

## COUNTER CULTURE

Sandy Rea

An unaccustomed chill in last night's air began the stirrings of the fall nesting ritual at our house. (Having lived here 9 years now, I feel safe in referring to our preparations as ritual.) The hub of our activities deals with wood -- its storage, stacking, splitting, abstract worship, and its eventual fate in one of our woodstoves.

I spend the spring and summer searching it out, locating piles of unwanted scrap wood, having cords delivered. The basement stove is small, and requires a short-cut log, so I spend hours splitting, gleaming, enjoying the smell of the just-exposed sap in each hunk the maul severs. This is done neither quickly nor efficiently. Its purpose has nothing to do with speed or competence, but more truly with the visceral enjoyment of the lush wood scent, and its symbolism within our home.

When we first moved here, I was sold "seasoned" cordwood by a pair of snakes who knew a greenhorn when they saw one: The Beagle Boys unloaded a pile of rounds in my backyard, all the while swearing as to the high quality of same. I didn't notice the live barnacles until the two were well gone, and, predictably enough, never to be heard from again.

Now, like all locals, I treasure a good woodman, and am pleased when buying cordwood coincides with helping the community. This year, a Scout troop was selling and delivering wood to raise money for an extensive trip. (The Fort Clatsop Order of the Arrow is a top-notch supplier, and worth calling if they still perform this service.)

Besides the wood, there are the related activities that signal the coming of colder weather; like making firestarters, an odd assemblage of pine cones and paraffin in a paper cupcake holder. We heat the paraffin on the basement woodstove in a long-retired camping coffeepot, adding the essential crayon for hue, all the while talking about what a good gift these would make to our friends who have fireplaces. (They never get any - we use them all ourselves.)

We remember to get cider, and cinnamon sticks, and begin planning the quiet and full-some nights to be spent in front of the cast iron fireplace insert in the living room. Books that we meant to read last winter begin suggesting themselves as treats for the coming bad weather. I buy candles at Newberry's (3/\$1), and put them into newly-polished holders; we have enough for the entire house, even sconces for the stairway. The copper potpourri warmer starts looking really good again, and the kitchen cupboards are checked to make sure they contain sufficient flour, butter, spices, sugar and cookie cutters for those long, cold, rainy afternoons when the Baking Goddess reawakens and demands the house be replete with the sumptuous fragrance of gingersnaps.

Skins of yarn begin their annual migration from the shelves in the den to the work bucket next to my reading chair in the living room. Myriad afghan starts, slippers, scarves, hats, and toys emanate, day by day, from the ever-growing acrylic pile at my side. I am reminded of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and of this mere mortal's inability to stem the flow of assorted ombres and heathers from their chosen path. Ignoring the inherent dangers, I fearlessly check the fliers for yarn sales.

Soon it will be time for the bi-yearly wardrobe switch, when the tank tops will go hide in the eaves while the turtle-necks emerge from storage. Each fall I have the opportunity to delight in the rediscovery of what excellent taste I have in picking sweaters; some are such a pleasant surprise that I would buy them all over again. Others, made by friends, remind me of the treasures we have in one another, and how the coming winter will allow time to write notes to all of them, to tell them so, late in the evening, by candle-light. As the year and I grow older, we meld.

## Picking Berries

Margi Curtis

I think I know why this time of year is called "Indian Summer". It has to do with berries. Wild blackberries and blue huckleberries hanging swollen, shining and ready.

On a September evening, after work, there remains an hour before dusk. This is my chance to get at the wild evergreen huckleberry bush that lives, so conveniently, in my front yard. The fruit adorns it like a holiday ornament, tiny, almost black, and thick enough to conjure images of jam.

Each little berry must be removed one at a time. Thornless branches and leaves make picking easy, but the accumulation of berries is slow. I realize it will take much longer than I have to gather enough for Christmas jam. In this realization is my disappointment that I could have thus far constructed a life for myself which doesn't allow enough time for berry picking.

So, I breathe. I let myself become absorbed in the rhythm of picking each beautiful little huckleberry. My bowl begins to get heavier. I look more closely at this marvelous plant, native to the green, wet coast. It was growing here when all the land was forest right down to the sand. The Indian women spent hours gathering berries in their hand-woven baskets. They ate a large amount of their pick, as the bears do, and dried the rest. Unlike me, they had time for this, because it was part of their survival.

In July, twenty years ago, I traveled to Nome, Alaska, located just above the Arctic Circle on the edge of the Bering Sea. Word was that I could find all the work I wanted in Nome. From the airplane window, my first view of this land were rolling hills of endless tundra, which grew a few feet atop permanently frozen sub-soil. Upon venturing into the hills outside of town, I found the tundra to be dotted everywhere with low-bush blue huckleberries, very much like those native to the alpine meadows of the Cascade Mountains. By the end of August, there would be berry picking! I felt at home.

One of the jobs I ended up with required me to stay awake at the front desk of the Nugget Inn Hotel from midnight to 8:00 a.m. Being a night desk clerk in Alaska in July allowed me to watch several "nights" which consisted of about an hour's worth of dusk before sunrise. The dusk increased in length every shift, until one night I saw a star for the first time in weeks. With the growing darkness, the berries began to ripen on the tundra.

At 8:00, Marilyn, the manager, would bound in all dressed in her Gold Rush Era dress. She was followed more quietly by the Eskimo women who cleaned the rooms and did the laundry. There were usually two, depending upon who decided to show up. Sometimes only one came, and then I worked until noon to help, which was fine by me. I was saving college money.

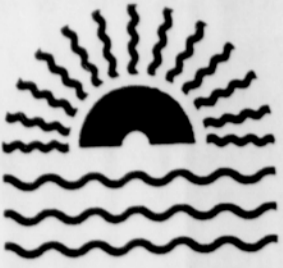
My favorite co-worker was Alma. We would spend hours folding sheets together in the basement laundry. We talked about our families, mostly. Alma was a grandmother and had a huge extended family. She was related to about half the people in Nome. I asked her questions about Eskimo ways; about how things were before white people came. She was quietest then and gave me short answers at first. Gradually, I think, she started to trust me. I felt some sense of another Alaska when I was with her. She was a peaceful woman, and a hard worker. When others showed up sporadically, Alma always came in on time.

One sunny, late summer morning, the day workers came in, but Alma wasn't with them. I checked the schedule, and her name was there. She usually came in with Lucy, so I asked her, "Hi Lucy. Where's Alma today?"

Her casual reply is still fresh in my memory. Her voice of deep Eskimo tones, with a Canadian/Indian combination of accents, the words formed with an unmovable jaw.

"Oh...prob'ly pickin' berries."

Every year, at least, those words come back to me. In late summer, when I pass wild berry bushes loaded with ripe fruit, I wonder about Alma. I, too, will often have those words be the ones to describe my whereabouts on sunny Indian Summer mornings when everyone else is at work. I will pick, as though it is part of my survival.



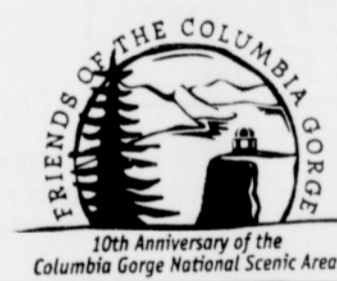
**BAGELS  
BY THE SEA**

**BAGEL FLAVORS**

Plain  
Sesame Seed  
Poppy Seed  
The Works  
Garlic • Onion  
Cheese & Jalapeno  
Asiago Cheese  
Tomato Herb  
Cinnamon Raisin  
Seven Grain  
Honey Nut\*  
Blueberry\*  
Cranberry Orange\*  
Pumpkin\* • Rye\*  
Sourdough\*  
Pumpernickel\*  
Pesto Parmesan\*  
Spinach Parmesan\*

\*These flavors rotate

575 SOUTH ROOSEVELT • HIGHWAY 101  
SEASIDE, OREGON • 97138 • 503.717.9145




### Friends of the Columbia Gorge

319 SW Washington, Suite 301  
Portland, Oregon 97204

**HOPE L. HARRIS**

LICENSED  
MESSAGE  
THERAPIST



503/ 325-2523

**WHEEL PRESS, INC.**

28 S.W. 1st Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
(503) 223-4027

JoAnn Honeyman Arthur Honeyman

**JIM WEATHERS  
CARPENTRY**



436-1885  
LICENSED • BONDED • INSURED



SEA STORIES  
LEA STORIES  
BOOK II

HOW TO  
MAKE A BOOK

**GAFF PRESS**

P.O. BOX 1024  
ASTORIA 97103  
(503) 325-8288

Edible Food  
Affordable Prices

**TRILLIUM  
NATURAL FOODS**

Lincoln City

47 N. HOLLADAY DR.  
SEASIDE, OR 97138  
738-8877

**UNIVERSAL VIDEO**

"ALL THE USUAL CRAP,  
AND LOTS OF GOOD STUFF  
Too."

STEVE HAUGEN  
JIM HAUGEN

### Important Message!

Cannon Beach area artists interested in submitting work for the Stormy Weather Arts Festival "Open Hanging" and the 1997 Cannon Beach Magazine please contact the Chamber of Commerce for more information.

Submissions are due:

Magazine: 10/25/96  
Stormy Weather: 10/30/96

(503) 436-2623