# WIDER HORIZONS

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### Newsletter

September, 2023

#### From the Director: Denise Klein

Beginning in mid-September, we'll be offering a series of meetings to discuss two important documents: our *Succession Plan* and our *Leadership Evaluation*. Both documents contribute to our organization's stability and longevity.

Each gathering will have about six people. Here is a link to a list of the meetings so you can begin to plan which would work for you: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2kdbf7nh">https://tinyurl.com/2kdbf7nh</a> The addresses of each of the venues will be sent at the beginning of October, along with a request to select up to three you could attend. Materials for your review, as well as discussion questions will arrive a week or so later.

Many of you have expressed a desire to have more opportunities to gather with each other face to face. That's why, despire continuing Covid worries, we are offering in-person (as well as Zoom) options. In the spirit of honoring our history, below is a photo taken at our last "all-member" meeting in January of 2020 (at the Douglass-Truth Library). You'll see both some familiar faces (especially if you enlarge the photo) and some members who have departed:



From left, first row, Charles Heaney, Betty Swift (deceased), Susan Adler, Michael Kischner

Please do try to make one of the gatherings so your voice will be heard. If interest is very high, we can add more venues (to keep each one small).

And let me know of other in-person activities you crave. We've recently resumed monthly walks and dining-together experiences. And this past summer, we had several gallery tours open to all. Other in-person events were offered to a more limited audience (members of the Movie Group went to see *Oppenheimer* together). Both Men's and Women's Coffee Groups (now offered twice a month) are drawing a respectable crowd.

And we're planning a series of holiday gatherings in members' homes beginning in November. Zoom has been a lifesaver for many of us, allowing continued connection without risk. But there really is nothing like seeing each other in person!

#### Eric Johnson's Stairways to Heaven

#### By Michael Kischner



Eric Johnson always wanted to be a dancer and a musician. During his school years, his parents forbade him to study both, so he started off in public school music. By 13,

he was the piano accompanist of his school choruses in Lansing, Michigan; at 16, he had his first job as an organist and choir director. He also played double bass in his local Lansing Youth Orchestra. He graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in organ performance and a minor in dance, having begun dance classes while in college.



Eric playing the organ at the Church of St. Eustache, Paris

Upon graduating in 1979, he came to Seattle to seek opportunities in both music and dance. In addition to jobs as the organist at several churches, he

became a vocal coach and accompanist at the UW School of Music. Since 2019, he has been the organist at Mercer Island Presbyterian Church.

In dance, Eric performed with On the Boards and also developed a passion for teaching. He taught dance and movement full-time to 36 years' worth of students in Seattle public and private schools and thousands of teachers and students nationally as part of the Partners in Education program of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

When an interviewer expresses awe at the music-reading abilities essential to being a professional musician, the teacher in Eric insists, "I am not a special person. I was taught my skills in a developmentally appropriate sequence." He believes most knowledge can be successfully imparted if it is properly unpacked for the learner. He will be teaching a seminar to doctors at Swedish Cancer Institute called "Optimizing Patient Outcomes Through Optimal Communication" in October.

The seminar grows out of the medical experience of his partner of 28 years, Dennis Hopkins, who died of cancer last year. Eric credits several *Wider Horizons* members with invaluable help during and after Dennis's illness: "I am so grateful to be engaged with a cadre of people who have been through so much and are willing to share what they have learned." He calls Denise Klein the "Empress of Senior Knowledge" and feels our village offers "a unique pairing of social experience and expert support."

Gradually coming out of mourning this year, Eric returned to perhaps the most exciting professional development activity of his last ten years—the French Organ Seminars, which have taken him to play and study organs from Versailles in France to St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London. He says, "Pretty much every set of stairs to an organ loft in Paris has been climbed by the greatest of organists/composers dating back to the 16th century." Wonder fills his voice when he speaks of climbing those stairs himself. He is currently preparing an October recital that he is calling "Stairways to Heaven: Great Organs of Europe."

### Gallery Tours of Members' Art By Denise Klein

Member and Board Member Audrey Hansen has a side gig organizing gallery tours at galleries that are showing members' art. It's helping to satisfy the felt need of an increasing number of our members for inperson experiences and also opening new vistas. The larger museums are better known than these small galleries, but visiting the smaller ones is a more relaxing experience and what you see at them is enlivening.



Barbara Oswald on left

On Friday, July 7, at Audrey's instigation, several of our members and some friends gathered at the A/NT Gallery in the Seattle Center for an unusual tour of the *Please* 

Touch! Exhibit, produced and curated annually by **Barbara Oswald** and the organization she leads *Revision Arts*. One of the exhibits' purposes is to provide a showcase for the works of disabled artists, including those with low vision. That's the reason everything in the exhibit is touchable.



All the Colorful Chaotic Feels, Lynne Conrad Marvet artist

Barbara blindfolded us for our tour. That gave us insight into the experience that low vision art appreciaters would have. Then we took off the blindfolds and had a different

engagement with the touchable pieces of art. When our mind-blowing experience ended, we adjourned to the charming Toulouse Petit restaurant on lower Queen Anne for a stimulating happy hour.



Audrey Hansen on the left; Denise Klein on the right; friend of Barbara's in the middle

Audrey put together a second trip to the



Fogue Gallerv in Georgetown on Saturday, July 22. Connie Glinsmann's art and jewelry were the original attraction but the gallery featured the exceptional work of

many other artists who use the Gallery as their workshop as well as other visiting artists. I highly recommend this eclectic gallery at 5519 Airport Way S (parking at the site): HOME (foguestudios.com)

Connie is a mixed media artist who creates abstract art and jewelry inspired by her own experiences and the people she meets. Her art is created from found objects, unique papers, and three-dimensional curiosities that attract her artist's eye.



#### **DEMOCRACY IN ACTION:**

### An Interview with Tom Heller By Audrey Hansen

**Tom Heller** has been actively advocating for his favorite political candidates and issues since 1968. With thanks to Robby Barnes, this article draws on the interview he conducted.

Last spring, Tom filled out postcards with other Wider Horizons' Democracy Action Group (DAG) members encouraging Wisconsin voters to vote in the April 2023 election of a Wisconsin State Supreme Court candidate, who would flip that Court from pro-gerrymandering, anti-reproductive human rights, and pro-voting restrictions.

Then, in March, Tom went a big step further and flew to Wisconsin. Under the auspices of CommonPower, he doorbelled in the undervoting area of South Milwaukee, with a focus in African-American precincts. The volunteers started after breakfast and doorbelled until dinnertime in the cold and snow. Only 20% of residents answered. The doorbellers explained what was at stake in the election and how these issues, particularly abortion, really would affect many residents' lives directly. They also stressed that their votes were important. Many residents expressed heartfelt thanks for the volunteers who took the time to come to their marginalized communities.

CommonPower arranged for evening speakers for the volunteers including journalists, a history professor, and videos. Near the end of the trip, the volunteers were called to the Democratic Party office in

Milwaukee. Eric Holder, former US Attorney General, was there. He founded antigerrymandering All on the Line, along with Barack Obama.



**Eric Holder with Tom Heller** 

Tom reports that this experience was uplifting, meaningful and rewarding: "The trip made me feel part of something that can make a positive change in society. There was a strong sense of shared mission, and the success of our candidate made it all worthwhile."

Tom sings the praises of CommonPower and, particularly, their success in building young people of color into organizational leaders. He was amazed by the competence of the leadership team, which was comprised of 20-somethings, all graduates of CP's leadership training program.

Today, Tom continues to actively promote democracy. He is writing postcards via Postcard4VA to get out the vote for Virginia state elections in November 2023. He also phone-banked with the Ohio Democractic Party, encouraging a No vote on Issue 1. Issue 1 was a prelude to a November vote to remove the state's abortion ban and provide access to abortion in the Ohio state constitution. Ohio turnout was great, especially for an August vote, and Issue 1 was defeated.

Wider Horizons' Democracy Action Group (DAG) is restarting after a summer hiatus. Join us for postcarding on Tuesday 9/26 at 10:30 at Oxbow Bakery and on Zoom Sunday 10/1 at 4 pm. We hope many members will join in this critical work protecting and supporting our fragile democracy. If you're not yet a member of the DAG, contact Sue Lerner slerner 1@msn.com to add your name.

### The Big Sky Country By Ann Lawrence



It' It's no surprise to any of us that Montana is considered Big. This summer, I was reminded just what was meant by "big"! I was invited by my

friend Diane to visit her family's property in Livingston, Montana, just northeast of Yellowstone Park. Her family's history in Montana began with building the railroad across this wild countryside at the turn of the last century. Diane had endless stories about her parents' and grandparents' lives, and how they had purchased a beautiful property far outside of town. This is where we were headed!

Getting to their property meant driving east along a rutted and muddy dirt road for more than 45 miles; then south along an even lesstraveled road that hugged the West Boulder River. After passing soaring eagles, herds of antelope, and whistling prairie dogs, we arrived at their ranch site. This is where you could just reach out and touch the history of this country. The original stage coach line snaked through their property and we were able to hike along it. The main house on their property had been the original schoolhouse/post office/com-munity center in the late 1800's. The log walls showed the marks from the builder's axe. The main fireplace still worked wonderfully and heated the main floor.

Diane's family had added to the house with a spacious porch which overlooked the wide meadow below the home. They had also added several bedrooms and a second floor. Their property included several bunk houses along the river which is where Diane and I stayed. Before Diane's family had purchased this property it had been a working ranch,

then it became a dude ranch for "swell" Eastern families to spend their summers. There are stories of Teddy Roosevelt sleeping in one of the cabins, which I can certainly imagine since he was such an adventuresome guy!

The high mountain range was south and west of us and the wide open rangeland was the area we drove through to get to the ranch. On some days, we would hike north along the river, heading into the more open, rolling countryside. This is when we would be able to follow the shadow of the old stagecoach road. When we hiked to the south, the trails would make lots of elevation gain, leaving the river bottom behind. We made our way through pine and aspen groves and saw lots of animal prints in the moist soil along the trail. It was especially exciting when we saw the first moose prints. I missed out on seeing this big beast because I didn't make it up to the top of the ridge. But I was told he was impressive! We were also lucky to see a black bear, and even luckier we were inside our car.



West Boulder River

This trip into the Big Sky country gave every aspect of my life more oxygen. It was easy to reconnect with nature where the seasons and the cycles of life were setting the pace for each day. Who could ask for anything more?

#### NEST (North East Seattle Together), Another Seattle Area Village By Audrey Hansen



So many similarities, so many differences. This sister village opened to membership in 2012 after three years of foundational work by Deborah Anderson and others. Currently, Emily Jones is the Executive Director and Chris Alin, the Operations Director in charge of emails, grants, scheduling home visits, etc. There is also a volunteer Volunteer Coordinator. Because there were no community centers for seniors in their catchment area, the founders wanted a brickand-mortar presence and currently NEST rents space within the Wedgewood Presbyterian Church.

Membership is growing and is slightly over 200 now. There are two member categories: Social (only) and Full access (may receive services). Dues vary accordingly, \$200 for Social and \$650 for Full Access. Like Wider Horizons, NEST has recently opened its borders to include members who do not live in NE Seattle. In addition to approximately 200 dues-paying members, there are 167 vetted volunteers who are also considered Social Members. Of these 167, 34 dues members are also volunteers.

NEST has about 40 member interest groups that meet at least monthly. A sampling is Walking, Poetry, Qigong, Science. Often 70 people attend their in-person forums. Pickleball is big with the NEST membership, and staff have organized games and more.

They have a budget of approximately \$242,000; 30% of their revenue is from dues.

In addition, they have 15 sponsors (four levels) who for various donations can have their logo on their website and sponsor their newsletter. Several businesses offer discounts to NEST members. Like Wider Horizons, they keep a directory of recommended home workers (carpenters, plumbers, etc.). Handymen are in demand and short supply.

Members request needed services by email. The only challenge they've encountered is volunteers willing to take members to downtown Seattle medical appointments. No one likes the traffic there.

The current Board of Directors has shrunk to five members, and they are recruiting more members now. They are looking for specific skills either within or outside of their membership. Board members do not need to be NEST members.

This is a thriving village with many activities and services; it's doing well. I encourage you to look at their website. It contains their calendar, annual financial report and more: <a href="https://www.nestseattle.org">https://www.nestseattle.org</a>.

## Susan Jamison Profile By Denise Klein



**Susan Jamison** 

Susan Jamison joined Wider Horizons this past year in order to have more social contact She found many options for socializing and even got a little overwhelmed after the near isolation of Covid.

She has enjoyed everything she's tried, including the Women's Coffee Group, the recycling (Recology) tour, and, especially, helping another member, **Naomi Shiff**. The helping turns out to be a two-way street. For

example, Naomi let Susan know about the free library services *Kanopy* and *Hoopla*, as well as the best way to boil an egg (hint: steam it).

Being a part of *Wider Horizons* has contributed to Susan's comfort with who she is—with a deeper level of self-acceptance that she has found is one of the benefits of growing old.

Susan mentioned these as some important life experiences and achievements:

- In the 70s I designed and helped build a little house in the country for myself and my kids outside of Olympia near the Sound. It was a good place to raise my kids.
- I made silver jewelry for a while also in the 70s and I think of myself as a jeweler but don't engage in making jewelry much at this time.
- I played volleyball competitively for many years. The highlight of the year was the Huntsman Senior Games in Utah. That was a wonderful community for me to belong to. I could walk into a game, even in a foreign country, without knowing anyone. I stopped when I was 80 and Covid hit.
- My job at PATH as an international health librarian was very enriching. Working with the various teams In low tech product development meant I could research a wonderful variety of subjects and work with a wonderful variety of professions.

With two children and three grandchildren, Susan will be interested to see how *Wider Horizons'* intention to become more intergenerational develops.

#### How We Help Each Other: Nora Langan's File Cabinet

It all started with this email from Nora:

Hi Dear WHV members,

Can any one or two individuals help me assemble a small office supply storage furniture piece? See pics of some of the components. Yikes! I did not know the cabinet would be delivered requiring total assembly. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

And here are the photos showing the process (which began with the unsuccessful attempt by Denise Klein and another member, both of whom gave up):





### A Dream Vacation By Charles Heaney



Katarina Kleinmann and John Barber

Imagine having the chance to spend a month in an old, un-disturbed part of Europe with its beauti-ful architectture, ubi-quitous art and cultural institutions, numerous small shops and cafés and delicious food. **Imagine** further that

language was not an impediment and that you could get around easily using ample public transit or with the help of family and friends.

That's exactly what John Barber and Katerina Kleinmann did in May of this year when they visited Prague and nearby towns and cities in the Czech Republic. Katarina, of course, was born there and hadn't been back since 2009. For John, it was a new, intimate exposure to a part of the world steeped in history and controversy. For both of them, it was a wonderful opportunity to grow their newfound friendship.

In Prague, of course, there were the many concert venues, including a famous one, Dvorak Hall, named in honor of the city's most famous composer. Above, Katarina and John are entering the Hall.



Municipal spa in Karlovy Vary

A few hours from Prague, they visited the well known spa town of Karlovy Vary where Katarina spent her childhood.

Spending time at spas is deeply rooted in the culture of the region and it is not uncommon for it to be included as an employee health benefit. To be sure, our travelers took great advantage of Karlovy Vary's famous spa.



Masaryk Fountain with Katerina's childhood home in the background

Also not far from Prague, they went to Cesky Krumlov, a UNESCO World Heritage Site owing to its well-preserved Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture. The town had entirely escaped the bombings of WW II. John described the surrounding area as very reminiscent of the England's Cotswalds with its gentle rolling hills and quaint villages.



No visit to Prague and its environs would be complete without sampling the good wines of the region. Fulfilling that requirement brought John and Katarina to the popular annual wine festival in the city of Cejkovice. They were eager participants and John recalls a noticeable and delightful level of intoxication among both the buyers and sellers of the local spirits.

When I asked were there any surprises on the trip, Katerina eyes opened wide and she told me about walking down a street in Karlovy

Vary, where she grew up, and seeing a woman coming toward her who looked somewhat familiar. They passed each other and then, almost simultaneously, they each turned around and Katerina called out "Svetlana," a friend she hadn't seen in 42 years. Some great catching up was the order of the day.

One of the truly gratifying things about being on your editorial board is the opportunity to sit down with members from time to time and get a real insight into their lives and what excites them and keeps them going. Listening to John and Katerina's enthusiastic recollections of their trip certainly fit that bill for me.

Looking toward the future, John thought that Santa Fe, NM might be their next stop in order to get away from Seattle's winter weather and enjoy the Southwest's cultural and artistic heritage. There's not that much Gothic architecture in those parts, but Georgia O'Keefe has a definite presence there. I'm sure Katarina will love it all.

#### Feedback from Tech Volunteer Alexis Forte

#### **By Denise Klein**



**Alexis Forte** 

After Noel Hanzel left us, we were joined by two new tech volunteers Alexis Forte and Courtney Gleeson. I caught up with Alexis recently to see how she was faring with our

members. I told her I'd heard only good things.

She has dealt with issues related to printers, Zoom, email, use of ipads and iphones, and how to make one's overall set-up more accessible and functional. She has liked all of it. As a digital native, she thought (and I agreed) that people in my generation are generally anxious about doing our own trouble-shooting, while she and her cohort just dive in and start trying things.

We talked about whether people would like a webinar on managing emails or other file management issues. From what I've heard, I told her, I'm not sure that our folks are really interested in learning new tech efficiencies—any more than we really want to part with our possessions. But it's something to think about, isn't it? Let me know if the idea appeals to you.

At present Alexis is working part-time with a start-up but her long term goal is a full-time job doing product improvement or product management in the tech field. She thinks her experience with *Wider Horizons* members will be applicable. She's learning what works and what doesn't work well for our user group.

In her spare time, Alexis enjoys swimming. She tested a lot of the local pools and found one on Mercer Island that suited her best (cooler temperature and more serious lap swimmers). She and her husband, whom she says works for Amazon and "has drunk the koolaid (he's happy there)," have no plans to leave Seattle. That is good news for us!

#### John Rochford Reflects on his Cancer Journey

#### **By Denise Klein**

I talked to John (who at the time we spoke was ensconced at his Gearhart Oregon condo) who shared reflections on his experience with an aggressive malignant brain tumor. Here are some of his observations:

- Life is not about all the things you've accumulated. I don't care about clothes as much any more; my vanity is dramatically reduced. What's important is friends and memories. We need to enjoy everything we can while we can.
- What's most important to me right now is figuring out how to have housing that's sustainable for Nick and me and the dogs (we are a package deal). We have a lot of steps to our front door. That could be disastrous but going to a new place could be disorienting.
- I'm very blessed with many different people helping me (providing rides and meals; going with me to doctor appointments). So I'm very humbled by thinking back about all the people in my life who've had something bad happen. I've said, "I'm sorry," but haven't responded with real help.
- I've been surprised by how busy you are when you are sick. I learned from my role at Metro with the Access Program that it takes so much time to get to and from an appointment. And it's exhausting! A 1hour doc appointment could stretch into a 5-hour ordeal. For people in cancer situations that can be torture. I appreciate all the efforts of people to get me to my appointments in part because it's so efficient and preserves my energy.

With my friends helping, my appointments were more brief than those of the Access clients. I've been so lucky!

- I feel so good about the support of my friends. I can't believe the depth and breadth of my relationships with friends and Wider Horizons members. How important community is! People were very concerned about my traveling to Gearhart. But you can get your mojo back with enough help from your friends.
- People have commented on my perseverance and that I talk about the experience a lot. It's how I make meaning.
- People will sometimes say they hope to die swiftly. Yet I often feel remorse when thinking about being unable to make my last goodbyes. Perhaps that is why I embrace cancer, and share my experiences. I hope that I will beat it. But I want to use this time to live. To treasure people, to make memories, and, hopefully, to make a small difference.

### Bonding Over Gardens By Jeff Hedgepeth



Eagerly anticipating my first time assisting one of my fellow Wider Horizons travelers, Naomi Shiff (left), I parked in front of

her lovely house in an upscale part of Capitol Hill. But I took a deep breath as I headed up the front steps. As a 70-year-old black man, I have spent a lifetime navigating my way through situations where a black man wasn't expected. I knew Naomi was white, but I didn't know if she was expecting brown me,

or if she had an itchy trigger finger. Yes, this is dramatic, but is a concern confirmed frequently in the news.

Following the directions next to the door, I walked right in. There she was, with no shocked look on her face, just a welcoming smile. Whew, I immediately felt this was going to be a positive experience for both of us. When I spotted catalogs from a specialty garden nursery by the door, I thought Bingo, she's a kindred soul! I mentioned the catalogs. She told me that her friend Bob Lilly would be picking them up the next day. Our bonding took a giant leap forward! Bob was a person I knew well from gardening circles. In fact, back in 2019, he was part of the final judging panel that had chosen my garden to win a prominent Puget Sound gardening contest.

All of this happened in a few minutes, as Naomi settled down with an ice pack on her knee, and I started doing the chores she needed help with. It was all easy stuff for a guy with strong legs. It was made even easier because she was so organized.

We took a break to just talk and get to know each other. As I scanned her living room I saw a little wooden bird. I told her I had one just like it. Near it was a stork I also thought I owned. My old brain struggled to remember where in my tchotchke-filled condo they were located. By this time, I think she had figured out another of our connections. I was still clueless and just thought this was a coincidence.

Finally she told me she had purchased the items at a house sale given by two men who were leaving an amazing garden and moving to a condo downtown. I nodded, but still missed the target, until she asked me where my house and garden had been located. After I told her, she told me that was the neighborhood where she purchased the items. Finally, I realized these birds were purchased by her from my house sale 20 years earlier. I no longer owned them. It was swell seeing them in her hands.



Jeff Hedgepeth in his award-winning Capitol Hill garden when he was a neighbor of Naomi's

We got back to business. After breakfast was readied for the next day, we headed to her



deck where I watered her many lovely pots and we talked plants and gardening and families and life. I had a blast. I was sad that I would be away for a few weeks. I

was thrilled when I got back on her schedule. I will be there as long as I am able and as long as I am needed.

### Disappearing By Kathleen O'Connor

September 24, 2022©

It comes in first like fog
on little cat's feet, but
this fog doesn't burn off
with the warmth of a sun
that no longer appears.
There is no dawn.
Each day blends into the other
as if there were no difference
despite what the calendar shows.

It's not just the lack of order
Or adjusting to an early retirement
Or being a tourist in a land
For which you have no passport
But have arrived at anyway
Without a travel guide.
There is no map.
No frame of reference.
Much less a guide.

Sometimes a simple object is so
Foreign you just stare at it
to comprehend
how or why water swishes in a glass,
Or a line is repeated and repeated
That once made you and everyone
Laugh.
Yet you still repeat and repeat and
Laugh as if it were something

new
You just made up from
The top of your head.
Fresh.

So fresh you keep repeating Because it still seems new. Each and Every time.

Who knows if there is sweetness In entering this new land With no map or passport? No one who wandered in Returned with a map Or offered any details Of the journey. Each makes their own journey.

Vacation comes from Vacate as to leave. This is now the last trip. A slow farewell To your mind and your self.

Do you know
You are disappearing?
Do you ponder it in fear?
Or
Are you like the frog

That jumped into a pot Unable to leap out even As the pot slowly turns into A slow, gentle boil.

Only this pot doesn't boil
It just slowly drains as
You watch or behold
Yourself as a stranger with
Curious changes
As one by one things
Once certain
Disappear

Without a final wave Goodbye.

Or is everything like dawn new again Filling you with Curiosity and amazement?

Even though It is
A one way
Road
away
from
who
you
were

#### **Wider Horizons Summer Gatherings and Travels**



Audrey Hansen using Denise Klein's electric saw



Farewell party for Noel Hanzel @ the Dills (Noel in the center of the photo talking to Barbara Oswald



Kay Beisse at Noel's Party



**Lake House dinner** 



Watching the Blue Angels @ Debbie Ward's



**More Blue Angels** 

### More *Wider Horizons* Summer Gatherings and Travels



Lynda Betts, Audrey Hansen, Victoria Bestock, Denise Klein (photo by Susan Fleischmann) on Arboretum Walk



**Union Sculpture at the Arboretum** 



Enjoying a day at Janet Tuft's Dabob Bay Cabin



Photo of members on tour at SAM. L to R, Nora Langan, Sue Lerner, Kay Beisse, Pat Siggs. Sue says: The tour guide, Wendy, gave us so much insight into the artist's life we felt like we knew him. Nora contributed greatly from her knowledge of art forms and processes. It was a wonderful learning experience.



Katarina at dinner in a French restaurant in Prague. In the photo with me are my two grandnieces and my niece's husband Daniel.