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COVER PHOTOGRAPH
by CATHERINE MCGUIGAN

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Love Among the Ruins Independence Day, 2018

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN, photos by REBECCA D'ANGELO

THERE'S HOPE IN a plain of asphalt and concrete, beauty in a nature that so abhors a vacuum it enables a tree to sprout in a thimbleful of topsoil. On this mysterious planet we call Earth, life will find a way to live anywhere, even in places that seem downright inhospitable.

Consider the hot springs of Yellowstone National Park—cauldrons of boiling water and roiling acids where you might dispose of a corpse to commit the perfect crime. Guess what? Microbes, with rainbow hues, thrive there, painting the mouths of these springs in garish, cartoon colors.

And way up aloft from Mother Earth, hovering at altitudes of more than eleven miles, hundreds of different species of bacteria, fungi and viruses flourish in the ether, among them human pathogens, including those responsible for Legionnaire's disease and staph infections.

Death Valley has the dubious distinction of being the hottest place on Earth. A little over a hundred years ago there, at a place aptly named Furnace Creek Ranch, a thermometer recorded the temperature at 134 degrees Fahrenheit, a world record that's never been broken. Water there is scarcer than honest politicians, and what's more, like the chambers that house those elected representatives, Death Valley is the lowest point in the United States. Not a very inviting environment for any animal, and yet, there are several species of pupfish that dwell here. They're survivors from lakes that dried up a hundred centuries ago.

And in an area much lower than Death Valley, buried a mile and a half beneath the crushing pressures of salt water off the coast of the Galapagos Islands, there is abundant life utterly dependent on the superheated and mineral-rich water spewing from deep sea vents in a world of perpetual night. These vents host a wide variety of organisms—giant tube worms, shrimp with eyes on their backs, ghostly fish, and even certain species of rays and sharks.

Terrestrial life seems as if it can live anywhere.



Late in the afternoon on Independence Day, while the city seemed to sleep in a haze of half-hearted plans for the celebration of an unrealized dream, I rode my bike over to the 48-acre tract that was once home to a place called Azalea Mall. By the time I migrated to North Side from the Fan, the mall was already closed, and a few years later razed, so all that remained of it was a

concrete footprint, which seemed to drift lazily as a barge on the sea of asphalt that surrounded it.

At the Westbrook Avenue entrance to the old mall site, four willow oaks grow from an island ringed in cast-cement curb and gutter. Beneath the oak trees there is a large section of broken and depressed asphalt where water sits for weeks, even during the driest of sum-

mer spells, a sort of pond that various forms of urban wildlife use as a watering hole, or, in the case of a red-tailed hawk, who seems to live in one of the oak trees, a convenient bird bath.

Shortly after Dewberry Capital purchased the site, they tore down the old mall, and erected a fence along its entire perimeter. Not long ago, one of the sliding gates to this enclosure was un-

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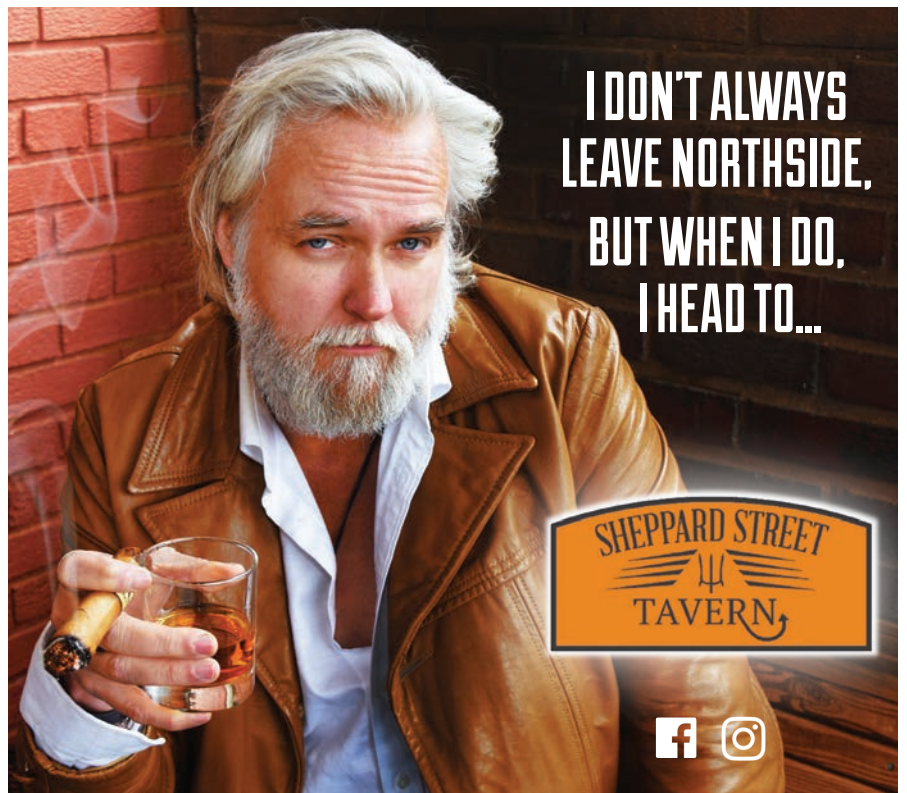
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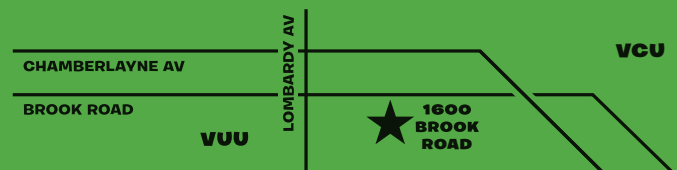
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ESSAY



locked, allowing easy access. Back in July I rode my bike through that gate and began a brief exploration of the unique ecosystem that is rising from the remnants of a mall. Because this section has been closed off to any traffic—automobile or pedestrian—for more than twenty years, nature has begun working its wonders, unhindered. The entire footprint is made of concrete. One vast area, presumably the remains of the flooring from a department store, is a perfect checkerboard pattern, each square inscribed by grout lines, though the tiles are long gone. Another section still retains small blue ceramic tiles, the sort used in bathrooms in the 1960s.

But all the concrete has one thing in common: There is a brittle layer on its surface, like a thin crust on a pastry, and as I ride, there is a satisfying sound—a crunch and a pop—and in my wake I can see the narrow path written in the concrete by the tires of my bike.

Out of every crack and tiny crevice in the concrete, grasses and wildflowers grow in great abundance, highlighting every fissure with a living green ink. Among the flowers are fleabane and Queen Anne's lace, goldenrod and chicory. Trumpet vines and Virginia creeper emerge from some of the cracks and form large carpet-like mats which hide any evidence of the constructs of man.

There are also the trees, some of them are still saplings, but many others are very large. There are sweetgums and Virginia cedars, along with hackberries, hornbeams and assorted maples, and one small black willow. By far, sycamores predominate this emerging urban forest, and several of them already

top out at thirty feet. There are also two notable invasive species—a very large mimosa, and a very stout ailanthus, or tree of paradise, what is called a “s---house tree” up in South Philly.

One of the most remarkable places in this evolving ecosystem is near the northwestern corner of the concrete footprint, next to what was once a loading dock. Here an underground spring has apparently broken through the concrete, creating a wetland where a variety of reeds and rushes grow in great profusion, and in among them there are frogs, and dragonflies alight on the leaves, or dip to touch the small pools of filmy water.

Throughout the world, archaeologists are discovering massive cities that were long ago swallowed whole by jungles. These were impressive communities in their day. And though they have been hidden for centuries deep beneath dense forest canopies whether in Cambodia, near the ancient temple of Angkor Wat, or clear on the other side of the world in Guatemala, where ancient Mayan cities were recently discovered that might have been home to as many as ten million people, scientists, armed with LiDAR technology, which uses pulsed laser light, have again exposed them to human scrutiny.

It was as if, one day, everyone from these ancient metropolises suddenly vanished. Some cataclysm occurred, an epidemic, perhaps. And with human beings gone, nature swiftly reclaimed the land.

Years ago, scientists predicted what would happen if everyone inhabiting New York City suddenly vacated the Big Apple. Change would be rapid.

Within the first decade, sidewalks and streets would begin to crack, and weeds and trees would take root. Hawks and falcons would flourish, and feral cats and wild dogs would prowl the streets and alleys. Two of the most pervasive vermin found in urban environments everywhere would soon go extinct. Deprived of the garbage supplied by humans, rats would suffer mass starvation; and without the warmth of buildings to protect them from winter temperatures, cockroaches would become a thing of the past. By the by, wolves and bears would return to Central Park, and within fifty years, skyscrapers would begin to collapse. In another fifty years, a deciduous forest of oaks and maples would cover the boroughs, and wildlife would return in full force.

A few months ago, Westminster-Canterbury Retirement Community purchased a little over ten acres of the Azalea Mall site where they plan to build what they call “independent-living residences,” more than a hundred of them. But the area to be developed will not infringe on the urban forest of Azalea Mall.

I find great solace in this, and would love to see the city of Richmond and Henrico County purchase the property and allow it to further mature as an urban forest, something that will remain a green space for generations to come. But unlike other municipal parks this one would be a constant reminder to us all that we are here at the pleasure of the planet, and if we insist on destroying the environment, one day we will all perish, but nature will simply shrug off our self-imposed extinction and reclaim all that we erroneously thought we possessed. **NRJ**

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Holly Lawn Restored

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

THEY HAD JUST finished up a leisurely dinner and all four of them were nursing cups of coffee. As Leslie Stack sipped from her cup, she turned to look out the

window and saw sheets of rain falling. “Where did that come from?” she said to her husband, Frank Rizzo, and their two dinner companions. They all watched as the winds whipped down 4th Street, bending trees planted in wells by the sidewalk. The trees would sway one way and then the other, and the rain was like the veil of a waterfall.

As Frank and Leslie made their way into North Side off Laburnum and up Hermitage Road, there was nothing but blackness. No light anywhere. Coupled with the wind and torrential rain, Leslie immediately thought about another storm that had struck Richmond fifteen years ago, the day after she and her husband moved into Holly Lawn.

“When we hit the A.P. Hill Monument I said, ‘Frank, look, the street is totally flooded,’” says Leslie Stack. “It reminded me so much of Gaston.”

As she narrates the story, her husband, standing next to her at the island in their kitchen here at Holly Lawn, nods along. “It was the darkest I had ever seen this area,” Leslie says. So dark, in fact that the couple missed their own house as they headed north along Hermitage Road. They decided to check on Leslie’s parents who live to the north of their home, and then returned to Bellevue.

When they pulled into their drive, Leslie was the first to see an uprooted holly tree. “We had a magnificent holly right at the front because we’re Holly Lawn, right?” she says. “The tree was down.”

That turned out to be a minor problem. “As we went further around the bend in the drive, all we saw were roots,” she remembers. “We lost multiple trees that night, five altogether, in the front and the back.”

The biggest of them all was a 125-foot red oak with a crown 80 feet across, and a trunk five feet in diameter. “When the winds came, they just lifted it up out of the ground,” says Frank.

They had no idea what damage the tree had done. As was their habit, the couple parked in the backyard and

entered through the rear door. “Here’s what was interesting,” Leslie remembers. “When we opened that door, there was no longer the smell of a house, it was smell of the outside. You could smell the rain, and you could hear it pounding inside the front of your home.”

One of the massive limbs of that giant red oak, had sheared away the porch, ripped off a window, punctured a turret and opened up a portion of the roof at the front of the house.

“Frank called the insurance company and I called nine-one-one,” Leslie says. “The firefighters were fabulous. They were concerned about us and our property.” The police arrived at about the same time to secure the property.

“But even after that, we realized that there was no way to secure Holly Lawn,” says Leslie. “So we camped out here for the next three days. We slept in the addition that was completely untouched.” That addition was built back in 1973, and when Frank and Leslie first bought Holly Lawn they had seriously toyed with the idea of removing it. “We’re glad now that we didn’t,” Leslie says.

At 1:30 that morning, Frank called their arborist about the fallen red oak, and left a message. “At five o’clock in the morning he called me,” Frank recalls. “I said, ‘When do you think you can get over?’ And he said, ‘I’m on property now.’” A couple hours later, the equipment and crew arrived, and by 4:30 that afternoon the tree was off the house. “They worked tirelessly,” says Frank.

For the next seven weeks, Frank and Leslie stayed in a hotel, and then for several months rented a duplex on Monument Avenue. They finally returned to Holly Lawn in November where they lived in the addition. “While Mark Franko was doing the restoration work and the selective demolition in the front part of Holly Lawn, the other part of their team was building us a first floor master bed and bath in the addition,” Frank says.

The couple had also hired Glave & Holmes as their architect, and then got approval for the project from the Department of Historic Resources and the Richmond Commission of Architectural Review. “Everybody had to agree,” says Frank.



Left: Frank and Leslie in the kitchen at Holly Lawn.



Right: The facade after the architectural reconstruction.

Many of the materials that were used in the construction of this house, one of the crown jewels of the Hermitage Road Historic District, are simply not available today. So salvaging the building materials was essential. “Leslie was head curator, and salvaged every brick, every piece of slate, every piece of copper,” Frank says.

Time dragged on. They had the architect and an engineer, but they needed just the right contractor to restore the house to its former glory. In March of 2017, nine months after the storm, Leslie and Frank hired Art Restoration Builders of Virginia.

During that restoration project, the couple learned exactly when construction began on Holly Lawn. “We have been able to find in the bones of the house through the reconstruction that they started building it in 1896, and it was finished five years later in 1901,” says Leslie.

The 14,500 square foot house is built entirely of brick, mortar and timber. And some of the timbers used in its construction came from trees not unlike the one that nearly destroyed Holly Lawn.

“The story is that they built a saw mill on the property,” Frank says. “And they cut down the old growth trees on the property and used that wood to build the house. Most of that wood is oak. You take a look at a stud in the wall and it’s three-by-five, rough-sawn oak.”

Even the day after the storm, when both Leslie and Frank could take in the extent of the damage, there was never any question in their minds about the reconstruction of Holly Lawn.

“When we bought the house, we bought part of Richmond,” says Frank. “And when something like this happens, the thought of walking away never occurred to either one of us. That was never a discussion. Okay she needs a facelift, we’ll get it done.”

Then Leslie tells me that they see

themselves as more than stewards of this renowned Queen Anne-style home. It is as if the house is a living thing, and a member of their clan. “We adore the house,” Leslie says. “But this home is now part of our family. Our six grandchildren have grown up here. The Thanksgivings, the Christmases. This house is alive. It is an extraordinary house to entertain in.”

“If I had a dollar for every car that stopped and stared and looked, I’d be a millionaire,” says Frank. “People bring us pictures and say, ‘That’s me on the bottom step at Christmas 1953.’”

“Weddings occurred here when it was home to the Richmond Council of Garden Clubs from 1969 till 1993,” Leslie says. “And its history all becomes like a blur. Like the history of your own life.”

As this year’s Richmond Symphony Designer House, Holly Lawn will be open to the public seven days a week for the next thirty days.

“We want to let the community know that we are going to be the first to show Holly Lawn,” says Susan S. Williams, chair of the 2018 Richmond Symphony Orchestra League Designer House “It’s been hidden behind construction signs and fences for more than two years and people are curious about what’s going on in that house. This will be the only opportunity for them to see it.”

And based on a preview last month when all that could be seen were empty rooms and vacant walls, people are really interested to see this 117-year old gem for themselves. “Our bare bones event was probably four times bigger than any other bare bones event we’ve ever had,” says Susan.

August 2, the night of that “bare bones event”, was when Holly Lawn was finally restored to her former glory, almost 26 months to the day after she was smashed by a giant red oak. “We finished the last punch list that day,” says Frank Rizzo. **NP**

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The Blue Hill Peninsula

WHERE DOWN EAST MAINE BEGINS

FOUR YEARS IS A LONG TIME, and although summer vacations, other excursions and assorted day trips with my son Charles during that period were always acts of joy and discovery, there was a wheel missing that could sometimes make for a jerky ride. This summer that wheel, my daughter Catherine, was back, along with yet another on—her beau Tyler. The plan was to leave at one o'clock on a Monday morning, and be back the following Sunday. By leaving that early we hoped to put the mid-Atlantic states behind us before eight. But, as with the best laid plans, we didn't pull out of Richmond until two-thirty with me behind the wheel. At our first pit stop at a Wawa in Maryland, Catherine climbed into the driver's seat, and she and Tyler would alternate all the way up to New Hampshire, through rains that were often driving, and traffic that was stop-and-go. In all the years our family has traveled together, I was always the sole driver; having two very good drivers sharing that burden was a relief.



Top: Bass Harbor Head Light.



Bottom: Rockweed, a ubiquitous seaweed of Maine.

BY LATE AFTERNOON

we reach Brunswick, just 20 miles from Bailey Island, where we always spend our first and last nights in Maine, and always at the same place, Cook's Island View Motel. We eat an early dinner of lobster over on Harpswell at a place called Estes, where you get two lobsters for under twenty dollars—no frills, no sides, just lobsters, which were alive fifteen minutes before you crack their shell. We all sleep soundly that night, and at the first gray of dawn, which is overcast and misty, I leave the motel room and in the parking lot spot seven crows perched on the uppermost and leaf-vacant limbs of a birch. Two of the birds on the topmost branch seem to be kissing.

An hour later, we pack the car, and head over to the Giant's Stairs, just a quarter mile from the motel, and park in front of the little Episcopal Church there, then make our way along the paths that run along this singular formation of basalt and quartz that was formed 500 million years ago. We climb these massive, rocky ledges as if they are stairs, and get one of the best views there is of Sebasco Bay, watching the deep blue water crash white against this rocky shoreline. On the other side of the path, there is a dense and perfect and untended botanical garden created by the unerring hands of nature. There are giant colonies of beach roses, the hips as large and red as cherry tomatoes. And right next to them grow stands of New England asters, pale lavender with yellow eyes. An entire blanket of orange jewelweeds. In among this all grow sumac. There are no invasive species here, and no fertilizer or pesticide is every used. Nature tends to it all. This wild swath of Maine coastline is maintained by the nearby

town of Harpswell. Back in 1910, Captain William Henry Sinnett, a Bailey Island native, donated this two and a half acre strip of coastal land to his community because he wanted to ensure that all could enjoy it. That seems to be a prevalent view up here, which is why there is such a profusion of land trust holdings all along the coast. It's as if Mainers have long understood what Native Americans have always known—no one really owns land.

We head up the coast to our Airbnb cottage in Penobscot at a leisurely pace. Catherine and Tyler are in the backseat and they pick at one another like lion cubs, and Charles, whenever he has an opportunity, attempts to join in the gentle fray. I love to watch and listen to them interact, Tyler, consciously or not, taking on the role of big brother, and Charles responds to it.

Penobscot is a town on the Blue Hill Peninsula, but it sprawls for miles and miles from the shores of the Bagaduce River to the rolling blueberry barrens that dominate much of this area. The houses are sporadic at best, and we finally find ours, which is owned by a man named Jeffrey who works for the nearby town of Castine, home of the Maine Maritime Academy. He built the house himself, a two-story saltbox with more than ample room for the four of us, though we could easily sleep another two in the living room, and all for \$72 a night.

Throughout the night it rains, not heavily, just a slight pattering that Charles and I can hear from the loft bedroom, the ceiling and walls of which are festooned in a pair of massive and multi-colored jib sails. In the morning, early, I leave the house and scope out the woods where wild blueberries, perfectly ripe, await plucking. I fill a cup and return to the house, and Catherine and I make breakfast, nibbling on the berries which are smaller than peas. The rain is now not much more than a drizzle, and a few hours later it lifts altogether as we make our way into

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY CATHERINE MCGUIGAN

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the town of Castine where we wander along the streets, then head over to a place called Witherle Woods, which is another part of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust. It's an uphill climb through spruce and firs, and occasional groves of white birch that always seem to form dense colonies. Near the top, towering pines frame spectacular views of Penobscot Bay.

We then head over to Little Deer, and then Deer Isle, where we climb rocks, explore tidal pools and pay the perfunctory visit to Nervous Nellie's Jams and Jellies, where you can buy an assortment of homemade jellies and chutneys, and wander through the woods which are filled with the fantastic sculptures of Peter Beerit, all made with the refuse of our culture, things that might have been pulled from a scrap yard or a junk yard, or found in a drainage dish. Always worth a visit.

At the very tip of the island is the town of Stonington where you can catch a ferry to Isle au Haut, part of Acadia National Park. Fog settles in around us as we make our way along the main street, and then out to the wharfs that line the harbor. By nightfall we're back in our temporary home in Penobscot, and we make dinner and talk well into the night.

Here's the thing: I really like Tyler. He's smart, funny, and somewhat sardonic. What's more, he can cook, and has a resourceful mind. Above all else, though, he treats my daughter with love and respect, and a father could ask for no more.

The next morning, our third full day in Maine, we drive the forty miles over to Mount Desert Island. Instead of going to Acadia National Park that day, we decide to hit all the towns on the island, beginning with Bar Harbor. We pass quickly through the commercial district and walk along the pink granite sea wall which runs in the rear of fabulous homes that were built more than a hundred years ago.

We then head over to Sommesville and Pretty Marsh, then Tremont and Southwest Harbor. This side of the island is not quite as ritzy as the other side. The houses are more modest, and the restaurants nowhere near as pricey.

On the other side of the island we visit Northeast Harbor, which is extremely well-to-do, and then drive over to Seal Harbor, where a strange thing happened the last time Catherine, Charles and I were in Maine together.

That summer five years ago, we carried our rods and reels, a cooler and



Hiking through Witherle Woods on the Blue Hill Peninsula.

a tackle box to the municipal wharf, and out to the hinged dock that rises and falls with the tide. We walked to the end of the dock and I stripped out a squid on the deck, and just as I was baiting the twin hooks of a top-and-bottom rig, I heard someone call my name. I looked to my kids who seemed puzzled. When I turned toward the parking lot I saw my brother Bruce with his wife Andrea, and their

kids, Kirsten and Matthew. He and Matthew each carried a rod-and-reel. It turns out they were on vacation, staying in a small cabin in Bar Harbor. So we fished until dusk and hit the incoming tide just right, and with it shoals of Atlantic mackerel and pollock. Charles kissed the first one I caught, a pollock, slimy as an eel. It was for good luck and good measure. And the luck paid off because among

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us we must have caught fifty or sixty fish, all of which we released, though we didn't kiss another one.

The next night my brother and his family joined us for dinner and I bought twelve lobsters for less than sixty dollars—the going price that year was under four dollars a pound, the cheapest I've ever seen it. We ate with relish, and late into the night sat around the fire telling stories and Charles, who had moved into my lap, fell asleep before the stories were ended.

We try our luck this year from the same dock, and never get so much as a strike. As we pack up our gear and stow it in the Honda CRV, I talk with a lobsterman who's pulled up beside me in a pickup. Turns out he's from Oklahoma, and came Down East twenty-five years ago and just stayed on.

He points to a perfectly dressed, granite seawall behind us that rises seventy feet above the waterline. It is topped with dense greenery.

"You know who lives up there?" he asks.

I shake my head.

"Martha Stewart," he says.

"Really?"

He nods. "She buys her lobsters from us," he says, then quickly corrects him-

self. "I mean, she doesn't come down to buy them. She sends her people."

We hit one final village called Bass Harbor. There we climb the pink granite cliffs below the lighthouse, and wander through a fog forest, densely populated with spruce and balsam, where the ground is rich in fern and moss, and the air pulses green with chlorophyll.

The following day the weather is crystal clear, and it's already heating up by nine in the morning when we pull into Acadia National Park, which is aptly called the Crown Jewel of the North Atlantic Coast. With more than three million visitors annually, it is one of the most popular holdings of our National Park system. It harbors the highest headlands on the East Coast, the tallest peak in the US on the Atlantic Ocean, hundreds of miles of hiking and biking trails, rich biodiversity, and virtually every ecosystem on the island is home to at least one endangered species. It is one of our favorite places in the world.

We begin with a six-mile bike loop, the first half of which is a steady incline, and then it's pretty much all downhill. This 436-acre lake, the largest on the island, was carved by glaciers thirty thousand years ago. The waters are so pristine



Harbor at Stonington, Deer Isle.

you could drink from it, and it serves as a reservoir for Bar Harbor and other island towns. It has an average depth of fifty feet, and is home to scores of aquatic creatures, including land-locked salmon and giant lake trout.

After the bike ride we climb to the summit of Cadillac Mountain. The entire ascent is one visual drama after another, from the thick balsam forests at the base to the alpine environment approaching

the summit. So much of it is texture and color, and at the very top you can see for miles out into the Atlantic, which is dappled with scores of spruce-draped islands, and to the west you can see the mountains of interior Maine.

There are more than 80 varieties of lichens on Cadillac, and they grow more profusely as you approach the peak. They cover vast sheets of pink granite, and their designs and colors

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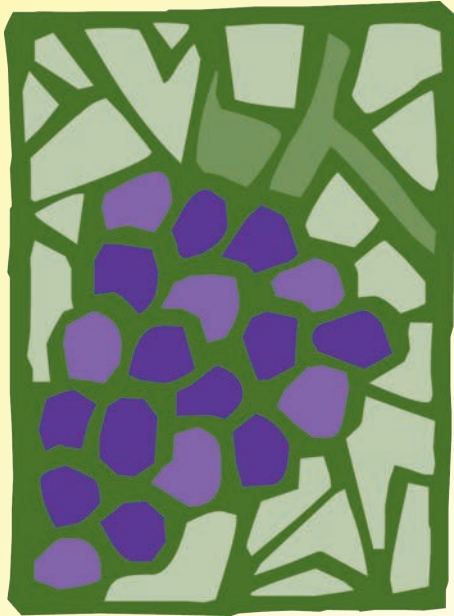
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Outside Cook's Island View Motel.

are painterly in an abstract fashion.

Afterwards we drive over to Atlantic Brewing in Town Hill, and try Blueberry Ale, Island Ginger and Coffee Stout, along with a sampler from the adjacent Mainely Meat BBQ. Later in the evening we pick up four lobster at IGA grocery store near Trent, then head back to Blue Hill.

When we check out of our house in Penobscot the next morning, we find a great roadside clam shack called Bagaduce Lunch just a few miles away. They serve up full-bellied clams, or steamers as they're also called, beer-battered and fast-fried in peanut oil. We sit on picnic benches behind the restaurant, and as we eat, watch the outgoing tide of the Bagaduce, reversing its flow. That evening back down on Sebasco Bay we find a village called Cundy's Harbor where we eat more steamers, along with fish and chips, then head to the same motel room we had slept in that first night on Bailey Island. When everyone is asleep, I step outside and walk down to Mackerel Cove. It is about one in the morning, and tomorrow we will be heading back to Richmond—a thirteen-hour haul through heavy rains, as it turns out.

During this past week, I'd come to know Tyler better, and got to know even more about my own son and daughter. Tyler grew up on a coast similar this one out in the Pacific Northwest, but he'd never been to Maine before, and he loves it. Next summer we're all planning to head out to Tyler's old stomping grounds, and travel the entire West Coast.

Overhead, the sky is clear and the night enflamed with a red half-moon and a bellicose Mars. And then the Perseids arrive, streaking the heavens with flashes of pale green light. Things you would miss if you looked away for a nanosecond.

Against the Dying of the Light

by FRAN WITHROW

DEMENTIA. THAT word strikes almost as much fear in our hearts as cancer. The thought of being unable to recognize loved ones, losing one's independence, and forgetting everything that makes one a unique individual is terrifying. And it is even more frightening when it happens at a younger age than normal.

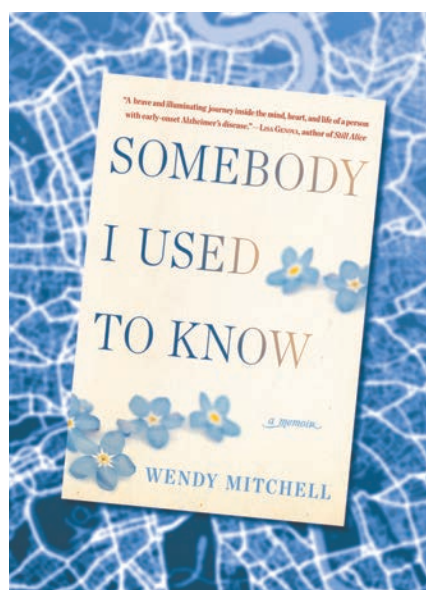
Wendy Mitchell of Yorkshire, England, should know. In 2014, at age 58, this single mother of two adult daughters was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease. It was quite a blow to this active, highly organized, energetic woman who prided herself on her exceptional memory skills as an administrator for the British National Health Service.

At first puzzled by her falls, fuzzy memory, and fatigue, Mitchell deftly chronicles the path toward her diagnosis. She could easily have given up and shut down, but instead she decides to fight back, refusing to let dementia define or limit her.

She begins by adapting her behavior and her surroundings to accommodate her impaired memory. After she can no longer drive a car, she buys a bike. When she finds herself capable of only turning left, she cleverly alters her routes. When she forgets what is in her kitchen drawers, she downloads photos and tapes them on her cabinets. She set alarms on her iPad to help her remember her medications, appointments, and eating schedule. She even blocks herself into her kitchen so she won't fix a salad and then wander away, forgetting to finish it.

She might have dementia, but Mitchell gets top marks for innovation and creativity.

But Mitchell does not stop with just finding solutions for herself. Determined to make a difference, she sets off to help others, becoming heavily involved in support groups and the medical community. She travels alone, carefully mapping her route and hotel accommodations ahead of time, to speak at conferences. She starts a blog called "Which Me am I Today?" which



serves to raise awareness about dementia and to remind readers that people with dementia have feelings, deserve compassion, and can still make meaningful contributions to society.

Too often we only see the outside of a person with dementia. Mitchell peels away the outer layers and lets us see inside. What does dementia feel like? How does one cope, knowing there is no cure? How can society support those who face dementia, and what tools might dementia patients use so they can be independent as long as possible?

As her disease progresses, she remains flexible, always looking for the positive. She takes the doors off rooms in her house so she can remember what is in each one. She befriends the taxi's office by taking them cookies and explaining why she calls if the cab is even one minute late. She is kind to herself, recognizing that some days are good days and some days are not.

This incredible, plucky woman has a lot to teach us about resourcefulness, courage, and hope. Wendy Mitchell's memoir deserves to be read by patients, their families, and the medical community. Mitchell may someday forget she has written this gem, but the reader will surely not forget her. **NJ**

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Stone, Sea and Sky Works by Alice Anne Ellis at Stir Crazy Cafe



ALICE ANNE ELLIS has been a Richmond resident since 1990, when she moved here from Scotland. She works as a librarian at Henrico High School, home to HCPS's Center for the Arts and the International Baccalaureate Program. She has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from St. Andrews University in Scotland, a master's in library science, and has studied art in Scotland and Richmond.

Her work has been featured in numerous group and juried shows, both in Virginia and Scotland. Since 2015, she has been an artist member of Art-space Gallery, a non-profit, artist-run organization that has been serving the Richmond community for 30 years. She currently has a solo exhibition at Capital One, and her work will also be on show in Art-space's Members' Biennial from October through November at Art-space Gallery, 31 E. 3rd Street, Richmond, VA 23224.

"People use the land for nourishment and shelter, and eventually return to the land as dust," says Alice. "Land-

scape and people become one. In a lonely landscape, one is never alone. These works reference the marks and character a landscape acquires through interaction with people over hundreds of generations. Many stone circles in Europe predate the pyramids – and yet there they still stand, modestly and accessibly, in fields and among trees old enough to have shaded marauding Vikings."

"My medium here is archival ink on paper, from which I make collages on panel," Alice adds. "I focus initially only on mark-making - the primal quality of pigment moving on a wet surface. Then I tear up the paper. This creates a fresh focus on lines and shapes, which begin to tell their story. I look on the process as unlocking a puzzle, a journey of discovery and coincidence. My work is influenced by Japanese sumie and woodblock printing" **NJ**

Her works will be on display through October at Stir Crazy Cafe, 4015 MacArthur Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227.

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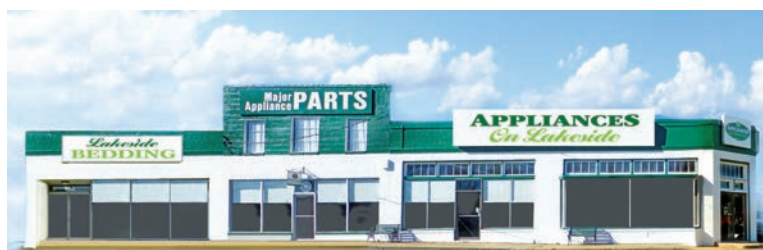


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