

# MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2021 | MAINEWOMENMAGAZINE.COM

MEET  
**Ashley Morrill** of  
**CABIN MASTERS!**



**DON'T MISS!** Remarkable Veteran *Gretchen Evans* is Going Strong

207's Beth McEvoy  
Tells Maine Stories

ZELIA LUNT'S DIARY:  
*Back to School in 1843*

Romance Novelist  
KATANA COLLINS





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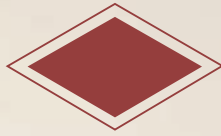
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# | FEATURES |



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## **21** **MEET THE CABIN MASTERS!**

Keeping it down to earth with Ashley Morrill and the rest of the crew from the show on Discovery Channel's DIY Network.

*Cover photo by Brewster Burns*

## **26** **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

Some notable Maine women of Rotary.

## **49** **PICNIC IN A GRAVEL PIT**

Lew-Ellyn Hughes shares the importance of putting in just a little more effort.



Einstein said the measure of intelligence is the ability to change.

Well, then, we are sure brainy. How our lives have changed over the last year and a half. We as women led the way to create a new reality, by changing, adapting, and moving forward. I applaud all you brilliant women.

With what we endured over the last year, we always worked for positive change, in large and small ways. We have created different, more flexible homes, found and experienced more beauty outside, done a wide variety of projects, and gone on walks, excursions, and trips when we could. And we found each other. Change is hard but hidden in change is a gift of another reality we could never have imagined.

I honor all of you. According to Einstein, wow, are we smart!

Embrace your day. Give yourself the gift of starting over today. You are good and have a lot to offer. Remember that.

Please enjoy this issue. In it are stories of many women of all ages who have changed directions or careers, and who have kept on learning, giving back, and growing. How privileged I feel getting to know some of the many amazing Maine women.

We have added again “On the Horizon: Events around Maine” as more venues open and as traditional happenings are revived. We are thrilled to list many. You also can go to our website page at [mainewomenmagazine.com](http://mainewomenmagazine.com) and there we will also list throughout the month events that are happening in Maine.

I have read your letters, and I hear that many people are having a hard time finding *Maine Women Magazine*. We are printing more and more, but they do get scooped up fast. I sincerely encourage you to get a subscription and have the magazine delivered to your home each month, guaranteeing you will never miss an issue.

I want to extend to all of you a special discount for the month of September only: a year's subscription for \$29.95. The magazine makes a great gift, too.

Thank you all for writing, Please keep the letters coming.

*Blessings and Peace,*  
*Mary Frances Barstow*  
*Editor/Publisher*

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

# MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

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# CONTENT

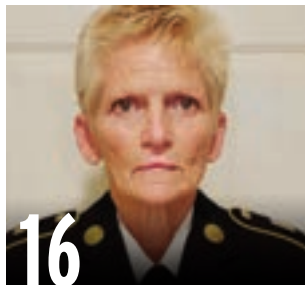
## MORE FEATURES



12

### BACK TO SCHOOL IN 1843

The Diary of Zelia Lunt (1825–1899), who studied at Westbrook Seminary.



16

### STRONG AND UNBROKEN

Army Commander Sargent Major Gretchen Evans' survival story.



30

### 207 REPORTER

Beth McEvoy travels the state and presents great stories.



35

### THE POWER OF ALOHA SPIRIT

Even in dark times, "The ukulele can bring a lot of joy," says Renee Conlogue.



38

### FINE WINE IN LINCOLNVILLE

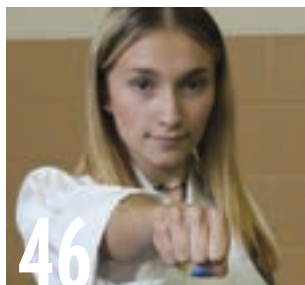
A talk with Bettina Doulton of Cellardoor Winery and Vineyard.



42

### SALTWATER CLASSROOM

Founder/director Lexi Doudera inspires global ocean stewardship.



46

### SHE DOES WHAT? KARATE PHENOM

Fifteen-year-old Abigail Dudley earns a coveted black belt in karate.



50

### LOYAL BISCUIT COMPANY

Heidi Neal and Fenway – the dog who helped it all happen.



52

### ROMANCE NOVELIST

Katana Collins on home renovations, Harley Quinn, and a writer's life.

## IN EVERY ISSUE



10

### 10 SOLO VOYAGE

Holly Martin's postcard from the Tuamotus.

### 56 GREAT READS

*The Maine Play Book: A Four-Season Guide to Family Fun and Adventure*

### 58 HOME

Having a successful yard sale.

### 60 ON THE HORIZON

Events around Maine this month.



62

### 62 GARDENING

Celebrating the last of summer's beauty.

### 64 LOVE ON A PLATE

Carrot Salad with Cashew Butter Dressing

### 65 MOMSENSE

Painting Over the Wall

### 66 QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

By L.C. Van Savage

| LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

I'm just reaching out to say how much I appreciate this magazine and all the work and quality goes into it. I look forward to each issue. Thank you for the informative, entertaining, and quality work that you do!

—K. A., Scarborough

First, I love your magazine. I know lots of women pick it up and read it, but as a single fulltime father of a little 8-year-old leader, I realize now more than ever that

strong, independent-thinking women are our future. I find myself chatting about your magazine often. More and more people are hearing about it.

—M. A., Portsmouth

Wonderful piece on Violet Cormier! Thank you. I so enjoyed grabbing a copy and reading about her, Erin French, Nikki Strout of Rugged Seas, and others in the issue. POWER.

—C. K., Portland

My husband gave me a subscription to this wonderful magazine, and I have enjoyed it every time.

Such high-quality production, fascinating people, and great photos, etc.!

—M. E., Jay

I have been enjoying the *Maine Women's Magazine*, and especially August's feature on Erin French! I keep sending in my postcards to get a seat at her table, but alas no luck so far!

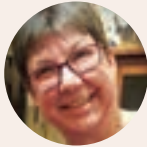
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| CONTRIBUTORS |

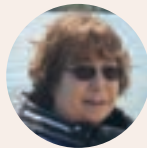
**Robert Cook** is an award-winning journalist who has covered everything from Presidential campaigns to compelling human interest stories for more than 25 years.



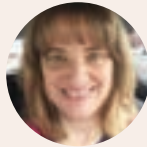
**Elizabeth DeWolfe, Ph.D.**, is Professor of History at the University of New England where she teaches courses in women's history and American culture. She is the award-winning author of several works including *The Murder of Mary Bean* and *Other Stories* and *Shaking the Faith*. She lives in Alfred with her husband, Scott.



**Pam Ferris-Olson, Ph.D.**, worked as a freelance writer/photographer/editor/educator prior to relocating to Maine in 2016. The breadth of her experience with natural resources, storytelling and women, and a passion for the ocean inspired her to found *Women Mind the Water*. She is a visual artist who enjoys kayaking.



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



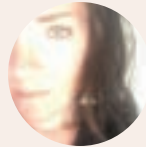
**Sheila D. Grant** is a freelance editor/writer/photographer, and the author of two books. Her work has appeared in the *Boston Globe* and been recognized by the Maine Press Association and the New England Outdoor Writers Association.



**Jodi Hersey** is a freelance writer from Hermon. She has worked in television, radio and print for more than 15 years. She is a military wife, mother of twins, and a huge fan of vintage cars, especially Ford Mustangs.



**Sarah Holman** is a writer living in Portland. She grew up in rural Maine and holds a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Sarah is enthusiastic about coffee, thrift shop treasures, and old houses in need of saving.



**Lew-Ellyn Hughes** is an award-winning columnist and author. Her column *Away with Words*, is an eight-time winner in the Maine Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest. She writes nonfiction stories about the people, places, and lifestyle of rural Maine.



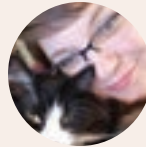
**Avery Hunt** spent 30 years in New York City in publishing, and has worked both as an award-winning journalist for *Newsday*, and a magazine executive for *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, *Esquire*, among others. She has also written for major magazines and newspapers. In 2001, she and her husband, now deceased, moved back to the coast of Maine, where she spent many childhood summers.



**Beverly Mann Lessard** ran a childcare center for 27 years, was a newspaper contributor, and self-published several books of her columns. She lives in Lyman.



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



**Kathleen "Kat" Szmit** is a journalist, book editor, and aspiring novelist who, after years of memorable visits, is finally a resident of Maine. She lives in Alfred and is enjoying all that her new home state has to offer.



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

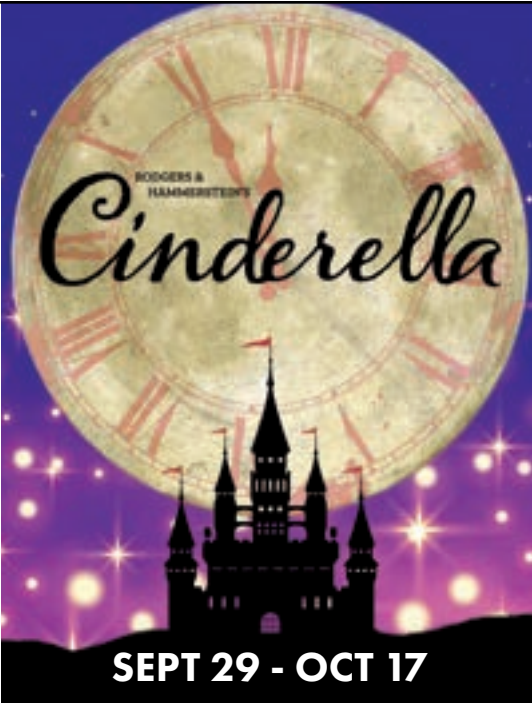


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Photo by Holly Martin

# POSTCARD FROM HOLLY

BY HOLLY MARTIN

**H**olly Martin, 29, is sailing around the world in her 27-foot-long Grinde sailboat, which she christened the SV Gecko. She left Maine in the fall of 2019, from Round Pond Harbor on the Pemaquid Peninsula. Holly sent this "postcard" by satellite from the South Pacific, to the readers of Maine Women Magazine.

ly surge towards the free meal. I've learned from locals that the more quickly I bring the fish up above the surface of the water, the less likely I am to be pestered by sharks. I look down again and see a few reef sharks swimming below me. As long as the fish remains out of the water, I'm safe.

It's not unusual here to see a person snorkeling back to shore with one arm sticking out of the water holding a fish on a spear. It's just another example of how nature adapts. Sharks have lived for over 400 million years in the ocean. Who are we to think we can outsmart them for long? •

I sight along the length of my spear gun and press the trigger. A watery clack resonates in my ears, and a silver fish spins at the end of my spear. I immediately turn around, scanning in every direction as I kick urgently towards the surface. My head breaks into air and I take a deep breath, simultaneously shooting my arm out of the water to hold the fish aloft. I put my face into the water again and scan below: so far so good.

Spear fishing in the Pacific comes with some additional challenges: sharks. In populated locations, sharks become accustomed to the clack of a spear gun firing, and immediate-





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# *Back to School in 1843:* THE DIARY OF ZELIA LUNT

BY ELIZABETH DEWOLFE, Ph.D.



Alumni Hall, 1868. The original building of Westbrook Seminary is still in use today. Photo courtesy University of New England, Westbrook College History Collection.

*“A lovely day again. Have spent it as usual,  
in endeavoring to acquire knowledge.”*

Zelia Lunt, *April 5, 1844*

In the 1840s, it was the rare young woman whose usual day included studying rhetoric, Latin, and botany. But thanks to a remarkable diary, housed at the Maine Historical Society in Portland, we can know the excitement of one of the lucky few women students who *were* then getting a rigorous education.

Zelia Lunt (1825–1899) studied at Westbrook Seminary, where some of Maine’s earliest efforts at higher education for women took place. Her daily diary entries reveal an avid learner. Later, she became an educator herself, passing on her knowledge and enthusiasm to other young women.

Despite her personal good fortune, the idea of educating women was still controversial in Zelia’s day. Some critics worried young women would collapse under the stress of intellectual rigor. Others raised concern that educational pursuits might leave young women infertile, unruly, and disinterested in domestic duties. And some wondered . . . might not such an education (equal or nearly so to what men received) go against both nature and the Bible?

On the other side, proponents argued that a substantive education would better prepare women for domestic roles. It would not be distracting or damaging to the recipient nor detrimental to soci-



Zelia Lunt, ca. 1837.

Collections of Maine Historical Society,  
courtesy of VintageMaineImages.com



## April 18th, 1843

*“Tuesday. Father has today been to Portland and purchased, for Mary Ann and me, each a book in which he wishes us to state the common-place matters of the day.”*

ety. According to this view, an educated woman would be better able to manage her household and be better equipped to advise her sons on their own intellectual pursuits. Further, supporters argued, she would be able to make pleasant conversation with her husband’s friends and guests, thus boosting his reputation. Persuasive as these arguments might be, few women had the opportunity for higher education or any opportunities for learning beyond basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Westbrook Seminary helped fill that gap.

In 1831, a group of leading Universalist men founded Westbrook Seminary to enhance the “morality and purity” of youth and to offer a rigorous education. In an arrangement that was unique in Maine (and most places), both young men *and* young women would be admitted “with equal privilege.” Classes began in 1834. At that time, the word “seminary” did not signify a religious training ground, but rather it was a word used synonymously with “institute.” Many seminaries had entrance exams, required knowledge of Greek and Latin, and offered demanding classes in academic subjects. A seminary education was like that of a secondary education today, offered in an era when high schools were rare.

For young men in the early decades of the 19th century, attendance at a seminary functioned as a gateway to a four-year college. For women like Zelia Lunt, their studies nodded to the domestic benefits that proponents had articulated, but more importantly, prepared women for one of the few occupations available to them: teaching.

Lunt first attended Westbrook Seminary in the spring of 1843. She had just turned 18 years old. For two weeks, she attended classes in the single building that comprised the school on what was then known as Stevens Plains (today, Portland).



This tintype from ca. 1855 is the earliest known image of Westbrook Seminary students.  
Photo courtesy University of New England, Westbrook College History Collection.



Dr. J. William Daniels’ Geometry class, 1876.  
Photo courtesy University of New England, Westbrook College History Collection.

Having taken well to her studies, she continued, and she matriculated the following fall.

Westbrook Seminary offered classes year-round in 11-week terms. Tuition per term was \$3.00, or \$4.50 if you studied languages or higher mathematics. Two instructors, Moses Walker and George True, taught the young “scholars,” as they were called. Students came from across Maine and boarded near the Seminary in private homes. Some were as young as 10 years old. In the early Fall, Lunt walked to the Seminary from her own home, but as the

## October 5th, 1843

*“Mr. True [Seminary headmaster] collected the fragments that were left of the lecture yesterday morning for the one this morning; as he said a good housewife would collect the fragments of one meal, for another.”*



Westbrook Seminary basketball team, 1899.

Photo courtesy University of New England, Westbrook College History Collection.



Shoveling Snow on the Westbrook Seminary Campus, Winter, 1918-1919.

Photo courtesy University of New England, Westbrook College History Collection.

weather turned, she boarded closer to the school, in the home of Zachariah Stevens, founder of the japanned tinware industry and a donor of land for the new Seminary.

Lunt loved learning. Shortly after commencing the fall semester, she wrote: "Have attended school, and like much." As a student she wrote compositions and prepared oral exercises including recitations, debates, dialogues, and declamations (which meant giving a speech, typically one well known). Each morning she listened to the headmaster's lecture, which often focused on shaping students' character with talks on managing one's temper, punctuality, and profane swearing. Students also enjoyed evening presentations on wide-ranging current topics including mesmerism, phrenology, and galvanism (electricity). Lunt studied geography, French, arithmetic, rhetoric, Latin, and moral philosophy, a

field which encompassed psychology, logic, and metaphysics. Science classes introduced her to chemistry, optics, and botany. Her study of botany included collecting and analyzing various flowers and plants.

Lunt appeared to be a diligent student, although compositions proved challenging. As she faced her homework one evening, she noted her writing assignment had "been rather a dull employment." Her view appears to have been shared by her fellow students: one of Headmaster Walker's morning lectures focused on why one

needed to practice writing, "that difficult task," Lunt wrote, "which we all so much dread." At the end of each term, a student exhibition showcased recitations, declamations, and compositions in front of a crowd of important observers and neighborhood guests. Lunt's winter term examination in 1844 began "at an early hour in the morning [with] the school room . . . as densely filled as it could be." It was a long, but happy day: "The exhibition continued till nearly dark, and closed with the reading of composition. . . . We then sought our homes, much fatigued with the exercises of the day."

Lunt's Seminary classes provided more than knowledge. Zelia Lunt bonded deeply with her fellow students, and they with her. Amongst themselves, the young women collectively found a supportive community of like-minded, knowledge-hungry students. Out of the classroom, Lunt and her friends enjoyed a literary club, long walks, tableaux, parties, visiting, and a variety of games such as "grace-hoop," "button," and "chase the squirrel."

At the end of the fall term, Lunt bemoaned the imminent departure of friends: "We shall many of us be widely separated, but time, nor distance, cannot erase the impression which we have gained from our books, our teacher or . . . each other." Her school days, she wrote, were "the happiest (I trust I speak for all) period of our lives." "Oh halcyon days!" Lunt sighed as one term neared the end, "how soon they pass away."

Lunt was not alone in the experience of a sisterhood. Female seminaries and nascent women's colleges in the 19th century became places where young women learned the role that one's gender would play in their future lives. Early Westbrook Seminary leaders, such as minister William Drew, encouraged women to keep advancing into new areas. With a dismissive nod to female academies (in-

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### ***Friday, March 22nd, 1844***

*"Another snow storm, and blow storm, today. I had the sad misfortune this morning to fall into a snow-drift before reaching the school-room, and consequently to be laughed at; however, I arrived there without any serious evil, except a cold hand."*



## Monday, May 13th, 1844

*“My 19th birthday. How short a time it seems since my 18th. I then attended school in this place, and boarded in this house, and now I can attend school no more at present but must endeavor to impart, as well as acquire knowledge. I have had 31 scholars today. I probably shall have more, and hope they will make less noise than those which I now have.”*

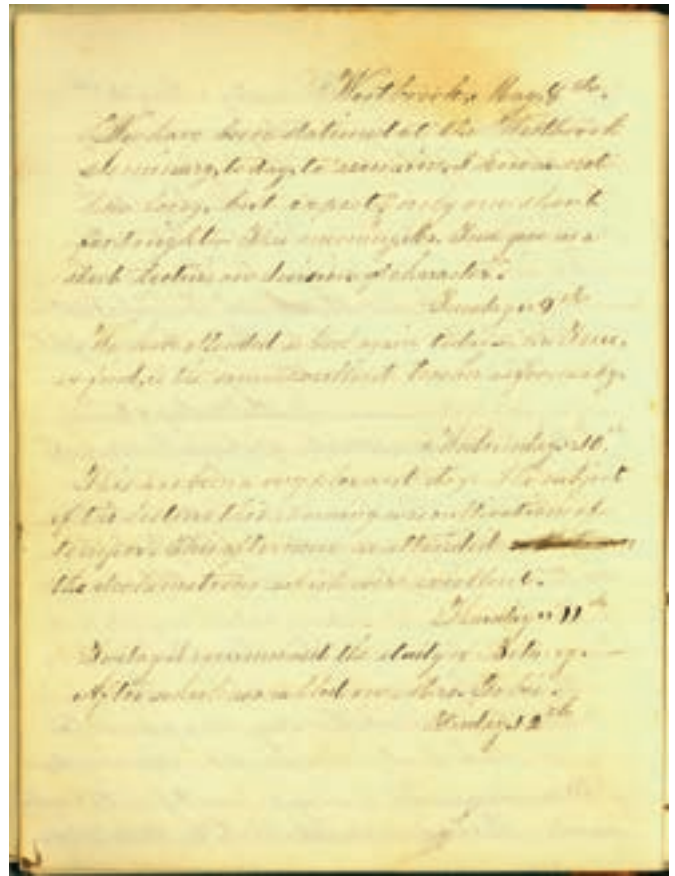
situations that were typically finishing schools), Drew wrote of women that “there was no reason at all why their education should be confined to drawing, dancing, music, and painting and their training to keeping a house in order, turning a spinning wheel, [or] making a pudding.”

Westbrook Seminary followed true to their more ambitious philosophy in the decades following Lunt’s attendance. In 1863, the State of Maine granted the school authority to offer curricula and degrees “equivalent to that of any female college in New England.” Young women who chose this advanced curriculum received a “Lady of Liberal Learning” or a “Lady of English Learning” degree, depending on her course of study. In 1865, this degree was renamed a “laureate of arts” and was offered into the early 20th century.

Enrollment grew throughout the 19th century. In the 1920s, Westbrook Seminary became Westbrook Junior College and a single-sex institution, focusing on pragmatic, two-year programs that trained women for jobs. In the 1970s, men re-entered the newly renamed Westbrook College, which had added training in health-related fields in four-year, baccalaureate programs. In 1996, Westbrook College merged with the University of New England and adopted the UNE name. Zelia Lunt’s single-building school, where she was one of 50 scholars in 1843, is now the setting for new generations of co-eds who study on three campuses and earn bachelors, masters, doctoral, and medical degrees.

In the fall of 1843, Headmaster True gave a series of lectures on teaching, which included his thoughts on what is a teacher’s role and how to organize a school. Lunt must have paid particular attention: in the summer of 1844, she took on “a new and arduous task,” teaching more than 30 students in her own school, a not-unusual occupation for a bright, single young woman. The following fall term, Lunt re-entered Westbrook Seminary as both a scholar and as an assistant to True and Walker. Her duties included correcting compositions and listening to recitations. For the next 20 months, Lunt continued to study and assist in the education of Westbrook Seminary students. In 1855, she married Henry Walker, the widower of her sister Mary Ann, who had passed away in 1851. Lunt had five sons and died in 1899.

For more on the history of Westbrook College, see the online exhibits on the Maine Memory Network at [www.mainememory.net](http://www.mainememory.net) and the Westbrook College History Collection at UNE at <https://dune.une.edu/wchc/>.



Zelia Lunt's Diary, 1843.

Collections of Maine Historical Society, courtesy of VintageMaineImages.com

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Gretchen and her dog Rusty hiking. *Photos courtesy of Gretchen Evans*

# GRETCHEN EVANS

## Strong and Unbroken

BY AVERY HUNT

In 2006, Army Commander Sargent Major Gretchen Evans was checking on troops at a remote location. At the time, she was in charge of all Army ground forces in Afghanistan, with a distinguished 27-year Army career and tremendous experience. Suddenly she and her team were faced with a barrage of mortar fire. One of the explosives landed close by, and she was slammed into a concrete barrier. Two other soldiers near her were killed instantly. She survived.

Transported to a military hospital in Germany, she soon learned the extent of her injuries. Among the many she had sustained, she was rendered totally deaf, with a brain injury, shrapnel wounds, and PTSD. She was in intensive rehab for 18 long months. But over time, Evans has rebounded to live a full and highly active life. She remains “Unbroken,” which is also the name of her fellow wounded warriors’ four-person extreme sports team. This is her story.

Her memories of that fateful day, when her life so abruptly changed, are still clear today. As Gretchen Evans recalls, “It was near the end of our deployment, and I was flying in a helicopter, checking on troops. We landed, and I exited the helicopter, and it lifted off to land in a safer place until I was ready to leave.

“I’d been on the ground less than 10 minutes when mortars started incoming like rain. We immediately sent out a Quick Reaction Force to neutralize the enemy that was firing at us, but in the meantime, I was standing in the open, yelling to my troops to get inside the fortified bunkers for protection. Before I could get in a bunker myself, a round landed to my right and detonated, killing two soldiers standing next to me. The force of the blast threw me toward one of the concrete bunkers, which I hit headfirst.

“I was Medevac’d to Bagram Air Force Base and then to Landstuhl, where I was put into a coma for a couple of days while the doctors assessed my injuries. When I awoke, they told me I was



deaf, had a traumatic brain injury, and other internal and external injuries. I knew right then that my career in the military was over. I had no Plan B.”

Before her injuries, Gretchen had been a successful senior military intelligence analyst and paratrooper, serving in dangerous conflict zones around the world including Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Over the course of her career, she earned many medals and awards, from the Bronze Star to a Presidential Unit Citation Medal, several Global War on Terrorism ribbons, and six Meritorious Service Medals.

Throughout her nearly three decades in the service, Evans worked her way up to Command Sergeant Major, the highest rank an enlisted soldier can achieve—a promotion she received in 2001. By 2006, in her last mission, she was responsible for the security and personnel on all bases and forwarding operation bases in Afghanistan and oversaw more than 30,000 ground troops.

Evans grew up in Abilene, Texas, one of three siblings. While she was not raised in a military family, her father was a World War II vet. After high school, she went to college at Texas Tech, but soon found tuition costs to be a difficult financial hurdle. She decided to join the Army where she could continue her education, with the military covering her tuition as a benefit, after a four-year service commitment. But a funny thing happened along the way: she fell in love with the Army. “After six months, I realized I had found my calling.”

It was in Afghanistan that she met her future husband, Robert, a Navy captain, and senior chaplain for all military serving in the region. Before getting involved, the two worked together professionally, dealing with the death of soldiers: counseling, gathering their personal effects, consoling families, and helping people overcome war-related traumas. Then Capt. Evans was recalled to Washington, D.C., and the two could only correspond by email. Bob soon expressed his romantic interest. Not long after that, Gretchen was summoned to D.C. for a briefing with top generals about the situation in Afghanistan. That evening, over a romantic dinner, Bob asked her to marry him, and she accepted.

Six weeks later, back on duty, Gretchen’s life as she knew it came to a screeching halt, with that incoming mortar attack. Bob was never notified, and she couldn’t let him know. Dead silence ensued. “When someone in top command is injured, no communications are allowed, since the enemy might get wind of it,” she explains today. It wasn’t until she knew the details of her damage that she wrote to him, explaining what had happened and that he didn’t have to stick to any commitment. His response was immediate: “I’m with you!”

Today, the devoted couple lives in Brunswick, mostly because Robert went to Bowdoin and had always wanted to come back to Maine. Gretchen adds that she loves this area for all its great outdoor opportunities. Among her many athletic abilities, she has run 40 marathons. She and Bob regularly go hiking and kayaking, and Gretchen pursues her extreme adventure races.

Evans’ transition from military to civilian life was very difficult. She had spent her entire adult life in the Army. Her heart was broken, not only due to her injuries but also to the sudden loss of her military family, her team, the fellowship, and the mission she had found and loved—the whole military experience. “I was in



Gretchen in uniform with Rusty by her side, top, and in her Golden Knights gear after jumping out of a plane.

a very dark place.” She was lost, sad, and hopeless until she found her way into “No Barriers Warriors,” a non-profit organization serving veterans with disabilities from all branches of the military and all eras of service.

Evans sent in her application to No Barriers, but she anticipated rejection, due to the extent of her injuries and a PTSD diagnosis. Much to her surprise, she was accepted and found the healing environment of her first program with them to be life changing. “Before, during, and after, No Barriers provided me and my group with powerful tools to replace hopelessness, not only with hope but with a renewed passion for living life to the fullest.”

She embraced the opportunity to learn lip reading, rather than bemoan her hearing loss. She became an accomplished lip reader. She has devices that detect vibrations. And she has special equipment on her phone that turns words into sentences so she can see them (much as smart phones will let you dictate your words into a text message).

Another important part of her renewed vitality rests with her “hearing dogs.” Her first, Aura, was a full-time guardian against her deafness, thanks to intense training from AmericanVetDogs. Aura is a highly trained Labrador who functioned as her vital “ears.” “Aura went everywhere with me—hiking or running or any outdoor activity, alerting me when a bike rider is behind me, or someone is passing me on the right. At home, she would let me know when the doorbell or phone rings. If I was driving my car and an ambulance siren blared, she’d tap me on the shoulder to let me know. She was also the first hearing dog that AmVetDogs ever trained. I had to have a very active dog, and Aura was just crazy enough to fit the bill.”

But now, as Aura is slowing down, she has been retrained to help Bob with his own PTSD. Gretchen, meanwhile, recently got Rusty, a young black Labrador with a gentle disposition, lots of energy, and enough discipline for the job—which involves a range of activities, strenuous and otherwise. She says that these dogs helped save her life—not just from possible accidents but as compassionate and loyal



Gretchen and Rusty take a break from canoeing.

companions. “Aura gave me back my independence, and she gave me hope. Now I have Rusty, who is robust, whimsical, and a fabulous hearing dog.”

Gretchen has healed herself with much effort. Part of that is her proactive effort to reach out to her fellow wounded vets. She is on the board of several veterans’ and educational organizations. In Maine, she helps fundraise for MaineVet2Vet, which pairs veterans together so they have a “battle buddy” and do not isolate or succumb to depression. She’s an ambassador for No Barriers.

She frequently speaks to veteran groups, and she is now part of “Women Veterans Speak,” a national speaker’s bureau. She is, no surprise, a highly sought-after motivational speaker. She has given presentations to Prudential, the Baltimore Orioles, Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Food Lion, and two organizations dear to her heart—No Barriers USA and America’s VetDogs.

“I thought I sucked at public speaking, but I just talk from the heart,” Gretchen says. Her story also resonates with civilians, not just veterans. She talks about leadership, teamwork, resilience, grit, and selfless service—all in a down-to-earth manner, a slight Texas twang laced with salty phrases, and lots of humor. She gets rave reviews from her audiences.

Gretchen is also one of the four female combat vets in a play created by Jonathan Wei for the Telling Project. Called *We Went to War*, the play is a loosely scripted theater piece in which the women each tell their stories in powerful prose. They have already played the Guthrie Theater in Milwaukee and the Library of Congress.

This October, they will perform at the National Press Club in D.C.

She continues to pursue her passion for extreme sports, with fellow injured veterans. In 2019, Gretchen and her “Unbroken” team signed up to compete in “The World’s Toughest Race”—a 671 km 7-day endurance race held in Fiji. They were the first all mixed-abilities (she prefers that term to handicapped or disabled) team to participate in this world-famous competition. There were 66 teams of four. Each team also had an additional crew member who didn’t participate in the race but who was there at the end of each leg of the race, to be of help.

“Our biggest challenge was that we’d never done an adventure race before, and we had a huge learning curve. Once we got to Fiji . . . we had to develop ways to communicate with me in the dark. Almost every event required us to plan so our team could do the tasks despite our injuries.” While “Unbroken” didn’t finish the grueling course (nor did approximately 30 other teams), they put up a good fight. You can watch the whole race on Amazon Prime’s *World’s Toughest Race: Eco-Challenge Fiji*.

At 5 feet 2 inches and 98 pounds, Gretchen Evans may be petite, with a lean wiry frame and a wide grin, but she has a commanding presence. And her heart, courage, and determination are boundless. This fall, CSM Evans will be honored again, as she is inducted into the U.S. Veterans Hall of Fame, in recognition of her outstanding and meritorious service within the United States Army and her community. •



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Ashley Morrill, center, with her brother, Chase Morrill, left, and her husband, Ryan Eldridge. Photo by Brewster Burns

# Meet the *Keeping It Down to Earth* CABIN MASTERS!

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

**T**he hit TV show *Maine Cabin Masters* returned earlier this year for its sixth season on the Discovery Channel's DIY Network, and it is now going full speed into its seventh season. It is a reality show on which rustic cabins and lakeside camps are given much-needed renovations by the crew at Kennebec Cabin Company, based in Manchester, Maine. Prospective clients write in, describing their remote and run-down properties in Maine, and the lucky few selected get a cabin-makeover that might be de-

acades overdue. The on-camera team includes designer Ashley Morrill; Ashley's husband Ryan Eldridge, described as "the voice of Reason"; the Boss, who is Ashley's brother Chase Morrill; and dedicated and skilled builders Matt "Dixie" Dix and Jared "Jedi" Baker. Together they give deteriorated cabins a new lease on life, to say the least.

And somehow, they make all their hard work and problem-solving look enjoyable, while the neglected cabins go from being in a derelict state to state-of-

the-art comfortable and gorgeous. How the Cabin Masters crew do what they do is impressive—and fun to watch, as the show's legions of fans will testify.

It was a joy to talk with Ashley and also with Jen Reese, Cabin Masters' invaluable Business Manager. They both gave me a chance to learn more about the show and those who make it happen. Together, this group of wonderful people pull off miracles, saving and transforming Maine cabins and camps—and the heritage that goes along with them.



Photos courtesy Maine Cabin Masters

**MARY:**

I love your story. How long have you been doing the *Maine Cabin Masters* show?

**ASHLEY:**

We are in our seventh season. It's crazy. We never in a million years would have thought that it would have become this popular and taken off as it has. We're very grateful for sure. Ryan and I will watch TV sometimes, and we're like, "Oh my gosh, that's weird. That's us. We're on TV!"

**MARY:**

How did you start this?

**ASHLEY:**

Chase and Ryan were builders, and they did one project together. Then

Chase found out about the TV show, so they did a Skype interview together. He came back. He was like, "Hey, you guys want to be on a TV show?"

They were like, "Yeah, right, whatever," and they did a Skype interview, and then they did a pilot, and then it just kind of snowballed from there.

**MARY:**

Unbelievable. And everybody seems to get along so well!

**ASHLEY:**

Oh yes, absolutely. I mean, we can get upset with each other, but we've always been so close that it always blows over, even though you might want to strangle somebody sometimes.

**MARY:**

Now, you work in a central role on the show with Chase and Ryan?

**ASHLEY:**

Yes, I'm married to Ryan. My brother Chase is kind of like the lead of the show.

**MARY:**

Do you feel comfortable with the TV and all this?

**ASHLEY:**

Yes. Yesterday was my day off and it was raining out, so I knew that there'd be a lot of people over at our headquarters. I went over and just hung out for a while, so I could meet everybody because I know that we have people coming from all over the state . . . all over the country. It's crazy.

**MARY:**

I went to Florida to do an interview last winter and someone I met said, "Oh you're from Maine, where the *Cabin Masters* are!"

**ASHLEY:**

It's weird. A lot of people in Maine have no idea that we exist. They find out about us from their friends that who outside of the state, which I think is hilarious.

**MARY:**

It really is. Have you had any national media attention on you?

**ASHLEY:**

We went on a show with Kellie Pickler and Ben. It was a daytime talk show. We've had other little blips. Here in Maine, though, we have to buy our own show. They just started sending us a link that we can watch. I think that's funny that we have to buy it.

**MARY:**

And how are your families dealing with all of this?

**ASHLEY:**

Oh, they love it. They love to promote us so much. They all wear our t-shirts every day, and they all say, "Oh, I'm Ryan's dad," or "I'm Ashley's mom."

**MARY:**

Do you get a lot of fan mail?

**ASHLEY:**

We get a ton of fan mail. Somebody just did a pastel of my two dogs, Gus and



Charlie, and drove it up to an event that I was at and gave it to me. And it's absolutely gorgeous! People mail us presents and letters and bring us stuff all the time.

**MARY:**

That's wonderful. And you've expanded into other businesses . . . a restaurant and entertainment?

**ASHLEY:**

Well, we have got an awesome staff behind us. Like the manager of the restaurant. I used to bartend with him at Sugarloaf, so I've known him, I know how professional he is, and I know that we can trust him. He's just doing an amazing job!

**MARY:**

That is a lot.

**ASHLEY:**

Yes! To open up a huge place like that, and to do everything without us there because we pretty much are off filming. We're like, "Good luck, call us if you need us."

**MARY:**

Do you have a contract for a certain length for the show?

**ASHLEY:**

This season we're just about done with a cabin, so we're in the process of signing a new contract.

**MARY:**

They are going to continue with the show?

**ASHLEY:**

Oh yes, definitely.

**MARY:**

Does it ever scare you at all, that all this has happened so quickly?

**ASHLEY:**

No. We would be doing this with or without the cameras. We weren't after the fame, but once it got started, and we saw how it was really making people happy? We were like, "Wow, this is pretty cool." We don't want the Hollywood aspect of it. We want to continue to be ourselves. We want to continue to be Mainers. We don't want to think of ourselves as more than what we are.

**MARY:**

And everybody is from Maine originally?

**ASHLEY:**

Yep.

**MARY:**

You haven't been approached to be on the *Good Morning America* or the *Today* show yet?

**ASHLEY:**

No, but we have somebody who has been working on that, and I don't know if she's maybe waiting for the new season to be announced.

**MARY:**

How about your customers? Have you had people upset with you at all?

**ASHLEY:**

These people know what they're signing up for. They hand us over the key, and they give us free rein. They have a list of things that they would like to see done, but overall—in order to keep the budgets low—we need to have the ability to go find windows that are on sale here, or like some wood here or there, you know what I mean?

**MARY:**

I do.

**ASHLEY:**

By allowing us the freedom to make the choices, we keep the budgets lower. So, these people have to have a lot of trust in us. There might be one or two things that aren't exactly how they wanted it, but overall they're psyched about the entire project.

**MARY:**

They have to sign off I'm sure, to go on this show?

**ASHLEY:**

Yes.

**MARY:**

And do you actually make a regular profit as if you are the contractor, or do you have to take a cut for the show?

**ASHLEY:**

It pretty much it works out to be even. We're definitely not making money off of the builds. But there are other ways that we're able to do that by starting up other businesses.



Photos courtesy Maine Cabin Masters

# A Conversation with JEN REESE, *Cabin Masters'* Business Manager

**MARY:**

Tell us about *Cabin Masters*.

**JEN:**

Sure. So, there's Kennebec Cabin Company, which is the umbrella over the *Maine Cabin Masters*, which is the television show. We're going into our seventh season. And at Kennebec Cabin Company we have our retail store, which has all *Maine Cabin Master* logo wear, tee-shirts, sweat-shirts, key chains, and coffee mugs, and so on. And we have an online store. The great thing about the retail store is that we feature Maine-based arts and crafts.

Then last summer we launched the Woodshed, which is our bar, as well as a live music and event venue. We have live music four days a week from June through October. And we started doing bigger concerts, so we created the *Rock the Dock* concert series. Our stage is actually made out of a dock, donated by Great Northern Docks, which is really cool. We have these large, ticketed concerts once or twice a month now.

**MARY:**

How did *Cabin Masters* get started?

**JEN:**

There was a company called Kennebec Property Services owned by Chase's father, who has since passed away. Chase started working with him and took over the company. A friend of one of his daughter's mother reached out and asked if he would be interested in being on a television show. So, they created a pilot episode called "The Lost Cabin Hunters." It didn't get picked up by anybody, but this production company came in—Dorsey Productions—and they really liked everyone involved. They said, "If we can figure out a show, we'd really like to work with you guys and pitch something else."

So it morphed into what the *Maine Cabin Masters* is. There's Chase, the boss; Ryan; and Ashley, who is our designer. Ashley is Chase's sister. She is married to Ryan.

And then there are two others, Jedi and Dixie, who are close friends. And they renovate old lakefront cabins.



Photo by Sally Stevens

**MARY:**

They find old cabins people have, and they do them over to make them elegant?

**JEN:**

People submit their cabins to us to be renovated by the *Cabin Masters*. They're seasonal lakefront cabins. The idea is not to turn them into grand homes or anything, but the *Cabin Masters* come in, and they make the spaces more usable. They fix them up, on very tight budgets, so that the places can be enjoyed for generations to come.

**MARY:**

Do you work in any particular area in Maine?

**JEN:**

We work all over the state. The last year, we've definitely stuck closer to Central Maine because of the pandemic. We're actually one of the only shows that was able to keep filming. Now we're starting to branch out a little further. It airs every Monday on the DIY Network.

**MARY:**

Do you have a lot of followers of the TV show?

**JEN:**

We do. We have an incredible fan base. We're seeing fans from all over the world really that are coming up here this summer,

and showing us support. They're putting our little area of Manchester, Maine, on the map.

**MARY:**

Now, I'm sure you have more work than you could handle.

**JEN:**

We do. We have over 3,000 applications for Maine cabins that people want us to renovate.

**MARY:**

How do you choose?

**JEN:**

The cabin owners tell us how much they have to spend. They tell us what they ideally want done. We need to make sure that it's realistic, that their budget matches the work that needs to be done. And then there's also the production side of things because it's for TV. We have to consider, "How will this camp and this location work for TV purposes?"

**MARY:**

Is Dorsey Productions a Maine company?

**JEN:**

They're a big TV production company out of Colorado. They've done a bunch of different shows.



**MARY:**

But Ryan, Chase, Ashley, and the others are from Maine?

**JEN:**

Born and raised here. All in Central Maine.

**MARY:**

How many shows a year do they put together? How many houses?

**JEN:**

It really depends. Last year we had a shortened season because of the pandemic. Some years it's 16. Some years, like last year, it was closer to 10. I think this coming season it is going to be closer to 14.

**MARY:**

What is Ashley's background as a designer?

**JEN:**

She owned an antique business for a while here in Central Maine. She's a very creative, artistic person, with an instinctive design sense. So, the guys come in, they do the renovations, and then Ashley and her team come in behind them, and they decorate everything. And she's involved throughout the process with choosing paint colors and anything relating to design.

**MARY:**

And how long does it take to film a cabin renovation?

**JEN:**

We try to do cabins in two-and-a-half month periods. So, they'll start one, production will come in for the demo, then they'll leave, and then they'll come maybe halfway through, they'll do some more filming, and then they'll leave, and then they'll come in for the end, when they reveal the cabins to the homeowners.

**MARY:**

What are the homeowners like?

**JEN:**

We're actually doing an owner meet-up this Saturday at the Woodshed. There will be about 20, I think, who are meeting up to chat about their experiences. We have had some really incredible homeowners, and they really become more like family around here. •



Matt "Dixie" Dix, left, and Jared "Jedi" Baker. Photo by Brewster Burns

**MARY:**

Through your popularity?

**ASHLEY:**

Yes, and we have side projects that are going to help us make money. Overall, the point is to keep budgets low and have homeowners get a really great product for not too much.

**MARY:**

How many people watch the show, do you have any idea?

**ASHLEY:**

Well, I've done my own just poking around, and ratings are pretty high, but I wouldn't want to say for sure because I don't know the numbers. I read online that it got about 3.5 million viewers. But I don't know in terms of overall, or just last season.

**MARY:**

Does all that popularity affect your personal lives?

**ASHLEY:**

It definitely affects your personal life. We can't go out and not be recognized. You have to actually take in consideration what you're doing and what you look like. Can't go out in your pajamas! And there are times when I know I need to schedule extra time because I know that I'm going to end up seeing people and stopping and say hi. But overall? If

anybody comes up to us, we'll stop and take a picture and say hello. We never say no because it's the fans watching that are the reason why we're here.

**MARY:**

That's wonderful. Now, do any of you have children?

**ASHLEY:**

My brother has four.

**MARY:**

Oh, he does? So, you're an auntie. Do you all live in the same town?

**ASHLEY:**

Manchester is right outside of Augusta where our store and restaurant are. We all live within about 15 minutes of Manchester.

**MARY:**

Do you socialize with each other when you're not working?

**ASHLEY:**

Oh, yes. We're very close. We go to each other's camps, we ski together, and we go and hang out at the restaurant together. Yeah, we're always together.

It is really cool. We are extremely grateful, and we hope that we're making the state of Maine proud.

For more information, please go to <https://mainecabinmasters.com/>. •



# Maine Women of Rotary— Making a Difference

BY CHRISTINE SIMMONDS

**R**otary is an international community service organization with 1.2 million members world-wide. These are people from all walks of life who work together as a club to promote peace, fight diseases, advance education, and support communities. Local Rotary clubs throughout Maine and the world provide college scholarships, participate in international student exchange programs, host community fundraisers, and invest in youth leadership. The clubs also foster business relationships, friendships, and community connections, and they host dozens of offshoot programs.

Rotary was formed in 1905 by Paul Harris, an attorney from Chicago. Women were not allowed to become members of the club until the late 1980s. Now, Rotary International of 2021 has thousands of women in leadership positions, including the first woman president of the organization who starts in July of 2022.

**ANN LEE HUSSEY** of Portland is one such remarkable Rotarian woman. She is a member of the Sunrise Club in Portland.

Ann Lee was introduced to Rotary when she accompanied her late husband Michael Nazemetz, who was a member of the organization, on an international service trip to India in January of 2001. During that first trip Ann Lee helped immunize children against polio. In April, Ann Lee and Michael took a second trip to India, where they assisted with providing cleft palate surgeries.

After that second trip, Ann Lee told her husband, “I think I need to join Rotary.”

While she has been active locally in scholarship programs and the food pantry, Ann Lee said she was most attracted to the international work because of the polio project. She has a personal connection to the illness.



Ann Lee Hussey immunizes a child in a market in Chad. “The markets are an experience unto themselves. [This family] is from a nomadic tribe that travels in a camel caravan across Northern Africa with their cattle and goats. Fascinating people,” she said. *Photo courtesy Ann Lee Hussey*



“I have polio, so that’s probably my driving force,” Ann Lee said. In fact, she was one of the last people in Maine to contract polio. She has done a lot of public speaking around the world because of her ability to talk firsthand about the disease. “Putting drops in children’s mouths, knowing that I’ve helped protect them from a crippling disease is just huge,” Ann Lee said.

She has also done a great deal to help other polio survivors throughout the world, including giving tricycle wheelchairs to survivors for free through grants.

Since joining Rotary, Ann Lee has worked in India, Chad, Nigeria, Mali, Egypt, Madagascar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, among others.

With the help of people like Ann Lee, Rotary International and their global partners have eradicated two strains of polio worldwide.



**CAROLYN JOHNSON** is another remarkable Rotarian woman. Carolyn is a member of the Yarmouth Rotary Club. She joined in 2001, following her husband, who had become a member first.

Because she was a teacher and a principal in Maine schools for many years,



Ann Lee with Saliu, another polio survivor.  
Photo courtesy Ann Lee Hussey



Carolyn Johnson shares books and a smile with students in Guatemala. Photo courtesy Carolyn Johnson

Carolyn found herself drawn to an education-based project in Guatemala when she attended a Rotary International convention in 2005.

While the original purpose of the project was to get textbooks and computers to middle school students in Guatemala, Carolyn soon discovered the country was facing a literacy problem. The teachers in the Central American country’s schools told Carolyn and her fellow Rotarians that many of the middle school students did not have the skills to read the textbooks that Carolyn and her fellow Rotarians were bringing. So, Carolyn got to work.

By 2008 Carolyn had developed an intensive program for primary school teachers in Guatemala to help them to teach literacy. A Guatemalan instructor works with the primary school teachers and then goes into the classrooms and assists with implementing the instruction.

Carolyn said this literacy instruction, named the Culture of Reading Program, has seen many results and has spread to many schools throughout the country. In schools where they have implemented the Culture of Reading Program, 50 percent more of the children are being promoted to the next grade level. This means more

Guatemalan children are completing school, too. Statistically, Guatemalan children who get promoted to second grade are more likely to complete school up to sixth grade.

The program is now self-sustaining, and Carolyn said more than 100 schools and 12,000 teachers have implemented or been trained in the program.

Being a Rotarian does not require global travel, though. Every Rotary club and member does amazing and important work in their own communities, many without ever traveling outside of their home state.



**KIMBERLEE GRAFFAM** of Rockport is a remarkable Rotarian woman who has made Rotary a family event. Kim and her husband Leni Gronros are both active members, and their daughter Megan Peabody is also a member after growing up attending Rotary events with her family.

Kim joined Rotary in 1998 after her father Sandy Graffam passed away. Sandy had been a Rotarian for many years, and Kim joined as a tribute to him and to follow in his footsteps.

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Kimberlee Graffam and her husband, Leni Gronros, at a Rotary event. *Photo courtesy Kimberlee Graffam*

Kim said she jumped into Rotary with both feet. She became more and more involved in Rotary at the local level.

Her first exposure to the larger world of Rotary was in 2002 when she attended a district conference in Bethel. The next year she met Leni at the same conference, and they were married in July.

Locally Kim is involved with many community events and fundraisers through her club that support local businesses, charities, and scholarships. Internationally, she and her family have sponsored students from Croatia and Mexico. Kim says her family still stays in touch with the girls, and they have all taken trips together as well.

Kim was president of her club in 2008 while she was pregnant with daughter Kylii

Gronros. Although she worked with her doctor to schedule her c-section to avoid missing a Rotary meeting, Kim likes to say her daughter had other plans.

Kim went into labor the night before a meeting. She sent an email to her Vice President that he would need to run the meeting because her water had broken.

During her time as president, Kim only missed two meetings. One was just before Christmas, and the other was to give birth to her daughter. The week after giving birth, she was back and presiding over the club. "That's how much I've loved Rotary all these years," Kim said.

*To learn more about Rotary, or find a club near you, go to [Rotary.org](http://Rotary.org).*



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# Beth McEvoy

## A Reporter for 207 Travels the State And Presents Great Stories

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

**B**eth McEvoy beams into our houses many evenings, all throughout Maine, via the popular nightly TV features show, *207*. Beth reports on two to three stories a week for the show, which is allied with News Center Maine.

Independent and resourceful as a journalist, Beth is generally filming herself as she does these stories. As she says matter-of-factly, “I shoot with my iPhone. I shoot with a GoPro. And I shoot with my news camera.” She has interviewed a remarkable array of people over the years she has been on *207*, winning an Edward R. Murrow award and getting three regional Emmy nominations. Throughout all, she says she continually marvels at the variety and greatness of what people in Maine are doing.

On this recent occasion, I was thrilled to “turn the tables,” and get to interview Beth. Her dedication to community shines through in every aspect of her conversation. What an extraordinary woman, with a talent and generosity for telling the important stories that weave us together.

**MARY:**

A familiar voice from TV! Now, you grew up in Maine, is that correct?

**BETH:**

Yes. I was born in Massachusetts, but I think we moved here when I was two. I was raised in Wells, Maine, and I went to Wells High School.

My parents were from Massachusetts, but they came up every summer to Wells Beach—my grandparents had a house on Wells Beach. My parents always knew that when they grew their family, they wanted to raise them in Wells. My dad actually bought 20 acres of land when I was really little, and he built our home.

Now I built a home, right up the street, and my

sister lives down the street. We live on this private dirt road in Wells. We all live next to each other, and it’s wonderful. We enjoy the outdoors, so my husband and son surf, and I paddleboard. We’re seven miles from the beach, and the schools are great. Wells is perfect for raising children!

**MARY:**

That is wonderful. How did you come to get your job with *207*?

**BETH:**

As soon as I graduated high school, I actually moved to Argentina, and I was a foreign exchange student for a year. I loved that experience. Then I went to school in Utah at Utah State University, also a great experience, and I met my husband who’s from there. We started moving around for his job, and we lived in Arkansas. That’s where I started in public radio. I worked for KUAR, the public radio station in Little Rock. I was a reporter and anchored *All Things Considered*.

Next, we moved back to Utah, and I did freelance work for Utah Public Radio, UPR. Growing up, at first I was forced to listen to public radio because my dad always had it on in the car. Then, you don’t realize as a kid, but you’re actually listening to it, too. As I got older, I came to appreciate it and know that I loved public radio. Anyway, I was so happy to work for them.

But when we moved back to Maine, six years ago, I decided to make the leap to broadcast, and it was a thrill because I started to get to work with all these people who I grew up watching.

**MARY:**

Have you ever had a story that’s just blown your socks off?



**BETH:**

Yes. All the time, actually. I've talked to filmmakers, authors, musicians, actors, chefs, artists, politicians, and they're all amazing. But I also like the smaller stories. I met this woman who's passed away now. Her name was Dottie Brown. When I met her, she was 104 years old, and she still lived in her own home, the home where her and her husband had raised their children. She would host a knitting night every week with friends from church. Her mom had made her knit when she was four, so she had been doing it for 100 years. She had a picture of herself when she was little, sitting in a rocking chair and crying, because her mom would make her master the knitting of socks. Her mom would make her do a sock, then undo it, and redo it so that she could learn how to knit. Dottie was amazing.

More recently, I got to go out on a lobster boat with Virginia Oliver. She is 101 years old, and she still goes out three days a week with her 78-year-old son. And I mean, she sat on the edge of the boat. Okay. I'm talking to her. There's no place to sit except for just the edge of the boat. And she's sitting there while her son is driving like 24 knots and just leaning back like you would in a chair. And I asked, "Are you worried about falling?" She said, "No!" She was steadier on her feet on the boat than off the boat. She doesn't think she's a big deal, and I'm just in awe of her. So, it's people like that who really touch me—their attitudes.

I've had other stories that really have moved me. I met these two guys in Kennebunk who get up every morning, walk the beach, and they pick up trash. Every morning. They've been doing it for over five years. They're just the nicest people, and they want to make their community better. Smaller stories like these really inspire me because I love people, I love my community, and I believe in bettering our community. And so, when people are doing that, in these unique ways, I love it.

**MARY:**

Your work and home life mesh well, it sounds like, and you kept the balance during COVID?

**BETH:**

I have one son. He's 14. My husband and I, we've been married for almost 17 years this August. They are both so great—so supportive. They watch many of my stories and give me feedback.

I turn in about two to three stories a week, so I am on the road, shooting two to three stories a week. I'm really content with what I'm doing. Even during the pandemic, I still was able to go out and meet with people and safely distance because with a camera you can be far away. That's a nice thing. I'm a one-man band. I'm what's called an MMJ, multimedia journalist. I don't work with a photographer typically. I write, shoot, and edit my own material. It's easier, in the sense of being flexible and independent.

**MARY:**

Unbelievable. So, you set up your own camera and then shoot yourself interviewing?

**BETH:**

Yes. And I usually use at least three cameras every time I shoot. I shoot with my iPhone. I shoot with a GoPro. And I shoot with my news camera. So, there's lots to choose from.

**MARY:**

When you first got the job, did you come with all those talents and abilities, able to run the camera and edit the footage and everything?

**BETH:**

No. I didn't. I started as a producer at NewsCenterMaine. Then I moved over to our digital team. And when I was on the digital team, I started to learn how to shoot and edit.

It's fun. It's so fun. And NewsCenter, there are just so many talented people there who are great about teaching. You can really go as far as you want to go there because it's such a great culture of, "Oh, you want to learn how to do this? Great, let's show you. Let's get you a camera, let's do it!"

At the station, it's a hard job, and it's demanding. The hours are long, and the rides can be long. But you work with wonderful people, you get to meet wonderful people, and you get to do amazing things. Like I mentioned earlier, I've been lobstering with the oldest woman probably in the world who lobsters. You get to see and do really, really cool things. The people I work with, specifically on our 207 team, are all just absolutely amazing people. And Amanda Hill, Rob Caldwell, Peggy Kaiser, and our photographer Kirk Crowley are just amazing, amazing people. It's a wonderful environment to work in.

**MARY:**

Have you found Maine to change at all since you have been observing it?



**BETH:**

Not so much, except for one thing. Maine land is so heavily privatized that access to the water can be really challenging for people. I did a story with these women who swim in the water in the winter, and we were talking about the ocean. This girl grew up in Bangor, and she said, "A lot of the kids I grew up with, they had never even been to the ocean." That's incredible to me.

I'm passionate about telling stories about the outdoors—I love the outdoors. I always have. Our family, we play outdoors a lot. So, access to the water and access to outdoor Maine things are subjects that are always on my mind.

I did a story up in Stonington which was inspired by my husband. He said, "You should do a story about this." So, we went up there years ago. The story in Stonington was that basically on that island, Deer Isle, there are few public access points to the water. Unless you own property right on the water, you have very limited access. And the story was about a campground this man had created. You could rent kayaks and you could go out to this archipelago, this chain of islands, and visit them through his campground. He tried to work with a conservation trust to get this place to become part of the State of Maine so it would be public use. But it didn't work out, and he needed to retire for health reasons. So he had to sell it privately, and it broke his heart. A private person bought it.

So no, I don't see a lot of change in Maine. But . . . the coast used to be populated with all these little old campy cottages, and now people are tearing those down, and they're building McMansions. I'm a big believer that things like that, like the coast, are meant for every person. Everyone should have access to those things.

**MARY:**

How do you stay nonpolitical?

**BETH:**

Of course, I have my own values, and I'm a religious person, but as much as I can I check that at the door when I'm doing a story. For the most part I do features, which makes it easy. Just a couple months ago I interviewed Barney Frank, just a feature about his life. That was kind of funny. The reason that I interviewed Barney Frank is because I backed into his car.

As I told on *207*, when airing my interview with him, I was out with my sister for her birthday, and I backed into his car. I was in a parking lot, so I just barely scraped it. Still, I definitely dinged it, and I had to go in and introduce myself and say, "I'm sorry, I just hit your car. Let's exchange insurance information." He goes, "How bad is it?" I showed him a picture of the damage. He's like, "Don't worry about it." I was like, "Are you sure?" And he told me a story, that when he came out as a gay man, one of our first politicians to ever come out as gay, somebody said to him, "Geez, Barney, you're looking better. You're working out, you're dressing better. But you still drive a piece-of-crap car." And he replied, "I don't date cars," or something like that. He is a very non-materialistic person. He's always driven cars that are pretty old, and he just didn't care about it. I was so grateful, of

I care about people, and I want to tell their stories. I do genuinely believe that just about everybody has at least one story to tell.

course, that he was so kind to me. But then also it was wonderful because I got to meet him. We ended up doing a really wonderful sit down, talking about his life, the work that he's done as a politician, and his strong connection to Maine because he does live here now.

**MARY:**

Are your other family members involved in journalism?

**BETH:**

No. My father was an engineer at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and my mother was a teacher. I actually have six siblings, and everybody does something different. I grew up in a large family which is awesome. I feel very blessed. I love all my siblings. My sister is a real estate agent. My twin brother works in finance. And so on. But I everybody's very supportive of each other. Growing up in a supporting, loving home is a great foundation and good fortune. You really believe, "I can do whatever I want."

**MARY:**

What aspect of your job do you particularly like?

**BETH:**

If you have a friendship with someone, it often takes a while to get to know them and then get to know the details of their life. But as a reporter, you walk in, and you have this platform where you can ask them anything. So, you get to know people more quickly, and often it's really intense.

I did this story with a woman who had been married, and she and her husband had wanted to climb Mount Katahdin. But as they started, he started to have a heart issue, and a couple months later he passed away. So, she made it her goal to get in shape and follow through and do it, and she did. I interviewed her at the base of Katahdin Mountain. She was getting ready to go up the next day to climb it a second time. We're sitting there talking about her husband who died and how much she loved him. We are both crying. It's amazing because you get to connect with people. Do you know what I mean?

**MARY:**

I do.

**BETH:**

I care about people, and I want to tell their stories. I do genuinely believe that just about everybody has at least one story to tell. Maybe you couldn't do a series on them, but everybody has something. •

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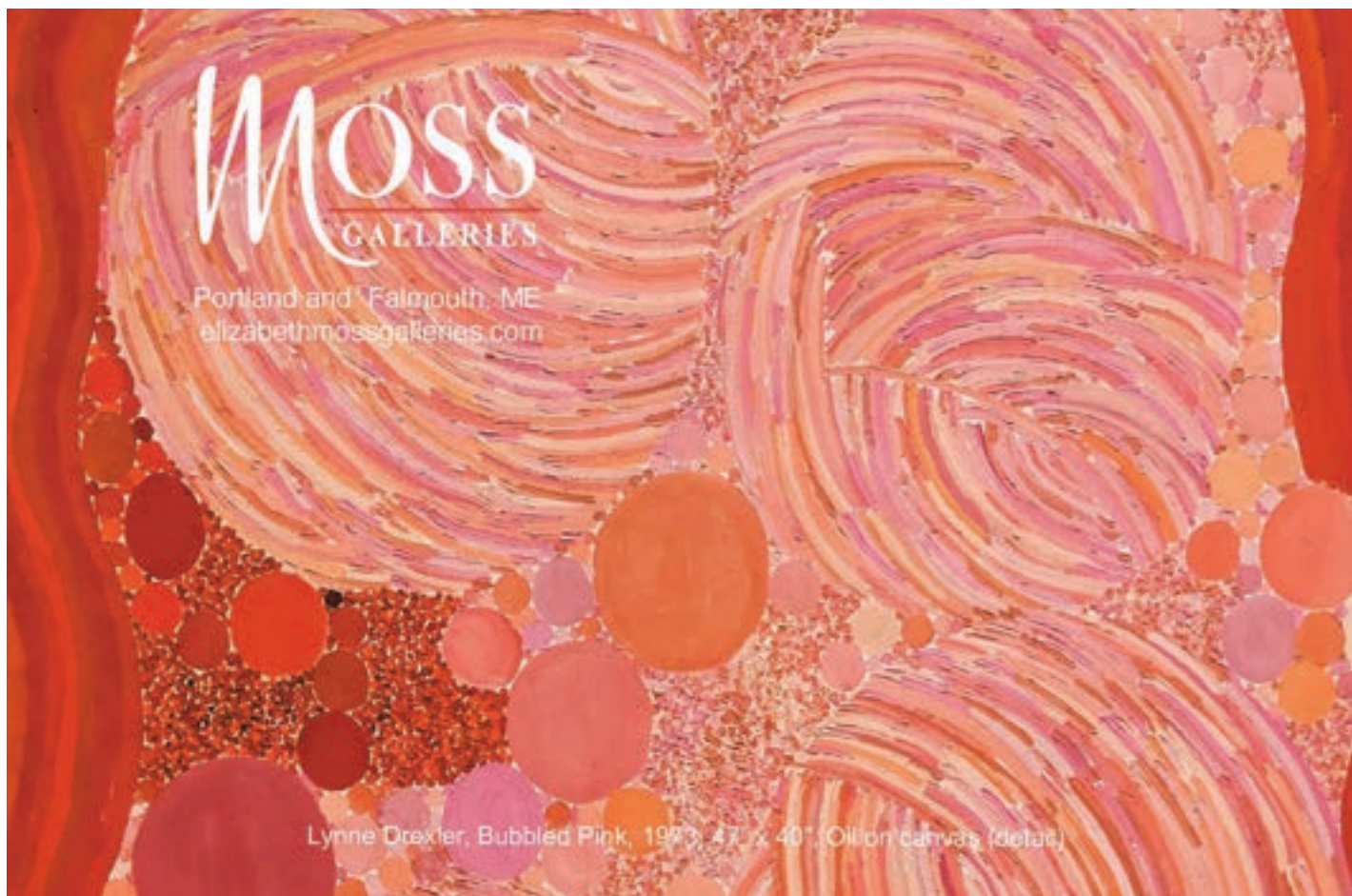
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# The Power of Aloha Spirit

*Even in dark times, “The ukulele can bring a lot of joy,” says Renee Conlogue.*

BY LIZ GOTTHELF

**M**any of us think of the Hawaiian word *Aloha* as a way of greeting, to say hello or goodbye.

But the word *Aloha* is so much more, explains Renee Conlogue, owner of Aloha Maine, a shop at 51 West Gray Road in Gray, where she sells ukuleles and other items from Hawaii.

“*Alo* of *Aloha* means being present, and the *ha* is the breath of life. *Aloha* is a reminder to be here, in the present,” she said.

Hawaii has a law on the books that defines the “*aloha spirit*” as the “coordination of mind and heart within each person.” The law further describes *aloha* as extending warmth and caring for others with no obligation in return, and the belief that each person is important to every other person for collective existence. The law asks government and court officials to keep the “*aloha spirit*” in mind as they serve in their roles.

Renee, a native Mainer, visited Hawaii when she was 25 years old and was im-



Renee Conlogue

mediately smitten. She moved there a year later, in 1988. She came back to Maine in 1998 to be closer to her family. The time spent in Hawaii made a lasting impression, and the *Aloha Spirit* became a part of her.

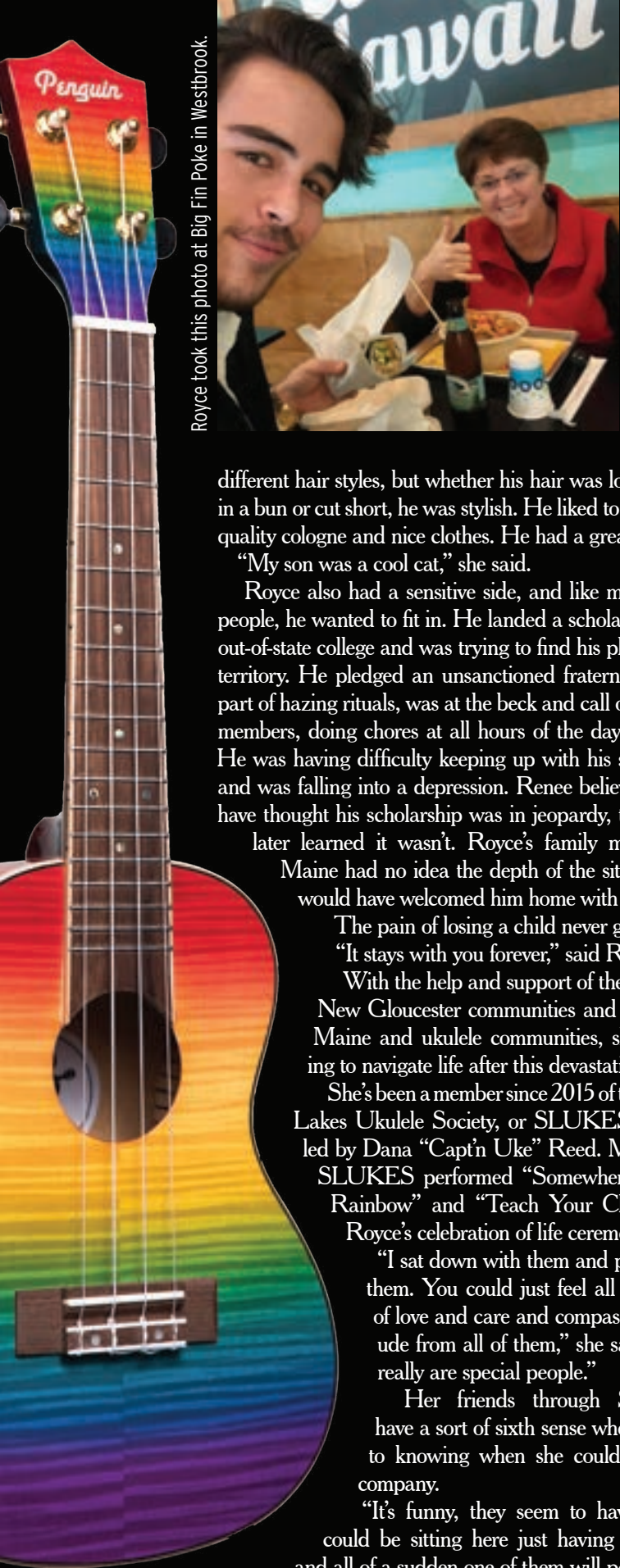
“I just love the culture. It’s so kind and

loving,” she said. “I really am an ambassador for Hawaii.”

Renee opened Aloha Maine on Dec. 31, 2017, realizing a long-time dream of owning a shop where she could spread the *Aloha Spirit*, sell Hawaiian products and gifts, and create a comfortable space where people could learn to play the ukulele. What she didn’t know was that the *Aloha Spirit* and the community she was helping to foster would bring her much needed support and compassion during a very difficult time.

A few months after she opened Aloha Maine, her son, Royce, died by suicide at the age of 18. Royce was a much-loved and talented young man, popular in high school and known as outgoing. He had a lot of compelling dreams, abilities, and prospects.

Royce loved performing in plays and had extraordinary musical ability. He could listen to a song, write out the music on paper, and then sit at a piano and play it. He was funny and sociable. He went through



Royce took this photo at Big Fin Poke in Westbrook.

different hair styles, but whether his hair was long and up in a bun or cut short, he was stylish. He liked to wear good quality cologne and nice clothes. He had a great smile.

“My son was a cool cat,” she said.

Royce also had a sensitive side, and like many young people, he wanted to fit in. He landed a scholarship to an out-of-state college and was trying to find his place in new territory. He pledged an unsanctioned fraternity and, as part of hazing rituals, was at the beck and call of fraternity members, doing chores at all hours of the day and night. He was having difficulty keeping up with his schoolwork and was falling into a depression. Renee believes he may have thought his scholarship was in jeopardy, though she later learned it wasn't. Royce's family members in Maine had no idea the depth of the situation and would have welcomed him home with open arms.

The pain of losing a child never goes away.

“It stays with you forever,” said Renee.

With the help and support of the Gray and New Gloucester communities and the Aloha Maine and ukulele communities, she is learning to navigate life after this devastating loss.

She's been a member since 2015 of the Sebago Lakes Ukulele Society, or SLUKES, a group led by Dana “Capt'n Uke” Reed. Members of SLUKES performed “Somewhere over the Rainbow” and “Teach Your Children” at Royce's celebration of life ceremony.

“I sat down with them and played with them. You could just feel all the energy of love and care and compassion just exude from all of them,” she said. “They really are special people.”

Her friends through SLUKES have a sort of sixth sense when it comes to knowing when she could use some company.

“It's funny, they seem to have radar. I could be sitting here just having a moment, and all of a sudden one of them will pop through the door and say ‘How are you? Just checking in on

you,” she said. “They'll go out of their way to pretend to need a set of strings or something, just to let me know they're nearby.”

Playing the ukulele and focusing on learning has been a great distraction. She enjoys playing Hawaiian folk songs that remind her of her time spent in the Aloha State.

“When I play, I play a lot of songs that are very sentimental. I'm a very sentimental person,” she said. “It puts me in a very peaceful, happy place. It puts me back on the island, hearing the waves and smelling the plumeria.”

Aloha Maine has been a healing place for Renee, and it's become a place of comfort for others as well.

Many people come into the store wide-eyed and intimidated, never having touched an ukulele (pronounced oo-koo-lay-lay), and have left with a brand-new instrument, excited to come back and learn how to play.

She said one day, a man came in the door and said he had tried playing a guitar and didn't think he had any musical talent. He now regularly comes back to take lessons and recently purchased his third ukulele. He's found it's been a great way to relax and take a break from a stressful job.

While it still requires practice, many people find playing the ukulele easier than a guitar. There are only four strings, typically nylon, which are softer than steel guitar strings.

Renee recommends anyone interested to explore joining a local ukulele group like the SLUKES. She has found the group to be welcoming to everyone, regardless of musical ability.

“The ukulele can bring a lot of joy. It really can, and I guess I'm testament to that,” she said.

*For more information, please see Sister Moms for mothers who have lost a child to suicide: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2248865818722864>*

*Dana Reed's website <https://captn-uke.com> has numerous ukulele resources, including tutorials videos, song PDFs, and upcoming events.*

*Aloha Maine is located at 51A West Gray Road, in Gray, Maine. <https://www.alohamaine.com/>*





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# A Talk with BETTINA DOULTON of Cellardoor Winery and Vineyard

## *Fine Wine Made in Lincolnville*

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

It is still hard to grow grapes in Maine, says Bettina Doulton, owner and head of Cellardoor Winery and Vineyard in Lincolnville. The state's short growing season and cool temperatures make a bountiful grape harvest a formidable challenge.

But thanks to viticulture scientists, cold-hardy hybrids are now indeed growing here—for example, at Cellardoor's beautiful five-and-a-half-acre estate vineyard. And thanks to the careful blending done by the expert Cellardoor winemaking team, who use both Maine-grown and select grapes from other states, success has come knocking. The results are wowing customers, winning awards, and pleasing those who visit for tastings.

Putting Maine more on the wine map has been Bettina's latest "great adventure" these past 13 years. In her former life and career, she worked at Fidelity in the area of mutual fund investments. But this self-described "math dork" and workaholic was ready for a change, and she was drawn to the idea of running her own small business. She bought Cellardoor in 2007 and moved to Maine, and to a new field. Now, she and her team are changing people's minds about Maine wines—an achievement.

I was so glad to have a chance to talk this month with Bettina, about the wines of Cellardoor, the company she owns and operates, and her unusual path to this pleasing doorway. While things are gradually returning to normal after COVID, she explained that the winery (the company's state-of-the-art production facility) has not yet reopened for tours. But people can make a reservation for wine tastings at the gracious Lincolnville tasting barn. And while there, visitors can walk down and see the vineyard—yes, see the wonder of grapes growing in neat rows in Maine, just as if they belong here, which, happily, now they do.







*For more information, please visit <https://mainewine.com/>. Cellardoor Winery and Vineyard is located at 367 Youngtown Road, Lincolnville, Maine 04849; (207) 763-4478. At this time, for preset tastings, pairings, wine purchase, and more, hours are Thursday through Sunday, by reservation only. The company is opening a new location soon in Portland: 127 Middle Street, Portland, Maine 04101; (207) 536-7700.*





**MARY:**

Tell me about the name of your winery, Cellardoor. I've read that according to surveys, that combination of words is considered among the most beautiful in the English language.

**BETTINA:**

Yes, there was an article in the *New York Times* on that subject about two years ago, saying the same thing. I would love to take credit for it, but it was the people who started the company—I bought it from them—who were the ones who called it Cellardoor.

**MARY:**

How did you come to live in Maine?

**BETTINA:**

I moved up here from the Boston area to buy the winery in 2007. I've had it now over 13 years.

This is a second act in life for me up here. I worked at Fidelity Investments in equity mutual funds for a long time. I had always loved what I was doing at Fidelity. They've given me incredible opportunities. I am a math dork by nature.

Then I had cancer in 2006, and you know what? I was more reflective after cancer. I had long had the idea that I wanted to run a business, instead of analyzing how other people ran a business. Through a weird confluence of events, I ended up buying Cellardoor. I have so many wonderful things to think about this adventure and this part of life's journey for me.

**MARY:**

As you made this big change in direction, what was useful to you from what you'd learned in your previous investment job?

**BETTINA:**

You work hard to build a team culture. You try and remember the best things that you learned from your life to this point and especially the mentors who have made an impression. Why did they make an impression? You try and build a mosaic out of all of those things, when you're building a business and creating a work culture yourself.

You try and create an environment that was the one that inspired you or gave you a platform, and you try and do that for other people. That's all you can really do. You're making it up every day. We all are. The business environment changes, the people you're working with change, and you change. That's a constant process. The backdrop you're working in evolves. You have to keep doing the best you can to make all those pieces work.

I'm constantly reassessing what's working and what's not. You try and do more of what's working, and you try and eliminate the things that aren't working, or do less of them, or fix them. That was something I learned from my investment days. I try to be open minded and able to self-critique.

**MARY:**

Did you at least enjoy gardening and growing things before, or was your new life all totally new for you?

**BETTINA:**

It was all new. I drove in Maine in February 2007, in a *rear-wheel drive car*! I mean, come on! I remembered, though, something my dad told me once: "Hire people who are smarter than yourself." So, okay. I didn't know how to grow a vine, but I found people who had good Maine farming experience. A gentleman came

wandering onto the property, and he was there for eight and a half years. Now, I have somebody else, also excellent. My wine makers, they found me, and they've been with me since 2008. They're incredibly talented and passionate about what they do.

**MARY:**

It seems brave. Did you come to Maine by yourself, or did you have a partner or a family?

**BETTINA:**

No, I have no family here, and I came by myself. I don't know if I ever felt brave about it, but when you are kind of pushing forward with your life, you just keep going. In the moment, none of it ever feels brave. You get your resolve, and you proceed—"I'm going to go give this a go."

Changing careers and changing locales are incredibly difficult. You are jumping into the deep end. But I know I'm a hard worker. I know I'm pretty good at making mental jigsaw puzzles and businesses work.

I think more people have strengths and experiences—business or personal experiences—that would allow them to be more adaptable than they give themselves credit for. You rely on the things that you know how to do, and you figure it out. You do have to look at it as a journey and adventure and a bit of a game, though.

**MARY:**

How is Cellardoor wine distributed? How can people get it?

**BETTINA:**

We have a tasting room in Lincolnville. So, we sell a lot through that winery. We had a tasting room in Portland. Unfortunately, due to COVID we had to close that, but we're about to reopen another tasting room in Portland. We have to do some renovations on the space, but we're hoping to open on Middle Street in September, and we're really excited about it. We'll have a presence in Portland, again.

We distribute through National Distributors and Maine Distributors, in the state of Maine. They both have been wonderful partners to us. We're very fortunate. National Distributors covers the middle and south, and Maine Distributors kind of more north and down east.

It's been interesting as people's habits over the last 18 months have been impacted. Because we work with distributors, they both sell into wine shops and restaurants. Last year those partnerships worked for us because they were selling into places where people could buy



our wine and drink it at home. This year, both that part of the business and the restaurant business is better. It's been good year on both of those sides.

**MARY:**

Now, how does it work with growing grapes in the state of Maine?

**BETTINA:**

When I first got here, somebody asked me, "So, what percent of your wines are going to come from grapes grown in the state of Maine?" Way back then, I said, "Well, our goal is 20 percent." Mary, I've never made it, and I'm never going to make it. Growing grapes in the state of Maine is not easy.

Every once in a while, somebody asks me, "Why are you doing this in Maine?" And I sarcastically will answer, "Well, anybody can do it in Napa or Washington or Oregon." The reality is, we're making this work. The academic viticulture specialists have developed hybrids that can weather the cold. The big challenge for us is the fewer number of growing days in the state of Maine than you would have in traditional growing areas. We need sunny days, about 55 degrees. We have a whole lot less of those here than you would in other places.

**MARY:**

Do you enter your wine in any wine-tasting competitions?

**BETTINA:**

That's an interesting question. Most importantly, we are proud of the fact that we produce wines that our guests enjoy. But yes, the wine competitions are really good for gauging how we're doing competitively on the artistry and science of making wines. And we do great at the wine competitions. If you go on our website, look at our wines, you will see that they all have been sent off to competitions, and they all win awards. We go out to the tough competitions. We don't go to the easy ones. We really want to see how we're doing.

**MARY:**

Do you think you're making a difference for the state of Maine and changing views on Maine wine?

**BETTINA:**

Wines in the state of Maine had a horrendous reputation when I got here. I don't think that's the case anymore. Yesterday we had a group come in to do a wine tasting, and one gentleman came up to me. He was very honest, and he said, "When they told me we were

coming to a winery in Maine, I said, 'Really, do we have to do?'" But he had changed his views, saying, "This is really good!"

We have people come in, and they're surprised, saying, "Oh, this is nice in here." I don't know what they expected, but, I think, they expected it to be very rustic. It's a beautiful space. The wines are really good. We are very proud of the guest experience. If we have a whole lot more years of beating people's expectations and surprising them positively, I think that's just fine.

**MARY:**

Do you do tours all through the summer and the fall?

**BETTINA:**

Right now, we are by reservation, so that guests can come in and do a wine tasting, have glasses of wine, cheese plates, and so on. They're welcome to walk, enjoy the property. We historically have done winery tours, which is the production facility. We have not reopened the production facility tours yet. It's really the heart of our business. We have to make sure that part stays. But it's food processing, and we are not yet comfortable to let it be open back up to tours. When we can, we will. We have been incredibly diligent about making sure that our environment for producing your product is healthy.

So, we're currently open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday by reservations for wine tasting. It's those winery tours that we aren't doing quite yet. We're waiting for the health environment of our country to be just a little bit better before we reopen the winery to the public.

And in terms of how long into the season, we're going to be definitely open through October. Then, we will see how we're going

to work through the winter. Last year, we did a one weekend every month, but we'll see how it's going to go this year. We also can do all kinds of private tastings, occasions, work with wedding caterers, and things like that, that we are happy to host. We've done wine tastings on the road, such as a wine dinner down at the Cragnair Inn that went really well. Yes. We love doing events like that.

**MARY:**

Who does the winemaking within your company? Do you get involved in that part of the process?

**BETTINA:**

Aaron and Christina are the ones who do all the blending trials. They will often have me come up as they're working towards which blends they want to do. They are the artists, and they are the creators. We have a good understanding of what types of wines we want on our list, and then I really leave it up to their brilliance to make sure that it is well produced, and that it's something that we're really proud of.

As a result, we have people who are very supportive of Cellardoor Wine and us. We have friends who drink our wine across the state, and we really appreciate them. We know there are an awful lot of choices—plenty of options for people. We work very hard to earn that loyalty, all the time. You have to earn it every day.

**MARY:**

What is your bestselling wine?

**BETTINA:**

A Perfect Stranger is our number one selling wine, every year. It is an off-dry white, and guests love it. •







# Inspiring Global Ocean Stewardship

*Lexi Doudera and  
Saltwater Classroom*

*Photo by Olivia Dawson*





*Left:* Exploring the dynamic environment between the high and low tide is always a favorite activity for participants, including these students in Portland. *Center:* The goal of all Saltwater Classroom programs, such as this one in Camden, is to inspire students to keep learning about our oceans, forming a passion and an everlasting commitment to ocean stewardship. *Right:* Here, students part of a community program in Sayulita, Mexico hold their quadrat, ready to sample the intertidal zone at their local beach. This program was Saltwater Classroom's first program taught entirely in Spanish. *Photos courtesy Saltwater Classroom*

## BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

**G**rowing up near Penobscot Bay, Lexi Doudera was always engaged in learning about the Maine coast and the ocean. One of the highlights of this marine education came when she was a student at Camden Hills High School. Lexi had the chance to spend ten days in a marine science program based in Cape Eleuthera in the Bahamas. There she worked with researchers who were studying lemon sharks.

Now the 26-year-old is applying her accumulated knowledge about the ocean in her capacity as founder and Executive Director of Saltwater Classroom. Saltwater Classroom is a non-profit educational organization that applies hands-on and virtual programming to teach environmental education and inspire global ocean stewardship. It is designed to connect youngsters aged 9 to 12 years old with the ocean through engaging educational opportunities.

As Lexi sees it, “Education is a fairly simple solution to environmental problems that can really change the way society thinks about and treats the environment.” Lexi chose to focus on students in grades 3-6 because she says that studies have shown that is an optimal time to teach environmental education. Students in this age group are naturally curious as well as old enough to understand the relationship between cause and effect. They also are “competent, talkative agents of change. They have amazing peer influence on other people their age but also on their parents, their families, and their communities.”

Lexi was fortunate to grow up in Camden where the local school is part of the Five Town Community School District. The district is an exemplar of providing excellent educational opportunities in Maine. Lexi studied Spanish beginning in kindergarten,

so by the time she went to college, she spoke Spanish very well. Her K-12 education, enhanced by the learning opportunities afforded her at Northeastern University, were pivotal in steering Lexi to conceive of and found Saltwater Classroom.

Lexi's fluency in Spanish served her well when she participated in a six-month study abroad program through Northeastern. She traveled to western South America, to Chile, to study coastal urban sustainability. Chile is the southernmost country in the world and the closest to Antarctica. It is most definitely coastal—the country's geography is long and narrow, with the western edge lying along the Pacific Ocean. And it has large urban areas. For example, Santiago, the capital of Chile, is one of the largest cities in the Americas, with a population of more than six million. It is located within an hour's drive of the Pacific coast.

Lexi points out that 40 percent of the world's population live within 60 miles or so of a coast. Think of such heavily populated places like New York City, Miami Beach, and Los Angeles. Since these cities, and others worldwide, such as Tokyo, Mumbai, Shanghai, Lagos, Calcutta, and Buenos Aires, are coastal, they can experience significant impacts of climate change, including hurricanes and flooding. Being on the coast also increases these cities' reliance on the ocean for food resources. Lexi says these are all reasons why cities should be urgently concerned with sustainable growth and why education is such an important element in achieving this. “A well-thought-out curriculum implemented city- or country-wide can have a serious impact on how a generation of people view the environment.”

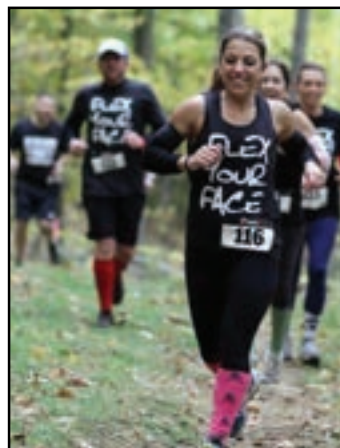
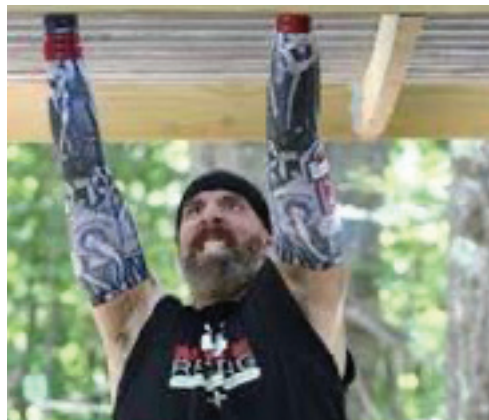
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In Chile, Lexi volunteered in a fifth-grade classroom, where she realized the particular value of teaching students about the ocean. Lexi gained additional insight through two internships. One was with the Conservation Law Foundation, a New England nonprofit that advocates for the environment. The other was with the nonprofit Ceres. Ceres works with investors and companies to advocate for bold action and policy solutions on environmental issues. Lexi's classroom education, her internships, and personal experience laid a strong foundation from which she developed the plan and curriculum for the organization—Saltwater Classroom.

Lexi may have been the creative driver for Saltwater Classroom, but she had a support team. Two primary members are her parents. Her mother Vicki Doudera serves as a Maine State Representative. Representative Doudera is a member of the legislature's Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Lexi's father Edward Doudera is an attorney in Camden. Another primary supporter is a classmate of Lexi's from Northeastern University, Olivia Dawson. Dawson serves as Saltwater Classroom's Director of Education and, with Lexi, as a teacher for the program. Additional capable individuals are available, as needed, to help run workshops.

Saltwater Classroom's curriculum is based on case studies done in Boston and Chile and from Lexi's marine studies at Northeastern. When she launched Saltwater Classroom in June 2018, Lexi started with 15 students from Camden. Fueled by passion and dedication, Lexi has grown the program. Like so many other organizations, Saltwater Classroom experienced setbacks due to the COVID pandemic. The organization lost revenue from cancelled programming. But it also discovered the value of virtual education. In November 2020, Saltwater Classroom held a 3-week program using virtual programming. It was a success. The program reached more than 200 students working from a range of locations including Mexico and Savanna, Georgia. "It confirmed the idea of integrating technology in education."

Lexi hopes that someday Saltwater

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Saltwater Classroom's interdisciplinary curriculum combines elements of marine science, like sampling seawater in Camden shown here, as well as art, music, and conservation. *Photo courtesy Saltwater Classroom*

Classroom, now based in Portland, will operate in 50 countries. She loves “the idea of students around the globe connecting about the ocean.” And, in anticipation of taking Saltwater Classroom to Mexico, nearly 75 percent of the curriculum has been translated into Spanish.

This July, Saltwater Classroom held a 2-week in-person learning experience at Waynflete, a school in Portland. Tessa Anable, Director of Enrichment at Waynflete School thought Saltwater Classroom was a great fit for the students. “At Waynflete, we are all about the environment and teaching students to understand, love, and care for it.” She felt the curriculum was a good combination of “games and hands-on exploration in the sand, mud, rocks, and tide pools of our local beaches and rocky shoreline. Our campers were engaged in the scientific ideas, and they loved the fun activities.”

Lexi's plan for Saltwater Classroom is to continue in-person sessions during the 2021–2022 school year. In the longer term, Lexi wants to develop a “deep dive” workshop on the Gulf of Maine, as well as a Maine-specific curriculum.

## Saltwater Classroom's recommendations for how to help the ocean:

- **Keep Learning!** Education leads to appreciation, value, protection, and an everlasting passion for the ocean.
- **Use Less Plastic** — Plastic is a huge problem for the ocean and marine life. It is one of the largest contributors to climate change. Every choice made to avoid plastic makes a difference.
- **Participate in Coastal Clean-Ups** — Removing harmful debris from the ocean environment is important. Organize a beach clean-up with friends and family.
- **Consume Responsibly** — As consumers it is our duty to consume responsibly. That means making choices about what we eat, what we wear, and what we buy. Choose products that are sustainable and smart.
- **Spread the Word** — Tell friends and family. Share with a teacher or a neighbor. Let them know why you love the ocean and how it needs our help and what they can do.

For more information, visit [www.saltwaterclassroom.com](http://www.saltwaterclassroom.com) or email Lexi at [lexi@saltwaterclassroom.com](mailto:lexi@saltwaterclassroom.com) and to hear

an interview with Lexi visit <https://wom-mindthewater.com/artist-series/artist-series-lexi-doudera>. •



Photo by Jodi Hersey



# Karate Kid to Karate Queen

*Fifteen-year-old Winslow teen earns a coveted black belt in karate.*

BY JODI HERSEY

**A**bigail Dudley is not your average teenager. This quiet, unassuming blond-haired, brown-eyed fifteen-year-old from Winslow—with perfectly painted fingernails—is the youngest person ever to receive a black belt at Huard’s Martial Arts since it opened 55 years ago. She earned this accomplishment over the summer, but it’s a goal she’s been working to achieve since she began taking classes at age four.

“I saw early on that she was a unique individual who had a lot of focus, but that doesn’t mean you’re going to go all the way,” Abby’s karate teacher, Shihon [Japanese for master instructor] Mike Huard, explains. “We do a lot of different martial arts at our school, and we stress the aspect of being able to do striking and grappling. She had to do everything, which is another thing that makes it hard to get promoted because you have to be physical. You have to get down and dirty sometimes, and not everyone can do it.”

Abby could do it. Each week this petite yet powerful, confident, and exceptionally competitive teen just kept showing up to class with an appetite to learn more and a drive to knock down any obstacle that stood in her way. And she did so all while balancing school, dance, and gymnastics along with karate.

“I grew up being a dancer,” Abby says. “The flexibility and kicking that goes with dancing was always something I was into. Karate also has a lot to do with legs, flexibility, balance, and coordination. So, it is something I enjoy doing.”

Shihon Mike says Abby’s other extra-curricular activities never became a distraction for her. Instead, they helped condition and improve her karate skills and abilities.

“Because of dancing and ballet, her technique and focus were so good. Her dancing didn’t subtract from it. For some people it does. They can’t balance that much,” he explains.

Abby also had good support, allowing consistency and attendance. “It takes more than a good student [to earn a black belt]. It takes good instructors. It takes dedicated

parents because you can’t skip classes. You have to really earn it, and she never skipped a class.”

As Abby became more involved in karate, she and her family started traveling all over New England, to Washington, D.C. and New York, to participate in various karate competitions.

“She is very competitive. Her favorite part of all this is learning the new techniques she needs in order to travel and do tournaments,” her mother Angela Poulin explains. “There was only one tournament that she was in that I had a hard time watching her fight because she was literally getting the snot beat out of her. But she wouldn’t give up.”

Angela continues, sharing more about her daughter’s perseverance, “The Sensei [Japanese term for teacher] would keep going over to Abby saying, ‘Are you okay? We can stop this fight.’ But she wouldn’t stop, she wouldn’t give up. We finally had to call the match because she would’ve been on the floor bleeding or on a stretcher before she would ever give in.”

Abby’s grit and determination never wavered. It only grew stronger until she began to win one competition after another, bringing home an astounding 45 first-place wins.

“The amount of awards she got the year before the pandemic was just phenomenal,” Angela says. “We have a whole room in our house that’s just for her trophies and plaques.”

The COVID-related shutdown didn’t get in Abby’s way. She stayed motivated, practicing her skills at home regularly and logging onto her computer for online karate classes. She even participated in several virtual tournaments, where she successfully earned the rank of World and National champion.

“If I see a challenge, I focus on that challenge. I keep at it until I conquer it. Then the rest seems to follow,” Abby says.

Yet as hard as she tries, she admits, she is no super-human. She, too, has her weaknesses and areas that resist mastery. “I’m a perfectionist. I’m competitive with everything—everything except mini-golf. I always lose. I’m so bad at that game!”

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Abigail Dudley receiving her black belt. Photo courtesy Huard's Martial Arts

Along with her black belt, Abby has also earned the title of Sensei and the privilege of being able to teach karate students who are both younger and older than she is.

"I'll be up front showing or demonstrating a Kata [a sequence of karate moves], or certain kicks throughout class," Abby explains.

"She knows what she's doing," Shihon Mike adds. "For so long [as a student], she was taking and learning from everybody. Now everyone else wants her knowledge and wants to take and learn from her. It's going to be a pretty interesting road ahead for her."

She's only a sophomore in high school, but Abby has life-long plans to stay at the head of the class. Earning her black belt is just the beginning.

"I'd like to go to Julliard [a private performing arts school in N.Y.] and get an advanced degree," Abby says, in speaking of the future. "Hopefully I will do something with teaching and dance, maybe even open my own business someday."

Wherever life takes her, Abby will no doubt be an inspiration to many, as well as a role model to karate students who are learning, working hard, and improving their skills. •



Abigail Dudley with Huard's Martial Arts Founder Kancho Randy Huard. Photo courtesy Huard's Martial Arts





Photo by Holland Rockwell

# PICNIC IN A GRAVEL PIT

BY LEW-ELLYN HUGHES

It was a beautiful, cool summer day. I had heaps of energy and the time to spend it. I thought a bike ride and a picnic lunch would be a good idea, so I packed up and headed out, looking forward to time in the Maine outdoors.

After a few hours of exhilarating biking along dirt roads, I began looking for a sweet place to land for lunch. I searched for that perfect spot, but after a hundred more rotations of my tires, that place seemed to be evading me. A few more miles under my wheels, and I didn't think I would ever find it.

Eventually I quit looking for paradise and opted for a big, flat boulder on the edge of a gravel pit. It was not what I had been wanting. It was muggy, buggy, and dusty. Still, it was sort of nice—the rocks

were interesting, many quite beautiful, and each one different, like snowflakes.

As I ate, I wondered if this was the same gravel pit where I drank Boone's Farm Strawberry Wine when I was legally too young to consume alcohol. I thought about those wild days and all those kids who are now kids no longer, plenty old enough to drink, but many don't drink now because of medication or physical limitations or cutting back on doctor's orders. Who could ever imagine it is possible to become too old to drink? I ate and pondered the ironies of life.

A car drove past me, the only one I'd seen all morning. In the driver's expression I could read the question, "Why are you sitting on a rock in a dusty, dirty gravel pit?" Had he stopped and voiced that question, I would have answered, "Because I don't want to wait any longer. I am hungry now!" And "Yes, I know I'm in a gravel pit. I had hoped to picnic beside a stream or to have a breathtaking view, but finding anything like that was taking too long!"

So, it was there, on that flat, hard stone that I satisfied my impatient belly, but only my belly was filled, not my soul's fulfillment of finding a beautiful place.

It wasn't long before I became uncomfortable on that hardened spot. I

mounted my bike and started home, not the way I came, for who wants to see everything they have already seen? I went instead around about a different route back to town.

Just a few hundred yards down the road, I came across a lovely yellow picnic table on the edge of a sweet little pond with a stream, with a mountain view in the background. If I had put in just a bit more effort, I would have reached what I was searching for. If only I hadn't given up, I would have found it. To say I was disappointed in myself is an understatement.

It was at that moment I remembered something that I'd heard a speaker relate, as she spoke about quitting too early and therefore settling for less than you could achieve. Her epiphany occurred at a red light. As she waited, she glanced out her window and noticed three ducks swimming in a puddle. A few feet beyond that mud bath was a large, pristine lake. She rolled her window down and hollered to them, "Silly ducks! You are in the puddle!" They couldn't understand her, of course, but her words weren't really for them.

It was then that I knew exactly what the man who drove past me had been thinking. He was thinking, "Silly woman, you are in the puddle!" •



The sweet spot. Photo by Lew-Ellyn Hughes

# Heidi Neal, the Loyal Biscuit Company, and Fenway – the Dog who Helped It All Happen

By Robert Cook

We all have moments that change our lives forever. Heidi Neal immediately identifies one such moment as the day she visited a local animal shelter near her Rockland home in 2008 and met Fenway for the first time. She was instantly drawn to the eight-week-old half Lab, half shepherd puppy.

It was love at first sight.

Just two years later, Fenway would also usher in a whole new career for Heidi when they spied a local pet supply store for sale, on Rockland's Main Street. The Loyal Biscuit Company store beckoned to Heidi, who was ready for a change after a successful 15-year banking career. Fenway seemed to have led her onto a new path.

"She is absolutely the reason we're here," Heidi said. "She absolutely changed my life, 100 percent."

Heidi is a total believer in the bumper sticker that reads, "I didn't rescue my dog. My dog rescued me."

When she and her husband, Joel, purchased the store in January 2010, they changed the store logo to a silhouette of Fenway. Joel, who serves as the deputy police chief in Rockland, was equally in favor of this new direction. Heidi and Joel own four other dogs and a cat, and it was Joel who first inspired Heidi to get a dog of her own.

Sadly, Fenway passed away in May after 13 years. She is still mourned and much missed. For Heidi, the thought of this beloved and special dog can bring tears. But Fenway's spirit continues to guide the Rockland store and the six additional Loyal Biscuit Company stores that have sprung up over the last 10 years. The stores are making a positive difference in many pets' lives by helping their owners choose nutritious and healthy pet food for their dogs and cats.

"If I won't feed it to my own animals, I won't sell it," said Heidi about the Loyal Biscuit Company's core values.

Their approach has been successful and gained many loyal customers. The couple opened their second store in Belfast in June 2011. Heidi said that Joel urged her to expand. She met with a business counselor on Wiscasset at Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), who helped her put together a sound business plan.

Heidi and Joel bought their third store in Camden shortly after opening in Belfast. Waterville followed in 2014, Brewer in 2017,



Heidi Neal and Fenway. Photo courtesy Heidi Neal

Hallowell in 2019, and the Bath store opened in April 2020. When asked if she plans to open any more stores in Maine, Heidi replied that she is not sure, but "Maybe," if the right opportunity presents itself. "I don't want to grow just to grow. I want to grow because we are ready for it."

All of their stores, except Hallowell, have self-serve dog wash and grooming stations. And, says Heidi, "We have increased our inventory and selection"—of healthy pet food, supplies, and pet toys.

Beyond offering these products in the stores, Heidi prides herself on having well-trained team members who enjoy their work and who are knowledgeable and service-oriented. All staff members at Loyal Biscuit Company stores must know the products they sell very well, so they can serve as consultants and help pet owners choose the right nutrition for their dogs and cats. The team receives many referrals from area veterinarians when pet owners need to seek nutrition solutions.

The staff is what really sets Loyal Biscuit Company apart from larger pet supply store chains, Heidi believes. When she hires new team members, Heidi emphasizes, "'One, you've got to be nice. Two, you also have to want to help people.' Those are my biggest priorities and qualities that I look for in a person."

Heidi said educating pet owners about the benefits of going with more nutritious pet food can be a significant challenge. Like many pet owners, Heidi said she too, previously, would just buy regular pet food at the local supermarket off the shelf, without ever looking at the list of ingredients.

What she finds is that most pet owners want to give their dogs and cats the best food available. Heidi relates to those who have gone through the process of realization: "Once you figure it out, you think 'Why am I feeding this stuff to my dog that is loaded with chemicals?'"

The Loyal Biscuit Company sells many brands that offer more vegetables and meats without excessive carbs that come with most kibble-based dog food. One of the most common objections Heidi encounters is that pet owners don't want to pay more for nutritious pet food. But once these owners realize that they will actually give their dogs a smaller portion of dog food each day and that the bags of healthier dog food will last longer, cost becomes a non-factor. The healthier foods are just not that much more expensive than traditional dog food.



Photo courtesy Heidi Neal



Heidi said that obesity is one of the leading causes of illness in dogs, just as it is in humans. With more nutritious and leaner dog food, pet owners can help their animals lead longer and better lives.

Making changes like going with a new dog food with smaller portions and eliminating table scraps is easier said than done, Heidi acknowledges. "It's hard not to fall victim to "those eyes," she said. But pet owners must use their will power and change bad habits, for the good of their pets' long-term health.

All of the hard work done by Heidi and her team have garnered several awards, including Coolest Store in America in 2018 for *Pets+ Magazine*; Maine Retailer of the Year in 2017 from the Retail Association of Maine; and Best Maine Pet Store four times from *Downeast Dog News*.

"We have been very fortunate to be recognized for what we do," Heidi said.

She is also pleased that she has maintained her strong Midcoast Maine roots. She was born and raised in Rockland, and she can see where she was born from her Rockland store office window. After earning a degree at Thomas College in Waterville, Heidi worked at Midcoast Federal Credit Union and Camden National Bank for 15 years. That experience taught her a great deal about running her own business and marketing it, but she still had a lot to learn when Fenway egged her on to buy the Loyal Biscuit Company.

When asked what she loves the most about her business, Heidi said it is how they are making a difference in helping pet owners have healthier and happier dogs and cats.

Whenever a customer returns to one of her stores after trying out a pet food solution, and they tell her that their dog or cat is doing so much better, Heidi feels satisfaction and pleasure, to have fulfilled the mission of the Loyal Biscuit Company.

"I really think we've had a huge impact," Heidi said with pride.

To learn more about Loyal Biscuit Company, visit their web site at [loyalbiscuit.com](http://loyalbiscuit.com).

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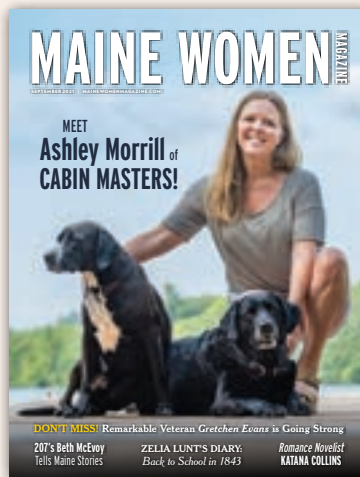
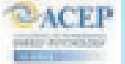
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Katana Collins is both a romance novelist and writer of a Harley Quinn comic that offers a new perspective of the former DC Universe villainess.

# Romance Novelist Katana Collins

## On Home Renovations, Harley Quinn, and a Writer's Life

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KAT SZMIT

**T**he Joker is dead. Batman, that caped crusader who spends his nights keeping evil at bay, has been imprisoned. There's only one person who can save Gotham, and it's definitely not who you'd expect. Neither is the writer—the person who penned the latest thrilling adventure in this ongoing comic—who you'd expect.

Katana Collins didn't set out to be a writer, but she stumbled into it when needing an elective during her senior year of college. Since she'd always loved writing, she decided on a course called "Creative Nonfiction," taught by renowned author Heather Dune Macadam.

"I remember after the first week of classes, after we'd turned in our first assignment, she asked me what my major was, and I told her, 'Photography.' She said, 'But you're a writer.'"

It was a stunning revelation. Back then, Katana didn't see writing as a viable career. But her professor's comment shifted her thinking. After college, she moved to New York City, where she worked for Lucky Duck Productions, a television production company owned by Linda Ellerbee and Rolfe Tessem. Katana would go to work, then rush home and get writing, often until two in the morning.

In 2008, there were sweeping layoffs at the company, which included Katana, who decided to take an entry-level job with a publishing house.

"I wanted to see what they were publishing and why and rejecting and why. What I saw in a meeting was it was all romance. They wanted all the romance they could handle," Katana said.

Paranormal romance was at the top of the popularity list because of *Twilight*, and publishers wanted more in that vein.

"I thought, 'I can do that.' I love romance novels. I used to read them all the time," Katana said. "At the time, they wanted the naughtier the better."

In fact, she would sneak one of her mom's Harlequin Romance novels and read under the sheets with a flashlight. Those would prove tame compared to what Katana created. She wasn't sure she could conjure up a paranormal romance, but did, parlaying it into a three-book series that began with *Soul Stripper* in 2013. Since then, she's worked with Kensington and St. Martin's Press before venturing into independent publishing.

Her latest book series focuses on a bakery and one of several



sons, a former Mr. Universe, who returns home when his mother is diagnosed with cancer. Katana said she got the idea while shopping at a nutrition center in Portland.

“The men who run that store are the kindest, handsomest beefcakes I’ve ever seen in my life,” Katana said. “I remember looking around and thinking, ‘There’s a book here.’”

Katana’s goal with the books is to offer entertainment that’s also believable. The women are strong and independent, as are the men, who are also comfortable expressing emotion.

“I actually find it to be quite realistic,” Katana said. “I think that the journey of finding your person or people is not always the journey of finding your marriage partner. Sometimes it’s about finding your best friend.”

Then there’s Harley Quinn. Thrust to center stage with the release of several successful contemporary films featuring the titular character, Harley Quinn has been around since first being introduced in 1992 as a super villainess, and a romantic interest for the Joker, in *Batman: The Animated Series*.

Fans will immediately call to mind the vivacious (and not always mentally stable) blonde with red and blue pigtails. She’s been Katana’s favorite character since her debut, which was intended as a one-off until fans clamored for more. Katana learned from her husband, Sean Murphy, the longtime comic book creator behind *Batman: White Knight*, that within the universe he’d created in *White Knight*, DC Comics wanted a spinoff featuring none other than Harley Quinn.

In the second of a three-book trilogy, Sean has Harley get pregnant and give birth to twins. Katana immediately knew that the focus of the spinoff had to be on that experience and pitched the idea that would become the spinoff.

“For me . . . all I kept thinking was how it had to be about her journey to motherhood,” she said.

In Katana’s mind, Harley Quinn is someone who has always struggled with her identity. Now, she’s facing postpartum depression, being a new mother, and being single. Because of the dramatic turn the story takes—no spoilers—Harley ends up essentially alone with her children.

“I don’t have children, so it’s not that I know what postpartum is or feels like, but I’ve had many of my friends go through it,” Katana said. “Taking away that stigma is really important.”

She extends that same idea to men. “It’s not that men have the chemicals postpartum, but lots of men who are first-time parents are in that struggle of ‘How do I be a dad and husband and provider?’” she said.

Katana also added in a sleek new villainess, an old-time Hollywood starlet with a nefarious and deadly hobby. Because Harley is a former psychologist and a former villainess, she’s brought in to try and capture this new evildoer.

Joining the illustrious world of heroes and villains has been a heady experience for Katana.



Top: The home Katana Collins and her husband Sean Murphy bought was originally built in the late 1800s and includes stunning details, such as this window bump-out. Bottom: Pinot is one of several furry friends belonging to romance novelist and comic book author Katana Collins. The animal lover also has three dogs.

"It's awesome. A little terrifying at times," she said. "I was particularly nervous about the social media aspect of it. I don't tend to go on social media a lot. It scares me. But surprisingly, it's been very welcoming and very warm. And the people that haven't been, I ignore."

It's also not lost on her that she's making a name for herself in what once was a man's world.

"Much like a lot of industries, I think we're starting to see that change from it being a man's world," Katana said. "We're starting to see a lot more female creators, female editors, female marketing specialists." In the offices at DC and Marvel, as well as on the credits of the book, she sees more than just a monolithic roster of men now.

What might surprise fans is that Katana works from home in Portland. Sean and Katana used to live in Brooklyn, New York, where he'd joined her after residing in California. They had hoped to buy property in New York but were always shy of the asking prices. Having been priced out of Brooklyn, they found a secondary residence on State Street, a lavender-hued house.

"I joke that I got duped," Katana said. "It was an unseasonably warm weekend for March, like 55 degrees the whole weekend. I fell in love with the city that weekend, not realizing that 55 is not a typical March day."

Even so, they were enamored with the Portland lifestyle and found themselves spending more time here in Maine than in New York. Finally, they decided to make Portland their permanent residence, living for a while on State Street before buying the home they now live in on Danforth.

"It was . . . a fixer upper, to say the least," Katana said. "We didn't quite know what we were in for when we bought it."

Numerous offers had been made on the house, but each had been withdrawn when the scope of work needed was revealed. By the time Katana and Sean bought it, it had been on the market for three years. The renovations were intense.

"It was all knob and tube, so we had to completely rewire and install all new electrical," Katana said. "There was no insulation. It was horsehair, so we had to insulate the whole thing. We tried to salvage as

much as we could. We wanted to keep as many of the historical aspects as possible."

The older elements include the slate shingles, a stunning and elaborate carved wooden mantel in the dining room, and a bumped-out seating area in the same space. Each new renovation project, however, brings new information about the house.

"We didn't realize that every window in this house is a weird size and shape," Katana said. "We had to custom make curtains. Everything ended up being a bigger chore than we realized."

To accommodate their different writing styles—Sean enjoys blasting loud music, while Katana must have it quiet—Sean renovated the carriage house adjacent to the main house, to serve as his studio. Many of their Victorian furnishings were found online or purchased from Maine's wealth of antique shops. They found several pieces at Cabot Mills in Brunswick, while other items were ordered, such as a fainting couch from England.

When not coming up with Harley Quinn's next move, Katana enjoys time with her three dogs and a cat, and gardening. She also likes participating in community theater and, pre-pandemic, performed with the Portland Players, Lyric, and the Community Little Theater in Lewiston.

"When we moved here, one of the things we talked about as a couple is how, in your 30s when you don't work in an office, do you meet people?" Katana said. "Do we join a bowling league? I don't know how you make friends when you're in your 30s and don't have a workplace to meet people. Community theater is that for me."

So, what advice would she offer aspiring writers?

"I think that the artistic side of it is only a fraction of what you need to do," Katana said. "You also need to have a business head about you. You need to know how marketing works, what the trends are, and what books are popular. If you can dissect why they're popular, that's going to be really beneficial."

But the most important thing?

"Write something you're excited about," she said. "Write something you love. And try to find the spin that makes it marketable. You can still write what you love and find the niche that makes it marketable." •

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# Why You Shouldn't Try to "Get Rich Quick" in the Stock Market

By Katie Brann, CFP®

For the rest of our lives, we'll be comparing "pre-pandemic times" and "post-pandemic times." We'll reflect on how we spent our days in quarantine, the hobbies we picked up and quickly abandoned, and the activities we carried into 2021 and beyond. With no sports on TV, no restaurants or bars to visit, the internet at our fingertips, and in many cases a little extra money in our pockets, many young Americans ventured into the world of trading individual stocks.

While we don't think individual stocks are the best option for everyone, especially those just starting out with small sums of money, we're certainly not against them on the whole. They play an important role in many of our clients' portfolios. What we don't advise is placing bets on companies to make a quick dollar in a month, a week, or even within a day.

To be a successful day trader, you have to be right day after day. If you're constantly trying to capitalize on hot new stocks every week, you must invest significant time into personal research and consistently make correct decisions about what to buy and sell. Also, you must outperform professional day traders with access to superior technology and research material than yours. Conversely, at Golden Pond we prefer to buy companies with strong balance sheets and positive long term growth outlooks, which sell goods and services that will be in high demand for many years to come. We do thorough research at the outset, pick quality brand name companies, and let time and compound interest do



Katie Brann

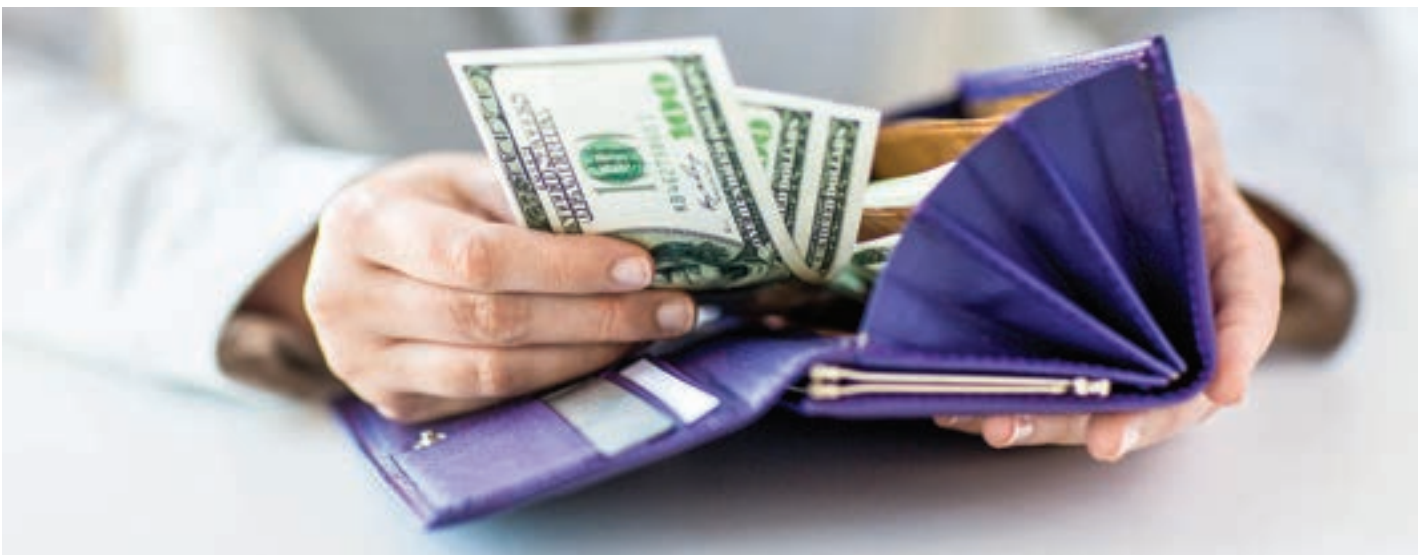
their thing. Every quarter, we review our individual stocks and decide if it's time to let any go, again after doing extensive research on the company's long-term outlook.

If you are spending significant time making short-term changes in your portfolio, you are probably more likely to make a bad decision when market takes a downturn. Paying attention to your money is a good thing but getting too wrapped up in daily performance can lead new investors to panic and sell at the bottom of a market correction. We help clients determine how much income they need from their portfolio in the next eight years and allocate that to more conservative investments (not stocks!), so they don't need or want to lock in losses when the market inevitably drops.

If you choose just a few individual stocks as opposed to funds, your portfolio is probably not diversified enough. You shouldn't put all your eggs in one basket no matter how sturdy the basket seems. Every company is subject to unique risks, but the effect of those risks is greatly reduced by owning a variety of companies across all sectors of the economy. Investing in a low-cost fund that owns hundreds of companies is an easy way to get diversified, and it encourages a more "hands off" approach.

It can be tempting to start day trading when your friends are bragging about the money they've made, and advertisers are making trading seem fun and exciting. The reality is, it's easy to make money in a bull market when the price of everything is rising rapidly. And sure, investing is interesting and can be a little fun—but we believe that a good investment philosophy is straightforward and frankly, a little boring.

*Katie Brann, CFP® is a client advisor at Golden Pond Wealth Management. To learn more, visit [goldenpondwealth.com](http://goldenpondwealth.com).*





Jennifer Hazard Photo by Nina Cutter

# ***THE MAINE PLAY BOOK***

## ***A Four-Season Guide to Family Fun and Adventure***

*By Jennifer Hazard*

**(Second Edition)  
\$16.95,  
softcover, guidebook**

*Published by  
Maine's  
Islandport Press.*

Jennifer Hazard's *Maine Play Book*, organized by season, is the ultimate guide to the state's family-friendly adventures. It's perfect for visitors and for Maine residents looking to take day trips or explore new places in their home state. The newly released second edition has been thoroughly updated.

When the first edition of *The Maine Play Book* was published, Hazard's children were 11 and 12 years old. Now a mom of two teenagers, Hazard has incorporated activities for all ages, such as swimming, hiking, biking, berry picking, ice-cream licking, leaf peeping, and skiing.

"During this challenging time in history, my family and I have taken full advantage of the beauty of the Maine outdoors," writes author Jennifer Hazard in the book's introduction. "Just as we did when my kids were small, we buoyed our spirits with road trips throughout our home state. Together, we've camped and hiked in some of our favorite state parks, explored ponds and lakes with our canoe, or simply enjoyed a campfire in our own backyard."

There's a reason the former blogger has been called the "Family Fun Maker" by the Maine Office of Tourism. She doesn't just write about these activities—



she actually does them. She first pored over her own blog, Cute Potato, outlining all the places her family had traveled. Then she added even more ideas to the list, making plans for new day trips and overnights.

“There’s advice in this book that you just can’t find anywhere else,” said former Islandport Press editorial director Melissa Kim. “Jennifer has first-hand knowledge of so many of Maine’s best places, both the well-known ones and the little gems that are tucked away. This is information you can only get from someone who has lived and parented here.”

*The Maine Play Book* is conveniently organized by season and region, making it easy to find information about places nearby—or far away—and plan adventures in advance. Hazard’s descriptions are a convenient length, too, giving enough information to give a good sense of a place, but not belabored. One Amazon reviewer said she wishes toll booth operators could offer *The Maine Play Book* to every car with kids entering the state.

Picking up the second edition will certainly help visitors and staycationers navigate all the changes made throughout the state in the last year. There are still a lot of wonderful things to do in Maine. There always will be.

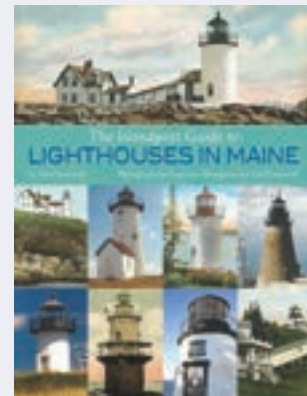
“It’s always been my love to find those things and guide people toward them,” Hazard said in an interview. “The book doesn’t have every event, every farm. It has those places that really spoke to us.” •

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# HAVING A SUCCESSFUL YARD SALE

*Tips for Making All Go Smoothly*

BY SARAH HOLMAN

Love 'em or hate 'em, yard sales are a great way for sellers to get rid of unwanted possessions and shoppers to gain wanted possessions, all without adding anything to landfills.

And having a yard sale can earn a seller some money, all while finding new homes for things no longer needed. A successful sale can yield hundreds of dollars in a day or two.

If you are giving a yard sale, your profits at the end of the day will depend on more than the items you're selling. Preparation and presentation can make or break your event. Having a yard sale is no small task, so if you're going to tackle it, you might as well do it right. Here are some ideas on ways to get the best results from your labors and have a successful yard sale.

## ORGANIZE

This part takes a serious time commitment. It's best to start at least a month (ideally two or three) in advance of your sale date and chip away at it when you have a few hours free at a time. If possible, choose a place in your house, basement, or garage that can be the staging area for the sale. Set up a row of large, empty boxes to organize as you sort. Have plastic baggies on hand so you can manage small, loose items, especially kids' toys. Got a pile of random Legos? Throw them in a bag together and price it at \$1. A toy with a bunch of little pieces or a doll with accessories? Bag them up. You'll be more likely to sell all the parts if they're together neatly and priced to move.

As you pull items from the depths of closets, backs of drawers, and tops of shelves, keep *like with like*. Determine your categories (such as clothes, kitchenware, household decor, tools, books, electronics) and sort accordingly. Price each item as you go along. That way you won't have to unpack your



boxes again later, to price everything, only to repack them for transport to where the sale is being held.

Before items go to the staging area, wipe down anything that looks dusty or dirty. Take the time to make things look appealing and useable. Blow up tires on old bikes. Have batteries and an outlet available for shoppers to test gadgets.

## PRICING

It takes a lot of time, but it is definitely worth it to price your items. A lot of people aren't comfortable asking how much something costs or naming the price they want. You'll lose potential buyers and spend a lot of time answering cost questions.

The generally accepted yard sale pricing rule is 50-30-10. New, unused items get priced at 50 percent of their retail cost, slightly used items at 30 percent, and used items at 10 percent of retail. You can also utilize bulk pricing, like "Buy 1, Get 1," or a similar package deal. If what you are selling includes antiques, *do your research*. Don't price an old, sentimentally valued piece too high that it won't sell, and don't let a priceless heirloom get away for \$10.

If your yard sale is a multi-family event and you plan to keep track of proceeds separately, make sure each family uses a different color price sticker. That way, your cashier can keep a log of purchases to tally at the end of the day.

## LOCATION

You can hold a yard sale anywhere and pull in customers using advertising and signs. But if you're able, pick a place that is easy to find, offers ample parking, and has enough space (ideally flat ground) for all your items. If you're not confident about your location, consider asking a well-located friend, neighbor, or family member if they'd like to join the event. Sales advertised as community, neighborhood, or multi-family sales tend to attract more customers because shoppers know the number of items will be greater and more diverse.

## TIMING

Saturday is the most popular day for sales, but fanatics say Friday is the primo day to shop. If you're going to take the time and put in the effort to prepare for a successful sale, why not do two days? You might consider one full day (8 a.m.–3 p.m.) and one later half day (9 a.m.–1 p.m.). Some sellers also slash prices at the end of the second day to get rid of any lingering items.

Whatever time frame you choose, be prepared for early birds to show up as much as an hour in advance. This practice (common on the part of serious yard-sale goers) can be annoying while you're trying to set up, but it's also an opportunity to sell a lot quickly. Collectors and resellers will scoop up your best merchandise, so consider a "no bargaining before opening" rule. If they really want the goods, they'll pay the sticker price.

## DISPLAY

Displaying your items on tables will greatly increase your sales. Having objects at table height makes everything easier for your customers to see and inspect. If you run out of tables, improvise with sawhorses or boxes (plastic totes or sturdy cardboard) and a piece of wood across them. For clothing, hang items on hangers, and display them on a garment rack, clothes line, or fence, so they are easy to see and look through. Ideally the only things on the ground will be large items like furniture or bulky objects like luggage or big toys.

As much as possible, group similar items together, again, *like with like*. For example, collect and present items for the kitchen together. Place holiday decorations together in another group. Have all books, comic books, magazines, CDs, and DVDs together in another spot. If you have a bunch of small, loose things, consider putting them all in a shallow box or tote and pricing them with a sign that says, "This box \$.25 each."

Think about what first impression your sale will make, including what drive-by shoppers will see from the road. You'll want to place anything valuable, large, or unique within view to encourage people to stop their cars and see your wares.

## ADVERTISE

Serious yard salers will plan out in advance what sales they want to go to before they jump in the car. Even the casual shopper might scroll the local listings before they head out and plan an efficient route. It's easier than ever to advertise your sale online, utilizing free services like Craigslist and Facebook community pages. There's also the tried-and-true method of placing an ad in the local newspaper, which generally gets you both a print and an online listing.

If you have a lot of one type of thing, like lots of baby stuff or camping gear, make sure to mention it in your ad, if you can. Dealers

will be looking for anything antique or vintage, including jewelry. Contractors are searching for tools and other building materials. Things that seem useless—like odd quantities of leftover tile, half empty boxes of screws, piles of unused shingles, or scrap wood—may get snapped up faster than you think. People also look for CDs, books, and records. Print ads often have limited word counts but online options are typically more generous, so you can highlight your most numerous, interesting, or prominent items.

## SIGNS

If your town or city allows, advertise your sale with signs that direct people from busy intersections to your location. These signs will encourage people driving by to stop. They will also help people who saw your ad and who are looking for your sale (and may be a bit lost) to find your sale successfully.

Your signs should be on bright posterboard, with the words large, bold, and written with black permanent marker. Dollar stores are a great place to find these supplies for not much money.

### HOW TO PRICE YOUR STUFF: THE 50-30-10 RULE

New, unused items:  
50% of retail

Slightly used items:  
30% of retail

Used items:  
10% of retail



Include the date, time, a directional arrow, and the address on your sign and hang them the night before your sale or early the morning of. Remember to collect all your signs after the sale.

### BARGAINING

It's not uncommon for shoppers to ask if you'll take a lower price on an item, even when the price is clearly marked. You're under no obligation to accept, and if it's early in the sale you may want to hold out for someone willing to pay full price. Later in the day or on Day 2, you might want to take less, especially if you plan to give away or pitch everything that doesn't sell.

### CHECK OUT AND MAKING BANK

The easiest way to manage payments is to set up a checkout table near the front of your driveway or yard. This way you can greet people as they come in and receive payment as they leave. It will also discourage people from walking off with stuff they haven't paid for, which is an uncommon but not unheard-of occurrence. Make sure you have a good lot of change (both coins and bills) before the event starts. Lots of folks will show up with \$20 and \$50 bills to break. If you have the ability to offer credit card payment, use it.

Shoppers appreciate it if you have bags or boxes on hand for their purchas-

es, especially if they are buying multiple items. If you happen to have an extra "floater" who can help lift heavy items into cars, that is also a plus, but of course not required.

If you have kids in your household, consider allowing or encouraging them to sell baked goods and lemonade, or hot cocoa if it's cool, at their own table. It keeps them busy and involved, they make a little cash of their own, and shoppers can enjoy the refreshments.

### UNLOADING

When the sale is done, you'll have some items left. Look over everything and set aside any high-value items you want to try selling separately via Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, eBay, or a similar service. Excluding these valuable exceptions, the rule should be that if you dragged it out of the house to sell, it's not going back in. Next, box everything up for donation. Goodwill is a popular yard-sale drop-off location, but there are many more to consider, including local churches, shelters, thrift stores, and nonprofits. In some cases, the organization or store will even come pick up your boxes for you.

Putting together a successful event is a time commitment, but the benefits are tangible. You'll have a lot less clutter in your house, a little more cash in your pocket, and a feeling of accomplishment when all is said and done . . . and sold! •

# ON THE HORIZON

*Events around  
Maine this month*

BY SHEILA D. GRANT

Gradually more festivals, fairs, tours, and events are ours to enjoy. Some would argue that September, with warm days, crisp evenings, and the advent of fall foliage season, is the finest month of all. Here are a few excellent ways to enjoy Maine this month:

### INTERNATIONAL SEAPLANE FLY-IN, SEPTEMBER 9-12

This popular event draws pilots and aircraft from around the globe. It features displays of aviation skill, a wide variety of aircraft to be viewed downtown and at the Greenville Municipal Airport, and one of the largest craft fairs of the season. Spectators of all ages flock to the shores of Moosehead Lake to nosh food-truck fare, browse the artisan booths, and watch pilots compete in the Bush Pilot Canoe Race and other contests. Visit [seaplanefly-in.org](http://seaplanefly-in.org) for more information.

### BAR HARBOR FINE ARTS FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 10-12

This show at the Bar Harbor Inn & Spa on the beautiful downtown waterfront draws artists and visitors nationwide. Juried artists ensure consistent quality and a balanced show in terms of media. Admission is free. Hours are noon to 8 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. For more information, call (207) 266-5162 or check the event's Facebook page.





Photo by Don Dunbar

### SIXTEENTH ANNUAL EASTPORT PIRATE FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 10-12

While 2021 details had not yet been announced at press time, this swashbuckling celebration typically includes live music for all ages, pirate-themed meals, fun walks/runs, a treasure hunt, and pirate boat rides. There are also presentations at the Tides Institute, Museum of Art exhibitions, a gold and silver doubloon scramble, a pirate parade, barrel relay race, street dances, story times, children's pirate ship races, and more. Visit [eastportpiratefestival.com](http://eastportpiratefestival.com) for more information.

### MAINE OPEN LIGHTHOUSE DAY, SEPTEMBER 11

This popular event, sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard, the Maine Office of Tourism, and the American Lighthouse Foundation, usually attracts 15,000 to 18,000 visitors annually. Visitors have rare opportunities to climb into and learn about over two dozen historic Maine lighthouses dotting the rocky shore from West Quoddy Head in Lubec down to Goat Island Lighthouse near Kennebunkport. For a list of participating lighthouses, visit [www.lighthousefoundation.org/maine-open-lighthouse-day](http://www.lighthousefoundation.org/maine-open-lighthouse-day).

### TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL CAPRICCIO FESTIVAL OF KITES, SEPTEMBER 11

Kite enthusiasts of all skill levels will want to gather from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Ogunquit's Main Beach. This festival is part of a one-week celebration of the arts. Over 300 kites will be given away for kids to decorate and fly. Volunteers assist families with setup, decorating, judging, and provide

kite-flying demonstrations. Call Tracy Smith of Crickets Corner Beach & Toy, (207) 646-2261, for more information.

### THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL LAUDHOLM NATURE CRAFTS FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 11-12

The Summer Solstice and Nature Crafts Festival is proceeding this year with "cautious optimism." Held at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve at Laudholm, this two-day event includes more than 120 juried exhibitors, live music, and local foods. Visit [wellsreserve.org](http://wellsreserve.org) for more information.

### 2021 MAINE CHEESE FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 12

Celebrate Maine cheese and cheesemakers with the Maine Cheese Guild from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. at Manson Park in Pittsfield. A highlight this year is the inaugural Maine Cheese Awards. This family friendly festival includes music, food trucks, demonstrations, adorable goats, and of course, plenty of delicious cheese. Visit [mainecheesefestival.org](http://mainecheesefestival.org) for more information.

### BATH ART HOP, SEPTEMBER 17

The Bath Art Hop is a collaboration of people passionate about art and community who have come together to highlight the area's talented artists. The event is a self-guided art experience of local galleries and artist tables in downtown Bath on the third Friday of each month from June to September. Live music and a beer garden add to the fun. Follow the event's Facebook page for more information.

### HARVEST FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 18

The Harvest Festival is a small, family fun event that celebrates the Houlton Community Market and the bountiful farmers of the area. Contact the Greater Houlton Chamber of Commerce, (207) 532-4216, for more information.

### MAINE CELTIC CELEBRATION, SEPTEMBER 18

This event in Belfast, typically held for three days in July, has been pared down to one day this year. Festivities take place from

10 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Steamboat Landing and around the Boathouse. There will be a robust lineup of Celtic music, dance, and storytelling, as well as a "kilt kontest." The event also includes Highland Games, a dog show, and several workshops. For more information, follow the event's Facebook page or visit [mainecelticcelebration.com](http://mainecelticcelebration.com).

### TWELFTH ANNUAL POLAND HERITAGE DAY, SEPTEMBER 18

This rain or shine event, held on the grounds of the historic Poland Spring Resort and Preservation Park from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., includes historic tours, wagon rides, kid's games, inflatables, craft vendors, live animals, and more. New this year, there will be food trucks, stock car racing, a zip line, bingo, and interactive gameshows. There is no gate fee. Many activities are free. Proceeds benefit local charities and the Poland Spring Preservation Society. For more information, email [info@poland-springps.org](mailto:info@poland-springps.org).

### THE DEMPSEY CHALLENGE, SEPTEMBER 25-26

This year's event offers a global option so that anyone in the world can participate in this annual fundraiser for people impacted by cancer. The goal is to raise \$1.5 million while collectively moving 1.5 million miles over the weekend. Saturday's in-person 5K walk/run and 10k run will begin at Simard-Payne Park, in Lewiston, with the bike event launching from the same location on Sunday. Event organizers said they also have Challengers who kayak, hike, and even horseback ride. Registration is \$50 per person, with a \$250 fundraising minimum to participate locally. For more information or to register, visit [DempseyCenter.org](http://DempseyCenter.org).



Photos courtesy of the Dempsey Center





Dahlias, those stunning late-blooming plants, are putting on a show now. This heirloom variety may not rival those fluffy dinner-plate-size dahlias but combined with its maroon foliage, it is the center of attention.

## CELEBRATING THE LAST OF *Summer's* *Beauty* STORY AND PHOTOS BY LYNETTE L. WALTHER



*Top:* Sunshine in bloom, these late-summer rudbeckias produce plenty of flowers. *Bottom:* As summer wears on, so does the foliage of many of the garden perennials like daylilies. Give them a “haircut” and pop in some fall annuals like mums and ornamental cabbages.

**W**hen we see those purple asters blooming along the roadsides, we can be certain the jig is up, and fall is on its way.

It seems like just yesterday I was filling sixpacks with potting soil and starting seeds—lettuce, cucumbers, zucchini, pumpkins, chard, kale, herbs, and flowering annuals. Seems like only last week I was getting the hanging flower planters set for the summer. On the bright side, the gardening season is not yet over. Now is exactly when we need to be paying attention to those late-season vegetable crops and flowering annuals and perennials.

Some of my dependable late bloomers in the perennial garden are the rose of Sharon bushes. These blooming shrubs are cold-hardy to the max, an excellent choice for Maine gardens. Most of the summer they are simply there, providing structure to the landscape all year long. Rose of Sharon is a woody perennial, meaning one that does not die back to the ground in winter.

Hybrids with sweet pink double blooms include “Sugar Tip,” a variety with variegated foliage in a cream and blue-green. “Little Kim” is a more compact variety with big, hibiscus-like white blooms that have stunning crimson centers. And my all-time favorite is “Blue Chiffon,” a cherished true-blue with big double blooms. Talk about a contrast with fall flowers like goldenrod, tiger lilies, or golden yellow brown-eyed Susans.

My Sheffield pink mums are always a late-season surprise, lurking at the edge of the sunny perennial border all summer. They get frequent pinching back until midsummer, so they will end up a compact mound of cheerful blooms.

All summer the burgundy foliage of *Cimicifuga* was a stun-





*Left:* Kale is one of the vegetable garden's most versatile crops, and now is the time to enjoy this nutritious food. *Right:* A bountiful crop of tomatoes can be enjoyed for weeks to come when we dehydrate them for our own version of "sun-dried" tomatoes.

ning contrast to blooming annuals and perennials. But in late summer this stately plant lights up with tall "candles" of sweetly fragrant blooms that are absolute bee magnets. Nearby, the late-blooming deep blue spikes of monk's hood make for a handsome contrast. Asters and ornamental cabbages are also great additions to fall landscapes.

Plan on starting seeds of ornamental cabbages next year for that purpose. Noting what ornamentals are in bloom now can help direct your spring planting next year to ensure color throughout the growing season.

The second crop of lettuce is already in, and we are still enjoying the kale which has been a mealtime staple since spring. I have my neighbors Fred and Carol to thank for a bunch of kale leaves they gave us a couple of summers ago. Of course, we had heard of kale, but we had never tried it. What a revelation! There really is something to the kale revolution.

Kale is a great addition to fresh salads, cooked dishes, and soups. Contrary to what we had expected, it isn't bitter. Thankfully, this vigorous green thrives throughout the growing season. At a perennial exchange last spring, I scored a few plants of something called "Beedy's Camden kale," named after a local gardener who discovered this unique variety that is reported to survive winters here.

Nutritionists extol the virtues of leafy greens as excellent sources of nutrients and antioxidants. Kale has become our go-to green. Give it a try, if you haven't already become fans. We add julienne strips to tossed

salads, soups, or casseroles, and they virtually disappear. One person I know likes to add a handful to scrambled eggs, and I suspect it could even be added to a few baked goods for more "hidden nutrition."

Elsewhere in the vegetable garden, many of us are cleaning up and cleaning out spent plants. This is a great time to harvest open-pollinated seeds from vegetables like beans and peas or ornamentals such as lychnis, foxgloves, poppies, calendula, zinnia, and the like. (Wikipedia defines open pollinated as "generally refers to seeds that will 'breed true.'" When the plants of an open-pollinated variety self-pollinate, or are pollinated by another representative of the same variety, the resulting seeds will produce plants roughly identical to their parents.)

Make sure seed pods are dry before picking. Label envelopes of clean seeds with variety and year, and store completely dry seeds in sealed containers in the freezer. Saving seeds is a great way to make the most of this season. It saves money, too, and gives us the opportunity to grow those favored varieties again next year. Pumpkins, zucchini, cucumbers, squash—all members of the cucurbits or gourd family—often cross-pollinate and cannot be trusted to produce seeds true to their parent plants. But toasted pumpkin and squash seeds make great snacks.

There is still plenty to be done in the garden, while we enjoy the changes there and the change of season, too. For now . . . take a deep breath, look around, and enjoy the beauty. •



*Top:* Blue Chiffon, a double rose of Sharon, blooms late in gardening season. *Bottom:* Brussels sprouts are awaiting a light freeze to bring out their character and "sweeten" them up.



# CARROT SALAD WITH CASHEW BUTTER DRESSING



Photos courtesy Jim Bailey

BY JIM BAILEY, THE YANKEE CHEF

**C**arrot Salad! Yup, that great side dish from our childhood and a mainstay at my father's restaurants many decades ago that has been "lost in the shuffle" for a long time. Let's Yank out this old favorite and give it some new life. (And it might be a salad that kids take to.) Here is my version of a classic.

Try adding a 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, or a tablespoon dried, for another uniquely fresh flavor. As needed, double or triple recipe to feed a crowd or to make extra for later. It only gets better after sitting in refrigerator overnight.

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 large carrots, peeled and shredded
- 1/2 cup raisins, dried cranberries, or cherries
- 1/2 cup creamy cashew butter (*see Note*)
- 1/4 cup crushed cashews, pecans, walnuts, or almonds
- 2 tablespoons shredded, unsweetened coconut
- 2 tablespoons crushed pineapple
- 1 tablespoon lemon or lime juice
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon honey

## DIRECTIONS

- Place the first 3 ingredients in a large bowl and toss to combine; set aside.
- In another bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients until smooth.
- Pour into carrot mixture, toss to incorporate completely, cover, and refrigerate at least an hour before serving. •

*Note: Almond or sunflower butter are great substitutions here, as well as simple peanut butter. See what your grocer carries and use your imagination.*



# PAINTING OVER THE WALL

BY BEVERLY MANN LESSARD

Today I painted over the wall. It is a 200-square-foot wall in our basement that our daughters painted white 20 years ago as a blank canvas for family, friends, and guests to sign. Signing the wall became the thing to do whether you were Brian, the Pepsi guy, or one of the neighborhood kids. But today it was the cellar's turn to get a cleaning and new suit of clothes. My husband and I are preparing to leave our empty nest for a smaller place with a better fit. As I started to paint, I began to realize how much the wall meant to me.

In a sense the wall represented our family journey, a living history of what took place in our home. There were the names of the 1996 lacrosse team who came to our house for a psych party one Thursday evening. There were signatures of our daughters' friends and boyfriends, some we miss, others not so much. There were hearts drawn around names of high school sweethearts who no longer speak to each other and hieroglyphics around the names of the more artistic. There were signatures from children who attended my childcare center, located at a different site—they got to sign the wall on long-ago evenings when Mom or Dad couldn't make the pick-up time by 6:00, and so the kids got to come home with me for a bit. There were even names with messages, the grandiose proclaiming themselves prophets among their fellow teenagers.

Some of the inscriptions were particularly meaningful. Our oldest daughter and her new husband signed their new names the evening after they got married in our backyard. When I came to that one, the paint brush suddenly became too heavy to hold. I set it down in the paint tray and just stared for a while.

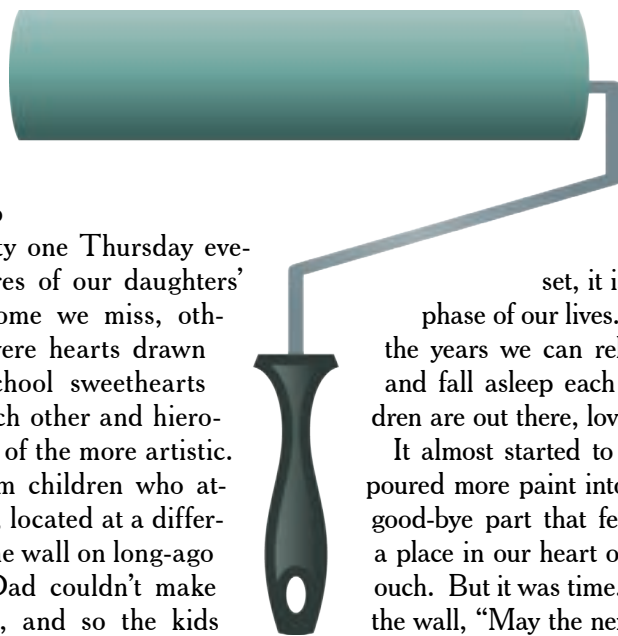
Where had the years gone? We moved into this house when our youngest daughter was eight years old. Now we have grandchildren about that age. The wall has witnessed the cycle of an entire generation.

I was reminded of a story I once read about a woman who was in a car accident and lost ten years of memory. When she woke up in the hospital, she expected to see her three young children, only to be greeted by three teenagers. While I didn't exactly lose ten years, I definitely felt that I had arrived at a future from which I could not return. There was no recapturing the years when the sound of feet were little slippers, not my husband's size 11 slippers.

And while my husband and I aren't exactly ready to fade into the sunset, it is time to get on with the next phase of our lives. They call it the golden years, the years we can relax, enjoy our grandchildren, and fall asleep each night knowing that our children are out there, loving and raising them well.

It almost started to sound good, I thought, as I poured more paint into the tray. Maybe it's just the good-bye part that feels uncomfortable. It tugs at a place in our heart once described by E.T. as . . . ouch. But it was time. "Good-bye," I whispered to the wall, "May the next owner of this house fill you back up again with the friends and memories of their lives. May these walls live again even as my husband and I leave for new adventures."

When I finished, I stood back to see if one coat had covered it all. But all the colors of the rainbow markers seeped through the paint to tell me they weren't gone yet. It was going to take more than one coat to paint over 20 years of memories. And yet, I thought as I packed up for the day, no matter how many coats I apply, my heart would always see the names and remember. •



# QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

**Birth order experts see these patterns: oldest siblings are reliable, organized, and intelligent. Middle children are people pleasers—friendly, peer-oriented, and good at negotiating and peacemaking. And the youngest are simple, agreeable charmers who love to laugh. Can we break free of such sibling-defined roles as we get older and be more independent and self-invented? —“Baby”**

OK, I guess it's interesting to categorize people, figure them out, put 'em in slots. Good husband and I have 3 sons, and they pretty much fit into these 3 grooves with a few variations. But to your point, “Baby,” why should any offspring want to “break free” of those flattering descriptions? None of those elucidations are at all insulting. And what if 2 parents have 14 kids? Which ones are the middles or the middlest? I guess it's safe to say that if a person comes from a family given to herds, too bad. They may have a problem fitting into life's definitions. But luckily, they'll have a lot of siblings to discuss the matter with.

**There's a wristwatch on the market that you program to count down from your estimated future death date to the present. The point is to remind the wearer that time is the ultimate precious commodity, so better use it wisely, not waste it. You can always see, approximately, how much time you have left and act accordingly. (You predict how long you are likely to live by answering questions in the user manual about your health and circumstances and by keying your answers to actuarial data provided.) Is this watch helpful or macabre?**

—Hourglass Sand

Oh my stars and garters, as Samantha Stephens used to say on the old Bewitched TV show. Sand, don't we have enough personal baggage to drag around with us every day, without this extra worry? Yes. Do we really need to know when it's “mortal-coil” time? No. Will knowing make us better people, as Scrooge gets redeemed from seeing the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come? Doubtful. If we did know, we'd fuss and worry about looking our best all the time, going on a diet so we look slender and buff in “the Box,” hoping we don't gross everyone out with unpleasant gurglings. Who can keep it all running in our heads because some dumbass wristwatch tells us we have exactly XXX days, XXX hours, and XXX minutes left on Planet E.?

And another thing: does that watch take into consideration unexpected mistakes, such as staring at our cell phones as we stupidly step out into traffic, totally forgetting what our parents taught us about looking left and right first? No. Look folks, it's simple. Before you cough up far too many dollars for a Twilight Zone watch, treat every single day as if it's your last, be kind to others, take care of your teeth, do no harm, do at least three good deeds of any size in that one day, eat a giant portion of chocolate mousse, tell the people who matter that they're loved and respected, important, successful, and honored. As to that watch? Fuggedaboutit.

**Someone posted a question, “What movie have you seen more than 10 times?” Everyone responding had many movies in this category, such as Titanic, Dirty Dancing, Notting Hill, Good Will Hunting, ET, Star Wars, White Christmas, and Wizard of Oz. Is it better to re-watch “guilty-pleasure” movies, or take a chance on an unfamiliar movie? —You've Got Mail**

We watch and re-watch stuff on the big and small screens because we're hooked on it and them. And the programmers keep re-running classics on TV. As for me I am hopelessly hooked on every musical and black and white film made from 1950 back and have learned to endure the sighs and eye-rollings of my ungrateful progeny. Oh, and I could watch all the old Andy Griffith shows to the end of eternity, but that's because I have a big Crush on crazy ol' Barn. And yeah, I'm a movie freakazoid and love almost anything that flickers across a screen. But one reason I love them all so much and will watch many over and over is because in those old films of the '30s and '40s with Bette, Joan, Spencer, and Jimmy, et al., the background stuff is so familiar to me. I'm closing in on 84 after all, so all those old furnishings, cars, expressions, and fashions are things I grew up with and mistily remember. Do I want to go back to having one black Bakelite telephone for the whole house, and ice boxes that routinely leaked melted ice all over the floor? Hell no! But I like to look at the background scenes of those old films and remember. And I also like to get tricked, as I was when watching *The Sixth Sense*. I'll watch that film lots of times so I can see the clues and pick up new little details I missed the first time. That's usually why I rewatch movies. Hey—you like films? Watch them as much and as often as you want to. Why not? Where's the harm?





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