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Wisconsin's Main Street Shopping Guide | September-October 2026

**Round Up Some
Of Your Craziest
Friends & Take A
Little Road Trip
This Fall. Lots
Of Great Ideas
Inside This Issue!**

A Wonderful Read: Uplifting, Light, Funny, Refreshing & Positive



The Country Register Of Wisconsin

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September-October 2026**

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We are seriously looking for some more friends

By Scott Hughes
Publisher

EAU CLAIRE, WI - I have some friends who look a little bit like the jokers on our cover this time. No, seriously, it's true. Well, my friends don't have big, round, orange heads. I hope yours don't, either.

But those expressions? Yeah, I've seen those before.

And did you notice that almost all of them looked right at the camera for the photographer? Amazing indeed.

Hey, speaking of friends, we're always looking for some new ones.

So I've got a favor to ask you, Dear Reader.

Could you please take this

copy of the Country Register to one of your favorite little shops, one of those little hidden gems that more people should know about, and suggest that they consider advertising with us?

Your referral would mean the world to us and help keep our business healthy.

We provide little shops all around the state with a very, **very** affordable way to talk to thousands and thousands of potential customers throughout Wisconsin.

But we can't possibly get to all of the shop owners out there. So that's where you come in.

All you have to do is bring them this copy of the paper, point to the ad at the bottom of page 3, and tell them they should call or email us. Thank you!



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Schedule of Events

Great Sales & Promotions In Our Favorite Places!

September

- 1After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m.
The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 1-30All Wisconsin Shop Hop - 45+ Stores - Statewide
- 1-30All Wisconsin Shop Hop - Barn Door Quilts - Sturgeon Bay
- 1-30All Wisconsin Shop Hop - River's Edge Quilt Shop -Hayward
- 1-30All Wisconsin Shop Hop - The Duke's Stash - New Glarus
- 8After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 8-13Quilters Business Academy - Woodland Ridge Retreat - Menomonie
- 10-12Quilt Kits & Beyond Vending At Great Wisconsin Quilt Show - Madison
- 10-12Barn Door Quilts Vending At The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show - Madison
- 11-12Yellowstone Art Trail - 9 Locations - Cadott, Boyd & Eastern Lake Wissota
- 12Fundraiser For Muehl Public Library Expansion Project
Discount Embroidery Blanks - Seymour
- 12.....M50 Pot O' Luck Mini Mystery Day - River's Edge Quilt Shop - Hayward
- 15After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 19Barn Door Quilts Vending At Harvest Fest - Sturgeon Bay
- 19.....The Paisley Star Vending At Sugar Creek Bible Camp Fall Festival- Ferryville
- 22After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 24-27Fall Fat Quarter Frenzy - Bolt & Skein Quilt Shop - Shawano
- 24-27Extended Hours For Warrens Cranfest - The Market Place - Tomah
- 25-26Willow River Piecemakers Quilt Show - Prairie Covenant Church - New Richmond
- 25-30Falling Leaves Shop Hop - Busy Bobbin - Rice Lake
- 25-30Falling Leaves Shop Hop - Crazy Moose Fabrics - Elk Mound
- 25-30Falling Leaves Shop Hop - Fiber Lab - Menomonie
- 25-30.....Falling Leaves Shop Hop - The Quilting Nook & More - Osseo
- 29After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien

October

- 1-3Falling Leaves Shop Hop - Busy Bobbin - Rice Lake
- 1-3Falling Leaves Shop Hop - Crazy Moose Fabrics - Elk Mound
- 1-3.....Falling Leaves Shop Hop - Fiber Lab - Menomonie

- 1-3Falling Leaves Shop Hop - The Quilting Nook & More - Osseo
- 1-31.....All Wisconsin Shop Hop - 45+ Stores - Statewide
- 1-31.....All Wisconsin Shop Hop - Barn Door Quilts - Sturgeon Bay
- 1-31All Wisconsin Shop Hop - River's Edge Quilt Shop - Hayward
- 1-31All Wisconsin Shop Hop - The Duke's Stash - New Glarus
- 2-3Quilt Fest On The Mississippi - Omni Center - Onalaska
- 2-3Barn Door Quilts Vending At the Darting Needles Quilt Show - Neenah
- 2-3....."What's Old Is New Again" Quilt Show - Faith Global Methodist Church - Neenah
- 2-3Vintage Shop Hop - The Old Junction Mill - Milton
- 2-3.....Vintage Shop Hop - The Paisley Star - Boscobel
- 3-4Chippewa Valley Quilt Show - Northern Wisc. State Fairgrounds - Chippewa Falls
- 3-4Needle & Quilting Workshop Vending At Chippewa Valley Quilt Shop - Chippewa Falls
- 6After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 7-13Fall Warehouse Sale - Herrschners Outlet & Quilt Shop - Stevens Point
- 8-10Fall Colors Quilt Shop Hop - Olive Juice Quilts - Onalaska
- 8-10Fall Colors Quilt Shop Hop - River Road Quilt Shop - LaCrosse
- 8-10Fall Colors Quilt Shop Hop - Quilt Basket 'n Creations - Viroqua
- 8-10Fall Colors Quilt Shop Hop - The Paisley Star - Boscobel
- 8-11Countdown To The Holidays Sale - Bolt & Skein Quilt Shop - Marshfield
- 13After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 16-18Sweet Sixteen Virtual Retreat - River's Edge Quilt Loft - Hayward
- 17America's Birthday Bash Quilt Show - Montello High School
- 20After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 21-24NE Iowa Fall Shop Hop - Forest Mills Quilt Shop - Postville, IA
- 23Barn Door Quilts Vending At Treasures Of Tomorrow Quilt Show - Marshfield
- 23-24Treasures Of Tomorrow Quilt Show - LEV Church Orbital Building - Marshfield
- 27After Hours Facebook Live At 6:00 p.m. - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 28-31.....Holiday Open House - Herrschners Outlet & Quilt Shop - Stevens Point

November

- 1-3Holiday Open House - Herrschners Outlet & Quilt Shop - Stevens Point
- 1-31Holiday Shop Hop - Needle & Quilting Workshop - Wausau
- 4M50 (Gaelic Charm) Mega Mystery #5 Starts - River's Edge Quilt Shop - Hayward
- 6-7Christmas On First - Needle & Quilting Workshop - Wausau



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Prescription For Adventure - Autumn Rituals and Checklists ...

By Naomi Gaede Penner

"What are you doing?" I ask my brother when he answers the phone and sounds out of breath.

"Splitting wood," he says.

I visualize him in one of his red-plaid flannel shirts.

"Much better to do this now than when it's below zero and my hands and the splitter freeze."

Summers are short in Alaska, and winters are cold. He has a generator for when the power goes out and a woodstove to keep the house warm. There's plenty of beetle-killed timber in our homestead woods, yet even so, it takes work to cut, split, stack, and cover it.

"I need to check some property line fences next," he adds. "By the way, we're having moose-hunting weather."

I understand what that means and know he's working under overcast skies with heavy, cold moisture in the air. I'm thinking hot chocolate is in his near future.

My father, mother, and brother were all hunters. My Kansas-bred farmer-parents didn't think twice about butchering a moose, albeit much larger than the bovines they were used to. Once the hunters returned, we kids were part of the assembly line. Our parents adeptly sliced the meat into roasts, minute steaks, and cubes for stew, and then handed the cuts to us. Mom had demonstrated how to fold and wrap the meat in waxed butcher's paper. Next came labeling the packages with a black marker. Finally, we lugged the provisions to the freezer in the woodshed and arranged them



Naomi Gaede Penner

in specific sections. Later, scraps of meat would be ground into hamburger. The Gaede Meat Department was ready. Grocery shopping would be easy.

After I moved out of state, I stood at a grocery store meat department baffled by the arrays of "chuck," "rib," "rump," and "loin" options. Added to my frustration was that I really didn't care for beef anyway. I preferred moose, caribou, and Dall sheep.

Hunting and Gathering

In addition to being hunters, our family gathered. Most years I purposefully return to our homestead in late summer when I can pick low bush cranberries (lingonberries) with my siblings. The small red cranberries decorate the lacy green moss, and as we

The Winning R
(continued from page 1)
1st Prize
Superb Moose Roast
In a bowl soak 3 lb. moose roast in a brine made of
1/2 Cup Salt
1/2 Cup brown sugar
2 T. Worcestershire Sauce
Add enough water to cover half the meat. Turn meat every 2 hours while soaking for 8 hours. Remove meat from brine and allow meat to drip excess brine. Place meat in smoker for 8 hours. Next put meat in roaster and cover with 2 cups water and bake at 325°F for 2 1/2 or 3 hours.
Ruby Gaede

Great Lander Recipe Contest
Moose Roast Wins For Ruby Gaede
Judge's Comments: "It's a very difficult job to judge the Great Lander recipe contest, because cooks all over Alaska send in their most appetizing dishes: cheesecake, pumpkin dessert rolls filled with cream cheese, stews scented with burgundy, teas redolent of cardamom, pound cake heavy with sour cream, Cornish pasties stuffed with beef kidney and onion, broccoli sauteed with mushrooms and pine nuts, breads flavored with marjoram and dill, rose hip sauce to serve with grouse, Sweet and Sour Pâté, recipes for eggplant baked with basil and garlic, for French Canadian "Chinese Pie," cabbage combined with curry, vermicelli with chili powder, pizza with pineapple, bear meatballs, salmon liver stroganoff, rattlesnake with nutmeg, orange, and lemon, moose steak in cream, string bean salad with olive oil — It's enough to make a judge hungry!"
"First prize went to Ruby Gaede's Superb Moose Roast because it is an uncomplicated recipe but one which combines three methods: marinating, smoking, and roasting with liquid (braising) to bring to perfection one five-pound moose roast. This is cooking at its finest: few ingredients, fresh ingredients, methods suitably applied."
1st prize) Ruby L. Gaede's Superb Moose Roast.
2nd prize) Ethel Schwantes' Filler of Sole Pizzaiola.
3rd prize) Anne Detoni's Rose Hip Sauce for grouse or duck.
Honorable Mentions: 1) Patsy Carpenter's Bean-Thread Casserole, 2) Janice Sant's Salmon Liver Stroganoff, 3) Mr. and Mrs. Greg Perry's Filled Muscat Star Cookies, 4) Alice Bowles' Cornish Pasties, 5) Karen Schalka's Cheesecake with Variations.
(continued on page 11)

Ruby Gaede's award-winning moose roast recipe.

squat down to reach them, we marvel at the artistic arrangements of the mixed vegetation on top of lichen-etched rotten tree stumps. Other berry bushes poke out along the edges of our grassy airstrip where sunshine has enticed them to flourish. Picking berries quiets our souls and subdues our conversation while increasing our slapping of mosquitoes.

Cutting and chopping rhubarb requires less time outdoors for the attacks of the ubiquitous bloodsuckers. My sister-in-law precisely cuts the stalks into small pieces, measures two cups into a Ziplock, and marks each package.

My brother has perfected blueberry pancakes with the tiny fruits he occasionally still finds on our land, or when he's hiking in the mountains. Sadly, the wilderness has taken back Mom's raspberry patch, although rogue strawberries from her strawberry patch surprise us along the dusty road.

When I return to Colorado, my suitcase contains frozen cranberries and rhubarb.

Taking Inventory

We grew up with a plain cardboard box in the hallway closet filled with winter socks, mittens, gloves, and whatnot. With four children, these clothing accessories came in all shapes and sizes. Shortly before fall arrived, our mother took inventory so as to

prevent the wild and noisy bedlam of eight hands and arms discovering only one mitten or mismatched socks in the box. Not to mention boots that had been outgrown over the summer. Not to mention heads crashing together, unkind words, and the very real panic of missing the school bus. Thus, she assessed which articles had "run away to the circus," as she was fond of saying. Even if a boot had not run away, she evaluated whether the pair was still usable and whether they could be handed down to a younger sibling; if not, a purchase was necessary.

Growing up in Interior Alaska, the nearest store was a two-hour flight away, or later, on the Kenai Peninsula, a three-hour drive on a gravel or ice-packed road. But not to worry. Mom summoned the child in need of new footwear to stand on a piece of typing paper while she traced around one foot and sent it off to Sears and Roebuck's or Montgomery Ward's. Mail orders often took three weeks.

(Now, decades later, villagers purchase from Amazon, which can still take three weeks for orders to arrive — and that depends on flying weather and whether or not the Post Master or Mistress is in the village.)

For us children, ice skates and sleds were equally important for an autumn inventory.

Continued On Page 5

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... Always Be Prepared

Continued From Page 4

“Do I have to wear white figure skates?” protested our brother.

It’s not easy for a boy to have two older sisters, and parents who believe in passing down as much as possible to the younger kids in the family. It worked for our little sister, although by the time clothes reached her, they were pretty well worn out — and the styles had changed, too, not that this was that critical in the far north. Finally, a family friend gave our brother black hockey skates, and he spent a day plunging into a snowbank — and learning how to stop.

Years later, I still take inventory of my “woolies” and “mufflers” (wool scarves for around my neck). I no longer outgrow my clothes, but my purchases focus on the energy-efficient apparel of fleece vests, down-insulated “puffy” winter coats, and hand-warmers. I give my brother Yaktrax and micro-spikes for Christmas.

“I couldn’t live without them when I walk the dog,” I tell him.

In return, he gives me waterproof Gore-Tex socks. “Oh! So, cozy!” I exclaim with pleasure. “Maybe I’ll go wading in puddles, like I did as a kid, to try them out.”

We laugh. Since my primary residence is in a state with a spider web of roads, I can easily walk into an REI, Sportsman’s Warehouse, or L.L. Bean. I’ll admit though, I miss thumbing through thick mail-order catalogs — and especially the Christmas ones, with all the dolls, toy stoves, and farm sets. By the way, I still have my light-blue figure skates with gray fur around the top. Size 6. I’ve kept them, even though they are too small. I’ve kept them be-

cause they remind me of good times on the skating rink Dad made in our backyard — and to display them with my outdoor Christmas décor.

Fruits of Our Labor

In fall, before I return to Colorado, at least one sibling will say wistfully, “Naomi, are you going to bake us a rhubarb-cherry pie? Like Mom did?”

“Of course,” I reply. “And would you like rhubarb coffee cake or cranberry nutbread? Or both?” I already know the answer.

Then I turn to my brother’s wife, “You make the best roasts ever. Could you make one before I leave?”

“Mashed potatoes? Gravy?”

She knows the answer. I can taste it all already.

We are prepared. We can nestle in for shorter days and colder nights with a crackling fire, cup of tea and a tasty baked treat, and even a heated vest. Let’s welcome autumn.

Rhubarb-Cherry Pie

Ingredients:

- 2 ½ c. rhubarb, chopped
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) pitted, tart, red cherries, un-drained
- 1 c. granulated sugar
- 2 T. quick-cooking tapioca

Method:

Combine ingredients and let stand 10 minutes.

Prepare two-crust pastry. Roll out and line a 9-inch pie plate. Dump in pie-filling ingredients. Cover with remaining rolled-out crust. Pinch edges together and trim off excess dough. Sprinkle lightly with cinnamon and sugar.

Bake at 400 degrees for 40 minutes. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Rhubarb Coffee Cake

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ c. brown sugar
- ½ c. cooking oil
- 1 egg
- 1 c. sour milk
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- Pinch salt
- 2 c. flour
- 2 c. finely cut rhubarb

Method:

Mix above ingredients, beat 2 min. Fold in rhubarb. Pour in 9 x 13-inch pan.

Topping

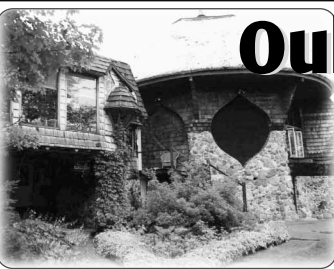
- ½ c. chopped nuts

- ½ c. granulated or brown sugar
 - 1 tsp. cinnamon
- Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Recipes & Their Origins

- Moose Roast Recipe Contest Winner— Ruby L. Gaede (see photo)
- Moose Roast Recipe Family Winner – Patti Kvalvik Gaede (see photo)
- Rhubarb-cherry pie – Ruby L. Gaede
- Rhubarb Coffee Cake – Naomi Gaede Penner

Naomi’s brother is Mark Gaede. You can read about him in the book he wrote with Naomi: “The Alaska Bush Pilot’s Son,” available on Amazon. To learn more about the Gaede’s homestead, go to the Prescription for Adventure Facebook page.



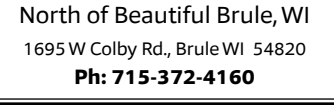
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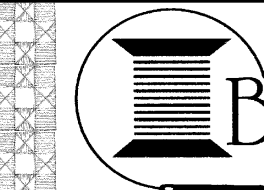
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- Oct. 16-18:** Sweet Sixteen Virtual Retreat
- Nov. 4:** M50 (Gaelic Charm) Mega Mystery #5 Starts

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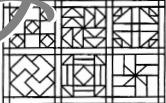
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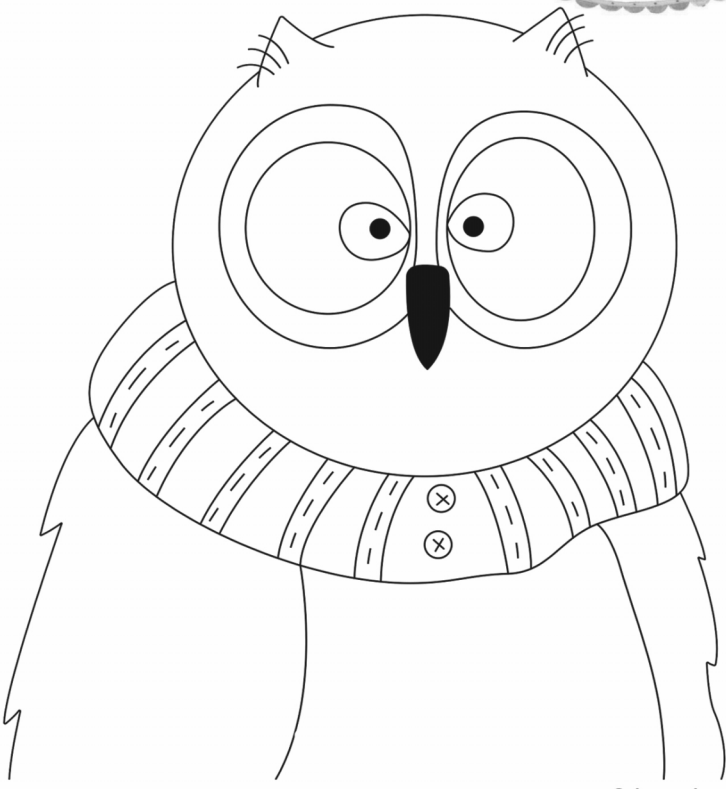
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Avoiding A Cat-astrophe!

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 primal 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 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.Debcatsnquilts.com

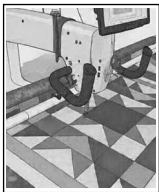


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Humble Life Acres - The Fox Family & The Hen House

By Resha and Tim,
of Humble Life Acres

Most people assume a fox living beside a chicken coop is a disaster waiting to happen. After all, foxes and hens have been cast as natural enemies for generations. But what happens when a fox quietly takes up residence, and the expected chaos never arrives?

The story of a fox and a henhouse isn't always one of conflict. Sometimes, it's a lesson in coexistence, curiosity, and the surprising balance that exists in nature when we take the time to observe and allow. It is a delicate harmony that can exist between wildlife and the places we call home.

What most do not realize is that the fox mom is looking for a safe home to start her family. As more land is transformed into managed landscapes, there are less places for nature creatures to seek refuge. To just be. To exist and to thrive. Sadly, there is a mindset that the threat of wildlife on the land results in taking that life without regard. Sure, it is somewhat of a threat. But, since when did things get to the point that the belief that every wild animal must be eliminated simply because it exists nearby?



More of that mindset has become the normal, to where we are without understanding, even eliminating nature's medicine cabinet. When our first response is to eradicate rather than understand, we risk disrupting the delicate balance of entire ecosystems. The animals we fear, the plants we call weeds, and the medicinal herbs we overlook all play a role in supporting biodiversity, pollinators, soil health, and the interconnected web of life.

By taking extra precautions, such as securing a chicken coop with adding a second layer of heavy-gauge wiring and

lighting to mitigate threats within our control, you can have foxes living right beside a chicken coop. You can have confidence through observation that the environment will be successful for both.

For years, we have solar predator lights around the chicken coop, which have worked great, until this year. How solar predator lights work is there are two red flashing lights that mimic the eyes of larger predators and those that only come out at night. What I didn't realize is that while they may have "failed" the chickens in our coop, so to speak, they worked to protect the fox and her six beautiful kits from other predators.

Observation is one of the most valuable tools for living cohesively with wildlife. By paying attention to animal behavior, seasonal patterns, and the rhythms of the natural world, we can better understand how to share space in ways that benefit both humans and wildlife. Observation replaces assumptions with knowledge. Fear with understanding. This is how we have two large dogs, a fox family, and chickens in the run, all living cohesively, respectfully and in harmony together.

We noticed that over a period of time, the mom fox would move the kits, which she did to a nearby culvert. We believe that due to the threat of nearby predators like coyotes, she has moved them back into the safety of our space. Sadly, there are four

kits from the original six left.

In the early mornings, we observe her time with the kits. They are so happy to be with their mom, playful and carefree. The connection between mom and her kits is one of love and deep adoration.

In the evenings, we have observed her sitting by herself and taking a moment to watch the sunset. Perhaps getting some much-needed peaceful time after being away for most of the day, hunting for food on a consistent basis.

This has been an amazing and honorable experience. We were able to keep close observation while keeping a respectful distance with the use of security cameras. It is unbelievable when you have a fox family in the camera view, and behind them are chickens roaming around in the run. The foxes do not care at all what the chickens are doing. They are there because it is a safe place to be, which happens to be on five acres of land, surrounded by thousands of acres of cultivated land.

Our journey started when we moved from city life to country life five years ago. When we arrived, the land was very disrespected. In our first year, we hauled 60 cubic yards of garbage off the land. There were no birds, wildlife or signs of life. With love and respect of the land, with care and determination, and by revitalizing and with conservation efforts we now have hundreds of species of birds that nest. Wildlife, including species at risk, seek refuge on our five acres.

Rooted in nature and committed to preservation, our connection to the earth runs deep. We have respect for the land, we advocate for responsible land stewardship, conservation and the protection of wild habitats. The importance of land stewardship is a responsibility for us all that walk the earth.

Stay tuned for our documented video journey with the Fox family.

Much love,
Resha & Tim
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Pieces From My Heart - Brittle, With A Bite

By Jan Keller

Pistachios. Is there a more delicious nut?

There are pistachio groves near Alamogordo, New Mexico, and each time I'm in the area, I'm tempted to stop to buy some at the producer's retail outlets.

Recently my friend Maryann, who lives in Alamogordo, came for a week-end visit. As an extra-special treat, she brought some raw pistachios as a gift.

Immediately, I had brittle on my brain!

It was about a month before I got out my heavy candy-makin' pan and assembled the necessary ingredients. I had researched via internet and found three recipes of special interest. After careful review of the ingredients and directions, I took elements from each recipe and concocted my own.

One of the recipes talked of stretching the brittle as it was barely cooling. My friend Norma stretches and pulls her peanut brittle and I know it's a highly coveted holiday treat. I love it. It was a no-brainer the stretching recipe was des-



igned to become my primary recipe. Based on the other two recipes, I decided I would add cream of tartar and cinnamon, as well as a couple of spices to give that special bite.

In no time brittle was cooked and it was time for the stretching. My sister-in-law Connie was visiting. I recruited her help to pull sections of candy until it took on an iridescent sheen. After quickly re-buttering our fingers, we'd move on to another barely-touchable glob of the molten goo and repeat the process.

Everyone who's tasted the brittle has raved, so, from one nut to another, I'm pleased to share the recipe with you. Warning: this may be addicting!

Jan's Brittle With A Bite

Ingredients:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light Karo syrup
- ½ cup water
- 2 cups pistachios
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon Tabasco sauce
- 1 tablespoon baking soda

Method:

In a large heavy pan, combine sugar, Karo syrup and water. Boil this mixture until it reaches 238 degrees on a candy thermometer. Then add pistachios, salt and cream of tartar. Continue to cook, stirring frequently. When the boiling mixture reaches 290 degrees — hard

crack — remove the pan from the burner and add vanilla, butter, cayenne pepper, chili powder and Tabasco sauce. Quickly stir together then add baking soda. Mix well and, working quickly, pour out onto a couple of buttered cookie sheets. Spread with a spoon. Beginning with the outer edges, with well-buttered fingers begin to pull and stretch until it's very thin and a section breaks away. It's a good idea to have a sheet of foil where you can put the pulled pieces of candy. When well-cooled, store in airtight containers or sealed plastic bags. The pistachios in this recipe could also be substituted with peanuts, cashews, or any desired combination of nuts.

It's good stuff — and when pulled thin, not hard on teeth.

©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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Halloween - 1950s & '60s Fun

By David Kish

I grew up in the late 1950s and early 1960s in an old Italian neighborhood in Norwalk, Connecticut. Everyone was friendly and knew everyone by name for blocks around. Back then, Halloween was more than just collecting candy in costume — it was a guessing game.

As the youngest of four boys, I was always the last to wear a passed-down Halloween costume. My first costume was a silky, red devil body suit and plastic devil mask. I had a big orange plastic pumpkin bucket with black strap handle for my candy.

No one went out before dusk, so I would keep looking at the clock and asking my mom when I could go out. Back then, children went out by themselves in complete safety. My brothers were seven to 14 years older than me and did their own thing, so I ventured out on my own. As soon as Mom gave the okay, I started going from house to house, happily yelling “Trick or Treat” when someone opened the door.

Increasing the night's fun were

neighbors trying to guess who you were before giving you any candy. I always stayed silent while they guessed. Of course, some got it right while others probably played the game by making believe they didn't know who you were.

There was a corner candy shop that the owners lived above. Kids would gather on the sidewalk in front of the closed, dark shop and wait for the owners to open their window upstairs. Then they would toss nickels and dimes to the trick or treaters on the sidewalk below. The owners would come downstairs, turn on the lights in the shop and open the doors for us all to come in and exchange the coins for the candy of our choice. When I think about it now, I wonder why I didn't just pocket the money since I had a whole bucket full of candy! But I was a kid with a sweet tooth and the more candy, the better.

Across from the candy shop lived a lady who gave out fresh candied apples and nearby was another house where you'd be handed a small bag of peanuts. I would eventually make my way home in the dark and my Mom and I would



Raw Pixel Photo

sit on the living room rug and dump out the pumpkin bucket so we could go through all the candy. Mom would look for Mary Jane candy and peanuts, which I was happy to give her. The rest went into a special “candy drawer” in a lamp table and I would eat a few pieces a day as I fondly remembered a won-

derful night!

David Kish is a fiber artist, teacher and writer who enjoys writing short articles about his memories growing up. He has lived in the Southwest since 1992 and has retired in southeast New Mexico.

KISSed Quilts -
Design Ideas Sometimes Need To
Percolate For ... 20 Years?

By Marlene Oddie

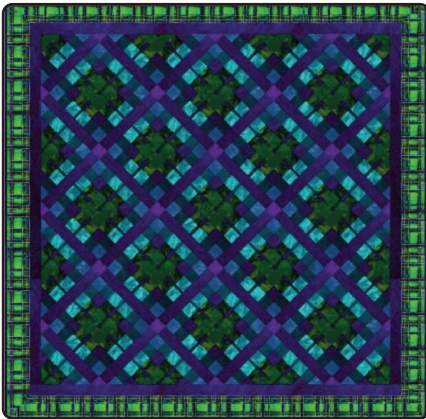
When presented with the new fabric collection from Frond Studios — Bells of Ireland distributed by Northcott — I immediately remembered a block design that I developed over 20 years ago. I fortunately found it in an old file cabinet and worked on creating it in Electric Quilt 8 to start playing with it on a larger scale: an entire quilt.

This collection has a beautiful canvas panel for bag making and a couple of different large print running yardage SKUs, but I chose to focus on the more color saturated SKUs combined in a way to make this beautiful Tartan — fussy cutting the printed tartan for the border.

This On Point Plaid pattern and the Bells of Ireland collection of fabrics are shipping to your local quilt shop now. If you need patterns, templates, fabrics and/or kits, please ask!

The possibilities for this pattern are endless. Find your favorite plaid color combination, a family tartan, one that works with your personal aesthetic, or dream up your own.

I've written the pattern in such a way that you are making strata sets and then cutting and reassembling the entire block and the pieced setting triangles.



The key is to get your color placement of the block correct so that with the sashings, cornerstones and the blocks it makes a continuous plaid.

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.



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Back Porch Break - Wildlife Wonders

By Nancy Parker Brummett

What is it about sighting wildlife that gives us such a thrill? Maybe it's because each encounter is so unexpected. Also because it's nothing that can be planned. No matter how many tourists ask the park rangers, "What time do you let the animals out?" that's not how it works, folks. No travel agent can guarantee a wildlife sighting either. It's the very serendipitous nature of it that makes it seem like such a joyful gift.

In the fall in Colorado, many residents plan a trip to Estes Park, near Rocky Mountain National Park, to hear the elk bugle and to see these majestic creatures in their natural habitat. The surprise comes when they also see them crossing streets in downtown Estes Park, creating both a photographic opportunity and a traffic jam.

My husband and I took an anniversary trip to Banff National Park in Canada last summer. As much as we loved seeing the massive Canadian Rockies, the crystal clear blue lakes and charming old hotels, it was the wildlife that made the trip extra memorable.

On our drive down Sunshine Mountain from the high vista lodge where we stayed for two nights, we were surprised to round a corner and see a mountain goat staring at us from the side of the road. "So, you folks are checking out," he seemed to be saying. "Hope you enjoyed your stay. Come back and see us, eh?"

No doubt he knew we were tourists by our rental car with the Alberta license plates.

A day or so later we were driving from one mountain lake to another when we came upon a bear seriously going about searching for the thousands of berries he needs to sustain himself. Unlike the goat, he didn't seem to give us any mind at all. Canada had a late summer, so it's possible he just came out of hibernation. Food was his biggest priority and we were too encapsulated in steel to be enticing. Now with fall approaching, he'll be fattening up for the winter, I'm sure.

We also saw a herd of elk from a distance, and though we didn't spot a moose, we had such a good sighting of one outside of Jackson Hole last year that we didn't feel at all deprived. When my husband Jim shared a bit of his lunch at a café near



Kerry Hargrove Photo

Lake Moraine with a chipmunk, he delighted a family with children nearby. We certainly hope the fine for feeding wildlife we saw posted later doesn't apply to chipmunks!

I have a friend who sees every sighting of a hawk as a special message and gift from God. If she sees a bald eagle, she feels blessed beyond belief! We are all blessed to share this earth with God's marvelous creatures, and when our paths cross unexpectedly, my gratitude abounds.

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. "Like" her author page on Facebook, or to learn more about her life and work, visit www.nancyparkerbrummett.com.

Now available from Nancy Parker Brummett: "Take My Hand - A Faith-Based Guide for Helping Aging Parents," in print or eBook from Amazon.



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Writing From Life - Crafting Is ...

By Jeanette Lukowski

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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 said.

Her comment lingered. Of course she can do better! I've seen her skill. I'm also eager to see how she redesigns 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!

©2026 Jeanette Lukowski. Lukowski 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.

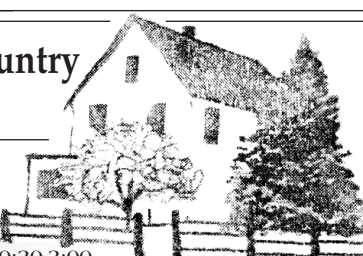
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TO MAKE COCOA:

Add 2 Tbsp. Cocoa Mix to 8 oz. (1 c.) hot milk; stir until dissolved. Pour hot cocoa over marshmallows. Good with cinnamon toast. ♥

With Love From the Heart of the Home Come... Susan Branch

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Pieces From My Heart - Autumn Leaves

By Jan Keller

The distant horizon greets me as I walk through a landscape painted with the rich warm tones of gold, crimson and bronze. The gentle autumn breeze, even on a sunny day, possesses an unmistakable chill. Overhead, the leaves clinging desperately to barren branches rustle a melody of greeting as I pass. With an accompanying percussion rhythm, the brittle fallen leaves scrunch into countless dried bits as they cushion my steps.

I like the gentle, warm and sunny autumn days, when summer's whisper returns for brief moments. The out-of-doors beckons. I long to take respite from the busyness of day-to-day routine to recreate my being. My lungs expand with exhilarating fresh brisk air. The stress, worry and frets of the day are exhaled, releasing me from their exhausting drain on my energy.

Hidden in the grass out under a big willow tree I spot a cottontail. With lop-ears tucked down close to his body, he blends in with the natural terrain. Except for his large, acutely perceptive and frightened eyes, I might not see him. Once I'm past, the furry animal relaxes his tense muscles and hops off in the opposite direction.



Smileus Photo

High overhead in a large oak tree, a pair of squirrels bicker at one another. I smile and think, "Those two must be married." The red robin is gone, but a V-formation of high-flying geese honk their way across a clear azure sky. Their migration south is a predictable sight of the season.

Autumn can appear a dreaded drab time, focusing on death, dying and the stark reality of the severe elements. The wildflower blossoms lose their bright blush

and the wild grasses are no longer green. Their apparent life force has been snuffed out by a freezing blast from the north wind. Survival of the fittest is the governing role of nature. Through the long cold winter, the old or weakened animals will succumb, falling victim to harsh decree. At the appointed season, the quiet darkness of death is natural. Even welcome.

Just as day follows night, spring will follow a winter of rest. Seasons turn into

years. Years accumulate into lifetimes. The future will belong to the progeny.

Geese will make a return flight when winter is past. The blades of grass will sprout and flowers will grow and bloom anew. When the robin returns, a nest will be built high in a tree, barely visible, hidden amidst the strong branches and fresh growth of lush green leaves. In the spring, prolific signs of new life will be witnessed throughout the realm of nature.

But today, as I walk through a landscape painted with the rich warm tones of gold, crimson and bronze autumn leaves, I feel a cold wind that follows the setting of the sun. The wind whisks past and stings my unprotected cheeks.

Wishing I could retreat to a sanctuary of immunity, I am reminded of the revitalizing necessity of a time to rest.

©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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Golden Autumn's Gifts

By Barbara Kalkis

Autumn — at last! I will miss you summer, but there's such relief with autumn's arrival. Finally, I can accept the fact that the five pounds I promised to shed in May will spend the holidays stuck to my hips. That thought frees me to shred my stack of sure-fire weight-loss tips. Also out: the food journal logging diet victories and confessions of eating ice cream swimming in chocolate sauce, walnuts and whipped cream.

It's also time to say goodbye to every summer salad and chilled soup under the sun, which looks scrumptious in magazines and easy-breezy to prepare. One famous chef claimed that she just served

salads to guests. Easy-peasy and everyone loved them. Really? Only if I buy ingredients in a bag and dump them all in a salad bowl. Otherwise, I must cook and chill the pasta, corn, rice or potatoes, and spend hours slicing, dicing and adding all the other ingredients to make the dinner look effortless, healthy, and — as a bonus — slimming.

I tried that advice, but two hours later I was still hungry and needed a snack, like my ice cream. I enjoyed the forbidden snack by reassuring myself that ice cream provides bone-strengthening healthy calcium, which I noted in my food journal.

In autumn you can stow your trendy charcuterie boards. Like chilled salads and soups, they, too, are wearisome. You



Jeni Foto Photo

can pile them high with cheeses, meats and veggies that require hours of slicing; add condiments spooned out of jars and placed into cuter containers, deli sausages, salamis and cheeses that must be decorated with olives (black and green), cherry tomatoes, pickled onions and, oh, don't forget the cracker and bread assortment. By the time I finished with my one-time only charcuterie board, I had loaded three boards and a dozen bowls and was wondering why I just hadn't popped a chicken in the oven with vegetables and called the meal "done."

Now at last, it's autumn. My favorite season. Wai — I said that about spring when I shook off my winter doldrums; summer when the fresh market vegetables were really fresh and flower bouquets were from the garden. Days stretched from early sunrises to late sunsets sparkling with firefly dances and starry skies. Now, before the chill of winter, autumn arrives in brilliant color. Out of the closet come the comfy clothes that fit like the summer shorts didn't. In the kitchen, the microwave goes silent. Heavy pans for cooking "serious food" are pulled out of their summer storage in the oven. It's the season to cook. Best of all, it's time for comfort foods like cookies, pies, and cakes.

Autumn is the perfect time for everything from meat to vegetables to cookies

and every kind of dessert. We can practice old recipes and try new ones before the holiday season. Magazines, organizations, and even companies enthusiastically support cooking. Wisconsin Energy's Cookie Book has been published continuously since 1928. Pennsylvania cookbooks feature apple crisp, snickerdoodles and Gobs (or whoopie pies). Some states have an official state cookie, pie or desert, while provinces promote iconic foods associated with a region.

Think about the popular foods where you live. The foods routinely featured and ordered in a café or restaurant are part of a region's cultural signature. For me, there's nothing better than sitting down with a glass of ice-cold milk, a cookie — or 6! — fresh from the oven and watching the sunset. The warmth of something baked in an oven touches the heart in a way that a tossed salad or cold salami never can.

©2026 Barbara Kalkis. Barbara divides her time between writing, teaching and consulting. She is a terrible cook but appreciates those home chefs who have perfected the art. Reach her at Barbara-Kalkis01@gmail.com.

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Falling Afresh

By Nancy Parker Brummett

It's been 60 years since I spent all day every day in a school building. And yet when September rolls around I get that "first day of school" excitement all over again. To me, September feels more like the time for a fresh start than January ever does. I have to rein in my shopping excursions this time of year, however, because I have a real weakness for new pencils and pens, lined notebooks, and everything else stores set out in their back-to-school displays. I'm still enjoying a purple folio I bought one year because ... well, because it was purple with a purple legal pad inside. Who could resist?

Beyond the back-to-school feeling, however, are all the refreshing signs of change. My Virginia Creeper begins to take on shades of orange and gold. The tips of the leaves on the red maple behind our house hint at the bright ruby brilliance soon to come. And there's always that one day in the fall when the light becomes noticeably different. Rather than the sun beaming down with a harsh glare, a more peaceful, golden light descends upon our world. Such a

beautiful and peaceful change.

And don't we need this season to recover from the hectic pace of summer and restore our souls to prepare for the winter to come? Maybe it's because we remember the chilling winds and icy roads winter brings that we savor every golden September day. Autumn days are just too precious and fleeting to spend them holding on to summer or fearing what's to come. Rather they bring an opportunity to take a deep breath or two, clip the last of the roses to bring in the house, and curl up on the back porch with a light blanket and a good book.

We hear a lot about New Year's resolutions in January, but fall is an even better time to reflect on the months of the year behind us and embrace changes that refresh us before we head in to the holiday season. If you find joy in decluttering your office or culling clothes from your closet, fall's the time to do it. If you want to replace the grab-and-go meals of summer with some hearty stews and soups or pumpkin-flavored everything, now's the time. Refresh family menus with some new recipes from those seldom opened cookbooks!

A praise hymn by Daniel Iverson contains the

lyric, "Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me."

I want to be still long enough this fall season to feel the renewal of the Spirit within me. Then I'll have a chance of falling afresh in to the new season with joy and hope.

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.nancy-parkerbrummett.com.

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Halloween Is Fun For All Ages

By Susan Baldani

Boo! Halloween is almost here. Ghosts, goblins, vampires and werewolves will be roaming the streets after dark. Jack-o'-lanterns will flicker on porches, as leaves are rustled and the scent of firewood wafts through the air. Doorbells will ring, and shouts of "trick or treat" will resound throughout neighborhoods.

I have such wonderful memories of celebrating Halloween as a child. Instead of store-bought costumes, my siblings and I mostly wore homemade costumes made by Mom or Grandma. These could be simple, such as a white sheet with holes cut out for the eyes. Instant ghost! Or a black leotard and tights, cat ears and drawn on whiskers. Meow!

Others though were pretty elaborate, such as my witch outfit. My mom painted my face green, put a long black wig on my head and long black dress on my body, and

sent me to school for the Halloween parade. I was sure I was going to win for best costume.

Well, I never got to march in the parade. I was so scary that kids started crying when I walked into the classroom. The teacher made me take off the wig and wash off the makeup.

So much for getting the winning trophy. However, my mom redid it all when I got home so I could scare all the neighbors and get extra candy for my amazing costume.

These homemade costumes were always my favorite because no one ever had the same exact one. Every year, we would come up with something different and had great fun taking old ties and ripped shirts to make ourselves into hobos, or dressing all in red and putting on some devil's horns. The ideas were endless.

Today, I love seeing all the kids out trick-or-treating in their costumes, whether store-bought or homemade. It's a time for



Pressmaster Photo

them to be whatever they want for one day; whether a princess, a superhero, or a dinosaur. And, getting free candy always brings out the smiles.

Also, many of my adult friends have Halloween parties and encourage their guests to dress up. After all, who doesn't want to be a kid again, even for just few hours? To laugh, play, and have fun; these are things we should always make time for in our busy lives.

So have a Happy Halloween, and don't eat too much candy!

Susan Baldani writes articles about small town life, decor and food for various magazines across the U.S., Canada, and the UK. You can contact her at suebaldani@yahoo.com or through her website at www.mywritingwall.com.

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Prepare a box mix of gingerbread in an 8-inch pan. Cool completely, then crumble the cake. Set aside.

Mix 4 cups cold fat-free milk with 4 packages of instant butterscotch pudding mix. (1 oz. pkgs)

Mix for 2 minutes until slightly thickened. Let stand for 2 minutes.

Stir in:

- 1 can (15 ounces) solid pack pumpkin
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon each ground ginger and nutmeg

Stir pumpkin and spices into the pudding until well blended.

Thaw 1 carton (12 ounces) frozen reduced-fat whipped topping.

In a trifle bowl or large glass bowl, layer a fourth of the cake crumbs, half of the pumpkin mixture, more cake crumbs, and half of the whipped topping. Repeat layers.

Janet M. Bair contributed recipe

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM

just

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live simply DREAM give

be BIG LOVE

GRATEFUL laugh LOTS

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The definition of contemplation is inspiring ~ concentration on spiritual things as a form of private devotion ~ an act of considering with attention ~ the act of regarding steadily.

Contemplation about anything is pretty rare today. When was the last time you spent a considerable amount of time thinking about anything? We live in a fast pace world and we often want tasks or decisions to be resolved even faster.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM

Find a comfy place and simply "contemplate" on one thing of your choice. It might be a challenge ~ be patient with yourself ~ Give yourself some Grace!

Joy & Blessings, *Jody*

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.
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The Way It Is & The Way It Was - Grandma's House

By James Nelson

Editor's note: James Nelson was a long-time writer who contributed monthly to The Country Register. In honor of Grandparent's Day in September, here is a previously unpublished work from Nelson. He passed in 2020.

It was old, yet new; it was Spartan, yet grand. It looked stark and cold to many but in my mind's eye it generated warmth and love. It was Grandma's house. At this time in my young life, I was sure no finer house existed anywhere in the world.

A large bay window in the front room viewed the most elegant front porch one could imagine, from its ivy-covered pillars to the broad, long front steps leading to the oaken front door. The porch seemed to beckon you with the words "This is a grandma's house." The top step had a squeak all its own that seemed to say "Welcome."

All the rooms had high-beamed ceilings, which made them difficult to heat in our wintry climate. It didn't matter to Grandma. She always said it made her feel like she was living in a castle. Certainly this was easy to imagine for a small boy.

Her dream home was heated by central heating, meaning a large round, black woodstove sitting in the middle of the living room. Its cavernous, clanging double doors welcomed each tamarack log inserted in its throat with snapping sparks and crackling sounds of warmth.

The living room was Grandpa's favorite. I remember so vividly, as a child, watching him rocking in his chair at the end of the day, the only time he had to sit in it. Later in the evening, the twilight shadows slowly crept across the living room's linoleum-covered floor eventually creating a silhouette of this kindly man. Flames inside the woodstove reflected through its tiny window and danced upon his weathered features.

He never sat in his chair for long before Susie, his German shorthaired pointer, who never pointed at anything except her dog dish, was at his side. She knew it was only a matter of time before his hand would reach and find her with his soft touch. This dog, whom he often referred to as "that old pot hound," always looked up at him with adoration and

wagging tail, knowing full well she would be sleeping by his bed that night.

The only time his chair was moved was on Saturday night. He would take it to the front room and set it next to a small table radio, encased in a beautiful maple cabinet. There was no built-in stereo system in this house, thank you. There Grandpa rocked while laughing at the satirical humor of Amos and Andy. The rest of the family retreated to the living room so they wouldn't have to hear him say in his gruffest voice, "Shush now, I'm trying to listen."

This scene is etched in my memory forever, along with my love for both my grandparents. Every child should have the opportunity to develop a bond with his or her grandparents. After all, they are an extension of your own life.

Grandma's favorite room and mine, too, of course, was the kitchen with adjoining pantry. The pantry with the icebox at the back was another adventure for a grandchild. Yes, I still call our refrigerator an icebox. This always brings a smile to my children's faces. It's only natural.

The big old iron Monarch cook stove was what Grandma cooked her masterpieces on — from your basic foods to apple pie with golden brown crusts that would meld in your mouth. Believe me, they weren't fat free. All this was done with nothing but a thermometer on the heavy oven door. I guess you could say it was cooking by the seat of your pants. I remember the wood crackling and seeing the coals falling as I peered through the draft on the side of the stove. It tickled me because it was my job to split the kindling and set the fire the night before. It was a chore I loved to do and couldn't do at home. Mom had an electric stove. She couldn't cook as well as Grandma, either.

The Monarch stove was stoked up for double duty on baking day. It not only provided heat for Grandma's goodies but hot water for the weekly wash as well. If I was visiting, my job was to keep its flaming hunger satisfied with wooden mill ends. I was glad to do it because I knew at the end of the wash that Grandma and I would sit down for a coffee break.

I didn't get coffee at home but Grandma felt a cup of coffee with lots of cream and a

spoonful of sugar wouldn't hurt a grandchild. I was told not to volunteer any information to Mom about our coffee klatches, but if asked, not to lie about it. Fat chance of that Grandma, I thought, as a grin spread across my face. A large plate of sugar cookies was always on the table at the same time. Grandson was in seventh heaven.

The fire in the stove depicted warmth in more ways than one. I remember standing in front of the stove in my flannel pajamas and looking up at this large, kindly woman, absorbing the warmth generated by her and the stove. My bare feet would be cold on the linoleum-carpeted floor, but who cared. I defy any electric stove manufacturer to duplicate the sounds and smells that came from that old iron Monarch cook stove.

Grandmother arose at 5:30 a.m. each morning to cook a wonderful breakfast of biscuits and gravy, sliced slab bacon and, of course, eggs for those who wanted them. This was topped off with steaming coffee. Grandpa always sauced and blew on his to cool it. When I told Mom about Grandpa's actions, she said they weren't mannerly. Maybe not, Mom, but it sure looked like fun to me. Of course, smaller breakfasts were served, but I don't believe she ever bought a box of cereal. She didn't turn a dial to high, medium or low on her stove. She only had to ask, "Jimmy, please get me some more wood."

This heavy buxom woman filled my heart with pure joy till the day she went to heaven. I can still remember the odor of fresh-baked bread wafting through each room of this giant old house on baking day. This always meant a week's supply of sugar cookies would be in the cookie jar for visiting grandchildren. Occasionally the sharp smell of Sloan's liniment mingled in with the other more pleasant odors that filled her kitchen. I knew then Grandma had an ache or pain she was treating. She called it horse liniment. This always made me laugh.

Another never-forgotten part of my monthly weekend visits, besides her cooking, was the evenings. Just before bedtime, I snuggled into her large lap. While I was enveloped in her massive arms, she opened a book. More often than not it was the Bible, which she knew by heart. She was a self-taught reader, since she only went to the third grade



ND Stock Photo

in school. As I listened intently, I knew what she read was true. After all, if your grandmother whom you adored said it was true, it must be so.

The old house had an upstairs that was even more difficult to heat but no one seemed to care. All of its large bedrooms had huge walk-in closets and each had a long dangling cord with a switch on the end, hanging from the light fixture. It wasn't hard to find the switch in the closet's darkness, because it always hit you square in the eye when you walked in — wham. What better place for a grandson or granddaughter to spend a rainy afternoon, pretending they were all grown-up in their very own make-believe house. It wouldn't have been any fun if we'd had to manipulate sliding or accordion doors in a tiny space — like most closets in the average house of today.

Yes, this home would have many drawbacks in today's fast-moving world but in my eyes it was pure elegance — occupied by the two people I loved very dearly, Grandma and Grandpa.

Jim Nelson enjoyed a career at the Spokane Review and retired in Spokane, WA. His writings have been widely published in nationally known magazines, including five times in Chicken Soup of the Soul books. His book, "The Way It Was and The Way It Is," is still available for purchase through Amazon.com and contains 46 nostalgic short stories.



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September Will Always Be School Month

By Barbara Kalkis

I knew from the time I was 4 years old I wanted to be a teacher. My parents had given me a blackboard on a stand and a box of chalk for Christmas. They set it up in the basement and from there I held court over some dolls and a random teddy bear. Being a teacher was my goal because all the other kids in the neighborhood were at least a year older than I and already spent their

days there, while I languished at home. The result was that upon delivering me to school on the first day of kindergarten, my mother was annoyed that I was the only kid laughing and prancing around the teachers instead of crying and screaming, begging not to be left behind.
True to my dream, I became an English teacher for some years before entering the business world and teaching as a side profession. So ingrained was the desire to teach, along with the gratitude

of having the joy of it, every September I recall the experiences of being in school.
The jolting reminder happened a few months ago. Our high school senior class president wrote to invite us all to a reunion. I had completely forgotten about such events. Our class was never known for being a tightly knit group beyond our tiny cliques. Considering a trip to see people I had completely forgotten about nagged at me for weeks.

To make the decision, I looked back at a collection of informally stapled sheets of paper listing short biographies submitted by the class at our 20th reunion. Reading the words of people I had grown up with made me realize how far we had all progressed. Most of us were married — and happily — as attested by the comments about the beauty and gift of love from a special spouse. What also impressed me was that all of us had taken our education well beyond our high school graduation. Not just in certificates and bachelor's degrees, the number of attorneys, doctors, engineers, government representatives, teachers, architects, builders and business owners was a stunning testament to students driven to graduate degrees and specialty professions. Amazingly, we had all done well.

I wondered what made our class so special from such a little town with seemingly everyday kinds of families. I found the answer in our yearbook's Forward. I don't know who wrote it. I suspect the author was our yearbook instructor. He

wrote that formal education required two levels of experience: theoretical concepts and practical participation in actual problems and conditions in adult life.

He stated that, "With these tools of knowing and doing, one can make a good living and enjoy a good life."

The unknown author of the yearbook dedication also described the qualities of a good teacher: limitless devotion, involvement in student learning, inspiring leadership and contributions to student achievements and the school itself.

When I turned to the pages listing the high school staff and their education credentials, I saw that most teachers had graduated with advanced degrees from solid regional institutions versus the famous national glamor schools. Yet, our class of more than 200 students achieved prestigious jobs and positions and what one would honestly consider a successful life. Based on our collective achievements, I would say all of our teachers lived up to their charter. To them, I say "thank you!" You did your job well.

©2026 Barbara Kalkis. Barbara divides her time between writing, teaching, and consulting. She requests that you thank the teacher that helped you be the success you are — at whatever you do. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.



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Ann's Lovin' Ewe - 57 Questions of Life

By Ann Marie Stewart

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?

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

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

Or, you could record memories of your kids or grandkids. During the COVID-19 pandemic when I daily walked the eight-mile trail with my friend Barb, she told me funny and poignant stories of her grands.

"I hope you're recording these!" I'd tell her. I didn't want the stories lost or forgotten because I knew her grands would one day appreciate the re-telling. You could record:

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

Memories are important. Recently someone sent me a decade-old letter my grandfather had written in a November birthday card to his son, Abram. Since it was near Christmas, Grandpa wrote about Baby Jesus having swaddling clothes then compared it to when their family fled Russia and my grandmother had no diapers for their 6-day-old infant Abram. But someone had donated a few shirts and so his young wife cut off the sleeves and turned them into diapers! This was a precious fact I added to my novel.

I only knew this fact because it was

written in a letter and saved and passed down to me. Whether emails, letters, or journals, find a way to record and preserve memories.

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

Develop your questions: to help with your own research, I have compiled a list of questions from AmericanAnce-

tors.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. Ann Marie Stewart's novel "THE REMNANTS: One Family's Escape from Stalin's Russia," comes out October 2026.



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A Cup Of Tea With Lydia - Any Day Is Grandparents' Day!

By Lydia E. Harris

Fall usually means back to school, back to work, and back to scheduled routines. It's also back to Grandparents Day — which is celebrated on the second Sunday of September each year. This year it falls on September 13. But my husband and I don't need an official holiday to celebrate with our grandkids. We enjoy time with them as often as we can.

When our grandkids arrive at our home, I often ask them, "What day is it today?"

Their usual reply is, "Funday!" Any day with them is fun for all of us.

Recently, when they arrived, they answered, "Workday!" That's because Anna, 12, and Owen, 16, along with their mom, had offered to help us with housecleaning and yardwork.

"We can still have fun," I said, as I began to sing "Whistle While You Work."

Work they did, and with a good attitude! After they vacuumed and washed the floors, cleaned the bathrooms and dusted furniture, our home almost shone "like the top of the Chrysler building," as Miss Hannigan says in Annie. The yard looked better, too.

Of course, it wasn't all work. We took time for tea and treats, enjoying the sunshine on our deck while sipping their favorite peach herbal tea.

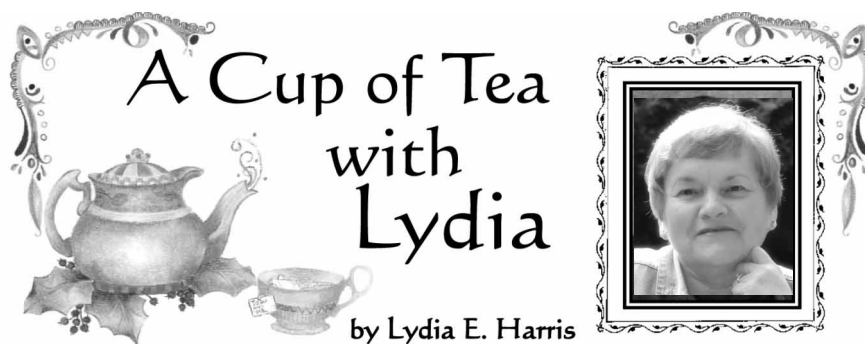
"These cookies taste good," Anna said when she took a bite of the chocolate chip cookies I'd baked the previous day.

I also served oatmeal cake, gluten-free chips and fresh strawberries, which they love eating dipped into sour cream and brown sugar. They think it almost tastes like dipping them into caramel sauce.

Their help that day was a win-win situation. They were planning to attend an out-of-state church camp in a month so I wrote out a check to help cover some of the cost.

"That's a lot of money," Anna said when they started to leave.

"Thanks for helping us," I said and



Lydia's Popcorn Cake

smiled. "Do you know what else you were doing?" They waited for my reply. "You were laying up treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20).

They drove away smiling and I smiled as well when I stepped inside our clean home and I knew God was smiling, too.

Any day is Grandparents Day. And any occasion can turn into a tea party with fun memories that linger and bless others and ourselves.

**From Lydia's Cookbook—
"In the Kitchen with Grandma":
Popcorn Cake**

This recipe is fun to make with the grandkids!

Gather with Grandma

- 3 1/2 quarts (14 cups) popped popcorn
- 1/2 cup butter (one stick), melted
- 1 10-oz package miniature marshmallows
- 20 unwrapped caramels, cut in half
- 2 cups favorite small candies, such as candy corn, M&M's®, gumdrops, or a mixture of candy
- 1 cup lightly salted or honey roasted peanuts or mixed nuts (optional)

Make with Grandma

1. Lightly grease an angel food cake pan with butter or nonstick cooking spray.
2. Measure the popcorn into a large

container that holds at least five quarts. Mix in nuts and candy, except the chocolate candy. Measure the chocolate candy into a separate bowl to add later, otherwise the chocolate will melt and turn the cake brown.

3. In a large saucepan or microwave-safe bowl, melt the butter and caramels together until the caramels are soft, stirring with a wooden spoon. Add the marshmallows and melt them completely.

4. When melted, pour the marshmallow mixture over the popcorn mixture. Mix the cake with a wooden spoon.

5. After the mixture cools slightly, stir in M&M's or other chocolate candy.

6. Press the popcorn mixture into the cake pan using wax paper or fingers greased with butter. Press down until the cake is compact.

7. Refrigerate the cake for an hour or until firm.

8. Remove the cake from the pan and place it on a plate. Serve at room temperature. Slice with a serrated knife.

9. To keep the cake fresh, wrap it tightly with plastic wrap or foil or place it in an airtight container. This cake is best eaten in a few days. Wrap and refrigerate the uneaten cake to prevent it from becoming sticky.

Serves 12 to 16

Tip: For popcorn — use plain popcorn, kettle corn or lightly salted and buttered popcorn. You can buy it already popped if you prefer. (A package of 5.5 ounces of popped popcorn will give you 14 cups.)

See cookbook for variations.

Lydia E. Harris enjoys serving tea to family and friends. Her books for grandparents are: "Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting," "In the Kitchen with Grandma," and "GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids." All are available at amazon.com or can be ordered through local bookstores.

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Back Porch Break - September Rose

By Nancy Parker Brummett

Why is it that September roses seem more beautiful than those of June? Maybe it's because we thought we'd seen the last of the blossoms, but then the rose bush surprises us with a new burst. Just a little plant food, water, and sunshine and voila! Another showing of delicate pink buds appears to remind us that warm, summer days are still with us, and beauty will continue to appear where we least expect it.

My rose bush is a common Rambler, but my neighbor has a glorious hedgerow of Rose of Sharon bushes. Actually from the hibiscus family, these blooms wait until late August or early September to come into their glory. In the Bible, the Rose of Sharon symbolizes beauty, and it is used in the poetic book of Song of Solomon to describe the beauty of a lover. This year we were all surprised when a darker pink section appeared in a bush that was always covered with light pink flowers in years past. It has been some sort of beautiful, botanical miracle!

At our last house, I had a more sophisticated rose that only had two or three blossoms at a time. Still, each year in September it would gather all

the nutrients it had left to produce one perfect rose which I always dubbed "the last rose of summer."

I'm not the only one to appreciate such simple solitude. In 1830, Thomas Moore wrote,

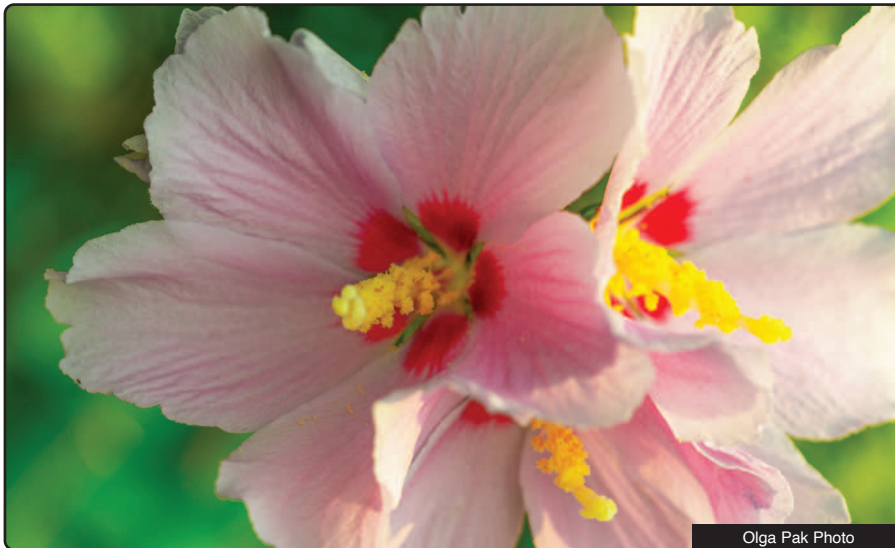
"'Tis the last rose of summer, left blooming alone;

All her lovely companions are faded and gone."

What lesson does the late or last September rose have for us? Maybe it's a sign that whatever our age we, too, have more to offer the world than we have yet revealed — even more than the world expects of us. If summer has rejuvenated us at all, can we pull on the resources we've stored up to go into fall producing something that makes the world a more beautiful, better place?

Might there be hard times to come? Sure. Perhaps the farmer's almanac predicts a cold and blustery winter. But as we are surviving it, the rose bush buried under the snow will be resting up for a new show of glory come next summer.

That wise sage Ziggy is quoted as saying, "You can complain because roses have thorns, or you can rejoice because thorns have roses." Let's enjoy the last rose of summer, applaud her resilience, and be optimistic



Olga Pak Photo

about the beauty in the days to come — even if there are some thorns, 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.

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Become Inspired:
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Bringing In The Harvest

By Annice Bradley Rockwell

As the daylight hours slowly begin to shorten, we begin to shift our thinking toward preparing for the season to come. Our vegetable gardens are likely producing plenty at this point in the year, so taking our gathering baskets out to the raised beds is a country task that brings great reward.

Our beans can be harvested to accompany a wonderful homemade meal, or they can be strung by hand and hung over the hearth to dry as a handmade garland to be enjoyed all year. Our heirloom tomatoes can be harvested right off the vine to make a perfect summer sandwich with some toasted homemade bread, creamy mayonnaise and salt and pepper. The abundance of our yield can also be canned to line our buttery shelves with the blessings of our harvest to be enjoyed all year long.

Our herb gardens can also be a huge source of happiness as we plan a morning out in the sun clipping and binding bundles of fragrant herbs to be hung inside to dry. They can be used for enhancing our fall meals or to brighten one of our country displays. Even an afternoon spent clipping wild blooms such as the bright mustard tansy, yellow goldenrod or the purple Joe Pye weed can provide us with plenty of natural elements to enjoy in the beautiful season of fall.

The Warmth of Home

The spectacular sunlight of September is truly a special gift. Although more fleeting than the sultry sun of summer, the beautiful days of early fall are to be enjoyed. Paired with the daytime beauty are evenings characterized by a crisp coolness. Nights come more quickly now, so our home's ambiance stands out as being even more welcoming and warm.

Taking time to create warmth in our decorating is time well-spent. Early lighting such as a punched tin hanging lantern or a mirrored sconce casts an inviting glow to warm the corner of a colonial keeping room. An antique floor lamp with a deep red-checked shade can enliven a favorite reading spot for a cool fall evening. And candles such as Pumpkin Butter or Colonial Apple Butter can be used as part of a harvest centerpiece, where both its subtle flicker and captivating scent enhance the mood of the room.

Gorgeous large wooden trays or boxes in early surface like red or mustard can be enjoyed as a focal point for fall. Filled with part of our abundant harvest, it becomes a striking natural element that takes center stage.

Simple Country Joys

Planning a day to surround yourself with the full blessings of fall is a way to connect



with friends and make memories to cherish. Wrapping a schedule around a festive fall event can be rewarding and fun. Fall festivals that include local farms and creative artisans can be enjoyed alongside a trip to our favorite antiques shops that might be hosting an outdoor show filled with great antiques, unique food trucks and decorative elements fresh-from-market to enhance our home displays.

This fall, savor the transition to those

cooler, spectacular autumn days. Harvest the bounty of your gardening efforts and delight in the simple country joy of creating an ambiance that truly welcomes you home.

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

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A Nice Remembrance, Twenty Years Later

By Kerri Habben Bosman

As I was contemplating ideas for this autumn article, two things happened.

First, I dreamed of my grandmother, who passed away 20 years ago on September 6. Even though I feel her with me every day, I almost never dream of her.

Second, I went to the doctor for my annual wellness check. I came away from both these events with gratitude and a renewed awareness of all my grandmother gave me.

In my recent dream my grandmother was as she was toward the very end of her 99 years. While she passed away at the hospital, in this manifestation she was resting in her bed at the assisted living facility. We were holding hands, gazing steadily at one another. Even as I realized she was dying, I also had that surreal feeling when you know you are in a dream. I made a semiconscious decision to not awaken, so that I could fully feel her essence longer.

I was alone with my grandmother when she died in 2006. Outside of gradual aging in her 90s, she was fortunate to enjoy good health (save for elevated blood pressure and high cholesterol) until 99 ½. Then she developed aplastic anemia, wherein her white blood cells and platelets stopped working. It was, at least, a peaceful way for her to leave this world behind. I sang hymns to her at the last. She stopped breathing during “Amazing Grace,” as I sang the line, “and grace shall lead me home.”

Even now if I unexpectedly hear that hymn, tears overtake my eyes.

When I was 9 months old, I started calling my grandmother, “Huba.” I said it with a short “u” sound. She embraced my nickname for her, and throughout the years she became “Huba” to my friends and even adults who came into her life.

Huba made the best mashed potatoes in the world. “I beat the hell out of them,” she used to say as a genuinely sweet smile emerged.

Every time I mash potatoes, I hear her voice.

She crocheted from the time she was 8 years old, making beautiful and warm things that turn houses into homes. Over her 91 years of needlework, she gave much of what she made away to family, friends, and to those in need. One of her favorite phrases as she grew older and older was, “It will be a nice remembrance.”

I was 9 when she taught me how to crochet. Therefore, Huba is in everything that I make. She taught me how to give with an open heart — so I, too, give away much of my crocheting. My work is her living legacy.

Huba cared for her husband and her sister through long illnesses when they were both in wheelchairs, and she never lost her joyful and playful spirit. Somehow she always had more to give.

Which brings me to my doctor’s visit. Huba does indeed have more to give, even after two decades. All of the tests they did were normal, save for my cholesterol level. I learned

that I have her high blood pressure. Though I suppose I should be a responsible adult and claim it as my own. No medication is necessary at this point, but a check-up will happen in six months.

After a few internet searches, I see many breakfasts of oatmeal and refreshing drinks of green tea in my future. As well as more walks than I usually enjoy around the neighborhood. Thankfully, I read that nearly everything I like to eat, including potatoes, is good for monitoring cholesterol. One article said to add fiber to my day, which surely must mean that all my yarn and crocheting helps too.

A grandmother’s love and a little amazing grace won’t hurt either.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer living in Cape Carteret, NC. Her email is 913jeeves@gmail.com.

I Am 75, After All

By Wayne M. Bosman

I have never been one to celebrate my own birthday, possibly because there have been so many. That may be why I was shocked when my 8-year-old grandson looked up at me and said, “Grandpa, did you know we’re having a surprise party?”

Well, it was my birthday and almost all of my children were there and seven of my grandchildren, but I thought that was serendipity, not planning. That two of my sons were busy at the grill and a few hundred local oysters were waiting to be steamed did not strike me as abnormal. We’re a large clan and sharing food is a time-honored ritual. When a few of my friends arrived, I was tickled. Apparently my children and my wife, Kerri, thought that turning 75 was special, and of course it was.

Since then, I have used the phrase “I am 75” shamelessly. I use it as a quick defense when I lose the word for one thing or another. I have decided that I no longer have to be the main “muscle” when heavy things need to be moved. “You guys get this one, I am 75 after

all.” Before that, I felt a little guilty asking for help with anything. What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger was part of my credo.

What is apparent to me now is that at this point in my life, what doesn’t kill me feels like it is trying to and that maybe taking a break isn’t the worst thing. I am 75, after all.

Genetically I have been very gifted. Mom’s side of the family, who I most take after, have been graced with long active lives. When Mom passed last November at 104, she had only spent the last two years in serious decline. She was still doing charity work, albeit in a much reduced role into the last year of her life. Her brother George, my godfather and hero, was still hooking his boat to the car and driving three hours to the family cottage into his 90s. He would spend a week fishing and preparing his catch to distribute to family and friends. Mom held her breath when he went on those outings, but he lived a full life and it wasn’t his driving that finally got him. If I have any targets and expectations they provided them to me.

Further, as recently as a year ago, before I let my beard grow, I would often have to show



Diego PH Photo

my driver’s license to get a senior discount at some stores. Maybe it was store policy, or the cashier was trying to make me feel good, but I chose to believe what I chose to believe. I am 75, after all.

The hard part of being 75, besides the glasses and hearing aids, is reading the obituaries. Most of us have had friends who died young, but my friends are too old for that now. The grim reaper has absolute job security and the older I get, the better the odds that my time will be due. Maybe that is one of the reasons that I stopped celebrating my birthday. Whistling in the dark ... I’m 75, but I can still whistle after all.

My son-in-law, who was raised by his grandparents, is always amazed by my ability to work hard at 75. Sometimes he comes by and finds me on my back under a car, hopping up quickly to get more tools or parts just like I did for 49 years of my work life. Old habits die hard and I only see the job that has to be done. Till later, every muscle in my body is sore. I let him lift the heavy stuff now. I am 75 after all.

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

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Building Harmony - A Cold, Furry Night

By Jeff Capps

It was one of those stormy Friday nights. The rain was driving down and lightning was flashing constantly all around, Cathy and I were intrigued by the storm as the thunder rattled our house. Our dog Waldo didn't take it quite so easily though. He either tried to find a place to hide, (like behind a toilet) or huddled close to us when the thunder clapped. We had to keep an eye on him so he didn't piddle on the floor in fear. That was fine with him. He liked to stay close.

Later on that night Cathy grew tired and went to bed but I was still watching the storm. Something about these storms draws me to them. There is a smell to the rain and the sound of it driving down. The flash of light and eventual boom. Wow. I decided to step outside to experience it first hand.

There is a good spot for this just outside the garage door. The eaves protected me (barely) from the rain and I got a good view of nature's fury. The trees on our property were whipping around with the wind. I was in awe. Then I



heard the door close behind me and latch.

I was locked out. Drat. I considered ringing the doorbell but this would mean waking up Cathy. After careful consideration I looked for another option.

At least I was mostly protected under that eave for the moment and the show was spectacular. Every time the forrest lit up I could see every leaf and every blade of grass for just an instant. Between lightning flashes the forrest was mostly dark, except for a small solar light

some 40 feet away.

Boom! Cool! Flash! Wow! Boom ... This was going on for a while when I noticed something out of the corner of my eye. Something moved in front of that solar light. It cast a silhouette toward me through the mist.

In the brief flashes of light I could see it was close to the ground with spiky wet fur violently shaking off water. Between the flashes it let out a horrible howl. Then the forrest would go dark again.

Still I could tell through that faint shadow in the mist, that it was getting bigger, or closer. I was blinded by another lightning flash. Again, darkness and a sinister howl.

Now I could hear it panting. It even let out an occasional snort. I tried the door. Still locked. I dare not move or make a noise. Perhaps it hadn't seem me. With the rain driving down, the wind a few blinding flashes, the immediate booms and all that howling I was getting pretty unhinged.

Now I could smell what ever it was and it was rank and close by. There were noises all around and I wasn't sure what to trust.

Suddenly it leaped at me ... knocking me to the ground hard. I could feel it's weight as it landed on me and even more: its claws on my chest! It growled and howled. It drooled on my face as it came ever closer.

In the lightning flashes I could see its spiked wet fur and its teeth up close. Its breath stank. It gave out one last howl as I prepared to lose my entire face and then ... it licked me.

Then it wagged its tail. What? After a moment my heart settled down. Turns out Waldo had sneaked outside with me and got lost in the rain. He was wet, lost and scared but more than happy to find me. He tried to lick my entire face off. Things went from scary to just kinda gross.

The door stayed locked so we hung out under that eave and watched the storm. Waldo even started to enjoy it. He was soaked, but we had fun.

All of this made me wonder: Why do dogs smell when they get wet?

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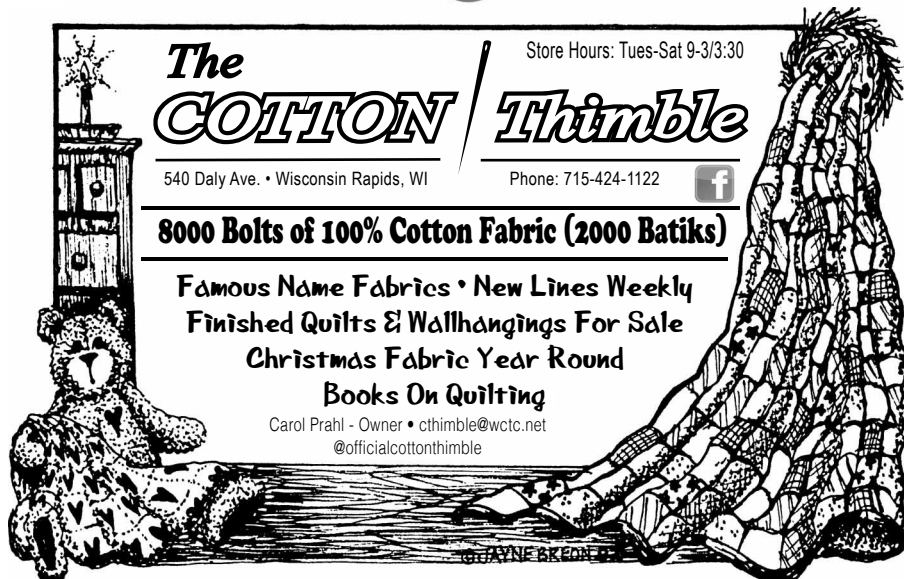
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Fall Foods To Flock Toward

By Laura Taylor

As we start to move into fall and cooler weather, it's the perfect time to get outside into fresh air. One of the best ways to explore the outdoors while staying out of the hot sun is finding a nice spot in the shade of a tall tree. But honestly, what good is sitting outside for hours if you don't have a sandwich, a drink and something beautiful to look at.

Now what if I told you that the "beautiful" something isn't a typical scenic view or your tablet screen, but rather something rare and exciting and that the snack and drink you bring along could be prepared in less than 30 minutes?

Birds will have their most fiery and colorful backdrop this season, highlighting their feathers and even making them easier to spot. Bird watching can be done from the comfort of a lawn chair in the cool fall foliage or even from your own backyard if you're lucky, leaving only a relaxing breeze and sounds of nature to enjoy.

As for something to keep you from

having to go back and forth for lunch, here are four recipes I promise you'll flock towards this Fall. They feature some of my favorite sandwich and drink classics that are always best when enjoying outdoors.

Chicken Salad Sandwich

Ingredients:

- Rotisserie chicken
- Dried cranberries
- Chopped pecans
- Mayo
- 1 tsp. Spice World Minced Garlic
- ½ tsp. Spice World Minced Ginger

Method:

1. Mix everything together and chill.
2. Serve on croissants or brioche buns.

A Halloween-Worthy Transfusion

Ingredients:

- 1.5 oz. vodka
- 2 oz. white grape juice
- 1 oz. cranberry juice

- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
 - 2 oz. ginger beer
 - ¼ tsp. Spice World Minced Ginger
- Method:

1. Shake vodka, juices, lemon, and ginger with ice.
2. Strain into a tall glass over fresh ice.
3. Top with ginger beer.

Turkey-Apple Sandwich with Garlic Mayo

Ingredients:

- Sourdough or multigrain bread
- Sliced turkey
- Sharp cheddar
- Thin apple slices
- 1 Tbsp. Spice World Minced Garlic
- 2 Tbsp. mayo
- Handful of arugula

Mix minced garlic into mayo. Apply to bread and put together sandwich as normal.

Visit www.spiceworldinc.com for more recipes and tips!



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The Ghosts Of Quiet Grace

By Meghan Diemel, Editor
The Country Register of Wisconsin

Hitting middle age in a time when we seem to have reached peak stupidity in America, where truth no longer has a home here and we've allowed ourselves to spin seemingly endless narratives to fit our delusions — which, in turn, continue to shatter our country into sharp shards of tribalism — I've been giving thought to my grandparents and what they were doing, thinking, and how they managed life at my current age.

Life in the era of sending their young adult children to college, to Vietnam, to the workforce, to marry at 19 and 20.

It started as esoteric whispers from the past that would float by and has grown in the last year to something much more meaningful. Something that has teeth and has dug into my psyche.

And then I found a stash of cards from my grandmothers, written nearly 30 years ago, and the figures of the past came into sharp focus — their legacies too important to shutter in my hope chest for another two decades, when I'll be very near the age three of my grandparents were when they died.

My grandfathers, to start, were phenomenal, overachieving humans. And I don't say that lightly.

My maternal grandfather, Don, died

before I was born. Not only did I not have the chance to know him, but I wasn't old enough to soak in the many stories I'm sure my grandmother had. By the time my interest in learning about my family's history began to develop, Grandma's health had begun to deteriorate. It is a missed opportunity I'll likely not forgive myself for in this lifetime.

As I've learned since then, Grandpa Read served during World War II. He entered the war because the secretary at Wisconsin Power and Light forgot to send in paperwork that excluded him from having to report.

He went anyway.

He served in the Pacific Theater and was headed for Saipan when the fighting ended. As the history books tell me, the Battle of Saipan was a brutal World War II military campaign fought from June 15 to July 9, 1944. U.S. amphibious forces invaded the Japanese-held island, aiming to secure an airbase within range of the Japanese mainland. The American victory cost more than 3,400 U.S. lives and resulted in catastrophic Japanese military and civilian losses.

I put myself on the boat, filled with young men mentally preparing for what was ahead of them, far away from home. Did he believe in the war? Was he afraid? Did he know what actually awaited them when they disembarked?

To know he chose honor and courage, though he had a legitimate exemption — well, it makes the opportunists of our current times parroting patriotism ring hollow, in the very least.

His commitment to living life with conviction didn't stop there for him. When the war was over, he went to Greenland to build the U.S. military base to protect the country from Russia. When he returned home, he took on militias in the area as a Wisconsin tax rep for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

My paternal grandfather John, known to all as Jack (or Pa), was an educator and community leader for more than 40 years and just as principled, pun intended. He was a coach, athletic director, teacher, and district-wide administrator.

In high school, he enjoyed a distinguished academic and athletic career, was an all-conference guard in basketball and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1950 with a major in American Institution and minors in English and social studies. He made his way through high school in two years.

His desire to make an impact through athletics, coaching and teaching led him to the small town I grew up in, where at just 20 years of age, he became one of two teachers for junior high students in the district. His initial duties included teaching the eighth grade and coaching all junior high boys' athletic teams.

Later, as the district expanded, he began teaching his fields of specialty, which included history and English. Eventually he was named the principal for the junior high and the three elementary schools and served as athletic director for the high school. He also proudly served as the high school boys basketball coach from the 1967-'68 season through to the 1982-'83 season.

Among his many other community contributions, he developed the Little League program in his early years, drove busses to and from games, and led the summer recreation program in the village.

That's all in addition to being the father of eight children — six boys and two girls, which was no doubt his proudest achievement.

As I scramble to contribute to the community, to give back in meaningful ways, to work and do my part in a dual-income household in 2026, to raise a child who is kind, respectful and has a work ethic and oh, yes — get enough protein and sleep each day — I think often of my grandfather Jack and how he made it all work.

I think of the sacrifices my grandfather



Grandma Reinke (blue) & Grandma Read

Don made as a young man and parent of two at the time, heading off across the Pacific to fight in a cataclysmic war.

And then I remember the quiet grace that stood behind them: my grandmothers. The silent labor that supported and nurtured my grandfathers along their path to greatness.

Grandpa Jack didn't run three elementary schools and a junior high and coach multiple sports on his own. His resume was built with the support of Grandma.

My grandmother Geraldine (Gerry) was the one at home juggling the labor of child rearing. With no driver's license, I cannot image how lonely and isolating it must have been at times. Maybe all the time. I don't know, because she didn't discuss it with us. She didn't have 10 different mother groups on Facebook to commiserate with others in her similar position, no Instagram influencers to make her feel like she wasn't alone. (And none to tell her she was parenting incorrectly, either, for that matter.)

My memory is that she loved a full house of kids and grandkids, loved having all of us together for holiday after holiday. She loved her alone time with Grandpa, too. We all knew their love for one another was the foundation upon which everything else was built. It started with them. From early on, we were taught to respect that commitment.

Living in an age of "self-care," I think of her with many young children under foot, having had eight children in 13 years, with her weekly hair appointment as a lone moment of respite. There was

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Honoring The Women Who Nurtured Extraordinary Lives

Continued From Page 26

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Of course, the older children played outside, as there were not endless streaming options, no device of all sizes to keep kids entertained and zombified. It was on her shoulders until Grandpa came home from work. And then there was cooking of three meals, laundry for eight children and adults, summer sports schedules galore, and of course, opening their hearts, backyard, alleyway and porch to the neighborhood, as was so common in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. The number of neighborhood "children" who came to their funerals decades later was a true testament to how welcoming they both were throughout the years.

And sure, they had many friend groups and loved to go out together, whether for bowling or other parties, but there wasn't money for dining out and cocktails weekly like many couples enjoy and crow about now on social media. Date night for them was often eating a nice cut of meat in one room of the house while the kids ate hamburgers in a separate room on Saturday night.

My maternal grandmother was left stateside during WWII and afterward, caring for my aunt and uncle solo for six to nine months at a time while Grandpa Don upheld his commitment to the armed services and helped build the base in Greenland. Not only was the fear of a Russian conflict front and center in the minds of American families, but she had the responsibility of keeping a home in order while making other sacrifices post-WWII as a single mother.

Having worked at Power and Light be-

fore marriage, being a "career" woman was not new for Grandma, though it was uncommon for her peers, as she often told me. She went back to work as a seamstress at a clothing store in their town when Grandpa's Texaco fuel oil business wasn't bringing in enough financially for the family.

More sacrifices made.

I imagine what it must have been like to be Grandma, with my husband so far away, on a cold, desolated piece of land I had never seen and likely couldn't fathom in appearance. He was possibly in the direct path of not just a brewing conflict, but real-life nuclear bombers and missiles that could be overhead between the U.S. and the Soviet Union if the Soviet Union so chose.

How she must have had to compartmentalize that fear, while still having to raise young children, work, put food on the table, help them in school ... those normal situations for many post-war parents of that era, but unfathomable for many of us complaining about tech neck to our chiropractors in 2026. (Those brave families of our current servicemen and women aside, of course. They, too, know the reality.)

Through all of their trials, each of my grandmothers became their own version of phenomenal, overachieving humans — even if the shadows of past eras kept them hidden.

My maternal grandma was direct but deeply caring. She made wonderful baked goods, loved to deer hunt, hosted sleepovers and taught me how to French braid my Barbie's hair. She always had Andes thin mints on hand, she was the first grandma we knew to get a microwave, and she loved a good gimlet. She had so many friends. She was always re-

galing us with stories of what she'd done and where she'd been during the week with those friends, with a bit of gossip sprinkled in, too. She traveled and shared photos of her travels with us during our sleepovers from faraway places like New Mexico, where my cousins lived, or Nova Scotia and Escanaba. She wore big floppy sun hats when out by the pool and she loved swimming.

She somehow endured decades of being widowed, but never outwardly wore that loss. She told me after the death of one of our beloved paternal cousins — who she, too, loved like her own grandchild — that we needed to pull ourselves out of the great sadness and carry on with it.

At the time, I was ticked. Now, almost three decades later, I understand. Loss is a part of life. The harsh reality of middle age is that funerals take the place of wedding weekends on your calendar. You have to learn to make room for your grief, so you can understand it and work through it, but it cannot consume you. It's perhaps the greatest lesson she gave me.

My paternal grandma Gerry spent years as my grandfather's sidekick, driving to school together, he as the principal of the junior high and elementary schools and she as the study hall monitor. She never missed any athletic game of her children and later many grandchildren, and she religiously took book for basketball games with her beautiful penmanship crafted from her elegant and delicate hands.

Those same hands lovingly prepared our favorite frosted, inch-thick sugar cookies for the holidays and shaped the delicious cornflake wreaths, topped with cinnamon candies. She survived the death of her sister in her younger years, the aftermath of her parents as they han-

dled that untimely death, and a brother who had developmental disabilities, brought on in part by medical malfeasance during delivery.

I often wonder if her spirit doesn't permanently reside at the ballpark in town, one which wears the moniker of my grandfather, in his memory. I often envision her name right underneath, because in truth, she was the supportive partner in the background. She was fiercely loyal and deeply protective of her family.

Reading through my grandmothers' letters and cards, it's striking how many things were happening around them in our country's history at the time they wrote them to me, but they simply carried onward. No mention of 9-11, no mention of Iraq, Iran or even the cost of gas. They hoped I was surviving classes while having mono, they wanted to send me money for "treats," they updated me on their lives and who was coming to visit or who had visited.

Nowadays, we live a life that is often simply a digital illusion. We have nothing to anchor us in a world of chaos, while people like my grandparents anchored themselves in family, in love, and in duty and service to their communities.

Among those handwritten and typed pages and in-between the folds of the holiday cards they sent me, my grandmothers built a sanctuary for an ordinary life for me, just as they had in their own homes for their husbands and children — all while nurturing spaces for the extraordinary to grow.

Those whispers I've heard in the last several years are more than just memories created by strong women.

They're the compass by which I should live.



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