

SURRENDERING TO MOTHERHOOD

Washed up

Two weeks ago, our washing machine started making a bad noise — a clunking, clanking, death-rattling kind of noise.

It was the kind of noise no mom wants to hear when she has just started the first of five loads of laundry, including those really dirty area rugs.

A mom without access to a washing machine is totally sunk.

When the laundry stops, so does life at the Huffman House.

T-shirts are not washed. Running clothes stay stinky. Clean underwear runs out. Teens start complaining about WHERE are my JEANS? The whole family might as well pack up their remaining clean clothes and move to the jungle and leave civilization far, far behind.

If that wasn't enough, the machine broke down on the same weekend the youngest Huffman was showing two goats and four rabbits at the Napa Town & Country Fair.

In the history of broken washing machines, there could not be a worse time for a washing machine to stop washing.

On the last day of the fair, the animal owner comes home with a bag of the dirtiest, most animal-scented clothing ever.

Usually I make her dump her clothes the minute she steps into the house and then immediately quarantine the fair clothes inside the washing machine.

And our washer was not washing.

My husband — the guy who would normally call for a Sears repair person or tinker with the broken machine — was equally occupied by the fair. It could be days before he'd have time to do appliance triage.

This called for "disaster-mom" mode.

I grabbed a pile of only the most in-demand dirty clothes — the essentials, shall we say — and decided to wash them in the bathtub.

I filled the tub with about 6 inches of warm water, added some soap and dumped in the clothes.

Then I took off my shoes and started my own personal agitating machine. Stomp, stomp, stomp. Just like squishing grapes, I figured.

After a nice soak and rinse, I wrung out the "clean" clothes and put them in the dryer. Dear Dryer: Thank you for not abandoning me like your younger companion who apparently

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SUSAN MERLE PHOTO

Icebergs bask in sun in the Arctic off the coast of Greenland.

Greenland's floating ice masterpieces

The Arctic Ocean freezes up a bumper crop for tourists

DOMINICK AND SUSAN MERLE

Why can't we stop taking so many photos of ice?

Andre can't, either. He's the official photographer of our expedition who's been traveling in this neck of the world for decades.

Or Charlotte, often referred to as "The Ice Queen," who knows more about frozen water than Johnny Walker and Jack Daniels put together.

"Oh my! Mon Dieu!" Andre shouted between clicks.

"This is a true bumper crop," said Charlotte. "Like nothing I have ever seen before."

We are sailing in the Arctic Ocean off the western coast of Greenland gazing — almost hypnotically — at what seems to be hundreds of icebergs of all sizes, shapes and colors floating by, proudly, as in a spectacular parade.

Now, viewing icebergs is no big deal up here. But it is extremely rare to see so many of them in one area for as far as the eye can see.

"They look like the Allied fleet heading to Normandy on D-Day in WWII," I said.

"Oh no," Charlotte responded. "They are gentle, more like milky clouds floating on the sea."

After a few more lame compar-



SUSAN MERLE PHOTO

The colors of Ilulissat, Greenland, are vivid and bold.

isons — for the sight was clearly indescribable — we considered the dazzling colors, a blend of ice white at the core with borders of blue and aqua reflecting into the waters.

And then, the unique shapes and sizes, some seemingly as large as our ship, others tiny as tugboats.

Actually, it was a twist of nature that brought us to this part of the ocean and this magnificent ice parade.

Our expedition ship, the MS Ocean Endeavor, was specifically designed to explore Polar regions. But itineraries are very flexible in the Arctic because of swift weather changes.

If you go

Pack layered clothing, strictly casual, and good hiking shoes. This is no tuxedo-dinner-with-the-captain cruise. Boots for Zodiac cruises and wet landings are provided by Adventure Canada.

Binoculars and a camera with a zoom of about 200 will work fine.

The cruise and land hikes are geared for all ages and physical ability, from vigorous to tender-foot.

It is a truly flexible tour. Itineraries often change due to weather or wild animal danger.

Zodiac rides can be splashy; rain pants would help.

For information on Adventure Canada's Arctic cruises, email info@adventurecanada.com.

While Greenland is the largest island in the world, an enormous triangle of land some 1,800 miles long and 700 miles across, 95 percent is covered with a blanket of ice almost 2 miles thick! Most of its estimated 56,000 inhabitants live in scattered villages on the west coast.

The colorful houses — red, blue, purple, green — look as if they dropped from the sky, landing every which way. The longest road in the country, a bumpy one

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Seattle and beyond with NVC

TRUDEE LEWIS

Seattle is a two-hour flight away from San Francisco. But a new Napa Valley College trip, a new tour exploring the Pacific Northwest coastal areas, uncovered an interesting area for me.

Starting in Seattle, we met Chuck Tracy, the excellent tour manager for the 36 Americans from many different states who gathered in this historic port city, surrounded on three sides by water, which is probably why 1 in 6 people have boats. Seattle's population is about 652,000 with the average age around 27. There are 50,000 children but 150,000 registered dogs, who enjoy dog lounges, spas and day care.

This Californian so enjoyed the abundance of green plants and mild temperatures. Overflowing flower baskets were on each lamppost, and biospheres were being built downtown to house more plants.

Seattle's thriving economic scene includes The Hudson Bay Co., Boeing, Nordstrom, Star-



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRUDEE LEWIS

The Space Needle in Seattle, Washington.

bucks, Amazon.com, Microsoft, salmon fishing, lumber and their sports teams, the Seahawks and the Mariners, who were saved by wealthy investors. Favorite tourist attractions are the Space Needle, Chihuly Glass Museum and Pike

Place Market.

The best part of the tour was onboard a chartered boat, the Chinook, cruising around the San Juan Islands while watching seals, bald eagles and orcas. We only saw a few fins of orcas when they came up for air while feeding. We learned that because of global warming, there are fewer salmon for the orcas to eat, so the big pods have broken up.

We stopped at two of the 172 islands in the San Juan archipelago. The first was Sucia Island, which has fossils on the beach that are millions of years old, and the second was the big island of San Juan. The overnight stay in Friday Harbor gave us an experience of quaint village life.

The Chinook captain told us about the 1859 Pig War, started when an American farmer shot a British pig eating his potatoes on his land. This caused the British and Americans to prepare for a fight over these islands. The issue

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MEMORY LANE

Wine writing in Napa Valley, circa 1871

For 145 years or so, the local harvest has enticed wine enthusiasts to visit Napa Valley and county. According to an 1871 Napa County Reporter article, those visitors enjoy tasting the local wines, especially "the bubbly."

Titled "A Visit to Mr. Woodward's Distillery," the article also gradually revealed the very human side of its journalist, a Mr. Twigg: "On last Wednesday afternoon Twigg, our mutual friend, in company with some of our distinguished citizens, paid a visit to the extensive distillery and vineyard of Gen. Wm. Woodward, some two to



REBECCA YERGER

three miles west of town. "The afternoon was well calculated for the enjoyment of fine spirits. We regret exceedingly that he (Twigg) did enjoy them to such an extent as not to be able to give a very satisfactory account of what he saw, did, heard, and tasted."

Although the pleasant perks of his assignment blurred his faculties, the reporter was able to recount some of the details of his visit to his colleagues. His condition was so relaxed, however, his colleagues had to write his article.

They wrote, "We ascertained, however, that the hospitable General was met on his road to town, but promising to return immediately, the party kept on and were shown the sights by

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UPCOMING EVENTS

TODAY

AUG. 29

VETERANS ART SHOW — Veterans Home of California Yountville, 260 California Drive, Yountville, presents “A Rainbow of Art” featuring works by California veterans who live at the Veterans Home. The show, which is held at the Member Services Center, is open daily from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Free admission.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOK SALE — Friends of the Napa Library hosts its seasonal Book Sale at the Napa County Library, 580 Coombs St., Napa, from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Info, countyofnapa.org/library/fol; 253-4614.

RANDY FOISEY — Randy Foisey performs at RaeSet, 3150B Jefferson St., Napa, at 7 p.m. Free admission. Info, facebook.com/eatraset; 666-2475.

TUESDAY

AUG. 30

NAPA FARMERS MARKET — Napa Farmers Market is open from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at South Napa Century Center, 195 Gasser Drive, Napa. The market offers the best locally grown, farm-direct produce and gourmet food. Info, napa-farmersmarket.org, 501-3087; napafm-manager@gmail.com.

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COFFEE & CULTURE — St. Helena Public Library, 1492 Library Lane, St. Helena, hosts its new group Coffee & Culture, which meets from 10:30-11:30 a.m. The group watches documentaries and discusses featured topics. Free admission. Info, shpl.org.

PINOCHLE — Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa, hosts games of pinochle for players 50 and older at 1 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

AUG. 31

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOK SALE — Friends of the Napa Library hosts its seasonal Book Sale at the Napa County Library, 580 Coombs St., Napa, from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Info, countyofnapa.org/library/fol; 253-4614.

MEXICAN TRAIN DOMINOS — Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa, hosts Mexican Train Dominos for players 50 and older from 1:30 p.m.

New players welcome. An instructor will help you learn so you can join in the fun. Info, 255-1800.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS WORKSHOP — Rianda House Senior Activity Center, 1475 Main St., St. Helena, hosts the workshop An Introduction to Essential Oils at 3 p.m. Learn how to use natural remedy options to promote physical and emotional wellness. Free admission. RSVP required. Info, 963-8555.

TRIVIA NIGHT — Jax Diner, 1122 First St., Napa, hosts trivia night from 7-8:30 p.m. Free admission. To register to play, call 812-6853. Info, derekmclintick@gmail.com.

ALL JAZZED UP — Join acclaimed pianist Mike Greensill for an evening of music history, storytelling and friendship at Silo's, 530 Main St., Napa, at 5 p.m. Immerse yourself in The Great American Songbook with classic tunes ranging from Gershwin to Fitzgerald and everything in between. Free admission. Info, silosnapa.com; 251-5833.

WEDNESDAY JAZZ NIGHT — Wednesday is Jazz Night at RaeSet, 3150B Jefferson St., Napa, from 6-11 p.m. Free admission. Info, facebook.com/eatraset; 666-2475.

OPEN MIC — Napa County Library, 580 Coombs St., Napa, hosts an open mic at 6 p.m. Free admission. Info, 299-1764.

JOURNEY DAY — Journey Day performs at RaeSet, 3150B Jefferson St., Napa, at 7 p.m. Free admission. Info, facebook.com/eatraset; 666-2475.

THURSDAY

SEPT. 1

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOK SALE — Friends of the Napa Library hosts its seasonal Book Sale at the Napa County Library, 580 Coombs St., Napa, from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Info, countyofnapa.org/library/fol; 253-4614.

CRIBBAGE — Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa, hosts cribbage games for players 50 and older from 1-3 p.m. Free admission. Info, 255-1800.

LIVE MUSIC ON THE PATIO — Nate Lopez performs at River Terrace Inn, 1600 Soscol Ave., Napa, from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Free admission. Info, RiverTerraceInn.com; 320-9000.

TAMMY SCHEFFER — Tammy Scheffer performs at Silo's, 530 Main St., Napa, from 7-10 p.m. Tickets are \$20-\$25. Info, silosnapa.com; 251-5833.

JIMMY SMITH BAND — Jimmy Smith Band performs at Priest Ranch Winery, 6490 Washington St., Yountville, from 6-9 p.m. Free admission. Info, priestbranchwines.com/events.

TABLETOP GAMING NIGHT — Napa County Library hosts tabletop gaming night at the Napa Valley College Student Center, 2277 Napa Valjeo Highway, Napa, from 6-9 p.m. Snacks provided. Free admission. Info, 299-1764.

Yerger

From CI

‘John,’ the genial Portuguese, who acts as ‘first man’ in the preparation of brandy and sherry. Entering the champagne department they found some three-thousand bottles of this sparkling beverage undergoing the second of the many manipulations which it is obliged to pass.’

The newspaper went on to describe the aging process. “In this stage, the bottles are placed cork down for the purpose of allowing the sediment to collect in the neck of the bottle. Some little curiosity being manifested as to how it was then disposed of, the man in charge made an example of the bottle under examination by cutting the string, whereupon away flew the cork, the sediment following, and out gushing the pure liquid in a stream of snow-white foam.”

As the article continued it became increasingly clear as to why Twigg was unable to meet his deadline. “The champagne underwent inspection with the assistance of glasses, and though it is not mature, the party expressed themselves as having tasted no better California champagne. Twigg says he couldn’t distinguish it from the best Heidsieck, but this is probably owing to his tarried too long by the side of the sherry and brandy casks.”

Based on the reporter’s description, it seems Woodward’s sparkling wine production was fairly large for its time. “Next, but by no means least, they were shown some 15,000 gallons of champagne in its first or primary stage, and a fine sample of ‘vermouth.’ Here Twigg was overcome as by a summer cloud; and not withstanding the host, upon his return home, conducted the party over the entire premises and submitted his various brands to a second test, our hero’s appreciation, like his words, failed to increase in distinctness or fitness, and the staple of his conversation since has been ‘vermouth.’”

Also based on the information in this article, it is highly probable it took Twigg’s considerable amount of time before he could live down his excessive enjoyment of General Woodward’s libations.

The article revealed, just like today, 19th-century Napa had locally produced sparkling wine to toast their special celebrations as well as their everyday occasions. Cheers!

Editor’s note: Since 1871, however, the wine world has agreed that only sparkling wine made in the Champagne region of France can properly be called Champagne. The rest is sparkling wine.

Rebecca Yerger is a Napa-based writer and historian. Email her at yergerenterprises@yahoo.com.

Huffman

From CI

is now “too good” to wash clothes.

Two days later, the Huffman clean laundry supply was holding steady.

Of course the #Throwback-Thursdays pioneer washtub experiment couldn’t go on forever.

Luckily, the fair was over and my husband could give the broken washer some attention.

I came home the next day to find both my husband and the guts of the washer on the floor. “Look at this,” he said, holding out a small plastic tube.

Apparently our washing machine has a little trap thingy inside it. Who knew?

He showed me the inside of the trap.

Along with lots of slimy black

gunk there were half a dozen bobby pins, two single earrings, a mini domino, 85 cents in change, and many chunks of school yard bark, which we now can report is truly indestructible.

Next, he opened up the machine’s motor. And that’s when he saw it. The washing machine breaker.

A twisted bobby pin had lodged itself inside the motor, next to a spinning thing that was definitely not.

He pulled out the bobby pin villain and put the washing machine back together.

He turned it on. Swish, swish, swish, went the washer.

Surrendering to Motherhood appears every other Monday. Follow Jennifer on Twitter: @NVRHuffman.



SUSAN MERLE PHOTO

Travelers on the Zodiac are framed by an iceberg.

Greenland

From CI

is less than 10 miles. If you want to go any farther, you hitch up your dog sled, paddle a kayak or simply take your chances and drive across the ice.

Fishing and hunting are not mere sports, but a way of life and survival. While Greenland is subsidized by its mother country of Denmark, where many of the first settlers came from, all packaged and canned food are imported and extremely expensive, often two to three times the prices in North America. For example, a head of lettuce, is about \$6.

Consequently, seal, whale, reindeer, muskox and just about anything else on land or sea are staples at the Greenland dinner table. We sampled a little of each during our stops along the western coast; most of it was chewy and none of it tasted like the proverbial “just like chicken.”

Despite the high price of living, we found the Greenlanders genuinely friendly and content with their harsh lifestyle. They’d quickly pose for our cameras, and often just as quickly pull out their own digitals and ask us to do the same.

It was at the town of Ilulissat where the fog and ice prevented our crossing over to Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic, but gave us the good fortune of witnessing that awesome display of icebergs. Perhaps it wasn’t just happenstance; the name Ilulissat translates into “iceberg.”

We heard the superlatives “awesome” and “amazing” quite often from the expedition staff during our 12-day Adventure Canada cruise. The 20-some experts aboard seemed almost like missionaries for the wild Arctic. But while it was repetitious, it didn’t sound like pure hype, but more like pure excitement.

Many of them wore different hats — lecturing one day, piloting the inflatable Zodiacs the next and often armed with shotguns once we crossed over to the Canadian Arctic where polar bears are the undisputed kings of the food chain.

Our first stop on the Canadian side was Mittimatilik (Pond Inlet) on the east coast of Baffin Island, a bustling community by Arctic standards, a one-horse town just about anywhere else. However, it is surrounded by one



SUSAN MERLE PHOTO

Greenland girls wear costumes for a ceremonial dance.

of the most beautiful landscapes in the Arctic.

Mittimatilik is also the home base for many rare marine mammals, including the almost legendary narwhal, often described as the “unicorn of the sea.” The huge narwhals, part of the whale family, catch cod and halibut with their spear-like unicorn tusks and rarely come to surface.

“I’ve taken at least 25 expeditions up here and have never seen one,” said Dave, our mammal expert on board.

The cod-halibut menu sets well with the narwhals, for their lifespan often exceeds 120 years. However, they can rarely survive one year in captivity. (So much for civilization.)

After viewing a cultural show in Mittimatilik, we made a few more stops in the sprawling Nunavut territory, which, at about 2 million kilometers, represents almost one-fifth of Canada. Yet, despite its size, its population would not even fill a typical football stadium.

Nunavut has been inhabited by the indigenous Inuit people for about 4,000 years. They are world famous for their artwork and carvings and live in remote villages only accessible by plane or boat. Life here is even more difficult than on the coast of Greenland.

Although Nunavut is a Canadian territory, the Inuit retain direct title to 350,000 square kilometers, an area equal to the size of New Mexico.

Now, we sail to our final adventure, Devon Island, the largest uninhabited island on earth encompassing more than 50,000

square kilometers. NASA has been conducting research for possible colonization of Mars on Devon Island for the past 20 years. And for good reason, for Devon Island seems not of this world.

However, we are in search of polar bears, the undisputed stars of our Arctic adventure.

But oddly enough, whenever bears were sighted by our advance shotgun-toting scouts, we weren’t allowed on shore for our own safety, but could only view the carnivorous beasts from the ship with binoculars. We saw several fully grown polar bears swimming and walking along the shore line.

We also saw a number of seals pop their heads out of the sea like periscopes, also keeping a safe distance from the bears, which have a strong preference for seal meat.

After sailing 1,800 nautical miles, our Arctic safari was now complete. While we didn’t see a whale or a muskox, and definitely no narwhals — polar bears, seals, a couple of arctic hares and a few reindeer were on our viewing and (sometimes) dining menu.

But in any event, Greenland’s “awesome, amazing, colossal, incredible, hypnotic” iceberg parade (my superlatives, not theirs) would have been an extremely tough act to follow.

Dominick and Susan Merle are Montreal-based travel photojournalists. Dominick is co-founder of the International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association. Email: dmerle@videotron.ca.

Seattle

From CI

was settled by generals when the Canada/U.S. border was established along the Haro Strait. The British moved onto Vancouver Island.

The cruise ended in beautiful Victoria, British Columbia, home to the grand Empress Hotel as well as many shops, restaurants, hotels, markets and lovely homes. Horse-and-carriage ride travel through the city, and the active harbor is water taxis, boats and water planes.

Victoria is called “the Garden City,” and its most famous gardens are at Butchart, begun in early 1920s, when the Butcharts turned their depleted quarry into 55 acres of gardens. The Sunken Garden, which was a quarry hole, is the most visually stunning. On the grounds are fountains, ponds, a bog garden, the Rose garden, the Japanese garden and the Italian garden. Even the trash cans had gardens on top.

We finished our visit in Victoria with a tour of the Craigdarroch Castle built by the Dunsmirs, before taking the Coho ferry to Port Angeles, Washington. From there we drove to the Hoh rain forest. A naturalist showed us the spruce, fir, cedar and hemlock trees cov-



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRUDEE LEWIS

The Sunken Garden at Butchart Gardens in Brentwood Bay, British Columbia.

ered with moss hanging down and ferns covering the forest floor. The rain forest gets about 150 inches of rain a year. Wow.

The final tour climbed up to Hurricane Ridge to see the Olympic Mountains. Composed of basaltic and oceanic sedimentary rock, the area had once been under the ocean 10 million to 20 million years ago. Because the mountains receive a lot of snow each year, they still had snow and glaciers in summer. Mount Olympus is the tallest peak at 7,965 feet. The wind can blow so hard on Hurricane Ridge that it peels bark off the

trees. Blacktail deer were grazing in the green meadows with no fear of people.

On the way back to Seattle, we stopped at The Sunshine Lavender Farm for the Lavender Festival, where everything lavender was for sale, including lavender ice cream. I learned that there are 39 species of lavender and 400 varieties. It was a lovely ending to a wonderful Pacific Northwest tour.

To take this tour, or any other Collette tour, contact Jenny Sercu, Napa Valley College trips and tours, at 707-967-2940, or email jsercu@napavalley.edu.