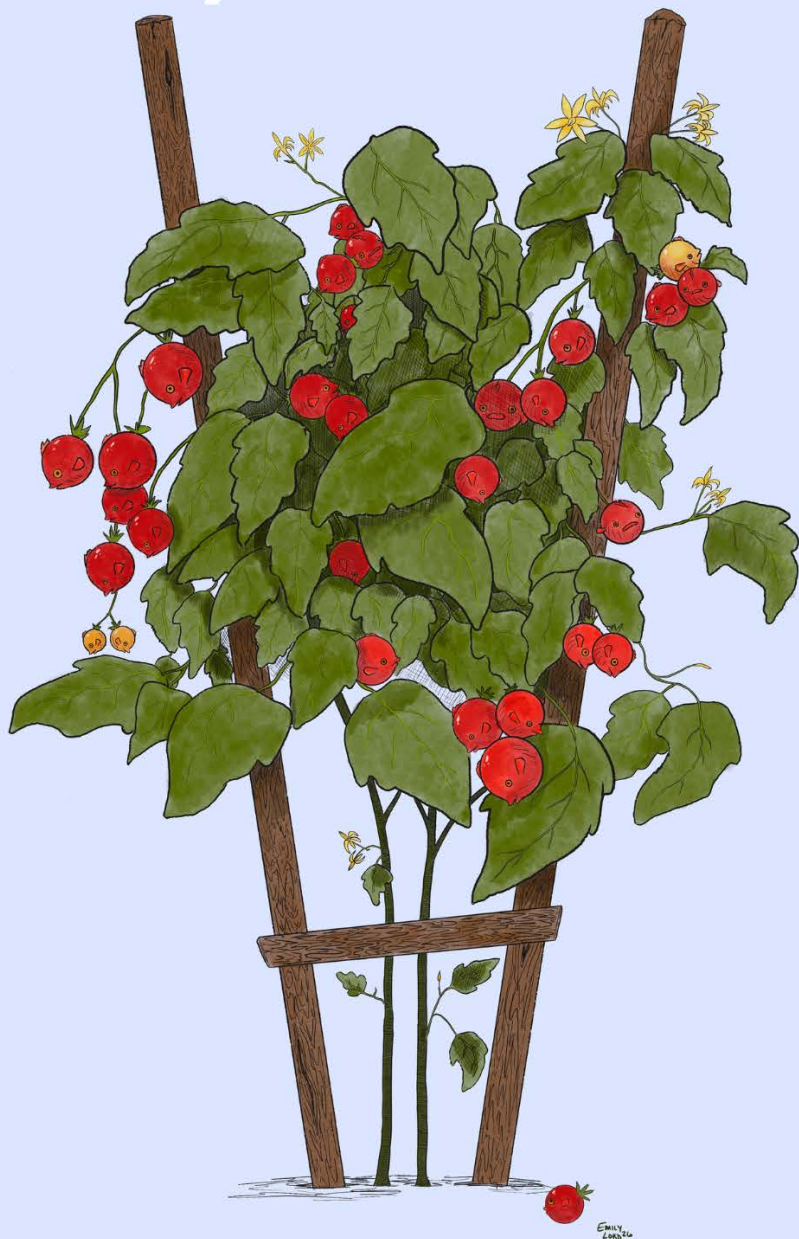


SKIPJACK REVIEW



FEATURING

KAI COOLEY - IAN AFFLERBACH - CHRIS DAHL

Skipjack Review

SUMMER 2026

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

Earth Day.....8

The Everglades Are Overrun.....10

Chris Dahl

Opening Up The Center.....11

Patricia Farrell

Orientation.....16

Ed Ahearn

Patio.....17

Louis Faber

Fire Season.....33

Sam Hunter

ART

Nocturnal Animals.....14

Susan L. Lin

PROSE

Manchester Island.....12

Kai Cooley

The Sunken Gondola of Nicolas

Jenson.....18

Ian Afflerbach

The Carrying.....20

Brittney Corrigan

INTERVIEW

A Conversation with Eric

Bogwalker and Amelia LaMair at

Flotsam Farm.....24

Jim Huff

From the Editors...

Summertime is in full bloom here at Skipjack camp—and so is Issue 7! We're down on our hands and fins pruning this and plucking that, preparing to can everything from tomatoes and green beans to love and laughter. The garden runneth over:

Take a good, long look through *Grandpa's old binoculars* in “Manchester Island” by Kai Cooley

Remember *forgotten treasure* in “The Sunken Gondola of Nicholas Jenson” by Ian Afflerbach

Guess the *unseen, silent work done gladly* in Patricia Farrell's “Opening Up in the Center”

Witness *flowers from a hundred different countries* ablaze in Chris Dahl's “Earth Day”

Share *fresh conversation* with Eric Bogwalker and Amelia LaMair at Flotsam Farm

Bear *the whole weight of grief* borne in Brittney Corrigan's “The Carrying”

Allow yourself to wander in “Orientation” by Edward Ahern

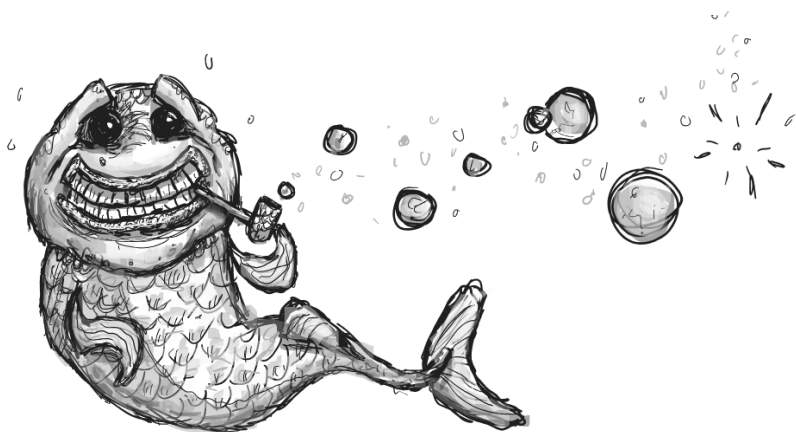
Join us and *hope for rain* in Sam Hunter's “Fire Season”

Reach for *distant stars* in Louis Faber's “Patio”

Let's take a moment to stop and smell those flowers all around us. How they crop up in the most unexpected of places.

With nothin' but love, love, love,

- Em, MM, and Jim



Chris Dahl

Earth Day

The starlings live one neighborhood removed from mine.
So dark, they remind me of moonless nights when it's just
the universe and stars—

How far away they are, those stars.
They don't even know we're here.

Does this love ever stop—this love for dirt and wind?
Flowers from a hundred different countries live here

and yesterday, at my mother's, out underneath some shrubs
where the vegetable garden used to be, two more blooms
I can't identify, although

I'm pretty sure one is an anemone. I don't know
how they came to be there—maybe starts from Katie
who used to live next door.

The flavors of being alive come and go. All night
nature builds and tears down. In the morning, nothing is settled.
The claws of otters

and eagles, rabbits, voles, a whole
extended family of squirrels, above and below, the quiet
clicking. Some animal over the cold snap—I suspect

a rat—snuck into my garage and stole an overwintering
begonia bulb from its pot. Never mind. I can buy more.
From behind the clouds a glimmering sun erodes
the edges

sending a solar music to intertwine
with the scent of honeysuckle—a vine so fecund
it overwhelms the spirit house on its pedestal.

What a good child, the sun says and pats my head.
I sway and grow toward the light.

Chris Dahl

The Everglades Are Overrun

by Asian Swamp Eels. The Midwest rivers by imported carp gone native.

Here in the Northwest, the state is searching for a “lead Murder Hornet trapper,” implying the need for multiple trappers.

We’ve finally agreed to the possibility that some strange phenomenon—alien or otherwise—haunts our skies, but what confuses us are the possibilities of disinformation.

How real is the science? Real real, or the kind that draws in viewers with breathtaking blurbs? Just as we’re losing the wonders of the world—one of the already dwindling population of resident Orcas dead in a boat collision—we shift

our attention to something on the other side of the looking glass. A mirror never reveals the truth, though its revelations often surprise us.

Patricia Farrell

Opening Up The Center

Twelve feet up, inside
un-leafed mossy-sleeved
branches, I trim
what I can reach, lean
off my precarious tripod,
my bird's-eye view clear
and a chickadee scolds me
as she tosses last year's detritus
from hollows and creases,
while unseen, silent
work goes on—
sap rises, blind moles push
through darkness, as I
direct buds downward —
bend all to my goal:
this year's fruit
within my grasp.

Manchester Island

On the mainland, Ricky sat on a metal milk crate in a bird blind he'd made of driftwood and jimson weed stems. Leafy branches overhead caged the blue of the sky. At his ear, a mosquito crooned of bloodlines. He raised his grandpa's antique binoculars towards the arrowhead-shaped wedge of land in the middle of the Ohio River. His grandfather had sold the island to Mr. Greenlee last week. It had belonged to his family for five generations. Wasn't that the same as forever?

A kingfisher rattled from a cottonwood and then dove sword-first as Ricky watched. Without moving his gaze, he pressed the binocular's eye cups into his skull, and when he did, the river disappeared. Vanished. Was gone. The air didn't even smell the same.

In a whoosh the river reappeared, pushed by a wall of glaciers at a thousand frames per second. The island's head crowned in a watery birth. Night dropped the cloak and dawn scissored the horizon with light again and again. Trees sprouted, grew, died, fell. Rich silt from upstream washed onto the shores over and over. The banks eroded and knuckled up a boneyard of roots. Much later there were people piling the soil in mounds, hunting animals, squatting around small fires, and eventually crouching in wait to ambush rafts of settlers. Now the settlers were burying and unburying gunpowder, and in a blink the natives were gone and the new men and women patted corn kernels into the dirt, dug holes for cherry trees and grapevines. He witnessed a sternwheeler sink, a boy drown, a man drown, a girl's face pressed into the sand so she could not scream while her clothes were torn from her by a passing riverman. Once, Ricky saw a mob row their boats ashore and throw a noose around a sycamore limb. He saw black feet swinging. The floods arrived as dragons that swallowed farmhouses and washed barns off their foundations. A gambling house full of poker chips

came and went. The people rebuilt and the river invariably emptied the island on repeat. Ricky watched his grandpa plant watermelons and tobacco and pound rope in between the planks of a boat and his grandma's smile pinken into a ripe apple as she wriggled her toes in the shallows...and then they both became old. His mother walked the length of the sandbar and turned and waved. His father swam arm over arm away from him.

The binoculars had suctioned to his face, but Ricky tore them off and threw them. He sat there shaky and panting, his head between his knees. Same freckle on his right knee cap. Same pale blonde hairs. But over there, the island was no longer theirs, no longer anybody's.

The kingfisher's rattle roused him to look again. Even without the binoculars, Ricky could see his old rope swing dangling abandoned from that sycamore tree. He saw Mr. Greenlee standing on the island dock with his hands on his hips, watching the storm clouds stacking to the west.

Nocturnal Animals

Susan L. Lin



Orientation

I am conditioned to blatant right angles,
Houses and yards and roads and signs
That define my fenceless chicken coop
But sometimes I allow myself to wander
into thick woods without trails or pattern,
discernable streams or rocky prominences.

Twenty paces into the curves of the woods
and my frames of reference have vanished.
I am illiterate, unable to read the uniquely
random jumble of trees leaning out of true.
Unease mingles with wonder as I realize
the secret to retracing is looking backwards

Louis Faber

Patio

I sit on the patio
of the hotel room
along the coast
and stare up.

I reach out
for the stars
etched
in the firmament
and burn
my fingers.

The Sunken Gondola of Nicolas Jenson

My father was raised near Oxford, England, by stuffy parents who cherished tradition. He did all he could to recreate their stuffiness in the Rhode Island town where I grew up, and where my father paid our bills by teaching Attic Greek to the brats at my boarding school.

His work followed his passion. My father adored Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. He would recite numbers, to anyone who would listen, testifying to their greatness: millions of readers, two thousand years of theater, all, he said, born from just 33 surviving Greek tragedies.

But my father would also insist, until the day he died, that this last number was wrong.

It should have been 34.

Several medieval scholars describe a play by Sophocles called the “Apolōlos.” In 1432, however, a scribe named Manilius Justus had identified stylistic inconsistencies between the only known copy of this play and other work by Sophocles and rejected the Apolōlos as a fake.

The manuscript was soon lost, the play soon forgotten.

This sad fate, my father believed, had been due to Justus possessing a corrupt manuscript. But another copy existed, my father swore, one that could finally validate the Apolōlos as our 34th tragedy—if only someone would find and raise the sunken gondola of Nicolas Jenson.

Jenson had been Venice’s leading printer in the 15th century and built his reputation by copying Greek texts. My father’s research had convinced him that Jenson printed an uncorrupted copy of the Apolōlos—only for the gondola carrying this precious volume to sink en route to its buyer. Knowing how fickle Venice’s waterways can be, though, Jenson always stored his most precious manuscripts in amphora casks sealed with pine resin. Should the right cask be found and opened, my father insisted, the world could at last reclaim this

forgotten tragedy.

I inherited my father's lifelong obsession not because I shared his reverence for ancient drama—nothing inoculates students against loving a subject so reliably as a tyrannical teacher—but because my own career as a typographer led me to realize the form of Jenson's manuscript would be nearly as valuable as its contents. In the 15th century, Greek typography was split into three stylistic schools: cursive, chancery, and orthotic. Cursive became the standard for most Greek texts, with chancery reserved for elegant occasions. But orthotic script—like the one Jenson used in the 1470s—has vanished. No museum or foundry on earth possesses a sample.

Typographers know that even familiar fonts, if looked at with the right eyes, can offer us portals through time. But to read the Apolōlos in an orthotic script would be a singular vision. With both text and font unseen for centuries, looking at that manuscript would be simultaneously peering into Venice in 1470 CE and Athens in 470 BCE. It would also simultaneously vindicate my father's lifelong passion, and—with no son of my own—establish for me a durable legacy.

I always knew the chances of finding Jenson's gondola were incredibly remote. As a young romantic, I think the long odds felt exciting. But a premature attempt at dredging a portion of the Rio dei Mendicanti proved hideously expensive, and most of my work since has been archival, learning more about Jenson's studio, which gondola carriers he frequented, and so on.

It is my one great regret in life that I never succeeded in finding that sunken treasure. Hamlet, for better or worse, settled his ghostly father's debts. I cannot say the same.

Now I too have become an old man. I suppose I should have seen it coming. But one day I simply realized with a start that I would never again join in any foreign excavations. Still, I continue to hope I live long enough to witness someone else discovering Jenson's gondola.

Until then, I will set down a few notes about the little adventures from my life and pass my idle hours reading about other treasure hunters who searched after legendary artifacts.

For who knows which of their dreams, entombed in the deep, may rise again one day?

The Carrying

Sun cycle 17: I cannot carry her any longer. Her small body feels heavier than mine, as if it contains the whole weight of my grief. But how can I leave her on this seafloor, among the eelgrass, the glacial silt? My body is a waning crescent, like the moon. Ahead, my pod wends steadily through the waves, their black and white backs undulating at the surface. They crest and drop, crest and drop. The sun has risen and set seventeen times since I began carrying her. How can I let her go? The steady huffs of my pod's breathing echo in me, pull me to follow, help me bear the weariness in my fluke, my fins. The ache at my core. Finally, I tip my head down, and she slips from my rostrum, sinks slowly through the shadowy kelp.

Sun cycle 1: Tali is born tail first, spinning out of me in a plume of fluid and blood. After that, nothing is as it should be.

Sun cycle 2: I lift her over and over. She rides on my body, above the water's dark surface. Nothing will harm her. My pod surrounds me, slowing their pace. Tahlequah, Tahlequah, Tahlequah. My name pulses out of them toward me. I lift her. Maybe this time she will take a breath.

Sun cycle 9: Sometimes I forget that she was born, that she is outside me. We travel together still, and I hear her heartbeat within me, feel her press at my belly. This familiar weight I carried for many months as she grew inside me. I hunted salmon, clicked and listened for the echoes of their shapes, caught their bodies between my teeth, swallowed them whole. They became my flesh, her flesh. We were one being: the salmon, she, and I.

Sun cycle 1: When her body leaves my body, at first I do not notice the vacancy. Her form, sleek and new, swimming beside me. Blood dispersing, becoming ocean, no longer distinguishable as anything other than the richness of the sea. Tali is not my first. But she is the first I will mourn.

Sun cycle 14: I fall behind my pod. They will not leave me, but now my body travels as two bodies, and I am slow. The salmon are shadows beneath me in the cold sea. Their fins, their thick bodies, their movement away from me. I have forgotten what hunger feels like. I have forgotten what it feels like when my belly is full. Within me, an emptiness I cannot relieve. She falls. I dive. I retrieve her. I lift her. Again. Again.

Sun cycle 7: Sometimes, others in my pod carry her for me. Notch, my son, my first. He carries his sister through the water, the length of her draped across his strong face, her fin drooping, her body lifted toward the summer sun. But I cannot rest. I do not like the feel of my body without her body pressed to me. Even if she does not move against me. Even if the sun does nothing to warm her.

Sun cycle 12: Who does grief belong to? Does it cling only to the one who has lost? Does it ripple out from one world to another, one being to another? My pod carries each grief as if it is shared in our bones, our bodies, our breath. We buoy one another. We are one being, have always been one being that has circled these waters for millions of years. The full moon's reflection. Our bodies traveling together.

Sun cycle 1: When Tali is born, it is not like it was with Notch. She does not latch to my side, she does not nurse. She hardly swims beside me at all before her body sinks, sinks, sinks.

Sun cycle 10: Her body is changing. She should be swimming beside me, swallowing my milk, growing quick and large and strong. But instead she sags. Her skin curdles, sloughs away each time I retrieve her. She is all around me in the water. Becoming the salmon. I cannot contain her. How will I keep her with me?

Sun cycle 16: Will it be my own hunger, my own weakness, that will end this carrying?

Sun cycle 4: She was born, and then she died. Only countable breaths. But there is no measure for the way in which the world continues. For the way the world has always been.

Sun cycle 11: Where does one body end and another begin? When one body is inside another, what is separate and what is the same? The salmon in my belly, Notch when he moved inside me, Tali in my womb, each member of my pod that is and ever was. I carry all of them. Her body is a vessel, my body is a vessel, my son's body is a vessel, the pod is a vessel. I feel every molecule that moves between Tali and me and every other body and fish and current and heart in this fluid world.

Sun cycle 15: How can we contain grief? It is vast as this sea, small as her stilled heart.

Sun cycle 17: All the cycles of the sun from Tali's birth until now, I have carried her. When she slid from me, I dove for her. When she fell through the cold water, I swam after her. Beneath the salmon, beneath my son, beneath my pod. I nudged her back onto my rostrum, brought her to the surface again and again. The sun shimmered on her black and white skin. The water beaded on her limp side, her sagging fin. Now, under this waning crescent moon, I see her beauty. Though I cannot keep her intact, she is not less. I see that she is me. That she is us. I dip my head, and she falls and falls, drops slowly through the water. She is everywhere. She is how I will rejoin this circling world.



A CONVERSATION WITH
ERIC BOGWALKER AND AMELIA LAMAIR
AT
FLOTSAM FARM

I recently sat down with Eric Bogwalker and Amelia LaMair at Flotsam Farm in Sycamore, MO, and ever since I keep coming back to the ideas of meaningful hard work and following your heart, not just your wallet. It's surreal how the latter feels like such a revelation in today's world. But it does. It is. This latest visit to Flotsam Farm has served as a big reminder to keep my eyes on the prize and remember the value of hard work. I am reminded that, if you have a vision, there's a way to make it happen within your effort and price range, even if you have to get creative and do it yourself. And that might even make all the difference.

Flotsam Farm is an ecologically conscious homestead and community hub in Sycamore, MO, about 100 miles southeast of Springfield. Founded by Eric Bogwalker and Amelia LaMair in 2011, they farm, raise goats and chickens, and host a variety of community events centered around music, art, and learning. Here's our conversation.

Jim: *I am absolutely in love with the space you've created out here at Flotsam Farm. The gardens, the animals, the DIY artistry at every turn—like renovating the barn into a music venue with two stages. It's all seriously impressive. Tell me a little about the origins of Flotsam Farm. How did this get started? How did the farm grow into what it is today?*

Eric: We've been here for 14 years. We got in when the land was still cheap. It was more dumb luck than vision. [Laughs.] It's a labor of love. But yeah, it's all about prioritizing. With the infrastructure and gardens built, most of it becomes upkeep more than anything, which allows us to do more all the time.

Jim: *I imagine that's what makes it possible to host so many community events—like the music festival happening later today. You're simply adding another section to the garden. As musicians yourselves, it must be refreshing to mix aspects of that world with the farm life. I imagine it makes the work seem less like work and more like another kind of hands-on art. How do you maintain this meeting of two worlds?*

Eric: We find value in these things. Balance. Much of what I've done I've observed being done, and I've taken on that kind of DIY philosophy to heart. Thinking in terms of sustainability and overcoming economic pressures. There just aren't a lot of options in rural areas, especially with music and art. But music is a social artform. Isolation can be a bad deal [in that way]. So, starting a music scene out here is important. Especially if there's a kind of activism to be found in having fun. I want to get people excited. "Come for the party, stay for the lifestyle," as our friend Amber Johnson says.

Jim: *I love that! [Laughs.] Speaking of lifestyle—in today's world, a DIY mentality is an increasingly priceless skillset. Tell me a little about how this mindset has allowed Flotsam Farm to flourish over the years. Was there a defining moment when you realized by DIY you could overcome some limitation? Or is it simply a matter of practicality?*

Eric: I guess I really became aware of the idea of DIY in like 1998 or 1999 when I had first left the rural Ozarks and went to Kirksville to college. Up there I met kids who were into making bands and booking their own shows, and eventually we rented a space just off the square in Kirksville that was a community run art and music space called The Aquadome. Our first show included a Pensacola-based band called This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, who were a really amazing band and deep practitioners of the DIY punk concept. That show blew my mind. They were hard touring, well-traveled folks, bent on creating a new world, informed by anarchism, mutual aid, fun, and music. They brought food and made us all pasta at the Aquadome.

But to me, DIY is about not asking for permission to live a creative and inspired life. It's about seeing a need in your community and meeting that need by being resourceful, fair, and pragmatic. And not waiting for someone else to give you what you want. With the DIY approach, gatekeepers can't keep us out, because we make our own gates.

Jim: *And you even run an indie record company, too, right? My gosh, you have so many irons in the fire. What all goes into that?*

Eric: Flotsam Farm Records! It's just another aspect of music scene building. A way of helping other bands get physical media made. Amelia even designs and produces the disc jackets and all.

Amelia: Yeah, I have an amateur screen printing set up, and I design and print our Creek Stink shirts, and most of our event shirts. It's a lot of fun! We have a hookup on blank t-shirts from a friend who works at a thrift store. I also screen print the album covers, like with Paranoid People, which features artwork from a gal named Melissa Honeybee. I drew the album art for our 7-inch split and the Bunker Blues LP, which were professionally printed. Our friends Dez and Harley do most of our show flyers. I occasionally help folks out with screen printing, but I really don't have much time to put toward it. The art is just another branch of this weird crazy DIY project that is Creek Stink/ Flotsam Farm. I enjoy the design part as well as the physical production. It's cool to be able to crank out 30 shirts or 100 albums using low tech methods and low impact materials.

Jim: *Clearly, Flotsam Farm is so much more than a “farm” in the usual sense of the word. You’re growing community out here as much as anything else, which is so wonderful. But I must admit, I’m as impressed by the quality of your vegetables as anything else. I have a modest garden at home myself, but none of it is looking anything like the cucumbers and tomatoes I’ve seen here today. Tell me a little about your farm. What all do you grow? Or what are some of your biggest yielders? Do you sell produce? How do you prioritize things, make time for, and keep up with such a big operation?*

Amelia: We grow quite a lot of food here. We don’t really sell much of it, which is confusing to some people, but we’ve determined that it’s really just worth more than money and we’d rather eat it, preserve it, and share it than try to go out and find a market. Our biggest crops are sweet potatoes, potatoes, garlic, and tomatoes, with smaller quantities of all kinds of other things thrown in. We grow sorghum, which we squeeze the juice out of with a horse or lawnmower powered press from the 1800’s and cook down into a tasty syrup. We’ve also started growing field corn, and last year we took it to historic Topaz Mill to grind. It’s been really fun to experiment with historical low-tech and community-centered methods, and inch toward actual food sovereignty.

I’m in the midst of tomato harvest right now and it’s a lot to keep up with! I’m either picking or processing them, or both, every day. Then there are the critters, which include a flock of laying hens, Muscovy ducks, and a few turkeys, which is all very entertaining, and a herd of dairy goats. We aren’t in full production mode with the dairy right now, but I dream of making cheese again someday!

I think growing food is pretty much non-negotiable, but it is definitely hard work, and a lot to juggle! We joke about how the rock and roll schedule and the farming schedule don’t fit together that well because one goes late and the other starts early. Labor to get it all done is probably the biggest challenge, but we have been fortunate to have quite a bit of help from a handful of friends collaborate on the gardens for a share of the produce. All of this stuff “takes a village,” and it is awesome that so many folks make the effort to show up and make the food production, events, etc. happen! That said, we’re pretty much always busy and behind on things. That’s the nature of a farm and having young kids. I’m really grateful to be able to live this life though.

Jim: *You seem to have struck the perfect balance between work and play. The word harmony comes to mind—and I think everybody feels this sense of harmony the second they arrive at Flotsam Farm. It's not this cold, factory farm operation; and even at events like the music festival later today, it's not just one big party. In fact, I'll probably be the first person to crack open a beer today. Sorry about that. [Laughs.] But seriously, this is such a welcoming space. Already today I've encountered artists, academics, and curious locals alike, and it's clear to me why you've had such success bringing this community together. Especially with other events you host, like your weekly Sycamore Salons, which champions, not only music and art, but crafts, culture, and the humanities. As it happens, various Skipjack contributors have even been guest speakers at these events, including Craig Albin, Brooks Blevins, Jared Phillips, and others. Tell me more about your Sycamore Salons.*

Eric: The Sycamore Salons are one of my favorites for sure. This area is known as Sycamore. There's Sycamore [river] access; there used to be a Sycamore store. The Salons take place every Thursday at 5 pm and feature a potluck, speakers, discussions, demonstrations, games, skits, etc. It's always an open invite to the public. The speakers or presenters have very different backgrounds, but so does everybody who comes to participate.

Jim: *That makes me think of my grandpa's generation, how he hunted everything and canned everything, trapped everything, and sold furs—on and on—and how I could've easily picked up the mantle of so much of his knowledge, but I didn't. We live in a very different world today, with 24-hour everything and Google and GPS in the palm of our hands. The Sycamore Salons feel like a way of keeping certain kinds of knowledge alive that might otherwise be lost. A sort of continuing of oral traditions.*

Eric: Sycamore Salons are definitely geared toward that kind of knowledge sharing. Actually, when we had Kaitlyn McConnell out for a Salon, we hit on this notion that home is partially about the skills and activities that are rooted in the place of home. Rooted in a home place in a physical sense, maybe, like in the landscape, ecosystem, the people there. I guess an implication of all that is that if we lose those skills, if they're not passed on, we lose some aspect of our being rooted in home.

Jim: *These are such important conversations to be having. What advice do you have for others wanting to support, or even start, similar grassroots community spaces in their own communities?*

Eric: Go for it! But try not to take on a lot of big red bills. Unfortunately, failure due to finances is a concern, of course. It takes a lot of trust, mutual support, and goodwill, but that's the whole point, you know? Respecting people more than money. One thing it helps to remember is, don't worry if attendance is light sometimes, especially early on. These things fluctuate. It's a long-game thing. But don't give up due to initial slowness.

Jim: *Where can people find out more information about Flotsam Farm, as well as purchase and support your work?*

Amelia: Flotsam Farm doesn't have a website right now, but we have a [rarely updated] Facebook page. If you're on social media, following Eric Bogwalker is the best way to see what we're up to. I send out a weekly email newsletter with our upcoming events, and folks can join that list by emailing flotsamfarm@protonmail.com. We are also getting a chat group going on Signal called "Sycamore Salon at Flotsam Farm" if anyone is interested. The best way to support our work is to show up at the farm for an event or come to a Creek Stink show! We also have an annual 24-hour Rock-a-Thon fundraiser, which has come and gone, but the link to donate is active all year.

Jim: *We always like to end on this question: What are you reading or listening to lately? What's your current favorite obsession or musing?*

Eric: Actually, I'm currently re-reading my favorite book: *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground, 1981-1991*, by Michael Azerrad. I've been reading and rereading that for at least twenty years. The book answers the question, What is this? in regard to Nirvana's *Nevermind* and the whole turn of the 90s. The title comes from the punk band, Minutemen. It's from one of their songs ["History Lesson –Part II," 1984]. Each chapter is about a different band. There's even a Butthole Surfers chapter. [Laughs.] There's a lot of stuff about the economics of running a band back then. A lot about how to DIY and make it work. And—I'm listening to "Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash" by The Pogues. The Part Time Travelers

bought me the Pogues record recently when we were touring around with them.

Jim: *That book is now on my list for sure! What about you, Amelia? What are you currently reading or listening to lately?*

Amelia: I have been reading *You Can't Win*, a memoir by a man named Jack Black who lived a life of crime in the late 1800's into the 1920's. It's really good! It's a unique perspective—like, he's likable even though he's doing these somewhat horrible things. It's also fascinating to read about underground life in those days, especially hobo culture. I've been listening to *Jimmie Driftwood Sings Newly Discovered Early American Folk Songs* on repeat, partly because I'm too busy to pick out a new record. [Laughs.] The songs are just so good and silly, and I really love his delivery. I also keep having "Dreamer" by Ozzy Osbourne stuck in my head. Not a popular song of his, but I really like it. He said it was his version of "Imagine" [by John Lennon].



Sam Hunter

Fire Season

the wind dies
and the sound of the pines stops

the smoke slowly settles
into depressions to smother
thoughts of bluer skies

there will be no sunset tonight

hopes of rain from the grey mass
brought in by the wind
have dissipated with the ashy
orange haze descending
from the north
where another country burns
and consumes a future
that will not be
experienced by
any unborn grandchild

and so I turn thoughts to
the now
to this small glade
within a forest
that has not yet
been touched by progress

and to my eyes that burn
with the heat of a day
spent in daydreams

AUTHORS

Ian Afflerbach is an Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of North Georgia. Along with their scholarship, Ian has written for *Public Books*, *The Conversation*, *The Podcast Review* and *The Bias*. Ian is currently finishing their second book, *Sellouts! The Story of an American Insult*.

Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had over 600 stories and poems published so far, and twelve books. He works the other side of writing at *Bewildering Stories* where he squats on the review board, and at *Scribes Micro*, where he's the idle figurehead.

Kai Cooley lives, writes, gardens, and walks dogs in the Appalachian foothills. Her work has appeared in the *Dayton Daily News*, *Nerve Cowboy*, and *Still: the Journal*.

Brittney Corrigan is the author of the poetry collections *Daughters*, *Breaking*, *Navigation*, *40 Weeks*, and *Solastalgia*, a collection of poems about climate change, extinction, and the Anthropocene Age. Brittney is the recipient of a 2025 Oregon Literary Fellowship and a former editor with *Airlie Press*. She was raised in Colorado and has lived in Portland, Oregon for over three decades, where she is an event planner at her alma mater, Reed College. Brittney's recent debut short story collection, *The Ghost Town Collectives*, won the 2023 Osprey Award for Fiction from Middle Creek Publishing. www.brittneycorrigan.com

Chris Dahl hopes to cup a handful of murky pond-water and reveal another world half-hidden in this one. Her book, *Not Now but Soon*, won Concrete Wolf's 2024 Louis Award, and *Mrs. Dahl in the Season of Cub Scouts*, a chapbook, won the Still Waters Press "Women's Words" competition, besides poems appearing in a variety of journals plus nominations for *Best of the Internet* and *Pushcart Prizes*. A board member of the Olympia Poetry Network, she shares her life with her husband and a tuxedo cat once named Minnow, but now called Sylvie.

Louis Faber is a poet and writer. His work has appeared in several anthologies and in *The MacGuffin*, *Cantos*, *Alchemy Spoon*, *New Feathers Anthology*, *Flora Fiction*, *Dreich* (Scotland), *Prosetrics*, *Atlanta Review*, *Glimpse*, *Rattle*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Pearl*, *Midstream*, *European Judaism*, *The South Carolina Review* and *Worcester Review*, among many others, and has been nominated for a Best of the Web and twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Patricia Farrell lives in rural western Oregon. Formerly a biologist and landscape architect, she completed the Certificate of Creative Writing program from Linfield University in 2021. Her poems have been published in journals such as *Camas Literary Journal*, *Verseweavers*, *The Clackamas Literary Review*, *Cirque*, *Eclectica*, and *Stone Poetry Quarterly*, among others.

Sam Hunter (she/they) believes that words can create beauty and connection, even in a troubling world. She has read and written poetry throughout her life and raised children who are readers and writers in their own ways. Sam now teaches high school language arts and social studies, allowing her to share her love of words with high school English Language Learners. She lives in Seattle, Washington.

Susan L. Lin is a Taiwanese American storyteller who hails from southeast Texas and holds an MFA in Writing from California College of the Arts. Her novella GOODBYE TO THE OCEAN won the 2022 Etchings Press novella prize, and her literary/visual art has appeared in over a hundred publications. She loves to dance. Find more at <https://susanllin.com>.