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## THE GRAVEL PIT

Wandering through “The Pit” with Jeff Gent is a little like strolling through a graveyard—except these bodies are not buried yet. They are the cars and trucks of dreams past—most still running, some just too proud to die. Like the storied 1948 Chevy 10-ton dump truck with the name “Curtis Wharf” still visible on the doors, along with the four-digit phone number. It features the 1970 license plates it bore when it came to the island.

The Chev was bought new by Phil McCracken’s father, owner of the Wharf in the days before Guemes even had electricity. Eventually the truck came to Guemes with Mack Lopp and served as his gravel pit’s main rig for some years. Lopp sold the Pit to George Wilson and he in turn sold to Gent in 1990. The elder McCracken, Lopp and Wilson (and even the Wharf) are gone now but the old Chev, long relegated to retirement, still fires off on the first try, runs on two cylinders just long enough to scare the mice out of the upholstery, then purrs as sweet as any 235 you ever heard with a gazillion miles on its crank.

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## THE LONG-LIVED LEVI’S FROM DOWN UNDER GUEMES

Jeff Gent was on his way for a night of cards with the boys. His laundry service being unreliable, he had to dig further than usual into his closet to find a clean pair of Levi’s. Upon his entrance, the guys couldn’t restrain their snickering at Jeff’s “new” 501 Levi’s. They looked new. But they stood out from the basic Guemes wardrobe: the cuts, flares and tapers suggested another era.

Don Pingree has worked for Value Village in Bellingham for years and knows clothes. Furthermore he is aware of the value of vintage Levi’s in the Pacific Rim countries. When he heard of Jeff’s 501, button fly, tapered jeans, he asked to see them and told Jeff they might be worth more than \$100. Without hesitation, Jeff said “Sell ‘em.” Two weeks later Don

presented Jeff with \$450 and “kept a little for myself.”

Turns out the jeans were a 1954 model left behind in the cabin by a relative years ago. Their original cost? “Chubby and Tubby in Seattle used to sell them for \$4.50,” says Jeff.

The story raises some questions: Just how deep is Jeffs closet? What else might be lurking there? By the way, in case your own closet needs cleaning, Don says “the demand is high for vintage Lee and Wrangler jeans; Nike shoes and sportswear, Hawaiian shirts, bomber jackets, all denim and much more.”



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It was one rock too many for island legend R. Wood Burns this spring. The 1970 Ford collapsed in total exhaustion after too many hard miles hauling salty driftwood,

boulders, kids and memories. The bumperless (“Brian did that”), bedless (“Claudia is responsible”), old workhorse was originally owned by Charlie Funk. It was purchased by Bud Ashbach (that’s him with the silly grin), 12 years ago. It folded up (Bud did that) while serving as a stoneboat in the Ashbach back field. Services were held in Jeff Gent’s gravel pit.

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“You’re going to sit around and tell dirty stories?” replied the astonished island matron when told of entertainment plans for the potluck honoring Gertrude Howard. “Gertie stories, not dirty stories,” replied Jane Read with a laugh. One of the Gertie stories that didn’t get told the other night was when a visitor approached her home a few years back to see if she needed any help. There was Gertie, 83 years young, out in the yard pruning trees—with a chainsaw!