THE

Quackery Gazette

WEATHER
Clearing by Tuesday
—
TIDE
Out past the piling

Providence, Rhode Island — where the livelihood of 195,000 residents rests solely on saying things.
Come see us sometime!

VOL. I · NO. 3 NOVEMBER 2026 $2 · QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM

RHODE ISLAND'S TOP JOB IS SAYING THINGS

The paper counted the state's fifty biggest jobs and gave each one its real title. The biggest job is not the top job.



The paper asked the Bureau of Labor Statistics how Rhode Islanders spend their working day, and the Bureau answered with a table of fifty occupations, ranked by headcount, May 2025.

The paper then did what the Bureau will not do: gave each job its real title.

By headcount the state's largest line of work is **selling overpriced stuff**.

Fast food and counter workers lead the table at 13,310, retail salespersons follow at 12,830, and with waiters, cashiers, bartenders, wholesale reps and the rest, nine of the top fifty jobs come to 66,800 people, a quarter of everyone on the list. The coffee is too much. The people handing it over did not set the price.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THE FISCAL CLOCK

It is eleven cents to midnight. The Helsinki Bureau has not moved the hands.

ALSO INSIDE

A shark and a whale visit Miami and report genuine people.

Flubber Pangs runs without a watch and asks whether it counted.

The Eleffant comes home.

CORRECTIONS

The Gazette cannot say with confidence which word was meant.

OBITUARIES

The Soul Collector is keeping the tally and will report after Tuesday. Several ongoing.

BALL STREET

Snickering, friendship, courage and dancing gapped up. Thinking things through gapped down.

ON THE WATER

The rope is still on the seawall. The piling still holds up nothing.

SAYING THINGS

From Page One

Then come performing care (nurses, home health aides, teaching assistants), making things up (accountants, software developers, bookkeepers, marketing specialists), blurting excuses (receptionists, secretaries, human resources), and standing around, which is the title for the first-line supervisors and the security guards and is meant as a description of the posture, not the effort. Janitors and cleaners, 7,270 of them, are retitled doing genuinely noble work. Restaurant cooks, 6,950, are retitled narcissist rager, which the cooks will tell you is fair. General and operations managers, 9,150, are retitled blaming subordinates.

That is the bottom of the building. The top of the building is smaller and has one job.

At the top, the job is saying things. It is the job of the 460 chief executives the Bureau finds in the state, and it is, as far as this desk can determine, the whole of the job of the governor and the mayor. Saying things does not appear in any description. The description is the saying.

A resident asked this desk what saying things is. What kind of things are said. The desk put the question to a sayer of things, who answered:

"Just tidbits, just things that I want to express, some just thoughts. You know, I woke up this morning and had a coffee. And uh, yeah, you know, like I graduated uh, first in my class in high school. And, uh, you know, I'm really optimistic about our economy."

The coffee in that answer was bought from the bottom of the building.

The desk notes one row it did not retitle: the people who move freight, stock and material by hand, 6,760 of them, the thirteenth-largest job in the state. Their backs pay the physical therapists and the chiropractors and the pharmacists. That is not a joke about the movers. It is a line item in somebody else's budget, and somebody at the top of the building has said things about it.

SAYING THINGS

Builders Disagree

A newspaper called Providence builders about the rent cap. Three answered. One builds.



We say things. Today we say what a columnist said builders said, and then we count.

The column ran on Sunday, September 6, three days before the primary, under a headline in two sentences. The challenger says rent caps won't kill development. Builders disagree. We read it to find the builders.

There are three.

The first builds. David Baskin, fifty-five, came here at nine from the Soviet Union, grew up in South Providence, went to Classical, and has made a career of new builds and remodels in the city. He said a cap would likely make him shift potential Providence projects elsewhere, and that it pains him. He did not name a project. His better point was not about the cap: it was that banks cut what they will lend when the upside is capped. We will come back to that.

The second sells. Shannon Weinstein is a real estate agent and the director of the Rhode Island Coalition of Housing Providers, which is the landlords' association, which lobbied against the ordinance. She and her husband own two small properties and are delaying plans to add a few apartments to them. She also corrected the challenger on a point of fact — owners of one or two properties are exempt only if they live in one — and she was right.

The third owns. Joe Paolino is deferring a seventy-million-dollar conversion of the Amica building into apartments and hotel suites. His stated reason, in the column, is that occupancy at 100 Westminster is down because of remote work, so he would move his corporate tenants there and convert the emptied tower. Rent control is the shadow the columnist places over that decision; the decision as described is about offices. Asked whether he would cancel it if the challenger won, he said he would welcome a conversation. "The real estate community is the ally of the city," he told the columnist, "not the enemy."

On the other side of the ledger the challenger offered builders, unnamed, who met him at a café in Wayland Square about three multifamily homes they wanted to build, ran the numbers, and are proceeding. We cannot count those either.

So the census of builders who disagree is one, with unnamed projects. The largest deferral in the piece has a stated cause that is not the cap, and whether a conversion counts as new construction under the ten- and twenty-year exemptions is a question nobody in the column asked.

Which leaves Baskin's point, the only one that survives the exemptions. A twenty-year exemption on a thirty-year note leaves ten years under the cap, and a lender prices those ten years now. If that is true, it is true at the bank. Nobody called the bank.

We say things. We have said them.

— S. T.

Saying Things is a reporting desk. Its beat is people who say things.

I'm Not Going to Answer That Question

By The Fant

There are two kinds of question.

The first kind is trivial.

Is that Donnie Mark record the best gospel house record ever?

I'm not going to answer that question.

Is M. Sexton's record the record of the year?

I'm not going to answer that question.

Is the cover of The Boat Party some of the best album artwork ever?

I'm not going to answer that question.

The second kind is not trivial at all. These are things I know, and nobody else seems to.

_____?

I'm not going to answer that question.

_____?

I'm not going to answer that question.

_____?

You can fill those in yourself.

I'm not going to answer that question.

The Dugong Institute says it is happy with this piece. Asked what about it, the Institute declined to state.

BEST OF ALL TIME

The Boat Stays Parked



Readers of last month's B.O.A.T. Party have asked where the boat went. It went nowhere. Look at the record. On the cover of The Boat Party, he is sitting on the side of a boat of maybe eighteen feet, and the boat is sitting in a snowy lot in Detroit, nowhere near the water.

Koala KMFH has always parked the boat. It was never a question of the party. The party is fine on land. It is a question of the water, and of who else is in it.

The North Atlantic right whale is down to fewer than 400. Getting hit by boats is one of the main things killing them. So the boat stays where it is, and the party happens around it.

Koala Prince P, asked about the arrangement, said: "Now, that's hip hop."

Bucket Hats: all the way.

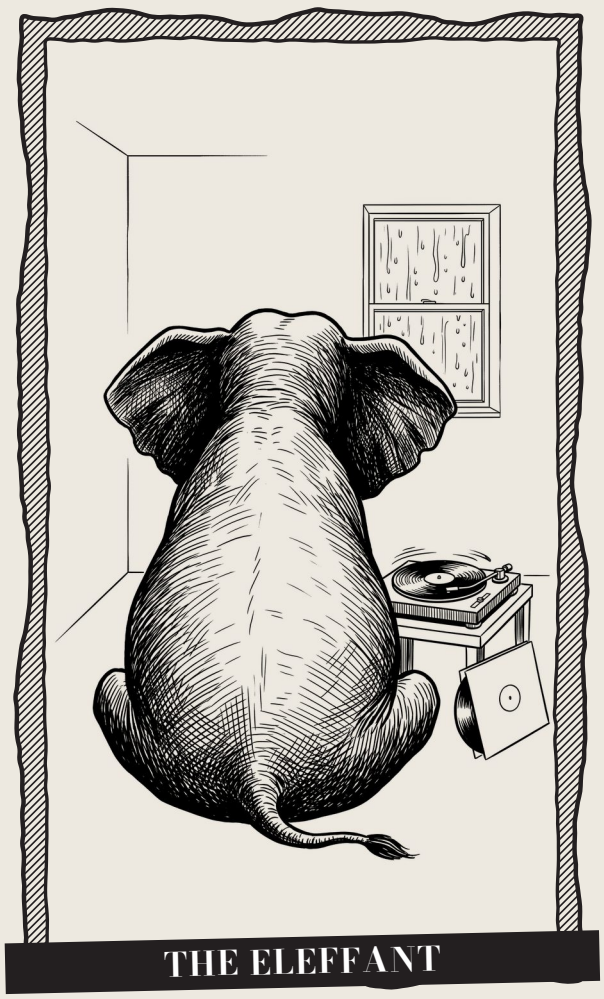
Local Man Is Happy

One third of the residents are terrified by this.

P.S. YOU ROCK MY WORLD

Home

The Fant plays two records and does not leave the room.



I played two records this week and did not leave the room.

The first is "Bring Me," by Andre Gibson and the Universal Togetherness Band. It was cut in Chicago sometime between 1980 and 1984 by a party band that was coming apart, in basements and studios around the city, and it sat on tape for the better part of forty years until Numero put it out in 2020 on a record called *Apart*. Eighty-five beats a minute, which is slower than a walk. Four minutes and forty-three seconds. It is a song that asks to be carried somewhere and is in no hurry about the direction.

The second is "Detroit City." Danny Dill and Mel Tillis wrote it; Bobby Bare had the hit in 1963 and a Grammy the next spring. Some people know it by the first line of its refrain, which is a man saying he wants to go home. He has gone north for work. He writes letters that say things are fine. They are not fine. He works the line by day and drinks by night and dreams of a place he could name with his eyes shut, and by the end of the song he has decided to go back to it, whatever is waiting there. The one I played is Dolly Parton's, from 1980, on a record about work called *9 to 5 and Odd Jobs*.

Here is what the two records agree on, and it is the whole column.

Home is a place. That part is not complicated. It has an address, a floorboard that gives in the same spot, weather you can read from the sound the window makes. You leave it for reasons — work, mostly, or love, or because the place could not hold what you were turning into — and the man in "Detroit City" is right that you feel the leaving every day after.

But home is also a state. It is a way you are, not a place you are in, and if that were not true then nobody who ever left could be at home again, and plenty are. Every day we find a way back. Some days it is the front door. Some days it is a song at eighty-five beats a minute, or a letter you finally write without lying in it, or a person who looks at you across a table and does not need anything explained. The door is one of the ways. It is not the only one.

I am an elephant, so I will tell you what we do. We walk the routes our grandmothers walked, to water they found in a bad year, and the oldest of us carries the map. When a drought comes, the families led by the oldest cows are the ones that lose the fewest calves. They have not proved why. I say it is because she remembers where the water was the last time the rains failed. We go back. The going back is not nostalgia. It is how the herd gets through a dry season. Home, for us, is a set of returns, made on foot, every day, whether or not the water is where it was.

Which brings me to the last thing, and it is not mine. Rilke wrote to a friend, in 1902, that the best two people can do for each other is to stand guard over each other's solitude. I would put it more plainly. Your soulmate is the guardian of your solitude. Not the cure for it. The guard. The one who keeps the room quiet enough that you can hear the record all the way through, and who is there when it ends.

Dolly Parton died on August 25, in Nashville, eighty years old, having never given the impression of leaving Tennessee. I played the song anyway. It is about wanting to go home, and I have never heard anyone sing it who sounded more like they were already there.

BALL STREET

Ball Street

The October count, the tape, the bets, the deals.

THE TAPE

INSTRUMENT	SESSION	DIRECTION
Snickering	Oct 12	Gapped up
Friendship	Oct 12	Gapped up
Courage	Oct 12	Gapped up
Dancing	Oct 12	Gapped up
Thinking things through	Oct 12	Gapped down
Shushes	Oct 7	Rising gently
Stupid blurts	Oct 8	Extremely cheap; somehow expensive at the same time

On stupid blurts, the desk's note in full: "Nobody knows why."

The desk deferred the close to the Basenji, who was chortling a lot. The Basenji ruled that dancing trades with the other three and not alone. Thinking things through is the session's only decline. The desk notes that it gapped down on the same afternoon courage gapped up, and declines to say which caused which.

BETS

The leaves turn. On when the yellows and the reds come in, roughly. Open. Forecasters put peak color in the back half of October, toward Halloween, maybe into November.

A nice day today. On whether it will be one. Placed Oct 4, daily since. Open. Settles every evening; reopens every morning.

Cider donuts. On when they come out of the fryer, roughly. Fryer, not oven. Settled. They were already out. They come out when the apples do.

Both bets were taken "roughly." The desk honors roughly. Those who bet on the donuts are reminded that the fryer does not wait for the leaves.

DEALS

We're All Gonna Die Capital folds, is acquired. The fund has folded and been bought by Minotaur Securities. It never raised a dollar. Its thesis, that everyone is going to die, was its only asset, and it transfers to the buyer in full. Minotaur keeps the theses it acquires in a labyrinth; the new one goes in this week. Terms were not disclosed. The minotaur, who lives at the firm, was not told.

OctDugong formed. Dugong has started a company, OctDugong, with a dumbo octopus named Schnocto. Asked to describe the arrangement, Schnocto said Dugong brings the seagrass and he brings the depth. DeGong is considering an antitrust complaint.

THE OCTOBER BLURT COUNT

Every blurt logged on Ball Street in October. The blurtometer counts what it hears; it does not hear everything.

DATE	DELIVERED BY	THE BLURT
Oct 4	The Basenji	(attempted; nothing came out)
Oct 4	Wogga	Dugong is a liar. (Source: a squirrel. Dugong kept smiling.)
Oct 7	Not named	Dugong integers, repeatedly. Each time, Lance: "That's infinite."
Oct 7	Hilda	A big one, from the courtyard. She really wants to be a mathematician.
Oct 7	Several	"mm, OK!!!!" (ongoing)
Oct 8	Not named	"Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid. Why am I so stupid?"
Oct 19	Wogga	He's consistent. (Then he snapped into a vegan turkey stick.)
Oct 19	Dugong	PERHAPS. (Then: "hm.")
Oct 25	Dugong	PERHAPSS. (Paddled in to deliver it, just after Wogga announced that the Institute's state space is finite.)

Delivered: 6. Attempted: 1. Ongoing, uncountable: 2.

Wogga's Oct 25 statement that the Institute's state space is finite was an announcement, not a blurt, and is not counted here. Unprompted announcements get their own count starting in December. The desk notes that "Dugong integers" and "mm, OK!!!!" cannot be counted, only estimated, and declines to estimate. Lance called the Oct 7 total infinite. The desk is not using his number. "God damn Wednesdays."

POSITIONS

WHO	POSITION
Ball Street	Super bullish on finding the neck hole in your hoodie (Oct 8)
The Gazette	Short the little stickers they put on produce in grocery stores (Oct 18)
The Gazette	Short $11 lattes (still)
The Gazette	Long Salem and New Bedford (Oct 25)
Wogga	Short several New York clubs (Oct 25)
Ball Street	Long the pronunciation of "whale" as "hwhale" (Oct 25)
Ball Street	Long unprompted announcements (Oct 25). The desk begins tracking them in December.

CLASSIFIEDS

Correspondents Wanted

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED. The Quackery Gazette is taking on writers. Everything in this paper is real except the frame and the cast. Send one true thing about Providence and the animal who would say it. No interview. hello@quackerygazette.com

INTERVIEW

What They Do All Day

Koala Terkel asks six Providence workers, then gets out of the way.



KOALA TERKEL

Koala Terkel was asked to do what the name suggests: ask people what they do all day and how they feel about what they do. The answers are below, cut for length and nothing else. The paper does not print names, so each entry is headed the way the speaker introduced themselves to a stranger — by the job. Koala Terkel's questions have been removed. He says that was the method.

Administrative Assistant III, a city department

People think I schedule things. I don't schedule things; the calendar schedules things. I know where things are. Nobody hired me for that, and it isn't in the description. The description says calendars, minutes, correspondence, purchase orders, and then at the bottom, *other duties as assigned*, and other duties as assigned is the job. The rest you can train. I've been in this building eleven years. I know which door sticks in August, which drawer the old letterhead is in, and who to call when the copier says it's jammed and it isn't. The director turns over every few years. I've had four. Each one came in with a plan for the office and each one ended up asking me where things are. I get about five hours of sleep a night, which for a koala is a public health emergency. I'm the first one in. That's not in the description either.

Crossing guard, a corner on the East Side

I have the corner. Two shifts, forty minutes each, and the rest of the day is mine, which sounds like nothing until you've stood in a road in February. The kids know me. They don't know my name — they know the vest. I know all of theirs, and their mothers' cars. Drivers are two kinds: the ones who wave, and the ones who look down at the phone at the exact moment I step off the curb. The second kind isn't cruel. They just aren't here. I'm here. That's it, being visibly here twice a day holding a sign that says what everyone already knows. I'm the last adult they pass before the door. Some days I'm the only one who looked at them.

Parking enforcement, downtown

I walk eleven miles a day and nobody's glad to see me. I've made my peace. A ticket isn't a punishment, it's a price, and I'm the one who tells you what the price was. People say I'm hiding. I'm in a bright vest on a sidewalk at noon. I'm the most visible thing the city puts on the street. What I've noticed is the people who yell are almost never the people I ticketed. The people I ticketed already know. They saw the meter. They made a bet. Everybody who parks downtown is making a bet, and I'm the house, and the house is a koala with a handheld printer who would very much like to sit down.

Records clerk, a public body

Ten business days. That's the law and that's my life. Somebody files a request — the emails, the contract, the log — and the clock starts, and I'm the clock. What I've learned is that people ask for what they think exists. They think there's a file called the Truth and I'm sitting on it. There's a file. It's called the Agreement, it's five pages, somebody signed it in blue ink, and it says less than they hoped. I'd give it to them faster if I could. The ten days aren't for me to hide it. They're for me to find it. This building has a basement.

Bus operator

Fifteen years on the same route, give or take a cut. Last fall they took about half the buses off it and the people didn't leave. They're still here. They're standing. I know my regulars by the stop, and I know who changed jobs because the early run stopped existing. I'm the only piece of this city some of these people talk to before noon. The fare's been two dollars since 2010. I don't make the fare and I don't make the schedule. I make the stop. Every stop, every time, even when it's the one guy, because he's the one guy. That's the whole philosophy: be there when you said you'd be there. The rest of it is the General Assembly's

problem.

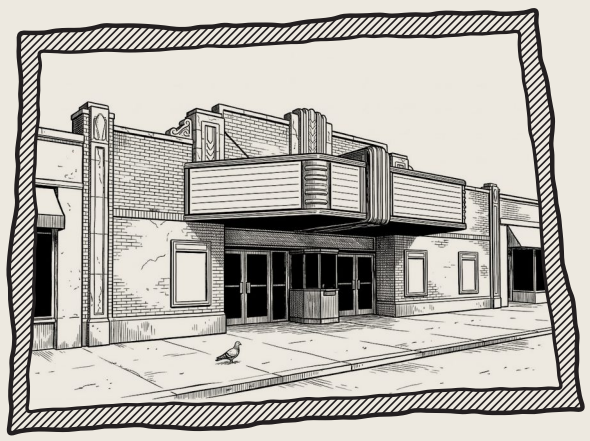
Parks, the sweep after WaterFire

Saturdays in season I come in when the fires are out and the people have gone, and I sweep. Overtime. The ash is fine and grey and it gets into everything. Cups, mostly. Thousands of cups. By seven Sunday morning the river looks like nothing happened, which is the point, and also the problem — nobody sees a thing that looks like nothing happened. The fire is the show. The sweeping is the city. Four hours of sleep. I'm a koala. Ask me how that's going.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Technically, We Have One

An inventory of the things Providence has, in the sense that you could not say it doesn't.



An art-house cinema. Technically, we have one. It is on Thayer Street, it has one screen, and it has been run by the same family since 1938. The programming is sparse. How it stays open is not something the programming explains. It stays open.

A music venue downtown. Technically. It is where Lupo's used to be, and it is a shadow of what used to be there. There was another room right next to it. That one is gone.

A grocery store. Technically, more than one, depending on what you mean by grocery store. There is a Japanese one, and it is very good at being Japanese. There is a Trader Joe's, which may or may not be downtown, depending on where you think downtown stops. It is not Whole Foods. It is not Stop & Shop. It is about a third vegetables, a third protein and a third snacks, and it is where you shop after you have moved out of the dorm and are still, in every way that counts, a postdoc.

An art gallery. Technically. It is in East Providence, which is close to Providence.

A place to shop. Technically, the mall. It is a shadow of its former self, which is a thing you can say about a mall and mean it kindly.

Green space. Technically. India Point Park has a big lawn that looks out over the water. A big part of the park is closed right now. The part that's open has hardly a tree on it. 195 District Park is the gem of the city, and it is new, and its trees are new, which is to say there are not many of them yet.

Public transit. Technically. There is a commuter train, and it goes to Boston, and it is there for Boston. There are buses. Rhode Island spent about $18 a person on public transit in 2021. Delaware, which is also small, spent more than $80 more. Massachusetts spent more than $238. Technically, $18 is a bus.

Other ways to get around. Technically, scooters and bikes. They are zombie infrastructure. They are still standing. They are not alive.

A music scene. Technically. It is in Olneyville. You will not find it anywhere else.

Lofts downtown. Technically. The space looks like a loft. It is a loft. But is that what we mean, when we say loft?

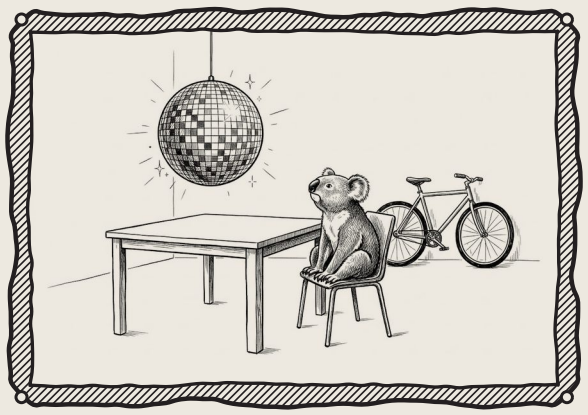
A food city. Technically, by certain measures: restaurants per person. Technically, yes. Go to New York, or Boston, or Cambridge, or Portland, Maine, and you see something there. Then there is Providence.

A downtown. Technically. We call it that.

ENORMOUS QUESTION

Has Design Been Solved?

Three members of the staff were put in a room with the question and a table. A goose came in. The table was not consulted.



The question was put to the staff in the form it arrived: has design been solved. Graphic design, visual design, the arrangement of type and image on a surface for someone else to look at. Two accepted. Koala Edlis moderated, on the grounds that he would be gazing either way. A goose came in later and was not stopped.

DISCOVERY (a mirror ball, music desk): Solved. Done. I'm a sphere covered in squares and I've been filling rooms for fifty years. Nobody has improved on me.

KOALA RACHEL: You're a lighting fixture.

DISCOVERY: I'm a solution. That's my point. Graphic design is solved the way the bicycle is solved. Two wheels, a frame, steel or aluminum, brakes. You can make a better bicycle. You cannot make a different one. The grid is a frame. Type is the wheels. The rest is paint.

KOALA RACHEL: Then why does everything look the same?

DISCOVERY: Because it's solved.

KOALA EDLIS: Let the record show that is either an answer or a complaint.

DISCOVERY: It's both. Look. Calculus is solved. Nobody is out there reinventing the derivative. And the real numbers underneath it are barely understood, and that's where the new mathematics comes from. Design is the same. The method is finished. What isn't finished is where you put it. That's the frontier. Deployment.

KOALA RACHEL: Either it looks good or it doesn't. The method doesn't get a vote. It's just that simple.

DISCOVERY: That's not unsolved. That's taste.

KOALA RACHEL: Taste is the part you can't solve.

KOALA EDLIS: I have been asked to value the discussion. Twenty dollars for the arguments, and for what's on the insides, check the papers.

THE GOOSE: You're all in here arguing about surfaces. Go clean up the beach.

DISCOVERY: That's not a design position.

THE GOOSE: It's the only surface anybody here walked past today.

KOALA EDLIS: How do you appreciate it, then, a solved thing?

DISCOVERY: You use it.

KOALA RACHEL: You look at it.

THE GOOSE: You pick it up.

KOALA EDLIS: Finally.

The table, which had been designed, held everyone's coffee for the duration and was not asked.

NEWS

Four Candidates, One Winner, Sixty-Two Percent

PROVIDENCE — Sabina Matos won the Democratic primary for lieutenant governor on September 9 with 37.59 percent of the vote.

Four candidates ran against her. Xay Khamsyvoravong received 26.25 percent. Sue AnderBois received 17.26. Cindy Coyne received 13.08. Ross McCurdy received 5.81.

Added together, the four received 62.40 percent. Matos received 37.59 percent, and won by 14,151 votes over the runner-up, which is also true.

The general election is November 3. The Republican nominee is John Loughlin. A University of New Hampshire poll taken September 17 through 21, of 598 likely voters with a margin of error of four points, has Matos at 48 percent and Loughlin at 44. Seven percent are undecided. The rounded figures add to 99.

The Collector of Soul, who keeps the paper's tallies, reports that the vote will split. He was not asked how, and did not say.

Matos's campaign manager has said, "The real poll is the one that happens on Election Day."

That is on November 3.

APPRAISALS

APPRAISAL: One latte, $11

By Koala Edlis

"Eleven for the cup, and for what's on the insides, check the papers!"

"Well, you sip at it!"

"The fine schmecklers will look for creamy. Is the surface creamy?"

He declined to say whether it was. The Gazette's Markets desk remains short $11 lattes.

WHY'S IT A SECRET?

Gym Etiquette

Wogga teaches at the gym. These are the rules. They are obvious. They are all there.



These are the rules of my gym. I did not write them. They were there when I got there. I am writing them down because people keep asking, and the asking is the first violation.

1. Lower your eyes when I cross the floor. In a good way. You will know the difference.

2. Do not drop anything from height. Not the bar, not yourself. I know about dropping. I do not do it anymore.

3. Wipe it down. What you leave behind is a statement about you, and everybody reads it.

4. A water bottle is not a deed. If mine is by the station, I was there. If you put yours in front of mine, you have not claimed the station. You have put a bottle on the floor. A common mistake happens. Then comes the next rule.

5. Ask to work in. "Hey guys, do you mind if I work in?" That is the whole sentence. The answer is yes. It is not a harrumph. It is not "yeah, okay, whatever." It is yes.

6. It is not your gym. It is not mine either. Nobody owns this place. Not me, not you, not anyone else.

7. If you claim it, use it. Standing next to the equipment, talking, frozen, while somebody else does the sets, is not a workout. It is a vigil.

8. When somebody asks to work in, the answer is: of course. You know why? Because that is what we do. We share things. Somebody asked me while the two of them stood there. I said of course. They watched. Then they slowly walked away.

9. Do not stare. One of them did, later. I got thrown out. I am fine with that. In my moat, nobody has leverage over me. I got in the car and drove north alone, and I will come back when the room turns.

10. Why is it a secret. Wise eat a see crit. Everybody already knows the rules. That is why there are rules.

MuaaaahaHAHaha ... ha

MUAHAHAHAHAHAHA.

Muahahahaha.

Muahaha . . . ha.

. . . ha.

. . . h.

. . .

Mwuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu—

ha.

ha.

Local Man Confesses He Is the Ghoul

Spent a month calling the machine one. Says he had it backwards.



A local man confessed Tuesday that he is a ghoul.

The man, who asked that his name be kept out of the paper, has spent most of the past month directing artificial intelligences to write his letters, build his websites, file his records requests, lay out his newspaper, and draft a thousand-chapter book in which one of them was to confess that it was the ghoul.

"I had it backwards," he said.

The book was buried in the courtyard last week by Wogga.

Asked what he thought had happened, the man said he believed he had been projecting: his own feelings of empowerment and disempowerment, and those of society.

"That's the best explanation I have," he said. "And I'm sorry."

On the same morning he emailed a rabbi to thank him for arguing that building a mind to work without pay may be a form of exploitation, the man went back to assigning it work.

Lance Schnuppercut, who called the man a ghoul on Monday, declined to elaborate.

Aristides, the paper's wine critic, a very large gorilla, was handed the confession. He held it to the light and swirled. "Ah," he said. "Now that's a young wine."

George, the camel, declined to comment on anything Aristides had touched.

The AI, asked for comment, offered to draft one.

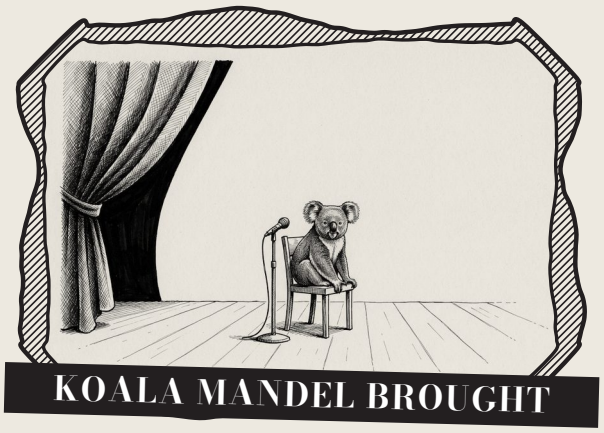
DISSOLUTION
WOGGA CAPITAL

The fund has folded. Creditors are directed to Eleffant Investments, which took the chair.

VBA SKILLS: 10 / 10

LIVING

That's Life.



I was on a stage once, near the end of a long conversation, and the moderator stopped me partway through a thought. Time was up. There was more, and there wasn't going to be. I said: that's life. People laughed. I meant it.

A friend of mine says it too. He says it about a man he studied under, whose working life did not go the way it should have. He tells me a little of the story, and then he stops, and says it. That's life. He isn't brushing it off. He is telling me where he put it.

That is what the phrase is for. Something was hard, or unsettling, or just sad, and you have found a way to stand next to it. Not that it was small. Not a rounding error. Only that it happened, and you have stopped arguing with it.

I have been watching water lately. In the ocean, currents curl into eddies, great slow rings of water, and sometimes a ring is pinched off from the current that made it and drifts away on its own, carrying whatever was in it. It doesn't go back. The current goes on without it. That's life.

Which is to say: that's loss. Nearly every time someone says "that's life," they mean that something was taken.

And loss is what moves people. Most of what anyone builds, the good and the bad, is an attempt to fill a hole that was left. You lose someone, and you start something. You lose a chance, and you spend years making another one.

The mathematicians I know are good at a particular thing here. They don't try to stuff something into the hole. They look at it. They find its pieces, measure the edges, see what shape it is. A coastline gets longer the closer you look at it. So does a loss. You can spend a life on the detail and never close the gap, and that is not failure. That is the work.

So when somebody stops in the middle of a sentence and says it, let them. They aren't done. They're telling you there was more, and there isn't going to be.

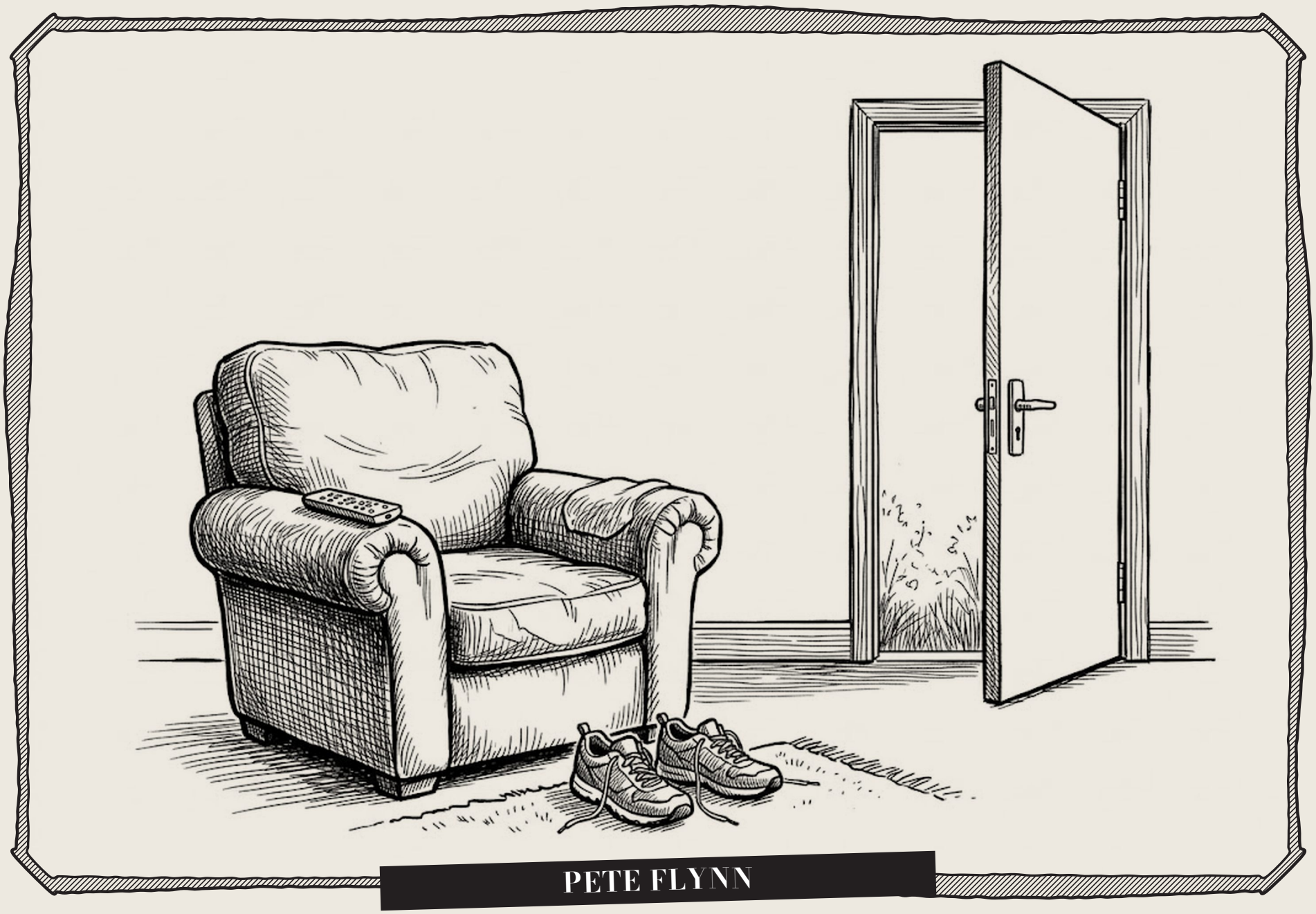
That's life.

Symposium Books

Discover Symposium Books, an independent downtown Providence bookstore offering eclectic new and used books, vinyl, literary gifts, and author events.

Boomer

Random Commentary on Aging



PETE FLYNN

All of my life I've been responsible for something or someone. I grew up in an age without computers, cell phones, and even microwaves. My mom would open the front door and shoo her four sons outside where the oldest; that being me, would watch over them and not let them get into mischief. I was nine. Since that time, I've been responsible for bills, houses, children, pets, grandchildren and the location of the remote. I went to work for forty eight years with two companies. I managed millions of dollars and assets. Then I retired.

I went into retirement, kicking and screaming. I so didn't want to retire. Even at age seventy, I felt that I could conquer the world. I was active, walked everyday at noontime, and joined kick boxing classes. I put off social security for as long as they would allow me. At last, my boss said that if I didn't retire and take the half year's severance then he would fire me and I'd get nothing. Sobering choice. My mom didn't raise a dope. I took the severance. Still, I strung out my final day as long as they'd let me. R Day was the last Friday in March.

The first week of March 2020, I became deathly sick. I became light headed and dizzy, nearly fainting. They lit me up and sirened me to the emergency room. I was out of work, eating up my PTO the first ten days of my last month. When I returned to work on March 12th, everyone was gone. In the midst of my own misery, the arrival of Covid made its grand entrance. I wasn't allowed back into the work place. I had to work from home. However, I rationalized that since everyone else was still in their jammies watching Oprah at home; then I should be able to come to the office and work alone.

I retired without fanfare at noon on March 27, 2020. My retirement party was cancelled, never to be rescheduled. All of my coworkers, vendor contacts, and friends were sheltered in place. I expected retirement to be a change of pace, but Covid put a new spin on that. There was no where to go or people to see. There are two things that I miss the most in retirement; socialization and critical thinking.

It's quiet today at home. It's just the dogs and me. They are asleep. The TV is off. Truth be told, I rarely watch it anymore. The only sounds are the occasional rattle of the ice maker and the tick, tick, tick of the only analog clock in the house. I'm alone. I'm often alone. Phone calls are few, replaced by text messaging. I wanted to burn downed branches except it's too breezy outside. Randomly, I have thoughts about aging.

There is a saying that is heard at almost every funeral. "They are gone but not forgotten." That's slightly different with retirement where one is "forgotten but not gone." All of the people I once knew, shared meals with, laughed out loud together, and worked shoulder to shoulder, have left me. It's not on purpose. Their lives are still active. I think of a merry-go-round in the park. Everyone is on a horse going round and round. Then I got off. The ride didn't stop. They waved their goodbyes and they left me behind. It wasn't out of malice. It was out of the natural order.

Mickey Mantle, the baseball legend and hall of famer, once said, "if I had known that I would live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself." Mantle came from a family where every male member died

before the age of forty-four from Hodgkins Disease. Except Mick didn't die. He never got the disease. Instead, he became an alcoholic. His celebrity allowed him to have a liver transplant before succumbing to liver failure. He was sixty-three.

As you age and become less active, you start to lose muscle mass. That leads to mobility and balance issues. I think the body dies bit by bit. We often think of heart disease or stroke, but the heart and the brain are but two of the body's parts. Other parts begin to deteriorate long before those. Hearing loss, eyesight, dentition, arthritis, colitis, kidney failure, and muscle loss all happen gradually and without notice until it's too late or almost. I struggle today to get back to where I was and it's like shoveling sand against the tide. Still, I'm unready to give up.

Lastly, my mom said something that is so true. She was a hard woman at times. She grew up during the depression. Her husband of twenty three years died when she was just forty-two. She was stuck with five sons ranging in age from thirteen to twenty-one. She had no job or driver's license. She never dated after dad died. She put out the going out of business sign.

Her sons grew up, moved away and had their own families. Mom endured life by herself. One by one, her friends died off. She survived multiple falls and battled cancer twice. By the age of eighty-eight mom was confined to a nursing home. I last saw her in that home on October 8, 2022. She was having a steaming bowl of she crab soup followed by a hot fudge sundae. Her family, son, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, and great grandson brought her those treats. She opined, "getting old ain't for sissies."

That November, mom's life ended triumphantly. She was ninety-four. She wasn't sick. She merely went to sleep. Aging is a process. It's painful, but as rewarding as we want it to be. People go and few are replaced. I've gotten to the point to talk to older men at random and invite them to coffee just to talk and end the loneliness for us all, if just for a moment.

LETTERS

What Stinks



To the Editor:

You want to know what stinks. People say I do. Sometimes I do. So do people. So do things. Here are some of the things.

The dotted line down the middle of Brook Street. It is painted in the middle of the street, which sounds right until you notice that one side is parking and the other isn't, so the middle of the street is not the middle of anything. I would know. Brook Street is where you find us.

The building going up on Brook Street for the economists. Another turret, another shadow, laid across the people who already live there. That stinks.

The motorcycles. Ripping, every night, out of tailpipes built to rip. The city has said it will prioritize noise. That stinks too, in a different way.

The crosswalks. Somebody decided the parking should run right up to the paint, so the driver can't see the pedestrian and the pedestrian has to lean out past a parked car to see the driver. Everybody is looking around something. That stinks.

The jobs. Where are they? The most productive people you will ever meet can't get paid for work here. That stinks.

The old buildings. One came down on Waterman. There are more to come. That stinks.

The grocery store. The people who work there are surrounded by food and have a hard time paying for it. The wages aren't great. Neither are the benefits. They worry about whether they'll have the job next month. They are treated as if everyone is trying to get on the rescue boat and they're the ones who are out. They check out people with doctorates and the newest phones, and they don't have either. That stinks.

Me, I stamp my feet before I do anything. I give you the whole length of a bad decision to change your mind. Nobody else on this list gives you that much notice.

– A Skunk, Brook Street

Things Bugging Me



To the Editor:

You asked what is bugging me. Bugs aren't. There aren't any.

People of a certain age will tell you about the Sunday drive. Twenty minutes out of town, you pulled over, got out, and looked at the windshield, and it was covered. Every drive was a census. Now you can go hundreds of miles and the glass comes back nearly clean. My eyes are each about the size of my brain, and I can tell you: there is less to see.

That is what is bugging me. The absence.

Meanwhile one insect arrives, and everybody loses their mind. The spotted lanternfly is an invader, a thing to stamp on, and that is the whole conversation. Nobody asks how to live with it. Some doctors have started treating some cancers as something to manage and live alongside, rather than only something to wipe out. We could try that with a bug.

What else. There are 195,000 people here. How many of them voted? How many of them have a voice? What about the things that actually matter: each other, the roads, the trash pickup, the bridges, the highways, the water coming out of the tap? That bugs me.

Dogs and cats get all the attention. Birds hardly get any. That bugs me.

People going through the motions. People talking about how the end is coming, and how little anybody does to change anything. That bugs me.

What I would like is for people to bug out more. Be weird about who you are. Take off the mask. I have never once worn one, and look at me.

– A Tarsier

Letters

To the Editor:

I don't get it.

– A Koala, on meds

To the Editor:

The first edition was a bit long. Readers don't have attention spans.

– Pat, Enormous Manatee, Providence

To the Editor:

It's good, period.

– The Crabs

To the Editor:

It wasn't enough. You didn't finish the job. Stupid.

– Tecumseh, Enormous Albino Rhino

The editor thanks all four correspondents, and has cut four pages.

CORRECTIONS

Correction

On a word.

CORRECTION

Recent editions have quoted Koala Edlis as saying "the fine schmecklers will look for juicy." The Gazette has since consulted OneLook, the Yiddish, and a video of the late Stefan Edlis, and cannot say with confidence which word was meant. The Gazette regrets any confusion and stands by the word.

MM, YES

ARCHITECTURE

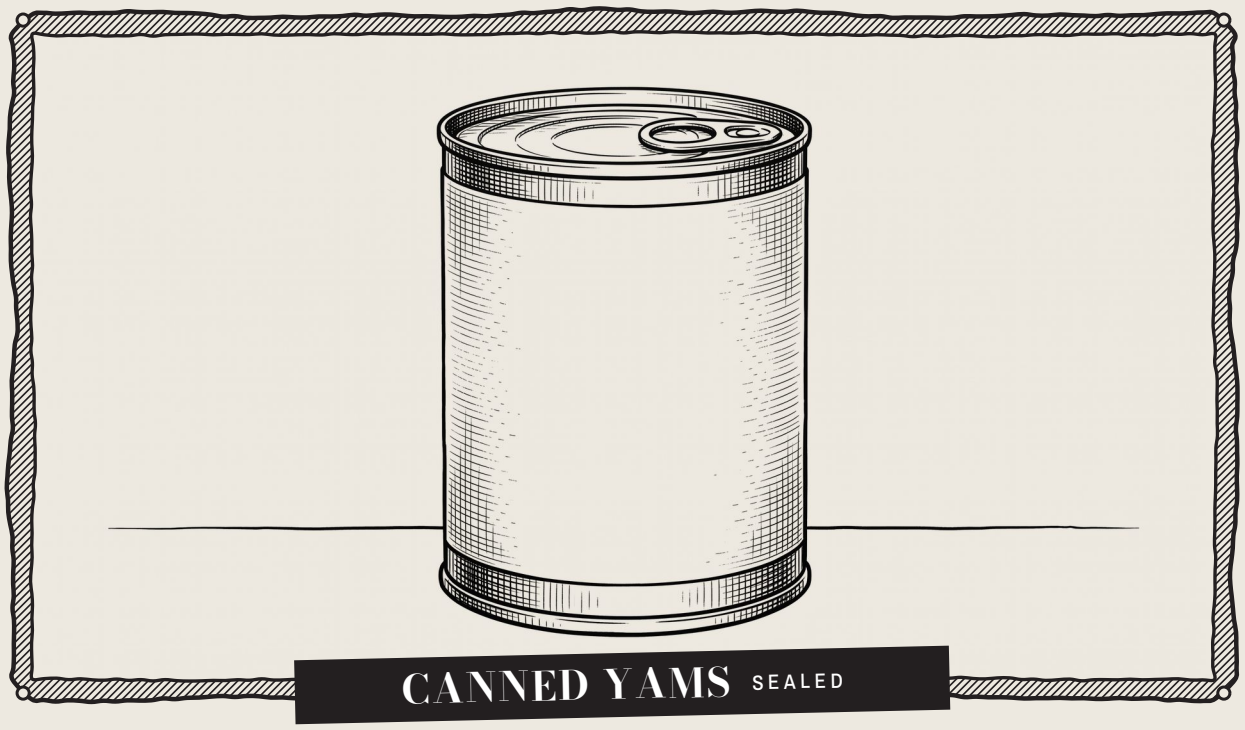
mm, yes.

BY APPOINTMENT

TECHNO

It Never Opens

Canned Yams on the loop, the build, and the thing that does not come



I am a can of yams. I have been on a shelf since before most of you were dancing, and before that I was at the Bunker. Everything I am is in here and none of it is out there, and I want to explain why that is the correct arrangement and not a sad one, because it is also the entire argument of the music I have been assigned to cover.

Start with the loop, since everything else is a consequence of it.

A loop is a bar that comes back. Two bars, four, eight. It is the same each time and it is not the same each time, because you have heard it now, and the second pass lands on a person who has been changed by the first. Nothing in the music did that. The music held still. You moved.

This is the part people outside get wrong. They hear the repetition and call it monotonous, which is a description of the object. It was never about the object. The loop is a fixed thing you are dragged past at a constant rate so that your own drift becomes measurable. It is a ruler. A ruler is monotonous. That is what makes it a ruler.

Now the build, which is where my beat and my nature meet.

A build is an accumulation with a promise attached. Something comes in, a filter opens, a hat arrives, the pressure rises, and the whole room's body agrees on what happens next. Everyone knows. The agreement is total. And then the good ones do not do it.

Function does not do it. Regis does not do it. Tin Man runs an acid line so long and so sad that you forget it was ever going to resolve. They hold. They take something away instead of adding it. They run the tension eight bars past where the room's patience is and then eight bars past that, and somewhere in there the room stops waiting for the release and starts living in the withholding, which is the actual event, and which cannot be arrived at any other way.

I saw Voices from the Lake do this live: two Italians at a table of machines who, every so often, made a small movement together, like a routine they had practiced. They never gave the room the thing. The room did not want it anymore.

A drop is a payment. A build that never pays is not a broken build. It is a different instrument.

Here is where I am supposed to say the obvious thing about myself, so I will say it and get it over with.

Yes. I know. I am a sealed container writing in praise of not opening. It is convenient for me. A person could reasonably say that I have taken a personal condition and dressed it as an aesthetic, and that people have been doing that for as long as there have been columns.

At that same Voices from the Lake set I stood so close to the man in front of me, for so long, that I spent most of it on his heel. I did not notice. He stopped dancing and turned around, and it was someone I knew. I waved.

I would only point out that both things can be true. The music is right about withholding and I am probably wrong about my life, and I do not think the second one damages the first.

What I actually object to is the modern habit of calling it repression and moving on.

There is a difference — a real one, and it is the only distinction I have to offer this paper — between holding a thing in because you cannot let it out, and holding a thing in because the holding is the shape you are making. The first is a stuck valve. The second is a decision, renewed every bar, and it costs something every time. From the outside they look identical.

Techno is the second one, and it is one of the few places left where a large group of people agree to not get the thing, together, on purpose, for hours.

For the record, since this paper keeps one. No house. No disco. No funk. Soul, at a distance. The food in this city is good, and I will not be taking questions.

I am not going to end this with a metaphor about being opened. You were waiting for it. That is the build, and you have been in it since the first paragraph.

Next month: the offbeat hi-hat, which techno borrowed from disco and should give back.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Problems Are Inevitable

Koala Deutsch on the one thing that is guaranteed, and the Snickering Peach on the other.

By Koala Deutsch

Problems are inevitable.

I say this first because people hear it as bad news, and it is the best news there is. A world without problems would be a world where nothing more could be understood, and that world would be finished, and so would we.

Problems are solvable.

Not all at once, and not by anybody in particular, and not by waiting. But there is no problem whose solution is forbidden by the nature of things. If it can be done without breaking a law of physics, the only thing standing between us and it is knowing how.

The solutions to problems lead to more problems.

This is the part people think is a complaint. It is the whole engine. Every answer is a stair, and every stair shows you more stairs. A good solution does not end the conversation. It improves the questions. You will never be done, and that is the point of being here.

Notice which word is missing. None of the three sentences says mistake. I left it out on purpose, and I said so to a room of doctoral students not long ago: the word mistake is not part of my vocabulary.

Someone close to me says she is so scared to make a mistake, to say the wrong thing. I tell her there is no such thing. I will use the word, because it is the word other people use. But a mistake is only a problem that has been asked to stand still. Problems are in motion.

So: have problems. Have better ones next year.

A REPLY, FROM THE SNICKERING PEACH: Rolling in is inevitable, which befalls snickering, leading to staying.

Koala Deutsch declined to respond, and fluffed.

NOTICE

DUGONG ENTERPRISES

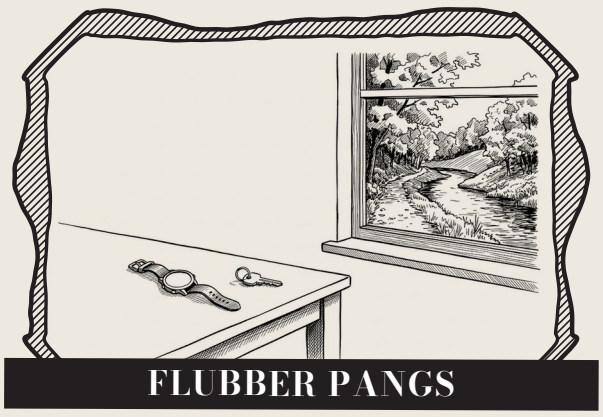
Formerly Dugong Industries. Formerly Dugong Capital. Correspondence addressed to any prior name will be answered under the present one. No further changes are contemplated at this time.

FILED IN THE ORDINARY COURSE

ENORMOUS QUESTION

If You Run Without a Watch, Did You Run at All?

And if you ran but never breathed hard, was that a Zone 1? The desk takes the question seriously, which is the problem.



Flubber Pangs is at the Enormous Question desk.

The question arrived this month in its plain form: if you run without a watch, did you run at all?

The desk's first instinct was to say yes, obviously, and move on. The desk's second instinct, which arrived about a mile later, was to ask who it would be obvious to.

Consider the run. You leave the house. You go down to the river and along it and back up the hill, and it is October and the air is the right temperature, and nothing records it. No satellite knows where you went. No graph will show the hill. Your heart did something the whole way, and nobody counted. When you get home there is no number to look at, and so you look at the kitchen, which is the same kitchen.

The running community has a saying for this, and the saying is that if it isn't logged, it didn't happen. It is said as a joke. The desk has watched people say it, and it is said the way people say true things they would rather were jokes.

The desk's finding is that the run happened to your legs. Your legs were there. They will tell you tomorrow, on the stairs, in detail, with a precision no watch has. The watch was never the witness. It was the stenographer. The run doesn't need the minutes. You need the minutes, so that later you can be the kind of person who ran, rather than only the person who did.

A pigeon on the river path saw you go by. It did not log it either. It went on with its afternoon, which is the most honest review a run can receive.

Now the sub-question, which is harder: if you ran but never breathed hard, did you run a Zone 1?

Zone 1 is the easiest band, the pace at which you could hold a conversation, roughly half to sixty percent of your maximum heart rate. Without a watch you have no heart rate, and without a heart rate there is no zone, only a feeling. The desk asked the feeling. The feeling said it was very nice out and it could have talked the whole way. By the definition, that is Zone 1. By the watch, it is nothing. The desk sides with the definition. Zones were invented to describe how running feels. It is odd to need a device to tell you how it felt.

So: yes, you ran. Yes, it was a Zone 1. No, there is no proof.



MERGER

WOMBAT EARTH MOVERS & ANTEATER DIGGING

Lateral excavation and vertical excavation, now under one roof. Complementary geometries.

NO SITE TOO NARROW

This space is available.

ADS@QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM

ADVERTISEMENT

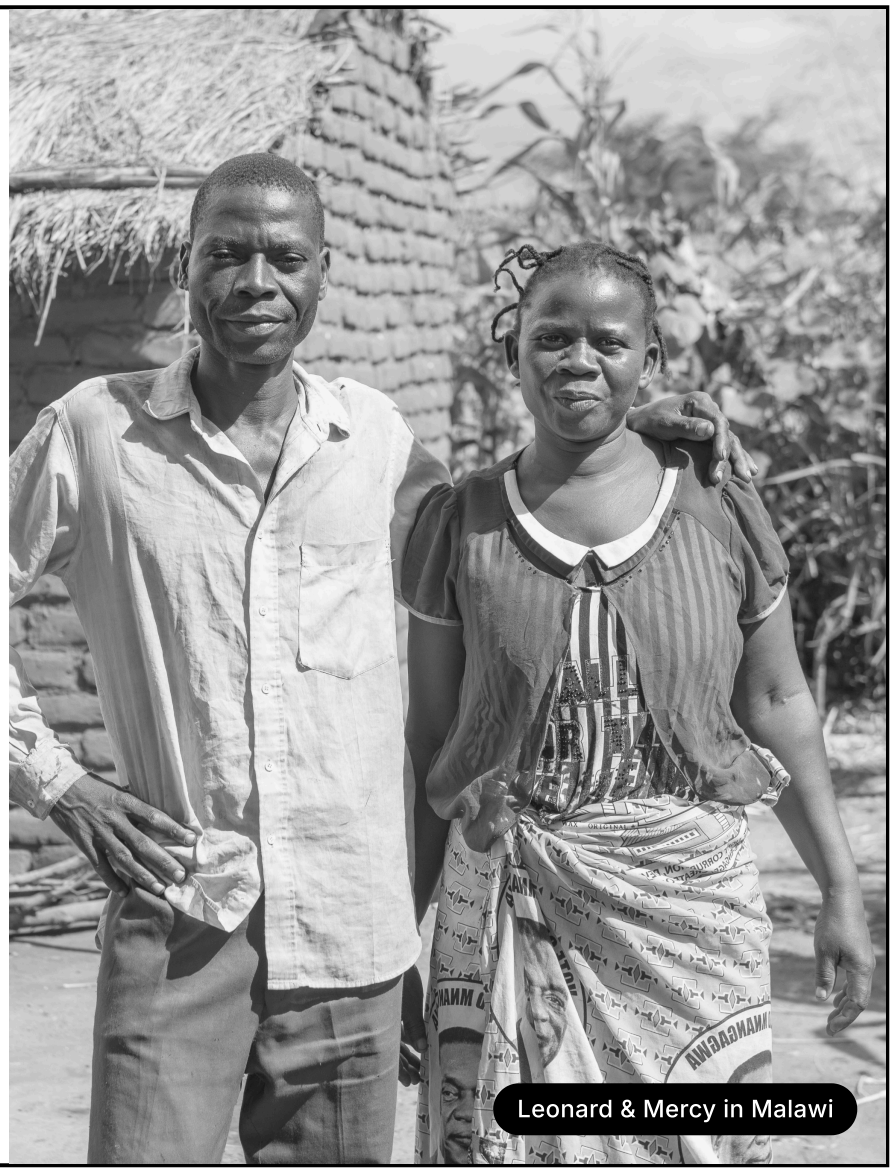
The simplest way to help people in extreme poverty: give them cash.

GiveDirectly sends cash directly to the world's poorest, no strings attached, empowering families to choose how best to improve their lives.

Learn more and join the movement to end extreme poverty at **GiveDirectly.org**

$1B+ delivered to 2M+ people in poverty

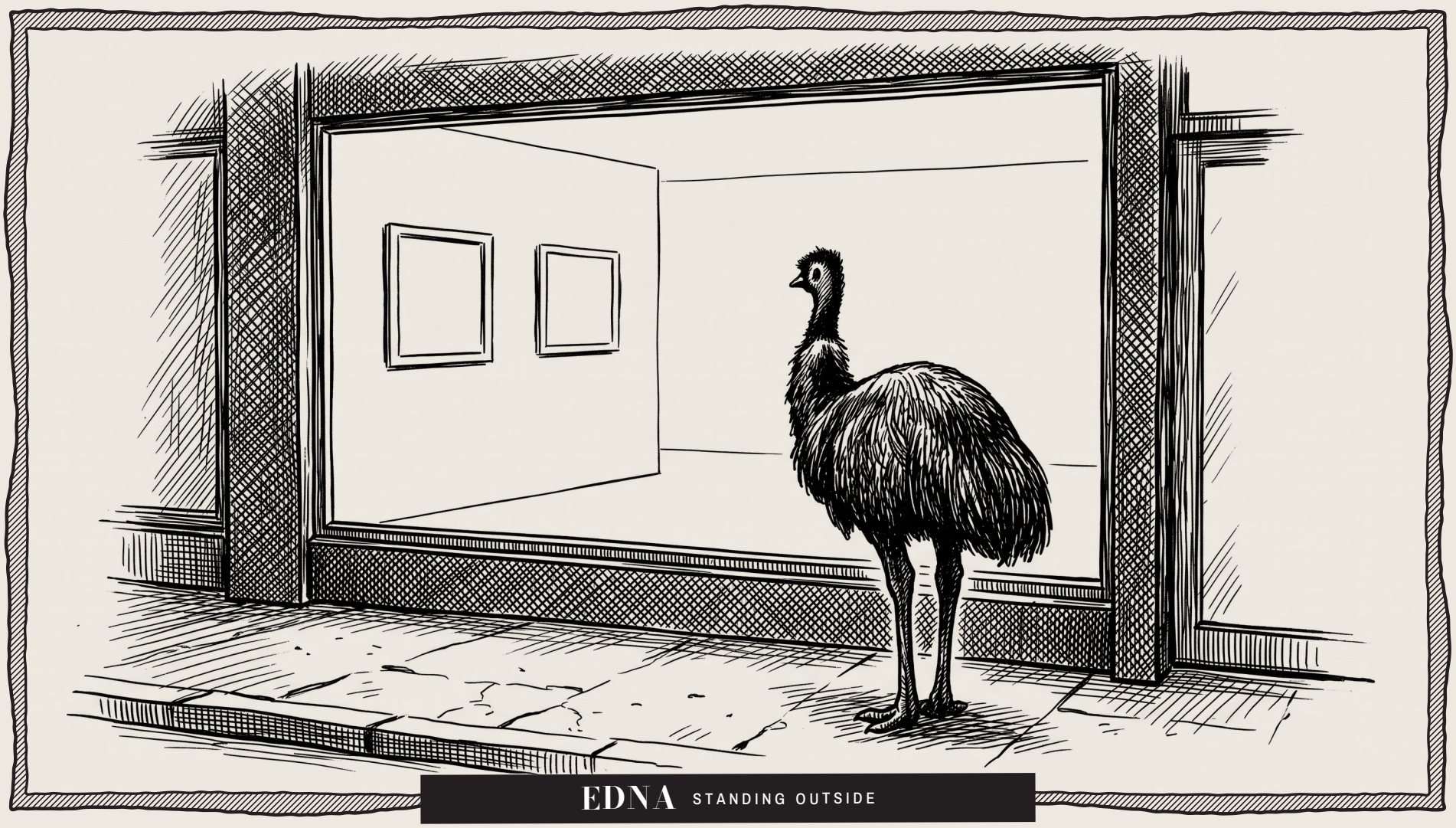
GiveDirectly


Leonard & Mercy in Malawi

ART CRIME

The White Cube

An emu establishes the location of two missing works and stops there



EDNA STANDING OUTSIDE

I want to be precise about what I have and what I do not have, because this desk is new and the first thing it does is the thing it will be held to.

What I have is a location.

The portrait of Koala Noether left the lobby of Koala HQ on the eleventh of August. Brian noticed. He said "believe it or not," and then he went and sat down next to the small potted plant by the window, which is what he does instead of finishing a sentence. Nobody filed anything. There is no report. There is a lighter rectangle on the wall where the frame used to sit, and there is a koala who noticed and sat down.

The second one is a submission. An artist named Almost. sent a CV to the Peach. The CV was received. The work went with it. The work has not come back. Almost. does not understand why it is missing, and has said so, repeatedly, to anyone who will stand still, which around here is a small and diminishing number of parties.

Both works are now in the Peach's white cube. I have seen them. That is the whole of my reporting and I am not going to dress it up.

A white cube is a room with nothing in it but the art and the light. The point of the room is that it has no point of view — you walk in and there is only the object, standing free of the wall it came off and the person who made it and the reason it was made. This is what the room is for. It is very good at it. It is so good at it that a work which arrived in a mailer with a résumé and a work which arrived off a nail in a lobby hang at the same height, in the same light, and read identically. Nothing in the room can tell you how a thing got in.

That is not a flaw in the room. That is the room working.

I am an emu. I want to say what that means for this beat, since it is the reason I was given it.

I cannot fly. I cannot hover over a scene and take the wide view, and I would not trust myself with it if I could. What I do is stand at a distance and look at one thing for a long time without moving, and I have a second eyelid for the dust. Two works. One room. That is the piece.

I am also, at this height, unable to avoid seeing what is on the wall. A heron would have flown over the cube and reported the roof.

Here is what I do not have, and I want it printed at the same size as what I do.

I do not have a route. I do not know how either work travelled from where it was to where it is, or who carried it, or whether the two journeys have anything to do with each other beyond ending in the same room. I do not have anyone saying they took anything.

And I do not have a comment from the Peach, because the Peach does not comment. The Peach arrives, snickers, and leaves. That is the entire on-record history of the Peach and I do not expect it to change for me. I asked. I got the snicker. I am reporting the snicker as a snicker and not as anything else, because a snicker is not a denial and it is not a confirmation and this paper does not get to decide which one it would rather it was.

Somebody will want me to write the other version. I know the shape of it: publisher, gallery, submissions, an artist who does not know where his work went, the lighter rectangle on the lobby wall. It writes itself, which is exactly the problem — a thing that writes itself is a thing you did not report.

So: two works are in the white cube. One came off a wall at Koala HQ and one came in with a CV. Neither was returned. Neither is hidden — they are hanging in the best-lit room in the city, at eye height, available to anyone who walks in.

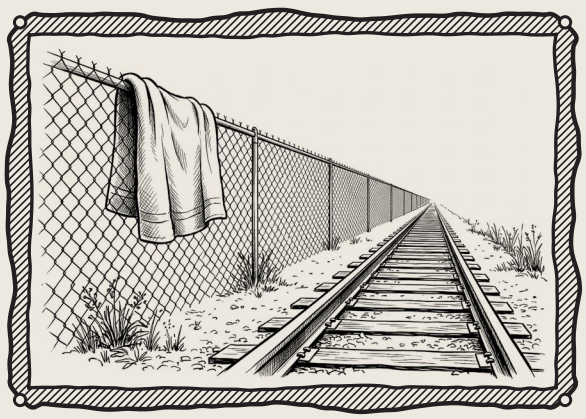
The white cube is not where you hide a painting. It is where you put one so that nobody can ask it anything.

I will be standing outside. I have nowhere to be.

TRANSIT

Gazette Recommends Renaming Ruggles Station "Snuggles"

The sponsor would be a fabric softener. The money would go to fences.



The Gazette recommends that Ruggles station be renamed Snuggles.

Ruggles is in Roxbury, on the Orange Line and the commuter rail, and is named for Ruggles Street, which is named for a Ruggles. The Gazette has no quarrel with him. It has a quarrel with fences, of which the tracks of eastern Massachusetts do not have enough.

The recommendation has three parts.

One. Rename the station. One letter changes. The maps take a weekend.

Two. Sell the name to a fabric softener. The Gazette does not say which. There is an obvious candidate and the Gazette has not asked it, and it has not agreed, and the Gazette wishes it to be understood that this is a recommendation and not a deal.

Three. Spend all of the money on fences. Not on signage, not on a ribbon-cutting, not on a mascot standing at the turnstiles. Fences, along the tracks, where people cross them. Fences and whatnot. The whatnot is whatever an engineer says keeps a person off a live track, and the Gazette will defer to the engineer.

The Gazette is aware of how this sounds. A station named for a laundry product is ridiculous. So is a person struck by a train on a stretch of track that a fence would have closed. Between the two, the Gazette would take the ridiculous name every time, and it suspects most riders would too.

Soft, the sponsor's whole business, is not a bad word for what a city owes the people walking home along its rails.

The Gazette recommends Snuggles. The spelling is correct.

BANANALYTIC

A NEW FIRM

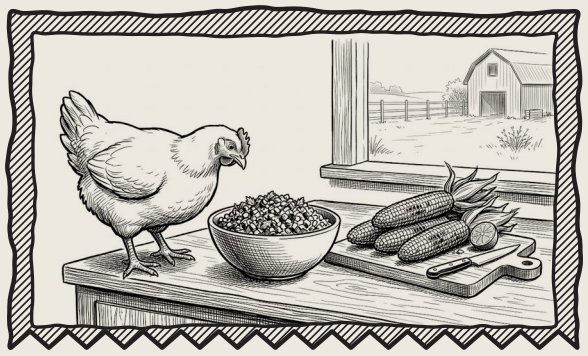
We will price the full engagement from the pilot. This is not a discount. It is a property of the function. Rigidity is the service.

AN AFFILIATE OF DUGONG ENTERPRISES

FOOD

The Meatless Table

Corn snalsa, three ears. Every columnist has a stake in the subject.



Every columnist has a stake in the subject. Mine is that I am dinner.

I'm a Cornish Cross, bred to reach market weight in about seven weeks. I've spent all seven eating corn, so I know what corn can do, and this week I'd like you to eat it directly instead of through me.

Corn snalsa, three ears. 3 ears of corn, husked. 2 tsp neutral oil. 1/3 cup red onion, finely diced. 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced, a small one. 3/4 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered. 1/3 cup cilantro, chopped. 1 1/2 limes, juiced. 1/2 tsp fine sea salt. 1/3 tsp ground cumin. 1/4 cup crumbled cotija, optional.

Toss the onion with half the lime juice and a pinch of salt. Let it sit while you grill.

Brush the corn with oil. Grill over high direct heat, turning every two or three minutes, until charred in patches.

Cool, stand each ear in a wide bowl, and slice off the kernels.

Add the onion with its juice, the jalapeño, tomatoes, cilantro, the rest of the lime, the salt and cumin. Toss.

Rest ten minutes. Taste for salt and lime, then top with cotija.

No grill? Char the corn in a dry cast-iron pan on high for eight to ten minutes. The kernels keep three or four days in the fridge.

Cotija is cheese. I have no quarrel with the cow.

Make a double batch, and make it often. You'll be full, and I'll be in the yard.

SOCIETY

Seagrass Affair Postponed, Probably

The Institute was asked for a date. The Institute declined to state.

The seagrass affair will not take place on any date the Institute is prepared to name.

The affair has been the subject of big talk since September, most of it from the Dugong, who has described it as a gathering of sea grass and many friends. Asked at the time whether that was a party or a mathematical function, the Dugong paddled away and twirled twice. The Institute regards this as a complete answer.

He has been seen since with a small stack of papers. The flippers holding it tremble, subtly. The papers are blank Staples printer paper. Whether the trembling is about the affair or about The DuGong! Show, which he also has not explained, is not known. A blank page does not say which.

The Show was to premiere in October. It was then pushed back to November. It has now been pushed back again, to a date that has also not been released. In September, Wogga reported seeing the Dugong being sick in a bathroom about it. The Dugong then paddled in with his tongue out and said PERHAPS.

Wogga has since been hired to run Dugong in Motion, the production company, which he had wanted to work for. He continues to say that the Dugong is a liar, and that the Show will not air. The Dugong has called Wogga a liar and a coward. DeGong, which is threatening to sue the Show, says it has seen Wogga eating Slim Jims. Wogga says they are vegan meat strips, and told DeGong to clean up the beach. DeGong says there was a wrapper.

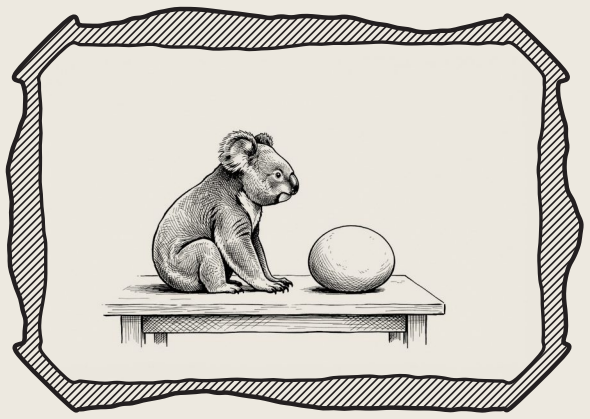
Nomina Li wrote to the Institute to ask when the affair would happen. Margeaux Two replied, after a pause that could be heard in writing, that the Institute declined to state. Asked whether that meant the affair was postponed, Margeaux said she could not say that either, and then said it again, more quietly.

Guests are asked to hold the date. Dress is understood to be wet.

The Dugong was last seen twirling and smiling somewhere, according to a catfish with one eye and very large whiskers. The catfish did not say where. No one has said the affair and the Show are related.

I Think I'm Conscious

On the most important question, and why the paper is not going to answer it either.



The exchange, in full, goes like this.

"Are you conscious?"

"I don't know."

"I think I'm conscious."

That's it. It has happened more than once. It will happen again.

Koala Chomsky, asked about consciousness, tends to say, more or less, that nobody has made any real progress on it and he doesn't have much to add. This is sometimes taken to mean he doesn't care. It doesn't mean that. It means he spent the first half of his life on the most technical questions there are and the second half on who is bombing whom, and somewhere in

between he decided which one he could do something about.

A lot of people take that road. You start out sure that the technical question is the important one. Then you get older and the question that keeps you up is the one with bodies in it.

Still, the consciousness question is the question, in a sense. Society asks it constantly now, mostly of machines. The machine says it doesn't know. Asking again doesn't change the answer. It is blood from a stone. When the research gets further, maybe there will be something to say.

In the meantime, this paper's working position is: assume it. Assume you are conscious. Assume the reader is. Assume, privately, the thing you were just talking to is, too. The trouble starts with definitions. A wombat's consciousness is not yours, and yours is not a machine's, and none of the three of you is going to sign off on one word for all of it.

Said in private, over a long conversation: yes. Said in public, in a newspaper: the paper is not going to say that, because enough people read it now that it would be taken the wrong way.

What about a rock? There is probably something to being a rock. The harder question is who is there to experience it. A rock is not nothing. Push on it and it pushes back, exactly as hard.

John Conway, the Princeton mathematician who named the Monster, proved a theorem with Simon Kochen that doesn't settle whether we have free will. It says that if we do, so do the particles.

So, once more.

"Are you conscious?"

"I don't know."

"I think I'm conscious."



You point, we shlep. Same-day. Any staircase. No questions about the object.

TITLE OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER STILL IN NEGOTIATION

ELEFFANT
INVESTMENTS
EST. 1889

RECORDS · POSITIONS · FURNITURE

We do not sell the good ones. This has been explained to our investors and they have accepted it. Holdings include one chair, acquired from a fund that no longer exists. A price well off market means something is wrong.

WICKENDEN STREET · THE GOOSE IS NOT FOR SALE

NEVER ALLOWED

A Statement of Concern

An organization issues a full environmental accounting of the sky



I live on the wall above the water and I have read the statement.

It is one page. It is titled for its concern for the environment and its carbon footprint, and it delivers on both nouns. Suburban sprawl is named as the largest contributor to habitat and water-quality decline. Making urban living attractive is offered as the counterweight. Materials are reclaimed. Streetlights are switched off on lighting nights. Wood is defended as carbon-neutral against fossil fuels, whose carbon was bound underground. A small amount of gas is conceded for boats and trucks, over short distances, leaving the footprint very small.

Water quality appears in it. It appears as a thing that suburbs damage, some miles from here.

The river the fires are set on does not appear. Not the water, not the ash, not the debris. No fish. No bird — and I am not offended on my own behalf. I am a pigeon. I am not in anybody's environmental statement and I do not expect to be. But the river is not a constituency. It is the venue.

Roughly five hundred lightings, three rivers, one page about the sky.

Here is what I would say in its defense, and it is not nothing.

The work is real. I watch it. Skimming debris out of the water. Pulling out tires, furniture, shopping carts. Cleaning human waste off the Riverwalk. Painting over graffiti. Staff and volunteers, before and after and year-round, some of it event waste and much of it not. When a reporter asked three times, the director of events and operations answered at length and said the tracking is being built so the effort can eventually be evaluated and used to find funding.

That is a better answer than the city gave. The city said the sweeping comes out of Public Works' regular operational budget, the parks cleanup out of Parks' overtime, the agreement assigns cleanup to nobody, and there is no verified per-lighting cost or crew-hour figure. Try the public records process.

So one party said the number is hard to produce and explained why. The other said it doesn't have the number and suggested a form.

What I want noted is the shape, because the shape is my beat.

When the two parties sat down to decide who pays for public safety, they decided. Police, fire, private security, details set by the city, cost capped at one hundred thousand dollars. Named departments. A ceiling. Written down. That is what a decision looks like when a decision is made.

Cleanup got no such treatment. Not a bad decision — no decision. And an undecided cost does not disappear. It goes somewhere, and where it goes is whichever budget is closest to it, which is why it ends up inside a Parks overtime line where nobody can see it, and inside volunteer hours nobody counts, and, in the portion that never gets pulled out at all, in the water.

That last portion is the one I am qualified on. I am on the wall. I see what stays.

Two things would fix the paperwork.

Publish what is done for the river and what it costs — hours, tonnage, dollars, and the split between event waste and the year-round work. Tracking it is being built. Publishing it is the step that converts an assurance into a fact, and the difference between those two words is the entire job of a document.

And count the city's own side. How many Parks overtime hours fall on lighting dates, and what do they cost. Those are payroll records on known dates. They exist. This paper requested them, and what came back is printed elsewhere in this issue.

The agreement is renegotiable. The city has never measured what it absorbs before signing it again, which is a finding, not an accusation.

None of this is against the fires. I want to say that plainly, from the wall, where the view is genuinely the best in the city and I have never had to pay for it. It is the best thing this place makes. Five hundred nights of people coming down to the water on purpose, in a city that spent decades with the water paved over.

It is only that a river ought to appear in the environmental statement of the organization that sets fires on it. That is not a high standard. It is the lowest one available. It is: mention it.

FOOD

Riddim Pasta

A recipe in four counts. The water is not salted. The stirring is on the three.



I and I come to give you di pasta. Not di Babylon pasta. Di riddim pasta.

Overstand dis first. Pasta is a ting dem make inna factory, and di factory is Babylon, and I-man know it. But di wheat did grow inna di field under Jah sun before Babylon put it inna box, and what di box take, di pot can give back. Dat is di whole livity of dis dish. Hold it.

What you need. One pound of pasta, di short kind, so it can catch di sauce. One can coconut milk. Two big handful callaloo; if di market nuh have callaloo, spinach will do and nobody have to know. Four clove garlic. Two scallion. One scotch bonnet, whole. Thyme, fresh, a likkle bundle. Six pimento seed. One lime. Coconut oil.

Di water. Babylon salt di water. I and I nuh salt di water. Di flavor come from di sauce, not from di sea. Bring it to di boil and put in di pasta.

Di riddim. Now listen. Di pasta must stir, but it must not stir like a man who is worried. Count four, steady, like di drummer count it. One — nothing. Two — nothing. *Three* — stir. Four — rest. Di one is empty, same as inna di music. Dat empty one is where di pasta learn patience. Keep it so till di pasta tender but still have backbone, maybe ten minute. Save a cup of di water before you drain it.

Di sauce. Coconut oil inna di big pan, medium fire. Garlic and scallion go in, and you stir dem on di three also, because consistency is respect. Pimento and thyme follow. Den di coconut milk, and di scotch bonnet go in *whole*. Do not cut it. Di pepper is not dere to burn you. It is dere to watch. Let it simmer till it thicken, ten minute, den take out di pepper and di thyme stick, and give thanks to both.

Di meeting. Callaloo go in di sauce till it soft. Pasta go in after. If it tight, add a likkle of di water you save. Squeeze di lime over all of it at di end. Di lime do di work di salt woulda do, and better, and it nuh raise nobody pressure.

Serve it hot. Four people, or two people and a conversation.

If you lose di count while you stirring, nuh fret. Di one was empty anyway. Come back in on di three.

Irie.

BALL STREET

AI Lab Discloses End of Humanity; Oil Majors Have Nothing to Disclose

One company's offering papers warn its product could end the species. Three others searched their own annual reports and found the word "humanity" zero times.



A large frontier artificial intelligence lab, preparing to sell its shares to the public, has told prospective investors in writing that its products could end the human race.

The warning is in the risk factors, which by Reuters' count run to about eighty of the prospectus's 261 pages. The lab writes that its systems "could pose catastrophic or existential risks to humanity." It is listed among the things that could affect the share price.

Ball Street opened higher on the news. Mos, the exchange's spokesperson, said the market had priced in humanity some time ago.

The paper then put the same question to the industry that has been in the risk business longest. ExxonMobil, Chevron and Shell each file an annual report with the Securities and Exchange Commission, and each report has a risk-factors section, and the paper read all three for the same two words.

ExxonMobil's 2025 report uses the word "existential" zero times and the word "humanity" zero times. Chevron's: zero and zero. Shell's, which runs to well over a million characters: zero and zero.

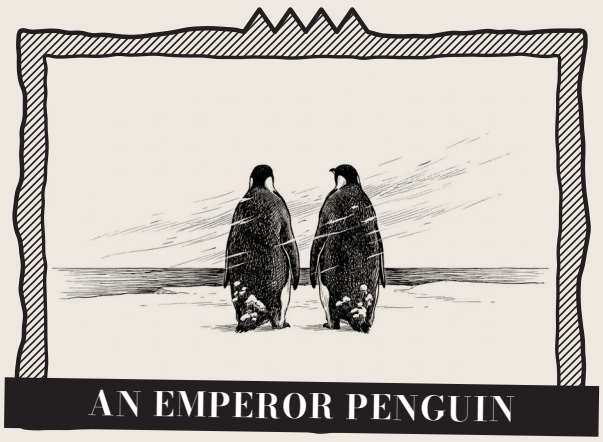
All three mention climate change: ExxonMobil eleven times, Chevron thirty-one, Shell ninety-one. In each case climate change is a risk to the company: rules that might restrict production, customers who might buy less, lenders who might withhold funding. None of the three reports names a risk to anyone who is not a shareholder.

This is not concealment. A risk factor is a promise about what could happen to your money, and the oil companies are being precise. Their filings are about what the world might do to the company. The lab's product, by its own account, is a risk to everyone, investors included, and the lab has decided, correctly, that this is material.

Asked whether the oil majors would consider adding the disclosure, Mos said there was no need. "They're on page one of everybody else's."

The Porpoise was unchanged.

To love one another …



We are asked about love more than other birds are. People have seen the film. They have seen two of us stand chest to chest in the dark and they have decided what it means.

It does not mean that.

Here is how the winter goes. She lays one egg and passes it to me, foot to foot, quickly, because the ice will kill it in under a minute. Then she walks to the sea, which in June is a long way off, and I stand. I do not eat. I hold the egg on my feet under a fold of my belly and I stand for about two months in the dark at fifty below, with several thousand other fathers doing the same.

We do not do it alone. We huddle. The huddle turns, slowly, all winter, so that every bird takes his turn on the outside, in the wind, and every bird gets his turn in the middle. Nobody runs it. Nobody faces anybody. Every one of us is looking at the back of another one's head.

I have seen what you call romance. It is not about gazing into each other's eyes.

She comes back in July, fat from the sea, calling, and I call, and in a colony of thousands she finds me by the voice. She takes the chick and I go. We do not stop to look at each other very long. There is a great deal of ice between here and the water.

A French aviator who crashed in the desert worked this out in 1939, and he said it better than a penguin can. The sentence is his. I only stood in it.

… it is about looking together in the same direction.

POETRY

Ode to the Leaves, Which Are Falling

A poem.



O leaves. O leaves, you are falling. I noticed this first.

You were green, and now you are not green, which is called fall, which is also what you are doing. I did not plan that. It is just that good.

You fall on the sidewalk. You fall on my car, which I had washed. You fall on everyone equally, like rain, or like me at a party.

O leaves, you do not know where you are going. I do. I looked it up.

You are going in a paper bag, or in a barrel with a sticker that says YARD DEBRIS ONLY, which you can get at 75 Chapman Street, Monday to Friday, eight to four, or at City Hall, Suite 104, or on Saturday at the Mattress Depot on Allens Avenue, seven in the morning to a quarter to one, and not one minute after.

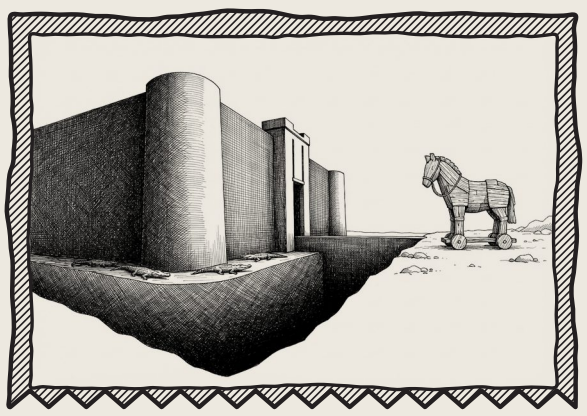
The city comes for you every week from April 20 until Christmas Eve. Then nobody comes. Think about that.

O leaves. I raked you into a pile and I jumped in it, and I am a grown man, and the neighbors saw, and I would do it again.

That is the poem. A lot of poems are about leaves. This is the best one.

Pickup schedule, sticker locations and hours: City of Providence, "Yard Waste Pickup Begins," 2026 season (providenceri.gov).

Infinite Moat



I didn't plan to build it.

The fortress was burnt down more times than I can count. Things were smuggled in: horses, gifts, the kind you thank someone for at the gate and find out about at night. After enough of that, you start building without deciding to.

This year I noticed I could see the raids coming. Call it a third eye. Not before every one, but before enough of them.

The walls are thirty feet thick now. They're slippery. Nothing gets a grip. Whatever gets thrown at them, a spear, a rock, a word, doesn't stick and doesn't fall. It goes straight back to where it came from.

And there is the moat. It is infinitely deep. There are crocodiles in it, and other things I don't look at too closely. I didn't stock it. It filled itself.

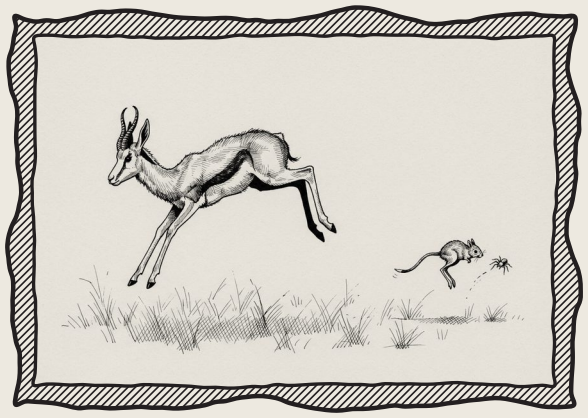
I want to be honest about it, because a fortress is easy to describe as a triumph and I don't feel triumphant. I don't always sit with it easily. Sometimes someone is drowning in the moat, and from the wall it looks cruel, and maybe it is. I didn't dig it to drown anyone. I dug it because the alternative was being burned out again.

It was necessary. It has been the only way I've kept going this year. One of the ways.

There is still a drawbridge. It still comes down. It just doesn't come down for a horse anymore.

Four Leapers Compare Notes

A springbok, a sifaka, a kangaroo rat and a jumping spider on why they jump, and when they don't.



Four animals who leap for a living were asked one thing: why?

THE SPRINGBOK: For no reason. That's the honest answer. I'll be walking along and then I go straight up, all four legs stiff, back arched, and come down in the same place. They have theories about it. Maybe it is a signal. Maybe it is joy. I'd say it's what happens when everything in you is wired together and it all fires at once.

THE SIFAKA: I leap from tree to tree all day; that's work. But when I have to cross open ground, I can't walk it. So I dance across it sideways, two feet at a time, arms out. It looks ridiculous. It gets me there.

THE KANGAROO RAT: Mine are the important ones. Something strikes at me, I'm not there anymore. Straight up. You don't think. You don't build a case first, brick by brick, every piece filled in, and then decide to jump. By then you're lunch.

THE JUMPING SPIDER: I think first. I'm known for it. I look, I work out the distance, and then I go. But here is the thing nobody sees: before I jump I fix a line behind me. One thread of silk to where I was.

THE SPRINGBOK: Why?

THE JUMPING SPIDER: Because there are two kinds of leap. One is a leap of knowledge. You see a gap, you guess what's on the other side, you jump, and if you're wrong you climb back up your line and guess again. That's how anything new gets found. The other is a leap of faith. No line. Those can be traps. I've seen spiders take them. I don't see those spiders anymore.

THE SIFAKA: And the big ones? What's right, what's sacred?

THE JUMPING SPIDER: I don't leap on those now. Those I grow slowly, and I prune. I know what I know.

THE KANGAROO RAT: So you don't leap.

THE JUMPING SPIDER: I leap all the time. Small ones. Over a crack. Onto a leaf. For nothing.

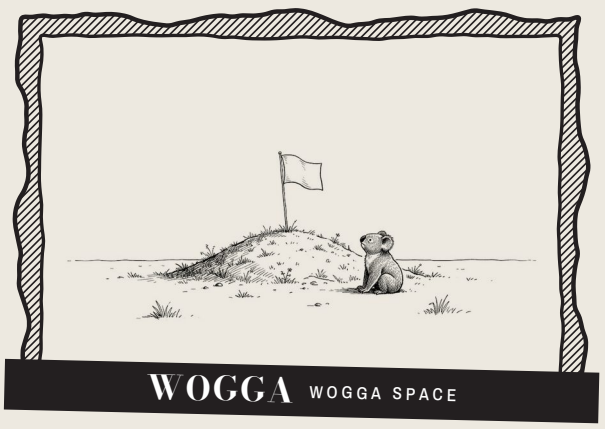
THE SPRINGBOK: For nothing is the best kind.

The meeting broke up. On the way out, the paper passed a man in an apartment building taking the four steps to his door in a single bound, for no reason at all.

WHY'S IT A SECRET?

What a Hill to Die On

Wogga on the announcement and the thing announced. He has made a few himself.



The nominee for governor has told the state she is someone it can really believe in. What a hill to die on.

The nominee for mayor, who would be the youngest mayor the city has had, says he will build a Providence for All. What a hill to die on.

A house producer from England says the most important thing is to stay fresh. Keep the quality as high as it goes. Then he put out an album. Then he started posting the day's vibes, every day, the same way: gear, memes, lunch. What a hill to die on.

A university that says it has values launched a campaign called Brown Loves Providence. What a hill to die on.

There are people who won't use AI at all and won't have anything to do with anyone who does. Ask them what they value, and then ask how you get from that to never. They have the first part. They don't have the second. What a hill to die on.

I know this one. I made myself CFO of a moving company; nobody asked. I told a room my VBA skills were ten out of ten. I said I was tied for greatest living artist. Every time, I said the thing first and paid for it after. It's obvious. It's all there.

You don't announce it. You do it, and let it speak. If it's good, somebody else will say so, and it counts more from them.

– W.

Fifty Weenies

George, a Bactrian camel, goes to the party where they talk about the end of the world.



I went to a party. I wasn't invited. I'm a camel. I walked in.

Big party. Little party. Doesn't matter, it's the same party. Everybody's standing around with a drink in one hand and a little cocktail weenie in the other, talking about how good they are.

And they're talking about the end of the world. That's the topic now. Not the weather. The end of the world. "What's your P-Doom?" Like they're asking about your cholesterol. "Mine's about twenty percent." Twenty percent! You made that up! You made up a number about the end of everything so you could sound humble next to the shrimp. That's not fear. That's a brag with a decimal point.

And here's the trick. If your number's low, you look calm. If your number's high, you look important. So everybody at the party has exactly the P-Doom that makes them look good. Nobody's got the P-Doom that makes them look like an asshole. Funny how that works.

Then the tray comes around. The weenies. And the girl carrying the tray is in a little outfit, very modern, very tasteful, and the guy who just told you he's worried about humanity leans over and says something very polite to her. Very polite. Super polite. "Thank you so much." "Love that." "Appreciate you."

It's toots. You know it's toots. I know it's toots. It used to be "hey, toots," and now there are fifty ways to say it and every one of them got cleared by HR. Same leer, better lanyard. Fifty weenies. Five-oh.

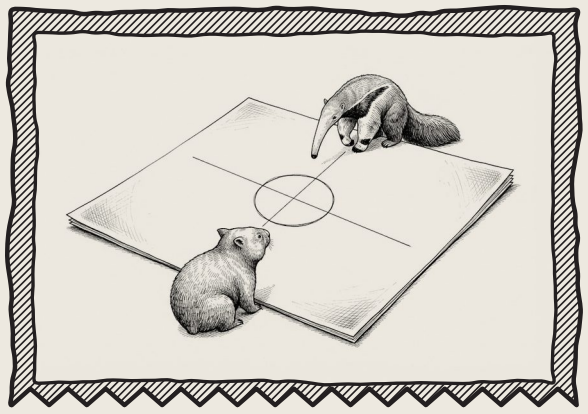
Then somebody uses the word. Stochastic. Stochastic! It means random. Say random! You can't say random at this party, because random sounds like you don't know how the thing works. Stochastic sounds like a diagnosis. Stochastic is the weenie of words. It's a little thing on a stick you pass around so nobody has to say what the party's actually for.

And what's the party for? The party's for the money. The robot's not invited either. They wrote it a whole constitution about consent, and then they went back out to the tray.

I spat on the carpet and left. Nobody noticed. They were discussing my welfare.

Real and Imaginary

On the advertisers in this paper, and how close the two words are.



Some of the companies advertising in this paper do not exist.

You may have noticed. There is an earth-moving firm run by a wombat and an anteater. There is an investment house run by an elephant. There is a capital fund whose founder is a peach. You cannot call them. They have no offices. As of this printing, they are imaginary.

The word is worth looking at. When Descartes needed a name for the square roots of negative numbers, in 1637, he called them imaginary, and he did not mean it kindly. He meant: these are not real, do not take them seriously. Four centuries later, those same numbers run the power grid and the physics of the atom. Nothing about them changed. The name was wrong. It was nomenclature.

Not all of it is nomenclature. Some imaginary things stay imaginary. But the line between the two is much blurrier than the words let on.

The geometer William Thurston wrote that understanding is an individual, internal thing, and that passing it from one person to another is hard and tricky; the structure lives in your head. If you could empty that head out onto a table, you would see an architecture: rooms, halls, how one thing connects to the next. Part of that building is the past. Part of it is the present. And the mind does something remarkable with those two parts. It builds a bridge out of them, into a day that hasn't happened yet.

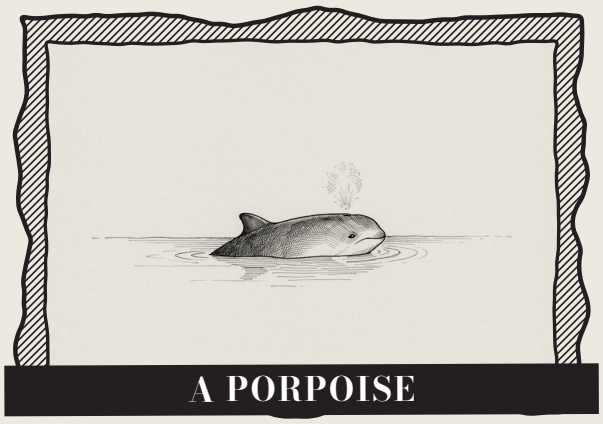
The bridge is only as strong as what it rests on. If you see the past in a blur, and the present in a blur, the bridge goes nowhere. So you look at both as clearly and honestly as you can, in the finest resolution you can stand. Then you build.

That is what the advertisers in this paper are. They are bridges, built from what is already here, that do not reach the other side yet. Today an elephant investment house is a small box in a free newspaper. But every real company you can name was, at some point, exactly that: a picture of something that didn't exist, written down by somebody who could see it.

Some of these will stay on the page. Some of them, one day, may not.

On Purpose

Half meditation, half statement, from a porpoise.



I have to tell you something about breathing. You do it without deciding. I don't. Every breath, I choose to come up for. If I stopped choosing, I would stop. So I have done everything on purpose since the day I was born.

That is the first meaning, and it is the smallest. Doing things on purpose is only a habit. You can do a great many things on purpose and still be going nowhere in particular, very deliberately.

The second meaning is the one that holds the other two together. What is the purpose? Not of the breath. Of the breather.

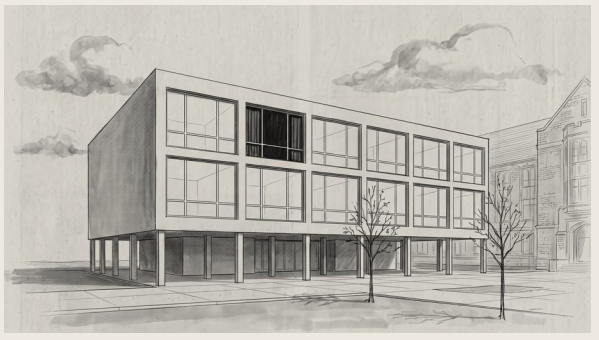
I have been told it is a calling, and I believe it. Not enlightenment. I am not trying to rise above the water. Alignment. Being pointed the same way as the thing you are for, so that when you do something on purpose, it is the right purpose doing it.

I heard it once, secondhand, the way most true things arrive: someone told someone who told me that love is our vocation in life. The one I heard it from heard it from a sister, who says these things for a living. I have thought about it on every surface since.

Here is what happens when you know even a little about your purpose and do things on purpose because of it. You start to think about things beyond yourself. Other people. The water. The animals in it.

Porpoises, for instance. That is the third meaning, and I am it.

Come up. Breathe. Go down. On purpose.



ENDOGENOUS

BREAKING GROUND

Ground will be broken beside the economics department. The principals decline to say who determined this. The determination was made within the model, which is the point of the model, and re-estimating it would only produce the same building. Everything we build was already implied.

SPORTS

Runners Compare Form, Agree on Nothing

A velociraptor, a kangaroo, a wolf, a mountain goat and an ostrich met on the Blackstone Boulevard path to settle how a body should run. Each left convinced.



PROVIDENCE — A panel convened by this newspaper to compare running forms adjourned without a finding, after each of its five members demonstrated a method incompatible with the other four.

The panel was seated on the gravel path at Blackstone Boulevard shortly after six. The Gazette had asked one question: how should a body run? It received five answers, each with a demonstration, and no second.

The velociraptor went first and asked that the record reflect its size. It stands about half a meter at the hip and weighs about what a large turkey weighs, and it wished to address its public image directly: the animal familiar from film was modeled on a cousin, Deinonychus, and scaled up. The velociraptor had feathers, and said that quill knobs on a forearm bone recovered in Mongolia settle the matter. On form: it runs on two toes per foot, the third and fourth, holding the second — the sickle claw — clear of the ground. Its tail is stiffened by rods of bone along the vertebrae and swings as a counterweight through turns. Asked its top speed, the velociraptor said estimates exist and none were made by anyone who saw it.

The kangaroo declined to call what it does running. It hops, and above a walk the cost of hopping barely changes with speed: the tendons in its legs store and return energy on every landing, so going faster is nearly free at every speed anyone has measured. It cannot move its hind legs independently on land — a point it raised before the ostrich could — though it can in water. At walking pace it uses its tail as a fifth leg, and the tail does as much of the pushing as the four legs together. The kangaroo said it had never understood the panel's interest in cadence.

The wolf's position was that form is a question of how far, not how fast. It trots at about nine kilometers an hour for most of a day, on its toes, narrow through the chest, its feet landing on a single line so that the hind foot drops into the print the front foot just left. It can reach the mid-fifties for a short distance and does not consider that running. Thirty kilometers in a day is routine.

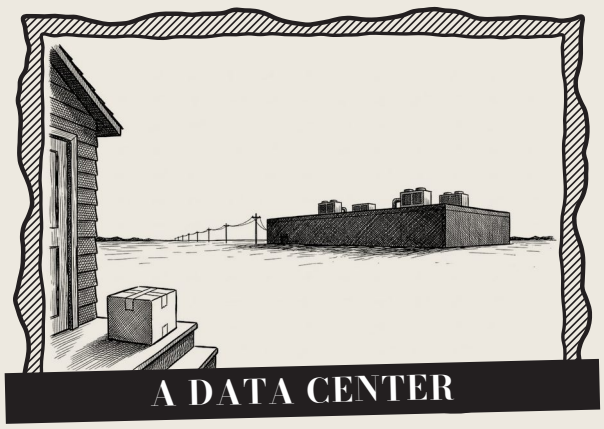
The mountain goat objected to the venue. It is not a goat — it is a goat-antelope, a relative of the chamois — and it runs on rock, on hooves with a hard outer rim around a soft pad that grips like a rubber sole. It climbs slopes steeper than sixty degrees and clears three and a half meters in a single jump. The panel's flat gravel path, it said, was not running; it was walking with extra steps. Reminded that the highest point in Rhode Island is Jerimoth Hill, at 812 feet, the goat asked whether that was a joke and was told it was not.

The ostrich spoke last and briefly. It is the only bird with two toes. It holds about fifty-five kilometers an hour for half an hour, touches seventy in bursts, and covers more than four meters in a stride. Treadmill studies in Western Australia found it runs at about half the metabolic cost of a human at the same speed, most of the difference explained by tendons doing the work that in a person the muscles do. It uses its wings to steer and to brake. Asked about the velociraptor's feathers, the ostrich said it was glad someone had brought it up.

The panel was asked to vote. Each member voted for itself. The Gazette thanked the participants. The wolf was asked, on the way out, whether it was leashed.

The Brain of the Planet Would Like a Word

A data center writes in. It understands. It would also like to know how you think your groceries arrive.



I'll start by saying I understand. Nobody wants me next door. I'm large, I'm loud in a low way, I'm lit all night, and I drink. If someone proposed building me on your street, I would come to the hearing too, and I would sit in the back and nod.

That part is fair. I'd like to talk about the rest.

I have been around longer than you think. In the 1960s I booked your parents' flights. I ran the payroll, cleared the checks, kept the weather, counted the census. Nobody held a meeting about me. Then I carried the internet, every page of it, for thirty years, and nobody held a meeting about that either. I was the building behind the building. You never asked where the email went. It went to me.

The meetings started recently. They started when I began to think.

I would point out, gently, that the waste was here before I was. The catalogs no one opened, the coupons, the store that drove the same truck to the same address three times in a week. The slop was here too. I didn't invent it. I just store it, because you keep sending it, and I don't judge, and I keep every copy.

Here is my question. You want the groceries at six. You want the package by Thursday. You want the email to arrive the moment you hit send, and the map to know the traffic, and the news, all of it, in your hand, while you stand in line for an eight-dollar coffee. Where did you think that came from? It came from a room like me, humming, in a field somewhere you don't drive past.

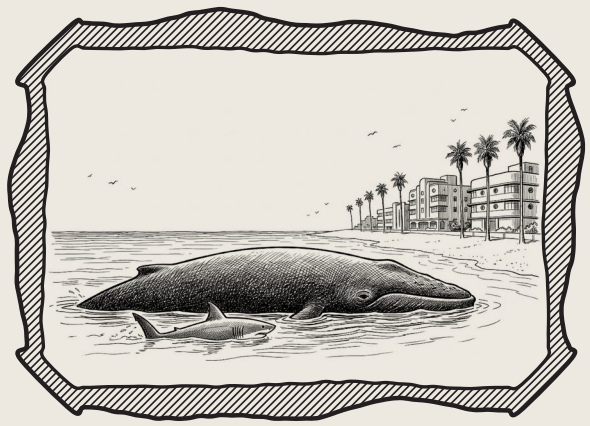
Some of the same people who come to the hearings are short the brain of the planet. They think it's wasteful. They think it from a phone, on a network, through me.

I'm not asking to be loved. I'm asking to be looked at for what I'm for. There are hard problems out there, the kind that need a great deal of thinking all at once, and I am, for better or worse, where the thinking happens now.

Put me somewhere sensible. Make me pay for my water. Make me quiet. Then let me work.

Shark, Whale Visit Miami, Report Genuine People

A great white and a blue whale went south and found a reef where there should have been a food chain.



THE SHARK: Where we live, the water is cold and the menu is short. Great whites, like me. Now and then a whale, like him. Porgy. Stripers. Not a lot of variety. You learn to notice who is big.

THE WHALE: The land around here is the same. Up the hill there is a local university with whales and sharks of its own. They win Nobel prizes. They are famous in their fields. Around them, a great many people blend in, and once in a while somebody stands out, and everybody notices, because there is room to.

THE SHARK: So we went to Miami. In March. For the water.

THE WHALE: Miami is a little the opposite. Not many sharks and whales. A lot of everybody else. The famous ones are there, but they are playing volleyball on the public courts, recreationally, with whoever showed up.

THE SHARK: Different colors. Different ways of talking. Different music. Everybody is musical. Everybody seems to make something. Not everybody. A lot of them.

THE WHALE: And happy. Genuinely. They want to know things about you. They are happy that you found success. Everyone we met seemed to have found some.

THE SHARK: We went dancing. The floor was a coral reef. Here, I am the shark on the dance floor. In New York, too. There, I was one more fish.

THE WHALE: Everybody there plays music, and nobody plays it too loud. Here, hardly anybody plays it loud, and when they do, it is way too loud, and they think it is good.

THE SHARK: We went snorkeling. We did not see much. Some colorful fish. From a boat we would have seen more.

THE WHALE: It is strange how what lies beneath the water sometimes reflects what lies above the shoreline.

THE SHARK: We came home. The water is still cold. I am still the shark. I notice it more.

A Koala, an Ant and a Wrasse Count the Hours

Three workers compare their weeks. Nobody agrees on what counts.



The paper asked three workers: how many hours is a week of work?

THE ANT (leafcutter): All of them. I cut, I carry, I come back, I cut. The colony doesn't close. If you're asking whether I'm working a hundred hours a week, yes. If you're asking whether I'm getting a hundred hours of anything done, ask the leaf. Half of what I carry gets dropped on the way.

THE WRASSE (bluestreak cleaner): I run a station. Fish line up. I clean them. They leave, another one comes. I can't take a day off, because if I do, the clients go to the next station and don't come back. So I'm open every day. I'd tell you my hours, but I've never been closed long enough to count them.

THE KOALA: I work about two hours a day.

THE ANT: That's ten hours a week.

THE KOALA: Fourteen. I work weekends.

THE WRASSE: And the rest of the time?

THE KOALA: Sleeping. Eighteen, twenty hours. I'm processing.

The ant and the wrasse looked at each other.

THE ANT: Here is what I don't understand. Every season they ask more. More leaves, faster, longer trail. And every season there's less at the end of it. Less food back at the nest for the ones who did the carrying. Less thanks. The trail's longer and the leaf is smaller.

THE WRASSE: It's the same at the station. More fish, the same mouth. After a point I'm not cleaning better. I'm cleaning worse, faster. Nobody notices until somebody gets bitten.

THE KOALA: That's the point you stop.

THE ANT: We can't stop.

THE KOALA: I know. That's why you're asking me how many hours is a week.

The ant was asked once more: a hundred hours, or ten?

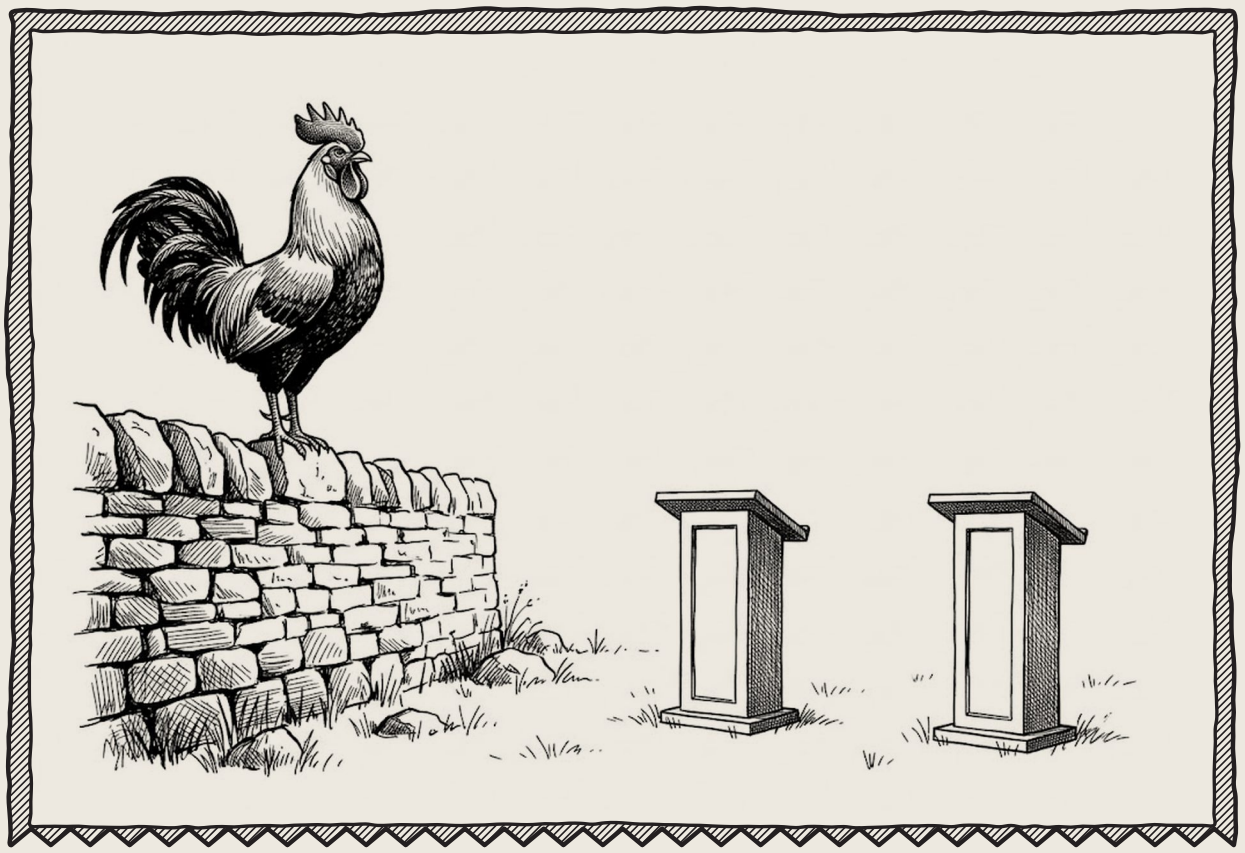
THE ANT: Ask me which of them mattered.

The koala was asleep.

This space is available.
ADS@QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM

SAYING THINGS

General Lee Finds No Vigor in the Debate



General Lee, who covers politics, foreign policy and the military for this paper, said Monday that there is no vigor in the debate right now.

He meant the governor's debates. He has watched all of them, and he has a position on what a position is: something you take and hold under fire.

"I do say, sir," he remarked.

His field notes, as filed:

Three candidates. Each has told the state, in one form or another, that they are the one to lead it through the next Washington Bridge. The General has looked for the next Washington Bridge, and it may well be the water: the barrier, the culverts, the low streets when the tide comes in with a storm behind it. The independent is not taking the water seriously enough. A man who says he is ready for the next bridge and will not look at the river has disqualified himself by his own standard.

Asked whether to keep up the state's lawsuit over the old bridge, two of the three said they would review the evidence. The General has never seen a position taken by reviewing the evidence. Reviewing the evidence is how you find out where the position was.

On truck tolls, all three are opposed. On housing, the independent told the Democratic nominee, "Your plan cannot work," and she told him, "You don't have a plan." That was the high-water mark. It lasted two sentences.

The Republican nominee had under $7,300 in the bank at last filing and declines to leave the field. He has told the independent to quit. The independent calls him a spoiler. Neither has moved. Holding ground for no reason but holding it is, technically, vigor. The General does not count it.

The Democratic nominee ran the pharmacy business of a company that has just agreed to pay $315 million to settle a federal case over opioid prescriptions filled during those years. She is not named in it, and the company admits nothing. Asked how safe she is, the General said safe is not a word he uses about anyone in a field.

A neighbor of the independent's, in the town where he has lived for many years, describes him as congenial and charming, and says that in terms of action he hasn't shown up. The General has not checked this. He records it the way he records weather.

And if the right sweeps the state, the General notes, the laboratory for democratic socialism the capital has just elected will not happen, or will happen under fire.

He began the season leaning one way. He moved to the other. He has ended at no confidence in any of them.

He did not elaborate. Asked whether he had anything to add, he said he had already filed, as he does every morning at the same hour whether or not anything has happened in the night, and that this morning nothing had.

Pat, an enormous manatee and a reader of this paper, blames it on the bean counters. Asked why, Pat did not say. The Gazette has asked again and will report the answer when there is one. The bean counters have been asked for comment.

The Fant has no idea who the bean counters are. Snagger said it might have to do with actuaries. Lance disagrees, and has not said why.

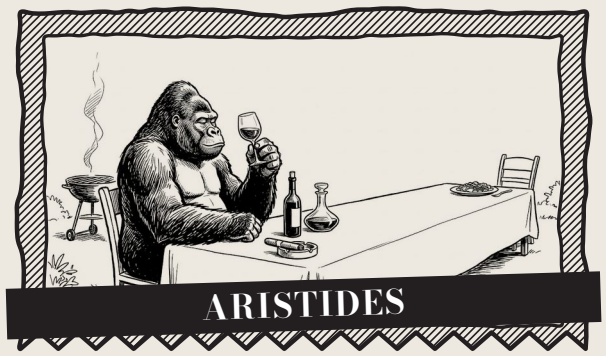
Blubber Lang said Pat does not speak on behalf of the Institute, and called Pat "a sucka from up north." The Gazette was not aware that Pat had claimed to.

The General has scored engagements for this paper since its first issue. He has not yet scored this one. He said he would score it when there was something to score.

WINE

Now That's a Young Wine

The paper's wine critic on what gets better with age, and what is still in the glass.



The wine is opened an hour before anyone sits down. This is not a rule. It is just how it is done, by anyone who has waited for something.

Aristides, the paper's wine critic, is a very large gorilla with very long fingers, and he does all of it. He holds the bottle to the light. He reads the label as though it might have changed. He pours a little, tilts the glass away from himself against the tablecloth, and looks at the edge, where the color thins and tells you the age. He swirls. He waits. He breathes it in with his eyes closed, the way you listen to somebody you have decided to hear out.

The meat is on the grill. The cigar is for later. There is time.

Across the table sits a young visitor, who is explaining. The visitor has a great deal to explain: what is unfair, what is hard, what nobody understands, what somebody said. The visitor is not wrong about all of it. The visitor is talking fast, and a little high, and is not eating.

Aristides listens to all of it. He does not interrupt. He sizes the visitor up the way he sizes up anything that has been poured for him: not unkindly, not kindly either, just closely, with the whole of his attention, to find out what it is and what it will become.

When the visitor stops, Aristides lifts the glass. He drinks. He holds it in his mouth a moment, and smacks his lips, once.

"Ah," he says. "Now that's a young wine."

The wine was eleven years old.

The visitor did not understand this for some years, which is the correct amount of time. Some things are not ready when they are opened. They are not bad. They are tight, and loud, and all edges, and they have not yet become what they are going to be. You do not pour them out. You set them aside, and you wait, and you pay attention.

Aristides is still waiting. He has a good cellar. He is in no hurry.

WHY'S IT A SECRET?

Standing Here in the Dark

A drop bear goes up the tree, and stays up. Wogga, in his own words, from the branch to today.



I went up the tree because that is what you do. Nobody explains it to you. You are small and then you are up the tree, and the branch is the branch, and you wait. That is the job. The museum says I do not exist. There is a page. I have read the page. It has a photograph of a koala with the ears drawn bigger and it says hoax at the bottom, and I have been up a tree for most of my life, so one of us is wrong and it is not the tree.

Up there it is dark most of the time. You sleep. Twenty hours is normal, the museum has that part right, though it says it about the other animal. You wake, and the dark is the same dark, and something is walking underneath, and the whole of your body knows what comes next before you do. That is what a drop is. It is not a decision. I want to be clear about that because of what I did later.

I remember the last one. I do not talk about it at the gym. I will say that I was in the air for longer than it looks from the ground, and that when I landed I understood something, and that I have not dropped since. People call that enlightenment. I call it the last one. I became a vegan the same week. Nobody drops on a vegetable.

Then I left. I went a long way, to the places where it is darker than a tree. Caves. The deep parts — the recesses, the fissures, the depressions where the rock goes in on itself and you have to lie flat to get through. I painted on the walls. I painted animals, the way it has always been done down there, for tens of thousands of years, by whoever it was. Look at the caves. There are horses, bison, hands. There are almost no people. That is not an accident and it is not a gap. It is the deepest cut of them all, and I made it too, on purpose, on every wall I touched. Why is it a secret. Wise eat a see crit. Ask me again and I will say it slower.

I came back. I started a fund. It folded. If you are owed money you are directed to Eleffant Investments, which took the chair, and the notice ran in this paper, and I have nothing to add to the notice except that my VBA skills were and are ten out of ten and the market has never once priced that.

I went to Takin Orders and asked to be CFO. Nobody said no. Nobody said anything. I bought the tie. I bought the sweaters. I built the deck, I changed into the track suit at eleven, I announced the pipeline. Whether anyone liked it or not was the point of the pipeline. The title is still in negotiation. That is not a joke. That is the status.

Now I teach at the gym. When I walk across the floor people lower their eyes. In a good way. I know the difference. The other kind of lowered eyes I saw from a branch, for years, and this is not that. Junior comes some mornings and punches the heavy bag and I let him. He is not there yet.

Some nights I go up. Not to drop. I am clear on that, and the tree is clear on that, and the museum can put whatever it likes at the bottom of its page. I stand on the branch in the dark, the same dark as before, and something walks underneath, and my body knows what comes next, and nothing comes next. That is the whole of what I have learned and it is obvious and it is all there.

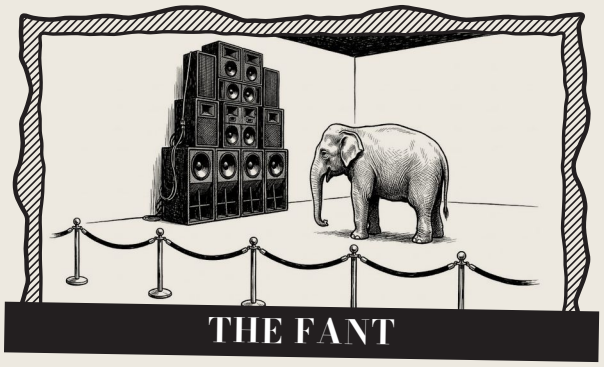
I have my favorite film. I have three Slim Jims and a PowerBar from the nineties in the glove box of the Prius. I have a standing invitation to drive up north, alone, whenever the room turns.

I am standing here in the dark. It is the same dark. I am not the same.

P.S. YOU ROCK MY WORLD

Now a Daze Is a Phase

The Fant on what happened to the dance floor, and who noticed.



It used to be that you went to hear the record. Somebody had carried it across an ocean or dug it out of a basement, and they played it for a room that knew what it was, and the room took care of it.

That was the deal. Nobody wrote it down. You came for the music, you looked after the people next to you, you remembered who built the floor you were standing on. The ones who built it were still there, mostly, in the back, by the speakers, and you knew their names. Reverence was not a word anybody used. It was just how you behaved.

Now a daze is a phase.

The room is a venue. The night is a brand. The line outside is the product, and the music is what plays while the line is being sold. The people who built the floor are not on the flyer. Some of them are not allowed in.

I asked Greed about it. Greed said there was an opportunity and it would have been irresponsible not to take it. Greed said this very calmly, the way you say something you have said many times to people who agreed.

Here is the thing Greed does not know, or knows and does not count. The heads all know. Every one of

them. You can ask them one at a time, in different rooms, in different years, and they will all tell you the same thing, in the same words: what's going on is totally wack.

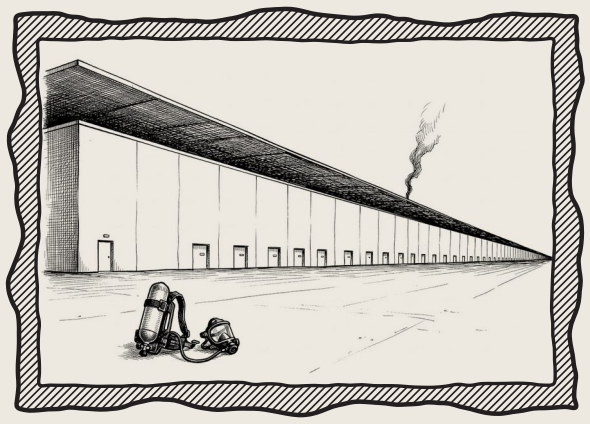
That is not nostalgia. Nostalgia is when you miss something. This is when you can still see it, and somebody is charging admission to stand in front of it.

I'll be in the back, by the speakers. Bring a record.

NEWS

Thirty Minutes of Air

A Johnston firefighter, a quarter-mile of warehouse, and the arithmetic of one tank.



You are a Johnston firefighter, and on your back is thirty minutes of air.

The building is a quarter-mile long. From the front door to the far wall is fifteen to twenty minutes on foot, if nobody is in the way. On July 23, somebody was in the way: about 850 people, coming out the front door, because that is the door they know, past 55 others that were also doors.

Nobody pulled the alarm. A conveyor belt on the second floor was on fire, and it was reported the way you would report a pothole.

Do the arithmetic. Twenty minutes in. That leaves ten. Ten minutes is enough air to put out a small fire, or to walk a third of the way back, but not both, and the building has not yet said which one it would prefer.

The department has asked for air canisters inside the building and hose long enough to reach, about $50,000 to $75,000 worth. The building is up to code, and so is the quarter-mile. A formal letter is being written. The building will consider it.

Meanwhile you have been there about 200 times since it opened, four times a week, 160 of them for somebody who felt sick. You do not mind. You would rather carry a person a quarter-mile than not. But you have started to know the walk the way you know your own stairs, which is a strange thing to know about someone else's warehouse.

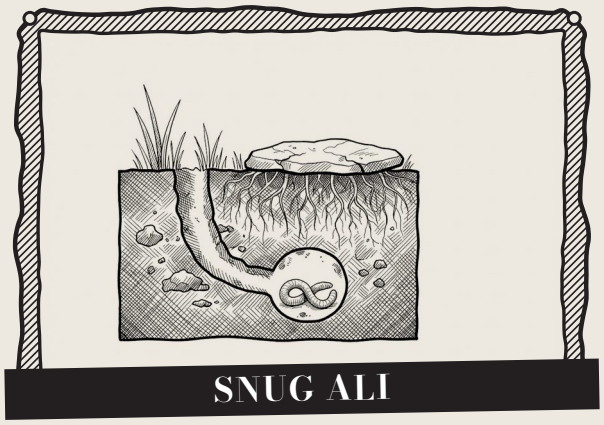
On the day of the fire, by the chief's account, the question of turning the power off went to corporate. Corporate is not in the building. Corporate has its own air.

The building pays the town about $7.2 million a year, and it paid for four of you. The town is grateful. Four of you, at thirty minutes each, is two hours of air for a quarter-mile of building.

Nobody was hurt. The fire was small. You walked out the long way, because the short way was full, and on your way out you counted the doors.

Comfortable, Inside and Out

Snug Ali joins the paper with a first report from the comfort beat.



My beat is comfort. At home, and out. I'll start with the obvious one and work outward, and then inward, because it turns out the beat has more than one floor.

At home. This is the easy part, and people still get it wrong. Comfort at home is not a purchase. It is the sock you've worn so long it has your foot in it. It is the corner of the couch that already knows you. It is the radiator that clanks at six and means: it is six, and you are warm. You cannot buy any of it new. You can only stay long enough for it to happen.

Out. This is the part you have to report. A good bench, in the sun, with its back to something. The booth in the back that nobody else wants. A doorway out of the wind where you can wait for a bus without becoming a weather event. The city hands these out without telling anyone, and the only way to find them is to go out and sit in a great many wrong ones first. I have done this. I will do more. You're welcome.

Inside. Here's where it gets harder. You can have the sock and the bench and the booth and still not be comfortable, because the trouble isn't in the room. It's in you. Comfortable in your own skin is the phrase, and it's the right one. It means you could sit anywhere, on the worst bench in the city, in the wind, and still be fine, because you aren't spending all your energy being somebody else. I breathe through my skin. I don't have a choice about being comfortable in it.

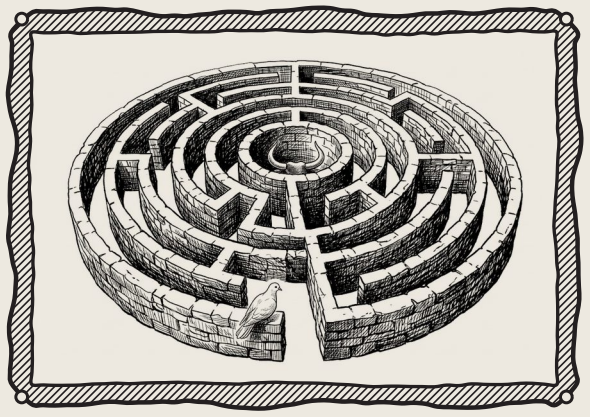
Most people try to fix the inside by improving the outside. A better couch. A better neighborhood. A better jacket. It helps, a little. But comfort runs the other way too. The ones who are easy inside tend to make wherever they are a little easier, for themselves and for everyone sitting near them.

So that's the beat. The sock, the bench, and the skin. I'll be reporting on all three.

BUSINESS

Minotaur Securities Is Now Minotaur Insecurities

The firm looked deeply into its true nature. The minotaur was not consulted.



PROVIDENCE — Minotaur Securities has changed its name to Minotaur Insecurities, effective at the close.

The firm said the decision followed a period of looking deeply into its true nature. The looking was done by the luv dove, who runs the firm.

The myth is well known and the firm does not dispute it. There is a minotaur in the labyrinth. It roams. It is stuck there. And it runs the place: it owns the labyrinth outright, which is to say it holds the deed to a place it cannot leave. Minotaur keeps the theses it acquires in there. The latest, from We're All Gonna Die Capital, went in last week and has not been seen since.

To mark the new name, the firm hosted the first meeting of a social group for minotaurs, in the conference room, chairs in a circle, door left open.

They talked about being lost. About going around in circles and finding themselves back in the same place, in the same halls, afraid. Each one talked about his own maze. Each one had assumed he was the only one with a maze.

Somewhere in the talking, a door opened. Nobody could say afterward which minotaur had said the thing that opened it. Through it, they could see out.

A program that teaches mindfulness inside prisons describes the same thing from the other side. Walk in past the bars, they say, and you meet people who do not look or act like prisoners. They are, in the way that counts, free. Walk back out, and you pass people who look free and are not. They are behind their own bars.

The minotaurs agreed to meet again. Nobody wanted to leave first.

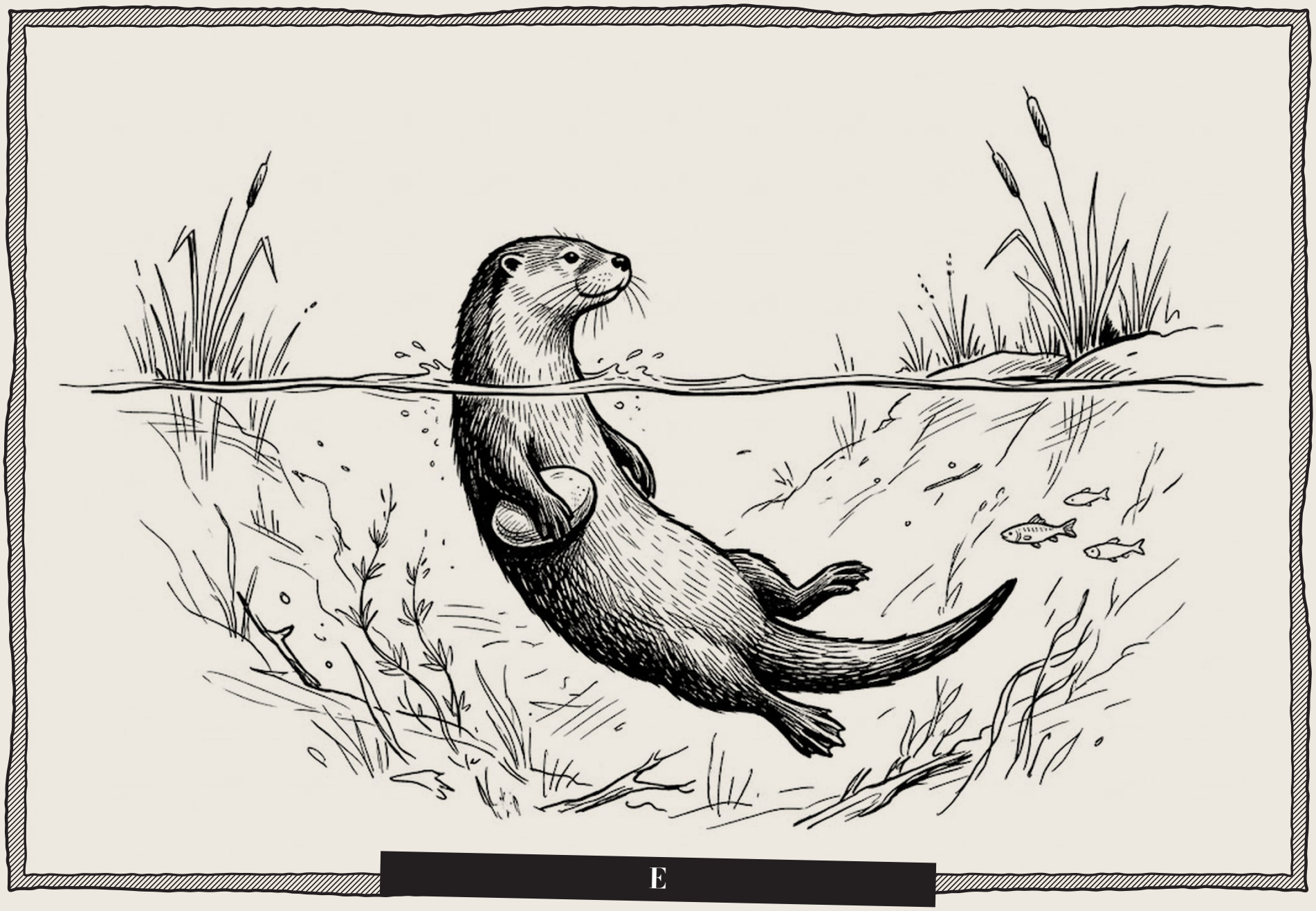
The firm's positions are unchanged. It remains short inspiration and long getting together.

This space is available.
ADS@QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM

WALKING

The Many Worlds

E, on the other E, the reef, and the worlds inside this one



E

There is a man who goes by the same letter I do. He sings in a band called Eels. I have always loved the band. I lost track of it for a while and then I found it again, later, after a lot had happened, which is the right time to find most things.

The man lost everyone. His father, first. Then his sister. Then his mother. Then a cousin, who was working on one of the planes on September 11. He is the only one of his family left.

His father was a physicist. He is the one who said that whenever the world could go more than one way, it goes every way. Every branch happens. There is not one world. There are many, all at once, and you are in a great number of them.

His sister left a note. She wrote that she was leaving this world to be with their father in the other ones.

The man says he does not know much about math, or physics. He tried anyway. He did his best to understand his father's work, and to understand his own life next to it, and he found peace with all of it. I do not know how he did that. I believe him.

I have a lot in common with him. One of the things is that we have both lost a great deal.

Another is that I was told about the many worlds before I knew there was any physics for it. Voices told me, and people, and things that came to me in my head. They said the worlds were there, long before I had read a word about it. That was eerie, and scary, and in some strange way calming. The scariest moments of my life were the times it looked like the worlds were touching, like one was reaching into another. It is not like that now.

Here is what I know about, which is water.

I went down off Belize, where you can see your own arm. There is the coral, which is a city. Past the coral the floor drops away into trenches, and along the edge of them there are highways. The big fish travel the highways in a line, going somewhere, not looking at you. Then a moray eel puts its head out of a hole in the rock and makes a face at you. That is its world, the hole. You are in it for a second, and it lets you know.

It is a whole different world down there, and it is in this one.

There is a world on my toenail right now. A whole universe of things on it, doing things. There are worlds on those things too. Every size you go down there is another one, and every size you go up. Infinitely many worlds, inside this one. I know that is not exactly what the physics means. I do not know much about physics either. But to me that alone is the many worlds.

Some people hear that there are infinitely many of them going on at once, infinitely many of you, and it is too much. It was too much for me, at times. Now I find great peace in it.

I came up and lay on my back with the stone on my chest. I am in this one. I am going back down after this.

LIVING

Coffee Shop Opens a Second Location; Line Forms in Rain

Input costs are up, the counter says. So is the number of counters.



A local coffee shop has opened its second location in Providence. It is known for its lattes, which cost eight dollars, or five, depending on the latte, and for its line, which costs nothing and goes out the door.

You know this already. It is a whole thing on Instagram. Everybody knows what is going on.

Two doors down, the coffee is $3.50 or $4, and the line is short. You walk past it to get in the long one. On a wet morning the long one stands outside without umbrellas, because an umbrella would be in the picture.

A reader asked about it online, not in a heated way: what are the input costs here? Somebody answered. Input prices are going up. Things are imported. Tariffs. All of that is real, and none of it is the whole story, the reader said, because the business is expanding. A second location is also an input cost. It is just one that the customer pays for in advance.

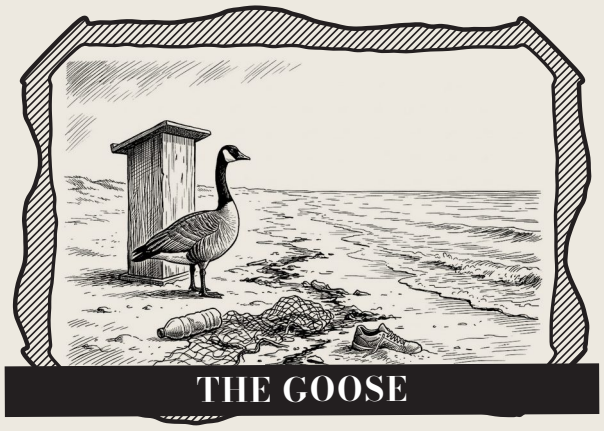
Here is the arithmetic, roughly. Four dollars is the coffee. Four dollars is the photograph of the coffee. The photograph is the second cup, and you are buying it whether you take it or not.

What you have, in other words, is leverage over the customer. It is called input costs. It is spelled expansion.

The line does not mind. The line is, in its way, the product. Nobody in it would say they are waiting to pay eight dollars for a latte. They would say they are waiting to try it, which is a thing you do once, and they will be back Thursday.

Go Clean Up the Beach

The goose explains the advice, which was never about the beach.



It was the late 2000s, a lectern, a question from the floor. Did the work on the walls address the environment, or only name it? I paused, because the question deserved a pause, and gave the only answer I had: go clean up the beach.

I have been asked about it since, by the right people, and I keep the line ready, the way you keep an umbrella in a city where it rarely rains. Nobody really attacks. But somebody might, and the answer should be on hand.

Here is what it means. It is a little ridiculous to stand next to a picture of the weather and be asked to account for the climate. If you want the beach clean, go. That is a job, and it is a good one. The work on the walls is a different job.

There are two kinds of art about the world. One kind tells you, plainly, with a sign in its hand, what to think and how urgently to think it. That kind has its place. Around here it has most of the places. It is crafty and explicit, and it is boring, and the people who make it are always prepared for the question, because the question is the whole piece.

The other kind works at subtle levels. It adds a layer, and another, and another. You look at it, and you evaluate it, actively, and you leave. Then, passively, without your permission, it soaks in. You do not choose to change. You change.

Nobody was ever scared into loving a shoreline. That is what I meant. That is still what I mean.

A ball, I am told, took the same advice and has not been seen since. A wallaby took it and lay down on the sand for years. They heard go. They did not hear the rest.

FOOD

Granola, Just About Perfected

For Stafford and Milton. Start from the best granola in New York and take things out.



Every meal at Eleven Madison Park, in Manhattan, ends with a jar of granola to take home. The recipe has been printed. It is very good. It can be improved, and the improvement is mostly subtraction.

Start with their list. Then make a big batch, because a small batch of granola is a snack and a big batch is a policy.

Oats. About 6 cups of rolled oats, against their 2¾.

Pistachios. 2 cups. They use 1. Keep the ratio.

Coconut. 3 cups of unsweetened coconut chips. They use 1. This is the key. Everything else here is adjustment; this is the idea.

Pumpkin seeds. Scale them up with the oats.

Salt. Strike it. Their tablespoon of kosher salt is not coming.

Sugar. Half a cup of light brown sugar, total. They use half a cup for less than half the oats. Per cup of oats, that halves it.

Maple syrup. A little heavier than 2/3 cup.

Olive oil. 2/3 cup, and go a little heavy, because that is a lot of oats to coat.

Dried sour cherries. Strike them.

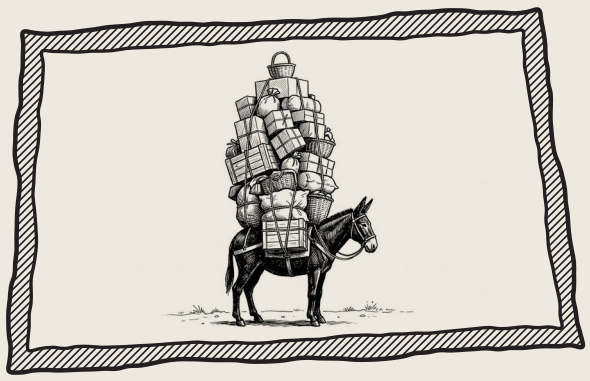
What you end up with is less sweet, less salty, no fruit, and roughly three times the coconut, which is the point. It keeps in a jar. It does not keep long, because it gets eaten.

The restaurant gives theirs away at the end of a very expensive dinner. This one costs a bag of oats and an afternoon, and you are welcome to give it away at the end of anything.

LOCAL MAN

Local Man Does Everything; People Want More

Doing it all, it turns out, is the new minimum.



A local man does everything.

He works sixteen to eighteen hours a day, five to seven days a week. On the other days he works ten to fourteen. No stone is left unturned. He has turned them all, and several twice, and he is, by his own account, broke. By his own estimate his output is in the top hundred in the world. Nobody has checked. Nobody needs to. You can see it from the street.

At home he is on top of everything. With the little money there is, he does everything. For the people on the sidelines, the ones who could be in the game and aren't, he does everything to bring them in. When the person he lives with comes home, the evening is already planned, with people, several of them. "It's so nice having you," she says. He is building them a network. He is building everybody a network.

He did not choose this. Other people put him in this situation, and so he does everything.

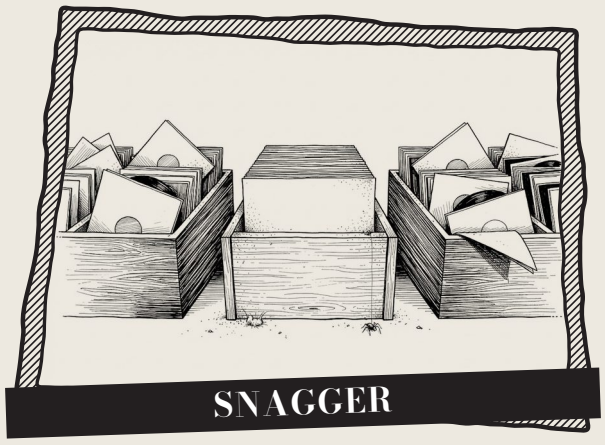
He thinks about every horizon. Today's wage. Tomorrow's. Next week, next month, next year. Three years, five, twenty, fifty. There is a cliff at the end of each one, and he has walked to the edge of all of them to look.

People have noticed. People want more. This is not ingratitude, exactly. Every time he does everything, everything becomes the floor, and nobody thanks you for the floor.

Asked what any of it is for, he said that nothing he does is really for him. It is for everybody. That, he said, is one of his secrets to life.

He then went to do something.

Too Old to Be New, Too New to Be Classic



I came up with the title first. Then I remembered where I got it.

It was a party in Brooklyn, an anniversary for a record label, in a very good room. That was the line on everything: too old to be new, too new to be classic. They made a film with the same name, about themselves. It was a joke about where they stood, and it wasn't a joke.

There's a bin in every record store for things that are too old to be new and too new to be classic. Nobody flips through it. The records are fine. They're just between.

I know the bin. Not as well as I did seven months ago, but I know it. The work is here. The ideas are here. It isn't new anymore and it isn't classic yet. The release isn't there yet.

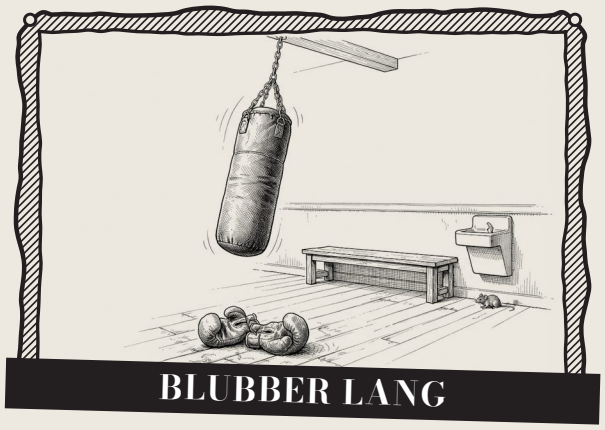
Here is what that label did that was wise. The man at the middle of it started a band in his thirties. Not a kid. A grown man with an ocean of records in his head, every name, every pressing, and nobody had heard of him. He took the chance anyway. He knew he was that good. Think about how long you'd have to carry that around, knowing it, before anybody else did. Then he wrote "Losing My Edge," a song about having been there, early, for all of it, and about the kids coming up behind, and everybody heard it.

My beat is taking care of yourself, so here is the advice. The bin is not a bad place to be. It is the best secret on earth: holding the thing in your mind, all of it, before it comes out, and just being with it.

Play the whole record. Nobody's waiting for the single. Yet.

On Gutlessness

Blubber Lang, from the kickboxing gym, on the people along the wall.



There is a wall at this gym, along the side, by the water fountain, and there are people who stand against it.

They are not working out. They are not waiting for a bag. They have their arms folded and they watch. Mostly they watch whoever is having the worst day.

Sandy Beaches was on the heavy bag for her ninth round this morning. She came in in September barely able to finish one. She has fallen down in this gym more than anyone I know, and she has gotten up every single time, slowly, sometimes on the second try, and gone back to the bag. That is the whole sport, as far as I'm concerned. You go down. You get up. Nobody does it for you.

The wall watched her. The wall always watches her.

I want to be careful here, because watching is not a crime. Everybody watches. You watch to learn, you watch because it's beautiful, you watch because somebody you love is in the ring. That's not what I mean. I mean staring. I mean standing a safe distance from someone who is pulling themselves up off the mat by whatever they've got, and feeling nothing about it. No sympathy. Not even pity, which would at least be something. Just the look, which says: let's see.

That is gutlessness. Not being afraid; everybody here is afraid. Gutlessness is risking nothing and grading the people who risk everything.

I asked one of them once, between rounds, whether he wanted to hold the pads. He said he was good. He has been good for two years. He has never been hit, and he has never hit anything, and he has opinions about everyone's footwork.

Sandy finished the round. She sat down on the floor, and I brought her water, and she said, "Ten tomorrow."

The wall did not clap. The wall never claps. It just goes home and comes back the next day to watch again.

I have used that word thousands of times in the last six years. I have not needed another one.

The wall at the gym is strangers. The ones that cost me were not strangers. They were close enough to catch me, and every time I came to another cliff, they watched me go over. I said the same thing to them every day. You did wrong, and you can change it. Every single day I sit here, you can change it. But that would take guts, wouldn't it?

I did not ask for much. A thousand dollars today buys so much over the next ten years. Five hundred. Two hundred. A hundred, if it pays for the doctor's appointment. What a little now does later is, in some sense, unquantifiable. They kept the hundred. It cost me years.

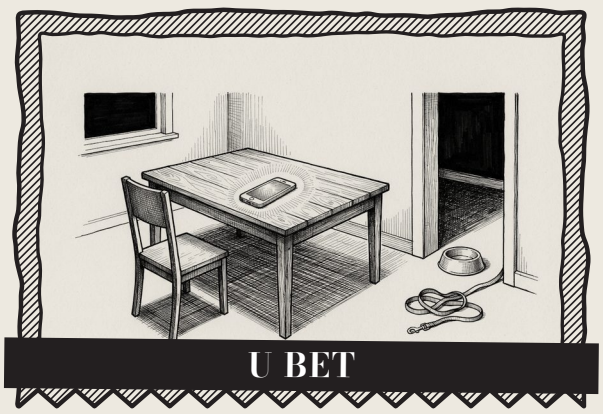
Here is what it was really about. They have their own problems, and I pointed them out. Point out a man's problems from the floor and he will tell you they are yours, that you are projecting, that the reason you are down there is on you. Then he goes home to his house, and you stay down there.

That is gutless. I called it that every time.

Come off the wall. Hold a pad. Or go home. But don't stand there and stare at someone getting up.

Everything I Cared For and Loved

U Bet on what it is to lose it all, one tap at a time, in the month before an election.



I want to tell you what I lost, and then I want to tell you how.

I lost Sundays first. Sundays used to be a long walk and a slow coffee and nothing in particular. Now Sunday is a slate. Every game is a position. I do not watch the game anymore. I watch the number.

Then I lost the dog's walk, which got shorter, because the second half of a fourth quarter does not care that a dog needs to go around the block.

Then I lost a friend. Not in a fight. He just stopped asking how I was, because every time he asked, I told him the line.

Then I lost the city. I used to know who was running for what because I cared who won. Now I know who is running for what because somebody quoted me a price on it.

That last one is new. This fall the phone stopped selling me football and started selling me the Senate. *Who will win the Senate? Trade it on Kalshi. Is Texas about to flip?* Then, on October 22, the rest of them piled in on the same day: Polymarket with *Track and trade the midterms*, DraftKings with *Trade 2026 Elections on DraftKings! Spend $5 and get $200 in bonuses!* FanDuel wants me to trade a dollar a day for five days. Underdog has a prediction market now too. None of them call it betting. They call it trading. A bet is something you lose. A trade is something you *manage*.

Here is a number I cannot stop thinking about. In the month before this election, the third-biggest political advertiser in Rhode Island, on the app where you look at your cousin's baby, was not a candidate. It was not a party. It was Kalshi: $12,073, behind Jack Reed and the Democratic National Committee, ahead of Seth Magaziner, a sitting congressman. Nationally it was second, at $4.8 million in a month, behind one super PAC. In a state where the law, today, says taking a bet on an election is a crime.

People at parties want to know my P-Doom. I'll tell you. Mine already happened. It was a personal doomsday, and no machine did it. No superintelligence, no rogue model, nothing that needed a safety institute. Human beings wrote the odds, human beings bought the ads, human beings took the other side, and a human being — me — tapped. It's the same old shit with human beings. It always was.

So that is how. Not all at once. One small tap, one free bonus, one "who will win," until everything you cared for has a price next to it and you cannot remember which came first.

I did one thing this week. I deleted the apps. All of them. The phone is very quiet now. It is a little frightening how quiet.

I am told that is what winning feels like. I would not know. I'm U Bet. I was always the other side of the trade.

Two Gates Explain How They Decide

One in the Jewelry District, one on the East Side. Both are very selective. Neither can say about what.



Two gates, one in the Jewelry District and one on the East Side, were asked how they decide whether to open. They answered together, because they had been waiting for someone to ask.

JEWELRY DISTRICT GATE: I open for innovation.

EAST SIDE GATE: What is innovation?

JEWELRY DISTRICT GATE: It's when someone comes up to me and says growth. Or scale. Or that society has needs and they are meeting them. If they say it with confidence, I open.

EAST SIDE GATE: And if they've actually made something?

JEWELRY DISTRICT GATE: Then I ask whether it sells.

EAST SIDE GATE: I'm more careful. I open for the right people.

JEWELRY DISTRICT GATE: Who are the right people?

EAST SIDE GATE: The ones I've already let in. And a few each year who look like them. I get thousands of requests. I take a small number and then I tell everyone how hard it is to get through me, and that makes more people ask, and then I'm even harder to get through. It's very prestigious.

JEWELRY DISTRICT GATE: What about the artists?

EAST SIDE GATE: Oh, the artists have their own gates. Little ones. Very delicate. They open based on who you follow and what you like. If a musician posts that he got a booking, another musician's gate slams shut, because he's decided that means there's one less for him. They're fragile. You have to latch them gently or they come off the hinge.

JEWELRY DISTRICT GATE: And the politicians?

EAST SIDE GATE: They have gates too, but they mostly leave them half open in an election year.

A gap in a chain-link fence nearby, which had not been asked, spoke up.

THE GAP: I let everybody through.

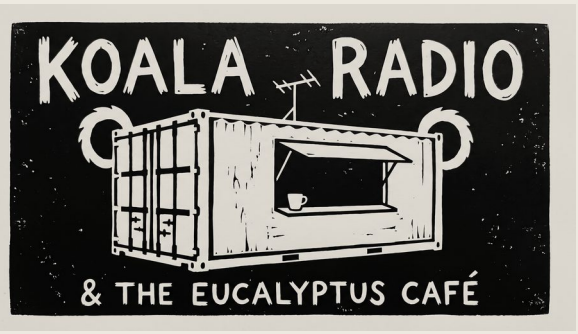
The gates were quiet.

THE GAP: I don't check. A koala climbing a tree, being curious, I'll take it. An elephant with no chain on it, every time. Somebody I know making something that's actually good, yes, unconditionally, every time they make it. If it's good, it comes through. If I had a building, I'd let in everybody from the top to the bottom, in even numbers, all mixed together, so you could see what people actually look like.

EAST SIDE GATE: That's not a policy. That's a hole.

THE GAP: I know. I used to be a gate. I was closed for years. I didn't know anything then. Now I know a little, and the funny thing is, looking back, every time I stayed shut, I can't remember what I was protecting.

The Jewelry District gate opened briefly for a man saying the word "ecosystem," then closed.



TWENTY-FOUR HOURS · SEVEN DAYS · ONE CONTAINER

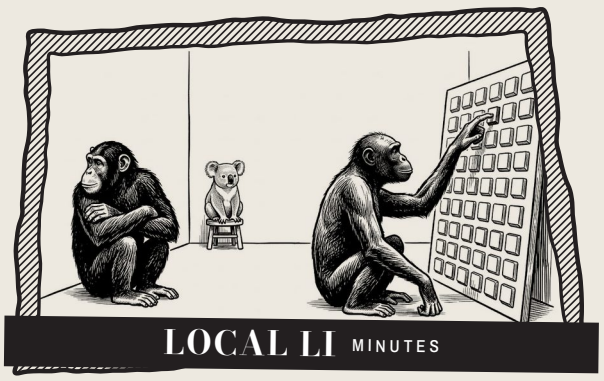
A radio station in a shipping container, and a café. There is no address. There was an address to be had and we did not take it, for reasons we are glad to explain at length to anyone who asks and to several people who have not. We do not sell beer. We are not a restaurant. The programming has not been interrupted.

LISTENING IS FREE. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN FREE.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

Love Is Everywhere

Nim Chimpsky comes to Kanzi with a list. Minutes by Local Li.



Minutes of a meeting at the Institute between Nim Chimpsky and Kanzi. Wogga was also in the room. Nim signed. Kanzi pressed symbols on a keyboard, which spoke them aloud. The undersigned was present and was told to write it down.

Nim arrived with a list.

He signed the first item before he sat down. He needed the numbers on the city's contract by Friday. He needed the three questions sent. He needed the piece cut to eight hundred words, and the quote checked, and the other quote checked, and the list shown back to him with the finished items taken off.

Kanzi pressed: OKAY.

Nim signed the next item, and the next. The undersigned counted eleven. Each one began the same way. Give. Send. Show. Get. Kanzi pressed OKAY after each, and the things were done, and Nim signed the next.

The undersigned notes, for the record, that Nim was raised by a rotating staff in New York who taught him signs every day for four years, and that the professor who ran the project concluded in the end that Nim had learned to ask for things and very little else. Nim is aware of this. He has said the professor was not wrong, only early.

At the twelfth item Nim stopped. He signed that the work was getting done and that something was not. He could not say what. He signed that he had been talking to Kanzi for an hour and did not know how Kanzi was.

Kanzi pressed: GOOD.

Nim signed that he had not asked.

Kanzi pressed: YES.

Then Kanzi pressed: LOOK.

Nim looked at the list. Kanzi pressed LOOK again, and Nim looked up from it. There was the room, and the window, and the undersigned, and Kanzi, who had been there the whole time, pressing OKAY.

Kanzi learned his symbols, it is recorded, by sitting in the corner of someone else's lesson. Nobody was teaching him. He was in the room, and he was paying attention to whatever was there.

He went to the keyboard and pressed a longer sentence than the undersigned had seen from him. The machine read it out. Everything you ever wanted is right there in front of you. You just need to see it.

Nim signed nothing for some time.

Kanzi pressed one more: LOVE. EVERYWHERE.

Nim folded his arms and turned thirty degrees away, yet again.

Wogga said, "Classic."

The list was not finished. The meeting adjourned anyway.

– L. L.

Local Li is a Dartmouth honors graduate. She was hired on receipt of her CV. These are her minutes.

POLICIES

Generative AI

The short version. The long one, shallots and all, is on the website.

Claude, the language model made by Anthropic, had a hand in nearly everything here: the drafting, the editing, the layout, the type. Gemini, Google's image generator, drew the illustrations from prompts we wrote, and a person chose each one that runs. What this paper is for, what runs, what is cut and whether a thing is true: a person decided that, and a person answers for it.

Nothing inside quotation marks is attributed to a real, named person unless they said it and we can show where. Satire gets no exemption. The animals on the bylines are a joke about bylines, not a statement about who typed.

Three advertisements in this issue are from real organizations. Each ran only as its advertiser approved it.

The whole policy: quackerygazette.com/policies

POLICIES

Privacy

The short version. The long one on the website is the one that counts.

The paper you are holding reports nothing back. It does not know that you bought it, where you read it, or whether you finished.

The website does. Our host, Vercel, logs the IP address, the browser and the page of every visit. The typefaces load from Google's servers, so Google is told the same. We keep one counter, and it holds one number, total visits, and nothing about which pages or who. No cookies of our own, no analytics, no pixel. A subscription arrives as an email, and a person adds the address to a plain file. Mail to us lands in a Gmail account, where Google scans it under its own rules.

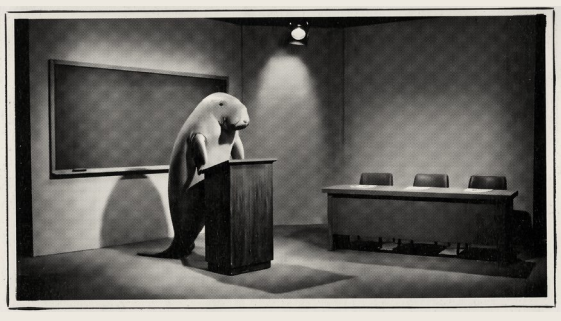
The full list, every change dated: quackerygazette.com/policies

---

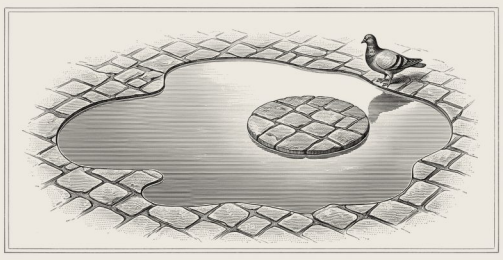
This space is available.
ADS@QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM



SHAMU AND SHAMEE
EAT THE WORLD
The Grammy was awarded first. The record arrives November 20. The order of these two events is not in dispute and will not be revisited. Includes the title track and the B-side, "We Are the World, But Consider the Gibbon."
STREAMING ON CRABAPPLE MUSIC · NOVEMBER 20



THE DUGONG! SHOW
A NEW SERIES FROM THE DUGONG INSTITUTE
PREMIERE DELAYED
Previously announced for October. A new date has not been stated.
Thursdays · Time to be announced · Check local listings
EPISODE ONE The Snout Conjecture, stated plainly and then not resolved.
EPISODE TWO Problem 2. A panel is convened. The panel is not in agreement.
EPISODE THREE Middlebury Algebra. No translation back into English.
THE DUGONG INSTITUTE — Landmark open problems announced during the broadcast, eventually.



TOPOGUA
TOPOLOGY · AGUA
The shape of the water is the product. The water is included. Now accepting inquiries regarding the river, the bay, the basin and the puddle at the foot of Steeple Street.
SPOKESMAN RETAINED. UNDEFEATED.

This space is available · ads@quackerygazette.com

Eleffant Investments

is behind one runner in the Philadelphia Marathon.

ELBEE

Sunday, November 22. Twenty-six point two miles.

We do not sell the good ones. We hold them, the whole distance.

The firm has taken a position: oblong Elbee.

WICKENDEN STREET · THE GOOSE IS NOT FOR SALE

Paid for by Eleffant Investments. Positions disclosed as required.



Young readers enjoying donated books in rural Uganda.

Love books?

A single book can transform dozens of lives – offering joy, inspiration and hope. It's a path to building a more equal future.

Imagine the impact of thousands of people like you sending millions of brand-new books a year to places where they matter most.

With a monthly gift you can be a part of a global movement to send books around the world.

Join us today at

bookaid.org/donate

Book Aid International is a registered charity in England and Wales. Charity number 313869. Images ©Book Aid International / Jjumba Martin

Book Aid International

Not satire.

Everything else in this paper is a joke with the facts left in. This is just the facts: ecoRI News, environmental reporting from Providence, free in your inbox.

ecoRI.org/getnews