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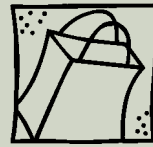
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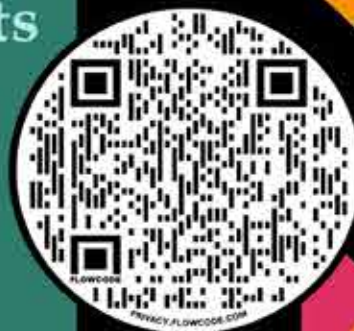
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DOVER – DE

Raucous Wildlife and Slimy Salamanders: What's So Great About Spring?

by Nancy J. Nash

Spring peepers send forth their high-pitched bell-like calls in March in my part of New England. Their constant repetition of “peep in, peep out” is both cheery and soothing, as the male chorus frogs (a type of tree frog) inflate the vocal sacs in their throats to attract females. They may begin in February but then have to interrupt their nightly chorus until warmer weather becomes more consistent. Occasionally they are deafeningly loud and raucous.

Growing up, we had a pasture behind our house with a marshy area dubbed “the swamp,” where I joined my young neighbors in “expeditions” and sometimes went by myself. I had heard hordes of spring peepers on March evenings although not earlier in the day. But once I was lured by the calls of a few daytime peepers and had traipsed down to the swamp to investigate when suddenly the sound stopped. Evidently the tiny frogs were frightened. What should I do? It seemed like my eavesdropping expedition was doomed to failure - until I kept still for moment. Guess I'd better just crouch on a tussock and quietly peer into the grasses and shallow water for any sign of life.

I heard a peep here and a peep there from a few stray frogs, but none made an appearance. Where were they? If I moved in the direction of the sound, it would immediately cease. Careful, though - bogs are slippery, and boots fill quickly with cold water. Ugh! I had to content myself with actually having heard a few peepers close up.

Frogs continued to fascinate, and my friends and I decided to scout for frogs' eggs and the tadpoles that hatched from them.

We found lots of eggs encased in jelly-like sacs among the marsh grasses. After a few weeks, polliwogs, as we called the tadpoles, emerged and swam around our little

“swamp.” We weren't sure what type of frog they were, but what did it matter? We excitedly observed as they grew limbs and lost their tails, part of the process of maturing into full-fledged frogs. Peering into murky waters, we had front-row bogs to view them! I'll bet our schoolteachers were impressed by our brush with metamorphosis.

A number of years later, I was working in the town of Amherst, Massachusetts when yellow-spotted salamanders attracted attention. In winter, members of this declining species lived on a hillside overlooking Henry Street. Every spring they would clamber down the hill and cross this small country road to find a vernal pool where they could mate and lay eggs.

However, they had fallen on hard times. Traffic had increased on Henry Street to the point where it was hazardous for them to cross the road. Some local residents decided to place a couple tunnels under the road to help the small amphibians find their way to the spring wetlands.

I was among those humans who ventured forth in the rain on a chilly April night to help guide the salamanders to the entrances of the tunnels. My companions and I were ecstatic when a number of salamanders entered and emerged safely on the other side of the road. Success! But why were some of them still reluctant to enter the underground pathway? The obstinate, ungrateful little critters!! The night was rainy and cold and dark, and we volunteers were thinking how nice it would be to go home and have a cup of tea.

In time, a few of the human helpers came up with a solution. They decided to modify the tunnels' original design to allow in more moisture and natural light. Contrary to public perception, salamanders are not slimy but require moisture to keep them from drying out. The natural light may help them navigate. These days they show their appreciation by using the tunnels more freely. Whew!

Recently, I have been reading Sheila Carroll's Nature Study Companion: Simple Ways to Discover Wonders Near and Far. She makes a case for allowing children to wander about the landscape, discovering and observing and developing curiosity. She also suggests that nature study helps them develop wholeness, character, and life skills. Looking back, I'm not sure exactly what I gained from my encounters with frogs and salamanders, but my friends and I are still enchanted whenever we hear a chorus of spring peepers calling in a meadow or spot a migrating yellow-spotted salamander on a rainy spring night.

Vermonters call springtime “mud season,” when the snow finally melts and bare ground becomes visible. As messy as spring can be, there is something about the milder air that frees us and reaches our souls. Owlets are born, skunks have their babies, and mother possums show up with little ones. It is a time of emerging life and a time of contentment. I hope the spring peepers are raucous this spring, and may the yellow-spotted salamanders make it safely across Henry Street!

- © 2026 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](https://www.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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Hoppy Spring

by Janet M Bair

It's always fun to look at new spring fabrics. Soft yellows, greens and pinks set my imagination going. What can I make with this? If it's too cute to leave in the store, I will often splurge and just buy half a yard. I can always make a doll dress for my granddaughter or cloth napkins for our dinner table.

By far, the hardest spring patterns to walk away from are the bunny prints. If they are lop-eared bunnies, the ones with the long floppy ears, I am sold.

I grew up a cat lover but my husband and daughter are allergic to cats. However, they are not allergic to rabbits. Thus, began my long love affair with bunnies. Their soft droopy ears, their cute constantly wiggling noses and their overall fluffiness make them a good petting substitute for a cat.

Bunnies are silent. They never talk back or offer critical comments. They are a peaceful pet to have. I took care of three different bunnies over the course of twenty years. Cupcake lived eleven years, Blackie three, and our littlest dwarf lop, Snickers or Snicky five years.

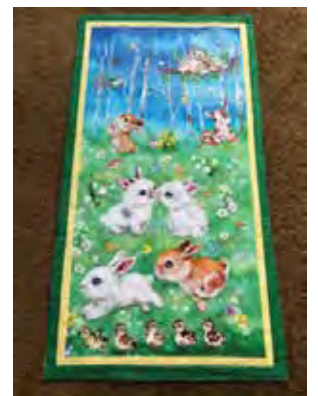
Although they often sit very still, they are surprisingly swift. When we let Snicky out of his cage, he would race down the hall and zoom under our bed right to the middle. No matter how far I stretched my arm under the bed, he always evaded me. Defeated by five pound of sneaky black and white fluff, I would walk away. Eventually he would come out from his hiding place.

To commemorate my bunny chasing days, this spring I am going to put a backing to a panel of bunnies and ducklings romping through the grass. It will be a good reminder that even though the snows have been deep this winter, spring always comes. The seasons flow onward.

Although it seems that all the bunny decorations in the stores have little to do with the real message of Easter, they are still fun to look at. I guess bunnies are used because they literally hop for joy. And isn't that what the season is all about? Not only do the days get longer and warmer, but we can rejoice in that Jesus is risen and the tomb is empty.

After His resurrection, “Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them!...They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!” John 20:19,20 (TLB—The Living Bible)

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Letters Worth Writing Home About

by Kerri Habben Bosman

Since I could write, I have loved writing letters. One of my favorite gifts as a child was new stationery, the kind that came in a pretty box with matching paper and envelopes all bound together by a ribbon. I was the kid that couldn't wait to write "thank you" letters.

It helped that I saw family writing letters. Dad often used his clipboard with watermarked paper on top of a ruled guide so that each line he wrote would be properly spaced. His handwriting was exceptional, having grown up when penmanship was an indicator of character. Uncle Henry, who lived across the street from us, always had his old Royal typewriter on their dining room table except for family dinners. I loved using his typewriter. I'd leave him a note if he wasn't in the room and then the next time, I came over one was waiting for me. When he died in 1992, I placed a typed note in his suit pocket. It read: "I came by to see you today. I pray that I shall live well enough to see you again."

Ten years later by coincidence, I became pen pals with the son of someone Uncle Henry knew in the 1930's. I never met Harold in person, but we were both writers. We sent works-in progress for the other's suggestions. We wrote for 12 years.

When I was 20, my dad suggested I write to the widow of a captain he'd worked with before retiring after 40 years as a ship dispatcher. He thought we'd have a lot in common. We did, and we telephoned and wrote letters for over 20 years. When Dad died in 2001, I called Jane, ready with the prepared speech I'd used in the "letting people know" calls. Except that when I tried to talk to Jane, my throat suddenly became a glob of wet marbles. Her response to my garbled words has stayed with me. "Old shipmates are always old shipmates."

Perhaps the most important letters I have ever written are the over 700 letters sent to my mother-in-law. I wrote to her at least two times a week from when I first met her in 2019 to her passing in late 2025 at the age of 104. She lived 1,021 miles from us in Kenosha, Wisconsin. My letters shared all that was happening for us and all of our family here. Most of us rely on emails and texts now, but Mom didn't. She needed letters to be read and reread with a cup of tea and a cookie or two.

In person I called her "Mom," but in my letters I addressed her as "Mary," her given name. By the time Wayne and I married in 2020, she was 100 years old and had long been "Mom," and "Grandma Mary." With most of her peers no longer with us, I wanted her to see herself as she'd been her whole life.

Her letters were written on handmade cards with pictures and details of the kids, namely her grown grandchildren, their spouses and ever-growing great-grandchildren. She knew when laundry was in the dryer and what was for dinner. She knew how the garden was growing and how each of us was evolving too. Most importantly, she knew she was a part of each of us all the time. Each letter ended with: "Wayne sends his love, as do I. We think of you every day."

Selfishly perhaps, I miss writing to Mom. At 104 she had earned a peace beyond our temporal and limited world. But I am also comforted because old shipmates in our sea of life will always be old shipmates. And I pray that I shall live well enough to see her again.

-- © 2025 Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer living in Cape Carteret, NC.

Her email is 913jeeves@gmail.com.



Wit & Wisdom

The Garden

by Juleann Lattimer

Tree branches rustled at the touch of the soft breeze. Stars dotted the night sky as the moon's glow shined like a spotlight, illuminating the figure of a man stooped over on his knees. Hands clenched at his chest, his face searching the heavens. A thick silence filled the air, except for the lone cry of an anguished voice, pleading upwards towards the sky. Just beyond the shaded walk lay three men, fast asleep. It was a strange picture – one struggling in deep despair, three sleeping in silent serenity.

Have you ever struggled in that shadowy garden – facing something that will not be resolved? Can't be fixed? No way out? All alone? You're not.

The One who anguished on His knees that night in the garden didn't stay there. A few hours later He went to the cross, from the cross to the grave, but He didn't stay there either. He arose on the third day, and has secured a place for us with Him in heaven. Because of this, even though we sometimes find ourselves in a dark shadowy garden, we're never alone. He is with us and has promised, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

I know. I've been in that abandoned garden. The world collapsing, life changing, struggling to hang on, but ... "Jesus is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) I've found His promises to be true.

-In the early 1990's four Christian friends, with a shared interest in writing, began meeting once a month to learn the writing trade. The four were each active in their various churches. As part of an outreach ministry, they decided to write an inspirational newspaper column as a way to reach a wider, and perhaps mostly secular, audience. Contact the authors at: witandwisdomwriters@gmail.com

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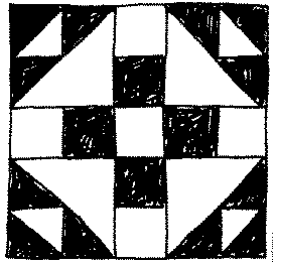
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Try a Round Robin Quilt!

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 appliqued 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 to 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



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NEIGHBORING STATE AD

A Cup of Tea with Lydia

A Milestone Nine-TEA-eth Party

by Lydia E. Harris

Colorful streamers, balloons, and tablecloths waited to welcome the senior ladies who met weekly for tea and treats in the community room.

But this time they gathered to celebrate my sister Erna's nine-TEA-eth birthday. The rose and gold floral-print napkins and paper plates said: "90 Fabulous." Her three daughters and grandson had arrived early to prepare the setting.

Tasty Treats

The buffet table held a delicious array of foods, including cranberry brie bites, a variety of crackers, and a charcuterie board loaded with an assortment of cheeses, meats, and colorful dried fruit. But the main feature was a homemade gluten-free three-layer vanilla cake with strawberry cream cheese frosting, topped with two large candles: a nine and a zero.

Other treats included homemade cranberry nut triangles, chocolate chip cookies, jam thumbprints, and lemon crinkle cookies (see recipe). Oh my—what a wonderful tea time with sugar and spice and everything nice.

Big Surprise

Twenty women from the retirement community, plus friends and relatives, came to honor Erna. But the big surprise was that her oldest daughter and grandson had flown from California to Michigan to help celebrate this milestone. How I wish I could have flown in from Washington State.

As usual, the women could select a teacup and teabag and brew their favorite tea. But today, wearing her crowning tiara, Erna reigned as queen.

As the ladies sipped their tea, they chatted and honored Erna.

Erna was all smiles, feeling treasured and blessed.

Special Memories

Later Erna reported by phone, "The party was a lot of fun and very special!" At her apartment, she was surrounded by the party decorations and cherished the memories of a wonderful time.

Young at heart and very talented, my sister Erna has had a memorable life and has blessed many. She wrote a Bible study guide for the book of Acts and coauthored a musical, *Who Is My Neighbor?* Most recently, in 2025, with the help of her daughter Lois, she published a book. Strong in her faith and wanting to showcase God, *He Was Always There: A Book of Stories and Miracles* by Erna Craven records events from her life, including our father's miraculous release from a Russian prison years before



her birth.

After coming to America in 1929 with their two sons, her parents, Nicolai and Helena Siemens, added six girls to their family. I am blessed to be the youngest. Over the years, I've enjoyed many happy occasions and teatimes with my family and friends.

So how would you celebrate a special event or milestone birthday? However, you make merry, I recommend rejoicing with family and friends over a cup of tea!

-© Lydia E. Harris enjoys serving tea to family and friends. Her books include: *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*, *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*, and *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids*



From Lydia's Recipe File:

Lemon Crinkle Cookies

1 cup granulated sugar	1-3/4 cups flour
1/2 cup (1 stick) softened butter	1-1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. vanilla extract	1-1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. lemon extract	1/2 cup powdered sugar
1 tbsp. lemon zest	1/2 to 1 cup lemon curd, homemade or purchased (optional)
2 eggs	

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and granulated sugar until light and fluffy.
2. Stir in vanilla extract, lemon extract, and lemon zest.
3. Beat in eggs, one at a time.
4. Mix together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
5. Add the dry ingredients to the creamed mixture. Do not overmix.
6. Cover dough and refrigerate for one hour.
7. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
8. Shape dough into 1-inch balls and roll them in powdered sugar. Place them two inches apart on a parchment-lined cookie sheet.
9. Bake for 13–15 minutes until edges are lightly brown and tops do not look wet.
10. Cool on the cookie sheet for 2 minutes. Then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.

Recipe makes about 3 dozen cookies.

Variation: For a burst of fresh lemon flavor, sandwich two cookies together with a teaspoon of lemon curd just before serving.

Optional variation: Sandwich two cookies together with cream cheese frosting. If using cream cheese frosting, store cookies in an airtight container in the refrigerator.



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PEDRICKTOWN

The Dinner Table!

by Tammy Page

With Mother's Day in a few months and the memories fresh in my mind of my mom setting bowls of hot, buttery mashed potatoes on the dinner table I am reminded of what the dinner table in our home means to me.

I raised my children in the 80's and 90's when the beliefs of spanking your children when they misbehaved was accepted, you knew your neighbors and the dinner table was the center of the home where meals, homework and visiting was the norm. But, as the 20's came about, things changed in the family home. No longer were families gathering at the dinner table for their meals instead they moved to the living room or bedroom with their plate in hand while also watching television or scrolling through their phone. Most families had so many activities going on such as sports, practices, after-school activities or part-time jobs that they rarely were home together. Parents are now scurrying here and there all over town picking up one child or another. By the time everyone arrives home, it's too late to eat together at the family table. Dinner is not the home-cooked roast and potatoes it once was, it's now a quick, ready-made microwave entree that can be cooked in a matter of five minutes.

Even when I worked full time and the kids were in elementary and middle school, I still came home, kicked off my shoes, changed my clothes and immediately started supper. While I was in the kitchen, in the next room my kids were working on their school assignments. Today most kids don't have homework, instead finish their work in the classroom. I can remember having homework every night from several classes when I was in school and my children did too. There were some nights that supper would be delayed because the amount of homework was astronomical. Even when we had late nights, we all sat down at the table together each night. It was a time to re-live the daily happenings. We'd discuss how the sports were going, the upcoming games, the projects at school and the activities coming up such as a friend's birthday party to attend.

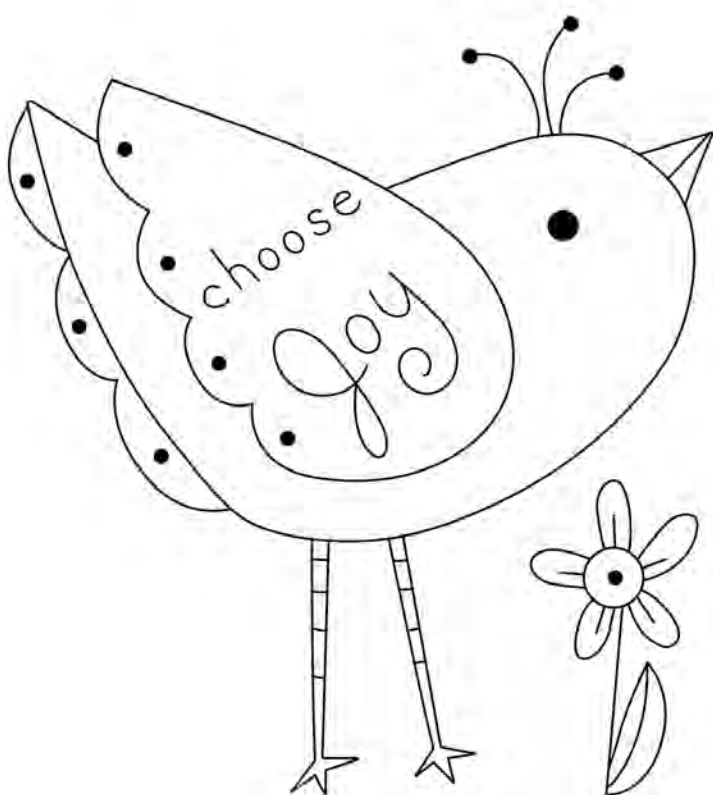
The dining table was also a catch-all for laundry piles to be taken upstairs to put away in their rooms, for unpacking school folders with papers that had been completed that day in class, for lunch boxes, purses and keys to land. It had to be cleared each day so that we all could sit there for the evening meal.

Today, it's just my husband and I that sit at the table for six. The other place settings are empty except for mail piles and things that need to eventually be taken to their rightful places. The dining table is not always used for meals either. I have to confess that my husband and I eat a lot of our meals in front of the television these days. If I had my way, I'd rather have it full of homework again, spilled milk and three kids trying to talk all at the same time. I'd be happy to spend my evening browning ground beef for spaghetti, stopping at the request of a child to help with algebra or literature end of the chapter questions. I'd relish in the requests for another serving or dessert after "cleaning their plate." I yearn to hear a child recite a prayer over the meal or even wish for those bickering remarks they made to each other. Oh, how I miss those days. Time has gone by way too fast; family values have changed and things have gone by the way-side. I hope that these customs return so that today's family can experience this connection that we had.

-Tammy Page writes from her family farm in Indiana.

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Shawl We Dance?

by Wayne M. Bosman

One of the things that first attracted me to Kerri were the old-fashioned shawls that she usually wore in both summer and winter. They were not the sort of thing that everybody wore, but she seemed to have one for every occasion or outfit. Though we met at social dance events where people were routinely playful, Kerri was more reserved than most, which I found intriguing. The shawls, though, that was a thing. I assumed that they were handmade, which also said something to me about her. Quiet but independent. Neither following the crowd nor trying to lead it. She was a more than competent dancer, but somehow whenever we danced together, I would say something that caused her to lose her place. It became an easily achieved challenge for me to cause a misstep in the course of a dance, sometimes remarking how the shawl matched her eyes. She wore a lot of blue. I had been dancing for almost 20 years and she less than one year, so maybe it wasn't so nice of me to break her concentration like that, but it was only a dance after all...

This went on for most of a year before I got a chance to ask her out. After an initial hesitation, she consented and the rest is history. But this is about the shawls really.

Kerri learned to crochet when she was 9 years old. Her mother and her grandmother were both avid handcrafters; it was natural for her to follow in their footsteps, or handsteps as it were. Kerri's mother had passed before we met. I soon discovered the inspiration behind the shawls that I had seen. The patterns went from very simple to extremely elaborate, with colors that covered the entire spectrum. The yarns were of all varieties, chosen for each project by function, form and whimsy. Wools from all over the world were included, along with cottons and occasional acrylics. As time went on, I developed an appreciation for the textures of the finer ones, getting subtle satisfaction from the softness and slight oiliness that came from the lanolin. How something could be gauzy and warm at the same time was a minor revelation.

Then came the giving. Kerri had often made shawls, blankets, hats without any idea who they would ultimately be for. Whether they ended up with a waitress or a young mother or child was a mystery to be solved at the correct moment, when gift and receiver appeared together. Those moments were and are met with the feeling that a certain grace exists and she gets to have a part in it. Her mother taught her that.

But back to the shawls.

At a certain point, it was time to clear out her mother's house. Hundreds of handmade items. Many, many shawls. Serendipity stepped in. My sister, Linda, is very active in her church groups in southeast Wisconsin. One of the groups provides prayer shawls for elderly or homebound people in the parish. Kerri's mother's shawls, made with love and care, found new destinations where they were needed and appreciated. Since then, a steady stream of prayer shawls and lap robes, handmade with love, have found their way to new owners. God willing, they will continue to do so.

But don't be concerned that Kerri is going to run out of shawls soon. We recently were waiting at a favorite restaurant when another patron admired the shawl Kerri was wearing. I joked that she had 40 more like it at home. A day or so later, Kerri took inventory. 56 shawls in the closet at that time with a few more destined for a Civil War exhibit at the History Museum. The blue ones match her eyes.

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

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“Perspective”

by Shelby Kottemann

When I was in the fifth grade, Mrs. Wilson assigned our class an assignment to interview with a person who lived at least 50 years ago. I chose my grandpa. Born in 1926, Shelby lived through many times I'd never known yet feel connected to. We sat down one evening and went over the assigned questions, which he answered simply. I learned that Papa grew up on a farm with his four brothers and sister. He recounted that when the boys got into trouble, his Paw would pull a switch off the old willow tree. His mother was sweet till her dying day and a sought-after favorite among all her grandchildren. Papa was a WWII veteran of the Pacific. He met grandma at church and married her right out of high school. He spent his career at a company that makes farm and mining equipment, called Caterpillar, and carpooled with friends, as people did back then. It was a treasure trove of family history. Yet, there was another question in particular that stuck with me. It was clear that my Papa had thought about it before. The question was, “What’s a modern convenience that you’re grateful to have now?”

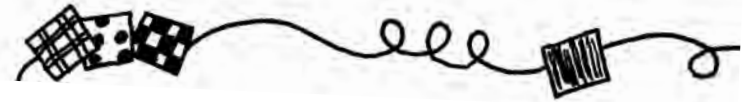
In reply, Papa stood up and walked over to the wall, gesturing with the turn of a dial. “That I can walk over to the wall and change the thermostat.” He sat down with a look of relief and satisfaction. Papa went on to describe how he and his brothers chopped firewood and all kept warm under layers of heavy wool quilts at night. They didn’t dare get out of bed till morning for risk of losing the heat trapped under the covers. He remembered how, as they went to sleep, they could see their breath in the moonlight through their bedroom window. On sweltering summer nights, the family migrated onto the front porch, sleeping in the open air in hopes of a breeze.

What a concept to be so hot that you sleep on the porch or so cold you can see your breath in your own bedroom! And yet, that was now only 100 years ago! Without history and reflection, we can quickly lose touch with all the simple things we have to be grateful for. There are just so many conveniences we have in our lives today that we don’t have the lived experience to fully appreciate.

I think about what simple gifts I want to be aware of. At the end of a long day, I get to melt into a warm, steamy shower. When I make dinner for my fiancé, I have a full-sized oven and open counter space to work with. My pickup truck has heat on chilly drives. I never want to lose touch with the countless comforts I have to be grateful for. In that lies a constant sense of abundance.

P.S. Yes, my grandfather is my namesake!

-Shelby Kottemann is an author and started Loves Nature LLC with a mission to help others connect their lives with their hearts. Her email is contact@inlovesnature.com. To learn more, visit her website www.inlovesnature.com



A Primitive Place Magazine

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In the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing pleasures. For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed. ♥ Khalil Gibran

Elevenses

“Elevenses” is the same as Afternoon Tea only you have it around 11 am ~ it’s shorter, smaller, less guests, more intimate, & no twine. ♥

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by Annice Rockwell



Awakenings of Glorious Spring

When the winter snow has finally melted away, our country yards take on a weathered and worn appearance. With our days getting noticeably longer, we are drawn outside to observe the quiet changes that abound. Slowly but surely as the days advance, we begin to see the subtle awakenings of glorious spring. After a long winter of relentless cold and unpredictable storms, we are no doubt grateful for the blessings all around us. The amiable sound of our robins' return, paired with the soft scent of warm earth give us a feeling of being in harmony with nature as we too notice a similar shift within ourselves. Cleaning our yards on one of the first warmer days feels remarkably rewarding as we look at our now-tidy landscape as a blank canvas for the rejuvenating season to come.

Proud Proclamations of Spring

Soon, as if right on cue, our bright yellow daffodils will make their presence proudly known as the perfect proclamation of spring. They are a symbol of a promise kept and their beauty brightens our days. Somehow the shift in the season helps us to gain momentum in creating new splendor in our yards and homes. Taking a full day to clean our country porch is a day well-spent. And creating a display around a spring theme can hearten our efforts. Our country door can be adorned with a handcrafted birdhouse in robin's egg blue and our porch windows become the perfect place for petite twig wreaths decorated with everlasting florals to enhance the welcoming scene. Our weathered porch barrel can be topped with an antique lantern that comes on right at dusk to create country ambiance.

In our yards, our dogwood and magnolia trees can be put to good use as a place to hang our country birdfeeders. We might even try our hand at fashioning our own sculpted birdseed and suet designs to hang outside as well for our feathered friends who are always appreciative.

Inspiring Reflective Scenes

The interior of our homes can be enlivened by some simple, yet artful vignettes to inspire. Our antique redware storage crocks can be filled with tulips and placed on a hooked runner with a floral design next to our fireside wingback chair. Handcrafted rabbits purchased at our favorite country shop can be placed beside an antique treen trencher filled with primitive grass and painted and aged eggs. Hand-poured candles in scents like Lemon Butter and Lavender Cream are an ideal accompaniment to our country spring surroundings.

This season, take time to appreciate the beautiful return of spring. Feel the strength that comes with coming through the season of winter. And reward yourself by creating spaces that reflect the symbolic power of the promise that Nature always keeps.

-- © Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques. She is currently working on her book, *New England Girl*. NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com

Life on My Farm - Breezy Manor Garden Fairies

by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

I believe in magic, always have. And a garden is one of the places magic truly happens.

Think about it. We take a seed or a cutting, put them into our garden soil, water and wait. Sometimes beautiful plants emerge giving us fabulous flowers, wonderful fruits and vegetables. Sometimes not. That's where magic comes in, I believe.

The growing of plants, any plant brings us joy. Nurturing a growing entity speaks to our souls. I think it's the same for farmers as well as gardeners. You can do everything right and still fail. But when it all works then there's magic.

Every year in my gardens I plan something new. For instance, new beds, new plant varieties, new methods. And I always ask for the blessings of the fairies. I leave blue bottles (for that is the favorite color of fairies), upturned flower pots, dense foliage for their homes and shelter.

I used to have a lovely stack of blue and green bottles in a corner of the garden but it collapsed. This year I intend to fashion a more permanent bottle tower. Bottles facing east for the morning fairies, west for the evening ones.

Morning fairies have wings glistening with dew drops and are very busy flitting around as they rejoice in the sunshine, blessing plants. Evening fairies are the ones I notice most gracefully floating over plants at eventide, pausing to say their prayers.

Gardens can calm a troubled or stressed mind. Hands in the soil, green growing plants surrounding you, magic fills your aura.

The queen of the garden fairies I think is the beloved dragon fly. With her majestic wings and her playful silhouette, the Queen hovers over your garden spreading magic. Be still and listen you can hear her singing.

Last year due to incessant rain I couldn't get my vegetable garden soil tilled. I grew tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, green beans and potatoes in old feed sacks. Filling them half full of barn compost and sweepings, I punched holes in the bottom for drainage and set them up against the fence. Very little watering required and no weeding. Will be doing this again with more sacks.

The real beauty in this method is when harvest is over you just dump the bags out on the garden, enriching the soil. Some of the feed sacks I will reuse, some I will burn.

As the world is a scary, stressful place right now I urge you all to plant a garden, large or small. Size doesn't matter, it's the fresh air, the growing, the tending. Watch for garden fairies, give them a safe place. Let their magic unfold you.

Peace and love,

Donna Jo



From Breezy Manor Recipe File

Sandy's Lime Jello Salad

Heat 2 cups of unsweetened applesauce until very hot, not boiling. Add one 3-ounce package of lime Jello. Stir well. Let cool then stir in 8 ounces of 7Up, mix well. Pour into an 8x8 pan, refrigerate for at least 4 hours. .

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

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Building Harmony

by Jeff Cappis

Spring Thaw

Through the winter months, we tend to forget the sensations of the other seasons. Can you truly recall the sensations of soft, warm air, or the fragrance of a freshly mowed lawn if you aren't there? Bits and pieces maybe, but we really need to be there to experience the whole thing at once. Some cultures refer to this as 'Silent Witnessing'.

Well, out here on Harmony Acres, after 'Silent Witnessing' 5 months of cold snow and winter, we were ready for a change alright. When winter came at first, it was beautiful.

We'd gotten used to the usual summer sensations that let into a warm fall. So, when the first snow came, it was faintly familiar. The trees, the yard and the forest were all covered in a virgin blanket of white. Even the freshly plowed driveway added charm to the place. Every year Cathy exclaims, "We live in a postcard," and vows to take lots of pictures. Of course, this is just Winter's first shot and we all know it.

What followed next in this winter wonderland is a long series of routines that lead to cabin fever. We didn't go out much because it was too cold. Winter had made our property a forbidden territory somewhere outside our window. I spent a lot of time moving firewood and building fires. It is amazing how much time we spend outside in the cold, so we can be warm inside. We watched almost all of the 800 movies in our collection and after a while, even snuggling by the fireplace got to be cliché. At this point, we keep our hopes up by making plans for next summer.

The hot tub is more enjoyable in the winter months, but it's a cold effort getting in and out. Once my hand froze to the doorknob going back in. It was minus a billion degrees outside and I stood there steaming, then, turning to ice. I blew on that @\$#%&! metal doorknob for 10 minutes until I got free! By then, my feet were frozen to the deck.

O.K., so much for the charm. Winter blows. By February, we just wanted it to be over.

Seasons being what they are, Spring did begin showing its face in March. At first the temperature started to rise. My hands quit freezing to the doorknob. The dog tended to stay out longer on his bathroom breaks and went further from the house. Then the air lost its bite and became somehow softer. So did the snow. We can always smell it in the air. The humidity rises, the trees breath out as they awake, and the frozen wild animal poop all over the property starts to thaw. Put this together with the sound of birds singing and the occasional cattle drive down our road, and you have the perfect cocktail for that time between winter and summer.

In the spring, a young person's fancy turns to romance. Now, I'm not saying we're old, but our fancies turn to landscaping and gardening. (Besides, that romance thing was getting old by the end of last December). The plans we made to keep our hopes up, would now become a reality. We brought out the lawn furniture. Cathy started planting her flowers for the deer's summer long salad bar. This also meant moving lots of rocks and digging lots of dirt. As spring lets into full bloom, this means working under a hot sun. I find myself wishing for a little snow and cooler temperatures.

I suppose somewhere around June we'll begin collecting firewood for next winter, but what's the rush? Everything is green, and how bad can winter be?

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2 Minute Lift

Becoming a Keystone Species

by Kathy J. Sotak

Can homo-sapiens be the catalyst for abundance and a thriving ecosystem?

I'm perplexed and pained. We live in a world so beautiful – a planet ultimately designed to enable humans to thrive. Each generation of humans work so hard and do their best for the next generation – yet we find ourselves in a perpetual cycle of despair. We have dirty streets, dilapidated buildings and crime in our cities. The builders of ancient times created structures that are still here for us to enjoy – yet the house we built just three decades ago is in need of repair and remodel. To top things off, the stove we bought just last year has broken down.

We put McDonalds into a community and then the two-generation family pizzeria needs to shut down. Wal-Mart enters a community and devastates even more – from fashion to tire shops to vision centers to local pharmacy. When we decide to stop investing in parks and sidewalks, the community health declines, crime increases and the economy depletes.

Dr. Zach Bush has provided my inspiration for today's contemplation – what will it take for humans to become a keystone species? What will it take for us make life exponentially better, just by us being part of it?

A keystone species is one that has a disproportionately large effect on its natural environment to flourish. The concept was introduced in 1969 by the zoologist Robert T. Paine. Keystone species play a critical role in maintaining an ecological community, affecting many other organisms in an ecosystem. When a keystone species is removed, the entire ecosystem is affected, sometimes ceasing to exist altogether. A profound story of this is the near extinction of the wolf and their intentional return in Yellowstone National Park.

Bison are also considered a keystone species in North America. The American buffalo can weigh more than a ton and stand taller than six feet and ten feet long. Despite this they can run thirty-five miles per hour and can maintain that pace for more than ten miles*. Why are they a keystone species? We'll start with their output. They urinate gallons of fluid every day, providing important nutrients to the soil, microbes and insects, like nitrogen, phosphorus, sulfur and magnesium. They produce 10-12 quarts of dung per day as well. This fertilizer beneficially impacts the soil and feed insects, which feed small birds, and so on, and so on.

Bison create wallows, which are small rounds in the earth that they create by rolling and digging in the dirt to shed their coats and dust off insects. This supports other life forms by creating shallow pools of water after it rains. An edible plant called lamb's quarters would grow in here, feeding and nurturing Native Americans (leaves are nutrient rich, and the seeds are considered wild quinoa). Finally, bison don't destroy the grasslands; they enrich and rebuild it through grazing, letting it rest from production so it can build its root structure.

Some believe that we are at a critical juncture of humanity's history: Our human species will either perish or go through metamorphosis. If you believe this, then the only question is, can we become a keystone species? Can we live in such a way that makes our land, communities, economies and ecosystems, thrive?

I choose to believe that we can be a keystone species. I see evidence all around us. For example, Judy Wicks started a small restaurant thirty years ago in Philadelphia. She wanted to see her community flourish, so she decided to buy meat from a local pork producer, then produce from a local farmer, and so on, and so forth. She ended up founding the farm-to-table movement all throughout Philadelphia, then built several non-profit organizations to help her community flourish. (Read more about this local legend - <https://www.judywicks.com/about2>)

Jane Golden is showing us more evidence of how to become a keystone species. In the 1980s, Philadelphia was over-taken by crime and graffiti. Out of love for her home city, she decided to launch a mural arts program – with a broad vision to revitalize the city's beauty through art. When gangs started to "tag" her beautiful artwork – she took a bold move and decided to hire the very graffiti artists that were ruining her murals. What resulted is one of the world's most prolific mural arts programs, with hundreds of murals dotting the cityscape. A jaw-dropping coincidence? Both crime and graffiti dramatically declined. (Read about Jane Golden - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Golden, or better yet, come to Philadelphia and take in a mural art tour - <https://muralarts.org>).

You see? This is our metamorphosis. There is already strong evidence that we are becoming a keystone species. What else can you and I do today to join the movement?

-*Bison facts taken from the book Blood Memory: The tragic decline and improbable resurrection of the American buffalo, by Dayton Duncan and Ken Burns.

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CAPE MAY

KISSed Quilts

A Larger Space and New Designs for All Shop Hops

by Marlene Oddie

It is amazing to look back and realize I've been writing for the Country Register for 15 years. I was living in the Walla Walla, WA area when I met a quilt shop owner in Athena, Oregon – Elaine Shaw of Highland Quilts and realized I knew her when she was in high school in California.

Elaine introduced me to Barbara Floyd, then owner of the local regional Country Register, and I was encouraged to write articles for our region and they would be shared with other regions as well. It was a way for me to get my name (a home based long-arm machine quilting service at the time) and quilt pattern designs out there and write about whatever was on my mind. Several years into writing, I moved to Grand Coulee, WA and opened a commercial space to do my long-arm machine quilting and have a small studio space to design and create.

As the years went by, due to local requests, I added fabric and a few notions. I hosted classes in a local art room and later in an unused classroom. This always meant hauling product relevant to the class. By 2018 I put my fabric online and when C* hit I already had an online presence that really helped my business. In 2021 I wondered if I should look for larger space where everything could be together or wind down the business. Although discouraged about available spaces in our community, I happened across a small written sign in a window – Serious Inquiries Only – Available for Sale by Owner. I couldn't believe it! I talked it over with my husband and gave the owner a call. She didn't live in the area so we wouldn't be able to see inside until she came into town. Fortunately, we didn't have to wait too long and we were able to review the space and come to an agreement to purchase it.

My husband took a month off from his regular work and in my mind that meant we would be moved into the space probably by mid-summer. This vintage 1930s building, had been modified many times and had things that needed to be removed. The longer it took, the more we found. Ultimately it needed a new roof (not expected) and that delayed things for quite a while. In 2025 – the All Pacific NW Shop Hop happened and I joined in, expecting I'd be in the new space by the event. If you came by, you realize I only got in there by Shop Hop Sunday in April and then, I was only partially in there with a bit of sheet rock up and plenty of work still to be done—but at least there was more space for all of you to shop! We loved having you all come by!

We've continued to work on it this past year and as I write this the spray painting is done, just a few touch ups left and the lights have been installed today. This year's All Pacific NW Shop Hop experience will be even better if you come to Grand Coulee, WA and visit us in our new location: 219 Main Street – a 2000 square foot building. So much bigger than where we were at on the corner.

Speaking of APNW – one of my designs, Pacific NW Nights, will be available as part of the shop hop. You can find kits for it while supplies last at both Highland Quilts in Athena, OR and in my shop, KISSed Quilts or on our website.

I've also got similar design concepts in a variety of other All Shop Hops this year, so be on the lookout for those. Watch my social media for posts about the reveals of those designs.



- © 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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De-Clutter, Design or Ditch It? Spring Cleaning's New Rules

by Barbara Kalkis

For many of us winter means snow, sleet, blizzards, frost, fierce winds, gray days and black nights that make the stars beam like searchlights. We know that one warm sunny January day doesn't mean spring has sprung. Whether the groundhog sees his shadow or not, we know spring doesn't arrive on February 2nd. Frivolous March may come in like a Lamb but will breathe Lion-like cold before it ends. Growing up, we also knew when Spring truly arrived. It was the day we spent "Spring Cleaning" every inch of the house.

Times have changed. I am now influenced by Influencers and Authorities whose number exceeds weed varieties. These experts inform us that there's more to spring cleaning than cleaning. They encourage us to "style," "design," "organize," "de-clutter" or "edit" our homes. Suddenly, cleaning has become secondary to examining our entire living space for defects. The more zealous connoisseurs command us to dispassionately "Purge" our homes of things we foolishly thought were necessary to our comfort and contentment. One purging style is "Japandi," the blended Japanese/Scandinavian minimalist design concept. Furniture seems to float in mostly empty spaces. It's a look to love if you don't have kids or someone who loves his 200-pound recliner and side table perfectly aligned with the TV screen.

"Purging" requires us to set aside emotions and be coldly logical. (No, you do not need 10 vases of various sizes. Save two and toss the rest. After all, how many times do you fill your house with bouquets anyway? Or buy one green plant and water it, then you won't even need one vase. Voila!) Choose a theme and discard anything that doesn't fit into it. Do lots of sofa pillows comfort you? Or are they clutter? The answer we're looking for here is "clutter." Let your visitors dangle their too-short legs from the sofa. They'll be impressed by your design skills, while keeping their visit brief.

One authority defines cleaning as "tidying." I like the term but am uncomfortable that it means I'm sloppy. Instead of urging us to haul out brooms, mops, cloths and spray cans, we must first "commit" to tidying up. I disagree. When you can scribble notes with your finger on surfaces, it's cleaning time. News that company's coming is also great incentive.

"Editing" allows us to select what to keep and what to toss. Eliminate one thing and replace it with something else. But isn't having more things better? Editing may result in buying something new and keeping the old item too. Evaluating every item in the house indicates considering pros and cons. No dice. It requires too much analysis and emotion making decisions.

"Declutter" is the kind way of saying you have too much stuff. Determine what you don't need and get rid of it. Some experts apply the strictly logical 80/20 rule: Keep the 20% of clothes you wear all the time and donate the 80% languishing in your closet. This rule does not appreciate that I would wear those 80% skirts and pants if I had not gained weight. I like a one-two-three approach best. "One" means "throw it out." "Two" means bag it, put it in the garage and if I don't rescue it before the season is over, out it goes. "Three" means keep it – at least for now.

It seems the best approach to spring cleaning, decluttering or organizing is to fill your home with the things you love and will care for. It also pays to keep giant garbage bags handy for when the cleaning mood does strike you.

-Barbara Ditties for Every Day...A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com Kalkis ©2026. Barbara divides her time between writing, teaching, and the world of high tech. She's author of Little.



Pork Chop 'n' Rice Casserole

You can also use boneless skinless chicken thighs for this recipe. I use whatever is on sale at the store that week

Ingredients:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 cups white rice | 2 pounds pork chops |
| 8 oz button mushrooms chopped | 1-1/4 teaspoons kosher salt |
| 2 cans condensed beef consomme | 3/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper |
| 1 can condensed onion soup | 1 tsp garlic powder |
| 1/2 cup butter, cut into 8 pieces | 1 tsp onion powder |
| 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided | 1 tsp paprika |

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Stir rice, mushrooms, beef consomme, and onion soup together in a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Top with butter pieces and 3/4 cup of the cheese. Season the pork chops evenly with salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, and paprika and place on top of cheese and butter. Top with remaining cheese and cover dish with foil. Bake in the preheated oven for 55 minutes. Uncover and bake until top is golden brown, liquid has been absorbed into the rice, and the pork is cooked through, about 20 to 30 more minutes.

Submitted by Colleen Gust, The Country Register - SK & MB

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