

Trestle | CREEK | Review

No. 35 | 2021

Editorial Board: Jonah Haas, Jaye Hanselmann-Cox, Joann Latimer, Kaela McKenzie, Gray Pocius, Nathan Preciado, Tehya Nikki Russell, Lucy Wright, Alyssa Yustat

Editors: Jaye Hanselmann-Cox and Gray Pocius

Editorial Advisor: Jonathan Frey

Trestle Creek Review is published once a year by North Idaho College. Submissions are open to students, alumni, faculty, and staff of North Idaho College, and to all residents of the Inland Northwest. Submissions of manuscripts and black-and-white art are accepted year-round. Submissions received by January 31, 2022, will be considered for publication in Trestle Creek Review no. 36. More information is available at our website, www.nic.edu/tcr.

Trestle Creek Review wishes to express our gratitude to Jay Carkhuff and the NIC Campus Events staff, Aaron Cloyd and the NIC English Club, Russel Davis and the staff of Gray Dog Press, Kristin Howard, Molly Michaud, and Blair Williams and the Art Spirit Gallery for their generosity and support.

Cover Art: Shelle Lindholm, *Apples and Oranges*

copyright 2021 Trestle Creek Review
www.nic.edu/tcr

FICTION

Abel Siemens Attender..... 19

POETRY

J. Lyon Chewing Gum 5
Roger Dunsmore At Cherry Picking Camp 7
 For Bodie & Silver & Every Crazy-Ass, Broken-
 Down Plank Table on Planet-Drum Earth 8
Jenni Fallein The Poet's Wife..... 12
 The Year of the Pandemic..... 14
 Velcro vs. Windstorm..... 16
Aileen Keown Vaux In the Park..... 35
 Deer 36
 Boa Constrictors Are Addicted To Hugs..... 37
Elizabeth Mathes Acrobatics..... 39
 Mucking Up..... 40
C. Illarai Fish Heart 41
Kassidy Wigen Year Anniversary..... 43
David E. Thomas September Saturday California Street Bridge..... 44
 Coronavirus Isolation 45
David Lewis Moore Buffalo of Loma 47
 How Many..... 49

QUARANTINE NOTES 25

Erin Davis 27
Georgia Tiffany 28
Dani Combs 30

VISUAL ART

E. Poteet Apple King 6
Robin Graf Slink..... 10
 Turnip..... 11
Maribel Martinez Mogilefsky Rain Meditation..... 18
 Prairie Collage 25
Dave Po Fire Dancer..... 38
 Iced 46
J. Lyon Hollow..... 42
Lucia Gregory 50

CONTRIBUTORS 51

Chewing Gum

I chew a
half piece of
gum in my
mouth rolls
around inside
but a whole
piece feels like
too much
is going on
inside my head
I had a friend
who on monthly
welfare only got
one pack of gum
she would ration
out choosing to
share each Winterfresh
strip divvying it up
amongst friends
three halves she
would fold
each end inward
upon itself I
still remember those
tiny hands of joy
over the silver
chewy ticky
tacky one
piece of
gum.

Apple King



At Cherry Picking Camp
for our son Jack, age two

No comet in the sky this morning,
A honey bee moves in the red-tassel corn,
golden pollen, sac-puff legs.
Roy saunters by in his orange,
 Tony Lama boots—
 “You wanna buy ’em?”

 A migrant picker,
bit on the tongue by a yellow jacket,
dies before the ambulance arrives.
Jackets so thick eating cherries
the pickers have to fight ’em,
two pounds for the price of one.

Roy laughs when I stroll around in his Tony Lamas
 in only my underwear.
Marvy says she saw a rock star
in rubber boots way up to his thighs.
 “Christ! Wear Levis!” Roy shouts.

Jack, just walking,
wants to know if caterpillars
 bite or kiss;
crawls under the car after one
into grass on the other side
where spotted bulls graze.
 Appaloosa bulls, we call them.

He kisses my face,
his cherry-dripping cheeks
blood-red and juicy.
No comet in the sky this morning.

Flathead Lake, Montana, 1983

For Bodie & Silver & Every Crazy-Ass, Broken- Down Plank Table on Planet-Drum Earth

We move this rickety-rackety-crazy-happity picnic table out into full sunlight melting creamy, first-fall-storm snow off Bitterroot Mountains, ten-foot planks as weathered as surf-hammered beach logs, plenty of room for us all, but prone to inopportune collapse: We must be balanced in our sitting along its sagging seats not to spill the magnificence of midday breakfast the two best cooks in the Earthy Realm of Gorging have prepared from their most high places—Black Coffee Mountain, Green Tea China, and Spanish Whiskey.

Black Coffee Scot tells of the Airborne Medic—embittered by what he experienced in Viet Nam before his whole unit excepting himself was wiped out—tells of reconnection with this friend who gently guided Scotty to conscientious objector status; China Green Israel of the cascading laughter, just down from sitting his high-tower, holy-fire mountain lookout warns us: *Just take a small bite of Boardy's eggplant chutney, it's spicy hot,* and his parsley-shallot green sauce supplies the zing every lima bean longs for.

Bodie, the outlandish bringer of massive, crazy-ass, incredible happiness, Bodie of the goey eye, who has swallowed whole the stunning chasm of grief from his brother Silver's unexpected death, Bodie, who at three months old plunges Grandma Barbara and Gaseous Roger into insane gales of galloping giggles, Bodie, handed, tossed from one crazed relative to the next, Bodie, eyes wide, bare baby feet stroked, tickled, tiny fingers touched and kissed, Bodie the Agile, able to suck both thumbs at once, or Auntie Isan's cheek, or Mama Ceed's full-milk breast, Bodie, the splitter of Papa Mark's round face into bright pumpkin smiles, Bodie riding Auntie Isan's rump like a born-again, mystic, bad-ass bull rider while Sarah Laughter-Dancing holds him on, Bodie, the swallower of deep grief, his brother Hi Ho Silver here at the table too, remembered, honored, given life, all of it given back in this crazy, happy-bright day.

And even when this old, rickety-rackety picnic table collapses as warned,
collapses right next to that bum left knee of Uncle Rudge,
we all stand up and shout laughter: *The Knee did it! That bum of a danged knee,*
he done too did do it! All stand up while Old Rackety falls down, its wooden leg slip-sliding
from its crotchety notch under the weight of full-on wild Bodie happiness—
and even then: it's the hammers of happiness prying heads off nails
that don't hold, happiness of hammers that pound bum-knee, wooden-wonky leg back
into its spidery notch before we all go off in different directions: Bodie with Mama
Cedar's red stringy hair to chew on, to wipe from his eyes, from our own wide-open eyes too,
to be cock-eyed goofy in love. And not to forget the golden beauty of Boardy's apricot by-god
jam and her by-god peach one too—the thick, orangish jams of wise
old rickety-ass plank table, asking, asking, always asking for our delicate, cross-eyed balance
as we sit, eat, and sing Bodie together.

Slink



Turnip



The Poet's Wife

for Roger

Who, may I ask, was married to Li Po?
Or shared a bed with the illustrious Basho?
Do not tell me they were celibate

I imagine while Li Po sits
(or drinks wine with the moon)
his wife hoes the hardened soil
grows the greens
pulls spindly carrots
stirs a meager stew
in a crock older than
the ageless poet himself

She will patiently ferment
her caterpillared cabbage
the juice of which he will imbibe
while she endures his hiccuped mumbles
and multifarious metaphors

When the poet is out
she lets down her hair
climbs the hills
recites melodious recipes
for half-gnawed gravensteins
that the deer will finish by morning

Not prone to chatter
she will take the neglected path
measure time by the notes
of shifting light as they play
on a forever river
then hurry home to prepare
Li Po's evening meal

For our dinner, my husband
has traded an entire volume
of his selected poems
for an extra-large pizza
with portobello mushrooms
and pesto sauce

He is proud of the exchange
so we eat more than half in one sitting

The Year of the Pandemic

Lately,
I just want a fish bowl
or even one of those
fancy rectangular jobs
where the bubbles come up
and the gravel
is ghastly neon
with maybe a castle
where a catfish slithers
and fish, plenty of fish

It's fine if they're guppies
or goldfish
the kind you buy
to feed pet snakes
only fifty-nine cents
A fair price for scales
shiny as a brand new penny
and fins like bridal veils

It's disgusting really
to make them
swim around and around
breathing their own sewage
in some bowl
we forget to clean
Some bowl
that grows a little algae
just so we can stare
like a cat watches birds
out the window

I think it has to do
with that pump
how the oxygen goes in,
the wave
from behind the glass

and you know,

*They never should have
put him on that ventilator*

Velcro vs. Windstorm

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, January 13, 2021

Piece of shit
carefully concealed as velcro—
the whole idea stolen with no patent
from some lowly plant
that clings irrevocably to your socks
on a mountain hike

The trouble is
the plant is way smarter
than the guys who invented
the sticky in sticky-back

I fashion a barrier made
of two shower curtains
hung on PVC across the hall
add a top layer
sewn from ziploc bags
eight stitched miserably in a row
use an entire roll of masking tape
floor to ceiling ceiling to floor

All this to seal off the living room
where the tree has abruptly entered
as if it could find shelter.
Fifty feet of spruce splinters the roof beams
like a kid's shattered balsa wood glider
and dumps insulation like
a dustbowl of cellulose coal

Hell of a way to put in a skylight
on this moonless night

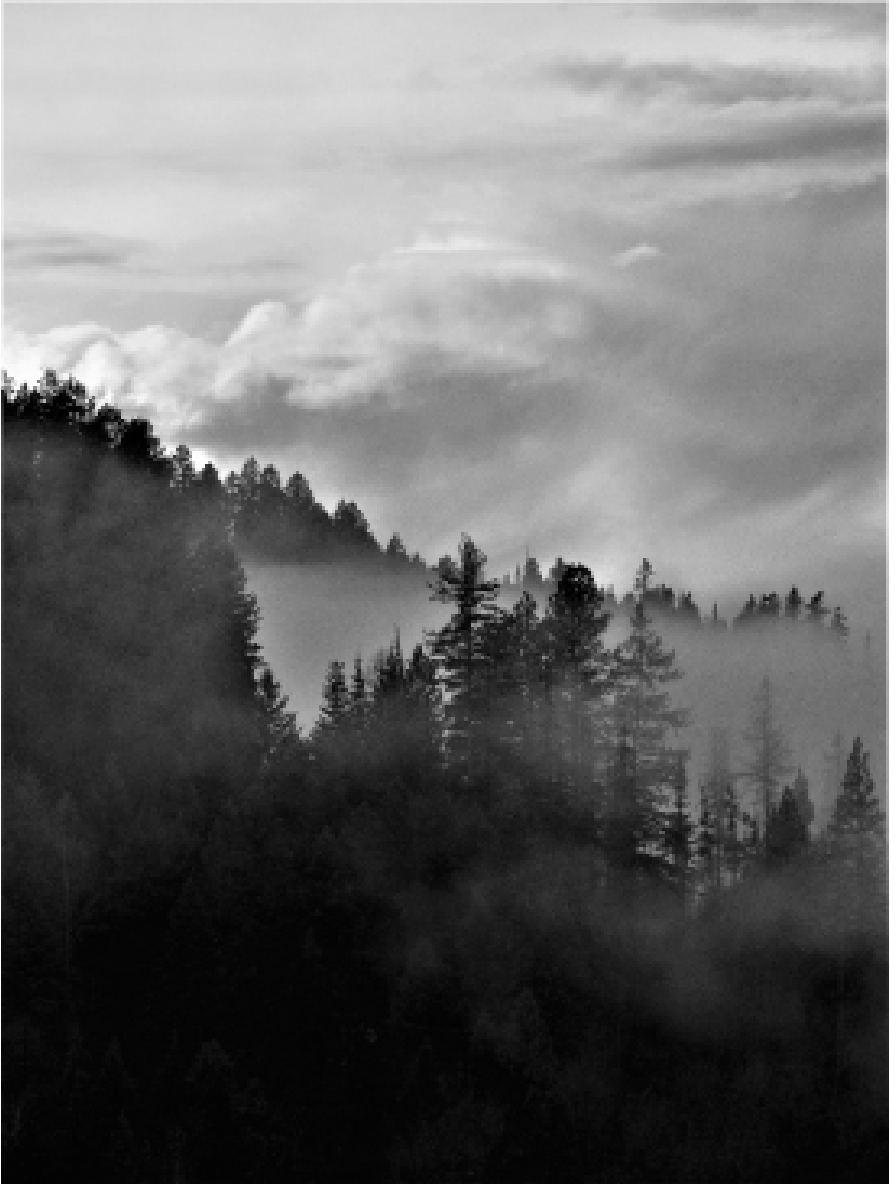
What was clever, I thought,
was how I'd use this sticky-back velcro
seal it real good, yet have it open like a door
Someone is going to have to go in there
you know, and fix that mess

But this sticky-back? What the heck?
Peels right off the plastic curtains
like water rolls off a duck
while the velcro side clings to itself
tight as survivors in a leaky boat

Those velcro people could learn a thing
from this giant spruce

She knows a lot about pitch
and how to stick it to ya

Rain Meditation



Attender

All around the bend of the river were houses scattered with a half mile to a mile between them, the furthest being three quarters of a mile from its neighbor. Two of the homes contained small families, while the furthest home housed a single woman, a widow, by herself. The widow was older, and by the time she had moved into her house her husband had been dead for three and a half years. Her two children were living away from her, one in Colorado and one in Germany. The river moved past her home slowly this time of year, but the mountain snow was just beginning to melt, and she could see the water beginning to rise and go a little faster. She sat on her porch looking over the tree lines, one behind the other and the other behind the other which was behind the other. She craned her head and squinted over at her neighbor's house, a bit away, just at the neck of the river so it was visible.

Her name was Eugene and her husband's name was Tom, and is still Tom, but Tom in a different way. Tom in a dead way. Eugene and Tom lived in the cabin every summer for the past thirty years, always travelling up and then back into town in late August. But Tom died and Eugene moved into the cabin because it was, for her, wrapped around her ideas of Tom: how she loved him but mostly how she missed him, and so the cabin became Tom and Tom became the cabin, not in any real sense but in the sense that a memento of a loved one takes on something more than what it is.

As Eugene watched the house near hers, she saw a couple come out onto their back porch. They looked strange and fuzzy off in the distance and she couldn't make out any real image of them. The man looked taller, or maybe the woman, and they both looked wide and athletic, but she also couldn't really tell, and so she slumped back in her chair and sighed down at the river. Her radio was on and it was talking to her about something, or talking at her. She was distracted by the quickening pace of the river beneath the trees.

"New updates on a local epidemic..."

New updates on a local river moving too fast, faster than normal. Faster than previous years. New updates about Eugene, but her children never called her to ask. Sometimes her oldest daughter called her. Edith called Eugene. Edith, her daughter. Edith in the city. Edith never married. *But maybe it's fine for her not to be*

married. Eugene closed her eyes and tried to think about her daughter, but she only heard the river. It sounded like it was rushing and overflowing but every time she opened her eyes to glance down at it, it looked the same, only maybe faster and louder.

She shifted her focus back to the couple, far off enough to not see and yet see at the same time. She couldn't tell if they were looking at her or not, but she kept staring. Suddenly the woman put her hand up and waved. *She is taller than him.* Then she squinted again. *Is he taller than her?* She lifted her arm up and waved back. The woman put her arm down and so did Eugene. She kept staring, and the couple went inside. She did not know their names, and they did not know hers, and in truth she did not know when they moved in, or whether they had bought or were renting the cabin, only that they were there now. She heard her phone ring inside, and she moved to answer it.

"Hey Mom."

"Edith?"

"Yes, it's me."

"I thought it was. Hi, sweetie."

"Hi Mom."

"How are you doing?"

"I'm fine Mom, are you okay?"

"Okay? Yes, I'm fine. Why?"

"Have you been on the internet or listening to your radio?"

"Yes, I have been. Or, I mean yes. Well, sort of."

"You've heard about the virus?"

"Yes, I think maybe. Or maybe not. I have. Which virus?"

"Don't remember, but it's got a number in the name."

"Ah."

"It's some kind of virus. I'm coming to visit you Mom."

"You are? Why?"

"Just people are getting sick."

"Is it very serious?"

"I don't know. Maybe, but it's very weird. Everyone's inside, and I can't go to work, so I'm coming to visit you."

Eugene stared at the river out the window. "For how long?"

“Don’t know, but I’m gonna start driving to you now.”

“Okay. I love you.”

“Love you too.”

“When will you be getting here?”

Her daughter hung up. *A virus!* She thought. *How exciting.* She felt bad for feeling excited but felt it anyway. It was hard for her to tell whether she was excited because her life seemed to be changing or because Edith was visiting her. She wondered how her other child was doing, and if he had spoken with Edith. Edith and Michael. Michael in Germany. Michael never married. *Michael hadn’t called.*

“I’ll call Michael, then, if there’s a virus,” she said out loud. She felt a little more excited because maybe Michael would come back too. She picked up her phone and dialed his number. When she pressed the receiver against her ear, it sounded like the river.

“Hey, you’ve reached Michael Hall. Leave a message.”

“Hello Michael, it’s your mother. Edith told me there’s a virus in Denver. Is there a virus in Germany too? She’s coming to stay with me at the cabin, and maybe if you can’t go to classes then you could come home too. Okay, I love you and miss you. Be safe. I love you and miss you.”

She hung up and smiled down at the floor. She grabbed her coat again and walked outside and sat down before looking over at the side of the couple’s cabin. *I should go talk to them and let them know what’s going on.* She felt more excitement. Maybe the couple could come over for dinner. That seemed like a good idea. Her hands pushed against the chair and she stood up again.

The day was getting a little bit darker as Eugene started over toward the other cabins. The unpaved dirt road next to her cabin seemed like it hadn’t had any cars or anybody walking on it in a while. *No one ever visits me.* Now they have to. She didn’t like that thought and frowned at the dust being kicked up by her shoes. *Don’t think that way.* But she couldn’t help it. Ever since Tom died, she felt herself getting melodramatic, like any little thing would shut her down. She frowned again and shoved her hands in her jacket pockets. If Tom was here, she wouldn’t let the dirt road sour her mood. She thought about him walking with her over to the couple’s house to see if they wanted dinner and smiled.

“Hello,” Eugene said. Her voice felt old and tired.

The door stood open with a stocky man staring at her blankly.

“I’m Eugene. I live next door to you.” She paused. “Not, um, right next door. Over there.” She turned and pointed to her house, maybe three quarters of a mile away, and the man squinted his eyes. His brows came together in a funny way.

A young woman came and stood by the young man. *She’s taller than him.* They were both very young, impossibly young it seemed. She started to feel uncomfortable. *Why did I walk over here? They’re so much younger than me.*

“Hi Eugene, I’m Kathy and this is my husband Gordon.”

“Hi, I’m Gordon.”

Eugene blinked. “It’s nice to meet you both.”

“It’s nice to meet you too, Eugene. Can we help you with anything?”

“Um... no. Have you two heard the news about a virus?”

“Oh? No, we haven’t.”

“Wait, yes we have.”

Eugene moved her attention to Gordon. “You have?”

“Yes, remember?” Gordon moved his attention to Kathy. “I told you about it last night before we went to bed.”

“Oh! Yes. We have.”

Inside, Eugene heard their phone ring. Gordon turned and walked toward the sound.

Eugene shrugged her shoulders and her back felt tight. “I just heard from my daughter and didn’t know if you’d heard anything about it.”

“I guess we did, but maybe Gordon would know more about it.”

“Yes, maybe.”

“Strange stuff.”

“I think so.”

Kathy stared at Eugene. She was pretty, and young. Young like Edith. Eugene felt her throat tighten. She didn’t know what else to say. *But you came here to say something, Eugene.*

“Would you two want to come over for dinner?”

“Oh. Tonight?”

“Yes. Um, yes.” Eugene squeezed her knuckles in the palm of her hand. She felt ridiculous.

“I’m not sure what Gordon has planned, but I think maybe we could.” She turned around to look over at Gordon and then turned back to Eugene. “It seems like he’ll be busy for a while. I could take your number and then call you about it later?”

“Yes, that sounds okay.”

“Okay,” Kathy smiled as she pulled out her phone.

The dirt road seemed less dusty as Eugene walked back to her house. She stopped halfway between the two cabins and stared down toward the river. The water seemed higher than it did this morning. If it got high enough it could wash off the road, and there’d be no dirt. Maybe it would pick up her house and wash it away and she could live somewhere else. *Don’t be so dramatic.* She felt as though she couldn’t keep from thinking thoughts like that. The river moved fast. *If it kept rising, I could be gone in an instant.* She looked back to her cabin and sighed. The dust around her shoes had settled while she was staring at the river.

Back in her house, Eugene sat looking through her window. The river outside moved so fast it didn’t even seem to move. But it was nearly dark, and Eugene thought maybe she just couldn’t see the water at all. Nobody had called yet. Edith hadn’t called, and Michael hadn’t called, and Gordon hadn’t called. Kathy didn’t call either. Who else was there to call her? *No one.*

Eugene picked up the receiver and placed it against her ear to try and call Michael again. The noise was weird and high and shrill, and Eugene was about to start dialing his number but she paused for a small moment. She pressed the receiver harder against her ear and slowly and eventually the tone became dull and low. She closed her eyes and kept it there to listen. She began to hear a river, and she imagined herself standing on top of her house, and the river outside rushing up the sides of her home. She heard her windows breaking and the wooden beams snapping under the weight of the water. Her own chest felt stiff as she listened, like the water was going to break her apart and pull her down to the bottom of the riverbed. She’d become like sediment. She listened some more and saw Tom lying on the riverbed too.

She opened her eyes when she heard four knocks at the door. She put the phone back and got up slowly. *Was I asleep?* She couldn’t tell. Maybe. She wandered over to the door and opened it up.

“Hey Mom.”

Eugene looked out softly through the doorway. “Hi, Edith.”

Behind the two of them the lights of Edith’s car dimmed. The dust was almost settled near its tires. The air was black and cold and wet, like it was about to rain, and there were very few sounds other than the sound of a cabin door closing and muffled voices trailing away. However, there was the sound of the river, stretched out across a few cabins and deeper into the mountains, which was loud, but almost so loud that after a while you couldn’t hear it anymore, and moving so fast and so quickly through the night you couldn’t see it.



QUARANTINE NOTES

Prairie Collage by Maribel Martinez Mogilefsky

Last August, when we finally launched the delayed 2020 issue of this magazine, we began to look forward. Or, more accurately, we began to continue looking forward. We had spent six months, by then, looking forward to a return to something we recognized, some version of our world and work that felt like a straight line picking up where we'd left off when we went into quarantine. We looked forward to seeing people, to moving through the world in the way we had. Many of us looked forward to a new administration. We looked forward to beginning work on a new issue of this magazine.

We kept looking: fall, winter. January came, and we began to build this issue of the magazine. The world that was unfolding around us was, it turned out, not the world we had been looking forward to, but probably we should have known better.

In late winter, we reached out again to our friends whose reflections had helped us think about our strange moment a year ago, and they contributed the notes in the next few pages. It seems they had been waiting too.

Now it is spring. We made this issue over the past few months without ever seeing the bottom halves of one another's faces, but it will publish on time. At the time of this writing in mid-April, there have been 57,716 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Spokane-Coeur d'Alene region and 803 deaths. Nationwide: 31.2 million cases, 564 thousand deaths. Worldwide: 138 million cases, 2.97 million deaths. The numbers are vast enough to be meaningless, hyperbolic.

Maybe it's impossible to look forward, really. We have only known the world we have known, so when we try to look forward—most of the time—we're actually looking back, looking back for some referent that will tell us what to look forward to. We are probably not wise enough to do it, to look forward into a world we've never known, but it is the only direction we can go from here.

Into whatever comes next, we offer these reflections from our friends on where we've been.

Jonathan Frey
for the TCR Editorial Board

March Again

It's March again. We are on the trail in the early evening. The dirt crunches beneath our shoes as we walk. The wind ripples the grey grass ahead of us. Once the sun sinks lower, it will flood the field with amber and gold, and for about fifteen minutes, the trail will be transformed. In the meantime, we keep our routine, zipping our jackets up to our chins and moving together across the colorless ground. When we first came to Spokane from California, I hated March, frustrated to be so close to Easter and still have to shiver. Eventually, March grew on me, and I came to appreciate the quiet pauses it provides before all the buds burst open, and the bugs down by the river start biting, and I have to apply SPF 50 to keep from burning. But now, we've gone through a whole year of Marches—twelve months of false starts and quiet pauses as we wait for life to open again. I'm sure at some point we had a summer—we drove to Glacier National Park in July and wore masks as we hiked. We celebrated our thirty-second anniversary in August. Come fall, classes resumed at the same time as always, though I only ever see my students on my laptop screen. And there must have been a Christmas. We put up a tree and took it down. We exchanged presents. After the new year rolled around, I'm pretty certain I turned fifty-two as expected. Not long after that, our country careened toward an inauguration, held its breath, and switched presidents. But none of these memories feel as firm to me as the sound of our feet trudging together along this trail, each step further evidence that when it mattered, we were able to hold the quiet between us and walk together through the stillness. Next week, our new puppy will join us on our walks. Pre-pandemic, we had decided not to clutter our empty nest with a dog so that we could travel overseas and be free. But after ten months of quarantine, my husband insisted. *If we can't travel anyway, I want a dog.* I took a while to come around, but finally agreed. We can only live so long in the pauses. So next week, we will take our little disruptor on the trail. He will dart back and forth between us, pouncing on rocks and tripping over his own paws. He will mess with our rhythm, and he will be welcome to it.

While CDC warns
of a fourth wave, our dog chews
face masks in his crate.

In Spite of Quarantine

Remember how first came silence,
then branches heavy with song.
Someone said, *Listen*.
Someone asked,
Have they been here all along?

In spite of quarantine, the sky
turned to wings,
winter to spring, yards to gardens.
Remember how first came loneliness,
then, almost overnight, solitude?

We walked the streets we'd only driven—
step by step, by breath, by name—
Elk Ridge, Crestview, Palouse River Drive,
verbena here, five-foot yucca there,
hedgerows of chickadees.

We listened to our feet crunch
down alleys we'd never noticed,
hollyhocks in the wind,
two small boys in the gravel building roads
with a yellow jeep and a hoe.

Late autumn, scattering bone meal
where the tulips had bloomed,
working the white powder into dark beds,
watching it blend and disappear,
I did not think of the bulbs or the bone,

but the scent of dropped plums,
the lithe shadows of bared branches,
and the work, always the work,
how it goes on,
the sound of steel tines raking the loam,

a curiously sweet weariness
quieting itself, and me
imagining what if there were no dreams
but only this sound as long as winter
scoring the caverns of sleep.

A Conversation

Dani Combs is an RN, a longtime TCR contributor and friend of the magazine, and a former TCR editor. She works night shifts at an acute care hospital serving the Inland Northwest, and has throughout the pandemic. We initially arranged to meet for this interview in-person, but the night shift is hard to shake, and we ended up talking via email over a week in early April, almost exactly a year after our previous conversation.

DC: Ok I had to get a little buzzed up first.

TCR: On?

DC: The finest vintage of boxed rosé.

TCR: Fancy!

DC: I was trying to think of what I would say and stuff and my life has been so boring.

TCR: I've never had a boring conversation with Dani Combs. I'm sure we'll be fine.

DC: The pressure is on.

TCR: So, how's work?

DC: Work is ok. I'm still working basically week on/week off. I got a position as full-time charge nurse so that means I do bed planning for hospital admissions and I'm on the code team. Night shift is nice, but on my week off it's a toss-up if I'll transition to being awake during the day as evidenced by me sleeping through our first opportunity for this interview by at least four hours.

TCR: The code team? That sounds harrowing.

DC: My role is being the recorder so I kind of just stand there and write everything down then I put it in the computer later. It's a very important job but not a very action-oriented role. Unfortunately, it's not always a good outcome but that comes with the territory.

TCR: So is the new position more administration? A year ago, it sounded like you were navigating some conflict between management and rank-and-file. How did that transition play out for you?

DC: Well I'm not management. It's like I'm a normal nurse but I organize placing admits and am a resource for my floor nurses. Currently the conversation has changed to union contract negotiations with the higher-ups. That's always sort of tense because it comes with the possibility of striking, but we will cross that bridge when it comes. I have a really great core team right now and that makes even the worst tasks easier. Many nurses everywhere are feeling under-appreciated for the risk versus reward they have been experiencing.

TCR: At the end of our last conversation you raised the question of whether 2021 Dani would feel the fear surrounding Covid was warranted. What would you tell her? Was it?

DC: The fear? Not warranted. The caution? Definitely warranted. Every life is valuable, and every death is sad whether it's Covid-related or not. The talk about "well they had other medical conditions that made them vulnerable" is total bullshit. No family member would say that about their dying loved one. "Welp, they had diabetes, so of course they died from Covid." No one says that.

TCR: You're pointing to a disconnect between the popular conversation about Covid WWWWWoutside the hospital and the real conversations among people who are encountering it firsthand?

DC: There is a definite disconnect. I don't think the disconnect necessarily happens with regard to the facts that are being presented from vetted news sources, but with empathy. Everyone has their own opinions and beliefs, and that's ok! But it's not ok to separate the person on the other end of the conversation from their value as a human being because they have a differing opinion. Whatever discordant conversations are happening would be greatly improved by empathy. Bottom line: DON'T BE A DICK.

TCR: Solid life advice, pandemic or no. What would you ask 2022 post-pandemic Dani? And, for that matter, will we be post-pandemic in 2022? Is the end actually in sight?

DC: I definitely think the pandemic will no longer be the main topic of discussion, but I do imagine that COVID-19 will still be around. The caution that has been practiced has drastically cut down on the cases of Influenza A and B. I can't recall having any patients with just the regular old flu this season. I would ask post-pandemic Dani: Does the caution continue? Do we get to go back to concerts? Is mask wearing still going to be a militant/divisive topic? Did you get a boyfriend?

TCR: Speaking of masks, how the fuck did that happen? How did we get to a point where mask-wearing during a global pandemic became politicized?

DC: Dude, everything is politicized now and I don't know why. It's exhausting. This question exhausts me. Both sides endorsed wearing masks, and yet constituents still fought about it? Did I use the word constituents right?

TCR: How does the politicization of the pandemic affect you day-to-day—and maybe especially in the hospital?

DC: My coworkers have their own differing opinions about masks, vaccines, politics. We have all been respectful of each other and if we choose to dip a toe into the controversy conversations it resembles the civil discussion that should be happening everywhere. In my life outside of work, I honestly don't consider politics at all. I consider my friends' risk factors, whether I have had known exposure (it's been months), and most importantly I ask my friends what they are comfortable with. I respect shop owners who want me to wear a mask because I'd want the same respect shown to me.

TCR: What would you tell 2020 early-pandemic Dani to prepare for the year she was embarking on?

DC: I would tell her to try, try and practice hobbies and being active. Even if it wasn't consistent, still try. Now that lots of restrictions are lifted it's hard to get back into being social because being alone is so easy. Even though I know I'm not alone in this, it's still easier to choose to be alone socially.

TCR: Is that what you mean when you say your life is boring?

DC: Generally, my mantra is “only boring people get bored,” but right now I'm the pot calling the kettle black. It's been very difficult for me to get back into social habits, and I know so many others are feeling the same way. It's nice to not be alone in feeling that, but it's also hard to be alone in the apartment watching all ten seasons of *Stargate: SG-1* by yourself. It's a great sci-fi show that I think is underrated. Also, several of my plants have died this winter, so I'm having trouble with all sorts of relationships.

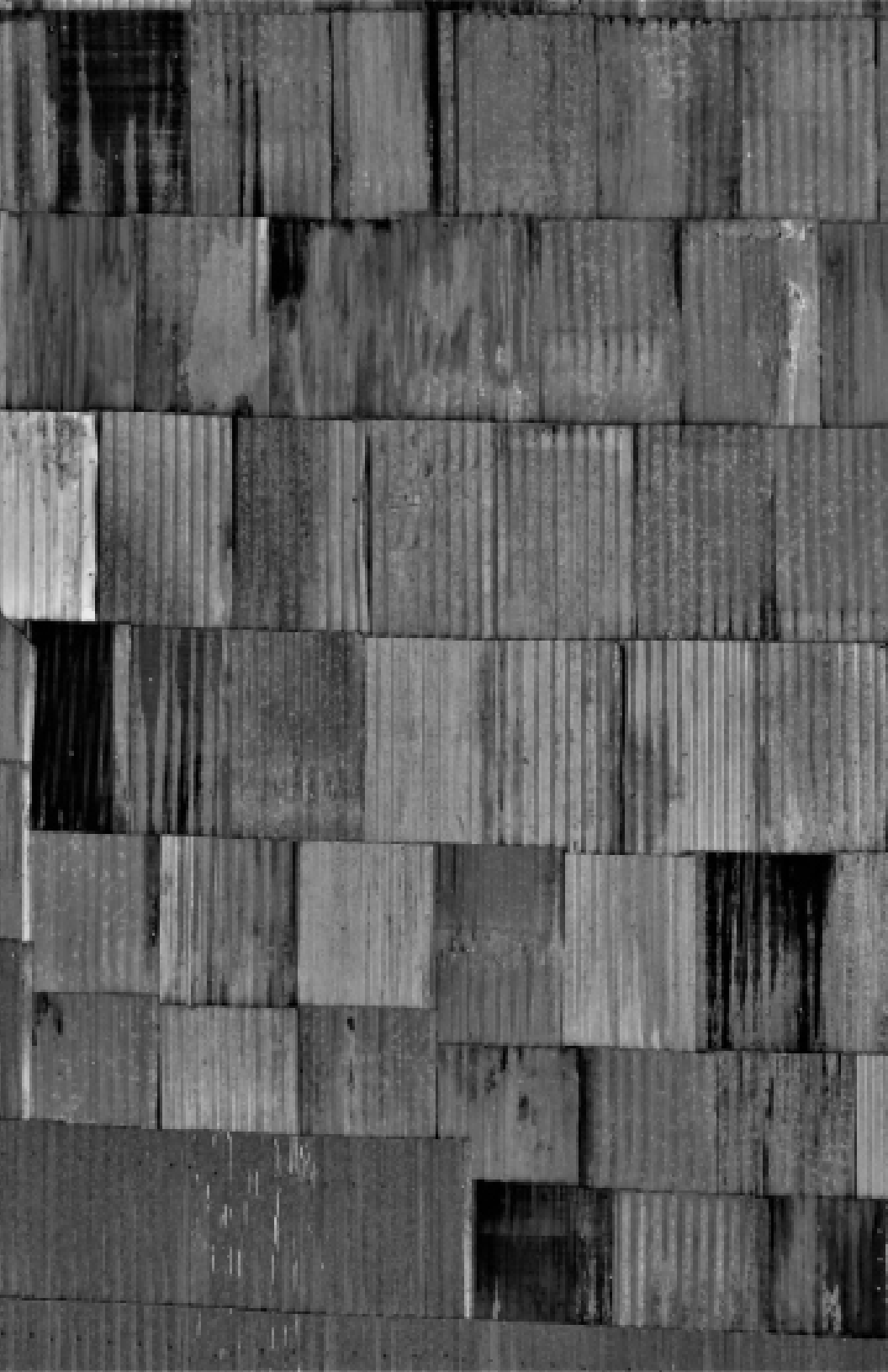
TCR: Are you optimistic about our post-pandemic world?

DC: I am optimistic about hygiene practices, but I am not optimistic about the division that continues to be created. I worry that misinformation, fear, and politics will continue to dictate the healthcare choices people make.

If you're reading this: Please consult a medical professional if you have questions or worries about vaccines, tests, etc. If access feels like a barrier, please reach out to community services like Heritage Health or your own local community clinic for resources.

TCR: What will it look like to reflect on all this and conclude we've meaningfully learned from it?

DC: As a country the lesson learned would show as unity and grace. Grace for those whose opinions differ from our own and the understanding that we still care about those individuals. I don't know if that is going to happen, but I hope it does.



In The Park

If you thought that life would end when the world did
then you don't know anything about life.

Half a world away, I held your hand
and said, *If the Earth is going to burn*
then I want to face it with you.

From a third-story apartment with a view,
the city looks the same:
the Steam Plant stands and birds of prey
chase a meal along invisible lines.

Of course I haven't seen a human for days
and walk the ghost park at dusk
absorbing any disaster notes floating in the air.

A man drives his Mustang in loops
around the abandoned mall garage
revving his engine in a make-believe race.

You were my dream before we needed them
to survive what happens next.

Deer

Why do they appear on the edge
of highways, mangled but breathing,
supplicants to metaphor?

My friend spent two years
restoring a vintage Mustang—
cherry red with a checkerboard interior
and a handbrake that spun her like McQueen.

On a nightdrive a buck crossed her path
and she cranked the brake so the hood dipped
and punted him twenty feet through the arc of lights.
The thing about deer, she said some years later,
is that they have enough babies to never learn fear.

Ascending the brush slope
two young bucks
followed me through the city streets,
one with an antler bent
just above his eye,
an anomaly that predicts
a death, slow and breathless.

The wildness covers the city,
like a thin blanket,
beneath which I'm restless.

Boa Constrictors Are Addicted To Hugs

a young boy tells me at the party
as if I did not know
the assignments of the body.

Hugs are like drugs, he says
and then returns to toys strewn on the quilt.
Someone on this lawn is celebrating a birthday.

On the air I can hear the lavender and lemon verbena,
minor registries of rooted ministries,
herbs that will keep us alive when cities disappear.

The children ask if I want to tour everything
dead in the yard. *Absolutely*, I say.
We gather in a semi-circle around the broken bodies.

Rest in peace, one of them says.
Rest in pieces, another adds.
Literally, I say, and the congregation laughs.

A girl leads me to a desiccated sparrow,
half of its bird bones cleaned by ants
who only want a meal and stave off sunset.

We agree that the bones look like cartoons
exposed outside the body,
proof that something lives inside of us.

Fire Dancer



Acrobatics

Screams take a break
tumble out window screens
scrape summer sidewalks
and dial a cell phone.

I wait the flight of your violence, nestled
on the door jam
in the tranquil
that comes with routine.

My fingertips vibrate sympathetic,
mallets to a singing bowl,
on the broken veneer of your impulse control.

Panels of a bedroom door
splinter kicked
head cracked
fist busted
into niches
where we live
our life small.

Your smile crests my lips
your words charge my veins
your pain nightmares my dreams.

On the other side of the world
someone pounds on the front door,
an insistence echoing only in blue.
I look in on you and
crawl out of the nest.
My jaw drops, my lips circle wide
in the *awe*
necessary
to say — *autism*.

Mucking Up

Clink, scrape, chill, up the spade and down
my spine. I'm eager to dig distraction
from the evening. A small garden.

A large rock. A pissed horticulturalist.
Several shovels, pitch forks and crowbars,
like cat claws, lever a stone
and drag it from its berth. LED light,
past dusk, exposes the rock
in gray-green hues. I'll Google Image
its name. Wikipedia its history.

Once mud
on an ancient shore, dried into shale,
packed into slate, could have morphed into schist.
I know the exact place to set it.

We'd sipped in the whiskied rays
of noontime resting on my front stoop.
Our legs and arms, nude and warm.
Our chit-chat light. Bonds solidifying
that we soon blitzed with too much alcohol
and Cheeto slag. Your neon lips erupted,
in guilty confessions that fried my circuits,
charred my arteries. Your volcanic shit

I have no place to set.

Fish Heart

It's the size of a thimble between my fingers
Charon's currency pays for the lesson,
Leaving questions unanswered
Afraid to drop it, to mar the stormy stillness
Rain washes the blood back
down concrete drains
to the sea

Hollow



Year Anniversary

You read the labels off whatever we're eating
something to fill the silence
I hate it.
I'd rather you say nothing

Is it me?
creating the space between us
counteracting your kisses
with tired eyes,
working hands

Sitting across from one another at dinner
I eat all the chips and salsa
so I don't have to talk
lackluster desire
Remember when we used to be that annoying couple?
the kind that sat next to one another in the booth

swinging our arms,
as we held hands

September Saturday California Street Bridge

Smoke dims the horizon
 Blue Mountain
 Black Mountain
vague outlines in the haze
 in the Sierra Nevada
 the Cascades
whole towns burnt to extinction.
 Here, warm sun
 and smoke
a soft breeze
 moves willows
river ripples low
 and slow
human voices utter
 tones of leisure
and a small white
 butterfly
arcs and flits
 through green leaves.

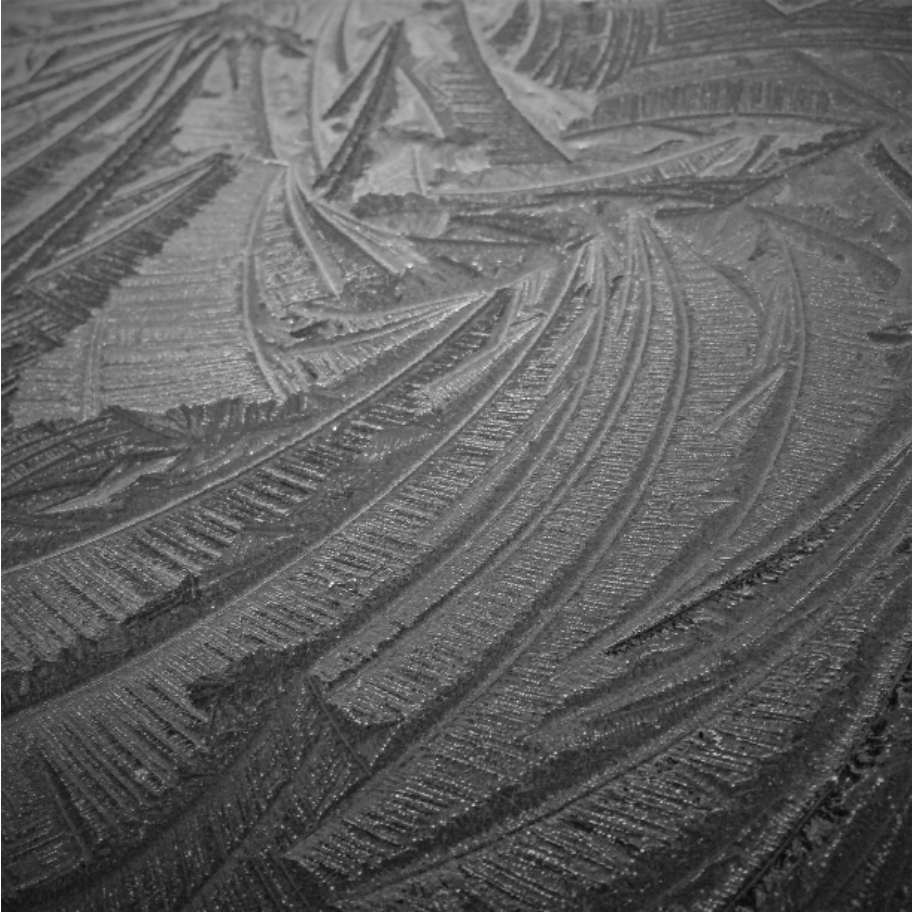
12 September 2020

Coronavirus Isolation

Snazzy new yellow
 Thunderbird convertible
brightens traffic on Higgins
 this gray morning
I'm sitting in front
 of Sparkle Laundry
waiting for my clothes
 to dry
the wind picks up
 a jet plane drops overhead
toward the airport
 the convertible
 rolls with its top up
no rain
after days of too much.

21 May 2020

Iced



Buffalo of Loma

Faded red rail fence,
corral of dust and mud,
a few buffalo stand
north of Fort Benton
in Loma, Montana,
renown location
of the most extreme
recorded temperature change
in a twenty-four-hour period
in the United States
of America,
January 15, 1972,
when the temperature rose
from -54°F (-48°C)
to 49°F (9°C),
thrilling example
of the Chinook wind.

Less advertised,
the massacre nearby,
one hundred years before,
one of the most extreme
unrecorded temperature changes
in American history,
January 23, 1870,
when temperatures dropped
from 98.6°F (37°C)
to 0°F (-17.7°C)
in more than
two hundred bodies,
old men, children, women,
a few warriors,
frozen on winter ground,
chilling example
of the settler mind.

Dusty humps
know spirits
of buffalo chasers
slaughtered here
along the Marias River,
know relatives
who drive today
north to the rez
south to Great Falls.
Mounted hunters
stand with them
in this muddy pasture
beside Highway 87
where a Chinook climbs
one hundred degrees
in strong memory
of a buffalo clan.

How Many

Eons on this hillside lawn
with this dog in this snow,
humans stand here
watching this night sky.

In rough and fine leather
or cloth, hunters, children,
travelers lean on wooden staffs,
looking out and up.

Above this valley
these high clouds
glow against dark,
this blackness a door

framed by darker scales
of haze. Inconceivable,
in deeper dark, that dog star
still looks back.



Dani Combs finally got her own apartment and a big kid job. She still loves chili and Lilly.

Erin Davis lives and writes near the Little Spokane River and teaches English at North Idaho College. Her work has been featured in *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*, and in anthologies published by Thoughtcrime Press and the Spokane County Library District.

Roger Dunsmore taught Humanities, Wilderness Studies, and American Indian Literature at the University of Montana (Missoula & Dillon) from 1963-2013. He is the author of numerous books, including *You're Just Dirt* (2010, FootHills Publishing) and *Earth's Mind: Essays in Native Literature* (1997, University of New Mexico Press). His fifth volume of poetry, *On the Chinese Wall: New & Selected Poems, 1966-2018* was published by Drumlummon Institute of Helena, Montana, in September 2019. (Here, among echoes of Archilochos and Meister Eckhart, can be found a poem for a loose ram, a poem for a woman kissing all the icons in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, a poem for a trapper in Montana whose pet wolverine loved Oreo cookies, and a man named Mike Blue Horse, 'best night-hawker on the Hi-line,' dancing solo in a bar in Montana.) He was a founding member and mentor of the Bent Grass Poetry Troupe, 2005-2013. Humanities Montana selected him as one of their Humanities Heroes in 2012. Dunsmore has been short-listed to the governor for the position of Montana Poet Laureate twice, 2005 and 2007. Currently, he is beginning his seventh year of staple-gunning the work of other poets monthly to utility poles and in small businesses in his Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, neighborhood.

Jenni Fallein lives in Coeur d'Alene with her husband, Roger Dunsmore. She is a teacher of Neelakantha Meditation, leads kirtan at Garden Street School of Yoga, and is a painter. Her one volume of poems is entitled *If Beauty Were a Spy*, published by Foothills Publishing, 2010, and recently she has a poem included in the new anthology from Foothills Publishing that addresses climate change: *Civilization in Crisis*, edited by Bart White and Dwain Wilder, 2020. She has had the great pleasure to be included in several past editions of Trestle Creek Review.

Robin Graf is an illustrator and printmaker from Post Falls, Idaho. She specializes in letterpress and relief printing, as well as gouache painting and digital collage.

Lucia Gregory resides in North Idaho. She approaches photography intuitively and works to discover uncommon beauty in everyday life. She shares images on Instagram @looshagee.

J. Lyon, at the age of eight, won an Oreo stacking contest for stacking the most Oreos before the cookies tumbled over. J. Lyon won a contest for guessing the correct lyrics to a Spice Girls song with a coworker. J. Lyon has never tried a Twinkie. Two truths, one lie.

CONTRIBUTORS

Shelle Lindholm (cover artist) is a painter who finds her inspiration from depicting wildlife right outside her studio door, which is nestled at the edge of the woods in the Flathead Valley.

“My paintings reflect the rugged elegance of the West and the enchanting pleasures of living here,” Lindholm says. “I paint the spunk and spirit I see in animals as they root, romp, and rest just outside my studio door. How can I paint an animal differently? That is the treasure I seek.”

Lindholm’s style of “primitive painting” has developed through years of exploring the versatile medium of acrylic. She uses the method of “addition by subtraction” in her work. A colorful palette of acrylics is layered with wax sandwiched in-between. Each layer is then scraped with a razor blade. This blends colors and builds primitive, organic textures. Lindholm says this final part of her process is when shapes and colors emerge, and her ideas and vision start to come to life.

C. Illarai lives in the Pacific Northwest despite harboring a specific distaste for cold weather. A lover of hot tea, unbridled snark, and Asian food, her hobbies include knitting, chasing her toddler around the house, and taste-testing every loaf of bread her husband bakes.

Aileen Keown Vaux is a queer poet and essayist whose chapbook *Consolation Prize* was published in 2018 by Scablands Books. Their poems can be found, or forthcoming, in *Faultline Journal*, *Roanoke Review*, *The Inlander*, *Northwest Review*, and *Portland Review*. Their interviews are published with *The Rumpus* and *Willow Springs Magazine*.

Elizabeth Mathes came to writing poetry late in life. She has published poems in a few small presses throughout the US. Personally, she is married to a musician and has a thirty-year-old adult son with autism who lives with them. Professionally, she is a mental health provider specializing in autism and families. She is often inspired to write on her daily walks with her son amid North Idaho’s alpine and glacial beauty.

Although **Maribel Martinez Mogilefsky** did not pursue a degree at North Idaho College, she has enjoyed attending classes over the years. Her main interest was the pottery class with Professor Larry Clark. In addition, she enjoyed the dance programs and the swim training class with Lynne Pulizzi. For several semesters, she returned to the pottery class because it fed her need for self-expression. It was a great joyous space of creativity and community. As a lover of art, any time spent in the expression of creativity is important for her mental health and sense of well-being.

She has a BFA degree from the University of Montana, 1995, focusing on painting. Currently she works for the Coeur d’Alene tribe at Marimn Health as a yoga and meditation instructor.

Another creative practice for her is photography. She loves capturing simple moments that express and measure her gratitude for life. It's an exercise of intuition and trust that the beauty and wonder of life shows up in simple ways. She strives to see the everyday moments around her with a new vision. Photography for her is a meditative practice, looking for the stillness in the moment.

David Lewis Moore is emeritus professor of Indigenous Literary Studies and English. His fields of research and teaching graduates and undergraduates have included Native American literatures, cross-cultural 19th century and 20th century American Studies, Western American literatures, Peace Studies, Baha'i Studies, environmental literature, and ecocritical and dialogical critical theory. In addition to dozens of academic articles, his three book-length publications are *Cultural Property in American Indian Literatures: Representation and Interpretation* (AIQ 1997); *That Dream Shall Have a Name: Native Americans Rewriting America* (Nebraska UP 2013); and *Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony, Almanac of the Dead, Gardens in the Dunes* (Bloomsbury Academic 2013). In positions from grad student to professor, he taught at the University of South Dakota, Salish Kootenai College, University of Washington, Cornell University, and University of Montana. At SKC he produced and directed community theater. On Montana Public Radio, he co-hosts *Reflections West*, a short weekly literary program at www.reflectionswest.org, and he has participated in theater productions by the Bearhead Swaney Intertribal Playwrights Project on the Flathead Reservation. He lives with his family in Missoula, Montana.

Dave Po has been a traditional artist and amateur photographer for just over two decades. Originally from the Philippines where he studied fine arts as a painting major, he moved to the West coast about ten years ago and is loving it here. He enjoys finding the fine detail in Mother Nature's creations and capturing them through macro photography. Aside from that, he also enjoys creating paintings composed entirely from imagination whenever possible. He enjoys riding along the Centennial Trail and being close to the abundant nature he finds all around.

E. Poteet is a nonbinary queer resident of North Idaho, intent on creating safe spaces and spreading laughter; they love to make pickles, play in the dirt, read and participate in creative expression.

Abel Siemens loves to write stories and praise God.

David E. Thomas grew up on the Hi-Line in North-Central Montana. He graduated from the University of Montana then found himself on the streets of San Francisco where he began his literary education. Economic realities drove him to work on railroad gangs, big construction projects like Libby Dam and other labor-intensive jobs. He has traveled in the United States, Mexico and Central America. He has published seven books of poems, *Fossil Fuel*, *Buck's Last Wreck*, *The Hellgate Wind*, *Waterworks Hill*, *Old Power Company Road*, *The Gosling*, and *Afternoon Stroll*.

CONTRIBUTORS

He has poems in the anthologies *The Last Best Place*, *Poems across the Big Sky I and II*, *New Poets of the American West*, and has published poems in *Romania*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Cedilla 6*, *7*, and *8*, and many other small magazines. His essay “Gothic Days” appears in *The Complete Montana Gothic* edited by Peter Koch, which also features Thomas’s earliest published work. He has published poems and an interview in *Talking River*, poems in *San Pedro River Review*, and appears in the anthology *Civilization in Crisis* just out from FootHills Publishing. He lives in Missoula, Montana.

Georgia Tiffany, a native of Spokane, Washington, holds graduate degrees from Indiana University and University of Idaho. Recipient of grants from the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, her work has appeared in various anthologies such as *Poets of the American West* and *Labor Pains and Birth Stories*, and in such publications as *Chautauqua Literary Review*, *Threepenny Review*, and *Talking River Review*. Her poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her chapbook, *Cut from the Score*, was published by Night Owl Press. She now lives in Moscow, Idaho.

Kassidy Wigen is an undergraduate student currently enrolled at the University of Idaho, studying English literature. She loves to write and spend time with her cat, Julien.



with loving gratitude to Pandemic Pony

Trestle | CREEK | Review

welcomes submissions of any genre of literary or creative work for its 2022 issue. *Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems per submission), prose (5,000 words maximum), or black-and-white artwork (any style or medium) may be sent via email. We consider work by any member of the North Idaho College community—including students, faculty, staff, and alumni—and by residents of the Inland Northwest.*

*No previously published work can be considered, but simultaneous submissions are welcome. Please include a brief bio with your submission. More information and complete submission guidelines are available at our website, www.nic.edu/tcr. Submission deadline is **January 31, 2022**, for May publication.*

*

Established in 1982, Trestle Creek Review is published annually by the students and the English Department of North Idaho College.