



**Crab for
Christmas!**

The Stocking Stuffer Issue

True Holiday Spirit

By Mary McCutcheon

In 1965, my father was nearing retirement after 40 years of railroading. Every Christmas season, he brought home several trees cut from along the railroad right-of-way, trees that would otherwise have been removed for safety reason. Each year, friends shared in the extra trees.

That winter was a rough one, and the tree cutting happened later than usual. As a result, a lady who normally got a tree bought one instead, so we ended up with an extra — a lovely fir.

My father had noted that a family had moved into the neighborhood. “I have something I want you to do,” he told me. “Up at that house on the corner, the one where that new family with the little kids moved in last month, I don’t see a tree in the window. Go ask them if they want the tree.”

He was right. The little house sat bleakly, with no decorations and kids’ toys in the front yard. I knocked on the front door. A tired-looking woman answered. Kids played on the front room floor behind her.

“Hello,” I said, “I live down at the green house and we want to know if you want a free Christmas tree.”

She gave me a blank stare in return. She muttered that she would have to ask her husband and shut the door. I walked home.

“Well, what did they say?” my father asked.

I shrugged. “Nothing.”

We started to go into the house, and a big man in a white T-shirt and old jeans and work shoes appeared at the end of the driveway. He walked partway up the drive, looking like someone

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Mark Larson photo.

Joyful Songs of the Season

For many, the holidays are all about the music, whether it’s “Jingle Bells” or “The Messiah.”

This year — our second holiday season under the damp blanket of COVID — most in-person concerts are still on hold or on Zoom.

But not all! Humboldt’s famed Tuba Christmas returns with its traditional two live outdoor concerts — Saturday, Dec. 4, at the Old Town Gazebo in Eureka at 1 p.m. and near the McKinleyville Safeway at 3 p.m.

Sadly, groups like the McKinleyville Community Choir and the Blue Lake Choir “Silent Nighties,” (pictured above in 2017), have not reemerged, but the Arcata Playhouse will try to fill some of that void with its “Jig & Thistle Radio Hour Holiday Show.” Broadcast with a live studio audience, shows are Dec. 3, 4, 5, 10 & 11. Go to arcataplayhouse.org for details and tickets.

Make your own “lovely noise” this holiday season.

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ASK THE DOC

HSRC

MAILBAG

Published since 1981 by
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TEDtalks: Stocking Stuff

Stockings were always the highlight of the Pease Family Christmas when I was a kid. Sure, you can't get a bicycle in a stocking, but wonderful things do come in small packages, especially when pulled from a sock hanging on the mantel.

Actually, with a little ingenuity and imagination (and balance), you *can* get a bicycle in a stocking. My parents did, back in the '60s.

I didn't actually see the bicycle arrive at our house on that snowy Christmas Eve night after the kids had gone to bed. But I can see it in my mind from the stories told after the fact — my 6'5" father, schussing down the hill in 6" of new snow on a child's two-wheeler with a toboggan balanced across the handlebars . . . that's a magical image that stays with you whether you actually saw it or not.

Then my mom ran about a quarter-mile of string throughout the house from the stocking

in the living room, upstairs to the bedrooms, down to the kitchen, up to the attic, back downstairs . . . finally leading to the new bike in the basement — with a big bow, a bell and those plastic streamy things from the handlebars.

Funny thing, I don't even remember whose bike it was — mine or one of my three siblings'.

This month's holiday edition of Senior News celebrates the joy of small gifts and warm memories, collecting stories that are little gems to share. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hannukkah, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice or something else, the end of the year is always a time for reflection, remembering and gratitude

for our gifts.

Ted Pease is editor and chief elf at Senior News. The card is from about 1958, with Teddy, little brother David and parents Fred and Lillian checking out the stockings, hung on the mantel with care.



Page 1 photos: The Blue Lake "Silent Nighties," conducted in 2017 by Jackie Dandeneau, (from left): Kit Mann, Halimah Collingwood, Keith Barnard, Autumn Feral, Laurel Goldsmith, Kristin Kirby, Rebecca Zettler, Lin Glen and Barb Culbertson. Mark Larson photo.

At the top of the page, the crabbers aboard the mighty HMS Penny in Trinidad Harbor are skipper Tim Haskett (of Redwood Coast PACE) and deck hand Peter Pennekamp. The catch has been good for sport crabbers — looks like there will be crab for Christmas this year. Ted Pease photo.

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Ho Ho, Ba-a-a-a! Happy Billy Goat Holiday

By Sara Turner

Not many of us are still around who remember the “Great Depression” of the 1930s and how our families coped during those tumultuous years.

When I was born, my father often told me, it was “a dark and stormy night.” From the hospital, I was taken to a lovely new home built on the outskirts of the small town in rural Mississippi where my father had a thriving construction business.

Those first years must have been idyllic for this young couple, financially secure and with friends and family in abundance.

Prosperity came to a screeching halt in the fall of 1929. My dad had absolutely no jobs and his crew was laid off, one by one. It must have been painful for my parents, but, in hindsight, they were fortunate that a simple country house 10 miles from town was available to them. Former residents had moved to better digs and we moved in.

I can imagine how hard it was for them to change their lifestyle

so abruptly. Change they did: those next years saw our household produce our own milk, make ketchup and jelly, grow and preserve all vegetables, slaughter and cure meat — and all in

abundance, so we could share with hired help and relatives.

My duties were minimal, but increased in responsibility as I aged and was in charge of cleaning the kerosene lamps. We had no electricity in those years. Running water was possible with an artesian well.

At Christmas that first year there was no cash for store-bought gifts, but this picture captures two smiling children who got a homemade wagon, complete with goat.

Lots of safe space to drive; few cars passed on the gravel road that fronted our house. Dust announced the ones who did come, and visitors were always welcome.

And the name of our goat? Why, Billy, of course!

Sara Turner, 94, of Arcata is a retired Humboldt State University professor of social work. This remembrance is part of KEET-TV’s “Snapshots” project.



ALL ABOARD! Sara Turner and her younger brother, Bobby, in their homemade 1930 Billy Goat Special. Who needs store-bought gifts?
Contributed photo.

‘Golden Poppy’ Is a Gift You’ll Cherish Year-Round

By Sydney Fisher Larson

During the pandemic, my partner and I committed to hiking as many trails as possible without leaving Humboldt County [see “Hitting the Pandemic Trail,” May Senior News, page 1].

After completing all the trails in the Arcata Community Forest, we began exploring other area. When we first started hiking in Sue-meg (formerly Patrick’s Point) State Park, the park was closed. People were allowed to park on the road and walk in, so we did.

One afternoon last November, we returned to find our car window smashed and miscellaneous items stolen. Parking on the road wasn’t safe, we decided, and we could — and should — support our state parks. So we bought a “Golden Poppy” Vehicle Day Use Pass (\$90/year; visit stateparkpass.com/california-state-park-pass.html).

Over the 11 months since we bought the pass, we have visited Sue-meg 25 times (and that does not include a few

trips to Fern Canyon), which would have cost \$200 in daily entrance fees.

This gift to ourselves is one of the best presents we’ve ever received. Not only do we visit Sue-meg State Park more frequently, but we get that warm feeling knowing we are supporting California’s amazing state park system.

Sydney Fisher Larson hits the trail from her home in Arcata.



Lola the Emergency Foster Dog Was Best Gift Ever

By Jane Parks-McKay

One of the best Christmas gifts that I ever received was in 2010 in the form of a big, bouncing 5-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer/Lab named Lola.

When the dog's owner moved into a place that didn't accept dogs, we tried to help find Lola a new home. No luck.

So that November, she came home with me as an emergency foster. Lola was, let's say, a special needs dog — high anxiety, a loud bark like a seal, she needed 24/7 attention. Everyone who saw her picture loved her, but no one could give her what she needed.

The morning she came home, I asked my husband about fostering her and he agreed. He wasn't wearing his hearing aids.

That evening as I was washing dishes, I heard a screaming bark as a car pulled up outside. In came the previous pet parent and her daughter, and Lola. As I assessed what we were taking on, my husband was furious and I just sat there dejected.

"Don't worry, it will get better," my friend said. The pet parents were heartbroken to say goodbye to Lola, and I cried with them. The terms of the rescue



required them not to see Lola again. (Of course, I broke that rule and we became dear friends.)

After everyone left, we looked at Lola and I thought, "Good heavens, what have we done?"

Even our 11-month-old puppy, who needed a buddy, was shocked.

But as the month wore on, it was apparent that both dogs adored each other. Lola became my Christmas present that year.

We soon fell head over heels in love with her, and her annoying traits became endearing habits. We knew she felt the same when a little neighbor boy took Lola for a walk and she ran all the way home, dodging traffic. Lola was ours.

Dedicated, loyal and completely dependent on us, Lola brightened our lives with unconditional love.

Even toward the end, she was active, and we all knew that Doggie Heaven was about to receive the most interesting dog they'd ever seen.

Lola was the BEST, and we'll never forget her. Earlier this year, we adopted a puppy, who has also been a challenge. Lola, a gift that keeps on giving, prepared us for her.

—
Jane Parks-McKay and family live in Santa Cruz and are still househunting in Humboldt County for their furr-ever home.

'Santa's Little Helper' Is Still a Joy 49 Years Later

By Carla K. Newton

Dec. 19, 1972, was a bone-chilling day in Springfield, Missouri. The ground was already frozen, and overnight it had been covered by a layer of thick, cold frost.

My hospital room was cozy, but that night was nerve-wracking. I was scheduled for a C-section early the next day and couldn't sleep a wink.

About 10 o'clock the next morning, my head cleared from the anesthesia and a nurse brought my sweet baby girl and placed her in my arms. The nurses had made and put a little pointed felt elf's cap on her head that said, "Santa's Little Helper." She was lying in a stocking, also made by the

nurses, with musical notes and felt faces of Christmas carolers.

We went home from the hospital on an absolutely epic Christmas morning — bright sun and 72 degrees. Upon our arrival home, we laid Santa's Little Helper, still in the stocking and hat, under the Christmas tree for a nap, taking plenty of pictures to memorialize the occasion.

The change in temperature from the 19th to the 25th, in a way, represents my life before the birth of my daughter and what it is now. Not that my life was bad before she was born, but it became so much better afterward. She is the reason I moved from

southwest Missouri to Arcata in 2013. She was a joy as she grew up, and still is.

She made her first recognizable drawing at the age of 2. Y'all know her as Lush Newton, the great artist and co-owner of The Art Center on the Arcata Plaza. She has been such an inspiration to me, encouraging me to try different mediums to do artwork of my own.

I grew up wanting to be an artist, and became one doing disposable art as an FTD Master Designer Florist. Once I was no longer a florist, Lush encouraged me to combine objects I find at the beach into pieces of art,

and also to paint and to exhibit those pieces. I would probably have never done any of those things had she not been born.

As many in Arcata know, she is compassionate, a very good friend, and very knowledgeable and helpful in her field. I always beam at the mention of her name.

Even though this gift of mine — for the Bible says children are a gift to their parents — is almost a half-century old, I've never received a better gift nor will I ever on this Earth.

—
Carla Newton is a writer and artist who enjoys her gifts in Arcata.



ASK THE DOCTOR

BY JENNIFER HEIDMANN, M.D.

Breadcrumbs

When I think about what we can do to be healthier, I find it useful to make a to-do list — and then follow the list like breadcrumbs leading to safety past unhealthy temptations like ice cream sundaes, cigarettes or big, comfortable couches.

Some things we can control. We can commit to moving our bodies, eating actual food (as opposed to the junk variety), getting mammograms and colonoscopies and pap smears, and avoiding drugs and alcohol.

But what if we do all of those things and still get sick? It is a reasonable question that invokes the injustice of life. Life is not inherently fair.

We know more now about intergenerational trauma affecting health, as well as life circumstances we cannot control that impact our health outcomes. Descendants of people who were traumatized may carry some of that trauma in their genes, perhaps making them more susceptible to illness. Likely, strength is also transmitted through those genes, and an ability to survive despite circumstances.

We also know that the social constructs set up around race, gender and economic status significantly impact both individual health and entire populations. If you live in a neighborhood without access to healthy food choices, or where there are not enough doctors to provide primary care, you may have a higher risk of heart disease,

diabetes and hypertension.

If you are a Black man and live with the constant fear that you might get shot when out on a run, you might be less inclined to exercise. Insidiously, feeling in danger because of your perceived societal status can produce stress that can increase inflammation in cells and reduce strength of immunity.

This doesn't mean our bodies are different physiologically — race is a social construct, and a human is a human. The injustices we pile on one another across socially constructed differences cause health disparities.

We can despair about all of this, but I recommend doing so only for a few minutes. Despair does not help, but it can force us to acknowledge the suffering we all face, and how we are interconnected. Like with other big issues, you have to name a problem before you can make any progress on solving it.

When my father was put on the list for a heart transplant at age 60, he questioned whether this was the best use of resources. His family and doctors thought it was, but his question still resonates with me to this day. He was not saying his life was not valuable; he was acknowledging the hard fact that while he was getting a brand new heart, many people cannot afford even basic health care.

While some of us can enjoy care from some of the finest medical doctors in the world, others are

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Listen to Ben Franklin

The ongoing pandemic and experiences of the past 21 months since the COVID-19 outbreak have taught us all a lot about how important personal and community connections are, and what a difference it makes when people can cooperate.

As infections of unvaccinated people continue nationwide — averaging more than 73,000 per day in November — it is puzzling why anyone refuses to get vaccinated. At least 99% of the COVID hospitalizations and deaths are people who haven't had their shots.

Here in Humboldt County, about 59% of us are fully vaccinated. What about the other 41% — more than 55,000 people? Many of those are children under 12, who are only now starting to qualify for vaccinations.

But before we condemn the unvaccinated, remember that people have always been fearful of new medicines. Polls show that many of those holding out against the shot are simply afraid.

So it was in the early 1700s as smallpox swept the American colonies:

"In 1736 I lost one of my sons," wrote Benjamin Franklin in his autobiography, "a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox, taken in the common way. I long regretted bitterly, and still regret, that I had not given it to him by inoculation. This I mention for the sake of parents who omit that operation, on the supposition that they would never forgive themselves if a child died under it; my example showing that the regret may be the same either way, and that, therefore, the safer should be chosen."

In September, 111 North Coast physicians took the unusual step of signing an open letter to their patients: "Please, for the sake of our community — the young, the old and all the in-betweens — get vaccinated," they wrote.

To get your shot, make an appointment online at myturn.ca.gov.

—Ted Pease

A 105-Year-Old 'Hurricane'

Julia "Hurricane" Hawkins was a lifelong competitive cyclist, but she lost interest and quit biking in her 90s because of a lack of competition.

At 100, the retired Louisiana school teacher took up running, and, in 2017, sprinted to the National Senior Games 100-meter dash world record in the 100-104 age category with a time of 39:62 seconds.

Another 100-year-old runner broke that record in September, but Hawkins turned 105 in November and became the first female track and field athlete in the 105+ age bracket, setting another record in the 100 meters.

She was pleased to win at the Louisiana Senior Games, of course, but

disappointed in her time — 1:02:95. "I wanted to do it in less than a minute," she said.

Asked if it made her feel any better that her time was still less than her age, her response was lightning fast: "No," she said.

The only other track and field athletes to compete at age 105+ have been men — a Japanese shot putter and a Polish discus thrower.

"I want to keep running as long as I can," Hawkins said. "My message to others is that you have to stay active if you want to be healthy and happy as you age."

—Ted Pease



HOMEGROWN BY JULIE FULKERSON

It's About Time

What is in a minute, an hour, a year?

Einstein told us time is relative. No kidding! Even young people are confused about what day it is. How long have we been wearing these masks? Did we celebrate the holidays with family and friends last year, or was that the year before?

When we are young, we have plenty of time — time to hang out, put off chores, sleep in, change jobs, drift a bit.

I remember adults telling me, "Time flies. You'll be my age one day. Make the most of it." Now, here I am. I hope I have made the most of "it" and will continue to pay even more attention now that I am clearly aware that my time is limited.

Just in the last week, I had reminders that time is relative.

Minutes: A few days ago, I took a self-administered COVID test. The 15 minutes it takes for the results to appear on the little pink line seemed like forever. I wasn't even productive during those precious 15 minutes as I anxiously awaited the results. Then, in a glance, negative.

Hours: I listened to Michelle Obama talk about how, in the time between the morning when she voted for her husband for president and when the results came in that night, it felt like the hours would never pass. She could do nothing about it but "hang out" and wait for the news. Her day felt longer than mine!

Months: I have walked over

3,000 miles through neighborhoods and alleys during this pandemic. With nearly every step, I notice projects my neighbors have taken on, healthy vegetables to replace water-thirsty grass, weeds that take over sidewalk cracks, leaves that change color in a day and behavior by crows that are smarter than cats or me. I am aware of seasons, but not what day of the week it is.

Years: "We've known each other for 74 years," my elementary school classmate exclaimed to a restaurant server. Four of us had gone through elementary and high school together. We got together to reminisce about the impact our education had on us and the collective memories of our own antics, parents, siblings, neighborhoods. Three-quarters of a century!

The server was perhaps 25 years old. The look on her face was priceless. It was obviously too much for her to take in. She asked us if we had decided what to order.

We carried on digging up decades-old memories of salmon loaf and shooting peas into the tiny asbestos tile ceiling holes. Eventually, we remembered to order and left big tips.

For now: I'm appreciating the time I have. Every minute.

Julie Fulkerson has been vaccinated but still worries about those who have not. It takes a minute for the painless shot, and saves days, years, lives. Contact: juliefulkerson@mac.com.

Gifts of the Season

By Rowetta Miller

Our first Christmas in Fieldbrook in 1977 was rather sparse.

We had three sons at the time. When our middle son, Jason, came down the stairs and saw the tree, he let out a shriek of delight.

He flew to the tree and picked up the present on top of all the others. It hadn't been wrapped — a stainless steel watering dish for our dog. I can't recall ever seeing our boys so ecstatic about a gift.

Back in the 1950s, living on a homestead, gifts were a rarity, but there was always something for us under the tree on Christmas morning — usually something to wear. One winter, living with our grandparents, I recall my Gram Dee looking through the J.C. Penney catalog and asking what size underpants my sister and I wore. Depression days called for practicality.

One story told by my Aunt Helen that I remember well, as she was a super storyteller, was about a Christmas visit to her sister Mary and her husband, Fred.

They were living in the mountains of Dunsmuir, and their oldest son, Chip, was 4. Times were tough and money was tight, Helen said, and they'd purchased clothing as gifts.

As Chip opened presents on Christmas morning, his face grew sad and a tear rolled down his cheek. Asked what was wrong, Chip replied, "I thought Santa always brought toys to all good little boys. I thought I was good."

Now it was the family's turn to be sad. They emptied their pockets of all the spare change they had, and one family member went to the drugstore to see what toys they could purchase with their measly amount of change.

One little boy's belief in Santa Claus returned as his parents suddenly discovered gifts out on the porch that Santa had forgotten to put under the tree.

Happy holidays!

—
Rowetta Miller counts her gifts every day in Fieldbrook.

"This little button is such a comfort to me. I would hate to be without it."

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The Gift That Won't Go Away

By Sue Blick

Our Wisconsin family's traditional Christmas gift-giving has changed over time as the size of our four families (ours, plus my husband, Jim's, three sisters') grew.

Instead of everyone giving each person a gift, we tried to simplify the process by picking names. Some years, we made our gifts, which was the discovery of some amazing hidden talents.

Then we agreed on a "white elephant exchange," which involved wrapping a generic item that was slightly used, possibly unwanted or brand new. Everyone picks a number from Santa's hat to take a turn to select a gift, then unwraps it so everyone can "admire" it.

Those with higher numbers pick their gifts later, so had an advantage because they can accept their gift, or "steal" a gift they like better from a previous picker. My New England cousins refer to this as a Yankee Swap, but with different rules.

As the gatherings grew, so did the whole process from beginning to end — with endless hilarity.

Back in Mequon, Wisconsin, I worked in the business office of our local hospital. The year we decided to do the white elephant exchange at work, I came up with what I considered the "perfect" gift.

It was slightly used but in good condition — an earth-tone ceramic pottery jar with a cork stopper that sat on our bookshelf. Its unique characteristic was that etched across the front are letters spelling F-A-R-T-S.

The FARTS jar was a big hit the first year, but the next year I returned home with it back in my possession. And the next year.

Since then, it has traveled with us from Wisconsin to California, and now has a prominent place again on our bookshelf.

It's a great conversation piece. Anyone willing to join me in a white elephant exchange?

—

Sue Blick collects unique items and warm holiday memories at home in McKinleyville.

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PAINTING THE OCEAN

BY MARGARET KELLERMANN

What is Blue?

Months before graduating from college in Seattle, I felt a specific emptiness that I guessed could be filled if I volunteered somewhere.

But offering help was scary. What if they didn't need my help? In my naïveté, I shuffled in unannounced to a nonprofit organization, volunteered for whatever was needed someday, then hurried out.

A few weeks later, a woman called. "I need you to take a group of 11 teens who are legally blind on a trip to the zoo this Sunday."

I had a hundred questions.

"Don't worry," she soothed. "Transportation and fees will be provided." Those were not my questions.

But I showed up that Sunday. We all boarded the bus, each teen needing to be accounted for. I asked how many had visited that zoo; most had never visited any zoo. How many of them could see a little? Half raised their hands, so I paired them up.

That buddy system lasted 10 minutes. Disembarking at the zoo entrance, one teen happily sped off in one direction; three went off in another. The main group waited patiently as I ran after the others.

Finally, we achieved a rhythm, where the youngest teen, Kenny, led the group with me. The others held hands two by two, as we sang pop songs to keep everyone together.

We stood at various exhibits, echoing howler monkeys and lions. The teens taught me the delicate difference in smell between gazelles

and giraffes. Several teens tripped over a water hose before I looked back to see the trouble I'd caused by not warning them.

At lunch, we sat at picnic tables while peacocks strutted around. Kenny asked me, "What's that loud sound like a huge crow?"

"It's a peacock," I said. Kenny wanted to know everything: what's a peacock, how big is it, what color is it, and what is blue?

"What is blue?" I repeated. Sensing this was a question for the sages, I turned to the group. "You guys, what's blue?"

They gave Kenny the best definitions of blue: "You know how you feel jumping into a swimming pool?" Or, "It's like resting in hammocks."

We returned to the main path. At the entrance to the nocturnal house, I realized the bright sun had blinded me so I couldn't even see an inch in front of me. For the teens, it was simple to weave easily through the pitch-dark tunnel. I heard their steps fading with their laughter. "Wait," I yelled. I can't see!"

Kenny came back, took my hand and led me through.

Margaret Kellermann volunteers through the free app *Be My Eyes*. Anyone with low vision can use it to ask for help reading labels and accomplishing everyday tasks. Contact her at bluelakestudio.net/contact.

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Book Group Zooms with ‘Damnation Spring’ Author

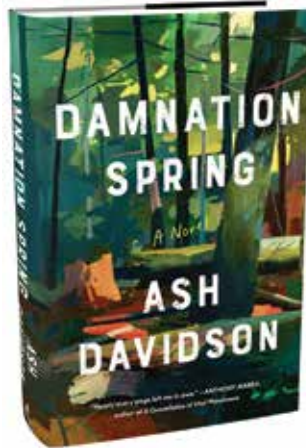
By Carol McFarland

We felt we knew her by the picture on the flyleaf of her new book, “Damnation Spring,” but I think most of the Novel Idealists book group were unexpectedly disarmed when we Zoomed with the young Arcata-born author to talk about her novel — about a logging family on the Redwood Coast.

An attractive, dark-haired young woman, Ash Davidson “met” with us from her home in Flagstaff, Arizona, looking composed and somewhat shy. We were struck by her friendly enthusiasm and eagerness to know what we thought about her book, which a New York Times review calls, “a glorious book — an assured novel that’s gorgeously told.”

Davidson was especially interested to know if her book felt “authentic” to us who live here.

She thanked Arcata Librarian Susan Parsons for



pursuing her via email to ask if she might talk to our book group. Davidson said she was “honored and delighted,” and, especially, most curious to know whether she had “gotten it right” in her depiction of 1970s logging life in northern California.

During the two-hour conversation, Davidson led us through decisions she made on plot and characters, and talked about the grind of juggling her “day job” with revisions, discussions with editors, writing workshops — and how she crafted the surprising finale.

Pressed to name her favorite character, she picked Rich Gunderson, the handsome, high-climber husband of Colleen, a self-taught midwife. The plot unfolds in the late ’70s as the logging company Rich has worked for since he was 15 struggles with timber permits, “enviros” who threaten the community’s livelihood, and a wily businessman

who may block Rich’s dreams to own a virgin redwood grove.

During the writing, which took 10 years, Davidson took numerous trips back home to Humboldt and Del Norte, and explained how her childhood memories of growing up in Klamath with her carpenter father and teacher mother informed the story.

As a reader, I was struck by Colleen’s scene with Daniel Bywater, who was sampling water from the Gunderson’s spring; he suspected the timber company’s herbicide spraying of 2,4,5-T was causing birth defects and cancers. Nearby, Bywater’s father, afraid of losing “the old ways,” is burning the core of a redwood log to create a traditional Yurok canoe (bringing to mind Yurok Elder Axel Lindgren).

Asked whether she plans a sequel, Davidson said a different book is in the works, and she promised to visit us again.

Carol McFarland of Arcata is a retired English professor and devoted member of the Arcata Library’s Novel Idealists book club.

A Harmonic Holiday Memory . . . and the Band Played On

By Donna B. Ulrich

One of my favorite Christmas memories is the time that the three of us kids, as adults, decided to do a surprise Christmas concert for my folks.

My parents were very proactive with us when we were young — we had swimming lessons, were in 4-H and the Girl and Boy Scouts, and were taken to the library often.

We were also given a chance to learn a band instrument. My sister was given my dad’s trombone, a silver Olds that he had played in the Army band.

I wanted to play the violin because all my friends were doing so. My mother insisted it was too hard to learn and why didn’t I learn the trumpet? Fine, I said, only three valves, how hard can that be?

My brother ended up with a clarinet; none of us remembers why.

We all played through high school in the marching band and orchestra. None of us has ever been arrested, gone into rehab or gotten any DUIs, so our

parents must have done something right.

Sometime in the ’80s, after we’d all grown up and got married, we decided to brush off our instruments when we were together for Christmas. We practiced separately and got together — once — in my sister’s garage.

Then we surprised the folks with lovely (I’m sure!) renditions of “Silent Night” and “Jingle Bells.” Near the end, we all were laughing hysterically and could hardly play at all, as all the instruments needed mouth participation.

The only one not laughing was my 5-year-old niece, who was playing the triangle, but she hadn’t had any cocktails before the concert.

Perhaps Mom should have let me learn the violin; I could have laughed and played at the same time.

Donna B. Ulrich hums holiday tunes in Trinidad.



SEASONAL SYMPHONY — The Bacon kids revived their childhood musical talents for the holidays in the 1980s: (from left) niece Alicia Bacon, Donna Bacon Ulrich, Lance Bacon and Diane Bacon. Contributed photo.



AGING IS AN ART — BY JOHN HECKEL

No More Waiting

What would motivate a bunch of 60- and 70-year-olds to spend the better part of 18 months trying to stage a production of Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot"?

Remember, these were months filled with COVID scares, social distancing, mask wearing and several scheduled performance cancellations.

The play does call for one slightly younger actor. Gabriel Cook, in his early 20s, has agreed to hang out and work with folks old enough to be his grandparents — Sally L'Herogen, Larry Crist, Arnold Wadell, Bernadette Cheyne and me.

I think even Beckett might be intrigued with the results of that collaboration.

The play is set to run for two weekends only, and will have limited seating in order to allow for social distancing between audience members. I highly recommend that you purchase tickets in advance, and do bring your "proof of vaccination" card.

We are all, of course, motivated by the theatrical provocation of the play. The questions it raises are particularly relevant during these pandemic times. It seems we are all waiting for and making contact with our own particular Godots.

We also all want to draw attention to and support the new Synapsis space on Union Street. Eureka City Council member Leslie Castellano envisions her arts and cultural center as a revitalizing agent for that area of Eureka. The proceeds from our

performances will go to Synapsis to help continue to restore their new facility.

But I must admit our motivation also has something to do with our age. The older we get, the more exhausted we become at the idea of hiding. I understand the Beckett-like irony, in that having spent so much of our lives in the pursuit of a good hiding place, we enter the last phase of our lives desperately wanting to be seen. Seen for more than walkers, canes, wrinkles and dementia.

"Waiting for Godot" gives us the opportunity to engage you in that seeing. And it gives us all an opportunity to be experienced for who we truly are and have fully become. Please, come see for yourself.

Oh, and come see young Gabe, too, creatively engaged with those old folks — and with Beckett no less; I can't help but think the world needs more of that.

Maybe Beckett himself deserves the last word: "*But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late.*"

John Heckel, Ph.D., 74, of Eureka is a retired HSU theater and film professor with a doctorate in psychology. "Waiting for Godot" runs Dec. 3, 4, 10 & 11 at 7:30 p.m., and Dec. 5 at 2 p.m. at Synapsis, 1675 Union St., Eureka. Go to inkpeople.ticketleap.com/waiting-for-godot for tickets.



FOR HUMBOLDT & DEL NORTE COUNTIES

AREA 1
Agency on Aging

It's Time to Review your Medicare Prescription Plan

Each year between October 15 and December 7, you have an opportunity to review the drug plans available in your area. Many plans change premium prices and drug coverage. You may switch to a new plan if you so choose.

It is highly recommended that all beneficiaries use Medicare's plan finder tool each year to compare the available Part D plans, as opposed to simply letting an existing drug plan auto-renew.

The Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) can help you review your drug plan.

Contact HICAP to make an appointment:

**by phone: 707-444-3000 or 1(800) 434-0222
or call Medicare at 1(800) 633-4227**

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HSRC News

Find Comfort with Delicious Winter Squash and CalFresh

By Ted Pease

Now that days are shorter, cooler and wetter, what's easier and more comforting for dinner than squash?

To roast any squash, toss slices or cubes in a big bowl with olive oil, seasonings (a little salt, pepper, your choice of spices), and bake them at 350-450 degrees on a cooking sheet until tender and beginning to brown. If you want to get fancy, add a little brown sugar, maple syrup or honey to the bowl mixture, or add sliced onion and red pepper on the baking sheet.

1. Acorn squash — slice in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, add a little butter or olive oil to the “bowl,” and bake open side up until tender. Eat straight from the shell.

2. Butternut — peel and bake, or boil and mash.

3. Delicata — the long yellow one with the green stripes, sometimes called “sweet potato squash”

for their brown sugar flavor. Cut off the ends, cut lengthwise, slice half-moons about 1” thick, toss those with olive oil, salt and pepper, and roast at 450 degrees until browned. You can even eat the skin.

4. Hubbard — the large, light green, lumpy squash are great for boiling and mashing.

5. Spaghetti squash — sounds like a practical joke, but when cooked, the flesh separates into strands like spaghetti, so it can be used with sauces just like pasta.

Those enrolled in CalFresh can still get an extra \$15 to spend on squash and other goodies at the Arcata Farmers’ Market through its Market Match program.

CalFresh’s monthly benefit varies depending on income, household size and expenses, and other factors, and ranges from \$16 to as much as \$194

for a one-person household.

Eligible households are issued an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card that works just like a debit card, and can be used at most groceries and farmers’ markets.

To apply, go online to GetCalFresh.org, call 877-410-8809, or go to the Humboldt Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) CalFresh office at 929 Koster St. in Eureka.

Ted Pease is editor of *Senior News*.



Calling all Caregivers and Families of Seniors



Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC) is planning for the future of older adults in Humboldt County and surrounding areas.

We invite you to take part in a survey to help us understand the challenges and needs experienced by caregivers – paid or unpaid – and families and friends of older adults (age 55 and older) who need care assistance.

How to Take Part in This Survey

- Complete the survey online. Visit humsenior.org for more information and the survey link.
- Take part in a virtual Caregiver Forum hosted by HSRC to provide information and feedback regarding caregiving challenges and services. Email adm@humsenior.org or call 707-443-9747 ext. 1267 to participate.
- Complete the survey by phone; call 707-443-9747 ext. 1267 to provide input.

We appreciate your assistance in shaping the future of caregiving for older adults in our community.



**Humboldt Senior
Resource Center**

Humboldt Senior Resource Center Is Open and Here to Serve You



Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC) provides a wide range of programs and services to help older adults in our community remain as independent as possible. We now have Centers in Eureka and Fortuna. All HSRC programs are providing services with pandemic safety in mind:

- **Adult Day Health** – A therapeutic day program for ages 18 and older with chronic conditions
- **Alzheimer's Services** – Resources for anyone with a dementia-related diagnosis
- **Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP)** – A care management program to help frail elders remain at home
- **Nutrition Program** – Offering meals for pick-up by senior diners or delivery to homebound elders
- **Redwood Coast PACE** – Providing comprehensive medical care and in-home support for qualified adults



Referrals are being accepted for all programs.
For more information, call us at 707-443-9747
or visit www.humsenior.org.



**Humboldt Senior
Resource Center**

1910 California St., Eureka CA 95501
3200 Newburg Road, Fortuna CA 95540

HSRC News

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1910 California Street

Arcata
321 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway
707-443-9747 • www.humsenior.org

Fortuna
3200 Newburg Road

Nurses Are Vital at HSRC

Nurses play a vital role in ensuring optimal health for Humboldt community members of all ages. Not only do they serve as caregivers for patients who are ill, they also help manage an individual's physical needs, assist with treatment, take steps to help prevent illness, educate and promote overall well-being.

Nurses work not only in hospital and medical offices, but also are found in public health settings, home health, research, schools, correctional facilities and in elder service organizations like Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC).

At HSRC, nurses work in Adult Day Health, MSSP (Multipurpose Senior Services Program) and Redwood Coast PACE. Some PACE nurses work in a setting similar to a medical office and focus on preventive health as well as

care for illness, while home health is also overseen by a nurse manager.

Adult Day Health nurses help implement care plans, manage medications and respond to medical needs of participants when they are at the center. MSSP nurses help social workers assess participants' medical needs while providing care management services.

In each of these HSRC programs, nurses are part of the team that assesses new applicants for program eligibility. The goal of all HSRC programs is to help older adults remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

HSRC currently has openings for nurses to join our team. If you are motivated by meaningful experiences, and wish to work in a nontraditional care setting, please explore our openings on our website at humsenior.org, or call us at 707-443-9747.

—René Arché

Enroll in the My Safety Call program!

Subscribers must:

- Live in the Arcata or Humboldt Bay fire districts.
- Be capable of answering the phone.
- Provide a house key to place in a lock box outside the residence, accessible only to emergency personnel.

There is a one-time \$12 fee for the service. To enroll or for more information, call HSRC's Activities Department, 707-443-9747, x1240.

COMMODITIES DISTRIBUTION

Arcata
Thurs., Dec. 16, 10:30-11 a.m.
Arcata Community Center
321 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Pkwy.

Eureka
Wed., Dec. 15, 10-11:30 a.m.
Humboldt Senior Resource Center
1910 California St.

McKinleyville

Thurs., Dec. 16, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
McKinleyville Family Resource Center, 1944 Central Ave.

HSRC Programs

HSRC will be closed Dec. 24th, 27th and 31st for the holidays.

All HSRC programs are open and operating as follows:

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

Activities Program: See the Calendar at humsenior.org for activities updates. Senior Home Repair is 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. The Senior Firewood Program is discontinued.

Adult Day Health & Alzheimer's Services: Open in Eureka and Fortuna. 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 welcome.

Redwood Coast PACE: Open in Eureka and Fortuna. New referrals are being accepted.

Senior News: Open as usual. Free copies available at area groceries and businesses. Available online at humsenior.org. Subscriptions, \$25/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.

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. **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 flexibility during this time as we continue to offer modified services.

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Support Hose & Socks
Sock Shampoo • Gloves

Incontinence Supplies

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Bed Protective Products

PAP Accessories

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Why We Do It: For Every Life, a Reason to Write

By Michael Bickford

The most prolific writer I know writes for no one but himself — no readers required.

His room is stacked with years of handwritten journals no one has read. For hours each morning he journalizes like a Diary Queen. Those volumes of heart and soul never get a second look. The writing is sufficient unto itself, purely for the easing of my friend's own mind.

That's one reason to write. Published writers have many answers to the question, "Why do you write?"

"... to rephrase the world, to take it in and give it back differently, so that everything is used and nothing is lost." —**Nicole Krauss**

"... to address ... my questions about what it means to be human ..." —**Junot Diaz**

"... to turn sadness into longing, solitude into remembrance ..." —**Paul Coelho**

And my favorite because it's closest to my own writer's heart:

"I believe there is hope for us all. Writing is my attempt to keep that fragile strand of radical hope, to build a fire in the darkness."

—**John Green**

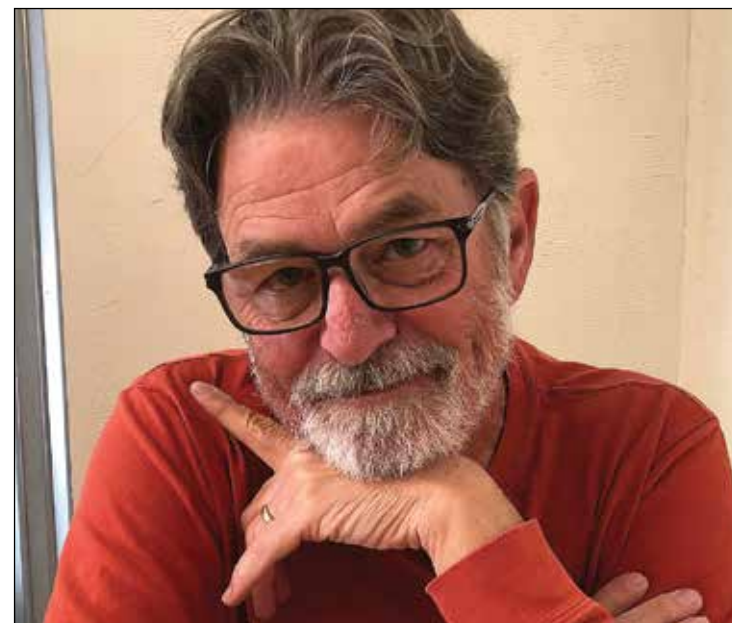
Those writers know that anything they write will be published and enjoyed by their adoring fans. But what about us, who write in the Redwood Forest of Obscurity? We write for the love of the process, but we are not cloistered monks, squeezing out Truth in silent solitude. We have read/response groups,

some persisting for decades. Local venues like Northtown Books, Morris Graves and Siren's Song are rebounding from the pandemic shutdown. We have College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State classes. We meet in coffee houses —in Zoom meeting spaces. Café Writing Society is reemerging!

And we have retreats. "Retreat" is a contradictory term since, as we retreat from day-to-day stresses, we *attack* our work. Before I retired, I got more writing done in one week at the Lost Coast Writers Retreat than I did the entire rest of the year.

And more inspiring interactions among writers are underway. Eureka Poet Laureate David Holper's efforts have led to readings, publishing and brilliant art collaborations. Local writer/educator Heather Quarles is establishing the Unbound Writing Center in Arcata, modeled after literary meeting/teaching centers in the Bay Area like David Eggers' 826 Valencia. There are plans afoot for a North Coast publishing co-op, writing conferences and writing classes.

Perhaps my journalizing friend's writing will be read by his children and grandchildren. Maybe the musings of those countless mornings will be published, finally find readers, and will influence and inspire millions into the future. Perhaps not.



Michael Bickford

Does it matter? Perhaps, from inception to language to page to the compost of time, the writing that reflects our human thought is ultimately and intimately for the writers themselves — to realize, materialize and ease the solitude that is the life of the mind.

—

Michael Bickford, 69, of Arcata taught middle school for 35 years. He writes with the Lost Coast Writers' Cooperative.

Writing Is Easy: 'Simply Sit Down at a Typewriter and Bleed'

"I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by." —**Douglas Adams**

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." —**Toni Morrison**

"You simply sit down at a typewriter and bleed." —**Red Smith**

"A word after a word after a word is power." —**Margaret Atwood**

"One day I will find the right words, and they will be simple." —**Jack Kerouac**

"Let me live, love, and say it well in good sentences." —**Sylvia Plath**

"The road to hell is paved with adverbs." —**Stephen King**

"Writing comes from reading, and reading is the finest teacher of how to write." —**Annie Proulx**

"I hate writing, I love having written." —**Dorothy Parker**

"If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster." —**Isaac Asimov**

"Everywhere I go I'm asked if I think the university stifles writers. My opinion is that they don't stifle enough of them." —**Flannery O'Connor**

"Words do not express thoughts very well." —**Hermann Hesse**

The Evolution of Gift-Giving

By John Meyers

Along with the usual feelings of good cheer at Christmas, I also felt the passing of a milestone in my life during the holidays last year.

My wife and I have reached the age where our gift exchange with each other featured a sleep apnea machine for one of us and a pair of hearing aids for the other.

Don't get me wrong — we both immensely appreciated our gifts, which obviously demonstrated the deep personal feelings of affection that we still have for each other, and showed how much we care for our health and well-being.

But as I look back, the gifts we have gotten each other over the years is a progression like a Readers Digest condensed story of our life together.

At first, we gave fancy presents like a genuine faux diamond necklace and a fancy Timex watch. That didn't last too long as we began to pay attention to our budget, and the gifts became things like a handmade macramé choker and a warm, colorful sweater from Kmart.

It didn't seem like too many years passed and we went through the all-for-one gift phase — like the year we gave ourselves an electric blanket. That was a blessing until the time Sheryl mixed up the controls. The

more I turned “my side” down, the hotter I got, until I threw off the blanket with a scream.

“The blanket is broken,” she said, “I’m freezing.”

I said, “I know! I’ve got my side turned . . . wait a minute.”

Then we went through the practical gift phase — a state-of-the-art Teflon frying pan from Sears for her and another warm, colorful sweater from Kmart for me. One year I got her a new toothbrush and she got me a pair of socks. We didn't care — it was the thought that counted.

In the last few years, shopping has become harder, so gift cards have worked out well. You can even order them online.

Then came the sleep apnea machine and hearing aids. Had to save a bit out of our Social Security every month for a while to get those.

We don't generally spend that much on each other. We're old. But the important thing is, we got old together. And that's the best gift of all.

—

John Meyers, 72, lives in Trinidad with his wife, Sheryl, and still enjoys ripping wrapping paper to bits now and then.

Say What You Mean

Over the weekend, I called up an old MIT classmate, Tom.

“Hey,” I said. “Long time, no see. What are you up to?”

“I’m working on aqua-thermal treatment of ceramics, aluminum and steel in a constrained environment.”

I was impressed. “Wow. What are you finding out?”

“Chapped hands,” he said.

Upon further inquiry, I learned that he was washing dishes in hot water under his wife's supervision.

—The Gadfly



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Walnuts in the Stocking

By Clare Greene

When I was growing up, it was a family tradition to put a walnut in the toe of the holiday stockings.

I always wondered why. Does Santa have a walnut grove somewhere south of the North Pole? Is there some symbolism I don't know? I have since heard of the legends of the holly, pickle, rooster, candy cane, jingle bell, and more, but never a Christmas legend of the walnut.

Google tells me that a bountiful nut harvest was a good luck charm of fertility, but surely not for a *child*. Yet, there that walnut was, every year, along with an orange for good measure. (I never questioned the orange, just ate it.)

Of course, I have kept the tradition with my kids, not knowing why, except that's how it's done: a walnut in the toe and an orange right above. Other fun stuff goes in on top, but the stocking isn't empty until you find the nut.

One other element of stocking fun in our family is that we always

forget them. After the presents are all opened and a special Christmas breakfast is downed and the mess cleaned up and we're figuring what we're going to do next — assemble gifts, play games, prepare the dinner — it dawns: the *stockings!*

I don't know why they're forgotten every year; they are in plain sight. One year, we didn't remember until after dinner. Happily, they provide a second, albeit smaller, celebration and any hint of a letdown vanishes.

That walnut turns out to be a good thing *after all*.

—
Clare Greene, 75, eagerly awaits the holidays in McKinleyville.

Editor's Note: *In ancient Rome, a good nut harvest was associated with fertility and good luck. Oranges symbolize riches, stemming from a myth of St. Nicholas giving three maidens gold balls as dowries to save them from being sold into slavery.*



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The Village takes the old idea of neighbors helping neighbors — but now your neighborhood is a whole lot bigger!

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We've moved! The Redwood Coast Village (RCV) office has moved to the Carson Block building at 3rd & F Streets.

Please update your records to our new address for mailing membership dues and donations. Effective 9/27/21.

New address: 517 3rd Street, Suite #14
Eureka, CA 95501

Phone: (707) 798-6311



www.redwoodcoastvillage.org

(707) 798-6311 • email: rcv@redwoodcoastvillage.org

Redwood Coast Village is a 501(c)3 California Non-Profit Organization.

Humboldt Transit Authority - HTA

Redwood Transit Service area includes the communities of Scotia, Rio Dell, Fortuna, Fields Landing, King Salmon, Eureka, Arcata, McKinleyville, Westhaven & Trinidad

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For people 50+ & the disabled

Wheelchair Lift **707-725-7625**

TRUE HOLIDAY SPIRIT . . . From Page 1

who was not really sure why he was there.

Awkwardly, he said, "My wife said you have a Christmas tree you want to get rid of?" You could tell he figured he had been sent on a fool's errand, but was trying to please her.

My father brought out the six-foot fir. The man just stood there, trying to figure out what to say next.

"My wife said you had a free tree," he said. "What's the catch?"

My father explained how he acquired the tree and repeated that it was free. As he spoke, the man moved closer and closer, as if drawn to the tree. You could tell he just did not believe what was happening.

As my father finished his explanation, the man reached out and grasped the tree.

"Well, uh, thanks then," he said.

"I'll take it."

He started to leave with it, but stopped halfway down the driveway.

When he spoke, his voice was choked up. "I want to thank you, mister. I got laid off three weeks ago. We are just barely making ends meet and we figured we couldn't afford a tree for the kids this year. Now, well," and his voice trailed off.

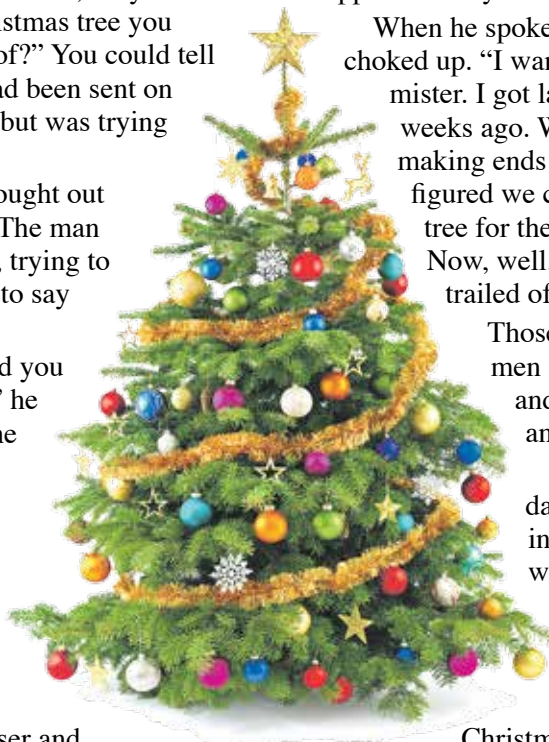
Those two working men shook hands, and the big man and his tree left.

I glanced at my dad. He had tears in his eyes. He was quite pleased about the whole thing. Those kids would have a

Christmas.

The next time I went by that house, the tree was up and decorated, gracing their front window. Christmas had been delivered.

—
Mary McCutcheon celebrates her Christmas spirit in Eureka.



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What Should I Know About COVID-19?

One of a series of four

What does "the science" mean?

"The science" is not one thing, but a body of research happening around the world. Because COVID-19 has emerged recently, scientists and policy-makers are still trying to understand the virus and how best to protect communities. Everyone is learning as we go.

How do I make decisions about my family's health?

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1st Christmas on My Own

By Patty Holbrook

I left home at age 18 with my piano and a twin bed, excited to start my first secretarial job at Motor Trend Magazine in Hollywood.

With little money, the only place I could afford was the back part of a run-down house in a scruffy area off Sunset Boulevard. It had a front room, an alcove just big enough for my twin bed, and a sink/stove combination with an ancient Coldspot fridge. My baby grand piano took up most of the main room.

I shared the bathroom with three other tenants who lived in separate one-room bungalows in the back with electricity but no running water. It was a backyard that would make a building inspector choke.

Peggy lived in the closest cottage. She was a tough, gum-chewing former waitress from Brooklyn who still had her New York accent, wore flannel plaid shirts, had red hair and a bad polio limp. Big Richard lived in one of the other units and Little Richard in the other.

I think I was the only one with a job. The two Richards didn't seem to have jobs or cars. Peggy owned an old Pontiac that was always on the fritz. One day, Big Richard came home with a Studebaker, saying a friend had loaned it to him. I noticed it had no license plates. He kept it beneath a tarp under the oleander bushes at the side of his cottage. One day the car disappeared, and so did Big Richard

for a few months. I think he was in the hoosegow.

On Christmas day, Peggy invited us all to dinner. She managed to cook up a batch of spaghetti on her hot plate. Little Richard brought a sheet cake that said Happy Birthday Virginia, donated by a buddy who worked at Safeway. Big Richard brought an expensive Harry and David holiday gift basket of imported cheeses. I didn't ask where he got it.

We sat on Peggy's bed, which took up most of the room, and drank lemonade from jelly glasses and ate spaghetti on chipped plates.

In the corner, she hung a shower curtain from the ceiling and hid presents behind it. We were each given a long stick with a string attached, and an open safety pin tied on the end. We fished for presents behind the curtain and laughed at our failed attempts. They cheered when I

snagged a box of Cracker Jack. How triumphant I felt.

I never had more fun and never tasted better spaghetti than Peggy served, my first Christmas away from home. I will never forget Peggy Lynch, who looked after me. I think of her whenever I smell Lifebuoy soap and Juicy Fruit gum.

Patty Holbrook is a pianist, artist and writer who celebrates the holidays in Eureka.

"It came without ribbons, it came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags."

—The Grinch, 1957.

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Crossword Puzzle is on page 20.

ASK THE DOC . . . From Page 5

ignored because of implicit societal biases.

For example, doctors don't listen as well to women as men. We have the highest maternal mortality rate of any wealthy nation, and Black women in the U.S. are about three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related issues than white women. The factors are more about who we are as a society than specific gaps in care: before you will receive the same gold standard of care that my father received all those years ago, your doctor must first acknowledge your suffering and take you seriously.

And to offer a gold standard level of care, we as a society need to be real about resources. The pandemic has pointed out just how closely we ride on the edge of structural stability in health care. As a system geared toward profit, the model is for staffing that is just enough or a little less than enough for demand, and then to glean as much profit as possible from procedures and medications.

But that money does not generally go to the doctors, physician assistants and nurses who treat you, and certainly not to aides and caregivers. As a physician, I am fortunate in my level of income, but I can also tell you I will be paying off my medical school debts far into my 60s. Most of what we pay for medical care goes into corporate financial pots. Meanwhile, when I admit my next COVID-19 patient, I just hope there will be a hospital bed, and a fresh N95 mask for me to wear.

Our societal to-do list for good health needs to go beyond exercise, diet and regular check-ups. We need to acknowledge the injustices built into our healthcare system, which is just a mirror of our society in general. What if we decided we want to do better for each other? And what if we realized that the person walking down the street with mental health or substance abuse struggles is us, could easily be us or someone we love? And even if that person is no one we know, we should recognize that their health reflects the health of our very community at large, so we have to try to do better. Looking the other way is not a plan.

Breadcrumbs make for good directional tools until some raccoon comes along and eats them. It is time to lay down a more substantial trail to follow that will be a whole new foundation for the direction we choose to go as a society, so that good health is a reachable destination for everyone.

Institutional bias against whole groups of people is not a sustainable way into the future. What small steps can we each take every day to create a healthier world for all?

Dr. Jennifer Heidmann is medical director and primary care provider at Redwood Coast PACE (707-443-9747). This column should not be taken as medical advice. Ask your medical provider if you have health questions. Send comments to seniornewseditor@humsenior.org.

“Every day is a gift. But some days are packaged better.”

—Sanhita Baruah, poet.



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Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1 Unfortunate folder for an important email

5 Favors one leg

10 Sufficiently qualified

14 Ballet attire

15 Start of the Spanish year

16 Tree supporter

17 Song and dance

18 Road trip destination?

19 Has a Philly cheesesteak, maybe

20 What the scorekeeper said to the scoreboard?

23 Person in a convent

24 In the know about

25 Final approval

28 Small whirlpool

30 "Give ___ rest!"

32 Pioneering ISP

33 What the geography teacher said to the globe?

38 Pronoun that some pair with "they"

40 B.J. of "The Office"

41 Tribute from a poet

42 What the penthouse dweller said to the private elevator?

45 Anatomical canal's locale

46 Pennies: Abbr.

47 Invitation request

50 Fourth month

52 Just slightly

55 Bonanza find

57 What the repairperson said to the broken appliance?

61 Not much

63 4-Down of love poems

64 Amount to make do with

65 Eric of "Munich"

66 Helped

67 Entry fee in poker

68 Baker's dozen?

69 Car dealer's document

70 Word after "dating" or "wading"

DOWN

1 One may be taken to the cleaners

2 Chase after

3 Be there

4 Greek poet's inspiration

5 Awful auto

6 Bidirectional, as a door

7 Paris transit system

8 Get ready, for short

9 Without help

10 "Gladiator" setting

11 Relative of a marina

12 Auction offering

13 They might visit Earth: Abbr.

21 It comes easily to hand

22 "Vidi" from Caesar's boast

26 It's under a foot

27 Like a movie from the '30s

29 Person who colors textiles

30 Mosque official

31 Young kid

34 Liter or gallon

35 Discount clothing chain

36 The last night of the year, e.g.

37 "Didn't mean to do that!"

38 Wet bar, perhaps?

39 Rushing

42 Congressional assent

43 Censorship-fighting org.

44 Language of Lahore

48 Cast a ballot against a proposition

49 Magic word

51 Itsy-bitsy bits

52 Carne ___

53 Hauls around

54 "Humble" dwelling

56 Famous Ford flop

58 Authentic

59 Ashtabula's Great Lake

60 Kind of shot in hockey

61 Prez on a \$5 bill

62 Groceries holder

Crossword sponsored by Sherman Schapiro

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Crossword answers are on page 18

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Letters to the Editor

Full Cover Price

To the Editor:

As someone with a long personal and family history in book publishing (my grandfather was instrumental in establishing Andre Deutsch and Paul Hamlyn in their eponymous imprints, as well as Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press after the Second World War, and I worked in publishing for almost 20 years), I have to take issue with Sue Leskiw's proud boast that she has "yet to purchase a full-price book" ["Love of Mystery," November Senior News, page 1].

What does she think authors live on? Book sales provide royalty income to authors; paying full price for a book ensures the author receives the maximum return for their work (and sales of used books provide nothing).

While she's enjoying the fruits of all her frugal book shopping, Ms. Leskiw might care to consider the lives of the authors of those books as they toiled over their keyboards for her enjoyment.

Pat Bitton, Eureka

Sue Leskiw replies: *Purchasing used mysteries is not an anomaly, but part of my ethos to tread lightly on the planet by buying pre-owned clothes, music, household goods, etc. Nearly all my paperbacks come from nonprofit groups via thrift stores or public events. After reading, I donate most back for further fundraising. Every book was bought new by someone, who opted not to keep it or send it to a landfill, but instead started a reuse-recycle chain by giving it to a good cause. Is Ms. Bitton also opposed to commercial used book stores, lending libraries (including little neighborhood cupboards), and friends sharing books they enjoy with each other?*

Watch Your Language

To the Editor & Proofreaders:

I love your much-needed senior newspaper. One of your entertaining stories in the September issue was about the men's underwear department at Sears and a 16-year-old young employee [Patti Stammer, "Tighty Whities — Sears 1960," September Senior News, page 9].

But my question to you is: Consider that the majority of your readers were raised in the 1940s-'50s before language turned into "gutter-garbage" talk! (A neighbor told me yesterday, "If I used Facebook, every 3rd word is the 'F*** word," which when first used, had an explicit sexual connotation.)

The same with another word for donkey: "jacka**." Why couldn't you replace "a**" with one of the words on the enclosed list*? Wasn't the point of the story to be funny, not graphic?

Just saying, we don't need more gutter-talk in our excellent senior paper.

A loyal fan,

Nina Peters, McKinleyville
(84-year-young writer)

* Ms. Peters offers these suggestions in place of Patti Stammer's use of "a**" in her article: "back-side, tush or tushie, rear, rump, bottom, derriere. Much more easy on the ear than A**!"

Patti Stammer replies: *Dear Ms. Peters, you're right. I might have used a half-dozen other words in that story. It was an unsettling and a sleazy experience, so "ass" seemed an appropriate choice. I was also raised in the '50s and, at 16, it was most likely the only semi-offensive word I knew. My mom, who once slapped my face for saying "damn," wouldn't have liked it either. I'm very sorry if I offended anyone.*

Hear the Birds?

To the Editor:

I just had to respond to John Heckel's hearing aid story ["Did You Hear That?" November Senior News, page 10].

I have had mine for about 10 years. I'm a birder, and could not hear "chick-a-dee-dee-dee." For several years, I knew I had high-pitch hearing loss. I missed other bird sounds, too. (Hearing a bird is often the only indication of its presence.)

Suddenly, on a bird walk, it hit me. I never heard the flicker calling — that is certainly not a high-pitched call.

Off I went to the audiologist. I was excited. The day I got the hearing aids, I started for home. As I turned onto my street, I heard my directional signal, "TICK-tick-TICK-tick-TICK!" I never knew they didn't just go, "TICK (pause) TICK (pause) TICK."

When I arrived home, I heard DOZENS of birds in my yard. I heard the leaves rustling. I couldn't wait to "try them out" in the field.

Now, I rarely go anywhere (except swimming) without them. I'm a BETTER birder now that I can hear.

Louise Bacon-Ogden, Eureka

Dear Santa:

All I want is a fat bank account and a skinny body. Please don't mix it up again like last year.

—Anonymous

Letters to the Editor 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.

MORE LETTERS ...

More on Books

To the Editor:

Reading became a passion for me in high school — Hiram Johnson Senior High in Sacramento.

A group of us formed a reading group in our junior year. Students were required to attend study hall for one period — for us, the perfect opportunity to read. On weekends, we would take the #4 bus to the downtown bookstore to buy more books.

We would read everything we could get our hands on, fiction and nonfiction. Thomas Hardy and John Steinbeck were typical, but I also read political books such as William Foster's "Toward Soviet America," and a book entitled "Harry 'Ass' Truman." Anything and everything was fair game.

My interest turned primarily to nonfiction when I went away to college. The first book I purchased as a college student was Leo S. Berg's "Classification of Fishes Both Recent

and Fossil," which led to a career as a professional ichthyologist.

Once I decided that my career goal was marine biology, for fun I would read such books as "Between Pacific Tides" by Ricketts and Calvin, and "Zoogeography of the Sea" by Sven Ekman.

I did become a marine biologist and continue to read books on fishes, such as William Beebe's "Beneath Tropic Seas" and "Half Mile Down," and David Starr Jordan's autobiography, "The Days of a Man."

Once I became a cubmaster for our son's Cub Scout troop, I read every book on Scouting I could find. More recently, my attention has been drawn to the history of railroads, and I'm currently reading "Bonanza Railroads" by Gilbert Kneiss, a fascinating history of old-time railroading in California and Nevada.

Ron Fritzsche, Arcata

Fly, Monarchs!

To the Editor:

In recent years, I've become extremely interested in the monarch butterfly and alarmed at the declining numbers of the monarch population.

Last December, I received a birthday gift of a mesh butterfly house. I grow milkweed, the host plant on which female monarchs lay their eggs. The eggs hatch into tiny larva and feed on the milkweed until the are ready to pupate.

This summer I watched for the eggs and larva on the milkweed and transported them to the butterfly house where they fed, grew, pupated

and then eclosed (emerged) as mature butterflies.

I've gained a new appreciation for God's creation through witnessing this process. I released about 40 monarch butterflies and hope the last generation made the long and arduous journey to Mexico or southern California for the winter.

Your area probably has more devoted and knowledgeable people who've done more than I have.

**Shelly Moran,
Fayetteville, Arkansas**

Dangerous Smoke

To the Editor:

Last month, Dr. Jennifer Heidmann discussed health risks associated with the holiday season ["Healthy Holidays," November Senior News, page 5]. But the largest seasonal health hazard many of us face was missing: localized pollution from wood stoves and fireplaces.

A substantial and growing body of peer-reviewed research makes it clear that woodsmoke pollution is a serious health issue we need to be taking much more seriously.

Fine particle pollution, or PM2.5, is the pollutant most closely linked with serious illnesses and premature deaths, even at low levels below current regulatory standards.

Woodsmoke is a particularly nasty source of PM2.5. It contains surprisingly high levels of toxins such as benzene, dioxins and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). The health effects that are linked with secondhand cigarette smoke are also linked to woodsmoke.

The externalized costs of wood heating are high. A recent study in Australia estimated that, on average, each wood stove increased annual health-related costs by about \$8,000 (in USD).

Numerous studies have shown that even the newest certified wood stoves used with properly seasoned wood are far more polluting than most people realize. A recent European report, for example, found that a perfectly used certified stove meeting strict "Ecode-sign" emissions standards pollutes the neighborhood with the PM2.5 equivalent of the exhaust of 750 modern heavy trucks.

Particle pollution is increasingly a focus of Alzheimer's research. In fact, a study specifically looking at pollution from wood heating found that using a wood stove, or even just living in a neighborhood where they're commonly used, increased dementia risk on average by 74% and 55% respectively.

It's difficult to discuss the problem of wood smoke pollution in a place where so many people heat with wood stoves, but we can't afford to continue ignoring the issue.

Ellen Golla, Trinidad

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Childhood Christmases, a Train Set & a Priceless \$1 Gift

By Roy Grieshaber

I remember my childhood Christmas holidays as being about family and church, not so much about gifts and things. It was a season of joy and of being together.

Gift-giving in our family was frugal, perhaps the result of parents who had lived through the Great Depression, and because life on a small family farm in Kansas was generally about working and being economical.

For our Christmas wish list, my sister and I could each choose one nice gift, being careful not to select the most expensive. We often received that item and several other practical gifts such as clothing. We became skilled at being excited and appreciative about gifts like socks and underwear.

Santa Claus came to our house each Christmas Eve while we were at church. In the car returning home, there would be speculation of whether Santa had come yet. Of course, our gifts were under the Christmas tree when we arrived home.

We understood that Santa was a spirit of love and giving, and that the gifts were from our parents, who played the role of Santa. We could never figure out, however, how our gifts got under the Christmas tree while we were all at church. Later on, Dad pointed out that our mother was always the last one into the car before we left for church.

On Mother's side of our family, we drew names at Thanksgiving to limit the gift-giving, and the cost of

that gift was not to exceed a \$1. One Thanksgiving, we cousins discussed raising the \$1 limit. Our Aunt Marie questioned why we would want to spend more money on gifts that no one really wanted anyway, and we decided not to increase the limit.

My most important toy as a child was my electric train, which had been a Christmas gift. Once I forgot to unplug the transformer when I was finished, and it burned out, leaving a square brown mark etched into the oak flooring.

I was devastated by my carelessness. I didn't see any way for me to ever get my train functioning again.

That Christmas, my Aunt Marie had drawn my name for the gift exchange. When I opened my gift

from her, I found a replacement transformer for my electric train. She had violated the \$1 rule she had previously defended.

It was my best gift ever.

Roy Grieshaber, 79, enjoys quiet holidays in Eureka.





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You Can Be in Senior News

- **JANUARY** is International Creativity Month, a great way to start a new year. What makes you feel creative? What's the biggest life change you've undergone? And how will you innovate and renovate your life this year? How can we all think outside the box during 2022?
 - **FEBRUARY** is Friendship Month (& also includes both Valentine's Day and National Marriage Week), so let's talk about love and friendship. Who's your best friend? Oldest friend? Most unlikely friend? What makes a good friend. And why?
- Contact SN editor Ted Pease: tpease@humsenior.org, or call 707-443-9747, x1226.

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