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Annual Quilting, Needlework and Sewing Theme Issue



The Florida Register

Amy & Dave Carter, Publishers
Toll Free Phone: 866-825-9217
E-mail: ads@TheRegisterWeb.com
Web Site: www.TheRegisterWeb.com
P.O. Box 2419 · Cumming, GA 30028

Publisher Contact Numbers Across the USA & Canada

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The Florida Register, January-February, 2026 Vol. 33 – No. 1

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Just A Note...

Happy New Year from our family to yours!!! Thank you for picking up our Annual Needle Arts themed issue! Start off the new year exploring the needle arts whether you are new to the craft or want to expand your skills. The shops advertising within our publication can certainly help you find the supplies you need to fit your skill level. Join a class to expand your knowledge or even to gain the basic skills of a new craft! The needle arts are rewarding, enjoyable and relaxing too. You'll find projects in this issue and as many articles on the theme as we could squeeze in.



Rachel, Amy, Grace and David

Are you ready for a redecorating project this winter? Then head out to our advertiser's shops and events to get redecorating ideas/products and new home décor. Within these pages, you'll find furniture, curtains, linens, paint, collectibles, and everything else you need for any redecorating project. Or buy that item you wanted for Christmas, but that Santa forgot to bring you.

Or if you are having an "inside day" --- what a perfect day to grab your copy of our publication, a hot cup of tea and shop online from our website with direct links to our advertiser's websites and/or their facebook page. With the after-the-holiday sales, now is a great time to visit the shops in person or order online!

Would your group or guild like to receive FREE COPIES of each issue? Just send an email to ads@theregisterweb.com or call 1-866-825-9217. Let us know how many copies (25 minimum) and a postal service mailing address.

Can we ask that you add a resolution to your list to help us this year? PLEASE let the shop owners know that you saw their ad in our publication as often as possible - it is extremely important! Also, feel free to pick up extra copies of the paper for your friends...we'd love for you to share it with them.

Grace turns 21 in February! Eeek! Dave and I are so proud of the amazing young lady she is. She is always there to support a friend, make people smile and enjoys her fun busy life. Rachel came home from Raleigh for Thanksgiving and Christmas. She has had lots of family and friends visit her in Raleigh the past few months and she enjoys sharing her favorite spots in town with her visitors.

Enjoy using our publication as your road map and visit some shops you've never been to before. New Year, New Shopping! Best wishes for a healthy and safe 2026.

Amy & David

Happy New Year!

AULD LANG SYNE	G N T I B R A D N E L A C L O C K K A
BABY	U O R O D E X U T O U I G O F H C T X
BALL	A I A T B S X B V P A R T Y I M I O W
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CELEBRATION	I T T F L U R E M A E R T S C F M M N
CHAMPAGNE	O I I O C T Y E C F T X S S R G N C W
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CONFETTI	C N N B E O A A P A U R K K C I V U C
COUNTDOWN	S I F N D N B L G A M E S C K C T N W
DANCING	I H J O B B F R F H E H T E N B T S
DECEMBER	N O I T A R B E L E C A S M R A V D E
EVE	Z U D L F N L V Q G M A T I G D Q O W
FATHER TIME	V R L K K K U E M P O D C D Q P V C
FIRECRACKER	P G G R R V R A A T T E I N J N P W F
FIRST	R L Y A F L U G R U E T V I S Q R L S
FLUTE	L A P A K E N Q N Y E W M G V H Q C H
GAMES	E S E D D E C E M B E R G H F T S E C
	A S R L W X E M I T R E H T A F M F M

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Pictured in the magnifying glass is a small portion of one of our ads. Can you find the ad that it came from?

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Advertiser's Name _____ Page #: _____
 My Name _____
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Yes! There is a prize for one of the correct entries.

Shop Hop

Upcoming Shows and Events

March/April events due by February 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. 16)
- Mon-Sat 5:30 pm Quilts and Lace (pg. 29)
- Tuesdays 6 pm Inspire Quilting & Sewing (pg. 20)
- Wednesdays 7 pm Crafty Quilters (pg. 19)
- Fridays 3:30 pm Quilted Twins (pg. 16)

January

- 10.....Visit Carolyn's Frame Up at the Camellia Show in Lakeland (pg. 17)
- 13-172nd Anniversary Week of Festivities at Cookie's Fabrics in Marianna (pg. 6)
- 15... Meet Fabric and Pattern Designer Leeza Hernandez at Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 29)
- 15-18Buttons Light Up Our Lives Show at Shores Resort in Daytona Beach Shores (pg. 28)
- 23-24 ..Cuddle Up with Shannon Fabrics and Bernina at Stitcher's Quest in Fort Walton Beach (pg. 5)
- 23-24Marketplace 2026 at Rohan Recreation Center in The Villages (pg. 10)
- 23-24 Quilts by the Lake Quilt Show at First Presbyterian Church in Lakeland (pg. 17)
- 23-24 Visit Carolyn's Frame Up at the Quilts by the Lake Quilt Show in Lakeland (pg. 17)
- 24.....Stitchy Box Class at Common Thread in Ocala (pg. 10)
- 27.....Reopening New Shop Location at Busy Bobbins in Chiefland (pg. 9)
- 30.....Mastering Color the Sariditty Way at Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 29)
- 30.....Sariditty Pinata Half-Day Workshop at Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 29)
- 31.....Sariditty Roulette Half-Day Workshop at Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 29)

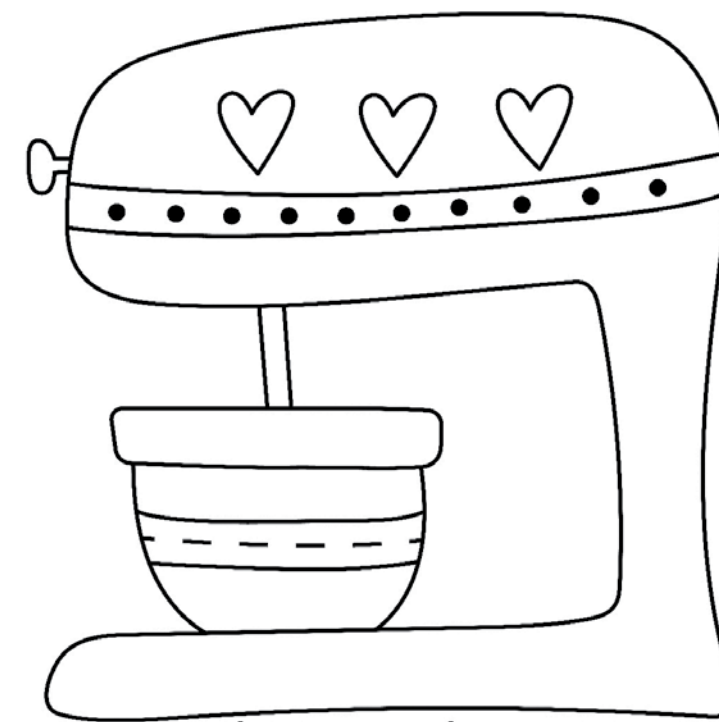
February

- 6-8 Stampfest at Matheos Hall at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Clearwater (pg. 23)
- 7..... Farm Festival and Quilt Show at Pioneer Florida Museum & Village in Dade City (pg. 21)
- 7.....Airing of the Quilts at Maxine Barritt Park in Venice (pg. 24)
- 13-14Cuddle Up with Bernina Event at Margie's Sew Much Fun in Crestview (pg. 5)
- 13-14 St Andrew Bay Quilter's Guild Show at Central Panhandle Fair, in Panama City (pg. 7)
- 13-14 Visit Carolyn's Frame Up at the African Violet Show in Lakeland (pg. 17)
- 13-14 A Gathering of Quilts Show at Charlotte Harbor Center in Punta Gorda (pg. 25)
- 13-15 America's Garden of Quilts Show at Rec & Aquatic Center in New Port Richey (pg. 23)
- 14..... Annual Fabric & Fiber Yard Sale at the Boating Club in St Augustine (pg. 26)
- 14..... 11th Anniversary Open House at Quilt A Bit in Greenacres (pg. 30)
- 18-21 Visit Sewing Garret at AQS in Daytona Beach (pg. 28)
- 20-21Chautauqua Quilter Guild Quilt Show at the Community Cntr in DeFuniak Springs (pg. 6)

continued on page 17

Free Pattern

For more fun and creative inspiration visit:
www.JacquelynnSteves.com



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Free Embroidery Pattern – May not be sold or used for commercial purposes. Use this pattern for embroidery, wool applique, punch needle or rug hooking, painted projects or whatever your imagination can dream up! Reduce or enlarge pattern as desired.

This issue is dedicated to Quilting, Needlework and Sewing!



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Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

Looking Forward



I am not an "eternal optimist." In fact, my adult son would likely tell you about the hours I waste focusing on the worst-case scenario of so many things, especially after the sun goes down. Be that as it may, there's no point in wallowing today. I'm promoting looking forward, after all!

Each January, society's collective focus turns to a New Year. Resolutions, hopes, dreams, and plans become the focus for many—as January days creep towards more minutes of daylight, football fans hope their team wins the biggest game of the year, and plans begin forming for dream romances, get-away vacations, garden or field plantings, births, and graduations.

This year, I hope to continue with the growth and learning I have been experiencing in my quilting journey. In the middle of 2025, for instance, I decided to engage with a weekly free-pattern-release program from one of the larger fabric houses. It began sometime in the summer, and ended two weeks before Thanksgiving.

Yep, that meant I made more than 25 quilt blocks! This doesn't sound like too much for those who are used to making quilts on a regular basis (as the "average" quilt might be made of five blocks across, and six or seven blocks down), but I was sewing "in the dark!" With no idea of how many blocks were to be released, or what size blocks were to be included, I just selected the random Halloween fabrics for each week's pattern based on the pattern's black and white image generated by my printer—and the mood I was in at the time.

I plan to assemble the Halloween blocks into some type of original design later this summer, when I visit a friend at camp.

Beyond that one plan-to-plan, I know of a baby due in May (no gender information yet), and an engagement (no wedding information yet). I also know what one of the two state-wide shop hop lines of fabric will look like. But that's it.

I used to be concerned about not having a full plan, fleshed out with details. I wanted a course of action for myself to take. But that was when I was a student, and/or a mom of young children who had a full slate of hopes, dreams, and goals of their own.

In 2025, I watched quilters' videos promoting "No Buy January," followed by "Sewing from My Stash," and "Finishing a Different UFO Project Every Month" as plans. Good for them, I cheered! I watched, but I cannot report that I was as disciplined. Oh well.

My 2026 goal? I simply plan to stay open to possibilities. Today, for instance, I innocently walked into a quilt store about twenty-five miles from my home, and overheard the owner sharing information with another customer. "We're going to do a scrap-buster program, which I haven't fully fleshed out in my mind yet, but it's going to..." Just like that, a new thing I can now look forward to. Yay!

© Jeanette Lukowski 2025. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author who lives in Alexandria, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: writingfromlife@yahoo.com

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Life on My Farm - Breezy Manor

My Vacation in Hard Times

by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

To paraphrase Merlin when he counseled King Arthur, "sometimes the only vacation is the past."

Pretty good advice in troubled times, when life comes down hard. The comfort of remembering.

Sitting in my drafty unwinterized old farmhouse with snow not too far off, I am vacationing in the distant past. Not just mine but also my ancestors.

Bringing to mind the stories I heard as a child, longing to hear them again. The women, men and children who managed thru hard times, wars, upheaval and somehow made a life.

When I feel beat up (as I age that is more often) stories from my great grandmother Ora come to mind. Her parents homesteaded in Kansas. Her father died after 18 months there, losing the land. Her mother was allowed to load one mule and walked back to Indiana with her 2 babies. I marvel at her strength.

I also remember Grandmother Ora telling me a farmer's wife had no business wearing white. I think of that every time I get barn dirt and manure on my white t-shirt, and I never wear white shorts!

Another grandmother was one of four daughters who were given away by their father after the death of her mother, to anyone who wanted them. Fortunately, an older childless couple gave her a good education (I have her 6th grade Latin book). She married a nice man and raised two kids. But somehow there was always a sadness about her.

And I think of how hard my mother worked to raise us five kids in another drafty farmhouse. Quilts hung over windows and doors, rooms closed off in winter. Layers of wool clothes for barn chores. Lots of biscuits and gravy and pots of green beans.

Tonight, I laugh at my old quilts hanging over windows and doors. Rooms closed off. Even hung some up on these uninsulated walls. And the layers of wool I wear to the barn and get chores done even now. I learned well!

The old quilts are a comfort for themselves. Some are family treasures, some I've made, and others from friends or estate sales. The estate sale ones carry their own grief --no one in the family wanted them. They are welcome and loved here.

I find it sad that textiles, the necessity of life, are so unappreciated. I'm one who patches barn jeans, replaces zippers. I keep a couple of good jeans for trips to town. I even darn socks, thankful Grand Dad taught me (and to mend horse harness).

With the coming snow I think of walking through deep drifts to the barn and out the lane to the neighbors to catch the bus at 7am, wearing plastic bread sacks over our shoes as we had no boots. I'm thankful today for my lined boots.

With a hot cup of tea and chocolate chip cookie I savor memories of conversations around the old kitchen table. Just daily life. As an older farm gal I'm glad to have the memories, the family and generational stories. The very stuff of life. And I grieve for families today who don't have the comfort of kitchen table talk.

Walking through the past helps me face the future, reminded I'm of strong stock. And I know I need to do a better job of writing down these stories as I'm now the crone of the family. Damn, how did I get here so fast?

One thought while I'm on vacation, I really need to document our family textiles for whomever comes after (side note, the only thing I have from great-great grandmother Fields is her Prairie bloomers.)

May you all take a memory vacation, pause and remember, laugh, cry and be thankful. Deep winter can be hard but we can manage.

Peace and love,

Donna Jo



Crestview, Fort Walton Beach

Geometry and the Zen of Quilting

by Barbara Kalkis

Some years ago, one of my clients visited me at my home. He's a physicist. When he stepped into my living room, he looked around and said, "I can see that you were never good at geometry." Since I'd never heard an opening line like that, I just stared at him wondering if one of us was crazy and, if so, he got the prize. Smothering a wise come-back, I just stared at him with a "huh?" look. I've heard that all physicists know everything, and he was exactly right. Geometry was my Waterloo in pursuing high-school mathematics beyond algebra.

Taking my gaping silent stare as an admission, he told me that the clue was in the way the room was arranged. All the furnishings were "off center" and "floating alone in space". I couldn't even be insulted. Even I knew it intuitively. He went on to give me a brief tutorial. Geometry is (not so) simply the study of shapes, angles, sizes, dimensions, positions of items and the spaces they occupy in relation to each other. Triangles, rectangles, hexagons, octagons, cubes, spheres: All furniture is a geometric shape and styling a room or a house is the art of placing those shapes in harmony with each other. The same goes for quilting. For the first time, it all made sense to me! That little lecture on furniture arrangement made me realize why I also suffered through high-school home economics. I could not "see" how to position pattern pieces on a length of fabric without the teacher's help. Fortunately, I was good at sewing a seam. No geometry knowledge necessary to do that.

I believe that geometry genetic missing link in my knowledge is why I appreciate fiber arts so much. There is something pleasing to the eye and peaceful to the heart and mind to see pieces of fabric sliced and diced and reassembled into stars, flowers, birds, trees, cabins, mountain tops, and every other shape imaginable. Exotic stitching techniques can highlight the design of a quilt, but perfect intersection of geometric shapes is what creates the Zen moment of calm and serenity.

I want to make one other point that is unrelated to mathematics. Every craft benefits from the artists who create new patterns, add a "twist" to an existing pattern, and otherwise advance the craft into something different and more alluring. This happens through generous sharing of ideas. By displaying, posting, discussing, meeting with other crafters and eagerly competing, art forms get better, stronger, easier, and more popular. As a community of those who create and those who purchase art, we build on the legacy of bringing home-made, hand-crafted beauty into our lives and other's lives. Sure, it's a lot easier to sit on the sofa - no matter where it's placed - and order something online versus going to a store and searching for just the right thing. But crafting a bedspread, lap robe, wall hanging, table runner, or apron soars beyond an item made in a factory by a programmed machine zipping out thousands of the same design on generic fabric. Beautiful quilts happen because some people are gifted at geometry. At the same time, others who do not understand it still know a beautiful pattern when they see it.

—Barbara Kalkis, 2025. Full disclosure: Barbara was and remains a teacher, as well as a writer and tech consultant. She's author of "Little Ditties for Every Day...A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm." Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.

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From Breezy Manor Recipe File

Great Aunt Ethel's Cracker Jack

Pop about 2 gallons of popcorn then put in large bowl or pan and set aside.
2 c sugar
1 c sorghum molasses
4T water
2 T cider vinegar
1 salted butter

Mix into ingredients in a heavy pan, cook until a drop forms a hard ball in water. Stir in a pinch of baking powder, stir well. Pour over the popped corn, and mix well, pour out on marble table to cool. Store in airtight container.

*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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A Cup of Tea with Lydia A Recipe for Love

by Lydia E. Harris



"Love makes the world go 'round," according to the lyrics of a song from the sixties. And although love is in season year-round, Valentine's Day begs for special celebrations that brim with love. So, pick a time, a place, a menu, and add love to someone's life. Maybe you'll plan something special for your Sweet-TEA or for a young grandchild you call Sweet Pea.

Serve a Heart-TEA Breakfast

Any big or little sweetheart would enjoy heart-shaped pancakes. All you need is a heart-shaped cookie cutter and your favorite pancake recipe. After the pancakes are cooked, cut them into hearts with the cutter. Or place a metal heart-shaped cutter (one that's open on top) on the griddle and add batter. When bubbles form on top of the pancake, use metal tongs to remove the cookie cutter and flip the pancake.

Serve these heart-y pancakes with favorite syrups and toppings. Strawberries and powdered sugar are delicious and pretty. Add bacon or sausage and English breakfast tea to the menu. For a unique twist, add a teaspoon of maple syrup to the brewed tea.

If you start someone's morning with love and a little pancake pizzazz, the rest of the day will be sweeter for both of you.

Savor Sweetheart Scones

Whom could you treat to afternoon tea? Create an inviting ambiance with background music, cloth napkins, and a lovely rose in a vase. Then serve piping hot tea and scones.

To make sweetheart scones, cut scones with a heart-shaped cookie cutter. Before baking, cut a smaller heart or circle from the center of each scone, cutting only part way through. Remove some dough from the center to form an indentation, but leave a layer of dough at the bottom. After the scones are baked, dust them with sifted powdered sugar. Fill centers with red jam—strawberry, raspberry, or cherry—and pass the whipped cream. Serve with fresh fruit and fragrant rose-petal tea. A-h-h-h, it smells like love is in the air!

Plan a Romantic Dinner Tea

When my college roommate and I were single, we used to have what we called "ro-tic" dinners. These were dinners without a "man" to make them romantic. Since I've been married for 58 years, I've enjoyed many roMANtic dinners. It's still nice to romance my one-and-only. Soft music, glowing candles, and a crackling fire add warmth. Of course, the food is important. Sometimes I order takeout from a favorite restaurant and serve the meal on china plates. Other times a three-course, home-cooked meal says, "I love you."

One way to serve a special meal at home is to set up a card table in front of the fireplace. Add a fabric tablecloth as well as your best silver and china, and serve foods you both enjoy. Start with an appetizer, soup, or salad followed by a main dish. For an added touch, include sparkling cider, and end with a decadent dessert, such as my truffle recipe.

Of course, you'll serve tea. Perhaps try a different blend with each course. We enjoy Harney and Sons Wedding Tea and their Valentine's Day tea with chocolate and rosebuds. Local shops and the internet offer hundreds of teas to sample.

Decorate with Love

Scatter Hershey's chocolate hugs and kisses on the dining table or tea tray. Also, place printed love sayings on the table, or include Bible verses like "Love one another" or "Love is patient, love is kind." You could even read aloud from 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter in the Bible.

My recipe for a loving teatime includes a beautiful table setting, delicious food, and people sharing from their hearts. I'm ready to add love to someone's life. Won't you join me?

© 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.

From Lydia's Recipe File:
Cookie Dough Truffles

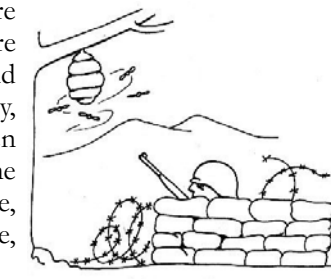
1/2 cup softened butter	1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)
3/4 cup brown sugar, firmly packed	1 (12 oz.) package dark chocolate chips, melted (optional)
1 tsp. vanilla	Extra mini chips, sprinkles, and cocoa powder for decorating (optional)
1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk	
2 cups flour, heated before serving (see note*)	
3/4 cup mini semisweet chocolate chips	

Directions:
1. Cream together butter, brown sugar, and vanilla until fluffy.
2. Mix in condensed milk. Add flour a little at a time and mix well (use hands if needed).
3. Mix in chips and nuts. The dough is now ready to eat. Refrigerate in a covered container or roll into balls.
4. For truffles, shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place them on baking sheets lined with wax paper. Refrigerate for 1 or 2 hours to become firm.
5. To dip them, melt the dark chocolate chips in the microwave following the package directions. I melt about 1/3 cup chips at a time in a custard cup.
6. Dip balls into melted chocolate 1 at a time. Coat them by turning them in the chocolate with a fork. Then use two forks, one in each hand, to remove the balls, letting the excess chocolate drip off before placing the balls on the wax paper-lined cookie sheet.
7. Dust with Hershey's cocoa powder or top with a few mini chocolate chips, nuts, or sprinkles if desired.
8. Chill the truffles in the refrigerator until the chocolate is firm.
9. Place the truffles in a covered container and keep them refrigerated until you are ready to serve them or give them as a gift. Keep leftover truffles refrigerated.
Makes about 3 dozen balls or truffles.
*Note: Eating raw flour can be harmful, so it is recommended to heat the flour first. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place 2 cups of flour in a 9x13-inch pan and bake it for 5 minutes. Cool completely. Then sift and use.

Panama City

Building Harmony Wasp Adventure

by Jeff Capps



My sister tells me that around the house there are "blue" jobs and there are "pink" jobs. Blue jobs were first established in the caveman days by cavewomen and include things that are hard, heavy, cold, painful, dirty, stinky, scary or icky. They decided that the cavemen should do these jobs. On an acreage, you can imagine the things this could involve. I've had run ins with mice, moose, deer, birds and a host of problems with nature, but the worst by far?

Wasps.

Man, I hate dealing with wasps! Guess they're not too crazy about me either. I get swarmed pretty much every year. (They also give me individual stings just to let me know they're still around.)

Once I was driving down the highway in my Jeep and a wasp came in through the window, smacking me in the forehead, then dropped into my shirt. Then, for some reason, it got mad at me! That was a fun drive. When we got home, the dog jumped out and wouldn't ride in my Jeep for 2 weeks.

One evening while Cathy and I were on our deck talking, a wasp stung my hand. It ballooned up for a week. When the swelling went down, a wasp stung my other hand and it was balloonsville for another week. Couldn't they do both hands at the same time so at least they'd match? The dog ran every time I tried to pet him.

Another time I bumped the tool shed door with the lawnmower while doing the lawns. Those wasps came out with a mad on! Take it from me, you can do real damage running with a lawnmower. Cathy had to replant a few flowerbeds and the lawn had weird patterns shaved into it for a month. The wasps (and the lawn mower) finally gave up when I ran into the pond.

The grand daddy of all swarms came about when they built a large nest in my woods. What a brilliant place for a wasp nest. I didn't find out they were inside until I was tossing logs in there one day. They were all over me like my dog on a pepperoni stick. I ran through the forrest, swatting and yelling. I jumped through bushes. I smacked into trees. The wasps and I finally made it to the house. In agony I reached for the doorknob. It was locked. Cathy was inside doing one of her "pink" jobs with the vacuum cleaner and couldn't hear the doorbell ringing (a lot). That was a hurtin' time.

I was done! No more Mr. Nice guy. Now don't get me wrong, I love nature as much as the next guy, but this meant war! I cleared the local hardware store of wasp killer and got one of those electric tennis rackets. Those things are fun! The little buggers explode when the racket hits them and if you're lucky, you can get 10 at a time! Be careful though. If you get them to swarm and then your batteries die, you're in for another hurtin' time—trust me on that.

Anyhow, I've finally got them under control (I think). I've installed bug screens to keep them out. I leave old nests hanging around because they are territorial and don't build around other nests. I keep a good stock of wasp killer. I have greatly improved my backhand with that tennis racket. I jump every time I hear a buzzing noise. Things have gotten better since the caveman days though. At least now my blue jobs don't have 6 foot wingspans.

©2025 by Jeff Capps Email: jcapps@telus.net

Life In Skunk Hollow The Day That Frosty Melted

by Julie A. Druck



This week I undid the house of all its holiday finery and put the Christmas decorations away for another year. That is, all except Frosty. I have a vintage plastic blow mold Frosty decoration from the '50s. Every year for decades he stood sentinel next to the front door of my grandparents' home. As a little girl I often had a Christmas picture taken next to him. When my grandfather died 13 years ago, I inherited Frosty, and he has proudly stood sentinel on MY front porch for those years. But alas, Frosty has begun to melt.

I noticed how bad he was last night. We had an extremely windy day, and Frosty had blown over. When I went to set him back up, I saw what I have been unwilling to acknowledge for the last several years. Frosty's base was becoming more and more brittle and cracked. My husband has been telling me for a while that Frosty's time has come, but I didn't want to hear it. Last night, I couldn't deny the truth.

It sounds crazy that I'm mourning the loss of a Christmas decoration. But in my mind, Frosty represents something much more intangible than a hunk of plastic. I lived with my grandparents for three years as a little girl and then for another ten years right next door to them. Their home was a haven of comfort and peace and joy to me. Every day was a holiday with my grandmother. Our supper table always looked like a lay-out from a vintage women's magazine—deliciousness and simple beauty were always on the menu. And when any holiday rolled around, my grandmother went full-tilt into making it special in every way. As for my grandfather, he was a bright beacon of warm light who loved me—not for what I did or didn't do—but simply because I was his Julie.

So, you see, in my mind, Frosty is a symbol of all the love and joy I received in my grandparents' home. But as I set Frosty upright again, I knew it was time to say goodbye. I went in and tearfully told my husband that Frosty could go with three stipulations: that he would take one last photo of me with my snowman, that he would dispose of the remains without telling me how or when or where he did it, and that he would remove Frosty's little metal shovel and save it for me as a keepsake.

As I contemplated my decision further, I realized that just because Frosty goes, doesn't mean that the memories he represents have to go. I still hold all the dearness and love of my grandparents in my heart that I can access at any time. And so, though Frosty won't be back again someday, he, and all that he stands for, will forever hold a warm place in my heart.

© 2025 - Julie Druck is from York, Pennsylvania, and writes from her farm in Skunk Hollow. She'd welcome your comments at thedrucks@netzger.com.

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Pieces From My Heart
 by Jan Keller

No Regrets

"I like the way you get things done—start to finish," a friend wrote to me many years ago.

I've kept the letter. I've read and reread it many times—especially when I'm falling behind and nothing seems to be getting done. Nevertheless, I realized this person really had hit upon the essence of the way I try to live my life. If there's something needing to be done, I make every attempt to try to immediately do it.

Some say I'm organized. When they do, I laugh to myself. The truth is I'm forgetful. Very forgetful! If I don't immediately take care of something, all too often it will slip off into some obscure oblivion, only to be forever forgotten.

Frequently I lie in bed at night only to suddenly hop up and out from under the warm covers. Maybe my abrupt action is because I remembered I forgot to turn down the thermostat or start the dishwasher. Maybe I remembered some item I forgot to add to my shopping list. Maybe I remembered I forgot to get a card in the mail for somebody's birthday or to extend a wish for better health.

Knowing me as I do, I know if I don't hop right up and complete the task, it will either bug me and keep me awake, or I'll drift off and never remember it again. I'm so bad about forgetting that it's not enough that I get up and 'start' by getting the card ready to mail. Oh no! Even if it's 3 a.m., I feel compelled to 'finish' by putting on my coat so I can take the card to the mailbox. Then, when I go back to bed, I can rest assured and put the entire matter out of my mind.

Even though I like to get things done, a lot of good intentions slip by and never get tended to. I'm keenly aware of this every year as I take my old calendar off of the wall and prepare to put up its new replacement. All of those clean square little boxes seem to represent only the best hopes and dreams for the future.

As long as the year lies ahead there are no postponed or cancelled plans. Not a single day is set aside for illness. Disappointment isn't included in the plan. No grief is scheduled. Filling those blank spaces is the optimism for all that's hoped for and might be achieved in the approaching but yet unknown future.

It's when I look back and review the spent year recorded in the old calendar's graphic filled-in, scratched out, and written over block format that I realize how short I am of living my life to its fullest.

The following excerpt from a Christmas letter caused me to realize I'm not the only one with regrets. I'm sharing it because of its wonderful challenge for the New Year.

Holiday time for our family seems to lend itself to conversation of past and present friends and of "good times." Nostalgia seems to surface, as do regrets—of letters not written, phone calls not made, and not enough time spent with family and friends. This Christmas we agreed it's time to send out our best wishes and love to all of our friends and family. And so—we wish you all a wonderful New Year filled with prosperity, good health, and most of all—NO REGRETS!



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Baked Macaroni & Cheese

16 oz dry macaroni	1/2 tsp. dry mustard powder
1/3 cup butter	1/2 tsp. seasoned salt or to taste
1/3 cup flour	pepper to taste
1 tsp. onion powder	3 cups sharp cheddar cheese
2-3/4 cups milk	1/2 cup swiss cheese or mozzarella
1/2 cup light cream	3/4 cup fresh parmesan cheese divided

Topping

1 cup Panko bread crumbs	1 teaspoon parsley
2 Tbsp. butter melted	

Preheat oven to 400°F.
 Combine bread crumbs, melted butter and 1/4 cup parmesan cheese. Set aside.
 Cook macaroni. Drain and run under cold water and set aside.
 Melt butter in a saucepan. Stir in flour and onion powder and cook 2 minutes. Whisk in milk, cream and seasonings over medium heat. Continue to stir until mixture thickens. Let boil 1 minute while stirring.
 Remove from heat and add cheddar, swiss and remaining 1/2 cup parmesan cheese. Whisk until melted. Stir in macaroni and pour into a 9x13 pan.
 Top with crumb mixture and bake 20-25 minutes or until bubbly and topping is browned. Do not overcook.

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Preserving Your Family's Heritage

by Patty Legg Duncan

In 2002, my sister and I began a heartfelt journey to uncover and preserve our family's history. For over 20 years, we dedicated ourselves to collecting stories passed down through the generations, recording important dates and creating a life history scrapbook that celebrates both our paternal and maternal roots.

In 2004, I enrolled in a class at my favorite local scrapbook store to create a scrapbook of recipes. Each week, the instructor provided themed materials for us to design pages featuring the week's recipes. Each used a 8.5" x 5.5" pieces of colorful cardstock as the base, and after class, we would slide our completed recipe cards into plastic sleeves in our notebooks.

As the class progressed, the teacher invited us to submit our favorite recipes. She would then transform them into beautifully designed pages, complete with themed embellishments, for our upcoming classes. Inspired by this creative process, I decided to preserve our family's cherished recipes by making personalized cookbooks as Christmas gifts for my sisters and daughters. Thus, the "Legg Family Recipe Book" was born.

Each book began with a custom-designed title page and divider cards for different sections. I created recipe cards for our family favorites – appetizers, sides, entrees, snacks, and desserts. Many of the cards included are not just the recipes, but also the family stories behind them.

For example, tucked into the pocket with my mom's Easter Deviled Egg recipe is a funny family anecdote that adds sentimental value to that recipe.

Over the next five years, I continued to craft new recipe cards for birthdays and holidays and gifted them to each family for their book. I even created two additional books for a social club I belong to, compiling favorite recipes from fellow members. We raffled these off as part of our fundraising efforts.

In total, I have created five recipe scrapbooks each containing over two hundred treasured recipes. They now sit proudly on my bookshelf, nestling among my other cookbooks.

These recipe scrapbooks have become more than just collections of meals, they are vibrant, creative keepsakes that preserve the flavors and stories of our family's heritage. They serve as a delicious reminder that food is more than sustenance, it is a connection to our past and a gift to future generations.

Patty enjoys family history and genealogy as a hobby, small town history, and photography. She is also an avid scrapbooker and digital storybook maker. She lives in Glendale, AZ, where she spends a lot of time spoiling her grandchildren. Patty works in the sales department for The Country Registers of Arizona/California, Carolinas/Tennessee, Nebraska, and Oregon/Washington/Idaho.



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Ann's Lovin' Ewe

by Ann Marie Stewart

A Russian Love Story from a Century Ago

My grandparents never kissed until their engagement. What a love story for Valentine's Day!

In 1922, two German Mennonites met in a Bible School in Tschongraw Crimea.

My grandmother, Lena Martens, stepped off the train from Orenburg over 1500 miles away only to discover her luggage had been stolen enroute and she would have to attend classes each day in the same brown dress that she'd wash once a week.

She wasn't interested in showing off. Besides, the school frowned on romantic distractions. She hadn't planned on getting married; she'd already helped raise her ten younger siblings, recently fought a battle with typhoid fever and lost her hair, then lost her young father and two little sisters. She would focus on the education she'd so longed for.

Nikolai Siemens, on the other hand, had purchased gold rings before he had even set eyes on Lena Martens.

When Nikolai met the sweet girl with a heart-shaped face framed by short curly hair, he began hoping the ring belonged to her.

But how could Nikolai possibly discover if Lena had a love interest back in her little village of Rodnitschnoje #10? The school had rules: no dating, no marriage, and there must always be six eyes in a room when there were two persons of the opposite sex. In other words, he could never ask her a personal question without someone else listening in.

Nikolai soon solved that problem by bringing his two-year-old niece to Lena's door to witness his odd question, "Is there somebody special back in Orenburg?"

But was this God's will? Nikolai wondered. One day when he saw Lena in the hallway struggling to unlock her door, Nikolai prayed, "Lord if I am to marry her, may I unlock the door." When she handed him the key, he inserted it in the lock, and the door sprung open. She was unaware why he almost skipped down the hall.

He had her ring; but did it fit? When he showed it to his sister, she slipped it on her finger and headed out to visit Lena. "Do you want to try on my ring?" she asked Lena. Ironically, the ring was a perfect fit.

But Lena would never wear it. Stalin had other plans and closed the Bible School and arrested the professors. To release the teachers from prison in Simferopol, students pooled their money, and Nikolai sold the two gold rings.

That summer Lena toiled on the threshing floor in Nikolai's village. As foreman, Nikolai kept an eye on her and asked if she would meet him that evening on the path behind the farms. Though they'd never spent time together alone, she had listened to Nikolai's preaching, sung under his direction, and learned much about him in her two years of Bible School. She wasn't surprised when he took her hand and asked, "Would you take this hand for life?"

She had no idea what was coming. That five years later they would have to flee Crimea and end up trapped in Moscow with Stalin threatening deportation. That her husband would be jailed in Lubjanka and that she'd hide out in a mother/baby home until her third child was born. That she would escape Moscow but would be forced to leave behind a toddler in Crimea. That two years later she would be reunited with her five-year-old first-born.

Or that fifty years later her seven children and twelve grandchildren would gather on their homestead in Blaine, Washington for a family reunion to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. And that at the church ceremony, their simple love story would be told and the congregation learn why Nikolai and Lena had never worn wedding bands.

And she couldn't know that her children and grandchildren believed in this love story. To celebrate and honor it, they surprised Nikolai and Lena with two golden rings. Two golden rings for the two hands that went through life empty, and two hearts that were full.

© 2025 All Rights Reserved --Ann Marie Stewart's novel, THE REMNANTS: One Family's Escape from Stalin's Russia, comes out in 2026. Please sign up for her newsletter for updates: AnnMarieStewart.com

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KISSed Quilts
Inspiration comes from service time love letters

As we approach that annual day when valentines are shared, I wanted to share a new and special collection from Lumin Fabrics/ Island Batik called "Missing You". This was designed by Terri Vanden Bosch of Lizard Creek Quilting in Rock Valley, IA.

"This fabric collection is a tribute to enduring love, heartfelt devotion, and the quiet strength found in life's most tender moments," says Vanden Bosch. Her father-in-law was a veteran. During his military service he and his wife wrote daily. These letters were found, wrapped in a cotton string and served

by Marlene Oddie




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as inspiration for this collection. Terri created a variety of tjaps with the following themes: mail, cross stitch hearts, morse code words, ribbon meander with bows, ink splat, and air mail love.

"This collection is my tribute, to love that lasts, to moments that matter, and to the quiet beauty of handwritten words. May these hand-drawn fabrics evoke your own cherished memories and offer comfort, connection, and peace to all who use them."

Terri has put together several beautiful quilt designs, including "Mail Call Block of the Month", "Hometown Hearts", "Linen Letters", "Care Packages" and "Convictions". Other designers have also used the collection to create additional quilt patterns. I've used the collection to make up two versions of my Hugs and Kisses pattern originally designed to send a subtle hug and kiss from a mother to a teenage daughter. Do you see a large X and a large O in both of these? Squint at the picture. One has a blue X behind a light O and the other has a burgundy O in front of a light X. Placement of colors and values makes all the difference.

Ask at your local quilt shop that carries Island Batik fabrics for these fabrics and patterns. Check out Terri's website at lizardcreekquilting.com. The Hugs and Kisses pattern can be found at KISSed Quilts.



© 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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All The Things We Miss

By Michele Hardman

I went to the beach one morning to have some quiet time to relax, reflect, think about life, plan, and just enjoy the beautiful, tranquil surroundings. I do this on a regular basis. Usually don't stay more than an hour and a half or two, but this is just my own personal therapy. My time to get away a little. Just like almost every time I come here, within a short time, a couple sets up camp within 20 feet or so of me. I've decided I must be some sort of magnet to people. They looked to be in their 30's maybe. Immediately they started slathering on sunscreen—not even giving their poor, bleached pale skin even an hour to absorb some healing vitamin D from the sun. Both of them then got comfy in their respective beach chairs, and proceeded to be glued to their cell phones most of the time they were there. This seemed so sad to me. I looked around me and began to think about all the wonders of nature that these folks were missing out on:

- They were missing the pelicans coasting along effortlessly just above the water.
- They were missing the sand crabs scattered around the beach that blend in with the sand so incredibly well that you rarely notice them until they move.
- They missed the stunning orange and black Monarch butterfly quietly fluttering by on its long migration journey to Mexico for the winter.
- They were too busy, absorbed in modern technology, to feel the soft breeze on their skin coming off the Gulf Coast. Or to think about how nice the warm sunshine felt on their skin.
- They couldn't focus in on the soothing sound of the ocean waves as they splashed onto the edge of the beach. Or barely look out onto the vast view of the ocean right in front of them.

How sad. And seemingly a complete waste of time. I wondered why they even bothered to come to the beach at all if they weren't going to fully enjoy it.

I'm the complete opposite, and often sit and give thanks that I'm ABLE to experience all these things. That I have eyesight to see nature.

Hearing to allow me to hear all the different sounds. Wisdom to appreciate it all. All the things this young couple missed out on that day—that they'll never be able to get back as they were in those particular moments.

I encourage everyone to take some time—regularly—to unplug from the rest of the world, even if it's only for a half hour, and soak up all the beautiful, wonderful, and free things that nature provides for us all.

Don't miss any more moments.

© Michele Hardman who writes from Indiana and Florida



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Make Time for You Recharging and Returning to What Matters

by Kim Caskey of Kim Caskey Quilt & Textile Tours • Host & Educator

There's something magical about flipping the calendar to January first. A brand-new year feels like a fresh start—a blank page, a do-over, an invitation to reset. It's that same feeling I speak about in my Temperature Quilt Lecture: a new year, a new beginning, a moment to choose differently.

It's no surprise that people often feel a surge of motivation and clarity at this time. We set intentions to live healthier, declutter, finish lingering UFOs, start new projects, volunteer, travel or simply be kinder. After the joyful chaos of December, January opens the door to something quieter and more intentional—a season to turn inward and make time for YOU.

For many of us who create—quilt, sew, stitch or make—find the weeks after Christmas often feel like the perfect moment to slip back into the comfort of our craft. The pressure is gone, the deadlines are behind us and the sewing room calls us home in a gentle, familiar way. This is the season to Make Time for YOU.

Self-care doesn't have to look like a spa day or a vacation (though those are lovely too). Sometimes self-care is as simple as reclaiming a quiet hour with your sewing machine or curling up with a hand-stitching project and a warm cup of tea. These small creative rituals don't just soothe our minds—they refill the well that the holiday rush

so quickly drains.

Whether I'm at home or on the road, I've learned that creativity thrives in the spaces where we slow down. When we allow ourselves to pause—to breathe, to reflect, to simply be—inspiration begins to rise again. It's in those gentle moments that ideas start forming, colour palettes appear, and that long-awaited spark returns.

This is a wonderful time of year to set a small intention for yourself and your craft. Nothing overwhelming or grand—just something that brings joy. Perhaps you'll pull out a project that was set aside in December. Perhaps you'll start something new, stitched just for the pleasure of it. Or perhaps you'll take an afternoon to tidy your sewing space, reacquire yourself with your fabrics and rediscover forgotten treasures tucked into drawers.

As quilters and makers, we naturally pour our hearts into others—stitching gifts for family, welcoming new babies with quilts, offering comfort pieces for friends and contributing generously to community charities. All of this giving is meaningful and deeply fulfilling; it nourishes a beautiful part of who we are. But after a season spent caring outwardly, January invites us to shift that giving spirit inward. This is the moment to refill our own creative tank, to restore the energy that allows us to keep giving with joy. What can you create for you? What brings you comfort, beauty, or peace? What helps you reset?

As the new year begins, let yourself linger in the slower rhythm. Set aside some time for you. Put on music that makes your shoulders drop. Let the hum of the machine or the rhythm of needle and thread guide you back to yourself. And perhaps, somewhere on your horizon, consider a creative escape—a quilt and textile journey in 2026 could be a quiet, joyful experience to look forward to, a little time devoted entirely to your own inspiration and delight.

Here's to a fresh start, a renewed spirit and the gentle reminder that taking care of you is not only allowed—it's essential.

Kim Caskey operates and is Tour Host for Kim Caskey Quilt & Textile Tours, as well as a Professional Longarm Quilter and Educator. If you would like to learn more about Kim and her tours or quilting, please visit Kim's website: www.kimcaskey.ca.



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It's a NEW beginning, a time to reflect on the past year - how about a fresh start? It just might be our state of mind - our ATTITUDE that needs the adjustment. Our emotional responses to life events and daily living shows up in our stress levels and of course, our joy in daily living. Standing tall, breathing deeply and Strutting Our "Stuff", will make a huge difference in our days. We will smile more, greet strangers with kindness, and have more patience with our family as we go about our busy lives.


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Joy & Blessings, Jody

Girlfriend Wisdom is written by Jody Houghton®. For color files of this writing contact Jody at: jodyhoughton@msn.com or www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com

Cowgirl Poet, Quilter, Entertainer



Yvonne Hollenbeck
Grandma's Homemade Aprons

I remember Grandma, and I guess I always will; I remember how she welcomed me to her house up on the hill; and peppermints for grandkids and she'd wipe our little cheeks

Her homemade pies and cookies were the best I've ever ate and I loved her pansy garden, and the roses by her gate. With the tail of that old apron, when a tear would happen by from a fall or from a skinned up knee things that'd make a young one cry.

But the one thing I remember most about those days of yore, was the homemade cotton aprons that my grandma always wore. She'd gather up the ends of it, and use it for a bag when picking garden produce, even used it for a rag.

All the grandmas wore them; be they slender gals, or fat; those aprons kept their dresses clean but they were more than that. She made her pretty aprons from feed sacks she had picked when buying special chicken feed or starter for her chicks.

They always had a pocket, where she kept her handkerchief, What happened to those aprons? No one wears them any more; those homemade cotton aprons that our grandmas always wore.

Order Yvonne's new book, "A Stitch in Rhyme" at www.yvonnehollenbeck.com — just \$15 + \$3.50 postage.

© Yvonne Hollenbeck; 2025

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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Grace and her boyfriend Zeke (left).
Rachel and her boyfriend Matthew (above).

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Events, cont. from page 3

- Feb., cont.
- 20-22 Super Stitcher Bowl Retreat with Quilts and Lace in Melbourne (pg. 29)
 - 27-28 Circle of Creativity Event with Karen Charles at Scrap & Sew in Lutz (pg. 22)
 - 27-28 Southwest Florida Quilt Show at Charlotte Harbor Event Center in Punta Gorda (pg. 25)
 - 27-28 Seaside Piecemakers Quilt Show at Melbourne Auditorium in Melbourne (pg. 29)
- March
- 1-Apr 30 Visit participating shops during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 3)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Margie's Sew Much Fun in Crestview during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 5)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Scrappy Girl Quilts & Fabric in Lake City during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 8)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Oceans of Thread in DeLand during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 14)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Black Dog Quilt Shop in Clermont during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 15)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Fabric Warehouse in Lakeland during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 17)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Fabric Smart in St Petersburg during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 23)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Cedar Valley Crafts in Englewood during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 25)
 - 1-Apr 30 Visit Sew N Quilt Co in Holly Hill during the All Florida Shop Hop (pg. 28)
 - 12-13 Spring Fling Sale at Nana's Quilt Shop in Brooksville (pg. 21)
 - 14 Oaks Quilters Quilt Show at Red Oaks RV Resort in Bushnell (pg. 21)
 - 14-15 Sun, Sand, Sea & Quilts Quilt Show at Venice Community Center in Venice (pg. 24)
 - 19-21 Original Sewing & Quilt Expo at RP Funding Center in Lakeland (pg. 17)
 - 21 Lanark Village Wandering Star Quilters Quilt Show at Chillas Hall in Lanark Village (pg. 6)
 - 28 Suwannee Valley Quilt Fest at the Historic Train Depot in Trenton (pg. 9)
- April
- 25 Airing of the Quilts at George Sands Park in Carrabelle (pg. 6)
- May
- 11-15 .. Quilting & Sewing Camp at Blue Lake (AL) with Stitcher's Quest in Fort Walton Beach (pg. 5)

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Wherever You Go by Shelby Kottemann

There's a saying that goes, "Wherever you go, there you are." I learned a lot about those words when I went on my first solo vacation. I'd searched for a small town in a state I'd never been to with a quaint downtown and a hike able arboretum. Northfield, MN fit the bill!

Upon arrival on a Friday, I realized the innkeeper was lonely, so I listened earnestly to her story late into the night. I explored downtown Saturday morning, but when I came back to get my hiking shoes, a melancholy guest, traveling for work, walked through the door. I stayed back hoping a caring talk might lift her spirits.

Sunday morning came. I was about to step out into the fresh morning air when the innkeeper rushed up to me in a panic. "My car is in the shop and I have no way to get to church. Can you give me a ride?"

"Of course," I answered. The still dreary guest asked to come too. "The more the merrier!" I replied. Unbeknownst to me, the innkeeper's church was over an hour's drive away. The good deed took half my day and half a tank of gas by the time I returned. The tagalong houseguest didn't like hiking and instead wanted to go out to eat and be brought back to rest.

Now it was Sunday night and I needed to go home. I had four long hours to think about how little fun I'd had. I hadn't seen the arboretum or even the rest of town! At every opportunity, I'd slipped right into my habit of putting everyone around me first. On my only vacation nonetheless!

This isn't a sad story though! In one of the downtown shops, I'd met a warm, wise woman with whom I'd shared a long, deep conversation. She struck me as one of those people who touched others' lives without realizing it so it saddened me to hear that she struggled with depression. The following winter, I sent a Christmas card to her little store with a handwritten message inside telling her how special she is and that she'd been the highlight of my trip. I hoped my letter would bring her some light. In February, I received a response! She'd been truly touched by my letter. We exchanged phone numbers and we have shared long phone calls twice a month for five years since! Sharing life's musings and ups and downs, we've built a loving friendship that enriches both of our lives beyond compare. In the beginning that solo vacation may have taught me about the burdens of being a caring person, but in the end, it showed me the ever-lasting gifts. For better and worse, wherever you go, there you are.

©Shelby Kottemann, who is an Author, Reiki Master and Founder of "Love's Nature LLC" for the love of nature and the nature of love. Her email is contact@inlovesnature.com. To learn more, visit the website www.inlovesnature.com.

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Piecing Life Together
Traveling

by Barbara Polston

Most of us, I believe, plan to travel, whether that's for business, family obligations or pleasure. I'm planning a trip to visit my oldest daughter and will be flying. In addition to all the things that need to be packed – clothing, toiletries and the like – whenever I travel, I spend quite a bit of time thinking about what I will be bringing along to fill spare moments.

There is always a book or two to read on the plane. On this trip, I'm bringing the latest selection of my book club. I expect I will be done with the reading and ready for our meeting, occurring the evening after I return home.

What seems to occupy most of my thoughts is what sewing or crafting project will come along. There are several things that must be considered. One of the first things is the size of the project. With airlines charging for additional bags or too much weight, this is important. Currently, I have some finishing handwork that needs to be done on two good-size quilt projects. Either would take up quite a bit of valuable suitcase space or require a second suitcase and additional baggage charges. Shipping the projects ahead of time seems like an unnecessary expense and risks them getting lost in transit, going or coming back. Neither of those projects seem like good options for this trip but would be strong contenders if I were driving. If I had a quilting project that could be broken down into small units of handwork, such as an English Paper Piecing project, that would be a good choice. Unfortunately, I don't have such a project planned for the near future, so that won't work either.

As luck would have it, I am ready to start a new counted cross stitch project.



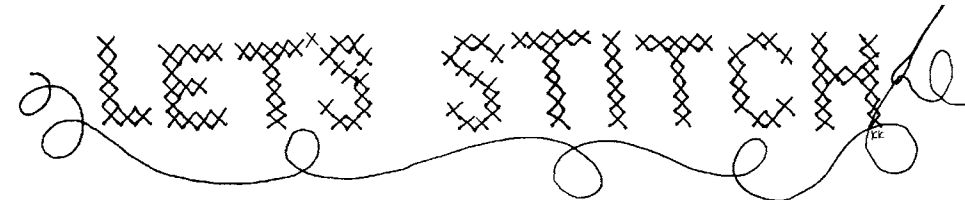
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I was gifted another embroidery project, Japanese sashiko, that is ready to go and I am anxious to try. Both projects fit nicely in my embroidery bag and won't take up very much space in my suitcase. These will be coming along with me, giving me plenty of things to work on while I'm away and relaxing with my daughter. She is thinking she will work on some embroidery projects while I'm there, a plan we are calling mother-daughter parallel crafting. She was gifted with the same Japanese sashiko kit and I'm wondering if we will truly be in parallel, working on the same project but bringing our individual interpretations to the work. I am looking forward to a bit of a surprise.
 Safe travels! Happy stitching!

©Barbara Polston, 2025. Barbara is the author of *Quilting with Dollies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects* (Schiffer Press, 2015) and a series of children's books inviting young children to share in *The Adventures of Puppy Brian* (www.puppybrian.com). Barbara lives in Tucson, Arizona where she has failed at retirement, but is getting more time for sewing in a variety of forms. Contact Barbara at barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com.



Sebring

Lessons from Geese

by Becky Van Vleet

My husband and I live on a golf course with several ponds. The water sparkles with sunlight as plentiful geese fly in and out and around this time of year. Much to the golfers' dismay, sometimes the geese congregate right on the greens. Nevertheless, I enjoy watching the antics of these fowls from my kitchen window.

A few years ago, I read Dr. Robert McNeish's "Lessons from the Geese," and I found the facts about these creatures to be so interesting. Contending with isolation and mental health setbacks from Covid impacts, I believe the lessons geese can teach us is timely for all of us. Enjoy!

SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO REACH A COMMON GOAL

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the following bird, making it easier for the other to fly, and most importantly, to save energy by drafting off each other. The lesson here is that people who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

TEAMS ARE INVALUABLE

In a V-formation, the whole flock extends at least 71% more flying range than if each bird flew alone. Working as a single individual can be hard, draining and ultimately will bring less benefit to the collective goal. Working individually can lead to burnout, so remaining in formation and accepting support will keep teams moving ahead.



ACCEPT SUPPORT

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back in formation. As it rotates back into the formation, another goose flies at the V-point position. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will join the formation of those who are headed where we want to go.


GIVE RECOGNITION

Geese in the rear of the formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. We should make sure our "honking from behind" is encouraging rather than judgmental.

CREATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

When a goose gets sick or wounded, two other geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and provide protection, staying with it until it's able to continue flying or it ultimately dies. Then they launch out on their own, join another formation, or try to catch up with their own flock. If we have as much sense as the geese, we'll stand by one another like they do.



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 eight grandchildren. Becky is a children's picture book author, and her website is devoted to family stories and creating memories: www.beckvanvleet.com



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Love at First Sight

by Becky Van Vleet



Walter & Alberta Troyan Newlyweds after WWII

"How do I look, Mildred?" Alberta fluffed her hair and stood on tiptoe next to her bed at the shipyard. "Just lovely, sweetie." Mildred pulled her hand. "Come on. Time to go. I want to beat the boys."

When the girls arrived at the St. Julien restaurant in San Francisco, Alberta scooted into the half-circle cushioned burgundy seat surrounding a round wooden table to wait for her blind date. Had she done the right thing? Mildred had twisted her arm, that's for sure.

When two sailors meandered toward them, Mildred elbowed her. "That's them. My boyfriend, Robbie, is on the left. The other one, umm, the other one must be your date."

Alberta gulped. She rubbed her damp palms on her skirt beneath the table. She whispered, "He's so handsome. What's his name?"

"Walter."

I'm passionate about family stories and preserving them, one at a time, for the next generations. I tap into my imagination for how events may have happened. Sheer fun for me. Moments I never actually witnessed come alive in vivid color in my movie mind.

As a baby boomer, I grew up with parents who occasionally shared relics about the Great Depression and World War II. Truth be told, I wish I'd asked more questions. At the time, I had no idea historians would one day crown their resilience as the Greatest Generation. But now, I esteem their stories more than ever.

My parents' WWII romance narrative is unique. A whirlwind romance if I've ever heard one. For some background, my mother, Alberta Thomas, hitchhiked from Indiana with her best friend, Mildred, to California after high school to serve the WWII effort. Her friends had scattered. Boys had joined various military branches faster than sparks flying from a fire. Many of her girlfriends had joined the female military counterparts.

But my mother's adventurous spirit took her on a different path. She set off across the country with her thumb up to hitch rides to eventually arrive at Mare Island Shipyard. Of course, hitchhiking during the early 1940s was much safer, and even somewhat common for women without cars. Upon arrival at the shipyard, she converted to a Rosie the Riveter with her welding assignments.

In the meantime, my father, Walter Troyan, served as a young gunner on the USS Denver in the South Pacific, enlisting at age seventeen. When a torpedo severely struck his ship, the vessel traveled to Mare Island Shipyard for major repairs which lasted from January to May 1944.

Although the sailors were still required to work during the overhaul time, they were granted a 30-day liberty leave. The 50,000 civilians working at Mare Island, mostly women, also had some time off from their six-day workweek. Sailors itching for dates with female employees was not uncommon.

Robbie, my father's friend, had already linked up with a new girlfriend, Mildred. He convinced my father to go on a blind date to meet Mildred's girlfriend, Alberta. My father thought, why not? Still a teenager, he'd already witnessed more battles and carnage than he ever imagined.

My parents fell in love instantly at the restaurant where they met. Between their working shifts, more dates followed, sometimes with my father's shipmate, Eddie Page, and his wife Emma. At the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco, my mother eagerly accepted his proposal, barely a month later, when he slipped a diamond ring on her finger. Within days, my father's parents hosted their engagement party from their home in Santa Rosa.

Before his ship left Mare Island to reenter the war, the couple squeezed in a few more dates, cementing their commitment. From May 1944 to November 1945, they exchanged letters for the remainder of WWII. Wasting no time, they married on December 2, 1945, just eleven days after my father stepped off the ship. We've all heard the expression, love at first sight. It was for them. Their unwavering commitment, staying married until their deaths, remains an inspiring example to me.

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

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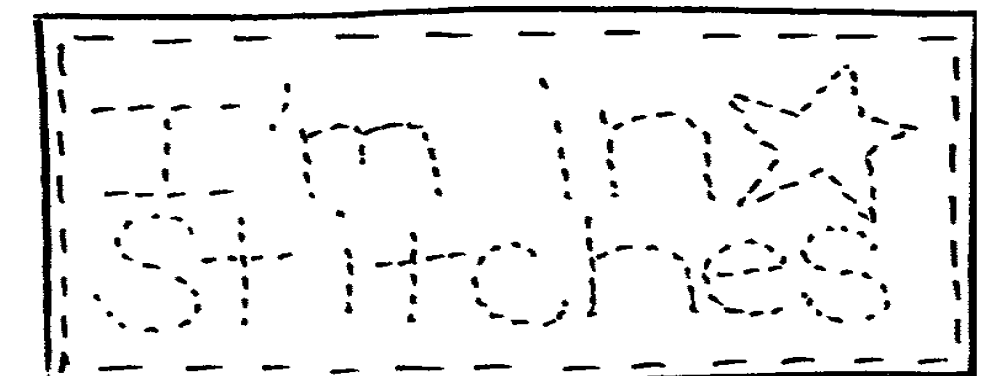
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Wrapped In Love

by Janet M Bair

Every quilt made is an act of love. We may have fallen in love with the fabric and want to make something unique. We may have a special occasion such as a wedding, graduation, birthday or Christmas gift in mind when we start sewing. We may be sewing for charity and will never see the recipient.

The amount of time it takes to piece and press the top, quilt it and sew on the binding requires a big commitment of time. Time that ends up being an act of love. As quilters, we love to sew and we love to bless others with our gifts. If we sew a lot, we have to find people to give our quilts to, or we would have no room in our houses.

Whenever I think of blessing others with their quilting skills, I think of my mother-in-law, Leone Bair, who was a talented quilter. She loved to make small Sunbonnet Sue doll quilts. She made dozens of these little quilts for her family, friends, and friends' grandchildren. She also made many items for her church's yearly Christmas fair. All gifts of love.

Although she passed away twenty years ago, the two doll quilts still at my house are in good condition even though my girls played with them while they were growing up. At that time, I was not yet a quilter.

I looked at the doll quilts more closely the other day. She hand-embroidered all around the Sunbonnet Sue girl appliqué and the four appliquéd hearts and then hand quilted the rest of the quilt with small hearts. I know it took a lot of time. The doll quilt is now forty years old. Dare I let my grandchildren play with it? I think I may set that one aside as there is another one, all machine appliquéd and machine quilted that is similar.

Without realizing it, I guess I have carried on her legacy. Last year, after practicing making half square triangles with a charm pack, I turned it into a dolls Christmas quilt. This year I am making teddy bear quilts using another charm pack of bears with guitars for my grandson. We all enjoy being wrapped up in a cozy quilt on a cold winter's night. Wouldn't a bear love one too?

Some people think Valentine's Day is just for sweethearts but over the years, as I did preschool story hours, I felt it was important to read stories about love to the children. The world can use more love and understanding.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God" I John 4:7 As we remind ourselves each February to love others, let us use our gifts of sewing lavishly on this hurting world.



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Recipe
Chocolate Cake Bars
 Courtesy of Regina Knically, from Linville, VA
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 * 1 package instant vanilla pudding
 * 1 cup oil
 * 1 cup water
 * 4 eggs
 Toppings
 * 1/2 cup brown sugar
 * 1 cup chopped pecans
 * 2 cups mini chocolate chips
 Directions:
 Mix together on medium for 2 minutes.
 Pour into well greased 11x15 pan.
 Sprinkle on toppings.
 Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or til done.

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**Learning Sewing and Needlework
with Grandma and Great-grandma**

by Nancy J. Nash

My father's parents passed away before I was born, but my mother's mother lived until I was a young adult. My great-grandmother lived until I was a sophomore in high school. Both were skilled seamstresses, and together with Mom, they taught me basic stitches and techniques.

I felt like I was exploring a new land with comrades. As I made new discoveries, they kept pace with me and they cheered me on. There is nothing like sharing a project with those who love you and encourage your efforts. This may explain why, after all these years, I enjoy mending clothing. It brings back memories of working peacefully side by side, our minds solving problems and our fingers plying needle and thread through fabric. Varieties of textiles - with their endless range of designs, arrays of color, and pleasing textures - continue to fascinate me and attract my attention. I learned to love such things at an early age.

I picture my great-grandmother sitting in a chair by a window, mending socks for the "menfolk" in our family. Her stitches are so tiny that we joke that they are machine made. My father pulls up a chair, and she regales him with stories of her youth, like the time a few of her brothers ran out of town the young man hired to run their small village school.

She was a stately woman, fairly tall, with ramrod-straight posture. Her white hair, soft as milkweed silk, was pinned up on top of her head. It had turned white in her early twenties from a fever she barely survived.

To me, she exemplified perseverance. My mother used to tell me how my great-grandmother had walked home from weekly shopping trips in order to save her bus money to purchase a watch for my great-grandfather. When he later passed away before his scheduled retirement, she was denied any of his pension, so she rented rooms in her house and managed to scrape by. During the Great Depression, she made dresses for my mother to save money for the family.

She could be quite spontaneous. Once a year we'd invite her to a country fair in a nearby town. "I'll get my sweater," was her quick reply. With her love of life, no wonder she lived into her 90s!

My grandmother opened my eyes to new horizons. She instructed me as I tried my hand at crocheting and knitting. However, when my grandmother got bogged down attempting to turn the heel of a knitted sock, I came to the rescue by poring over the pattern's written directions. I managed to figure out how to do it and told Grandma, and then she took over. She mastered the technique and gave away that first pair of heavy socks to one of the "menfolk." Outdoors in cold and snow, the socks kept feet warm and dry. Almost instantly, a waiting list formed for Grandma's winter socks, both menfolk and womenfolk cherishing their thick warmth.

Grandma introduced me to a pattern for a patchwork quilt called Grandmother's Garden. It intrigued me that scraps of cloth could be made to represent a house, a walkway, and clusters of flowering plants. I delighted in how our imaginations could play with an abstract design. Years later, I came across an article that juxtaposed photos of old quilts with photos of abstract art by famous modern painters. There were amazing similarities between the intricate geometric patterns of the quilts and the paintings done on canvas. Most of the quiltmakers were probably farm women with little formal education, and yet they produced designs strikingly similar to those of highly educated artists. It is not surprising that the art quilters of today produce work with the primary purpose of uplifting the mind and soul of the viewer.

As I look back, one of the main lessons I absorbed from my grandmother and great-grandmother was the importance of perseverance - the ability to plough through thick and thin to reach a goal. Perseverance is necessary for a child to learn skills and to develop vision for what can be done with them. It is vital to life's journey at any age.

- © 2025 Nancy J. Nash. Nancy J. Nash is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story*, and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, each available on amazon.com. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. She can be reached at nancynash341@gmail.com

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Our winner from last issue is Linda Home. Linda will receive a gift certificate to spend at Nana's Quilt Shop in Brooksville. She enjoys this shop because "they treat you like family even when you are new to the shop!" Congratulations Linda!

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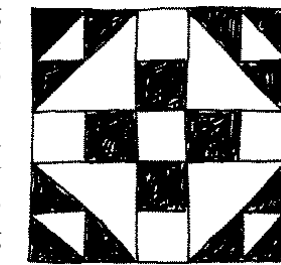
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Orange Park

Try a Round Robin Quilt!

by Judy Sharer

The excitement of making a round robin quilt is creating it with friends and not knowing exactly how it will look once completed. If you are in a quilters guild or have a social group of friends who sew this could be a great project.



There are two ways to create a round robin. First is as a single quilt that begins with a themed center, which is usually made by the owner. The center is passed from person to person each adding another border to the quilt contributing to the theme the original person chose. To complete it, add a border quilt whenever the quilt top is in your possession. You choose what to add to all four sides of the piece. It can be applied or pieced. Each quilt is usually passed within the group one time around the circle of members as the masterpiece grows. A certain time frame for the piece to be passed to the next person is set by the group. As you exchange the quilt top the group decides whether to show the progress that's been made or keep it a secret until the end to show the owner of the original block.

The second way a round robin can work is each member in the group makes an individual block for the original person to assemble into a quilt top. Smaller groups may choose to make more than one block per person, but each person makes a block for the other people in the group. The original person chooses the block size and a pattern for the block or they leave the pattern up to the people making the block for a scrappy quilt look.

Often in both cases the original person chooses the colors, and can even give each member a cut of fabric to use in the border or block they make. The colors and fabric help tie the quilt together as they add to the border or make the block to grow the quilt into a piece of art.

Over the years I've been involved in making several round robin quilts and it's always fun. It can also be a little nerve-wracking at times as you worry whether or not the final owner of the quilt will like what you've made. Then on reveal day you wait on pins and needles to see what your finished piece or quilt blocks will look like.

One of the members in our small group was pregnant and we decided to make a round robin baby quilt to surprise her. You could also do a round robin quilt with family members as a birthday present, or make one for a family reunion. Clubs can also use this method to make a raffle quilt. Regardless if it's for yourself or to give away, give it a try! This technique is a fun and exciting project to make with friends.

- © Judy Sharer is the author of a historical Civil War era romance series titled *A Plains Life*, published by The Wild Rose Press. Book One, *Settler's Life*, Book Two, *Second Chance Life*, Book Three, *Civil War Life* and Book Four, *Love Challenged Life* are available wherever on-line books and eBooks are sold. Look for her newest title *Secrets in Room Four* coming this winter. Visit Judy's website for more details. judysarar.com

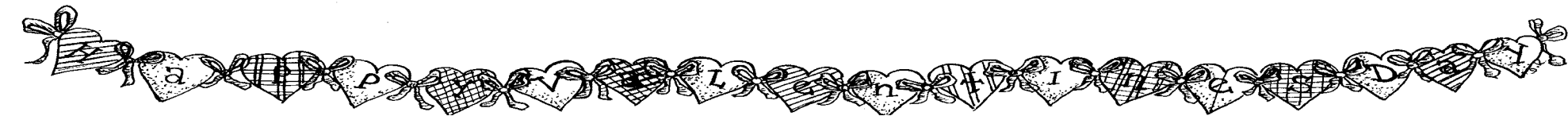
Bee Mine, Valentine

DID YOU KNOW? VALENTINE'S EDITION

- One of the earliest valentines still in existence is kept in an England museum and written in 1477—more than 500 years ago!
- Before envelopes, valentines were handmade from sheets of folded paper, then pressed closed with a wax seal.
- In the 1800s, admirers spent hours decorating cards with watercolor paints, pen and ink—a true act of devotion.
- By the mid-1800s, popularity demanded manufactured valentines, which were then decorated with lace, velvet and ribbons. They were often so ornate they needed their own box to send in mail!



Information Summarized from the Canadian Museum of History: www.historymuseum.ca. Cards downloaded from the World Wide Web. Artists unknown.



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New Year's Resolutions!

Over the years I always choose a few New Year's resolutions I can actually keep and here are a few you might like to try.

- * Finish one large or two small projects before I start another.
- * This year, have my sewing machine serviced before it breaks down.
- * Take a class, meet new people, and learn a new pattern, how to use a new accessory, or tool.
- * Try out a new stitch on my sewing machine.
- * Make something useful to donate to a charity.
- * Join a quilt guild or if already a member become more involved in the group. Maybe, take on a leadership role.
- * Organize or reorganize my sewing room or space more efficiently.
- * Encourage a friend to take up the craft of sewing and quilting.

Feel free to borrow one or two of my resolutions and have a Happy New Year 2026.

Judy Sharer is the author of a family saga/historical romance series titled A Plains Life, published by The Wild Rose Press. The four book series is available online wherever books and ebooks are sold. Visit Judy's website for more details. judysharer.com

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Melbourne, Sebastian

Stages of Love

by Janet Young

February is known as the Heart Month. This is the time when thoughts of love and romance begin to blossom as we get closer to Valentine's Day. Of course, most recently February is also known as Heart Month, reminding us of our cardiovascular health, and how to stay healthy. But let's get back to the original meaning, the meaning that comes to mind when we think of Valentine's Day.

"The love in your heart wasn't put there to stay, Love isn't love till it's given away. This is a familiar quote that is often found on pillows, or in catalogues, or even posters. When I read that, it got me to thinking. From the moment of birth, we are beginning to feel what it is liked to be loved. As an infant, we may not know the meaning, but we feel the love that our parents bestowed upon us the instant we were born. As we grow into childhood, it becomes evident that our parents love us, even when they punish us.

Fast forward to our teenage years. This is a time when we may experience what we perceive to be true love, only to experience our first heartbreak. Love can be the most wonderful thing in the world, but it can also bring pain and sadness. Does that mean we never love again. Of course not. As a young person, you will have many opportunities to date until one day you know that you know, this is that perfect person, the one you want to spend the rest of your life with.

Soon you start a family. And again, as you welcome that child into the world you will experience a love that you have never experienced before. And this love will be in your heart until your last breath. This love will take you on a journey unlike any love you experienced before, for no matter what that child does, even if it brings heartache or disappointment, you will always love your child. This is called unconditional love.

Years move on, you are now empty-nesters, and perhaps retired, and now you can devote your time and love for one another. Your many years of marriage is a testimony of how great love can be.

Unfortunately, there will come a time, when you will lose a spouse. This is when you will feel a loss like you never felt before. Your life will never be the same. That is the power of love.

If love can bring pain and heartache, why do we love at all? I believe it is our innate nature to love and be loved. When all is said and done, I think you will agree you would have rather had life full of love, than one of loneliness, and sadness.

Remember not only on Valentine's Day, but every day, let your loved ones know how much they are loved. Remember: The love in your heart wasn't put there to stay, love isn't love til you give it away.

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



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February is National Embroidery Month!

A Broken Thread

by Wayne M. Bosman

Anyone who has read my recent articles in the Country Register will undoubtedly notice one thread running through them. One way or another, my mother has appeared in almost all of them. That thread is soon to be broken. I am writing this at the kitchen table of the house I grew up in, which we are clearing out in the time leading up to her funeral. She was 104.

Clearing out another person's home can be a deeply personal, almost embarrassing, task. Not so much here. She spent these last years preparing to make it easier. Little stickers with names appear on many of the potential keepsakes. She insisted that we take some things home with us after visits to reduce the burden after she was gone. Her army of admirers understood that presents to her were no longer a practical idea. That was her way.

Little handmade items were still welcome, if not too expensive to make. Kerri and I focused on crocheted or woven items that she might actually use because of the love they were made with. Shawls, scarves, lap blankets all worked for her, as did little heart-shaped coasters. She kept some things in her drawers or on display because they were too pretty to use. That also was her way.

Kerri and I are spending our days helping my sister sort through Mom's things, trying to make sure that every family member has some meaningful keepsake to remind them of Mom every time they see it. Many of these are little ornaments or pictures that were made for her when her grandchildren were very young. Mom lived long enough to have great-great grandchildren who made her little things. Kerri kept Mom's soup ladle. I kept a cake plate that had survived potlucks and large family meals. I also brought home a herringbone scarf I wove for her a few years earlier. She was proud of it and proud of me for adding weaving to my life skills while in my 60s. She never ceased being proud of her children and grandchildren. To some degree, our successes were hers.

My sister has a list that Mom wrote with her of things that she wants different grandchildren to have. She is doing her best to carry out Mom's wishes about keepsakes. Then comes the rest of it all. My sister has a list of charities to best use everything in the house. From clothing to furniture to kitchenware and knickknacks, there is a place for everything. Almost nothing ends up in the landfill. That was how Mom lived.

Mom was a giver by nature and nurture. It made her happy to help my sister prepare things for the Giving Circle, a local project to give tangible help to people who needed it. As she got older and less able to make things herself, her job became to wrap up crocheted washcloths that went into each package. Age slowed her abilities, but not her desire to give.

My sister, Linda, inherited Mom's desire to give back. After the big push every year for the Giving Circle, the cycle starts again. By mid-January the bin boxes are starting to get filled with scarves, hats, and other necessities for urban areas in the northern US. An active church group contributes year round to keep poverty at bay. For Linda, her friends, and for Kerri, the knitting and crocheting doesn't really stop, the focus just changes. Prayer shawls for the aging and lap blankets for people in Hospice are a never-ending need.

Mom lived a full and long life. Although her thread is broken, the love she wove into so many lives is still strong.

For Mary A. Bosman (December 17, 1920-November 2, 2025)

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

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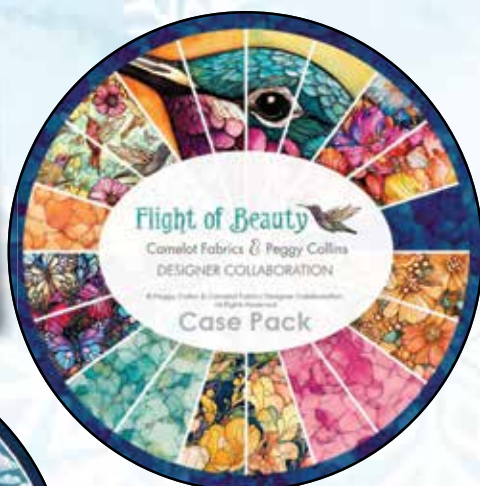
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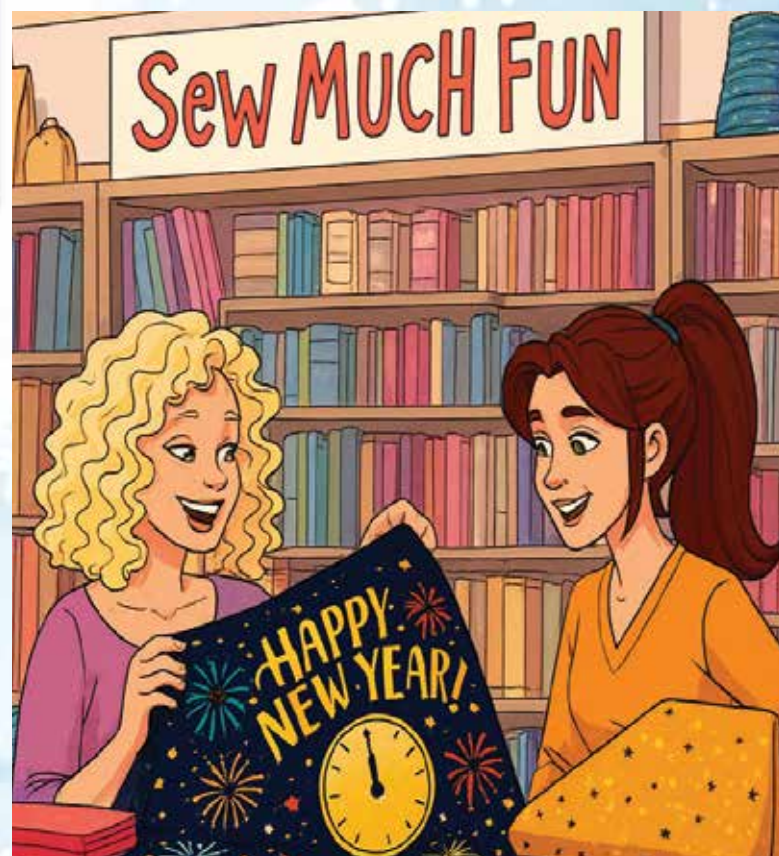
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