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editor's note

While reading Leigh Macmillen Hayes's piece on TimberNook, I was struck by the concept of a program for kids that "restores the occupation of play." I'm old enough that it hadn't occurred to me that play was something that might even need restoration, or that you could influence it in either direction, or that it could even be an occupation. In my mind it was simply spontaneous.

But then I got thinking about the rest of the population and how much we have forgotten about play and all the things that go with it, like navigating icky social situations, working out conflicts, solving problems, and collaborating with others. As one adult involved in the TimberNook program put it, "When adults step back and let kids work it out, that happens. You have to be a little bit comfortable with being uncomfortable."

Through the process of play, kids will almost always find a way to resolve their differences.

Given that the 'nook' in TimberNook refers to "hidden places away from fears of the adult world," maybe we adults need to find a few nooks of our own. Those magical places where our imagination is given free rein and we let go of our fears (and boy, do we have a lot of them), and engage instead in unstructured play on a level playing field. Perhaps we need to reactive our innate response to play and allow it to resolve our conflicts through engagement.

It could get messy at times, and in the case of TimberNook it often does, but given enough time and opportunity, there's a good chance we adults could learn a few things from the kids.

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Photo: Sabrina Cole Quinn



All Aboard the B&SRR

BY LEIGH MACMILLEN HAYES

Met Adam Cook, Austin Kaeser, Jordan Valladares, Dalton Hulsey, Connor Maher, and Cullen Maher. These six young men (pictured clockwise from bottom right) are the brains and brawn behind the Bridgton & Saco River Railroad Museum that they propose to build on Home Run Road in Bridgton.

The average age of the group of six is 28 years. But their combined interest in and knowledge of railroad history is lightyears beyond.

I recently sat down with Adam Cook to learn more about this venture and though I thought I knew something about the railroad's history, came away with pages and pages of notes and a head swarming with information.

Let's begin with a brief history of Bridgton and the railroad that they intend to depict in the museum.

Stevens Brook flows from Highland Lake to Long Lake in Bridgton, and was named for Jacob Stevens, a ranking member of the

survey crew that came here in 1766 from Andover, Massachusetts. He returned in 1768 under contract with the Proprietors to develop water power and make it serve the early settlers by creating mills. Stevens identified power sites along the almost two-mile brook with a drop of 156 feet from its source at Highland Lake (known originally as Crotched Pond) to its outlet at Long Lake (Long Pond).

In the 1800s to early 1900s, the town of Bridgton hummed with industry. And as Adam explained to me, talk of a railroad had been swirling about town for a while with various routes considered to connect

Bridgton and the surrounding towns to a standard gauge (4 feet, 8.5 inches) track and thus increase the ability to import and export goods, transport mail, as well as provide excursions for people.

Finally, on July 30, 1881, the Bridgton and Saco River Railroad, a two-foot gauge or Narrow Gauge rail, would be chartered. "The main line was the result of almost 40 years of in-town politics and squabbling," said Adam. It was finally decided that its course would extend from the standard gauge Maine Central Railroad in Hiram sixteen miles to Bridgton.

Deciding upon a narrow gauge of the rails being just two feet apart was a less expensive venture and the towns of Hiram, Sebago, Denmark, and Bridgton all agreed to this so that construction of laying the rails began in Hiram on July 17, 1882. "The railroad hired contractors from each town to appease all political parties," said Adam.

The first train ran on January 29, 1883. When the Norway Trolley Company hinted at providing service to Harrison, Maine, to compete for the lucrative steamboat passengers arriving at Harrison Landing, B&SR Railroad decided to construct a line that crossed Stevens Brook and ran along the edge of Long Lake. This allowed for coal to be delivered to several of the mills along the way, including Pondicherry, where Food City now stands, and remnants of a trestle that supported coal cars remain in the woods. On average, the railway brought in over 9,000 tons of coal each year. "The Pondicherry Mill alone," Adam said, "would eat between 2,600 and 3,000 tons. The mill consumed more coal in the average year, almost twice as much, in fact, as the railroad did in operations."

Tourists and summer camps also made use of the railroad and greatly added to the summer revenue. People could come up from New York, Boston, and Portland via the Maine Central Railroad to Bridgton Junction in Hiram, and then transfer to the two-footer to Bridgton. When the Massachusetts Bay Railway Enthusiast Excursions, a chartered trip for train fans from the Commonwealth State, arrived in town in 1938 and 1940, 200 - 300 people were injected into downtown Bridgton and the Town Band would come out to play. As for the summer camps, they knew it was a special experience for the kids coming to the area, despite the demeaning nicknames they devised, such as The Dinky and the Bustle and Scoot-Round (Think B&SR).

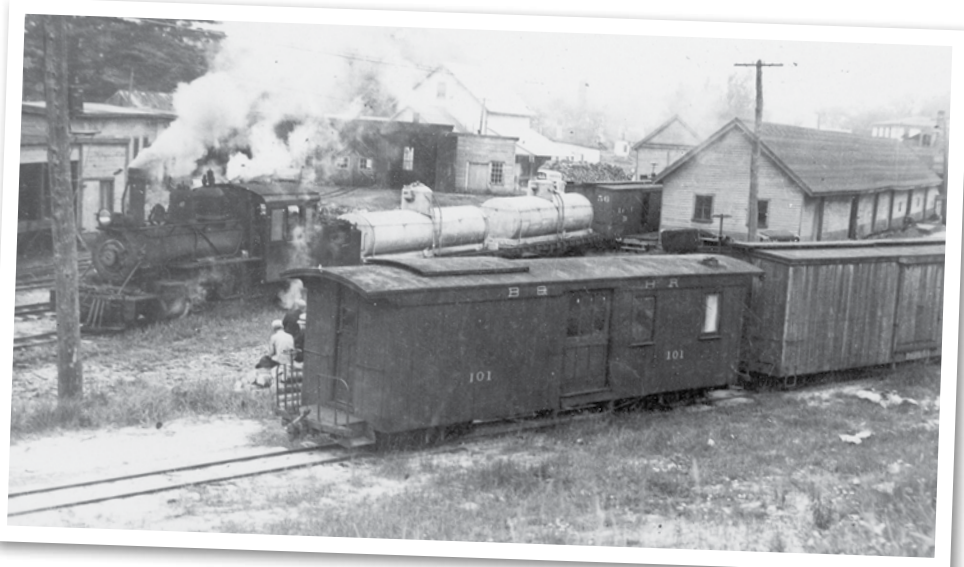
“The mission of the Bridgton & Saco River Railroad Museum is to rebuild and preserve the history of the narrow gauge railroad in the lake region area for current and future generations and to foster interest in the history of the town of Bridgton, Maine.”

BRIDGTONRAILROAD.ORG.

“What I found in our research,” said Adam, “is that the Bridgton railroad truly was a unique two footer. It died due to different circumstances than the rest of the two-foot railroads did. The biggest thing that killed the narrow gauge in Bridgton was the collapse of industry in town during the Great Depression. Bridgton had no outstanding long-term debts, and in the summers the train was actually making money. The problem was the winters because the cost of keeping the line open would destroy any profit the little line made, especially as the mail service went away from the train to the road.”

Despite the relative success of the railroad in summer, the Harrison branch closed in 1930 following the derailment of Locomotive #8. With no funds to repair the line, but still being liable to deliver the mail, the railway purchased a small fleet known as the Bridgton and Harrison Railway Express trucks.

In 1941, the railway finally folded. Rails were pulled up and much of the metal was scrapped. That almost happened to Locomotive #8, the newest of the locomotives, but at the last minute John B. Holt purchased it and later sold it to Ellis D. Atwood, who had also acquired Locomotive #7. Atwood used these to run train rides from 1947 to 1992 through the cranberry



bogs at his Edaville Railroad site in South Carver, Massachusetts. When that closed, the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Company & Museum on the Portland waterfront bought the engines.

Steam forward to 2019. Adam and his friend, Dalton Hulsey were hired by Conway Scenic Railroad. Adam became a track man and earned degrees and certificates in track work and layout. Dalton went into the mechanics department.

Both are lifelong rail enthusiasts, and went on vacation together to visit Nevada Northern Railway. “We were looking at some railways out there and driving through the desert, which is a three hour drive from anywhere,” explained Adam. “So we were talking about our local railroads. Dalton is

not originally from Bridgton. Maine Central runs up through Fryeburg, but he’d never heard of Bridgton’s two-footer. I talked about the history of it, how back in the early 2000s to 2012 or so, Bill Shelley tried to bring the railroad back to Bridgton, but that fell through. Kind of as a joke, we said, ‘Why don’t we try to bring it back.’”

Returning to work, they told Jordan Valadares about their idea because he had even more knowledge about mechanics. They also included Cullen and Connor Maher, both conductors at Conway Scenic Railroad. And they invited Austin Kaeser, who joined with no railroad industry experience, though he does enjoy carpentry.

“We had all the basics of railroad operation,” said Adam. “We had the track guy,

mechanics, actual train men. We had all the skill sets we needed, so it's looking at 'What's Bridgton's situation now? Can this be done?' We kicked that can around in the fall of 2019."

The pandemic struck in 2020 and most of the team was furloughed from Conway Scenic, which meant they suddenly had time to consider the possibility of creating a living history museum in Bridgton. Before going public, they made the decision to formally organize, sent the paper work off and at the height of the pandemic, on October 14, 2020, they officially became a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with a functioning board.

To date, they have purchased property on Home Run Road in Bridgton, acquired some equipment, and have enough two-foot rails to create a six-mile track. Though they are always in fundraising and grant writing mode, with some major fundraisers on the horizon, much of their funding thus far has come from their pockets.

Their current acquisitions include an original 30' box car frame from the original railroad that they plan to restore initially as a flat car so they can use it to build rails. "We will restore the first acquisition in such a way that we can restore it back to a box car when the time seems fit," said Adam.

They also own a ten-ton Plymouth Locomotive. "We are in the process of doing two major things to it: re-gauging it from three-foot gauge down to two, and then putting a new motor in it because the current motor unfortunately is badly cracked and it is beyond salvation in terms of restoration," said Adam.

When needs arise, the men work with other small railroads, volunteering their time and talents to assist with projects. In turn, Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railway in Unity, Maine, and New Hampshire North Coast Railway of New Hampshire have helped supply heavy gauge rails for the Bridgton track.

Working with Sebago Technics, a Maine engineering collective, they've been in the process of designing and redesigning plans for the site based on local, state and federal regulations. Proposals have been submitted to the Town of Bridgton and Maine Department of Environmental Protection for review. The Army Corps of Engineers has also reviewed the plans. The latest proposal for Phase One of the project includes a 60' x 120' car shop, with a small space for an office and museum, plus public restrooms. "The car shop is currently proposed to be a steel structure with a wood facade to give it a traditional two-footer feel, but allow for some more modern heavy equipment to be installed down the line to aid with restoration projects."



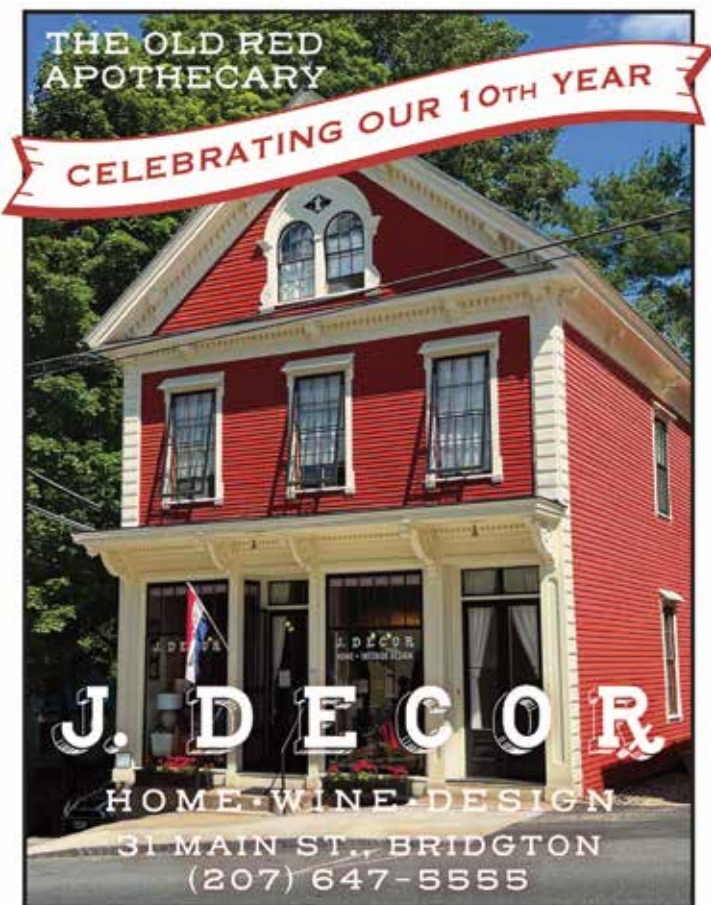
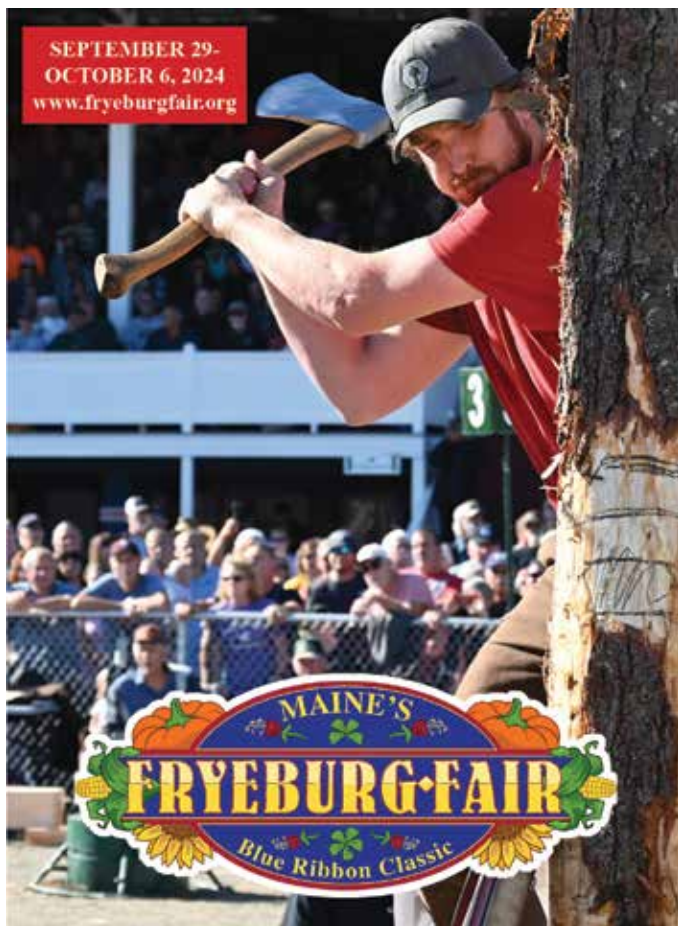
The six young men bring different perspectives to the table. Adam's education in track means he can look at a road bed and assess it as he considers how modern buildings encroached on the former track, where bypasses will need to occur, and what is economical to restore or rebuild. Dalton and Jordan, as the team's mechanics, consider feasibility of equipment operation, blueprints for structures, and what will a future maintenance program for equipment look like. As conductors, Cullen and Connor consider what is needed for passenger operations. Austin manages Portland Glass in Raymond and serves as the board's treasurer. "He has an important role as a third party approval stamp for any projects," said Adam, "as we have to convince him of the merits of an idea before it proceeds, which

allows us to tune our message to be more approachable to the general public as opposed to being all railroad jargon."

"Pretty much every proposal gets picked to death on operation comparability," said Adam, "even including modern railroading standards, which are very different from when the railroad was originally built. It's a lot of comparing modern day needs and laws and everything else with the operational needs for the railroad."

Bridgton and Saco River Railroad Museum is choo-choosing into Bridgton's future and everyone is invited to catch a ride. All aboard. 🚂

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A photograph of several children in a forest setting, engaged in a play activity. They are surrounded by various materials like plastic bottles, water, and containers. One child is using a funnel to pour water into a green bucket. Another child is using a small container to mix something. The background shows a dense forest with trees and a tarp hanging in the distance.

The Occupation of Play

BY LEIGH MACMILLEN HAYES

“Before we head for the woods, who wants to raise a hand and let me know the two rules?” asked Liz Mailett, director of TimberNook Western Maine located in Fryeburg.

Always be able to see a grown-up and be kind to each other, yourself, nature, and the materials were the children’s quick responses.

Liz told them to grab their backpacks, which contained a change of clothes, snack, and water, and then sent them off. The kids raced down the trail to an area in the woods where she’d set up a tarp in case the need for shelter arose, since this group meets no matter what the weather may be.

Beside it was a board nailed a couple of feet above the ground that was lined with hooks for the kids to hang their packs. Then they settled on a blanket and listened to a story about mud before Liz offered them the opportunity to go off and create mud kitchens with anything they could find in the woods.

Wooden pallets, crates and other materials they might use to construct something were set beside a tree in a space all referred to as home depot. Because of the day’s theme, cake pans and utensils were also available.

Without any direction, some baking supplies attracted all of the girls eventually. Some donned aprons and hats and got down to the business of creating mud cakes. If one ran off into the woods to grab an ingredient, the rest followed.

The boys clustered around the bigger materials. A few hauled pallets away and gathered sticks as they began to create a fort.

There was also an old water pump, where one of the younger boys spent almost three hours working the lever.

From where Liz and I sat on a log, we could barely hear their conversations, but she was always attentive. And because these children, ranging in ages from 4 - 11, have been coming to TimberNook regularly, she knows their behaviors well.

Six of us were situated around the perimeter, just close enough that the kids knew we were there, but we became part of the background. “We really encourage them to find a friend to help out. We’re kind of like a lifeguard and I really like that explanation because we’re watching, paying attention, but not involved,” Liz said. In fact, she tried to use a shoulder shrug, thumbs up or thumbs down if approached by a child, rather than verbal communication, thus allowing them to make up their own minds or seek the answer from another child.



The TimberNook model was created by pediatric occupational therapist Angela Hanscom of Barrington, New Hampshire. In her job, where the typical setting is indoors, Angela noticed kids were experiencing many sensory issues. They were falling out of their chairs. They were having issues navigating the environment. Parents and teachers reported that they didn't want to get dirty. The wind bothered them. "Sadly," said Angela, "kids are becoming weaker. A lot of our OT assessments were popping up as 'not as strong.' I just started paying attention to all these developmental issues that were coming up and the number of children who needed occupational therapy was skyrocketing."

Angela also noticed that not a lot of kids were playing outdoors in her neighborhood. And so she came up with the idea to start an outdoor program on her land. "I was only doing it in my community and I was just gonna do it for the summer," she said. That was in 2016. And the program has since gone global. TimberNook is now offered in 22 states, plus Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia.

"Children are designed to move," she explained. "And when we keep them from moving we actually become the barrier to that neurological development that needs to happen so they can be safer in their environment and have better balance and better attention in the classroom. That's all developed through movement and play."

The program is named TimberNook because it takes place among the trees or timbers; and nook refers to hidden places away from fears of the adult world.

Children have long been over-scheduled, and Liz admitted her daughters attend school, and then have dance or piano or softball in the afternoon. TimberNook gives

them the opportunity to just be. To play with friends. To make new friends. To try new things. To solve problems together. The experience reckons back to those days when we didn't need to be home until Mom called us in for dinner and then we were out the door immediately after to play until dark. Back then, we could roam anywhere and we did. At some point parental fear set in, and Liz told me that Angela links it to the advent of evening news when parents suddenly learned horror stories.

As Liz and I quietly talked, she noticed that Krystal, one of the adults helping that day, had moved a bit closer to some action. "We call it the hummingbird approach so if we start to see something, maybe body language or louder voices, and we may need to jump in. Like a hummingbird, we fly in to get a closer look and once the problem is resolved or if it needs adult support, once it is over, we fly away again. Usually just the presence of an adult will eliminate some of the behavior if there is something happening."

Not long into the three hours, I noticed that the level of voices had decreased. Significantly. Liz referred to it as deep play. Getting into deep play mode takes time. According to Edutopia, twenty-minute school recesses do not work. "It takes time

for children to figure out who they're going to play with, what they're going to play, what everyone's role will be, and finally to execute their plan. If recess lasts only 15 - 20 minutes, the children are just figuring out who they'll play with and what they'll do before the bell rings and recess is over. Many times, this allows for few (if any) imaginative play opportunities. Children require longer than 20 minutes of active free play in order to regulate their bodies and prepare for learning. In fact, when you first let children outdoors, their initial movement experiences will actually increase their activity levels. According to Eric Jensen's book *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*, 'A short recess arouses students and may leave them "hyper" and less able to concentrate.' Children benefit from an extended recess session (approximately an hour in length), because it gives their bodies time to regulate the movement and bring their activity level back down again."

After Liz had offered some activities for kindergarten teacher Wendy St. Pierre at New Suncook School in Lovell, last year, Wendy worked at TimberNook during the summer camp sessions. She highly recommended the program to Carolyn Lewey, the school's new principal and former MESA science teacher at Molly Ockett





School. Carolyn knows the value of time spent outdoors and sends her daughter to TimberNook so it was easy to twist her arm.

At first the plan was to bus the New Suncook students to Liz's property, but that didn't seem feasible. Nor did Liz or her family really want to see school buses pulling into and out of their yard on a regular basis.

With support from the staff and superintendent, plus grant monies so no taxpayer money was needed for funding, logistics were worked out and the pieces fell into place to bring TimberNook to the woods behind the school. Liz, staff members, and community volunteers, plus Dan Woodward from Valley Lawn and Landscape and his crew, cleaned the area of cement blocks and glass and other debris and turned the space into a magical place, located between a stream and boulder garden.

Carolyn reminded me that every minute in school is planned and there isn't always an opportunity for students to work out conflicts on their own. Kids who were isolated during remote schooling did not develop skills to navigate social situations. "When adults step back and let kids work it out, that happens," said Carolyn. "You have to be a little bit comfortable with being uncomfortable. We have playground conflicts that we don't see during TimberNook."

"As a school principal, I need to consider the cost of time spent out of the classroom," said Carolyn, "but I think the payoffs are tenfold when it comes to practicing all of the executive function skills that they can then apply when they're back in the classroom, which is exactly where our focus needs to be."

She added, "My philosophy of education has always been to support children in developing an understanding of the world around them, acquiring skills, collaborating with peers and becoming prepared to be engaged in their community. Unstructured play addresses all of these pieces and supports the vision we have for our school. TimberNook checks all of the boxes."

For teachers, it was a huge change where they are expected to be hands-on in the classroom, but not manage anything in the woods. The New Suncook staff talked about what play was like for them as children and how if one person changed the rules, everyone had to go along with that change, whether spoken or unspoken.

One thing the adults all noted is that kids can be successful in that environment, which follows them back into the school building. Teacher and parent of two elementary students, Kate Hutchins, described TimberNook this way, "Our students cross into the woods and suddenly they're miles away from school. They are surrounded by nature's playground and use everything and I mean EVERYTHING they can put their hands on to build, create, and imagine. The materials TimberNook supplies often support our Project Based Learning topic."

"As teachers," she continued, "we are invited to sit back and observe, which is a magical experience. Our students are builders, gardeners, shop keepers, robbers, explorers, and bankers. The conversation and collaboration is priceless. It is a level playing field. When conflict arises, students address it head-on without adult intervention, unless necessary. Every student is engaged. Three hours pass in three minutes. We live in the woods for the afternoon. And when it's over, we're exhausted and dirty and exhilarated."

"When I think about outcomes for students," said Carolyn, "they're all going to learn to read and write, but we can't neglect these other pieces. I feel like in today's society, we have gotten away from unstructured play and I think we have forgotten the benefits of that. This is a component that kids need every day and now we're giving it to them. At the end of the day, I want to get back to the basics and I feel like this is a foundation of childhood."

All New Suncook students spend one three-hour chunk of time in the TimberNook space about once a month. Kelley Brown, a teacher at Molly Ockett School, also brings her students to the site. I joined them for a visit.

When they first arrived, they could barely form a circle and some seemed to live up to the phrase, "ants in their pants." It was also apparent that there were students who wished to be noticed and had no filters.

After Liz inspired them with a story and sent them off with opportunities to be doctors in the woods, that all changed. Almost immediately, they quieted down. "It's their third time here and they're already really deep and involved and they get to come back tomorrow, which is so cool," Liz said. By the end of the three hours, medicines were mixed from dirt and water, tick collars engineered, forts that served as doctor offices were built, and appointments were made for various ailments including a giraffe with a broken neck. Tons of stream play involving bridges being constructed out of tires, pallets, and lots of bricks also took place.

"Each child took their own spin on the opportunity provided. Child-driven play at its finest!" said Liz. "We'll leave what they've created today and the big supplies out here and then we'll add some new loose parts with inspiration from *Piggy in the Puddle*, including big buckets of mud, stuffed animals, and duct tape for possible rain boots construction. They'll have opportunities to submerge themselves and the stuffies either in the stream or mud, and then have a chance to clean them too, so I'll bring soapy materials."

Kelley explained that the program was offered to her class because TimberNook is a great fit for her group of active, hands-on learners who thrive in being engaged in experiential learning outdoors. "My students behave differently, interact differently, in the outdoors," said Kelly. "I could transfer that to the classroom. It's phenomenal."

It's also given her the opportunity to change seating assignments back at school because she's noticed who works well together. And she's provided gross motor activities to help children succeed.

As I walked out of the woods a curious juxtaposition occurred. Kelley Brown's 20+ class of students were still at play among the timbers and I could hear soft voices coming from them on my left, while to my right New Suncook students were out for recess and there was much chasing, yelling, and screaming.

What began as an experiment in her backyard has grown into an incredible experiential learning program for kids that "restores that occupation of play" as founder Angela Hanscom phrased it. 🌱



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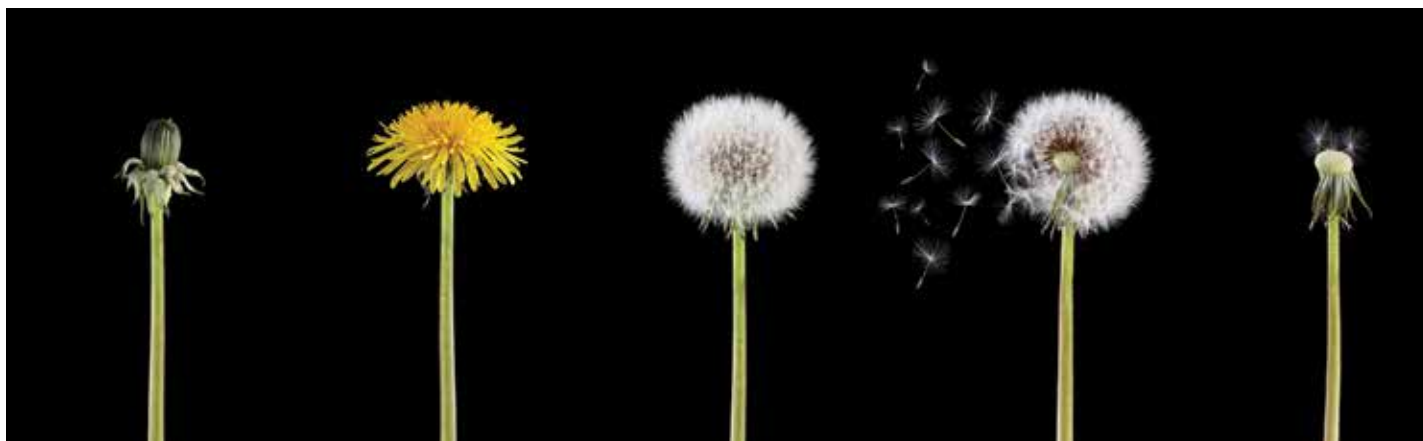
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Coming and Going

BY PERRI BLACK

One last hard push and a baby slips into the world, sucks its first breath, and belts out a cry. A lifetime later, the person that baby became breathes out one last time, and its loved ones cry. Birth and death—the two most momentous and mysterious adventures we will experience; polar opposites rounding out the cycle of life.

As far as we know, we have no control over how we are born. That is up to parents, and presumably they will try to plan the best possible entry into the world for a child. But most of us will have some say in how we die. Once we become part of the world, we begin to live and learn, constantly gathering knowledge and experiences to create a life that, as we lie dying, we can be satisfied has been a good one.

Daughter and mother, Grace Pease and Andrews Nelson, deal intimately with these opposite ends of life's spectrum. Grace is a midwife and Andrews is a death guide. While many people are familiar with midwives, fewer are aware of death guides, yet the two professions are remarkably similar in many ways and sometimes even overlap.

Grace graduated from the last class at Birthwise Midwifery School in Bridgton in 2022 and became a nationally certified professional midwife (CPM) licensed in both Maine and New Hampshire. She always wanted to do something in health care and studied medical anthropology and global health in college, but eventually ended up practicing in the more intimate, holistic field of midwifery. This was no surprise to her mother, who says she knew Grace was going to be a midwife since she was five years old.

Grace has had a lifelong association with midwives and was actually born at home with the help of a midwife, who was assisted by a student midwife named Brenda. Thirty-one years later, Grace now works with midwife Brenda at the Sacopee Midwives, a group practice of CPMs. Coincidentally, Brenda also assisted in the birth of Grace's husband.

Midwifery is as old as humankind (moving the so-called "second oldest profession" of motherhood into third place) but it is a relatively newly recognized profession in the United States. Midwives are common in Europe but in the U.S. most babies are still delivered by doctors in hospitals. Given that birth is our initial great adventure,

bringing us kicking and screaming into the world, rethinking this equation might be worthwhile.

There are various types of midwives classified according to training and services offered. Midwives like Grace (CPMs) undergo extensive training, including clinical rotations and preceptorships, and work with birthing parents who want to deliver their babies at home or at a birthing center. They help parents during the "childbearing year," which can include time prior to conception (e.g. preconception counseling, well body care, intrauterine insemination—IUI, etc.), as well as pregnancy and postpartum months. CPMs do not work with high-risk pregnancies, which would come under the care of a different medical professional like an OB/GYN. Midwives closely monitor and facilitate the birthing process, making decisions with the parent as it progresses. Should complications arise, the birthing parent will be transferred to a hospital setting birthing center if the situation requires.

Birth doulas may also be involved in various capacities. A doula is distinct from a midwife, and a trained, non-medical professional who provides a range of support to the birthing parent. They advocate for the client, ensure a pre-determined birth plan is followed, and provide comfort and support during labor. They also assist with postpartum issues and help navigate systems for relevant services.

Certified professional midwives develop very close relationships with their clients because, unlike doctors in hospitals, they are able to spend a lot more time getting to know them. A midwife meets with the birth parent 10 to 15 times before the birth, then an average of five times postpartum. During these meetings they discuss birth plans, options for birthing, support systems, nutrition, mental health, and relationships, as well as caring for the baby and its impact on family life. They also look at services available to help adjust to parenthood. The goal is to create a safe, receptive, nonjudgemental space to allow the natural process of birth to happen undisturbed, and welcome a new life into the world.

Grace's mother, Andrews "Bones" Nelson, operates at the other end of the spectrum, assisting people in exiting this life when their time has come. Her background is mainly in agriculture and farming but animals have always fascinated her. She has studied their

behavior since she was a child, observing them first-hand and reading their tracks and signs. She finds humans are the most interesting animals to observe, especially their behaviors during birth and death. In 2014, she became the first INELDA (International End-of-Life Duola Association) certified death guide in Maine (she prefers the term “death guide” rather than “death doula” because “doula” stems from the Greek word for slave).

Andrews aims to spread the word about death guides and encourage more people to take up the profession. She says more death guides are needed to help everyone face the great unknown.

People can begin the work required to face their deaths at any time but Andrews says that to ensure a “good death,” it is wise to allow enough time for final wishes to be accomplished. Young, healthy people sometimes plan their deaths long before they are likely to occur, while a diagnosis or illness may prompt others to begin the consideration. It is natural to feel fear or anxiety in the face of the mysterious and unknown. Andrews’ job is to help the dying person and their loved ones face the situation and ease into the inevitable transition. Like a midwife, a death guide aims to create a safe, supportive space for a dying person to pass through the gateway from this life into whatever lies on the other side. It is essential to allow that person to feel fully supported; after all, they are the expert on their life.

A good death occurs when someone is at peace with their life and understands what their life’s purpose was. To achieve this requires a lot of work, much more than just writing a will and “putting one’s affairs in order.” Conversations with loved ones, a deep look at the passing life, and developing a clear plan for death wishes are perhaps even more important. Andrews will meet a few times with the dying person and “their people” to assess the situation. She tries to identify what she calls the “family death guide”—a person who naturally has the skills to guide one into death (she says there’s usually someone like that in any group)—and will try to empower that person by acknowledging them and asking for suggestions on how to proceed with the process. She also advises engaging hospice services as soon as possible because they offer many benefits and most people wait until it is too late to take full advantage of them.

Next come several one-on-one meetings with the dying person to work on a “life review” and reflect on how they have lived. Sometimes this is the first time the person has thought about the topic, or the first time someone has asked and listened to them. If the person is not sure how to begin, Andrews might make an open-ended statement like, “Tell me about your family...” to get the process started. As the person talks, she practices deep, active listening and records the conversations. From this review they explore the person’s life purpose and devise what is called a “legacy project” very specific to the dying person; something they want to leave behind so others will know who they were. Past legacy projects have included a final farewell party, a scavenger hunt for family and friends, and a road trip to visit places important to the dying person. One of her clients wanted to call everyone in their address book to say goodbye. It was an impressive list of people all around the world, which seemed unlikely given who the person was. But it turned out to be true—rather like the Tim Burton film “Big Fish.”

The final step is creating a vigil plan, which is written down and agreed to by all who will be involved, including the death guide. This clarifies the person’s last wishes and determines a support system including those who will have access to the dying person, who will be present at the death, setting the mood in the room, etc.

Birth and death guides have been facilitating good beginnings and endings as long as humans have been in existence. Grace and Andrews say that being present at the beginning and ending of lives is a deeply humbling experience and they learn something new each time.

The vigil takes place when the person is “actively dying,” one to ten days before the end. Everyone involved will have a specific job to ensure the person’s wishes are followed. The whole process is fluid and the death guide reviews the plans at each meeting to make any necessary adjustments.

Planning a death can take quite a bit of time but sometimes a death is sudden or unexpected: accident, war, crime, or—where birth and death overlap—a stillbirth or abortion. In such cases, there is post mortem work, going through the same process with those who are left behind—reviewing the deceased’s life, then creating a ritual or ceremony for healing and processing the death.

During such momentous events as birth and death, the veil between this world and “somewhere else” wears thin and glimpses of the life cycle turning can be perceived. Both birth and death can be joyous, even ecstatic, experiences. Grace says that some mothers have had a pain-free childbirth—they did the pushing but did not feel pain and some actually laughed during the process. Andrews says that actively dying people will often see things or talk to others who are not visible to bystanders. Sometimes they see loved ones who have already died, as if those people are coming to help with the transition.

Birth and death guides have been facilitating good beginnings and endings as long as humans have been in existence. Grace and Andrews say that being present at the beginning and ending of lives is a deeply humbling experience and they learn something new each time. No two births or deaths are the same, and there is no right or wrong way to go about things. It is yin and yang; whatever happens is okay as long as the outcome is right. They both clearly love their work and are fascinated by it. Who wouldn’t want to be present at a good birth? And Andrews says she “loves to be a part of a good death.”

Birth and dying are natural, inevitable processes that affect all of us. They may be scary but can be made easier with someone to help along the way. In the meantime, value the time you have and use it wisely. You got through your birth, now think about who you want

to be on your deathbed and live accordingly. ✨



For more information about Grace Pease and midwives go to sacopeemidwives.org. To learn more about Andrews Nelson go to bonesnelson.com or view a short film about her at: <https://www.mountainfilm.org/films/death-and-her-compass>

PERFORMING ARTS

Please note that events are subject to change.

Arts Center at 8 Hancock Ave
Located in a church beside Soldiers Memorial Library in Hiram; offers classes, concerts, art shows, presentations, meeting space, and facility rentals. FMI: 207.409.1822

Bear Mountain Music Hall:
Artists and performers present a variety of concerts, programs and activities from June to September. Located in historic Waterford. FMI: bearmountainmusichall.org, 207.256-0060

Brick Church for the Performing Arts: Theatre and music take place in this historic and acoustically perfect setting. FMI: lovellbrickchurch.org, 207.925.1500

Deertrees Theatre: June through September performances mark the 88th season at this enchanting Adirondack-Style theatre nestled in the pines in Harrison. deertrees-theatre.org 207.583.6747

Denmark Arts Center: Once serving as the Odd Fellows Hall, this community gathering space offers a season of surprises topped off with the DamJam music festival in Centennial Park. FMI: denmarkarts.org, 207.452.2412

The Hayloft at Dragonfly Farm: Historically a dairy farm, the renovated barn provides event space and musical programs. www.hayloftatdragonfly.com 207.749.6160

Lake Region Community Theatre: Providing community performing arts opportunities, this summer's show will be *Beauty and the Beast*. LRCTMaine.org

Ossipee Valley Music Festival: String Camp, July 25-28 Featuring an omnivorous blend of genre-defying sound in South Hiram. ossipeevalley.com

Oxford Hills Music and Performing Arts Association: Staging productions highlighting local talent. June performance: *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*; November performance: *Hands on a Hard Body*; at Norway Grange. FMI: ohmpaa.com 207.613.5232

Schoolhouse Arts Center: Appealing to audiences of all ages, a variety of shows will be performed in Standish throughout the summer months. schoolhousearts.org 207.642.3743

Sebago-Long Lake Music Festival: Celebrating their 52nd season with Chamber music from various periods at Deertrees Theatre in Harrison. FMI: sebagomusicfestival.org

Stone Mountain Arts Center and The Queen Post Cafe: Nestled in the foothills in Brownfield, national acts and delicious food are offered Thursdays through Saturdays. stonemountainartscenter.com 207.935.7292

THE OUTDOORS

Greater Lovell Land Trust: Informative talks, engaging walks, pollinator garden, and lots of places to explore are among GLLT's summer offerings. gllt.org, 207.925.1056

Inland Woods and Trails: Connecting communities through the development, maintenance, and promotion of multi-use recreational trails for human-powered activities for all ages and abilities. woodsandtrails.org, 207.200.8240

Lakes Environmental Association: In addition to conducting valuable research on Maine lakes, LEA offers public programs and workshops, and maintains several miles of trails. mainelakes.org, 207.647.8580

Loon Echo Land Trust: LETT provides a variety of experiences including walks, paddles, and more at their properties located in various towns throughout the lake region. loonecholandtrust.org, 207.647.4352

Mahoosuc Land Trust: From the Androscoggin River to mountain summits, MLT offers trails, plus a pollinator garden and monarch festival. mahoosuc.org, 207.824.3806

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust: USVLT strives to connect community members with the protected lands through easement explorations of western Maine and eastern New Hampshire. usvlt.org, 603.356.9683

Western Foothills Land Trust: Hikes, walks, races, and paddles are offered that explore the natural history of the Oxford Hills Region. wflmaine.org, 207.739.2124

MUSEUMS & HISTORY

Bridgton Historical Society: Town artifacts are on display in downtown Bridgton, housed in an old firehouse and former church. bridgtonhistory.org 207.647.3699

Clarence Mulford Room: Fryeburg Public Library is home to a room dedicated to Mulford's fictional character, Hopalong Cassidy, and includes a collection of books, research notes and other memorabilia. FMI: fryeburgpubliclibrary.org, 207.935.2731

Col. Samuel Osgood House and Ham Research Library: Tour Fryeburg Historical Society's historic home and/or conduct genealogical research on site. FMI: fryeburghistorical.org, 207.256.3001

Denmark Historical Society
Formed in 1989, the Denmark Historical Society's mission is to collect and preserve the history of the town and its citizens. FMI: denmarkhistoricalsociety.com

Hazel & Owen Currier Doll Museum: Dedicated exclusively to dolls, this museum is owned by Fryeburg Historical Society. currierdollmuseum.org, Whitaker9244@roadrunner.com

Kimball-Stanford House: The 1839 house owned by Lovell Historical Society serves as a museum, while the ell houses the Research Center. lovellhistoricalsociety.org, 207.925.3234

Maine Mineral & Gem Museum: Nineteen interactive galleries explain the history of pegmatite mining in western Maine, topped off with Space Rocks: The Stifler Meteorite Collection, Bethel. FMI: mainemineralmuseum.org, 207.824.3036

Museums of the Bethel Historical Society: Exhibit galleries and period rooms are displayed in both the 1813 Dr. Moses Mason House and 1821 O'Neil Robinson House. FMI: bethelhistorical.org, 207.824.2908

Rufus Porter Museum: Learn about the 19th-century artist, inventor, musician, and founding publisher of *Scientific American*. June through October. FMI: rufusportermuseum.org, 207.647.2828

Scribners Mill & Homestead: The 19th-century sawmill and homestead in Harrison are open on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays from Memorial Day through Labor Day. scribnersmill.org, 207.583.6544

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Windham SummerFest: June 22. Celebrate the beginning of summer. windhamsummerfest.com, 207.892.1905

Pollinator Fest: July 27, 1:00 - 4:00pm Join Greater Lovell Land Trust for their 3rd annual Pollinator Garden Festival. gllt.org 207.925.1056

Ossipee Valley Fair: July 11-14, A country fair with livestock events, competitions, demonstrations, and exhibits in South Hiram. ossipeevalleyfair.com 207.256-9658

Waterford World's Fair: July 19-21 Celebration of rural and historical culture, with competitions and exhibits in North Waterford. waterfordworldsfair.org 207.890.7669

Founder's Day and Classic Car Exhibit: July 20, 9:00am - 5:00pm Music, vendors, crafts, and car show to benefit Hamlin Memorial Library and Museum, Paris Hill. parishill.org 207.743.2980

Gray Wild Blueberry Festival:

August 10, 9:00am - 3:00pm 8th annual family-friendly event featuring food, music, spelling bee, crafts, and more. 24 Main Street, Gray wildblueberries.me

Monarch Festival:

August 17 - 18 Join Mahoosuc Land Trust for workshops, Monarch butterfly tagging, children's activities, lawn games, artisan vendors and more in Bethel. mahoosuc.org 207.824.3806

Maine Outdoor Film Festival:

August 16 Loon Echo Land Trust and MOFF present an evening of Outdoor Films at Hacker's Hill Preserve in Casco lelt.org 207.647.4352

Lovell Arts & Artisans Fair:

August 17, 9:00am - 3:00pm 49th annual all-juried fair at New Suncook School in Lovell. hobbslibrary.org 207.925.3177

Oxford County Fair:

September 11 -14 Traditional county fair featuring livestock, exhibits, competitions, vendors, and a midway. oxfordcountyfair.com 207.739.2204

OLD HOME DAYS**Sebago Days:**

July 18 - 20 Road race, car show, talent show, kiddie rides, grand parade, music, and fireworks. sebagodays.com 207.787.3732

Lovell Old Home Days:

July 15 Road race, followed by a parade and exhibits. Find us on Facebook

Casco Days:

July 25-27 Fireworks, road race, children's parade, Grand Parade, and midway. cascodays.com

PLEIN AIR MUSIC**Music on Main:**

Free concert-series each month, May - October 144 Main Street, Bridgton musiconmainbridgton.com

Denmarkpalooza:

June 29, 6:00pm Free evening concert; BYOB and chair Denmark Bicentennial Park, Denmark

Paris Hill Music Festival:

Enjoy music and live entertainment under the stars for these benefit concerts. Paris Hill Common, parishillmusicfestival.com

Loon Echo Land Trust's Sunset

Concert Series: Wednesdays, 6:00 - 8:00pm on June 26, July 17, and August 7 at Hacker's Hill, Casco. lelt.org 207.647.4352

Dam Jam REVIVAL:

August 18, 12:00 - 8:30pm Outdoor family music and art festival held in Denmark Bicentennial Park Denmarkarts.org

RACES**Nomad Trail Race Series:**

May - October, Thursday, 6:00pm Monthly 3.1-mile Farm to Town Trailhead race series in Norway. Pre-register at wflmaine.org

The Longest Day 5K:

June 20, 6:30pm 5K trail run at Libby Hill Forest, Gray libbyhill.org

Four on the Fourth:

July 4, 8:00am Four mile race through town, Bridgton Kids Fun Run/Walk July 3 at 4:30pm. fouronthefourth.com

LEA Paddle Battle:

July 6, 8:00am Paddle Board and Kayak Races, Highland Lake, Bridgton mainelakes.org 207.647.8580

Norway Triathlon:

July 13, 8:00am Swim, bike, run in this USAT-sanctioned sprint. Pre-register at wflmaine.org 207.739.2124

Sebago Days 5K:

July 20, 8:00am Out and back on Route 11 with course closed to traffic. sebagodays.com 207.787.3732

Tough Mountain Challenge:

July 27, First Heat 7:00am Challenging adventure obstacle 5K race, Sunday River Resort, Newry. toughmountain.com 800.543.2754

Casco Days Country Run:

July 29, 9:30am Four-mile road race cascodays.com

Loon Echo Race Series 2024:

Fluvial 5k, Bald Pate 10k, Pleasant Mountain Half Marathon to support Loon Echo Land Trust, Bridgton Pre-register at lelt.org/trek 207.647.4352

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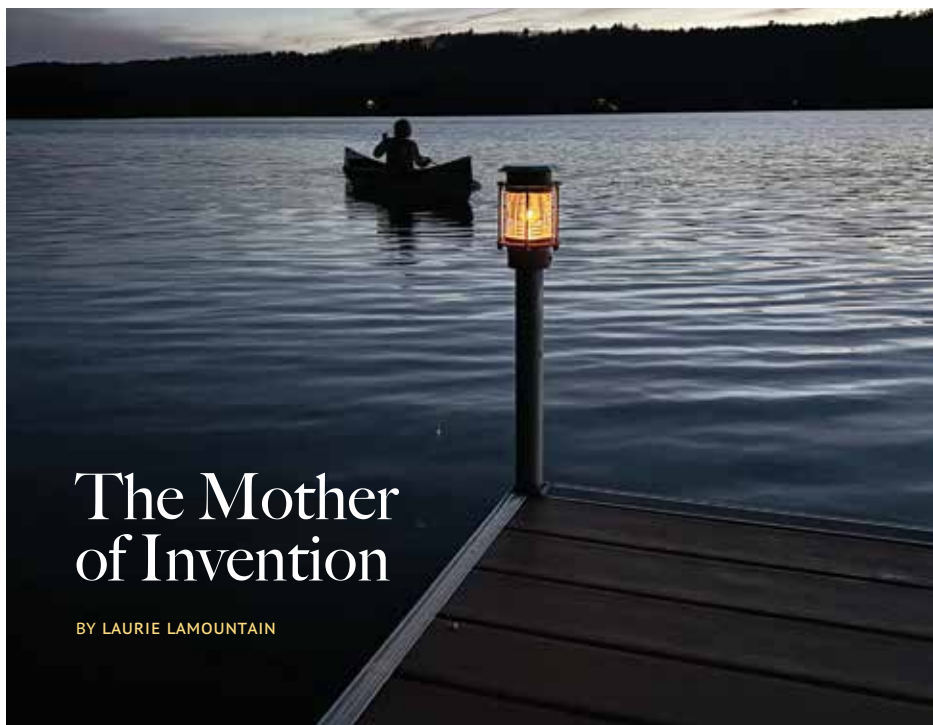
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Jun 8	Goodnight Moonshine
Jun 22	Antje Duvekot
Jul 13	Sam Robbins
Jul 14	Music without Borders
Jul 20	Kate Vargas
Aug 3	Heather Pierson Trio
Aug 10	Ellis Paul
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The Mother of Invention

BY LAURIE LAMOUNTAIN

Sometimes a great notion gives birth to others. When the French physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel (pronounced fruh.nel) invented the rotating lens used in lighthouses in 1823, it became known as “the invention that saved a million ships.” A year later he designed the first fixed lens, “for spreading light evenly around the horizon while minimizing waste above or below.” There were a number of inventors who paved the way for Fresnel, but when in 1826 he eventually replaced the earlier mirrors with catadioptric prisms, through which light would travel by a combination of refraction and reflection, he succeeded in designing the lighthouse lens as we know it – just one year before he succumbed to tuberculosis at the age of thirty-nine. Nearly two hundred years later, and after countless adaptations to improve, lighten, and ease the manufacturing of it, Fresnel’s lens is enduring proof that invention is an evolving process. While modern marine navigation relies on GPS and satellite-based radio to prevent accidents, the Fresnel lens is still used in active lighthouses around the world, and its use has since expanded to include movie projectors, magnifying glasses, and boat lights.

Two years ago, lifelong boat dock manufacturer, author, and artist Sam Merriam envisioned yet another application for Fresnel’s lens. Sam is the owner of Great Northern Docks in Naples, Maine, the company his father Fremont Merriam founded in 1979. He has an innate penchant for vintage

lines and imagery, which is richly evident in the illustrated Maine lake maps he creates in pen and ink and for which his brother Seth completes the composition. The maps are available for purchase at several lake region stores and at the company store. All profits from the maps go to local charities.

It so happens that Sam’s enthusiasm for vintage design extends to classic nautical lighting and that inspired his brother Stephen, a mechanical engineer, to conceptualize a solar lantern to illuminate dock posts, shorelines, and landscapes. Do you sense a family pattern emerging here?

“I had actually asked Steve to help me design a custom lamp for the end of my driveway,” says Sam. “I’d found a lamp with a large Fresnel lens at a salvage place. The galvanized steel housing had seen many, many miles at sea and was all rotted out, but the lens was amazing. I wanted something unique and in keeping with the style of my house and thought about some of the copper lanterns that I had seen in the past. But before I got to settle on anything, Steve came up with the idea of a solar dock light that we could sell [at the store]. So I wouldn’t say that I completely parked the idea of fabricating my driveway lantern, but this new idea completely consumed me.”

With the services of a research and development firm specializing in solar technology, the brothers merged state-of-the-art functionality and classic nautical design. In fact, the patent they have pending covers the concept of combining the look of traditional

nautical lighting with modern technology.

The R&D team produced the prototype and designed the solar circuitry. Everything else was Steve. He used SOLIDWORKS® CAD software to design a virtual 3D model of the lamp that specified the materials in which it would be constructed, how it would be constructed, and, of course, how it would look.

“Like Sam said, the lens was the inspiration. I had, being in the dock business for so long, been aware of what’s missing,” says Steve. “I talk to so many people who say, ‘I live on the dock all summer. That is my living room.’ They’re beginning to trick out their docks with grills and nicer furniture. It’s their living room on the water, so why not have nice lighting?”

Being in the industry, we knew there were better metals to be had. Those of us who buy things for our home know when we’re getting stuff that doesn’t have the quality, the look, or the longevity. We wanted a product made of anti-corrosive materials that could withstand both the lakefront and marine environment and last a long time.”

The ShoreLight™ is made with a marine grade anodized aluminum housing and a UV protected lens. All of the components are sealed to prevent insects and saltwater getting in. A built-in adapter in the base allows you to mount the lamp on various surfaces, such as a dock surface or pole, and a wall-mount is under development.

As far as the design was concerned, Steve recalls traveling in South Carolina and seeing a masthead nautical light that guided his process. “That design has been around for a very long time, but this is the first time anyone has resurfaced it as a modern fixture powered with a miniature solar panel.”

Another thing that sets their product apart is push button technology. Not only does it make it easy to turn the ShoreLight™ on and off, thereby preserving our exquisite dark skies and peaceful relations with your neighbors, it allows you to select one of eight identifying colors.

“When you’re out on the lake at night and returning to dock, it can be very difficult to identify your own dock and camp,” says Sam. “You could be off by four or five cottages. It’s very easy to do, even for an experienced boater. The light that I have on my swim raft is red and nobody else out there has a red light. I see that light and I know that’s my place.”

continued on page 31

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Laundry Lines

BY SUZANNE RICHARD

What is it that draws me to the hanging of laundry on outdoor clotheslines? I do not have the nostalgic memory of the outdoor scent of my mother's or even my grandmother's freshly laundered sheets aired in the sun. I have one recollection of a clothesline from my first childhood home. The parallel cotton lines served as unlikely sky hooks, helping my younger sister and me as we attempted to ice skate on a small rink frozen beneath the clothesline. When the lines snapped from our body weight we ventured unsupported on our ice skates, which was freeing in many ways, but this does not explain my attraction.

Clotheslines over the years have brought me life lessons and gifts of friendship. The hanging of laundry made it possible for me to breach a language barrier and to trust the kindness of a stranger. This occurred during my first attempt to hang laundry outside while living on my own in a tiny, first floor, alley apartment. What I did not anticipate was the infuriating dust stirred up by the cars entering and exiting the dirt alley. A knock on my door presented a middle-aged woman of Latino descent who managed between her Spanish and demonstrative gestures to indicate that I should gather my still damp laundry and follow her. There in her yard a few doors down was her clothesline set back from the alley where she generously offered me space to hang my laundry. It was an unlikely experience which obviously I have not forgotten.

A decade later in a different location, the artistic arrangement of laundry on a clothesline owned by an unknown neighbor across the street gave me the incentive to go introduce myself. That was the beginning of an on-going friendship evolving for the past forty years, even as we continue to hang laundry in different states.

On a more humorous note, a group of friends and I got a laugh at the expense of a friend who is a laundry hanging enthusiast. In her attempt to hang laundry, where clotheslines are banned according to the rules of the condo association, she resorted to standing a rotary-style line just inside her open garage. The arrangement seemed to work until the day an exceptionally strong wind sucked the apparatus out of the garage where it lay toppled in the driveway.

Another friend, who is a remarkable storyteller and loves to embellish, had us believing that the loaded clothes rack was last seen tumbling down the hill headed for the post office exposing all her "unmentionables!" The stand never did make it off her property, and the woman who owned the laundry would never have been so careless as to include her more intimate clothing in her selection, but it did create a laughable image.

With regard to the banning of clotheslines by condominium associations, it is reassuring that nineteen states, including Maine, have enacted the "Right to Dry" law. It does seem contradictory to ban clotheslines while at the same time encourage environmentally-sound practices, such as utilizing the free and abundant supply of solar and wind power.

Common sense suggests that the earliest history of drying clothes reverts back to the practice of washing clothes in streams and spreading the items on sunny rocks or bushes to dry. Stringing a line between supports enhanced the process. An 1830 edition of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* included the definition of a clothesline. By 1911, Gilbert Toyne, a blacksmith, wheelwright and farrier by trade who lived in Australia, patented his Aeroplane Rotary Clothes Hoist.

Approximately thirty-four years later, another Australian named Lancelot Hill, with the skills of a pipe welder and recently back from WWII, began manufacturing his Hoist Hills Clothesline. So celebrated is the rotary-style clothes rack in Australia that it has appeared on a stamp, was utilized in 1996 as an emblem for the Festival of the Arts in Adelaide, and later included in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games opening ceremony. Never again will I be able to view the common backyard rotary-style clothesline without thinking of the Hill's Hoist towering over the heads of stilt walking performers who were able to ignite them to disperse fireworks.

The simpler version of the laundry line commonly seen in Maine, which utilizes a single line suspended between trees, when located at a lakeside camp, can be designated for drying wet swimsuits and towels and not necessarily clean laundry. My aunt casually looked at such a clothesline at her summer camp and shared with me a heartfelt reflection. She commented that this clothesline, slightly bowed under the weight of damp swimsuits and towels hanging in the dappled sun, brings her such satisfaction as it means that family and friends





are gathered and enjoying camp as intended. There is a language associated with items hung on lines to dry in the sun if you listen.

The hanging of a household's laundry can say quite a bit about the people who live there. Is the laundry hung casually or with a specific plan? Is it the laundry of a single person, a couple, or perhaps a family with children?

The act of hanging laundry to some may appear too time consuming. Others find it well worth the effort as a money saver and a form of exercise. I also see hanging laundry as the ultimate form of multi-tasking. Once the laundry is hung, other tasks can occupy my time until I retrieve it when dry. Neighbors ask me what are the best predictors of weather based on the use of their clothesline. If their laundry is hung then I can expect it to be, "a good drying day," possibly complete with sun, puffy white clouds and a jaunty breeze. I have yet to find them mistaken.

The once securely established rules associated with the hanging of laundry seem to have been cut loose. Never have I washed the clothesline before hanging laundry. Monday was the designated wash day with whites hung first on the line. Some traditional practices remain viable such as pinning socks at the toes, pants by the cuffs and shirts by the tails, thus preventing the unnecessary stretching of the fabric. An experienced laundry hanger knows the technique of securing items side by side sharing a single clothespin. If you chose to use a rotary style rack you were advised to hang your sheets and towels on the outside lines with your "unmentionables" discreetly concealed in the middle. Leaving clothespins on the line is considered distasteful as it allows them to get dirty and broken more easily. Getting your clothes off the line before the sun goes down makes sense, but the rule of always neatly folding items so they will be ready for ironing is lost on me. I commend those laundry masters who still keep this practice.

It is not surprising that here in the States the hanging of laundry seems to be experiencing a resurgence. The once coveted washer and drier combination from the 1950s, for some a household staple, is not necessarily the case. According to estimates from Cleantechnica.com, the 10 largest World Economies and their use of clothes dryers is led by the United States with 92% of the population. Significant reduction of dryer use is found in China and Italy to be 3%, with

Canada claiming a dryer use of 81%. The cost of purchasing dryers and the electricity required to run them has given people pause. In colder climates such as Maine, however, hanging laundry has seasonal implications. The practice of attempting to walk frozen sheets and clothing into the house and locating a spot to complete the drying process is not as appealing. People looking for an alternative from a conventional dryer have a wide range of options in an apparently thriving market. Choices range from steel forged poles, to folding racks, to rotary models, to pulley systems, to wall mounts, to retractable versions and even racks suspended from the ceiling.

Laundry lines transcend beyond their intended practical use. The simple line suspension method is the most used prop in movie making depicting everything from the poverty of inner cities to rural wholesomeness. The hanging of laundry has inspired poetry and art. Poems vary in interpretation from the uplifting ritual to the drudgery of a dreaded task. Many striking paintings and photographs exist capturing the light and shadow of fabric hung in the sun. A composition may feature colored clothing or something as simple as an array of white sheets. A fellow laundry-hanging friend introduced me to the contemporary art installations of Helga Stentzel. Shaped by her imagination, black and white striped shirts are fashioned into a zebra. Common gray sweatshirts or pairs of white sweatpants morph into an elephant and a camel respectively. Even a suggested playlist of songs for Laundry Day exists, compiled by The Washing Line Pole Shop located in the UK. If perhaps you need more inspiration to take on laundry day and the hanging of laundry, tune into "Walking on Sunshine" by Katarina and the Waves, "Soak Up the Sun" by Sheryl Crow or "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen. Still, the opportunity for quiet reflection while hanging laundry for me has immense appeal.

I commend those of you who have embraced the hanging of laundry. It obviously has served you well. Even as a relatively latecomer to the hanging of outdoor laundry and a seasonal one at that, I have gained so much. If you have yet to investigate the act of hanging of laundry on lines, I encourage you to be bold and explore the possibilities. At the very least, I hope you come to notice and appreciate the laundry lines that appear on Maine properties. With the arrival of summer here in Maine, you have a full season of sun and warm breezes beckoning. 🌿

the bookshelf

BOOK REVIEWS FROM
BRIDGTON BOOKS

JUSTIN'S LIST

Before going over my summer favorites, there were two wonderful novels from last season that I want to recommend.

The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhorn is an historical novel set in Maine during the late 1700s. Martha Ballard, who was an actual midwife, (see *A Midwife's Tale* by Pulitzer Prize winning author Laurel Thatcher Ulrich) is called out to examine a drowned man's body and sees evidence that the much detested man may have been hanged first. Her discovery does not go over well, especially for her son, who is now the prime suspect in the murder. This is a well-plotted period piece, and Martha's resilience and strength make her a formidable protagonist in a world dominated by men.

North Woods by Daniel Mason follows a tract of land in western Massachusetts from the early colonists to the present day. Each tenant or tenants has a story to tell, and Mason's vivid prose and imagery make the book quite memorable. There are too many themes to mention here, however, nature and unrequited love predominate. The author also peppers his work with poetry, letters, historical records, and photos to enhance the interlocked stories making this a pleasure to read.

If you loved *The Wager* by David Grann,

and want another good true sea story, check out *The Wide Wide Sea* by Hampton Sides. It details Captain James Cook's fatal, third voyage where he attempted to find the Northwest Passage from the Pacific side. Cook, one of England's greatest explorers, was called out of retirement for one final mission. He was also responsible for bringing a Tahitian, Mai, back to his homeland, which made for an interesting side story. But where in the past, Cook had been the benevolent diplomat/scientist, his attitudes changed for the worse in his final voyage, which culminated in tragedy. Read Hampton Sides' impressive narrative to discover what happened.

Novels about time travel are nothing new, however, *The Ministry of Time* by Kaliane Bradley is refreshingly original. The narrator, who is never named in the story, is a civil servant in the UK State Department, and jumps at the chance to take a new "classified" position with elevated status and a huge pay raise. She discovers that she is to act as "bridge" or guide to Commander Graham Gore, a man who perished over 150 years ago with the Franklin Expedition tragedy. It appears the powers that be have somehow acquired a time machine, and have brought five people (who were about to die anyway so as not to alter history in any way) back from the past to the present. She is to live with this gentleman and act as his conduit to the modern world, but his Victorian sensibilities and modesty make it difficult and comical at times for her to

help him. A budding romance soon develops between them until chaos ensues.

The next two Irish novels are outstanding and deserve your attention. Both have characters from previous books, but can be read as stand alones.

Author Tana French continues with her Chicago Detective, Cal Hooper, who has taken early retirement to the Irish countryside, for another crime novel in *The Hunter*. Cal and his partner Lena have settled down and taken a local, disadvantaged, teenage girl, Trey, under their wing. When Trey's smooth talking, absentee father returns with a get rich quick scheme to fleece the townspeople, the peaceful equilibrium of the village is disturbed, with Trey and her own agenda in the middle of it all. The story takes time to develop, with complex characters and a meandering storyline, but it is well worth the effort.

In *Long Island* by Colm Toibin, Ellis Lacey, the heroine from Brooklyn is back twenty years later in a marriage to Tony with two children in New York. She is taken by surprise when a gentleman knocks on her door one day to tell her that Tony has impregnated his wife, and that after the baby is born, he wants nothing to do with it, and will be leaving the baby on their doorstep. This is a turning point in her life, naturally, and it sets off a chain of events bringing Ellis back to Ireland to visit her mother, and to also see the man she loved many years ago. Toibin is a master storyteller, and I can't believe how enmeshed I became with his characters.

Every day people float down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, or hike down a trail to the bottom, however, you can almost count on your fingers the tiny group of people who have actually traversed the 750 mile length of the Canyon. The difficulty lies in the fact that there are no trails to speak of that parallel the river, lots of cliffs to go around, and very little water to drink once you go up into these cliffs. Kevin Fedarko's memoir *A Walk in the Park: The True Story of a Spectacular Misadventure in the Grand Canyon* describes his incredible journey through the canyon with his photographer friend, Peter McBride. A pleasure to read, you not only get an amazing adventure, but also an environmental, historical, and cultural education of a national treasure.

Although it has fallen out of favor, many of us read and enjoyed *The Adventures of*



Huckleberry Finn back in the day. *James* by Percival Everett is another rendition of this classic work told through the eyes of the runaway slave, Jim (or James). Jim's perspective is eye-opening and educational to say the least, and the storyline eventually veers off in another direction for an exciting ending. Everett's story is just as colorful and entertaining as the original, and I believe today's students would benefit from reading both of the books together.

PERRI'S PREFERENCES

Recently, I have found it difficult to focus on anything for any length of time, never mind long enough to read a full book. Perhaps it was the weird winter that seemed to happen all at once in March, or maybe just the horrible noise of the news—I don't know. At any rate, the only novel I've read since my last reviews is *Lady Tan's Circle of Women*, by Bridgton Books favorite Lisa See. Inspired by a medical book written by a woman in 15th-century China, this is the story of two women at opposite ends of a very segregated social hierarchy. Tan Yunxian comes from an elite background and is taught by her grandmother, one of the few female doctors in China at the time, and Meiling is learning to be a midwife from her mother. The two girls become close friends and struggle to break free from tradition while working to help women at every level of society. As in *Snowflower and the Secret Fan*, See recreates bygone China including graphic details about foot binding, childbirth, and social ostracization. Probably not for the very squeamish. The Author's Note at the beginning is enlightening and puts some things into perspective, but I still question the foot binding.

These days my creativity extends only as far as the kitchen, which means that most of my reading has been cookbooks. *The Secret of Cooking: Recipes for an Easier Life in the Kitchen*, by Bee Wilson, got me through the winter—I would read a little bit of it every night before bed and feel a bit calmer. Wilson is a food and cooking historian and wonderful writer. The book is less a cookbook than a memoir although I really like her recipe for “drinkable vinaigrette,” which has now become my go-to salad dressing. I previously reviewed her *The Way We Eat Now* and *Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat* is on my “hope to read soon” pile.

I also want to mention *The World Cen-*



tral Kitchen Cookbook, which recently was nominated for a James Beard Award. The WCK is a global nonprofit founded by chef Jose Andres that has provided hundreds of millions of freshly cooked meals for those affected by natural disasters and other crises all around the world. It was, unfortunately, in the news in April when seven of its aid workers were killed while trying to provide food to people in Gaza. But that didn't stop their work. In addition to delicious international recipes and wonderful photographs, the book tells the captivating story of the WCK and the thousands of volunteers who support its mission. A sorely needed positive story.

Two people I would want at my ultimate dinner party, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, are together in *The Book of Joy* to discuss how to find joy in the face of so much negativity and sadness in the world. They met for a week in 2015 at the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala, India, to explore their spiritual practices, the nature of true joy, and how they have both faced tremendous difficulties yet still remain joyful. This book, facilitated by Douglas Abrams, is the record of their meeting and a generous gift to the world.

The In-Between, by Hadley Vlahos, is a fascinating account of “unforgettable encounters during life's final moments.” Vlahos, a young hospice nurse, relates the stories of the people she has worked with who have most impacted her life and thought, illustrating the importance of end-

of-life care and aiming to dispel the fear of death and dying. In a similar vein, death doula Alua Arthur talks about her work guiding people through the process of dying in *Briefly Perfectly Human*. In this memoir, she talks about how she came to be involved in this line of work and the lessons she's learned through her practice, particularly how to make the most out of the time we have here on earth. Despite their topic, both books offer profound insight into the inevitable and are surprisingly uplifting, often funny, and ultimately comforting.

Poetry is not easy; it is “where language is made to work hardest...” I find, like reading Haruki Murakami, poetry requires one to suspend “reality” and accept the parameters of the piece of writing. That is how I approach *A Year of Last Things*, by Michael Ondaatje, who started out writing poetry but is perhaps better known for his novels like *The English Patient*. This new collection of poems presents little glimpses of a life, like stills from a film or old photographs of dimly remembered times. They may require multiple readings to become clear...or perhaps they merely represent hazy memories from a dream. However you think about them, they are well worth reading, as are his previous volumes of poetry: *The Cinnamon Peeler* and *Handwriting*.

Or, if you want something else, try the always intriguing *Best American Food Writing* series—2023 volume edited by Mark Bittman...

PAM'S PICKS FOR KIDS & YOUNG ADULTS

Treehouse Town

By Gideon Sterer

Ages 1+

Pack your bags and head for the woods, Treehouse Town awaits, there are no shoulds.

A place so sacred where freedom rings, No rules or kings, just hang out and sing. Adventure awaits a vine swing away, down a chute, today is your day!

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Visit the sky high hemlock reading nook.

Animals of all sorts participate in the fun,

Hooting and hollering until the day is done.

The Dirt Girl

By Jodi Dee

Ages 3+

Zafera loves playing outside among the trees, insects, birds and streams. Her passion for nature is obvious, as she uses flowers and twigs to adorn her hair and carries a basket of nature made goodies. On her first day of school Zafera can't wait to play with the other children, but to her surprise they tease her for her nontraditional ways. Zafera hands out handmade invitations to her birthday party, and when the children arrive they soon embrace her unconventional ways and start to recognize that her differences are a gift. I love how Zafera stays true to herself.

Medusa The Myth of Monsters

By Katherine Marsh

Ages 10+

Middle School is proving to be a challenge for Ava, as her closest friends lose interest in her due to multiple episodes of temper tantrums flaring to annoying decibels. After a popular boy repeatedly interrupts her and charms the teacher, Ava's frustration rises to

a stratospheric level, which causes the boy to seize up and temporarily freeze.

Days later, Ava and her brother Jax, are transferred to their mother's alma mater, a mysterious boarding school in Venice, Italy. Double Greek mythology classes sound too good to be true, and Ava's new friends and roommate feel like family. The headmaster seems very fond of Ava and recalls her mother being an excellent student, but something seems off as the Olympian gods who founded the school appear to have their own mission.

Readers will cheer on Ava and her friends as they challenge the school and the gods one by one.

Deep Water

By Jamie Sumner

Reviewed by Britta Chalmers

Ages 10+

Deep Water is about a twelve year old girl named Tully. The reader follows Tully on her journey to complete the "Godfather" swim across Lake Tahoe. One of my favorite parts about *Deep Water* is that while Tully swims, she thinks about childhood memories, which keep her going. The characters felt real to me, and one of the big reasons that made them feel real was because of their personalities. This book is different because it is written in verse. I would also recommend this story to readers who like to follow characters that face challenges. I especially think people who enjoy swimming would be able to connect to Tully's character.

A Bright Heart

By Kate Chenli

Ages 13+

Minashin mercifully begs the gods to turn back time, her life slowly slipping away as she lies helpless in her own pool of blood on the palace steps. For the past few years, Minashin has outsmarted three feisty princesses to win the heart of Ren, one of three potential candidates to become king, only to be betrayed.

Miraculously, the gods respond and grant her wish. Knowing the mistakes she's made in the past, Mirashin vows to never fall in love again and to stop Ren from becoming the future king. Miranshin's new alliance with Jieh, another strong contender to the throne, grows stronger and their team power is undeniable, but her inner battle with love and trust may decide her fate.

Check and Mate

By Ali Hazelwood

Ages 15+

Fans of the Netflix TV series *The Queen's Gambit* will devour this YA novel that may change your mind about playing chess.

Persuaded by her best friend to join the non-competitive local charity tournament, Mallory, begrudgingly agrees to attend. It has been four years since Mallory played her final game that indirectly resulted in the tragic death of her father.

Mallory nervously sits down in front of the chess board, takes a deep breath, and moves her pawn to e4. To her surprise, she discovers her opponent is Nolan Sawyer, the world chess champion. Unexpectedly, that old, competitive person rears its vicious face. Game on!

Get ready to position yourself in front of this book for a while to cheer on Team and the world of chess.

What the River Knows

By Isabel Ibanez

Ages 15+

Inez desperately longs to join her globetrotting parents as they leave for their annual archeological pilgrimage to Cairo, Egypt. Little did she know it would be their last trip, until word returns of their mysterious death.

Inez's new sizable inheritance and guardian, her famous archaeological uncle, forbid Inez from leaving Argentina. With a magic touch artifact sent by her father in pocket and a few clothes, Inez secretly boards her uncle's boat to Cairo. Once discovered later in the journey, both her uncle and Whit, a handsome hired man, attempt to keep Inez away from their mission. Inez's determination to uncover the truth of her parents' death, the lure of magic that tugs at her in curious places, and their goal to make the biggest discovery in Egyptian history only makes Inez more determined to find answers.

Fascinating ancient Egyptian history, descriptive visuals of the archeological sites, and the pull of old world magic and historical fantasy make this a book I could not put down.





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Cool Bites

BY PERRI BLACK

Food grilled outdoors is scrumptious, but on a hot summer day you might want to stay away from the heat and leave the cooking to someone else. When invited to your next cookout, save yourself from getting too hot and bothered by offering to contribute a no-cook cool accompaniment or condiment to enhance the grill master's glory. Have cucumbers, tomatoes, frozen shrimp, a baguette and a few basic staples on hand and you're pretty much good to go. Make a quick trip to the farmers' market and/or supermarket for anything else, if necessary.

Focus on simple, fresh ingredients and attractive presentation. The following recipes are intended as suggestions. Feel free to substitute ingredients you have on hand, adjust amounts to match the size of the party, and be sure to taste test often during preparation to achieve the right balance of flavors.

Cool cucumbers are stellar accompaniments for spicy or smoky grilled foods. For a quick and easy appetizer slice a cucumber about ¼" thick, scoop out a small indent in the middle of each slice, and fill it with a little dollop of taramasalata (delicious "Greek caviar" available online or in specialty shops) or softened cream cheese (any type) then top with a single caper. If you want to get more involved, try the recipe at right for Chinese smashed cucumbers.

Tomatoes are perfect for summer cookouts and Caprese skewers are sure to be a hit. Thread "pearls" or small cut cubes of fresh mozzarella on short skewers with a cherry tomato and a basil leaf. Arrange on a plate, drizzle with good olive oil and

sprinkle with coarse salt. Or riff on a popular Vietnamese dish with a bowl of multi-colored cherry tomatoes, a lime squeezed over them and a small side dish of kosher salt to dip them in.

Take the Asian-inspired salty-sweet vibe a step further with slices of pineapple, mango, watermelon, peach or other similar sturdy fruit with a dish of chili salt for dipping: kosher salt, red pepper flakes or ground cayenne pepper (or both) mixed to your desired level of heat. It sounds weird but it's delicious! You can also pound fresh hot peppers with salt in a mortar and pestle if you have one.

Be party ready by keeping a jar of your favorite cocktail sauce in the pantry and a couple bags of frozen, cooked medium or large shrimp in your freezer—they can be thawed overnight in the fridge. For variety, mix up an additional "white" cocktail sauce (recipe at right). This sauce is also great as a crudité dip, crostini spread, or on all kinds of grilled foods.

A mixture of mayonnaise and Greek yogurt, the juice of half a lemon, chopped chives, a pinch of sugar, and salt and pepper to taste is a lovely dip for shrimp and, when watered down a little, makes a tasty sauce to drizzle over grilled fish or poultry.

And then there's a Korean take on Japanese Yum Yum sauce from Eric Kim of *The New York Times* (recipe at right). It's great on everything and the name says it all!

Baguettes freeze well and, when thawed, sliced and topped, make delicious no-cook bites. Good quality butter, tasty spreads, such as tapenade, and an assortment of cheeses and/or deli meats arranged on an

attractive platter is an easy and delicious addition to any gathering.

A tossed salad composed of seasonal produce from the local farmers' market is always party appropriate, especially when accompanied with a homemade dressing. Play around with the ingredients of a basic vinaigrette. Try a variety of vinegars (or fruit juice instead of vinegar) as well as different types of oils and mustards. Add grated garlic, minced shallots, various jams, spices, and chopped herbs—just keep tasting until you are satisfied with the results.

You can't go wrong with a cool, fresh fruit salad, which can serve as a side dish or dessert. Fancy it up a bit with a refreshing dressing made of honey, Dijon mustard, and vinegar (experiment with balsamic or flavored vinegars if you have some) mixed together with water and salt and pepper to taste. Or thin plain yogurt with any kind of fruit juice (citrus is perfect), then add a bit of minced fresh ginger, mint, or other sweet herb and drizzle over the salad.

These ideas should get you started and inspire you to experiment. Stay cool and enjoy your summer! ☀

CHINESE SMASHED CUCUMBERS

Cut 2 pounds cucumbers into 4-inch lengths, then cut those in half lengthwise. Smash the cucumber halves lightly with the flat of a knife until the skin begins to crack, then slice the smashed halves into bite-size pieces. Place in a colander in the sink and toss with a big pinch each of salt and sugar. Put a plastic bag of ice on top of cukes to weigh them down and let drain 15-30 minutes. For the dressing: combine 1 tsp. salt, 2 tsp. sugar, and 1½ Tbsp. rice vinegar in a small bowl. Stir until dissolved and mix in 2 tsp. sesame oil and 2 tsp. soy sauce. When ready to serve, shake cucumbers to rid excess water, transfer to a serving bowl, drizzle with 1 Tbsp. neutral oil and toss. Add half the dressing, 1 large minced garlic clove, and a pinch of red pepper flakes, toss again. Add more dressing, garlic, and pepper flakes to taste. Serve immediately garnished with cilantro and sesame seeds.

WHITE COCKTAIL SAUCE

Put 1 cup of mayonnaise, yogurt, or sour cream (or a combination) in a small bowl and mix in one of the following to taste: a teaspoon or more of curry powder and a splash of lemon juice; a couple tablespoons of ketchup and a splash of pickle juice or vinegar; any combination of fresh, chopped herbs; a couple tablespoons of chutney, jam,



or marmalade (any type); or a teaspoon each of honey and Dijon mustard plus 1 – 2 tsp. fresh chopped dill.

REFRIGERATOR PICKLES

A jar of homemade pickles or relish, your own or from the farmers' market, is never out of place if hamburgers or hot dogs are on the menu. Use pickling cucumbers for this recipe because they stay firm and crunchy in the brine. English cukes will also work but will become softer over time.

Cut 2 pickling cucumbers into spears or rounds. Add optional flavorings (garlic cloves, peppercorns, lemon slices, dill sprigs, bay leaf, red pepper flakes, etc.) to a clean, 1 quart Mason jar, then pack in the cut cukes. Heat 1 cup water in microwave or kettle until steaming hot. Stir in 1 tsp. kosher salt until dissolved then add 1 cup apple cider or white vinegar. Pour over cukes (you may not need all the liquid) and let cool to room temperature. Cap the jars and let them sit in the fridge for at least 1 hour, preferably 24 hours to fully pickle. Will keep refrigerated up to 2 weeks.

TAPENADE PROVENÇAL

- 1 1/2 c pitted black olives
- 1/3 c olive oil
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp lemon zest
- 1 Tbsp drained capers
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 oil-packed anchovy fillets (optional)
- 1 tsp fresh thyme, or 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper

Put all ingredients in a food process and process until finely chopped but not completely pureed.

BASIC VINAIGRETTE

- 1 Tbsp vinegar
- 4 Tbsp oil
- 1 tsp mustard
- salt and pepper

Combine vinegar with a pinch of salt and

pepper in a Mason Jar and shake until salt dissolves. Add oil and, mustard, and a tablespoon or so of warm water and shake until thoroughly blended.

PEACH VINAIGRETTE

Great as salad dressing or a sauce for chicken

- 1/2 c peach purée
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1/2 c extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 c balsamic or sherry vinegar
- 10 leaves fresh basil, washed

Combine all of the ingredients in a blender, and blend until smooth.

KOREAN YUM YUM SAUCE

In a medium bowl, stir together 1 tsp. garlic powder, 1/2 tsp. sweet paprika, and 1 Tbsp. warm water. Add 1/2 cup mayonnaise, 1/4 cup ketchup, 1 tsp. rice vinegar and 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil. Season to taste with salt and stir until smooth. Refrigerate in an airtight container up to 5 days.

ZUCCHINI RELISH

from Pat Wooldridge

- 12 c diced zucchini (you can use overgrown giant zucchini here)
- 4 c diced onion
- 2 c diced bell peppers (1 cup green, 1 c red)

Put all the above in a large bowl. Top with ice cubes and sprinkle with 6 tablespoons salt. Let sit 4-6 hours. Drain and rinse.

Combine in a large pot and cook until thickened:

- 2 1/2 c cider vinegar
- 5 c sugar
- 1 Tbsp dry mustard
- 1 Tbsp ground nutmeg
- 2 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 1/2 tsp celery seed
- 1/2 tsp black pepper

Add vegetables, stir well, cook 30 minutes. Pour into hot, sterilized jars. Process in hot water bath 10-15 minutes. Yield: 6 pints

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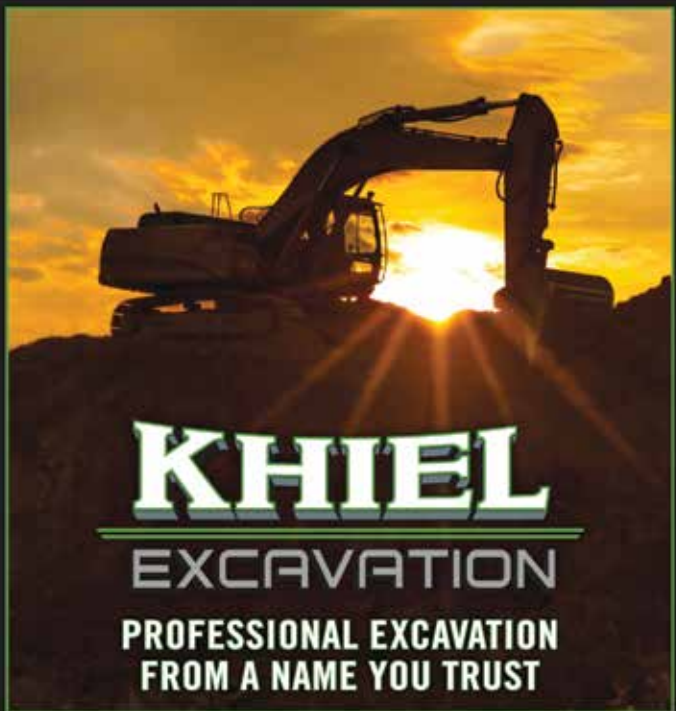
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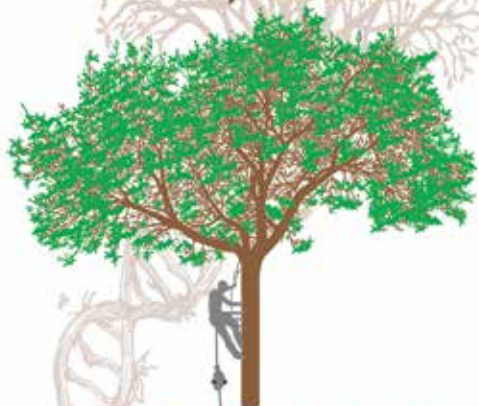


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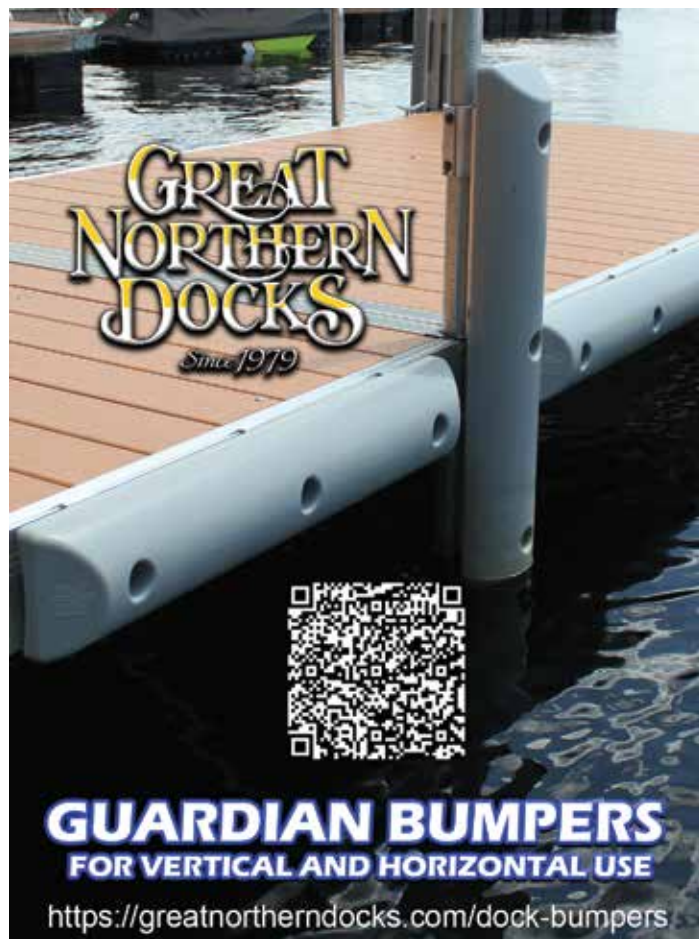


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continued from page 18

Another push-button option is light-house fade, which Sam describes as similar to Nubble Light in Cape Neddick.

"It slowly fades out and then slowly fades back in. It's not the kind of light you would put to music, like disco music. It's not a hard pulse or offensive by any means."

"Although we thought about putting it to music," says Steve. (Laughter) "We've had so many ideas that some of them stay trapped in the computer and are still there today. This was one of those spontaneous ideas that the design came together in an hour, after I'd spent hours on Sam's personal lantern. It was just one of those things. Often the things that we've come up with together solve problems – helping people get into the water, helping people out of the water, into their boat – and this is just an extension of that."

Sam sums it up: "This is a safety device and gently illuminates a walkway, which is what your dock is. It will put out just enough light to help you see the dock and help you in navigating home."

The very same notion Augustin-Jean Fresnel had nearly two hundred years ago. ✨

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