the theme of many holiday plans this year, as the pandemic keeps Humboldters at home and socially isolated.

“It’s going to be pretty quiet at our household,” said Jerry Patterson, 76, who lives outside of Eureka.

The Pattersons’ daughters and grandkids are in Southern California. Normally, the whole family — “about 20, with all the extras,” Jerry said — would be getting together for the holidays.

“No wild Christmas morning this year,” he said.

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ASK THE DOC

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TEDtalks: Brighter Days Ahead

Another year is just about done, for which many of us are profoundly grateful. 2020 has been a difficult year, and we have to hope that 2021 will be an improvement in terms of public health and national morale.

Maybe it's my advancing age, but the end of a year always comes as a surprise — "How did it get to be December already?" — but I'm glad to see 2020 go. This year feels like an unwelcome guest who has trashed the house, emptied the fridge, terrified the kids, set fire to the cat, totaled the car, made everyone ill and stayed 'way too long. Good riddance.

Because of the year we've had, this holiday season seems to be a little short of tinsel, cheer and a few elves. But in spite of the worsening pandemic and the body politic's ongoing nausea, it's hard for me not to be hopeful at the prospect of a new beginning.

The contributors to this month's Senior News Holiday Fest can help improve your mood, I predict. Even though Sheila Donnelly's dad firmly said "No" about the pony, it's still a story to make you smile (page 4). Many of us of a certain age (ahem!) can share Jane Parks-McKay's memory of getting the Beatles for Christmas (page 1), and remember those magical Sears catalogs and the joy of tinsel time (page 7). And I'll bet Brenda Cooper's mother was not the only one who was persnickety about her Christmas tree (page 3).

For some, Dec. 21 will be the most hopeful day of the month — maybe of the year. It will

be the "shortest" day of the year, when the Earth on its orbital arc swings farthest from the Sun and our days are more dark than light.

But then it starts back. "Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise," as French author Victor Hugo said. At 5:02 a.m. on the 21st, we'll start adding minutes of daylight, and head slowly back toward summer.

That's a happy metaphor for us to hold close as we wind up 2020. As the Earth and Sun demonstrate every year, dark days do start getting brighter. It's up to every one of us to help make that happen, whatever our personal philosophies or political preferences.

I confess to being an optimist, which I know annoys the heck out of some people. But I'm also a fisherman and a golfer, so optimism is a required part of my DNA.

Sometimes it's hard to see reasons for optimism, or even to get up some dark mornings. But I find that there's always something to make me smile. The guy next door just got himself a 9-month-old Dobie pup from the Animal Shelter in McKinleyville, and if that's not an act of faith and optimism in dark times, I don't know what is.

I'm not suggesting everyone take up golf or get a puppy (although both are mighty fine things to do), but I am wishing everyone joy and a brighter tomorrow. Me, I'm going crabbing. That always makes me smile.

—
Ted Pease is editor of *Senior News*.

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Kicking the Holiday Habit of Mom's Perfect Tree

By Brenda Cooper

Growing up in the Appalachian “hollers” of Tennessee during the Great Depression, my mother never had a Christmas tree. Her family's holidays didn't feature much tinsel.

But she sure made up for it by the time I was a kid.

By then, she and dad had moved north to work in the factories of Dayton, Ohio, during World War II, and although our holidays were still sparse and low-key in terms of gifts, Mom wasn't going to repeat those treeless childhood Christmases.

Mom had very high standards when it came to Christmas trees. Some might say extreme, even, in her quest for symmetry and perfection of limb and bough. My father was the maintenance laborer at a local factory, and he set up trees in all the offices every year. As a perk, the tree lot owners offered Dad any tree on the lot. And so began Mom's annual search for the perfect tree.

About a week before Christmas, we'd all head to the tree lot. For the next couple of hours, Mom would point at trees, and Dad pulled them out and twirled them so she could inspect them from all angles. Eventually, Mom would choose one.

But that was just the beginning. Next, Dad chopped off lower branches so the tree would fit in the stand, and then he'd twirl it again so Mom could point out the gaps. My long-suffering father would then nail those branches he'd trimmed off

into the holes Mom saw.

Eventually, the tree passed my mother's inspection and came into the house. Dad strung the lights and, if it wasn't past bedtime, my three brothers and I could start decorating the tree.

As they aged, my parents decided it was becoming too much work, and they reluctantly bought an artificial tree. These were still a lot of work — each wired branch had to be inserted into holes in the “trunk” and then spread out to fill the gaps.

By then, I had three kids of my own, and I'd take them to grandma and grandpa's to help put their tree together and spread out the branches. Dad still had to twirl it for mom's inspection and, once approved, he'd string the lights and my kids would help grandma do the decorating.

I wish I could say that I was never obsessed with the perfect holiday tree, but that would not be strictly true. For many years, I maintained my mother's exacting standards, inspecting, twirling, judging. One year, after installing a tree, I decided it wasn't big enough and took it back to swap for a taller one. And yes, I did cut off the lower branches and nail them to the trunk to fill in holes.

Over the years, I have kicked the perfect tree



HAPPY HOLIDAYS — Willie and Woody Cooper with their daughter Brenda and a “perfect” artificial Christmas tree in 2006. Submitted photo.

habit, I'm happy to say. We decorate houseplants now — ficus, mostly, and a 10-foot-tall cactus. But every season as we dig out a few favorite ornaments, I still get a little pang and think of Mom and how much joy she felt every year when her perfect tree was finally lit and decorated.

—
Brenda Cooper, 73, has considered how to decorate the redwoods outside her home in Trinidad.

10 Happy Years with a Big Friend Named Joe

By Laurene Thorpe

I will never forget the time I met Joe. I was 8 years old.

For as long as I can remember, I wanted a horse — not a pony, but a real horse. When we moved to the countryside near Hilton, New York, a rural area outside of Rochester, my dad made my dream come true.

It was Christmas morning 1958 when my father led me out of the house, my galoshes crunching on the snow, to the barn. There was Joe, a beautiful chestnut gelding. At over 17 hands, he towered over me, barely 4 feet tall on tiptoes.

When Joe lowered and stretched out his head to let me stroke his velvet nose, it was love.

My dad pronounced, “The first morning I have to clean his stall or feed him, he's gone.” I don't know if he meant it, but I believed him. My father never had to take care of Joe, not once.

I rode Joe the four miles to town, which still had hitching posts, and we had 250 acres so there was lots of room to ride. Joe was high-stepping and smooth; I even rode him in the July 4th parades.

Boy, that takes me down memory lane!

I had Joe for 10 years until I went away to college and moved from the area. We gave him to a neighbor family with a young daughter. They would pasture and take care of him for the rest of his life.

I never got home to see him again before he died at age 28, but I know he was loved by that little girl. And that makes me happy.

—
Laurene Thorpe, 70, remembers Christmases past from her home in McKinleyville.

'Dear Santa: We Want a Pony for Christmas'

By Sheila Donnelly

My Grandpa Ed O'Leary loved horses. He drove his matching team of shiny black Morgans to town and to church on Sundays. He refused to get a car.

But my dad and his three brothers were embarrassed by their father. On the other side of my family, our mother was a Callahan; her four brothers loved horses.

My dad made it clear to his 11 children that he wanted nothing to do with horses. When any of the Callahans visited, he made sure that none of his brothers-in-law sat in his La-Z-Boy chair, where the rich scent of horses would linger after they left.

We six younger kids all wanted a horse, although our five older siblings were not keen about it.

"No." Dad shook his head whenever we asked. "I hate horses," he said. "They are expensive and dangerous."

Mom agreed. "I saw too many times my brothers get kicked or thrown by a horse," she said.

But we fantasized about horses. Our favorite television show was "The Roy Rogers Show." We loved watching Roy galloping on his horse Trigger after the bad guys.

No horse for us. We made our own hobbyhorses, taking fallen tree branches, tying on bale twine, straddling the branch and racing up and down our gravel driveway on our "horses." At night, we tied



THE O'LEARY FAMILY, 1961 — Robert and Mary Ellen O'Leary's family in Minnesota. Sheila Donnelly is with her mom, third from left. Photo courtesy of Timothy O'Leary.

our stick horses with the twine to a fence.

Desperate for a horse, we reached out to Santa Claus.

Dear Santa,

We want a pony for Christmas, a Shetland pony, actually a horse; but we will settle for pony. We have a barn to keep the pony in and hay to feed it.

Merry Christmas!

Yours truly,

Kate, Steven and Sheila O'Leary

We addressed the letter to Santa Claus at the North Pole.

On Christmas morning, Steve and I ran out to the barn in our flannel robes, pajamas and rubber boots. We saw hoof tracks, and indentations in the snow, and larger human footprints.

"Santa was here!" Steve said.

But there was no pony in the barn.

"Dad must have come out and told Santa to take the pony away," Steve said.

We never asked for a horse again. The hoof prints were deer prints, and the indentations were not from Santa's sleigh. My sister Kate was hanging up Dad's winter parka a couple days after Christmas. In a pocket, she found our letter to Santa Claus. It had never been sent.

Knowing how disappointed we were, our Great-Uncle Ed Callahan invited all 11 of us for a ride on his large wooden sled pulled by his team of draft horses. It was a bright, cold, sunny day at 10 below zero, perfect for gliding across the snow pulled by Great-Uncle Ed's horses.

We were all bundled up, sitting on straw bales and covered with thick wool blankets. Afterward, we were invited in for thick ham sandwiches, potato salad, pickles, hot chocolate and cookies. It was the best Christmas gift.

—

Sheila Donnelly, 64, dreams of horses and Minnesota Christmases at home in Manila.

A BEATLE MEMORY . . . From Page 1



the county assessor's office, hoping they could refer me to the real estate agent who had listed it. I wanted to see photos of the old house. The assessor referred me to the new owner who had just bought it for her daughter. They didn't have any pictures.

Not long ago, I Googled the home again. The house was for rent, so I had a chance to see photos of what the home looked like now. Some remodeling had happened, but I still recognized the

place, especially the family room and the fireplace, still intact.

I revisited young memories. It was as if that crisp, cold special morning had just happened.

They say you can't go back, and you can't. But I will always be able to go back to that morning in my mind, and in my heart. That's good enough for me.

Jane Parks-McKay hums Beatles oldies in Santa Cruz and daydreams of moving to Humboldt County.

*Love, love me do
You know I love you'*

—The Beatles, 1963

ASK THE DOCTOR

20 Things for 2021

By Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.



2020 has been . . . interesting. It would be nice to think it will all be better come the stroke of midnight on Dec. 31, but it is doubtful coronavirus gives a hoot about our constructs of time.

I have been thinking about how to cope with this reality, and about what things I have learned from this year. Also, I wonder what things might make for a better 2021?

Along the theme of 20s (oh, those were good years, the 20s! no longer a teenager, but not quite yet carrying the weight of the adult world on one's shoulders. Sigh . . .), I have 20 observations to offer as a doctor during a pandemic, and as a human being who thinks science might actually have something to offer.

1. The vaccine for coronavirus will be available. It will offer some protection, and will get us closer to the holy grail of herd immunity.

2. The vaccine will not be available to everyone all at once. Scientists and public health experts will make sure it is distributed in the best way to help the most people possible.

3. Our job is to watch this process and make sure it is just, and hold our lawmakers to the highest standards of science and ethics.

4. The vaccine is not an instant fix. We will still have to wear masks

and physically distance ourselves.

5. Basic precautions like masking and physically distancing ourselves help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and reduce unnecessary deaths. If we follow these rules, we will do better as a nation (as other countries have demonstrated!).

6. Gathering with people outside your direct household without masking and distancing puts you and your loved ones at risk for disease and death. This is something to

consider with the holidays approaching.

7. Interaction with others indoors is much riskier than outdoors when with

other people not in your "pod."

8. Kindness has potential to heal our society.

9. Our neighbors and friends (and ourselves) might be lonely. Finding creative ways to connect with others is crucial.

10. Loneliness is of special concern around the holidays.

11. Our local public health officers have done tremendous work to keep us healthy. They might like to hear that from their community every so often.

12. Exercising and eating healthy foods remains a powerful tool for wellness — pandemic or no pandemic.

'Here's hoping for a 2021 that brings us closer together as a nation and community.'

Bulking Up at the Warehouse

By Ted Pease

We old folks have a reputation for shopping for good deals and overstocking. My mother-in-law, bless her, must have had 75 rolls of paper towels stuffed in every crevice and corner in her garage when she died.

Combine that frugality and desire for the security that a well-filled pantry provides with warehouse stores like Costco — especially during a pandemic, when we want to shop less and stock up more — and you may turned your home into a warehouse of your own.

But AARP points out that, with discipline and planning, shopping at warehouse stores can reduce your time in stores, limiting risk of exposure to the coronavirus, while landing some great savings on essentials that can easily offset annual membership fees.

Note three important words in that sentence: 1. Discipline, 2. Planning, 3. Essentials. Because warehouse stores are set up to entice shoppers to emerge with many more great buys than they came in for. And how many massive bundles of TP and paper towels do you really need (Mom)?

A recent AARP article lists five categories where smart shoppers can save, but let's eliminate the holiday bundles of bows, candy and gift baskets, and stipulate that you can save

a lot on big items like patio furniture and appliances.

But two other categories are worth considering. First, Costco's Eureka warehouse store has optometrists and audiologists on-site, and you can save a lot there on frames, lenses, contacts and hearing tests.

And the Costco pharmacy is worth the price of admission — especially since you don't even have to be a member to buy meds. Better yet, you can order your prescription meds online, and they'll deliver them to you.

A 2018 Consumer Reports study found that a month's supply of five common prescription drugs that would cost \$928 without insurance at chain pharmacies like CVS or Target was only \$105 at Costco.

As coronavirus infections and deaths rise, we are grateful to live in the relatively calm (knock on wood!) oasis of Humboldt. But we all should still limit our trips to crowded stores as much as possible. Remember Discipline, Planning and Essentials, and a Costco membership may be right for you. Also, you can easily make back your membership fee on gasoline and house brands alone.

Ted Pease is a semi-disciplined Costco member.



GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER? Crab season has opened for sport fishermen in Humboldt in time for the holidays.
Ted Pease photo.

Continued on Page 19



LIVE VIGOROUSLY

BY JOAN RAINWATER-GISH

My Next Big Thing

This is my last regular article. I've pretty much said what I wanted to say over the last three years I've been a columnist in the Senior News.

Before I go, I want to thank Ted, our illustrious editor, for saying "yes" to having my own column to write about my passion on how seniors can "Live Vigorously." He provided me a soapbox to put forth my ideas and, at times, let me "swipe at windmills."

Also, thanks to Liz, who manages to secure advertisements to keep Senior News free to our community. To the Senior News Community Advisory Council, which provides content ideas and support to our staff and writers. And to the Humboldt Senior Resource Center Board of Directors for its ongoing commitment to Senior News to ensure seniors have a voice in our community.

It was always my desire for seniors to read about what other seniors are doing to keep active. By highlighting seniors who were engaged in activities such as walking, hiking, kayaking, dancing, Tai Chi, weight lifting and more, readers might realize, "Hey, I could do that." I wanted my interviews of active seniors to motivate and provide role models to the rest of us, and maybe encourage us all to get up off the couch and move more.

Because moving is a key to aging well. It gets the blood flowing throughout the body, which benefits all of the organs, but is most im-

pactful to the brain, as it helps lift the mood, improves sleep, increases one's focus, lowers risk of Alzheimer's and reduces stress — which all helps to provide more energy and strength as we age.

I also wrote about other things that help us age better, such as consuming more protein, eating healthier and staying socially active. I wrote about things that are out of our control as we grow older, such as experiencing more deaths and how exercise can actually help us deal with grief and stressful events.

But throughout every column, there was always an underlying theme: Exercise.

As I conclude my career as a Senior News columnist, I want to thank my readers for providing feedback and accolades, you who have given me fame for a few days every month when Senior News hits the newsstands. Encouraging you to "Live Vigorously" has been an impetus for me to do the same.

So what's next? Well, I'm laying down my pen, lifting my dumbbells and getting ready to expand my fitness classes. My purpose is still to convince seniors that living with both strength and energy is an obtainable goal as we move through our "fourth quarter."

—
Joan Rainwater-Gish, 78, a personal trainer and senior fitness instructor, is expanding her senior exercise classes in Eureka.
Contact: jrainwatergish@gmail.com.

Chanuka, Festival of Lights

By Roz Keller

Chanuka (sometimes spelled Hanukkah) is a Jewish holiday celebrating the liberation of the ancient Jewish people from the Hellenist-Greeks who sought to assimilate the Jews into a Greek culture and religion.

Also known as the Festival of Lights, Chanuka is celebrated for eight days and eight nights starting on the 25th of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar, which occurs sometime in November or December in the Gregorian calendar.

This year, Chanuka starts at sundown on Thursday, Dec. 10, and ends at sundown on Friday, Dec. 18.

In Hebrew, the word Chanuka means dedication. Antiochus, the ancient Greek king of Syria, outlawed Jewish rituals and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 B.C.E., the Jews' Holy Temple was seized and dedicated to the worship of Zeus. Many Jews became Hellenized, assimilating into Greek customs, but some Jews opposed this assimilation.

The king sent his army into Jerusalem, slaughtered 10,000 Jews and outlawed the Sabbath day, Torah study and circumcision. A Jewish priest named Mattathias and his sons, who led the resistance, came to be known as the Maccabees, from the Hebrew word for hammer.

The Jews defeated the Greek army and purged the Temple of Greek idols. In the first-ever war for religious freedom, the Maccabees won independence from Hellenist rule.

After cleaning and repairing the Holy Temple, they prepared to light the menorah, or candelabrum, to

rededicate the Temple, only to find that there was only enough consecrated oil for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days, giving them time to prepare more oil to keep the eternal flame lit.

Chanuka traditions reflect these historic events. In non-COVID times, festive Chanuka parties of friends, families and within synagogue congregations are a highlight of the season. Each night at sundown for eight nights, friends and families gather to light candles in a Chanuka menorah, reciting prayers of praise and gratitude with each lighting. One candle is lit on the first night, two on the second night, and so on.

Traditional Chanuka foods are potato pancakes (latkes) and Israeli jelly donuts (sufganiyot), both fried in oil. Families play games of chance with a four-sided top (dreidle), each side representing a different word that together spell out a "Great Miracle Happened There." Songs in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and English are sung celebrating the holiday, and friends and family members exchange gifts.

Rabbi Wayne Dosick wrote, "Chanuka is a celebration of the uprising for religious freedom, a celebration of the rededication of the Holy Temple to the service of God, a reminder to continually strive for the cause of freedom for all people, and a celebration of the winter season and of bringing new light into places of darkness."

—
Roz Keller, 72, of Freshwater was HSRC development coordinator from 1992-2013.



Remembering Tinsel Time

By Louise Bacon-Ogden

When I was a child, my mom bought that real metal tinsel. We were on a budget, so she placed and removed each icicle so carefully each year. No one handled the tinsel but Mom.

Skip to my adulthood: tinsel was still popular, but now in thin wispy silver plastic strips. A slight breeze would “set it off.”

On one of my first Christmases, I set up a tree with those twinkle lights, some plastic ornaments and plastic tinsel. The cat was intrigued, sniffed the tinsel, which instantly stuck to her nose. She licked her nose and devoured the tinsel! (It was OK, as it

exited in silvery poops.)

From that day on, I stopped using that plastic stuff and have tried many variations of “icicles.” Ah, for the good ol’ days. They don’t make it like they used to.

Louise Bacon-Ogden *decorates her trees and feeds the birds at home in Eureka.*

Editor’s note: *Tinsel was a popular Christmas decoration as early as the 17th century, mimicking icicles in holiday décor. It went out of style as a Christmas staple during the 1970s, however, when the FDA revealed that most tinsel was made of lead.*

Those Magic Catalogs

By Jessie Wheeler

One of my fondest Christmas memories is of my sister and me with the Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs.

Every November, the waiting began: home from school on Friday evenings, we would look for the catalogs. There were no stores with Christmas decorations and toys in Bridgeville, so these catalogs, several hundred pages each, provided endless entertainment.

When they arrived, we could hardly sit still at dinner in anticipation of the joys of choosing what we wanted Santa to bring us. There was always a

big fire in the fireplace, and we would lie on the rug in front of it and peruse these magic books. They were magic, as they held all the delightful toys and books and games anyone could possibly want.

We discussed with excited anticipation what we would do with each item we chose. The catalogs were an evening ritual right up to Christmas.

This was the land before television. I still like catalogs to this day.

Jessie Wheeler *peruses her catalogs and dreams of sugar plums in Cutten.*

“There is nothing better than a friend,
unless it is a friend with chocolate.”

—Linda Grayson, *author.*

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PAINTING THE OCEAN

BY MARGARET KELLERMANN

‘He Knew’

One Christmas Eve when I was 8, we stayed with our grandparents at their Palos Verdes cliff house over the Pacific.

Strangely, that night, we three kids were expressly told to find our presents early Christmas morning without waking up any adults. Let me be clear: we were told to enjoy our Christmas toys without waiting for adult supervision.

This was a different kind of Santa Claus than we were used to, but we were totally fine with it.

I remember scampering out of our room into the living room, with the sapphire ocean just outside, feeling the awe of it all. The utter awe.

“He knew,” we kept whispering to one another.

We dedicated roughly the next 15 hours (what’s time to a kid at Christmas?) to a deep dive into playland.

First, I played with my four new trolls with their wild neon hair and a neat troll house modeled after the Swiss Family Robinson treehouse. My sister pranced around with her Malibu Barbie and her accessories: her tan, convertible, wardrobe, beach house, and boring boyfriend Ken, who owned several Hawaiian shirts and a change of shorts.

Instead of being jealous over my sister’s cache, I thanked Santa under my breath for not messing it up and doing a switcheroo. My broth-

er engaged with tons of G.I. Joe equipment: noisy Jeep, footlocker, machine guns, and two soldiers, so they could fight each other. Santa was amazing that year.

Second, our very cool Aunt Mary, a soon-to-be “retired” nun who had notoriously found a boyfriend (Mary let us know she was in love! and we kids were so happy for her), dropped in from another guest room while we were deep into our toys. In her black habit, Mary looked like the Flying Nun from TV

I thanked Santa under my breath for not messing it up.’

and Maria von Trapp from the movies. She got down on the floor with us, asking questions only kids usually have the prudence to ask: “Where’s she going now?” “What happened to him?”

Third, Aunt Mary helped us discover a three-paneled redwood partition that, we thought, had just been a backdrop for our toys. A gold sign read “Theatre” over a curtained window.

When we peeked behind the curtain, we discovered a dozen convincing hand puppets — a dragon, a lion, two puppies, a witch, a princess, a prince — waiting for us to make hundreds of stories with them, for years and years and years.

Margaret Kellermann, thanks to a FAR grant from Ink People for the Arts, is recording an audiobook of her novel, Annie California, this Christmas season. Contact her at bluelakestudio.net/contact.

Happy Birthday, Beethoven

By Dave Rosso

December is beloved by many because it is the month of Christmas. But to me, December contained a special day, and this December is even more special than usual — it’s the 250th birthday of Ludwig von Beethoven.

Fifty years ago, I took it upon myself to seek responses from a variety of musicians on the value of Beethoven on the occasion of his 200th birthday, in December 1970.

I got one response, a two-page letter written in Russian by classical composer Aram Khachaturian.

I was in my first year with United Press International in Washington, D.C., and our office was directly above the Russian news organization TASS, and one of the TASS staffers translated Khachaturian’s letter for me.

Here is the last part of his letter:

“They always play a lot of Beethoven in the USSR. Now in the jubilee year of Beethoven, the music of this great composer sounds in old schools, conservatories and concert halls of our country.

“Beethoven is very dear to us. The melodies of Beethoven have only a few phrases. But what kind of melodies they are! Moved by the philosophical mind of Beethoven, they give the scale for all humanity, so to say. They become a hymn for man — for his high humanistic ideals. In each

note of Beethoven’s music you may feel the great heart of this artist.

“In the middle of the last century, the great Russian writer, Nicolae Gogol, in his well-known book ‘Selected

Essays,’ from the letters to his friends, wrote: ‘All

compositions, in order to be good, should be born by the heart of the composer.’

“And for this to happen it is necessary that the artist should feel very deeply — should suffer if he wants to tell everything to the world.

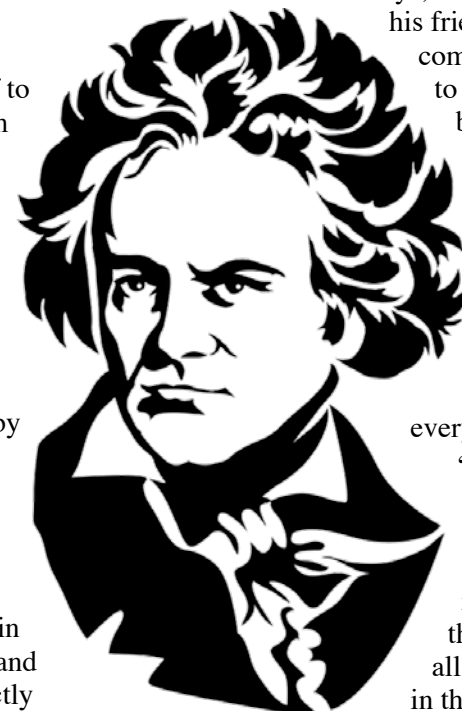
“Don’t take me too literally. I feel in my mind the suffering from the heart and in your own soul. I think that in this way all of the composers in the past and in the present whose names are

synonyms for the words ‘classical music’ created their compositions, and Beethoven is one of the giants of the creative process.

“That’s why that, while man lives, the music of the classics would ever live, and will bring us high ideals for fairness, goodness and beauty.”

Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) was a Soviet Armenia composer and conductor, considered one of the greatest classic composers of the Soviet era.

Dave Rosso, 77, is a music lover who listens to the classics at home in Cutten.



Grief & the Holidays: Find an Opening to Hope

By Julie Doerner

When we find ourselves in new circumstances such as this pandemic — even circumstances we did not choose and may not like — there is nonetheless an opening.

When what we have always done is no longer an option, room for something different appears. There is space to create a different way. There is an opportunity to try something unexpected, to stretch the envelope, to think outside the box.

Perhaps the masks, distancing, socializing outside, and refraining from hugs and handshakes have become normal to you, but probably not. Even for those who are now becoming accustomed to this new way of life, it continues to be challenging. There are so many small pleasures out of reach. There is so much we miss.

As the weather turns cold, days grow short, and holidays approach, the isolation and difficulties of this pandemic only seem to be increasing.

For those who are grieving the death of someone they love, recently or many years ago, the holidays often bring up feelings of longing and sorrow more intensely than usual. Losing social support due to the pandemic makes the heartbreak of grief more difficult than ever.

If you are feeling anxiety, stress or depression when you think ahead to the holidays, you are not alone.

So I invite you to experiment with the days ahead. I invite you to be curious, to be creative and willing to allow something completely different into the possibilities before you.

If you enjoy baking pies or cookies, but there is no one there to share them with, consider taking them to a neighbor or a food bank. If you have always wanted to try knitting or learn Spanish, if you want to rearrange your kitchen or paint a wall, well, maybe now, in this unexpected and unwanted opening, is the time to start. Possibilities are here for the holidays as well as year-round.

However you decide to celebrate the holidays this year, here are a few things that may help ease the weight of grief.

Make a plan for the day, and then be willing to let the plan go if need be. If other people are involved, let them know ahead of time that you may not be up for anything when the day arrives.

Consider stretching the holiday celebration into a week, rather than focusing on a particular day. This might help you experience the sentiment of the

holiday more authentically.

Be kind to yourself. This cannot be overstated.

Lower your usual expectations. Slow down. Simplify. Focus on what really matters to you.

And include the person, people or animal that has died into your day. Talk about them, or talk to them. Light a candle in their honor. Cook their favorite dish. Play their favorite song.

Tears may come. They probably will. And then they will subside.

In her poem “Wild Geese,” the poet Mary Oliver writes, “*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting — over and over announcing your place in the family of things.*”

You have a place in the family of things. You belong here and have something to offer, however difficult a day it is.

—

Julie Doerner is a grief counselor at Hospice of Humboldt in Eureka. She can be reached at 707-267-9801.

SANTAS, START YOUR ENGINES!

Many holiday favorites are canceled this year because of the virus, but two joyously noisy outdoor traditions are revving up their sparkly lights. In a year when physical distancing has eliminated many holiday gatherings and festivals, parades are a safe way to celebrate. The 32nd Truckers Christmas Parade will growl through Eureka on Saturday, Dec. 12. It starts at 6 p.m. from Redwood Acres on Harris Street to I Street to 7th to Myrtle. And Ferndale's Lighted Tractor Parade (a sample from 2019 at right) wends its way along the Victorian Village's Main Street on Sunday, Dec. 20, starting at 6 p.m. Wear masks! Mark Larson photo.





AGING IS AN ART — BY JOHN HECKEL

A Painful Insight

Last month, Janet and I went on our first COVID-19 road trip. Our plan was to spend three days in Sacramento visiting with my stepdaughter and her daughter, my granddaughter, then four days in the Eastern Sierras visiting with a longtime friend, and then finishing up with four days on the Mendocino coast.

Days before our planned departure, my left knee gave way to one of a myriad versions of arthritis, of which the major symptom is an excruciating burning pain. We discussed not going. Some overly masculine aspect of me spoke and assured Janet I could handle the trip. By the time we got to Sacramento I could hardly walk, the pain was intense, and some more nurturing aspect of myself was asking for help.

It was that nurturing aspect that asked for a wheelchair when we all traipsed off to the Sacramento Zoo. The zoo was our solution to how to be together amidst all the COVID-19 protocols. My extreme pain, mingled with a strong desire to spend time with my granddaughter, made me okay with using a wheelchair, a difficult and vulnerable process.

The wheel chair rental was \$15.00, a bit pricey, I thought. I was assured, however, by an enthusiastic young man, “that rental fee is good for the whole day.” At best, the Sac-

ramento Zoo is a two-hour experience, even with a 3-year-old.

So, there I am, for the first time in my life in a wheelchair because I need to be, experiencing an instantaneous flood of emotional vulnerability.

My vulnerability was deepened by being aware that the ground was no longer my friend, that cobblestone lanes in a zoo that should be ADA-accessible were not a good

‘This all led to an entirely new level of awareness.’

idea, and that the Sacramento Zoo’s rental of dysfunctional and antiquated wheelchairs was a really bad idea.

This level of vulnerability was further deepened by my need now to consistently look up at adults, and realizing that I was now staring directly into the eyes of the many children now staring at me.

This all led to an entirely new level of awareness and appreciation for those who struggle with these issues everyday, and the insight that, sometime in the very near future, I may also need that kind of help on an everyday basis.

In the end, I hope the burning pain in my knee goes away, but that the resulting two-hour Sacramento Zoo-inspired insights remain.

John Heckel, Ph.D., 73, a retired HSU theater and film professor with a doctorate in psychology, hobbles around home in Eureka.

HUMBOLDT LIBRARY FOUNDATION BUY A BOOK



Photo courtesy Cindy Denbo

As we look back at Holiday Gala’s Past, we remember HLF Board member, Marge Custis, the best fundraiser in the County.

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HSRC News

Gardener says, 'Helping People Is What's Important'

By Janet Ruprecht

When Ben Bridges was a boy, he had to wear braces on both feet.

One day, his mother took them off and handed them back to the doctor. Later, Ben was scooting down the stairs on his bottom when suddenly he stood up. He had feeling in his feet! He walked. He says it was a miracle.

These days, Ben is a soft-spoken gentleman of 63. A dedicated gardener, he lives alone in a cottage in McKinleyville surrounded by flowers and 112 cactuses. He began growing things when he was 8 with a crop of radishes.

"I adore plants more than anything," Ben said. "They teach you so much about life. When I work in the yard, it is such a blessing."

For years, Ben worked as a landscape gardener and volunteered as a beekeeper. Now he tends his own garden, which covers nearly every inch of space surrounding the house and cluster of cottages where he lives. He doesn't drive, although he used to have a bicycle with a motor that he enjoyed.

Ben was excited to be interviewed for the newspaper. "It is an honor," he said. "Seniors have valuable stories."

He connects listening skills to gardening. "Listening to everyone's story is what makes a good gardener,"

he said. "I communicate with the plants. I tell them the stories."

His own story has not always been a happy one. Several years ago, Ben said he was not taking good care of himself. He took a life skills course, and one of the goals he set was to get food regularly.

As a result, Ben was referred to the Humboldt Senior Resource Center's Home Delivered Meals program. Like many participants, he enjoys his interaction with the driver who delivers his meals as much as the food.

"I really appreciate all of the people who help with the meals," he said. "I consider them to be part of my family."

Ben was nervous as we started to talk. He'd given a lot of thought to what he wanted to say.

"I want to get it perfect," he said.

He's concerned about our culture and the state of the world. "Helping people is what is important," he said. "If you do that, you can't miss the boat."

Janet Ruprecht, HSRC's development coordinator, reminds readers that for as little as \$25, you can help provide meals to a homebound senior for a week. Call 707-443-9747, or donate online at humsenior.org.



Ben Bridges in his garden. René Arché photo.



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Picky Christmas Eaters Can Change

By Julie Fulkerson

Christmas dinner, I realize, is a metaphor for my life. I've shifted 180 degrees but it took many holidays to get there.

My grandparents' values and preferences were the foundation for traditional holiday dinners. I had to taste everything and not waste food. Chinese children were starving, they told me. At Christmas, this was the saddest image.

There were countless ways for me to find offense at this special occasion. My father always asked my mother if the turkey was bleeding under the armpit — his way of determining if it was done. I loved the white meat; it took years to discover that the dark meat was the best. No adult ever suggested that.

I'm not sure why I was so picky at holiday dinners, but Christmas dinner assembled combinations of food designed to make me cringe.

Because two very different sides of the family came together, we had duplicates of every side dish. My mother's mother was a Puritan in all meanings of the word. She was a terrible cook who insisted on figgy pudding steamed in a scary metal mold.

My father's mother had been a lumber camp cook in a tent in the woods outside of Bullwinkel, who cooked enormous portions fit for a lumberman.

We had two kinds of gravy: white and creamy next to giblet gravy with chunks of internal organs. Lovely jelled, molded cranberries shared a bowl with unappealing chunky cranberries with skin, seeds and lumps.

For the British side of the family, we had

aspic molded salad, likely the worst of all dishes. My cousins and I had an alternative pronunciations for *aspic* that we thought was hilarious.

In case you have not encountered aspic, it is tomato juice, gelatin, chopped celery and green olives. You cannot top it with enough mayonnaise to disguise it. One favorite memory was the year one of my father's students came for dinner and ate the entire mold. It wasn't until he had finished the bright red gelatinous mass that he realized it was to be shared. None of us said a word. There might have been a collective sigh of relief.

Sweet potatoes with marshmallows? A great way to ruin a marshmallow. Boiled onions and squash were the worst. Chunks of margarine helped. I still remember the feeling of it stuck in my throat, trying to figure out how to get it out.

Even the pies were torture. Pumpkin and mincemeat pie. Neither appealed to me. Really, *squash* pie? Meat in a pie? Venison to be specific. Bambi?

The wishbone drying on a hook never interested me. Now I do not eat turkey and do not count on luck for anything.

I did get over my pickiness. Today, its American children who are starving, and I do not waste food. Now the holiday dinner includes stir-fried tofu with sweet potatoes, shallots, kale and curry, homemade bread and crab caught by my sweet brother, Tom. Martinis with green olives . . . on the side.

Julie Fulkerson enjoys her vegan meals at home in Eureka.

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The See's Community Fund will donate a portion of the proceeds of candy sales to the Humboldt Senior Resource Center's Nutrition Program. This means that your sweet

tooth will help feed homebound seniors who cannot cook or shop for themselves.

For 14 years, See's Community Fund Board member Stan Smith of Stan Smith Insurance Services has been personally delivering the boxes of candy to Pierson's, which donates its space and labor, and sells the candy without markup.

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A Glittering, Joyous Memory

By Jan Ostrom

Christmas has always been my favorite holiday. Throngs of excited shoppers “dressed up like Eskimos,” the green trees with sparkling lights and anticipated gifts, ribbons and wrappers flying on Christmas morning. A big mess that mom cleans up, saying, “Oh, we could save this paper, it’s still good.”

My favorite Christmas ever was in 1958. We lived in Girdwood, Alaska, a little village off the mudflats of Turnagain Arm, south of Anchorage, where my dad was a railroad foreman.

It was a quick stop for the Alaska Railroad line, dropping off mail and machinery and bulk supplies for the area. A handful of houses made of solid timbers and rock surrounded the “depot,” which was actually a saloon called The Big Dipper. The Dipper was half bar, half community center; the back area with a jukebox was open to us kids from the one-room school who waited for rides home in the afternoon.

The Girdwood School had 15 students, grades 1-10. I was in 8th grade. Our teacher was Miss Nell Verlaine, a young woman from Florida who had “yearned to escape the palm trees and ennui,” and welcomed the snow like a thirsty puppy, exhorting us to “feel the snowflakes on your tongue.”

Darkness doesn’t “fall” in the winter in Alaska, it changes from dark to dusk from about mid-morning to mid-afternoon, and then back to black. Traditionally, Alaskans give gifts of warm clothing, lined boots and gloves, and earmuffs.

Trees inside and out are decorated for the holidays, with long extension cords running like



AN ALASKA ADVENTURE — A 13-year-old Jan Ostrom at the Bird Station railroad stop in 1958, about 40 miles from Anchorage, with a puppy named Jack and her mom, Trixie. Submitted photo.

tentacles from garage generators to the surrounding woods. The glint of red and green on the snow proved magical, mystical, to a California kid of 13.

Christmas Eve featured a huge bonfire that flamed all day and ‘way late into the night, with a backdrop of luminous stars. A few curious moose watched, wandering around the edge of festivities, almost unnoticed. The Big Dipper was jammed, the jukebox blaring, people dancing and singing.

At 6 p.m. the train out of Moose Pass stopped as usual, but instead of a mailbag, a tall skinny Santa in full red suit popped out of the caboose with bags of gifts for everyone, even teen non-believers! Toys, sleds, dolls and bottles of Jack Daniels tumbled out of his bag. It was an overwhelming experience, a joyous, unique Christmas memory to this day.

Jan Ostrom, 74, a retired professor of film and television, enjoys holidays without earmuffs at her home in Eureka.

Where does Santa shop?

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HSRC Programs & Services Update

Administrative Services: Open as usual, but please call 707-443-9747 before coming to our Eureka campus and we will assist you remotely if possible. We have locked the doors of our buildings, but staff are available for on-site assistance.

Activities Program: Firewood vouchers are sold out; the program has been discontinued. Senior Home Repair is now open for Eureka residents. Call the Senior Services Office at 707-443-9747, x1240, for information about Dial-a-Ride tickets. All other activities are suspended until further notice.

Adult Day Health & Alzheimer's Services: Modified services are offered; Day Centers are closed. Staff available by phone. New referrals are being accepted.

MSSP (Multipurpose Senior Services Program): Services continue, but contact with clients is primarily via phone. Staff are available by phone. New referrals are being accepted.

Redwood Coast PACE: Open in Eureka and Fortuna; Day Centers are

closed. Staff are available by phone. New referrals are being accepted.

Senior News: Open as usual. Free copies available at some area groceries and businesses, but many regular distribution sites are closed. Available online at humsenior.org. Subscriptions, \$20/year. Call 707-443-9747 with credit card info, or mail a check to 1910 California St., Eureka CA 95501.

Nutrition Program: Status of HSRC Nutrition services:

Home Delivered Meals service continues. *Fortuna meal pickup schedule has been adjusted for the week before Christmas. (See below.)

Senior Dining Centers continue to provide take-out meals via weekly drive-by pickup only. Meals are available by **reservation only** for those 60 and older and their spouse. Reservations must be made no later than seven days prior to pick-up day. Call the Senior Dining Center of your choice below for reservations or for questions about menus. Each package includes a variety of five meals. Pick-up schedules:

Arcata: Arcata Community Center, 321 Martin Luther King Parkway, Wednesdays 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Drive to the main entrance on the north side of the building; an Arcata city staff person will direct traffic, and provide directions for those on foot. **Reservations: 707-825-2027.**

Eureka: 1910 California St., Tuesdays 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Enter the parking lot from California Street and staff will direct you. **Reservations: 707-442-1181.**

Fortuna: Gene Lucas Community Center, 3000 Newburg Road, Thursdays from 12-12:30 p.m. in front of the Fortuna Senior Center wing; staff will bring the meals to you. *See change for Christmas week below. **Reservations: 707-725-6245.**

Information may change without notice. For questions regarding any HSRC program, call 707-443-9747.

We thank community members for their understanding and flexibility during this time.

*Fortuna Meal Pickup Christmas Week

Fortuna meal pick-up will be Tuesday, Dec. 22, from 12-12:30 p.m.

Commodities Distribution

Arcata: Thursday, Dec. 17, 10:30-11 a.m., Arcata Community Center, 321 Martin Luther King Parkway.

Eureka: Wednesday, Dec. 16, 10-11:30 a.m., Humboldt Senior Resource Center, 1910 California St.

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Season's Greetings

Eureka Mayor: 'Dear Friends'

By Susan Seaman

This has been a difficult year for everyone, and I think our retired seniors have had to bear a unique burden facing this pandemic.

Unfortunately, things will get more difficult as the year progresses and the weather gets colder. Gardening and walks around the neighborhood will be less manageable. Holidays, which are often an anticipated celebration for families who don't live near each other, are either being cancelled or hold risks that are especially dangerous to seniors.

I say this not to make things worse, but to thank you. Thank you for your sacrifices during a time when we need to be especially aware of how our activities affect those around us — including those who are most at risk.

COVID-19 has been hitting many areas of our country hard, and we've been fortunate in Humboldt County that it's been creeping in slower. That makes the sacrifice harder, doesn't it? The more successful we are at keeping it at bay, the more frustrating it is that we can't go back to normal.

The good news is that it really will end eventually.

There's a promising vaccine and we can make plans for a glorious celebration with family when that happens.

Until then, use the time around the holidays to take joy in the quieter things, like sending Christmas cards or baking holiday treats — especially for your senior friends who may be feeling lonely.

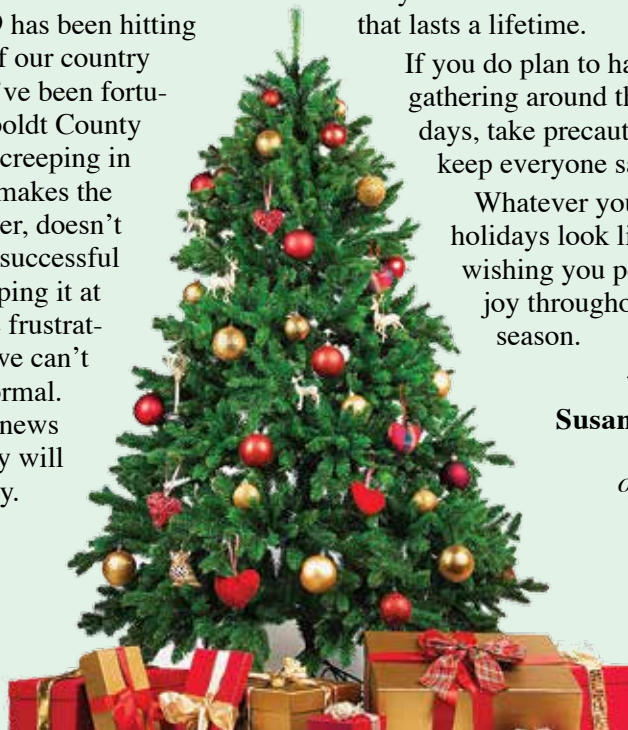
Be open to new activities, like sharing holiday stories with the family through video conferencing. Technology is not always easy and certainly can't replace a hug, but you can also have some memorable experiences together.

Spend some time journaling, or recording, your favorite holiday memories and share them with your family. That could be a treasure that lasts a lifetime.

If you do plan to have a gathering around the holidays, take precautions to keep everyone safe.

Whatever your holidays look like, I'm wishing you peace and joy throughout the season.

—
Susan Seaman
is mayor of Eureka.



CR President: Pulling Together

By Keith Flamer

College of the Redwoods would like to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

What a year we've had! We are extremely proud of all of our students who have persevered through the trials and tribulations that came our way in 2020 to continue their pursuit of a college education. Our faculty and staff's commitment to their education has likewise been impressive. Many of them have been working overtime to make sure our students feel supported and encouraged in their journey.

But we couldn't have done it alone, and we greatly appreciate the generosity of those in our Humboldt community who donated this year to support both our Redwoods Room & Board Scholarship Program that provides housing and meals to our CR students who face homelessness and

food insecurity, and to our Chrome-book Lending Library, which allowed us to provide much-needed technology to those students who are now taking classes from home. Without your support, many of these students might not have been able to continue their education this year.

Although most of campus is working remotely, we are all still working hard to move CR forward.

We want to thank you again for all of the support we've received from our community this year and we look forward to 2021 being a hopeful year for our students, our communities and our country. We're all in this together!

—
Dr. Keith Flamer *is president of College of the Redwoods.*

Rio Dell Mayor: 'Bright Spots'

By Debra Garnes

As we close out this crazy year, let us be thankful for the bright spots we were able to experience.

We still live in one of the most beautiful places on earth, a place that has beautiful outdoor spaces where we can safely spend time with a few friends.

We still live in a county where COVID-19 hasn't overrun us or our hospitals.

We've learned that virtual reality is now reality, but it allows us to see

each other even when we're apart.

So yes, while this was a very hard and sometimes sad year; let's look to the future with hope and optimism that we will be giving each other hugs very soon.

Stay safe, mask up when going out and have a wonderful and warm holiday season.

—
Debra Garnes *is mayor of Rio Dell.*

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A Grandmother's Gift

By Ralph Nelson

My grandmother came to live with us in South San Gabriel when I was 2. She was 72. Grandmother came to us with no income and few belongings, yet she was the most giving person I have ever known.

Her church always held an annual Harvest Gathering. To support it, she went through the local neighborhood seeking contributions, then expanded into the hills, about a mile away, where families from the Dust Bowl states had settled in temporary shacks and tents.

Her visits went far beyond soliciting donations. Wherever she saw a need, she helped, whether it was to clean house, cook a meal, mend clothing or anything else that was needed. Her presence in the community was a familiar and welcome sight.

What I best remember is her allowing me to count the coins tied

into a handkerchief during the Harvest Gathering. I would sort out the pennies, nickels and a few dimes. The amount was usually small, given by people who had little to spare.

An immigrant from Norway, my grandmother married my grandfather in Iowa. She was the first white woman in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where she gave birth to eight children. Three died in infancy. She experienced frontier hardship and persevered.

My grandmother continued her own brand of outreach by walking the hills well past her 80th birthday.

Whenever I think of giving, I think of my grandmother, who gave so much.

Ralph Nelson, 91, reflects on life lessons from his home in Eureka.

Holiday Generosity

Many people are attracted to the idea of a day of generosity after the consumerism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

The first Tuesday after Thanksgiving — Dec. 1 — is Giving Tuesday, a day that encourages people to do good. It is a global movement that inspires people to give, collaborate and celebrate generosity.

Because Giving Tuesday has been embraced by tech companies as well as nonprofits, much of the giving is online, especially this year. In 2019, a total of \$1.97 billion was donated to good causes on Giving Tuesday.

If you would like to participate in Giving Tuesday this year by helping seniors be healthy and independent,

we encourage you to give to Humboldt Senior Resource Center online at humsenior.org — click on the "Donate" button. Of course, you can donate anytime — it doesn't have to be this particular Tuesday.

The way to make the most impact is by becoming a monthly supporter. If you sign up online, your gift will automatically be deducted once a month from your credit or debit card. It is convenient, safe, and easy.

If you don't want to make your donation online, call us at 707-443-9747, or mail your check to Humboldt Senior Resource Center at 1910 California St., Eureka, CA 95501.

Have a safe, healthy holiday and a happy new year.

—Janet Ruprecht

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS . . . From Page 1

We'll have to settle for a Zoom Christmas. But all of us staying healthy is the best gift we could give or receive."

Other folks say they plan "new traditions" of outdoor walks with spouses or partners, or strung out along a trail, safely distanced, with a few friends or family members. Some say that they've walked more since the pandemic, which is healthy both physically and mentally. And some have seen parts of Humboldt they'd never visited before.

One McKinleyville woman paused in loading her groceries in the Safe-way parking lot to describe the Zoom Christmas carol singalong with family and friends that she's planning.

"That's if the kids will sit still long enough to sing at the computer with grandma," she said.

This isn't the first time that Christmas has been canceled, although the motivations in 1647 were political when the English Protestant Reformation outlawed holy days, including the festivities of the 12 days of Christmas. Feasting, celebrations, holly and ivy decorations and all the usual traditions were banned. Riots ensued, as you might expect.

Happily, Humboldters are reacting to this year's COVID-induced holiday restrictions with less drama.

"I love quiet holidays, so this is a good excuse to stay at home and simply reflect," said Julie Fulkerson, who is still tired from serving as a poll worker during the recent election. "No turkey, no mess."

Her day will focus on "music, reading, puzzles and provocative questions," she said.

Up in Orick, Marna Powell's 22-year tradition of a "huge open house" has been canceled. "The 'No-Stress Annual Christmas Party' would have been extremely stressful this year,"

she said. "Honestly, I'm not sure I can do the small family dinner this year, but with the deck heater and the fire pit, we can probably pull off something during the day, if the weather allows," Marna said. "Wishing you peace, love, good health and fresh air."

Several Humboldters are leaving town for the holidays, but it's not to violate physical-distancing rules for virus-rich family gatherings.

"This year I am hoping to be SCUBA diving on Christmas day," said Elan Firpo of Eureka, who is still deciding where. "No COVID under the sea, and I won't be able to get together with my family, so it makes sense to enjoy my favorite sport."

Like many, Suzanne Simpson of Arcata is at a bit of a loss without the usual gatherings of friends over a festive potluck dinner. "It was always so special," she said. "Not this year!"

"We'll just hang out and take a walk with the dog at the beach if it's not pouring," she said. "Very low-key! I'm going to miss all the hustle and bustle that the holidays bring."

"Not sure if we will put up a tree," Suzanne said. "I know I will miss it if we don't."

Another Arcata-area resident — "just call me John" — is looking forward to a little peace and quiet after nine months of pandemic punctuated by political divisiveness.

"What I want for Christmas is peace on Earth," he said. "If ever there was a year when we all need to take a breath and do a little Zenning, this is it."

"Maybe a lot of Zenning."

Ted Pease plans to enjoy the holidays outdoors as much as possible with his wife and dog, rain or shine. And maybe a little socially distanced crabbing off the beach.

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Light Up a Life

Hospice of Humboldt offers its annual Light Up a Life celebration virtually this year on Wednesday, Dec. 2, at 5 p.m.

The 35th remembrance of loved ones will take place virtually this year, on Access Humboldt/Channel 11, and on Hospice's website (hospiceofhumboldt.org) and Facebook and YouTube pages.

"Although we may have to stand physically apart as a community, our hearts can be united in celebrating the memories our loved ones," Hospice's Christine Miller said.

The ceremony will include reflec-

tions from Hospice speakers as well as musical offerings by Elizabeth Smith, Mary Isis, the Threshold Choir and Hospice Chaplain Taylor Hagbo. As always, the submitted names of loved ones will be displayed as part of the candle lighting.

The names of loved ones honored during the ceremony will be listed in the Times-Standard, and displayed in four locations in the community through the first week of January

To honor a loved one or learn more about the 35th annual Light Up a Life celebration, call 707-445-8443 or visit hospiceofhumboldt.org.



OUT TO SEA — Sport fishermen launch their skiffs and kayaks off the beach in Trinidad in pursuit of Dungeness crab for the holidays. Ted Pease photo.

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ASK THE DOCTOR . . . From Page 5

13. Women are bearing the brunt of this pandemic, often juggling work with home-schooling their children and keeping households running. Is there a mom you know who might need some support right now?

14. Women are also seeing higher rates of domestic violence during this pandemic. There is a local support line, Humboldt Domestic Violence Services: 707-443-6042 or 866-668-6543 (toll free).

15. People of color and indigenous populations remain at higher risk for complications of COVID-19. We must continue to work toward equality in our nation, communities, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces.

16. People who work in “essential businesses” should never have to ask their customers to wear masks, and certainly should not face being attacked for suggesting it.

17. This pandemic will eventually end — sooner if we work together.

18. Getting routine medical care, eye exams, dental care is still important. Just make sure to mask up (except when the dentist is working on those choppers or your doctor asks you to say “ahhh”), and to stay home if you feel sick.

19. Kindness, which I have already mentioned, needs several doses per day.

20. And this kindness should extend to yourself.

Please take care, stay strong, support essential workers, support each other and hang in there.

Here’s hoping for a 2021 that brings us closer together as a nation and community, even while masked and physically distanced.

Dr. Jennifer Heidmann is medical director and primary care provider at Redwood Coast PACE (707-443-9747). If you have health questions, ask your medical provider. Send comments to seniornewseditor@humsenior.org.

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Ho Ho Ho! 'Tis the Season for Scammers

By Pat Bitton

You know how it goes. You've just gotten home. You're tired. You're distracted. The phone rings. You don't recognize the number but reflex kicks in and you answer it.

That's exactly what a senior from Fortuna who we'll call Anna did in November, and that reflex sent her down a very expensive rabbit hole.

"We're from Apple," the friendly voice said. "Your iCloud account has been hacked."

Alarmed, Anna asked what she needed to do to get it fixed. "You need to buy gift cards," "Apple" said. "Don't worry, you'll be reimbursed as soon as it's cleared up."

Panicked, Anna immediately went to Rite Aid and purchased two \$500 gift cards, giving the card numbers to "Apple." But that wasn't enough. They set her to Safeway to buy more gift cards. Then to Target, for four more gift cards.

Now Anna's logical brain began kicking in.

"How do I know you're really from Apple?" she asked them. But "Apple" had a convincing response, even passing Anna over to a "supervisor," who promptly asked for four more gift cards.

Anna was at Target and still on the phone with "Apple." Fortunately an alert Target employee told her there was a gift card scam going around.

That gave Anna the courage to finally say, "No more." She called the police and Target's headquarters. Fortunately, she had the receipts on her phone so she could provide the card numbers. She also called Safeway and Rite Aid, and reported the incident to her credit union. Her credit card company, unfortunately, essentially told her she was on her own.

The reason this scam works is that, once Anna gave the gift card numbers to "Apple," they had the cash value of those cards and could use or sell the numbers right away.

While Anna is hopeful she'll get some of her money back, she wanted her story told so others don't fall into the same trap. She's not stupid. She was caught off guard, and criminals took advantage of her.

Scammers are most active when we're most distracted — the run-up to the holidays and tax season are prime times — but they're always around. So do yourself a favor and check out the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office website at humboldt.gov.org/2864/Scam-Information. And call law enforcement right away if you think you've been scammed.

The internet is a wonderful place in many ways. But there is a dark side. So stay alert and stay safe this holiday season. And anytime.

—

Pat Bitton, 69, of Eureka had a previous life in the chess game that is computer security.

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Letters to the Editor

An Overdue Thanks, Mom

To the Editor:

Reading the story “An Unforgettable Pie” by Jane Parks-McKay [Senior News, November, page 17], brought me memories of when I was of elementary age.

I never thought of how much work my mom did to prepare a meal for the family. I would go off to school, come home to play, then as if by magic the dinner table would have enough food for kings and queens.

Birthdays were marvelous fun, with childhood friendships, presents, playing games, the crowning glory of the cake. It never entered my mind how much effort it took for

my mom to make the cake, but now if I had to make one, the kitchen would be a disaster.

I’m sorry, Mom, that I took you for granted, that I never said thank you, for loving me so much, for making everything perfect.

Harold McArthur, *Eureka*, enjoys walking on the beach, reciting poetry, and poking dead things with a stick.

A Civilian Massacre

To the Editor:

Seventy-five years later, and apologists for the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945 still cannot bring themselves to accurately describe it as a “civilian massacre” (Senior News, October 2020).

In fact, both bombings represent the largest instant incineration of civilians in human history. Defending the use of indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction is welcome propaganda for U.S. weapons manufacturers and top U.S. military and civilian hawks, fueling U.S. enemies’ resolve to obtain and use them.

Japan’s “sneak attack” on the United States at Pearl Harbor followed decades of incidents between these du-

eling imperial powers. Japan’s 1937 “Rape of Nanking,” killing 300,000, was a fraction of the civilian casualties during the 1898 U.S. invasion of the Philippines, leading Mark Twain to observe, “I bring you the stately matron of Christendom returning bedraggled, besmirched and dishonored from private raids in Kiao-Chou, Manchuria, South Africa and the Philippines with her soul full of meanness, her pockets full of boodle and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies” (NY Herald, 1900).

No civilian massacre has ever withstood the judgment of history.

George Clark, *Eureka*

A Chilly Lesson

To the Editor:

We can all remember when we first learned how to swim. I would like to tell you about my experience taking swimming lessons.

When I was about 8, my parents enrolled me in Red Cross swimming lessons. They were held at Big Lagoon in early spring, starting at 9 or 10 a.m. I remember the thick fog was down to the surface of the waves.

Since all I had on was a swimsuit, I was very cold and my teeth chattered the entire lesson. During the class, my

mom and the other mothers sat up on the sand, away from the water’s edge, bundled up in their heavy coats and blankets, commenting on how cold it was.

I was counting the minutes until when the lesson would be over, so I didn’t learn much. Later, I taught myself to swim.

My mother apologized to me for years until she passed for putting me through this ordeal. Maybe I’m better for it.

Scott Baker, *McKinleyville*

Letters Policy: Senior News welcomes letters to the editor. To be considered for publication, letters should be received by the 12th of the month, must not exceed 300 words, and may be edited for space. Submissions must include the writer’s full name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. Senior News reserves the right to reject any letter. The same requirements apply to those interested in submitting longer commentary columns (up to 400 words). Mail to Senior News, 1910 California Street, Eureka, CA 95501 or E-mail tpease@humsenior.org.

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At the DMV: Anxiety, Self-Doubt & Redemption

By Steve Pence

I approached the DMV with an angst similar to that felt trying to eradicate a wasp nest from the dark and claustrophobic crawl space beneath our cabin floor. But no amount of armor could help me get a California driver's license.

The angst was my wife's fault. She had recently come within one wrong answer of failing her license test. Why did she tell me that? She is both a valedictorian and a National Merit Scholar. About these things she is properly embarrassed. Or should be.

"The questions were odd," she explained. "Several had little to do with operating a car. Who knew it's illegal to park your car across your own driveway?"

That explanation did not help. How would I, utterly lacking in scholastic credentials, succeed where she had almost failed?

The DMV staff were pleasant, part of the plot to lull me into complacency and keep me off the roads, I reasoned.

I signed in at a bank of computers next to several test-takers. Soon, a woman of about 40 turned away from her screen and said, "I failed," her face reddened. "What will I do without a driver's license?"

I told her I was sorry. I *was* sorry. For her. For me.

One month into retirement, and my lifetime of rising confidence was displaced by disappearing courage.

A clerk directed me to the computer the woman had just vacated. Why *that* computer? What if it

was like an unlucky slot machine, the one nobody ever beat?

I logged on. The tutorial explained there were 36 questions. From my spouse, I knew I could miss three and still pass.

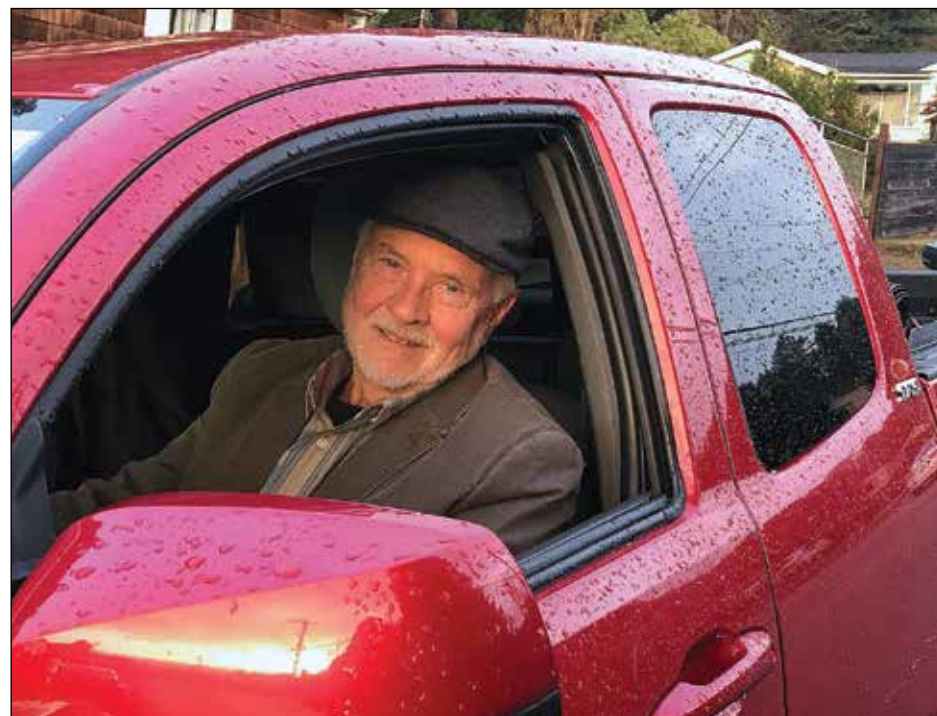
I began, slowly, and correctly answered questions 1 through 5. The feedback was quick. Every time I clicked on an answer, "Correct" appeared. Except on question 6, a "May you park across your own driveway?" kind of question. "Incorrect" flashed.

When I got to question 9, I was informed that I had skipped a question. That was deemed an incorrect answer, but the machine wouldn't let me go back.

Panic.

Twenty-seven questions to go. I had already missed two of nine. The advantage was with the house.

I lost focus, thinking, "I need a better bike." I hit the pause button. The DMV observer asked if I was



BACK ON THE ROAD — Only a little emotionally scarred by his license test at the DMV, Steve Pence of Arcata is back on the road. Submitted photo.

OK. Was he kidding?

"Is there only one right answer?" I asked.

"No sir, there is only one BEST answer."

I took a deep breath. I had failed only one important multiple-choice test in my life, and that was because I had a hangover. And anyway, who wanted to be an undercover federal agent infiltrating mob-related drug and gambling operations in

Continued on Page 23



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DMV . . . From Page 22

Cleveland?

OK, that was likely irrelevant. I took a deeper breath and resolved that the only way to get through the next 27 questions was FAST.

Quickly determine the best answer.

Do not doubt yourself.

Click on the answer.

Move on!

I did that. Repeatedly. Real fast.

“Correct” popped up continuously, so quickly that the next question seemed answered before I knew I had properly answered the previous question.

When I clicked on the 36th answer, the screen flashed, YOU PASSED!

Stunned, I walked to the counter. The young woman smiled and said, “Congratulations.” I admitted I had

been worried because my very smart wife had missed three questions and had barely passed.

“Did she take her test on the computer or manually?”

“The computers were down,” I said. “She took the manual test.”

The clerk laughed. “Funny! That’s the 18-question test. You could’ve missed six questions. Tell your wife you are ’WAY smarter!”

Dazed (but not so dazed that I believed this), I walked out to my truck. I think the bike I have will be fine.

—
Steve Pence, 70, a retired attorney from Michigan, flaunts his shiny new California driver’s license and pedals his bike from his home in Arcata.

Skip Your Next DMV Trip

Older Californians can skip a trip to Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to renew their driver’s licenses during the COVID-19 pandemic under an executive order by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The order allows seniors 70 and older to renew their licenses by mail instead of scheduling an in-office appointment. About 860,000 California drivers 70 and older renew their

licenses in DMV office visits every year.

Newsom’s order is designed to help reduce in-person transactions at the DMV and encourage a COVID-19 vulnerable population to isolate at home.

Most other drivers are already eligible to renew their license by mail or online. For information, visit dmv.ca.gov.

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- **FEBRUARY** — Let's tell some love stories. Remember when Cupid's arrow struck home for you, when bells rang and you fell head over heels? Send stories of puppy love or forever after.

Contact SN editor Ted Pease: tpease@humsenior.org, or 707-443-9747, x1226.

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