

Welcome to...

The Country Register of Kansas

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From My Desk... to yours

By Cindy Baldwin

Surprise! Sometimes life gives you surprises -- surprises that can be negative or positive and totally unexpected.

My husband and I came home from town a few weeks ago and as we drove in the yard we admired and checked over our flock of sheep grazing in our pasture next to our drive as we usually do. If you have been following my sheep saga of the past year, you will remember that my husband gifted our grandchildren sheep for Christmas 2022, and we take care of them on our farm. We had a great lambing season this past winter and sold our ram. We intended to buy a new one since he shouldn't breed his daughters, but a new ram hasn't joined the flock yet. So imagine our surprise when we spied a brand new baby lamb standing next to its mother, one of the original ewes. Apparently, we didn't sell the ram quick enough and this ewe, which had blessed us with the first birth last October, has blessed us again.

The ewe belonged to grandson Banks, and the look on his face was priceless when we told him his ewe had had a new baby. He's a 10-year-old farm kid who knows enough to know that you don't have babies without a male, and he knew the ram had been sold. "How did that happen?" he asked. We explained our poor timing, and he was happy knowing his lamb count had risen. We counted this surprise as a positive.

Unfortunately, the surprise we think we will be receiving when we cut this year's wheat may not be so positive. We live in the part of the state that has been suffering through severe drought for the past year. While we are luckier than many in that we will have a harvest, it is not promising to be even close to an average crop. We are still looking forward to working together with family and friends to harvest and know that will be a positive no matter what the yield is. So that surprise is both negative -- and positive.

Surprises are funny like that -- they are what you make of them. Sometimes we have to look for the positive in whatever comes along.

I'm sure many of you participated in the All Kansas/Nebraska Shop Hop and I hope you found many fun surprises in the shops and towns that you visited. Maybe you weren't able to purchase something in every shop you visited, but I hope you will be able to go back and visit the ones you liked some time in the future. Shop hops like this are a great way to introduce you to new shops, new communities and new parts of the state and your support is important to keep our advertising shops in business. This summer will bring plenty of opportunities to visit new places, experience new events -- and keep those surprises coming.

This issue has been an interesting one to put together as many of the stories submitted have been on themes that I have been thinking about or experiencing. Our talented contributing writers from across the country and Canada are very much appreciated as they share their experiences with our Country Register readership. I hope you find the articles interesting, meaningful and that they bring a smile to your face.

Until next time. -- Cindy

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On Our Cover...

Popsicles and strawberries -- does it get any more summer than that?

Every effort is made to have an error-free paper, however, mistakes do occur. Please double check dates, times, and locations with a phone call before traveling a great distance.

The Country Register of Kansas Vol. 24 No. 6, June/July 2023

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- Advertisers' businesses • State-owned tourist information centers
- Some locally-operated visitor centers
- Most Lawrence grocery stores • Other various locations
- Online www.countryregister.com/kansas

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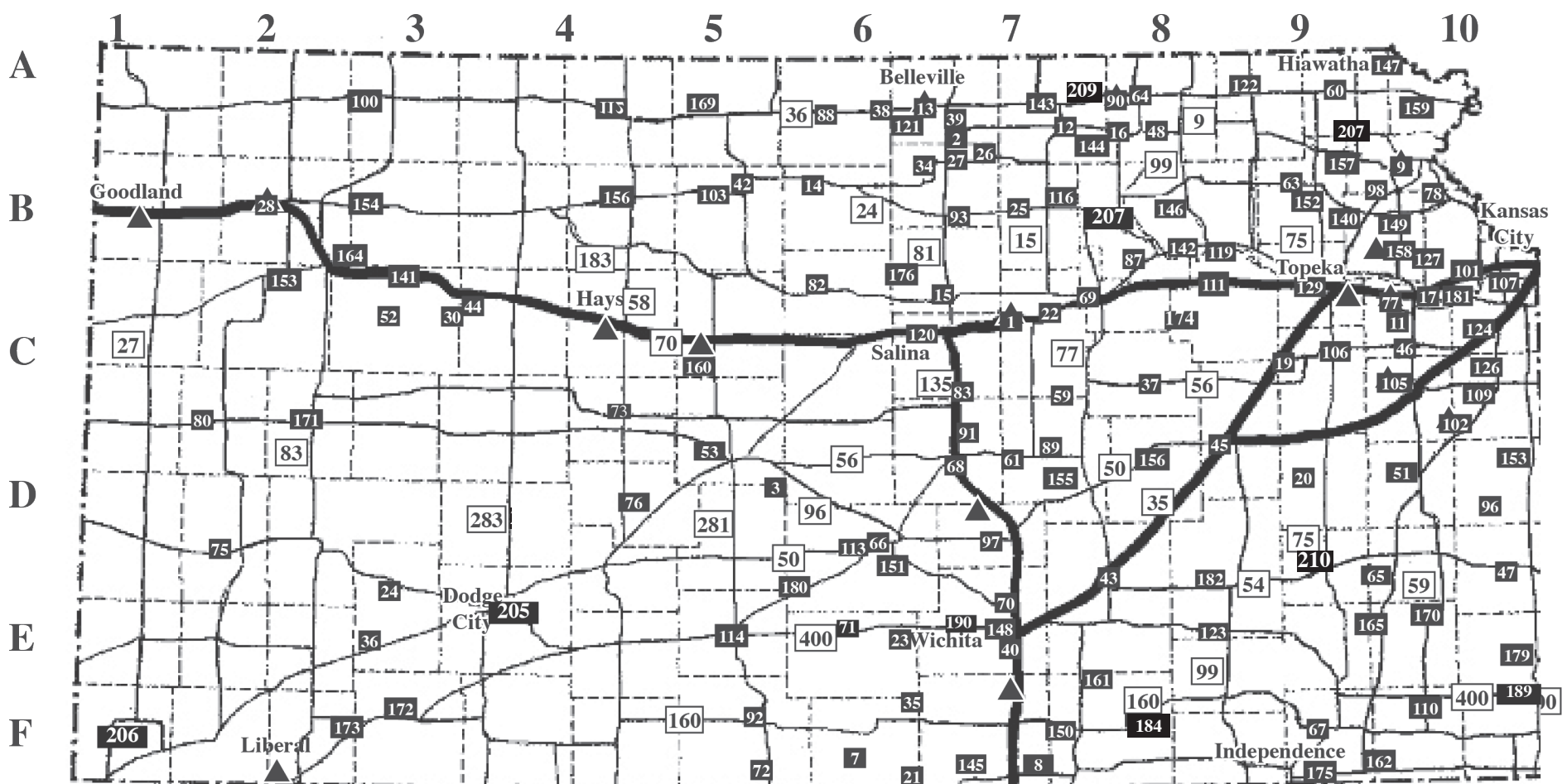
Upcoming Events Shop Hops & Quilt Shows:

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- # City numbers = white number in black box
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Gift Certificate Entry Form

Collector's Corner

Cowboy Boots

by Jim Olson

Cowboy boots have a rich history that dates back to the 1800s in the American West. The first cowboy boots were simple, practical boots made of leather and were adaptations of the English style boots already in use at the time by the military and many others worldwide. Originally designed for horseback riding, cowboy boots became a necessary tool to wear while working on ranches. With time, they evolved and became more decorative and stylish, with Western boot makers using exotic leathers as well as colorful stitching and intricate designs as demand increased.

During the early part of the 1900s, cowboy boots gained popularity outside of the ranching and rodeo communities. Cowboy boots became a symbol of Western culture and were not just worn by cowboys, but by anyone who wanted to embody the rugged, independent spirit of the West. In many places, cowboy boots had become a fashion statement with different styles and decorations reflecting different regions and cultures.

Consequently, cowboy boots have become highly collectible over the years, with many enthusiasts and collectors seeking out vintage and rare pairs for their historical significance and/or the craftsmanship involved in their production. Vintage cowboy boots from the 19th and early 20th centuries are particularly sought after by collectors, as they represent a piece of American history. Some collectors also focus on collecting boots from specific makers such as Lucchese, Tony Lama, Hyer, Rios of Mercedes, Acme or Justin -- often seeking out rare or unusual designs produced by certain makers. Others may collect boots that represent a particular era or style, such as flamboyant boots with fancy stitching and inlays, or boots made pre-1900.

The value of a particular pair of cowboy boots depends on a variety of factors including the age, brand, style, historical significance and condition. Vintage boots from well-known makers can fetch high prices at auction or in specialty shops, while boots that feature intricate stitching, exotic materials, or unique details are also desirable. Boots that were worn by famous cowboys or movie stars can be highly collectible and condition is an extremely important factor. For example, a pair of boots from the 1800s, that have been well-preserved and cared for, should bring a much higher price than those that are heavily worn or damaged.

Cowboy boots have been a symbol of the American West for over a century, and there are many different types of boots that have become desirable to collectors. Some of the most sought-after cowboy boots include:

- Authentic boots: Cowboy boots from the late 1800s through early 1900s in good condition are some of the hardest to find and are highly sought after by collectors.
- Custom boots: Many collectors seek out boots that were made by famous boot makers or custom-made for clients. These boots often feature intricate designs.
- Exotic boots: Cowboy boots made from exotic skins like alligator, crocodile, ostrich and snake are highly prized. These boots were generally more expensive than boots made from traditional cowhide and continue to fetch a premium when sold to collectors.
- Limited edition boots: Some boot makers create limited edition boots that are only produced in small quantities, or perhaps the maker was only in business for a limited amount of time, making these boots rarer and more collectible as time passes.
- Movie boots: Cowboy boots worn by famous actors in Western movies have become highly collectible. For example, a pair of boots worn by John Wayne in one of his movies would be of particular interest to collectors.
- Rodeo boots: Boots worn by famous rodeo cowboys are also highly collectible. These boots often feature unique designs and are usually made from high-quality materials to withstand the rigors of competition.

Overall, the collectability of cowboy boots has grown over the years because they represent fascinating and enduring symbols of a uniquely American culture -- also the development of the American West. As such, they are prized not only for their aesthetic value but also for their historical importance. Today, cowboy boots remain popular footwear for both practical and fashionable purposes. Not only are they still worn by ranchers and rodeo performers, but also by people who simply appreciate their unique style and history. They remain a symbol of the spirit of the frontier that is recognized as being uniquely American, no matter where you are at in the world.

Jim Olson © 2023, Western Trading Post, 403 N. Florence St., Casa Grande, AZ 85122. Learn more at www.WesternTradingPost.com, email info@westerntradingpost.com or call 520-426-7702.



Spring and Summer in the Country

By Nancy Nash

In my corner of North America, scenery shifts from month to month in a kaleidoscope of colors and patterns. In spring, breath-taking clusters of pink and white blossoms cascade from the branches of apple and cherry trees. The light-green maple leaves of April unfurl and grow larger by early May, providing a lush, shadowy canopy of dark green over the quiet lane where we take evening walks at dusk. On a warm day in June, the full circle of shade under the big maple on the lawn beckons like a young mother gathering her children around her for a story.

Humans have always looked to nature as a source of wonder. A few years ago, as I did some research on the Oregon Trail, I discovered that the plants and animals encountered on the long, strenuous trek to the West coast held a fascination for those walking mile after mile behind oxen or horses. Adults as well as children delighted in observing living things they had never seen before, and native women sometimes helped pioneer women forage for unfamiliar edible plants growing wild. Family members wrote letters home describing extraordinary land formations they knew would amaze their kin.

June brings us outdoors, where we can revel in the exceptional beauty of late spring and early summer. Country lanes shine with buttercups, and meadows are embroidered with red and purple clover and pink ragged-robin. Listen for melodies from songbirds. There is nothing like them. Pick a flower, press it, and hide it in a book. You may discover it months later, faded and pale but still a source of wonder and satisfaction.

©2023 Nancy J. Nash

Nancy J. Nash is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story* and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, each available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College.

Take a Break and Go Shopping
WIN A \$50 GIFT CERTIFICATE

In this issue of *The Country Register*, we will give away a \$50 gift certificate. Use your gift certificate to go shopping at your favorite *Country Register* advertiser. The winners will be announced in the next issue. Deadline for entry is **JULY 15, 2023**.
(Names are not sold, given away or used for any other purpose.)

Drawing Entry Form

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AND THE WINNER IS

June/July 2023 Gift Certificate Winner

The lucky winner of our \$50 gift certificate this issue is from an out-of-state entry! Residing in Skiatook, Oklahoma, Debbie Musgrave has won a shopping spree at the advertising store of her choice, Overbrook Quilt Connection in Overbrook.

After a short 3 ½ hour drive down the road, Debbie says she likes to do her shopping at Overbrook Quilt Connection for "the selection of material and helpful staff."

We hope you enjoy your time shopping and find something fun for your projects! Congratulations on being this issues lucky winner!

Revisiting A First Love

by Barbara Polston

You know me as a quilter, but quilting was not my first love. Many years ago, I was a practitioner of counted cross-stitch embroidery. Counted cross-stitch, for those unfamiliar, is a form of embroidery worked on even-weave fabric. Following a pattern chart and using designated colors, cross stitches are wrought over the fabric weave. Extremely detailed images can be created with these tiny crosses and a rainbow of color.

I loved this work and took time, almost daily, to stitch on my current project. Until, that is, I reached my 40s and, as happens to us all, my eyesight started to change. I found it almost impossible to look at the pattern and then quickly refocus on the stitching. It became so frustrating! It was no longer fun. It was no longer relaxing. I wanted to throw my work against the wall!

I prefer to have projects to fill spare moments, preferably making something lovely. Chatting with my mother, I expressed my dismay at my cross stitch, and cross-eyed, challenge. She suggested that I try quilting. The rest, as they say, is history.

Quilting has brought friends, travel and opportunities to combine my writing skills with the celebration of quilting. It has been a pleasure to win a few awards along the way and see my quilts published in a variety of books and magazines.

Recently, I started following a cross-stitch pattern designer on Facebook. Her designs are intricate samplers, and her posts always amusing. Several of my quilting friends follow her as well; some stitch her designs, and one has turned a design into a stunning quilt. Chatting with one of my like-minded friends, we agreed that, if anything could get us to cross stitch again, it would be this designer's patterns.

This thought took hold. Maybe, if I worked in just one color of thread, gridded off my fabric so that I would place stitches with more surety, and used magnification, it could work. I decided to give it a go and ordered up my selected pattern, fabric, embroidery floss and needles. A bit nervous, I prepared my fabric and dove in.

Here's something that I didn't consider. I now wear progressive bifocals. What a difference! I find that I can glance at the pattern and look back at my stitching effortlessly -- like I'm 30 years younger! I'm stitching a bit almost every day and overjoyed with the progress I'm making. I had forgotten how much I loved this activity.

Does this mean that quilting is a thing of the past? Have I returned fully to my first love? At this point, I can't say for sure, but, maybe a bit more embroidery and a bit less sewing -- at least until the current project reaches completion.

©Barbara Polston, Tucson, Arizona, April 13, 2023

Barbara Polston, the author of *Quilting With Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects* (Schiffer Press, 2015) and *Meet Puppy Brian and Puppy Brian and the Grey Cat* (www.puppybrian.com), lives in Tucson, Arizona, where she has failed at retirement, but getting more time to stitch in a variety of forms. Contact Barbara at barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com.

Playing Favorites

by Cathy Elliott



In years past, I had the privilege to play violin with our local Red Bluff Masterworks Orchestra & Chorale. We gathered each Memorial Day Weekend for a concert, honoring God, the United States of America, and the Men and Women of the Armed Forces. I always looked forward to this performance because the music was so rich and meaningful, inspiring mental fireworks of red, white, and blue—and accented with drum rolls, plus plenty of piccolo.

Before each piece, conductor Mark Franklin turned to the audience and said, "This one is my favorite." They laughed, but he meant what he said. He was right. Every rousing or heart-tugging tune celebrating our military heroes was the best.

If I had to pick a favorite, and don't hold me to this choice, it might be "This Is America." A medley of theme songs featuring the service songs of each military branch. Our mighty chorale's rendition of "The Caissons Go Rolling Along" and "Anchors Away" gave me goose bumps. Members of the audience who served in that branch or whose loved ones had done so were directed to stand and be honored when they heard their beloved tune. I saw tears stream down many proud faces and cried a few of my own.

As Memorial Day, Flag Day and July 4th approach and we ready to celebrate our freedom, I'll be remembering all my favorites again. Thankful for the spirit of sacrifice in every standing patriot. And many more heroes who could not.

© 2021 C. Elliott - Cathy Elliott is a full-time writer in California whose cozy mysteries reflect her personal interests from quilting and antique collecting to playing her fiddle with friends. She also leads music at church and cherishes time with her "grand-gams." Cathy's cozy plot-twisters include *A Stitch in Crime* released in tandem with the RElease (previously published) of a companion book, *A Vase of Mistaken Identity*. She is also a contributing author to Guideposts' devotional books, *Every Day Jesus*, *All God's Creations* and *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. For more information about Cathy, visit: <http://www.cathyelliottbooks.com>

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Random Acts

by Maranda K Jones

Picnic Time

If you could go on a picnic anywhere in the world, where would you go? I would pick the mountains. I would drive to a nice open clearing surrounded by hills all around, wildflowers coloring the sides of the mountains. Find a nice little table under the clear blue sky, spread out the red-checkered tablecloth, and set out sandwiches on cheap white paper plates torn apart at the ruffled edges. We would eat our lunch before the breeze blows in the late afternoon thunderstorm, and then we would drive home in the rain. The wipers would swish back and forth, singing along to the John Denver song on the radio.

Growing up in Colorado with a family who loves to camp made this a common occurrence. We spent most weekends in the pickup, traveling from our home on the plains to higher elevation. While camping we enjoyed many meals outdoors, and each meal seemed to taste even better in the fresh spruce air. There is a sense of accomplishment in cooking on a campfire. Earning that meal after setting up the tent, hiking to the lake and catching rainbow trout is a thrill, but going to the mountains for the day felt different. A picnic was a holiday all its own.



This happened once. I cannot recall the exact location, but I am sure my dad would know. He remembers each trip and lake and the number of fish caught with the smallest of details given. We can ask him one question, and he will recall the entire outing. "Dad, where were we when we sat at that little inlet after walking around the water?" "North Fork." Then he will proceed to tell us how many fish we caught, what the weather was like, and some other significant event that happened. "What was the name of the lake where my line got caught in that tree behind us?" "Rampart." Then he will remind us how many times we have been there and if we have an upcoming reservation to go back. I will have to ask him.

"Dad, where did we toss marshmallows to the chipmunks?" He will know. He will remember our snacking and constant questioning. My sister and I always asked if it was time for lunch yet. He will remember us continually filling our mugs with water from the red and white thermos sitting on the edge of the picnic table. He will remember telling us to walk down the hill with sideways steps and to watch our footing.

He will remember walking between my sister and me, baiting our hooks with red slimy salmon eggs. Either we were too little to do it ourselves or just did not want to reach in the small wide-mouthed jar to get three of them to fit nicely around the barb. I remember the answer to that one! The film stuck to my fingernails, and the squishy texture made me beg for a bobber and a fly. I could spend all day casting and reeling my line. My mom also loves to cast her fishing line out, so she reels in to tighten the slack and check her hook often. That day the four of us sat together, waiting for those tugs and hoping to catch a few.

For whatever reason, we were just there fishing for the day. A little fishing, a little lunch. A picnic. Sitting along the bank, with solid, flat rocks for chairs, we fished together. There was nowhere else to be and nothing else to do. No tent to be set up, no beds to be made, no firewood to gather. We were simply together, giving each other our full attention. That is what made that day feel so special. It does not matter where we were, but I will still ask my dad. He will remember. It is picnic time.

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Ann's Lovin' Ewe

Listen UP!

By Ann Stewart

A red bellied woodpecker persistently punctuated our pastoral peace with its percussive ear-piercing pecking. Then I learned the truth: my husband was broadcasting recorded tapping from speakers on our side deck to scare away the varieties of woodpeckers ruining our trees!

Whether we like it all or not, sound is all around us. But hearing and listening are not the same. Just as when we *look*, we don't always *see*; when we *listen*, we do not always *hear*. Hearing is involuntary, but true listening involves paying attention and considering the words.

Post Covid, we have the opportunity and necessity to reconnect, refresh our conversational skills and renew our friendships. The term "Listen Up!" came from the military, a slang term meaning to listen carefully. But now moms and coaches find it effective to encourage people to pay close attention. We too can UP our listening skills.

University Professor Dr. Heather Holleman teaches these important skills in her book **The Six Conversations: Pathways to Connecting in an Age of Isolation and Incivility**.

It's a short read that needs to remain a handy reference. Holleman describes **FOUR MINDSETS** in conversation. We can apply these ideas immediately. At our next coffee shop date, we can be curious, believe the best in our guest, express concern and mirror back by sharing something related to the topic.

Can you imagine if over your coffee conversation, you felt encouraged, knew more about yourself and your friend and left marveling about something your friend pointed out? Arriving at these **THREE FRESH GOALS** involves good questions. Dr. Holleman points out **SIX TYPES**: Social, Emotional, Physical, Cognitive, Volitional and Spiritual.

If your friend at the coffee shop is struggling to make a decision, Dr. Holleman illustrates each. Try to match each question to the category above.

How are you thinking about this decision?

Is this decision becoming hard on your body?

Who else can we loop into this conversation for advice?

Can we pray and ask God for wisdom here?

What emotions is this decision bringing up for you?

Was that an easy choice? Or How did you decide to do that?

The end of the book holds the biggest treasure: 100 top questions to prompt quality conversation. I'm listing ten I enjoyed and can't wait to try.

What is one item you might keep forever?

What is something you consider beautiful?

What are three things that make you happy?

What's the kindest act you've ever witnessed?

What is the first book you remember changing you somehow?

What job would you be terrible at?

What's the story behind the longest you've ever gone without sleep?

What's something you didn't want to do but were glad you did?

What feels like "home" to you?

What did you bring for show and tell as a child?

Now here's two tougher questions of my own: Can you remember the last time you had a conversation where you felt truly fulfilled? Or can you remember a dialogue in which you helped someone through your listening and questioning?

Listen Up! Let's all try to have that type of conversation today.

Excerpts taken from The Six Conversations: Pathways to Connecting in an Age of Isolation and Incivility by Heather Holleman, October 2022 C 2023

2 Minute Lift

Two Minute Reads to Flip Our Scripts

By Kathy J. Sotak

Plant Diaries: We are Mothers of Thousands

Maybe you can still hug your mother -- maybe you can't.

Maybe you lost a child -- maybe you haven't.

Maybe mom brings you joy -- but maybe you've been hurt.

Maybe you tried to have children -- but couldn't.

Maybe you chose not to bear children -- and then decided to be a mother in other ways.

If you ask me, "What are you doing for Mother's Day?" I'll give you a boiler-plate response. It's not that I don't love being a Mom. I'm blessed with two boys that make my heart bloom every day. And as a bonus -- not only do I love them, I like them too. They are very cool human spirits, and I am grateful that they chose me as their mother.

I see Mother's Day through a different lens, perhaps after losing both a mother and a son. But it's not my own pain I feel. I think about my co-worker M, who whispered her pain to me, "I tried to have children, but never could." I think about my friend S, who died from the poison of loneliness and other substances, and her two teenage daughters, now walking this earth without the solid embrace of their mother. I think of R whose son took his life. I think of my former hairdresser C, who took her own life and left her two grown sons, now figuring out parenthood by themselves. I think of E who didn't talk to her mom for two decades. I think of my friends S, J, M, A and D who chose not to have kids, yet our culture may not fully understand that choice.

So given this perspective, how can we look at this 107-year-old holiday differently? What if we turned Mother's Day into a celebration of honoring all of the mothers around us, and the mother within us? It doesn't matter if you have a child or a mom. I bet you are a mother in many ways. I bet you have many mothers in your life. It's time to recognize the Mothering Energy that we all have. It has nothing to do with kids, moms or dads. It has everything to do with creating something and nurturing those around us.

My Mother of Thousands plant helps me see a new take on Mother's Day.

This is my Mother of Thousands plant, its name quite literal. It produces babies that grow off of the leaves, their roots dancing in the air, then falls off into their own identity. This plant exists to remind us that we are "birthing" every single day. What are you creating and nurturing in this day?

The thousands of somethings we create and nurture each day are felt in this world. It could be a smile, a prayer, eye contact, a warm meal, loving an animal, doing your best, a new idea, artwork, laughter, playtime, poetry or dreaming. And a thousand more.

You and I are both Mothers of Thousands. May you honor the Mother within you, and may we all honor our surrounding Mothers that nurture us. And if you are lucky enough to hug your own Mother today, give her a warm embrace as you honor her for all that she is.

Mother's Day may be past, but let's continue to honor the mothers around us all year.





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Aspen Grove Quilting's Stories with Sam ...

Throughout the month of March, I participated in a social media event called #IGQuiltFest. Amy Ellis Quilter & Designer (@amyscreativeside) on Instagram hosts this event every March. It is an opportunity for individuals to share photos and stories of some of their favorite tools, best tip ever, recent finishes, fabric storage and more! It's a fun event, so make sure you check it out on Instagram and see what other like-minded individuals are sharing. You might even find a neat way to upcycle some left-over fabric, or giggle along at some "what was I thinking" moments.

"Creative Hands" was the topic on day four and immediately the reference of wearing many hats came to mind. If you are unfamiliar with this phrase it refers to having many jobs, roles and responsibilities. As the topic of the day inspired my social media post, I took a twist on the common forementioned phrase. Many of us who are involved in crafting trades likely echo the following perception: that we use our hands in place of hats in our roles and responsibilities most often.

Looking into this theme I wanted to take the opportunity on social media to recognize how creative hands are so much more. Sometimes we are so focused on what we want to achieve and how we are going to do so, that we forget about the little contributions that our hands bring to those around us.

Hands that hold. Hands that comfort. Hands that nurture. Teaching hands, leading hands. Inspiring hands, hands that create, hands that celebrate. Hands to grow with, learn with and laugh with. Likely, multiple descriptions of the above-mentioned hands fit into your life, and perhaps like mine it can be seen passing down from one generation to the next.

Supportive hands – the evidence of supporting hands can be seen through many generations in my lineage. Often my grandma could be found helping and supporting her students and their parents, teaching arts and crafts and sewing to locals. She was a loved teacher and member of her community, often found supporting them by donating her time, energy and money. Her actions of supporting passed down to my mom, who encouraged me to continue the characteristic. Helping out a neighbor, donating to local food banks, dropping off food at a friend's who is struggling, volunteering with local organizations, and encouraging others to do the same -- support comes in all forms and at all levels of community.

Mixed in with supporting is the never-ending process of learning, and we often find our hands participating with our mind. Recently my mom and I were in the sewing shop finishing up a lovely spring project. The Tulip Season quilt was almost complete and only a few long seams remained. Then it was time to celebrate our highly anticipated project. I grabbed the quilt top with its coordinating 3" border and started sewing. Coming to the end of the strip I noticed that I had accumulated a large excess of fabric – the ends were no longer lined up. I quickly joked at mom saying she must have cut it incorrectly, and she scooted over to check out the problem. The first question out of her mouth was "did you pin it?" I looked at her and straight faced replied, "I don't pin it, I wing it." After she finished laughing, she again re-taught me the importance of pinning long seams.

Just simply looking at my work I knew that she was right. I needed to end my stubbornness to save some time (and seam ripping) by absorbing to her lessons. Her tiny, creative hands reached over and took the quilt to the tabletop. Her fingers swiftly worked to pin two pieces together. The next four long seams were pinned by my mom to emphasize the lesson, again. Four perfectly lined up seams resulted through this teaching and learning with her hands. Few words were exchanged during this lesson, her hands doing all the teaching. Plus, my previous lessons about the significance of pinning sped up the process.

As I reflect on the relationship that my parents and I have, I can clearly see the importance that hands have in our lives. We guide and live so many of life's moments through our hands. My hands are filled these days with little hands, looking to guide them, encourage them and support their creative minds. To be a part of these moments is such a blessing. Encouragement and teaching, loving and supporting, joking or nurturing – I wish to continue building these moments with my family, and I strive to encourage another generation of creative, kind, loving hands.

Share some of your favorite stories of someone's hands molding a positive experience. Send us a message through our email, website, or social media. I'd love to hear if that experience has been passed to the next generation. See you next edition – chat soon!

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You don't meet the people you love,
you recognize them.

--- Anna Gavalda

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



Five Reasons Singing is Good for You!

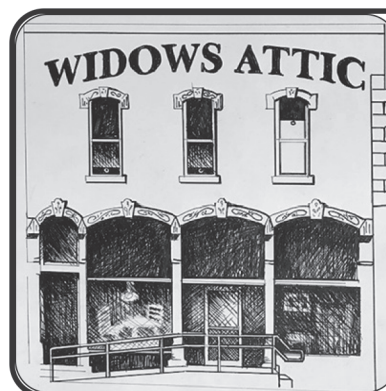
Singing makes you feel better - Singing enhances lung function -
Singing helps you beat stress and helps with relaxation -
Singing helps improve your memory - Singing builds a sense of community.
There are more benefits like pain relief and self confidence.

**GIRLFRIEND WISDOM: Turn on some music
and Sing, Sing, Sing like a Bluebird!**

Sing in the car - Sing in the shower - Sing at Church - Hum a melody while taking a walk - Become a karaoke Super-Star!
The benefits are important and too many to ignore. This God-given ability is available to all of us. Nature sets the example in many ways and this one is among the sweetest. Composer and songwriter Cole Porter's words are so true: "Be like the Bluebird who never is blue. For he knows from his upbringing what singing can do!"

Joy & Blessings, *Jody*

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



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The Heart of July (with August on the Horizon)

By Nancy J. Nash

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

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

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

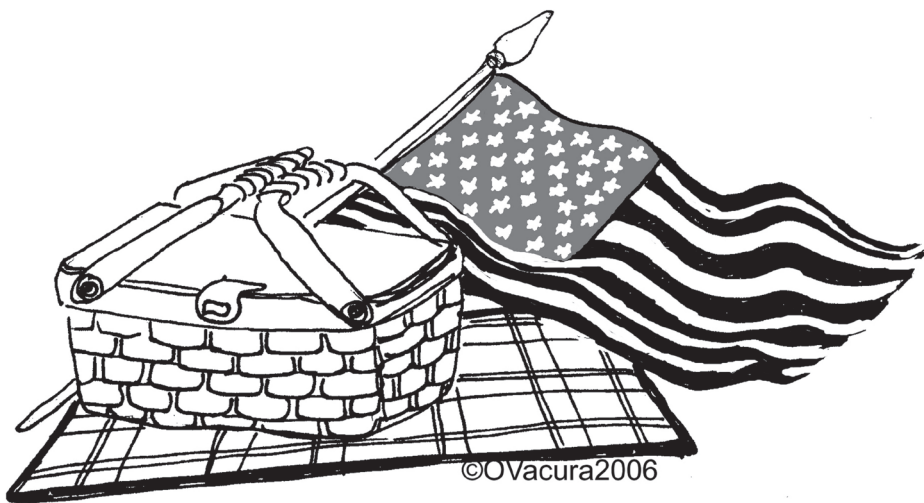
What besides berries, ice cream and outdoor eating rest in the heart of July as treasures to be sought and savored? Its flowers, of course, are extraordinary. Some of my favorites are the wild ones that line the roadsides: simple, comforting clusters of orange day lilies; dusty blue chicory as pale as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

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

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

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

©2023 Nancy J. Nash Nancy J. Nash is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story* and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, each available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. She can be reached at nancynash341@gmail.com



Shop News

The Quilted Sunflower Changes Focus

SPRING HILL -- Leslie Birmingham, owner of The Quilted Sunflower in Spring Hill, has announced that she will be closing the shop in June with a targeted date of June 23. She will continue the longarm quilting side of the business out of her home. The shop had been in business nine years this month. A liquidation sale began May 30.

"The time has gone by quickly the last nine years," Leslie said. "I've made some wonderful friends and lasting relationships with my customers. The friendships I've made have been the best part of owning the shop and I will miss that."

Leslie added that she is looking forward to having a more flexible schedule to enjoy her family.

Enjoy this new chapter, Leslie.

New Quilt Shop Opens in Harper

HARPER -- A new shopping experience for quilters is waiting for you in Harper, Kansas. The Raccoon Quilt Company opened for business in November. Owner Pauline Oliver said her goal is to "invigorate and spread an interest in quilting and sewing for all ages." The shop has over 800 bolts of fabric -- with more arriving each day -- and a selection of notions, tools and patterns. In addition, the shop has classes and projects for all ages and abilities of sewers.

A Harper native, Pauline and her husband, recently moved back to the area after careers in Kansas City and Wichita and decided to open the shop in downtown Harper. The shop's unusual name was suggested by Pauline's brother who has written a lot of stories about raccoons over the years. You can find out about classes and other events on their Facebook page. The shop is open Wed.-Friday 10-5 and Sat. 10-2.

Smoky River Quilt Shoppe to Close

OAKLEY -- A destination shop for quilters in western Kansas has announced it will be closing. Donella Younkin recently announced the closing on the shop's Facebook page. A sale will begin on May 30 with 30% off everything in the shop -- excluding quilts.

In announcing the closing Donella said, "I'm so sorry to close, and I will miss everyone, but I gotta spoil grandkids and do other things in life. But I did love the shop and all the people. What great friends I have made. Thanks so much for everyone's support for the last 10 years."

Donella purchased the Smoky River Quilt Shoppe from Donna and Jim Smith, who originally opened the downtown shop in 2011. Best of luck in your new adventures, Donella.

Please note shop hours have changed. Now open Monday-Friday 8-4 and Saturday 8-11. Closed Sundays.

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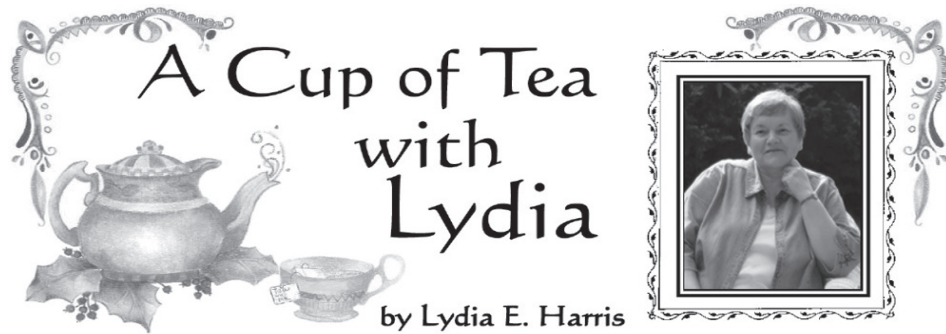
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Watermelon Smiles

My face was as red as the strawberries I picked. By afternoon, my back ached, berry juice stained my hands, and my throat felt parched. I wanted to quit. Just then my father stopped by the berry field with a large chilled watermelon and cut a thick slice for me. What a refreshing treat! That was more than 50 years ago. But whether young or old, many enjoy the bright color and juicy sweetness of watermelon. So, from decorations to featured foods, let watermelon steal the show at your summer par-TEAS.

For a casual party:

Enjoy an outdoor party in your yard, or transport your party to the park. Add pizzazz to your table with colorful watermelon-themed paper plates and napkins. I've even found watermelon-shaped candles and watermelon-print fabric that I sewed into a tablecloth. Or let kids make watermelon paper placemats to add to the decor. Draw a half-slice of watermelon on white construction paper. Then let kids color the green rind and red flesh with crayons or markers. Add black oval dots for seeds. Or buy a white paper tablecloth for kids to decorate.

For the menu, here's one idea: lemonade iced tea (see recipe), croissants filled with ham and cheese, assorted garden vegetables and watermelon slices. Once the half slice of watermelon is eaten, you're left with a smiling rind and a smiling face. For dessert, make "watermelon" cookies from your favorite sugar cookie or shortbread recipe, but tint the dough light red. Roll out the dough, cut circles, and then cut the circles in half. Press mini chocolate chips into each slice before baking.



Watermelon Cookies

After the cookies are baked and cooled, frost the round edges with green frosting squeezed from a tube. These "watermelon slices" will add a sweet ending to your meal.

For a fancy party:

A crisp white tablecloth with red or green napkins makes a striking table setting. For a centerpiece, use half a small watermelon and place it upside down on a plate. Then make fruit kabob flowers by cutting watermelon and other fruits into flower shapes or balls. Assemble them on skewers, and poke them into the watermelon half.

Or create a show stopper by carving a watermelon into a unique design. For our daughter's wedding, I cut long oval watermelons into scalloped baskets with handles and filled them with fruit kabobs. To welcome our newborn granddaughter, I carved a small watermelon into a baby buggy, poking in paper umbrellas for wheels, then filled it with fruit salad. You could even carve your melon into a teapot. For these ideas and more, go to www.watermelon.org (click on carvings).

Plan the menu around favorite tea foods, and finish with a frosty slice of "watermelon" sherbet made from one of these recipes.

1. Wrap the inside of a medium-sized mixing bowl with plastic wrap. Spread a one-inch layer of green pistachio ice cream or lime sherbet to cover the entire inside surface of the bowl. Freeze until firm. Soften pink strawberry ice cream or raspberry sherbet and mix in mini chocolate chips. Fill the green bowl with the ice cream or sherbet. Freeze until firm. Before serving, thaw slightly, unmold, and cut "watermelon slices" with a sharp knife dipped into warm water.

2. Cut a small, chilled honeydew melon in half and remove the seeds. Fill each half with raspberry sherbet and freeze it until firm. Cut each half into slices or four to six wedges. Press mini chocolate chips into the sherbet. Serve the melon immediately. Freeze leftovers.

If you're looking for a refreshing slice of summer, begin with a watermelon theme and end with happy memories. I'm ready to plan my par-TEA. Won't you join me to make smiles?

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast and the author of two books for grandparents: *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together* and *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*, both available at amazon.com and wherever books are sold.

From Lydia's Recipe File:

Lemonade Iced Tea

Combine:
4 cups brewed Earl Grey tea (Use 5 teabags and steep for 3 minutes; remove teabags.)

1/3 cup sugar (or sweeten to taste)

Add:

1 cup cold water

1/4 cup frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed

1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Mix and chill. Serve over ice in frosty glasses. Garnish with fresh lemon slices.

Makes 5 cups

Variation: Replace Earl Grey tea with English Breakfast tea.

Frosty glasses:

For sweet sips, moisten the glass rims with water and dip them into sugar. Chill glasses in the freezer until ready to use.

Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

First Inning Moms

The crack of the bat in a neighborhood park has me once again reminiscing about a little leaguer of my own. Back in 1995, the day before I left my job after 16 years, I had to face up to the one task I dreaded most: cleaning out my desk drawer. The contents were melded into one giant rectangle of paper clips, rubber bands, plastic spoons, push pins, cough drops...you get the picture. Within this moraine of corporate life, however, I discovered a treasure: a 3" button with a picture of my son Tim in his little league baseball uniform, wearing a hat three sizes too big and a sideways smile on his 9-year-old face that said, "I don't know if I can hit or catch a ball, but I'm sure going to try."



Working moms and dads know the memories that button evokes. Most of them are positive, because I loved being a part of it all. However, the challenges of being a single mom were great. The schedules were always posted on the refrigerator, but the times seemed impossible to meet. I still warmly remember every parent or coach who volunteered for pick-up duty, letting me opt for the carpool home.

Then there were the afternoon phone calls to the office. "Mom, where's my glove?" "My hat?" "My right shoe?" Followed by the logical next call, "Where's my left shoe?" The next time the phone rang I could pick it up and say, "it's in the dryer," because I knew there was a search going on for the uniform!

Along with the memories comes the guilt, of course. Why was I always so late getting to the games? It was possible for me to leave work on time, but too often I didn't. I actually remember driving down the interstate while slicing oranges into sections on top of a grocery bag on the passenger seat of my car.

Blessedly, our kids tend to grow up to appreciate our best efforts and forgive us for being less than perfect. One Mother's Day while Tim was away at college, I received a card from him that I treasure even more than the button. On the cover is a photo of two little boys in baseball gear. Inside the blank card he wrote: "Just like me, huh? Happy Mom's Day, Mom! Thanks for bringin' the oranges! Love always, Tim."

Gratefully, more and more working moms and dads are entering ball games, recitals, school plays and other activities right into their calendars -- and leaving work to attend them! If you're one of these parents, resolve to leave work on time. Be a "first-inning mom" or a "kick-off dad." Be in your seat when the curtain rises. In 10 years, you'll never be able to remember what was important enough to keep you at work. I can guarantee it.

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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Town and Country Cooking

By Janette Hess

Berries in abundance

We live in a world where seasonal fruits such as strawberries are available year-round. That said, off-season strawberries pale in comparison -- in both appearance and taste -- to those picked at the height of strawberry season. In most areas of the United States, that season is now!

Seek out the abundant berries at farmers' markets or local patches. Work those bright, sweet, juicy nuggets into every meal. Search through collected recipes to find old favorites that have been waiting for the right season, or, better yet, try new recipes that will take those strawberries beyond pie and shortcake.

This issue's recipe for Berry Smoothies combines frozen fruit with yogurt to create a treat that's appropriate for breakfast or any time a pick-me-up is needed. Strawberry Muffins, with their decadent cream cheese spread, are particularly suited for breakfast or brunch. Strawberry Salsa Fresca is a complete departure from traditional strawberry fare and makes a spectacularly tasty topping for grilled chicken, pork or fish.

Berry Smoothies

- 4 cups strawberry quarters, frozen
- ½ cup blueberries, frozen
- 16 ounces vanilla yogurt
- 1 6-ounce can (single-serving can) pineapple juice, well chilled
- 2 tablespoons honey

Strawberry slices and/or whole blueberries for garnish, if desired

Combine all ingredients except garnishes in blender; blend just until smooth. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

Strawberry Muffins

Batter:

- 1 cup chopped fresh strawberries
- 1 tablespoon sugar (for macerating strawberries)
- 2 cups flour
- ¾ cup sugar (for batter)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup whole milk
- ¼ cup canola or vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- Large-grain sugar for garnish (sanding sugar or turbinado sugar)

Spread:

- 4 ounces softened cream cheese
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 or 2 minced strawberries
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- Reserved strawberry juice

Toss 1 cup chopped strawberries with 1 tablespoon sugar; set aside for 30 minutes. (Sugar will macerate, or soften, the strawberries and draw out the juice.) In large mixing bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In separate bowl, beat eggs. Add milk, oil, zest and extract. Pour liquid ingredients into dry ingredients. Using spatula, stir and fold just to combine. Using colander, drain strawberries very well. Reserve juice for use in spread. Fold strawberries into batter. Spoon batter into 12 paper-lined muffin cups. Sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes, or until muffin tops are golden. To make spread, beat together cream cheese, powdered sugar, minced strawberries, almond extract and reserved juice. Serve with warm muffins.

Note: Muffins may be baked in advance and stored in an airtight container. The tops will soften, and the muffins will become even more delicious! If desired, reheat briefly in a microwave oven.

Strawberry Salsa Fresca

- 2 cups chopped strawberries
- ½ cup chopped red pepper
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- 1 to 2 teaspoons minced jalapeno pepper
- 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Toss together strawberries, red pepper, red onion and jalapeno pepper. Cover and chill for 1 to 2 hours to allow flavors to blend. Before serving, add remaining ingredients and stir to combine. Serve with corn chips, or use as garnish for roasted or grilled chicken, fish or pork.



A trained journalist, Janette Hess focuses her writing on interesting people and interesting foods. She is a Master Food Volunteer with her local Extension service and enjoys collecting, testing and sharing recipes.

What in the World is That?

by Becky Van Vleet

I have been blessed to have this beautiful "thing" in the corner of my dining room for a number of years, which boasts of a nostalgic time period on rural farms. (Refer to the photograph.) But, what in the world is that you ask? I really would not be able to answer this at all if not for my mother and other family members explaining this vintage domestic good to me.

First, my mother. She loved antiques, and especially if she had a memory of one's use in her family. So as her parents gradually got rid of things they were no longer using, she let it be known that she'd love to have certain items adorning her home rather than see her parents discard them. Yes, even a cream separator! She donned her newly acquired farm item with artificial greenery, much like I have today, and placed it in the corner of our kitchen. And when company asked, what in the world is that, she explained exactly what it was and how it functioned to separate the cream from the milk after the cows were milked. A few years ago, I learned a little more about the Thomas family cream separator from my twin aunts, Sue and Mary.

My aunts shared that their father, my grandfather, bought some cows when they moved to a new house in 1942 in rural Indiana. Then he purchased the cream separator to sell cream. The separator had three containers that were used during the separation process. The top container was used to hold all the whole milk, and once it was full, Mary and Sue would take turns turning the handle around and around, causing the rich, thick cream to separate from the whole milk and flow out of one of the spouts. The skim milk would flow out of the other spout.

It was the girls' responsibility to keep the separator clean with boiling water so the cream would be free of germs. Young Mary and Sue smiled with pride every time they got a good grade and price for the cream they sold, after it was inspected by Mr. Robertson.

If you live in the Midwest, you may be lucky enough to find a cream separator in the attic or a neighbor's barn. Since this area of the country had a lot of dairy farms, there are often a few separators at any garage sale you might go to. As for me, I have a priceless remnant of pastoral America sitting right in my dining room. Sometimes my grandchildren ask Nana, "What in the world is that?" And I'm happy to talk about the good old days any time I can!



Becky Van Vleet, a retired school administrator, lives near Colorado Springs with her husband, Troy. They are the parents of four grown children and enjoy spending time with their nine grandchildren. Becky is a children's picture book author, and her website is devoted to family stories and creating memories: www.beckyvanvleet.com.

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Finding Love In The Mourning Doves

by Kerri Habben Bosman

One reason I like to write these articles is to remind myself what is important. They force me to keep digging until I reach what I want to express. Sometimes I have to push aside a lot of details to achieve that. It is then that I realize once again how much time is spent on the minutiae of living.

I don't mean basic maintenance like grocery shopping and doing laundry. These tasks and others like them can become quietly sacred in their own way just by being grateful for having enough. There is much to be said for being dedicated to what needs to be done. It is when all the details begin gelling that I consciously slow down. If I didn't, I might forget that simply being alive is a precious gift. For underneath all that accumulated moss is still the rock itself. A core each of us has that makes us who we are.

Perhaps this introspection is why watching the birds is so relaxing. They, too, have details to tend to but they never seem in a hurry. My husband, Wayne, and I enjoy seeing them land on the feeder, from the tiny finches to the bigger blue jay. The chickadee always draws our attention. A male cardinal up on the top of the crook gleams endlessly red and we find his arrival better than anything we'd ever see on television.

Then there are the birds that feed on the ground. Each year we have an Eastern towhee couple arrive in the spring. Papa Towhee is striking in his black overcoat and Mama is elegant in her simplicity. When the robins start to appear, it is an extra special day.

But my favorite bird is the mourning dove. Since I was child, I've valued the even coo and steady pace of this bird. Usually there are two of them together and, sometimes, three. They either fly off in one sudden moment or one ascends, and the others follow.

It is both their immense calm and their sudden energy that inspires me. Each bird gently strolls along the ground, eating until it has gathered enough to fill its capacity. When it is indeed time to fly, they take off with a deliberate and passionate trill.

These doves never bother any of the other birds and even a nearby squirrel twice their size doesn't cause them to change their path. They just quietly go about the business of gathering as if they know exactly where the next morsel is waiting. A pastel, iridescent light glimmers off their feathers whenever they are in the sun, and it is then that they seem transformed. One moment they are seemingly drab, and the next they are shining.

I try to go about my days and my tasks in a way similar to a mourning dove, ideally with an even pace wherein somehow everything gets done. I haven't perfected this bird's graceful motions in changing course; I slip into a flutter and then catch myself. Yet, there have been pivotal moments in my life when I knew exactly what I had to do and how to do it.

I apply the most important lesson from the mourning doves to how I am with other people. For all our different personalities and paths, everyone can feel gray and drab once in a while, especially when life's details could overwhelm us. So, I try to draw out a bit of light to remind people that they truly shine, which brings me back to why I write these articles. There is always the increased self-awareness, but being able to share with you and others is part of what keeps me steadfast.

And of course, there is always remembering the mourning doves.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer in Chapel Hill, NC. She can be reached at 913jееves@gmail.co



Quilting with Barbara

By Barbara Conquest

Look Around You!

Overheard after a public presentation by a noted quilter: "What an inspiration she is!" "I feel so inspired after seeing that trunk show," and the like. What inspires quilters? The Oxford English Reference Dictionary defines inspiration as *a supposed force or influence stimulating creative activity... a sudden, brilliant creative or timely idea*. Sometimes we feel as if inspiration has fled from our quilting lives. You know... same old, same old.

Where can we quilters find inspiration for our projects? In former days the making of quilts was often a matter of necessity, and inspiration had little bearing on the matter; family must be kept warm. We have more freedom now, but with almost unlimited choices, we also have more decisions to make. An important decision we all struggle with at times is that of colour. One day we suddenly realize we're tired of the safe colour combinations we've used so often, but where to look for something different? In other words, where do we look for inspiration?

Look around you! Nature doesn't make mistakes. Observe the combination of nature's colours in the mountains as you drive through them: the varied greens (or golds in the fall), the mauve-to-grey mountains, the sky, the snow... At a Ginny Beyer presentation I attended some years ago, I learned she takes photos of flowers, for example, using technology she breaks interesting areas of these photos down into pixels. Voila! A coordinated palette. Ginny Beyer has long been noted for her palettes; at one time she was famous for the new ones she produced yearly. She knew that nature doesn't make mistakes and used that to her advantage and ours.

If you're neither a photographer nor a techie, there are other sources of inspiration. Quilting magazines are replete with colorful projects, sometimes with two colour versions of the same quilt. Other people's colour combinations new to you may strike your fancy, and you'll wonder why you had never thought of them before. While travelling in the Maritimes two years ago, I ran across a colour combination so striking that I wrote a note on a scrap of paper and tucked it in my purse for future reference. (The fact that it's still in my purse simply indicates a lack of time, not inspiration. But that's another story). Colours and colour combinations on objects as mundane as an upholstered chair in someone else's house or a public building can be inspirational. Quilt shops' displays rarely fail to inspire. Keep your eyes open and your cell phone charged.

When the top is complete, where can you or your longarm find inspiration for a quilting pattern unique to your quilt? Everywhere! Fences, trees, shadows, brick walls, textures in nature, carpets in public places (carpeted hotel corridors are a gold mine of design), railway ties, geometric designs on older buildings... endless possibilities. Of course, most quilting magazines these days include suggested quilting patterns. Some of them are rather impractical as printed, but they can be modified and adapted for your personal requirements.

You may have noticed that the definition of *inspiration* implies that inspiration leads to action, which separates true inspiration from mere good intentions. So be it. Are you inspired?

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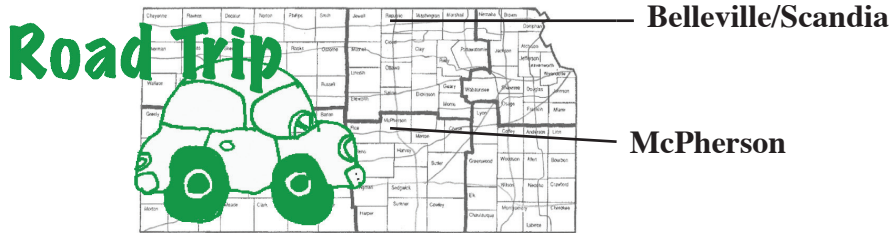
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Kansas has had the great fortune to have a number of fun retreat centers where friends can take a few days for themselves to work on projects – or just get away and recharge from all the tasks and activities that demand attention. We have featured a number of these retreat centers over the years in The Kansas Country Register. In this past year or so, four more get-aways have opened or changed ownership – interestingly all in the middle of the state in a line stretching from almost Nebraska to almost Oklahoma. In this and the next issue of The Country Register we will be featuring them in our road trip stories. One of them just might be your next retreat destination. Come with me as we visit the two in north central Kansas – Sew Country Stitchin’ Retreat House southwest of Belleville and Corner Block Lodge in McPherson. The August/September issue will find me in Kechi and Wellington. Let’s hit the road!

Sew Country Stitchin’ Retreat House Located Southwest of Belleville 1281 Queen Road • Scandia KS

For 30 years Sew Country Quilt Shop in Belleville has been a quilter’s destination shop – great fabric, great original designs by shop owner Sheila Cornet and a knowledgeable and helpful staff. And now Sheila is offering another destination service, the Sew Country Stitchin’ Retreat House.

Sheila had been wanting to open a retreat center for some time but couldn’t find the right space. And then the perfect spot opened up just down the road from her own farm home – her late in-laws’ house. After some refurbishing and renovation to accommodate quilters and crafters, Sew Country Stitchin’ Retreat House opened last September.

I met up with Sheila at Sew Country and rode with her to the Retreat Center, merely minutes away from the shop and downtown Belleville. The ‘70s-era ranch style house, located four miles southwest of Belleville, is close enough to town to provide easy access to amenities including a grocery store, restaurants and, most importantly, Sew Country Quilt Shop, and far enough out of town to offer a quiet, peaceful atmosphere perfect for working on projects and late-into-the-night conversations and fun.

“Our visitors have found (the retreat house) to be peaceful, comfortable, convenient and close to the quilt shop. They often walk in the door of the house and say ‘Wow’. It’s a pleasant surprise to them when they see what we have,” Sheila said.

When planning the retreat house, Sheila considered what she, as a quilter, would feel was important for a productive,



Sew Country Stitchin’ Retreat House. Below: Sewing tables with six sewing stations. Overhead lighting and an abundance of natural light from windows makes seeing those stitches easier.



Cutting mats and big board ironing boards and irons are available for use. The house also has a washer and dryer for the use of guests.



comfortable stay. She looked at the house through the eyes of a quilter and considered comments her customers had shared over the years about places they had been. She also visited several retreat houses/centers herself and made note of what she liked – and didn’t like. That input guided the improvements she made to the house to make it quilter/crafter friendly.

When I walked through the front door, I stepped into the work area outfitted with sewing tables and chairs and filled with light. The room has large windows letting in natural light as well as newly installed canister ceiling lights directly over the work tables. There is currently room for six sewing stations, but there are plans to add an additional four stations in an adjoining room. Sheila was very particular about the quality of the work station chairs when picking them out.

“A comfortable chair makes all the difference when you are sewing or working on any type of craft project,” Sheila said.

Retreat guests bring their own machines and project materials, but the other necessary sewing equipment is provided. A large cutting board and two big board ironing



LEFT: Bedrooms are bright and airy with single beds. The retreat house sleeps six. NEXT BELOW: The fully equipped modern kitchen has everything needed to cook your meals. Dining area adjoins it. BELOW: Enjoy the quiet of the country in the spacious yard.

boards and irons are within easy distance of the sewing area. A project design wall is available to try out different block layouts.

The work area layout allows for easy conversation with plenty of space to spread out your work. And if you are needing a short break from sewing, but don’t want to miss out on the conversation, a comfortable sofa and chair line one wall of the work area. This is also great for those doing hand work, knitting or crocheting that want to be “in the action” but find a sofa more comfortable than a table.

Three bedrooms, each equipped with two single beds provide sleeping for six. The rooms feature handmade quilts on the beds and are on one end of the house, providing a quiet space to sleep if others in the group choose to stay up later working. There are two full baths – both with showers, one with a tub – all on the main floor. All linens are provided for guests. There are plans to add four more beds in the finished basement in the near future, accommodating groups of 10. The basement is currently used for a casual conversation space.

The house features a fully equipped kitchen including dishes, flatware and pots and



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pans. Retreaters do their own cooking and provide their own food, however, the kitchen is stocked with staples – flour and sugar and condiments. A toaster, coffee maker and a Keurig, crockpots, microwave, oven and gas-burner cooktop are available for cooking. If you enjoy grilling, a Green Mountain pellet grill is also available for use. Guests are asked to wash their own dishes in the dishwasher, but that is the only housekeeping duties that are requested.

“If you’re paying for a get-away, who wants to do housework,” Sheila said. “When your retreat is over, you can just pack up and leave.”

Other amenities at Sew Country Stitchin’ Retreat House include television with Dish TV, WiFi and central heating and air that guests control. There is a two-car garage for guests’ vehicles. They also have access to a spacious yard and some beautiful views of the north central Kansas sunsets, sunrises and rural countryside.

Sheila said the retreat house was intended to be a place where a group of friends could come and have fun. “If you have a good time, it doesn’t matter how much you got done. There are no “quilt police” allowed here,” she laughed.

To reserve the space, contact Sew Country Quilt Shop 785-527-2332 or email sewcountry@nckcn.net. Minimum of three guests. Rates: \$60/person/night, preference is for a minimum 2-night stay. For family or other groups, call for rates.

Corner Block Lodge 300 S. Maple • McPherson KS

The Corner Block Lodge is in my own back yard. But after visiting the house, I would seriously consider it for my own get-away.

Autumn Wilgers and her mother, Shari Strauss, owner of The Quilter’s Yard in Junction City, purchased what had been Maple Memories in January 2022. The house had been run as a retreat center for a number of years, but the owners had moved out of state and were wanting to sell it.

“We just kind of fell into it. Mom had always dreamed of running a retreat house, and I have always liked crafting and was glad to help with it,” Autumn said. “When



Above: Corner Block Lodge.

LEFT: Two of the work stations. Each table has available task lighting, cup holders and waste baskets. Work rooms include design walls.



Right: Ironing station features big board ironing boards and irons.

Below: The kitchen is fully equipped with appliances, dishes and cooking equipment to prepare your meals.



we heard (it was for sale) it seemed like a great opportunity. The fact that my husband, Dustin, and I live in McPherson and I could manage it helped us make the decision.”

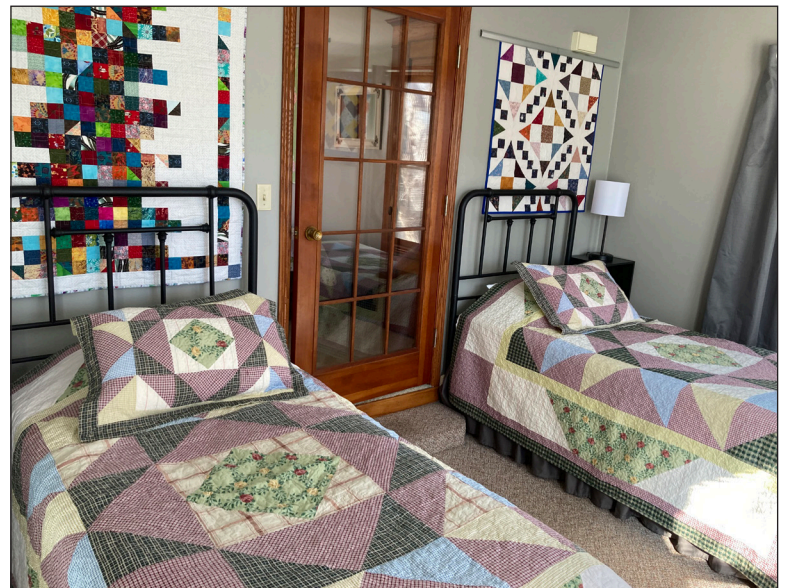
Corner Block Lodge is a two-story, early 1900s Victorian-style home built in a neighborhood of historic McPherson homes just a block off Main Street. The name comes from its corner lot location. If you visited Maple Memories in the past, you will find the home has had some major updates since Autumn and Shari took over. The house has been painted, new flooring has been installed in the kitchen, dining and bathrooms and a new walk-in tile shower has

been added upstairs. A brand-new front porch has also been added to the house.

Shari and Autumn have outfitted the house with the needs of crafters in mind, while keeping much of the authentic period atmosphere of the home when it housed a family. Original woodwork in much of the house, original door hardware, leaded glass windows



The house has three comfortable seating areas for relaxing, conversation or watching television. BELOW: The bed rooms, all located on the second floor, feature single beds and varied layouts.



STORY CONTINUED ON PG 14

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McPherson • Minneapolis • Salina

RETREAT continued from pg 13

and interesting nooks and sitting areas were kept.

The house will accommodate groups of up to 12. There are 12 crafting stations in three connected rooms. Each station includes a 5' x 2' table with individual light, sewing chair, trash can and cup holder. The cutting station has three cutting mats. Visitors bring their own machines, but ironing boards, irons and design boards are provided.

Autumn said since she has been managing the Corner Block Lodge groups using the facility have ranged from quilting to scrapbooking to family reunions – even a bachelorette party has been booked. Shari has hosted a few retreats through Quilter's Yard for individuals who might not have a group to book the house. She has held some special events there and overnight classes. A Handi Quilter Truck Event will be held at the retreat center Aug. 9-12. Autumn shared that there are several groups that are regular retreaters at the house including one that has been coming for over 10 years. In addition to retreats and overnight events, Autumn would also like to start a once-a-month "sip and sew" style get-togethers in the future.

Guests staying in the house share bedrooms furnished with single beds. Autumn said she enjoys decorating and changes out the quilts in the bedrooms to fit seasonal themes.

"I've been told the beds are really comfortable," she said. Bedrooms also have room darkening shades.

Bathrooms – all upstairs – are shared. All bathrooms have showers.

The fully equipped kitchen includes two full-size refrigerators, dishes, cooking utensils, coffee maker – everything needed for the group to fix its own meals. A dining area for 12 is in the kitchen/dining area. Corner Block Lodge provides coffee, but guests must bring their own food. There are two grocery stores in McPherson for shopping after arrival as well as a number of restaurants and food delivery options.

The house has several spaces for gathering and visiting when guests need a break from crafting including one on the main floor, a lounge area in the basement and a screened-in porch sunroom sitting area. Gathering areas have televisions and the house has Wi-Fi for your devices.

Corner Block Lodge is just two blocks from Stitches Quilt Shop. Other shopping in McPherson's downtown, including a destination kitchen/cooking store, and dining options are within easy walking distance.

Rates are based on rental of the whole house for your group whether you have one person or 12. Sunday through Thursday is \$300/night and Friday and Saturday are \$600/night. Autumn said the typical group comes for a 4-day/3-night stay, but the house can be booked for any number of days. For 2023 she is running an add on special if you add Thursday night to your weekend stay. Call or see their ad on page 14.

For more information see the retreat center's website www.cornerblocklodge.com or call for availability.

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by June Friend



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Slices of Life

By Sherry Osland

Teaching in Australia (Part 3)

(Editor's Note: This is the third installment of the writer's experience with teaching overseas in the early 1970s.) The first two installments were printed in the Feb/March and the April/May issues of The Country Register. If you missed them, you can find them online at www.countryregister.com/kansas. Links to the past 12 issues are available to read there.)

To teach in Perth, West Australia, I got situated in an apartment in a flatblock in East Perth, thankfully, with a roommate. My commute was 13 miles to the newly developing migrant communities on the North side.

At first, I took a bus. My school was Balga. I taught quite a mixed ethnic group of students (British, Irish, Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, Indian, Aboriginal and Australians). I also had a class of deaf students. After some mishaps in taking the bus, I decided to buy a car. Having NO experience in buying one, I did the best I could with the money I had. I ended up with a fire-engine red, 1951 Morris Minor (visualize a VW Bug with an extra hump at the back): left-handed standard shift, right-handed steering, motor in the front, "boot" (trunk) in the back -- for \$150. My roommate and I took it out together to practice. When the driver forgot about the right-hand drive aspect, the other would yell to remind her!! It finally all came together. I spent several months between the bus and driving it (when/if it would start). A definite love/hate relationship.

There were two things that were immediately obvious differences in Australia. The schools there were open-air. The classrooms were connected by open-sided corridors to other rooms and the kiosk. Meals were eaten sitting out on the lawns on sunny days and inside sitting on the floor of the corridors on rainy days. "Tea" was around 10:30 am and the staff rooms had tea and bikkies (cookies) while the students could buy lollies (sweets and confectionaries) and juices from the kiosk. Noalimba is where I learned to drink "white tea" -- hot tea with milk and sugar. The second thing was the men's attire. Businessmen, male teachers, bankers -- all men wore shorts with their shirts and ties and knee high socks. At first, it was the thing to try not to snicker. Before long, it was quite ok. The way some female teachers were dressed, they would've been sent home to change here in the States. Students wore uniforms. Balga's boy's shorts and girl's skirts were navy/blue plaid worn with white shirts/blouses. The migrant kids' families couldn't always afford the whole uniform and most kids wore black flip flops. There was no Phys. Ed. There were after school clubs for various community sports.

Schools were under the direction of a Headmaster/Mistress. Each area had a Senior Master. Caning was the severest discipline. The student would hold out his hands, palms up and get the ends of his fingers hit with a light cane - very painful, but I never saw it happen. Most punishment was "scab duty" -- going around the lawn areas picking up litter. There were times for detention as well.

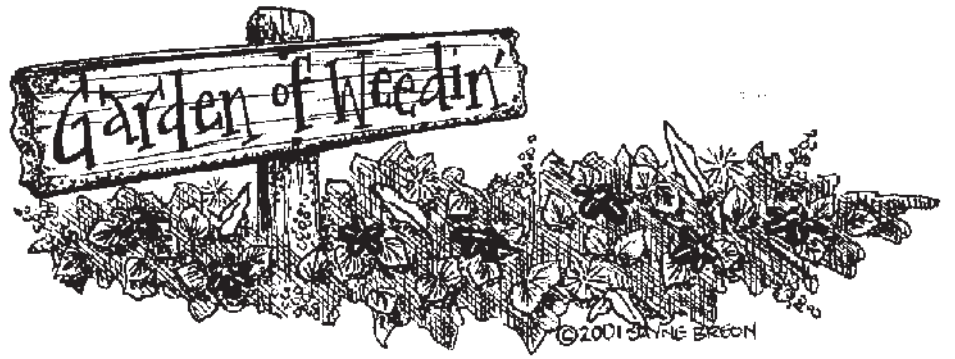
I suppose I had the typical first year as a teacher. I had good days, bad days, good students, trying students. There were three of us in the Art Department. Howard, my Sr. Master, and Pippa, the other teacher. She had taught five years, but this was her first year at Balga. Her earlier positions had been in a country school, and now she was assigned to a city school. (She was my model, my anchor at times and, most gratefully, my very good friend.) As a State Education system, when teachers graduated from Uni, (university) their first assignments could be in a bush school (aboriginal reservations), then a move to a country school, and if wanted, an assignment to the sought after city schools.

This cycle of assignments was quite routine, and teachers moved through the system and planned ahead accordingly. Then! Here comes an onslaught of recruited American teachers! My group of 24-26 slid in fairly unnoticed. But, both the second and third groups were each around 150 teachers. The State officials had not foreseen the consequences of assigning most of the American teachers to city schools. Australian teachers' appointments in bush and country schools were extended by one or two years (the contract times for the American teachers) and many lives were disrupted! (ouch!)

I settled into life and, after six months, felt fairly "at home". We did move from the apartment to a house and got another roommate -- a teacher from the second group. The three of us became best friends and had our adventures together. A most significant part of our friendships was our shared morals and faith -- by God's design.



Written by Sherry Osland of Praise Works Quilting in Abilene, formerly writing the Quilts That Redeem column for The Country Register. For examples of quilting (as well as pictures of Hand-braided rugs and Quilts That Redeem books, for sale) go to: [facebook.com/praiseworksquilting](https://www.facebook.com/praiseworksquilting) Contact information: sherryo51@hotmail.com or 785-263-5528



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Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

The Pace of Quilting

I recently sent my quilting friend a text message that made me kind of stop and reflect. The message was describing a day actively engaged in quilt-making activities -- yet I had produced no single finished work to share with her. Sound familiar? Or does it sound strange?

I had worked on seven different quilt projects that day. No kidding! Seven.

But the total amount of time I had spent on those seven quilting projects had only added up to a small number of hours, as I was stealing time away from doing other activities (like grading student papers, reading a book, or taking a walk).

Project #1: Machine-quilted a simple, 14-inch square wall hanging for someone made from a bandana honoring her high school reunion.

Project #2: Basted together a panel of fabric, batting and backing fabric for a mid-size wall-hanging for someone else's new work office.

Project #3: Pulled fabric out of plastic boxes as I began planning a sudoku puzzle-turned-pattern lap quilt for someone undergoing breast cancer treatments.

Project #4: Drew colored-pencil blocks on graph paper, capturing details from an online video I had seen the night before (two quilt designs I hope to make in the future).

Project #5: Cut fabric from two of the three color families needed for a table runner wedding gift project (the wedding is in a month).

Project #6: Machine-stitched around the upcoming month's gnome -- part of a 12-month set of wall hangings (11"x14" finished size) I call Gnome-of-the-Month -- for myself.

Project #7: Chopped up another "scrap" bit of fabric (about the size of a fat quarter) into blocks for a full-size quilt my mother commissioned me to make for a woman at church.

A rare day of productivity; a somewhat rare day of scattered directions. Most days I spend quilting are focused -- and I only work on one project for a number of hours at a time.

In March, for instance, I presented a thirty-eight-inch square quilted wall hanging to someone as a gift, made from over 100 two-and-a-half-inch squares. I had started cutting squares for that project in October 2022, which meant that it had taken me five months to complete the project.

Over those same five months I started, worked on and finished about ten other projects between October's start and March's finish. The other projects were quick, or easy, or had an earlier delivery date than the March bridal shower. The heart wall hanging was too special to rush; created without a pattern, the project also required lots of decisions. Measure twice, cut once.

For me, quilting is a hobby. I enjoy quilting when I have spare time -- or when I need a puzzle to distract me from stress. There are times my sewing machine sits idle, like an old friend waiting for me to return. Other times, it hums along with life, filling my life with wild productivity.

The true beauty of quilting? We each get to set our own pace.

© Jeanette Lukowski 2023. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author who lives in Mankato, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: writingfromlife@yahoo.com



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Building Harmony

By Jeff Cappis

The Playhouse

Momentary ideas. My life is full of neglected projects and things that seemed like good ideas. You know people like me, our garages are usually a mess. My wife Cathy on the other hand, sees things through and keeps a very orderly life. (The way I am just bugs the hell out of her). So, when we work on something together, she keeps me going, and I give her the best job I can. It usually works out very well.

Friends offered us a children's kitchen set. It had a wooden stove, fridge, sink and a cabinet. We decided our granddaughter would look cute playing with it, so we took them up on it.

We got the kitchen pieces home and discovered we didn't have room for this stuff in the house. We couldn't make her play with it in the garage. (Well, I thought we could, but Cathy is in charge of child welfare around here, so I got overruled). Anyhow, we decided to build her a playhouse.

What could that cost? Maybe \$400? Cathy thought a porch would be cute. I figured white vinyl siding to match our house would look right. If we might be out there after dark, then the house should have lights as well. How about an outlet so we could plug in a heater and drink hot chocolate out there with them in the winter. Winter? Then it should be insulated. It was nicer than our house.

It was supposed to be done in a weekend. Right. Before we knew it, a week had gone by. My fingers were covered in bandages, and Cathy's shins were bruised. While

doing the inside walls, we accidentally boarded ourselves in. I had to cut us a door before we ran out of air. Later I fell off the roof while shingling it. Luckily my head got to the ground first and broke my fall. Cathy screwed herself to the house while putting up the shuttlers. No problem, splinters and all, we were getting into the project.

One day the house began to sink on the west side. Three days later it began to sink on the east side. It's been pretty level ever since.

All in all, we spent two months and about \$1600 on this playhouse. O.K., so we did go a bit overboard, but that would all be worth it to see the look on our granddaughter's face -- right?

Finally, the big day came. We walked her up to it, then uncovered her eyes. Ta-da! She loved it! She walked around it, then told us we were going inside. When it was my turn, she stopped me at the door. "You can't come in Grandpa."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Cause, you don't take your shoes off."

"But I built this place!"

"You can't come in." You never argue with the lady of the house (big one or little one) so I stood outside and watched them have a tea party through my custom plexiglass windows. It began to rain.

Our granddaughter loves that playhouse. She doesn't come over too often, so the playhouse mostly sits idle. I go in there sometimes when no one is looking, and I don't take my shoes off. Cathy goes in there to dust it. I mow the grass around it, and every year we paint and keep the maintenance up on it. All this because we thought our granddaughter would look cute playing with her kitchen suite -- a momentary idea.

copywrite 2023 by Jeff Cappis Email: jcappis@telus.net



A lot of good things don't get made because of too much thinking.

---- Agnes Martin

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Summertime Wheels & WWF Mantras!

by Julie Pirtle

Summertime and the livin' is easy. RVs are rollin' and the tension is high. Wait! What? How do idyllic thoughts of all the wonders that Mother Nature has to offer turn into stress and tension? Well, if you are an RV-er, you know exactly what I'm talking about. It's the WWF mantra that we make when it is time to maneuver that trailer into the park site.

Mind you, WWF has nothing to do with wrestling in this scenario. Rather, it's the vow that most couples make with an open heart before the back-in exercise begins, "We Won't Fight." However, it is easy to see how wrestling COULD become involved if things go sideways (both figuratively and literally!).

In my own family, camping started at a very young age. My parents purchased an antiquated tent trailer from their grandparents. It featured a canvas that popped up over the trailer base and folded down into a tent. The trailer bed held a double wide mattress. For the three of us kids (ages 6 and under), they bought bunkbed cots and put my baby brother in a portable crib.

Yep, it was crowded, but I just remember it being fun and cozy. Kudos to my parents for deciding to venture into the wilderness with three small rugrats in tow. Keep in mind that they had a one-year-old still in diapers -- before disposables were even a thing. I'm not sure I would have taken that on!

Our family camping trips changed throughout the years. As we grew, so did their rigs. We graduated into a double pop-out tent trailer and then to a mini motor home. The thing that did not change was the ever-dreaded arrival of our family at the destination campground. We knew it was coming -- backing in.

I am surmising that my parents had some sort of a system of hand signals to assist them in this whole process, but I am sure they should have come up with a better plan. All I remember is making sure that I stayed low and out of sight as they did the "to the right, to the left dance."

Alas, this WWF affliction is widespread. I have watched this happen to many campers, and it is always cringeworthy. It's kind of like a train wreck, and you can't help but watch. For an example, take this typical family who pulls up with a truckload of kids, and Mom gets out to be the guide.

It's waaaaay past dinner time and quite obvious that the entire family is weary, hungry and antsy to get out. Junior is even yelling that he has to go the bathroom. After five or six futile attempts at backing in, Ranger Rick strides down the lane to add more strife by informing them that the tire marks they are creating on grass that surrounds the RV pad are a park violation.

By this time, Mom has pulled out all of her hair, Dad is contemplating a fist fight with Ranger Rick and, by the look of his pants, Junior did indeed have to use the bathroom.

It's always good times and entertaining if you are the observer!

Recently, my husband and I decided it was time to get back into the RV world, and we bought a camping trailer.

This is a second marriage for both of us, and we enjoyed sharing memories of raising our own families with camping trips every summer. We both missed camping.

Feeling like old pros, we were a bit cocky when we decided to take the WWF vow. We have adequate communication skills and did not foresee an issue.

We were put to the test right away. It was time to back into the ever-so-small rental pad that would temporarily house our beautiful trailer. We went over the hand signals and small details that we felt would create a smooth parking experience. It went sideways....fast.

In defense of myself, I thought I was doing a splendid job of navigating for him. My hand signals were spot on, and I was using descriptive and clear language. "Ummm... just a teensy-weensy turn to the left. WHAT? Yes! YOUR left. WAIT! You are going right. STOP!" (OK...maybe not so clear!)

But here's the thing. We still were doing it. We weren't arguing. There was no spectacle. That is, until Larry the Lot Lizard decided to "spectate" us. He stood there with his hands in his pockets and a toothpick hanging out of his mouth. Just watching.

However, that was not enough for Larry. Oh no. Larry decided that it was his job to throw in his two-bits. He proceeded to walk up to the driver's window on our truck and "man-splain" what I was trying to diligently communicate to my husband.

His endeavors only made matters worse, and, by this time, I was steaming. I stopped the process and proceeded to let Larry know that we were not in need of his assistance and that we had this. On our own. No "splainin" needed! Go away, Larry!

I am proud to say that we now have a couple of trips under our belt, and that the parking experiences have been flawless. Some might say it was because we had pull-through spots both times. I'd like to think that it's because we are smart enough to know that pull-through spots save marriages. Just sayin'.

As you embark on your summer adventures, just remember to enjoy the views, and watch out for Larry. We've got this! I know we do.



Julie Pirtle is a Professional Organizer and owner/operator of **Clutter Happens** in Mesa, AZ. She also works with clients nationally through Video Consultations. The Clutter-Challenged can reach her at clutterhappens@gmail.com, on Facebook:/clutterhappens or her website www.clutterhappens.com.



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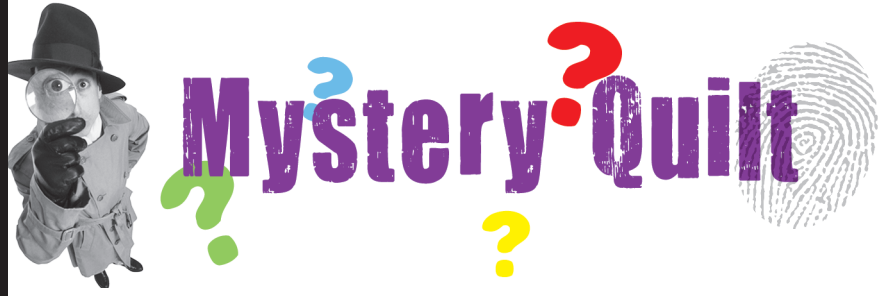
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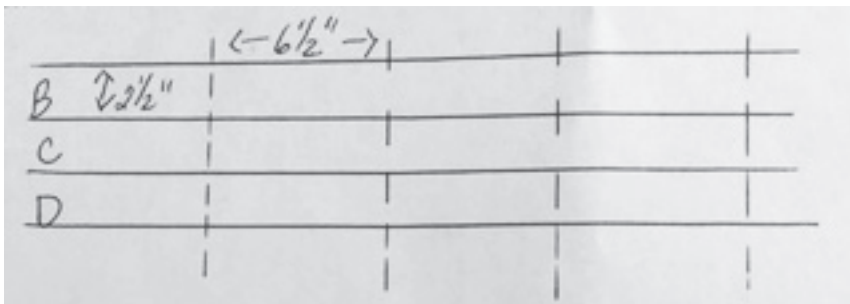


Part 3 of 3

Make sure you have pressed all of your seams well. Now we add the borders. MEASURE YOUR QUILT

Border 1: Using Fabric A -
Cut 1 1/2" strips of Fabric A. Sew together so get the length you need to make a border. Sew to the sides first and then press toward the border and MEASURE again and add border to top and bottom.

Border 2: This is a pieced border using 2 1/2" squares. From Fabrics B, C, and D, cut 2 1/2" strips. Sew these together lengthwise to make a fabric strip set. Press seams toward the darker fabric. Square up one end and sub-cut into 2 1/2" X 6 1/2" sections. Sew 4 of these together. The pieced border will probably be longer than side of your quilt. PIN it in place and adjust as necessary. Again, attach the sides first and then the top and bottom.



Border 3: Using Fabric E Cut 2 1/2" strips to make your final border. Press toward E. Quilt as desired. Fabric A was used for Binding.

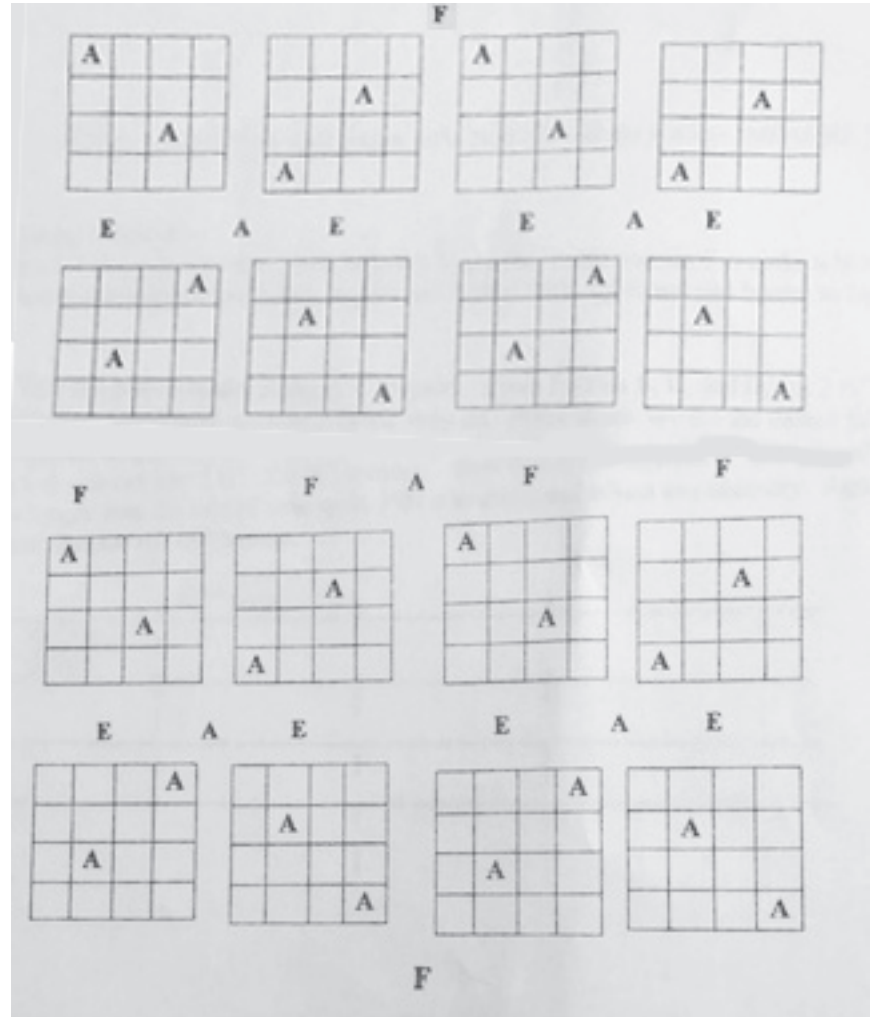
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From my farm

Family Values And...

By Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

I realize not every lady embraces being a livestock farmeress in her mid-70s. It is a hard and lonely life with two certainties -- if something goes wrong, it's my fault, if something goes right it's dumb luck. And I have enjoyed plenty of both.

My city bachelor brothers are lining up to change my life.

At our last family dinner, it was presented to me that I needed to sell out, move into assisted living where I could sit all day, watch TV and tell stories to others. They neglected to realize I would slit my wrists that first day.

I do understand it's hard for families to comprehend lifestyles outside the box. They mean well. And I'm sure others like me are having these conversations. But "we" hang on, endure, find love, passion and adventure in our own way.

A dear friend, Penny, who is 15 years younger, gave me the best advice -- when I no longer feel the love and contentment from my barn, animals, garden and loom, it will be time to move. Ok, in 20 years I might be ready.

What families don't understand is how much better, easier our lives would be with a bit of physical help, a good word, some encouragement. Alas, even my own children and grandchildren basically ignore me.

Never thought of myself as a white haired warrioreess but here I am killing it!

A couple years ago I did the ancestors DNA thing -- Scottish, Welsh and Irish. Makes me a wee bit stubborn, hardheaded, farm orientated and artistic. Also leads me to believe my brothers were adopted or dropped off by gypsies.

Like the old looms and spinning wheels I use, I have strength, use and delight. As my hands caress the old lumber, follow old paths in wool spinning and pattern work, my ancestors smile in the shadows. Weaving on Lady Mary in the loom house, sunshine over my shoulder, sheep grazing outside the window, dogs sleeping by the lion is my idea of a perfect day. As is cleaning the barn or weeding my gardens.

Spring shearing is done, now I have boxes of fresh fleeces to skirt, wash, dye, spin... Create! That's the really fun part -- assessing what my sheep have grown, then letting the fiber tell me what it wants to become.

In my over 50 years of fiber work, I have learned a valuable lesson -- listen to the fiber. Let it tell you what it wants to become. Following this path, I have never been disappointed. Of course, when several fleeces talk at once I am bound to listen, ready for creation. That's how I wind up with over 100 WIPS, (works in progress). And I confess I am a starter not a particularly diligent finisher. There are a few unfinished sweaters in my basket of voting age. One day...

Since this article is for May and June my dye gardens will be giving me fabulous gifts of color on those freshly washed and spun fleeces. The wonders of Mother Nature never cease to amaze me. A flower, some leaves, berries, roots or bark and you have awesome color! Every dyepot is visited by Dye Fairies who add their own magic and hue. Taking the lid off those pits is like opening presents, always surprising.

I stand in my yard and marvel at the treasures there beneath my bare feet.

We of today owe so much to those ancient souls who herded sheep, laboriously turning their wool into clothing. Going further down a fiber path, they discovered dye plants.

That excitement, adventure, joy lives today in this Maven of the Wool, Crone of Ancient Arts. A wool journey which begins anew with each fleece and dyepot, every single day. I am blessed.

Mom's Really Quick Deviled Eggs

12 hard-boiled eggs, peeled, sliced long ways

Put the yolks in a bowl, mash well with a fork, add a dash of salt and pepper. Mix in enough prepared mustard, she used French's, to let the yolks stick together, add 1/2 teaspoon of cider vinegar, mix well. Fill egg whites, then sprinkle paprika over the top.

We grew up on these for Sunday dinner and in the farm fields in the 50s. I still make them.

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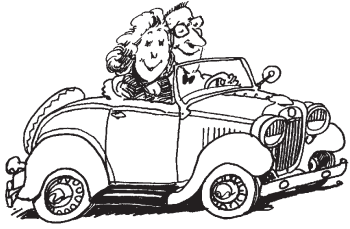
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Calendar of Events • Internet



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

When making a road trip, always call ahead to confirm times and dates. We make every attempt to provide accurate information, but there are instances when things change. Always check weather conditions and travel safe.

May

30-June 10...2nd Anniversary Sale @ 4 Golden Stitches, Yates Center, p. 18

June

1-23...Store Closing Sale @ The Quilted Sunflower, Spring Hill, p. 19
 1-3...Orphan Train Celebration, Concordia
 1-28...June Purple Dot Sale @ Needle in a Haystack, Severy, p. 17
 3...Horton City Wide Garage Sales and Auto Show, Horton, p. 21
 10... World-wide Knit in Public Day, contact your LYS for activities
 15-17...KC Regional Quilt Festival, Overbrook Quilt Connection, Overbrook
 22-24...Grandma J's Inventory Sale, Wilson, p. 8
 29-July 1...Sale-A-Brations @ Needle in a Haystack, Severy, p. 17

July

1...Liquidation Sale @ Elsie Grace's, Frankfort, p. 21
 1-31...Christmas in July Sale @ Silver Threads & Golden Needles, Burlington, p. 19
 5-31...July Red Dot Sale @ Needle in a Haystack, Severy, p. 17
 6-9..."Retreat for Individuals" @ Turtle Hideaway Quilt Retreat Center, Kechi, p. 16
 13-15...Handi-Quilter Van Sales Event @ A-1 Singer Sewing Center, Wichita, p. 16
 16-28...Surprise Discount Sale @ Prairie Flower Quilts, Leoti, p. 6
 18...15th Anniversary Celebration @ Hidden Treasures Quilt Shop, Mankato, p. 9
 26-August 5...Back To School Sale @ Old Town Business, Conway Springs, p. 17
 28-29...5th Weekend Fabric Sale @ Seneca Variety, Seneca, p. 21

August

9-12...Handi Quilter's Truck Event @ Quilter's Yard, McPherson, p. 12

October

5-14...Central Kansas Shop Hop

November

1-5...Houston Intl. Quilt Show, 2023 Quilter's Motor Coach Trip by Pack and Go Tours

Cowgirl Poet, Quilter, Entertainer



Yvonne Hollenbeck

Where Prairie Flowers Bloom

There's a special place I love to go
 where prairie flowers bloom;
 how I love to see their beauty
 and to smell their sweet perfume.

Where the meadowlarks are singing
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 as the morning sun is rising
 in a sky of purest blue.

You can have your fancy gardens
 with the rows of blossoms straight,
 laced with walking paths and benches
 and arrangements by the gate.

My heart prefers a country lane
 that is flanked by prairie sod;
 ...a wilderness of flowers
 that were planted there by God.



Order Yvonne's new book, "A Stitch in Rhyme" at
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Yvonne Hollenbeck, from Clearfield, SD, performs her original poetry throughout the United States, captivating audiences in her wake. She is one of the most published cowgirl poets in the West and is not only a popular banquet and civic entertainer, but also co-writes songs with many western entertainers. Yvonne also pens a weekly column in the "Farmer-Rancher Exchange" and writes articles about life in rural America in various publications throughout the West. For more information, visit <https://www.yvonnehollenbeck.com>

Facebook Live • Directory of Advertising Shops

These are the ones we know; more will be added as we discover them. If you are an advertising shop who hosts a scheduled Facebook Live program, let us know so we can include you.

Monday:

2 p.m. -- Quilter's Paradise

Tuesday:

6 p.m. -- Make It Sew, Quilter's HQ, weekly

Thursday:

9:00 a.m. -- Prairie Point Quilt & Fabric, weekly

Friday:

9 a.m. -- Yellow Dog Quilt Shop, weekly

1 p.m. -- Charlotte's Sew Natural, weekly

5:30 p.m. -- "Come As You Are" Sales Party, Wool Market and DIY School, weekly

Saturday:

9 a.m. -- Overbrook Quilt Connection (2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sats.)

9:30 a.m. - Overbrook Quilt Connection (1st Sat.)

Look for updated Directory in each issue of The Country Register. You can have Facebook remind you when an event is starting -- great for those times when a shop posts an unscheduled Facebook Live event.



Letter to the Editor:

28 March 2023

Dear Editor,

Writing is a lonely job. It requires concentration, the search for the perfect word, and the desire to go beyond communication and *connect* with others. No matter how alluring it is to leave the computer off, the printer silent, and the home-office door closed, a topic buzzes in our thoughts demanding the same attention as a mosquito on a summer day.

So, we write, not really knowing if we have communicated or connected with anyone. One of the joys of writing for **The Country Register** is that the publication has nurtured and grown an international community. We share similar hobbies, interests, sense of humor and traditions.

I know this because of the emails I've received. One example is the article on doilies. It was written on a challenge. Although my 'day-job' is writing about high-technology topics, I tell my mostly male colleagues about my **The Country Register** articles. Following the article I wrote about aprons, I mentioned my delight at hearing from women who also love wearing aprons.

A man who is an industry leader mentioned that his mom and grandmother wore aprons and the wonderful memories it brought back. He then casually mentioned that they also made so many doilies that walking around the house was like walking through a lace garden. I love that beautiful image. He challenged me to write about doilies, not knowing that I have a bureau drawer full of them, as well as a doily on every doorknob and open surface of my house.

But the real surprise was not for him. It was for me. After the article was published, I received emails from women who also love doilies. Connie in Kansas even sent some doilies tagged for donation.

To everyone who emailed me, I'm grateful for your notes. To the editors who published the article, thank you. To **The Country Register**, I commend you for creating and nurturing an international community that finds joy and *connection* in knowing each other through your publications. There's no better gift to a writer.

Kind regards,
 Barbara Kalkis
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Prescription for Adventure

By Naomi Gaede-Penner

Barn Quilt Tour Surprises

“Do you want to go on a Barn Quilt tour?” I asked my friend Melissa. I’d done so eight years prior, in 2014, and had told her about it – how I’d downloaded a map and chosen several routes, and how it had been like a grand treasure hunt. Rather than using fabric and thread to stitch together blocks for a bed quilt, Barn Quilters use wood and paint to create one quilt block to display on a barn, silo, granary, shed or house. Barn quilt craftsmanship arrived with immigrants from places such as Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands and became popular in the New England and Midwestern states; not only were they decorative, but they served as landmarks for finding a specific farm, crossroad or other locations. We chose a date, and with a map, snacks and optimism, we headed to northeast Colorado. The deep blue sky was nearly cloudless. Miles of prairie land rolled gently around us. Smiling sunflowers edged near the road. We hadn’t seen a barn quilt, but all the same, we were having a great day. When we neared the area designated on our map, we pulled off the interstate, identified the roads we wanted to go on and plugged an address into our phones. “Do you remember this area?” Melissa asked. “I’m not sure.” Dust flew up behind the car, and we continued. “There’s supposed to be a barn quilt at this intersection,” I stated, looking in all directions yet not seeing anything. “Let’s ask that man.” Slowly Melissa drove the car toward a tractor where a man was wiping his hands on his overalls. “Yes, there used to be one here, but that barn burned down.” We looked at each other with disappointment and thanked the man. “Let’s try this other route,” I suggested. We found a small, sprawling settlement, which had a name on the map, but no main street. A U.S. flag flapped in the breeze and drew our attention to a post office. No barn quilt in sight. I felt apologetic. This excursion was not turning out as I’d enthusiastically advertised. “What does your phone say for directions?” I asked Melissa. She stopped the car, scrutinized the screen, and turned into a field with eight-foot cornstalks. The road became a damp, single-track path. We couldn’t see in any direction, and we were approaching a blind-sighted hill. Eerie. We held our breath, rounded the hill safely, and popped out onto a gravel road.



A few of the barn quilts the author and her friend found in Ft. Morgan, Colo. Kansas has many examples of barn quilts, with some areas having self-guided tours.



“No barn quilts there!” We giggled with relief. Eventually, we arrived in Ft. Morgan. Now there were quilts: on a church, and a halfway house, on what had been the post office, on a barbershop and a residential home. Some were faded, some were peeling; others were shiny and newly finished. We snapped pictures. Then, finding ourselves captivated by the town itself, we wandered into curio stores and the library. We found murals outside and inside buildings. The people were friendly, and the town was quaint. We were having a wonderful time. We decided we’d move to Ft. Morgan, but we’d need to find lunch. The locals agreed on a restaurant “on the way out of town.” “I think I ate there last time,” I told Melissa. Sure enough. It was “on the way out of town,” filled with locals, and still had the best Mexican food ever. A piece of peach pie confirmed that indeed, even though we hadn’t seen the myriads of barn quilts I’d promised, we would put this rural town on our list of possible relocations.



Naomi’s non-fiction Alaska books are available at prescription-foradventure.com, or by calling 303.506.6181. In Kansas, they are available at Faith & Life (Newton) and Kansas Originals (1-70 at Wilson.) “The Bush Doctor’s Wife” is also available on Amazon. You can follow Naomi on FaceBook at “Prescription for Adventure.”

Find Your Art & Heart -- at Any Age

by Barbara Kalkis

While touring the Sierra Mountain foothills to see the sights, a friend and I made an early morning stop in a neighborhood known as “Old Town.” It is like many locations around the country. You know the ones -- pockets of a city that harken back to days when things were made by hand, when markets carried goods in brands you thought were gone and lost forever, when restaurants were called cafés, and the food was made to order and cooked in an oven not a microwave.

These sanctuaries welcome and nurture working artists and crafters who carve, paint, weave, set gems into unique jewelry, collect novelties or used books, and simply wait to chat with the next browsing tourist. Working artists possess all kinds of interests. That’s what makes every “old town” so alluring. Every nook and cranny bursts with creativity.

YNOT Starts a Business. Why Not?

My friend and I arrived well before most stores opened so we decided to explore the area’s landmarks and historical markers to while the time away. Later, we sauntered up the sidewalk until we came to an open doorway. It led down a long hall dotted with tiny shops. All were still closed except for one tucked into the end of the row. A simple sign said “YNOT”. The door was open. We looked at each other and shrugged. Like two Alices in Wonderland, we stepped into another world.

It was a dazzling realm of wild colors and textures. Paintings of animals, flowers, fields and landscapes filled every inch of the walls and narrow aisles. Each one was done in the three-dimensional style achieved by a palette knife. One vineyard scene drew the viewer into the painting to ramble between rows of grapes.



Suddenly, we heard a welcome. The artist had been quietly working on a painting and could not pause until he finished a section of his latest creation. As we commented on the beautiful works he had produced, he told us about himself. At age 77, he decided to take art lessons. He took one and instantly knew he wanted to be an artist. So, he went home and told his wife that they needed to convert one of their rooms into his art studio. She replied, “Not here, you won’t.”

Her crisp retort made me think what Mrs. Columbus must have said when Christopher told her he had discovered a new continent and needed three ships – immediately -- to cross the Atlantic Ocean to prove it. Or Joan of Arc telling her parents that she was leaving the sheep in the pasture -- and home -- to get the rightful man crowned King of France and, oh, by the way, lead the French army to boot-out the English invaders. Both seemed crazy. Both were successful.

Like Columbus and Joan of Arc, the artist pursued his dream. He leased the space we were in. He even named the shop after himself, with a small twist. Spelling his name backwards, the studio is called YNOT, a double meaning that captures his decision to start a new career. Now 83 years old, Tony spends his days blissfully painting.

Aren’t working artists like Tony inspiration for all of us? They prove that discovering what we love to do can happen at any age! They *live* the motto, “Do what you love. Love what you do.” They prefer happiness to sensibility. That takes real courage and effort. It may not bring wealth, but it makes us richer to follow the path of our heart’s delight. You can’t put a price on that.

©Barbara Kalkis. Barbara follows her heart writing, teaching, and consulting with high-tech clients. She’s author of Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.

By the Yard[®]

by Jennifer Lopez

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ARE YOU WORRIED YOU MIGHT REGRET THOSE COLOR CHOICES IN THE FUTURE?

NO! I'M REGRETTING THEM RIGHT NOW!

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