



Caring for loved ones

by Era Living

[Era Living is a Platinum Sponsor of PNA Village and provides premier senior independent living and assisted living facilities at eight locations in the greater Seattle area. Two of these facilities offer memory care services. Thank you, Era Living, for your ongoing support and partnership.]

You want the best for your loved ones. As you get older, this may mean stepping into a caregiving role for an aging spouse or parent. This shift often comes without preparation and can affect you physically and emotionally as you try to balance their needs with your own.

Taking time for yourself may seem indulgent, but self-care and support are vital.

The emotional toll of caregiving

No matter how much you love your spouse or parent, caregiving can be hard. Dementia or cognitive decline may reduce the emotional connection you once shared, and daily tasks like dressing or bathing can feel overwhelming. These changes often lead to feelings of loss, guilt, and loneliness. Recognizing these emotions is an important step in getting support.

Why self-care matters

Caring for yourself ultimately helps you provide better care for your loved one. Self-care isn't selfish—it's essential. Caregivers face higher risks of depression, weakened

immunity, weight gain, chronic illness, and memory loss. A healthy diet, exercise, rest, and keeping up with your own medical needs can protect your health. Taking time for hobbies, friends, or even short breaks also helps manage stress. Remember, it's okay to ask for help.

Recognizing caregiver burnout

Burnout affects 67 percent of caregivers. The Institute on Aging defines burnout as physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Symptoms may include fatigue, poor sleep, irritability, mood swings, withdrawal, and resentment. If you notice these signs, it's time to seek support.

Resources for caregivers

Caregiving is a journey you may not have expected, but you don't have to walk it alone. Give yourself credit, seek help when you need it, and lean on your community.

Here are some helpful supports:

- Family and friends who can share caregiving tasks
- Support groups and organizations like the Caregiver Action Network or Family Caregiver Alliance
- In-home care professionals or household service providers
- Era Living's Family & Caregiver Resources

(<https://www.eraliving.com/resources/family-caregiver-resources/>)

The PNA Village office, Greenwood Senior Center, and PNA will be closed for the holidays from December 24 to January 1. We wish all our members, volunteers, and friends a joyful season and look forward to seeing you in the new year!

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Considering senior living

Planning for changing health needs can ease the caregiving journey. Retirement living communities can provide a safe, supportive environment for people at all stages of aging.

Retirement living offers a range of options— independent living, assisted living, and memory care—sometimes in the same community, allowing couples to receive different levels of support together.

Starting the conversation early helps families make informed choices. Key steps include researching your options, involving family, preparing questions, finding a comfortable setting, and focusing on positives without rushing decisions.



by Natalie Wainwright



Lois Jones performs “Small Gestures” for members of PNA Village—but the effects can be large indeed. She provides a bit of inspiration when and where it may be needed most.

She looks at the weekly requests on the village volunteer site, responds to ones that say “mail or leave something on their front step,” and then writes an upbeat note. Sometimes, Lois leaves flowers with her note but usually puts a small gift into the envelope—a bookmark, an inspiring seasonal limerick or a haiku on a small card, or a motivating or cheerful article, perhaps about a senior who has contributed to

their community.

The aim is not for her to meet the recipients of these little care packages and or to form an extended writing relationship. Rather, she sends encouraging and positive thoughts from the whole Village to some members who may feel isolated or in need of support. “My goal here is to write to as many people as I can, to make contact with as many people as I can.”

Her father worked for the federal government. Lois was born in Washington, DC, and lived on the East Coast for her first nine years before moving to Seattle. She started college at Western Washington University, where she met her husband Tracy. They both graduated from the University of Washington. She embarked on a long teaching career, and they had two daughters.

The “Boeing Bust” recession in Seattle prompted them to move to Alaska in 1972. Lois taught school for 20 years in Alaska and did graduate work in adult community education at Alaska Pacific University. She and Tracy enjoyed Alaska and their many adventures. He fished and crabbed year-round in several areas from Dutch Harbor to Cook Inlet while she taught high school English in Homer and crewed on their salmon gillnetter in the summers. But she realized she didn’t want to retire in cold (slippery) Alaska.

They made their move in an extended RV trip through parts of Canada and all the lower 48 states except for Vermont and New Hampshire. Enroute, they spent three winter months in Miami, Florida, before heading to Imperial Beach on San Diego Bay, where they settled briefly and where Lois volunteered in the schools.

In 1995, they moved to Seattle, where Lois taught and tutored students in English at Shoreline and Seattle community colleges. Later, she volunteered at Children’s and Northwest hospitals, Laurelhurst and Greenwood elementary schools, and the PNA Hot Lunch Program.

After Tracy’s death and the Covid pandemic,

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Lois didn't go back to the kind of volunteering she'd done before. She heard about PNA Village. The "Small Gestures" program enables her to volunteer even while on her extensive travels. She just takes her gift supplies with her and sends notes from wherever she is.

Aside from loving to travel, Lois reads a lot. She's been in a book club since 2005. Because of their democratic process of selecting books, "We all end up reading things we would never otherwise read." And if that isn't enough, Lois enjoys listening to classical music and learning to play the piano.

Her volunteering spirit now shows up in other milieus. One of the most "intensely interesting" tasks was helping a village member write a memoir. Lois composed while typing and then revised and edited the "life history." She's also helped paint the 62nd Street mural, helps with gardening chores, and regularly visits with and helps her many friends.

When asked about her impressive 30-year history of volunteering (on top of the formidable and admirable teaching career), Lois shrugs and says, "I believe you should leave things better than how you found them. Make a contribution."

We miss you, Jim.

by Cathie Scott

Jim Berka died this summer. His unexpected exit is felt keenly by all those who knew him—many, many people far and wide. Jim was a craftsman, a sportsman, an adventurer, a traveler, and a giver.

He's been with PNA Village since its beginning in 2012. Over the years, he generously shared his time and talents—helping with handy helper jobs, organizing volunteer happy hours, and serving as a dedicated member of our Volunteer Committee. He also volunteered as a docent/historian on



Amtrak trains. Jim poured his energy into building connections, helping neighbors, and making our community stronger.

I met Jim when he joined our village supper club several years ago. Whenever he was in town and not off on one of his many trips, he'd join us for our monthly dinners. He arrived one time with his arm in a sling after shoulder surgery a day or two before. Even though I wasn't a lifelong friend, I felt I knew him so well. I didn't know facts and

details about his life, but I knew HIM. His inner light shone through his every move. He was a man of few words and abundant deeds.

He was intrepid. Always moving. A friend said, "Jim didn't let any moss grow." He was always ready for the next adventure and the next person who needed his help, often at the expense of his own projects. He was a journeyman carpenter and an avid car fixer. Both skills were in much demand.

He grew up in Minnesota, ending up in Seattle in 1992. Jim worked for the Port of Seattle until his retirement. He maintained close ties with family and friends and a girlfriend in Minnesota and would follow his beloved Kraken hockey team to games there.

I will relish your memory, Jim, as much as you had relished life.

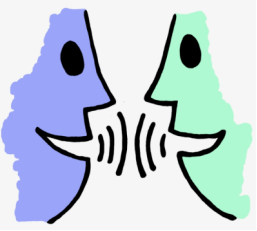


Jim and Cathie at Murphy's Pub

Answer to Village Trivia question False — Village volunteers can also provide rides for grocery shopping, social events, and more.

Learning Seattle speak

by Judith Hansen



My little newsletter column started as a place where newcomers to Seattle might get some tips on how to start integrating into the Phinney neighborhood. You took the first step by joining PNA

Village. *But then what?* I offered suggestions that a few friends and I had found useful. *But then what?* I'm hoping that newcomers from two-plus years ago are now well integrated into our neighborhood fabric.

Now, I'm going to take another tack and talk about "our fabric" as I see it. All of us weave our thinking and stories in different ways. My story comes from long experience in Los Angeles and its many cultures and from living in various urban places including San Francisco, Berlin, and other cities outside the US. The experience has made me a watcher until I find a group, get my voice, and then feel a sense of community. But I generally start with my LA voice until I get acculturated.

LA is a fascinating place. Admittedly, it has many very different voices, depending on the part of the city. Each neighborhood has different rules of behavior and talk, often stemming from cultural rules.

However, many cities share a common language represented by national radio and TV programming, where most presenters tend to sound the same.

That sameness is particularly prevalent in Seattle. Newcomers often arrive with their own rules. LA folks tend to be very open about things that would take Seattleites a long time to get to. Personal things. But here in Seattle we try to fit in. Some of us have a harder time than others. Although we're becoming a newcomer-heavy city, recent arrivals still notice what's been called the Seattle Freeze, polite but distant, with a tendency toward indirect communication.

For some of us, communication differences hit us full-on when trying to integrate. I've found I jump too quickly into talk pauses and even might interrupt with a question before the speaker is finished. *Mea Culpa.*

But please understand that different communication styles do exist. And for some of us oldsters, it's taking more time to integrate into the style of a genteel Seattleite. In this time of outrageous and harsh name calling, this gentility is very much appreciated.

PNA Village Information Session: Tea, Treats, & Conversation

Tuesday, January 27, 1–2 pm
Greenwood Senior Center

Curious about how you can stay active, connected, and independent as you age? Join us for a cozy afternoon of tea, treats, and conversation with PNA Village members and staff. You'll hear inspiring stories from neighbors who are part of the Village, learn how our volunteer network and trusted resources make life easier, and discover how the program helps members stay in the homes and communities they love.

Bring your questions, your curiosity, and maybe a friend—everyone's welcome!

RSVP appreciated:

village@phinneycenter.org or 206-789-1217.



Deconstructing/reconstructing Christmas carols

by Elena Louise Richmond

I look forward to the music of Christmas, although I feel a little wassail drunk from it by January. I don't mind the iterations of Harold, the Hark-Angel and his pal Round John Virgin, which begin the day after Labor Day. After all, it's only for a month out of the year, two and half if you're a musician. I get sick of carols by Thanksgiving and then get a second wind.

The second wind carries old made-up versions of carols we sang as kids. Like "God rest ye merry gentle-

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men although you're not too bright." When my mother heard me sing that she gave me a look that suggested I had blown my nose on Luke, Chapter 2, of her Bible.

Two of my piano students (Anna and Julia, who now sometimes introduce me as their aunt because I objected to them calling me their "old piano teacher") taught me these words to "O Christmas Tree:"

*Oh, Todd the Toad, oh Todd the Toad,
Why did you jump into the road?*

You used to eat a fly or two

But now the flies are eating you;

Oh, Todd the Toad, etc.

I'm partial to the shepherds who:

*Washed their socks by night all seated
round the tub.*

*A bar of Sunlight soap came down, and
they began to scrub.*

A number of clever verses in "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" elucidate what those shepherds got up to while they waited for the Messiah. And who can blame them? I sympathize with their ennui.

My friend Nina invited me into her crusade against how we render "Silent Night" meaningless. We sing that all is calm and all is bright. Okay. Fair enough. But then there's this stand-alone phrase: "round yon virgin, mother and child." Round yon virgin, mother and child, what?

The only way to get this past an English major or a singing teacher would be to punctuate and sing "All is calm, all is bright round yon virgin, mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild." Nina and I try to get through the line without a break.

While I'm on the subject of infants, holy or not, there is no such thing as a mild baby, especially not if he is planning to grow up to save mankind. I always substitute "wild" for "mild."

Let's move on to the insipid "Away in a Manger." (I'm sorry if you like this carol, but they put me on the stage when I was three and made me sing it to Highland Covenant Church in Bellevue. I really

wish they hadn't.) Here we have two lines that people run together without a comma: "The cattle are lowing the poor baby wakes." The cattle are lowing. That's a thing all by itself. The kid wakes up. That's another thing. One might cause the other, but they're still two separate things. Okay, this isn't a very strong complaint. I think I'm still unhappy from my trauma when I was three.

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" has enough grammatical conundrums to keep me busy through all the verses. Take the beginning, which we blithely sing as four unrelated thoughts:

It came upon a midnight clear.

That glorious song of old.

From angels bending near the earth.

To touch their harps of gold.

I believe the meaning is this: The glorious song of old (the aforementioned "it") was sung by angels at midnight who apparently had to bend toward earth to get their harps out of storage.

I understand that language is used differently in verse. I don't fault Edwin H. Sears who wrote the text in 1849. Still, in 2025 and after the "Me, Too" moment, I have to say the idea of angels bending and touching is a little weird.

These are some of the many thoughts I have as I sit at the piano playing Christmas carols so that other people can have warm and transcendental experiences. You're welcome.



BBQ in the gardens of Ida Culver Broadview on August 13.

PNA Village welcomes our new intern.



Hi. My name is Paul Brown. I'm the new intern at PNA Village. I grew up in Bend, Oregon, and went to Washington State University for my undergraduate education. After graduating, I moved to the Seattle area and am enjoying it tremendously!

I recently started my graduate degree program in Social Work at Seattle University while continuing to be introduced to what Seattle has to offer. I spend most of my free

time playing golf, watching sports with my friends, and finding new restaurants to enjoy.

My passion is social justice and helping underrepresented members in the community. I'm learning about PNA Village and the tremendous work that it does. I look forward to meeting everyone and working alongside you all!

BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Natalie Wainwright

When We Were Real, Daryl Gregory's 10th book, was released this past April by Saga Press. It's very funny and thought-provoking. It contains moments that move a reader to recognize and feel deeply about experiences and emotions we all share.

The plot and tone are very different from his earlier books (as they are from each other). But all his books strive to evoke empathy and achieve it through unusual plot formulations and settings, incorporating unexpected iterations of contemporary science fiction and fantasy motifs.

All of Gregory's books are inventively plotted and written, with convincing characters and great dialog. They're truly captivating and have received praise and acclamation. *When We Were Real* is about two-thirds literary, one-third goofy, and an overall pleasure to read.

Daryl Gregory lives in Seattle. He says in an interview in the April 2025 issue of *Locus* magazine that his family, whose antecedents on both sides moved from East Tennessee, "went to a Baptist church that was made up mostly of Southerners who'd moved north for jobs in the '60s." The teaching of the church that "[T]here's one way to go through the world, and we figured it out" conflicted with what he was learning in life and from reading science fiction. He learned that "everything can be different." He says that this conflict led specifically to his 2021 novel *Revelator*, but it seems to inform all his writing.

When We Were Real takes place in a world very like ours. However, its inhabitants were recently told that their world isn't real. It's a "sim," a simulation; all of it and its people were created from code. The proof they've been given through "announcements" has come in the form of examples of structures, places, and beings that simply could not exist if the rules of physics were true.

The book centers on a group of people who take a bus tour to many of the "impossibles" so they can experience them rather than simply knowing about them. Each character has a motivation for joining the tour: a comic book writer, who's come with his friend, an engineer who has had brain cancer; a young, pregnant "influencer" who wants to ensure that her baby gets so famous that the code writers can't just delete him; a young man accompanying his paranoid father; a nun trying to understand how her beliefs can fit in this new



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scenario; her assistant whose faith is unwavering, even though she understands the world is not what she had thought; and a rabbi who sees himself as timid and ineffectual.

People come away changed, knowing that they are not “real” in any sense they had believed before. The group begins to ponder the meanings of their “lives.” What meaning, if any, can be attributed to their trials and tribulations, the hardships they’ve undergone, their friendships, their love, their choices, their “actions,” their deaths? What about God?

In the *Locus* interview, Gregory says that when writing the book, he thought of *The Canterbury Tales* and *Gilgamesh*. *When We Were Real* is his response to The Matrix movies: “[O]ne early thought I had was I really resented how in The Matrix, by their own rules, Neo and Trinity are just killing people right and left who are real innocent people who just happen to be possessed, but they still die in their pods. I thought, That’s kind of morally reprehensible. And then I thought, Well, what about all the other people in the simulation who aren’t the heroes? Aren’t they real too?”

In this book, Gregory makes it clear that there’s no getting out of the simulation; the characters understand they can’t shoot their way out to some real, if terribly unpleasant, reality that’s behind the world they’d believed they were in. And doesn’t it matter if you injure or kill others, even if they—and you—aren’t real?

Daryl Gregory says he “writes best from empathy.” He writes better, he says, if he loves his characters. “[My] guiding principle for the book was that the job of each person on the bus is to take care of everybody else on the bus. Just like everybody on the planet has to take care of everybody on the planet. It’s our only job.”

This funny, serious book is ultimately about empathy. The necessity for it, the deep reality of it. The theme is timely, and its expression in *When We Were Real* is moving indeed.

BETSY’S TIPS ON WELLNESS

Finding pleasure as the days grow colder and shorter

by Betsy Kruse

Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower – Albert Camas

We’ve had such a warm, beautiful summer that it may be even tougher to move into autumn. The days get shorter, and darkness falls upon us. The skies move to gray. The rain falls. And winter is not far behind.

All true. But what else is true? For one, we get to experience distinct seasons and a temperate climate in the Northwest. We can view every leaf as a flower and every drop of rain as moistening and nurturing our ground. Rain puts out fires in our forests. Mushrooms pop up! Crisp, cool mornings refresh and greet us as we walk in our neighborhoods or hike in the mountains.

I like to think about what I can do to enjoy the fall season and adjust my activities to accommodate the change. Just this week, I enjoyed a wonderful



walk with friends in the Washington Park Arboretum. The leaves were still on the trees. I wondered if we’ll have a colorful fall because everything is so dry. We sud-

denly came upon a beautiful coyote. It slowly stepped forward, dropped to the ground watching its prey and totally ignoring us, and then abruptly hopped up toward a squirrel that fortunately escaped capture. Ahh the joys of nature!!

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Think about what you can do to soak up the wonders of our environment. Here are some ideas I've been thinking about:

- Put on your raincoat and enjoy a walk in the rain.
- Make a big pot of soup or chili accompanied by cornbread or a crusty piece or two of bread. Invite a friend to join you.
- Take a road trip to admire our autumn foliage in parks and nearby mountains. A trip to Leavenworth might be nice or the Japanese Garden in the Arboretum.
- Go to a pumpkin patch with grandkids or friends. While there, take a hayride or test your skills in a corn maze.
- Decorate for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and the fall season.
- Read a good book or do a craft you can enjoy on your own.
- Donate coats, sweaters, shoes to those who need them.
- Help others to celebrate the holidays by donating food or money to food banks.
- Assist in preparing meals for others in your community for the holidays.
- Invite your neighbors for a gathering to sip cider or enjoy a glass of wine. Or host a potluck or Friendsgiving.
- Take a class, go to a lecture, and enjoy lunch at Greenwood Senior Center.

I'm sure you can think of other things to welcome and enjoy the fall season. Churches and the Greenwood Senior Center/Phinney Neighborhood Association offer many opportunities to volunteer and help others.

By nature, I enjoy reaching out to others and socializing. I also enjoy my time alone for nurturing body and soul. Whether we like it or not, we all need to adapt to the changes we experience as we age. Thinking about what we can do as opposed to what we can't do helps us accept the things we can't change and change the things we can.

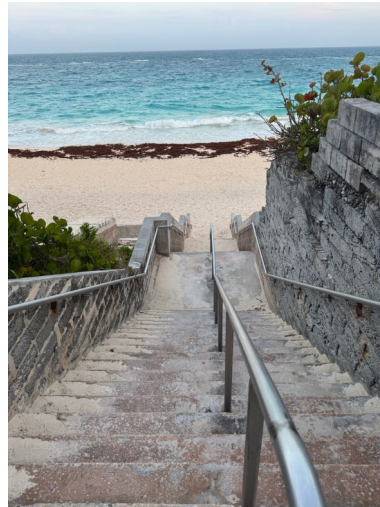
Bermuda for two

by Elena Louise Richmond

On a background of deep green foliage, Bermuda is a watercolor of pastels beginning with the turquoise of the sea. The stucco of the cottages is in shades of manganese and cerulean blue, rose madder and diluted pink opera, lemon yellow and new gamboge, topped off with bright, white limestone

roofs—except for our cottage, which was barn red. Bus stops painted pink signal buses going toward Hamilton, the main town on the island. Bus stops painted blue signal going away from town.

The sounds of Bermuda are constant: roosters (called Red Jungle Fowl),



Steps to the beach

great kiskadee, grey catbird and mourning dove, whistling tree frogs, crickets. Most persistent of all are car horns and speeding mopeds.

The Red Jungle Fowl have their harems all over the island. Three families of chickens lived in the thick jungle of palm trees and foliage that bordered the property where we stayed. The three hens came out every morning, each with their broods of four or five chicks while the rooster strutted around, his chest puffing out whenever he crowed.

On our second morning, we slathered ourselves in a half-tube of sunscreen and went to the beach. Our access was around the corner and down an eighth of a mile to Elbow Beach. The astonishing clear turquoise water went from cold to tepid to bathwater in five minutes. The waves were high enough that for the first time in 25 years, I could throw myself in front of one and ride it towards the shore.

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As a kid, I loved Washington State waters because it was all I knew. I grew up swimming in Puget Sound and didn't know it was cold. I lived for the times we went to the ocean and I could throw myself in front of the waves. In the Sargasso Sea that surrounds Bermuda, I was ecstatic, squealing with pure pleasure.

Andrew swims like a fish. He has the broad shoulders and long body of a swimmer. I loved watching him dive into the waves headfirst like a dolphin, then loll on his back, toes in the air, waiting for the next one.

Sargasso seaweed floats in shallow waters and washes up onto the shore where it creates hedges in the sand. Portuguese man o' wars come riding in on the seaweed and nestle themselves into it on the beach. We encountered one such creature putzing along on a wave, supremely confident that no one would challenge it.

Hamilton is the main town of Bermuda, but St. George is the oldest. It's on its own little island at the north end of the archipelago on the other side of both a causeway and a bridge. St. George seemed to be getting its clothes on for tourist season. But there are always compensations for traveling off-season, principally the smaller crowds. St. George had cobblestone streets and an ancient church; it looked much older than the rest of the island. Even the pastel-colored buildings seemed faded and world-weary.

The town is named after the patron saint of England, not to be confused with George Somers who founded the first British colony on Bermuda in 1609. In the main square stands a huge statue of George Somers reaching his hands to the sky with a ghastly smile on his face. Maybe he was drunk. In any case, the press around George Somers obscures the fact that the English may have colonized Bermuda, but they weren't the first to discover it.

Juan de Bermudez first found the islands in 1505. Apparently uninhabited by humans, the Spanish just moved on. As Andrew put it, they didn't find

anyone to massacre or exploit so they left. The British came along a century later.

In 1609, a ship called the Sea Venture was wrecked off the coast of what is now St. George. Sir George Somers was the captain. As I was reading this on a plaque in the town square of St. George, a penny dropped. Shipwreck, uninhabited island, 1609. Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* in 1611; it was his last play. It begins with a shipwreck on an uninhabited island, except for a wizard, his daughter, and a slave. News of the Sea Venture wreck would have had time to reach England. I thought I had discovered something: Shakespeare based the island and the shipwreck in *The Tempest* on Bermuda. Later, I found about 10 books and numerous articles about Bermuda as the location for *The Tempest*; that didn't bleed me of my joy in having thought it out myself.

One of my favorite lines from *The Tempest* is spoken by Caliban: "Be not afeared; the isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not." I grabbed Andrew's arm, quoted the line, and said, "Andrew, it's the whistling tree frogs! Those are the strange noises!"

We had three reasons for choosing Bermuda as a destination: we both love the beach, I'm an Anglophile (Bermuda is a protectorate of Great Britain), and we are fond of Ancestor Worship. Ancestor Worship is what Andrew calls travel in search of family connections. His parents met on Bermuda when his father was headmaster of Saltus Grammar School.



Andrew at Saltus

One afternoon, we searched for the school. It was a magnificent white building on a hill, visible from the streets of Hamilton. "I say!" declared Andrew when we looked at the building from the

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bottom of the school playfield.

This was Andrew's thing. He had asked me if I thought we'd hear British accents saying "I say!" on Bermuda. I said I didn't think people talked that way anymore. "Oh, I say!" he responded. "Andrew. You're not going to walk around Bermuda saying 'I say!'" His response: "I say!"

The uniformed guard at the entrance to Sالتus school called ahead to introduce us. We waited in the hall outside of reception. On a wall of old photographs, Andrew spotted one of his father during World War II with a group of uniformed dignitaries.

By the time we entered the reception, every official in the school must have been informed that the "Booker family" was on campus because everywhere we went, they knew who we were and treated us like royalty. The director of enrollment took us to the Alumni Room to see the portraits of all the former headmasters. Andrew's father was third in line. There was his name "Robert E. E. Booker 1934–1948." And there was the portrait.

Andrew looked up at it. "That's not my father," he said.

Was it just a bad portrait? The eyes seemed right. The name was correct. Everyone was nonplused. Andrew said he somehow remembered a portrait at his childhood home. Had his father taken his? In which case, who was this? So, there's a mystery.

We were passed on to the director of alumni, whose office was in the building where Robert Booker would have lived. Andrew supplied the director with information about his father and his three half-brothers who had also attended the school.

Photos were taken: Andrew and me; Andrew, me, and the headmistress; Andrew and the director of alumni. Goodness, what a to-do! I felt honored to be included. Andrew was pleased and a little overwhelmed.

We spent a lovely week on Bermuda. It was easy to get around on the bus, and taxis were inexpensive. People were friendly and eager to help. I knew nothing about Bermuda before Andrew and I visited.

*Ice cream social
September 5*



*Tour of Kruckeberg
Garden on September
17*

Keeping Fremont weird, one step at a time

by Maddy Norell

A group of village members set out in June to explore the Fremont neighborhood, Seattle's self-proclaimed "Center of the Universe." Once an industrial area, Fremont began reinventing itself in the 1960s. Artists, students, and bohemians flocked in, bringing with them public art, countercultural energy, and a flair for the eccentric. Over time, traditions like the Fremont Solstice Parade and Sunday market cemented its reputation as the city's quirkiest neighborhood.

But Fremont has not been frozen in time. Since the 1990s, waves of gentrification have reshaped the area. Tech companies moved in, housing prices shot up, and the community's free-spirited edge has softened. Still,

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Waiting for the Interurban

as our walk showed us, Fremont holds tight to its playful, artistic identity even as the landscape changes.

We began our walk at Fremont Coffee Company, a neighborhood staple since 2003. With its mission to bring back the classic coffeehouse experience, it's the kind of

spot where neighbors linger over espressos and pastries. It set the perfect tone for our morning.

Next, we stopped at Charlie's Queer Books. Founded by Charlie Hunts, a man of trans experience, the shop started as a disco book cart and has grown into a welcoming space for queer literature and community connection. It reflects Fremont's spirit of inclusivity and creativity.

We then were greeted by Fremont's most eyebrow-raising landmark, a 16-foot bronze statue of Vladimir Lenin. Sculpted in Slovakia and rescued after the 1989 revolution, the statue depicts Lenin not as a friendly intellectual but rather surrounded by flames and weaponry. Since arriving in Fremont in 1996, it's become one of the neighborhood's most famous (and debated) icons.

Just around the corner sits a 12-foot-tall piece of the Berlin Wall, installed in Fremont in 2001. It commemorates the fall of the wall and nods to Seattle's role in the 1948 Berlin Airlift. It's a striking reminder that Fremont, for all its whimsy, does not shy away from heavy history.

We lightened the mood near the Fremont Bridge with "Late for the Interurban," a bronze statue honoring two beloved Seattle TV clowns, J.P. Patches and Gertrude. Their children's show ran from 1958 to 1981, and the statue, unveiled in 2008, still draws crowds and donations for Seattle Children's Hospital.

Just down the street, we found Fremont's most famous interactive artwork, "People Waiting for the Interurban." Created in 1979, Richard Beyer's sculpture of six passengers and a dog waiting for a train that no longer exists is constantly dressed up by locals in costumes, props, and messages. It's a perfect symbol of Fremont's community creativity.

Because this is Fremont, we stumbled across two enormous apatosaurus (dinosaur) statues rescued from the Pacific Science Center for just \$1. Covered in ivy and weighing five tons each, they embody Fremont's knack for turning the ridiculous into the unforgettable.

Our walk through Fremont was more than a stroll. It was a reminder of how neighborhoods evolve. Gentrification has changed Fremont's face, but its core remains as a place where public art thrives, history is remembered, and weirdness is celebrated. Fremont continues to prove that a city is at its best when it makes space for both joy and reflection.

VILLAGE VOLUNTEER VIEW

Feeling ready to reconnect?

If it's been a while since you last volunteered, we'd love to see you back in action! Life gets busy, and it's perfectly fine to take breaks. But if you've been thinking about getting involved again, now's a great time to jump in.

We've got a variety of volunteer opportunities coming up—everything from quick, one-time tasks like giving rides or raking leaves, to making regular social visits or providing ongoing support for members. Even a single hour can make a real difference for village members.

Volunteering is also a great way to reconnect—with fellow volunteers, with members, and with the heart of what makes the Village so special. Check your inbox or reach out to the staff to see what's available. We'd love to help you find a shift that fits your schedule and interests!

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