

# LIFESTYLE

OLYMPIC PENINSULA



## *Inside the issue*

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A Chaotic Good Elvin Bard  
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# *Welcome to Lifestyle*

I'm new here. New to Port Townsend, new to The Leader, new to this special publication, Lifestyle.

I'm in awe at what I have yet to learn, including the town's extensive history, the minds behind its architecture, and fractures within community.

But there's something I've picked up so far in the restaurants, coffee shops, and grocery stores: the essence of Port Townsend is its people. Port Townsend and the surrounding areas are defined for the most part by people who have not accepted "ordinary" as a lifestyle.

On that basis alone, I qualify for local citizenship and am happy to be here.

Lifestyle Magazine has a focus on people. Our goal is to introduce you to some very interesting members of our community who are doing very creative things. They have employment, hobbies, and passions that are wonderful and out of the ordinary, that you won't find in such concentration anywhere else.

We invite you to meet these folks in these pages, and then seek them out to see so much more that we couldn't put in a magazine.

Welcome to Lifestyle.

***Managing Editor, Erik Dolson***

VOL: 04, ISSUE NO. 02  
PRODUCED BY OUR TEAM AT

## **The Leader**

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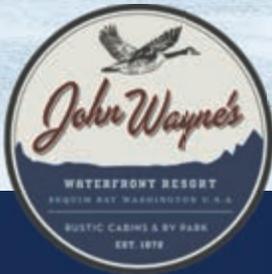
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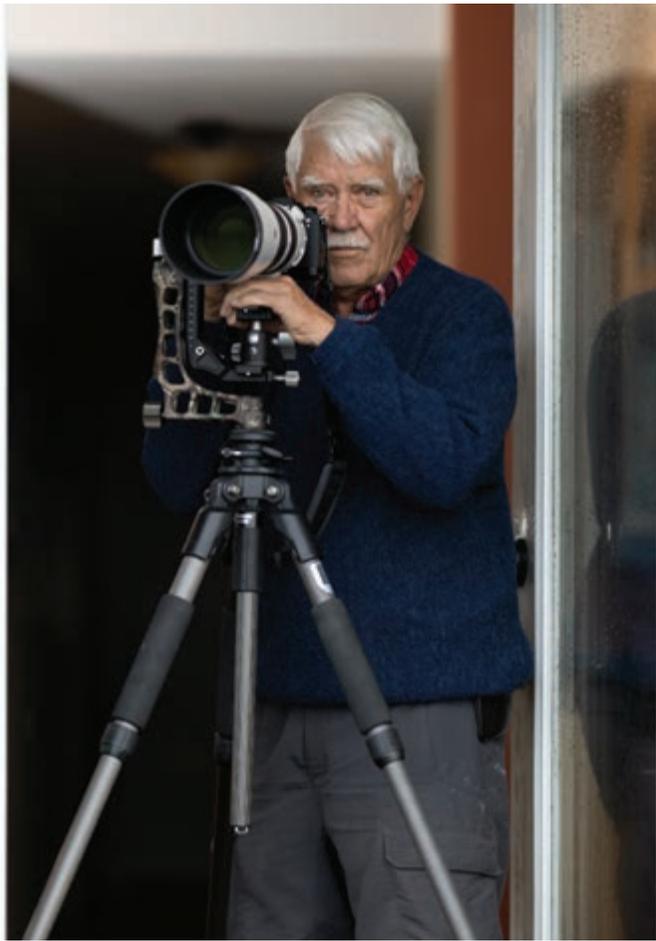
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Mullensky

# *a photographer*

by Charlie Mullen

With photos of foxes, ships, lightning, landscapes, people, and much more, Steven Mullensky is a renowned photographer and has been for over 50 years, selling his pictures and working freelance for papers and magazines, including *The Leader*.

His natural enemy, the cold.

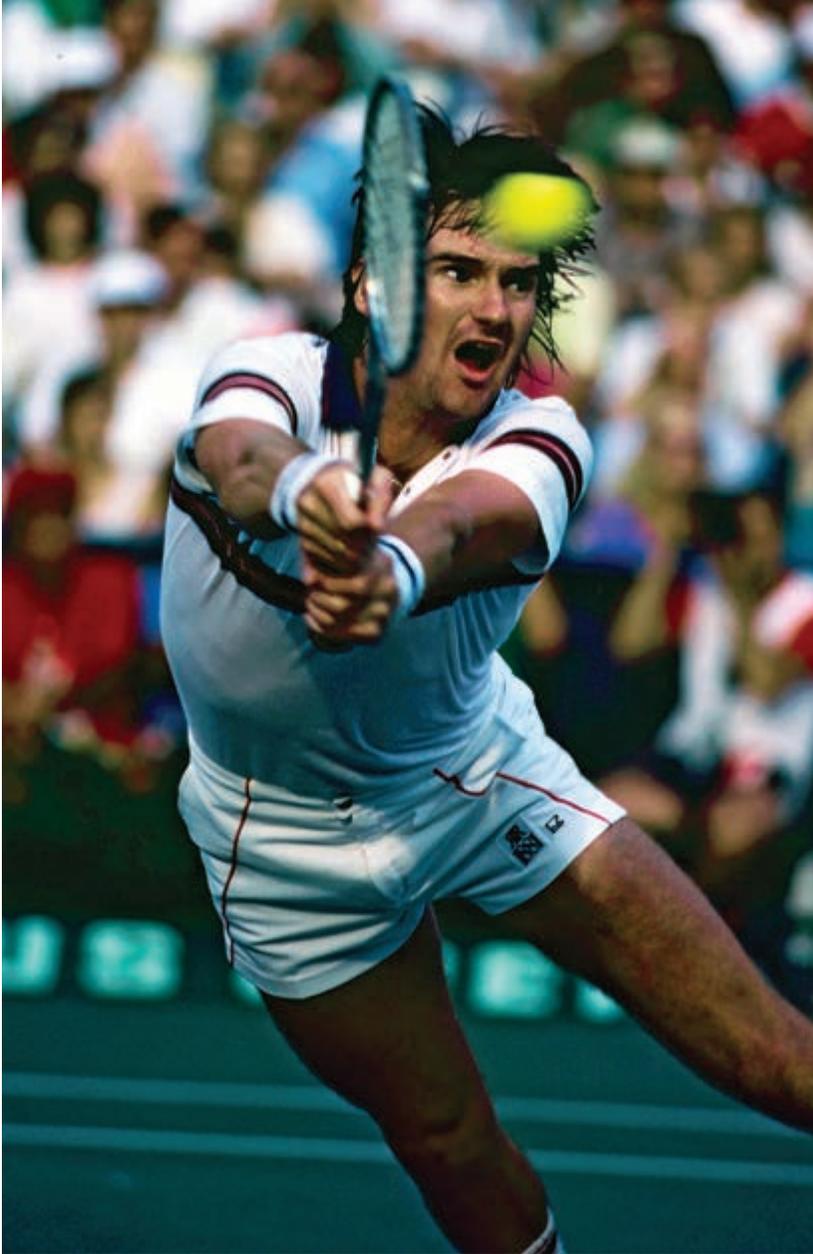
Being featured in *Sports Illustrated* was one of his dreams.

He was given his chance when he went to a game and stayed after the rest of the photographers had left.

## **Pam and Martina**

US Open Tennis. Martina Navratilova had just beaten Pam Shriver in two sets during a semi-final.

**Photos by Steve Mullensky**



Alone with the team, he was able to get a picture no one else could, landing his photo in Sports Illustrated, getting the chance to have his pictures put on glossy paper and shipped around the country in the premier sporting magazine.

One of his earliest memories was holding a box camera at the age of four.

By 1973 he began to consider himself a professional photographer.

He said he finds himself inspired by the actual scene he encounters when photographing.

Sometimes it's the way the light is shining on the scene or the way that shadows are laid upon it.

"I want to represent what I am shooting," Mullensky explained, and sometimes that means giving representation to the vastness of the Grand Canyon or the nobility of a giant tortoise. It is something, he acknowledged, not everybody can do.

It takes practice and skills to really represent what you are working on, he said. When giving advice to aspiring photographers, Mullensky preaches, "learn your equipment."

### **Jimmy Connors**

Jimmy Connors giving it all at the 1982 US Open Tennis.



Mullensky has traveled to many places in an attempt to capture the true essence of those areas.

Not completely relying on the "rules" of photography, he said he wants to capture what others can't see, getting the picture that others may have missed, and staying late, until he feels satisfied with his work.

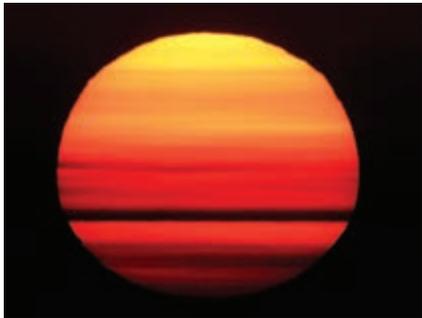
### **Dawn Patrol**

Lenticular cloud over Mount Rainier with a flock of geese heading south.



### All the Pretty Horses

A herd of horses in a field get spooked when one of them nips at another.



### Sunrise

Vibrant sunrise over the Cascades of Washington.

Mullensky said he hopes to bring a viewer's attention to the beautiful moments in an often harried life for which some don't want to sit around and wait.

Mullensky has owned a café/bakery and coffee business and he continues to find photography to be the career he enjoys the most and has lasted the longest.



### Flower Moon

The Flower Moon rises and is supported by a wispy cloud.

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**Thomas Nall**

# *Let the baking begin*

by Marci Peterson

When I left Alaska a few decades ago, my search for the texture and taste of finding a loaf of real sourdough bread ended when I walked into the Crusty Crumb Bakery.

Tom Nall, the owner, greeted me, and I told him that I had yet to find a loaf of sourdough bread since leaving home.

He said that he hadn't either since he left Alaska.

After reminiscing about our favorite places and things to do up there, I purchased a loaf and went home expecting disappointment again. But with my first bite I said, "Oh my gosh. This is the real thing," and started giving samples to all my friends and neighbors.

Two years later I still share the real thing with those who've never had it.

Tom greeted me with that contagious smile of his. The first thing I wanted to ask him was how did he come up with the name Crusty Crumb.

"Well, its bread and the outside has a crust and inside are the crumbs. You know, the ones you find on the table."

Nall said he started Crusty Crumb in 2019, three months before COVID hit.

“I was a cottage bakery at the time. We had our whole house licensed as a bakery through the Department of Agriculture. And we ran that for about two and a half years. Fortunately, the Creamery closed and we were pretty lucky to get in here where we’ve been for almost two years,” he explained.

Since its beginnings, the business has grown exponentially.

“Unfortunately, though, it got to a point where our growth has been halted. We purchased a commercial hood oven which was our jewel. But when the building inspectors came in, they said there’s not enough power to operate it in this building.”

Nall said that his next door neighbor loaned him his commercial kitchen, which Nall uses up to five hours per day, which allows him to transport his wares while he seeks out a new kitchen to call home.

He has his eye on a place with plenty of space but the moving costs are giving him pause.

“It has twice the square footage of this place and the power I need is already installed. But it’s going to cost us about \$50,000 to move in.”

He said his existing capital has him seeking out financing from a

local investment group.

“I just filled out an application with the Lyons Group. These guys are a local investment group who invest in small businesses in Port Townsend with lower rates on set loans. Half of the administrators are customers.”

Nall said that he’s trying to position his company to become a wholesaler.

“The Food Co-op, Chimum Corner Store and Aldrich’s all want to carry a line of our products along with the store opening soon on Marrowstone Island. Recently the manager at QFC and the store in Port Ludlow called, interested in carrying our products. Practically every coffee shop in town have contacted me. They want cookies, bagels, croissants, pastries,” he explained.

Nall said he has customers driving here from Spokane once a month to pick up their 12 loaves of bread.

“Everybody wants something, but we just can’t facilitate it. If I could get that oven installed, what takes us five hours to bake will only take us two-and-a-half. That leaves eight to ten more hours to bake.”

He and fellow baker, Mikie, usually start at 3 a.m. and work 13-14 hours without breaks.



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Ginger Slingshot (Kristin Myers) waits in the wood near the Chinese Gardens in Port Townsend, with her slingshot drawn back. Photos by Lloyd Mullen

# *Elf bard slays foes, sings melodies*

by Kirk Boxleitner

From Jem and the Holograms to Hannah Montana, the conceit of a songwriter adopting a colorful stage alias is a familiar one in pop culture. Port Townsend's Kristin Myers is capitalizing upon the ascendance of geek culture to make it especially fantastical.

Myers has already racked up a decade of experience as a singer-songwriter under her own name. She has two albums to show for it, but the past year has seen the rise of a new persona for her; Ginger Slingshot, a Chaotic Good Elven Bard who sings about Dungeons & Dragons (of course), along with other “nerdy stuff,” in her words.

“Ginger means well, but she’s kind of all over the place,” Myers said of her alter ego, whose catalog

of songs so far includes “Emotional Baggage of Holding” and “Monsters.”

Ginger’s creation was inspired by Gen Con in Indianapolis, the largest tabletop game convention in North America, which includes similarly fandom-themed musical acts.

Myers spoke not only with the event organizers, but also the musical performers who were featured at last year’s Gen Con, as she developed not only the songs and the stage elements for an extended show of her own, but also the costumes, props and character elements for Ginger Slingshot herself.

Myers’ efforts bore fruit when Ginger Slingshot performed at this year’s Gen Con, accompanied

by a small ensemble, after working to define not only who the character was, but also what flavor of fandom musical subgenres she happened to be working within.

“I go more for comedy, laughs and just plain having a great time,” Myers said. “But there’s so many other exciting permutations, from nerd rock to nerd folk songs, some of which have more Celtic and Renaissance influences, and even nerdcore rapping.”

Myers went so far as to name-check Magic Sword, a 1980s-influenced electronic trio based out of Boise, Idaho.

More locally, Myers was quick to credit “The Castle,” the restaurant and performing arts venue hosted by Manresa Castle in Port Townsend, with providing her a valuable testing ground of sorts, where Ginger could find her own voice.

“It was a big asset to be able to perform at the Castle,” Myers said. “It was a wonderful opportunity to further develop my show, get used to being onstage, and embrace the theatricality of being more than just a girl with a guitar under a spotlight.”

Myers practiced costume changes and experimented with lighting effects at the Castle, and extended her gratitude to Zulu’s Board Game Cafe in Bothell, as well as Gabi’s Olympic Cards & Comics in Lacey, which also provided her with venues.

“I’d love to do more local performances as Ginger,” Myers said. “Of course, we’re currently heading into the fall and winter months, when a number of folks focus more than planning their bookings for the following year.”

One notable success in the meantime has been Myers’ Kickstarter, which as of Sept. 17 had raised \$7,531 from 88 backers for Ginger to record her own first studio album, complete with rewards ranging from early digital downloads to stickers, T-shirts and signed CDs to her faithful contributors.



Slingshot plays a bard’s melody on her guitar near Fort Worden state park.

“I wanted to raise enough money not just to pay for the studio, but also to compensate my fellow musicians for taking part in this project, so we could all support each other,” Myers said. “There’s even a 3D-printed miniature of Ginger out there now, that’s compatible with D&D and Pathfinder, so that gamers can have their favorite Elven Bard along for the ride.”

For more information on Kristin Myers and Ginger Slingshot, visit [kristinmyersmusic.com](http://kristinmyersmusic.com) and [kristinmyersmusic.com/ginger-slingshot](http://kristinmyersmusic.com/ginger-slingshot) online.

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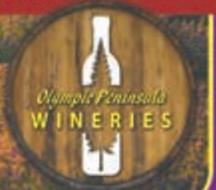
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Clockwise from left: Jesse Nelson, Caroline Rush, Amy Plastow, Erin Channis.  
Photos by Thais Oliveira



# BEAN KEEPERS

by Thais Oliveira

Baristas can make or break your day. When you need that brain boost, pleasure pop in the morning, you trust them to deliver your cuppa just the way you like it. It takes a lot to do just that. A well-maintained machine, quality beans, lots of techniques and a nose and palate to boot. Here are some of your morning heroes in Port Townsend.

## FROM BEAN TO HAND

Jesse Nelson is not just your friendly and knowledgeable barista. It was during a Seattle University trip to Guatemala that Jesse first got introduced to the growing and roasting side of the coffee culture and a new hobby started. A few years later, he transitioned from public administration to roasting and his coffee company, Conduit, was born in 2011 in Seattle. Since then, Jesse has been concentrating on sustainable sources and relationships, in importing only fair and healthy beans while knowing the hard work it is involved to get that perfect latte served in the morning.

Jesse had just moved to Port Townsend to be close to family and get that small town community feel, while keeping his coffee company. When all shops locked down and accounts dwindled,

he saw an opportunity to get back to being a barista and also create a special blend of beans to serve exclusively at Aldrich's. He has been an integral part in the coffee shop creation, maintenance and sustenance since his friend Yos Lychtenberg bought the market in July 2020 during the pandemic. When you get a cuppa there, you get 1895, a Brazil, Honduras and Costa Rica blend with medium body roast full of hazelnut and chocolate notes.

"I love the coffee shop community, the regulars, the predictability and the connections, especially here in PT. Coffee is a conversation. A cup in hand is the culmination of meticulous agriculture, producer engagement, importer care, roasters' fingerprint, and finally the brew process to the customer's hand", explains Nelson.

## A COFFEE LOVE STORY

Caroline Ruth, barista and owner of Velocity at the Northwest Maritime Center, knew nothing about brewing and serving coffee when she got hired as a baker at the late Bread and Roses, Frank and Linda's endeavor from Pane D'Amore and now the Courtyard Café. Recently transplanted here from Ohio to be a farmer, Caroline got trained to brew instead and found her love. Joe, an experienced barista and manager of the new cof-

fee shop, became her husband and together they opened Velocity in 2011.

“I fell in love with him and with coffee. I was always called to serve. I am so grateful for such a great community on campus at the Maritime Center, in the maritime community and in Port Townsend in general,” says Ruth.

Her preferred method is the pour over at the shop and at home. According to the barista, the taste of the bean comes out cleaner in the slower extraction, in the grind to order and the perfect temperature of the water.

## COFFEE BY DEGREE

Amy Plastow may have only started as a barista at Better Living Through Coffee in May, but coffee has been on her mind since she decided to study business management at WSU. Her TCC was a business and feasibility plan for an imaginary coffee shop in Port Ludlow. After working as barista during summers here at her hometown and a few corporate jobs in Everett and Minnesota, Amy decided to invest her time and effort in her love of the bean. Now apprenticing under Ben and Jesse from BLTC, she is learning the business aspects of a shop, shadowing roasts at their facility by Goodwill, and learning how to craft a cup of coffee.

Amy’s morning favorite is the Brazil roast pour over with a little heavy cream.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Erin Channis recently moved from Mystic, CT, an east coast version of Port Townsend, where she worked as a barista in what is called a second wave coffee culture. The term refers to corporate, big industry coffee like Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts where the product is not refined but consistent. In Mystic, she served out-of-state tourists and did not have a relationship with customers like the atmosphere at Sunrise Coffee, located at the boat yard.

“Here I am inserted in the communal bit, where regulars recognize each other, are friends and coworkers, we know each person and their favorite drink and the tourists pick up on the family vibe,” says Erin.





# Tiny homes, sustainable living

By Marci Peterson

Whenever I drive by Greenpod Homes, I think of the Muppet Kermit singing, “It’s Not That Easy Being Green.”

Not so for Ann Raab, the owner of Greenpod Homes, who has made it easy to live sustainably in a house that’s well, all green.

When my late husband Mark and I first entered the model on display located at 1531 W. Sims Way in Port Townsend, we knew that we had to have one.

Not only was it visually appealing, but we felt good in it.

Raab graduated from Colorado State University with degrees in interior design and construction management and a BFA in art.

“I was designing homes and interiors and working with a lot of contractors. Then I could see that there was a need for advocating for smaller homes. It’s really easy to build big, but really difficult to build small so every inch is important,” she told *The Leader*.

Raab also designs furniture to focus on small because, she said, everything that was being built was oversized.

“The evolution of Greenpod Homes, basically I decided we needed to have a business that helped employ our town. So I

thought, if I could build a box, I’d fill it with everything made in Port Townsend,” she explained.

The display home in Port Townsend is the Waterhaus, which was made in Port Townsend and funded locally it was built in about six weeks. “And right after we brought in the built green guidelines. So it’s an example of everything on built green guidelines. It’s energy efficient, low maintenance, non toxic, shows water recycling, American clay, organic fibers, aging in place. So we created a space.”

Raab said that she was hearing from people who were chemically sensitive who were not finding anything they needed.

“So we created a space where there were no PFCs, (perfluorinated compounds which may effect the thyroid, immune and reproductive systems, cholesterol levels, cause hypertension, birth defects and cancer) no off-gassing. You can see things like paper instead of wood and turn off your power in certain areas so there’s no electromagnetic fields coming in.”

She said she meets skeptics of her processes and of the need to build and live green.

“Yeah, some people believe it and some don’t. We’re consumptive in the way we live. So if I can showcase, especially



Ann Raab and her partner, Nina Saastad sit in their Greenpod gallery at the corner of Sims Way and Hancock st. Photo by Lloyd Mullen

to women, on how to live more sustainably just by making it easier for them like composting and putting it outside, not getting on the ground to unplug your outlets when you could have one switch, that would make it easier.”

Raab said her focus is on things that simplify living one’s life and making it more sustainable.

“We have videos on our website to educate people and get the message out as fast as we can. One of the biggest things we’ve done was a container home.”

Raab had three of her homes featured in one week on Tiny Home Tour. Everything in it, even the door handles, are made by locals.

“What I’m saying is buy things that have meaning and surround yourself with beauty instead of just a use. Like the box with the shed roof, see where the light is coming in and how the water runs off the roof and using different types of glass.”

Raab said it is her goal to incorporate a oneness with nature which allows the home dweller to ground themselves to it.

She added that the city will allow homeowners to have on their property two ADUs and tiny homes on wheels as a second and rent them out. “I wanted to show everyone what they looked like, make them available and see if we can get that going in the future,” she said.

Raab also does feasibility studies. The biggest cost is property, sewer, water and power. After that she looks to see what’s left over in a client’s budget to build a house.

“There’s a low inventory of houses and rentals here. What I want to do now are triplexes with women sharing the property. We have a real estate license to help with finding property.”

She said that she is seeing inventors trying to find solutions for the future.

“We’re here to be part of the solution with affordable, sustainable housing.”

# *The beauty of oysters* by Thais Oliveira

The life of an oyster farmer is one of toil and beauty. The forces of nature are both hard and astonishing. Maintenance of cages, boats, and gear is constant.

Chris Brown came to oyster farming from the end of their life cycle. As a restaurant server and food lover brought up in the Midwest, a highly processed market, he was always interested in sustainable agriculture and the “farm to table” principles. Making connections with the “back of the house” folks, he went on to learn hydroponics for microgreens and the oyster business with Hog Island Oyster Co. restaurants in San Francisco and Napa.

That Puget Sound is a perfect place for oysters influenced the decision of Chris and his fiancée' to move to Port Hadlock. The morning after moving Chris was invited to participate in the annual kelp harvest at Blue Dot Sea farms in the northern part of Hood Canal, one of the main basins of Puget Sound.

Brown is part of the crew that plants the spats, mini oysters bought from a hatchery, in the spring and several times a year and makes sure they grow healthy all year around. He watches the nutrients and food also flourish in the spring as the ocean comes alive and the bivalves start their filter/feed process in 5-acre suspension aquaculture 200 feet from the shore. The method benefits include an excellent flux of natural

phytoplankton, ample tidal currents and a proven capacity to support multiple shellfish species and seaweeds.

“It is a year-round work that can be challenging physically and mentally but it’s incredible to watch the little creatures grow into beautiful and delicious oysters while improving the environment. My passion is also to share what is grown in our backyard, to serve people the bounty of the Fjord and watch their delight”, says Brown, referring to the creation of Bearded Oyster, a pop-up business where he serves the oysters he grows at events.

An avid cook, Brown is looking for ways to incorporate kelp into the menu in mignonettes. For his wedding, he created a seaweed liqueur used in place of olives in a mescal martini.

Having an icy tray full of raw oysters or a bowl of stew at Hama Hama in Lilliwaup is a unique and beautiful experience. Sitting in little A frame huts, in a gorgeous setting overlooking the fjord, surrounded by mounts of shells, the smell of wood smoke and salty air, eagles and seals, one is treated with the freshest bivalve one can get.

The shellfish is carried off the beach, washed, counted, chilled, and served. The beds on the sixth-generation family-run shellfish farm are located at the mouth of one of the shortest,

Dave Lundeen uses a crane to lift a batch of oysters off shore near Hama Hama. Photo by Lloyd Mullen





Oyster farmer, Chris Brown bags oysters on a beach. Brown shields his eyes from the sun while pointing offshore. Courtesy photos

coldest, and least developed rivers in Washington State, their namesake, and that purity is reflected in the clean, crisp flavor of the oysters downstream.

Another plus to the whole “farm to table” experience is how well educated a customer can become during a meal in a down-to-earth, no-frills space. Servers at the Oyster Saloon get trained and take tours of the beaches, farms, and nursery systems. Daily updates include varieties and conditions. Several servers are former farm or wholesale staff, and farm interns are required to work in the restaurant.

The connection is noticeable in their knowledge and enthusiasm. An oyster is presented like wine by a sommelier.

Oysters in the Pacific Northwest are generally salty in the winter, and sweet and plump in the spring. In the summer, if they're from a spawn area, they may get soft and creamy. When spawning, they'll be salty and skinny for a few weeks in late summer before hopefully fattening up in the fall, and then hibernating in the winter.

There is a sweet spot for the best taste and sites and seasons vary, making a close relationship with nature indispensable. Tides and depth are other factors in

how much food is available and how fast they grow. If an oyster is too young it won't have much flavor, it'll just be salty. If they get too big and old, they're hard to eat raw and get cooked. Growing methods influence shell shape and flavors too.

“How all these factors contribute is hard to say - there's so much about oyster flavor that's elusive, hard to predict and hard to put into words. And that's one reason why eating them is so compelling” explains Lissa James Monberg, Vice President of Shellfish at Hama Hama Co.

On the creation of the Oyster Saloon in 2014 complementing their wholesale and storefront, Lissa says the family used to joke that it was easier to find a Hood Canal oyster raw on the half shell in New York City than in Hoodspout. “Growing up, our families usually just ate oysters grilled over a fire, dunked in garlic butter and dribbled with tabasco. We wanted to serve cooked and raw, bridging the cultural divides between oyster lovers. And we think hanging out around a campfire, drinking a few beers and eating oysters is a really fun way to pass the time.”

Hama Hama runs oyster classes at the farm from October to May.



Tacksi Turbo communicates with Velda Thomas at Heron Hill Equine. Photos courtesy Norm MacLeod

# LEARNING FROM AN OLD ALLY

Among Velda Thomas' earliest memories were of the work horses across the road from her grandparents' home near Bedfordshire in the U.K.

"I was fascinated. My mom's youngest sister took me on a bareback ride, on the back of one of these work horses and I fell off into the grass in a field. And wanted to get right back on."

Thomas is a Port Townsend author and artist whose recent work includes a deck of cards and guidebook which, she said, represents the wisdom she has received from a collection of somewhere between 30 and 50 horses. She has titled her work, "Bless the Horses Equine Wisdom Deck." The wisdom contained in those cards she said, come directly from the horse's body.

"Some people might call it channeling and some people might call it animal communication. When you are in a deep state of listening you may hear messages that are non-verbal. My experience, being an energy worker and a body worker, is that I started receiving messages that were clearly not my own

thoughts so I collected those messages. Initially it was about giving these messages to the owners of horses."

Thomas is a printmaker and author and these cards were created by cutting blocks from wood and linoleum.

"It's a layering process and when you look at the cards there is sometimes texture in the background. That may be horse hair, hay, hay netting, things that are relative to the horse. I realized at a certain point that these messages were not just for me - to hold on to them and not share them was not in service to the horses," Thomas told *The Leader*.

She said that horses carry memories deep inside their tissue, generations-old.

"It's just the same as with people. What we hold in our tissue as human beings is being validated by science. Our grandmothers' memories are in our tissue but unfortunately, what we remember is mostly the trauma," Thomas said.

Humans are apex predators and horses have been, for thousands of years, prey.

“Our relationship with them developed out of their curiosity. What horses have the ability to do for us, in terms of our spiritual development, is they will mirror what is deep inside of us. Horses don’t discriminate. Horses are honest. They will always tell it like it is,” Thomas said.

“My feeling is that it would be a different conversation if I were with a wild mustang that has never been touched, than with a horse that has been stabled and in contact with people for generations,” she said.

Horsemanship, historically, has been a story of training through intimidation. Thomas said she sees that as changing.

“People want a relationship of trust and reciprocity rather than one of dominance. There’s a big movement now, I would call it compassionate horsemanship or connected horsemanship. People are trying to build relationships so they can have those moments, when you can let go and trust the horse and have those magical moments,”

“This is not about people being fixed by horses, it’s about being in service to the horse. I want the horses to be able to be free in their choices.”

Thomas is working with Teren and Norm MacLeod, owners of Heron Hill Equine.

“Teren is interested in marginalized and underserved people who may never have the experience of being the presence of a horse. It’s amazing to see those people light up around a horse.” So her work is not just for those people who own or work with horses. She has also participated in small group experiences.



One of the things Thomas has learned from horses is their care for each other.

“Not about riding but just being with the horses and that’s where Heron Hill comes in - it’s a great place to start off, there are three horses there who are very gentle.

“Sometimes we minimize what horses are doing because they are herd animals, they learn how to thrive that way and to protect each other. Humans have become so focused on our individual growth that we’ve forgotten what it feels like to be a part of a community. We should ask ourselves, do I have to be dominate to succeed?”

Her art is available through her website [veldathomas.com](http://veldathomas.com) and on her Instagram, [veldathomas11](https://www.instagram.com/veldathomas11).



Thomas' hand-printed art includes a 64-card deck communicating the wisdom of horses.

# SAMURAI IN PORT TOWNSEND

story and photos by Thomas Mullen

The ballroom at Fort Worden has seen its share of warriors so there's no place more fitting for the testing of Iaido students.

Sensei Nikolas Konstantinou brought the headmaster of his Japanese school, started in the 1600s, to Port Townsend to test his five students.

"Iaido is very specialized. Iaido is also known as a finishing art. Iaido is a presentation of technique so there is no contact between people," explained Konstantinou.

The art consists of four main movements, drawing the sword, the cutting, a symbolic removal of the blood from the sword, and re-sheathing the sword.

Toyoda Shigeharu Soke (headmaster) after the testing.



"It is about smoothness and control. When people practice with a sword they tend to make the sword move fast. There is a groove along the sword that helps make the sound you hear. When performing a controlled, overhead cut, Kiritsuke, there's a solid 'whoosh' throughout the cut," he explained.

The entire process lasts less than a minute.

"The samurai believed there was a spiritual growth of the person practicing this art, that they weren't just practicing with the sword to kill someone," Konstantinou explained.

He began the Port Townsend school three years ago after teaching in Las Vegas for 10 years.

"I wanted to train and teach from my school. The only way to do that was to get consent from Japan. I was training in Aikido when I was teenager and once I started in my diving career I didn't have time to practice but I always enjoyed the weaponry."

Konstantinou explained that in the 1600s a great shogun unified Japan by keeping the other warlords under his command. The art form derived from battles of the prior century.

"By keeping the samurai poor they wouldn't be able to confront him or try to take power. Certain samurai became teachers and they would present their technique. These techniques were battle-tested in the late 1500s, along with riding on horses with bow and arrow because the Japanese sword was used only when you got up close in a battle."

Still, the sword became a symbol of Japan.

Samurai, Konstantinou said, comes from a similar word, meaning to serve.

"They were basically police and anybody who disobeys them could be killed by samurai, and they'd be allright."





Clockwise from above left: Elizabeth Kennedy setting up for a diagonal cut in Kata called Oikomi. Aiden Murney performing overhead cut Kiritsuke in Kata called Shomen which means to the front. Michael Kunz preparing for a large diagonal cut in kata called Kaishaku, symbolic of the samurai that cuts off the head of a sitting samurai who has just cut open his stomach, Seppuku. Seppuku is the honorable method of taking one's own life performed by samurai in feudal Japan. The hakama's dress like appearance was to hide footwork from opponent. Callen Johnson drawing the sword, Nukitsuki in Kata called, Migi, which means to the right. Jei Dexter putting sword in her belt Obi in preparation for performing a set of sequences called Kata. The skirt like trousers worn by samurai called hakama have five folds that represent the five virtues of Bushido (samurai code): Benevolence, justice, courtesy, wisdom and sincerity.

Although considered a martial art, Konstantinou said his students come to him because they are interested in the history of Japan.

“This is more than a martial art – it is a spiritual way of life. The highest honor among samurai is the person who has never drawn his sword and that is because he is so respected.”

Skill can be seen first, in the way the student sits down.

“And to be able to draw the sword quickly and cut and block, it takes many years practice to make it

look easy. It gets more demanding on your body. This is sort of a zen-like movement,” he noted.

Konstantinou added that he is always instructing his students to slow down their movements and to exercise more control.

“This is a way of life, considered and controlled and respectful of other people,” he said, “ the opponent is usually yourself but understand that you're cutting someone down and still you must remain very relaxed and in control.”



John Paul Bishop as Prince Florimund in *Sleeping Beauty*. Photo courtesy John Bishop

## *New artistic director is building dancers*

The ballerinas and danseurs have been training and rehearsing since Labor Day for their December performance.

“It is grueling not too grueling. With rehearsals and choreography happening at the same time, it’s still hard,” Port Townsend Ballet’s new Artistic Director John Paul Bishop told *The Leader*.

“People need live performances. I love movies but nothing beats live theater because you’re right there when people are doing their art. It’s what drew me to ballet, you’re baring your soul, your body is your instrument,” he said.

The pandemic eliminated live performances for three years and with them went his 22-year gig at Northwest Ballet Theatre.

“In Bellingham we had a beautiful school with three studios but I couldn’t get the landlord to give us any grace, it was sad moment, we had a good run, I haven’t taught class or done any choreography for three years and our first class here was brutal,” Bishop admitted.

Such is the life of this danseur and choreographer who started his career at the age of eight.

“I didn’t really want to, but my mom was a concert pianist for the Milwaukee Ballet. I went full time professional when I was 16,” he said of his beginnings. He had a backup plan – he took three years of architectural drafting training which he liked.

“But at that time I thought, ‘I want to go see the world.’”

And so he did, working with such luminaries as George Balanchine, Mikhail Barishnikov, and Andre Eglevsky. He was inspired by many, including the man many consider the greatest of all time.

“I worked with (Rudolf) Nureyev. His passion on the stage was unequalled. Technically, he was a great dancer but he would command a stage. He had a very difficult life. His manager made him keep on dancing after he probably should have quit.”

Bishop’s vision for Port Townsend Ballet includes such fundamentals as creating a syllabus and curriculum.

“It’s important to have when you’re building a professional ballet dancer - and whether they become professional or not, they must have good training. It’s like sports, if you don’t have fundamentals you’ll develop bad habits and then you will have a lot of injuries.”

Bishop said that it’s best for dancers to begin as he did, at age seven or eight.

“In most of the Russian schools there are eight levels of training - that’s the building part, I had to go through that. But this is a very different time we’re living in. If you’re not going to a big academy it’s hard to build a curriculum. There are lots of things kids have, that they do, not just ballet. You have to tailor it so everybody can have a good experience.”

With support from the community, Bishop said he hopes to build a solid program in Jefferson County. He has about 30 dancers some as young as five, some in their 20s and 30s, the vast majority of them are female.

He said he suspects many lovers and patrons of ballet a traveling some distance to see the art but that can change. He pointed to Mount Vernon.



Bishop

“I was on an arts council, years ago and McIntyre Hall was a brainchild of this group. About 10 of us put it out there that Mount Vernon needed an arts facility. A lawyer for John McIntyre came in and gave us a check for six million dollars.” With that start-up capital, the arts council soon raised enough money to build an \$18 million Performing Arts Center.

Bishop gave a shout-out to his predecessor at Port Townsend Ballet, Anna Tallarico, who helmed the program until recently.

“Anna did great work.”

Bishop recently relocated to Port Townsend with his wife, who he met overseas.

“I finished up my professional career in Japan where I was first dancing and later doing choreography for Japanese ballet companies for almost 10 years. So I got to be fairly fluent in that language.”

He’s also been enlisted to help with the production of Key City Public Theatre’s “The Canterville Ghost” where, he said, he’s doing a bit of everything. “I’m helping with the sound and helping Albert hang lights, working with the director, arranging props. It’s gonna be great! There’s so much talent there, I’m blown away. It can’t do anything but grow,” he predicted.

His first ballet production, “The Nutcracker” opens December 9. Anyone interested in their scholarship program, donating to PTB or volunteer opportunities can find them online: [porttownsendballet.com/donate](http://porttownsendballet.com/donate)

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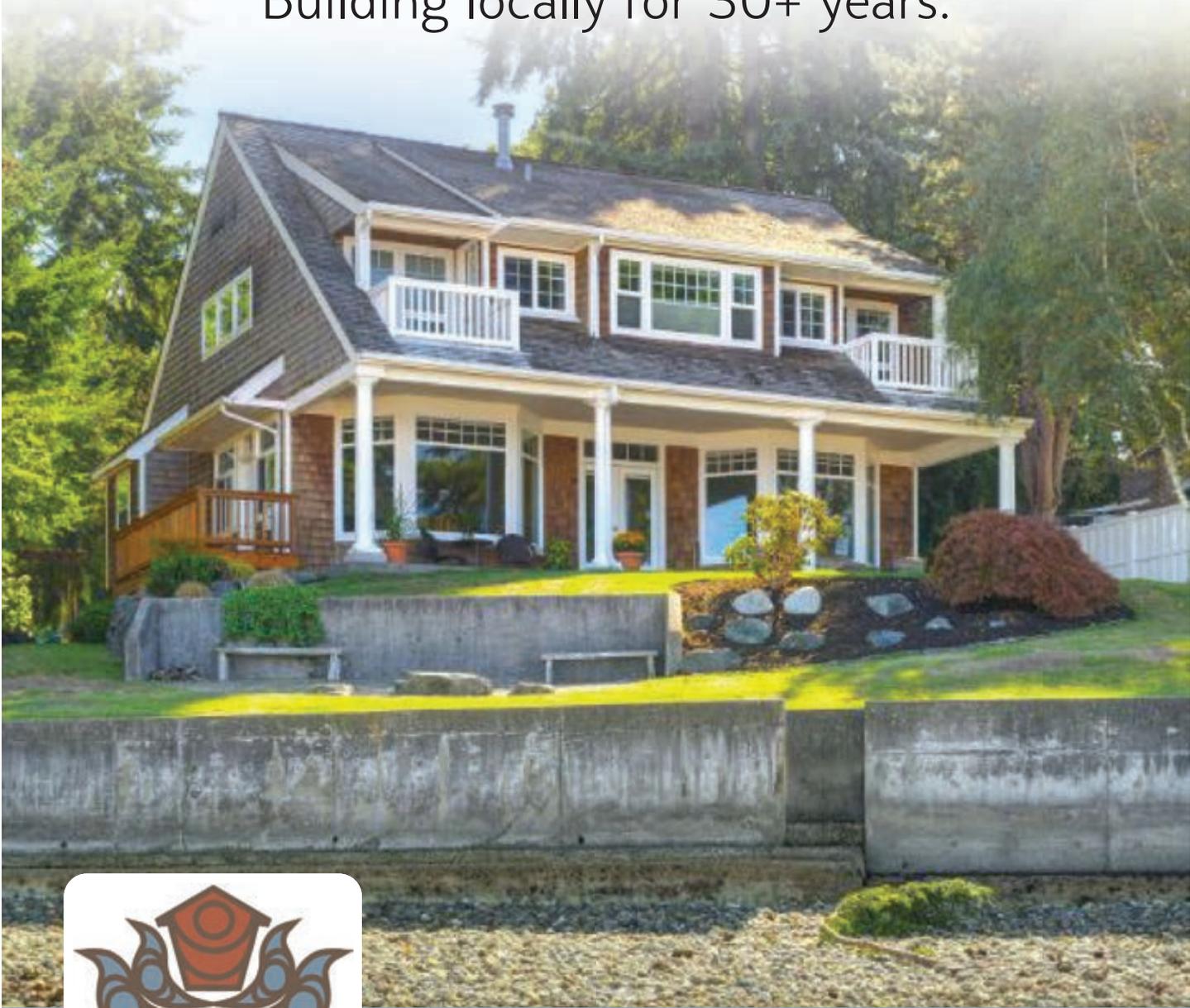
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