

The Florida Register

Your Statewide Guide to Premier Shopping and Events

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July & August 2024



The Florida Register

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Just A Note...

During your summer travels, stop by a few advertising shops! You never know when you might get a minute to find a shop to visit and our publication can lead the way. You can stay out of the heat by shopping (in-person or online) and support the economy of small, local businesses. Or another way to beat the heat is to make one of the projects featured in this issue, or work on a project you find at one of our advertisers.



Amy, Grace, David and Rachel

Please be sure to visit our Facebook page and "Like Us." From our website, you can find links to our advertiser's web sites, view the current shows and events listing, register to win a \$25 gift certificate to your favorite advertising shop, subscribe to the paper, and more!

Have fun exploring the shows and shops holding special events that are summarized in our Shows & Events Listing – mark your calendar now for all these great events! Many shops are having sales to help accommodate your budget so be sure to take advantage of those opportunities and coupons in the ads.

Please make a point to let the shop owners know that you saw their ad in our publication – it is important. Advertisers want to know that their ad in our paper is worthwhile, and they like it when you mention you saw their ad. Without the advertisers, our publication would not exist, so they need to know the paper is working for them. Also, feel free to pick up extra copies of the paper for your friends.... We'd love for you to share it with them.

If you know a shop that should be advertising in the paper, please let us know (via email, phone, or mail). We are always looking for new shops to add to our list of great advertisers.

Christmas is coming (yes, really)! It is less than 6 months away. Why not start your shopping now and stash away a few gifts so you are ahead of the game come December?! Many shops have Christmas in July sales, summer sales, etc., etc. Take advantage of those events to make early progress on your holiday shopping. Just make a list of what you purchased and where you stashed it for safe keeping.

Grace's summer is off to a fun start. She started a job as a waitress at a nearby restaurant. She has fun in the sun planned, exercising and hanging out with friends on her summer schedule. Rachel is interviewing with hospitals and working on her spreadsheet of options for her Anesthesiologist Assistant jobs for after her Dec graduation. We've seen her a couple times recently which has been wonderful!

We wish you a wonderful, relaxing, safe SHOPPING summer!

Amy & David

Shows & Events

September/October events due by August 1

Mail a check for \$25 with your event info to the address at the top of page 2.

Facebook Live or App Events

- Mondays 3:30 pm Quilted Twins (pg. 12)
- Mon-Sat 5:30 pm Quilts and Lace (pg. 25)
- Tuesdays 6 pm Inspire Quilting & Sewing (pg. 16)
- Wednesdays 7 pm Crafty Quilters (pg. 15)
- Thursdays 10 am Miss D's Quilts (pg. 22)
- Fridays 9 am Boutique 4 Quilters (pg. 28)
- Fridays 3:30 pm Quilted Twins (pg. 12)
- Fridays 5 pm Sweet Darling Quilts (pg. 16)

- July**
- 1-31 Christmas in July Sale at Quilt Love Longarm Quilting in Tampa (pg. 16)
 - 2-31 Kangaroo Sewing Furniture Sale at Sew 'N Quilt Co in Holly Hill (pg. 23)
 - 4-6 Anniversary Sale at Beyond the Stitches in Crystal River (pg. 5)
 - 9-13 Fabric Sale at Brick City Cross Stitch in Ocala (pg. 5)
 - 11 30% off Sale at Itching for Stitching in Dade City (pg. 13)
 - 12 DIME Educator, Ashley Jones Virtual Event with Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 25)
 - 13 3rd Anniversary Celebration at My Sewing Barn Quilt Shop in Milton (pg. 3)
 - 13 Facebook Live Announcement with Margie's Sew Much Fun in Crestview (pg. 4)
 - 15-20 6th Anniversary Sale at Scrap & Sew in Lutz (pg. 17)
 - 19-Aug 3 Visit the participating shops during the Central Florida Shop Hop (pg. 6)
 - 19-Aug 3 Visit Nana's Quilt Shop in Brooksville during the Central Florida Shop Hop (pg. 16)
 - 27 Christmas in July Event at Quilt A Bit in Greenacres (pg. 26)
 - 27 Kimberbell Event at Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 25)
 - 27 Kimberbell Event at Sweet Time Quilting in Sebastian (pg. 25)
 - 27-28 Judy Kessinger Special Serger Event at Beyond the Stitches in Crystal River (pg. 5)
 - 29-Aug 2 Quilting & Sewing Retreat with Stitcher's Quest in Mary Esther (pg. 3)

- August**
- 8-9 18th Anniversary Sale at Nana's Quilt Shop in Brooksville (pg. 16)
 - 13-17 Pattern Sale at Brick City Cross Stitch in Ocala (pg. 5)
 - 15 OESD Embroidery Free Lecture/Demo Day at Stitcher's Quest in Mary Esther (pg. 3)
 - 16-17 Hands-On Embroidery Party at Stitcher's Quest in Mary Esther (pg. 3)
 - 31 30% Off Birthday Bash Sale at Sweet Darling Quilts in Lutz (pg. 16)

- September**
- 7 TOPS Craft Show at New Beginnings Christian Church in Tampa (pg. 27)
 - 19-21 QuiltFest at Prime Osborn Convention Center in Jacksonville (pg. 20)
 - 19-21 Visit Calico Station during QuiltFest in Jacksonville (pg. 20)

- October**
- 7-10 Florida Sewing Sew-Ciety Annual Conf at Lake Way Baptist Conf Cntr in Leesburg (pg. 11)

- November**
- 15-16 41st Fantastic Quilt Show at the Venetian Center in Leesburg (pg. 11)
 - 15-16 Suncoast Quilt Expo at Harvest United Methodist Church in Lakewood Ranch (pg. 18)

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A Cup of Tea with Lydia

The Fragrance of Sharing Tea

by Lydia E. Harris



Who doesn't love a little bit of this and that? And that is exactly what a tea party can be! Let's do a taste-test on a varie-TEA of teatimes.

1. A spot of tea and charcuterie!
My friend Kathleen had just returned from a 10-day mission trip to the Philippines with a team of eight people. As part of her home-based prayer team, I was eager to hear about her outreach and invited her for tea.

Since charcuterie boards with assorted foods are popular, I arranged most of the food on a pretty tray for us to share. It included crackers, two kinds of sliced cheese, thin salami slices rolled into roses and placed in small cups, cherry tomatoes, and fresh strawberries. If desired, you could garnish the arrangement with edible fresh flowers. On the side, I served teacups with homemade cheesecake topped with whipped cream and blueberries.

While we sipped tea, I learned that Kathleen and the team had shared God's love with 2,700 prisoners in sixteen jails and prisons. They also distributed food, hygiene supplies, and 1,000 Bibles.

Kathleen spoke to groups of prisoners each day and blessed the lives of truly desperate men and women. She shared her heart with prisoners and spread the sweet-smelling fragrance of God. I sent her home with a small heart-shaped German chocolate cake and fragrant lilies from the table arrangement—further spreading a wonderful fragrance.

2. A simple "thank-you" tea shares love.
My niece's daughter surprised me by ordering containers of Lyle's golden syrup online to be delivered to my doorstep. She knew I had run out of this important cookie ingredient. To thank her, I invited my great-niece and her mother for tea and cookies made with golden syrup. (See recipe for Everyone's Favorite Cookies). After our visit, I sent them home with the remaining cookies and the flowers that decorated the table. Flowers make the perfect reminder of the fragrance of friendship.

3. A tea can put the happy in birthday, and it doesn't even have to be in person!
My niece delivered a tea party in a box from me to my older sister, Ruth, for her 87th birthday. I kept it quick and easy with store-bought items including a colossal-sized piece of carrot cake, candles, several other treats, and her favorite candy bar—Baby Ruth.

I tucked in napkins, a small bottle of sparkling cider, and "Birthday Party" tea, which she enjoys. This herbal tea brews a rosy pink color and has a fruity flavor. To brighten her apartment, I sent along a flowering purple and rust chrysanthemum plant with a perky floral bow.

Whether teatimes are simple, fancy, in-person, or delivered, they can leave a lingering sweet fragrance for us and our guests. Who needs the fragrance of your love over tea?

—Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast and the author of three books for grandparents: GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids, In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together, and Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting, all available anywhere books are sold.

From Lydia's Recipe File: Everyone's Favorite Cookies (Brun Kaker)

- Ingredients:
- 1 cup butter, softened
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 2 T. powdered sugar
 - 2 T. golden syrup (e.g. Lyle's)
 - 1 tsp. vanilla
 - 2 cups flour
 - 1 tsp. baking soda

Preheat the oven to 350°. In a large bowl, cream together the butter, sugars, golden syrup, and vanilla. In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the flour and baking soda. Add the dry ingredients to the creamed mixture, 1 cup at a time. Mix until blended. You may want to mix it by hand. Divide the dough in half. Form each part into 2 long rolls, about 1½ inches around. Place 2 rolls of dough on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake the cookies for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the rolls have flattened and are lightly browned. Remove the cookies from the oven and place the cookie sheet on a cooling rack. Using a pizza cutter or knife, cut each rope into diagonal strips that are 1-inch wide. Allow the cookies to cool slightly before moving them from the pan to cooling racks. When cool, store the cookies in a covered container. Makes 3 to 4 dozen cookies. Tip: You can find golden syrup in some grocery stores shelved near light and dark corn syrup, and also online.

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By the Yard by Jennifer Lopez

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SURE, I COULD BE WORKING ON MY QUILT SHOW ENTRY RIGHT NOW, BUT THEN WHAT WOULD I DO THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SHOW?

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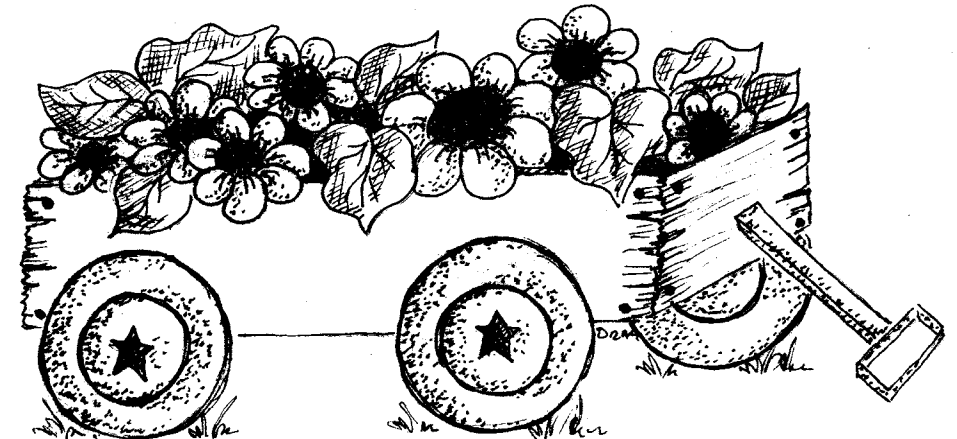
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The Junk Drawer

by Colleen Gust

I think every house has at least one. Ours in the kitchen, right by the fridge. We also have another drawer filled with miscellaneous "stuff" in the china cabinet. That one at least has a theme – paperwork! Rulers, pens, notebooks, and random pieces of paper, and we have managed to cram in a deck of Dutch Blitz cards.

I am convinced that all junk drawers are connected. For every person saying, "What's this?", there's someone saying "I'm sure it was in here...". Our kitchen junk drawer isn't even really junk. I prefer to call it a holding place for miscellaneous items I don't want to throw out. I've even purchased a few metal drawer organizer bins to create divisions for the chaos. At the front is the important divider containing the glasses care – little bottles of glass cleaner, and some used to death raw silk homemade glass cleaning cloths. My husband and I have worn glasses since we were little; cleaning our glasses is just part of our morning routine.

Just past that are frequently used items – a multi-head screwdriver, lint roller (we have pets), scotch tape, pens, and grocery list paper. I always have a selection of rubber bands wrapped around the screwdriver and the lint roller, and the width of the elastic band determines which handle they get wrapped around. The rubber band protocol is about the extent of the organization.

The further back in the drawer, the more random the items become. White cotton string for tying a roast, fancy Japanese Washi tape, which I can't bring myself to use because they are so pretty. Oh well, they still bring me joy just sitting there. There's a flashlight with what I will assume are dead batteries. We're prepared for the next power outage (sorta).

So, why am I sharing what's in my junk drawer? It dawned on me that, in some ways, junk drawers are like friends and family.

Just like a junk drawer contains a diverse array of items, friends and family bring different personalities, backgrounds, and experiences to your life. Each friend is unique, contributing their own "item" to your collection of relationships. A junk drawer may seem chaotic initially, but it holds familiarity and comfort. Similarly, friendships can be messy yet provide a sense of belonging and support in life's ups and downs.

And, like a junk drawer may hold hidden gems amidst the clutter, friendships often reveal unexpected depths and qualities in people that you may not have initially noticed. Like a junk drawer, friendships require occasional attention and maintenance. Whether it's tidying up the drawer or investing time and effort into nurturing friendships, both are worth the effort for the value they bring to your life.

Colleen Gust is an avid baker and gardener and lives with her husband outside of Regina, Saskatchewan. Kirby and Colleen Gust are publishers of the Manitoba & Saskatchewan Country Register.

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Joy & Blessings,
Jody

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®. For color files of this writing, contact Jody at: jodyhoughton@msn.com

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Ann's Lovin' Ewe Summer Sandwich

by Ann Stewart

If summertime were a sandwich made of Memorial Day to Labor Day, with Fourth of July as the filling, when is your annual vacation? Do you begin with June travel as the bread of the sandwich, and then kick back at home until September? Or is your travel centered in July as a delicious filling in the middle of your summer? A month or more of anticipation precedes and then you anticipate the change of seasons. Or is your vacation held off until the end of summer, so you savor it to end summer with a bang?

Perhaps it has become a tradition. It's the way you've always done it. What else is the way you've always done it? When July 4th rolls around, what's your favorite dish? Where do you watch the fireworks? Who do you hang around with as you grill? What traditions simply cannot change? What do your kids want to repeat each year? What would feel incomplete if you didn't do it again?

Sometimes it's something simple. Ordinary. Growing up in Washington state when the strawberries were ripe, my mom would make her famous shortcake topped with berries, vanilla ice cream and whipped cream. And that was dinner. Seriously. That's a memory that sticks.

Now in Virginia, my summer would not be complete without sitting out on the side deck and listening to the lambs and their mamas bleat to each other. Then as the sun sets red in the west, the fireflies light up the grass. It's simple, it's ordinary, but the memory is extraordinary.

We do take an annual family vacation, and it's sandwiched in the middle of summer. We don't go to France or Italy or vacation on a Hawaiian beach. We don't go somewhere different every year. In the late 1970's, we began going to a certain lake in northern Idaho (which I hesitate to name lest its popularity grows). It was our family of five and my cousin's family of five.

This summer will be our 47th year at this lake. When my dad, the patriarch waterskiier and the man with the most frequent floating miles passed away, his brother-in-law spoke about him: family, faith, Priest Lake (oops, there it is). He claimed that's what kept our families close.

What began as our family and my uncle's has expanded to the multi-generational families of two cousins (14 total there), and my two brothers' and my families (22 more). We take up quite a few cabins along the waterfront. We float, read, talk, swim, hike, bike, play cards and board games, and waterski. But mostly we talk. And because of that summer window of a week or two, however separated we've been by time and distance, we are close all year.

Do you have a summer tradition? Though you may love summer spontaneity and serendipity, it's important to have something that repeats. Something that makes the ordinary extraordinary. Something that by repetition makes a memory last a lifetime and creates a tradition. Rinse. Repeat. Rinse. Repeat.

One scrapbook company appropriately named their organization Creative Memories because seeing the same pictures over and over locked in the memories of those events. But with or without photos, some events are permanently etched in my mind. At Priest Lake, Aunt Tami dragged the kids (who all groan) out on the dock for three photos: all the cousins and second cousins lined up by age, then all of the same group lined up by height (which the older but shorter cousins don't appreciate), and then one with all the "extras." Those "significant others" who may or may not make the final cut. (Sometimes that is determined by how well they pass the cousin test.) She's been taking these photos for more than twenty years. The pictures were far cuter when the munchkins ranged from one to ten, but now there's far less groaning as the adults realize how much the annual photos mean to us, the stories they tell, and the memories we made.

This is the first year a new generation of babies arrive at Priest Lake. We could have three or four babies there at once. So, the tradition continues with a photogenic picture of the newest generation.

What about you? If you don't already, make sure you take a break this summer. We all need a vacation and families thrive enjoying time together. And, if you don't already, why not take a minute to celebrate the ordinary and then repeat it. Make your summer days extraordinary by repeating something that is worth making into a memory that may become a tradition.

—© 2024 Ann Marie Stewart "Stars in the Grass" won best debut novel in the Christys, a great summer read.

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Memories and Happenings

The Times are Changing

by Gayle Cranford

When I was a child and learning to read in the primary grades, the school board's choice of reading books was the "Dick and Jane" series.

I realize that today's world believes that those Dick and Jane books were much too simple and unsophisticated for even 6, 7, and 8-year olds. But, my world in the early 1940s was one of innocence.

There were no TVs and no computers. Unafraid, we children played outdoors, returning to our homes for lunch or when the street lights came on. Innocence!

Despite living through World War II and being aware through the adults' conversations and our participation in the "war efforts," we felt protected by love from all the adults in our small world...parents, policemen, teachers, pastors, neighbors, etc. Our life values were formed in those protective and mostly unsullied growing-up years.

In my day, education was based on the preparation of children to be our nation's future leaders.

I've always believed that our educational system should foster developing good citizenship and promote decency, respect and love.

© 2024, Gayle Cranford. Gayle lives with her daughter in Florida now, after growing up and living most of her life in western PA. She is 88 years but is active in their local area politics, working to help elect officials who believe in strong family values, writing letters to the editors for publication and enjoying time with her daughter and granddaughter. Many friends and family compare her to the energizer bunny.



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I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

The Little Things

by Wayne M. Bosman

Life sometimes seems to go from one big thing to another. From car problems to Covid to rising prices, there is always another thing to grab your attention. Bad news sells, as any newspaper knows. Sometimes we enjoy scaring ourselves with the latest horror movie or disaster film. This story is not about that.

This is about something that happens in life that gives another effect. This is about the little things. You probably know what the little things are. Things done that take very small effort and get noticed just a little.

My wife, Kerri, is an artist of the little things. The 3" vase with a variety of flowers that sits in the middle of the kitchen table? It didn't just appear there. She takes the time to choose each bud and surround them with some herbs from the garden. She chooses each herb for reasons that only she knows. Sometimes because of the scent, never overpowering, but just there. Maybe a sprig gets chosen because of its healing power according to traditional medicine. Because, after all, the kids are coming over and one or another has a little cold. At other times just because it caught her eye. The total effect goes almost unnoticed. It is just a little thing.

Mom notices. Once or twice a year we drive up from our home in North Carolina to stay with her in Wisconsin. Mom lives in the house that she has lived in since WWII, but at 103 she needs a little more backup. My sister, Linda and her husband, Mike, have been providing that backup for years, so a couple times a year we come up to give them a break. We move in with Mom for a week or two and do our best to spoil her.

The first morning there, Kerri goes outside for flowers and brings in a 3" centerpiece. It sits on the kitchen table that has been in the same place since I was a child. Mom always notices. Her mother, she tells us, always did the same sort of thing. Probably for the same reasons.

We have little rituals done much the same way each day. Since we are both awake before Mom gets out of bed, we have time to get her newspaper and set it next to her plate at her seat at the table. On her plate goes her women's multi-vitamin and a baby aspirin. A recent concession to her age is a Tylenol. A glass of water waits with her pills. Also, on the plate is a small piece of coffee cake or kringle. Next to the plate is one banana. For over ten years, Mike has been making sure that she has a supply of bananas. A little thing. The list goes on.

After watching her struggle to break open a banana, I started cutting a little slit on the stem of next morning's banana to make it easier for her. I never knew that she noticed until this evening. She mentioned it while we talked on the phone. She noticed that little thing.

Kerri is a firm believer. Mom thinks that Kerri is single-handedly keeping the post office in business because of her weekly letters. Birthdays don't get forgotten. Children receive postcards when we travel. The brief excitement of real mail for the cost of a stamp. Adding another crop to the garden because someone is fond of it. Paying special attention to a plant that a family member chose and then sending pictures of the flower in bloom. Little things.

The little things soften the hard edges of the world. They can be the difference between subsisting and living. They are small acts of love and faith and appreciation for the gift of life.

-© 2024 Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC. His email is wbosman1@gmail.com.



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1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg	2 cups shredded unpeeled zucchini
1/4 teaspoon salt	1 cup shredded peeled apples
5 large eggs, room temperature	1-1/2 cups chopped pecans
1-1/2 cups vegetable oil	

In a large bowl, combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. In another bowl, beat eggs. Add oil, sugars and vanilla. Pour over dry ingredients; mix well. Stir in zucchini, apples and pecans (batter will be stiff). Spoon into 3 greased 8x4-in. loaf pans. Bake at 350° until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 50-55 minutes. Cool in pans for 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.

*Submitted by Linda Waltz, Fort Wayne, IN

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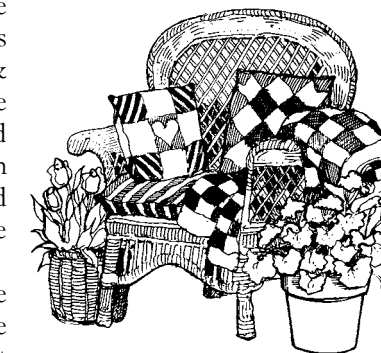
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A Quilting Legacy - "Then and Now"

by Judy Ann Stupak

Wow. What a change. Mom quilted from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s; I picked it up 20 years later. The reason I didn't start earlier? Time & space. Who has months to work on the same project? Who has the space to have a quilt spread out for months on end? I did not realize how much things had changed. I did not realize you could make a quilt in a weekend and have someone else take care of the space issue for you.



What has changed? All of mom's quilts were cut with scissors; I have rotary cutters which are far more accurate and much faster. She did not have specialty rulers; I have many- some are large, others small. Some cut curves, squares, diamonds, hexagons, triangles, or jewel shapes. Beside scissors, her only notions were pins and a measuring tape; I have many - all designed to improve efficiency and the look of the final product.

Mom's closest fabric store was 15 miles away; a trip to the city, over 3 hours away. The store did not just sell quilting cottons and notions like many stores do now. It had fabric for all occasions - baby, bridal, Sunday dresses, and denim for work wear. But it didn't even just sell fabric. It sold ready-to-wear clothes for all ages and all sexes. It sold shoes, hosiery, accessories, toys, and craft supplies. A real general store. Needless to say, the selection of fabric available for quilting was limited at best, so most of mom's quilts were made with cottons from bargain bin bedsheets. In contrast, I have access to beautiful fabrics. Some already pre-cut and matched. If I need a quilt quickly or if I can't make color theory work for my quilts, it doesn't matter. Someone else has done the work for me. In addition, I can buy the fabric at one of the local shops, at a Quilt Show, in my travels, or on-line from anywhere in the world.

Mom made each quilt from start to finish. She drafted the pattern, cut the fabric and quilted the layers. I have many options. If I don't want to draft my own pattern, I can look through magazines or books. I can go on-line for free patterns, or purchase one and instantly download it. I can quilt it myself, I can rent a long arm, or I can contract it out. Her first quilts were sewn on a treadle sewing machine.

She was so excited when she got her first mechanical sewing machine! Now, almost all machines are computerized and come with larger throats and specialty feet. Many quilters have more than one.

Mom learned English along with the rest of us as we went through school. By her second decade in Canada, her circle of friends and activities had expanded. One of her favorite outings was the monthly quilting bee at church. Most ladies in the community did not work, so the outing was a great opportunity to socialize, and the group included women of all ages. Most often the quilts, made of scraps and recycled garments, were donated to charitable causes. Quilt groups everywhere have continued the rich tradition of donating quilts to a cause. Families affected by fires or floods, women in shelters, children in hospitals, Alzheimer patients, just to name a few. As soon as a need is known, quilts are being donated.

The quilting group was mom's only source of quilting education. She loved being exposed to new ideas. She always came home inspired. She was eager to try everything new. In addition to quilts for charity, they also made a quilt for each child as they graduated from High School and went away to college. Mine was done in a new pattern someone had come across - the Bowtie block. It was white with bowties of pink and purple. Made of Fortrel. For a while every quilt mom made was done in bowtie blocks. It was the only block she knew. Then there were the "Precious Moment" blocks done in liquid paint. There were whole cloth quilts. There were quilts edged with Prairie Points.

Now, there are hundreds of blocks, hundreds of patterns, and hundreds of ways to share information. I can attend classes locally, watch TV programs or go on-line for information. I can learn from professional quilters who come to us or I can go to them. I can meet with quilters in another town, or another country. I can take quilting cruises or tours anywhere in the world. There really is no limit to what we can learn or the friends we can make. There are quilters, quilt shops, and other sources of inspiration the world over.

I still have 3 of the quilts Mom made. As a wedding gift she made us a quilt in white with matching pillow shams. She drafted the pattern, hand stitched it, and crocheted the binding around the edge. The quilt has 3 roses in each corner, with cross-hatching in the center.

The winter before her stroke, Mom made a quilt for each of her 13 grandchildren. They were very basic, but reflected her style - a combination of a print and solid, made of bedsheets, stitched in the ditch, with one layer of echo stitching.

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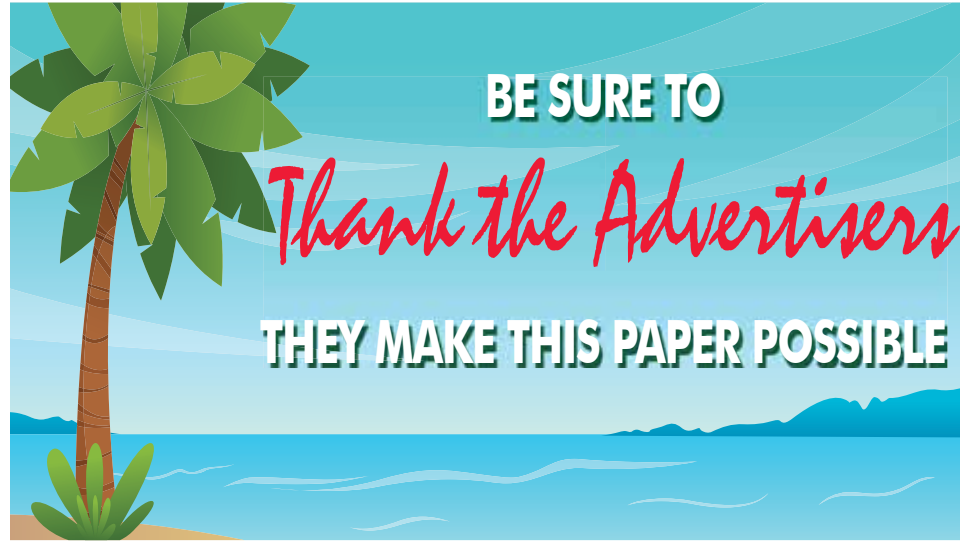
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A Quilt Good Enough to Eat

by Janet M Bair

Summer is a blaze of color. I love picking fresh blueberries from our two bushes. Plump red tomatoes, yellow corn, and purple eggplants are my favorites at our local farm stand. Green zucchini, yellow squash, and ripe peaches are all hard to pass up.



At a recent quilting event, I bought a gallon sized bag of fruit and vegetable prints for \$2.50. Not only was it a good deal, but the prints of the fruits look good enough to eat. There were prints of strawberries, raspberries, cherries, blueberries and peaches in brilliant colors, just waiting to be sewn into a new creation. I had fun thinking of what to make out of all the small scraps but have finally decided to make a picnic quilt for my grandchildren. They love eating outdoors and like to take their dolls and teddies outside for an "adventure." Maybe the quilt will let it be a clean adventure which my daughter will be happy about.

It struck me though, that we take for granted all of the vibrant colors we have available to work with. Fabric was not always so colorful. We can walk into any fabric shop and find a wide assortment of colors to choose from, even glitter infused fabrics let alone the more tropical looking batiks.

I was reading an interesting quilting book and one bit of information caught my eye. Being a librarian for most of my life, I had to do a little research. Before the 1850s, fabric was colored from plant based materials—indigo, woad, madder, turmeric-- or animals—shellfish purple, cochineal

In 1856, eighteen year old British chemist, William Perkin, discovered one of the first synthetic dyes, an aniline purple or mauveine as he called it. Before his accidental discovery, purple dye was difficult to produce. Many small sea snails were needed to produce enough dye to color a whole dress.

Royalty were the few who could afford to wear purple but with the new fade-resistant aniline dye, this brilliant, vibrant color became affordable for the masses. Consequently, purple became extremely fashionable in Paris and London in the late 1850's to early 1860's. Perkins built a successful factory and business out of his discovery so it was a happy ending to his accidental mistake.

I am very happy to have access to purple fabric because I think it is a lovely color. Sometimes mistakes lead to nice discoveries. We sew something upside down on a quilt and it looks even better than we planned. We cut something out and find we didn't measure accurately but we somehow fix it. We miss a turn while driving and end up on a beautiful road we would never have traveled on. We are painting a picture and glob some paint where it shouldn't be. We can always paint over it. Don't panic over mistakes. Sometimes our journey will have them but we should not be defeated by our mistakes. We just need to pick up our needle and thread or paintbrush and carry on.

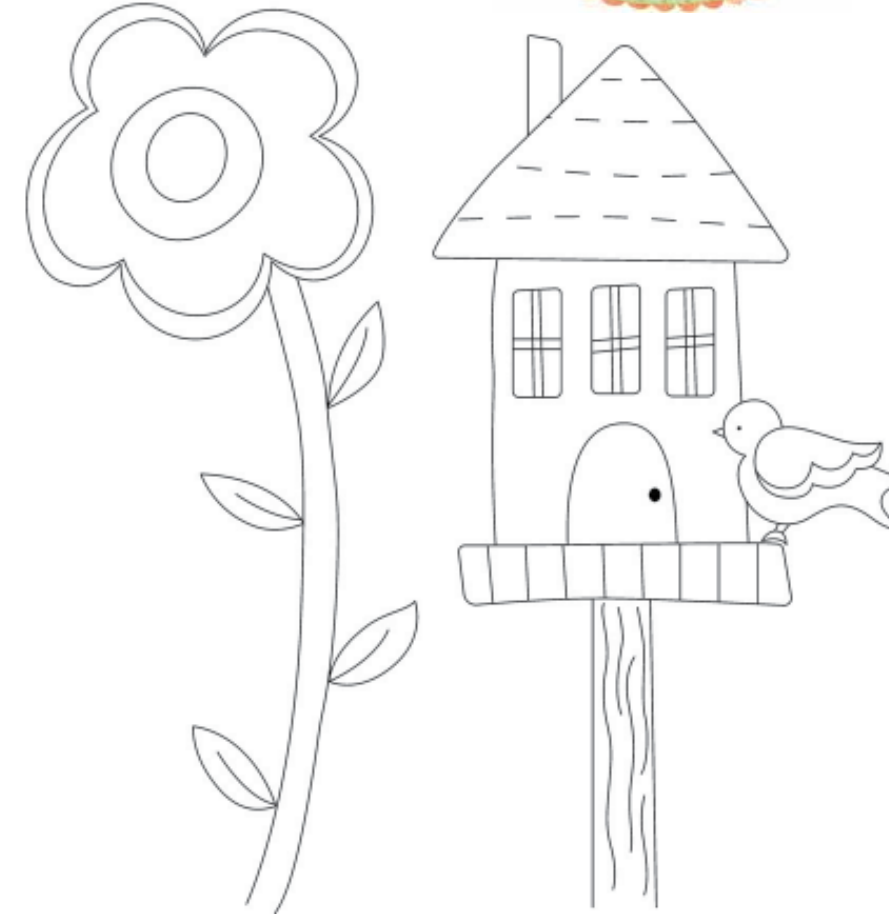
"We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps." (Proverbs 16: 9 TLB)

- © Janet M. Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at librarybair@hotmail.com

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Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett
Saving Souvenirs

It's vacation time again and I'm thinking about all the souvenirs I collected on vacations past. Some I still have and others have traveled elsewhere, but it's fun to remember them all.

The summer I was 12 my family took the longest, most memorable vacation ever. My dad spent all winter planning the route we would take, every site we would see, every motel we would stay in, almost every meal we would eat. Finally it was time for my two sisters and me to climb into our 1959 white Chevy station wagon, with a grill that looked like a giant steel emoji grin, and hit the road. Our journey took us from Tennessee to California and back in a huge loop through at least 10 states. Adventures and back seat squabbles abounded! But back to the souvenirs.



For years the bookshelf in my room held my treasured souvenirs from that trip. A favorite was a Native American doll from somewhere out west with a real suede dress, headband with feather, and her own metal stand. She was stunning. Next to her sat a three-inch high porcelain oriental doll from China Town in San Francisco. Never mind that I got to see my first stage musical, South Pacific, while in that city. I got to buy an oriental doll in China Town! But best of all, standing next to her was the small bronze donkey with "Pikes Peak or Bust" printed on the side. Yes! I bought it at the top of Pikes Peak in Colorado, never imagining that 17 years later I would move to that state and then spend the next 47 years of my life (so far) living at the foot of America's Mountain. Pikes Peak or Bust indeed!

Without a doubt I've spent more on souvenirs from adult vacations, so they may be nicer but not as memorable. I do remember a trip I took to Mexico with my two sons during my single parent days when I purchased souvenirs/Christmas gifts for all my family back in Tennessee from vendors on the beach. I shipped them all off, but at the last minute I decided that since the boys would be with their dad for Christmas, I would go to Tennessee. I hadn't imagined actually having to watch my distinguished, always well-dressed, Southern-gentleman dad opening his multi-striped serape from Mazatlan!

A print from our honeymoon in Maui, a sculpture of a Native American man and his wife from South Dakota, two oil paintings from Taos have always found spots in our homes. I still have silver jewelry from another trip to Mexico, porcelain rabbits from the flea market in Santa Fe, a menorah from Israel and Murano glass jewelry from Venice. Yet as the years went by and our home got smaller, most of the souvenirs I've collected recently are smaller as well—magnets, shells, or post cards for the most part.

Recently we attended a 100th birthday party for a neighbor. Her family displayed a board containing post cards from all the places, all over the world, that she and her husband visited. It was really a display of memories. After all, the memories of each trip we take are the best souvenirs of all. Get out this summer and collect some more!

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. Follow her on Facebook, Instagram and Linked In or subscribe to her blog posts at www.nancyparkerbrummett.com.

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Appreciating the Art of Quilting for the First Time

by Susan Hodges

A few months ago, I invited my husband, brother and sister-in-law to attend a quilt show with me. They agreed, but probably more to humor me, than any real interest in the outing.

To say it was a transformative experience for them would be an understatement. Though they knew that quilting was my "hobby," they never fully realized the unleashing of creativity this so-called hobby entailed. They saw, through many examples, that piecing and quilting involved more than just a fabric puzzle waiting to be solved. They witnessed quilts as works of art in many forms.

In each of the quilts displayed, the quilter was leaving a legacy that was uniquely theirs. It was a piecing together of their stories, dreams and hopes into something tangible and beautiful as they answered the Voice within them urging them to create.

Some of the creations were simple with their presentation of clear shapes and color, others those landscapes or replications of nature. Some illustrated family stories and some incorporated pieces of clothing from childhood memories or memories of those who have passed on. And others were artist's creations playing with colors and unusual shapes.

In each entry, we witnessed the struggle the quilter faces between their logic brain and the artist brain. Our logical brain thinks in near, linear fashion working with known principles and a desire to make things neat and ordinary. Whereas our artist brain likes to put odd colors and shapes together, by presenting tried and true things in new ways. This struggle continues as the artist creates and logic guides as the quilter blends the technical skills they have honed with patience, practice and commitment with new and untried designs.

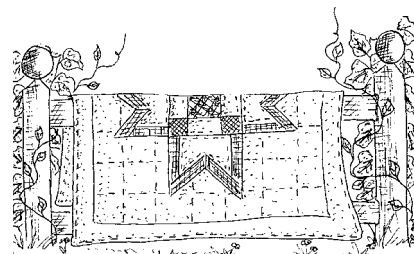
Through the elements of design, the quilter offers us visual depth on a flat surface as they incorporate an assortment of lines, shapes, and colors to tell their story.

Through this display of over a hundred quilts, my husband, brother and sister-in-law saw graphically that the art of quilting is not just an "add on" to life. It is instead, a means to help the quilter articulate who they are and/or who they hoped to be as they combine little pieces of fabric into a grand design of shapes and colors.

You can experience this same opportunity of awe and appreciation of quilting art at the Busy Bees Honey of a Quilt show 2024 being offered Friday October 4 through Sunday Oct 6 at the Activity center at 610 Fairview Street in Fountain Inn, SC.

You can also look at the events listing in this issue for quilt shows closer to where you might live.

© 2024 Susan Hodges is a member of the Busy Bees Quilters Guild in Fountain Inn, SC. She has been quilting for 10 years and especially likes paper-piecing. Susan and her husband relocated from Western NY to Simpsonville, SC to enjoy their retirement.



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Get into the Water and Make a Splash this Summer

by Susan Baldani

What is it about water that soothes the soul? Whether it's the ocean, lake, pond, river or stream, it makes being outdoors a little more special.

Of course, most people love the beach. The roar of the waves, the feel of the sand beneath your toes and the squawks of the sea gulls overhead is for some a little piece of heaven. There's something about being on a beach that makes you feel like you're on vacation, even if your house is only a few towns away. It's also a fact that waves toss negative ions into the air, and according to WebMD, help "alleviate depression, relieve stress, and boost our daytime energy."

Other people would much rather be at a lake. The water is calm and still, and there are no waves to knock you over or flip your raft. Once out of the water, you can go into the woods to find some shade and get a break from the heat. Some lake areas have grills where you can barbecue and enjoy a meal with your family and friends around picnic tables placed under the trees.

I'm fortunate to live not far from either a beach or a lake, but one of my favorite things is having a pond right behind my house. I can watch egrets having a fish dinner, or turtles, including the snapping

variety, lumbering across the grass looking like the prehistoric creatures that they are. There are frogs and colorful sunfish as well, who are trying not to become dinner.

But even when there is no wildlife to be seen, the sun reflecting off the surface of the pond or the mist rising above creates a special effect that is unique to a body of water. I also have a little stream out back, and after a good rain, the babbling of the water running over the rocks is one of my favorite sounds.

Immersing ourselves in water also bring about a state of relaxation. The buoyancy as we float makes us feel light and carefree, and the silkiness surrounding us makes us feel cocooned. It's a good thing I don't have a pool; I don't know how I would ever get anything done. Once I get in the water, it's hard to get back out.

So, take advantage of this warm weather. Pick up a colorful beach bag and some towels, lather on the sunscreen and have a great summer!

—Susan Baldani has an MA in Education and a BA in Psychology. She enjoys writing and in addition to writing articles about small town life, is currently working on her second book. You can contact her at www.mywritingwall.com

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It's never too late to call on a friend that you've not seen for many a year; or visit a neighbor that might be alone and bring them some comfort and cheer.

It's never too late to make some amends to someone you might have done wrong; because rather than harbor a grudge all the time, it is better to just get along.

When at times you were angry, like all of us get, and you spoke out of anger and hate, to admit you were wrong is a tough pill to chew, but, "I'm sorry" is never too late.

So, let us all strive to serve and to give until our course here on earth is all done. For it's never too late to let bygones go and seek out the good that needs done.

Order A *Stitch in Rhyme* at www.yvonnehollenbeck.com!

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Yvonne Hollenbeck, from Clearfield, SD, performs her original poetry throughout the United States, captivating audiences in her wake. She is one of the most published cowgirl poets in the West and is not only a popular banquet and civic entertainer, but also co-writes songs with many western entertainers. Yvonne also pens a weekly column in the "Farmer-Rancher Exchange" and writes articles about life in rural America in various publications throughout the West. For more information, visit <https://www.yvonnehollenbeck.com>

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2 Minute Lift

by Kathy J. Sotak

Plant Diaries

I've got a bit of a problem here and it's called thistles. As a gardener who refuses to use poisonous weed killer, I'm on my hands and knees every spring, negotiating with the thistles.

I stab my knife down vertically until I can hear the satisfying "pop" of the weed coming up from its long single root. Over the past two weeks I've heard over a thousand pops. But unbeknownst to me, the thistles are thriving.

Underground, thistles send long horizontal runners. Thistles can pop up anywhere along its vast root network. In other words, there's no cutting thistles down. There's no killing them. Every time that I try to kill the thistles, the plant says no thank you. Their roots make new life points in the runners below.

In other words, I'm helping them thrive.

Have you ever been cut down, but you ended up thriving instead? Has a negative experience ever created a new life point within you?

Me too.

Sometimes in our daily routines we can forget to notice the new life points, i.e., opportunities, that are created. All we need to do is send energy there and it can pop up into the sun and flourish. Yes, circumstances may try to cut you down, but we are a thriving species.

What do you have running through your network that is begging to be born?

When we experience something that goes against our ability to thrive, it clarifies a new path. If we see something opposite of our value system, it redirects us to walk the path towards our value system.

We can easily be fooled with the illusion that life is static, programmed and predictable. I'm taking a lesson from the abundant thistle plant, realizing that there are many nodes in which I can send my energy – it may be left, right and zig zag all at once.

What is my ultimate lesson from the thistle plant? That the unpredictable, zig zag line is the best path to thriving... and likely the most fun.

Need another lift? Check out 60+ other stories at <https://2minutelift.com/>. Kathy J. Sotak, founder and writer of 2 Minute Lift, Seattle, WA 98104-2205

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About the Cover Artist

Lam Britton

Pam Britton was born in Colorado and moved all over the country on her parents' whims. Having lived in Florida, Arizona and Hawaii, the family finally settled in Texas where Pam met her husband, Ken. A childhood full of drawing led Pam to enter a technical high school where she enrolled in commercial art classes. After graduation life took her in a different direction and it wasn't until the 1990s that she finally settled into working as an artist. Initially a craft painter, Pam's artwork would adorn muslin pillows and wooden accent pieces. As her work evolved she was bitten by the New England bug, a painting style she's happily adopted.

After spending a few years vacationing in New England she and Ken decided to take a leap and move to the northern coast of Maine (known as Downeast Maine). Far removed from the sophistication and tourist crowds of southern Maine, Britton is surrounded by good neighbors and unspoiled, natural terrain. This beautiful backdrop inspires her artwork, which has been well received by the local community. Pam often pays tribute to specific local landmarks in her work and has even been commissioned to create a sign for her town.

Britton says, "I have to credit my mother and my husband, to whom I've been happily married 40 years, for giving me the encouragement and advice and downright physical help to succeed over the years."

In summer of 2012 Pam and her husband decided to return to Texas, settling in the little town of Lometa on the western edge of the Hill Country. It was a move for a warmer climate once again, but also the prospects of new inspirations for artwork in the Lone Star State.

To view Pam's art prints, go to www.PennyLanePublishing.com or call Penny Lane Publishing at 800-273-5263 for more information.

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What's in Your Purse?

by Becky Van Vleet

What if your purse could leave behind a godly legacy? Through various seasons of my life, I've carried all kinds of things in my purse, ranging from a diaper, a comb, gum, Band-Aids, and lipstick, to hand lotion, postage stamps, glow sticks, and half a million receipts. I remember watching the show Let's Make a Deal when I was young, and Monty Hall paid \$50 to a lady who produced a hard-boiled egg from her purse!



After my mother, Marie Alberta Troyan, passed away in 1977, my father asked my sisters and me to go through her belongings. We were surprised when we discovered tucked away in her purse a small red notebook that was filled with a variety of quotes she'd written down. Sadly, we could not ask her why she started this collection nor where she got the quotes. But what we did know was that our mother attended ladies' Bible classes regularly. More than likely, she kept the notebook handy in her purse to pull it out for notetaking, maybe for church sermons as well.

This red notebook was clearly a treasure from our mother's purse. She could speak to us after her death. And she did just that. Through the years, I have picked up my mother's red notebook to ponder her quotes, all centering around practical, everyday living.

Not so long ago, I pulled out my mother's red notebook again. This time I was looking for a particular quote that I wanted to review. And then it hit me. What about turning my mother's notebook into a book of some kind for my other family members to enjoy. After all, two more generations had come since my mother's death, and all of us would enjoy this, I reasoned. On a mission, I started writing devotions for each quote, expounding upon them with an application. After a few weeks, I gave my newly formed book (just for the family, mind you) the title, *What's In Your Purse?* Well, one thing led to another, and I'm happy to say that my devotional book was recently published and is available on Amazon! Now this treasure from my mother can speak to many others.

Going back to the first question, what if your purse could leave behind a godly legacy? This sure happened with my mother, but she had no idea. She was simply carrying around a small notebook for personal notetaking.

We all know that fashion accessories such as purses keep changing. Whatever kind of purse we're carrying now may not be trendy in the next few years. But our spiritual purses will always be in vogue with God. Just like we'd discard gum wrappers and used tissues from our physical purses, do we need to discard unforgiveness, worry, fault-finding, selfishness, and other negativities from our spiritual purses? Hopefully we can fill our spiritual purses—our hearts—with love, patience, grace, and kindness. We may not be offered a cash deal from a TV host, but we'll definitely leave behind a godly legacy!

Becky Van Vleet, a retired school administrator, lives near Colorado Springs with her husband, Troy. They are the parents of four grown children and enjoy spending time with their nine grandchildren. Becky is a children's picture book author, and her website is devoted to family stories and creating memories: www.beckylvanvleet.com

America in Stitches – The Threads That Bind Us

by Barbara Kalkis

America's 248-year-old whodunit: An urgent request. A good deed. A needle, thread, and fabric. A missing piece of paper. The nation's enduring symbol.



America's national holidays are all quite straightforward in their purpose. Memorial Day is a day of remembrance. Labor Day celebrates work. Veteran's Day is for those who have served in our military forces. July 4th – Independence Day – celebrates the formal creation of our country. It's probably the most fun since it's become synonymous with summer, parades, picnics, and the all-important summer BBQ.

It also holds the mysterious question that took 200 years to solve. We remember slices of history made on that July 4th in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After months of negotiations and debates, representatives of 13 colonies signed the Declaration of Independence. It was a moment of massive courage. With their signatures, colonists pledged allegiance to their new country of united states and became traitors to the king of Great Britain. Not only did they have to return home and "sell" its concepts to their colony, they began a war of independence in earnest. They signed anyway.

Diving into details, they adopted a 'great seal'. Francis Hopkinson, one of the signers, designed the elements. We know this because he wisely presented the delegation with a paper invoice. A simple act, it became fuel for the mystery.

The delegates also determined to have a flag to represent the united nation. (We will leave the question of how men prioritize tasks to another day.) George Washington, commander of the continental army, accompanied signers Robert Morris and George Ross to visit Betsy Ross, widowed wife of Ross's nephew and a highly successful seamstress.

Betsy Ross had learned sewing as a child and was apprenticed to an upholsterer when she married John Ross. They had a thriving upholstery business and, after John was killed in the early skirmishes of 1776, Betsy continued working mending tents, and making flags for military units.

The men handed her a design featuring 13 6-pointed stars. Betsy famously took her scissors and, with one snip, made the stars with 5 points, as these were easier and faster to sew.

She sewed the flag with a canton of thirteen stars representing each colony. They were positioned in a circle on a field of blue. Red stripes symbolize valor; white for purity; blue for loyalty. Sadly, Betsy did not think to give the Father of Our Country a paper bill.

In the 1800s, nearly a century after she created our national symbol, people questioned whether she really made the flag or simply took credit for it. After all, there was no paper invoice. Only one paper fee to Betsy Ross survives. She made a flag for the Pennsylvania navy, and they recorded their payment on paper. However, Betsy repeatedly made the claim, and was quoted on it. In 1873, her grandson published her story, and it became history.

In 1952, on the 200th anniversary of her birth, the US Post Office created a 3-cent stamp showing Betsy sewing the flag under the watchful eyes of Washington, Morris, and Ross. With the literal and figurative "stamp" of approval from the United States Post Office, we have the government's official view of the mystery. (This is good news for all the kids who write to Santa Claus.)

For crafters everywhere who joyously sew, create, and share their love of handiwork, Betsy Ross elevated crafting with highest praise: "My needle is my pen; my thread, the ink. With each stitch, I write the history of this nation. . . The stitches may seem insignificant, but they hold together the fabric of our nation."

©Barbara Kalkis, 2024. Barbara writes, teaches, and consults for high-technology organizations. She's author of *Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm*. She loves history and crafting.

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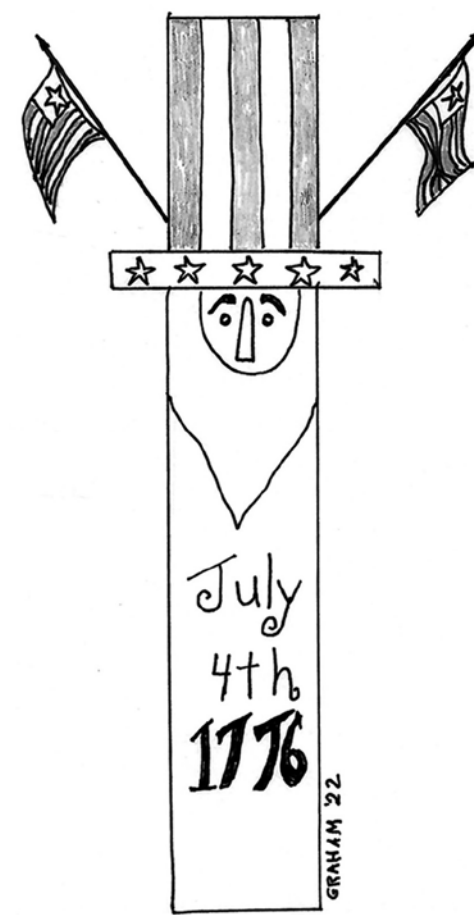
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Uncle Sam

This pattern is free for you to use. Please give the artist credit. Not for commercial use. Enlarge this pattern to your desired size. Paint on wood. The original piece was designed to fit on a board about 4 feet tall, but it can also be made much smaller. The hat brim is cut from a separate piece of wood. The purchased flags are inserted into holes drilled into the sides of the hat. You can also applique in wool or cotton and embroider the details. You can do punch-needle or rug hooking techniques too. Whatever craft you choose, have fun! Designed by Kathy Graham

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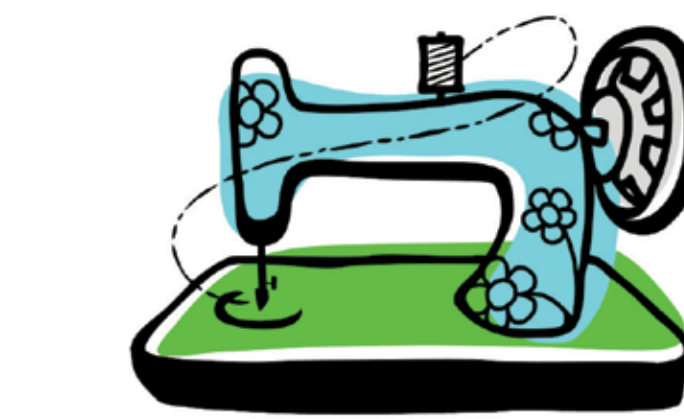
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Life in Skunk Hollow by Julie A. Druck

What's Inspiring You Right Now?

Our youngest son, Eli, and I have lately taken to sending each other our monthly inspiration list. It all began several months ago during a phone conversation. He told me that he had recently been enjoying asking various people the question: "What's inspiring you right now?" He was intrigued to hear all kinds of responses and proceeded to share with me what was on his own inspiration list. I loved the question, and it got me considering what I would add to such a list. That led to keeping a little notebook and writing down whatever was inspiring me for the month which I then began to share with Eli.

This simple practice has resulted in some interesting discoveries. One being that things that inspire me aren't always things that make me necessarily want to go out and do something. Yes, there are times when seeing a beautifully decorated cupcake in a shop spurs me to go home and bake. And sometimes reading an inspiring biography ignites a desire to be a better person. But Eli and I have discovered that sometimes an object or animal or person or idea simply inspires you in the moment without further need of action. I know that doesn't fit the typical definition of inspiration being "a process that mentally stimulates one to do something." But sometimes inspiration is simply the beauty of a moment in and of itself. Inspiration has this way of enriching your life without necessarily requiring anything beyond that. And that enrichment leads to yet another discovery which comes from recognizing what inspires us, and that is: gratitude.

When one begins to list things that are inspiring, one simultaneously ends up creating a list of blessings for which to be thankful. Eli and I have included all sorts of things on our lists: herons and bees, cupcakes and Beatrix Potter, touring historic homes and going to yard sales, sunsets and alligators, the beauty of watching people do what they are gifted at and going to a jazz concert. All these things and dozens and dozens more are all things for which we can give thanks. And one's heart is always in a better place when it's living in a nearly continual state of gratitude for things that inspire one's life.

Lastly, we've both realized as we look for inspiration, that the practice itself is inspiring. Why? Because it drives us to pay attention. Looking for inspiration helps us to be present, to be fully in a moment. It makes us hone in on things and consider what's meaningful and enlightening and thought-provoking and joyful. And that links to yet another definition of inspiration: "the drawing in of breath." Inspiration is the very air we breathe, and I for one am thankful for the thousands of things every day that make me sigh with contentment and joy. So I dare you to start paying attention to what breathes life into you. And I'll get you started by asking: "What's inspiring you right now?"

© 2024 Julie Druck is from York, Pennsylvania, and writes from her farm in Skunk Hollow. She'd welcome your comments at thedrucks@netzero.com.

Breezy Manor Farm Recipe

My simple buttermilk biscuits

2 cups self-rising flour
1 stick of butter
1 cup of buttermilk

Work in 1 stick butter in the flour until it looks like coarse crumbs. Stir in 1 cup buttermilk. Mix well, turn out on floured surface. Knead gently, folding the dough in half several times. Cut biscuits, place on parchment lined pan. Bake at 450 for 12 to 15 minutes.

Serve warm with butter, honey or jam.

*Submitted by Donna Jo Copeland, Farmeress at Breezy Manor Farm. See her article in this edition for what's happening on her farm.

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Life on My Farm - Breezy Manor

Musings and the Marsh

by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

As I near my 75th birthday (how did I get this damn old so quickly) I have become more aware of my blessings. Trials and tribulations are still mountains but each night and sunrise I count blessings. And I admit some days it's just that I get through that one.

And I'm learning to trust myself more. My wee farm, wool business, tumbling farmhouse often cause me to second guess myself crazy. This year my word is "better" and I'm trying to make my realm better. I can't change the world or stop greedy demons but I can work on my corner. I am learning to trust my decisions I make today as the best I can do--today. Tomorrow is another day.

There was a big fiber Festival last weekend where I vended. Took a chance on a double booth, double rent. I found myself becoming scared with all of the what ifs. Barn time is how I center and recharge. Cleaning cages I worked on my mind set-focus on selling farm raised and made goods, farm stories, demonstrating my skills. Greeting each person with a smile, handshake or hug. I was calm and giggly at setup. Two days of a great crowd, laughter and one of the best shows I have ever had.

Okay, the stars lined up, my amethyst stones gave me energy. I'm thrilled and have money for hay and insurance.

Since I rug hook with my sheep wool and designs are what I see out my window or in my mind, my work is farm oriented.

Dragonflies, sunflowers, black cats, sheep. I'll share the story of 'The Marsh, a rug I just finished.

I grew up on a 160-acre farm about 2 miles from where I live now. The big red dairy barn was down the hill from the house and sat on what used to be a dirt road which went thru our place to the next road. It meandered up our long drive, between the barn and corn crib, thru the barn lot, past a marshy area then uphill and into the woods where corners of a log cabin crumbled. My ancient first grade school teacher...she was a classmate of my great grandfather...was born in that cabin.

As a child I spent a lot of time out there in the woods watching the cows graze. I marveled at the birds, dragonflies, butterflies, frogs and more in that marsh. An old Brooklyn tile silo stood on one corner, all that remained of a barn long gone.

In early fall of 1956, the SoHo oil line broke. Killing everything...cows, rabbits, foxes, birds, wildlife, crops, trees. It's now 2024 and the land has not recovered.

That special marsh lives in my memory and now in this rug. I will admit that while working on it, the rug just seemed to magically go together. A story wanting to be told.

One lesson I hope you all will heed is to please protect our land. Stop being greedy. Stop chemical poisons. Simply be kind. And let enough be enough.

I know I'm only one old farmeress. But my soul cries when I think of the kids who will not know the joy of fireflies in the yard at night. Butterflies gathering at creek bank or mud puddle. Hear frogs sing.

There is a big part of my blessings here on my wee place. I'm quite content with little technology, lots of outside time, work and animals.

I guess this article really is Musings from a crone...be well, love, laugh and be kind...

-Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor, Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owner/operator, Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life.

Give Me a Break!

by Barbara Polston

Almost two years ago, I retired. That lasted for two months. Believing I still had something to offer, I sought part-time employment. I was fortunate to find work with a consulting firm, aligned with the nonprofit sector in which I had spent the last twenty-some years of my career. I appreciate the income, the benefits and feeling like I am still contributing to the betterment of the world. On the other hand, the work is stressful. We function under tight deadlines, trying to serve clients who often delay providing needed information, or want to change proposal focus just hours prior to submission deadline.

The past few months have been particularly challenging. There has been a price to pay for the resultant stress in binge eating, depression and anxiety. "This is supposed to be semi-retirement," I thought, "and not what I signed up for."

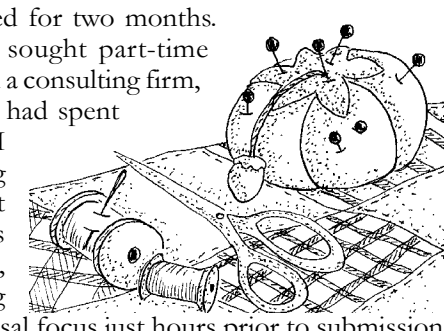

Not only was the professional "to do" list long, but projects were stacked throughout my studio space. These stacks of projects were doing nothing but adding to my stress. After work hours, I felt too tired to create. I was lucky if I did a bit of hand stitching. "This is supposed to be semi-retirement," I thought. "I want the time and space to be creative."

Something had to change. Talking with my employer, we arranged for time away. I tackled the project stacks in my studio, sewing up birthday and holiday gifts to last throughout the year. With quilt show deadlines coming earlier next year, I started the detailed project that will be my entry. It was lovely to see my vision realized in cloth, ribbon and paint, moving so much closer to "done." After living in my house for over three years, I was finally able to hang my miniature and small quilts, creating a gallery that brings me joy to see.

As my time away came to an end, I felt much calmer and in control - especially of my studio space. There are still waiting stacks of projects, but the stacks are not as high. I felt ready to return to work in a much better frame of mind.

I would encourage you to carve out a break for yourself when you need it. Having a routine and a schedule is beneficial, however, changing your routine (doing something different than you normally do) has benefits as well. Changing things up can lead to experiencing more excitement in life, encountering new or novel experiences and, possibly preventing burnout. A change in routine, whether for a few hours or a few days, can improve both mental and physical health. Bottom line - Give Yourself A Break!

-Barbara Polston, Tucson, Arizona, May 2024 Barbara Polston, the author of *Quilting With Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects* (Schiffer Press, 2015) and *Meet Puppy Brian, Puppy Brian and the Grey Cat*, and *Puppy Brian and Brother Vinny* (www.puppybrian.com), lives in Tucson, Arizona where she has failed at retirement, but getting more time to stitch in a variety of forms. Contact Barbara at barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com.

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Reflections of the Front Porch

by Janet Young

Prior to WWII, porches were a prominent architectural feature added to homes everywhere; especially for the homes in the south. The years before air conditioning was available people would sit outside to catch a few cool breezes on a warm summer night. Or, to start their day perhaps, by drinking their morning coffee on the front porch. A front porch was a welcoming and functional space where friends and family could gather to connect, converse, and if including neighbors a sense of community was created.



The porch was a gathering place where family photos were taken, where children played games - such as Jacks, where first kisses were exchanged on a star-studded night. The porch is where you get to meet and know your neighbors. For example, if someone walking their dog offers a quick hello, or perhaps a bright smile or friendly wave of the hand from a neighbor across the street who sees you relaxing on the porch, these are ways to connect one to the other.

Another example would be the porch as a gathering place for little ones to come and eat their ice cream cone, or drink a refreshing drink of cold lemonade.

The porch is a perfect spot to sit outside and read a book. What better place to prop up your feet and read that novel you have been wanting to read. Or, how about journaling? This would be ideal for letting your creative juices flow as you feel the summer breeze and smell the roses surrounding your porch.

While we are at it, let's not forget the porch swing and the rocking chair, all attributes that helped to make the porches of yesteryear. The list could go on and on as we reflect on the influence the porch has had on thousands of families over the decades.

Yes, the porch is the bridge to the outside world. It is a welcoming place that offers community as we stated above, affords conversation, and enables a connection to family, friends and neighbors. As summer unfolds, if you are fortunate enough to have access to a porch, take advantage of the power of the lowly porch, and see what a difference it makes in your life.

Happy Summer

— © Janet Young is a Certified Tea and Etiquette Consultant, Co-Founder of Mid-Atlantic Tea Business Association, and prior owner of Over The Teacup

Life in Skunk Hollow

by Julie A. Druck

Practicing Hospitality

I recently taught a short lesson about hospitality to a group of children. The message was that we are to "practice hospitality." To help them understand hospitality, I explained that the word "hospital" is a clue. The children agreed that a hospital is a place where people are taken care of. I went on to explain that, similarly, practicing hospitality is practicing caring for people. And hospitality can be lived out in many, many ways.



For several years now, my husband and I have enjoyed a tradition of having dinner company once a month. I really can't remember when we started doing this - probably when our now-grown sons were teenagers. And though I can't remember when we started this tradition, I do remember why we keep doing it. It's actually rather addicting! Having a different group of people over once a month has been such a rich experience.

Besides the obvious joy of simply getting to know people better, one of my favorite things about this type of hospitality is how much it seems to bless and encourage our guests. Because many people don't eat together as a family in our culture, it can seem rare or strange to be invited to someone else's home to share a meal. It's been interesting to encounter all kinds of reactions to our invitations over the years. I usually begin by explaining that my husband and I enjoy having dinner company once a month and that we would like them to be our guests. Some people are immediately delighted, others surprised, some confused, others are hesitant, and some seem to question the motive behind the invitation! But I can tell you that we've never had anyone who has accepted an invitation, not express great enjoyment both during and after the get-together. I remember one man who seemed hesitant to come, stood up at the end of the evening and said in a surprised tone, "Well, this has been JUST delightful!"

From widows to widowers, to co-workers and co-volunteers, from old friends and missionaries, to extended family members, neighbors, and, occasionally, strangers, we have been so blessed by the lives and stories of others. Though we intentionally make dates for monthly dinners, my favorite experience was when we spontaneously invited a man and his 15-year-old son to our home after church one afternoon. This was only the second time they had attended our church, so we really knew very little about them. We sat around the table eating and talking, including our own three teenage sons. I had asked the visiting teenager several questions about his opinion on things. Conversation continued until at one point this young man looked around at all of us and said with amazement and wistfulness, "I didn't know people do this." I never saw that young man after that day, but my hope is that the experience made a lasting impression on him.

As to the practical side of our once-a-month hospitality: We keep it simple. I have a few basic meals that I am very familiar with and comfortable making for this purpose. And it seems that simple meals and "everyday" place settings help to put guests at ease. Sometimes we give a quick tour of our little home, but otherwise, we just put a tasty meal on the table and talk. We've learned over the years that people feel valued, honored, and loved simply by us taking the time to share a meal with them and making a point of getting to know them. And after all these years, I still haven't figured out who comes away more encouraged through this simple practice of hospitality - our guests or us.

— Julie Druck is from York, Pennsylvania, and writes from her farm in Skunk Hollow. She'd welcome your comments at thedrucks@netzgro.com.

Building Harmony

by Jeff Cappis

A Cup of Coffee

Every night I set out a cup of ready to mix coffee next to the kettle with just enough water for 1 cup in the morning. That amount of water uses the least energy and boils the fastest to get you on your way.

It's not for me though, I'm not that organized. Usually, I plan my mornings after lunch. I do it for my wife Cathy. She's the one who finds the energy to get going in the morning and face the day. I could spend an hour just trying to find socks that match.

So, it's for her that I manage to stick to one strict routine every day. One scoop of coffee, one small package of sweetener, all in her favorite mug next to a kettle with just the right amount of water in it. I've even awoken in the middle of the night because I'd forgotten to do it. Naturally, I want her to succeed at what ever she does, so this is just a simple way to help her on her way and tell her I love her.

Sometimes I even leave her little encouraging notes and cartoons. I mean well. If I come across right, it starts her day off nicely. I love that. Sometimes though, the words come out wrong and then she has all day to get mad at me. I hate that. I have found though, that when I write notes, I have time to read them over fifteen or sixteen times to figure out if they could be taken as an insult. I wish I had that option when I go to use my mouth.

This gesture went without saying for quite a while. I did this for her; she knew why I was doing it for her; I knew she knew why I did it for her; she knew I felt good about knowing she knew; and that was her silent way of saying she was glad to know how I felt about knowing.

(You gotta be married to understand that one...)

Anyway, this went on for years and one day I kinda began to wonder if the gesture hadn't lost its appeal. We certainly never talked about it. Maybe it was time to step things up a bit. I wanted to let her know how I felt deep down. For a guy, this means go bigger. I decided to leave her a rose and attach sparklers to her mug. Maybe even a sign that said, "You've got your coffee, now you can go away." (I read that one over eighteen times before I realized it was a bad idea). Also, a rose every day could be expensive.

In the end I wasn't sure what to do. A big gesture might make me look needy for attention, too little and the gesture might look gratuitous. Believe me, guys do actually agonize over this stuff. In the end I got a headache and decided to head for bed. Before I did though, I decide to set myself up with a morning coffee as well. So, I put my mug next to Cathy's with all the usual stuff in it. When I got up, it was quite convenient to make myself a mug full, so from then on, every night I set up both our mugs next to each other for the morning.

One evening, while we were doing dishes, I found myself drying our mugs and it brought the question to mind. "I know you appreciate me preparing your morning coffee every night, but I'm wondering if the message still means the same." Cathy stopped washing dishes for a moment and thought.

"It was getting to be a kind of stale message," she said, "a girl likes to be surprised once in a while. But then, you started putting your own mug next to mine. Kind of like we are starting the day off together. It makes me feel close. I like that." Then her smile went sour. "It would be even better if you got your lazy butt out of bed as early as I do." She gets up at 4:30 AM. I quietly finished drying the mugs.

I do, however, continue every night to set up both our coffees for the next morning. The gesture goes without saying, she knows why I do it for her; I know she knows why I do it for her; she knows I feel good about knowing she knows...ng my head on the desk. I sure hope I can come up with something to write about.

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KISSed Quilts

by Marlene Oddie

A new idea for using those pre-printed placemats

New fabric collections occasionally do a block print likely intended as a placemat. I've made several styles of placemats, but it seems that there is always a lot of binding!

Northcott's new collection shipping now, Autumn Gathering, has such a print that lends itself to being reimagined as a quilt that could be used as a table topper.

This quilt design uses the printed placemats, a border print, two coordinates, binding and backing from the collection.

The pattern details the fussy cutting of the mitered border print. The center portion measures 40" and the overall size is 64" x 64".

You can find this pattern on my website or ask at a local quilt shop near you. Be sure to tag us if you make this up in these fabrics or something else. #fourplacemattabletopper
Happy Stitching!

— Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus, but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene's adventures via <http://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>



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