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Minnesota's Guide to Specialty Shopping & Fun Events

January/February 2024

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Minnesota's Guide to Specialty Shopping & Fun Events



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City Listing

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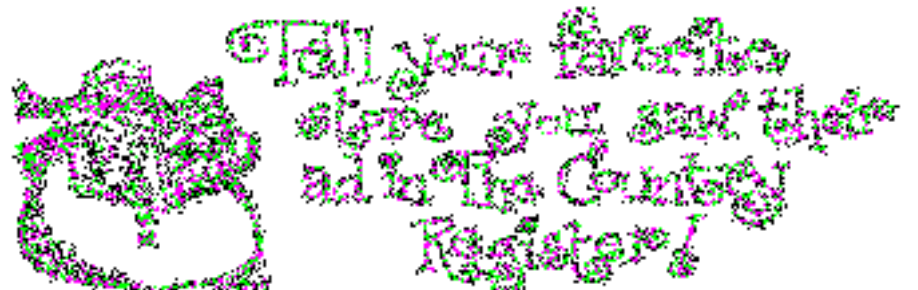
Special Events

January

- 1.....Anniversary Sale - Old Alley Quilt Shop - Sherburn
- 13.....Snowball Party - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
- 19-21.....Monthly Sew In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
- 20.....Grand Opening - Creations Quilt Shop - Duluth
- 26-27.....Seams and Dreams Pajama Jam - Quilt Haven on Main - Hutchinson
- 26-27.....Seams and Dreams Pajama Jam - Sew Quilty - Arlington
- 26-27.....Seams and Dreams Pajama Jam - Cabby's Corner - Gibbon
- 27.....English Paper Piecing Class - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
- 29-Feb 3.....11th Anniversary Sale - Sewing Seeds Quilt Co. - New Ulm

February

- 4.....Pro Bolt Sale - Quilted Dog - Cloquet
- 10.....English Paper Piecing Class - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
- 10.....Sweetheart Sale - Quilt Haven on Main - Hutchinson
- 16-18.....Monthly Sew In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
- 23-25.....Retreat - Quilter's Cottage - Kiester
- 29.....Leap Year Blow-Out Sale - Quilted Steeple - Lone Rock, IA



Where in Minnesota?
Somewhere in Minnesota the image to the right can be found.
Where is it?
(Answer on page 13 of this issue)



Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

Facing Future Fears

Twenty-four years ago we were all in a panic over what might happen when the clock struck midnight on December 31, 1999, and we plummeted into a new millennium. Yes, it was two dozen years ago this January that we were told to store up gallons of water and batteries and everyone everywhere was talking about all the bad things that might happen in Y2K. Guess what? The clock struck 12:01 AM and nothing significant changed.

It's true there was some reason for concern that what was dubbed the "Y2K bug" would keep our computers from moving from 1999 to 2000 and we might find we all reverted to 1900 instead. Banking, telecommunications, and energy systems could have been affected. So computer experts updated software and replaced or modified existing systems to avert the crisis and it worked. A lot was learned about proactively preparing for technological challenges in the months leading up to that fatal tick of the clock. So the hard work may have paid off, but all the fear we found ourselves swimming in didn't contribute to the smooth transition at all.

Besides jugs of pure water and batteries, consumers were encouraged to stock up on medications and first aid supplies, flashlights, cash, fuel, battery-operated radios and basic necessities like toiletries and hygiene products. My husband and I gave in to fear enough to buy a stock of batteries and about five jugs of water. Over the years we used up the batteries but when we moved eight years ago we found a couple of jugs of Y2K water still in our crawl space. We laughed remembering that we went out to dinner on New Year's Eve 1999 to a very expensive restaurant we hadn't been to before (nor since). As my husband signed the check he quipped, "Well, we can come back here next millennium."

No doubt there will be attempts to whip us all into a frenzy of fear in the year to come. Certainly we see events in our country and our world that concern us deeply, but as in Y2K our fears won't contribute to solving the issues, only our hard work and optimism will make a difference. Fears can paralyze us, making us feel powerless over our lives. Better to choose faith over fear and slam the door on fear mongers.

Worry seems to be a basic failing of human kind however, and we worry about what we fear. Speaking to believers in the sovereign God, Elisabeth Elliot wrote, "We are allowed to plan for tomorrow but we are not allowed to worry about it."

Jesus also encouraged us not to worry in Matthew, Chapter 6, often called the "mental health" chapter of the Bible. He asks, "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" (Matthew 6:27). He speaks of how God cares for the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field and then says, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

I need these reminders as much as anyone. Psalm 121:3 says, *He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber.* Let's resolve to move into 2024 facing any fears we have for the future head on and remembering that faith always overcomes fear. May you have a happy and fearless New Year!





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*As I was untangling a ball of yarn for a friend!
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There was hope and there's an end to everything!
So don't roll everything into a ball!*

- by Lila Liebl



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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The Sweetness of Life

by Kerri Habben Bosman

Late last year, I began a special project. My husband, Wayne and I were driving home from Wisconsin after a visit with his 102 year old mother. He asked me how many essays I had written over the years and suggested that Mom would love to read all of them.

And just like that, I was finally inspired to put together a book of twenty years of essays. I have thought of doing this many times before, but as happens with me, bringing happiness to someone I love galvanizes me into action.

In 2003 I began writing what I called "Compass Points." My dad would have turned 90 that year and I wanted to acknowledge that. In my rereading, I discovered a somewhat inept attempt at creative nonfiction. I winced a bit at the sheer sentimentality of it, but I was also affirmed reading my tribute to him. I felt a flash of grief so intense it revitalized me because for a moment I could feel the entire journey.

Thankfully, over the next ten years, each of the ensuing forty essays steadily improved. And a style developed. Although each piece is different, common themes emerged. Every one carries layers of joy, gratitude and love.

I used some of these essays as a portfolio, which brought further writing assignments, including becoming a part of Country Register publications in 2012. Along the way, the style of these articles grew both more concise and cohesive.

As I prepared the book, it took extensive restraint not to change very much. For this version I wanted each piece to be an authentic representation of who I was when it was written. If I made everything perfect, Mom wouldn't feel the whole story. And neither would I.

The specific details carried me back to a time when both my own mother and grandmother were living. I could fully feel the moments, yet it was also like watching a movie. On the surface each essay appears to be about me, but they are also about people I treasured. Their precious presences linger softly between the lines.

I've felt the following quote with ordinary and pivotal experiences since, though I originally wrote those words in the second article after my mother died:

"Sometimes the sweetness of life bends you in half. In those moments you are utterly and fully alive. When you stand up again, you are stronger, breathe more deeply and experience the world with kinder eyes."

And in the ensuing 28 articles the next chapters of my life pour forth. Described in them is how I lived on my own and then the life that Wayne and I share together. I write about him and the family I love like my own. Including grandchildren who become frequent "characters." Most of them are teenagers now and as I reread the articles I realize anew how quickly and how much they've grown.

And, of course, the Mom that inspired me to put a book together is vibrantly there as well. Presently this book is in the works as a surprise for her. She embraces me and everyone with so much love, which brings me to what I've discovered during my project.

I've learned that the details of my life may have changed over the course of twenty years, but that the root of who I am is the same. I still count my blessings every day. I still believe life doesn't have to be perfect to be ideal.

Mostly I have learned that I love exactly the same way. Only with a deeper sense of how huge love truly is. With an open, grateful heart it only grows more. It expands with a redeeming sweetness that sometimes bends me in half.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer in Cape Carteret, NC. She can be reached at 913jееves@gmail.com.



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Become Inspired

By Annice Bradley Rockwell

Peaceful Dwellings

As the festive, fast-paced excitement of the holidays draws to a close, we are given a chance to create a protective sanctuary of peace to enjoy the season of winter. Winter weekends might find us venturing to nearby antiques shops searching for perfect pieces to add to our room arrangements. Early baskets, blue decorated stoneware jugs, early treen and country lighting are all wonderful investments that add touches of warmth to our indoor vignettes. Tavern tables flanked with wing-back chairs can be moved closer to the hearth now for a cozy fireside arrangement in which to enjoy a piping hot meal of chicken pot pie and homemade cranberry chutney.



Symbols of Comfort

Our outdoor additions can be equally fulfilling. Setting up the evergreen tree that graced our keeping room during the holidays as an outdoor sanctuary for our wildlife can add visual interest and appeal. Adding natural decorations such as pinecones filled with peanut butter and birdseed can provide a special winter treat for our feathered friends.

As the snow falls and blankets the roads, our home takes on a whole new look against the new backdrop of white. Silhouetted against a stark landscape its features often stand out now as a symbol of comfort and shelter against the season's cold and blustery days.

Shift to Stillness

Being outside in the elements to gather our seasoned wood for the fire, we are reminded of how blessed we truly are to have the safety of home. Unexpected snow days where a depth of snow provides a day off from our normal daily work provides us with time we can spend enjoying the pure beauty of nature. A winter walk enveloped by the stillness of winter is a country treat meant to be savored. Despite its initially withered and worn appearance, the woods are actually quite vibrant and alive. The sun's radiant rays on the snow create a brilliance that only belongs to winter. As it is enjoyed, we may catch a glimpse of small creatures endeavoring to forage. We might take advantage of a spectacular new view of our maple swamp as its bare trees allow us to see even more of its fringed beauty.

Winter's slower pace grants us the blessing of quiet time. Along with this calm rhythm often comes the ability to nurture our ideas and plan for the season ahead. Whether it is being excited about beginning a new business venture or repurposing a small room in our home to be used for a hobby we have come to love, the winter season is the ideal time to allow our concepts to come together and take shape. This season embrace the shift to stillness. Take in the slower moments that allow you to enjoy observing the beauty that abounds in nature. And when you experience that beauty, share that wonder with those you hold dear.

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

Sherburn



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- The Notebook
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- The Princess Bride
- When Harry Met Sally
- Casablanca
- My Big Fat Greek Wedding
- Moonstruck
- Four Weddings and a Funeral
- Love Story
- Crazy Rich Asians
- Atonement
- Something's Gotta Give
- Titanic
- La La Land
- Pretty Women
- An Affair to Remember

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM

Achoo! ~ Bless You!

Hummm....
Ever wonder why we "Bless" people who sneeze?
It is unknown exactly why we say "Bless You" in response to a sneeze. There are many theories, and some believe it started to ward off demons and spirits or to bless someone with good health. Research shows that the response remains commonplace because of its connection to good manners.

The tradition of blessing someone after a sneeze is so old that even Roman scholar Pliny the Elder wrote about it in Natural History (77 AD) and puzzled over its origins. When a person sneezed it was to expel evil spirits from their body, and the blessing was given to prevent them from going right back in!

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM:
Whether it be ancient tradition, or good manners, expressing a Blessing is positive, uplifting, and spreads good will to friends, family and strangers alike!
Positive thoughts bring healing thoughts that all will be well in time. When sharing a blessing, a blessing is also received. Give it a try at your next opportunity and share some good will!

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



BLESS YOU!
Numbers 12-13
The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you PEACE.

My First Quilt Block

by Judy Sharer

Do you remember the first quilt block you ever attempted? You probably worried about matching the points and sewing over seams just right so everything looked good and matched perfectly.

Not me! My mother wanted me to enjoy quilting. My older sisters hadn't taken to sewing. I think Mom figured she'd started them too late, so she'd start me earlier. After all, I was ten years old.



Being the youngest and her last hope of having a child enjoy the finer things in life, like buying fabric and making it into a thing of beauty, my mother used reverse psychology on me. She could care less if my points matched or if my colors were what she would have chosen. She started me with the flying geese pattern and using scraps. Nothing to line up, just sew and go! I loved it! The geese were different colors and didn't have to be in a certain order. I sewed six panels with six geese in each.


I was hooked! I learned to wind and change my own bobbin, and I could thread the machine needle all by myself. I was allowed to use Mother's machine when she wasn't using it. Three rows of geese flew up and three down. No sashing, no points to worry about. It went together quickly. My sisters were impressed with my design, and Mother showed everyone who came to house what her little protegee had done. Then I decided to add a border to make it a little bigger to fit my bed; a border that didn't need to match points. Mother suggested using the rest of the scraps, so I made a rail fence border. Again, the order of the fabrics and colors didn't matter. The border went together easily and sewing it to the quilt was a breeze.

How can I recall so vividly every step I took to create my first quilt, you ask? It's still a favorite cover-up that's draped over the end of the couch. Although not my most prized quilt, it's certainly one of my most memorable.

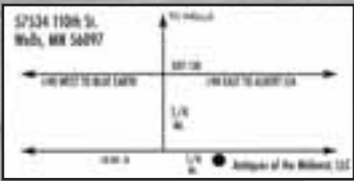
Judy Sharer is the author of a historical family saga romance series titled *A Plains Life*. This four-book series published by The Wild Rose Press is appropriate for the entire family. *A Plains Life* series is available on-line wherever books and eBooks are sold. Visit Judy's website judysharer.com and follow her on Facebook and Twitter.

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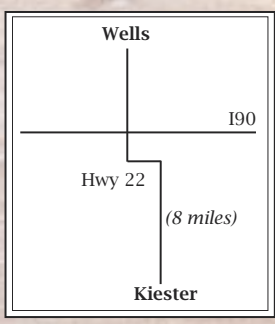
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I Found A Quilted Heart

I was walking the dog around a lake one beautifully warm day this past fall. The leaves had pretty much all fallen from the trees leaving them bare for the upcoming winter. As I came up a hill I saw in the distance a bright red object hanging in a tree. As I got closer I noticed it was a quilted heart that had been left hanging in the tree! Someone had taken the time to make this beautiful quilted heart and leave it for someone else to find and brighten their day. I took a picture of it and sent it to my cousin who loves to find hearts in nature such as rocks and leaves and clouds shaped in the heart form. They hold a special place in her heart and are very symbolic for her. I thought this would be perfect to share with her! She delighted in the heart as I had hoped she would, but she also filled me in on what it was! While I hadn't taken a closer look at the heart and left it hanging for others to find, my cousin said it is part of "I Found a Quilted Heart"! I hadn't heard of this before so I quickly googled it!



Come to find out "I Found a Quilted Heart" (IFAQH) has been around since 2014 when three sisters found a quilted heart while on a hike through Valley of Fire State Park in Nevada. They weren't able to find who had left the very first quilted heart, they were inspired to help spread the joy that their heart had brought them. They began quilting hearts to take out on day trips and leave them around for strangers to find. All these years later IFAQH has grown out of Nevada and is now international!

If you would like to participate in spreading the joy you can visit the website www.ifaqh.com and find more information about quilting your own hearts and leaving them to be found. You can also see hearts and stories from around the world!

With the New Year upon us it's time to plan something fun for 2024! Heartland Retreat & Rental Hall is a beautiful Kasota stone church renovated into a lovely 2 story rental facility in Southern Minnesota, just on the Iowa Border. Elmore is a small town of less than 600 people, located on Highway 169, and 10 miles south of I-90.

The Retreat has everything you can think of! It offers 9 bedrooms all uniquely decorated with handmade quilts and sleeping 2-3 guests per room on single beds. There are accommodations for 21 people with 3 full bathrooms; 2 with full size walk-in showers & 1 with a full bath tub/shower. Your stay requires a 2 night minimum stay of 10 or more people. Most lodging is only accessible by stairs. Each room includes beds, lamps, chairs, a clock, hooks for hanging clothes or towels, a nightstand, a ceiling fan, and ample outlets. The following items are provided for your stay: linens, light blanket & quilt, 2 pillows, towels, wash cloth and hair dryers.

The main level workroom is huge - 1,200 square feet! The spacious hall is a perfect spot for gathering and making memories - with comfortable seating, WiFi access, LED lighting, TV, board games, and puzzles. Enjoy a peaceful retreat or an energizing get together here! This space is perfect for crafting, quilting or having a family or corporate get together. They offer twenty-one 8' tables available to configure in the way that best suits your event. There is also additional space in the adjoining sanctuary! The kitchen is directly off the workroom allowing for easy food prep and catering. The kitchen is fully stocked with everything and anything you'd need for your group!

While in town you can enjoy stopping in for breakfast or lunch at the local cafe. Kathy's Kitchen is also available for catering your retreat! You can also go golfing, have a drink, or grab a meal, at the local 9-hole golf course. If you are hosting a quilt retreat it's good to know Michele's Quilting & Sewing Center, Welcome Stitchery and BS Studios are only 9 miles away in Blue Earth, MN.

Whether you are thinking about a family reunion, a business party or a weekend quilt or crafting retreat, Heartland Retreat & Rental Hall may be the perfect place for you. Visit their website for more information, www.heartlandretreatmn.com, and give them a call today!

Heartland Retreat & Rental Hall is offering a great special! When you book your weekend 2 night stay, you can take advantage of adding a Thursday night absolutely FREE!

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Brain Teasers

What are the next three letters in this combination: OTTFFSS

Answer: ENT (each letter represents the first letter in the written numbers, one, two, three, four, five, six etc.)

**Think of the color of the clouds.
Next think of the color of snow. Now,
think of the color of a bright moon.
Now answer quickly what do cows
drink?**

Answer: Water

**I am a rock group with four members.
All dead, one was assassinated. What
am I?**

Answer: Mount Rushmore

What goes up but never comes down?

Answer: your age

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Pieces From My Heart

by Jan Keller

Can the Afterglow Last?

The soft strains of Silent Night continue to echo in my mind. I'm still basking in the warmth I felt from the loving holiday companionship of family and friends. Yet, Christmas 2023 is past.

Burnt candles remain on the mantel but they have been snuffed out, leaving ugly charred wicks and dripped wax.

In the corner of the living room the Christmas tree still stands. Once it was beautiful with gaily wrapped gifts tucked beneath its branches. Now the gifts are gone—except for one to the neighbor. I ran out of time and failed to get it delivered. Somehow, the once gaily decorated tree has become an eyesore. The decorations are dusty, making the glitter and charm seem tacky. It's funny how packing "Christmas" back into the storage boxes is never as fun as the unpacking had been. The anticipation of Christmas seemed to dissipate just as quickly as the wrappings on the gifts were ripped off.

The days following Christmas come with sharp contrast, reminding me of the real world. Though the throngs of shoppers in the mall are in a hurry to exchange those slippers that didn't fit or the shirt that didn't match. There's no choice but to take a number and patiently wait. I also must remember to stop by the grocery store for milk, bread and potato chips to make sandwiches for lunch with the leftover turkey and ham.

I don't even want to listen to the news. It's upsetting and even discouraging.

Finally, once New Year's Eve is past, the holiday season is officially over. As the week progresses, every trace of Christmas is finally and completely packed away. Enlisting the family to rally around to undecorate is difficult and the chore is usually left for me. In solitude, reflections on the various "special" ornaments and decorations—gifts from loved ones or others we've enjoyed through the years, and yes, even for decades, are indeed satisfying. There's also the knowledge that when December 2024 comes there will be joy in their rediscovery.

Amid my musings, I find myself wondering:

Did Christmas 2023 hold any real and lasting meaning?

Were any lessons learned that I'll successfully apply into my daily existence?

How long into this brand new year can I cling to the challenge of keeping even a faintly glowing ember of the Christ in Christmas alive?



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Making Choices Brings Change

By Barbara Kalkis

Sometimes it seems as if all the wise sayings in the world have already been said by those old standbys: the Bible, Einstein (Did the man ever say anything useless?), Confucius, various Greeks who all seemed to be philosophers and the wisest people known universally as “Mom” and “Anonymous”.

As one year ends and another enters, I realize that Mom and “Anonymous” have given me some of the best guidance. Mom’s advice was practical. If I asked to do something that all my friends were doing, she would reply, “Just because everyone else jumps off a bridge, doesn’t mean you should.” (While teaching me to think before acting, that comment ruined me for diving into pools or running freely into the ocean. I still tiptoe into the shallows and slowly edge my way to the deeper water.)

When Covid struck in 2020, we were forced into solitude and standing 6 feet apart. While online meeting software emerged to save our collective sanity, it was still a time of separation. It seemed that the silver linings to the covid ‘cloud’ were that we could slouch around in our pajamas, watch TV or browse the internet until the need for food drove us into the kitchen and postpone cleaning since visitors were not likely to show up on the doorstep.

That initial shutdown motivated me to develop a fresh philosophy about how I wanted to spend my time (or die of boredom). B.C. (Before Covid), I had been a sometime crafter – a dabbler making greeting cards, writing poetry, commentaries, or letters, sewing, embroidering and perfecting the art of single crochet. (Potholders for everyone at Christmas. Bonus! They double as a face cloth, hot pad, bar cloth and dolly’s winter blanket.)

In those gloomy days, I discovered three wise-saying gems. The first was from the Bible: “In the world you will have trouble but take courage. I have conquered the world.” That saying comforted me. The second saying came from Lorelee in our cardmaking group. She sent an email telling us to embrace “Prolific Creativity.” Her comment inspired me. “Anonymous” provided the third saying. It sits on my desk next to my computer, so I see it every day. The faded paper is curled and brittle. The advice says, “The Three C’s of Life: CHOICES, CHANCES, CHANGES. You must make a choice to take a chance, or your life will never change.”

If you recognize this saying, it’s because it was published in The Country Register. I don’t know the edition or publication date. I do know these words have guided me to focus on choosing activities I enjoy and enthusiastically pursue them. I more readily take chances to do something different. Mostly, I’ve learned that change is refreshing.

As we complete one year and welcome a new one, let’s leverage our “Art Advantage” and resolve to play, create, dream, invent, design, decorate and build more. We love art, let’s live it. Welcome inspiration, seek beauty in the world around us. And if it’s not there, let’s bring it in. Creativity energizes our thinking, opens us to visualize what can be, not just what is. Hobbies keep us searching for new ideas. They spur us to turn our appreciation of the world into art. We simply need to make a date with ourselves to play and be creatively prolific again and again.

A House can be an architectural achievement, but Home is where we find comfort, soothe our spirits and make the choice to set our heart and art free. Go for it. Happy New Year!

©Barbara Kalkis. Barbara spends her time writing, teaching, and working as a marketing consultant. She’s the author of Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.



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Country Register Recipe Exchange
Rhubarb Crisp
 submitted by Patti Lee Bock of New Ulm, MN

1 cup flour	1/2 cup butter
3/4 cup oatmeal	1/2 tsp cinnamon
1 cup brown sugar	4-5 cups rhubarb

Syrup:
 1 cup sugar 1 tsp vanilla
 1 cup water 2 tbsp cornstarch

Mix all ingredients for crust until crumbly. Press 1/2 mixture into 9x13 inch pan. Spread diced rhubarb over crust. Combine syrup ingredients and cook over low heat until thick. Pour hot syrup over rhubarb. Sprinkle with remaining crumbs. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. When cool, cut into squares.



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Do You Want the Whole Story or Just the Condensed Version?

by Colleen Gust

Condensed milk most definitely has its own identity and its not interchangeable with evaporated milk usually. My husband used to get confused when he saw it on the grocery list as he was never confident that he knew the difference between condensed and evaporated milk. To this day, in our house, it's usually just called Eagle Brand® as he knew that meant the sweetened milk!

Sweetened condensed milk is milk from which about 60% of the water has been removed and then heated to 185-194°F, and sugar is added. It isn't a diet food as it is about 45% sugar, and this sugar actually helps extend the shelf life of the product. In some countries, evaporated milk is known as unsweetened condensed milk, so I can certainly understand where my husband's confusion comes from!

Condensed milk has been around for about 200 years. Gail Borden Jr. started manufacturing this long-lasting without refrigeration product after a trip from England after witnessing the death of several children from poor milk from shipboard cows. Borden also introduced the "Dairyman's Ten Commandments" as a condition for farmers to sell him raw milk. They had to wash the udders before milking, keep the barns clean, and scald and dry their strainers morning and night. Between the canning of the milk and the increased hygiene, Borden's milk (Eagle Brand) was well regarded as a safe alternative to raw milk.



Condensed milk is used in various desserts from many cultures – everything from key lime pie to tres leches cake as it adds a smooth, creamy texture.

Did you know you can boil a can of condensed milk in water for about 3 hours to create a dulce de leche (caramel sauce)? I have to share the information that the internet is full of warnings that the can could potentially explode. The secret to preventing that seems to be ensuring the can is covered with water when boiling. I've never had any mishaps, and I've done this many times, but it is a danger. One year, for little Christmas favors, I boiled cans to create dulce de leche and made custom labels for the cans.

Dulce de Leche

1. Bring a large pan of water to a rolling boil. You will need enough water to completely cover the sweetened, condensed milk can.
2. Remove the label from the sweetened condensed milk can – it will come off when boiled anyway.
3. Submerge the sweetened condensed milk into the boiling water using tongs. Hint – if you place the can on its side, it can roll around, and set it right side up in the boiling water can cause it to roll around and make a rattling noise when it cooks.
4. Cook the can for 3 hours – make sure that the can remains covered with water at all times. Add more boiling water if necessary
5. Using a pair of tongs, remove the can from the boiling water. COOL. It's crucial to cool it down before opening it; otherwise, you could create a geyser of steaming hot caramel when you open the can.

In many parts of Asia and Europe, when drinking hot or cold coffee or tea, sweetened condensed milk is the preferred milk. That reminds me...cold condensed milk is always relaxed because it chills in the fridge.

I'll leave you with this recipe on how to make your own sweetened condensed milk?

1. In a medium saucepan, mix together 2 cups of whole milk and 1 cup of sugar.
2. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir to dissolve the sugar.
3. Once boiling, reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer uncovered without stirring for about 45 minutes or until it is reduced to about 1 ½ cups.
4. Cool. Will keep about 1 week.

*If you want to use a 12 oz. can of evaporated milk, reduce the sugar to ¾ cup and cook for 30 minutes.

Colleen Gust is an avid baker and gardener and lives with her husband outside of Regina, Saskatchewan. Kirby and Colleen Gust are publishers of the Manitoba & Saskatchewan Country Register.

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Life in Skunk Hollow

by Julie A. Druck

Warm Winter Memories

As I considered a topic for this edition, I began reminiscing about my childhood winters. One memory led to another, and I realized I have quite a storehouse of warm winter memories.

Actually, ice cream making isn't a "warm" memory, but it's part of my winter memories of childhood nonetheless! My grandmother made Sunday dinner each week for her children and grandchildren, and we spent the whole day and evening at my grandparents' home. Once a month, the evening would include a birthday party for all those who had a birthday that month. January was a big birthday month for us as it, by far, contained the most family birthdays. And as a special treat, our family made homemade ice cream. It seems it would make more sense to prepare it for the summer birthdays, but we did it in the wintertime because that's when the creek edges froze over. A creek ran not too far behind their home, and my grandfather would troop down there and chop ice from the edges of the creek to bring back to freeze the ice cream. The funny thing is we only ever made vanilla ice cream. Now my own family makes a repertoire of ice cream flavors (with peanut butter being the absolute best!), but we NEVER make just plain vanilla!



Besides the big Sunday dinners and parties on their enclosed porch, there are memories of hours spent in their warm basement by the fire playing UNO and Monopoly and Carrom with my sister and cousin. Sliding down into the basement on the carpeted stairs on our bottoms was a fun pastime as well when we were especially young (or not so young!). The basement also contained a toy chest of Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs and plastic bricks that stuck together like Velcro. There was a big stack of Golden Books to snuggle up with and read. And in one corner of the basement was a large train layout—my grandfather's own way of fun. Even today, the sight and sounds of a model train transport me back in time to the comfort and joy of those days.

If there was snow on the ground, we would head outside to my grandparents' large yard and play in the snow or sled down the small hill on the neighbor's property which was catty-corner from my grandparents'. If we had a particularly big snow, one of my uncles would bring his snowmobile over, and we'd take turns riding with him through the streets of the little development.

Sunday evenings were filled with leftovers and puzzles on the coffee table and episodes of "The Wonderful World of Disney" on the big console television in the living room. I would often head to the kitchen and help Mammaw crank the leftover lunchtime entrée of ham or beef or chicken through the meat grinder into salad makings for the week.

And, of course, the winter contained lots of lovely holidays for memory-making. Christmas was a magical time with all the trimmings. Pop & Mammaw threw a New Year's Eve party for just us kids with homemade hats and appetizers and apricot nectar punch in big chunky Polynesian glasses she bought at Disney World. And in February, my grandmother pulled out all her paper supplies, spread them on the dining room table, and invited her grandchildren to make homemade Valentines.

As I type out these memories, my heart is again warmed by the rich storehouse of winter memories my grandparents created for me. They continually inspire me to create a similar wealth of sweet memories for our own grandchildren . . .

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



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This month in Minnesota History

January 8, 1971: President Richard Nixon signs a law creating Voyageurs National Park. Supported by former governor Elmer L. Andersen and Charles A. Lindbergh, the legislation had been approved by Congress on October 5 of the previous year.

February 11, 1891: The Duluth, Missabe and Northern Railroad is established by the Merritt brothers to carry iron ore from the Mesabi Range to Lake Superior ports. Leonidas Merritt had discovered iron near Mountain Iron the previous November.

From The Minnesota Book of Days (Minnesota Historical Society Press)

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A Cup of Tea with Lydia

by Lydia E. Harris



Tea Parties that Say, "I Love You"

"Love Makes the World Go Round" is a song from the 1960s musical *Carnival*. Sixty years later, the lyrics still inspire me. In this new year, we have many opportunities—including Valentine's Day—to share love with others. Here are a few ideas for tea parties that say, "I love you," which could help us make the world go 'round.

TEA PARTIES AT HOME

Last year, when my extended family celebrated the engagement of my niece Lena and her fiancé, Dylan, the couple requested ideas for dates. I set a "date" for them to come for tea.

On a sunny afternoon, I served Dylan and Lena tea outdoors on our deck. A large red heart, a potted pink Gerbera daisy, and two wedding cake toppers decorated our setting. One came from my sister's wedding cake and featured a bride and a sailor—like the navy man she married. The other bride and groom had graced my cake 56 years earlier.

While we nibbled croissants filled with chicken salad and sampled other treats, I enjoyed getting to know Dylan and hearing about their wedding plans. In honor of their recent engagement, I had baked Royal Rings, a cookie shaped like a ring with sweet candy jewels. (See recipe from my book.) I also served several tea blends and rhubarb punch, a popular family beverage. We sipped tea from my mother's pink floral teacups. Since Lena was named after my mother, Helena, I gave her the set of teacups as a gift. And because this was a "date" for them, I offered them dates to eat.

I sent them home with the flowering centerpiece and a few favorite cookies. They said good-bye with beaming faces, anticipating the joy of their not-too-distant wedding day.

TEA PARTIES TO GO

My friend Barbara and I enjoyed making memories together in tearooms. But when I became ill and couldn't get out, Barbara made the hour's drive to my home with a tea party to go. In addition to a tea lunch, she brought a cheery yellow floral teacup. "This is your sunshine cup," she said as I sipped tea from my new cup and savored homemade goodies. The tea and her kind gesture warmed more than my body. It also warmed my heart and added joy to my life.

TEA PARTIES BY MAIL

If you can't deliver a tea party in person, you could share love by mailing a tea party. That's what I recently did for my friend Barbara. Now, years after she brought me a tea party to go, her health has declined and she lives in a skilled nursing facility. Since I can't make the long drive to bring her tea, I mailed a tea party in a box. I contacted her daughter in advance and arranged to have her share the tea party box and enjoy teatime with her mother.

The box included two floral china teacups, several tea blends, shortbread cookies, and other treats. I also sent paper plates, napkins, silk flowers, and a few small gifts. Just as Barbara's tea party brightened my day, now I could return the favor via mail and add cheer to her life.

TEA PARTIES IN 2024

As I recall the song "Love Makes the World Go Round," another song plays in my mind. During my childhood, I learned the song "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." I still embrace those words and seek ways to add love and joy to the lives of others. Teatimes are one way that works for me. And when I bless others, it also adds joy to my life.

Throughout the year, I hope you will join me and look for ways to show love to others. Perhaps we'll serve tea in our homes, deliver a tea party to go, or mail one in a box. Whatever we do, let's make the world go 'round with our love.

From Lydia's Recipe File: Royal Rings

Ring-shaped cookies with sweet candy jewels

(Recipe from Lydia's book *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids*, pages 213--14)

- 1/2 cup soft butter (1 cube)
- 3 egg yolks (save whites for another use)
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Candied fruit or small candies that won't melt (such as Boston Baked Beans, Juju Fruits, or Dots)
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- Multicolored sprinkles

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar. Add egg yolks and vanilla to creamed mixture, and beat until light and fluffy. Combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Sift dry ingredients into the sugar mixture, and mix well. Shape into 1-inch balls. Push your finger through each ball to shape it into a ring. Make sure the opening is at least 1/2-inch wide so it doesn't close while baking. Dip the top side of each ring into colored sprinkles. Place on lightly sprayed baking sheet. Add a piece of candied cherry or small candy on each cookie for a jewel. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Carefully remove cookies to a cooling rack.

Makes 24 rings.



Curling

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.

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- BRUSH
- EIGHT
- END
- GRANITE
- HOUSE
- ICE
- PLAYERS
- RINGS
- ROCKS
- SHEET
- SKIP
- SPORT
- SWEEP
- TARGET
- TEAMS
- TEN
- TOURNAMENT
- TURN
- WINTER

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast, grandmother of five, and the author of three grandparenting books: *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids* (2023); *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*; and *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*. All are available online and wherever books are sold.



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Life's Recipe

by Becky Van Vleet

Not so long ago, I was going through my 45-year+ recipe box I received for a wedding shower gift. You know, the kind with tabbed dividers that hold three by five lined cards and you actually write out recipes! I had not browsed through it for quite some time, and I was hunting down a specific recipe for dinner. My fingers stumbled upon "Life's Recipe" on a piece of paper that was nestled in with other cards behind my "Meat" divider.

Recognizing it from years long gone by, I had a vague memory of cutting this "recipe" out from a church bulletin and adding it to my recipe box as a new bride. I paused a moment to read it. And then I drew a breath and pondered on the ingredients and instructions for "baking" this recipe.

Momentarily stalled from my recipe hunt for dinner, I decided to research this beautiful and profound life recipe. I discovered it was written by Ella Mae Wheatley in the early 1900s, an African-American woman from Kentucky. Her granddaughter, Tammie, is attributed to circulating it beyond the family.

Maybe you've never seen this, or maybe you have, but a re-read could be beneficial for many of us.

LIFE'S RECIPE

- 1 Cup good thoughts
- 1 Cup consideration for others
- 2 Cups sacrifice for others
- 3 Cups forgiveness
- 2 Cups well-beaten faults



Mix these thoroughly and add tears of joy and sorrow and sympathy for others. Flavor with little gifts of love and kindly service. Fold in 4 Cups of prayers and faith to lighten other ingredients, and raise the texture to great heights of good living. After pouring all this into your daily life, bake well with the tear of human kindness. Serve with a smile!

This life recipe sounds easy enough. But just like food recipes, if an ingredient is missing or there's too much of one thing and not enough of another, or you forget the flavorings, the whole recipe is skewed.

Life is tough, it's not always Easy Street, that's for sure. As we enter into a new year, I believe Ella Mae's life recipe may be just what we need to bake. I'd like a large portion, please!

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.beckylvanvleet.com.



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Life's Recipe

by Becky Van Vleet

Not so long ago, I was going through my 45-year+ recipe box I received for a wedding shower gift. You know, the kind with tabbed dividers that hold three by five lined cards and you actually write out recipes! I had not browsed through it for quite some time, and I was hunting down a specific recipe for dinner. My fingers stumbled upon "Life's Recipe" on a piece of paper that was nestled in with other cards behind my "Meat" divider.

Recognizing it from years long gone by, I had a vague memory of cutting this "recipe" out from a church bulletin and adding it to my recipe box as a new bride. I paused a moment to read it. And then I drew a breath and pondered on the ingredients and instructions for "baking" this recipe.

Momentarily stalled from my recipe hunt for dinner, I decided to research this beautiful and profound life recipe. I discovered it was written by Ella Mae Wheatley in the early 1900s, an African-American woman from Kentucky. Her granddaughter, Tammie, is attributed to circulating it beyond the family.

Maybe you've never seen this, or maybe you have, but a re-read could be beneficial for many of us.

LIFE'S RECIPE

- 1 Cup good thoughts
- 1 Cup consideration for others
- 2 Cups sacrifice for others
- 3 Cups forgiveness
- 2 Cups well-beaten faults



Mix these thoroughly and add tears of joy and sorrow and sympathy for others. Flavor with little gifts of love and kindly service. Fold in 4 Cups of prayers and faith to lighten other ingredients, and raise the texture to great heights of good living. After pouring all this into your daily life, bake well with the tear of human kindness. Serve with a smile!

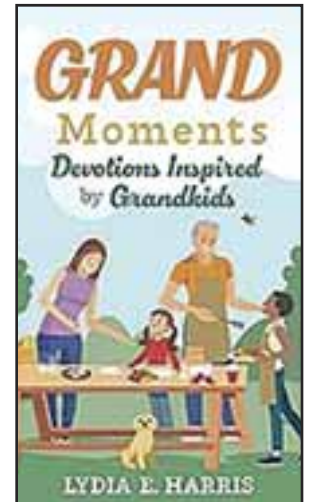
This life recipe sounds easy enough. But just like food recipes, if an ingredient is missing or there's too much of one thing and not enough of another, or you forget the flavorings, the whole recipe is skewed.

Life is tough, it's not always Easy Street, that's for sure. As we enter into a new year, I believe Ella Mae's life recipe may be just what we need to bake. I'd like a large portion, please!

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.beckylvanvleet.com.

Book Review Grand Moments Devotions Inspired by Grandkids

by Lydia E. Harris



40 Devotions Inspired by Grandkids
Get ready to smile, laugh, and perhaps shed a few tears as you read the encouraging devotions in GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids. Lydia Harris (known as "Grandma Tea" to her grandkids) combines heartwarming stories from her grandchildren's lives and wisdom from God's Word to inspire grandparents in every season. She also includes thirteen tasty recipes to make and enjoy with grandchildren. Each of the forty devotions includes a "grand thought" takeaway, a prayer, creative ideas to spend time with grandchildren, and quotes from grandparents and grandkids. GRAND Moments offers practical tips to guide grandparents as they pray for their grandchildren, share and model their faith, and invest in their grandchildren's lives. Whether grandchildren live near or far away, this book will help readers grow as intentional Christian grandparents and pass on a godly legacy to future generations.

You Could Win!

You can register to win a copy of **Grand Moments Devotions Inspired by Grandkids!** Clip and mail in this form! If you prefer not to cut up your paper, write the form below on a note card and mail to: The Country Register; 2920 - 144th Ave NE; Ham Lake, MN 55304. You will be notified and receive your prize by mail! Good Luck!

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For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. - Jeremiah 29:11
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Happy New Year!

Random Acts

by Maranda K Jones

Love Letters—A Love Story

I love letters! I enjoy receiving letters in the mail, but I really love the letters of the alphabet. I spend a lot of time with those 26 characters while I work with first graders. We say the sounds, we write the symbols, and we put them together to make words. We read and write letters all day, and I cannot think of a better job. It never feels like work!

My love of writing started in third grade. Mrs. Martin taught us cursive that year, which was very exciting for someone who had been printing her entire life. I felt empowered by this change and wanted to perfect my penmanship. She gave us time to practice, and she gave us great examples. She showed us how to write a wave of connected c's between the dotted midline and the baseline. She swept up from the bottom line to the top, came down with a point and repeated twice before ending this exercise in a sweep to the right. My teacher praised my hard work and encouraged me to keep writing.

Just when I thought life could not get any better, we were given homework. I looked forward to working on my spelling homework in a brand-new red spiral notebook each week. I was expected to write each word, in cursive of course, use the word in a sentence that showed I understood the definition, and then go back and underline the word. After skipping a line, I would start the process over with the next word on the list. I felt so happy writing in my red notebook and wanted to construct the best sentences possible. I felt inspired to create something new that had not yet been written.

So, I started another notebook. This notebook had a plastic purple cover with three sections divided by manila folder pockets. Each section would have its own subject, and the first one was math. I made a multiplication table with a ruler and the preprinted lines. I wrote each multiplication fact, forward and backward. I stored the flash cards we had made in class in that subject's pocket. Mrs. Martin cut hundreds of orange construction paper rectangles, and I wrote math facts with a black crayon on each card. She met with me and made sure I had mastered each number's facts before I was allowed to make the next set. I was rewarded with a big rubber band to keep all the cards together when I reached the 9s. I felt such a sense of achievement and independence.

The next section held a record where I wrote down a list of all the books I read. It never filled the entire section because I checked out the same books from the library over and over again. I enjoyed reading, doodling, and rereading with the instructional drawing books. I borrowed every book by Lee J. Ames in the school library for most of my elementary years. When I was not filling the notebook with drawings, I was trying to figure out what was so funny in the books by Fred Gwynne. *The King Who Rained* and *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* are so clever and the word play makes me laugh even harder today.

The third subject of this notebook was filled with stories and poems. I wrote acrostic poems for everyone I knew. I wrote lists of friends and family members. I rewrote fairy tales and illustrated my new characters. This was a place to get things out of my head and onto paper. This section was all mine, no right or wrong answers. Writing felt like such a treat to me, and I need to make more time to enjoy it again. It is my quiet time to figure out what I am thinking about. I like putting my thoughts into words and seeing a visual representation of what is going on in my mind, in cursive of course.

This year is a red spiral notebook with empty pages begging to be filled well.

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"Simple Dutch Windmill"

Five Sizes Included

Assembly Instructions

1. Lay out A blocks on point—this means with one point at the top and one at the bottom. Add B block on the sides as setting triangles. Fill in remaining C blocks setting triangles on the top and bottom. D corner blocks are the scraps. Not every size has all block styles. If you did a color palette or scrappy you may want to move your blocks around until you are satisfied with the layout.



Think diagonally to sew it together. Sew an entire row on the diagonal together. Always press a joined seam to the single piece of fabric.



Once all diagonal rows are pieced, then sew one row to the next based on the layout shown.

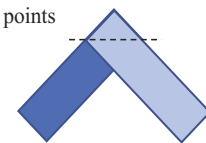
The light pinwheel centers will now fan as well. (see Block Assembly for reference)

Trim the outer edges of the quilt—**be sure to leave 1/4" seam allowance from the outer point/seam intersection along all sides.**



Cut (1 1/2" inner, 2 1/4" outer; 2 1/2"; 1 7/8" sides, 2 1/4" top/bottom; 1 1/2"; 2 1/2") or larger as desired strip widths long enough to get around the entire quilt. Sewing them on will help you not lose your points when adding a binding. Use this diagonal technique for joining the strip ends.

Measure vertically left, center and right. Hopefully these are all the same length, if not, take an average. Cut two strip lengths to size and sew to the sides. Press away from the center.



Measure across the top/center/bottom—hopefully these are all the same, if not, take an average. Cut two strip lengths to size and sew to the top and bottom. Press away from the center.

Quilt it – a quilt sandwich is a backing, batting and the top.

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Bind it – To finish completely by machine, cut (4, 5, 6, 8, 11) 2 1/4" strips (depending upon thickness of batting you may choose to do these wider or narrower), sew ends together on the diagonal, fold in half lengthwise, align along back of quilt edge and avoid placing join seams at corners. Stitch about 4" and check that your binding will fold to the front and cover the seam at least 1/16" to 3/32" (almost 1/8"). Join ends by your favorite method and finish stitching down. Fold binding around to the front and top-stitch binding about 1/16" from the folded edge of the binding. You will likely stitch in the ditch of the binding at the back or just inside the quilt from the binding seam. Use thread in your bobbin that matches your backing or was used in the quilting. Detailed instructions on how to do this can be found in my co-authored book, *You Can Quilt! Building Skills for Beginners*.

Label it. -- Don't forget to label your quilt. It is nice to include who made it, pattern name, who quilted it (if different), who it is being presented to, the date, and location. Include any special connection or meaning that the quilt may have between the maker and the receiver. There are many label options available, including printing your own on an inkjet printer with colorfast sew-in or fusible fabric, or writing with fabric ink on a pre-printed label or making your own.



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The Story Behind The Wit and Wisdom Writers



In the early 1990's four Christian friends, with a shared interest in writing, began meeting once a month to learn the writing trade. The four were each active in their various churches. As part of an outreach ministry, they decided to write an inspirational newspaper column as a way to reach a wider, and perhaps mostly secular, audience. After tossing around potential column titles, the group chose *Wit and Wisdom*, a title that encompassed both Christian humor and knowledge gleaned from reading the Bible and living for the Lord.

Letters of introduction, along with sample columns, were sent to newspaper editors in a three-county region and the writers were given the go-ahead to submit columns for each paper's readership. Since there were normally four editions each month, the writers were each assigned

a week to send in their column. So, while the *Wit and Wisdom* column was a weekly feature, each writer submitted just one column a month.

As time went on, the face of newspaper publishing changed; some papers consolidated while others went out-of-business. During one such turbulent time, one of the writers happened upon a copy of *The Country Register* while vacationing in New Jersey with her family. She brought the publication to the next writer's meeting and received unanimous approval to approach the editors with the *Wit and Wisdom* column – that was eleven years ago. Since that time, the column has regularly appeared in national and international issues of *The Country Register*.

The group compiled some of their columns into three *Seeing God* anthologies that are available for purchase. They have also written six comedy/mystery plays that were performed at a local church.

Independently, each of the writers have branched out into other fields of writing. Judyann Grant has written stories, articles and curriculum for a wide variety of Sunday school publications. She has published hundreds of devotionals and has two children's picture books in print. One of the books, *Chicken Said 'Cluck'*, published by Harper-Collins, was named a Dr. Seuss Honor Book. Her first chapter book in a new series entitled, *Be God's Hero*, has just been released from Talking Donkey Press (an imprint of All About Kids Publishing). She began writing in high school and after graduation worked for a weekly newspaper where she met her future husband. Married for 46 years she and her husband are blessed with three daughters and nine grandchildren. Her family and her love of nature inspire much of her writings. For many years she worked for The Writing Academy, developing and teaching a Devotion Writing Course. Currently she is working on Book #2 in the BGH series as well as developing a cozy mystery series.

Cheryl Ann Potts is an Elementary Reading Specialist K-6, currently retired after 34 years, but continues to tutor students in her home. She has six published teacher resource books from Scholastic, Inc. and Alleyside Press, plus one children's early literacy reader from Kaeden Corporation. Cheryl also writes poetry, articles, inspirational newspaper columns and devotionals for the various local newspapers as well as *The Country Register*. Cheryl has contributed stories and poems to the three *Seeing God* anthologies written by the four writers, as well as the combined efforts for six comedy/mystery plays which have been performed in a local church dinner theatre format.

Juleann Lattimer has written inspirational articles for numerous Christian publications as well as published a children's early reader book based on her late husband's interest in street rods. She is the author of two devotional books: *Shop Talk* and *More Shop Talk*, thoughts gleaned from her many years working in her home-based beauty shop. She also had a part in many writing projects with the other *Wit and Wisdom* writers.

Roxanne Ferguson's interest in writing started with journaling. From there she went on to write poetry and music that was used in being part of a gospel music group. She has written children's stories for Sunday School take home papers with Union Gospel Press. She has also been published in *Creation Magazine* and has written numerous inspirational pieces for local newspapers along with writing for *The Country Register*. Her current writing includes writing puppet skits for Sunday School programs. Roxanne loves the outdoors and much of her writing includes experiences with gardening and nature. She is a wife, mother of three and grandmother to seven. She is a retired teacher, having taught both elementary grades and high school English.

For more information about the *Seeing God* books or the church plays, contact the authors at: witandwisdomwriters@gmail.com. [Book Titles available: *Seeing God in Christmas*; *Seeing God in Nature*; *Seeing God in the Everyday*.]

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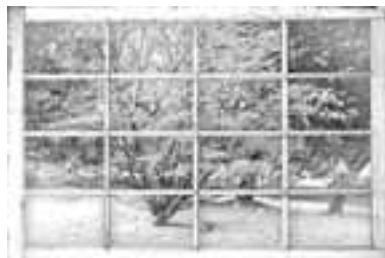
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Wit and Wisdom

by Cheryl Potts

Snow Place Like Home



Some people think I'm crazy because I like winter! There's something about that cozy home feeling, holding a cup of hot cocoa, and a good book that is so inviting and relaxing. There are a slew of indoor winter activities and projects that I can hardly wait to begin when temperatures plummet and the white stuff falls. This time of year, one of my most relaxing activities is to pull out my sewing machine and work on quilts, gifts, making clothes or trying out new craft ideas. With soft music playing in the background and a cup of tea to sip, I'm content to stay in my sewing sanctuary for hours.

After a while, I take a break from reading and sewing as I launch into writing. I enjoy writing poetry, short stories, and "teacher books." I've discovered the more I write the more ideas I get! Especially recording little things my children used to say and do that I don't want to forget. Someday they will be surprised to read about themselves in my journals and family poetry album. I even keep a folder of ideas and anecdotes to complete the next time I have some spare time to write.

An on-going hobby of mine is scrap booking. When my sister-in-law introduced me to this creative activity over ten years ago, I'm sure she never thought I would spend hours upon hours condensing and cropping 17 photo albums into 5 scrapbooks. In fact, since my family pictures are all caught up, I've been working on my parent's albums. It's been a great family history study as well! However, since I'm an organized and somewhat obsessive-compulsive personality, I've expanded the scrap book concept to my classroom scrap book, as well as, my church family album, my mother's Red Hatter's album, and even a scrap book for my parent's dog. Yikes!

And then there's playing the piano...a great emotional outlet. My parents made a very worthwhile investment, for I was a most unusual child. I loved to practice! Now it's a great past time and a skill I can use for church and school.

So, you see that's why I enjoy winter. There's never a dull moment. There's always something to write about, read, a project to finish, an idea to pursue, music to play and moments to savor! I thank God.

1 Timothy 6:6 – "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

Hebrews 13:5 – "...be content with what you have..."

The Power of Hope & Positivity

by Lesley Nuttall

As we begin another new year, some of us like to make New Year Resolutions, such as losing weight, doing more exercise or to stop smoking. But does anyone ever think about making ourselves happier?

I will admit that the stress of living through the last several years with more violence in our streets, war, losing family and friends, and of course loss of jobs or businesses can cause anyone to lose Hope. I like to encourage everyone to have patience! We must live one day at a time and being patient will increase our inner peace and give us more Hope to continue onward to "happiness!"

My husband is one of the happiest people I know. Sometimes I hear him half humming/whistling and I ask, "what is making you so happy this morning?" He smiles and answers, "I'm alive!" (He's 86!) What a good example of Hope! Did you know that Hope combined with positive thinking releases a potential strength within us? Another wonderful way to happiness is "giving." That doesn't always mean monetary, especially in these hard times, but giving of yourself. By that I mean helping a neighbor, a friend or even a stranger. A smile, or a "good morning" to a stranger may just change or enhance their mood. In a grocery store, offer to reach something up high on a shelf for a senior, or offer to lift something heavy into their cart. My husband does this every time we are shopping. (It's a wonder we get any shopping done!) But it makes him happy to help!

I think back to when our son Tom was a cancer patient in Toronto and was undergoing a stem cell transplant. I admit he was a very unhappy fellow. The Hospital Technician needed to extract 5,000 cells from our son's body to have cleaned and transplanted back into him. They extracted 13,000 cells, but only need 4,000 to put back in. Tom donated the remaining 9,000 to the research lab. This immediately changed his complete outlook and was smiling and happy because of his contribution!

At an early age, I was blessed with the talent to play the accordion. I taught myself to play as there was no extra money in the family for lessons. I have been playing, by ear, for 70 years and love to volunteer to entertain residents in the long-term care homes, other groups, or just play along with friends. At Halloween I liked to sit out on our front step and play. I would dress up in a character costume and play as the children came for treats husband handed out. The little ones were so amazed to see me (in a cat costume) playing and would be laughing and I would let them touch the keys to hear the different sounds. So much fun! My music gives me so much happiness!

I followed in my father's footsteps to become a part time writer for more than 30 years. I love to write poetry. In 1989 I published a "Party Book," and I was asked in 2004 by a publisher of The Country Register in our city to write a column for them. I have been submitting my articles as well as my poetry for over 20 years. During the pandemic many stores were closed, and publishers weren't buying as many articles, so I offered my poetry free for the last three years. Now things have normalized again, and I am submitting my articles again. I am so happy when I receive their magazines with a small payment check in appreciation of my work!

Happiness is infectious! You can bring happiness to others by making a phone call, a text or email, or a card or letter. I love to send cheery "thinking of you" cards. It's like sending a smile to show you care!

"Give and it shall be given unto you!" Luke 6:38



© Lesley Nuttall loves to write poetry and lives with her husband in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.



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

Crock Pot Holy Moly Potato Soup

recipe by Taste of Home

- 4 cans (14 - 1/2 oz) diced new potatoes, undrained
- 2 cans (10- 3/4 oz) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- 2 - 1/2 cups water
- 1 can (11oz) whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 can (10oz) diced tomatoes and green chiles, undrained
- 6 green onions, chopped
- 1 medium sweet red pepper, chopped
- 1 tbsp dried minced onion
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 pound spicy pork sausage
- 2 cups (8oz) shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 carton (8oz) French onion dip
- Tortilla chips

In a 6 quart slow cooker, combine the first ten ingredients. In a large skillet, cook sausage over medium heat for about 6-8 minutes or until no longer pink. Break it up into crumbles as it cooks. Drain the sausage and add to the slow cooker. Cook, covered, on low to allow flavors to blend for about 4-5 hours. Add cheese and onion dip in the last 30 minutes of cooking. Stir before serving. Serve with tortilla chips.

Freeze cooled soup in freezer containers. When thawing, partially thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Heat through in a saucepan, stirring occasionally. Add broth or water if needed.



Country Register Recipe Exchange

Dainty Rice Dish

submitted by Lila Liebl



Cook 3/4 cup rice until done. Pour off the water. Put rice in bowl. Add 3/4 package marshmallows (small) and 1 can crushed pineapple. Let this stand overnight to chill. In the morning add 1 cup cream (whipped), sweetened if you like, and top with Maraschino cherries.

Happy New Year!

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