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The 250th Anniversary of the United States:



Ideas and Ideals

by Nancy J. Nash

In the 1890's, a man named Dietrich was a blacksmith at the Wilhelmshaven naval shipyard in Germany. The story is told that one day he spoke to his younger brother, Wilhelm, and gave him a warning.

"I'm not supposed to tell you this," he said. "I could lose my job for divulging this secret. But down at the shipyard, we're not making cargo ships for world trade like the Kaiser wants the public to believe. We're putting guns on them. We're building battleships and preparing for war.... Don't stay in this country. You have to leave again."

Wilhelm had already lived for a short time in the Midwestern United States with his wife and son before returning home to Germany. There they were blessed with the birth of another child, Sophia. The young father bemoaned the lack of job opportunities he had had as a carpenter in the Midwest. But now there was another reason to return: trouble was brewing in his native country. He knew he had to heed Dietrich's advice.

Wilhelm and his family crossed the ocean to Ellis Island, landing on July 3, 1894. Little Sophie was almost three years old. She watched, transfixed, as her parents bowed and kissed the ground in gratitude for a new homeland. She never forgot.

The family settled in Illinois, where Sophie grew up on a farm, as did her daughters after her. One of them later married into my family and became my aunt. She was raised to value freedom, and all her life, she embraced the sense of responsibility on which freedom rests.

A number of years ago, my brother wrote *Books and the Founding Fathers*, a study of the literature that influenced the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Our Founders thought deeply, read widely, and attempted to articulate principles that they could then apply to forging a system of government responsive to the will of its citizens.

Over and over, they affirmed the need for virtue and integrity among the people of the new nation. Ultimately, the success of the American experiment would depend upon the ability of its foundational ideas to live in the minds of the citizens and the power of its ideals to sustain their willingness to sacrifice.

The Founders gleaned wisdom from the works of ancient philosophers and from Judeo-Christian scripture (with its emphasis on freedom, justice, equality, and human worth). Thus was born a nation different from all other nations—one that replaced kings and queens with a few carefully crafted pieces of paper that contained an enduring blueprint for the American republic.

The United States is not simply a place of prosperity or a distinctive landscape. At its heart is a set of principles of government intended to honor human dignity and to form a sturdy framework for freedom. Its ideals continually demand our attention and challenge us to think soberly and wisely.

Sophie grew up to marry the son of English immigrants. England and Germany fought each other in the First World War, but the life of the young couple in America was one of peace. It was also rigorous, working a farm without running water and electricity for many years. But Sophie had seen her parents kiss the ground in this new land, and she never forgot their gratefulness for the opportunity to escape oppression and to embrace liberty. Neither did my aunt.

Their memorable heritage is like fabric in a patchwork quilt, its colors and designs blending into a unique and vibrant pattern 250 years in the making.

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Nancy is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story* and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, both available at amazon.com. She holds a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. She may be reached at tradit2@verizon.net.



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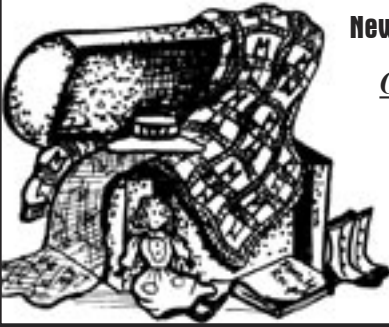
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# A Cup of Tea with Lydia

by Lydia E. Harris

## Hawaiian Tea Party

Aloha! Do your vacation plans include a trip to Hawaii this spring? If not, why not create your own tropical paradise with a Hawaiian tea party? It's the perfect theme for a birthday, family gathering, or just for fun.

**PREPARE A TROPICAL SETTING:** A quick trip to a party store will yield many decorations to create a fun setting. You'll find leis, honeycomb pineapples, grass skirts, and colorful tableware. For a beach atmosphere, you may also want to add shells, flip-flops, and beach towels.

In your invitations, encourage guests to wear bold floral prints, Hawaiian shirts, or casual beach clothes. When guests arrive, welcome them with outdoor tiki candles and Hawaiian background music. Place artificial leis around their necks, and offer iced tea with a splash of tropical punch.

**PICK LUSCIOUS FOODS:** What's on the menu? Decide if you'll serve simple refreshments, such as finger foods, dessert, and tea, or a luau-type meal with lots of food. Either way, think coconut, pineapple, mangos, papayas, and macadamia nuts as you plan.

If you plan to serve only desserts, how about old favorites like pineapple upside-down cake, coconut cream tarts, or banana bread with macadamia nuts added? Or try a new recipe, like my Pina Colada Hawaiian Cream (recipe included). For a fancy touch, serve this dessert in long-stemmed parfait goblets, and top each serving with a crisp cookie, such as a Pirouline stick. If you don't own stemware, use plastic champagne glasses or clear dessert dishes.

Hungrier? Prepare a chicken salad with pineapple tidbits, celery, and grapes. For the dressing, combine 1/2 cup mayonnaise, 1 teaspoon soy sauce, and 1/2 teaspoon curry powder. Serve the salad in a quarter pineapple shell or on a lettuce leaf with a slice of mango or papaya on the side. Garnish with cashews and a bright paper umbrella.

Scones can take on a Hawaiian flair by adding 1/2 cup flaked coconut to a basic recipe. Cut the dough into wedges, and before baking, make a thumbprint in the center of each scone, and fill it with pineapple-apricot jam or tropical preserves.

If you prefer a luau-type tea party, serve barbecued pork in rolls, salad, and Hawaiian kettle-style potato chips (such as Tim's brand). Add a dessert buffet with coconut macaroons, pineapple sherbet, and other desserts already mentioned.

No matter how simple or hearty the menu, serve plenty of tea. You'll find delicious blends with or without caffeine in tea shops and on the Internet. Spice up your menu with Mango Ceylon (Republic of Tea). Consider the Coconut (www.teatimegarden.com), or other exotic teas.

**PLAN FUN ENTERTAINMENT:** Your guest list will help determine suitable entertainment. We attended a large party for adults where Hawaiian dancers entertained us. After their graceful performance, they taught us the hula.

For economical entertainment, invite a friend to play the ukulele or guitar and sing Hawaiian songs. Guests could even learn a few tunes like "Pearly Shells" and sing along.

If you enjoy brainteaser games, hand out sheets of paper with the words "macadamia nuts" written at the top. Give guests five minutes to make as many words as possible from the letters in those words. Reward everyone for playing by passing a box of chocolate-covered macadamia nuts to share. For school-aged children, write the word "tropical" vertically and ask the kids to write as many words as they can that begin with each letter. Then give them inexpensive sunglasses for prizes.

If you're yearning for a taste of Hawaii, don't wait for an island getaway. Create one at home. Make your event as exotic or simple as you wish, but have fun! I'm ready to take off for teatime in the tropics. Won't you join me?

FROM LYDIA'S RECIPE FILE: **Pina Colada Hawaiian Cream**

*A smooth, creamy dessert. Also delicious on scones or as a dip for fruit kabobs.*

Combine in a saucepan:

|                      |                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 cup whipping cream | 3/4 cup milk (2 percent or whole) |
| 1/2 cup sugar        |                                   |

Warm on medium heat until sugar dissolves.

Stir in:

|                                             |                        |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 cup Pina Colada yogurt (8 ounces.)        | 1 cup light sour cream |
| 1/2 teaspoon pineapple flavoring (optional) |                        |

Pour into 6 glass goblets or dessert dishes. Chill one hour or until thickened. Dessert will resemble the consistency of yogurt. Top with toasted coconut flakes and a leaf of fresh pineapple-mint. Serve with a crisp cookie and a small fruit kabob made with fresh pineapple and other tropical fruits threaded on a fancy pick. Variations: Substitute strawberry or lemon yogurt for the Pina Colada yogurt. For the lemon yogurt, add 1 teaspoon grated lemon rind.



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# Life in Skunk Hollow

by Julie A Druck

Christmas in July



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 seven 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 he takes on. So, after much planning and paperwork, he purchased 1,100 Canna 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 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](mailto:thedrucks@netzero.com).

Lydia E. Harris, M.A., is a home economist and freelance writer who enjoys serving tea to family and friends in Seattle, Wash. ©2009 Lydia E. Harris. Used with permission. No reprint without the author's permission. Contact [LydiaHarris@Qwest.net](mailto:LydiaHarris@Qwest.net).

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Countryberries Designs



Bee Skep Parade

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Designed by Judy Zarlenga

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## 2 Minute Lift

by Kathy Sotak

### A Historian Takes Her Daughter to the Cemetery

Imagine being an eleven-year-old girl and are told enthusiastically, “Get in the car, we are going to the cemetery!”

That was my mother beginning a new detective’s journey, with an invitation for me as her apprentice in training.

I knew by then my mother followed her curiosities. I watched her pick up (and lay down) several hobbies and projects throughout her life. Her primary role was homemaker and chief operating officer of the household. Of course, she did the expected things of the era like knitting, gardening and embroidering. She also followed her yellow brick road of peculiar interests, like learning tatting – a near-obsolete form of lace-making, restoring ruined photographs from the late 1800s and professionally valuing old silver coins.

I was the baby of the family. After three decades of child-rearing and that job near complete, her attention went elsewhere: she became a self-appointed historian, overnight. I believe she felt it was her duty to make sure legacies lived on. This included her ancestors, her husband’s ancestors and our community.

Somehow, in the roles and responsibilities section of her historian job role, appeared cemetery investigator. My mother had a suspicion that there were more graves buried than headstones appeared. With this as our hypothesis, we started this journey at our county’s courthouse on a beautiful summer day. I recall that I wished to be anywhere but there.

The clerk invited us back into a dark and musty corridor and I recall the creak of metal filing drawers – like the rusty tin man that hadn’t moved in ages. Out popped the proper binder with names of those buried in our community’s rural cemetery.

I moaned and groaned as my mother drove to our next stop: the cemetery. I became even more desperate to end my training by convincing my mother she could do it by herself. But she made it sound like a magical journey of meaning as we walked the rows of stones.

“There should be a headstone here. Baby [last name] was buried here, 1921-1921.” We knelt down with garden tools in hand, which served as official archaeology instruments.

“Be careful,” my mom said as we gently tapped the trowel into the soil an inch down, “we don’t want to wreck the headstone.”

I didn’t believe we would find anything, but then I heard a distinct “clink” of the trowel followed by an excited “gasps” from my mother. Unbelievable to me, under two inches of topsoil and grass we found our first headstone.

Slowly we pulled up soil and grass, exposing decades-old cement. We went back home to get paint brushes – I mean, more archaeological tools – to gently sweep away the dirt to see if we could read any of the imprints.

Sure enough, we soon read the inscription: “Baby [last name]. 1921-1921.”

We repeated that exercise for every plot that indicated a grave but no headstone appeared. In several cases, we found small cement markers buried under topsoil like the example above. In most there was none. With love and responsibility in her heart, my mother found the funding (perhaps from the county or from our church) to purchase small proper headstones that would remain for decades to come.

I didn’t realize how much that experience would shape my life. My mother helped to restore the remembrance of every life in our community. Every single life made a difference. I’ll never know the story of the family whose baby died after only a few months. I just know that that life made an impact – even now a century later through me and those who read these words.

Over time we visited more cemeteries, looking for family ancestors. My mom would point out the extra-beautiful headstones, making sure I learned to respect intricate details that most overlook. Sometimes we would find a special inscription that made my mom think about the legacy she wanted to leave. It made for a beautiful conversation as we walked through the rows of those that had passed before us.

Today when I visit a cemetery, it brings a pang of excitement. It sparks this memory that only my mother and I shared. I think about her legacy that lives in my heart. I think about the legacy I want to live.

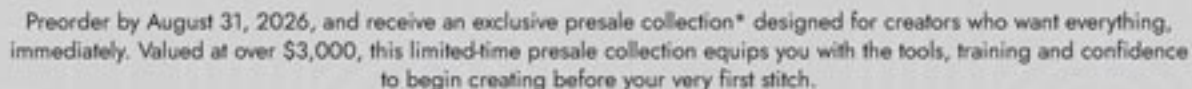
I don’t know what my kids will remember about me. It likely won’t include cemeteries – but perhaps I’ll find a detective journey of my own.

They will be my perfect apprentice.





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# 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 left-over 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's 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.

# Avoiding 'Cat'-astrophe

by Deb Heatherly



Let's face it, cats are as drawn to quilting do-dads as much as we are. A game of bat the spool across the floor and under the furniture can keep the most curious feline amused for quite some time. Thimbles can be used for the same type of feline hockey game. Jelly roll strips can be dragged from room to room with the pride of capture in a game of 'kill the snake,' while expensive cat toys sit idle. If your fur babies are anything like mine, a simple cardboard box and a few dropped supplies create imaginative play and contentment like nothing else.

Which brings me to this true story.

At my previous studio it became obvious that our Max loved fabric strips. So much so, that if I was working with strips, I got in the habit of giving him his own strip to play with. If I did not, he would wait until I was not looking, jump on the cutting table, and then drag my strips, one by one, up the stairs. They were always deposited near his toy box for "safe keeping" and easy to retrieve later, albeit a little worse for wear with teeth and claw marks.

Because I was used to his obsession, I thought nothing of his continued habit a few years later when we moved. Much to his delight, during this particular project, I cut an extra black strip just for him.

"Here you go," I said to him. "A snake just for you."

He happily grabbed my offering and began to carry it around. I swear I could see him smile.

For days he carried it up and down the steps. For some reason, this black strip held his attention longer than others ever had. The black strip was never left near his toybox, because he seemed to always be dragging it somewhere. Maybe deep down, because of the fabric color, his primaeval instincts had kicked in and to him it really was a snake. This went on for over a week.

Having gotten used to finding it on the steps, I simply stepped over it and left his toy where I knew he would find it a bit later. On this particular day, I was in the process of stepping over the strip, when much to my surprise, the strip began to wiggle and move. I am sure I walked on air and gasped for air when I realized that this particular strip was indeed a black snake and not a strip at all.

"Snake! Come quick!" I called to my husband

He thought I was joking at first because he too had been stepping over Max's pretend snake for days, but he soon realized that something in my tone needed further investigation. Minutes later a broom, a dustpan, and a bit of maneuvering to keep Max from grabbing this 'strip that moved' and the snake, who was probably as scared as I was, was safely taken out to the woods and released.

For days I wondered...had the snake just found its way inside or had I actually been stepping over what I thought was a black strip for several days? I'm glad that I will never know for sure.

In the meantime, no more black strips for Max. Hot pink and neon orange seem like a much better choice from here on out.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, "Grids Girls," for tips and inspiration, and two free mysteries each year. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/770429649800457/>. Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>. Visit Deb's website at [www.Debcatsquilts.com](http://www.Debcatsquilts.com).

# Over the Teacup

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

# Pieces From My Heart

by Jan Keller

## Summertime Taste Sensations

It was a dream come true when my husband and I traveled to New Zealand many years ago. After our very long flight, we boarded a cruise ship and visited many towns on both the north and south islands. We found the country to be as beautiful as we had imagined and the New Zealanders were exceedingly friendly.

We enjoyed all of our shore excursions, but I was especially excited to sign up for a visit to a sheep ranch which included lunch with the family who owned the ranch. In addition to getting to watch the trained shepherd herd the sheep, I was eager to get to visit and see inside of a typical home—and taste a New Zealand home-cooked meal.

New Zealand seemed like a perfect place to live. The weather was wonderful and reportedly moderate year around. One very surprising feature was that homes don't require screen doors. There's no need. They don't have bugs or flies. In warm weather they simply leave their doors and windows wide open. As an added bonus, they also don't have snakes.

Our visit was in January, but because the seasons are reversed, we were delighted by the summertime taste sensations our hostess served picnic-style in their backyard. Along with a variety of barbecued meat offerings, the menu included a couple of simple salads that combined ingredients I never realized could be so complimentary. I am sharing these recipes because they were simply sensational—and perfect for serving at any backyard gathering!

### WATERMELON, CUCUMBER & ONION SALAD

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Watermelon, cut in chunks   | Cucumbers, sliced        |
| Sweet Onion, thinly sliced  | 2 Tablespoons Salad Oil  |
| 2 Tablespoons White Vinegar | 1 Tablespoon Brown Sugar |
| 2 Tablespoons Mint, chopped | 1/4 cup White Wine       |

This recipe as given to me did not indicate amounts for the watermelon, cucumbers or onion—but don't worry about it because the recipe is flexible. The watermelon is primary, cucumber is secondary, and onion is complimentary. Play with the amounts as you prepare and combine them.

The remaining ingredients should be mixed together, poured over the salad and tossed. The dressing is adequate for a medium-sized salad.

### STRAWBERRY & MUSHROOM SALAD

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Fresh Strawberries, sliced      | Fresh Mushrooms, sliced       |
| French Salad Dressing of choice | 1-2 Tablespoons Mint, chopped |
| Fresh Lemon Juice               | Sour Cream                    |

Again, this recipe is flexible. Simply slice the strawberries and mushrooms into a bowl. Mix together the French dressing, mint, lemon juice and sour cream according to taste and toss together with the strawberries and mushrooms.

©2026 Jan Keller No reprint without permission Jan shares other pieces of her life in her books, *Pieces From My Crazy Quilt*, and *The Tie That Binds*. These books can be ordered by calling 719-866-8570, or writing: Black Sheep Books, 11250 Glen Canyon Drive, Peyton, CO 80831



## May God Bless the USA!

You have to love a nation that celebrates its independence every July 4, not with a parade of guns, tanks, and soldiers who file by the White House in a show of strength and muscle, but with family picnics where kids throw Frisbees, the potato salad gets iffy, and the flies die from happiness. You may think you have overeaten, but it is patriotism.

– Erma Bombeck

Photo by Lytle Achziger

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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 to 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](mailto:contact@inlovesnature.com). Visit her website at [www.inlovesnature.com](http://www.inlovesnature.com).

# Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

## Salon Sagas

I had my first manicure in a nail salon when I was in my late fifties. I only went then because my two little granddaughters who were visiting one summer wanted to go. When the woman who answered the phone said she would give the girls a “free flower” I thought that was very kind and expected them to come home with a long-stemmed rose or a carnation but no, it was a daisy painted on each small thumbnail.



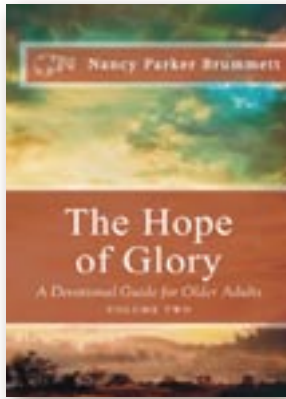
That was about 30 years ago, but since then I've become a semi-regular client at several different nail salons. You may think that the best “people watching” may be found at airports, malls, or ER waiting rooms, but I assure you, the clientele at nail salons can be most bemusing and amusing.

People become very loyal to their nail technicians, and I've followed my favorite to three different salons as his job changed, but I've noticed many similarities in terms of clientele at the different locations. It always warms my heart to see a faithful daughter or caregiver bringing in an older woman to get a manicure or even more rejuvenating, a pedicure for her ailing feet and hard-to-cut toenails. I also like seeing men getting pedicures to make their wives happy!

But you can see some strange things in nail salons, too. One time a fortyish business woman was on her phone the entire time she was getting her pedicure. She also had her laptop open on her lap and was conducting business as if she were seated behind a mahogany desk in a high-rise office building. I actually overheard her offering a job to someone. They were negotiating salary, vacation time, job title, etc., and everyone in the salon could follow along with each discussion point. In the end the fellow on the other end of the phone evidently said he'd talk to his wife and let her know, so we were all left wondering if he took the job. It's been a while since I was in the corporate world, but is this the new business etiquette? I hope not.

Keeping up with the life events of manicure seekers is entertaining as well. You overhear that someone wants bright orange because they are headed to Mexico on vacation, or you witness a giggly bridal party coming in to get their nails done for the wedding. Recently two little girls proudly held out their hands to show me the ice blue polish they got because they were to be flower girls in their aunt's upcoming wedding. Much of life can be witnessed in a nail salon, and seeing those two little girls reminded me of two others many years ago. I guess salon sagas can be sentimental, too.

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



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**TELL** friends about their products and encourage them to shop there

**WRITE** positive reviews

**SIGN UP** for emails

**SEND** a message or an email and let them know you appreciate what they do

# 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!

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## Stories of a Farm Wife

by Tammy Page

### Memories of Mom

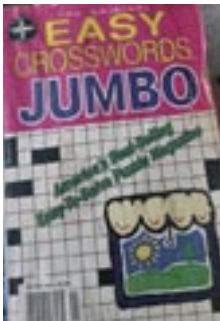
I grew up watching my mom when she had a few spare moments work crossword puzzles. It's a pastime that has been forgotten by the younger generation.

I recently cleared out my mom and dad's home after my dad passed away and found new and some old crossword puzzle books. Our whole family was used to seeing my mom picking up a crossword puzzle book when we would gather together or drop in for a visit. There was rarely an occasion such as a birthday, Mother's Day or Christmas that she did not receive a new book as a gift. Mom was always good with words and an intelligent woman and I can now appreciate the piles of crossword books laid around the house. She would have a couple on her end table beside her recliner and there was usually one on her bedside table and one on the kitchen table while she was preparing a meal. And, of course there might have been one in the bathroom too.

As a child I thought my mom was the smartest mom on the block because she could complete a puzzle in no time flat. If she didn't have a book she would work a puzzle in the daily Indianapolis Star newspaper. Since finding her books while clearing my parents home, I've found myself opening them up and working some myself.

I retired two years ago and at times I don't have my everyday chores to do or my husband is watching another favorite wartime movie and I curl up in my chair and work on one a little bit. I've found that one of my favorite places to relax and enjoy the quiet is on my front porch with a crossword puzzle book in my hand. It's a chance to get away from the everyday noises of television and phones. I make it a habit to leave my phone in the house and just enjoy the peace and quiet with my own thoughts. I also find it relaxing and comforting to know that I inherited the enjoyment of crossword puzzles from my mom who passed away four years ago. I even found one that had not been finished from 2000 and it was nice that I could finish what mom had started. The one from the year 2000 had some old phrases and meanings of words used today. I've found those a little easier to solve because of my age I suppose. I also love seeing my moms handwriting again and before her hands became too shaky to stay in the lines. It makes me feel close to her each time I pick one up and miss her even more.

I know that from now on I will continue to work crosswords and each time it will bring back precious memories.



## GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



### Summer is the time to see Nature in full bloom!

The sky is more blue, the green leaves are in their full glory!

The brightness lifts our spirits and gives us more energy.

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.

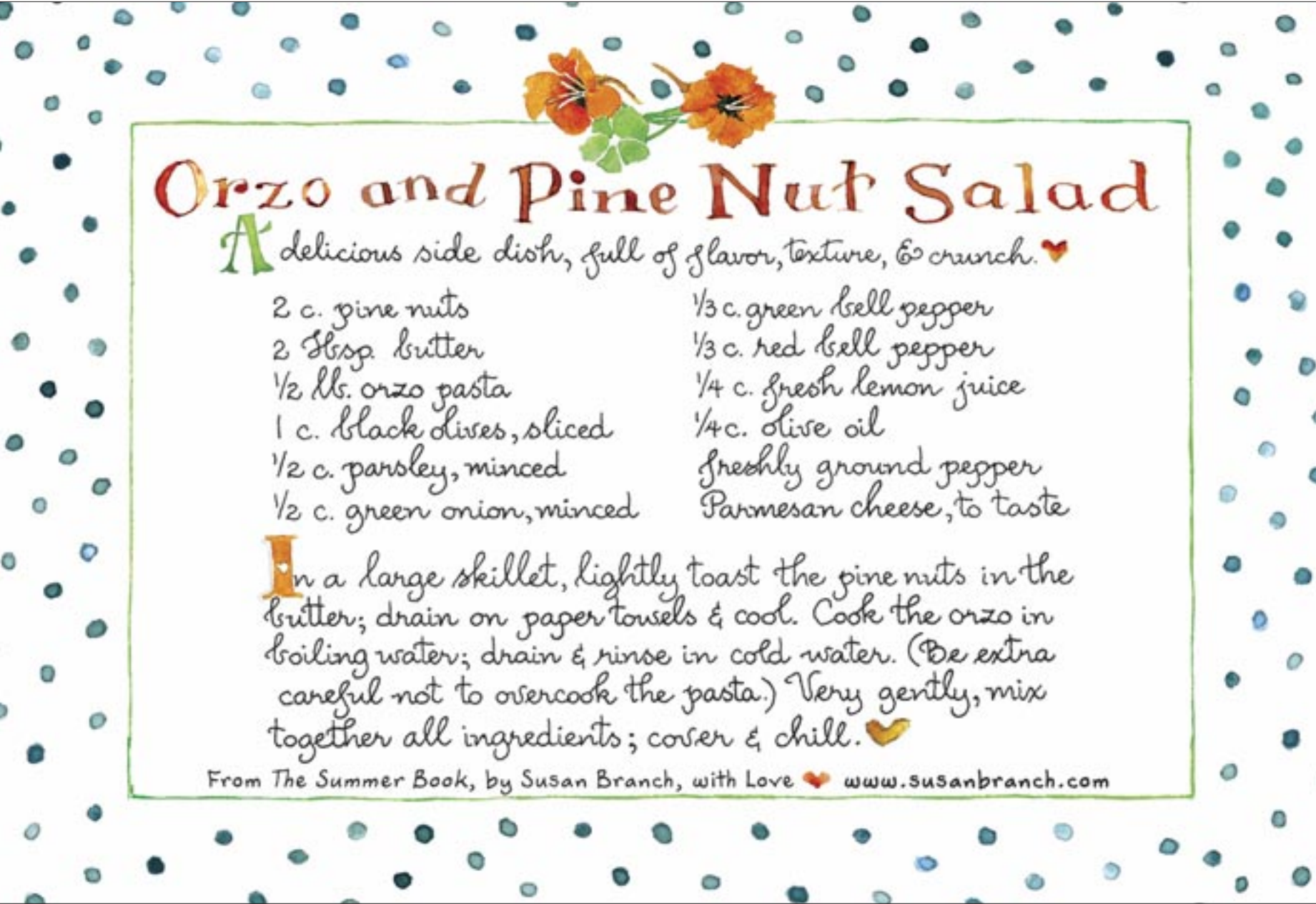
Beauty is often only thought of as external, like a person, a landscape, a moment of grace, but it is clearly connected to the mind, heart, and spirit.

**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,

Jody

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



# Orzo and Pine Nut Salad

A delicious side dish, full of flavor, texture, & crunch. ♥

2 c. pine nuts  
2 Tbsp. butter  
1/2 lb. orzo pasta  
1 c. black olives, sliced  
1/2 c. parsley, minced  
1/2 c. green onion, minced

1/3 c. green bell pepper  
1/3 c. red bell pepper  
1/4 c. fresh lemon juice  
1/4 c. olive oil  
freshly ground pepper  
Parmesan cheese, to taste

**I**n 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](http://www.susanbranch.com)



## Become Inspired

by Annice Bradley Rockwell

### 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 hydrangea:

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 bunting of red, white and blue expands 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

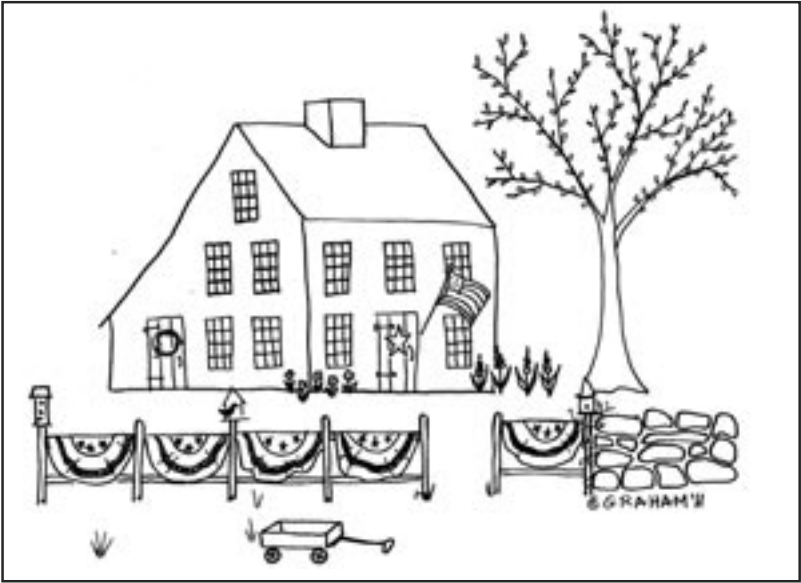
Taking part in our town's 250th celebrations will no doubt be a time to remember. Whether it is a tour of the local museum's bicentennial collection curated just for this year, or an historic home tour designed with 250 in mind, the activities for this very special summer abound. Summer favorites such 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 Antique. She is currently working on her book, *New England Girl*. [NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com](mailto:NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com)

## Countryberries Designs July Saltbox



This pattern is free for you to use. Please give the artist credit. Not for commercial use. Enlarge this pattern to your desired size. It can be applied in cotton or wool by hand or with fusible web. Embroider the details. If you're a painter, create this design with acrylic paints on canvas and varnish to protect. Try this pattern as a punchneedle design or as a hooked rug. Have fun!

Designed by Kathy Graham

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# Those Were the Days!

by Jay Mark

## Advertising in Song

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 the 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*.

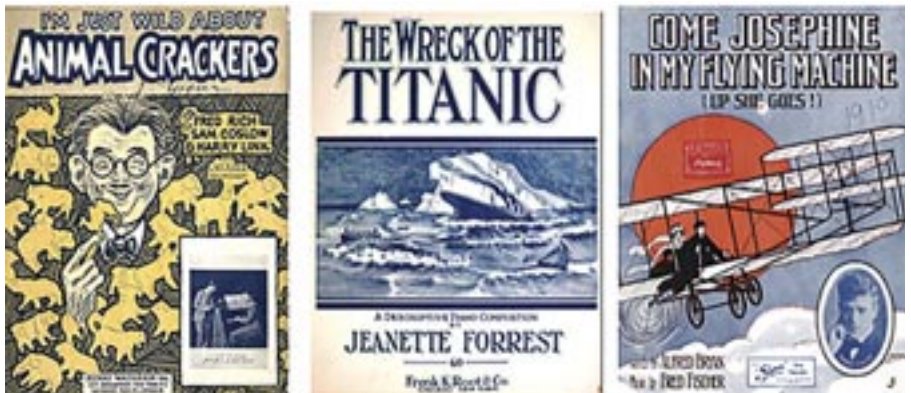
The great thing about sheet music collecting is that they don't have to be just stored in albums. In fact, they serve as ideal framed decor. They are easy to display. And they are frequent conversation starters.

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](mailto:jaymarkhistorian@gmail.com).



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## Sew Downtown

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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](mailto:contact@inlovesnature.com). Visit her website at [www.inlovesnature.com](http://www.inlovesnature.com).



# Summer Song

by Barbara Kalkis

July, you are the hip-hip-hooray month,  
The summer-every-day month.  
You are laughing celebrations,  
Picnics and vacations,  
Marching bands and morning parades,  
Sultry nights with cricket serenades,  
Butterflies fluttering in casual abandon,  
Dragonflies zipping in directions random,  
Swimming, baseball, mosquitos, and ants,  
Hiking and biking and summer romance,  
Hot dogs and lemonade, ice cream and pie,  
Burgers and brews and tomatoes on the vine.

July, you are the longest of carefree days.  
We mellow in August's languid golden haze.

Reason returns in sensible September.  
It's giddy July we cheer and remember!

»Barbara Kalkis. Barbara is an educator, writer, and marketing consultant. Her poetry collection is titled *Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm*. Contact her at [BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com](mailto:BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com)

# 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 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.

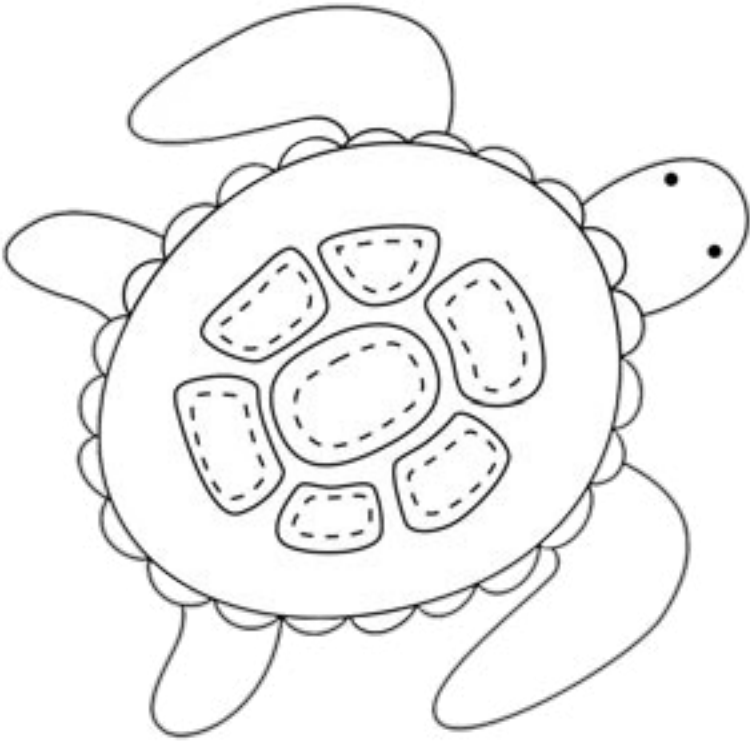
I'm trying out various star designs using patriotic fabric for a wall hanging. The fat quarters I bought for this project are: white background with red stars, navy background with a 1776 drum print and a pale blue with a ring of small white stars print. I am still working out the sizing of my wall hanging.

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 co-ordinate 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!

## Free Pattern

For more fun and creative inspiration visit:  
[www.JacquelynnSteves.com](http://www.JacquelynnSteves.com)



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

## Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski



### Crafting is \_\_\_\_\_

Fun! Individualized. Customizable. Approachable? Available to everyone! Different for each one of us.

Yes, I was brainstorming all of the different words to finish the title with, when I realized I didn't want to limit the focus of our exploration.

My craft is quilting. Talking with a quilting friend the other day, she shared pictures of a quilt top she had been working on—but was planning to take apart in order to make improvements. "I can do better," she explained.

Her comment lingered. Of course she can do better! I've seen her skill. I'm also eager to see how she re-designs the quilt top.

Walking my apartment building's hallways, I see varieties of paintings on both canvas and wooden boards, I see embroidery, I see beads which were arranged then fused together with heat; in town, I have seen classic car touring groups in parking lots, where car owners visit with others about the cars they have restored; I walk into the public library, and see posters about upcoming crafting classes; I open my mailbox and see the community education mailing about crafting classes available to residents throughout the year.

All of these crafting opportunities, available to anyone who is interested, are just a sampling, of course. Unlike formal school courses, however, there aren't grades assigned to the crafts we create. Oh, sure, there are contests and competitions any of us can pursue if we are interested—but we don't have to. I, for instance, tend to make things which interest me. A flannel quilt for a new baby or friend who lives in colder climates; a quilted table runner for a wedding gift;



a quilted door hanging to celebrate the seasons; quilted placemats, quilted picnic "blankets," quilted wall hangings...even a quilt to record the daily high temperature for the first year in a new town.

Might I now add to my earlier list of adjectives? Crafting is invigorating, as it provides me with a sense

of freedom like no other activity, and it's...

Okay, it's not necessarily free. But freeing? Yes!! Liberating.

There have been a number of times I thought about ways to make an income from my crafting. Unlike when I first started sewing, technology has created so many ways for crafters to monetize their skills—to share a new bit of knowledge, insight, even their thoughts or skills with people well beyond their geography. (This very publication, for instance, provides a platform from which to share thoughts, ideas, and information.) Every time I think about it, though, I come back to the same conclusion: I love crafting because I don't have to care about the critics. Instead, I get to do absolutely only what intrigues me, tickles me, or draws me to it out of curiosity. Granted, I don't get a raise or promotion like a job might provide, but I also don't fear being fired—or encouraged to retire.

Crafting supports autonomy, allowing each of us to choose our own path!

© Jeanette Lukowski 2026. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author who lives in Alexandria, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: [writingfromlife@yahoo.com](mailto:writingfromlife@yahoo.com)



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Search for the underlined words in the recipe in the word search below!

## Easy Peach Cobbler

recipe courtesy of Trisha Yearwood

Two 15oz cans sliced peaches in syryp  
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter  
1 cup self-rising flour  
1 cup sugar  
1 cup milk

Homemade Whipped Cream:  
2 cups whipping cream, chilled  
4 tbsp sugar

Preheat oven to 350°. Drain 1 can of the peaches, reserve the syrup for the other. Place the butter in a 9x13 inch oven proof baking dish. Heat the butter on the stove or in the oven until it's melted. In a medium bowl, mix the flour and sugar. Stir in the milk and the reserved syrup. Pour the batter over the melted butter in the baking dish. Arrange the peaches over the batter. Bake for 1 hour. The cobbler is done when the batter rises around the peaches and the crust is thick and golden brown. Serve warm with fresh whipped cream.

Homemade whipped cream: Chill a large metal mixing bowl and wire beater attachment in the freezer for about 20 minutes. Pour the chilled cream and sugar into the cold mixing bowl and beat until it forms soft peaks, about 5 minutes.



Ann's Lovin' You

by Ann Stewart

## 57 Questions

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” 1780s midwife Martha Ballard at her OB-GYN when she picked up *Our Daily Bread* and read the August 1, 2008 devotional about an 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?

If you're like me, you probably have a blank book like Martha's just sitting around the house. 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, or 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 or 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. To learn more go to my website at [www.AnnMarieStewart.com](http://www.AnnMarieStewart.com).

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.



## KISSed Quilts

by Marlene Oddie

### Take a Ride Into the Countryside

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.



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 Gam-mill Optimum Plus and especially enjoys designing quilts and helping create meaningful keepsakes. Fabrics, patterns, kits, and templates are available at [kissedquilts.com](http://kissedquilts.com). Follow Marlene's adventures on Facebook and Instagram.



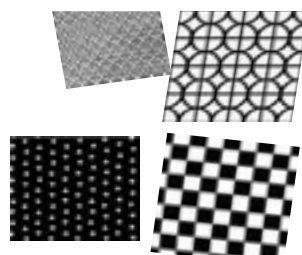
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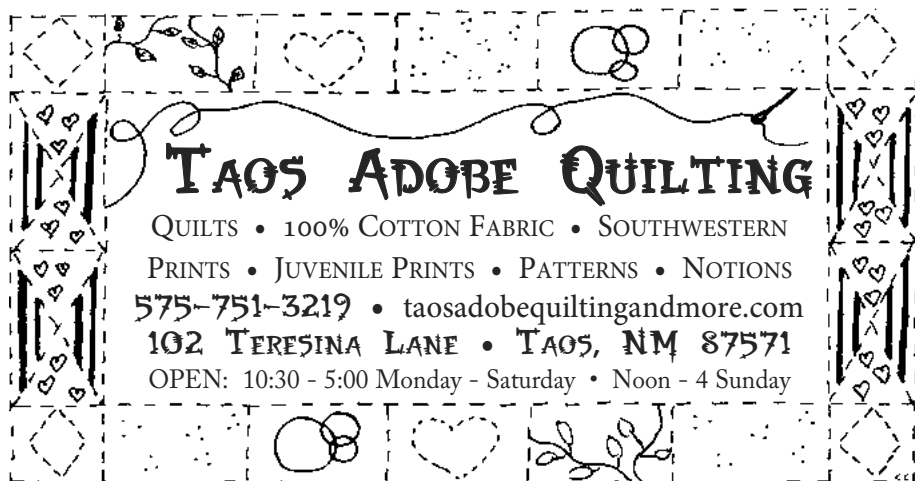
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## The Heart of July (with August on the Horizon)

by Nancy Nash

If July is the heart of summer, what is the heart of July? What treasures of sky and meadow does it hold?

Gone are the wild strawberries of June, tastier than any store-bought variety. Black raspberries replace them, growing wild and much sought after. Neither blackberry nor red raspberry, they are at once mild and sweet and zippy. Can a berry taste energetic? Somehow they have a liveliness that matches the month. When you wash them and place them in a dish, the plump black raspberries turn slightly mushy, sending forth rivulets of deep red or burgundy and adding beauty to their merits. Served in July with light cream and a sweetener, or as jam on toast the rest of the year, they are one of many varieties of summer berries that attract our eyes and delight our taste buds.



In a phone conversation with a friend recently, I asked why she sounded so joyful. "Ice cream and outdoor eating!" she declared. I agreed it was indeed the season. In North America, ice cream consumption has run high for a long time. Farm stands often sell homemade concoctions, eliciting smiles from babies and older folk alike. I told my friend that a local ice cream shop had a blackboard inscribed with this saying: "You can't buy HAPPINESS, but you can buy ICE CREAM... and that's close enough." It's the universal treat. I don't know of anyone who doesn't like it in some form or other.

What besides berries, ice cream, and outdoor eating rest in the heart of July as treasures to be sought and savored? Its flowers, of course, are extraordinary. Some of my favorites are the wild ones that line the roadsides: simple, comforting clusters of orange day lilies; dusty blue chicory as pale as distant hazy mountains; and brown-eyed Susans nodding in the sunlight. Delicate blossoms of Queen Anne's lace, with shapes like small umbrellas, fill the meadows. Flowers inspire us as few things do, finding their way into gardens and homes in arrays both real and imagined. Everything from furnishings to wallpaper, hand-weaving to watercolors, embroidery to printed fabrics bears their imprint. Can you conceive of a world without such enduring loveliness?

And, of course, there are fireflies, starting in June and ending by mid July. Tiny bursts of light, on and off, off and on, they create an electrical display in the sky that rivals 4th of July fireworks. Some of these glowing insects hover in trees, where they blink like Christmas lights. Most dart about, turning dark meadows into showrooms of light and energy. Their quick, bright, unexpected appearances tease us to look for patterns and identify designs. But they are not constellations of stars, nor do they float past us like clouds morphing into sailboats and dragons. They remind me of the dots and dashes of a telegraph code or the ordered steps of a minuet, but only on the surface. Chaotic and unpredictable, how do these little beings navigate the night and avoid colliding with each other? How can their dance be so endlessly wild and free?

So here we have it: along with the fruits of field and meadow, the heart of July enfolds fireflies, a mystery beyond imagining. Over misty meadows, by musky brooks, like fragments of stars that have broken loose and are not sure where to land, they give us an excuse to extend a summer's day into the night. We sit on the porch and watch, mesmerized.

After July, what's on the horizon? New flowers and gentle breezes may grace our days. Evenings can be magical as we stroll through a village where streetlamps highlight soft contours of trees, as we meander down a lane and listen to critters calling and chirping in the darkness, as we feel on our faces the touch of warm air that invites us to linger. This, happily, is July's encore: August...more summer.

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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](http://amazon.com) and [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.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](mailto:nancynash341@gmail.com)

