



# WWURA NEWS



May 2020

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Serving Retired Faculty and Staff

## President's Note from Kevin Majkut

In this time of "Stay-at-Home" I've been spending some time watching online college professors' lectures, some on the Internet and some from various "Great Courses" DVDs that I find in used bookstores. Generally they have been interesting and informative but often fall short of a "great" classroom lecture. I've been thinking a bit about my college education and where I found those significant learning opportunities, especially great classroom lectures. I'm not talking about entertaining presentations, but those professors and times whereby a lecture brings everything together... when it both solidifies information and concepts while launching students into new understandings. This is on my mind because of the crisis for higher education brought on by the current pandemic. There doesn't seem to be any doubt that the nature of the college experience will change. And I wonder what that will look like for Western.

The WWURA Board of Directors has been on-hold for the last few months waiting for some change in the present situation. We cancelled a few meetings but plan on meeting electronically in early June to start looking to the summer and into next year. The July summer picnic/annual meeting has been cancelled. The current racing to "reopen" business and society seems a bit early in this pandemic and hopefully will not be too damaging. But even if Western Washington opens up, WWURA will need to be very careful on how and when we restart events and activities. Certainly our membership is at risk from the virus so we will need to step lightly even as other groups may try to rush back to "business as usual." I'd appreciate any thoughts people have on future activities and directions for WWURA.

I hope everyone is living well in this current situation; keeping healthy and active. And don't forget to maintain contact with other people in this trying time.

## Scholarship Winner Melody Gao

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I cannot tell you how grateful I am to be able to receive the WWU Retirement Association Scholarship. My name is Melody Gao and I call Vancouver, Washington home. I've always enjoyed working with others and making their day a little brighter. I knew from a very young age that I was looking for a career that would allow me to interact with and help others. However, there are many careers that fulfill those requirements. The next revelation occurred when I realized I really enjoyed watching and reading about anything that was related to medicine, especially shows with good medical content and documentaries about different rare illnesses. A doctor's ability to cure illnesses and help those who were injured inspired me. I found the resilience of the human body fascinating and wanted to learn about all of its inner workings. "Why?" was always the question that I found myself asking and it has led me to the career path I am on now. I see my role in the future as one that can help others obtain mental and physical health.

Western in all honesty was not my first choice, but as I got to learn more about it, my feelings quickly changed. I was intrigued by the sense of community I felt as a visitor. The campus was not too big, but also not so small. Western offered a large university feel while emphasizing the importance of smaller class sizes.

*(cont'd on page 4)*

### Inside :

Health Notes - by Evelyn Ames	p. 2
Cooking for One	p. 3
Interest Groups	p. 4
Scholarship Winner, cont'd	p. 4
Book Review	p. 5
Poetry Corner	p. 6

## May 2020 Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

### Journaling for the Health of It

“Journaling (or keeping letters or diaries) is reported to be an ancient tradition, dating back to at least 10th century Japan.” In the 1400’s in the Arab world, the writings of Ibn Khaldun come within descriptions of “journaling”. A renowned historian in the traditional sense of a compiler of chronicles, he is recorded to be the “creator of a new discipline, *‘umran*, or social science, which treated human civilization and social facts as an interconnected whole and would help to change the way history was perceived, as well as written.” “Gertrude Bell’s journals capture the remarkable experiences of an extraordinary and ultimately historically significant woman, in an era when most women stayed near their homes and husbands. Born into a wealthy British family in 1868, ... She led a life that is almost as incomprehensible now as it was a century ago. She was an archaeologist, mountaineer, photographer, political officer, writer, translator, traveler, and cartographer, known to the sheiks of the Middle East as “The Queen of the Desert.”

When I asked one of our WWURA members, June Hopkins, why she was journaling, she said “writing has always been my go-to activity, so when I found myself isolated at home during this pandemic, I just needed to write. I have no one living here with me so this is a way to “talk,” or to “socialize” in a way. Keeping a journal helps me put things in perspective, to keep tabs on what is going on inside my head as well as what happens here day to day. I do think that this is a way to avoid depression because thoughts are “thought out” and put into words. I want to remember what has transpired during this time--and it will go on for a long time, I fear.” “It is also an intellectual pursuit, and a way to keep my mind active and flexible.”

The concept of a diary, now called journaling, means writing down one’s thoughts and feelings. Researchers in the field suggest that journaling helps to manage anxiety, reduce stress, and cope with depression. Journaling is reported to help individuals improve their moods by helping them prioritize problems, concerns, and fears. “Journalists” can track day-today symptoms and recognize what triggers various feelings. It serves as a way to control those triggers, providing opportunity to engage in positive “self-talk!”

*Intermountain Health Care* reported “expressive writing (like journaling) for only 15 to 20 minutes a day three to five times over the course of a four-month period was enough to lower blood pressure and improve liver functionality. “Journaling helps keep your brain in tip-top shape. Not only does it boost memory and comprehension, it also increases working memory capacity, which may reflect improved cognitive processing.” A unique social and behavior outcome of journaling is it can improve your mood and give you a greater sense of overall emotional well-being and happiness.

Related to mood is how journaling benefits overall emotional health: “As journaling habits are developed, benefits become long-term, meaning that diarists become more in tune with their health by connecting with inner needs and desires. Journaling evokes mindfulness and helps writers remain present while keeping perspective. It presents an opportunity for emotional catharsis and helps the brain regulate emotions. It provides a greater sense of confidence and self-identity. Journaling can help in the management of personal adversity and change and emphasize important patterns and growth in life. Research even shows that expressive writing can help individuals develop more structured, adaptive, and integrated schemes about themselves, others, and the world. What’s more, journaling unlocks and engages right-brained creativity, which gives you access to your full brainpower. Truly, journaling fosters growth.”

In summation, one writer offers this suggestion: “So, great. You get it: Journaling is good for you — physically, mentally, and emotionally. But what if, like many of us, you find yourself stuck, staring fruitlessly at a blank page? Well first, ditch the guilt of not being consistent or instantly motivated. Simply start where you are. If you need to initially just write a single line, or detail the specifics of what you had for breakfast, do it. Don’t preoccupy yourself with managing perfect punctuation, grammar, or spelling. Just write and don’t censor yourself. This is for you. Remember: You don’t have to be Shakespeare.”

## COOKING FOR ONE

### Suzanne Krogh

It was halfway through my senior year of high school when a guidance counselor suggested I enter General Mills' recently announced contest to find "The Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow". Each state would have one winner of a \$1,000 scholarship; everyone else would win a Betty Crocker Cookbook. All I had to do was take a one-hour test at the time and place of my choosing. I chose Thursday's deadly dull sixth period study hall and wrote my heart out.

As the school year approached its end, I learned that I had won...a cookbook. Despite my disappointing finish, over the decades that cookbook has been my go-to resource for everything from meat roasting instructions to birthday cake recipes.

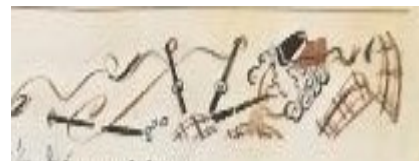
Late one night about 30 years ago, I found myself in need of a cookie. Or two or three. There were none in the house, and it was way too far from Sudden Valley where I lived to the nearest 24-hour grocery store. Turning to Betty Crocker for the simplest, quickest recipe she had to offer, I chose her 3 ingredient shortbread. I didn't need a full recipe yielding a whole pan of cookies; just the instant gratification of a midnight snack. So, doing some quick arithmetic, I figured out a reasonable recipe for a single cookie. Within a few minutes, the rich odor of butter and sugar filled the kitchen and soon I was happily nibbling a warm, rather large, piece of shortbread.

Over the years, that cookie has remained my first choice whenever I need a quick sugar fix, even now that I live in town, five minutes from my 24-hour Haggen. It's a sturdy recipe, not a fancy one. If you've never baked in your life, it's a good place to start. If you're an experienced baker, you'll be able to play with it to make different varieties.

### EMERGENCY LATE NIGHT SHORTBREAD COOKIE

#### Ingredients

1 tablespoon sugar  
2 tablespoons very soft butter  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour



#### Instructions

Turn the oven on 300 degrees  
Thoroughly mix the ingredients in a small bowl  
Scoop into your hands to make a firm ball  
Flatten to make a thick, round cookie, about 2 1/2 inches in diameter  
Even up the edges or cut with a biscuit cutter  
Sprinkle a bit of sugar on top  
Bake on an ungreased pan or cookie sheet for 28-30 minutes

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P.S. Suppose isolation is over and unexpected company is arriving for tea in less than an hour. Your ingredient list now becomes

1 cup very soft butter  
5/8 cup sugar  
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

Press flat in a 9x12 inch pan, sprinkle with sugar, bake 30 minutes at 300 degrees.  
Cut in squares while still warm and don't tell anyone how easy they were.

## May 2020 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](mailto:dfmoore12@gmail.com)

We will have a Zoom meeting at 2 pm on Tuesday, May 19 to discuss

*Persuasion* by Jane Austen. Minda Rae Amiran will be the discussion leader.

Upcoming books are:

*A Moment of Lift* by Melinda Gates

*Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens

*A Woman of No Importance* by Sonia Purnell

*Pilgrimage to Eternity* by Timothy Egan

**INFORMAL DINING**—Stephen Hutchens, 360-483-6873  
[sphutchens@yahoo.com](mailto:sphutchens@yahoo.com). Contact Steve for more information.

**OPERA GROUP**--Evelyn Ames, 360-734-3184, [evelyn.ames@wwu.edu](mailto:evelyn.ames@wwu.edu)  
Contact Evelyn for more information.

Opera update on Metropolitan Opera weekly streaming: simple way to access is  
type in search line: metopera.org. Operas begin streaming at 4:30pm and continue  
until 4pm the next day (Pacific time). You can start and stop any number of times.  
Check to see if other opera houses are streaming at no cost.

### 2019-2020 MET HD

Opera streaming by the Metropolitan Opera: Week of May 8-10

May 9: program about Met opera house (includes interview with L. Price)

May 10: Cav and Page

**Met HD: Radio broadcasts:** King FM-98.1–10 a.m. and CBC Radio 105.7 - 1 p.m.

**WRITER'S GROUP** - Troy Faith Ward, 425-299-4924, [troyfaithward@gmail.com](mailto:troyfaithward@gmail.com).  
Meets twice a month. The groups are kept small so there is time for reading and critiquing  
each other's work.

A second writing group has started and is accepting new members. Meets twice  
a month. Call Howard Evans, 360-650-9724, [barbandhoward@comcast.net](mailto:barbandhoward@comcast.net) if  
interested.

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## Letter from Scholarship Winner Melody Gao, *cont'd from page 1*

The number of clubs and activities available to explore seemed super promising. The vast amount of opportunities is what drew me in. I am super glad that I chose Western because the last two years have been the best college experience I could have asked for.

The WWU Retirement Association Scholarship relieves the financial burden for my family. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for not only helping with my financial burdens but also allowing me to be more independent. This allows me to get closer to my goals. The generosity that you have bestowed on my family and myself is one that will last a lifetime. Again, thank you!

Sincerely,  
Melody Gao

## Book Review

### *The Fifth Risk* (2018) by Michael Lewis: A Review

In this time of pandemic and social distancing, with a desire to be as non-partisan politically as possible, I break one of my rules of thumb by reviewing a second book by the same author. Several years ago I reviewed Michael Lewis's *The Big Short*, a book about the bursting of the credit and real estate bubble in 2007 and 2008. I do so because I think that *The Fifth Risk* is a valuable book in itself and that it provides an important perspective on our current situation.

*The Fifth Risk* is about President Trump's taking the reins of government from President Obama. Early in the book Lewis reports on an interview with Frank MacWilliams, a former Wall Streeter focusing on risk analyst who then became a risk analyst for the Department of Energy. MacWilliams tells Lewis that the nation's intelligence community considers the major national security risks to be (1) the exploding of a dirty bomb at a huge public gathering like the Super Bowl, (2) North Korea, (3) Iran, (4) sabotage of the national electrical grid, and (5) program management. Program management—or mismanagement! That's the fifth risk.

Lewis remarks that by and large most government programs run fairly well—think Social Security. It's the train wrecks that we hear about, like the fouled up initial rollout of the health insurance exchange website for Obamacare. But who among us has heard of Frazer Lockhart “who organized the first successful cleanup of a nuclear weapons factory, in Rocky Flats, Colorado, and had brought it in *sixty years early and \$30 billion under budget*”? (Emphasis added.)

Lewis devotes one section of his book each to the Departments of Energy, Agriculture, and Commerce, explaining the importance of their work and the dedication of their staff. He also notices the countervailing activities of Trump appointees to those departments, appointees who oppose the mission of the department to which they have been appointed.

Along the way Lewis makes clear that data is intrinsically important to the successful operations of the several agencies he covers. And the data comes from data collection. He laments that President Trump's appointees have by and large curtailed data collection. One might say that they are inimical to data collection. Which observation brings me to my segue to the pandemic. Here is a short list, taken from the book, of the things that the Obama transition team was prepared to prep the Trump team about “How to stop a virus, how to take a census, how to determine if some foreign country is seeking to obtain a nuclear weapon, or if North Korean missiles can reach Kansas city.” Lewis wrote this in 2018, with stopping a virus at the head of the list. We know that one essential part of stopping a virus is testing for the virus—data. Very probably in exploring the fifth risk, Lewis has given us an unintended insight into why our testing for Covid 19 has been so tragically inadequate.

Like all of Lewis's books, *The Fifth Risk* engages the reader with clear, intelligent, occasionally witty writing. It's a pleasure to read.

**-Bob McDonnell**

## Poetry Corner

### Death in the Time of Coronavirus

Nanette J. Davis

March 6, 2020

Now formalities swept away,  
the sick made invisible  
while the dying stripped of comforts  
confront exhausted medical staff.  
Absent the gathering of family or prayers  
to mark the passing of minutes before the end.  
All swept away under wave after wave  
of the coronavirus in this evil time.  
Leadership failing, confusion in high places  
Full speed ahead to save the corporations sucking  
On the people's strained resources.

The lost ones—low wage workers, incomes  
gone,  
Nary a penny of savings.  
Frail elderly left on the scrapheap of history  
The uninsured panting for help at shut doors  
The disabled ignored—drag-down-the-economy

Better-off-without-them.

Hoorah! U.S. holds world's record on number of cases.  
Not to worry, he says, we'll be virus free by Easter

Filling up the churches, restaurants, parks, recreation  
centers

Back to normal, he says. Don't contradict me.

Death comes in multiple forms.  
Missing, small businesses as they collapse like glaciers.  
Gone, the belief about the invincibility of America  
Lost, the easy assumption that everything gets better.

Who has the answers?  
What are the questions?  
Where are the leaders?  
Who will guide us out of this wilderness?  
Where is our Redeemer now?  
Silence.

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