

NOVEMBER 2019

# MWM

MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

# THE FAMILY ISSUE



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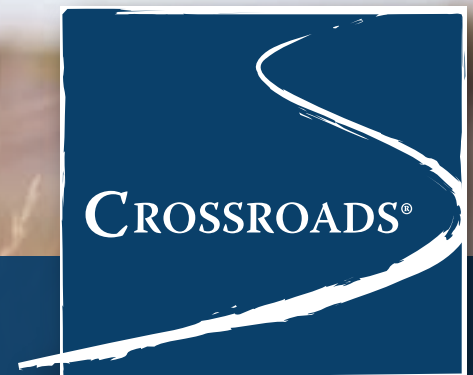
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Photo by Winky Lewis

This is a portrait of my small family, me, teenager and the dog, minus a pair of cats who would not have cooperated with a trip to Portland to visit the studio of the wonderful photographer Winky Lewis, who captured us in February. I'd name my son here but I'm not going to push my luck; I recognize my good fortune that he even got in the frame.

There's always wrangling involved with family portraits, right? My family of origin, including my five siblings and my parents, was last photographed together at Thanksgiving in 1988. One of my brothers is wearing a bathrobe, one of my three sisters is not looking at the camera and half of us look as though we had not yet made it into the single shower in the rambling old house where we all grew up. With a family of eight and one hot water heater, not everybody is going to be clean at the same time.

Sometimes I look at those portraits of families where everyone is wearing white and smiling so perfectly and think, how did you pull it off? What bribery took place off camera?

What fights erupted over costume choices? Where are the ketchup and coffee stains? Because that's real life.

That's the spirit in which we approached this Family issue of MWM, timed to coincide with the beginning of the holiday season that will rule our lives from now until early January. Families are imperfect. They fall apart and come together in new ways, sometimes forced into that flexibility by tragedy, sometimes by unexpected good fortune, sometimes—often—by the willpower of a woman. Inside this issue you'll find a story of a Farmingdale family raising their granddaughter as a result of the nationwide opioid problem. You'll spend time with a woman whose marriage to a celebrity ended in divorce and a new mission; advocacy for Mainers living with domestic abuse. You'll meet a Stonington woman who has been married, blissfully, for 72 years to a lobsterman who was born just a few houses over. And our cover woman, Chan Himm, who entered into an arranged marriage at age 19 and has gradually pushed up against cultural boundaries to create the kind of modern marriage she wants.

Tucked inside this issue you'll also find ideas for ways to get in the holiday spirit, including joining us at Brick South at Thompson's Point in Portland on Nov. 10, when we host the MWM Live event (complete with vendors, demos and chances to learn how to knit or slip into the confessional with MWM's own Dear Evangeline). Don't miss Candace Karu's enticing side dish suggestions for your Thanksgiving table, ideas on ways to preserve family treasures from Sarah Holman and from Amanda Whitegiver, the story of a woman who has been looking fabulous in the same holiday dress for more than 30 years. Now that is Maine style.

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**ON THE COVER**

Chan Himm, photographed at the Cambodian Temple in Buxton.

Photo by Heidi Kirn





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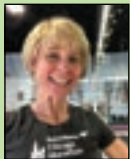
Left: Maine Women Magazine Live. Photo by Lauryn Hottinger. Right: Patty Griffin. Photo by Michael Wilson



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## »»»» Concert

**Nov. 8, 8 p.m.**

State Theatre, 609 Congress St., Portland

**Nov. 9, 7:30 p.m.**

Opera House at Boothbay Harbor,  
86 Townsend Ave., Boothbay

Maine native Patty Griffin rolls into Portland to perform at the State Theatre on the 8th and then onto the Opera House at Boothbay Harbor on the 9th. The singer/songwriter has been singing and playing guitar since she was a teenager growing up in a family of six siblings in Old Town. Her most recent album, *Patty Griffin*, came out in March. Catch her with Lori McKenna at the State Theatre (*tickets starting at \$40 via ticketmaster.com*) or see her in Boothbay at the Opera House (*\$35 advance, \$40 at the door; 207-633-5159*).

## »»»» Maine Women Magazine Live

**Nov. 10, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Brick South, 8 Thompson's Point, Portland

Join us for a Sunday full of crafts, storytelling and our magazine content brought to life. Ticket sales benefit In Her Presence, a nonprofit empowering immigrant women to

succeed in Maine. (*\$5 in advance or at the door; mainewomenexpo.com*)

## »»»» SLAPsGiving IV

**Nov. 15, 8 p.m.**

Portland House of Music and Events,  
25 Temple St., Portland

Superhero Lady Armwrestlers of Portland. Just like it sounds. Women arm wrestling. Plus good food and good humor. The purse (as always with this group) is entirely for charity. This season's featured nonprofit is the Maine Foodscapes Garden Project, which provides gardening resources for the food insecure. (*\$8 in advance, \$10 at the door; portlandhouseofmusic.com*)

## »»»» Holiday Craft Sale

**Nov. 30, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Rd., Falmouth

Every year Maine Audubon hosts a holiday craft sale at its headquarters at Gilsland Farm. Look for items made by volunteers and staffers, including the handknit and handcrafted, from jewelry to stained glass. Purchases help support Maine Audubon's mission. (*207-781-2330*)



Playwright Callie Kimball. Photo courtesy of Amie Miklovich

## Play Preview

**Nov. 4, 7 p.m.**

Portland Stage, 25A Forest Ave., Portland

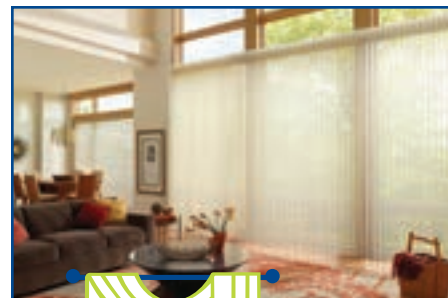
**Nov. 14, 5:30 p.m.**

Maine State Library, 230 State St., Augusta

A little more than a year ago, Anita Stewart, Portland Stage's executive and artistic director, and Ellen Alderman, chairwoman of Maine's Suffrage Centennial Collaborative, sat down with Portland playwright Callie Kimball to talk about her writing a play to commemorate 100 years of women having the vote. Kimball's hunch is they asked her because historical fiction was in her wheelhouse; her 2016 play *Sofonisba*, is about an Italian Renaissance painter. Stewart and Alderman also made a very specific request; could the play address suffrage from an intersectional point of view? Kimball was happy to oblige, "because we have so much material written about the white suffragists," she says. All women technically got the vote in 1920, but for black women it remained hard to cast a ballot, in large part due to Jim Crow laws, the state and local laws that enabled segregation.

The result is *Perseverance*, which will be previewed twice this month (performed without sets and the actors reading their parts) in honor of Maine ratifying the 19th Amendment in November 1919. Kimball tells the story of two women within the same space 100 years apart. *Perseverance* (Percy) Turner is an African-American schoolteacher, writer and suffragist, teaching in a municipal building in the small town of Hillcroft, Maine. Percy will be played by Bowdoin student, Jessica Speight. Meanwhile in 2020, Dawn Davis, also a teacher, is running for office on a platform of education reform, while renovating that very same Hillcroft building with her husband, finds Percy's letters.

There's a good chance that Portland Stage will do a full production of *Perseverance*, so Kimball will be listening attentively, with an eye toward fine-tuning. "I usually like to hide in the back because then I can sort of tune into how the audience as a whole is responding. Are they fidgeting, are they tuning in, are they leaning forward?" She's already done two drafts of the play. "In quick succession. Now I want to hear it. I want to sit with it." Sit with her for a sneak peek. (Nov. 4 tickets \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door; portlandstage.org. The shorter preview on Nov. 14 is free.)



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# SIDE HUSTLE

*Two great side dishes to carry you through the holidays and beyond*

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED  
BY CANDACE KARU

Some people binge *The Office* or *Game of Thrones*. On a gray, rainy Sunday that cries out for the couch, a snuggly blanket and the remote control in arm's reach, I like to hop on YouTube and watch vintage cooking shows. Give me Nigella Lawson as she lovingly licks chocolate pudding from a spoon, a tour of Paris with the old *Great Chefs of Europe* PBS series, or Emeril Lagasse seasoning a pan of gumbo with his signature "BAM!"

I grew as a cook watching these shows and more like them. Jacques Pepin helped me refine my knife skills and culinary technique. Martha Stewart is responsible for whatever baking skills I can claim. Ina Garten, who has no professional culinary training, taught me that cooking for people you love is a truly joyous endeavor.

While I'm captivated by watching a great main dish go from stove to table, it's the side dishes that really hold my interest. Whether you brine or spatchcock, fry or roast, a turkey is always going to be turkey. For me, it's what surrounds the bird that makes the meal. Stuffing! Potatoes! Veggies! Side dishes are like subtle makeup on a beautiful woman, meant to bring out her best features without commanding center stage.

As the days grow colder and shorter, I find myself spending more time in the kitchen getting more creative, especially with side dishes. While I'm not vegan or even vegetarian, because of concern over climate change, I am trying to prepare and

serve more plant-based meals and reduce the amount of meat I consume. Hearty side dishes, like this bread pudding loaded with mushrooms and leeks is a delicious accompaniment to poultry or beef, but it is also a satisfying vegetarian main dish.

**Candace Karu makes her living writing about food, fitness and travel. Follow her on Instagram: @candacekaru or at candacekaru.com.**



## SCARBOROUGH FAIR LOW-CARB BREADLESS STUFFING—PARSLEY, SAGE, ROSEMARY & THYME

If you are fighting the Battle of the Carb, whether you are Paleo, Keto or just looking for a way to get more veggies in your diet, this recipe is for you. It's easy to prepare—if you're really pressed for time, you can find the veggies pre-cut in the produce section—and so tasty you won't care that it's good for you and doesn't have a single cube of bread in it. I love having leftovers of this dish. I stir it into cooked farro or wheat berries for a hearty fall salad.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 onion, diced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small head cauliflower, cut into small florets
- 1 cup butternut squash, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1 8-ounce package baby Portabella mushrooms, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh sage, chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth
- Salt and pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

Melt butter and olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, and celery and cook until softened but not browned, about 5–7 minutes.

Add cauliflower, squash and mushrooms and season well with salt and pepper. Sauté until tender, 8–10 minutes more.

Add garlic and sauté for 1–2 minutes longer.

Add parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme and stir until combined. Pour broth over mixture and cook until totally tender and liquid is absorbed, about 10 minutes.



## FALL FAVORITE BREAD PUDDING

This earthy, rustic recipe can be a side dish or a stand-alone main course. The pancetta is used as garnish for flavor, but it can easily be eliminated altogether to make it vegetarian. Bread pudding is delicious the next day. To reheat, bring the dish to room temperature, preheat the oven to 350° and be sure to cover with aluminum foil so it won't dry out.

### INGREDIENTS

- 6–7 cups bread, crust removed, cut in 1/2 inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 ounces pancetta, diced (optional)
- 3 medium leeks, sliced, both the white and light green parts
- 1 1/2 pounds mushrooms, washed and trimmed, sliced (I use baby portabella)
- 1 tablespoon fresh sage, chopped
- 1/4 cup dry sherry
- 4 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup grated cheese (I use half Gruyere, half Cheddar)
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
- Salt and pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°. Bake bread cubes until golden brown (about 15 minutes). Set aside to cool.

Heat oil and butter over medium heat in a large skillet.

Add pancetta and cook until it is slightly brown around the edges. (Want vegetarian? Skip this step.)

Add leeks and cook over medium heat until they are soft and tender.

Add mushrooms, sage, sherry, salt and pepper and continue to cook over medium heat until liquid has evaporated. Remove from heat and set aside.

Whisk eggs, cream, chicken or vegetable stock and half of the grated cheese in a large bowl. Add the mushroom mixture and bread and combine well. Let sit for 30–45 minutes so the bread can absorb the liquid.

Put mixture in a large (9 x 13 inch), greased baking pan or casserole dish and top with the remaining cheese.

Bake until top is golden brown and the egg mixture is set, about 45 minutes. Serve immediately.





# COMMAND CENTRAL

*From a small living room in her West End Victorian, Figgy DiBenedetto can watch the world—and her restaurant.*

BY MICHAELA CAVALLARO  
PHOTOS BY BONNIE DURHAM

For many chefs, the kitchen is the command center of their home. But not for *Chopped* champion Natalie DiBenedetto. Better known by her childhood nickname, “Figgy,” DiBenedetto owns Figgy’s Takeout and Catering in Portland’s West End. And from her favorite chair in what she refers to as the fireplace room, she can peek out behind elegant wooden shutters and see what’s going on at the takeout window. “They don’t have to call me,” DiBenedetto says of her employees. “I can just see if they need me.”

During the winter, DiBenedetto and her family spend most evenings in the fireplace room. Sometimes she and her son Basil, 13, and husband, Aaron Staples, cook hotdogs over the fire, or set up a couple mattresses on the floor for a sleepover. The family cat, Bruce, loves to curl up in front of the fireplace, too. The room is cozy, with just enough space for three modern armchairs, a leather chaise lounge, an electric piano and a rustic wooden curio cabinet DiBenedetto bought in Hudson,

New York.

Basil was born in the Hudson Valley and spent his early years in a post-and-beam farmhouse built by his parents. DiBenedetto and Basil’s father, Johnny DiBenedetto, ran an upscale diner there. But Johnny was killed in a bike accident when Basil was still a baby and not long after, DiBenedetto realized that both she and her son could benefit from a permanent change of scenery.

When the grieving pair eventually made their way to Portland, DiBenedetto was able to buy one of the West End’s treasures: an 1868 Victorian with a mansard roof that once belonged to Frannie Peabody, the patrician AIDS activist who died in 2001. The purchase was possible thanks to a weak real estate market in 2010 and a pair of sellers who quickly took to DiBenedetto and her young son. “I still can’t believe my good luck,” she says. “But I needed some luck, so I don’t feel bad about it.” She met Staples at Eventide, where he was shucking oysters and they married in 2016.



1



2



3



6



4

**1** The home, which Frannie Peabody had lovingly restored, boasts 12-foot-high ceilings, a gracefully sweeping staircase and stunning trompe l'oeil details—all complemented by DiBenedetto's funky, modern art and décor. "I love to imagine what Frannie would think about seeing all this banana-pants [stuff] around the house," DiBenedetto says. "She would either have a heart attack or totally love it."

**2** When 5 p.m. rolls around, if DiBenedetto and Staples aren't perched on a stool at neighborhood dive bar Ruski's, they're often hanging out in the fireplace room with a cocktail or a glass of wine.

**3** Basil has recently fallen in love with vinyl, like this *Guardians of the Galaxy* soundtrack. The turntable gets an extra workout over the holidays. In heavy rotation: William Shatner's Christmas album.

**4** After her 13-year-old son taught himself to play a few songs on the piano—*Mad World*, the 1983 hit by Tears for Fears is a favorite—DiBenedetto signed him up for lessons.

**5** DiBenedetto is a little obsessed with woodland creatures—owls, fuzzy mice, even the woolly L.L.Bean raccoon slippers her husband bought her for Christmas one year. "I love them so much it makes me grit my teeth," she says. "I want to have a cabin in the woods at some point, and when I do it will be outfitted with many felted mice, owls, hedgehogs and bears." Owls appear in this room in three different forms: felted, wooden and printed on a porcelain jar.

**6** DiBenedetto bought this chair and its mate at an antique fair in Rhinebeck, New York. Her mom bought the Midcentury-style textured pillows for her.



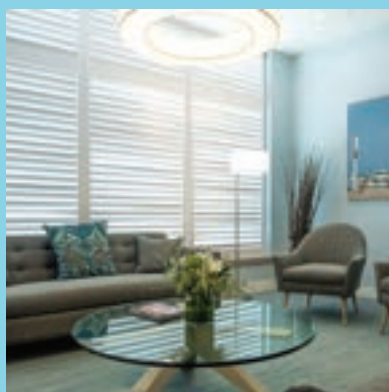
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# Couple of Constancy



At the far right is Rose and Andy Gove's pale green house, easy to spot for its teal colored shack and their wharf. *Photo by Heidi Kirn*



# IN STONINGTON THERE LIVES A WOMAN MARRIED FOR 72 YEARS TO A LOBSTERMAN, AND WITH HIM, THE SEA.

BY GALEN KOCH



The seafoam green house rises from the water on strong granite slabs. It looks as if it has always been there, as if it grew out of the pale green lichen covering the rocks of its sturdy base. This house is as much a fixture of the community as the couple who have called it home for 64 years. Rose and Andrew Gove, 90 and 89 years old, respectively, raised two daughters, four dogs and three cats here. Andy fished Penobscot Bay and the surrounding waters for 80 years and Rose has been by his side for 74 of them. She is the lobsterman's wife. She's offered him steadfast support, waking with him most mornings to make his breakfast and pack his lunch, seeing their children off to school and returning always to her sun porch, to watch the waters he traversed, the land of the lobsterman and the lifeblood of Stonington.

If you could own a view, Rose claims this one. She's watched Andy motor out through Stonington Harbor's archipelago to haul lobster pots in the early morning, seen the tide creep in over the silt and recently, started seeing the waves of winter storms break on the front lawn. "What a wonderful view we have!" she says, pointing to the islands and boats in the harbor. "In the summertime, especially, you can't believe the different kinds of boats we see headed for Bar Harbor. And when it comes fall we had a couple of ducks came in here, as much as 25 years ago, and the father duck came in and I fed it some crumbs, bread crumbs." He returned with the mother duck and then as the years went on, she says, there would be four ducks and then eight and so on until now sometimes 50 of them come to see Rose Gove, hoping for some bread.

From her spot on the porch, Rose can look across the cove to her childhood neighborhood, Greenhead, where she grew up with eight siblings in a house on the lower road. When she was a young girl, in the 1930s, Greenhead and the surrounding neighborhoods were full of year-round residents. Main Street boasted, at one time, grocery and furniture stores, bars, and shops with home goods and clothing. Now, there are art galleries and souvenir stores that celebrate Stonington's nautical history. Most of the homes clustered together on the hills of Stonington are, in the winter and early spring, boarded up for the season. There's a NAPA Auto Parts, a few year-round restaurants and the Granite Museum, paying tribute to the work men like Rose Gove's father did at the quarry on Crotch Island before shifting to lobstering. And while Stonington still boasts the highest lobster landings in the state, 15.1 million pounds in 2018, much of the more practical



stores have left downtown. If you're looking for a new pair of shoes, you better get online or be ready to drive an hour to Ellsworth.

During her childhood in the 1930s, children ran as packs. They swam off wharves, visited lobster shacks and spent as much time on the rocks or in the trees as they did in their houses.

When she wasn't jumping off a wharf, Rose would walk through town, singing songs with her cousin. Once they had an invitation to sing together at the birthday party of the town doctor, Dr. Noyes. Her whole family was musical. Her uncle Archie Hutchinson played in the Merry Mariners, a local country-western style band that moved islanders' feet at the Legion Hall for decades. Her father played the accordion and her uncle Hermon played both the saxophone and the banjo. "We always used to get together and have a good musical evening at home," she says. Rose also sang between acts at the Opera House in Stonington.

Before 1939, the year the Deer Isle-Sedgwick Bridge opened, Rose had left the island only once: "My aunt came down and took my mother and I to Massachusetts and so we had to go take the car, put it on the big barge, and got towed to go over to Sedgwick." The bridge construction marked a change for many islanders, making travel off-island more accessible. Rose remembers going to the dedication ceremony for the bridge when she was 11. There were fireworks, a banquet and a dance. "The funny part is Andrew was there," she says. "But we didn't know each other then and I think we were both close to each other because we were both just up on the hill."

Rose's early memories are scattered with coincidences like this, mo-

ments when she and Andy almost met, but didn't, including in her earliest days in Greenhead, when they lived within shouting distance of each other. "I grew up on the lower road, just up above where Andrew was born," she says. "I was 11 months old when he was born. I told him if I'd known it, I'd a crawled up to see him!" Before long, Andy moved to the 263-acre Eagle Island between North Haven and Deer Isle, to live with his grandparents.

In his early teens, Andy started fishing with Rose's father. (His grandmother had bought his first lobster license for him when he was 8 for \$100.) "He would be over to the house a lot," Rose remembers. "Poor thing, I'd be coming home with some boyfriend but...he caught me after a while. I tell everybody, I says, 'I robbed the cradle,' but I says, 'He did the chasing.'" They both attended Stonington High School and started "going together" when Rose was 16.

Andy didn't have much interest in school. "He'd always be looking out the window wishin' he was out there fishin'" Rose remembers. "And the teacher used to ask him a question and I'd have to poke him with my finger." After they married in 1947, Andy 17, Rose 18, they both left school to live on Eagle Island near Andrew's grandparents.

Life there was quiet. Rose harvested vegetables from Andrew's grandmother's garden, tended to the hens and her new baby, Myrna, and prepared for the long winters, canning mackerel and perishables. The couple still debates how many canned goods were in their cellar on Eagle Island—he says 400, according to her, it hovers around 150. Rose might be underselling a bit. "I loved that kind of life, then," she



Yes she eats lobster, preferably in a knuckle sandwich. "Not this kind," Rose says, holding up her fist. "I take two [lobster] claws and Andrew and Myrna give me their knuckle meat which is the tenderest and sweetest of all and I make me what I call a knuckle sandwich." Photos by Justin Levesque



Andy Gove retired from fishing in 2018. Now he and his wife Rose spend most days together, traveling off island for healthcare appointments and working on puzzles in their warm, sun-soaked porch. Photo by Justin Levesque

says. "I really didn't want to leave, I liked it so well, but we had to." Myrna needed to go to school, so they bought a house in Stonington. One aspect of it was a welcome change from life on Eagle. "I'll tell you this much," she says. "I never had a toilet—inside toilet—until we moved. And oh, I'm telling you, I thought that was the most wonderful thing I ever had!"

They had a second daughter, Sandra, and settled into a life in the house perched on the edge of the harbor. Andy grew into a legend among Stonington fishermen. "Andrew's worked so hard all his life," Rose says. "He's done a little bit of everything." He caught halibut and lobsters and got so intensely into herring fishing that he bought a plane to spot herring in the inlets and coves of Penobscot Bay (only learning how to fly it after making the purchase). As the herring fishery collapsed and lobster landings soared in the 1990s, he devoted himself to lobster fishing.

From the land, Rose Gove kept an eye on the sea. Some of her stories

*"I grew up on the lower road, just up above where Andrew was born. I was 11 months old when he was born. I told him if I'd known it, I'd a crawled up to see him!"*

are the stuff of children's books. There's one about Dundee the Cat, who rode the back of a seagull right off the edge of the rocks but lived to roam the neighborhood and another about Tomfool, a cat who rode a dog's back all the way from Rose and Andrew's house to the Stonington

Opera House. And there's the story of Lou-Seal, the seal who comes back to bask on the rocks outside Rose's window every spring on June 9, her birthday.

She's also seen cultural shifts in this fishing town: Stonington's transition from a town that faced the ocean to one that faced the land, her neighborhood's change from a year-round to largely seasonal community, the loss of a diversity of fisheries and rise of lobstering as a thriving and lucrative multi-million dollar industry. As she watched, the harbor bloomed with more lobster boats as landings continued to increase, attracting more and more fishermen to the harbor. By 2008, Stonington alone was pulling in 10.28 percent of the state's haul. A decade later, it was up to





Rose reads the paper by the window of their home. From there she's been able to watch her husband Andy coming and going from the sea. Photo by Justin Levesque

13.17%. That's partly a result of shifting water temperatures driving the lobster north, part of climate change. Rose Gove gauges those changes with her eyes. The sun porch window frames a small island, more of a rock, really, called Two Bush. "The tides are gettin' higher." Rose says. "I have seen [Two Bush] washed away. It's gettin' smaller and smaller on these high tides and I told Andrew, 'You know there's gonna be a time when all we're gonna see is the top of those trees. All you're gonna see is the trees.' So I keep watch of it anyway." Rose says the water has begun to lap the bottom of the houses and shops on West Main Street, those buildings that hang over the water on their wooden stilts. "I just know the land is washing away. And it's gettin' higher and higher. I might not be here to see it, but everybody else will have to wait and see, I guess."

Despite all those changes, some things that have remained the same. Rose's love of family, her love of this community, and her reverence for nature persist. "I'm so glad I live here in Stonington and on the island, of course, because I think it's the most wonderful place you can be now. We're very lucky, very fortunate, I got a wonderful family and a wonderful home. We're both fairly healthy now and what more can you ask for?"

The summer of 2018 was Andy's last summer fishing. He's sold most of his gear, save for a few traps still piled on his fishing wharf. "I will say I am glad that he is through fishing because I worried so much," his wife says. The heavy lifting of traps, all 80 years of it,

finally wore out Andy's shoulders, she says. "I know he was overworking himself and I was so glad when he finally listened to the doctor." Now the two spend most days together, traveling off island for healthcare appointments and working on puzzles in their warm, sun-soaked porch.

At 90, Rose is remarkably healthy. She attributes it to a few things, including that she never drank or smoked, and tried to eat the right things, like a lot of seafood. She loves hake and halibut and, especially, a delicacy she calls a knuckle sandwich. "Not this kind," Rose says, holding up her fist. "I take two [lobster] claws and Andrew and Myrna give me their knuckle meat which is the tenderest and sweetest of all and I make me what I call a knuckle sandwich." But time does take its toll: Rose is hard of hearing and uses a cane to walk, to prevent her back from aching.

In June they celebrated their 72nd wedding anniversary and her 90th birthday. There was a party in town. "I didn't expect to live this long, to tell you the truth," Rose says. But there is still the striking view out those windows, the knuckle sandwiches to enjoy, the company to keep. "[Andrew] takes good care of me. He's a good man," she says. "I couldn't-a got one any better."

***Galen Koch is the founder of *The First Coast*, a project that records oral histories from members of Maine's coastal communities and brings them back in exhibit form. She is a native of Stonington.***

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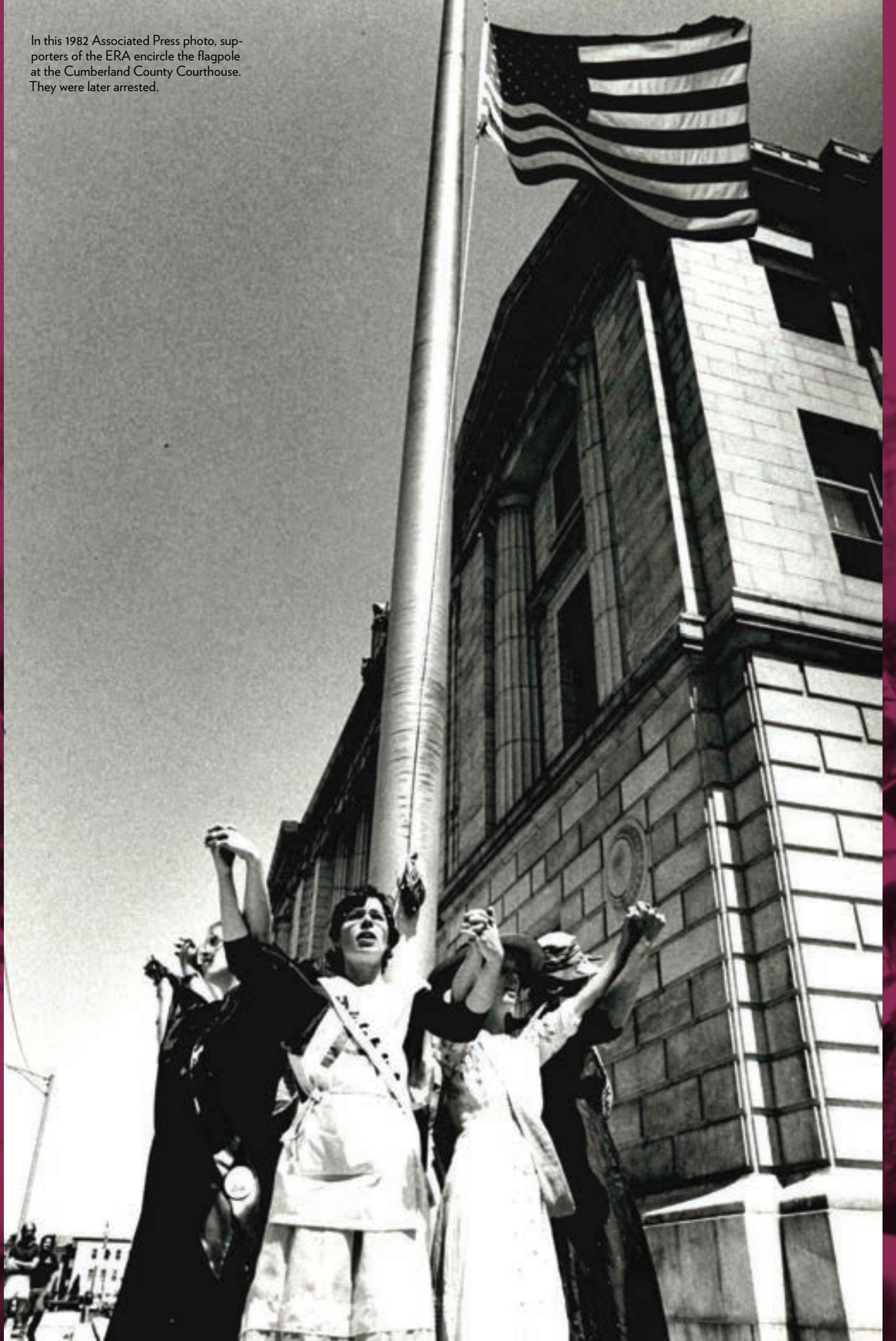


COOLING & HEATING





In this 1982 Associated Press photo, supporters of the ERA encircle the flagpole at the Cumberland County Courthouse. They were later arrested.





# Still Waiting

THE 27<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT HAS NEVER BEEN FULLY RATIFIED, ALMOST A CENTURY AFTER AN EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT FOR WOMEN WAS FIRST PROPOSED. HOW A PROPOSAL IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE AIMS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE IN MAINE.

BY JUDITH MEYER

A century ago this month, Maine ratified the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote after decades of petitions, protests and righteous agitation. But by 1919 some of the leaders of the national suffrage movement weren't around to see the triumphs. "Most of them didn't live to see it passed," says state Rep. Lois Galgay Reckitt. "Including Susan B. Anthony."

Reckitt is trying her hardest to avoid that fate herself and arguably, her fight for women's rights is even more frustrating than Anthony's. Reckitt, 74, is the sponsor of a state bill (not the first) for a Maine Equal Rights Amendment that represents a way to bypass the long-stymied national effort to amend the U.S. Constitution to affirm equal rights for women. That national campaign has been a tortuous process now approaching its own centennial and as time has dragged on, 26 states have done as Maine has, drafting ERA language in their constitutions. Like suffrage, the ERA is something that seems both fundamentally logical and also, because it remains unfinished business—despite being passed by Congress 47 years ago, it has yet to be ratified by three-fourths of the states—increasingly Quixotic. For Reckitt and others in Maine, the fight for the ERA is far from done. And she wants to be around to see it pass. "I do not want to be the Susan B. Anthony of Maine, thank you very much," she says.

This amendment is a simple enough statement: *Equality of rights under the law may not be denied or abridged by the State or any political subdivision of the State based on the sex of an individual.* Her bill, LD 433, has been carried over





Elizabeth Mitchell, wearing an ERA pin on her right lapel, in 1982, with colleagues Rep. John Diamond (L) and Rep. John Martin, just after she was elected floor leader of the Maine House of Representatives. A staunch supporter of the ERA, Mitchell was a key player in getting a state ERA amendment in front of voters in 1984. It failed. *Photo courtesy of the Portland Press Herald*

to the second session of the 129th Legislature for 2020 after passing overwhelmingly in the Senate and by a majority in the House but seven votes shy of the two-thirds majority needed to send it to the voters of Maine to be enacted into law. Not a single Republican in the House supported it in the final vote, but at one point this year, supporters say the bill was just two votes short of passage.

Reckitt's bill is supported by the Democrats in the Legislature and by dozens of groups working toward equal protections, including Equal Rights Maine, a group formed in 2016. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree wants it to pass. Sen. Susan Collins is in favor of the ERA.

Gov. Janet Mills really wants it to pass. She describes herself as deeply bothered that Maine has seen fit to amend the Constitution 173 times since 1833, but not a single one of those amendments has been about equal rights. And Maine doesn't have the best track record historically on women's rights; while the state moved fairly quickly to ratify the 19th Amendment 100 years ago, it had considered (and rejected) an amendment to the state Constitution allowing women to vote seven times between 1873 and 1917. An Equal Rights Amendment has been considered in Maine eight times since Congress passed the ERA in 1972, including once when it was put to the voters directly, in

1984 (and failed by a vote of 333,998 to 195,653) and the most recent effort, Reckitt's.

Pingree, first elected to public office in 1992, remembers that time as "an era when we felt like we were moving forward in a positive way on a lot of things." Now, she says, it feels like women's rights are under attack. "Having a state-based ERA would really solidify this idea that Maine is taking strong action to say we care about the rights of women in our state, and whatever is going on around us in the political sphere, we're going to stand strong." She regularly hears from older constituents who fought for equal protections over the years and are now asking, what's happening to those rights?

It's not just older residents wondering. When she spoke in support of LD 433 this spring, Allison Hepler, who represents Woolwich in the Legislature, said it baffles the students in her U.S. history class at the University of Maine at Farmington that the ERA was never ratified, given that some of the arguments that stalled it were that women might be forced to serve in the military and use unisex bathrooms. Women now comprise 14 percent of the military, and unisex bathrooms are a growing trend. "They have grown up with these two realities and their world has not collapsed," Hepler says. For some young people it's a surprise that America didn't manage to enact such a basic protection for women decades ago. "I think young women grow up with sort of a very different idea, a stronger sense of equality now," says Pingree. "And when they face the reality that the laws don't protect them, it's shocking."

But proponents, including Alison Beyea, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, feel the ERA may finally be within their grasp. "It's exciting to see a government speaking boldly and proudly about the ERA," Beyea says. That includes the



THE 146-YEAR HISTORY OF WOMEN ASKING FOR—AND NOT RECEIVING—LEGAL EQUAL RIGHTS IN MAINE:

Source: *Maine Law and Legislative Reference Library*

1873

RESOLVE FOR SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT

*Not enacted.*

1887

RESOLVE FOR ELECTIVE FRANCHISE

*Not enacted.*

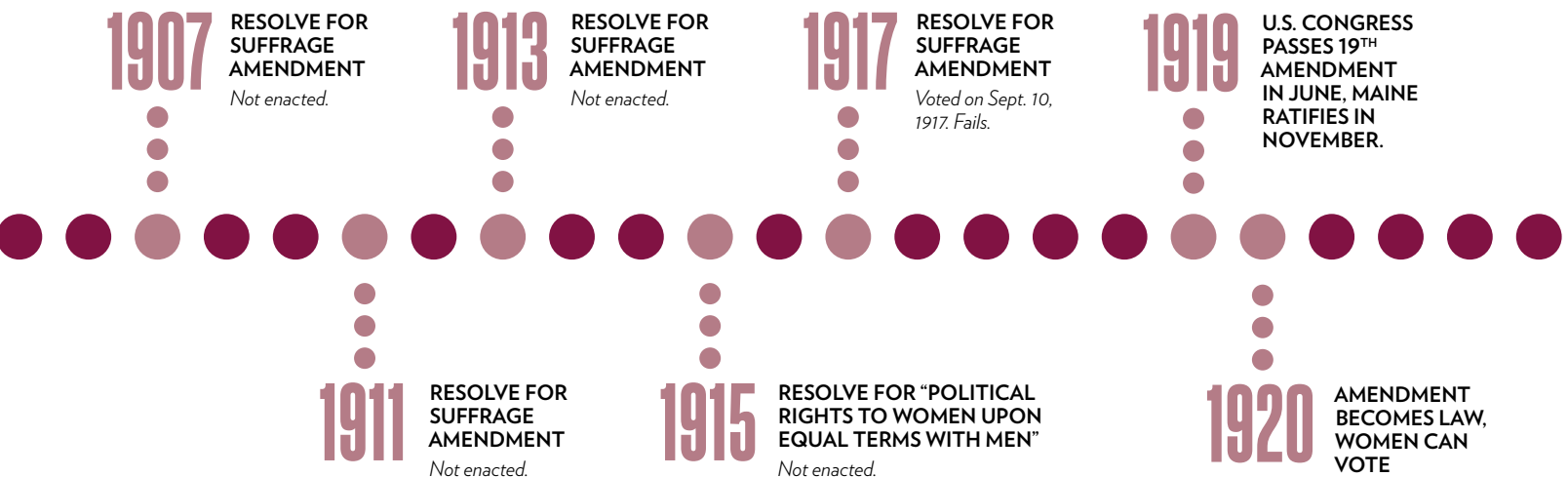
governor, who brought up the need to pass the Maine ERA at a tea at the Blaine House in August to celebrate the suffrage anniversary. She also spoke in support of the amendment in front of the Legislature in March, arguing that while Maine has made great progress in equal rights, it has been “piecemeal, intermittent and impermanent.” Laws that cover discrimination only in specific areas, like unemployment, housing, credit, public accommodation and education are “ephemeral, subject to repeal or change at the whim of any particular legislature of initiative,” she testified.

Mills, Maine’s first female governor, has faced inequality throughout her career. When she was in law school, there was one female professor at the University of Maine School of Law. She had a hard time finding work in the private sector after graduating in 1976. So she became a prosecutor. After winning her first murder conviction in 1978, she remembers the Portland Press Herald published a story in the society section under the headline “Prosecutor wore pale powder blue.” She found it amazingly sad that what she wore was of greater importance than what she did. She became active in the women’s movement precisely because she “didn’t see the progress I wanted to see.”

Reckitt’s activism also wasn’t born of a single incident. “It was the drip, drip, drip of inequality,” she says. She remembers not being treated the same as boys when playing sports in high school and college. When she married, decades ago, she did not take her husband’s name. This mild rebuke to the patriarchy meant she had to get an opinion from the Attorney General’s Office to restore her maiden name to the voter rolls so she could vote. When she was working fulltime as a teacher and making more than her husband in the early 1970s, she faced the frustration of needing him to co-sign her car loan. By 1973, she was testifying in front of the Maine Legislature on behalf of an ERA. “There’s some stuff in this world that is just wrong,”



State Rep. Lois Reckitt first testified on behalf of the ERA in 1973. She’s not done yet. Photo by Heidi Kirn







Judy Lloyd didn't remember exactly when this photo was taken, but according to the Portland Press Herald's archives, it was on August 26, 1981, Women's Equality Day. What the Brunswick resident does remember is that she walked 15 miles that day, most likely from Yarmouth to Portland along Route 1. The occasion was a rally for the ERA, possibly the U.S. version or one of the many proposed state amendment for equal rights. Lloyd still has that t-shirt (it spells out NOW, the National Organization of Women) and at 69, she's still a feminist. She protested the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court. She's been to anti-Trump marches. She's also still an ardent supporter of the ERA. But, "I'm not a ringleader anymore." She used to work at the Family Crisis Center with state Rep. Lois Reckitt, who sponsored the bill for the current proposed amendment to the Maine Constitution. "She's done a lot," Lloyd says. It amazes her that in all this time since this photo was taken, the ERA still hasn't passed. "It would really be nice to be recognized as a human being in the Constitution," Lloyd says. —M.P.

Reckitt says. "It's not a moral question. It's just wrong."

She left teaching and served for decades as the executive director of Family Crisis Services in Portland. She's a co-founder of the National Organization for Women in Maine, the Maine Coalition for Human Rights, Maine Right to Choose and the Maine Women's Lobby. This is her second term in the Legislature, where she represents South Portland.

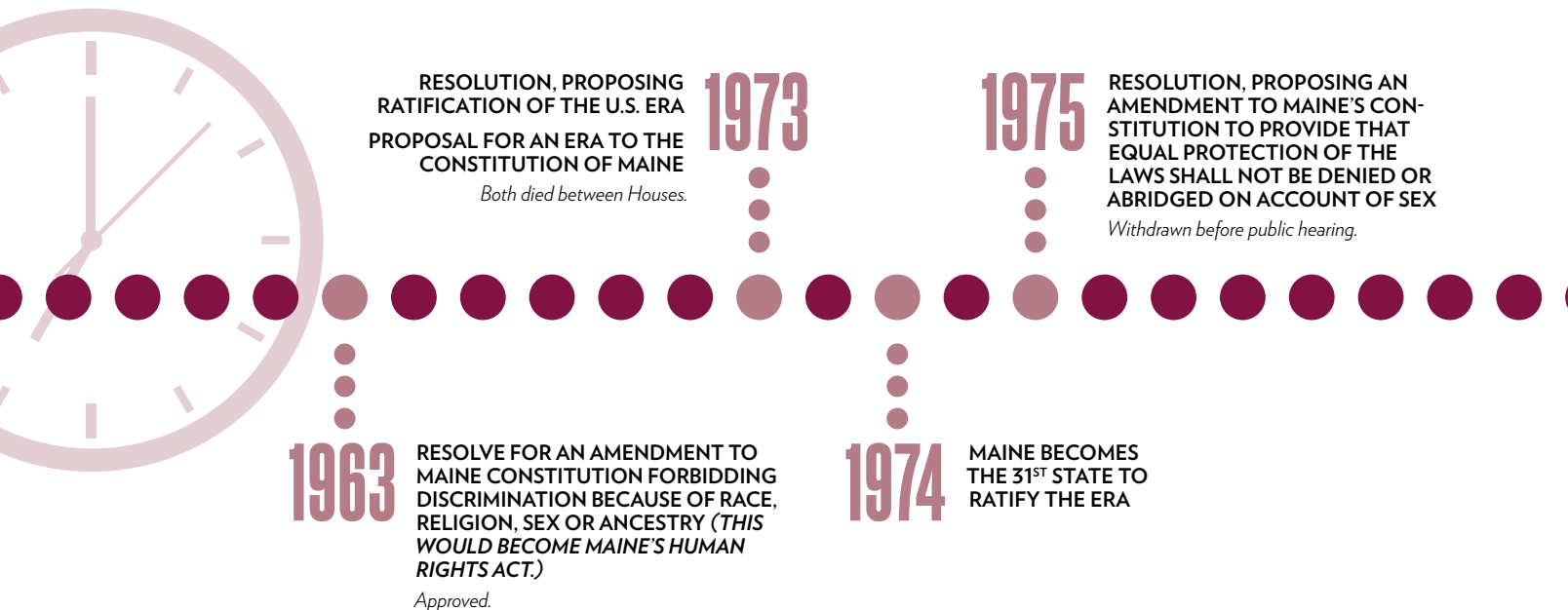
Adoption of a state level Equal Rights Amendment would protect Maine women against the fluctuations of time and the fluctuations of the judicial system, she says. Everyone in this state has a mother, some have sisters, some have daughters. This is important, she says, to every citizen of Maine, not just women. Or it should be.

## OPPOSITION

U.S. Sen. Susan Collins finds it surprising, and puzzling, that Maine has not yet been able to pass its own ERA, "because this is a state that has been very open to women leadership, as has been shown by women who run major corporations in our state," she says. Only a few states have elected three women senators in their history, and Collins points to the fact that Maine's women senators, herself, Olympia Snowe and Margaret Chase Smith, represent the highest collective number of years served by women in the Senate. "Mainers have shown that they're willing to trust women to lead them in very important ways," Collins says.

Opponents of the Maine ERA say equality is already afforded women under Maine's Human Rights Act and under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, making it unnecessary. But that argument overlooks the long legislative history of the ERA, including its passage by a two-thirds majority in Congress in 1972, 49 years after activist Alice Paul wrote the amendment and it was first introduced to Congress.

In order to amend the U.S. Constitution, the ERA had to be ratified by at least 38 states (three-quarters of these United States). The deadline was 1979. Thirty-five states did so fairly quickly, including Maine in 1974. When it wasn't met, the deadline was extended to 1982 (Maine's Sen. Bill Cohen, a strong supporter of the 27th Amendment, was a key force



behind that extension in 1978). Currently 37 states have ratified the ERA. But if that tantalizingly close goal of 38 is met, Congress would still have to approve a further extension.

Why did it stall, nationally? Pro-family advocate Phyllis Schlafly devoted much of her energies to traveling the country convincing states not to ratify the ERA. Schlafly came to Maine in the 1970s and again in 2007. Warning that an ERA would force courts to approve same-sex marriage and deny government benefits to housewives and widows, Schlafly also told a Bates College audience during her second visit to Maine that there was no such thing as marital rape. “By getting married, the woman has consented to sex,” she said, “and I don’t think you can call it rape.” Marital, or spousal, rape is now illegal in all states. Same-sex marriage was legalized in Maine in 2009, repealed at referendum later that year and approved at referendum in 2012. Schlafly died in 2016, the year after same-sex marriage became legal nationwide by decision of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Some point to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 as a major factor in stopping the ERA from ratification. When he was governor of California, he supported the ERA, and the Golden State ratified it while he was in office. This was in keeping with the Republican position in support of the concept of equal rights. (Maine’s own Margaret Chase Smith gave a persuasive speech in support of the ERA on the Senate floor in 1950, saying “I think that the most effective argument for Equal Rights is summed up in three simple words—‘Women are people.’ Think that over just a little and you will see the justice and overwhelming merit of the Equal Rights measure.”) But Reagan changed his position as president, saying that he believed the 14th Amendment was sufficient protection for



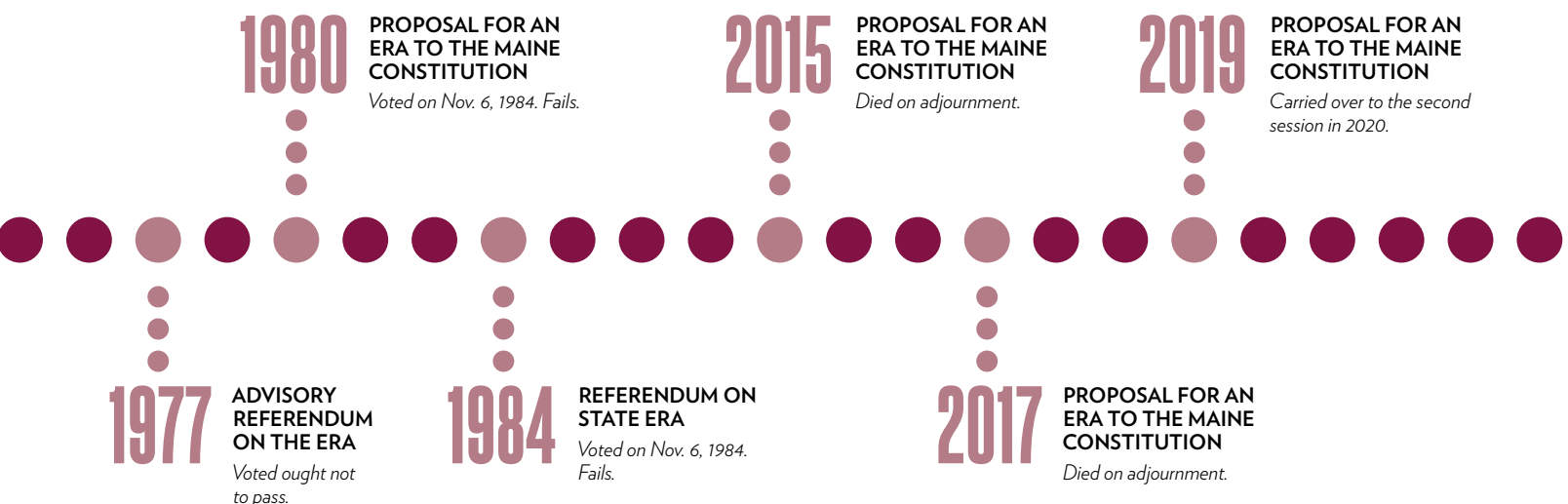
Supporters at a Women’s March in Bangor in 2018. Photo courtesy of Sherry Streeter

women. The 14th Amendment, adopted in 1868 as part of the nation’s rebuilding process post-Civil War, guarantees equal protection of “persons,” making it illegal for states to “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”

As a result of Reagan’s reversal of position, the GOP took equality rights out of its platform and the notion was largely adopted by the Democrats. According to Nancy Murdock of Equal Rights Maine, Reagan’s position “flipped the demographics.” Why is the 14th Amendment insufficient? Murdock explains that it was, in its earliest form, intended to specifically mention women, but protections for

former slaves had to come first and protections for women were struck. As a result, when a discrimination case is considered, there is higher scrutiny for violations based on race and religion, and less for sex. Murdock says gender should be on the same plane as race and religion. “The state of Maine would benefit from having this amendment to the Constitution just because of that reason,” Murdock says.

There are, she points out, plenty of state and federal laws that offer many protections based on gender, but laws can easily be changed by political impulse and can be inconsistently enforced. Constitutional amendments are more strongly cemented. Hepler agrees. “It’s a lot







In August 1980, supporters of the ERA march in Portland. Holding the banner are Chris Torraca (L) and Kate McQueen. *Portland Press Herald* photo by Gordon Chibroski

harder to change constitutional amendments than it is to change laws,” says the state representative from Woolwich. Having equality for women written into the Constitution would give legal experts more tools in the toolbox, she said, to drive equity. She’s still seeing her students face inequity, like the female student athletes who tell her about disparities in the resources for women’s sports in high school and college. “You can see in their faces talking about how much they lived it, clearly,” Hepler says.

Murdock, who lives in Brooklin, is retired from a career in architecture and volunteers almost full time on equality issues. She became active in the women’s rights movement in 2016 after attending a women’s rights discussion at the Blue Hill Public Library. She brought her design background to the fight. “My thinking was, how do you design yourself out of a problem like this, the problem being the ERA wasn’t ratified and for terrible reasons,” she says. She’s been fortunate to escape gender discrimination, but points out the fight for equality is for “the many more of us who are unfortunate and who have been discriminated against in ways that they can’t overcome.” That includes pay equity, housing opportunities and employment, she says.

She dispenses quickly with the arguments about the ERA forcing co-ed bathrooms and sports as illogical. “There’s a lot of local control in our world,” she says. “And there should be sports for girls and sports for boys, bathrooms for girls and bathrooms for boys. That’s just part of our culture. I think that’s just something that gets worked out.” Are we

really “going to not care about equal treatment under the law because of bathrooms?” she asks. Furthermore, the U.S. hasn’t had a draft since 1973. But if it did, Murdock theorizes that current societal norms suggest that, “at this point most young Americans would think it would be fairer for both boys and girls to be drafted.” In other words, the opposition is rooted in outdated thinking.

But one issue stands out as the focus of most of the opposition to the ERA: abortion. Opponents claim it would be a vehicle to force taxpayer-funded procedures. Murdock disagrees. “How is that an equality issue?” she says. “That is an emotional issue.” She points out that abortion has been legal for decades, without the assist of an ERA. What the ERA would do, she said, is guarantee equality in reproductive health care, but since only women can bear children, that care would include pregnancy choice. But opponents, including the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland and the Christian Civic League of Maine, strongly oppose the measure because of what they see is a lack of protection for unborn children and required public funding for abortion procedures. Rhode Island got around this issue when it enacted a state-level ERA in 1986 by specifically addressing abortion in the law: *Nothing in this section shall be construed to grant or secure any right relating to abortion or the funding thereof.*

That’s a compromise in the absence of federal action. But some hope remains for the 27th Amendment to be ratified. Pingree is part of a congressional group, which also includes Collins, Sen. Angus King and Rep.

Jared Golden, advocating to extend the deadline for ratification of the ERA. After that deadline was extended to 1982, for years no more states took action. Then, in 2017, Nevada voted to ratify. Illinois followed in 2018. And, this month, Virginia stands poised to become the 38th state to ratify. Hitting that magic number would presumably breathe new life into a federal ERA if Congress acts to revise the deadline. Collins was a sponsor of one strategy to do so, the “fresh start” strategy first proposed in 2000, which would restart the entire process, but now prefers the three state approach, extending the date for ratification to bring in those last three states. Collins is hopeful that the approaching centennial of suffrage will provide the energy and the will to see a fully enacted ERA. She wants what she calls “a clear and unequivocal statement in our Constitution” of women’s equality. “It’s important because it’s not just a statement of a national guarantee,” she says. “But rather it would bind

the states together. And, I think that’s important.”

In the meantime, the Legislature plans to take up Reckitt’s bill again in 2020. It could be just a matter of making sure every Democrat shows up for the vote (four were absent) and swaying a few of the Republicans and Independents who voted against it in the House in May. It’s been a partisan issue in the House, but in the Senate, five Republicans crossed the aisle to vote yes. If it fails again, Murdock says she expects it will return in 2022. Reckitts certainly isn’t giving up. “It feels like the end of a life’s journey for me,” she says.

*“I think young women grow up with sort of a very different idea, a stronger sense of equality now. And when they face the reality that the laws don't protect them, it's shocking.”*

**Judith Meyer is the executive editor of the Sun Journal, Kennebec Journal and Morning Sentinel, is vice president of the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition and a member of the Legislature’s Right to Know Advisory Committee.**



## WHAT MARGARET SAID

Maine Sen. Margaret Chase Smith advocated for the Equal Rights Amendment on the floor of the Senate on Jan. 23, 1950. It was proposed every year from 1923 until 1972, when Congress finally passed it. It has not yet been ratified for enactment by the required 38 states.

Mr. President:

I am for the proposed “Equal Rights” amendment to the Constitution for the very reason that some women are against it. Throughout my service in Congress, I have clung steadfastly to the belief that when women demand equal rights with men they must give up their special feminine privileges. I have urged that on all women’s legislation because women are just as subject as men to the old saying that “you can’t have your cake and eat it too.”

But in being for this “Equal Rights” measure, I can appreciate some of the difficulties. These difficulties must be overcome. It may take time. But the more we delay, the harder it will be ever to achieve the objective.

This is not a “petticoat” measure. It is a measure designed to give fuller meaning and expression to the traditional American way of life. We have heard a great deal about Civil Rights and no discrimination against any one because of race, color or creed. I would add one thing to that no-discrimination code of Civil Rights—sex. I say that there should not be any discrimination against any person because of race, color, creed—or sex. But I say with equal conviction that neither race, nor color, nor creed, nor sex must be permitted to be the basis for agitation for special rights and special treatment under the guise of no discrimination and equality. There is a danger of losing balance on this subject

and in our zeal for equality to unconsciously demand and grant special treatment and privileges over and above equality.

I think that it is high time that we stopped thinking of women as being second class citizens—as people with less qualifications and secondary in priority. There should be no such thing as priority for or against women or men.

I think that the most effective argument for Equal Rights is summed up in three simple words—“Women are people.” Think that over just a little and you will see the justice and overwhelming merit of the Equal Rights measure.

In closing, I want to pay my respect and express my appreciation to those Senators who are going to vote for this measure even though they do not believe in Equal Rights. In the first place, I respect their opinion even though they differ with me. But more than that I admire the fair and unselfish attitude that they have taken by saying that they are voting for this measure so that it can be referred to the states for ratification or rejection to give the people of America a more direct vote and voice on this issue. Some of these Senators will fight Equal Rights back in their states on the question of ratification or rejection. But by male standards, they will have manfully faced an issue rather than bottling that issue up in Congress without the states having had an opportunity to voice themselves on this proposal.



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# PARENTING

# AGAIN

*Judy Howard is raising her son's child and it has opened her up to a whole new world.*

BY AMY PARADYSZ  
PHOTOS BY ANDREE KEHN

**J**udy Howard gets up before the sun rises over Farmingdale, turns on a light for a pet hermit crab, feeds her cats, exercises, packs lunches, double-checks a backpack and a dance bag and, after breakfast, does the daycare drop-off on her way to work as an administrative assistant. She's 62.

"Is this where I thought I'd be at this point in my life?" says Howard. "No. But apparently it's right where I am supposed to be."

For nearly eight years, Howard has been raising her granddaughter Sicily, who is now 10 and in fifth grade.

Sicily is one of up to 6,000 children in "kinship care" in Maine, being raised by grandparents, other relatives or "fictive kin," such as a close family friend, according to the most recent statistics from child advocacy nonprofit Annie E. Casey Foundation. The number shifts frequently because the children might be moved between family members and other situations, but that's more than three times the 1,900 Maine children in foster care. And Census data from 2017 suggests the number of kinship families could be quite a bit higher, given that 18,000 Maine children were living in a home owned by a relative other than their parents. In Howard's case, she's taking care of her son's child.

"These are family members who have stepped up to take care of a child and, of course, as we get older that's not always as easy as one would think," says Howard, who at-





Left: “Mr. Scott and Mammee” (Scott Sipe and Judy Howard) on the couch with Sicily, 10, who they are raising in Farmingdale.

Below: Judy Howard and Scott Sipe on their motorcycle. When they first met, Judy jokes that she was ready to run off with him on the back of the bike. For now, with Sicily to look after, they settle for short rides.

Right: From sports to homework, Judy Howard keeps a close eye on the granddaughter she’s raising.

tends monthly support meetings with Kinship Families of Central Maine in Waterville (for details, find them on Facebook). “We give of our heart, our soul, our money, our time and our energy, and we do it all for the sake of a child. I work full time, and I have a mom who is 80. I have days when I fall short in every way. I tell myself that I move mountains every day and I’m not going to focus on that pebble I missed.”

The backstory as to how a divorcee, a widower and a foster child became a loving family of three begins in the late 1970s. Howard and another Navy wife, Sandi Sipe, were raising their sons on the island of Sicily. They formed a friendship that outlasted both their marriages. In 2008, Sipe reached out to Howard and asked her to come for a visit. Sipe was remarried, living in Florida and reaching the end of her battle with colon cancer. Sipe died three months later, but because of that visit, Judy had gotten to know her old friend’s second husband, Scott Sipe.

“We’re both confident that Sandi was setting us up,” Scott Sipe says. “We hit it off right away and had a lot in common through Sandi.”

Two years later, two things happened: First, Sipe, moved in with Howard, who jokes that she was ready to ride off on the back of his motorcycle. Second, the mother of two grown sons became a grandmother. Howard was there when her daughter-in-law gave birth to a baby girl.

“That just took my breath away,” she says.

The baby was named after the Italian island Howard loved so much, and where her own son had been an infant. Howard was able to take care of baby Sicily a few hours at a time, once a week or so. But then, when Sicily wasn’t quite 2, her parents moved from Maine to Florida.

“I remember the first time I got to Skype with her and she was kissing the screen,” Howard said. “Things like that will melt your heart.”

Sicily’s father was—and still is—in the Merchant Marines, which keeps him away for months at a time. He depended on his wife to do the childrearing, as had been the case with his parents’ marriage. But, while Sicily’s mother was living alone with her toddler, she was, Howard now knows, addicted to opiates and in treatment. Within months, Sicily was found wandering the neighborhood in her diaper in the middle of the night. Howard got a call that her granddaughter was in foster care. Within a few months, Howard was standing in front of a judge in Florida, petitioning for temporary custody. Sicily’s maternal grandparents wanted her, as well.

“Between the case workers and the guardian ad litem and the judge, the decision was made that I would be the best fit,” Howard says. She introduced her granddaughter to her beau, “Mr. Scott” as Sipe is known, and the three







of them went home to Maine, where they have lived together ever since.

Howard's daughter-in-law was ordered to complete rehab and a parenting program before she could visit with Sicily. "She never did," Sipe says. "But she'd disappear for three or four months at a time, and she'd call back strung out." Last year, Howard found out that Sicily's mother had died of an overdose.

Sicily visits with her mother's family but was never reunited with her mother—which haunts Howard, who can't stop herself from wondering whether a visit would have made a difference. But, focused on Sicily's well-being, Howard had said that her visit requirements were the same as the state of Florida's.

"Sicily's mother truly loved her daughter," Howard says. "She couldn't overcome. Such a

waste. Such a loss, to lose your life to addiction and not see your child grow up. Some days I look at that little girl and see a facial expression or a certain movement or a certain like or dislike, and I think, 'She's just like her mother!'"

Sicily's father now has two families to visit when he gets leave—his girlfriend and their toddler in the Philippines and his mother and daughter in Maine. His trips to Maine are short. It's clear that Sicily's home is with the couple she affectionately calls Mammee and Mr. Scott. Howard takes Sicily and school friends up to camp in Kingsbury Plantation, making sure the girls' parents understand there's no cell reception, no electricity and no running water. In the woods, Howard shares treasures of her own childhood with her grandchild. They swim, kayak, catch frogs and play lawn

games. "Remember the old lawn darts that were probably deemed dangerous?" Howard says, laughing.

The world has changed, and so have parenting styles.

"When I grew up, you sat at the table, you didn't tip your chair, you didn't wear a hat, no radio, you ate what was put in front of you and you cleaned your plate," Howard says. "Today, when I go to my granddaughter's school, I have to be buzzed in. And it's scary. I wonder, have I prepared her enough without making her paranoid? But she keeps me young. She opens up a whole new world to me. I know different music now, I keep more active, I watch different shows. I've loosened up a bit, I'm not as rigid—well, my

**"I remember the first time I got to Skype with her and she was kissing the screen. Things like that will melt your heart."**

body is, but my mind isn't."

Opportunities for Howard and Sipe to take out that motorcycle for those trips they once imagined would fill their weekend days are rare. But they have no regrets.

"We really enjoy an evening watching TV, Sicily leaning her head on my shoulder," Sipe says. "We've both reached the age, Judy and I, when we realize what's important. It's those moments that important. I love that little girl."

Howard can't even count how many times well-meaning people have said they couldn't do what she's doing—raising another child. But, she says, "I couldn't have lived with myself if I had just said 'Whatever happens happens.' Every child deserves parents who are loving, nurturing, caring and willing to give them the skills they need to be successful," she says. Sometimes, those parents are also grandparents.

***Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough whose daughter is friends with a teen being raised in a kinship family.***



# Split but Unbroken

Patrisha McLean had a celebrity marriage that might have seemed idyllic from the outside. It wasn't. How she's rebuilding a new life with the help of her art and advocacy work.

BY MARY POLS // PHOTOS BY MOLLY HALEY

**P**atrisha McLean used to live on top of a hill a few miles out of Camden's downtown, surrounded by 175 acres of gardens, lawns and woods. Now she lives in a house that looks directly out on Camden Harbor from its eastern shore. Her view is so impossibly paradisaical that it almost feels like an optical illusion, as if someone were flipping through the pages on a very large nautical Maine calendar just outside the windows: Windjammers, yachts, working boats, the occasional kayaker.

This is the first house she ever bought on her own, purchased after her split from musician Don McLean, not long after he was arrested and according to court records, charged with domestic violence assault and five other crimes stemming from an hours-long January 2016 incident at their hilltop house that left her bruised and dialing 911 from behind a locked door. He pleaded guilty to domestic violence assault but the charge was later dismissed under a plea agreement. He was convicted of three crimes and paid a fine.

"My house is very meaningful to me because my husband was so controlling I had no say in the house we were living in," McLean says. Her new home is filled with a warm, eclectic mix of furnishings and artwork. The vibe is bohemian cozy by way of California; if it looked out on redwoods it would make equal sense. She's sitting on the window seat in her bedroom, with that view to her right. The bed is on a landing and her desk just below it, well filled with signs of work. She is busy these days, working on expanding the documentary project she began after her split from her husband, "Finding Our Voices:

Breaking the Silence of Domestic Abuse." She's got lunch partially assembled in the adjacent kitchen—crab cakes and corn salad—and she's sipping tea made with herbs freshly cut from the garden.

She and Don McLean had four houses, including another Maine house, in Castine. In each of them, he did all the decorating, she says, to the point where she didn't feel comfortable contributing anything that represented her own style. He made her send back a dreidel a friend had sent for their first child, she says, because her Jewish heritage was not something they shared and he did not want to feel like an outsider. Once, a friend gave her a small, framed photograph. "And the only place I could put it—we had 15 rooms—was in my darkroom."

He put her down so much, she says, including for her taste in bright clothing, that she lost all confidence in her ability to make decisions. For that reason, buying a house was particularly scary. She made offers on other houses and then retracted them before finally settling on this house in 2017. The gardens are planted, with flowers of her own choosing, the walls hung with artwork she picked. It's all hers.

"Everything in it reflects me," she says. "And it is proof, every day, that I can make good choices. It's just a very big step in coming back to who I was."

On first acquaintance, McLean, 60, does not seem like the kind of woman who would be easily led. She's full of ideas, creative impulses and strong opinions about everything from Brett Kavanaugh to Andrea Dworkin's research on pornography. She





Patrishia McLean, 60, sits in her garden at her home in Camden. It's the first house she bought on her own after a nearly 30 year marriage to singer/songwriter Don McLean. She has spent the last two years adding plants and hardscaping to the yard, which looks out over Camden Harbor.





McLean says Camden felt like home to her, even after her marriage ended. “It is not my shame,” she says. “It is his. So let him hang his head when he walks in town because it’s what he did.”

questions as well as she answers. But to blunder through saying this to her—that she doesn’t seem like the easily-led type—is to be reminded of the way we as a society stereotype victims of domestic abuse.

“That’s the thing,” she says. “That’s my exhibit.” She’s referring to “Finding Our Voices,” which has spent the better part of the year traveling the state and is currently in Augusta, at the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine through Dec. 13. The multimedia exhibit revolves around 19 domestic abuse survivors. McLean, a professional photographer, made portraits of the women, which are featured alongside writings and recordings. She’s also part of the exhibit herself. In a recording there (and online) she talks about her boyfriend from the 1980s, before Don McLean swept her off her feet, who told her recently that he remembered her as “ferociously independent.”

That was true, she says. “That was me. That’s part of what domestic abuse is. It’s coercive control and it is step by step. You don’t know how you got there and you don’t know how to get out.”

She recognized herself in the other women featured in “Finding

Our Voices,” all victims of domestic abuse, and often violence. “They are all very different,” McLean says. “But there is also so much commonality...I can relate to every single one.”

It’s a challenge to write about Patrisha McLean without writing about what or where she used to be. Her past as the wife of a famous person, the man who wrote one of the most iconic songs of the 20th century, is always present and is shaping her present as she tries to expand the dialogue about domestic violence in Maine. After staying silent herself for many years—she called the police on her husband in 1994, but says she successfully begged them not to arrest him then and tried to halt his arrest in 2016 as well—she is eager to help other women tell their stories. And there are many: A domestic violence assault is reported to Maine law enforcement every two hours and five minutes, according to the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence. The coalition’s network fielded 34,053 calls to helplines around the state in 2018 alone.

As an advocate, McLean is “fierce,” says Regina Rooney, the education and communications director for the coalition. Rooney says she’s



McLean says she worried she'd be lonely, but her sense of community—and support—in Camden is powerful. "I have a very strong feeling of community here."

been a strong partner in getting these messages out there: survivors are not a monolith, this is an intense problem in Maine, where 40 percent of all reported assaults are domestic and people everywhere are suffering. When the show opened at the Camden Public Library in February, Rooney says, "I could see people walking around and recognizing people from the community that they knew." She does a lot of trainings, but "to actually see people and hear them reflecting on that in the Camden library?" It was "remarkable" she says, to see "that people are really listening."

Rooney said one of the things she most appreciated about McLean's approach is the way she works with participants (all women so far, but men and boys too suffer from domestic violence, as former Gov. Paul LePage spoke to) in making their portraits. "How they wanted to be represented," Rooney says. Instead of as bruised or battered victims, they got to show themselves as they were healing. The work McLean did over many years as a family photographer, specializing in photographing children, was relevant there.

But with "Finding Our Voices," so is her deeper past, the career she had before she met Don McLean. She used to be a reporter, a job that has made her uniquely qualified to help other women in abusive relationships tell their stories, and to understand that sometimes the women who find her via her website, or approach her in public, want to talk, but only off the record. "I can tell immediately," McLean says. She wants to eventually bring the number of participants in "Finding Voices" up to 30, and publish a book based on the exhibit, but not by persuading someone to participate. "A lot of times a person might think they want to do it but they are just not emotionally ready."

She grew up in Montreal but yearned for California, where her father lived. "I was just so mesmerized by it," McLean remembers. "Especially San Francisco. The fog and the hills and North Beach. It was just so cool. It was really golden." At 19, she left Montreal and headed west. She waitressed and worked for tiny newspapers, the kind that began to evaporate in the early aughts. There was a weekly in Humboldt. A daily in Antioch. The names blur together. She made very little money. A



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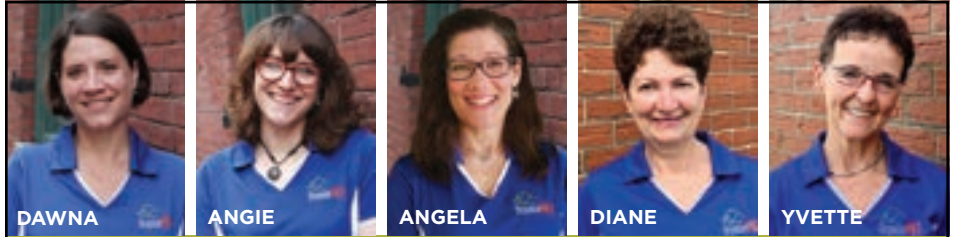
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\$600 a month apartment in a garage in North Beach was too much of a luxury. But she loved the work she was doing and she felt herself on an upward trajectory, headed to one of the bigger papers in the Bay Area.

Then in 1986 she had an assignment to interview the man who wrote "American Pie." Don McLean was opening for Joan Baez at the Concord Pavilion. He was 41, Patrisha was 27. They were married five months later, but not before she signed a prenuptial agreement saying she would never write a memoir about him. (Their divorce agreement restricts her from writing about her experience.) They moved east, living first in Castine and then Camden.

cess that would have stopped McLean from speaking about her ex-husband. "Spiritually it would have been like a death to finally be out after 29 years and not be able to speak about it." As part of a plea deal, Don McLean was convicted of three of the charges, but avoided jail time and a domestic violence assault charge was dismissed. He tried, unsuccessfully, to wage a legal fight against the Free Press in Rockland for writing about the exhibit.

In the garden at her new house is a rose bush, an Ispahan. She had this type of rose in the extensive gardens she shared with her ex-husband. (Her ex, 74, still owns their old house, and his girlfriend, Paris Dylan, 25, a social media

# "I'm just having the time of my life just being by myself."

She put her career aside, for the time being. They had two children, Jackie, now 29 and a singer in a small band called Roan Yellowthorn, and Wyatt, 27, who is a barista in New York. Sometimes, she says, her husband had rages, but family life made them lessen and she sympathized with him. He'd had his struggles, including losing his father as a teenager.

She felt isolated. She says her husband didn't believe in therapists, so she did not have a professional to talk to. She didn't share her pain with friends, and friends didn't ask. "People sort of think as the couple as sacrosanct," she says. "A friend might tell you she doesn't like your boyfriend, but once the ring is on? You don't want to interfere when someone is married." She gets that. "You sort of feel like, whatever they have, it works for them. And that's dangerous. That is what happened to me. I didn't hear any dissenting words." Now, she says, friends tell her they knew something was up. They noticed her placating her husband, following his orders and putting her down, she says. One of them, writer Deborah Joy Corey, was instrumental in telling her not to sign a non-disclosure agreement in the divorce pro-

personality, has posted shots of herself in the gardens on Instagram.) But here in the house on the harbor, the bush grew well over her head in just one year and was covered with blossoms. "In one year this did better than my gardens did for 10 years there," McLean says. Things are flourishing in her life. She got certified to scuba dive in Cozumel. She visits her grandchildren in New York state. She dove in the Red Sea. She's contemplating a trip to Turkey.

"It was lonely the first two years," she says. "But I'm just having the time of my life just being by myself. I used to think that I'd want someone to do things with, but I just do them on my own and I do what I want when I want." No compromising. As one Cowboy Junkies song goes, time to go see movies of one's own choosing, "black and white with a strong female lead." "I realized that most of my life, it's been the guy's dreams that I've been tagging along with."

"Women should stop doing that," McLean says. "I really am a feminist now. So, so, so much."

**Mary Pols is the editor of *Maine Women Magazine*.**



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# Re- Arranged Marriage

CHANBOPHA HIMM ARRIVED IN MAINE THE  
YOUNG BRIDE IN AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE.  
HOW THIS CAMBODIAN-AMERICAN ADAPTED  
AND EVOLVED WITHIN TRADITION.

AS TOLD TO MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE  
PHOTOS BY HEIDI KIRN

*Chanbopha Himm was born in November 1980 at the Khao I Dang Refugee Camp in Thailand, to a Cambodian-born mother, Yorn Un, and a Chinese father, Song Kry, who had spent much of his life in Cambodia. Her parents had already survived the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror, her father by pretending not to be educated, and by saving morsels of food for his family while cooking for the regime. After three years in the camp in Thailand, her older half-brother, Kimly, sponsored the family to come to America. They arrived in Attleboro, Massachusetts via the Philippines, with 50 cents to their name. Chanbopha means Moon Flower, but going to American schools, the little girl in the new country went by Chan to make things simpler while her younger siblings were given American names: David, Jennifer and Michael. She also has three older half-siblings, Kimly, Sophan, Heng.*

*This is her story of adaptation, arranged marriage and becoming an advocate for herself, for her career and for her Cambodian community in Maine, as told to Maine Women Magazine. It begins with her as a 7-year-old in Attleboro, serving as chief translator for her family and the community. The transcript has been condensed and lightly edited.*





**B**oth my parents, especially my father, were very strict on me, I couldn't go out and play like normal kids. Afterschool activities, lacrosse, track, what not, I couldn't participate in any of these. My dad would walk me to school in the morning and walk me home in the afternoon. When I got home I would do my homework and I would also teach my brothers and sisters. I would do my best to try to educate them and at the same time, in between school, when there is doctor's appointments, Social Security interviews for disability, I would be taken away from school for an hour or two and translate for my community.

It made me grow to the person I am right now. I am a caring, outgoing person. I will say "Hi" to anybody. I am not afraid. I am very approachable. I am really blessed that my dad did all this for me. If he hadn't shaped or conditioned me in the way that he did, I wouldn't be who I am now.

But at a certain age I was hoping that I could live my life. When I graduated from high school I got accepted to UMass Amherst, but I didn't get a chance to go because that is when my father introduced me to my husband. I met him one day and I honestly thought he was going to be marrying my half-sister because technically she is supposed to

be married first. I was like, "You will like my sister!" Then he was like, "What is she talking about?" *[A month later her father told her she was about to enter an arranged marriage with Channdara Himm, the son of one of his friends who lived in Maine. She moved to Maine in 2000.]*

God bless my husband because he is such a great guy. He gave me my space. For three years to get to know him. He said, if you need longer just let me know. So for three years we just became friends...And then finally, here we are, with two kids. The first one is Nathan (11) and Natalie (4). The first born son is always the luckiest...in Cambodian culture a boy or girl is just as good, but in Chinese culture it has to be a boy. You need to at least have a boy and if you have the first boy you are amazing. *[In those early years, the larger family wondered when their first born would come.]* So much pressure. Everybody kept asking. We just said that we weren't ready. I was really trying to build a career foundation.

I was studying accounting. Before going to school I did the work behind it first to find out if I liked accounting or not. I started working at The Thomas agency, processing receivables, and afterwards I worked for Stanford Management.. they are like Section 8 what not for people, government housing, I was their accounts payable, I was their accounts receivable and then I was their corporate accountant. I worked my way up, even without having a degree at that time. I finally realized what my passion was, which was







Above: Chan Himm at the Cambodian temple in Buxton. "I was brought up to go to temple. I was brought up to wake up early in the morning on New Year to make the cakes for the celebration. To set the table a certain way, to honor our ancestors." Far left, Chan with her husband Chann dara, daughter Natalie and son Nathan.

numbers. I worked at Unum, in short term disability, and then I worked at Nichols Portland as their staff account for a few years.

I have been at Wex about three years. I did an entry level [job] for finance and now I deal with fleets over \$1 billion, domestic and international fleets on the receivable side. I love Wex. It is truly a great place to work. They welcome a lot of multi-cultural. I'm in the Wex-Pats. [The group has about six members, hailing from Russian, Brazil and other countries.] What we are trying to do is, whoever is coming to Wex, we want them to feel like they are at home. We want them to feel welcome. So they can say, 'Hey Chan, how do you grow within Wex? What are your techniques? I'd like to grow into this department.' And we are getting them out there in community events.

My ultimate goal with where I am working is to become management. To become that leader that I would like to be. Not just for my career, but I would love to expand it into my community. That's why I decided to become part of the Cambodian Community Association of Maine. And to be part of Wex-Pats.

I look back now, our system from back then [when she arrived in America] to now has grown significantly. Like people now care so much. Before, when we came, we didn't have supporters.

Now there is nonprofit groups, even financial groups, that are willing to teach them how to take care of their finances. When we came to America none of that was here. We would be assigned one person who would have like 1,000 families.

I work with the Maine Immigrants Rights Coalition, with the Congo immigrants. I have been working with Mufalo (MIRC's executive director Mufalo Chitam). I want to reach out to all Cambodian women. To set them up a little bit more to get out of your comfort zone, to embrace what you have, you're in America. Try new things. Like for the past two years I have been into pageantry, and in 2018 I was a Ms. Maine with the American Women of Service. I was awarded Ms. Maine in 2019 and then I was just featured in two beauty (pageant) magazines as a cover girl, world wide. The reason why I ran was to build more confidence in myself. When I came here I didn't have any confidence. Now I want to share it with the Cambodian woman out there.

Cambodian men are probably a lot like many men; they expect their wife to be home cooking, doing the household chores, not going out, speaking, and trust me, I know because my husband was like that. Recently, within the last three to four years I would say, I have been able to break him of that. How? I just kept go-





Chan Himm outside the Watt Samaki Cambodian temple in Buxton, with a trio of monks behind her.

ing. No marriage is perfect, we had our ups and our downs. At one point during that time my husband wasn't happy because I kept putting myself out there. I was working more, I worked a lot later. Now that I am the breadwinner of the family he now understands why I am doing this.

I love the outdoors. I love skiing, jet skiing, snowmobiling, water skiing, tubing, hiking. My first hike was at Old Speck. It is one of the most rugged trails in Maine. We started at 9 in the morning and we didn't leave Old Speck until 9 at night. I loved it. I wanted to go hiking again; my husband was like, 'Hiking is dangerous.' My first time camping was at Chimney Pond. I

wanted to go up to Katahdin but we only made it to Chimney Pond. This was one of the first time I was able to step away, I went with friends, he let me out with friends, overnight. First time ever. I think it kind of grew on him that I am just going to do it, with or without your approval.

I believe that every woman has their voice and that women should empower women. That we could all become great leaders, only if we

are able to break free with this certain wall. We can be great, we can be stronger than a lot of men out there and my husband in a way I think, kind of realized that. It took him a long time though. It has been quite a haul. When I married him I was very obedient. I obeyed, just like I obeyed my

father. I honored, I was respectful, I didn't do anything out of the ordinary for my tradition, which was stay home, come home, be at home. It's just home, home. But he is now supporting me a lot more. He finally realized that okay, 'She's on to something.'

Someday I would like to be financially free and I told him, this is my dream: I would like to retire and travel with you.

He is finally at this point, we are finally in agreement of it; this is what we want. And to set an example for my kids, especially my daughter, and have her realize that she can too be the breadwinner of the family, she too can be the woman that she wants to be. My timeline was already defined for me, when I was born, at birth, that this marriage was getting arranged. But I broke free. I changed my timeline into something different.

My timeline was already defined for me, when I was born, at birth, that this marriage was getting arranged.

But I broke free. I changed my timeline into something different.



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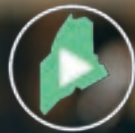
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| AT THE HELM |

# THE PLOT THICKENS

*A young Mainer returns home to farm oysters on Casco Bay. With 140,000 oysters growing in the Harraseeket River she might need a bigger plot for her farm.*

BY AMY PARADYSZ  
PHOTOS BY JENNY MCNULTY



Emily Selinger checks on her small sea farm from her boat, *Mignonette*. The sea farm is 1,600 square feet and she's rapidly outgrowing it. She received a couple of small grants from the Libra Future Fund for Mainers and The Island Institute's Aquaculture Business Development Program to jump-start her business.

Five minutes from Freeport's Harraseeket Harbor, Emily Selinger slows her boat, "*Mignonette*," approaching what looks like several ladders floating horizontally. "This is my little farm," she says. "I have the rights to 1,600 square feet right here, which is fast becoming not enough. Essentially, I rent this space from the state."

What looks like rungs are actually just the top of underwater mesh bags, each filled with oysters at various stages of growth. She pulls a bag out of the Harraseeket River, gently pours oysters out onto the floor of the boat and nudges them around until she finds one about 3 inches in diameter.

"Do you like oysters?" she asks, retrieving a shucking knife from her bag and scolding herself for not having brought a lemon. She makes quick work of the hinge then holds out a shell, the oyster meat and juice shimmering in the morning sunlight. The other half of the shell she tosses back into the gentle waves. One for me, one for the sea.

"We call it oyster farming, but it's more like a garden," Selinger says. "Because what do I really do? I come out here and weed, then I harvest oysters. This whole operation stands on the weather, water temperature, water nutrients and stuff floating around in the sea."

Selinger, 29, comes from a family of sailors. "I pretty much spent my entire childhood on this river, sailing and exploring," she says. "So,

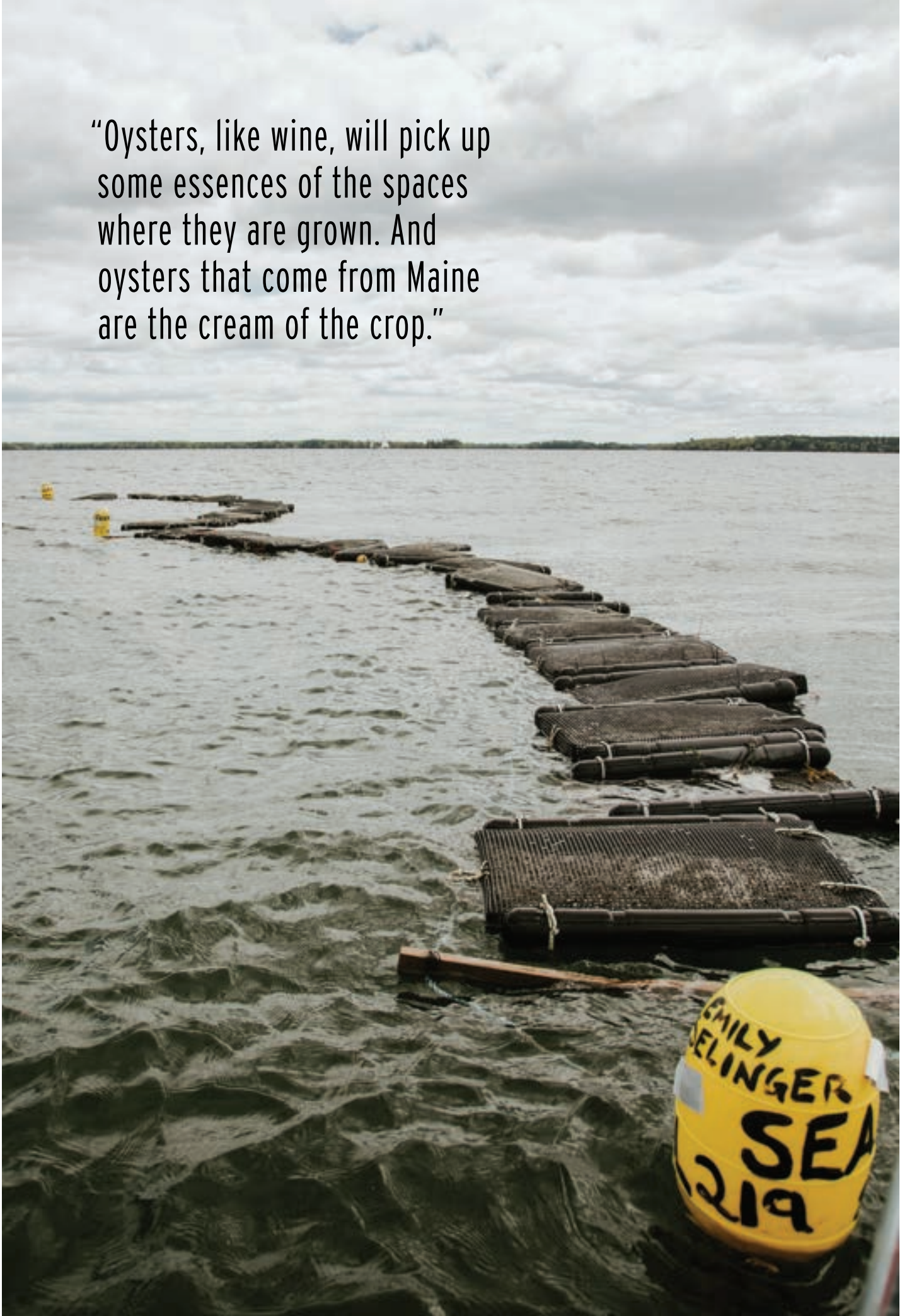
when I was thinking about this, I knew immediately where I wanted to put my farm."

When she put in her application for a lease with the Department of Marine Resources, Selinger planned for her farm to be out of the way of waterfront property owners, boaters and lobstermen. But she also knew where there would be perfect conditions for oysters—nutrient-rich water racing by with each tidal flush. Selinger's friend Amanda Moeser, a PhD student in marine science at Antioch University New England, had researched historic populations of wild Eastern oysters in Maine and discovered they once grew by the thousands on the flats around the southern side of Bowman Island. The two women have situated their farms at either end of this stretch of habitat. Within squinting distance, Selinger can see Moeser's Lanes Island Oyster Co., which sits at the mouth of the Royal River in Yarmouth. While those wild oysters are mostly gone at this point, Selinger occasionally turns up a big old beauty as she wades around her farm at low tide.

When the women met four years ago through Selinger's uncle, Selinger had just stopped sailing professionally up and down the East Coast between the Virgin Islands and Canada and was looking to be back in Maine, working on the water and calling her own shots. She just hadn't figured out how she would make a living.



“Oysters, like wine, will pick up some essences of the spaces where they are grown. And oysters that come from Maine are the cream of the crop.”







Selinger, 29, grew up on the water and returned home looking for a life built around the outdoors.

"I took her out one day on my boat and showed her the farm," Moeser says. "And I told her she could try growing a string of oysters."

By 2017, Selinger was in the aquaculture business for herself. She started with 10,000 seed oysters, and those are the oysters she's been harvesting in recent months. She has been steadily adding seed and currently tends upwards of 140,000 oysters.

Oyster farming is not a fast return on investment; oysters take two to three years to reach harvest size. Selinger has subsidized her start-up with personal savings, a boat borrowed from her father and her pay from hauling traps several days a week for a longtime lobsterman. She used a \$5,000 grant from the Libra Future Fund for Mainers under 30 to outfit her garage as a retail location. She also received a \$1,500 grant from The Island Institute as part of its selective Aquaculture Business Development Program.

"We have definitely seen growth in interest in small-scale oyster aquaculture in Maine," says Susie Arnold, a marine scientist from The Island Institute. "With climate change, we are going to be running into problems feeding the world's population, and it's important to think about sustainable food systems. Shellfish and seaweed aquaculture require no outputs that exacerbate climate change. They're taking things out of the water that we have in the water in excess and using that as fuel."

An adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of seawater a day. "It's a super sustainable way of produce a lot of protein," Selinger says. "This industry is huge for Maine's future. Our coast is perfect for it, with all the nooks and crannies. And there's a lot of uncertainty in lobstering. If our ocean warms up too much for lobster, they'll be gone. But oysters

will be here."

While most oyster farmers—including Moeser—sell to distributors, Selinger is taking a direct-to-consumer approach. Besides selling oysters out of her garage in Bath, she also offers "harvest to doorstep" delivery within 25 miles of Freeport, at \$2 an oyster with a minimum of a dozen.

Taking a page from what she calls "land farms," Selinger is also offering a community supported agriculture (CSA) model. Over the period of a year, a \$200 membership buys eight dozen oysters spread throughout up to four deliveries, as well as a shucking knife, glove, cooler bag and—for those new to shucking—an in-person lesson.

"Oysters have always been this premium restaurant product that people think you need to be a professional to serve them," Selinger says. "But that's not true. The idea behind the farm share is to help folks get used to shucking oysters and eating them at home. It's a great thing for people who entertain a lot. And you can experiment with condiments at home."

Selinger's favorite is a simple mignonette of 1/2 cup white or red wine vinegar, a medium shallot diced really, really fine, and a healthy dose of freshly ground black pepper. She serves this in a little bowl alongside a dozen oysters—or two or three dozen—with a tiny spoon for drizzling and lemon wedges for a squeeze of freshness.

"Oysters, like wine, will pick up some essences of the spaces where they are grown," Selinger says. "And oysters that come from Maine are the cream of the crop. There's just something about coldwater seafood."

**Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough who does indeed enjoy a fresh oyster, lemon or not.**



# THIS OLD DRESS

*Talk about timeless; Priscilla Kjellman has styled this dress more than 30 different ways through three decades of holiday parties.*

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMANDA WHITEGIVER



Priscilla Kjellman bought this dress at the Ralph Lauren outlet in Freeport about 30 years ago. It makes an appearance every holiday season. She has no plans to retire it.

As the holiday party season starts and women everywhere ask themselves, *what am I going to wear to this thing?* Priscilla Kjellman is all set. That's because she has been wearing the same go-to holiday party dress for 30-plus years. This black velvet number, which came from the Ralph Lauren outlet in Freeport "back when factory stores were great places for bargains," pre-dates her oldest child, who just turned 30. The classic shirtwaist is very forgiving and has "morphed over the years," she says, including being shortened from its original mid-calf length. "I took it closer to my knee." It's been belted over three different baby bumps and accessorized with every kind of shoe. She never intended the dress to become a habit. "I only knew that I was buying something that had longevity," Kjellman says. It grew into being essential. "It was just the dress that I dragged out every year because there was some

function that it was perfect for, and then it became oh 'How funny, I wear this every year.'" Now it's her thrifty, pretty template for celebration.

The Freeport resident has always gravitated toward fashion. "I wanted in high school to do something with that but didn't know how to pull that trigger." As a young woman she worked for the Carroll Reed stores and catalogue and then took time off to raise her family, keeping her hand in by helping friends decorate or shop. When her youngest daughter got to high school, Kjellman went to work at J. Crew in Freeport. She worked there for about 10 years and occasionally helps out at busy times, but mostly she's focused on health coaching.

### DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE IN ONE SENTENCE.

I've always loved clean classic lines, without fussy detailing and pieces that grow and change as you wear them, kind of like a chameleon.

### IS IT "MAINE" STYLE? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, HOW DOES IT DEVIATE?

I definitely like to add a Maine vibe (think woodsy ski lodge) when I'm feeling it. I do not like to intentionally make the look (too contrived) but love when I naturally make the feeling happen.

### FIRST OUTFIT YOU REMEMBER PICKING OUT AND LOVING, FEELING GREAT IN?

My mother was an amazing seamstress, for fun, not as a vocation, and we would spend time looking over patterns and fabric choosing something that always felt unique. I remember the sense of individuality that came from wearing something I helped design.

### HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU FELT LIKE YOU DEVELOPED A STYLE OF YOUR OWN?

College is when I remember thinking that I was creating a personality with my style choices. I was known by the nickname "prep" because of my clothing style, East Coast preppy with a dash of L.L.Bean.

### FAVORITE BRICKS AND MORTAR PLACE TO BUY CLOTHING IN MAINE?

I'm a J. Crew, Madewell, Zara, Anthropologie kind of shopper. But I've recently decided that throwing in a Target and H&M buy works great.

### BEST CLOTHING SHOES OR ACCESSORY BARGAIN OF ALL TIME:

Handbag, a Coach, 25 years ago when I thought



it was a crime to pay over \$100 for a handbag. But I loved it and never grew tired of it.

### MOST YOU EVER SPENT ON SOMETHING TO WEAR?

I'm too much of a bargain hunter to go crazy.

### WHAT WOULD YOU REFUSE TO WEAR?

Probably nothing, I just wouldn't wear it as it might have been intended to be worn.

### DO YOU OWN BEAN BOOTS? IF YES, HOW MANY PAIRS?

Yes; knee, mid calf and ankle.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT "GO TO" OUTFIT OR ITEM OF CLOTHING?

Jeans, leather jacket, boots or a leopard shoe are the easy uniform that never fails. And high waisted jeans, don't get me started: I love them.

### WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO ACCESSORY?

I've worn my children's gold circle charms on a gold chain for 25 years. (These are medallions shaped into profiles, engraved with her children's names.) Sometimes it's all I wear as an accessory.

### WHAT DO YOU CHANGE INTO AFTER A LONG DAY?

Athleisure wear with a cashmere sweater.

*Amanda Whitegiver is a lifestyle family photographer who adores dark chocolate and singing with her two daughters.*



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# MY PRECIOUS

*What do i do with this (really important) thing? Tips on preserving, protecting and displaying family heirlooms*

BY SARAH HOLMAN

It's a special privilege to be entrusted as keeper of an important family artifact. Best case scenario, it's an interesting, well-preserved item that can be displayed and enjoyed. I have a few of those in my home. In my family, I am also the keeper of disintegrating lace fan, a porcelain doll whose head is accounted for but detached and a pile of yellowing photographs featuring stern-faced relatives I can't identify. Sentimental packrat that I am, I can't part with any of it.

How do we manage boxes of keepsakes, photographs and documents that haven't been sorted or preserved? How do we catalog, protect and display these items in a way that celebrates their past and protects their future?

The foundation of successful preservation lies in using the right materials. "The biggest enemies of photos are direct sunlight and non-archival storage," says Bob Delaney, who offers scanning, printing and digital restoration at his Yarmouth business, Delaney Design. To stop deterioration and fading, archival materials should always be used. For framed pictures, an easy way to tell if the mat or backing board is archival is by looking at the core. Yellowish-brown color indicates it's not acid-free, even if the outside appears white (sometimes acid free paper is applied to a cheaper core). Delaney suggests removing the photo from the old mat or backing—which may need to be done professionally to avoid damage—or digitally reproducing the image.

Digitizing is an increasingly popular way to preserve old photos. The process involves photographing or scanning originals at high resolution and creating digital files to print and archive. At Photo Market, a camera and photography supply store in Portland, owner Peter Doe says archival services are a significant part of his business. Doe invested in high-quality scanning equipment and employs a photographic expert to perform the majority of the archival and retouching work in-house. Online services offer bulk digitizing, but Doe says to be careful; often



Restoration work for a fire department, in progress at Grapheteria in Portland. Photo by Sarah Holman

the originals are sent overseas. Working with a local expert ensures the safe return of your materials and allows for custom retouching. "A lot of older images benefit from color adjustment," Doe says.

Jim Castonia meticulously restores damaged photographs for customers at Grapheteria, a full-service printing and framing shop in Portland that also offers in-house photo digitization, restoration and mounting objects in shadow boxes. Castonia uses Photoshop to fix water stains, fading and burn marks and even to recreate missing or damaged sections of images. "Because of the digital age, a lot can be saved," his wife and shop co-owner, Lisa Castonia, says.

Jamie Rice, who works for Maine Historical Society in the collections and



Examples of mounting and restoration work done by Grapheteria, a full-service printing and framing shop in Portland. *Courtesy photos*

But for unique objects, like the swordfish bill Grapheteria recently framed, custom work is a necessity. “Sometimes it takes a bit of Yankee ingenuity,” says Lisa Castonia.

Rice advises anything done for display should be reversible. For example, she doesn’t recommend using adhesive on original items. “Glue and tape break down over time. They stain and flake.” Glass cabinets or curios help keep artifacts clean and safe, especially if an object is near the kitchen, fireplace or a doorway where grease, smoke or dirt are present. The exception, she says, are textiles, which “need to breathe.” And the task of cleaning historic objects should always be left to professional archivists, she says.

To take the next step toward preservation, start at Northeast Document Conservation Center in Massachusetts, a regional hub for conservation. Their services are extensive (far beyond document preservation) and they offer online pamphlets, how-to’s and other free resources. Maine Historical Society will also steer inquirers toward local conservators, many of whom have specialty areas.

Sometimes when it comes to artifacts, “What’s done is done,” Rice says. “But the best thing you can do is take care of the items in your custody.” And you didn’t ask for custody, take it as a compliment that the rest of the family considered you worthy of the task.

***Sarah Holman is a writer living in Portland. She is enthusiastic about cheese plates, thrift shop treasures and old houses in need of saving. Find her online at [storiesandsidebars.com](http://storiesandsidebars.com).***

research department, says acid free storage helps, but the most critical element is the environment. “Store your collections in a place where a person would be comfortable staying for a long time,” she suggests. Not the basement or attic, where temperature and moisture levels fluctuate drastically. “I wouldn’t want to sit on a sun porch 365 days of the year,” she says, “and neither would your grandmother’s handmade quilt.” When packing away items, Rice says to consider how they relate to each other. Newsprint tends to rub onto other objects, as might a brightly dyed fabric placed next to something white.

To mount objects in shadow boxes, Lisa Castonia and long-time Grapheteria employee, Michelle Caldwell, often sew through a fabric-covered, acid free background to hold things in place. Heavier artifacts require fine wire attachments or custom-made mounting blocks. For commonly mounted items like plates or guns, those materials often come ready made.



# FREAKISHLY GOOD

Elizabeth Hand's *Curious Toys* is a multi-layered historical thriller about a serial killer, carnival life, art and a conflicted young teen.



Author photo by Leslie Howle



*Curious Toys* by Elizabeth Hand  
Mullholland Books

BY AMY CANFIELD

If you're familiar with the 20th century "outsider" artist Henry Darger, you're going to enjoy Lincolnville resident Elizabeth Hand's latest, *Curious Toys*, a lot more than you would otherwise. If you've never heard of this enigmatic gentleman, it's worth a few quick clicks of a Google search so it is easier to immerse yourself in this suspenseful and gender-bending work of historical fiction.

Set in the bustling Riverview amusement park in turn of the century Chicago, October release *Curious Toys* is a thriller about a murderer who preys on young girls. Thrust into the mystery is the tough-but-tender Pin, a 14-year-old who dresses and passes as a boy after her sister disappears, and Pin's odd ally, Henry Darger. Henry tells Pin he is a detective with an agency that watches out for girls to keep them safe. (This is where it helps to know a little about the real-life Darger and his work.)

Historical fiction's success hinges on the details and Hand, known for her cross-genre and often punk-infused work (she's written more than a dozen novels, including *Mortal Love* and *Wylding Hall*) doesn't miss a beat. From the glitz of the park and the fakery of the freaks to the gangs, pickpockets and assorted molesters that frequent Riverview, the reader is smack dab on a midway in 1915. Pin runs drugs for the Freak Show's "She-Male," delivering to an uptown movie studio peopled with wannabe starlets and frequented by a creepy Charlie Chaplin. When the murders start, people can't help bringing up H.H. Holmes, the serial killer executed in their not-so-distant past. Holmes will be familiar to readers of Erik Larson's novelistic nonfiction work *Devil in the White City*. *Curious Toys* has drawn favorable comparisons to Larson's 2003 bestseller, including from *Publishers Weekly*.

While the weirdness of the carnival setting, a killer on the loose

and the cryptic Henry make for a seductive tale on their own, Hand gifts us with the vulnerable but resilient Pin. Pin's fortuneteller mother makes her dress as a boy for safety's sake, but for Pin it is more than a disguise. "For as long as she could recall, this was all she'd wanted. When she remembered her dreams, she recalled being neither girl nor boy, only flying, nothing between her skin and the wind."

She revels in the liberation, but she's conflicted. While "(b)eing a boy meant freedom; being a man meant joining an army of monsters." At the amusement park she sees "men everywhere, drunk or shouting, laughing as they pulled women around: onto the roller coasters, where the women would scream and cling to them; into the House of a Thousand Troubles, where fans would blow up the women's skirts so you could see their drawers; on to the Witching Waves where men and women would be thrown against each other and the men could grab their breasts, pretending it was a mistake." In this world of men, "nothing was safe, it was the only thing she knew to be true."

But Pin lets down her guard to let Henry in. As the killing escalates, so does her involvement with him. His peculiarities, art and writings are revealed and we're given Hand's insights into his own gender-bending creativity. (He drew warrior girls with penises, for example.)

Hand, whose science fiction works have won Nebula Awards, seamlessly blends the darkness and light of these colorful characters from a different time into a rich and entertaining read, culminating in a most satisfying ending. It's a lot, but, oh so curiously, it all works.

**Amy Canfield, a Maine Women Magazine editor, is now a Henry Darger fan. She lives in South Portland.**



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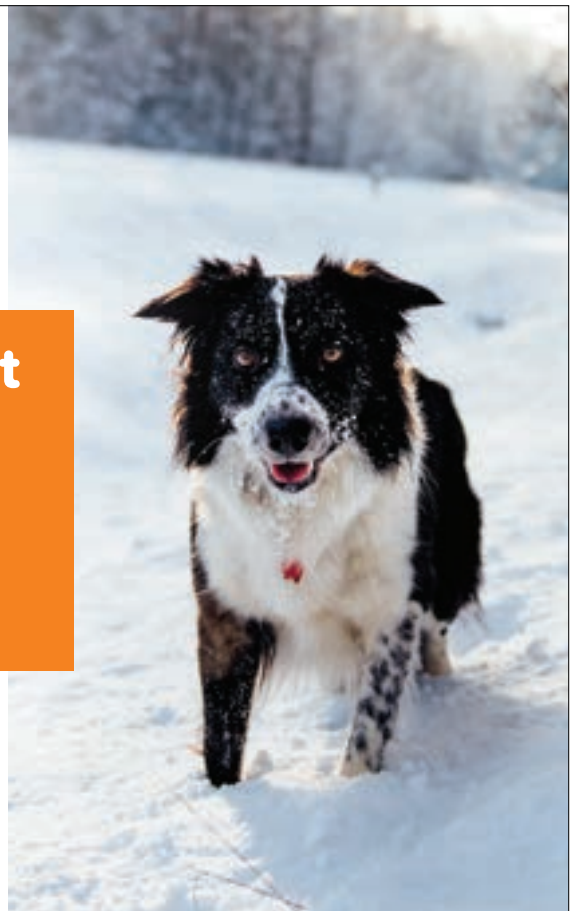


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# ASSISTED UNCOUPLING

BY MAGGIE KNOWLES

**R**eady to get real with me? I just went through a divorce. I never thought I would be saying that, but here I am...a divorced mom.

Saying that doesn't feel like a stab in the gut. I am not crumpled on the floor sobbing. Not that I am jumping for joy, but though I lost my marriage, I didn't lose us as a family.

My parents got divorced when I was exactly my own son's age, and all I knew was that I was NOT going to repeat whatever the hell it was that they did. The daily bashing, using the kids as messengers, can't-even-be-in-the-same-room drama cast an "I am never getting married" attitude over my teen years.

Even if our romantic relationship was no longer working, my ex and I decided we were always going to be a family; our beautiful son deserves to have parents that can both be at his games, holidays and dinners, without a frost that gives everyone stomachaches.

In order to achieve this, we needed to go through intentional steps to pave a path of unity around the wellbeing of our son.

Yes, that is easy to type out. And I am sure many divorcing parents have that same vision. But it is a goal that cannot be attempted without support. It was our marriage counselor (yes, we continued therapy together) who suggested we take the Kids First Program class that teaches separating parents how to, literally, put their kids first.

Honestly, I think this class, one of a handful offered by the Scarborough-based nonprofit Kids First Center, should also be mandatory before a couple even HAS kids, but I digress. For four hours we were surrounded by couples in various stages of separation, anger, confusion, sadness or resignation, and I was impressed at how many parents were still there together.

It was heartwarming to see how far divorce has come that so many were putting their revulsion for the other aside to learn how to be supportive, caring and empathetic for the trauma their children were going through. And while it has been said that "a good divorce is better than a bad marriage," there is a scarring that happens to children that has to be acknowledged. Their lives will forever be drawn into the Before and After of their parent's decision.

Whether you are also going through a divorce or just need some

reminders on how to parent better together, here are a few tips we learned at our Kids First class.

The class recommends that parents set a weekly 30-minute phone call or sit-down that starts with anything celebratory to share, then moves into scheduling confirmation or changes, and finally any questions or concerns. Should personally driven anger start to slide into the call, the other parent should calmly ask, "Is this in the best interest of the kids?" We have had to use this a few times, and it is amazing at how quickly that de-escalates building tension.

Children should NEVER hear you bashing the other parent to them. Remember, they are half that other person. If they hear all of your gripes, disappointments and name-calling toward your spouse, of course they are thinking you feel the same way about them. Don't do it. It breaks their hearts and ultimately could turn them against you.

If you have fallen in love with weeks of your divorce, don't drag your kids into that. Respect they are grieving the loss of their normal. Throwing them into a new family will be so disruptive to their healing. Kids First recommends waiting 10 months minimum into dating someone before introducing your kids to a new partner, and then

**"...but though I lost my marriage, I didn't lose us as a family."**

only after you have included their other parent in that development.

The workshop we took also shares how divorce affects children at different developmental stages. This was key in seeing this process from our 11-year-old's point of view. He needs to know primarily there was nothing he could have done to change anything, we love him completely and that his favorite things (like lacrosse) wouldn't be going away.

We had to recognize a few other behaviors to support, like he is a kiddo who gets anxious about remembering what bus he is taking after school, so we have taken extra steps to help him feel comfortable about changes in his routine.

If you are leaving a relationship that is violent and abusive, Kids First Center has classes that speak to those additional traumas. There are support groups for kids and parenting classes that are dad-specific as well as more intensive co-parenting classes.

I am proud of us. Not saying we are running through fields of daisies daily, but we are committed to keeping our communication respectful, our time together joyful and reminding each other that should personal angst sneak in, our new vow is always putting our kid first.

***Maggie Knowles writes about all things kid. She and her son live in Yarmouth, where she gardens, keeps bees, laughs at her chickens and refuses to get rid of her stilettos.***





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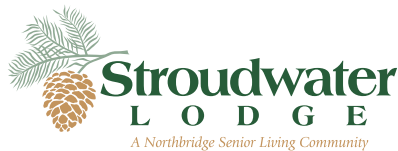
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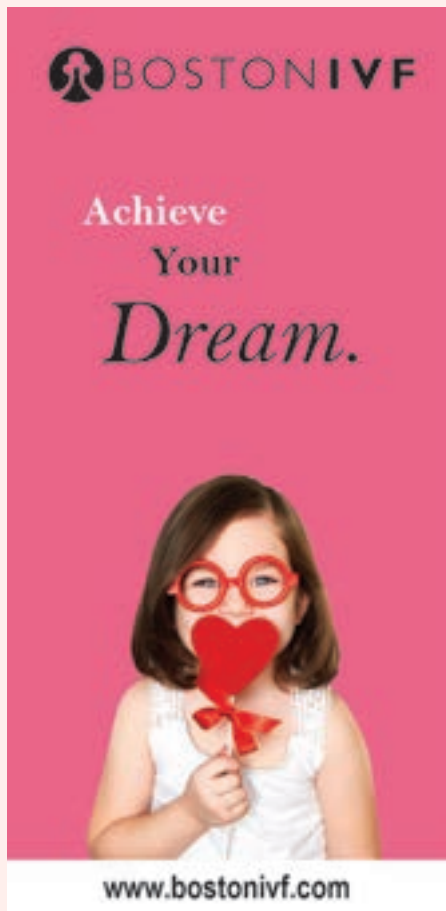
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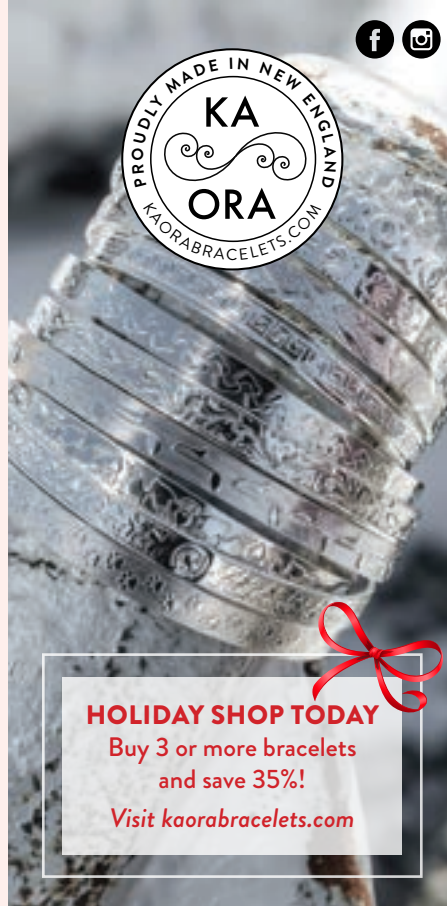
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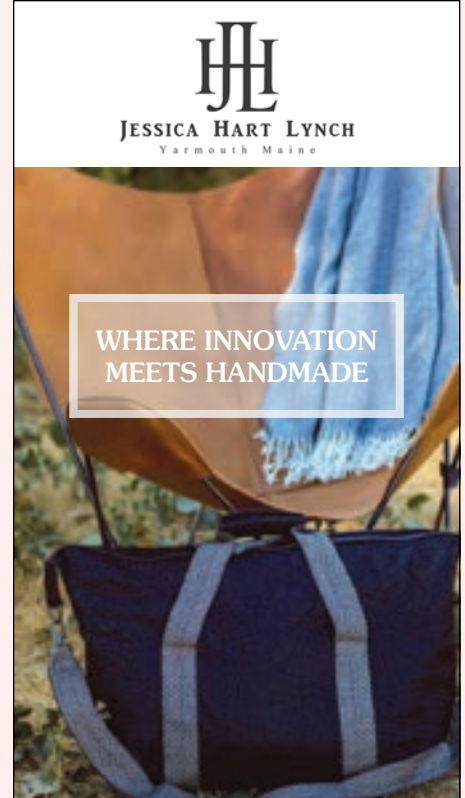
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Photo by Diane Alosa-Grieves, Cumberland

### People Watching

*By Emily Eschner, Portland*

I've come here  
to the water  
at dusk  
a number of times now.  
The same place  
at about the same time;  
but never the same.

I witness an old man and woman  
sharing bits of bread out of a brown paper bag;  
twentysomethings with their arms around each other;  
fiftysomethings hand in hand;  
on the boardwalk,  
on the rocks,  
at the edge of the lake.

It's windy.  
I watch the sailboats drift by  
two at a time,  
and scarves blow  
side to side.

I came here to read,  
but I think I'd rather just watch...  
girls who wear tiny backpacks  
and girls who wear no shoes.  
People who walk their dogs;  
and dogs who walk their people.

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