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JULY 2021

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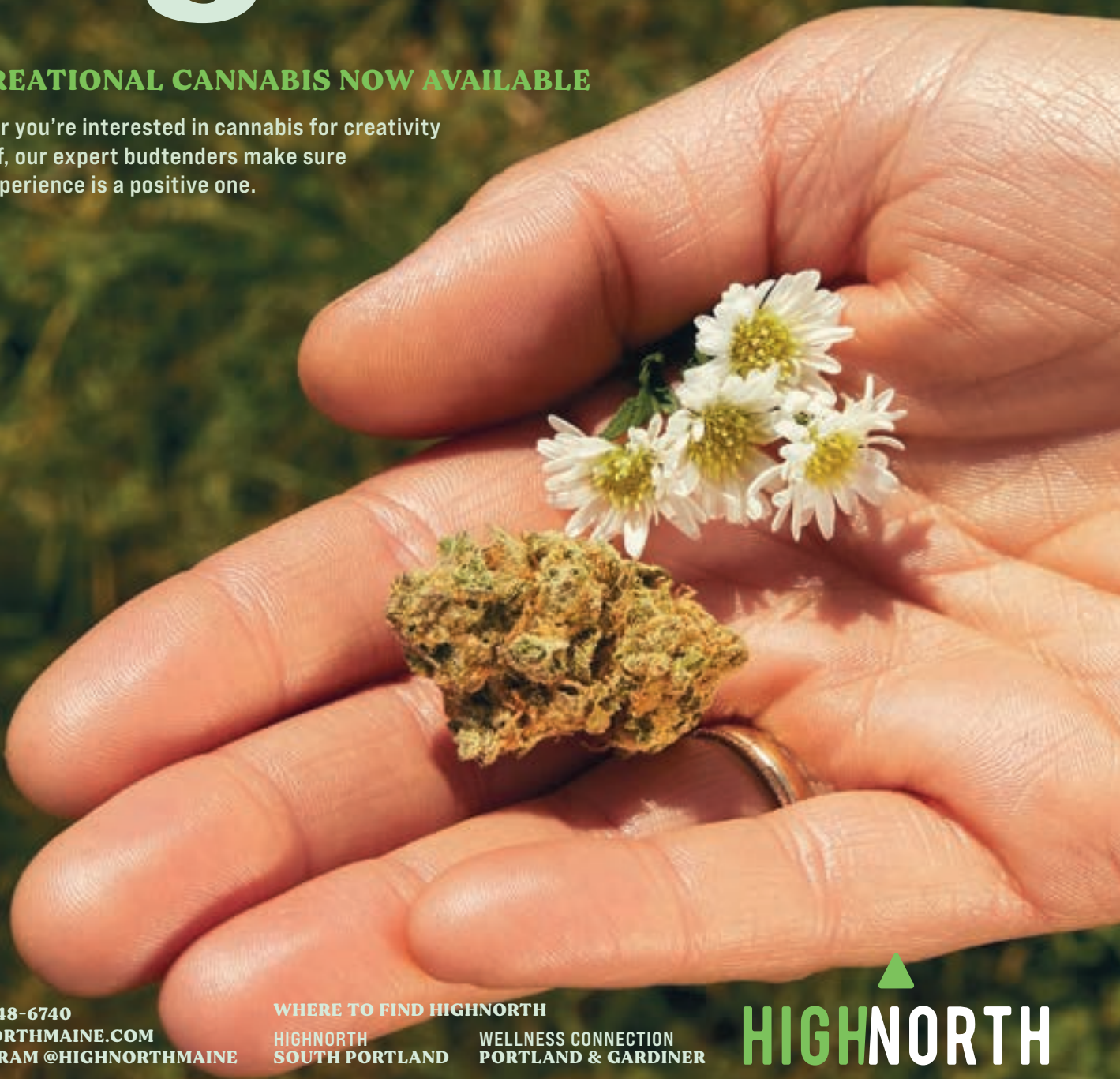
& Melissa Smith of WEX

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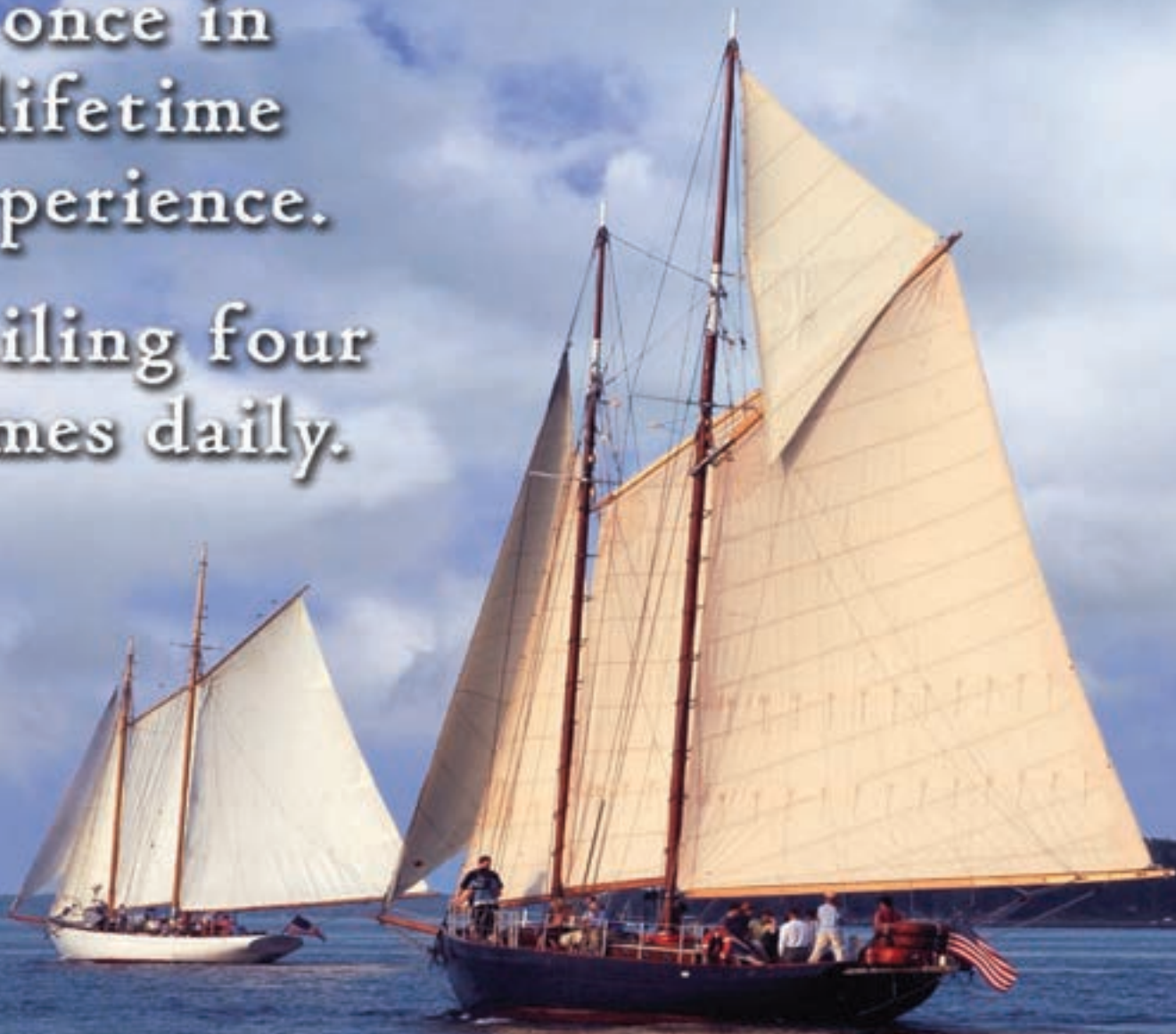
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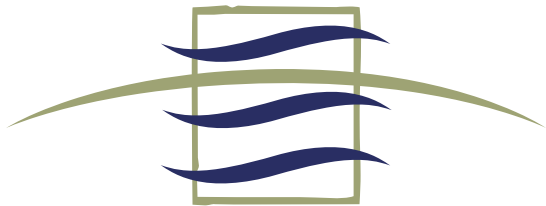
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# | FEATURES |



Photo by Jason Paige Smith

**Tri for a Cure**  
Maine Cancer Foundation 2021

**CANCER TRIES, WE TRI HARDER.**  
*still apart, always together*

## Tri for a **Cure** Special

**12**  
**MELISSA SMITH  
OF WEX**

A Cornerstone of the  
Tri for a Cure

See Our Special Features  
in the Table of Contents.



This month I am honored to bring to all the women in Maine the opportunity to join Tri for A Cure, which helps to support the work of the Maine Cancer Foundation.

We are so lucky to be part of an organization that helps all folks in Maine.

Tri for a Cure started as a thought, an idea—the determination of women to give, to help, and to have fun at the same time.

This month I interview Melissa Smith. She is a woman who understands the power of working together for the good of the community. Here is a woman with huge responsibility and little time, who embraces a keen understanding of giving back.

We're always winners when we do exactly that. We join as a team. We make new friends, and we're a part of making a big difference in so many lives.

I applaud Tri for a Cure. There's nothing bigger than the power of women, and I invite you all to join in. Let's celebrate our power together.

Please call and make the time to join in. For more information on the Maine Cancer Foundation or to make a donation, please email [TriForACure@MaineCancer.org](mailto:TriForACure@MaineCancer.org) or call 207-773-2533.

I also thank you again for the letters and the continued gifts you give me by embracing *Maine Women Magazine*. It is you, each one of you, who give Maine the flavor of goodness and grace. How honored I feel

to bring you more stories of the women in Maine.

And this month I share with you a story from an unknown author:

A wise woman traveling through the mountains found a precious stone in a stream.

The next day she met another traveler who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveler saw the very precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him.

She did so without hesitation.

The traveler left in a joyous state, rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew this stone was worth enough security for a lifetime.

A few days later he came back to return the stone to the wise woman.

"I've been thinking," he said. "I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious.

Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me the stone."

*Much Love,  
Mary*

*Mary Frances Barstow  
Editor/Publisher*

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

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| LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

First of all, I am a guy who loves *Maine Women's Magazine*. Your story on glamping in Maine [May 2021] was just what the doctor ordered for us.

I love camping, but my wife, not so much.

This story helped us find a perfect compromise which she says she would like to try. We can't wait give this idea a whirl, for a nice romantic weekend in the wilds . . . Well, not exactly the wilds, but close enough for us.

Thanks for the great stories.

—Billy C., Freeport

What an inspirational story on Partners for World Health [*Maine Women Magazine*, May 2021]. It shows what one person of focus and determination can do. This is a beautiful profile, about how Elizabeth McLellan harnessed that drive and is helping hospitals all over the world. Amazing story.

—Paul P., Portland

Awesome article about Dr. Yasmin Mahal [*Maine Women Magazine*, June 2021]. Maine's young ICU physicians

bore, and still bear, great responsibility for helping the sickest COVID patients. And, BTW, the care of COVID patients is on top of their regular load of critically ill patients.

—J.S., Biddeford

I saw the great article you did on Yasmin Mahal. We have many inspiring women on our team here at SMHC!

—A.K.,

*Communications & Public Affairs, Southern Maine Health Care*

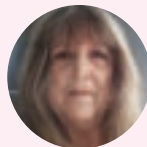
**CORRECTION:** In the June 2021 issue of *Maine Women Magazine*, the photograph of Ann Flannery and Lynette Breton (p. 34, lower left) was taken by Jeanne Bamforth. We regret the error.

| CONTRIBUTORS |

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



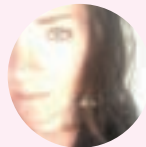
**Wanda Curtis** is a Master's-prepared nurse and journalist. She writes frequently about health, family, and women's issues. Her articles have appeared in the *Kennebec Journal/Morning Sentinel's Women's Quarterly*, *Bangor Daily News*, and other publications. She is married with four children.



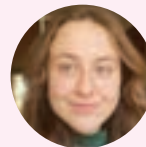
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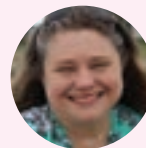
**Sarah Holman** is a writer living in Portland. She grew up in rural Maine and holds a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Sarah is enthusiastic about coffee, thrift shop treasures, and old houses in need of saving. Find her online at [storiesandsidebars.com](http://storiesandsidebars.com).



**Althea Kastelic** is from Portland and is currently interning with *Maine Women Magazine*. She is studying Journalism, Psychology, and Environmental Studies at Mount Holyoke College and is enjoying exploring Maine's beaches and trying out new recipes!



**Amy Paradysz** is a freelance writer and photographer from Scarborough who loves the colors of a summer sunset.



**Teresa Piccari** is a lover of the written word across all genres. A career journalist and native Philadelphian, she has called coastal Maine home for 16 years.



**Shelagh Gordon Talbot** hails from Vermont. She worked in the film and television industry, including on the award-winning kid's show *Jabberwocky*. Looking for a less hectic life, she moved to the Moosehead Lake region and became a journalist. She is a freelancer who also writes music, plays guitar, and sings.



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



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# POSTCARD FROM HOLLY

BY HOLLY MARTIN

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

## How to Visit the Tuamotus

This month, French Polynesia has officially opened their borders to tourism. The catch: you have to be American, and you have to be vaccinated. Luckily, my mom falls in both of these categories. As soon as the border opened, she booked a flight to Tahiti to come for a visit.

I'm currently living in the Tuamotus—a remote reef archipelago a few hundred miles east of Tahiti. How do you get out to a remote coral reef community? The answer is "with time and patience." To get cell service in Fakarava (one of the atolls in

the Tuamotus), I turn on my phone's hotspot, place it in a dry bag, and haul it up the mast. Once the phone is high enough, it picks up a signal from a faraway cell tower. This is how I communicate with outside world.

The day my mom landed in Tahiti, I woke up at 4 a.m. to sail the 30 nautical miles to the small village airport. By the time she landed in Fakarava, I

had anchored and was waiting at the airport. The plane lands on a long stretch of reef runway, and the passengers disembark through an open-air shelter that serves as a walkway off the airstrip. After my mom landed, we sailed the 30 miles back through reef to get to a sheltered anchorage in the southeast corner of the atoll. We'll hang out here until it's time to sail back to the airport. •





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# Melissa Smith of



*A Cornerstone of the Tri for a Cure* BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

In 2007, Melissa Smith was one of the women around the brainstorming table of what would become Maine’s largest one-day fundraising event, Tri for a Cure. The all-women sprint triathlon is Maine Cancer Foundation’s signature fundraiser. It supports their mission to increase cancer prevention and early detection and to improve access to care for every Mainer who needs it.

“Melissa’s ongoing personal and professional commitment, from Tri for a Cure’s inaugural year through today, has helped to propel this event to its record-breaking \$2M level in 2019,” says Cheryl Tucker, Executive Director of Maine Cancer Foundation. “And especially now as we enter our second year as a virtual event.”

“We’re so proud of our relationship with Melissa, WEX, and the dedicated WEX employee-led Tri for a Cure team,” adds Cheryl. “Melissa sets a high bar for community involvement and giving back, not only for herself but also for her company. She is a true role model, including being a Tri for a Cure participant herself!”

Melissa Smith is chair and CEO of WEX, a global company that provides financial technology services, with a core fleet offering as well as offerings in healthcare and travel. With Melissa at the helm, WEX has experienced tremendous growth and success. It was a pleasure to talk with her about Tri for a Cure and her work and life path.

**MARY:**

How did you get involved with Tri for a Cure?

**MELISSA:**

Well, it’s a long backstory, but I went through a time where I was actively involved in triathlons, and one of my girlfriends invited me to an event one day. She was another triathlete, and she invited me to an event which was hosted by Julie Marchese. Julie wanted to put on an all-women’s triathlon to support cancer. She was on the Maine Cancer Foundation board. It was the first time I met Julie that night. I gave her my card when I left and told her that I was really enamored with what she was trying to do and would like her to reach out and contact me because I thought that WEX would be a likely sponsor for the event.

Part of what struck home for me when I talked to Julie was that she had done a Danskin triathlon, her first triathlon where you actually swim with a water noodle and

swimming noodles. At that point, she wouldn’t have defined herself as an athlete, but she did it, and she felt so proud of herself afterwards. She thought, “Well, why can’t I do something like that? Why can’t I create that same feeling and that same opportunity, and also raise money at the same time?” I just admired the fact that somebody wanted to make a difference and wanted to recreate that feeling and was channeling that through women.

This was before they even started the Tri for a Cure. She reached out after that meeting, and I spoke to the CEO at the time, and I told him that I wanted to sponsor this event. I thought it was going to be great. He was incredibly supportive. And so we became the main sponsor that first year out.

**MARY:**

Wow, that is wonderful. And you’re a triathlete yourself?

**MELISSA:**

Yes, I would say I have a history of being a triathlete. I went through a time when I did a lot of that. Actually, kind of flash forward many years, when Julie turned 50, she wanted to do a half Ironman for her birthday. We went to California together and did a half Ironman for her 50th birthday. That first meeting was the start of what’s been a great friendship, and I’ve been so inspired by the impact of the Tri for a Cure. It’s one of those amazing, amazing things when you see someone has an idea, they take the initiative to go do something about it, and it just took off. You could feel it that first year. It was just special.

I was on the committee that first year and I would go to these committee meetings, and Julie would read some of the emails that she was getting from the women who were training. It was so much about people feeling like they could do something that they didn’t think they could do and how empowered it made them feel.

**MARY:**

WEX is involved also by having a team?

**MELISSA:**

We are. Yes. We’ve had a team every year and amazing women on that team. For some, it has been their first triathlon. Others are already super active. So, you get a good representation at WEX.



Portrait by Jason Paige Smith. Tri for a Cure photos courtesy of WEX.

One of the things that you'll hear year after year, which is really one of the things I learned, too: you go in mentally with the idea this is a race. But after you've done it once, or half-way through the event, you realize it actually isn't a race. It's so much more than that. It doesn't feel competitive. You're there to support one another. Everyone's building one another up, and that's part of what makes it special.

**MARY:**

That makes sense—that for this event, mutual supportiveness is key. When you think about your own life, growing up in Maine, where did you find that encouragement to keep going?

**MELISSA:**

My parents were divorced when I was two. My mom was a single parent, but she remarried when I was five. And so, I did have a very strong stepfather who was an important part of my life. But my mom, she set a high bar. She expected all three of her daughters to be super independent. I don't know how else to say it. She stressed that we needed to be able to live our lives in ways so that we weren't dependent on other people. That meant that we had to push through things that made us uncomfortable.

And she expected us to be part of the community, and she did that by example. She worked very hard, but she would still, though, volunteer and be involved in our community. She set an expectation, and we just rose to it.

**MARY:**

I have read that you became pregnant around the same time that you became CEO. How did people receive the news?

**MELISSA:**

People were great. The thing that surprised me—this was in 2014—there was only one other person who was pregnant when she became the CEO. Everybody knew she was pregnant. So, I was the first CEO of a public company that we could find who be-

came pregnant when I was CEO. The people on our board, when I told them, were incredibly gracious. They went into governance mode, which is their job, but they were also very supportive of this idea that I was going to live my whole life, which I think is important to everybody. They've known me for a long time and, if this is something I wanted, they wanted it for me, too. They were really very supportive.

And I got tons of notes from employees, from customers. Women support women, and it's awesome when that happens, but also I got lots of notes and had lots of conversations with men who had daughters. I remember standing up on stage one day at a customer event, and I was quite far into my pregnancy. When I came off the stage, a customer came up to me, and he said, "I think it's really important what you're doing because it shows other women that they can have a family and they can have a career, too." I think the fact that I was quite far into my pregnancy and up on the stage just kind of hit the point home for him.

One of the things I do think about often is that—because there are not a lot of female CEOs—it's important that I physically show up when I can, so people can see that it's beyond the name. They can see that there's a person there. Frankly, it has nothing to do with me. It's the title of the job and the fact that it's a female that I think is important, to be available to have people lay eyes on me. I'm always very sensitive to that because there are not a lot of interactions, so it's important that they go well.

**MARY:**

Did the company start in Maine?

**MELISSA:**

Yes, it did. Long before I started, there was a family that started the business. The problem that they were trying to solve was: It used to be that when you bought fuel, you had a manual chit that you'd get. For corporate accounting, trying to reconcile all that

activity and make sense of it was very difficult. So the original thesis was to streamline the payment processing around that fleet payment and provide convenience and control to the end customer. That was the original thesis. It's evolved tremendously from then.

One of the things that has always been true for me and was true when I first started here, so give credit to the people who founded the company: if you look at our culture studies, a factor we test the highest on is people's ability to be themselves. You know, within this company, you actually are expected to have a voice and opinion. And so, I think that helps.

I actually think that's an important part of why you see a female CEO and see the female representation we have really across the company, which is incredibly high compared to any benchmark there. It ties back into this idea that people are able to be themselves while they're at WEX. It's the tag, "Be you at WEX."

**MARY:**

What has the course of your career at WEX been?

**MELISSA:**

I've been here for a long time, for over 20 years. The management was clearly going through a process at the board level of succession planning. I had been given increasing responsibility. I don't think I had the same job for more than 18 months, maybe two years. I kept getting increasing responsibility. Then when they made me president of the Americas piece of the company, it became clear that there was a master plan because at that time, it was 90 percent of the company.

**MARY:**

How do you think that women can get in the habit of trying new things and reaching new potentials?

**MELISSA:**

Going back to the Tri for a Cure, I remember an experience I had with triathlons. I'm a runner. I had done

marathons, and I was looking for my next challenge. So, I signed up for a half Ironman as my next challenge, not really understanding what I was signing myself up into.

I could swim-ish, but I couldn't do the crawl. So, I hired a triathlon coach, and I met her at a pool one day. And I couldn't swim the length of the pool. Here I had signed up for this race where I was going to swim 1.2 miles in the open water, and I literally couldn't swim the length of the pool.

She left that night, and she didn't tell me at the time, but later, after the race, she told me, "I couldn't sleep that night [after the first lesson] because I kept thinking about what trainer liability is." But in our sessions, she just made me suck in water. She just made me go one lap after another, until

finally I got to the point where I could at least swim one lap in the pool with my head in the water.

I think about that a lot. I think of endurance sports a lot when I think about work because you have to kind of trick your brain out to focus on the moment you're in and focus on a shorter-term milestone. Otherwise, it's overwhelming. You have to think about smaller milestones along the way, and it helps you get through the harder things. Then look back and celebrate when you get to the bigger milestones. Sometimes you tell yourself you can't do things when you actually can. You just have to tolerate the fact it's going to be hard.

It is like Tri for a Cure. It makes you feel so good when you look back and you can say, "I did that." •

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# Two Friends, Reunited by Tri for a Cure

BY JIM KENDRICK

“Everybody cheers us on, but I almost feel selfish,” Andrea Tetzlaff admits. “It’s just so much fun! Yes, at the same time, of course, I know we’re doing the right thing. I get to support my friends, my community. It’s just so great. I love it so much!”

This is how she describes participating in the Tri for a Cure fundraising competition.

And for the past four years, it’s been a double blessing for her because her partner in the biking, running, swimming event is a childhood friend from Gorham, someone she had formerly lost touch with.

Andrea’s family moved away to West Virginia more than 15 years ago, separating her from her best pal in Gorham—Allison Kennie. Life moved on, Andrea now has her own family, and four years ago she connected with Maine Cancer Foundation’s fundraising partner, Tri for a Cure.

She had moved back to the Portland area and was a spectator at the Tri for a Cure event when she saw a sign-up sheet for the 2018 participation lottery. Thinking ahead to the next year, she put her name down. As she recalls, “I just immediately wanted to do it. I signed up and began to visit the site.”

So later, she was visiting the Tri for a Cure Facebook page, and that is where, very soon, the two childhood best friends—from when they were seven years old in Gorham—were connected through the Tri for a Cure site. They made an almost-instant decision to partner up for training, and ultimately, for the full July event.

Andrea remembers their early connection as “a perfect match” for the event.

“I’m a runner, and she’s a biker. And even though I hadn’t seen her in more than 15 years, she immediately taught me a ton about biking. I get to support my friends and do the fund raising. Of course, the kids get in on it too, which helps us instill great values in them too.



Andrea Tetzlaff (left) and Allison Kennie.

Her Tri partner Allison sums it up, saying, “There’s just so much willingness and happiness. This event is just so awesome!”

Recently, the race “has been remote (due to the pandemic), and we missed it so much,” Andrea says. “It’s remote this year too, and I wouldn’t feel as natural, as easy, as included without her [Allison]. I love it so much . . . with the bonus of doing it all with someone who has been my friend from seven years old.”

The 15-mile biking event and the 3.1 run are naturals for Andrea and Allison.

But the swim?

Says Allison, “The swim is terrifying to me. I’m not a swimmer. And in the ocean, wiggled into a wet suit like a sausage?

“There are women who, well, swimming is what they do! That’s not me. I’m always wondering what’s underneath me, you know?”

Laughing, but still a little serious, she says, “I’m swimming in the ocean, but every minute I’m thinking, ‘What else is out here with me?’”

“It’s all amazing, though. With the supportive environment created by Tri for a Cure? All I can say is that if she [Andrea] and I can do it, anybody can.”

Does the re-kindled childhood friendship extend beyond the annual Tri event?

Says Allison, “Well, we’re training together all spring and most of the summer. Beyond that? We keep up with each other and our families. When we can do lunch, we do lunch. Dinner? Then dinner. The Tri for a Cure brought us back together, and it seems like we’ll stay together!”

*Andrea lives in South Portland with her husband Joe Polchies and 12-year-old twin daughters Mallorie Polchies and Calleigh Polchies. Allison lives in Portland with her husband Kevin Kennie and their daughter Nora Kennie, who is also 12 years old.* •



# Celebrating JEAN GINN MARVIN, of the Nonantum Resort

*She's been with  
Tri for a Cure from the Start*

BY MARY FRANCES  
BARSTOW



Jean Ginn Marvin (right) and Tina Hewett-Gordon (left) after the Tri for a Cure.

**F**ew people have been as involved with Tri for a Cure as Jean Ginn Marvin, Innkeeper at the Nonantum Resort. From Tri for a Cure's very inception, through the trials of the COVID epidemic and to its 2021 season, Jean has been active as both a participant and as a successful fundraiser for this important cause.

As a native Mainer, Jean is highly involved in the community: she serves on the board of Southern Maine Community College, plays brass with the Casco Bay Wind Symphony, and was even a representative with the Maine House of Representatives.

Athlete, business owner, musician, and Tri for a Cure supporter . . . what an amazing Renaissance woman! We're honored to feature her in *Maine Women Magazine* and celebrate the great work she does.

**MARY:**

You go way back with Tri for a Cure. What comes to your mind, when you recall those early days?

**JEAN:**

I've been involved right from the beginning, 13 years ago. Julie Marchese had this idea of having a triathlon. So, she got a group of friends together, and we trained and went down to Webster, Massachusetts, to look at, and be in, a triathlon that Danskin sponsored. None of us had ever seen a triathlon even, but we were in it. We had a really fun time.

In terms of having a triathlon back here in Maine, we thought that maybe we would have a 100 people, we could talk to our friends, and get maybe a 100 people to be in this triathlon to raise a little money for Maine Cancer. Julie just talked to a few of her friends, and we said, "Yeah, sure, whatever." Never in

a million years would we have dreamed that things would go like they did. It's been such a thrill to watch this thing just take off like a rocket.

It really speaks to how a group of women getting together can make something happen. Each person would say, "Oh, well I know somebody there. I could talk to them and see if we could do something." It brought out all the connections we had within the community.

I sit on the board of Southern Maine Community College (SMCC). And so that was part of it, when we were making a decision of where do we have this? I said, "I think we should do it at SMCC. It would be fabulous." I introduced Julie to the president of SMCC at the time, and they were off to the races. Now the community college is a huge proponent of this race, and they open their doors to us every summer.



Top: Jean and Tina celebrate after a successful race. Bottom: Jean with her daughter, Colby Marvin Bracy, Nonantum Human Resources and Philanthropy Manager.

**MARY:**

What do you like about the Tri for a Cure triathlon?

**JEAN:**

I mean, it's a wild day. You can't imagine there are this many people in all of Maine! It feels like they are all there.

One thing I really like about the Tri for a Cure is that it is an event that welcomes non-athletes to become an athlete for a day. I mean, somebody like me, I would have never thought I could be in a triathlon. And yet I've been in all 13, and my times get better each year. Usually, as you age, you get slower. I had never competitively swam or competitively ridden a bike, so I had no idea how to do those things. I've worked on my own skills and become a better athlete because of it. But even if you're near the back of the pack, it's still a thrilling event to be part of.

When you see the people, the line of the people who are in this event, you see people of all ages, all shapes, and sizes doing it. If somebody falls on their bike or something, 10 people stop to help that person up. It isn't like they go whizzing by because they're trying to beat them in the race. That isn't what it's about. You can compete with yourself to try to get a better time, but at the end of the day, it's about supporting each other.

There is just such a great vibe throughout the event of support and care for each other. And I mean, everybody knows somebody who's been impacted by cancer. It's easy to raise money for this event because people know that the money is going straight to Maine Cancer Foundation. So they're willing to support. I've been in the top 20 fundraisers, I think pretty much every year, just because my friends are willing to support that cause.

I was fortunate to be asked in, and it just has been so special to me. I mean, that's a big part of my summer. Every summer there is triathlon weekend. My niece comes in from Arizona to do the race with me. The person I work with, who I share an office with, she does it, and her family all come in, and we always have a big party afterwards. I really missed it last year.

**MARY:**

Can you please tell a bit about your work life?

**JEAN:**

Yes, I run the Nonantum Resort, which is located in Kennebunkport. We've opened, and this our 137th season. We have 109 rooms, and we have four food outlets. We do 70 weddings a season and numerous birthday parties, conferences, family reunions, fundraisers. It's a busy place. It's located on the water, right on Ocean Avenue in Kennebunkport. Our family has owned the resort for about 30 years.

**MARY:**

How did your family come to be the owners?

**JEAN:**

My father was a real estate developer and investor. He invested in the property, and the person who owned it ended up going bankrupt. So, my father ended up with the property. I was in the Maine legislature at the time. He asked me to go to the resort in the summer and help out because the legislature doesn't work in the summer. As soon as I got there, I knew that it was where I was meant to be. So, I didn't run for re-election the next term. And I've been at the Nonantum ever since, for 23 years.

**MARY:**

What stands out about the resort to you? What attracts people to it?

**JEAN:**

I think the thing that sets the Nonantum apart is that we have the same people work year after year. We have a very robust onboarding process when we hire people. Many similar places, it's kind of like, "Here's your shirt, get to work." We have a lot of training that happens before they ever have a day at the Nonantum. And you become part of our family. The Nonantum family is a really tight group. We take care of each other and work well together. Last summer, for example, the director of sales, the director of group sales, the general manager, and myself were the hosts and hostesses of the dining room the entire summer.

A lot of our people couldn't work, either because they didn't have childcare, or they couldn't work because they were scared of the virus. So, we had a pared-down staff, only 60 of us, and we all wore different hats. We'd be cleaning rooms in the day, working in the dining room at night, and just doing whatever had to be done to get the job done.

You build a certain rapport with people when you're working under those kinds of circumstances. But even before the pandemic happened, we had a very special relationship among ourselves. We all love hospitality. We love meeting new people, talking to new people.

The general manager is a woman named Tina Hewett-Gordon. I think

having two women running this hotel makes it much more maternal. We take good care of our people, we're both mothers, and we know what it's like to have to balance a household. Tina also does the Tri for a Cure.

We know that if things aren't good at home, you're not going to be able to give what you need work. So, we make sure that people get to family activities. We make sure that they're not over-scheduled. And if you could only work one day a week, well, then we schedule you one day a week.

Your life ebbs and flows with the ages of your children, or maybe you have elderly parents, or all kinds of things can happen in people's lives that make it so they can't work as much or make it so they want to work a lot. We schedule around that. That's one of the great things about hospitality—we're a 24/7 business. We can come up with a new scheduling plan if what you got isn't working for you.

So, we work together. And I mean, the general manager and I had daughters who were similar ages, and they spent many a day on the floor of our office, coloring or whatever, while we were working around them.

During the past year, I think also we really realized the importance of the Nonantum family and how we work together. I mean, it's just a remarkable situation, the way that people take care of each other and how we work together. And I think that the pandemic only strengthened those bonds.

**MARY:**

I have such admiration for you, using that humane, family-friendly approach, of "we'll work things out, as long as we all get the job done." Now, do you have entertainment for the guests?

**JEAN:**

We have a lot of music and entertainment, like Jim Ciampi and Don Pride. Sometimes in the evenings, we have a guy who does singing by a campfire, four nights a week. And we also, Sunday afternoons, have singing by the pool. I started college as a music major, so music is something that's really important to me. I love having live music at the hotel, and we do pretty much every day.

**MARY:**

Did you grow up in Maine? What has your background been?

**JEAN:**

Yes, I grew up in Cape Elizabeth. I went to Cape Elizabeth high school, graduated from there. Then I went to a school in Michigan called Interlochen Arts Academy. It is a fine arts boarding school. I went there to study music. From there, I went to Syracuse University, and I ended up with a degree in political science, a degree in policy studies. Then my family ended up in a moving company. I worked in the moving business for Allied Van Lines. And then I went for the legislature, then I went to the Nonantum.

Along the way, I married one of my college friends. I was also a trombone major when I started, and so was he. We met my freshman year of college. We've been married 39 years now. And we have three children and three grandchildren, with a fourth due in June.

Neither one of us was particularly active with our music, but this past year, he and I decided to do 25 days of Christmas carols. On Facebook, every day for the first 25 days of December, we played a different Christmas Carol—trombone duets, and we also both play this instrument called a euphonium, which is a tenor tuba. Some days, we did trombone, some days we did euphonium, and some days one of us did one and went to the other. We called it the Bob and Jean show because his name is Bob Marvin. Since then, we've done other holidays. So, now we are playing again. We don't practice as much as we should, but it's fine.

**MARY:**

Do you work all year round?

**JEAN:**

I'm a Sugarloaf girl, so I go skiing on the weekends, but yes, I still work all winter. Some of us work year-round, like the people who work in physical plant because they paint rooms while there aren't people around, the marketing people, and the wedding people because they plan events. We plan all winter, and then we execute plans all summer. •

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# PAT ELTMAN

## A Cancer Survivor Turns from Politics to Painting

BY AMY PARADYSZ

What do Janet Mills, Chellie Pingree, and Dr. Nirav Shah have in common?

They each have a Pat Eltman piece in their art collection.

Eltman's oil paintings of sunrises, sunsets, and seascapes are entirely apolitical. But the artist, who turns 71 this year, spent four decades shaping our political landscape as a strategist, campaign manager, and grassroots organizer. Politicos have purchased several of her paintings over this past decade that she has enjoyed a second act as an artist.

"We've been lifelong friends, most of us," Eltman says, adding Shah hasn't been a Mainer as long but she gave him a painting out of gratitude for all he's done to keep Mainers safe through the pandemic.

A lifelong South Portland resident, Eltman has always been drawn to the sea for healing air and renewal. That's what she captures in her art—the sun rising or setting in warm oranges, salmons, and golds over Maine seascapes with islands, marshes, and footpaths cutting through seagrass. The process of interpreting photos with oil paints, she says, is meditative and utterly calming.

As the saying goes, the calm comes before the storm. But, in Eltman's life, the reverse has been true.

When Lyndon B. Johnson came to Portland in 1964 to campaign for re-election as president of the United States, Eltman was there with the Teenage Democrats from Cathedral High School. She was hooked, drawn to the perpetual storm of politics as a way to bring change.

Eight years later when her friend Peter Curran campaigned for a seat in the Maine state legislature, she went door to door, dropping off leaflets in the evenings after working for the telephone company all day. Through this most humble of beginnings, Eltman's circle of friends quickly became the movers and shakers in the Democratic Party at the Maine State House. Then, when Jimmy Carter was elected and tapped longtime Maine Senator Ed Muskie as U.S. Secretary of State, Maine's sphere of influence grew nationally.

"My career in politics took off from there," Eltman says. "I ended up working on presidential campaigns as political and field director."

She worked on the Carter-Mondale presidential re-election campaign in 1980.

"Maine became a very important swing state," Eltman says. "And I was tapped for deputy state director because of my knowledge of Maine's political landscape. This is what started me on my journey in national politics."

She worked on the Mondale-Ferraro campaign in 1984, followed by Jim Tierney's campaign for governor of Maine in 1986.

In the early days, Eltman made as little as \$15—per day—as a grassroots organizer. In the State House, some of the male legislators called her "Cupcake."



Top: Pat Eltman often works from a photograph, as seen here.  
Bottom: Saltwater Marsh on Cape Cod. An oil painting by Pat Eltman.



“It was a man’s world, basically,” Eltman says. “But, when I came back to the Speaker’s Office in 1988 after the Dukakis campaign, finally more women started getting elected. In my lifetime, I’ve seen the first woman as Senate President. I worked for Libby Mitchell, who was the first woman Speaker of the House and only the third woman in the country to be elected Speaker and President of the Senate. And now we have our first female governor, Janet Mills, and our first female Secretary of State, Shenna Bellows. In my 40-year span, I’ve seen quite a bit. Women have worked hard and come far.”

In 2000, Eltman was the regional political director for Al Gore’s presidential campaign in the Midwest.

After decades of hectic travel, campaigning in Washington, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, and Oklahoma City, Eltman shifted gears and became Maine’s state director of tourism.

“That was the best job—selling Maine, the most beautiful state in the whole country, to the world,” she says. “Lighthouses, lobsters, and moose.” And so much more.

Her next campaign—against breast cancer—was a more difficult and personal one.

“It’s like your life stops when you hear that you have cancer,” she says. “It’s always in the back of your mind. It’s a sisterhood, when you go through breast cancer.”

A tumor was detected through a routine mammogram and treated with a lumpectomy followed by radiation. This



Top: Pat Eltman at work in her home studio in South Portland. Photo by Amy Paradysz  
Center: A painting of Mackerel Cove on Bailey Island by Pat Eltman.  
Bottom: A painting of sunset on Casco Bay by Pat Eltman.

month Eltman has reached 12 years of remission.

Perhaps it was reaching that milestone of being cancer-free that made her see the world a little bit differently and take things a little slower, a little more creatively. Because it was a decade ago when Eltman walked past a sign about art lessons on the door at Roux & Cyr gallery in Portland and decided to pick up a brush.

She says, "It's about seeing a beautiful sky and thinking, 'Wouldn't I love to paint that?'"

Eltman's first art show was in 2015. The venue was the "One Night Stand Gallery" at Planned Parenthood in Portland. Since then, she has had several shows at the Couleur Collection in Falmouth and at Roux & Cyr.

Eltman often paints on commission. Or, captivated by the beauty of nature, she goes back to her studio with a photo, captures the essence with her brushes and paints, snaps a photo with her

phone and posts her work for sale on her personal Facebook page.

Although her home has as much framed art as a gallery, it's common for her to have nothing of her own art in sight, other than what is in progress on her easel.

Her largest commissioned piece is a 2-foot by 4-foot seascape of sunset on Casco Bay. Characteristically for this artist, the buyer was a labor leader in Washington, D.C.

Other than creating a lifetime of contacts for prospective buyers, one might think that politics and painting would be as different as night and day. But not for Eltman.

"In politics, you need a strategy, and the same is true with painting," she says. "Both are about interpretation."

For her, perhaps, politics and art are more like sunrise and sunset: One shines a light to make a more beautiful world, the other captures the fleeting light because the world is beautiful. •



This oil painting by Pat Eltman of a cottage on Peak's Island is inspired by a historic photo.



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# Joan Lunden— *Taking the Baton and Running with It*

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

Joan Lunden is a beloved journalist, author, speaker, and health advocate, who for almost 20 years was an admired host on *Good Morning America*. She has always been a trusted and informed voice, with a particular interest in improving women's health. Her latest book continues this mission, exploring aging—with humor, empathy, and *lots* of helpful information. It is called, *Why Did I Come into This Room? A Candid Conversation about Aging* (2020).

In 2014, Joan was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent an arduous course of treatment, while still very much in the public eye. As she writes in the book, “*People* magazine asked me to appear on their cover bald for that story. *Bare-headed bald*—as in no scarf, no hat, no vanity.” And she did it. This is one strong, gutsy woman, who lives life to the fullest. I am so very happy I had a chance to speak with the incomparable Joan Lunden for *Maine Women Magazine*.

**MARY:**

Joan Lunden, in your career, you have done many amazing things. Then, you got physically sick yourself. And you went through it, teaching others how to go through it. Thank you for that. How did you get on your path of teaching about health?

**JOAN:**

Thank you. Well, my dad was a doctor. He was actually a cancer surgeon. I was raised in Northern California—born and raised in Sacramento. Everywhere we would go and no matter where we were, out on the street or at a restaurant, there were always people coming up to him and putting their arms around him. I would constantly hear “Ah, thanks doc for saving my wife’s life.” As a little kid, I thought, “Wow, I want to be that.” What could be better than that?

Then, my dad was also an avid private pilot. He used to fly around the country, assisting doctors on difficult surgeries. And he spoke for the American Cancer Society all the time. He was coming back from speaking at a big cancer convention in Southern California. I was 13 at the time. And he crashed flying home in our private plane. He was only 51. That left me saying, “I’ve got to take the baton and keep running. I need to follow in his legacy and carry on his legacy.”

But when I graduated from high school, I went to work in a hospital that he had helped to found and build. And boy, I found out real quick that scalpels and shots were not going to be part of my future under any circumstance.

So I went away to college and majored in psychology. I figured that’s as close as I’m going to get to medicine. But I always felt this compelling desire, this passion, to disseminate health information. I did it on *Good Morning America*. I always hogged all the stories that were health related. And when I left *Good Morning America*, I hosted a show called *Health Corner* for a few years. Currently, I’m the host of a PBS program called *Second Opinion with Joan Lunden*. Obviously, it’s about healthcare. I interview doctors all the time. I also am the host of a podcast that I do for the *Washington Post*. And that’s called *Caring for Tomorrow*. It’s all about the future of healthcare.

And I have a new book, *Why Did I Come into This Room? A Candid Conversation about Aging*. I wrote it because women age differently than men, and the more we know and understand about our bodies and what’s going to happen, the more comfortable we can be with the aging process. It is good to be aware of the normal symptoms of aging, reasons why they’re happening, and even some takeaways as to what we can do about it. It takes some of the scary out of it and so you are not left feeling like you’ve done something wrong.

So, all this while, learning and teaching about health has just been my passion.

**MARY:**

What new projects do you have coming along?

**JOAN:**

In the never ending re-invention saga of Joan Lunden, I have just accepted a visiting faculty position at Lehigh University! Starting in the fall, my first class is August 23rd. And I’m going to be teaching Population Health in the Media. My two passions, media—disseminating information, and population health.

I’m especially active in the area, the past five years or so, of boomer health, senior health, caregiving, and women’s brain health. So this is perfect for me. And I’ll be going there every Monday to teach the class, but it’s not going to just be lecturing. My class is going to be different. I’m going to be interviewing a health expert or a broadcaster. I’m starting the whole semester out interviewing Dr. Julie Gerberding. She was the first woman to ever become a director of the CDC. I did a special for ABC called “Behind Closed Doors of the CDC,” and she was the director at that time so I got to meet her. She is now vice president at Merck in charge of global health policy and population health.





*Clockwise from top: Joan working out at Camp Reveille; Joan and her husband, Jeff Konigsberg; A morning walk at Camp Reveille; and Joan on the Camp Reveille climbing wall.*

The second class I'm interviewing Brian Stelter, who is the chief media correspondent for CNN and the host of *Reliable Sources*. So it'll be really interesting because these students, they can take the class either for College of Health credit or for Journalism credit. I'm really looking forward to it. I'm working everyday now on it, getting these classes ready, writing the interviews, and getting myself ready to become Professor Lunden. It's a learning curve. But it's fun. Just taking on a new challenge, it keeps life exciting.

**MARY:**

Your husband, Jeff Konigsberg, has long owned several summer camps in Maine, west of Portland, for boys and girls. So you spend your summers there in Maine, I understand, by a lake. Have you considered opening an adult camp so we could all go and experience some healthy outdoor living again?

**JOAN:**

It's funny you should say that because about 15 years ago, I started a women's camp there on the grounds of Camp Takajo. And every year when all the kids went home, I had women come in. We had about 250 women come every summer. It went until about five years ago. It was the summer after I had been diagnosed with cancer, and I gave it up at that point. I hear from a lot of the women all the time on Facebook saying, "Oh, we wish she was still doing Camp Reveille," because they got together and they left their hairdryers behind, and they pulled their hair back into a ponytail. We did egg-and-spoon races, and we played games. It was just a reconnection to your childhood and to just being outside. They were active on the waterfront, they climbed the climbing wall. And let me tell you, I can't tell you how many women in their 70s climbed that climbing wall. They would come down and say, "I can't wait to tell my grandkids."

**MARY:**

Your life and career have had many aspects—Mom, grandmother, broadcast journalist, bestselling author, speaker, women's health and wellness advocate, and adult camp coordinator, as I just learned—and soon, professor. And along the way, you went through the cancer. How did you get through the breast cancer? How did you keep going during that time?

**JOAN:**

It was obviously very difficult. I'll never forget the night before I was going on the *Today Show*, actually, because they're the ones that called me up and said they wanted me to be interviewed on the show, and *People* magazine had also called and said, "We want to do a story. We'd like to put you on the cover." And I was just going through my first 12 weeks of chemo. So, I said yes to *People*, and they said, "Look, we'll come to your house. We will photograph you with your wig on, and then with a scarf on. And then if you'll allow us, we'll do it with your bald head. And then it's up to you, what you're going to be comfortable with." It was scary taking the wig off and having this photographer get so close up in front of me and taking the picture.

I just said to myself, "You've got to really dig down inside and really find that smile and that positive strength because that's what's going to come through on the page." And I remember one woman wrote to me on Facebook and said, "I was recently diagnosed with

"I just said to myself, 'You've got to really dig down inside and really find that smile and that positive strength because that's what's going to come through.'"

breast cancer the same time that you had. And as they told me, all I could think of was that picture on the cover of *People* magazine. But not the picture, it was the smile, because that said to me, "I can do this." I thought, wow. Talk about no regrets. And the *Today Show* had heard that I had done this cover of *People* magazine, and they said, "Can you come on and be with us? Because the editor-in-chief of *People* magazine is going to be on the show, and they're going to show this picture of you." I said, "Well, I'm actually having surgery, breast cancer surgery, the day before, but I'll join you by phone."

Then about a week later, I went into the *Today Show*. But the night before, I washed my face and I looked up in the mirror. And as I wiped my face off, I wiped all of my eyebrows and all of my eyelashes. They all came out at once. And I looked in the mirror, I thought, wow, I am really looking at a cancer patient. I immediately called my hair-and-makeup artist and said, "Sweetie, you are going to really earn your money tomorrow."

I mean, it's shocking. Not to be vain, but I never realized how much your hair and your eyebrows and everything presented who you are until they're all gone. It's like somebody took an eraser and erased your face.

But through it all, I've got to tell you, I mean, 24 hours in, I said to myself, "Wait a minute. In the most strange but wonderful way, you just got an amazing opportunity dropped in your lap because you can choose not to be a victim, but to become an advocate. This is going to be your chance to carry on Dad's legacy." And that's what it was. It became this amazing gift and opportunity to me that I wouldn't necessarily have had if I hadn't been diagnosed with cancer.

From that moment on, it changed my whole journey through the treatment and recovery process, because I was a strong advocate. So I think it's changed my journey in the most positive way. It certainly changed the trajectory. Another thing, it changed the trajectory of my career. And I'm now trying to branch out and do a lot of other things, but in the end, if that little dash on my tombstone just represents what I did for cancer patients, I'm cool with that.

**MARY:**

I just can't help keep thinking how you have honored your dad in all you're doing. He must be so proud that you honor him this way.

**JOAN:**

Oh, thank you. I like to think that if he's up there now looking down, he's going to say, "You did it, Joanie. You took that baton, and you kept running."



# ADVOCATING THROUGH ART

*Local artist and cancer survivor uses her talents to demystify the cancer treatment process.*

STORY BY ALTHEA KASTELIC  
PHOTOS BY PETER GUYTON



“I’ve got to fix my hair!” laughs local artist Erin McGee Ferrell as her face comes into focus, ducking out of view from her zoom camera and tidily combing the vibrant red strands behind her ears. In 2019, McGee Ferrell was diagnosed with breast cancer and found that she carried the BRCA 2 gene mutation. She underwent a double mastectomy, radiation, an oophorectomy (surgical removal of the ovaries), and hormone therapy. She lost all of her hair, was bedridden for over a month, and continues to be monitored closely for any sign that her cancer has returned. Two years later, she has her hair back, is cancer free, and is working to use her skills as an artist and a researcher to advocate for cancer patients.

McGee Ferrell has always been an artist. As a toddler, she would stand in front of her Sesame Street-themed easel, a baby bottle balanced on the edge, clutching a paintbrush in her small hand, and paint for hours. When she moved from her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, to Seattle, Washington, in elementary school, she used art to cope with the change and began making paper dolls. Now 36 years later, after her double mastectomy surgery, she began making paper dolls again.

“I set up my studio with very light, little, tiny brushes, and things I could just do watercolors with. I would get out of bed and come down to my studio because I couldn’t really do anything else, and I would just sit in the studio and paint how I was feeling and how I was thinking,” she says. “I made the dolls for myself to visually speak about this strange experience I had just gone through on my cancer journey.” She describes the paper dolls, dubbed “Pirate Crew Paper Dolls,” as “a crew of lopped off, scarred, and tattooed women, unwillingly initiated and conscripted onto a storm-weathered voyage.” They are broken, she says, and at the same time “hardy, fierce, angry, and resilient.” They’re a creative aid. “This breast cancer educational tool,” she says, “is a humorous and simple visual guide for newly diagnosed patients.”

The inspiration to create the Pirate Paper Doll collection was borne out of the trauma McGee Ferrell says she experienced when she was diagnosed with cancer. “I literally felt like this big, padded football helmet descended on my head,” she says. “When [the doctor] said, ‘You have cancer,’ it was this literal feeling of this fog, these pillows coming over my head.”

Once someone is diagnosed with cancer, they can have as little as two weeks to get their affairs in order before they begin treatment. “You have to ask, ‘Am I going to keep my nipple or am I going to lose my nipple? Am I going to have my surgery in Maine or I’m going to go to Boston? Who are my surgeons going to be?’ You have to cancel all of your work and plans for the next year, rearrange your whole house because post-surgery because you can’t move your arms above your shoulders, and you also can’t lift anything over a pound for a month. You have to tell your mom and dad, and your kids, and your spouse, and all your friends and family that you have cancer. All of this has to happen within two weeks, and the whole time you now have this fog helmet descending on you and you can’t think about anything except ‘Oh. My. Gosh.’”



In order to understand and explain the development of brain fog after a cancer diagnosis, McGee Ferrell began working with neurologist Dr. Susan Wehry at the University of New England. “What happens is once that fog descends, and you get diagnosed with cancer,” McGee Ferrell says, “your thoughts [can] get hijacked.” It can become difficult or impossible to go into the normal thinking process—to think. “You’re in fight or flight mode.”

As a patient advocate, McGee Ferrell has made it her mission to alleviate as much confusion and difficulty as she can from the cancer treatment process. Simplicity, she says, is key. “A lot of times, patients don’t really understand what’s going to happen to them,” says McGee Ferrell. “I’m very interested in the PTSD that happens at cancer diagnoses.” Sometimes, she finds, women can more easily understand what’s going to happen to them with drawings, videos, visual translations of medical jargon, and, yes, paper dolls.

So much of the cancer treatment process is unknown to the average person, McGee Ferrell says. “I had always heard of breast cancer, but when someone says they have fake breasts or they are getting their breasts removed or they are losing a nipple, [I think] ‘What does this mean?’ Surgical drains, drain jackets, breast reconstruction; all of these are aspects of the cancer treatment process, but are difficult to understand when they are being described verbally, McGee Ferrell says. “We need more visual language in our health system.”

Although she loves her work, life as an artist can be a challenge. “I’ve always had to justify being an artist,” she says. “I feel like the only way artists can be taken seriously is to justify the importance of what we do alongside technology and medicine.” As a professor of 2D art at the University of New England, McGee Ferrell, works to enmesh art into science, research, and the world of health and wellness. “One of the things I integrate into my teaching is a whole theme called evidence-based design,” McGee Ferrell says. It means there is scientific data, “showing that if I am in a hospital room and I’m a patient, and I am surrounded by a window as well as pictures of nature, I am going to require less pain medication and heal faster, therefore having a shorter hospital stay, and I won’t cost the hospital as much money, if my surroundings are beautiful and full of visual things.”

McGee Ferrell has not only used her artistic talents to convey her experiences to patients, but to also try and make doctors understand what cancer treatment can feel like. For the most part, doctors, nurses, and technical staff do an amazing job at treatment and care giving, but sometimes a patient’s experience is negative. For example, after five months of intensive treatment, McGee Ferrell arrived at Mercy Hospital in Portland to get a port-a-cath (a mechanism to administer medicine) removed from her neck. It was supposed to be a celebratory day, her final cancer surgical procedure. Upon arrival, she learned that all of the operating rooms were in use, so the surgery would take place



should change this for people, and we'd like for you to possibly be on an advocate board." However, after their conversation, McGee Ferrell says, she never heard from the vice president again.

McGee Ferrell continues to create art to help people understand cancer and make the treatment process more accessible and understandable. She is currently working on a collaborative travelling art show project for the National Cancer Institute and is continuing to work on research about the brain's response to trauma with Dr. Susan Wehry. Now that she has her range of motion restored and is healed from surgery, McGee Ferrell has also returned to her primary art medium: large-canvas oil paintings. "With undulating texture, I expose vulnerable ground with confident thick strokes," she shares in her artist statement, "using oil paint to build figurative narration with ferocious determination. Honesty of discipline and joy of play are my truths."

McGee Ferrell's work has been motivated by her personal lived experiences. However, she says, after learning that her daughter also has the BRCA 2 gene mutation, her understanding of her mission changed. In a video she filmed for a presentation last year, McGee Ferrell stands outside on a busy street corner, a bright blue sky overhead, and a broad smile on her face. "Hi! I'm Erin McGee Ferrell coming to you from Wrigley Field, Chicago, and I'm here to talk about my Pirate Crew Paper Doll project," she says. "It's pertinent that I'm talking to you from Chicago because I'm visiting my daughter, who recently discovered that she is one of my three children with the BRCA 2 gene mutation."

"I didn't have a purpose for this project other than to self-express what I was going through," McGee Ferrell continues. "Then, I started hearing from others. They wanted to pass it on to their friends. Now, I realize that I'm making it for my daughter. Whether I'm in Chicago or Portland, Maine, I have a story to tell, and I think it helps others."

*For more information about Erin McGee Ferrell and her work, you can visit [www.ArtistAMERICAN.com](http://www.ArtistAMERICAN.com), [www.PirateCrewPaperDolls.com](http://www.PirateCrewPaperDolls.com), and [artistamerican](https://www.instagram.com/artistamerican) on Instagram. All of the Pirate Crew Paper Dolls, as well as other works, are available for purchase on her Etsy site: [www.etsy.com/ca/shop/ArtistAMERICANcom](http://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/ArtistAMERICANcom).*

in an X-ray room. It was hot, claustrophobic, and the doctor was half an hour late. When he did arrive, she says, he was on a phone call. And the removal of the mechanism was excruciating. "The whole experience was miserable," she says. "[The doctor] was distracted, and I felt like he had no empathy for me."

Not one to stand idly by when she sees a problem, McGee Ferrell decided to act. After her experience, she went home and painted, explaining through brush strokes the emotions she could not convey with words. She painted the room, the make-shift operating table, the distracted doctor, the kind nurse that held her hand, and her legs, flailing out in pain. "I showed it to the vice president of the hospital," she says, "and talked about what a miserable experience it was." At the time, the vice president's response was enthusiastic, says McGee Ferrell. "She said, 'This is so important, and we need to hear about this, and we



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# A Conversation with DR. VALENA WRIGHT,

Specialist in Gynecologic Oncology and  
Author of *It's Time You Knew: The Power of Your Choices to Prevent Women's Cancer*

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

**V**alena Wright, MD, is a board certified gynecologic oncologist at Beth Israel Lahey Health and Hospital in Boston, and an expert in women's wellness, with over 25 years of experience. She is an Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor of OB/GYN at Boston University School of Medicine.

She is also a dual U.S. and Canadian citizen, an "empty nester, and mother of three," as she puts it, and a regular visitor to the place she grew up, Prince Edward Island.

Dr. Wright has written a new book, *It's Time You Knew: The Power of Your Choices to Prevent Women's Cancer*, published in February 2021. Valena wrote this book after the death of her older sister from ovarian cancer. Her goal is to share information about how cancer prevention measures can help women avoid a cancer diagnosis altogether. This book is all about how to decrease your risk of women's cancer through daily choices and how to protect your precious health.

It was a pleasure to talk with Dr. Valena Wright and to learn about preventative health steps for women. As she might put it, "It's Time We Knew"!

**MARY:**

You grew up in Prince Edward Island, I have read. How often do you get back there?

**VALENA:**

Yes, I grew up in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. My family has been there since it was settled. I'm the only one who left and came to the United States.

I spend every summer there with my family, my extended family. It's beautiful. I do that route, Highway 9, which wraps through Maine up to Calais, to the border. I've been going on that road for probably, I don't know, at least 30 years, once a year. I used to travel that road when it was a dirt road. I know Maine well.



**MARY:**

With your busy practice, how did you come to write the book, *It's Time You Knew: The Power of Your Choices to Prevent Women's Cancer*?

**VALENA:**

Despite all my medical training, I'm treating cancers that I know could have been prevented, and I firmly believe that prevention is better than cure. It's actually that quotation—"Prevention is better than cure"—that is part of the original Hippocratic Oath and the modern-day Hippocratic Oath.

If you look at cancer statistics, it's estimated that about 48 percent of cancers could be prevented, meaning we have screening tests, or that there are early warning signs that people could recognize and act on. If they came in to get treated when something was either precancerous or a very early stage, it could be curable.

A lot of the times the stories of the women in my operating room, their stories of what happened, are difficult to hear. Sometimes, they don't know the risk factors, or sometimes they didn't recognize something was wrong. I felt by telling these stories in my book, it might have an impact. It might help to change how women thought about their health. If women could be more proactive, take more positive actions about their health, they could potentially avoid many challenges, such as those faced by the women I tell about in the book.

Everyone gets really excited about the latest cancer breakthrough, but there are some really common effective steps and changes that people can implement themselves.

I think *It's Time You Knew* is a really timely book. If women are proactive, not

afraid to speak up, and they go in to see a doctor when they need to, it could potentially save their life.

**MARY:**

What would you say are most important things that women can do for prevention?

**VALENA:**

It depends on their age. First, screening. That's number one. Know what screening tests you should have, based on your age, like a mammogram, a Pap test, the HPV test, and colonoscopy. One of the newer screening tests, that a lot of people aren't aware of, is lung cancer screening, where, based on your risk factors, you get a low-dose CT scan.

Make sure you go to your screening tests. I think people sometimes have this idea that if they have no symptoms that everything is fine, and "Why should I go to the doctor?" That's a mindset, and it usually involves a little bit of denial. I get that it's not always easy to access care. Sometimes there are financial barriers. But least women should know that there are tests out there and pursue them as best they are able to.

Second, women should know the symptoms. Unfortunately, as we get older, we do accumulate health risks and problems that we don't have when we're young. Uterine cancer is usually diagnosed after menopause, and it's pretty easy to recognize because you get post-menopausal bleeding. If you've been a year with no menstruation to then have any bleeding is abnormal. That should trigger a visit to your doctor—even spotting once, that's out of the blue and you don't know why it's happened—you really should see your primary care or gynecologist. It's only about 10 percent of the time it will turn out to be cancer. There's other things that could cause that. But why ignore it? Just because it's one episode and it didn't happen again doesn't mean to forget about it. Our GYN organs are deep in the pelvis, and they don't always give us symptoms when something's wrong. We have to know that when we get a symptom, it's abnormal and it's worth a visit to your doctor.

Third, know the risk factors. The most common woman's cancers that I treat (not including breast cancer because breast cancer's treated in general surgery in this country)

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are uterine cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, and vulvar vaginal cancers. The most common cancer of these is uterine cancer.

Many women are unaware that obesity links directly to uterine cancer. It is a risk factor for that type of cancer. Even being 15 pounds over your ideal body weight will increase your cancer risk, and it goes up for every 15 pounds over. More than half of the uterine cancers that I treat are obesity related. It's not necessarily a direct cause of cancer. It's a linear correlation.

Obesity is an epidemic in the United States. It affects women three times more than men. It's estimated that by 2030 two-thirds of the population is going to be obese. Maintaining an ideal body weight has so many health benefits. There are steps that you can take every day to improve your health in this regard. Obesity is complex because nutrition comes into it. The importance of regular exercise comes into it. You need a holistic approach because no one is going to be motivated just to try and prevent cancer down the road. But over a lifetime, our habits of taking good care of our health can make a huge impact.

The one last thing I wanted to say about uterine cancer, before we go on, is that because of the obesity epidemic, it's really sad that there's a shift, and the cohort of women with the fastest rise in the incidence of uterine cancer is the group of women between 25 and 40. That is astounding because usually only 5 percent of uterine cancer is diagnosed under age 40. Now uterine cancer in that age group is dramatically increasing. It's harder to diagnose because when you're 25 or 40 you're still menstruating. You may have abnormal bleeding from other causes, from a side effect of a birth control pill. And you might dismiss it. It's really important in that age group not to ignore symptoms and to make sure everything is fine.

**MARY:**

How do you view exercise as an aspect of preventative medicine?

**VALENA:**

Movement is kind of a new medicine prescription. People do better when they are able to establish some habits where they're moving. When patients come to me in the office, and I ask them about exercise the first thing they say is they're too busy, and then the second thing they say is, "Well, I get a lot of exercise at work." Or, "I have grandkids, and I chase my grandkids around." But, that's not really taking care of you yourself. That's doing your daily activities.

We know that sitting is like the new smoking. If you sit for more than six hours a day you increase your cancer risk, independent of obesity. It's really important that on a daily basis we're living in the now *and* we're thinking about our health because it will pay dividends in our retirement.

As physicians, we have guidelines that are based on the body mass index, or BMI. If it's over 30 that's going to trigger a different evaluation than if your body mass index is normal, just because we know that the risk of uterine cancer is greater for those with the higher BMI.

So, knowing these points, maybe you will be a little bit more active, as needed. It's good for your overall health. It's not just a fear of cancer that I'm trying to get across. It's just that life should be fun and filled with joy. We should be doing things that take care of ourselves and make us feel good.

When you ask people why they exercise, for example, men often answer they exercise because it makes them feel better. Women often answer they exercise in preparation for an event, what with all of the social messaging and what not. They will exercise to lose weight so they'll

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look good for their wedding or for some occasion that is important to them. I'm not dismissing it. I am saying that by having good health, we just feel better. If we feel better, we have more energy to do the things that are important to us in our own lives.

When I say exercise I don't mean for people to have to go spend money. Even if you go for a walk for 5 or 10 minutes, and you've never done that before, that is good. The walk impacts you because it can improve your mood. It can improve your mobility. Because we sit so much, we start to get stiffness in our joints. Our muscles become somewhat atrophied or contracted. That pull, or unnatural alignment, can really make people uncomfortable.

**MARY:**

I've noticed that some people are naturally thin and others are not. Is it just calories in, calories out?

**VALENA:**

No, it's not just calories in, calories out. There's a lot of socioeconomic, environmental, and genetic factors in weight. It's complex. It's not easy. If it were easy and we had the answer, we wouldn't have this obesity epidemic. It's not easy.

But one thing that people don't realize is the impact of sleep. If you're not getting adequate sleep then your hormone levels are out of whack and your cortisol level is high. With that stress response in your body it's just extremely hard to lose weight. Most of the time, if you need to lose weight you first have to look at sleep deprivation and you have to make sure you're getting at least six to seven hours of sleep a night. Because without that, your hormones are going to sort of battle against your efforts.

People argue and debate this question all the time: what's more important, the nutrition and calories, or the exercise? Again, I think it's not one thing. We have to have a more integrated approach. Because yes, portion size, not overeating for emotional reasons, all of those things matter. But it's not just one thing.

Advances in exercise research have shown that even if you exercise for a very short time, but you get your heart rate up, it can have the same benefits as exercising for a much longer time, like 45 minutes or an hour.

And for developing healthy habits, it's important to be consistent and know that you're going to feel better, because you really will. It takes about 30 days of being consistent to see the change.

**MARY:**

Can you please speak about your sisters—how cancer has affected your close family?

**VALENA:**

For my older sister—Debbie was her name—it was really sad. Her diagnosis of ovarian cancer. That's my profession, and ovarian cancer is something I treat and see daily. My sister was living in Germany at the time she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and came home to Canada. She received great care. But unfortunately the treatments didn't work. She had such a positive outlook throughout her cancer journey and battle.

When any woman is diagnosed with ovarian cancer, it's an indication for genetic testing because up to 20 percent of women with ovarian cancer will have an inherited gene mutation that has predisposed them to cancer. I have two other sisters. Knowing what I knew, and my sister's diagnosis, there are actions that we could take, as sisters. I had risk-reducing surgery, which means I had fallopian tube and ovaries

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removed because for ovarian cancer there are no screening tests that work. People have this false belief that you can screen for ovarian cancer, but we can't. Even if you do an ultrasound and a blood test called CA125 every six months, we miss ovarian cancer even in that six-month screening interval.

So, we don't have an effective screening test for ovarian cancer. But we do know that if you have a gene mutation or a strong family history, having your fallopian tubes and ovaries surgically removed will dramatically decrease your risk. I had surgery and everything was fine. My youngest sister was reluctant because she was younger, not close to menopause, and didn't want to have premature menopause. She eventually, after me being very persistent, decided to go through with surgery, and she ended up being diagnosed with the earliest stage of fallopian tube cancer.

I was shocked when we got that pathology report back. She didn't require chemotherapy, and she's fine. She's cured. It was a really lucky finding. In recent years research has shown that a lot of ovarian cancer doesn't start in the ovary. It actually starts in the fallopian tube. The site in the fallopian tube can be so tiny, microscopic. It's not going to be picked up by an ultrasound, or a blood test that has a tumor marker. In the earliest stages, it just can't be picked up. In my younger sister's case, her having the surgery prevented her from developing a fallopian tube or ovarian cancer later in life.

So, it can be appropriate to remove the tube and/or ovary, especially after menopause. I think that's a really important take-home for women who have finished having their children and are considering their contraceptive options. Also, if your cancer risk is elevated because of your family history, you should ask if there is any screening test or genetic testing that you could have done or if there are things that you could do to decrease your risk.

#### MARY:

Many women go to doctors who seem in the "try to fix it after it's already in a difficult stage" way of thinking. Where can they find preventative help?

#### VALENA:

That's a good question. More and more medical centers are starting to develop programs called lifestyle medicine. At Lahey, we have a program called Lifestyle Medicine that focuses on nutrition, weight management, and exercise. The best place to start is with your primary care physician and to use community resources. For programs to work and for you to stick with them, you really want community-based care. People seeking to lose weight use Weight Watchers a lot, for example. That's one of the most successful weight loss programs. You need to find activities and programs you enjoy.

There are a lot of resources online. The American Cancer Society has a page online that talks about lifestyle and interventions that you can take to improve your health.

#### MARY:

Thank you for sharing your perspective, information, and experiences. And for focusing on preventative steps, so people can reduce their risk of getting a life-threatening diagnosis.

#### VALENA:

It's really my pleasure. It's a way to honor my sister, and I hope that women are inspired to action—we can all do more to take good care of ourselves. •



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# HOMELESS TO HOTELIER: Tracey Whitten

*"Pure grit" needed, when turning life goals into reality.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOY HOLLOWELL

**A**t 18 years old, Tracey Whitten was a freshman majoring in business at the prestigious Rutgers University in New Jersey. She was also homeless. "I did not have a healthy relationship with my parents, and so I broke ties with them when I legally became an adult," Tracey explains.

Her lowest point came during Christmas, when students were told they couldn't stay in the dorms during break. "So where am I going to go?" Tracey remembers asking herself. "I have no money, no family."

A friend of hers was getting ready to move into a new apartment, but at the last minute changed his mind. He gave his key to Tracey. "So, there I was, basically hiding out in this empty apartment for 10 days between Christmas and New Year's with no heat and no electricity," she says. "It's a significant part of my life."

That summer she headed to Bar Harbor, determined to make as much money as possible. Tracey also decided to put college on hold. "I found out that if I took a year off and then filed as an independent on my taxes, I could go back to school and apply for financial aid without needing to be under my parents."

During that time Tracey heard about a Harvard University business study. The gist of it states that just 3 percent of those surveyed have long term goals. Thirty years later, that same 3 percent has 98 percent



Tracey Whitten manages a core staff of about 40 between the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center, and University Inn Academic Suites in Orono. *Courtesy Joy Hollowell*



of the country's wealth. Tracey realized she needed a long-term goal. "But I'm an 18-year-old kid [at that point], not a dime to my name, not a care in the world, what the hell am I going to do with my life?" she recalls thinking.

Tracey ended up working for Tom Walsh. Walsh owned Ocean Properties, a hospitality development company with more than a hundred hotels around the country, including the Bar Harbor Regency. Tracey was impressed by Walsh's success, as well as what the hotel industry offered in terms of a career. "I decided that by the time I was 35, I was going to buy a hotel."

She knew the first step was going back to college. Tracey enrolled as an accounting major at Husson University in Bangor. "I was front and center in all of my classes," she remembers. "I would actually target smart people and try to spend as much time with them as possible, so that I could constantly download their knowledge."

Tracey graduated from Husson in 1992 as salutatorian of her class. She received offers from three of what were considered the "Big 6" accounting firms in the nation at that time. Tracey chose Coopers and Lybrand, which had offices in Portland, Maine. "I realized that if I wanted to be smart, I needed to be around smart people, and these people were the smartest," she says. "Because now I'm 22, and 35 is coming."

While at Coopers and Lybrand, Tracey acquired some well-known clients, including L.L. Bean, Jackson Lab, Central Maine Power, and Chris Hutchins. Hutchins' family owned Dead River Company. He went on to found Alternative Energy, Incorporated (AEI), the largest biomass electrical-generation developer and operator in the country. "Chris was a genius," says Tracey, "always ahead of the curve. I knew I wanted to work for him."

And she did. Hired first as Hutchins' controller, Tracey would become the CFO of AEI within a year. "We bought \$300 million in purchase agreements for power plants," she says. "That's a lot of money coming into Bangor, Maine. Then we sold those power plants to Canada and took in another \$300 million—all in a matter of three years. I was the one working the deals. It was some really cool stuff."

But it was also corporate America, at a time when glass ceilings were a real threat for women in the business world. "Even though I

was a peach to everyone, love vibration always, I was also the CFO, and some men didn't like the power that I had," Tracey remembers. "And they made it known."

She ended up developing Grand Mal seizures. "I knew I had to leave. I had been poor before, I had been homeless before—that didn't scare me. Losing my soul did."

Ironically, the timing couldn't have been better. The University Motor Inn in Orono was for sale. Turns out it was one of the first properties owned by Tom Walsh. Tracey knew this work at this place was her calling. "But it was barely breathing at the time," she says. "It was a dump."

Bank after bank said "no" to lending Tracey the \$1 million she needed to buy the hotel. "My friends kept saying to me that it's not worth it. But I wouldn't listen to them. I had a plan, and it was going to happen."

Finally, Machias Savings Bank decided to take a chance on her. "The loan rate was high, and it needed to be HUD guaranteed, but I got it," says Tracey. She was 31 years old, four years ahead of achieving her long-term goal.

It wouldn't be easy. Tracey ended up taking out a second mortgage on her home, a \$50,000 cash advance on a credit card, and cashing in her 401K. "I bet the farm," she says, laughing. "I didn't care. This is what I was supposed to do." She spent the next 15 years rebuilding the hotel into what is now—the University Inn Academic Suites.

And Tracey wasn't done yet. "I always knew that banquet space fills rooms, so I needed to build banquet space." She had blueprints ready to go for a conference center right on the University Inn property. Then, the phone rang.

"The caller says to me that Danny Lafayette is selling the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center, and he thinks you should buy it," recalls Tracey. "Here was my biggest competitor in town now offering to sell that business to



Tracey Whitten planned to build a conference center in this area of University Inn Academic Suites until she was provided with the opportunity to purchase the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center just up the road.

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me. I hung up the phone, looked over at my accountant, and said, 'I'm going to buy the Black Bear Inn.'

The owner of two successful hotels and a conference center in Orono is often asked to share her expertise, in particular with younger people. "I always tell them: stack the deck. Every person you meet along the way, counts," she says. "They are all a brick in your foundation of life."

Tracey's own foundation would be rattled to the core during the pandemic. She was forced to temporarily close the University Inn Academic Suites while working to keep the Black Bear Inn afloat. "Everything just dried up," recalls Tracey. "There was no business. There were a lot of tears those first few months."

Then, a unique opportunity presented itself. The state of Maine contacted Tracey to see if she and her team would be willing to house First Responders at the Black Bear Inn—people who needed to quarantine. "I knew I couldn't make this kind of decision by myself," she says. "I wanted all of my staff to have a say in this."

After meeting with the town's fire chief to quell any concerns about COVID-19, they agreed with safety being the first priority. Staff was able to section off a part of the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center to become a hub for fire fighters, police officers, ambulance workers, and any other first responders who may have been exposed to the coronavirus and needed to quarantine.

Tracey remembers that Easter Sunday, watching a fire fighter guest visiting with his family. "His wife was sitting in a lawn chair outside while the two of them talked through a window. Meanwhile, their two kids are riding bikes around the parking lot," she recalls. "It was surreal but also beautiful to watch."

Now 51, Tracey is looking forward to her next life goals. Buying another hotel is not one of them. "I sprinted to get here," she says. "I mean, I really ran hard. And now, I'm ready to take all that energy, all those life lessons, and use them to heal people in a holistic way. I love having my hardships inspire others. It's a really magical moment when I see that happen. I think my story gives people hope, and we need that right now." •

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| SHE DOES WHAT? |

# Ashley Rutherford: Running an Ice Cream Boat, Having Triplets, and More!



BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

Ice cream sandwiches, anyone? Klondike Bars? Ashley Rutherford's company, Sea Snacks LLC, is kind of like an ice cream truck on the water. In the Portland Harbor area, she and helpers motor out and sell frozen treats to people in their boats, both the leisure and working variety. For Ashley, 40, it is a part-time job to supplement a regular job on land. But it is remarkable that she does it at all . . . since she recently had triplets! Two girls and a boy have joined the family, with IVF and the marvels of modern medicine playing a helping hand.

I so enjoyed my wide-ranging conversation with this wonderful new mom. What great spirit and energy she has, with appealing optimism, perseverance, and hu-

mor in the mix. I appreciated her sharing her thoughts not just about the summery ice cream business, but also about major life experiences.

**MARY:**

How did you happen to get into the ice cream boating business?

**ASHLEY:**

I know, right? Well, I grew up in Yarmouth and graduated from Yarmouth. I've been an avid boater for most of my adult life. Boating is kind of an expensive hobby, or a habit, I would say, so one day, I'm sitting on my boat, thinking, "What do people like? What would people need? What kind of service could I do that would



Photos courtesy Ashley Rutherford

be relatively easy but also fun and help pay for my boating habit?" And I thought, "What if I sold ice cream because no boaters bring ice cream—nobody has a freezer. Everyone brings sandwiches, drinks, and chips but not that." I figured maybe it would be like a little novelty, so I did it. Then it's kind of taken off, which is awesome.

**MARY:**

How does your business work and how long have you been doing it?

**ASHLEY:**

I go out on the boat, a 24-foot Aquasport, and motor around the bay. I go out from about 2 p.m. to 5 or 6 p.m., depending on how nice the weather is or how busy it is.

But I've found that after lunch is the best time. I go through a lot of mooring fields, like Great Diamond Island in Casco Bay, in the coves where everyone is rafted up and sitting. I have a big flag, and I call out, "Ice cream!" (Or people can arrange an appointment.)

To keep the ice cream frozen, I use dry ice, which usually lasts 24 hours. I put it in a cooler. The ice cream is rock solid. It's colder than your freezer, dry ice is. I go to Vessel Services generally in the morning, and I buy a couple of pounds of dry ice.

Everything is pre-packaged. I sell Klondike bars, Drumsticks, ice cream sandwiches, strawberry shortcakes, Choco Taco, Bomb Pops, all kinds of ice cream treats—pretty much everything an ice cream truck has, I sell.

My company is called Sea Snacks LLC. I've been doing it now for five or six years, so people generally remember me. This season would be my sixth, but I didn't do it last year because I was pregnant, so I decided to take the summer off.

**MARY:**

Where do you leave from?

**ASHLEY:**

I have a slip in South Portland where I leave my boat, so I'll go all the way from the Fore River to downtown Portland, and sometimes I sell ice cream right in the harbor to lobster men or whoever. When I'm motoring around sometimes people wave me down or I'll scoot by and they're like, "What are you doing?" And I say, "I sell ice cream." And they say, "Oh my gosh, I'll buy some." It's kind of random.

**MARY:**

Do you go out alone or do you have a helper?

**ASHLEY:**

I have helpers, yes. I don't go out alone. It's a little tough to fend off boats. I usually dock up to a boat with our fenders down, and people tie off, so it's like I'm steering, and I'm also talking and selling. It's kind of hard to do everything, so generally it is two people. Sometimes friends will go, wanting the boat ride and to get the experience, and then they get a free ice cream every shift, so it's all volunteer.

**MARY::**

Do you have another year-round profession, to go along with this job?

**ASHLEY:**

Yes, I have a full-time job. I've had one for my whole life as an adult. The ice cream boat is more like a weekend job. I'm a practice manager at a psychiatric office in Portland. I moonlight with the ice cream boat.

**MARY:**

You mentioned having been pregnant last summer. Can you share how that went?

**ASHLEY:**

Well, I had triplets! I know, my goodness! The triplets came about because we did in vitro fertilization (IVF). We



*Top: The triplets show support for Ashley's ice cream business, Sea Snacks LLC. Center: Nothing beats ice cream on the water on a hot summer day. Bottom: The triplets looking good in life jackets!*

had a total of seven embryos, and we tried two at one point, and then two again, and they both all ended in really early losses. We had three left, and I was thinking, “Gosh, it’s expensive to do these [procedures].” I was 38 and a half at that time, and my doctor said, “I’m fine with doing all three because you’ll probably get one, you maybe will get two, but at least, most likely, one of these will work.” We went ahead and did all three, and then they all three took. That is exactly what happened. It’s rare, but it happened. My doctor was so shocked. He said, “There is a one percent chance that this happens, just so you know.” Meanwhile, I said, “How am I going to have triplets? Is this crazy? Oh, my gosh!”

Yeah, I was a little terrified. I feel like it was one of those things where I was in shock, and then I said, “All right, okay. We can do it, it’s fine, it’s good.” Now people say, “How do you do that? How do you do this? How do you guys do it?” And I say, “You just do it because you don’t know anything else.” Obviously, you do it, and you love them all and think, “How would I do it without all of them?” Do you know what I mean?

**MARY:**

Yes, I do. Your family feels right. Now, did you have problems getting pregnant, being older?

**ASHLEY:**

Well, I’m married to a woman—we got married last October—so I guess age wasn’t really it. It was more like I didn’t have a husband. So, I don’t know how to say it in a way where I’m like . . . Well, a lot of people, of course, do IVF. I used my eggs and donated sperm, making the embryos which were implanted.

**MARY:**

Amazing. So, they’re all biologically connected to you and to this one other person. Do you know who the father is?

**ASHLEY:**

Well, there’s a profile that you choose from. I don’t know him, but I know a lot of his history, his family history. They do personality testing, and they provide pictures, from childhood. They do genetic testing and, as far as health goes, check things like kidney, heart, and brain.

**MARY:**

May I ask what factors you looked for, in selecting?

**ASHLEY:**

For me, smarts is important. His SAT scores were almost perfect. I thought, “Wow, he’s so smart.” I said, “Perfect.” They test for things that they could potentially be a carrier for. This particular one had nothing at all, no anything. So, I would say actually health and smarts were the two things. He’s also really cute so we were like, “Well, this helps.” They show you the person’s picture as a kid, not as an adult.

**MARY:**

How did the delivery and pregnancy go for you?

**ASHLEY:**

My pregnancy was amazing. I had absolutely no problems. I had no morning sickness, I had no cravings, I was completely normal. I went to 34 weeks and a day, which is really long for triplets. I had the C-section. They were great. All came out weighing great weights, and they barely needed to go to the NICU for more than 48 hours. It was amazing. I lost a little bit of blood during surgery, a little more than they anticipated, but I was fine after. Obviously, I’m still here.

**MARY:**

How did your wife feel about all this?

**ASHLEY:**

She’s a little more nervous than I am. I’m a little more easy-going and a “fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants” person. She was definitely worried about me and the surgery. But with the triplets, she’s just said, “Of course we’re going to have triplets. Okay!” We were both onboard because what are you going to do after you’ve tried for so long? You don’t think it’s even going to happen, but then it does, and you say, “Okay, well, here we are!”

**MARY:**

You were really committed to having a child, it sounds like?

**ASHLEY:**

Yes. The thing is that when I thought about my life as a kid, a young person, I always thought I would have a house full of kids and be always busy and doing all kinds of sports and running all around and having a really full, nice life, with people

coming over all the time. I love that about living. As I got older, I was like, “Maybe I’m only going to have one kid, I guess, because of where am I. I don’t really want to do it alone. You’re in relationships, then you’re not, and then, “Okay, I’m in my mid-thirties now.” And you’re thinking, “I’ll just have one.”

**MARY:**

What are their names, if you don’t mind me asking?

**ASHLEY:**

Oh, sure. There’s two girls and a boy. The girls are Crew and Dillon. The boy is Boone.

We think they’re cute, obviously! They’re funny. They’re so much cuter in person than pictures.

**MARY:**

Who takes care of the children when you are working full-time?

**ASHLEY:**

We have a nanny. A good friend of ours is also our nanny, so she does it. Then Stacy will do it one day because she works four 10-hour shifts. COVID was actually beneficial for us because we both got to do more at-home stuff, and it was helpful to be around more.

My mom babysat them a little bit last night because we went over to a friend’s house. After they were asleep. It’s hard for one person to handle three, but we do it, of course, because we’re their parents.

**MARY:**

How old are they now?

**ASHLEY:**

They’re five and a half months, pretty much today. We are into it now, I know. We just took them for a stroller walk, and I was like, “Oh, boy.” We were okay, but it was kind of drizzly.

**MARY:**

Everybody must stop you.

**ASHLEY:**

Everybody. They’re like, “Twins? Oh Wow—Triplets?”

*For more information about Ashley, Sea Snacks, and the triplets, please visit their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/Sea-Snacks-LLC-317551365086709](http://www.facebook.com/Sea-Snacks-LLC-317551365086709).*

# Theresa Secord

## A Penobscot Basket Artist Keeps Tradition Alive

BY WANDA CURTIS



Top: Theresa Secord's baskets have been on display throughout the country. *Photos courtesy Theresa Secord*  
Bottom left: This barrel basket made by Theresa Secord now resides in a permanent collection located at Colby College Museum of Art.  
Bottom right: Theresa Secord made this basket for the Sante Fe Indian Market. It's a replica of a glove box made by her great-grandmother more than a century ago. *Photo by Steve Wewerka*

The centuries-old proverb, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime,” still holds true today.

One skill—basketmaking—has provided functional containers and income for Native Americans for many years. Baskets have been woven for hunting, fishing, gathering crops, and even decorative purposes. Like quilting and some other crafts, however, basketmaking almost became obsolete. By the early 1990s, there were fewer than a dozen practicing basketmakers in Maine under 50 years old.

Today, through the efforts of Penobscot basket artist and advocate Theresa Secord and the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, there are more than 200 basketmakers in Maine. Their average age is 40 years old. Secord was the first U.S. citizen to receive the Prize for Creativity in Rural Life from the Women’s World Summit Foundation, granted at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The prize was for helping to revive traditional basketmaking among Native American tribal peoples and teaching them how to become self-sufficient.

Secord was introduced to the art of basketry as a child while visiting her grandparents on Indian Island. She grew up in the Portland area but enjoyed visiting relatives and learning more about the culture. Secord admired her ancestors not only for their proficiency in making baskets but also for their ability to persevere in difficult circumstances and earn a living selling baskets. Her great grandmother, Philomene Saulis Nelson, was a well-known weaver who sold baskets on Indian Island.

“I admire the resilience of my ancestor basketmakers, especially my great grandmother, who actively practiced economic self-sufficiency as an Indigenous woman entrepreneur,” Secord said.

Although Secord was interested in basketry as a youth, she decided to pursue a career in geology. However, her life took a different turn when she accepted a position as staff geologist for the Penobscot Nation on Indian Island. It was there that she became acquainted with the well-known Penobscot basketmaker and speaker Madeline Tomer Shay. For five years, Madeline Tomer Shay instructed Secord in the tribal language and mentored her in the fundamentals of weaving baskets.

“Ours is a community art form in that the mentoring and the economy surrounding the traditional material’s access take place within the Wabanaki community,” Secord said.

### MAINE INDIAN BASKETMAKERS ALLIANCE

In 1993, a group of tribal basketmakers from the four federally recognized tribes in Maine expressed concern about the declining number of basketmakers among the younger generation. Secord assisted them in founding the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance (MIIBA) to help preserve their traditional basketmaking practices through mentoring and workshops.

According to the Native Cultures and Arts Foundation website, MIIBA programs have included a 10-year-long traditional arts apprenticeship program in which apprenticeships



Theresa's Son Caleb with a braid of sweet grass. He's one of the next generation that she's mentored in basket weaving to keep the tradition alive. *Photo courtesy Theresa Secord*



Lauren Good Day  
*Photo courtesy First People's Fund*



Theresa Secord with her niece Shannon Secord, whom she mentored in basketmaking. *Photo courtesy Theresa Secord*



Theresa Secord held training sessions for Native American artists at the Red Lake Nation reservation in Minnesota in conjunction with the First People's Fund. It was one of the many sites across the U.S. where she worked with emerging artists. *Photo courtesy Theresa Secord*

were awarded to basketmakers and also a series of tribal community basketmaking workshops rotated through reservation communities. Mentors instructed youth in the process of making baskets, from the gathering of materials to the weaving of a basket.

### BUILDING A BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE

First People's Fund reports that approximately 40 percent of Native Americans earn income from arts- and culture-based practices. First People's Fund is an organization whose purpose is to help artists in tribal communities access critical resources they need to succeed. Secord has worked with First People's Fund to build a better infrastructure for tribal artists. She has traveled to tribal nations across the U.S. to coach emerging artists and small art business owners. She has conducted trainings on Indian reservations in Minnesota, Washington state, Alaska, Hawaii, South Dakota, and upstate New York.

"Most of my trainings take place at large rural Indian reservations," said Secord. "The largest was the 1.2-million-acre Colville Confederated Tribes in Washington state, near Grand Coulee Dam."

One of the next generation artists trained by Secord is Lauren Good Day. She is now a trainer herself and a successful entrepreneur actively marketing her artwork (pictured in the photo). She is also involved with indigenous fashions.

### PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS

In addition to the Prize for Creativity in Rural Life awarded by the Women's World Summit Foundation, Secord has received numerous other prestigious awards. The National Endowment for the Arts bestowed upon her the National Heritage Fellowship at the 2016 Tribal Nations Conference at the White House (an annual meeting held between U.S. presidents and tribal leaders to discuss economic, health, and cultural issues affecting tribes).

Earlier this year, Colby College in Waterville presented an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree to Secord. She's a member of the Colby College Museum of Art Board of Governors. She said that Colby featured the first standalone Wabanaki art exhibition ever to be presented in an art museum. Some museums have exhibited individual Wabanaki pieces as part of a mixed collection, but Colby was the first to present a Wabanaki standalone collection, Secord said.

In June 2021, Secord was among 13 "culture bearers" selected for the Luce Indigenous Knowledge Fellowship, which is a program created in 2019 to honor intellectual Native leaders. She was the recipient of a \$75,000 cash award and will have access to educational resources for training and professional development. She will work with an apprentice demonstrating ash and sweetgrass basketry. She will also organize Wabanaki basketry terms into a written document for use in tribal communities and help to preserve the Wabanaki language for generations to come.

### FUTURE PLANS

Regarding other plans for the future, Secord said the current pandemic has caused her to re-evaluate her life. One of her top priorities, she said, is ensuring sure that her son Caleb is thoroughly trained in all aspects of Penobscot basketmaking to carry on the tradition. She has also been focusing more on her own creative art expression and marketing her work, which recently included participating in a virtual market. She won first-place ribbons for her basketry at the Santa Fe Indian Market, the Eiteljorg Indian Market in Indianapolis, and the Heard Museum Indian Fair and Market in Phoenix.

### WEATHERING ADVERSITY

Secord has been actively involved in educating the public about the invasion of the Emerald Ash Borer Beetle into Maine. The beetle, which originated in Asia, is a serious threat to the ash trees used by many Native American basket makers.

"What is in Maine's favor is that the ash trees do not grow here in large contiguous forests, like they do in the Midwest, so the spread is not as easy," said Secord. "The foresters tell us there will be pockets of ash that will survive the invasion."

In response to the threat of the Emerald Ash Borer Beetle, Secord pioneered the use of cedar bark overlay on ash to conserve ash. She also taught the technique to the next generation of basketmakers. She is now making her baskets smaller to help conserve ash as well. She's following in the footsteps of her ancestors who demonstrated the ability to withstand many kinds of adversity.

"The resilience of my ancestors to withstand pandemics and all kinds of adversity, as they wove baskets and kept our culture alive, inspires me," Secord said.

*For more on Theresa Secord and her basketry art work, please visit her website at [www.theresasecord.com](http://www.theresasecord.com).*



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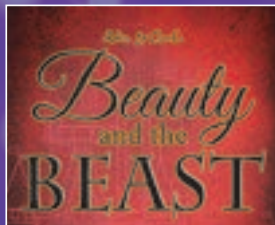
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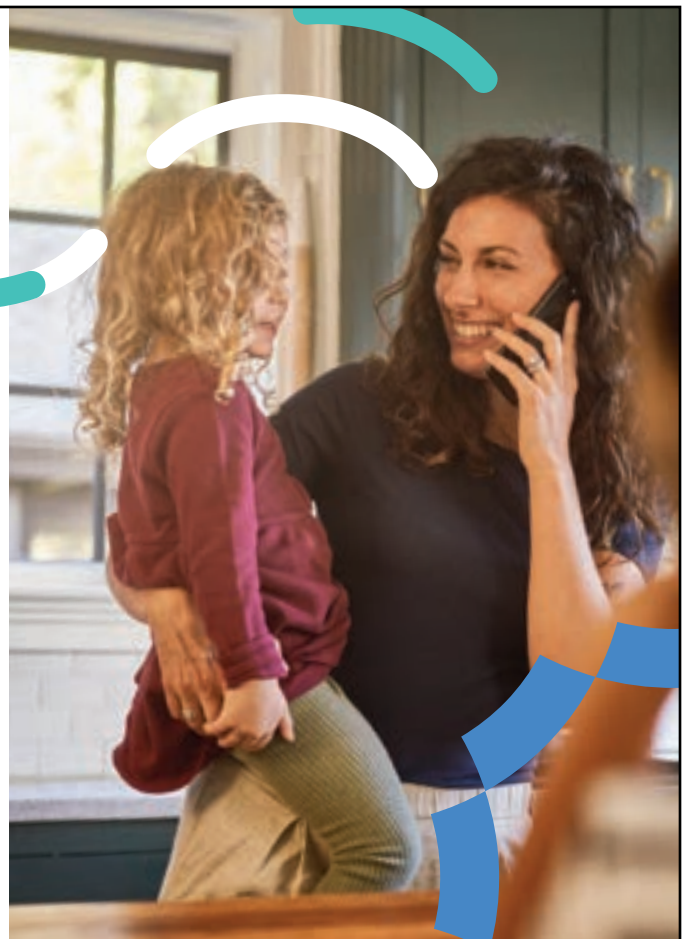
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# HOT DAYS, COOL NIGHTS:

## How to Survive and Thrive in the July Heat

BY SARAH HOLMAN



Summer in Maine is a beautiful, finicky, fleeting event. Sometimes we're still wearing wool socks in June. Other times it's so hot we have to be reminded not to go in the ocean for fear of hypothermia. Whichever way summer kicks off, by July it's in full swing. Long days, cool nights, beaches, lakes, and barbecues. And every person we've ever known visiting from out-of-state. Whether you love it or hate it, it's hard to say too many bad things about the Vacationland summer.

Lovely and relatively short as the season may be, we do have a few steamy summer days here in Maine. Some new construction homeowners are opting in on central air conditioning, but the majority of us are making do with window units or good old-fashioned fans. Whatever your cooling method of choice, there are several things you can do to help keep the mercury down, especially during a heat wave.

### 1. CLOSE YOUR BLINDS

Thermal insulated block-out curtains aren't just for warmth in the winter. Keep out those hot rays, especially on north and west-facing windows, to keep cool air inside and hot air out.

### 2. BLOCK THE HEAT FROM THE OUTSIDE

Planting trees to shade your home is a great way to stop heat before it hits your house. Choose deciduous varieties so you don't lose the sunlight (and sun warmth) during the winter months.

### 3. MAKE REASONABLE AC CHOICES

If you choose to use AC, set it for the highest comfortable temperature, ideally between 75–78 degrees F. Increasing the thermostat by just 2 degrees can reduce the cost of running the unit by about 10 percent. Also, if you're shopping for an AC unit, look for one with a high energy-star rating and choose the right size for the square footage of your room.

### 4. WATCH YOUR CEILING FANS

If your fans aren't rotating counterclockwise, they're probably just pushing hot air around. The counterclockwise rotation pushes air straight down, which helps create a cooling effect. (Clockwise is for winter, to pull cool air up). High speed works best for summer. A fast-moving fan can make you feel up to 5 degrees cooler.

### 5. CLOSE OUT THE SUN, LET IN THE MOON

It makes sense to close your house up tight during the day, but as soon as the

outdoor temp drops below the indoor temp, it's time to open everything up. Use window fans to pull in the cooler air and open doors and windows at opposite ends of your home to create cross breezes.

### 6. COOK AL FRESCO

Don't just eat outdoors, cook out there too. Even boiling water adds heat to an already hot house, not to mention turning on the stove to 400 degrees. Plan to grill meals outside or choose takeout for super-hot dinner times.

### 7. FIND YOUR HOT SPOTS

You can cool your body significantly by applying a cool, damp cloth to the back of your neck. Other cooling points include wrists, inner elbows, behind the knees, tops of the feet, and inner ankles. You can also sip cold drinks or hop in a cool shower to bring your body temperature down.

### 8. TRY OLD SCHOOL AIR CONDITIONING

Place a shallow bowl or pan of ice in front of a box fan to chill the breeze. This technique only cools a small area, so it works best if you're stationary, like sitting at your desk or watching TV.

### 9. CHOOSE COTTON CLOTHES

Breathable fabrics like cotton help cool your body. Wear light, loose-fitting clothing, especially if you're going outside in the heat.

### 10. COOL YOUR BULBS

Incandescent lightbulbs produce a lot of heat, so switching to energy-saving bulbs can help cool your home (and save you money on energy costs).

With a few easy changes to your heat-management routine, you can keep your home—and yourself—cool and comfortable during the three months of Maine summer! •



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# SANDY WEISMAN:

## An Artist's Satisfying Journey

BY TERESA PICCARI

As the inaugural guest on my radio show nearly four years ago, Sandy Weisman requested U2's "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" as a metaphor for her life. For someone as gifted and accomplished as this artist and poet, this was a confounding choice.

We didn't fully untangle the mystery at that time, but in a recent interview she helped shed light and understanding on her life and creative process. Reminded of her song choice, she laughed and said, "I think I'm a restless person in general. It's always been that way for me. It's not unusual. It is who I am." Her comment recalls one made by choreographer Martha Graham, who referred to the "blessed unrest" that keeps artists "marching and makes us more alive than others."

Weisman spent 15 years as director of gallery education at Massachusetts College of Art & Design, where she developed and taught curriculum based on exhibitions in the Bakalar & Paine Galleries, now known as MassArt Museum of Art. Then, 11 years ago, she moved from Boston to Maine. "I wanted to move where I would be happier," she said of her decision to relocate to South Thomaston, where she has built a residence and the 26 Split Rock Cove arts center. She has created three art studios and one apartment dedicated to an artist residency. The center offers a variety of visual arts and writing workshops in the warmer months.

"I still have a lot of interests. I'm very happy pursuing them, and I think I'm still searching in that way. I think it's always going to be like that for me. I like a lot of things. I like music, so I play music," said the classically trained pianist, who now plays a keyboard in a rock ensemble through Midcoast Music Academy, which gives her a chance to explore improvisation, similar to when she is playing around with



Photo by Amy Parrish

materials and making collage.

Perhaps, it isn't that Weisman hasn't found what she's looking for at all, but that her searching has rewarded her with more creative treasures than most people realize during a lifetime.

### FOLLOWING A PATH OF IDEAS

"I like ideas. There's a million ideas of course," she said. Following an idea through some path, whether it ends up in a book or a print, collage, or a mixed-media piece, is all the same to her. She doesn't limit the result. "For me it's really about ideas and trying to communicate what is interesting to me and how I can put that into form."

Her form might end up as piece of poetry, artwork, or a book. "It comes out of thinking about ideas that are interesting to me rather than manipulation. I love manipulating materials, but I think I start with ideas. Then I figure out what the form is going to be."

### PURPOSE AND PASSION

Weisman's Midwest roots are evident in the practicality she brings to bear on her art. "Purpose is easy for me because I come from a purposeful family," noted the Cleveland native. "They weren't artists or musicians or writers, so translating that into an art form was a more difficult thing to do. They had the idea that you should be a teacher or a nurse—that was the purpose. I think I approach my artwork purposefully. I want to do it well. I want to do good work. I want the pieces to be beautiful," explained the art educator. Her career has been steeped in teaching on many levels, from youngsters to those attending university. Weisman is also generous her time as a mentor to young local artists.

Passion has been harder, a little more evasive, she noted. "The passion . . . you have to be passionate about your art to do it. Nobody's waiting for your art, frankly, so you have to be passionate about it to do it."

"I think right now," she says, "I just really want to enjoy what I'm doing; I want to do it because it's a joyful thing to do. I don't need to have some big goal at the other end at this point. I'm just trying to make my life as passionate and purposeful as I can, through my work. That is the most important thing for me right now because I really feel this has been a defining period of time. At this age, will there be another defining period of time? I don't know," said the 72-year-old.

### ART BOOKS AND POETRY

Her books feature a combination of organic items and their likenesses made from paper and rough materials, including seaweed, leaves, and feathers, many found on her property that overlooks the Muscle Ridge Channel in South Thomaston.

Weisman began working with books 20 years ago when she took a book-making



*Book of Hours*



*Leaf Book*



*Mycorrhizal*

class in Boston. It has evolved, like poetry, into a second, great creative love. “I was doing a lot of collage and mixed-media stuff, and I was writing poetry, and I wanted to start combining things.”

“I like trying different ways of combining language and imagery. I like that combination very much, but I really appreciate the book for its visual, structural form, and as a person who worked on a loom for many years, I’m really comfortable with structure.” In addition to holding a Master’s in Art Education from Mass College of Art, she studied in the Fiber Art Mastery program at Boston University.

She is active in two poetry groups, where members critique each other’s work. “I love the conversation around poetry. I love being with other poets. I love writing poetry. I like sitting at my desk thinking about it.”

“The writing and the art-making combine for me, not necessarily literally, but it’s the same process of even though it’s language you’re paring things down to a minimum to get at some kind of crystallized idea. So, you might be writing about a summer morning, but you’re really talking about death. There’s a concept that happens and getting to that concept is what’s really great for me about writing poetry, getting under the subject matter to see what it is I’m talking about. I feel that way about a lot of the artmaking too. How do I get under it to some other core idea through these materials? In the case of poetry, it’s language, and with art, it’s materials. Those things are critical to me. It’s how I think,” she explained. And in our conversation, she speaks often of how “satisfying” making art is for her.

### A MIGRATION THEME

Migration, including trees, animals, and humans, has become a major focus of the artist’s study, resulting in several creative projects. What she learned was that everybody and everything migrates. “I think I got involved with it because of what was happening at the U.S. border—to say something about it. We’ve all migrated at some point. Animals, trees, and people all do it for the same reasons—food and security and to protect the babies. Trying to improve one’s life and chances of success are a big part of the reason why people move around,” she observed.

The day before we spoke, Weisman completed work on *Mycorrhizal*, one of three art books inspired by her study of trees which models mycorrhiza, the symbiotic relationship between a seed plant and fungus.

An underground communication occurs, informing the mutually beneficial relationship. “I just like the idea that there is all this communication happening underground, under the trees. It’s a very friendly thing, the fact there they’re helping each other,” she explained. As a climate changes, trees will begin to move to better locations to get what they need to sustain. Over time,



an entire tree stand sometimes migrates up or down a mountain, for instance.

Two of these books will included in an upcoming show, featuring 18 members of the Midcoast Maine Book Arts group, set to open on August 26th at the Michael Good Gallery in Rockport. Weisman, along with Paula Blanchard, Cynthia Motian McGuirl, and Abbie Read, is a founding member of the group.

### MAINE JEWISH MUSEUM

Recently, Sandy Weisman found herself walking around her home wondering what Sarah did all day, along with other women in the Bible, who lived between 1800–1000 BCE. In the book of Genesis in the Bible, it says that Yahweh told the elderly Abraham that his wife Sarah, also elderly, would give him a son. Sarah laughed, believing this prophesy to be impossible, But, as prophesied, she gave birth to a son, Isaac. Sarah is one of seven women Weisman will create a book around, to be included in a show slated for the Maine Jewish Museum in Portland, in winter 2022.

Weisman is one of five book artists who have been invited by the museum to create art on Biblical Women of the Old Testament.

Her work will cover an 800-year span, beginning with Sarah and ending with Bathsheba, who wound up married to King David.

“I sort of see her in silk and jewelry, and she occupies the queenly space. I see that as an elegant book. The earlier books are going to be grain and goat hair,” she says with an easy laugh. “I’ve already bought the goat hair.” •



Top: An exterior view of Sandy Weisman's studio and artist apartment.  
Bottom: Split rock in Muscle Ridge Channel off South Thomaston.

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# ON THE HORIZON

## Events around Maine this month

This summer much will (we hope) gradually return to normal. Although many festivals, fairs, tours, and events have been forced to delay reopening until the 2022 season, there's still plenty to do around the state this July!

If you're up for an adventure, here are some of the many events you might enjoy.

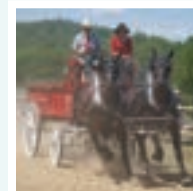
### TOURS WITH LINDA GREENLAW

Legendary Maine captain Linda Greenlaw has been offering tours on the water this summer, including an educational Lobster 101 experience... where you can learn about hauling lobster traps! For booking and information, email [seashedgifts@icloud.com](mailto:seashedgifts@icloud.com).



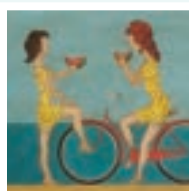
### WATERFORD WORLD'S FAIR, JULY 16-18

North Waterford is host to three straight days of classic Maine fun, with everything from a pie-eating contest to a sheep dog demonstration. To learn more, stop by [waterfordworldsfair.org](http://waterfordworldsfair.org).



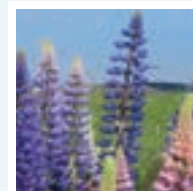
### THE FINAL PAINTINGS OF CARLO ALBUCCI NOW-JULY 13

Carlo Albucci (1947–2020) was a Florentine artist whose “ironic, iconic, surreal and comic” paintings will be showcased at the Gold/Smith Gallery in Boothbay Harbor until July 13. Visit [www.goldsmithgallery.net](http://www.goldsmithgallery.net) for more information, and to preview some of his unique paintings.



### BAR HARBOR GARDEN CLUB PUBLIC GARDEN TOUR, JULY 17

Enjoy some natural beauty with the Bar Harbor Garden Club's tour of “Fine Island Gardens,” rain or shine. Stop by the club's website at [www.barhargardenclub.org](http://www.barhargardenclub.org) info and tickets.



### BAR HARBOR MUSIC FESTIVAL, JUNE 27-JULY 25

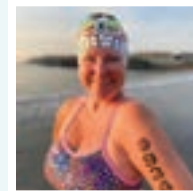
The Bar Harbor Music Festival kicked off in late June and will continue into late July, featuring a wide variety of artists and genres. Visit [www.barharbormusicfestival.org](http://www.barharbormusicfestival.org) for information and registration.



Antonio Galera  
@DRodriguez

### TRI FOR A CURE LIMITED EVENT, JULY 18

Though the Tri for a Cure is virtual again this year, Southern Maine Community College will once again be the site of an in-person event: a run/walk 5K, restricted to Tri for a Cure participants who have raised at least \$250 for the cause. If you're eligible, come celebrate crossing the finish line! For information, visit [TriForACure.org](http://TriForACure.org) or email [triforcure@mainecancer.org](mailto:triforcure@mainecancer.org)



Heidi Wefers

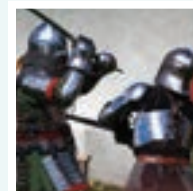
### MOXIE FESTIVAL, JULY 3, JULY 10-11

The Moxie Festival has, sadly, been canceled for the 2021 season, but certain events are still on. Check out the Moxie Fireworks (July 3), the Moxie 5K Road Race (July 10), and the Moxie Car Show (July 11), all in Lisbon. You can find all this info and more at [moxiefestival.com](http://moxiefestival.com).



### THE MAINE RENAISSANCE FAIRE, JULY 17-18, 24-25

Jousting! Music! Local artisans! The Maine Renaissance Faire in Acton is set to be a blast this month. Learn more at [themainerenaissance.com](http://themainerenaissance.com).



Brotherhood of the  
Arrow and Sword

### NORTH ATLANTIC BLUES FESTIVAL, JULY 10-11

Rockland's famous blues festival is on! Enjoy two days packed with performances by skilled artists. For lodging, tickets, and additional recreation suggestions, visit [www.northatlanticbluesfestival.com](http://www.northatlanticbluesfestival.com).



Ronnie Baker Brooks

### OSSIPEE VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL (MICRO-FESTIVAL), JULY 23-24

In lieu of the full festival experience, the Ossipee Valley Music Festival will be hosting a micro-festival this month, with attendance capped at a quarter that of the 2019 festival. To join in and safely support live music, visit [ossipeevalley.com](http://ossipeevalley.com).





Anna Crowley Redding  
Photo by Dave Dostie

# ***CHOWDER RULES!***

## ***The True Story of an Epic Food Fight***

*By Anna Crowley Redding, illustrated by Vita Lane*

**\$17.95, 32 pages**

*Published by  
Maine's  
Islandport Press.*

**A**nna Crowley Redding's *Chowder Rules! The True Story of an Epic Food Fight* is a delightful children's picture book, suited for ages 4 to 8. It tells the story of Maine lawmaker Cleveland Sleeper and the great lengths he took to defend his beloved "steamy, creamy, dreamy clam chowder" from the inclusion of tomatoes. Sleeper was so passionate about his favorite food that he even tried to pass a law to

outlaw the practice. New Yorkers, who love their brothy, tomato-y soup, were outraged. The two regions ultimately settled this great debate with a dramatic cook-off in Portland.

Crowley Redding, an avid reader, finds inspiration from the news articles, books, and even poems. She found the inspiration for *Chowder Rules!* in the *Boston Globe* from the year of the cook-off, 1939. After reading that Mainer



believed “to put tomatoes in clam chowder is to commit a crime against nature,” she agreed—and knew she had a story to tell.

“I completely freaked out when I read about Cleveland and what he did,” she said. “I even loved the way he talked about this food fight. I knew I had to write his story and that this chowder hero should not be a footnote to history for one more minute!”

The 32-page book not only gives a succinct and fun history lesson, but also teaches the importance of doing your research. It shows you just might find something significant along the way. Another engaging aspect of the book is that you can take a stab at the winning recipe, included in the back of the book.

“Nothing is better than eating your story in addition to reading it!” Redding wrote in a blog post on her website, [anacrowleyredding.com](http://anacrowleyredding.com).

Available on Redding’s website, in addition to her blog, is an educator’s guide for *Chowder Rules!* that includes a word search, writing prompt, and even more activities to help young readers digest the text. Announced as a thank you to the Maine Library Association for naming *Chowder Rules!* the winner of the 2020 Lupine Honor Award, the educator’s guide is fully downloadable.

Whether you favor the winning recipe, or decide you prefer Manhattan’s tomato-filled version, Redding’s *Chowder Rules!* combines fun of cooking with local politics and debate in a way that is digestible for children. •

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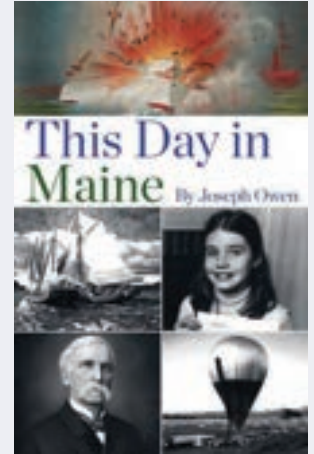
**THIS DAY IN MAINE (REVISED)**

By Joe Owen

**\$18.95, softcover, nonfiction**

Revised version available June 29

Long-time newspaperman Joseph Owen chronicles the daily history of Maine, from January 1 to December 31, in *This Day in Maine*. He highlights the famous and infamous, and the big and small of everyday life in Maine. Since achieving statehood in 1820, Maine has developed into a sometimes-mythical vacationland of moose and lobsters set against breathtaking vistas and endless natural beauty. But the state’s history is replete with tragedy and triumph. This fascinating book is perfect for history buffs, lovers of Maine, and those looking to learn more about the state’s remarkable history.



**A MONARCH BUTTERFLY STORY**

Written by Melissa Kim, illustrated by Jada Fitch

**\$10.95, nonfiction board book**

In *A Monarch Butterfly Story*, a young boy inspires his class to study the monarch butterfly’s life cycle and plant a garden to give the iconic insect a safe place to lay their eggs. A simple narrative and beautiful illustrations aid young learners in their study of the butterfly, from threats to its survival to respectful human interaction. This is the fourth in a series of narrative nonfiction board books, created in partnership with Maine Audubon, written and designed specifically for a preschool market. Other titles in the series include *A Snowy Owl Story*.



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## Vacationland: Lighthouses, Lobster, and Legal Weed

Move over lobster, craft beer, and scenic shorelines—recreational cannabis is about to have its big summer debut. For the first time in summer history, the 30-million tourists visiting Maine can legally purchase cannabis at dozens of stores across the state. Legalized in 2016, it took Maine lawmakers four years to set up a regulated retail system to safely sell recreational cannabis. The carefully guided rollout of the cannabis market has been met with great success, and the \$222 million dollar plant is now Maine's largest agricultural crop, surpassing the ever-popular blueberry and the tried-and-true potato in value. The potential it has for Maine's economy, and the summer tourism industry is very promising.

### What the Canna-Curious Need to Know

Edibles, vapes, pre-rolls, oh my! Nine Pound Hammer, Snoop's Dream, Skywalker Kush—say what? Visitors from out of state won't need to come as cannabis connoisseurs, just a valid photo ID that shows you are 21+ and all of your questions: *How do you want to feel? Do you want to smoke or try an edible? Are you looking to relax or celebrate?* As the state's largest cannabis provider with 11 years of experience, we see our role not as retailer, but as educator. It is our job to make sure that anyone trying recreational cannabis in Maine has a safe and positive experience.

When visitors arrive, you'll be greeted by a professional budtender, who'll navigate the process, from selecting a delivery method, to the strain, to the dosing—all you'll have to do is describe what type of outcome you'd like to experience. Much like a bartender makes a drink recommendation, that's what your budtender will do. And important to note, most retail outlets do not accept credit cards due to federal banking restrictions, so cash is the preferred method.

And while there has been much anticipation over the first-ever legal, recreational stores, customers can come to expect the following things: quality, consistency, and safety. Like most new experiences, you may want to try more than one thing. All recreational cannabis products are sold by state-licensed stores, which means they follow a highly regulated set of state laws, that include safety packaging to prevent access to minors, rigorous third-party testing, and clearly labeled dosing instructions. Our advice to everyone trying cannabis—start low and go slow. Through a discussion with a budtender, you'll get an opportunity to ask any



HighNorth By Wellness Connection, South Portland.

Photo by Liz Davenport and Cycle Davenport of Convinced Photography

questions you may have about the plant, the delivery methods, and Maine's state laws surrounding legal consumption.

### Cannabis and Tourism?

As summer heats up, the timing couldn't be better for Maine's tourism industry to rebound after a year of hurdles, restrictions, and financial losses. Americans have been housebound, overworked, and overstressed—and Maine is ready to welcome a healthy 2021 tourist season. While some visitors will be traveling solely to shop for cannabis recreationally, others may be revisiting cannabis for the first time in 20 years. Ironically enough, the timing of legal cannabis sales present an unexpected opportunity for Maine's hospitality-based businesses to make up lost revenue due to the 2020 pandemic. And the proof is in the anecdotal pudding.

If you look to what happened in states that have legalized cannabis before us, including Alaska, Massachusetts, Colorado, and California, you'll see thriving adaptations and innovation within canna-tourism businesses. Puff and paint parties, cannabis-infused private dinner parties, "canna-bus" tours, and "bud and breakfasts" are just a few examples of how previously thriving tourism businesses embraced a new market. Take the Desert Hot Springs Hotel in Hollywood, for example. It created an area for private outdoor consumption, and business increased 50 percent. The state department of tourism in Colorado says that cannabis tourism has grown 51 percent since 2014, with sales soaring into the billions.

### Maine Cannabis Laws

- **Enjoy on private property:** It remains illegal to consume marijuana in public spaces. Hotels can prohibit consumption on property.
- **Drive safely:** Do not drive under the influence of cannabis.
- **Only legal to buy from Licensed Stores:** The only legal way to buy recreational cannabis is from state licensed stores—where all products are tested for safety. (Steer clear of companies charging a delivery fee for free "gifts.")
- **Dosing:** Start low, go slow. Trained budtenders will guide you but carefully read labels to determine serving sizes.
- **Purchase amounts:** up to 2.5 ounces per visit.
- **Transportation:** It remains illegal to transport marijuana across state lines.
- **Packaging:** All products are sold in child-resistant packaging.

This ancient plant, that has been pushed away and once classified as a schedule one drug, is finally now being explored once again for not only its healing power, but also its incredible economic possibility. So, whether you're from out-of-state or a Mainer planning a staycation—or a business working to rebuild—everyone deserves a little something new. It's high time. •



A shady retreat is what this cat wants. Provide some shade and shelter in your landscape for your pets, so all can enjoy the space.

| GARDENING |

# DOGGONE GOOD LANDSCAPES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LYNETTE L. WALTHER

**P**ets can add so much to our lives. The past year has seen record numbers of pet adoptions as homebound folks welcomed dogs and cats into their lives. And in the process, many are learning that their home landscapes need some adaptations to accommodate their new four-legged family members.

The other day I spied an adorable golden retriever puppy on a leash walking down our street with its owner. As soon as that cutie pie spied the freshly cut lawn next door, the dog flopped on its back, rolled, and squirmed in the grass. You'd think that little patch of green was a long-lost relative.

It was a joy to behold. But after about five minutes of unabashed pleasure on the part of the dog, the owner at the other end of the leash was clearly getting impatient to move on. She tugged and cajoled, but the dog was blissfully in a world of its own. It took several more minutes of dog-to-turf

contact before the retriever was ready to walk.

Could it be that this grass-besotted dog did not have a lawn of its own on which to frolic? Who knew a bit of turf would mean so much to a canine? Apparently, grass is serious business for dogs, which is yet another reason to consider your pets when it comes to our yardscapes. Any time is a good time to start planning and preparing a pet-friendly landscape.

Anyone with a dog knows that considering a canine's needs outdoors is going to be a necessity. For cats, the accommodations are in some ways similar, but not entirely. My own cats are not permitted outside due to their outstanding abilities to hunt birds and small game, as well as for their own health and welfare. However, cats as well as dogs enjoy and benefit from enclosed runs which allow them outdoor access under controlled conditions. This is one solution for cat owners concerned about the safety of both wildlife and their



Lily is secure behind a simple hogwire fence. Because dogs often like to run alongside fences, plant gardens elsewhere to avoid them being trampled.



What is it with dogs and digging holes in the lawn? Moose has a lot to learn on this issue. In the meantime, there are things his owner can do to discourage the canine excavations.

pets. Look for special kits to create outdoor cat enclosures or someone handy with simple tools can construct a “catio” for the feline friend.

Pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides have no place in a pet-friendly landscape, whether they are on the grass or on the plants. A pet-friendly landscape should not include any of those little “skull and crossbones” signs seen on some lawns warning every living thing on the face of the earth to keep off the grass for fear of the powerful chemicals that had recently been deposited there. Even if a pet has not rolled on such a lawn, if domesticated animals walk or run across it, they will often lick their paws or coat once inside or track those chemicals indoors.

### HERE ARE SOME OTHER TIPS:

The presence of pets in the yard makes it even more important to garden organically. There are great non-toxic products out there, but even organic choices can be troublesome when it comes to pets. If you must use any garden chemicals, read the labels and follow instructions to the letter.

Beyond the dangers of toxic chemicals, some plants are poisonous to dogs and cats. There are more than 700 plants that can cause sickness or worse. For a comprehensive list, visit the American Humane Society’s link: [humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/plants\\_poisonous\\_to\\_pets.html](https://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/plants_poisonous_to_pets.html)

On the other hand, some plants—such as catnip—are ones that your four-legged friends especially enjoy.

Both cats and dogs like to eat grass for their digestive systems, so a patch or pot or two of “kitty greens” would be a healthy treat. (See Renee’s Garden Seeds for special seed selections.) These greens can be especially important for indoor cats.

Be cautious when using certain gardening products in the landscape, like cocoa fiber mulch for instance, because its chocolate smell may entice dogs to eat it, but it can make them sick.

Water is important for pets and other critters in the garden. Keep dishes and birdbaths clean and filled with fresh water because pets will often visit them for drinking as well. Avoid sitting water which can attract and breed mosquitoes that can spread heartworm for example, not to mention other diseases. Pond owners know that both dogs and cats are attracted to these little water bodies. To prevent cats from “harvesting” pond fish or frogs, create a wetland that surrounds the pond, incorporating it into your landscape design because cats don’t like walking on wet ground.

Use special care when operating mowers or other outdoor power tools if pets are present.

While protecting our pet’s health is a vital component of a pet-friendly landscape, happiness comes a close second. Imagine making the garden not only pet-healthy, but also a place they’ll enjoy. Dogs often like to run the perimeter of the yard to protect their domain. A path, rather than planted beds, along a fence makes good sense. That patch of green lawn where pets can romp and run without trampling precious perennials is important, but so too are trees. Pets need shade, especially in the summer. Often digging dogs are looking for a place to cool off.

If digging is an issue, try a layer of some chicken wire covered with gravel or rocks and then apply a layer of mulch over it. Dogs and cats won’t like the feel under their paws. This solution could also deter pesky squirrels from digging in some areas.

However, some canine breeds are born to dig, such as burrowing dogs like Jack Russell Terriers, for example. Rather than attempting the impossible, go with the flow and provide these pets with a sand pit where they can dig to their little heart’s content. A little encouragement and an incentive or two (like a toy or treat buried for them to discover) can help redirect their efforts to the designated digging pit.

Fences and hedges can be useful in a pet-friendly landscape to keep your pooch in a specific part of the yard, or to keep the neighbor’s dog from getting into the yard. For some reason dogs and cats seem to prefer lush flower beds when it comes time to take a siesta, effectively flattening everything in range. Don’t get mad—take action. Just push a few wooden dowels into the soil, sticking up four to five inches. They won’t show among the foliage, but then it’s not so comfy for your pet to plop down. Thorny plants strategically positioned and twig borders can help prevent pets from straying into flower beds.

Sometimes you simply have to think like a dog—or a cat—to understand what they like or don’t and use that “uncanny” insight to keep you a step ahead of their antics. Give them a safe place to relax and romp, and everyone will be happy. All it takes is a little thought and some planning to make your landscape a place of joy and delight for both you and your pets. •



Keeping cats indoors can include a special little “catio” that gets them out safely where they can see and smell the outdoors and watch the birds safely—for them and the birds, too.

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# Joyce Wilson-Sanford: On Looking Inward

By Robert Cook

Many would agree that spirituality is food for the soul, giving life greater meaning. We often get absorbed in life's pressing challenges, however, and neglect our inner life. But sooner or later, spiritual needs come to the fore.

Joyce Wilson-Sanford of Cape Elizabeth had this realization about five years ago when she was confronted with a family crisis that made her look inward. She would sit on her porch and read daily devotionals until something moved her. She hadn't been to church in 40 years, but prayed anyway for a good outcome, "and a miracle did happen."

This inspired her to write the first of her three *I Pray Anyway* books, which are entitled, *Devotions for the Ambivalent*, *PLAYbook*, and *Reflections for the Spiritually Cranky*.

Throughout her life, Joyce explained, there were times when she gave up on traditional religion and God, but when she experienced tragedy, she still yearned for a more spiritual life. When she began her own form of prayer at home, she found it very satisfying.

Joyce discovered that her books gave voice to a changing religious landscape. She later found that there is a Census group called the "Non-Affiliated with any Religion," more commonly known as "Nones." What she and many others are experiencing is this:

"Organized religion often doesn't meet our spiritual needs. We want prayer. We want healing."

Joyce believes that people are seeking healing and inner peace, but some people have lost respect for organized religion. In her view, she said, "Prayer doesn't need a building, or a perfect belief, or a perfect prayer. I am shocked at how many people say they don't know how to pray."

All three of her books reflect her personal journey of dealing with aging, searching for spirituality, and finding the right place in one's heart and soul to achieve peace.

Joyce is a member of the Green Memorial A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Zion Church in Portland, with the Reverend Kenneth I. Lewis, Jr. as pastor.

It is a home base for her spiritual development. She says, "It has real-deal worship and lots of joy." Joyce refers to the Dalai



Lama, who says, "Find a spiritual home that speaks your language. There is no need to rebel. There is no need for perfection."

Her book entitled *PLAYbook* serves as a guide for groups of like-minded souls participating in in-person or virtual workshops. Before the pandemic, Joyce's workshop met at the local library and featured great diversity, in terms of its members' faiths and beliefs.

"Everybody believes in a miracle, but nobody can say how it happened," Joyce said. She added her workshop would conclude with everyone giving a blessing to the person sitting next to them. "It was a wonderful experience, with a lot of laughter."

Joyce believes the COVID-19 pandemic made many people take a hard look at their spiritual needs when so many were forced to stay close to home and practice social distancing, and when they had more time on their hands. "We were all forced to look inward."

Her advice: "Take your spiritual needs seriously. Find your kind of prayer."

Joyce believes she has come full circle as a result of her spiritual awakening. Her journey to Maine started in Illinois as a single parent. After meeting David, they married, combined families, and moved to Maine.

"We packed up a U-Haul with five kids and came here with no jobs and two unsold houses in Illinois," Joyce recalled.

She remembers how they went to the bank to get a mortgage, and the banker was so impressed with Joyce's background that he granted them a mortgage when neither had employment at that time. Her first Organizational Development job was at Sun Savings and Loan, followed by three years in Organizational Development at Central Maine Power. Eventually, she joined Hannaford Supermarkets from which she retired as Executive Vice President of Organizational Development for the global parent company, the Delhaize Group. "It was a great career home for me. I was very honored to be a woman at that top level in a very non-traditional field at that time."

She recalled how her bosses saw her as a maverick who did things in her own colorful way. "Thank goodness they often worked," Joyce said.

She retired from the Delhaize Group and Hannaford in 2006. Joyce is not the only writer in the family; her husband, Dr. David Sanford, wrote a weekly relationship column for the *Portland Press Herald* for many years titled, "Partners Matter." Joyce now consults with leaders who want to re-imagine a new way to work.

Joyce believes that her decision to seek out her own spiritual growth when she needed it most, coupled with her willingness to share her journey with others, has enriched her life. She believes it is to be a gift that people should give to themselves.

"I hope that through my books, if people recognize a spiritual hunger, but can't place it anywhere, that they pursue their own prayer practice anyway."

"I experience both faith and doubt, but I still trust in the power and energy of prayer, even if imperfect and raggedy."

*I Pray Anyway: Devotions for the Ambivalent*, *I Pray Anyway: Discussions and Workshop Playbook*, and *I Pray Anyway: Reflections for the Spiritually Cranky*, by Joyce Wilson-Sanford are available on Amazon. •



MON-FRI 9-5  
SAT 9-2

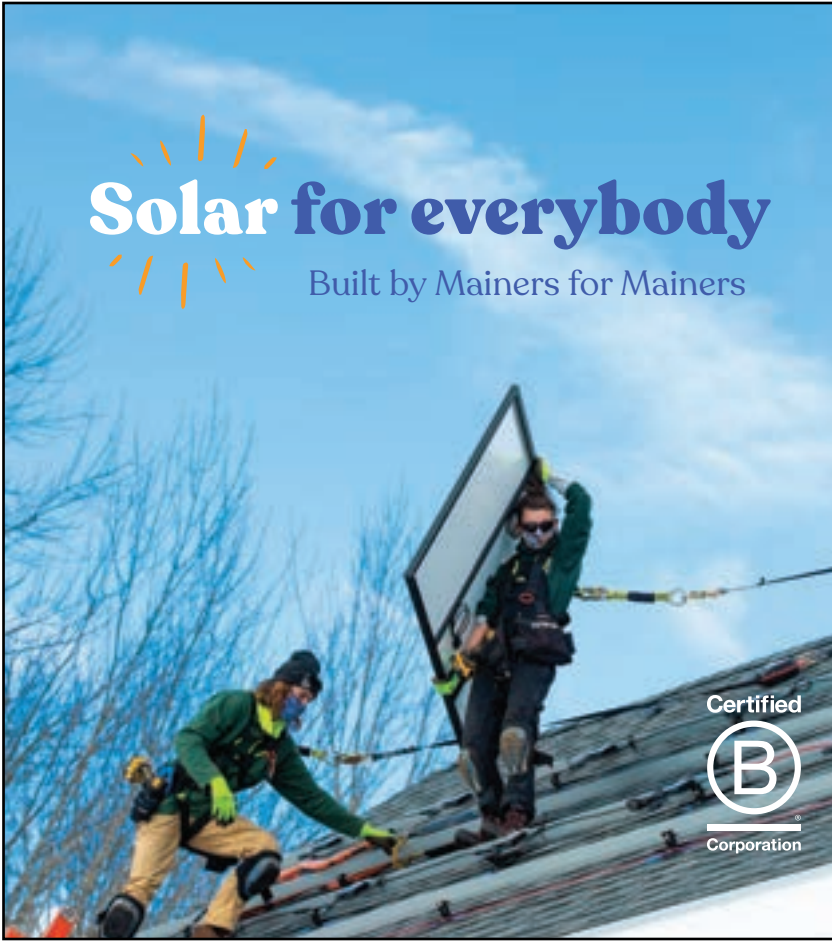
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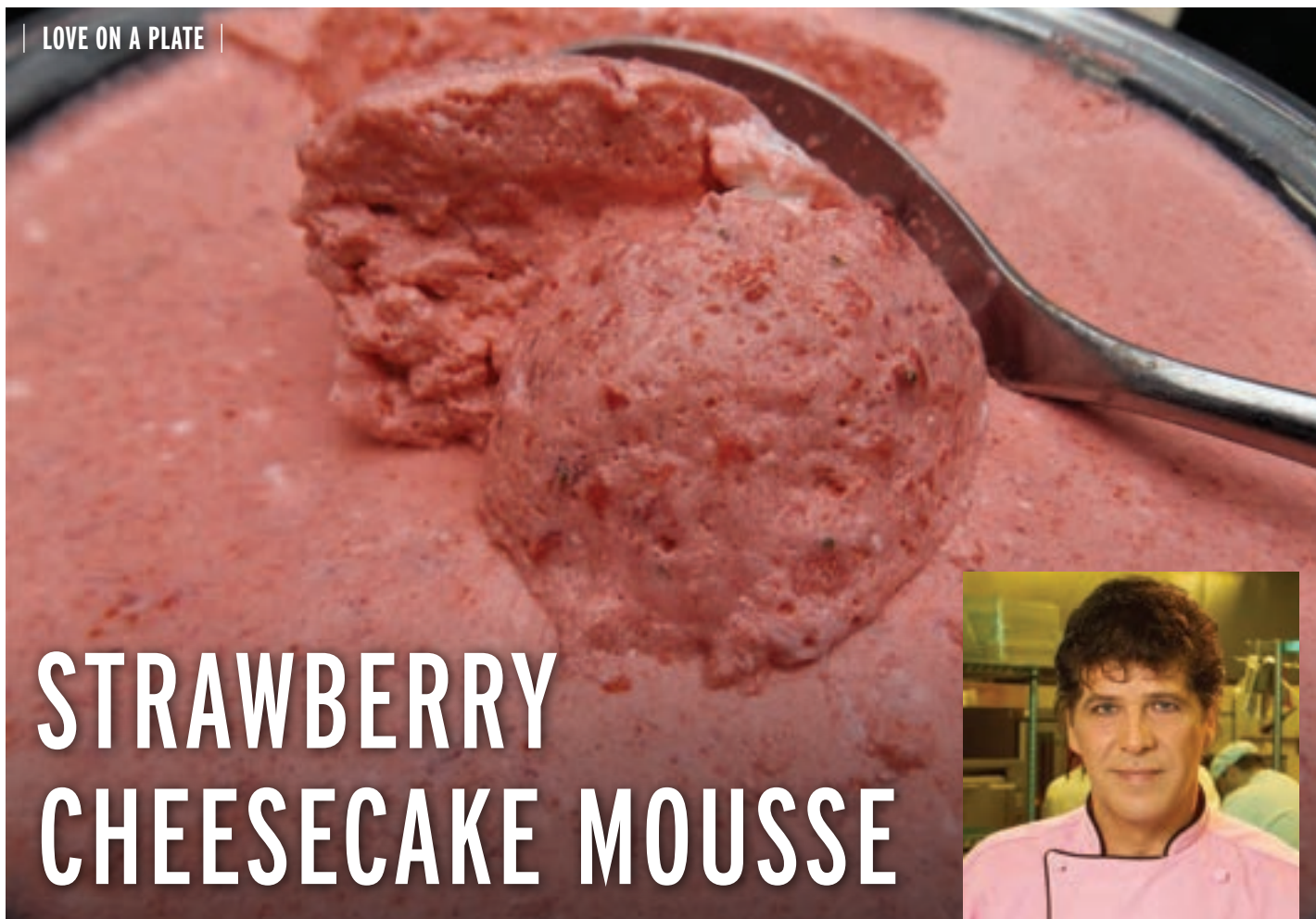


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# STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE MOUSSE



Photos courtesy Jim Bailey

BY JIM BAILEY, THE YANKEE CHEF

**A**bsolutely perfect mousse that you simply cannot mess up! I forgo the unflavored gelatin in this recipe (much to the chagrin of my friends with culinary institute degrees) because the flavored gelatin is far superior in flavor, and the consistency is even better than the flavor: firm, but not too firm.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup chopped, fresh strawberries\*
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 (3-oz.) box strawberry gelatin
- 1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, softened
- 2 cups whipped topping (*See Note, below.*)

\* For those of you who do not, or cannot, eat the strawberry seeds, simply follow the instructions, but force the strawberry mixture through a sieve before combining with the whipped topping mixture.

*Note: I have used my own whipped cream, but the mousse is often too thin, and you can “mouth-feel” the sugar you use when adding it to the cream upon whipping.*

## DIRECTIONS

- Place the strawberries in a bowl and toss with sugar. Let sit for 30 minutes for the strawberries to “weep.”
- In the meantime, follow directions on gelatin box, but use only 1 cup boiling water and no cold water. Let sit for the remainder of the half hour.
- When ready, beat cream cheese and whipped topping together until thoroughly combined in a large bowl. Set aside.
- Transfer strawberries and accumulated juice to a food processor or blender, add gelatin mixture, and pulse for about 10 seconds, or until strawberries are completely pureed.
- Empty into bowl with the cream cheese mixture. With your mixer on low, beat until everything is well combined. You can do this step by hand as well.
- Transfer to a bowl, cover with film wrap without touching the mousse, and refrigerate until cooled and firm, about 4 hours. •



# SWEET SUMMER MEMORIES

BY SHELAGH TALBOT

July always makes me think of campfires and sing-a-longs. When I was small my family would pack up and travel to visit my godfather and his family for a week. It was a long trip, back in those olden days of the 1950s. But despite the guaranteed flat tire (tires used to have tubes inside), it was well worth the time spent. We would also always stop for a picnic lunch, picking a spot in a field under a nice shade tree. I recall one time when my brother and I had to chase away a friendly cow who ambled over and thought our sandwiches were for her as well.

This family we visited had a daughter about my age, so there was always someone to play with, and that was nice. But my favorite memories from that long-ago time were the campfires and the singing. My godfather had an old banjo. He would come strolling down to the campfire, the banjo slung over his shoulder. In the darkness of evening, with the only light being from “millions” of fireflies and the campfire, he reminded me of a traveling minstrel of old.

We would sit around anticipating while he tuned the banjo and ran through some riffs to make sure his instrument sounded good. Then he would ask for song suggestions. Since this happened every summer, we knew our favorites. Mine at the time was “Keeper of the Eddystone Light.” My godfather would make funny faces as he sang, which would bring smiles and laughter. Sometimes he would encourage us to make up an extra verse or two. When you’re eight years old, that was sort of a scary thing to do, but I’d plunge in and give it a try. I think my verses had something to do with the porpoises and porgies mentioned in one of the earlier verses. We each had to stand by the fire and sing our little made-up

verses, and even if they were not the greatest, we’d get a polite round of applause.

There was something sacred about these campfire get-togethers. Because we were surrounded by darkness and the flickering fireflies, we kids felt we were the only family in the world up and singing at that time of night. Oh, and there were two pesty little brothers—mine and my friend’s—and they would run around with marshmallows on sticks and, by being noisy and generally irritating nuisances, they would try to interrupt the sing-along. Then, much to our girlish delight, they were hushed by our mothers, and the music would continue. It was all part of those special evenings. After an hour or so, my godfather would launch into “Goodnight Ladies,” and we knew it was the cue for us kids to go off to bed.

Once we were in pajamas and tucked in, we could still hear the grownups singing softly to the old banjo through the open bedroom windows. It was a wonderful sound, infused further by the clinking of ice in glasses and grownups laughing. We couldn’t really hear what was being said, but we felt safe, happy, and loved, and life at that time seemed so easy and uncomplicated.

The lesson I learned after “growing up” is that there’s always room for the kind of music shared around campfires, be it with an accompanying instrument or just a cappella. The warmth from those fires and the music would enter my heart and find permanent lodging there. If I ever feel sad or lonesome, I still can conjure those memories back up. I hope you readers have some of those happy memories too, from summer days at camp or from summer visits as a child. Hold on to them—they are more precious than gold. •



## QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

***My son loves the outdoors, but I don't. I'm having a hard time keeping up with him when we go out, but I want to make sure he knows how to stay safe in nature. Do you know how he can learn the skills he needs?***

—Anne

Luckily for us, Anne, we live in The Age of Google. So, get on your phone or laptop and ask Dr. Google where there are year 'round camps or classes on how one survives in the Great Outdoors. You don't have to toss your son into the Nome wilderness in January with one match, a length of rope, and a can of sardines. No, it does not have to be a Badlands Boot Camp thing, but there are lots of organizations that teach people how to get along with Mother Nature and to be safe while visiting. Enroll him, and you stay home in front of the electric fireplace and a boatload of great movies on the tube. You'll both be happier.

***I moved out of my mother's house and got my first apartment, but she's still helicoptering! She asked me to call her when I leave the apartment, and when I get to work, and when I wake up . . . it's crazy. Is there any way to make her give me some space?***

—Athena

Well, actually Athena, no, as long as you keep enabling her, in other words, keep answering her phone calls and responding to her requests. Helicopter mothers have a hard time understanding that their hovering is harming their helicopterees, that they are keeping their babies soft and making them afraid to face what we all have to face--THE WORLD! They also love doing it and apparently need to do it, perhaps more for themselves than for you. But, there are a few ways you can get Mamabear to back off, and one is to *Not Obey Her Mandates* about phoning in your every move. Tell her one time and one time only that you've decided to put on your Big Girl pants, that you love her but won't be phoning in hourly reports ever again. Your Mama Dearest has serious control issues, Athena, and could use a few years of twice-a-week counseling. But learn from her. In your mind, move her from helicopter-mother to teacher. She is here to teach you how not to be a mother. Pay attention.

***There was an old box of antique memorabilia in the attic—very valuable. I want to give it to a museum. My sister wants to hold onto it. What do we do?***

—O.H.

Many questions. Are these things connected to your family in some way? If yes, keep and distribute them equally. If it all has absolutely no familial hooks but is of historical value, I'd push for the museum. But, if the stuff is valuable, maybe your sister needs the money. Does she? If yes, does she know how to sell these things at the proper price? Is there a Tiffany's or Christie's or Sotheby's nearby? If yes and if your sister agrees, ask some folks from well-established antique emporia to come to the house to give you a few estimates and then make the decision. However, if you think the items belongs to the Ages and would do best for people to see and enjoy them in a proper museum, well then here's my answer: that's one tough decision.

***Do you have any tips for pet care? My neighbor asked me to take care of her dog for a few days. I agreed without thinking, but I've never taken care of a dog. Her trip is in a few weeks. Is it too late to tell her I can't?***

—Kelsey

No, not too late! Tell her. Why should an innocent animal be put at risk by a kind-hearted but un-knowing dog sitter? What if you accidentally feed the beast something fatal to dogs, like chocolate? Tell your friend that you are afraid you'll cause her dog harm by accident, but tell her that you'll look for a good kennel or dog-sitting service and since you'd agreed to do it in the first place, you'll pay half the costs. Fair is fair. She was counting on you.

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