

THE GUILFORD REGISTER

ADVENTURES & STORIES FROM THE MAINE HIGHLANDS



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The Sun Sets On Another Year

By John McNamara

Sunset. I love a bright, fiery sunset, especially here in Maine. They exist in other places, sure, but none are as majestic as those we have here. On a recent visit to Sebec Lake with friends, we enjoyed another incredible sunset. One of the images captured during that excursion graces the cover of this issue, reminding us of the beauty of this corner of the world.

As our boat sped across the lake at dusk, the dry, cool air filling our lungs, the sunset hit me in a new way. It made me think about the end of a phase with our teenager. I remember the day he was born like it was yesterday. It was, hands down, the most amazing day of my life—scary and nerve-racking, sure, but also wonderful. Every day after has been an adventure; a moment of panic; a moment of teaching; a moment of my own learning. It has also been one day closer to him leaving.

In his early years, anytime he enjoyed a sleepover at a friend's house or a visit with his Mimi, Lisa would fret—worry about her baby being away from her. I would tease her, of course, and explain that it was temporary. He needed to get out of the house and away from his parents now and again; he needed to grow. That banter lasted more than a decade. It always played out the same way and became a running joke—questioning how she planned to handle it when he went off to college—left the nest for good.

We are not quite there yet—college is still two years away, but this month he turns 17, and this year we begin looking at colleges. I knew this day would come. I knew he would get older—was getting older each year—and with each passing year, I gave a little more; accepted the natural space that needed to grow between us. But now that we are in what feels like the final stretch, I am the one having the hard time accepting that he will be gone soon. He will leave a void in my everyday life. I will miss hugging him good night or good morning. I will miss our banter about technology and cars. I will miss everything about him.

I want my child to grow up and be the best person he can be, and yes, we have spent the last 16 years teaching him how to cook, clean, and iron. We have spent this time nurturing him and showing him, by example, how to be kind, how treat people with respect, and how remain neutral when necessary. The challenge has been that our son is crazy smart—a sponge soaking up knowledge, regardless of the source's credibility. He says he “does not like school,” but he loves to learn. That is evident in his grades and in his teachers' feedback. And honestly, given the upheaval two years ago when we plucked him away from the group of friends he had since kindergarten and dropped him into central Maine, he has done quite well—thrived in many cases. We will take some credit for that—for teaching him the ways of the world over the years so that he could cope with such a drastic change, but also continuously imprinting him with the importance of empathy and compassion.

I know we are not alone. I know tens of millions of parents go through this every year—some have to do it multiple times, peeling that band-aid off more than once. For us, or at least for me, this one time is going to be hard enough.

And to be honest, I am not worried about losing my child. He has already been preparing us for his departure. With the issuance of a driver's license and the gift of a car, he has shown us what life without him looks like—sounds like—feels like. It is teaching Lisa and me how to exist without the one thing—the one person—who has bound us so tightly for so long. So, no, I am not worried about losing him. I am worried about losing the quality connection—the honest conversations; the small stuff that weaves through our lives every day. What I am also worried about is all the mistakes he will make.

I know he will make mistakes. He already makes a lot of them: bad decisions with ripple effects. Hell, I made more than my share of mistakes at his age. Of course, when I was his age, I did not have the guardrails he has today. My parents had been divorced for a long time by the time I was Jack's age. My life then was littered with verbal hatred between parents: custody battles; arguments; fighting; blaming—all the things that make it difficult for a teenager, for any child, to grow up with loving guidance. I am not saying that my parents did not love me. I think they just hated each other more, so their focus (at least from the perspective of a naive teen like me) was not on my best interests or my future growth. Jack does not have that. In fact, he has the opposite, and I have spent my life as a parent ensuring that to be true.

But here we are. I am bracing for the day when the sun sets on this phase of our lives together. I am bracing for the day when his decisions are all his own, not those guided by Lisa and me. And maybe I have been thinking about this all wrong. Maybe I should see this as just the next phase in our relationship. As I said, I know he is not leaving us for good.

This next phase, however challenging it may be for me—for the three of us—is the necessary evolution of being a family. I am not really ready for it, but I will embrace it if it means more time with him. Besides, Lisa has already informed Jack and me that we will be buying an house in whatever city Jack lives in so he will never really be that far away from us.



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The Best Hiking Trails in Piscataquis County

By John McNamara

So you're thinking about hiking up this way. Good. I'll be honest with you right off the bat — when people from away picture Maine, they're usually picturing the coast. Lobster boats, lighthouses, that kind of thing. But the real wild Maine, the Maine that makes your legs ache in the best way, and your phone loses signal for hours at a time, that's up here in Piscataquis County. We've got more moose than people in some parts of this county, and the hiking reflects that.

Start Easy: The Guilford River Walk

If you just rolled into town and aren't sure your legs are ready for a mountain yet, start at the Guilford Memorial River Walk. It follows along the Piscataquis River right through the town of Guilford, and it's about as low-key as hiking gets around here — flat, scenic, and it's over before you've even worked up a sweat. It's a good way to stretch your legs after a long drive and get a feel for the place. Plus, you'll pass through one of our prettier little downtowns, with the old Victorian homes and maple trees lining some of the streets. Not a bad way to spend twenty minutes before you tackle something with actual elevation.

Borestone Mountain: The One I Send Everybody To

Honest answer — if a flatlander asks me for one hike, this is the one I send them to. Borestone Mountain Sanctuary, just outside Monson, is the perfect blend of "worth the effort" and "won't destroy you." You're looking at about 4 miles round-trip, with nature stations along the way that'll keep you occupied even if you're not the type to stop and read every plaque.

What you're after is the summit. At just under 2,000 feet, it's not a giant by Maine standards, but the view from up top — Sebec Lake spread out below you, the old Onawa Trestle in the distance — will make you forget your calves are screaming. Bring binoculars if you've got them. Birders go a little nuts for this trail, and once you're up there, you'll understand why.

Gulf Hagas: Our "Grand Canyon"

Now, if you want to see locals get genuinely excited, mention Gulf Hagas. We call it the Grand Canyon of Maine, and we don't say that to be cute — it's a series of dramatic gorges and waterfalls cut into the slate up near Brownville, and there's really nothing else like it east of the Mississippi. This one's not for the faint of heart. It's a serious hike, the kind where you want real boots, plenty of water, and a full day blocked off. But the payoff is waterfall after waterfall, with the trail hugging the rim of the gorge in spots that'll get your heart going a little.

Get directions before you head out — the access roads back there can be confusing if you've never driven logging roads before, and cell service is not something you can count on. That's not me being dramatic, that's just how it is up here.

Walk a Piece of the Appalachian Trail

Here's a fun one for the bucket-list crowd: the Appalachian Trail itself runs right through Monson. You don't have to be one of those thru-hikers who've been walking since Georgia to enjoy it — you can park right at the trailhead and do a day hike on the same trail that ends at Katahdin. There's something about standing on the AT that gets people, even folks who've never hiked a day in their life before. Monson's also the last real town before the famous "100-Mile Wilderness," so if you're around when the thru-hikers are coming through (usually mid-to-late summer), you'll see them resupplying, looking equal parts exhausted and thrilled.

If You're Feeling Ambitious: Barren Mountain and Big Moose

For hikers who want something with a bit more bite and a bit less company, Barren Mountain is out past Borestone on the same general road system. Fair warning — this trail isn't as well-traveled, so the path can be rougher and less obvious in spots. Go with someone, tell people where you're headed, and keep your wits about you.

Over toward Moosehead Lake, Big Moose Mountain (a lot of old-timers still call it Big Squaw) climbs to nearly 3,200 feet and gives you the best view of the whole Moosehead region you'll find anywhere. It's a real climb, not a stroll, but the panorama at the top — lake after lake, mountain after mountain — is the kind of thing that makes you understand why people move up here and never leave.

(HIKING, continued on page 10)



piscataquisforward.org



THE LIBRARY SHELF

SHORT STORIES, POEMS & CHAPTERS WRITTEN BY MAINE AUTHORS

Each month we will highlight a short story, poem or serial written by a Maine author. If you are a Maine writer, or know of one who would like to be showcased here, reach out to us at john@theguilfordregister.com

Broken

By John Paul

Country music quietly echoed through the pub. You had to listen carefully to comprehend the song playing; otherwise, it was just white noise—loud enough to know the DJ was doing her job, but not loud enough that you could sing along.

It was still early. Happy Hour had barely begun, yet some patrons were already slung over the bar, passed out—remnants of the lunchtime crowd, no doubt. In one of the booths directly across from the bar, too many girls were crammed into the small space, all drinking white wine spritzers. One was wearing a veil; her bachelorette party was in motion. Their cheers and excited screams drowned the music out even more.

The Drunken Unicorn is not a large pub—not by American standards—but was significant by London standards. Inside, a single bar runs along one wall while the other is lined with booths. There were many high-top tables down the middle for Happy Hour, but they get put away as the night goes on, and the late-night, younger crowd moves in to take over. At the back of the pub is a large dance floor, accompanied by smaller booths. Near the entrance, on either side, is a set of spiral stairs that lead to a catwalk that wraps the entire pub. It is more private up top—standing room only—and an excellent place for someone to make out in a dark corner or scope out their next target. It was my favorite pub.

I've been in many pubs all over London, and I have been in my share of dive bars in Boston and around Burlington, and they all have one thing in common, aside from being filled with drunk idiots, I mean. They are all filled with easy prey. It is scary—sad even, when you think about how pathetic people are, especially the ones you find in a bar. I find myself creating ways to challenge myself and even challenge my victims—almost giving them an unspoken warning. The smart ones would heed that warning and write me off as some asshole in the bar. But the weak or vain ones get so wrapped up in my words—my good looks, and before they know it, well, they... don't ever make it to another bar.

The challenge for me, sometimes, is deciding which idiot to lure in. This night was one of the easier nights. The pub was already a happening spot. It usually was on a Wednesday night, which always seemed odd. How is the middle of the week the one night when everyone decides to go out, stay out late, and get pissed? They have to work the next day and the day after, but that does not stop them. Even back in Boston, it didn't matter what night of the week it was—the bars were always packed.

This particular night, I thought of finally talking to the cute bartender. We've been playing that game—the one where I stare at him, he looks up at me, and I turn away, then we switch roles, and it goes back and forth like that for hours—for days. For us, it has been months. I am supposed to be the strong one—in control, but there is something about him, this bartender, that makes me weak in the knees.

I watched him move back and forth behind the bar like a relay swimmer—smooth and in control. He had a rhythm. It was mesmerizing. I finally decided to go up to the bar—this was going to be my moment, but as I approached, he got called to the other end of the bar. I was left standing, waiting.

Then I found myself almost humping the bar as my two new 'friends' sat like bookends, holding me captive while they sat captivated by my story, another monologue about my youth. The bartender heard many of my stories over the last few weeks—some more than once. This night was a new one, I think. I finally had the bartender's attention, but I was stuck—no, stuck is not the right word. Stuck would imply that I was trapped and could not get out of the situation. I could tell you that I lost my courage to talk with him, but the reality was that as I approached the bar, I found someone weak—someone looking to be attended to in a way that would turn out badly for them, and I felt compelled to feed my inner urge, to try and fix what was broken.

I recall one specific day vividly. I was playing in our backyard, or at least what my parents called a backyard. I was not doing anything special. I was keeping myself occupied while my parents fought inside. I did not know at the time, but looking back, I now understand that the violence I witnessed that day triggered something in my brain—it woke me up and pushed me down a path I still struggle to walk today.



"That is so fascinating," the boy said, not listening to me as much as he was enjoying the movement of my lips.

Our neighborhood was a collection of mobile homes—I think you call them caravans here—with no private backyards. Everyone shared the open space of dirt and weeds between each of the dilapidated structures we called home. As that 4-year-old child, I believed there were hundreds of mobile homes in the area, but as

an adult, I learned there were a dozen or so, all in disarray. Almost none exist there today—at least not in a liveable state. Regardless, the place I called home at the time did not provide the best living conditions for me. It is safe to say that my life was destined for trouble from the very beginning.

"Oh, you poor thing," the girl chimed in. "That can't be true. Look at you now, a handsome stud." She gripped my bulging bicep—holding tightly, almost as if trying to hurt me and turn me on at the same time. I am pretty sure she found me quite dreamy—a lollipop she wanted to lick all day. She was one of those girls who you know is always watching the door—always looking for

(BROKEN, continued on page 9)

He Done Me Wrong

By Walter Boomsma

Getting a fresh start sometimes means letting go of a grudge. I recall watching a friend's relationship with his daughter-in-law go bad. Of course, I only heard one side of the story, so I was spared the agony of having to arbitrate and was able to focus on how my friend was coping with the situation.

At one point, he admitted that several people suggested he apologize to diffuse the anger and tension. He said, "I can't do that. It would be like the victim apologizing to the mugger." In his opinion, he'd been tragically wronged, and it just didn't make sense to do anything except be hurt and angry.

His analogy of being mugged intrigued me since I was mugged at gunpoint some years ago. While it didn't destroy me, the experience did exact a toll. For some time, I was a bit paranoid in parking lots at night. If a car approached, I instinctively tensed. And I carried around more hurt, fear, and anger than I realized for a while.

Then it dawned on me that my own feelings about the incident made me more of a victim than the actual robbery. (In much the same way, my friend's feelings are making him the victim. It would appear the guilty party is not living in constant agony and hurt. If what my friend says is true, she's actually quite happy to be rid of him and is probably taking great pleasure in his pain.)

In situations like these, it pays to keep things simple and approach them with a certain lack of passion. Most people would say I had every right to feel the way I did—we do have laws against that sort of thing. But the fact remained that those feelings were getting me nowhere.

They were actually limiting me and making me miserable. I considered what I contributed. I did provide him with an opportunity. Yes, rationally, one should be able to walk through a parking lot at night, but there are risks, and I chose to take them. In that regard, I suppose I "shared the blame" for what happened. The simple physics is that every criminal needs a victim. So while I don't take all the responsibility for his choices and actions, I'm "sorry" for giving him a temptation he, in his weakness, couldn't resist. (I'm not real sorry—just a little.)

My most important contribution came after the robbery. That's when "I done me wrong." I doubt that he intended to make me paranoid, angry, and fearful. He simply wanted my money. The rest of the stuff was, more accurately, "my fault." In the long term, I was making myself the victim. His power and control over me only lasted for those few minutes he had the gun pointed my way. When he and his gun were gone, so was his influence. Once I realized the effect of the incident, my thoughts about him changed dramatically.

I can't honestly say that I've totally forgiven the guy. He was eventually caught after several more robberies and beating up an elderly couple. I was more than willing to go to court, but not to apologize to him. My fresh start was not about forgiveness and apology. (Many times, apologies are in order when incidents escalate and things are subsequently said and done in anger and frustration.) Most fresh starts are about what is controlling us.

A fresh start doesn't mean throwing caution to the wind and putting oneself in jeopardy. I can deal with this guy. I'd actually be willing to meet him again. But probably not in a dark parking lot.

Getting a fresh start means focusing on the future and what you can control. It doesn't matter where you are. What matters is where you are going next. Life's too short to be a victim of your own fear or grudge or anger.



*Walter Boomsma is an educator, writer, and the author of *Small People—Big Brains*. With a background in teaching and public speaking, he blends practical wisdom with a deep appreciation for lifelong learning. His work often explores themes of personal growth, communication, and community engagement, encouraging readers to think differently and discover meaning in everyday experiences. Through his writing and outreach, Walter strives to spark conversations that lead to understanding, empathy, and positive change.*



LOCAL EVENTS

THINGS TO DO IN THE MAINE HIGHLANDS

PISCATAQUIS FARMERS MARKET

Sundays in June - August, 2026

Whether you live in Piscataquis County or are traveling through, you will want to stop at the Piscataquis Farmers Market in Guilford. With upwards of 40 farmers and artisan vendors offering fresh fruit and veggies, meats, cheeses and so much more. Enjoy this outdoor market along the Piscataquis River. Learn more at:

www.piscataquisforward.org/farmers-market

SANGERVILLE DAYS

July 11, 2026

Come out and celebrate Sangerville for a full day of fun in the sun. The festivities include a parade, car show, fire trucks, food and craft vendors and live music. To learn more, volunteer or register as a vendor, go to:

www.piscataquisforward.org/sangerville-days

RIVERFEST

July 25, 2026

Join us for a day filled with live music, craft vendors, fun activities for the kids, an expanded beer garden, a community run, fireworks, and so much more. It all kicks off with the annual town parade. Come for the fun, stay for the friendships. Learn more and sign up at:

www.piscataquisforward.org/riverfest

RED HOT DOG FESTIVAL

August 8, 2026

The Maine Red Hot Dog Festival is a DDA fundraiser designed to attract a large number of people to the town where they will see all that Dexter has to offer, and to simply have fun! Learn more and sign up at:

www.redhotdog.org

Bartlett Yarns: The Mill That Time (Mostly) Forgot

By John McNamara

There's a building in Harmony, Maine — population somewhere south of a thousand, the kind of town you could drive through and never know you'd left if you weren't paying attention — where the floorboards still shake on the third floor the same way they have for the better part of a century. That's Bartlett Yarns, and if you care even a little about wool, old machinery, or the particular Maine stubbornness that keeps things running long after the rest of the world has moved on, it's worth knowing the story.

A Mill That's Older Than the State It's In

Here's the detail that always gets people: Bartlett Yarns dates back to 1821, when Ozias Bartlett started a carding mill along the banks of Higgins Stream. Maine itself had only become a state the year before. So this little operation tucked into the woods of Somerset County has been spinning wool for essentially the entire existence of Maine as we know it — through wars, fires, the Depression, and now a couple of pandemics for good measure.

It hasn't been a perfectly smooth two centuries, mind you. The original mill building operated until the 1920s, when it burned, and a new building went up in its place — this one wired for electricity, which at the time counted as cutting-edge. The mill originally ran on waterpower from Higgins Stream, and hydropower technology had only arrived in the northeastern United States about 30 years before Bartlett got started. So in its own quiet way, this place has always been an early adopter, even if everything about it today reads as gloriously old-fashioned.

The Machine That Makes It All Possible

If you ever get the chance to tour the mill, the thing you'll remember isn't the yarn on the shelves — it's the mule. The mule machine dates back to 1948 and is the sole one still in use anywhere in the United States for this kind of work. It runs on tracks across the building's floor, stretching and twisting, roving into yarn in a motion that essentially mimics what a hand



spinner would do, just at a manageable commercial pace. It twists three to five feet of roving, stops, and winds that yarn back onto a bobbin — over and over, the entire length of the run.

That process is exactly why Bartlett yarn feels different in your hands than something off a big-box store shelf. A carding machine built back in 1881 turns out the roving for hand-spinners and needle-felters, and the mule does the rest, giving the finished yarn a loft and a softness that more modern, faster machinery can't replicate. It's not nostalgia talking — it's actually a different physical process, and you can feel it in the skein.

The Couple Who Kept It Going

Every old Maine business eventually needs someone willing to take it on, and for Bartlett Yarns, that turned out to be Lindsey and Susan Rice. They'd been raising sheep and shearing fleece since marrying in 1984, hauling their wool to Bartlett to have it spun because, coming from New Hampshire, it was the closest mill that would do the job. Susan would knit with the finished yarn and sell the results at farmers' markets, and somewhere along the way, the Rices fell hard enough for the place that when it came up for sale, they bought it.

What's struck many people who've visited since is how deliberately Lindsey Rice has resisted modernization. He's been blunt about it — he doesn't see the point in investing in faster machinery to increase volume, when the whole appeal of what they make is that it's not mass-produced. He's said plainly that this is a handknitting yarn, and that he wants every skein to be something he'd be proud to knit with himself — not something stamped out in a factory overseas. Rice has also pointed out that the manufacturing side has stayed close to how it operated back in the 1930s and 40s, and that with good maintenance, it keeps turning out a solid, dependable yarn.

More Than Just Yarn for Grandma's Mittens

It's easy to assume an operation this old serves an aging, narrow customer base, but that's not really the case. Rice has noted that while much of their popularity comes from an older generation of knitters making hats and mittens, a younger crowd is getting involved too — Waldorf schools, for instance, teach knitting to first- and second-graders to build hand-eye coordination and a sense of accomplishment. The yarn ends up in heirloom sweaters and Christmas stockings as much as it does in practical winter gear, and shop owners who carry it talk about customers loving the rustic feel and the durability — yarn that's built to outlast the sweater you knit from it.

If You Want to See It Yourself

Bartlett Yarns isn't set up as a museum, and the Rices are quick to remind visitors of that — it's a working business first. But once a year, they open the doors for tours, letting people climb those creaking stairs and watch the mule do its thing in person. Join old yarn lovers on August 7 and 8 for the annual open house. If old machinery, Maine wool, and two centuries of stubborn continuity sound like your kind of afternoon, it's worth planning a trip up to Harmony to see it. Just wear good shoes — that mill does a lot more walking than it looks like from the outside.

Bird Watching in Piscataquis County

By John McNamara

I'll tell you something that surprises a lot of visitors: the birding up here is some of the best in New England, and almost nobody outside Maine knows it. We don't have the puffins and the postcard lighthouses people associate with this state — that's all down on the coast. What we've got instead is a few hundred thousand acres of unbroken forest, lakes the size of small countries, and bogs that haven't changed much since the glaciers left. If you like birds, that combination is about as good as it gets.

Why This County Is Different

Most folks think "good birding" means a marsh somewhere with a boardwalk and a visitor center. We've got a little of that, sure, but the real draw up here is the northern forest itself. The Appalachians stretch right up into this county, with peaks running 1,500 to 2,000 feet and higher, and that elevation, combined with all the spruce and fir, creates exactly the kind of habitat that boreal species love. On a good June morning, a person could realistically tally a dozen or more warbler species without trying particularly hard. That's not me exaggerating for the tourists — that's just an average Tuesday around here in late spring.

What You're Likely to See

Let's talk specifics, because vague descriptions don't help anybody pack their binoculars. Up here, you'll find Common Loons on basically every big lake — Moosehead, Sebec, you name it. Listen for that wavering call at dusk; it's one of those sounds that, once you've heard it echo across a quiet lake, you'll never forget. Beyond the loons, keep an eye out for Northern Goshawk, Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes, Rusty Blackbird, White-throated and Lincoln's Sparrows, and if you're lucky, White-winged Crossbill or Evening Grosbeak working through the conifers.

If you're chasing the true boreal specialties — Spruce Grouse, Gray Jay, that sort of bird that makes serious birders drive six hours — you'll want to get well off the pavement and onto the logging roads. The good news is that access has never been better. Logging roads reach into nearly all of this forest now, so spots that used to require a guide and a week's notice are a lot more approachable than they used to be. Just bring a paper map as backup. Cell service out there is, let's say, optimistic at best.

Where to Actually Go

Borestone Mountain Sanctuary, near Monson, is run by the Audubon Society, and it's tailor-made for birders. The hike up gives you a real cross-section of forest habitat, and from the summit, you're looking out over Sebec Lake and the old Onawa Trestle, with birdsong following you the whole climb.

Moosehead Lake, up around Greenville, is the big one — literally, it's the largest mountain lake in the eastern U.S. Lily Bay State Park on its shores is a known spot for Common Loon and a good mix of forest birds. The lake itself is worth scanning with a scope during migration for waterfowl passing through.

Closer to the heart of the county, Williamsburg Forest has a network of interpretive trails through varied terrain, which makes it a nice option if you want to bird on foot without committing to a full mountain hike.

And don't overlook the farm fields scattered around towns like Atkinson and Dover-Foxcroft. They don't sound glamorous, but open fields next to forest edges are exactly where you'll pick up species you won't find deep in the woods — sparrows, hawks working the field margins, the occasional surprise. Local birders regularly post checklists from these exact spots, which tells you something about how productive they are, even though nobody's putting them on a postcard.

Spring migration gets going in earnest by May, and that's when the warbler push peaks — if warblers are your thing, this is the month to clear your calendar. Early arrivals like sparrows and the American Woodcock show up even before that. Summer settles into prime breeding season, which is your best shot at the boreal residents who stick around all year rather than just passing through. By fall, things thin out a bit compared to the coast, but the forest birds are still active, and you'll have the trails mostly to yourself, which some of us consider a feature rather than a bug.

We don't get the birding festivals and the crowds that the coast does, and most of us up here are just fine with that. Find your own quiet spot in the woods, and you'll understand the appeal soon enough.





THE SOUTHERN BELLE

LISA MCNAMARA

World Cup Party in the U.S.A.

Our household has a big case of World Cup Fever. It has been a glorious discovery of how uniting this world sport is beyond the arenas where it is played. In a world where it's hard to have any conversation that expands beyond your own yard and can quickly become contentious and heated, there is one topic that immediately brings a smile to all: "Football." From this point forward, I will drop the word "soccer" and join the world and use "Football." And to be clear, I still love my American Football, especially College (SEC) American Football.

But no words sum up my feelings about this summer's joy better than those of my dear friend, the Reverend Canon Julia Mitchener. I decided to share this space with her to celebrate the 250th birthday of our beautiful country.

Freddy From Germany and a Mighty Good Meal

I don't know about you, but I am loving the World Cup. It's not so much the sport that's got me hooked, it's the fans. It's Scotland's "Tartan Army" drinking Boston bars dry one day and raising money for a children's hospital the next. It's Japanese tourists staying behind for hours following each game, cleaning up stadiums as a sign of respect. It's people from Cape Verde pouring into the streets of Atlanta after witnessing their tiny nation, in its first World Cup match ever, hold the mighty Spanish team at bay.

It's also this German guy named Freddy. Freddy has been traveling across the U.S. for the past couple of weeks watching soccer, yes, but also eating a lot and writing restaurant reviews. His social media posts have attracted a huge following after his visits to Waffle House (10/10, we will be coming back!) and various establishments in New Orleans (Jambalaya and drinks are fantastic, but why does everyone throw plastic beads?). Clearly, Freddy has been impressed by his culinary road trip. Most of all, though, he seems delighted by the community he's found along the way. This is the real gift of his posts, to my mind: their reminder of the value of sitting down with our fellow human beings and breaking bread, especially during these acrimonious times in which we live. It's hard to think the worst of someone with whom you're sharing world's best Philly cheesesteak. It's tough to cling to biases when a complete stranger has just introduced you to the wonder of fries dipped in a thick chocolate shake.

This will come as no surprise to anyone who's ever supped at the table of Jesus. The context may be different, but the vibes are much the same. Across the globe each week, people of varying nationalities, races, ethnicities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and political persuasion come together to break bread with God. To stretch out our hands in a mixture of hope, longing, joy, despair, faith, doubt, cynicism, and awe—to stretch out our hands to receive what at first may not look like

much of a spread but one that serves up all the love and healing and nourishment this broken and troubled world will ever need. We come to stretch out our hands to Jesus; we come to stretch out our hands to each other, too. To walk up the chancel steps with someone we envy. To kneel shoulder to shoulder with a spouse, sibling, or friend with whom we've been at odds. To receive the Bread of Life from a priest who has disappointed us. To drink from the cup of a chalice bearer we argued bitterly with last week. To glance down the altar rail and see the face of someone who, growing up, we were taught to distrust simply because of the color of their skin. We come to stretch out our hands to Jesus but also to each other, and in doing so, not only to "taste and see that the Lord is good" but to taste and see that we are good as well. That's right, we are good! Our community is good—not perfect, but good. Each of us has been created in the image of God and bears that image in this world. There is room in the Body of Christ for all, even, and perhaps especially, for people we might be tempted to revile—our adversaries, those who have hurt us, those whom we perceive as the Other, and those parts of ourselves from which we have become estranged but which are loved and held tenderly by God.

This is the miracle of the table of our Lord. In the bread and in the wine, in communion with our friends and with our foes, we are knit together into a mystical fellowship that transcends boundaries of space, time, affinity, and affection. Which makes for a mighty good meal.



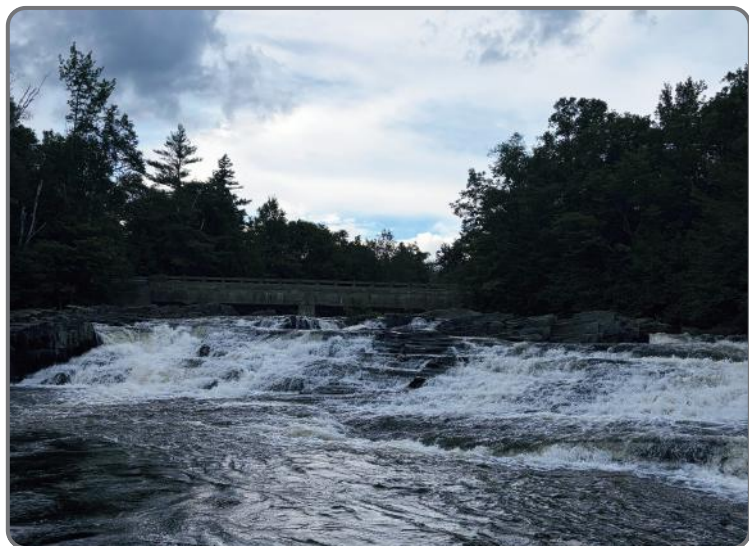
And Then There's Katahdin

I'd be lying to you if I didn't mention Mount Katahdin, even though it's technically in Baxter State Park rather than squarely in our backyard. It's Maine's tallest peak, the northern end of the entire Appalachian Trail, and an absolute legend among hikers. Trails like the Knife Edge are not for beginners — we're talking serious elevation gain and exposed ridgelines — but if you've got the experience and the nerve, it's the kind of hike people talk about for the rest of their lives.

A Few Honest Tips From a Local

Bring bug spray. I mean it — black flies in late spring and early summer are no joke up here, and nobody wants to remember their trip to Maine as "the time I got eaten alive." Layer your clothing, because the weather can change quickly, especially up high. And tell somebody your plans before you head into the more remote spots — cell coverage is spotty at best once you're off the main roads.

We don't get the crowds that Acadia does, and honestly, that's the appeal. Come find out for yourself.



something better—someone better to walk in and take her away from whatever man she was with at any given moment—as if no man was ever good enough, complete enough for her.

She noticed me when I first walked in—a 10 in a room full of sixes, thinking they were nines. I was much more handsome than the guy she was with, but she was not about to say that out loud. I knew she wanted to take me home and get me into bed as quickly as possible before losing her courage.

I smiled and nodded, silently accepting her drunken compliment as I continued my story. I was a little surprised that neither of them asked about the violent incident I referenced—a clear sign that neither of them was actually listening, but I knew my audience. I knew that people in the pub were not there to listen. They wanted the music to drown out the talking so they could navigate their way through the night, looking, touching, and feeling their way in hopes of getting lucky.

We lived in an impoverished part of Vermont where everyone struggled to make it through each day. As much as everyone suffered through their pathetic existence, they all found time for unprotected sex: condoms are a product for the privileged.

The boy and the girl laughed out loud, almost spilling their drinks on themselves. The bartender smirked, too, as he half-listened to the monologue. I was slightly annoyed that my new 'friends' continued interrupting my story, as if my telling it was a critical part of our conversation. It wasn't, but it still irritated me when people interrupted me—interrupted anyone. I spent years being talked over by my parents, by the nuns at the orphanage, by almost everyone everywhere, until I decided that was reason enough to take a person's life. It was one of my triggers—one of the checklist items that helped me justify killing someone, not that I really need to explain or justify my thirst.

Oh, sorry. I just blurted that out, didn't I? Well, this is my story—the story of how I came to be who I am, how I grew up to be someone who kills people. I am not going to label it—label myself by saying I am a serial killer. I don't think serial killers do that—say that they are serial killers, I mean. It wouldn't serve their purpose—my purpose, would it? Most serial killers want attention. I've heard that psychiatrists say serial killers just want to be heard—seen and ultimately want to be caught, which is pretty messed up if you ask me. I don't kill because I want someone's attention. I kill because I like it. I like the sight of blood—I love the taste of it. I love making people suffer, but we can discuss that more later.

If these two had not been so infatuated with me, they would have heard the tone of my voice change—they might have even seen the red flag that silently indicated that I am a hot mess and not the one they should take home. But they did not see any sign. They saw a strikingly handsome young man fully engaged with them, telling a story while making them feel like they were the prettiest in the room. Damn, I am good.

(ADAM, continued on page 10)

(ADAM, continued from page 9)

Too many young people wandered around our trailer park—kids, many close to my age then. We were left to roam, often barefoot. Some wore nothing more than a saggy diaper—a nappy, and many of us were filthy a lot. It was the life we lived. It was the only life we had ever known.

“That sounds pretty messed up,” said the girl. “Did... did you... hear that... darling?”

“I am right here, darling,” the boy responded with less of a slur as he leaned on the bar so she could see him on the other side of me. “I can hear everything just fine.” He really couldn’t.

“I’m sorry,” I said to them both. “I am sure you find this story extremely boring. We should discuss something more lighthearted—something upbeat. Maybe we can talk about how you want to use me—use my body tonight.”

I knew they didn’t—wouldn’t find my story boring. It did not matter what words came out of my mouth—everyone loved my stories. They had a lot of drama, suspense, and excitement. I knew these two idiots were desperate for my attention—any attention from someone new.

“No, not at all,” the girl replied. “I am Poppy, by the way, and that drunk knob next to you is Nigel.”

“Nice to meet you both,” I said in a thick New England accent, which neither picked up on. “I am Adam.”

It is funny to think that we three had been sitting there against that bar, drinking and talking the night away as if we were old buddies, and yet it took us so long—them so long to introduce themselves. If I am being honest, their names could have been anything. Those details did not matter to me. I knew that neither of them would see another sunrise.

“Nice to meet you, too,” Nigel replied, putting his hand on my right knee while Poppy caressed my left calf with her stocking-wrapped foot. Her shoe had fallen off, or she had kicked it off, lost in the sea of feet piling up at the bar. The happy hour crowd was multiplying quickly, and these two drunks were getting frisky.

“Stop interrupting him, darling,” Nigel continued, unsure if she was interrupting me. It was clear that the alcohol in his system was beginning to blur his judgment, which was a good thing. The more numb he got now, the less pain he would feel later. “Let the handsome man finish his story.”

I turned towards Poppy and then Nigel, smiling at each before looking straight ahead to smile at the cute bartender and wink at him. He was adorable and not a mess like many of the bartenders at this pub. While I was staring at the bartender, the two drunks leaned in and kissed me at the same time. The bartender bashfully smiled back at me as he voyeuristically watched the two lovers sloppily crash into my cheeks.

* * * * *

We met an hour earlier—Poppy, Nigel, and me. Poppy and Nigel had been sitting at the bar, privately discussing their desire to bring a third person into their bed. Listening to them babble on and on about this one simple thing had me convinced that this was a topic these two had frequently discussed. You know those kinds of people—they talk the talk but never walk the walk. I’ve known many of those kinds of idiots in my short lifetime. I’ve screwed a number of them and even killed a few. Those people annoy me. You know what I mean? They say they want to so

something, to go somewhere, or meet someone, but they never do. Instead, they talk about it repeatedly to anyone who will listen—anyone stupid enough to listen and not point out that they should do it already. Damn, people irritate me.

Anyway, it was Wednesday night. I was on the prowl and was unlucky enough to have to listen to Poppy and Nigel ramble on. They vented about their bosses through their first pint, and by the second pint, they were back to talking about expanding their sexual circle. I stood next to the girl, to Poppy, waiting for the cute bartender to take my drink order, not that I should have had to give it to him. I had been coming to this pub for a long time, and I ordered the same thing each time—two fingers of whiskey with one ice cube. He took that order a hundred times, but every time, he would ask what I wanted to drink—maybe he thought I would mix it up one day. I didn’t—mix it up. Not with my drink. I liked what I liked.

Finally, I had to say something to the girl—to Poppy. She and Nigel were debating a menage a trois. They needed closure, and I needed blood, so I interrupted them. They were both startled. I thought she was going to hit me at first, but once she got a good look at me and heard my proposition, she smiled and started whispering to her boyfriend.

I was almost done with my drink when the two came out of their huddle and proclaimed that I could go home with them as if their decision needed to be proclaimed. They said it like they were doing me a favor. I mean, they were, just not for the reasons they thought.

So there you go. There I was, squished between two horny drunks telling another story about my past, not that either of them really listened. I think that once we had all agreed on what would happen later that night, the two of them tuned out of listening to me completely, really hearing the words coming out of my mouth. I am sure all either of them could think about was getting me naked. All I could think about was killing them so I could get the craving out of my system. I had bigger plans that night—ones that included the cute bartender, and, believe it or not, they did not involve killing him.

Chapter Two

One of my earliest memories is of me sitting on a picnic table outside our trailer, shooting stones at Chester with my slingshot. Chester was a big dog. I was too young to know his breed, but I remember he was a large dog. He was loud and always sounded angry. He belonged to Mr. Picklebury, and Chester did not like anyone. He constantly barked, growled, and showed his teeth as if trying to challenge you to a fight. I was not a good shot, but then I was only four.

While shooting pebbles at Chester that day, I watched a mother and daughter step out of the trailer next to Mr. Picklebury’s. I had only seen them a few times, and I recall thinking that the mother looked much younger than my mom, who was only 19 years old. I assumed the daughter was learning to walk—she moved around quite awkwardly. I never saw a man go in or out of their trailer, but that was typical of our trailer park probably in all trailer parks. A lot of the kids in our trailer park had teenage mothers and invisible fathers. Dads were a rarity, which made me special since I had both, at least for a while.

(BLOOD, continued on page 11)

As the little girl walked with her mother, trying to comprehend balance, her sporadic movement agitated Chester much more than my feeble attempts to stone him to death. He was barking and lunging toward the girl with all his might, completely ignoring my game. He always ignored my games. Chester was a strong dog: all muscle. I watched him move around methodically, loosening the clothesline pole he was tethered to so he could lunge at the little girl—as if he knew exactly what he was doing. He did. The entire clothesline shimmied and shook when he got excited. I want to think that my hitting him with pebbles only worsened the situation, but I cannot recall them even getting close to him. I am surprised that the clothesline stood for as long as it did.

I remember hearing a loud noise, and when I looked up, Chester was dragging part of the clothesline across the yard, running towards the little girl with the speed of a marathon runner approaching the finish line. The few clothes hanging to dry were dragged through the dirt, chasing Chester as if to stop him—or help. Before the mother could react, Chester tackled the little girl and tore into her arm, chewing on it as if it were his favorite bone. The girl let out a high-pitched, hurt-your-ears kind of scream. I remember chuckling as I watched Chester naw on her arm. The mother yelled at Chester, but he ignored her, almost oblivious to her presence. She picked up an old metal baseball bat from the ground and began hitting him with it. Chester was unfazed. He held on to that little girl's arm and refused to let go. I was impressed, but more so, I was excited.

It was mesmerizing to watch how the bat hit Chester. I relished the sound as the metal met Chester's head—a heavy bonk as two hard surfaces collided. With each blow, Chester bled more, but he did not lose his focus—he did not let go of the little girl. Before that day, I had never seen an animal beaten, nor had I seen one tear into a human. Watching it happen right in front of me was so exhilarating. I get aroused just thinking about it today.

By the time Chester finally let go of the little girl, he was covered in blood, both hers and his own. He wobbled around, clearly trying to shake off the pain he felt from the baseball bat as he hobbled around the yard, still dragging the clothesline with him. The mother threw the bat at Chester as he walked away. She was exhausted but relieved that Chester was no longer tearing into her only daughter. By then, a crowd had formed—neighbors who were not passed out from drugs or alcohol had emerged from their nasty trailers to assess the commotion. They were addicted to the drama as much as they were addicted to their drugs.

The little girl's arm dangled from her body, and blood spewed out of her like water from a firehose. I had never seen that much blood before. It fascinated me. I wanted to bathe in it, to drink it. I did not know then that the human body was so flimsy, so weak. I was not sure why the sight of the blood excited me, but at that moment, I only wanted to see more blood—to taste blood. And I am not talking about blood from a small cut. I wanted a lot of blood.

When the police finally arrived, Chester, with a new sense of energy, ran straight toward the officers as they exited their cars. The clothesline tore through the dirt, weeds, and spots of grass; nothing held Chester back. He was still hungry for flesh and

blood. I watched Chester run right past me, still dragging the clothesline. As I turned to watch him lunge at the police, the two officers pulled out their guns and fired multiple shots. The large dog fell to the ground next to the table where I sat. Chester's blood went everywhere—like a water balloon exploding. Thankfully, the officers had surprisingly good aim—they could have easily missed Chester and put a few bullets in me.

A lot of Chester's blood sprayed towards me, painting one of my legs and part of the table where I sat. It was tantalizing to feel the warm red substance erupt all over my leg. Instinctively, I dragged my finger through the blood and was about to taste it when one of the police officers yelled at me to stop. It was many years later before I finally got my first authentic taste of someone else's blood, and it was as wonderful as I had imagined as that little boy.

Eventually, one of the police officers called for an ambulance and animal control, but it was too late. The little girl was already dead. She bled out in her mother's arms. The mother held her daughter tightly, rocking and crying, screaming as loud as she could. The two were covered in blood, but the mother did not care. I remember wishing in that moment that I could have been that mother covered in all that blood.

As an adult now, I often wonder if the loved ones of my victims are as distraught and lost as that mother had been when they discover the body of their son or daughter, boyfriend or girlfriend, mother or father, lying in a puddle of their blood. I am never around to see that pain and suffering. I don't care about those secondary characters. They are irrelevant to me—unimportant in my mission to kill—my quest for blood.

As one officer talked with the mother, a second officer covered the little girl's body with a dirty bedsheet that had been hanging on the clothesline that Chester dragged around the yard, contaminating the crime scene. A third officer, the one who kept me from tasting Chester's blood, asked me if I knew which trailer belonged to Chester. I pointed to Mr. Picklebury's trailer as I tried to touch the blood on my leg again. The officer saw what I was trying to do and wiped my leg and the table clean before walking towards Mr. Picklebury's trailer. I remember thinking that I wished Chester had killed that officer, too.

Mrs. Rattleson, the older woman who lived next to us, eventually came out of her trailer and sat beside me on the table. She was wearing a tiny silk house robe. I remember it so well because her boobs were bursting out of it. They burst out of everything she wore. It would be years before I learned that Mrs. Rattleson was the owner and headliner of Rattle Tails, the strip club on the far end of town.

No one answered when the officer knocked on the door to Mr. Picklebury's trailer. I often watched kids knock on that door, and Mr. Picklebury was always quick to answer. I could have shared that information with the officers, but I didn't. Instead, I sat next to Mrs. Rattleson with my head resting on her boobs, and we watched the police try to make sense of what just happened. Eventually, the police officer stopped knocking and stuck a note on the door handle.

When the last police car finally drove away, Mrs. Rattleson looked down at me and asked if I wanted to join her for lunch. We leapt off the table and walked to her trailer, hand in hand. Her hand was soft and comforting. In those moments, Mrs. Rattleson was more of a mother to me than Lori ever was.



PRESENTED BY



JULY 25, 2026

RIVERWALK PARK - GUILFORD, MAINE

10AM - 9PM



Gerald Thomas Trucking Co.

John O. Ames

Herrick Excavation



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