



WWURA NEWS

March 2017

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Serving Retired Faculty and Staff

President's Note

February weather was not kind to WWURA: Board meeting and Play Reading Interest Group both got cancelled. But things are sure to look up with daylight savings time, St. Patrick's Day, and the Spring Equinox just ahead.

We enjoyed Matt Krogh's February Luncheon talk on a Fossil-Fuel-Free Future, and thank him for speaking. In this issue we highlight our upcoming Wednesday, March 15, Travelogue with **Gail Adele** presenting on Papua New Guinea at the Squalicum Yacht Club.

We continue to accept donations to our Scholarship Fund for Western students. If interested just send a check made out to WWURA and designated for scholarships to **Barbara Evans**/ 715 N. Garden St. #502/ Bellingham, WA 98225. We also seek volunteers to fill some positions in WWURA for the rest of the year. If you'd like to serve on a committee, become our Historian, or throw your hat into the ring for Program Chair, contact me at ron.ward740@gmail.com.

Now sit back, relax, and enjoy the articles, select a March Interest Group, or peruse other items of interest in this issue of the WWURA News. You might also check out our newly revised website at www.wwu.edu/wwura. Let us know what you think.

-Ron Ward

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WWURA Travelogue

Presenter: Gail Adele

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Squalicum Yacht Club
2633 South Harbor Loop Road

6:30 p.m. for Dessert, 7:00 p.m. Presentation

"Papua New Guinea is a country of tropical rain forests, high mountains, and remote tribes that speak more than 700 languages. The Sepik River area people are renowned for their superb artistic ability in painting, carving, and weaving. Intrepid Australians looking for gold made first contact with the stone-age people in the high mountain valleys only in 1933. Dancing, drumming, and singing are an integral part of the spiritual life of the people. Body painting, bird of paradise feather headdresses, multiple shell necklaces, grass skirts of all kinds are worn by the villagers as they participate in their dances and ceremonies.



I look forward to sharing photos from my recent trip to this most diverse and interesting country."

Members whose **last name** begins with **A through L** please bring a dessert to share. WWURA provides coffee and tea. Some members like to bring wine.

A small donation of \$2 per person, \$3 per couple, is requested to cover room rental and beverages.

2017 March Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

Plant Products in Herbal Teas: Contraindications of Use



A cup of hot tea in mid-afternoon on a cold, snowy day warms spirit and body. Which tea to select? Black tea, green tea, or herbal tea? Nowadays, people are turning to herbal teas as alternatives to caffeinated beverages such as coffee, black and green tea, and cocoa). In the United States, the popularity of herbal tea consumption has increased significantly during the past few decades. Herbal teas are made up of mixtures of roots, leaves, seeds, barks, parts of shrubs, vines, and/or trees. Limited toxicological study of herbal teas has been conducted, meaning the safety of many of these products is unknown.

Notice the various colors of herbal tea packages in the tea section in grocery stores. Examples of colors include a yellowish-colored package for chamomile, a lemon-colored package emphasizing lemongrass, a lavender package focusing on lavender, a reddish-colored package highlighting ginger, a blueish/purple package highlighting berries, a greenish-colored package promoting mint, and a pinkish color for hibiscus and raspberry,

Herbal teas often include a combination of several plant products. This combination or combinations of plant products might include chamomile, lemongrass, peppermint, spearmint, rosehips, ginger, cinnamon, licorice root, pomegranate, stinging nettle, valerian, rooibos, valerian, luohanguo (a non-caloric sweetener to compete with other herbal sweeteners such as stevioside), and hawthorn. Many of these plant products do have medicinal properties but it is important to know they also interact with prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Such interactions may decrease or increase the biological activity of medicinal drugs, meaning drugs are broken down too quickly or not quickly enough, thereby negatively affecting a person's health.

The [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine \(NCCAM\)](#) provides efficacy and safety information, fact sheets, resources, and tips for choosing or not choosing plant products included in herbal teas. The following is a selected list of herbs that carry warnings of use for people who have certain health conditions (particularly cardio-vascular disease, allergies, diabetes and liver disease) or are taking prescription drugs:

Chamomile – Based on animal and human studies, the usual warning for chamomile is to avoid taking it with sedatives (including alcohol) because it may increase drowsiness. It should be avoided when taking an anticoagulant medication because it may interact with blood clotting. Those who take cholesterol lowering drugs should avoid chamomile because it causes statins to be broken down in the liver, rendering them less effective. People allergic to plants such as ragweed, chrysanthemums, marigolds, or daisies are more likely to experience allergic reactions to chamomile.

Licorice root – It is suggested that licorice root should be avoided or consumed with caution if one is taking ACE inhibitors, diuretics, digoxin, aspirin, corticosteroids, insulin, or laxatives. In large amounts and with long-term use, licorice root can cause high blood pressure and low potassium levels, which could lead to heart and muscle problems. Some side effects are thought to be due to a chemical called glycyrrhizic acid. Licorice that has had this chemical removed (called DGL for deglycyrrhizinated licorice) may not have the same degree of side effects.

Lemongrass: Lemongrass leaves are commonly used as “lemon” flavoring in herbal teas. Avoidance relates mostly to pregnancy (which WWURA members need not be concerned).

Pomegranate: Some people (e.g., those with plant allergies) may be allergic to pomegranate. It is unclear whether pomegranate interacts with warfarin (blood thinning medicine) or drugs that work similarly in the body to warfarin. Federal agencies have taken action against companies selling pomegranate juice and supplements for deceptive advertising and making drug-like claims about the products.

Ginger – Based on animal studies and human case studies, the common warning for ginger is to avoid it when taking anticoagulants. Taking both ginger and anticoagulant drugs may cause too much bleeding; however, scientific evidence is limited.

Cranberry: Drinking cranberry juice appears to be safe, although large amounts can cause stomach upset and may over time increase the risk of kidney stones. Large doses of cranberry may alter levels of warfarin.

Peppermint – One of the most commonly reported side effects of peppermint is that it causes heartburn. Peppermint can relax the lower esophageal sphincter (this keeps food in the stomach from going back up into the esophagus). People with [gastroesophageal reflux disease \(GERD\)](#), despite medications to prevent, are often advised to avoid peppermint.

Health Notes, cont'd

Hawthorn: Has been used for people with heart failure but long term studies have not confirmed effectiveness. Side effects of hawthorn can include dizziness, nausea, and digestive symptoms.

Asian Ginseng: Short-term use of Asian ginseng in recommended amounts appears to be safe for most people. Safety of long-term use is not known. Some common side effects are headaches, sleep problems, and digestive problems. Ginseng might affect blood sugar and blood pressure. As with several other plants, it might interact with anti-coagulant drugs.

Lavender: There is little scientific evidence of lavender's effectiveness for most health uses. Extracts may cause stomach upset, joint pain, or headache.

Kava: Comes from the Polynesian word "awa," which means bitter. It has been banned from the market in Europe and Canada due to heavy users developing severe liver disease. In March 2002, FDA warned health care providers and the public about the risk of liver damage associated with kava. Combining kava with alcohol increases such risk. Long-term use of high doses of kava has been associated with dry, scaly skin or yellowing of the skin. Heavy consumption of kava has been associated with heart problems and eye irritation.

Passionflower: Is generally considered to be safe but may cause drowsiness.

Valerian: Studies suggest that valerian is generally safe for use by most healthy adults for short periods of time. Little information is available about its long-term safety or its safety in children younger than age 3, pregnant women, or nursing mothers. Valerian may slow how quickly certain drugs are broken down by the liver, causing them to stay longer in the body. This includes anticonvulsants, benzodiazepines, insomnia prescribed drugs, and alcohol. The same liver enzymes that break down antihistamines and statins also break down valerian. Few side effects have been reported but some reports of headache, dizziness, itching, and digestive disturbances have occurred. Some studies show valerian is effective in inducing sleep after several days (12 to 24 days) of use but whether it is effective for treating insomnia has not been proven.

Note: Green, black, and oolong teas all come from the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*, but are prepared using different methods. To produce green tea, fresh leaves from the plant are lightly steamed.

Suggested resources: <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm> <http://www.just-health.net/Sleepy-Time-Tea.html>

<http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/herb/valerian> <https://www.yogiproducts.com/ingredients/>

<http://www.celestialseasonings.com/learn-about-us/whats-in-our-tea>

<https://nutritionnutsandbolts.com/2012/11/07/herbal-tea-drug-interaction/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/insomnia/expert-answers/valerian/faq-20057875>

Book Review

A Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki

This fascinating and elegant novel begins when Ruth, a Japanese-American writer and a New Yorker, discovers on the beach of a remote island at the north end of the Strait of Georgia, an object sealed in a plastic bag. It's a Japanese child's lunch box containing the journal/diary of Nao, a bright 14 year old Japanese girl, two packets of letters, one in Japanese and one in French, and a wrist watch.

Ruth is stuck in her years long effort to complete a memoir, so she begins reading Nao's journal/diary and is immediately captivated. The novel is structured by alternating between segments of Nao's writing and a narrative reporting Ruth's intense, almost obsessive research, seeking to know what might be Nao's fate, since Nao's sealed lunch box may be flotsam from the epically destructive Fukushima earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster of 2011. Or could it be jetsam, something like a bottle with a note in it, tossed in the sea so that fate and the forces of nature carry it to some receptive soul?

Nao's story is compelling and compellingly told. She grew up in Sunnyvale, California, where her father was a software engineer. Her father having lost his job, the family moved back to Tokyo, just as Nao is starting middle school. Her classmates see her as an outsider and bully her continuously, viciously,

Writers Group

Appetite by Evelyn Wright

What are the best meals you've ever eaten? Not the fanciest, most ornate, or most sumptuous, but the ones you most enjoyed? That you still remember — its aromas rising off the plate, greeting you when you sit down?

Here's one of mine: a plate of baked pork and beans with a chunk of hot Svenskaka on the side. Butter. Raspberry jam. Cold milk.

That's a memory from the late 1930's, when we walked through snow to school after breakfast and walked home for lunch. Starving. The smell of baking bread hit when we walked in the front door. Shedding our hats and mittens and jackets and snow pants and overshoes, we rushed to the kitchen. And on the table, were plates of baked beans — savory with salt pork and sweet with molasses, and a plate of Svenskaka. What our mother called Svenskaka was a flat bread, made from fresh dough during its first rise. She baked it when we were coming home for lunch and there wasn't time for the usual second rise. Its bottom crust was slightly tough and crunchy, the top crisp, and the interior soft and warm and fragrant. You could breathe that bread.

And the jam, made from wild raspberries, was sweet and sharply tart. When we picked them in late July, our arms were pricked by thorns and our fingers stained red. It seemed impossible to fill our pails, for the berries were tiny and so tender that their juice seeped into the bottom of the pail. (With just a little sugar and a bit of cornstarch and water, you could make raspberry creme with the extra juice, a special treat on berry-picking day.)

And while some people might claim that raspberry pie is the best, I always found it too seedy. My Aunt Hannah's apple pie was the best I ever tasted. She used fresh tart apples, whatever was in season, a bit of cinnamon, plenty of sugar and butter. But it was her crust, a flaky pie crust that — and it sounds contradictory but it's true — crust that was crisp and, at the same time, melted in your mouth. It was never pale and soggy on the bottom. And its color — a light golden brown. I've asked her daughter, my cousin (who makes a pretty mean apple pie herself), just how her mother made her crusts. All she can tell me is that her mother used leaf lard. I don't know if bits of cracklings get into leaf lard, but Aunt Hannah's pie crusts crackled, they melted, and the juices of her pies were a spicy nectar.

Aunt Hannah's apple pie, a capstone to our Fourth of July picnic, was always served at the family reunion at Fortune Lake. This Upper Michigan lake was always cold, and the breeze was always chilly, even on warm days. But that didn't keep me and my cousins out of the cold lake, where we played until our lips were blue and our teeth chattering. Then we smiled at each other as our mothers scolded and wrapped us head to foot in towels and held us close to warm us. As soon as we got into our dry clothes and sweaters, we were ravenous. Appetite made Aunt Edla's ham and scalloped potatoes the tastiest I've known — salty ham and starchy potatoes drowned in creamy sauce. with crunchy browned bits on the edges. Then came Aunt Mabel's fruit salad and her sweet and sour pickles, Aunt Sigrid's rolls with butter and jam, and Uncle Andrew's sweet watermelon!



What can be sweeter than the memory of good food, eaten in the company of people who love each other?

March 2017 INTEREST GROUPS

If you are interested in one of the groups please call or email the contact person.

BOOK GROUP--Donna Moore, 360-733-5769 <dfmoore12@gmail.com>

We will meet Tues., March 21st at 2:30 at Donna Moore's home, 1200 Birch Falls Dr.

March's book is *The Invention of Nature by Andre Wolf*. Discussion leader is Donna Moore; treats - Barb Evans.

April's book is *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead

BRIDGE GROUP—The bridge group will meet in March, time and place to be announced.

INFORMAL DINING -- Janet Berg, 360-733-4654, <janetlila@hotmail.com>

OPERA GROUP--Evelyn Ames, 360-734-3184, <evelyn.ames@wwu.edu>

Web site for The MET HD: <https://www.metopera.org/Season/InCinemas/>.

March 11, *La Traviata*

March 25, *Idomeneo*

Locations for MET HD: Barkley Film Center and Lincoln Theater in Mt. Vernon. Skagit Opera is at McIntyre Hall in Mt. Vernon. At various times the Pickford Film Center offers opera, ballet, and theater productions from Europe venues.

The Skagit Opera (now called Pacific Northwest Opera): <http://skagitopera.org/performances/>

PLAY READING—Margaret Woll. 360-734-8427 <mhildeb408@aol.com> We will meet Monday, March 27th at 2:00 at the home of Margaret and John Woll, 208 Highland Dr.

SKIING - Charlie Way, 360-734-0649 <cybway@aol.com>

WRITER'S GROUP -Lynne Masland, 360-676-9821 <lmassland@comcast.net> Meets twice a month. The groups are kept small so there is time for reading and critiquing each other's work.

Book Review, cont'd from page 3

brutally. Since her father is unemployed and sunk in deep depression and her mother is fully concentrated on keeping the family afloat, Nao feels abandoned. A saving grace is Nao's great-grandmother Jiko, 104 years old and a Zen Buddhist nun. Nao spends a life-saving summer with her.

Through Jiko, Nao learns about her great uncle Haruki, who was a pacifist university student studying philosophy and French poetry, during World War II, when the military drafts him and trains him to be a kamikaze pilot. More brutality. The letters in Japanese are his official letters home during that training. Those in French record his real experience and thoughts.

This novel is richly layered with Japanese pop culture and ancient lore, with fine musings on the meaning of time, with details of the Japanese military during World War II, the Fukushima disaster, with quantum physics, and detailed knowledge about ocean ecology, and more.

Through the power of magical realism, the lives of Ruth and Nao interpenetrate. For me the central treasure of this wonderful novel is Nao—honest, smart, observant, anxious, kind, generous spirited, and funny. Author Ruth Ozeki gets her just right. Ozeki is a Zen Buddhist priest and teaches creative writing at Smith College. Those lucky students!

- Bob McDonnell

WWURA Calendar 2017

March

- 7—Board Meeting
- 15—Travelogue—Gail Adele on Papua New Guinea

April

- 4—Board Meeting
- 19—Travelogue—Peggy Loudon on Spain and Portugal
- 21—WWURA Lunch—Northwood Hall
Speaker, Melissa Rice

May

- 2—Board Meeting

June

- 6—Board Meeting

July

- 11—Picnic-Annual Meeting

What Was Your Most Memorable Meal ?

If you have a “memorable meal” you would like to tell us about, send a description of it to Lynne Masland (lmasland@comcast.net). She will put together an article for the newsletter featuring your delectable recollections.

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