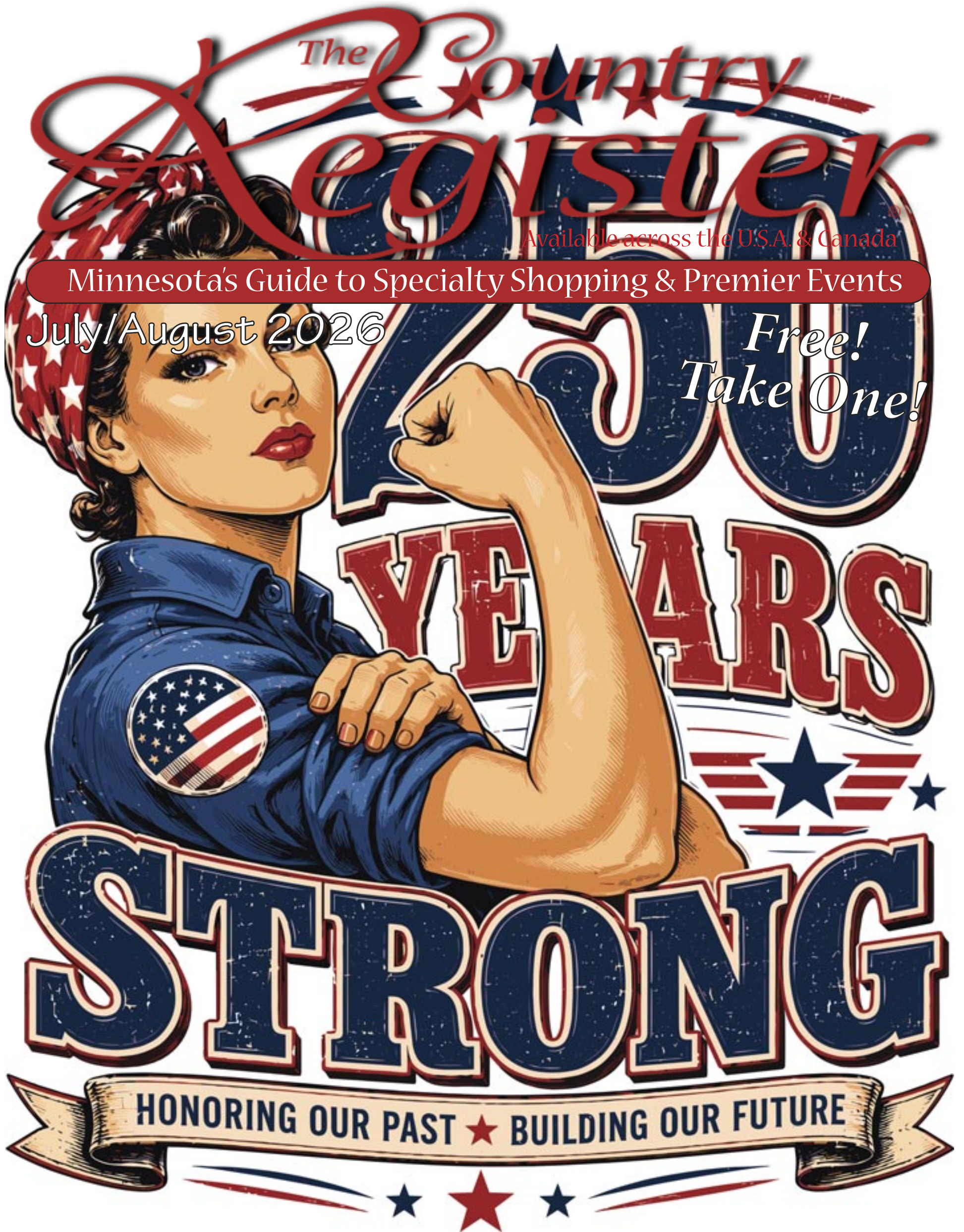




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July/August 2026

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Months July/August 2026

Volume 32 Number 4

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Special Events

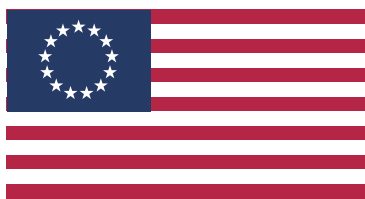
July
1-31.....All Iowa Shop Hop - Quilted Steeple - Lone Rock, IA
2.....15th Anniversary Party - Quilted Dog - Cloquet
10-12.....Monthly Sew-In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
11.....Open Sew - Creations Quilt Shop - Duluth
15-18.....Party Express Shop Hop - Michele's Quilting and Sewing - Blue Earth
18-19.....Monthly Sew-In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
24-Aug 15.....Quilt Minnesota - Various shops throughout the state - see individual ads
16-31.....Christmas in July - Creations Quilt Shop - Duluth

August
7.....Braham Pie Day - Braham
7.....36th Annual Show of Small Quilts - Braham
7-9.....Monthly Sew-In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
8.....Open Sew - Creations Quilt Shop - Duluth
21-23.....Monthly Sew-In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls

September
8-13.....Quilter's Business Academy - Woodland Ridge Retreat - Menomonie, WI
12-13.....Hill City Quilt & Fiber Arts Show - Hill City, SD
24-26.....Des Moines Area Quilters Quilt Show - Des Moines, IA

October
2-9.....Northwoods Quilt Trek - Creations Quilt Shop - Duluth

History of Our Beautiful Flag



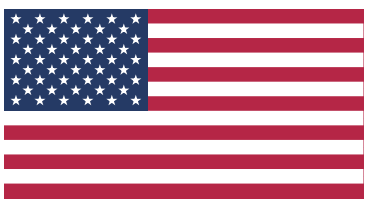
1777
A Flag for a new nation
On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress resolved that the Flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, with thirteen white stars on a blue field, one for each of the original colonies.



1795
Fifteen stars and stripes
With Vermont and Kentucky joining the Union, the Flag grew to fifteen stars and fifteen stripes, the version that flew over Fort McHenry and inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner."



1818
Return to thirteen stripes
Congress restored the thirteen stripes to honor the original colonies, and provided that a new star be added for each new state on the Fourth of July following its admission.



1960
Fifty stars
With Hawaii's admission, the Flag reached its familiar fifty stars. Since independence, the national Flag has been revised twenty-seven different times.

National Flag Foundation

We Want to Hear from You!



Do you have something fun and/or interesting to share with us? We'd love to hear from you! We'd want to share your great stories, fun craft or quilt projects, yummy recipes, beautiful poetry etc.
Stories of the past are always so engrossing!
Send us an email, give us a call or send us something in the mail. We look forward to hearing from you.

Where in Minnesota?

Somewhere in Minnesota the image to the right can be found.
Where is it?

(Answer on page 16 of this issue)



Take your paper with you this summer as you travel the state and stop in and visit the shops in The Country Register! Tell them you saw them here in the paper!



Minnesota Backyard Birds Indigo Bunting

SIZE: 5 - 1/2 inches
MALE: Vibrant blue, dark markings scattered on wings and tail
FEMALE: light brown with faint markings
MIGRATION: Complete to Mexico, Central America and South America
NOTE: Seen along woodland edges feeding on insects. Comes to seed feeders in early spring before insects are plentiful.

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- LIKE** their posts
- SHARE** their posts
- COMMENT** on their posts
- TAG** friends who would like them
- POST** photos of their products and tag them or use their hashtag
- 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

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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 were 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 out the ever-tenacious "Pflanzeichwillnichtus." (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.



Recipe: Doctored up Baked Beans

submitted by Margaret Haase

Ingredients:

- 3 cans Bush's Original Baked Beans (28oz)
- 8 slices bacon cooked & chopped
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/3 cup yellow mustard
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup molasses
- 4 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
- 1 Vidalia onion, chopped
- Kosher salt to taste
- black pepper to taste
- red pepper flakes to taste
- garlic powder to taste
- 1/8 tsp liquid smoke

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°. Add baked beans, cooked bacon, chopped onion, yellow mustard, ketchup, brown sugar, molasses and worcestershire sauce to a large oven safe dish. Stir and combine well. Season to taste with the kosher salt, red pepper flakes, black pepper and garlic powder as well as liquid smoke. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour. The beans will be bubbly and carmalized on the top!





Suduko - Find the answer key on page 19

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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 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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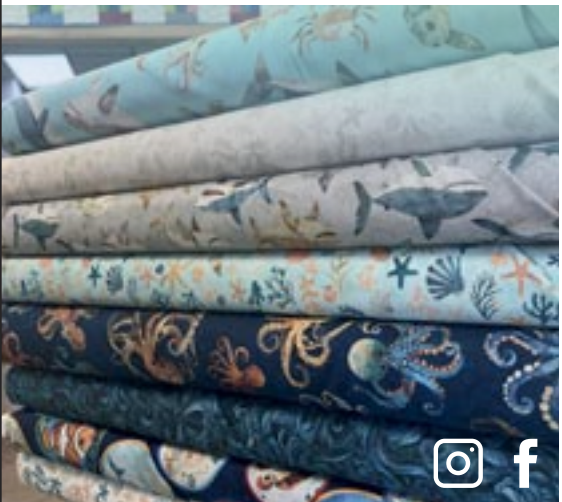
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The Enchanted Dream

The Country House Celebrates 45 Years!



In 1981, a story was started in the little town of McGregor. The Nistler family had fallen in love with a landmark, a 100 year homestead. What could be done with this run-down house? Brenda and her husband LeRoy renovated it and it became the Country House.

This house, with its 13 rooms, offers Country and Victorian crafts to all its visitors. It was mostly loved by women and when Brenda noticed the men getting antsy, she decided to add in the Ice

Cream Room to keep them occupied. To her surprise, the men decided they wanted to shop too. So, Grandpa's Up North Cabin and Garden Shed were added. Soon the Tea Room was a buzz serving coffee, tea, goodies and soup in a bread bowl with cheese cake.

Then an amazing thing happened, the very house where Brenda was born in was given to her. "What shall we do with that?", she wondered. This small house became home to Grandma Millie's Antique Shop.

Soon the Tea Room was getting too small for all of the customers who enjoyed eating while they visited. So a replica of a one room school house was built and it became the School House Cafe. This quaint Cafe is decorated with plenty of unique memorabilia. You could enjoy breakfast, lunch, soup, coffee or espresso with the best rolls, bread, pies, cookies and cakes. You can dine inside or outside on the patio.

Stop in this summer and help us celebrate our 45th birthday! There's something for everyone here!



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!

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Call Dolly Brown at 612-868-1309 to make
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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 wall hanging 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 wall hanging.



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.

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 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 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.

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.



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

4th of July Firework Cookies

recipe from Recipes by Inside Bru Crew Life

- Ingredients:
- 1 - 15.25 ounce vanilla cake mix

* 8 tbsp unsalted butter, softened

• 1 large egg

• 1 tsp vanilla extract

• 4 ounces cream cheese, softened

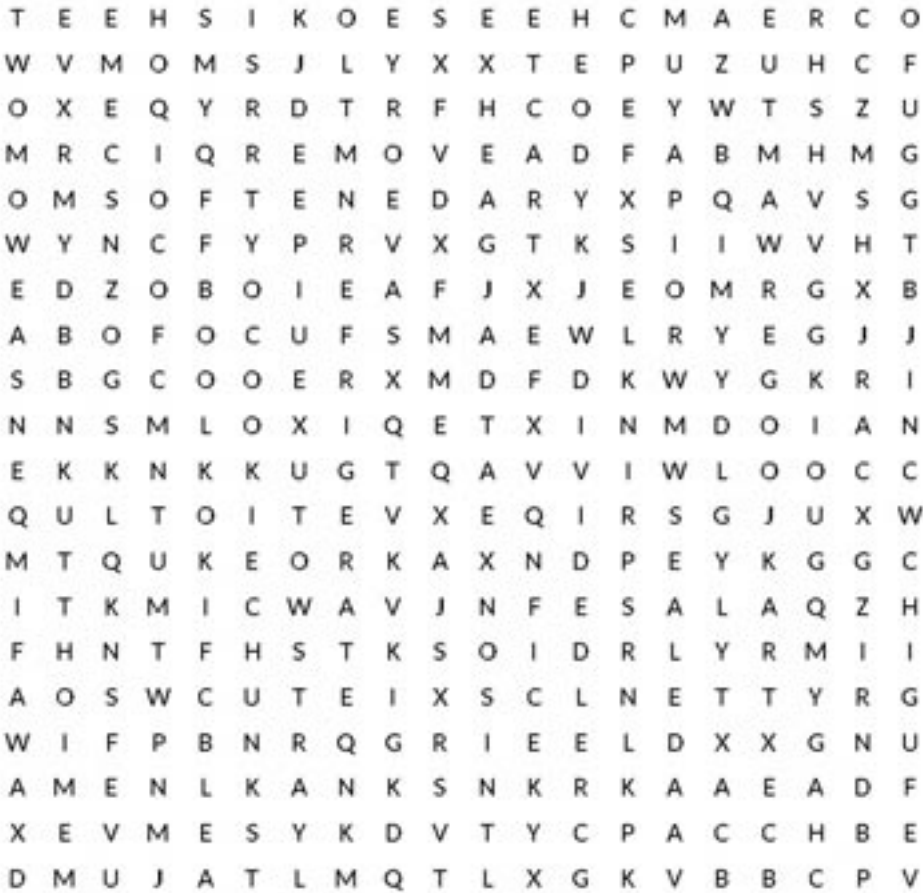
• 2 cups Oreo cookie chunks

• 3/4 cup red, white & blue M&Ms, divided

• 1/2 cup red, white & blue sprinkles, divided

Instructions:

Mix together the dry cake mix, butter, cream cheese, egg and vanilla until soft dough forms. Stir in the cookie chunks, 1/2 cup M&Ms and 1/4 cup of the sprinkles. Refrigerate the dough for 60 minutes. Preheat the oven to 350°. Use a 2-tablespoon cookie scoop to make even dough balls. Press the remaining M&Ms into the tops of the dough balls. Add the extra sprinkles to the tops of the dough balls. Place the dough balls on a cookie sheet and bake for 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and let the cookies cool for 2 minutes before removing them from the tray. Let the cookies cool completely so they can set and then store them in a tightly sealed container.



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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.





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.

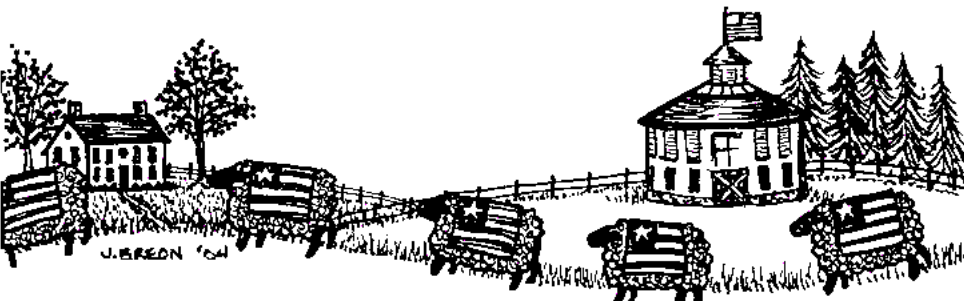
Memories are important. Recently someone sent me a decade-old letter my grandfather had written in a November birthday card to his son, Abram. Since it was near Christmas, Grandpa wrote about Baby Jesus having swaddling clothes then compared it to when their family fled Russia and my grandmother had 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.

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.

© 2026 Ann Marie Stewart www.AnnMarieStewart.com. Ann Marie Stewart's novel *THE REMNANTS: One Family's Escape from Stalin's Russia* comes out October 2026.



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

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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 with others in a unique and vibrant pattern 250 years in the making.

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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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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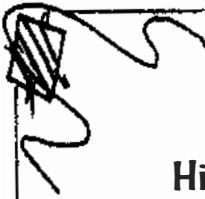


On this day in History

July 19, 1879: Doc Holliday commits his first murder, killing a man for shooting up his New Mexico saloon. Doc Holliday opened a saloon in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1879. On July 19th, Mike Gordon, a former army scout, began to fire bullets randomly into the saloon. Holliday calmly stepped out of the salon and dropped Gordon with a single bullet. Despite his formidable reputation as a deadly gunslinger, Doc Holliday only engaged in eight shootouts during his life, and it has been verified that he killed two men, the second of which was at the famous "Shoot Out at the O.K. Corral" in 1881 with his friend Wyatt Earp.

August 13, 1952: "Hound Dog" is recorded for the first time by rhythm and blues singer Big Mama Thornton. Elvis recorded the song four years later after hearing a rewrite by singer Freddie Bell who changed the original lyrics to include "Cryin' all the time" and "You ain't never caught a rabbit".

Information found on www.history.com

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Orzo and Pine Nut Salad

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

2 c. pine nuts	1/3 c. green bell pepper
2 Tbsp. butter	1/3 c. red bell pepper
1/2 lb. orzo pasta	1/4 c. fresh lemon juice
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. ♥

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Recipe: Dill Dip

submitted by Patti Lee Bock

Ingredients:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3oz cream cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1-1/2 tsp salt
- 1-1/2 tbsp onion flakes
- 1-1/2 tsp dill weed
- 1-1/2 tsp dry parsley

Directions:

Stir mayonnaise, cream cheese and sour cream until well blended. Add salt, onion, dill weed and parsley and mix well. Chill before serving.



GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



God makes everything BEAUTIFUL in its time.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

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, 

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

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

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Apple Cinnamon Mug Cake

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg
- 3 tbsp milk
- 1 tbsp melted butter
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup diced apples



Photo by Baking Me Hungry

Directions:

1. Add flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon and nutmeg to a large microwave safe mug.
2. Mix to combine.
3. Add milk, melted butter and vanilla extract.
4. Stir until smooth.
5. Fold in diced apples until evenly distributed in the batter.
6. Microwave for 60-90 seconds.
7. Cool for one minute.
8. Add your favorite topping such as caramel, ice cream or cinnamon sugar.

Recipe by Nova Recipes



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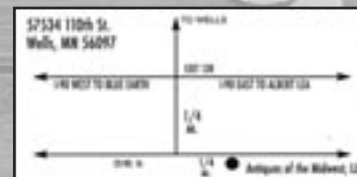


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Avoiding 'Cat'-astrophe

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 primeval 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.

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Des Moines Area Quilters Guild

Quilt Show



Oh, My Stars

September 24-26, 2026
9-5 daily

Iowa State Fairgrounds
Rastetter 4-H Building

Annual Des Moines Area Quilters Guild Quilt Show – “Oh, My Stars!”

Iowa's largest quilt show, sponsored by the Des Moines Area Quilters Guild, is set for Thursday – Saturday, September 24, 25, and 26. The annual quilt show will be held at the 4-H Exhibits Building at the Iowa State Fair Grounds. The theme of this year's show is “Oh, My Stars!” The 4-H Building will be filled with more than 600 quilts created by the group's talented members. Dozens of vendors from several states will be displaying and selling their goods including Gold Level Sponsor, Bernina-Woodside Quilting, and Silver Level Sponsor, Off the Rails Quilting.

The show will include several special exhibits. In conjunction with the “Oh, My Stars!” theme, a wide variety of star quilts, from celestial to Hollywood, will be on display. The “Sashiko and Boro” exhibit will include bags and quilts that demonstrate the beautiful ways these techniques can be used. “Written in the Stars” will be an exhibit of quilts with words and messages somewhere in the quilt. For the President's Challenge exhibit, members were required to fill in at least five squares on a bingo card created by the guild president. The Central Iowa Textile Artists will display their favorite art quilts.

Free lectures and demonstrations will be presented during the show by several of our vendors. Hands-on classes will also be offered daily. Topics and costs for these classes will be posted on the guild website. Quilt turnings featuring Friendship Quilts will take place throughout the three-day event. A Quilt Maker's Market will offer small quilts, bags, and other treasures created by guild members for immediate purchase. This year's beautiful raffle quilt features a constellation of blue stars that is sure to please the lucky winner.

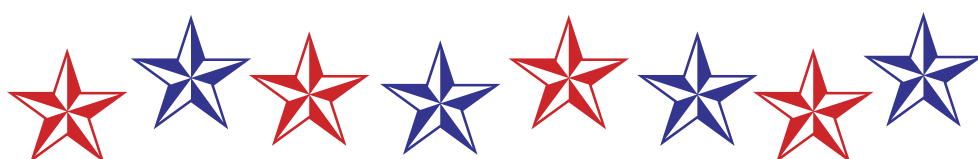
Janome/University Vacuum and Sewing is sponsoring the Resource Table where there will be a raffle for a new Janome sewing machine with the drawing on Saturday afternoon. Other show sponsors include YLI Threads for the show volunteers, and In the Beginning Fabric by Jason Yenter for the Community Giving display. We would like to also thank the other sponsors, Creekside Quilting, The Iowa Quilt Block, and Treasured Gifts for their support.

On Friday evening there will be a Banquet that will also feature a quilted fashion show. The Banquet on Friday evening will be held at the West Des Moines Christian Church, 4501 Mills Civic Parkway in West Des Moines. The cost for the dinner will be \$35. Go to <https://www.dmaqq.org> for information on purchasing tickets for the Friday evening dinner. Everyone is invited.

Show hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door; children 12 and under are free. Three-day passes can be purchased for \$24. Advanced tickets can be purchased at <https://www.iowastatefairgrounds.org/event-calendar/quilt-show>. Buses are always welcome.

The Des Moines Area Quilters Guild meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month, January through August and October at the West Des Moines Christian Church. Times for the meetings are posted on <https://www.dmaqq.org>. The guild has nearly 500 members, a newcomer's group, and many small groups with a wide range of interests. Professional speakers from around the country and local talented quilters speak at the meetings and share their skills at workshops offered throughout the year. Two retreats and three quilting socials are held each year. Education and community outreach have long been an important part of the guild's mission. To raise funds to support our community giving and education outreach, the guild hosts Iowa's largest rummage sale of quilting and sewing items. Members also have an opportunity to participate in a president's challenge, block exchanges, and community sewing days. The Des Moines Area Quilters Guild is a great place to meet others and share the love of quilting.

For more information go to <https://www.dmaqq.org> or follow Des Moines Area Quilters Guild on Facebook.



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 "gaspl" 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.

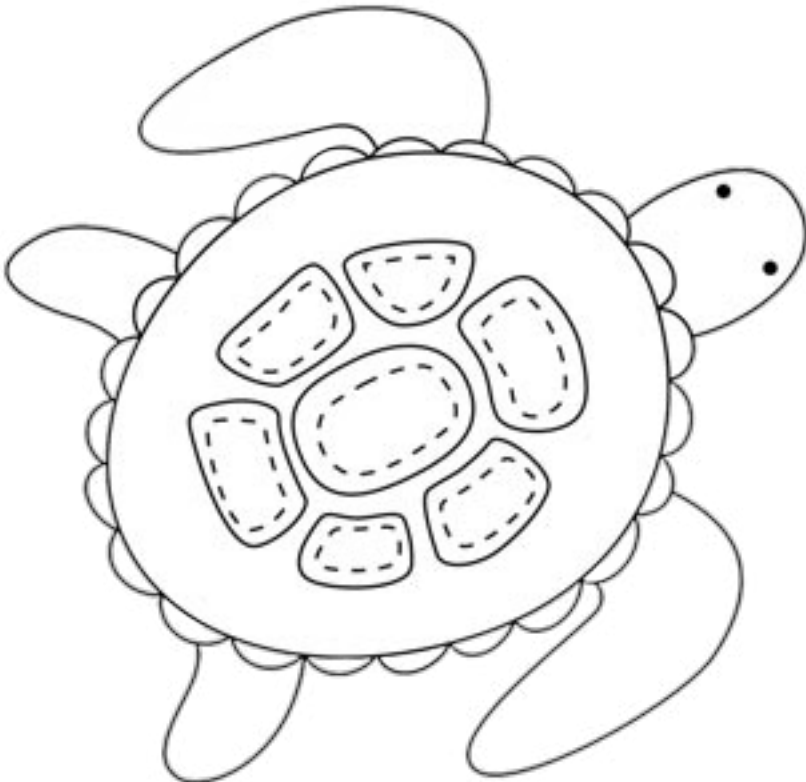
I didn't realize how much that experience would shape my life. My mother helped to restore the remembrance of every life in our community. Every single life made a difference. I'll never know the story of the family whose baby died after only a few months. I just know that that life made an impact – 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.



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.

Answer Key to Suduko

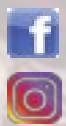
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7	6	9	4	1	5	3	8	2
5	1	3	8	2	7	9	6	4
2	4	8	3	6	9	5	1	7

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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May God Bless America!

Happy 250th Birthday!

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. Visit her website at www.inlovesnature.com.