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MARTINSVILLE - MOORESVILLE



America The Great

by Janet Young

As we enter the 250th Anniversary of our nation, let us be ever mindful of the impact the signing of the Declaration of Independence signifies.

Signed in 1776 in Philadelphia Pennsylvania, this document shaped the future of our country as it stated that all people are created equal, and are empowered by unalienable rights, to which we adhere to this day. Through this document our freedoms were granted. The establishment of this nation was built on God-fearing men, who wanted to escape Britain’s religious persecution, taxes, and social constraints.

Many believed that the Hand of God enabled them to win the wars. In fact, the reference to God’s Hands is a symbol of peace, strength, and the ability to see His influence in all things. For example, when George Washington was preparing for battle, fog appeared overnight which enabled Washington and his troops to escape. Abraham Lincoln referencing “this Nation under God,” encouraged the people to fast and pray for this country, which further supports the idea of divine guidance. Another example that these men saw The Hand of God in establishing this nation, was their commitment to putting “In God We Trust” on our currency. Many examples show that these men clearly felt God’s Providence was upon them.

Just as the men and women of yesterday, fought for our freedom; so too, our brave men and women of today are fighting to keep our nation safe and free. Let’s not destroy that which we have fought for so hard these many years.

There is no question the United States of America is by far the greatest country ever. Let us not destroy it from within. We reap what we sow. So tonight, when you put your head on your pillow, I trust that you will thank God for this country and pray that as a nation we will come back to Him. For our country was built on Godly principles. If we turn our backs on God, He will let us go on our narrow ways. Remember America is the greatest country ever born, let us not destroy it.

Happy 250th America!

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

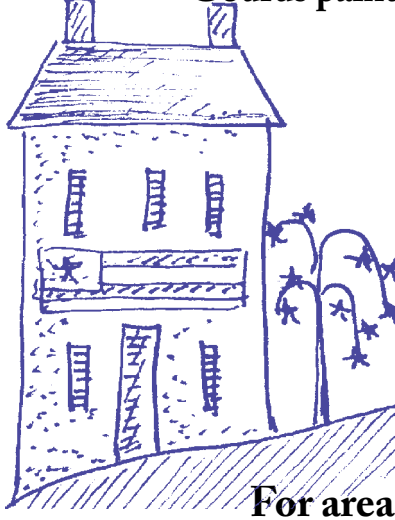


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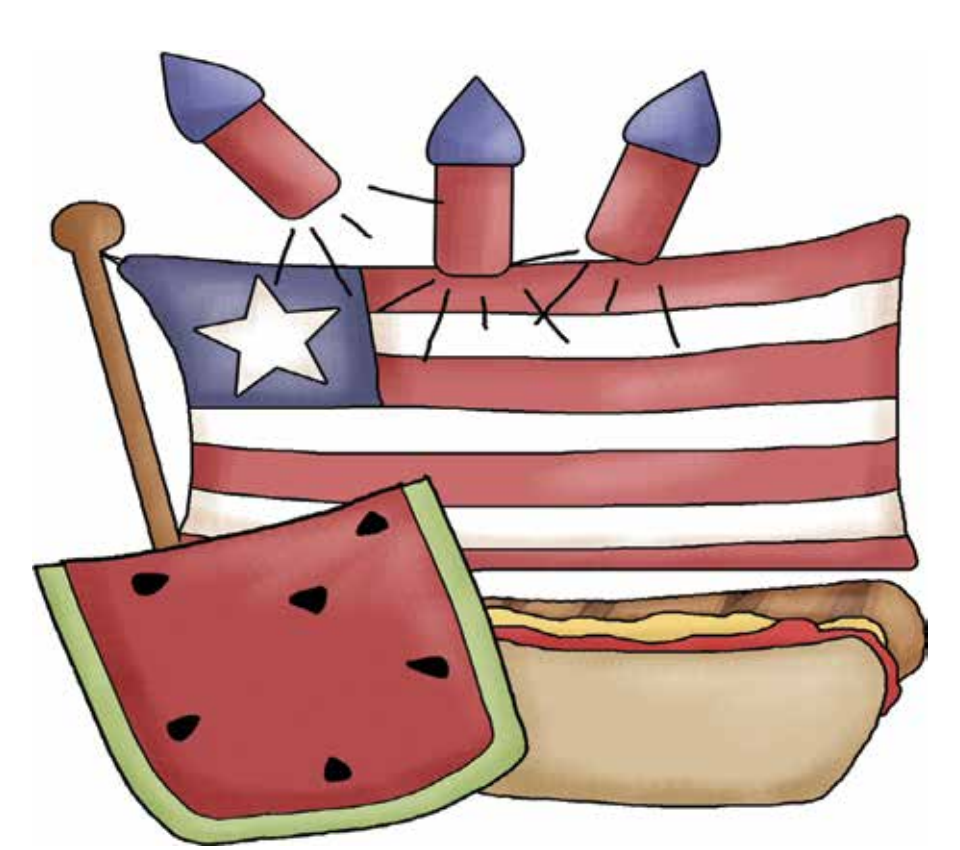
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KIRKLIN - WABASH



Life on My Farm - Breezy Manor

It's Been a Soggy Mess, And Now..

by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

My goodness rain, muck, mud, floods, wild winds and weeds chin high!

Garden update: my feed sack garden is doing well... tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers are happy and I will have some produce soon!

I planted beans in rows of heavy muck, we will see how they do. Of course I had to cover with pieces of fence trying to chicken proof

I lined the feed sacks up against a section of cattle panel for support and the cucumber vines like the climb!

And of all things, my weedeater mower is on the fritz. Lacking money for repair or replacement, I have decided to let the goats and sheep graze, letting the yard just go au natural... Charlie likes being in charge, waiting for my "round em up" command. He's got it handled!

I confess I like seeing what comes up with no mowing. The flea bane who is usually white, this spring has been a glorious pink! Lots of patches of white clover, a feast for the bees. Plantain has made a huge bed by the wood shed. My yard is really kind of neat.

My bane, as with most sheep raiders, is the lovely thistle. Yes their purple blooms are lovely, their stickers not so much. As I don't spray, Charlie, me, spade, leather gloves and wheelbarrow spend a lot of time in the pasture digging. I do bag the whistles for garbage pickup. Can't have those stickers in my sheep wool!



As I have a huge patch of false nettle across the creek, I have spent years searching for redeeming qualities, to no avail. I've tried dye, cordage, the goats and sheep won't eat it. When I mow with my scythe the cut off bits reroot. I tried a weed wizard to burn it, did the tops but it came back. So once again (when the water level goes down and I can wade across) I will dig and bag.

Living here over 55 years I have taken note of the changing weeds. Pigweed and Johnson grass used to cover garden and pasture. Then Japanese knotweed, then thistles and nettles bringing along Creeping Charlie for company.

I try to spread barn leavings, muck and manure over pastures and gardens. But one old lady with a pitchfork and wheelbarrow can only do so much. And weirdly no one volunteers to help. But I try. Not always my best but I try.

In half a century I think I have raised the ground level 6 inches. The dirt certainly is happier with no chemical sprays or bagged fertilizer....just poo.

When Charlie and I take a break with a cup of tea and homemade cookie, we sit in the yard and enjoy the sheep grazing contentedly. Makes me smile. Reflect. Tell myself it's good that I'm a simple lady, poor in coin farmeress and stewardess of my wee corner of the world.

I try to keep my wants and needs simple. No internet, no TV, no computer, no central heat, no air conditioning. Almost a primitive lifestyle. But there is peace here with all of the craziness of livestock....and magic.

My soul sings as I work with the toolslooms, spinning wheels, spades, pitchfork, hammers...of my ancestors. I even have my great great grandmother's homemade wooden ironing board---yes I still iron. I feel the comfort of their love, their legacy.

And I grieve for the youth today. They seem so lost in technology, no sense of purpose or direction. Alien to manual labor, tactile sense. Loss of respect for each other. They don't take time to rejoice in sunrises or the serenity of sunset. Never take the time to lay on a hillside and watch the clouds.

Yes I cry the lament of old crones.

May you dig in the dirt, plant flowers, vegetables, breathe rain fresh air, greet each day with joy in your heart.

Peace and love.

© 2026 - Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor, Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owner/ operator, Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life.





From Breezy Manor Recipe File

Afternoon tea, scones and fresh berries

1 to 2 cups fresh berries, washed, put in a pretty bowl

Mix together

2 cups flour

1 stick cold butter, grated

2 t. Baking powder

1/2 cup cold milk or cream

1/4 cup sugar

1egg

Mix by hand until a dough forms, put out on floured surface, knead a bit, pat into an 8 inch circle. Cut into 8 wedges. Place on parchment paper lined cookie sheet, bake 18 to 22 minutes at 400 degrees.

Serve with tea and a smile



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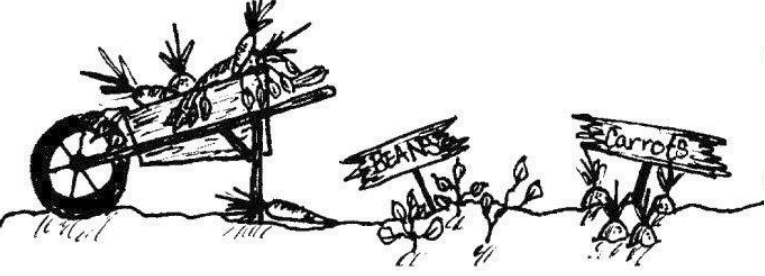
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Weeding the Summer Garden

by Kerri Habben Bosman

I weeded our garden this summer morning before the swelter of the day snuck in. I worked beneath a nicely overcast sky, surrounded by a quiet breeze with the slightest hint of rain in it. I migrated from garden bed to garden bed, welcoming each arriving thought as I listened to the world breathe.

I talked to the tomatoes and smiled at the watermelon. I checked the cucumber plants, happy to see that more were growing after yesterday's harvest. I shook my head at the plethora of mint, swiping my hand across it to bring forth its aroma. I pondered the tiny purple flowers on the thyme. I transplanted seven pepper plants to a better spot, silently apologizing as I uprooted them. I secured them gently but firmly into their new place, and watered them right away with a promise to come back soon.

My husband, Wayne, says it is an act of faith to plant a garden. Each winter as our seedlings sit in the front window, we eagerly await each new stage of their development. We plant dormant seeds with prayerful hopes, hoping that our care, their environment, and uncontrolled circumstance will support their growth into the best plant they can be. We rejoice from the first tendrils to the last vegetable or flower when autumn is coming upon us. We clear out for the last months of the year and wait to start all over again.

Much of our summer garden began on a winter's day in January when I brought out all the seeds we'd saved from last year. Zinnias, marigolds, peppers, and tomatoes. The beans, carrots, sugar snap peas we had to buy. And of course, I bought plants. Except for spoiling grandchildren, we are frugal. With Scottish and German backgrounds between us, we cannot escape it. However, putting me in a plant nursery in late April with a credit card is possibly more dangerous than sending a shopaholic to the mall. Thankfully I have a lot of willpower, but often something beautiful and new to me simply jumps into my cart.

We bought our cucumber plants from our 16 year-old-grandson, Hunter. He grew them in his high school horticulture class, and then they had a plant sale. Cucumbers don't always grow well here at the coast. Because he planted the seeds and nurtured them, we especially wanted them to bear fruit. Even if it was just one cucumber, his efforts would be a success. We are grateful to be enjoying many a cucumber salad.

And, like I said at the beginning of this article, I plucked the ever-tenacious "Pflanzenwillnichtus." (This is my very own botanical name for a weed. It is a combination of German and Latin, meaning "plant that I do not want.") Along the way, I made mental notes as to how the plants I do want are growing, deadheading as I go. I find a bit of irony in weeding-as I meticulously cull a concentrated area, I am also focusing on the entire garden. I feel the surrounding beauty and the grace of being alive. This creates a precious cohesion, an acceptance of all that is and all that is not.

Our garden of life these last few years has been partially fertilized by loss and sorrow. They churned up the soil of who we are, and these emotions are still breaking down into nutrients that will somehow serve us. Yet, through it all, we resettled our roots, trusting the journey in this strange soil, and we were given enough water and enough light to grow into a new season.

Now, I must go to check the transplanted peppers, smile at the cucumber plants, and pause gratefully at the tender, tiny flowers of thyme.

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

GREENFIELD - GREENWOOD

Age Matters
Only if You're Counting

by Barbara Kalkis

I was feeling pretty perky about the country's 250th anniversary and even planning a family gathering until I had a conversation with a casual acquaintance. In a somber voice, he mentioned that he is old enough to remember our country's 200th anniversary. The thought of clearly remembering a major event 50 long years ago made him feel old. Realizing that I also fondly remembered 1976, my perky attitude died as quickly as a mosquito hit by a bug zapper.

Rather than dwell on how I've spent the last 50 years, I decided to consider age in a disciplined, logical manner. Difficult to do. After all, society is consumed by the ages of everyone we know and those we don't know but who are related to those we do know. We color our hair to hide the gray. We erase wrinkles with magic creams and medical procedures. We work out at fitness clubs with gusto and the determination of professional athletes. Health foods become meal staples. Conversations dwell on ways to stay healthy, what vitamins to take, how to maintain balance, how to be a 'super-ager,' avoiding unrefrigerated leftover foods that create toxic bacteria. (Cooked rice! Who knew???)

Taking a different approach, I took out a packet of 1976 quarters that I still have. Remember them? Yes, you may admit it. A colonial patriot is beating a drum; adjacent, 13 stars representing the colonies encircle a flaming torch. Below it are the immortal Latin words, "e pluribus unum," or "from many one," that beautiful concept of a diverse population united by love of country. The words, "United States of America... Quarter Dollar" circle the coin's edge. Every essential image packs just under 1-inch diameter.

Then I started to consider things older than I am. When in doubt, think about crafts. My first thought was that stitching things together had to have occurred on the final day in the Garden of Eden. On a more logical trend, I remembered spinning fibers and weaving linen into clothing and tanning animal skins into hats, coats, shoes happened in our earliest history. Anonymous painters like the one of Lascaux, France ancient caves, covered the walls with vivid likenesses of racing horses, deer and bulls.

In America, weaving, shaping bowls and grinding grain were mainstays of natives and, later, Pilgrims. Quilting was a mandatory job to make blankets. Children embroidered alphabet samplers with decorative stitches. Cooking was required to survive.

In the late 1800s, astute homemakers wrote books that elevated every housewife's tedious role into "craft". Suddenly, it wasn't just cooking anymore. Authors instructed readers how to design nutritious meals, sew clothing and decorative items. Most importantly, the books explained how to create budgets and manage household expenses under the title of "home economics."

With that history in mind, I feel better about age. As with all the anonymous people who lived in North America or came to it, building, creating, designing, inventing,

painting, "making do" and doing what was necessary to make a home was the start of crafting. Folks just didn't know it then. Today we have the luxury of crafting for comfort, beauty and celebrating our imagination to make something beautiful or useful. Crafting is the heart of every national anniversary. It's not about numerical ages on a personal or even a national level. It's about ensuring that the age we live in and our own stage of life build on the past, celebrate the present and gift the future with new talents and new perspectives. Happy birthday, America! Here's cheers for the next 250 years!

©Barbara Kalkis, 2026. Barbara is a writer, teacher and marketing consultant. Her poetry book is Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm. She believes happiness lies in not thinking about age – hers or anyone else's.

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Ann's Lovin' Ewe

by Ann Marie Stewart

57 Questions of Life

With the passing of a loved one, we lose generations of knowledge, thoughts, wisdom, and a resource of history. No more can we find the answers to our questions. That thought begs us to consider what words are important to leave behind. Thoughts about this were spurred after reading **The Frozen River**.

Author Ariel Lawhon claims she “collects” people for her novels. Ironically, she “collected” 1780’s midwife Martha Ballard at her OB-GYN when she picked up Our Daily Bread and read the August 1, 2008 devotional about am 18th Century midwife who had delivered over a thousand babies and never lost a mother.

Then she discovered that Martha Ballard’s daily medical notations became a legacy and medical and historical record compiled and turned into a biography by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich on which Lawhon based **The Frozen River**.

So you see, Martha would be forgotten and her medical wisdom lost were it not for the fact that her words still have power.

What about you? What words do you need to record for future generations?



Blank Book. If you’re like me, you probably have a blank book like Martha’s just sitting around the house. Or you could pick up a pretty one for your nightstand. It’s not a diary, but a place to collect:

- Nightly thoughts
- Favorite Bible verses
- Beautiful quotes and sayings
- Something you learned that day
- A line from a book you read
- Memories

OR you could record memories of your kids or grandkids. During Covid when I daily walked the eight-mile trail with my friend Barb, she told me funny and poignant stories of her grands. “I hope you’re recording these!” I’d tell her. I didn’t want the stories lost or forgotten because I knew her grands would one day appreciate the re-telling.

You could record:

- Something your kids or grands said that day
- Something your kids did or learned that day
- Some wise advice they gave you
- Some wise advice you want to give them

Memories are important. Recently someone sent me a decade-old letter my grandfather had written in a November birthday card to his son, Abram. Since it was near Christmas, Grandpa wrote about Baby Jesus having swaddling clothes then compared it to when their family fled Russia and my grandmother had no diapers for their six-day-old infant Abram. But someone had donated a few shirts and so his young wife cut off the sleeves and turned them into diapers! This was a precious fact I added to my novel.

I only knew this fact because it was written in a letter and saved and passed down to me. Whether emails, letters, or journals, find a way to record and preserve memories.

I was blessed to interview my grandparents about their escape from Russia and the child they left behind. These memories became the novel **The Remnants: One Family’s Escape from Stalin’s Russia** which will be available in October 2026. Please go to my website at www.AnnMarieStewart.com to learn more.

Your Questions. To help with your own research, I have compiled a list of questions from AmericanAncestors.org and VisitingAngels.com that can help YOU prompt loved ones to tell you about their lives. Or use the questions to start recording for the generations who follow you. You can download the 57 questions off my website at AnnMarieStewart.com Then print and start writing, talking and listening.

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Ann Marie Stewart’s novel THE REMNANTS:
One Family’s Escape from Stalin’s Russia comes out October 2026.

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A Celebration of Strength
In 2026 with the approach of the height of the year, we have so much to be proud of. As our nation celebrates its 250th year, one of the best ways to proclaim our patriotic pride is through decorating. Our yards this time of year are naturally filled with the beauty of green lawns and gardens filled with color. The stands of red beebalm that attract the hardworking hummingbirds are in full bloom now. Our blue hydrangeas that are always lush and vibrant are all part of the backdrop of a spectacular and especially patriotic summer.

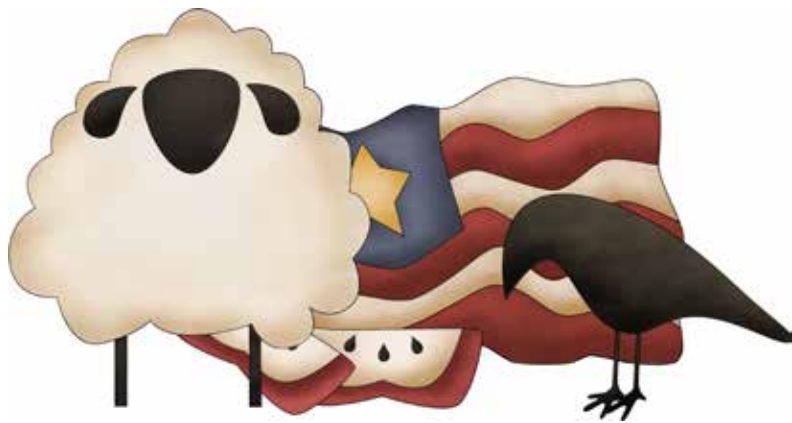
To decorate our porches, gorgeous primitive buntings of red, white and blue expand our décor and lend historic appeal. Small bicentennial flags lined along our fence let people know we are truly celebrating our nation's proud history.

To make our enthusiasm even more evident, we might even create historical decorative vignettes that are unique and have an even stronger colonial appeal. A huge copy of The Declaration of Independence paired with a Revolutionary cloak and tricorn hat can be placed next to an inkwell with a quill and American flag. It's a way to celebrate freedom and to honor history.

Participating in the Past
Taking part in our town's 250th celebrations will no doubt be a time to remember. Whether it is a tour of the local museum's bicentennial collection curated just for this year, or an historic home tour designed with 250 in mind, the activities for this very special summer abound. Summer favorites such as the July 4th parade or the quaint shoreline town's boat parade will be received with exceptional fanfare and enthusiasm this year because this historic milestone deserves it.

Spirit of 1776
So as summer gets into full swing and festive events start to gain momentum, consider taking part and enjoying the "Spirit of 1776" fun. As people who are naturally passionate about history, colonial antiques and the legacy of our nation's past, this summer is a time to bring our absolute best.

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



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Keeping In Touch...

“Odds and Ends”

by Cindy Ashfield old.stuff@sasktel.net

It’s time for another column. I wonder what the family wordsmith may have chosen to say this time? There are lots of spring thoughts that come to my mind. “Odds and ends” that, for me, define this time of the year. I looked up in my dictionary (yes, I still use one) the definition for “odds and ends”. It didn’t make the BOLD print, but tucked under “odds” was this: things left over; extra bits; odd pieces; scraps; remnants. Well, that certainly describes what the end of winter looks like, but spring - no.

Spring invites me outside to watch our returning birds... geese, crows, robins, and their followers. All sightings, making us hopeful of the returning warm days. A walk around the yard brings the reward of colourful spring blooms, scilla, tulipia, and daffodils. The tulips and perennial flowers are all showing promise of later colour. Joe and I used to climb the Qu’Appelle Valley hills as soon as the south-facing slopes were bare of snow, picking crocuses.

More and more folks are joining the winter enthusiasts who walk past our house. Time is taken for a chat to catch up on all their news. Perhaps it’s a summer vacation or visitors coming. I wonder if more people are planting a garden this year? We have all watched food prices rise beyond anything we may have expected. Everything is relevant, though. I am old enough to remember when, as a teenager, I babysat (now referred to as child care) for twenty-five cents per hour or mailing a letter for the cost of a five-cent stamp. Incomes have risen, but the cost of living seems to have outstripped that somewhat. So, my flower gardens are once again sporting veggies, and I’m asking the faithful perennial flowers to add a spark of colour. I found last year’s raised beds to be a great way to garden, and I hope to add another this year. I’m trying something new this year. I have ordered some sweet potato cuttings and plan to grow them in a growing bag, which should give me the opportunity to move them to a warmer spot in the fall. The growing bag is a first time try out for me. I also want to remind any new gardeners of the University Garden Line. (306) 966-5865 or email: gardenline@usask.ca. I have found this service to be most helpful in the past. I wonder how many of the winter daydreams I had about my ever-changing yard will actually be a reality?

We live in a changing environment. I think that weather patterns have given us a milder winter that seems to stretch out a little longer. So with all the hope that the warmer, brighter days bring, what are your plans? I’m starting my summer attending a wedding... young love planning a lifetime together, this fills their grandma full of anticipation. Perhaps visitors are coming. Plans for road trips are not altered too much beyond necessary road repair delays, which, for me, is easier than the “white knuckle” driving caused by icy, snow-covered roads.

By the way, back to my dictionary, looking for “wordsmith”, one of my words describing Joe. There was nothing in the book, but rather an online definition. My writing this time has been poking at the “this and that” part of how spring leads me into summer. Whatever your plans, whether busy or relaxing in the sun, til next time in the Register, I hope that it celebrates you, being you.

Addendum: I am just in after a day of enjoying yard work. I may tell you that the dandelions are doing very well this year, and the ticks are enjoying a healthy spring as well.

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Kirby's Korner:

That's So Weird

by Kirby Gust

I heard two stories this week that made me think about how much the world of technology has changed. The first was a teenager of today talking about this cool new music she and her friends had found online. It was parody songs written and performed by what must be a new app called Weird Ai. Yes, you read that right, Weird Ai not Weird Al. The thing that really got me about that story was how the teenager thought it was more likely that artificial intelligence would make such music than actual recording artists.

The second story was about Thomas Y. Levin, a professor and media theorist at Princeton University who collects 20th-century “voice letters”. These voice letters were really the first ever voicemail. Starting in the 1930s, recording booths were opened where anyone could pop in and record a personal message for a loved one or friend. They would pay a small fee and then receive a lightweight vinyl record with their recording on it. This record could then be put in an envelope and mailed anywhere in the world.

I don't know about you, but when I see that I have a voicemail on my phone, it's almost annoying, because you know there is a 10-to-1 chance it is just a scam call that went to voicemail, and there is nothing there once you get through all the menu options. I think that would have been quite the opposite ninety years ago.

I can almost imagine the excitement of receiving one of these lightweight vinyl records in the mail. I can only imagine someone waiting all day after the mail arrived for everyone in the family to get home so they could listen to it. What if the family didn't have a record player? Not only would they have had to wait to get the whole family together, but they would also have had to find a neighbour or another family with a record player they could use. And you could bet if that happened, both families would have gathered around to listen. There would have been no private messaging.

From what I hear time and time again from our readers of The Country Register, we provide a bit of the latter. “When is the new issue coming out?” or “I check every time I go into my favourite shop in hopes that the new one is out.” These are just some of the things I hear from our readers. It gives us great pleasure to know that, in a new world where everyone wants what they want and wants it right now, we can provide something worth waiting for.

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The Importance of Dreams

by Shelby Kottemann

Dreams are one of the longest standing mysteries in the universe. We can dream of things in our sleep or we can daydream of possibilities for our life. Whether night or day, I have come to believe that dreams hold a power in our lives beyond our realization. Here are two ideas why:

Some nighttime dreams are just an interesting conglomeration of things our minds are processing. However, I think we've all had a dream or two sometime that we just knew was more than a dream. One of mine came a few years ago. Whether you believe in Angels or not, I had a dream that something from Heaven told me to pray for my mother. When I asked why, I felt a reply of "Health" and it felt urgent. I asked my mother if she had been to the doctor lately. She showed me a spot where her dermatologist had frozen a mole off her arm with liquid nitrogen. I asked her to have it checked again. She knew I had dreams and feelings, so she went without question. The doctor who checked it scheduled emergency surgery to remove melanoma that had spread so deeply that it was within a hair's distance from her lymphatic system. I might still have my mom today because she and I trusted a dream.

As for daydreams, I have a theory that I would love for you to put to the test: When we daydream with a sense of appreciation and joy in our hearts, without any expectation, that dream goes out into the universe and it comes to us in extraordinary ways. Even small things apply. For instance, I thought to myself a couple of times, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have some soft pink peonies in my yard?' I even looked at them in the store, but with some big expenses that had come up, I just couldn't justify buying flowers. A week later, I was out for a walk and stumbled upon a large paper bag marked Free peonies. What are the chances of that? Peonies! I looked up and said, "Thank You."

Starting today, I invite you to trust your dreams: your sleeping dreams and your daydreams, big and small. Follow your instincts. Imagine the possibilities with gratefulness and joy. Allow your mind to wander and your heart to listen. You just might notice that your dreams aren't so fantastical after all. You might find that some dreams are truly whispers from your soul.

Shelby Kottemann is an author, teacher, and empathic reiki therapist. She created Loves Nature LLC to help others create heart-centered lives. You can reach her at contact@inlovesnature.com. Visit her website at www.inlovesnature.com.

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Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

Road Trip Season

This might make me sound silly, but while many people were spending the grey and somewhat gloomy days of January and February packing up and putting away the remains of their December holidays, I'm was thinking about where to travel during the upcoming summer months.

Perhaps this pattern began when I was a child, when my mother would drive us the five-hundred-plus miles to visit her parents, siblings, and a variety of cousins. If we were lucky, we made the drive two times a year—for winter holiday weekends, and the week-long summer vacation—but while the winter drives included my father, summers were most often reserved for my older sister, my mother, and I.

When my sister was in high school, there were additional drives to explore out-of-state colleges added; after my sister headed off to college, the summer drives naturally shifted more to just me and my mother in the car. Life sure looked different in the front seat than it had all of those years in the back!

Then, the magical year of holding a driver's permit arrived. What glorious adventures those five-hundred-plus miles became! The open road of interstate highways when my mother would drift off into a light nap in the passenger seat...I had never felt such freedom. Were those the moments when the passion for summer road trips was ignited?

Choosing a career as a teacher was decided by life's circumstances rather than the summer months of "unemployment," but I quickly learned to appreciate them. I began by planning little day trips the kids and I could take to places like zoos or historical farms which provided educational experiences for visitors; as the children got older, I planned other scenic drives which included a night or two in hotels, adding evening swims in the hotel pool to our trips focused on dinosaur digs and Girl Scout badge checklists. After my mother retired, she would join us as we headed to destinations such as Mount Rushmore—or job interviews I was offered in other states—but the drive my kids and I took to the Grand Canyon was part of a weekend birthday-gift-to-myself trek.

It's impossible for me to calculate all of the miles I've driven a car because, for me, the "prize" has been the scenery I've seen along the way. Last month, for instance, as my now grown son drove me in his car's passenger seat to my mother's burial (she purchased the plot years before her retirement—and subsequent move to be closer to her grandchildren), what did I spy on the interstate as we neared Madison, Wisconsin? None other than the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile! No kidding.

Reaching the Spring Equinox in March, my thoughts naturally turned towards summer road-tripping season. Where might I go? I admit to feeling a bit more apprehensive about driving by myself the older I get, but to stay home all summer?

© Jeanette Lukowski 2026. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: writingfromlife@yahoo.com



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Life in Skunk Hollow
Christmas in July

by Julie A. Druck

I've been thinking a lot about Christmas lately – more specifically, about Christmas trees. The thoughts have been coming as I wander through the newly-planted Christmas tree field on the hill above our little house. I've taken to walking through the grassy field most evenings at dusk, praying over and blessing the trees – that they would grow strong and well as they work their way to maturity over the next 7 years.

In addition to a growing beef cattle herd, our son, Caleb, and his wife, Abby, are trying this new venture on the fifty-acre farm on which both our families live. Our son is a thorough researcher and meticulous implementer of any new project that he takes on. So, after much planning and paperwork, he purchased 1,100 Canaan and Douglas Fir seedlings. And over a period of three days in late spring, our family helped put those baby trees into the ground. Four generations from Caleb and Abby's families turned out to help at various times over those days. From Caleb's grandfather who helped dig holes to little nieces and nephews who watered the baby seedlings with cups from a bucket, it truly was a family affair.

Caleb told me that he heard 7-year-old Joshua gently talking to one of the trees as he watered its base. Josh's encouragement of "Grow, baby, grow" is the same desire of all those who helped – from the ones who babysat Caleb and Abby's toddler son (who was more interested in eating dirt than planting trees), to Abby's sister who helped tuck trees into the ground while her newborn son was tucked into his swaddle against her, to those who golf carted bucket after bucket of water to the field, and the ones who dug (seemingly) countless holes. We're all eager to see the growth and harvest of the crop.

And therein lies a tendency I recognize within myself – that of wanting to jump to the end of a process – no matter if I'm making something, reading a book, or waiting for trees to grow. The process can sometimes feel like an interference to the ending. Sometimes I just want to have the gift without the bother of opening it! And yet, I'm slowly realizing (in a lot of areas of life) that the process, the journey, IS the gift.

You know, the length of time we have on this earth is unknown to us. There's no guarantee that I'll actually see those trees grow to fruition or ever have the privilege of having one decorate our home during the holiday season. But if I focus on the beauty of the process instead of jumping ahead, I realize that seeing the end of the trees' maturity isn't the only, or even the primary gift. One gift that's already been realized because of these Christmas tree seedlings has been the blessing of family working together for a common purpose. And that purpose goes far beyond a farming venture. For this year, we planted more than just trees. We planted common memories – memories of the joy and sweetness there is in helping one another. The process of doing a job together is just as valuable and as precious as tall, mature Christmas trees. And so, in a sense, beauty has already begun coming to fruition, and these seven years of waiting will provide more opportunity to discover, delight in, and be thankful for all the gifts that will surface in the process.

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



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The Inner Critic

by Shelby Kottemann

When you have a creative spirit, that never goes away. It follows you everywhere you go. Creativity and art are expressed not just through quilting and sewing but through the way we dress, how we express our thoughts in words, in the way we live our lives.

Children express their creativity best. With no filter and no abandon, they create and share with the world. I remember in my little girl days, I used to sit and draw for hours. Time disappeared, and I got lost in the moment. I learned the piano with curiosity and openness.

Then, in my teen years, a not-so-friendly voice came along. Suddenly, my second time practicing a song should have been perfect and those drawings had glaring flaws. That voice robbed my joy for creating and replaced it with pressure.

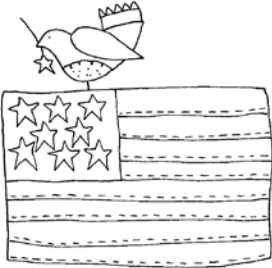
Though I'm ashamed to admit it, I don't create as much these days. In a way, it's because I'm afraid of myself. Isn't that a funny concept? Well, I'm looking to change this, and it starts with a beginner's mind and the expectation that I will make mistakes. I'm practicing the act of telling myself, "I'm learning," or "I'm practicing." Along with it comes trusting myself that, if I can't fix a problem, I can turn any flaw into something even more beautiful. I'm creative after all.

Putting this all to practice, I recently made a needle book. I fell a half-inch short on my outer piece of fabric- no room for the seam! Well, I used pinking shears on that edge and hand stitched embroidery across the line where the seam would have been, turning a mistake into an opportunity for beauty and detail. My project turned out even better for it. I'm learning that, in all the pressure I was applying to myself over little things, I was missing out on so many opportunities to be the creative spirit that I am and allow my wings soar. I'm doing much more of that now! If you've ever felt some of these same things, fly with me.

Shelby Kottemann is an author, teacher, and empathic reiki therapist. She created Loves Nature LLC to help others create heart-centered lives. You can reach her at contact@inlovesnature.com. Visit her website at www.inlovesnature.com.

Spinning Wheels for Freedom

by Janet M. Bair



As the 250th anniversary of our country draws near, I have been contemplating freedom's cost. Freedom is not free.

When the American colonies decided to boycott British imports of tea and cloth, the American women did their part. By the 1750's, a great deal of cloth was imported from Britain.

We read these facts today, but it doesn't register what extra work this would mean for the average mother of a large household.

Making cloth involved many time-consuming tasks such as spinning thread from wool or flax and then slowly weaving the threads on a loom. The Patriot leaders called upon American women to create cloth locally so that the colonies were no longer dependent upon Britain to survive.

Wearing homespun became the patriotic thing to do. Just as women became creative in brewing teas made from native plants such as sage, raspberry and strawberry, they grew flax and sheared their sheep. Various plants were used to dye thread as well as onion skins, nut shells, and bark.

In the late 1760's and early 1770's, women got together for spinning bees for the cause of freedom. Each woman would load her spinning wheel into the back of a wagon and go to the appointed gathering spot, usually the minister's home. The women would sit and spin for a whole (farmer's) day, from dawn to dusk. The gatherings often numbered 100 women from all economic backgrounds. Freedom from Britain was their united goal.

It's no surprise then to know that every scrap of fabric was cherished and re-used and re-worked until it became only small pieces, which were then patched into a quilt. The artistry and creativity of colonial women is to be admired. It makes me wonder what American women would do today to help the cause of freedom.

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

Go Take a Ride On a Train

by Barbara Kalkis

Visiting family used to require enough driving to make me feel like a crunched-up candy wrapper at the end of the trip. I'd pack enough clothes and jackets for all four seasons and every eventuality, from hiking to yoga class to restaurant dining to slouching in front of the TV. Intent on filling every space in my car, I even packed camping gear: tent, sleeping bag, backpack and cookware. (Never can tell if the family wants to take an impromptu hike.) Finally, I'd throw in the necessities: maps, emergency road assistance supplies, snacks, chips, water bottles, a stack of CDs and my cell phone. Content that every contingency was addressed, I'd head off for several hours on seemingly always crowded highways.

The trips included stops at familiar cafes and boutique shops along the routes. Although I passed through beautiful farm lands, I could only glance at the blossoming fruit trees, ripening tomatoes, corn, hops, sunflowers and golden wheat. At freeway speed, it was just a colorful blur. Occasionally I'd see trains in the distance, moving at pace with and then ahead of us when traffic slowed. It looked romantic and alluring, but I needed my car and all of my possessions.

That changed in one moment on a drive home one holiday weekend. Traffic was heavy but moving fast. I had just crested a hill and was headed into the valley when a small car blew a tire. The force of the blowout threw the car across three lanes of traffic and spun it around, facing into the cascade of speeding vehicles. Miraculously, every traveler in every lane hit the brakes and stopped in time. After a collective gathering of breath and senses, the two young inhabitants exited the car and ran safely to the side of the road. It was a game changer.

On my next trip, I decided to try a train ride. I figured I'd hate it. After all, how could I get along without all my stuff? Downsizing is painful, whether it's a house or a roomy car. However, the freeway near-miss incentivized me. I packed only essentials in a backpack and carry-on. I am now a train loyalist.

While someone else "drives," I relax in the rolling comfort of a seat on the top level. I have high-speed Wi-Fi, so I can catch up on email, news and the daily crossword. Best of all, I have the luxury of time. I can study every aspect of daily life as it floats by. Trains capture the endless parade of sights: from smoking industries, to landfills, to condo villages, to mansions, to stunning wild lands, farms, forests, waterways and an endless sky. Graffiti "decorates" construction sites, yet the English teacher in me admires punchy philosophical bits of street wisdom and impressive artistic talent displayed in creative -- almost three-dimensional -- lettering that transcends calligraphy. Large-scale mural artistry is a real talent!

As we barrel down the tracks, the conductor sounds the whistle in a continuous shrill scream. The stopped highway traffic at the cross-roads seems like a dream. We pull away and continue the blissful rhythm of the rails.

Driving requires stopping to "stretch." Plane rides are cumbersome. When I want to move on the train, I sashay over to the café car. The train alone offers us a close-up look at how we live our lives, place by place.

The fabric of America is not in the sky. It is on the land. And it is the train that shows us who we really are. Don't take my word for it. Go take a ride!

©Barbara Kalkis, 2026. Barbara divides her time between consulting, writing, and teaching. She's author of Little Ditties for Every Day. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.

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Those Were The Days!

Advertising in Song

by Jay Mark

In this day and age of instant communication, radio & TV, internet, social media and the like, it is a challenge to think back to a time when none of these existed. Radio, the first mass communication medium didn't emerge until the 2nd quarter of the 20th century.

Magazines and newspapers were the primary source of news and information... albeit delayed.

The telephone, patented in 1876, allowed person-to-person communication. A year later, Thomas Edison introduced the phonograph. For the first time people could hear recordings of voices and music.

Until then, music and performances could only be heard live. That's why the piano was the most popular instrument in the American home. It was the family's entertainment medium. To keep up with the latest songs and music, the sheet music industry exploded in the 19th century. The industry changed from simple covers to colorful, eye-catching covers to lure customers into making a purchase.

Sheet music (initially called “music sheets”) in itself offered opportunities to publish historic classical scores and other instrumental music. But the medium soon opened up to song sheets that could tell stories of love and romance, humorous experiences, travels and news events like in “The Wreck of the Titanic.” Anything a composer could come up with.

As aviation emerged, it was quickly covered in sheet music – *Come Josephine in My Flying Machine*, *Come Take A Trip In My Airship* and *Lucky Lindy* amongst countless others.

All this got me wondering what mediums did companies use to promote their products in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? It turned out sheet music was an ideal way for advertisers to get their messages and products out to the masses.

With the emergence of the automobile, dozens of promotional pieces were published. Songs like *In*

My Merry Oldsmobile, My Little Ford Rambled Along, Take Me on a Buick Honeymoon. Countless other manufacturers whose life spans were pretty short are immortalized in sheet music. *The Jitney Bus, Mack's Swell Car Was A Maxwell and A Jolly Ride in a Glide.*

Food and beverage products were another area in which themed sheet music proliferated. Songs like *Heinz is Pickled Again*, *Under the Anheuser Bush*, *Rum and Coca Cola*, *I'm Just Wild About Animal Crackers*. Well, you get the idea.

The beauty of old sheet music is that because of a plethora of subjects and themes, there is virtually nothing that one can't find of interest. I've found that amongst the many things I collect, I probably have more sheet music than any other thing. Pick the subject and there are enough to satisfy a collector's desire to accumulate. Some of my areas of interest include Rags, railroads, aviation, Black Americana, jazz, sports, musical instruments, songs about cities and states, just to name a few.

But for me, I am most interested in advertising sheet music. Not only for their colorful, imaginative covers, but how they address their products in lyrics. My holy grail is a piece of music called “*Signs We See As We Pass Along*.” Published in 1904, it is an early critique of the pervasiveness of advertising. A train passing through a tranquil countryside assaults passengers with 40 products on billboards, signs and painted barn sides.

For more information about that intriguing song, see my article in the May-June 2017 *Antique Register*.

The great thing about sheet music collecting is that they don't have to be just stored in albums. In fact, they serve as ideal framed decor. They are easy to display. And they are frequent conversation starters.

A Good Read: Few books have been published of late about the history of sheet music. Some information can be gained from “*Old Sheet Music: A pictorial history*” by Marian Klamkin (1975); “*Victorian Sheet Music Covers*” by Ronald Pearsall (1972); “*Rare 19th Century Large Music Sheets*,” and “*The Sheet Music Reference and Price Guide*” (1992).

Value: The beauty of collecting sheet music is there is something for everyone. Many pieces are valued at under \$5. Others can be purchased for less than \$25. For some of the most desirable pieces such as those mentioned in this article can go far north of \$100. Remember, condition is one of the most significant factors in evaluating the value of sheet music.

Start collecting sheet music, and people will “sing” praise to your unique eye and ear.

© 2026. *Virtually an antique himself, or maybe a “collectible,” Jay Mark, has more than a half-century experience in the antiques business. He owns Those Were The Days!, an online specialty bookstore. A recognized historian, he also teaches, lectures and writes about antiques and history. Reach him at jaymarkhistorian@gmail.com.*



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1 c. black olives, sliced	1/4 c. olive oil
1/2 c. parsley, minced	freshly ground pepper
1/2 c. green onion, minced	Parmesan cheese, to taste

In a large skillet, lightly toast the pine nuts in the butter; drain on paper towels & cool. Cook the orzo in boiling water; drain & rinse in cold water. (Be extra careful not to overcook the pasta.) Very gently, mix together all ingredients; cover & chill. ♥

From The Summer Book, by Susan Branch, with Love ♥ www.susanbranch.com

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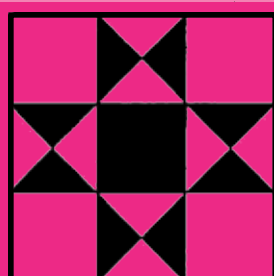
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GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



God makes everything BEAUTIFUL in its time.
Ecclesiastes 3:11

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Sunlight triggers the release of hormones in our brain.
Those hormones boost our mood and helps a person feel calm and focused.
Have you ever noticed that when you walk in nature you seem to notice the birds and other nature sounds more clearly? Slowing down to enjoy our neighbor's beautiful flowers is secretly lowering our blood pressure too.
Beauty is often only thought of as external, like a person, a landscape, a moment of grace, but it is clearly connected to the mind, heart, and spirit.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM: True beauty goes beyond what we see because it shines through in our actions, and our kindness. Let that smile come into full expression the next time you "feel" a thing of Beauty!

Joy & Blessings, 

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.
Color files of this writing and artwork are available: www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com



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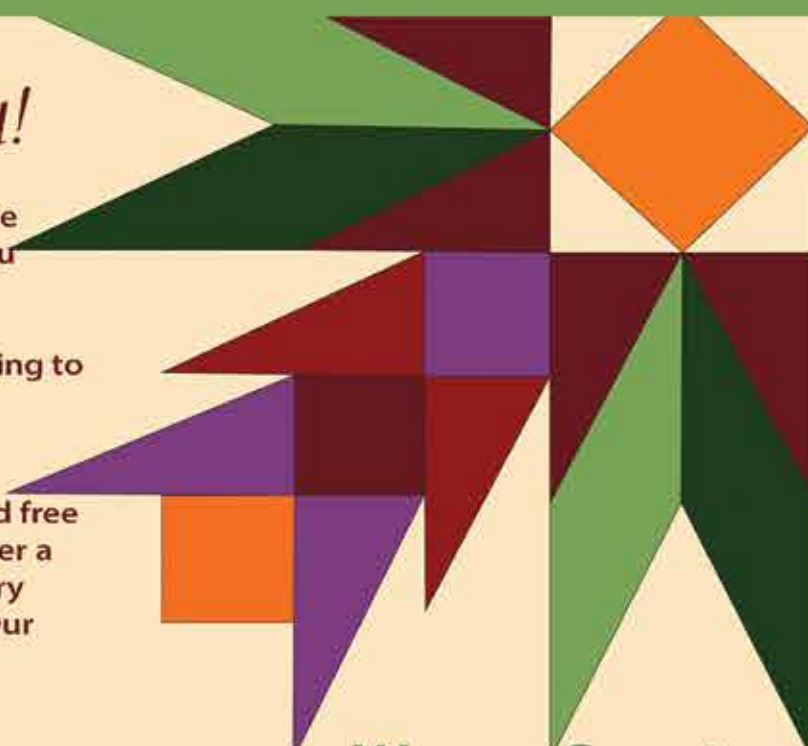
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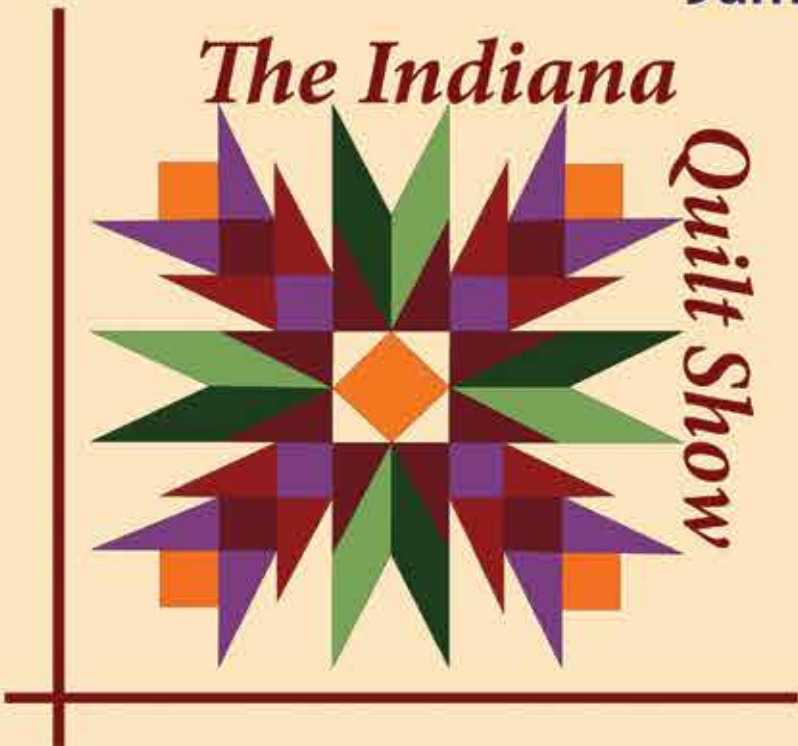
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Life in Skunk Hollow
Christmas in July

by Julie A. Druck

I've been thinking a lot about Christmas lately – more specifically, about Christmas trees. The thoughts have been coming as I wander through the newly-planted Christmas tree field on the hill above our little house. I've taken to walking through the grassy field most evenings at dusk, praying over and blessing the trees – that they would grow strong and well as they work their way to maturity over the next 7 years.

In addition to a growing beef cattle herd, our son, Caleb, and his wife, Abby, are trying this new venture on the fifty-acre farm on which both our families live. Our son is a thorough researcher and meticulous implementer of any new project that he takes on. So, after much planning and paperwork, he purchased 1,100 Canaan and Douglas Fir seedlings. And over a period of three days in late spring, our family helped put those baby trees into the ground. Four generations from Caleb and Abby's families turned out to help at various times over those days. From Caleb's grandfather who helped dig holes to little nieces and nephews who watered the baby seedlings with cups from a bucket, it truly was a family affair.

Caleb told me that he heard 7-year-old Joshua gently talking to one of the trees as he watered its base. Josh's encouragement of "Grow, baby, grow" is the same desire of all those who helped – from the ones who babysat Caleb and Abby's toddler son (who was more interested in eating dirt than planting trees), to Abby's sister who helped tuck trees into the ground while her newborn son was tucked into his swaddle against her, to those who golf carted bucket after bucket of water to the field, and the ones who dug (seemingly) countless holes. We're all eager to see the growth and harvest of the crop.

And therein lies a tendency I recognize within myself – that of wanting to jump to the end of a process – no matter if I'm making something, reading a book, or waiting for trees to grow. The process can sometimes feel like an interference to the ending. Sometimes I just want to have the gift without the bother of opening it! And yet, I'm slowly realizing (in a lot of areas of life) that the process, the journey, IS the gift.

You know, the length of time we have on this earth is unknown to us. There's no guarantee that I'll actually see those trees grow to fruition or ever have the privilege of having one decorate our home during the holiday season. But if I focus on the beauty of the process instead of jumping ahead, I realize that seeing the end of the trees' maturity isn't the only, or even the primary gift. One gift that's already been realized because of these Christmas tree seedlings has been the blessing of family working together for a common purpose. And that purpose goes far beyond a farming venture. For this year, we planted more than just trees. We planted common memories – memories of the joy and sweetness there is in helping one another. The process of doing a job together is just as valuable and as precious as tall, mature Christmas trees. And so, in a sense, beauty has already begun coming to fruition, and these seven years of waiting will provide more opportunity to discover, delight in, and be thankful for all the gifts that will surface in the process.

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



KISSed Quilts
Take a Ride Into the Countryside

by Marlene Oddie

For over a decade I have been designing quilts with Island Batik fabrics. They are now a division of Lumin Fabrics and I'm honored that they asked if I'd put my name to one of the fabric collections designed by Jerry Khiev. I selected this beautiful blue and yellow collection – *Countryside Charm* – as my first Signature Collection.

Various values of blue and yellow create a pleasing palette that is just happy! The motifs are a variety of floral patterns, leaves and small petal shapes.

I've designed four primary patterns and a couple of them have bonus designs included.

Angled Shadows – you may recognize the block that I designed last year as part of our All Pacific Northwest Shop Hop event. This version of it doesn't include any sashings and has a consistent background throughout the quilt. This is easily constructed when using AnglePlay® templates for the half rectangle triangles. Having angled shadows is something new to our industry! Enjoy the 3-d effect.



Honeycomb –

Used my newly designed Half Hexi template, that maximizes the use of a 10" square and can cut a half or whole hexi, the setting elements and corners, to make this quilt. The template has holes where the 1/4" intersections are to help facilitate marking your seam start and stop points. Bonus: Make a simple wallhanging with your favorite fabrics. This concept could be used with any collection.



Sintra Entrada –

This one may be familiar, but looks quite different than one you might have seen a few years ago. This is because I'm using a light medium value blue consistently for the vertical rectangle instead of a darker value. This may look difficult to construct but uses strata techniques to make it simple. This tile pattern can be found at the entrance of Sintra Palace in Portugal. I've chosen to color it quite differently.



Hearts-a-Bloom –

Using the corner-to-corner technique you'll get bonus half square triangles. So I used them in a bonus design—Windy Pinwheels. You could also just make one block set and frame it as a wallhanging.

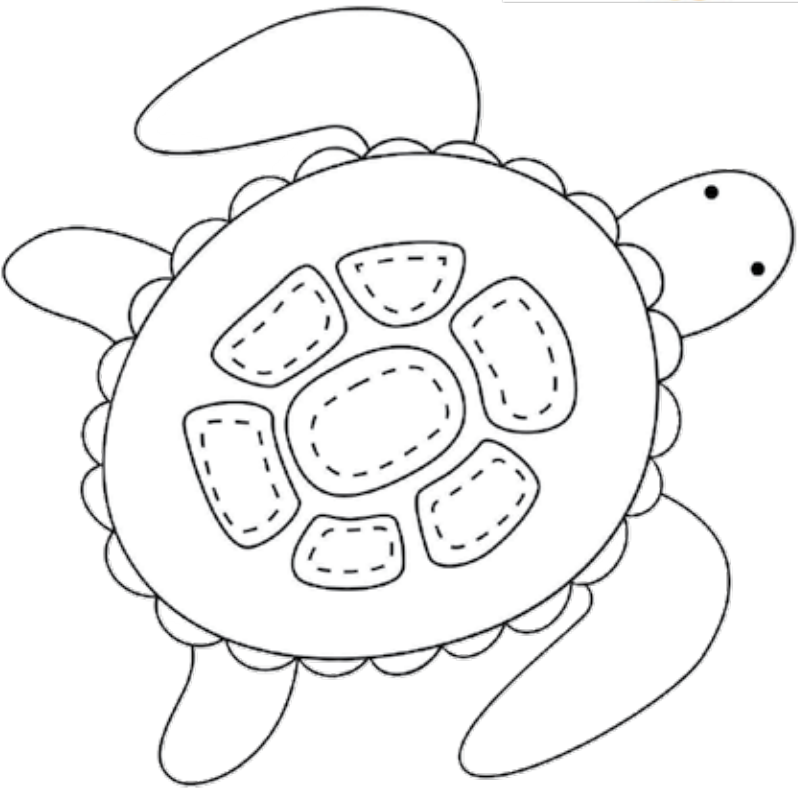
These fabrics, templates and patterns are shipping to your local quilt shop now. If you need patterns, templates, fabrics and/or kits—please ask!



–Marlene Oddie, of Grand Coulee, WA, is an engineer by training, a project manager by profession, and a quilter by passion. At her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts, she quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus and especially enjoys designing quilts and helping create meaningful keepsakes. Fabrics, patterns, kits, and templates are available at kissedquilts.com. Follow Marlene's adventures on Facebook and Instagram.

Free Pattern

For more fun and creative inspiration visit:
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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.

NEIGHBORING STATE ADVERTISERS

Sorting Stash Summer

by Janet M. Bair

This April I was fortunate to attend the AQS (American Quilter’s Society) show in Hartford, CT. Since it was only an hour away, many from our quilt guild attended. It was certainly much closer than going to Paducah, Kentucky for their main show.

Seeing the amazing craftsmanship of quilters from all over the world was inspiring and intimidating. I could only imagine the thousands of hours that went into some of the stunning quilts. The “art quilts” that show a picture very close to a photograph amaze me. My friends and I were there for seven hours and we still didn’t see everything. With over 100 vendors, it was hard to choose what to buy. I restrained myself and only bought ten fat quarters from out-of-state shops.

The following weekend was our own guild quilt show sponsored by the 150 members. I was very happy to see my first queen size quilt “Seaside Dreams” on display. Two years ago when I first walked into Colchester Mill Fabrics, I fell in love with several turquoise seashell prints. After I walked around the whole store which has amazing selections, I went back to the first bolts of beachy themed fabric and created my quilt from them. While I can’t swim all year round in New England, I can dream about the beach while sleeping under my quilt.

At our show, there were four quilt shops selling fabric. I selected a fat quarter bundle of five coordinating beachy fabrics, plus an unusual piece of batik that I couldn’t resist. Oh, and I bought a fat quarter of donut fabric for a doll’s dress. Our guild sold a lovely variety of handmade items besides “mystery bags” of fabric. I just had to buy two of those.

April turned into May and at our last guild meeting, they held a huge sale of donated fabric for \$5 a bag. The collected money went towards purchasing child oriented prints for our Comfort Quilts that we donate to the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. Of course, I stuffed a bag.

The following week, I went to a Quilt Auction where you bid on baskets of fabric. The competition was fierce but I managed to win the bid for one basket. There were 150 baskets of fabric to bid on but the prices quickly went up higher than I wanted to spend. But it was a fun event.

This is going to be a stash sorting summer, as I lay fabric out on the two spare beds, the card table, and the rug, looking to see what pieces will go together and trying to decide what I am going to make. For starters, I was able to already sew a quilt top from a jungle print with borders of green, grey and a bright yellow.

I usually have between 5-10 projects that I am working on at once. The piece of “glow in the dark” fabric I bought at AQS will make a cute pair of doll pants for my granddaughter. Several other doll dresses are in the works plus two requests for aprons.

I’m trying out various star designs using patriotic fabric for a wall hanging. The fat quarters I bought for this project are: white background with red stars, navy background with a 1776 drum print and a pale blue with a ring of small white stars print. I am still working out the sizing of my wall hanging.

My fabric stash is not very large compared to other quilters. Most of my past sewing was clothing which left very few scraps and in 2020 I managed to sew every spare piece of fabric I owned, when we couldn’t go shopping. I want to be a good steward of my resources and to use up the fabric I’ve already acquired in the past four years of quilting. One of my goals is to start cutting three inch strips to make a “scrappy” quilt. I have plenty of blue fabrics and my leftover pieces of yellow will coordinate well, along with green accents.

It’s a lot faster to buy material than to sew it! Hopefully, I can sit outside and do some sorting and organizing this summer. What are your fabric plans for the summer? Whether they are big or small plans, I wish you a Happy Fourth of July and a super summer!

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

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