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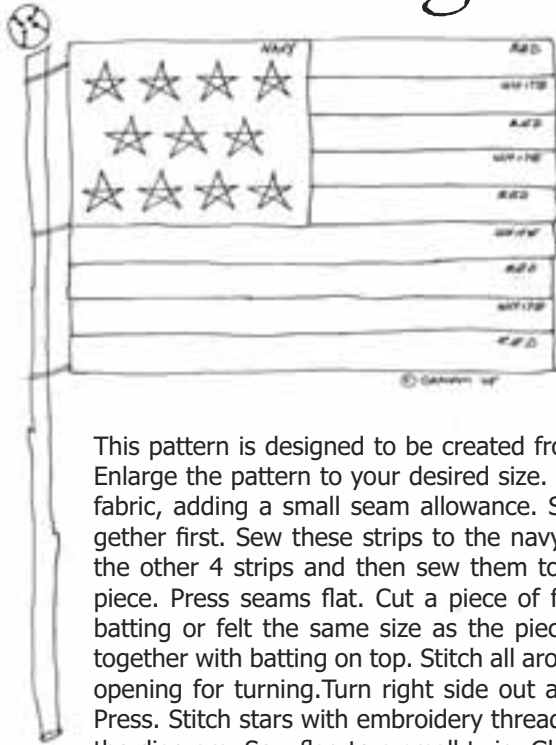
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Happy 4th of July From Your Country Register!

Countryberries Designs



Primitive Flag



This pattern is designed to be created from strips of cotton fabric. Enlarge the pattern to your desired size. Cut strips of solid or print fabric, adding a small seam allowance. Sew the 5 short strips together first. Sew these strips to the navy rectangle. Sew together the other 4 strips and then sew them to the bottom of the other piece. Press seams flat. Cut a piece of fabric and a piece of thin batting or felt the same size as the pieced flag. Place right sides together with batting on top. Stitch all around edges leaving a small opening for turning. Turn right side out and stitch opening closed. Press. Stitch stars with embroidery thread or pearl cotton following the diagram. Sew flag to a small twig. Glue a bead or jingle bell to the top of the pole.

This pattern is free for you to use. Please give the artist credit. Not for commercial use. If you're a painter, create this design with acrylic paints on canvas and varnish to protect. Try this flag as a punchneedle design or as a hooked rug. Have fun!

Designed by Kathy Graham

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Pieces From My Heart

by Jan Keller

Berry Good Donuts!

Simplify ... that seems to be my adopted life objective. I used to pride myself on baking and cooking yummy meals and treats, but no longer. Is my identity wrapped up in garnering praise and compliments in exchange for hours spent in the kitchen? I think not ... especially in the summer!

Many months ago, I happened upon an online photo of a jazzed up glazed donut, and I saved it to my desktop. I didn't want to forget what I considered a truly great idea for an easy-does-it dessert. I thought the photo presented what might be an especially appropriate refreshment or dessert idea to serve at a shower, luncheon or tea party.

Recently, and on an absolutely ordinary day, I came home with everything needed in hand—fresh strawberries, glazed donuts, and a spray container of whipped cream. When my husband was engrossed in front of the television, I very carefully sliced across a couple donuts with a sharp serrated knife. (Honestly, that was the greatest challenge to putting together this show-stopping desert. Once that was done, all I had to do was spray whipped cream on the bottom half of the donut, top it with a few slices of strawberries, and then cover with the donut's top half. For a little extra pazazz, I filled the donut's hole by spraying a dab of shipped cream and topping it with another strawberry slice.

When our "Berry Good Donuts" were ready to sample, John and I both paused for a moment because they looked almost too good to eat ... but soon we both took a bite and simultaneously agreed our donuts were really berry, berry good!

Since that first taste test, I think a variation might be to get glazed donut holes, cut them in half, fill with a dab of whipped cream and a strawberry slice for a yummy miniature "Two Bite Berry Good Donut Delight."

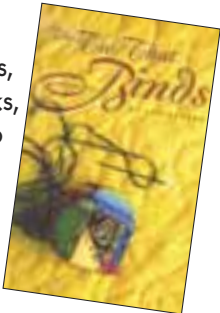


©2025 Jan Keller No reprint without permission Jan shares other pieces of her life in her books, *Pieces From My Crazy Quilt*, and *The Tie That Binds*. These books can be ordered by calling 719-866-8570, or writing: Black Sheep Books, 11250 Glen Canyon Drive, Peyton, CO 80831

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Life is like a quilt, pieced together from a unique patchwork of memories, friendships, joys, and challenges. In each of these books, syndicated columnist Jan Keller is down to earth and refreshingly transparent as she opens the door to life's dreams, triumphs and struggles in a heart-warming way that will touch you forever. You'll love the way she spins 'yarns' that



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Cooling Off At The Swimming Hole

by Judy Sharer

We had a swimming hole on our farm that I loved to visit on a hot day. My family would all jump in the back of the hay wagon hitched to the tractor and Dad would drive us to the spot. A small creek wound its way through the property. There was one place before it went through a culvert under the road that was deep enough to swim.

We didn't go often because of all the chores there were to do on the farm, but when we did go, we made an afternoon of it. Mom packed a picnic lunch with real sandwiches made with chicken salad or homemade ham spread. We'd have potato or macaroni salad and usually cupcakes or brownies for a treat. After eating we



would have to wait an hour before swimming. You've probably heard the old wives' tale, 'You can't go swimming for an hour after you eat.' I believe that was our parents' way of saying they needed a break before we got back in the water again.

We didn't complain, we just found flat stones and had contests to see whose rock would skip across the top of the water the most times. Sometimes we sun-bathed to work on our tans, or took a walk along the creek to see if we could catch a snake or frogs. Most farm girls aren't afraid of snakes. I wasn't.

After the waited hour was up, my brother and I took turns jumping off the rocks or swinging on a rope that hung on a sturdy branch over the water. My sisters and I would play Marco Polo, or see who could hold their breath under water the longest.

This was back in the day when one-piece swimsuits were what girls wore and you had to wear a swimming cap so you wouldn't get your hair wet and to protect water from getting in your ears. One of my sisters even used a nose plug. Today, when I go swimming, it's often in a two-piece swimsuit, in a friend's pool, where I recline on a plastic floating raft enjoying the sun! Oh, how times have changed. It's nice to take trips down memory lane, especially this time of year, and enjoy memories of bygone days.

© 2024 Judy Sharer is the author of a historical western romance series titled *A Plains Life*, published by The Wild Rose Press. Book One, *Settler's Life*, Book Two, *Second Chance Life*, Book Three, *Civil War Life* and Book Four, *Love-Challenged Life* are available wherever online books and eBooks are sold. If you're a quilter, you'll enjoy Judy's series with a thread of quilting throughout the story. Visit Judy's website judysharer.com for more details.

The Summer My Father Built a House

by Nancy Nash

One summer, I helped my father build a house. Well, ok, I was only four years old, so I couldn't offer much assistance, but I provided inspiration. Dad wanted a home for his family, which involved tons of planning and work, and I loved to accompany him to the worksite. I believe he relished his children's excitement and awe as ground was cleared, foundation laid, and the house took shape.

As a young man, my father was a carpenter who took construction jobs in summer and sold Christmas trees in early winter. It was the tree business that paid for the materials to build our house. Dad took a course in preparing blueprints, and he designed a modest "ranch" house, as it was called. It had a cellar, a main floor, and porches in front and back. The living and dining rooms blended with no wall between them. Each had a window, so it was good for viewing songbirds in the front yard and deer in the back pasture.

In between whatever other work he had, Dad spent hours and days at the site, often laboring alone or with the help of a relative or other workman.

One day when I was present, Dad took a pan and filled it with cement, sand, gravel, and water. He mixed it together with a triangular-shaped trowel to form concrete. Sometimes he pressed the trowel into the gooey substance and held it there for a moment. To my surprise, the result bore the shape of an evergreen tree! Then he pressed the trowel down multiple times in different positions to create an evergreen with overlapping branches. I was amazed and delighted. We called it a Christmas tree, and he made one each time he filled the pan. After I had admired in turn each new work of art, which is what it was to me, the trowel smoothed the pattern away. I believe the concrete was then used to set cinder blocks in place or to form the curving sidewalk to our front door.

Some days my brother showed up at the work site. As an older sibling, he knew more about the world than I did. He had heard of a Mount Suribachi in a far-off land called Iwo Jima. Upon eyeing a huge mound of dirt plowed up by heavy equipment, he dubbed it Mount Muchibachi. It was perhaps 15 or 20 feet high and perfect for climbing. So now we had a mountain looming beside our house! I imagine my parents got a chuckle out of that!

Mount Muchibachi, like the evergreen trees formed in cement, eventually vanished. Dad leveled it and smoothed it into a patch of soil before we moved in. The following spring, he planted a lawn. Later, he located large rocks on the premises and built a stone wall. One autumn, on a trip to Vermont to buy Christmas trees to sell locally, Dad came across a large, dark brown rock laced with white quartz. He arranged to acquire it and bring it home. It still garners admiration from its place on the lawn.

The home remains in the family, though my parents have both passed away. Visitors comment about how well-made the house is, with thoughtful touches and marks of ingenuity. I agree. Even better, I feel the comfort of my parents' love in a deeper way when I am there.

©2024 Nancy J. Nash. Nancy is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story* and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, available on amazon.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





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Appreciating the Art of Quilting for the First Time

by Susan Hodges

A few months ago, I invited my husband, brother and sister-in-law to attend a quilt show with me. They agreed, but probably more to humor me, than any real interest in the outing.

To say it was a transformative experience for them would be an understatement. Though they knew that quilting was my 'hobby,' they never fully realized the unleashing of creativity this so-called hobby entailed. They saw, through many examples, that piecing and quilting involved more than just a fabric puzzle waiting to be solved. They witnessed quilts as works of art in many forms.

In each of the quilts displayed, the quilter was leaving a legacy that was uniquely theirs. It was a piecing together of their stories, dreams and hopes into something tangible and beautiful as they answered the voice within them urging them to create.

Some of the creations were simple with their presentation of clear shapes and color, others chose landscapes or replications of nature. Some illustrated family stories and some incorporated pieces of clothing from childhood memories or memories of those who have passed on. And others were artist's creations playing with colors and unusual shapes.

In each entry, we witnessed the struggle the quilter faces between their logic brain and the artist brain. Our logical brain thinks in near, linear fashion working with known principles and a desire to make things neat and ordinary. Whereas our artist brain likes to put odd colors and shapes together, by presenting tried and true things in new ways. This struggle continues as the artist creates and logic guides as the quilter blends the technical skills they have honed with patience, practice and commitment with new and untried designs.

Through the elements of design, the quilter offers us visual depth on a flat surface as they incorporate an assortment of lines, shapes, and colors to tell their story.

Through this display of over a hundred quilts, my husband, brother and sister-in-law saw graphically that the art of quilting is not just an "add on" to life. It is instead, a means to help the quilter articulate who they are and/or who they hoped to be as they combine little pieces of fabric into a grand design of shapes and colors.

You can experience this same opportunity of awe and appreciation of quilting art by visiting a quilt show near you.

Susan Hodges is a member of the Busy Bees Quilters Guild in Fountain Inn, SC. She has been quilting for 10 years and especially likes paper-piecing. Susan and her husband relocated from Western NY to Simpsonville, SC to enjoy their retirement.



KISSed Quilts

A new idea for using those pre-printed placemats

by Marlene Oddie

New fabric collections occasionally do a block print likely intended as a placemat. I've made several styles of placemats, but it seems that there is always a lot of binding!

Northcott's new collection shipping now, Autumn Gathering, has such a print that lends itself to being reimagined as a quilt that could be used as a table topper.

This quilt design uses the printed placemats, a border print, two coordinates, binding and backing from the collection.

The pattern details the fussy cutting of the mitered border print. The center portion measures 40" and the overall size is 64" x 64".

You can find this pattern on my website or ask at a local quilt shop near you. Be sure to tag us if you make this up in these fabrics or something else. #fourplacemattabletopper

Happy Stitching!

Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus, but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene's adventures via <http://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit.

Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

Philosophy is wondering if that means ketchup is a smoothie.



NEEDLES AND THREAD

by Sheila Tinkham

All I need is my needle and thread
I forget awhile
Any spats
Any troubles
All I need is my needle and thread
For a moment
I am in bliss
All I need is my needle and thread
I sew
A quilt
My new creation
Yet all I need is my needle and thread..
Life itself
Stands still...
Complete.
All I need is my needle and thread.

Sheila Tinkham lives in Lincoln, NE. She started quilting when she sprained her ankle and fell in love with the process of sewing and the focused peacefulness of making and designing quilts. Writing is her passion and she has self-published three poetry books. You can follow her on Twitter at SheilaTinkham.

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The Guinea with Nine Lives

by Becky Van Vleet

What fun it is for this Colorado grandma to visit her daughter and son-in-law's homestead in Tennessee. Add two sweet granddaughters, and life doesn't get any better. I've never seen a more glorious garden which produces everything under the sun it seems. Picking fresh blueberries is a wonderful way to start the day. And I never mind sharing a few with the chickens and guinea fowl that meander around the property.

At my last visit a few weeks ago, I noticed one of the guineas was a little standoffish, not quite as social. But I soon learned from my granddaughters, Belle and Ava, that Ginny Guinea boasts nine lives. Really? I thought only cats could brag about that.

Ginny developed a limp her first year when one of her legs tangled with a wire in the guinea run while she was trying to scamper away. With her limp, she was never quite able to travel around the yard at the same speed as the other guineas. No matter. She hobbles where she wants to go, continues to lay her precious eggs, and never complains.

But birds of the air have taken notice of her slowness. The hawks in particular. No doubt their birdbrains have accurately assessed that a wounded guinea wanders around on the homestead. Easy prey. But the hawks are apparently clueless for Ginny's perseverance. She holds her own. No hawk as yet has been able to carry her off for a tasty snack, though they've tried. Belle and Ava have witnessed the attempts after threatening hawks alerted them to run outside to check. Poor Ginny would be hiding in bushes minus feathers.

After one vicious attack, Ginny was a bareback. All her feathers across her back had been stripped by a greedy hawk. The girl was bleeding. Belle and Ava didn't think she'd survive. But they hoped for the best as they gently placed the suffering guinea back in her coop. And with tender loving care, Ginny made a comeback.

But one day, Belle thought for sure Ginny had succumbed to a menacing attack. She'd trained their labrador, Luna, to join the family rescue team. On this particular day, Belle and Luna dashed to the back yard at the alarm squawk from the guineas. All the chickens and guineas must be protected after all, and especially Ginny. While Luna scared away potential hawks, Belle counted the chickens and guineas to ensure their safety and well-being. All were accounted for except Ginny.

Belle's heart sank. She summoned her mother and Ava to the yard for the rescue mission, if there would even be one. When Belle discovered a fresh-plucked guinea feather, then another, then another, she followed the trail until she noticed a big pile of feathers next to a tree. Calling out to her mother and Ava, she thought for sure the hawk had flown away with Ginny for an appetizing lunch. The evidence pointed to Ginny's demise.

But then—Belle heard a faint cackle from a bush. Could it be Ginny? No. Belle and Ava thoroughly investigated the bush. Not once, but twice. About to give up, Belle and Ava sauntered to the house, grieving. But another chirp drew them back. And there was Ginny, standing upright next to the bush, minus a few feathers, as if to say, "Were you worried about me?"

Not only did Ginny recover and grow her feathers back again, she continues to humbly strut around their homestead today. Unassuming. Persevering. Overcoming. Thank you, Ginny. Good character traits for all of us.



We've All Got Person-al-i-ty

by Barbara Kalkis

It was during a long drive that I heard an old song called, "Personality" by Lloyd Price. The catchy tune caught me, but it was the lyrics that held me. Like most contemporary songs, it repeated the same lines again and again, making it easy for me to sing along to it. Unlike contemporary songs it was completely upbeat. No sarcasm, cynicism, sadness, or groveling. No, this is a song about a man rhapsodizing about his love because of one quality, her personality.

What captivated me is that the singer never describes her physical appearance. Listeners never learn the color of her hair or eyes, how she dresses or how seductive she is. It is a love song purely about her character. Her "personality" is in the way she walks, talks, smiles, charms (when was the last time you heard that word?) and loves. And – bonus! – she's got "a great big heart"!

Besides memorizing the words as I screeched along, the lyrics made me think about the concept of personality. Over the past two years, I've traveled to many different cities and states. In each trip the cities were vastly different in unexpected ways. They were all in the United States but each city had its own cuisine, landscape, style and culture. Viewed together, they exuded vastly different personalities.

Pittsburgh has an industrial vibe that captures its steel-making history, along with vast numbers of bridges mapping its geographical location on three rivers. In Boston, buildings flaunt a colonial architectural element. The street names, landmarks and historical sites are constant reminders and tributes to its revolutionary spirit.

Tucson snuggles into its Sonoran Desert home with exotic cactus landscaping, Puebloan architecture and a color palette of browns, oranges, golds and reds that drench its searing sunrises and fiery sunsets. Across the state line, Palm Springs vibrates with a fresh, energetic spirit through multitudes of namesake palms. Its architectural style somehow captures both the stark lines of mid-20th century modernism and the casual-cool personality of southern California at play.

These were all pleasant travel reflections that I could have put aside, except that I couldn't get that song out of my mind! I kept humming it at odd moments and was doing so when I gathered the mail one day. The mail carrier had dropped several issues of *Country Register* in my mailbox. As I drifted through the pages of one issue after another, the advertisements caught my eye. For some reason I realized that I was looking at the personalities of the shop owners in their ads.

Almost without thinking I started to study the shop names. It seemed they fell into personality types. Birds are popular sources for names: like *The Blue Crow*, *The Bird Nest*, *Red Cardinal Quilting*. Some choose animals, like *Red Fox Yarns*. *Barn Door Quilts* and *Prairie Point Junction* exalt rural life. Others tell exactly what they do, like *Loving Stitches*, *Compass Star Quilts*, *Cactus Quilting*, *The Sewing Room*, *Calico House*, *Nuts and Bolts Fabric*, *The Copper Needle*. (Names were chosen spontaneously while writing this article).

I learned several things by getting attached to "Personality." First, six years of voice lessons was not one of my better investments. Second, we can groom, change and refine our personality – just like cities. Third, we all have a personality style. Some folks know theirs all their lives. Others reveal it purposely or accidentally, as in choosing a business name. Some of us must think deeply about it. But it's worth the time because personality is like a secret ingredient to a gourmet dish. It flavors life in the most charming ways!

©Barbara Kalkis, 2025. Barbara writes, teaches and consults under the business name Maestro Marketing & Public Relations. It was chosen as she watched the maestro conduct an entire orchestra in perfect unison.



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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Designed by Kathy Graham

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Toblerone Lava Mug Cake

Ingredients:

- 32g Toblerone (one large piece from 360g bar)
- 1 egg
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 tbsp milk
- 4 tbsp flour
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- pinch of salt

Directions:

1. In a small mixing bowl whisk together the egg, sugar, oil and vanilla extract.
2. Add the flour, baking powder and salt.
3. Mix to combine.
4. Stir in the milk gradually until the mix is thick and gloopy but not runny. When it reaches this consistency stop adding milk.
5. Pour mixture into a coffee mug.
6. Sink a piece of Toblerone chocolate into the middle.
7. Microwave for 90 seconds.
8. Serve on its own or with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



Recipe by Rosanna etc.

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Making An Old Singer Sing

by Wayne M. Bosman

My name is Wayne and I am a sewing machine addict. If there were meetings to cure this condition, I wouldn't go to them anyway. I picked up my love of sewing machines very young and have no desire to lose it now.

Some of my earliest memories involve Mom working at her old treadle sewing machine, sitting almost in her way with my little brother Ron, both of us fascinated with the way the treadle made the big wheel go around. Mom's machine had been converted to an electric motor by then, but we loved to play with the treadle. Ron grew up to design and build assembly lines for a living. I worked 49 years as an automotive and aircraft mechanic. Is that where it started?

Mom's old Singer was retired in 1972, replaced with a Sears Kenmore. That machine now sits next to our dining room table, where Kerri makes a point of using it for everything she makes for my 8 grandchildren. She tries to pass along some of the love that Mom put into the machine.

Fifty years ago, the old treadle machine moved upstairs to my brothers' and my unused attic bedroom. One of my nieces claimed it while still in her teens, and there it sits, twenty-some years later, waiting to be part of her grownup life.

Mom is 104 now but still fourteen years younger than that sewing machine. She is fortunate enough to still live in the house that she and my dad bought in 1946, and that machine is still in that attic. A few times a year we drive the 1000+ miles from North Carolina to her home in Wisconsin. We stay with Mom for a few weeks. We don't do much while we are there. At 104, she simply can't. She and Kerri spend time sitting at the kitchen table solving the world's problems and talking over recipes. I mostly poke around and look at old things.

Last visit, I decided it was time to examine the old Singer machine in the attic. No one had used it since Mom got the "new" machine in 1972. Unlike many sewing machines, it was not moved out to the barn and forgotten. The lovely old sewing machine table looked the same as it did when it was retired. I wish that I aged that well.

I opened the table and rotated the machine into position. The handwheel didn't turn, but I was undaunted. I travel with sewing machine oil and tools. Doesn't everyone? I vacuumed all the accessible parts and oiled judiciously. After a few applications, I got the needle bar unstuck and the machine rotated freely. Fifteen minutes later she was ready for a test run. Beautiful straight stitches!

I brought a sample to Mom and sat down to hear her stories about her first sewing machine. The machine had been my grandmother's. She got it soon after she and Grampa married. After Mom displayed a talent and inclination to make her own clothing during the Great Depression, Grandma passed the machine on to her. It served her well for many years, from making diapers and baby clothes to cowboy shirts for her four sons. When my younger sister was born in 1957, only the patterns changed. Doll clothing came next, but having time to sew with five growing children limited her time at the machine.

The old Singer may stay in the attic there for quite a while yet before it migrates to its next home. The classic cabinet is its' main attraction to the current generation. For me, the years of work that Mom did with it have given it an aura of love that sticks to each stitch.

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



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Become Inspired!

by Annice Bradley Rockwell

Spectacular Summer Luxuries

The warm, hazy months of summer are some of the most anticipated ones of the year. With more daylight hours to enjoy, we can take delight in outings with family and friends that are relaxing, spontaneous and fun. To celebrate the season of summer, taking in the sights and sounds of a traditional Main Street parade is one of the inspiring luxuries of a country life. Streets lined with vibrant American flags are also filled with people young and old ready to share in a celebration of freedom. Groups of proud, uniformed Veterans are joined by the hometown Little League teams, Girl Scouts and local Fife and Drum Corps. Huge American flags wave beautifully in the summer breeze as the symbolic sound of cannon fire hearkens back to days of the past. Small children waving petite flags of glory are filled with wonder as their very own American town comes together in moments of unity and collective joy.



Quaint Coastal Towns

Quaint coastal towns are fully alive and bustling on these warm summer days. Boutique shop doors are wide open to welcome eager buyers to sample their wares and to see the latest summer displays of seascape paintings, hand-crafted jewelry of colorful sea glass and hand-stretched saltwater taffy.

Ice cream shops stay open extra late to catch the attention of the spectators who enjoyed a band concert by boat at the white town gazebo. A fireworks display once all is pitch black is a special grand finale on a day well-spent with friends. Unexpected precious moments of solitude also tend to greet us more frequently on these long, summer days. We might finally have time to enjoy a long morning walk into town, taking in all of the sights and sounds of summer. Passing by Middle Cove we see all the boats docked in the snug harbor ready for the day. Cozy restaurants are getting ready to welcome out-of-town guests who will undoubtedly want to return. And the local historical society is advertising a "Plein Air" event that catches your interest as a perfect summer afternoon activity with a best friend to try your hand at watercolor painting.

In Full Bloom

Summer provides us with the perfect opportunities to indulge in newfound joys. We will often have time to practice and refine a recently acquired soulful skill. Without a doubt, the long-anticipated season of summer is one to be treasured. It is when nature's beauty is in its fullest bloom—and usually so are we. So, this summer embrace the happiness that this special season affords. Recognize nature's powerful proclamation of pride. And as you see the splendor in its full glory, you may begin to see it reflected beautifully within.

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

A Cup of Tea with Lydia

by Lydia E. Harris

Celebrating Eight-TEA Years of Life



Years before my birth, God began weaving my life through the prayers of others. Unbeknownst to my parents, my five sisters were praying for a baby sister. My mother had already given birth to eight children and was approaching 44 years of age, so another child was not on her prayer list. Nonetheless, when my sisters saw used baby clothes hanging on the clothes

line to dry, they knew their prayers were being answered.

As my birth approached, my brothers predicted, "It's going to be a boy. We already have too many girls."

"Did you pray about it?" the girls asked.

The boys sheepishly hung their heads.

"We did!" exclaimed my sisters with confidence, "and we prayed for a girl."

I'm thankful God answered their prayers with my birth. After my mother's long delivery, the doctor said I was a dead baby. I've been proving him wrong for 80 years.

In the Bible, Psalm 90:10 (NKJV) states, "The days of our years are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years." So here I am!

You only turn 80 once, but thanks to God, family, and friends, I celebrated my birthday several times with birthday gifts and Cards and birthday gatherings.

With so many gifts and celebrations, I certainly felt loved and honored. My sister Erna, now nearly 90, wrote in her card to me, "I'm glad you were born! You brought joy to the rest of the girls growing up. And then you brought joy to countless others! God knew what He was doing when He created you. Enjoy God's presence with you every day and the love that we sisters, relatives, friends, book readers, and others still have for you."

I'm sure my sisters had no idea what they would set in motion by praying for a baby sister. Now I've gone from baby to eight-TEA.

You don't need to turn 80 to celebrate. You can turn any birthday into a par-TEA. Choose your favorite teas and treats and celebrate God's gift of life to you.

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast and the author of three books for grandparents: *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids*, *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*, and *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*, all available at amazon.com.

From Lydia's Recipe File: Almond Bars

Makes 2 dozen or more bars, depending on size

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened | 1 cup granulated sugar |
| 1 egg | 1/2 teaspoon almond extract |
| 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour | 2 teaspoons baking powder |
| 1/4 teaspoon salt | 1 tablespoon milk |

1/2 cup sliced almonds

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar. Mix in the egg and flavoring. In a medium-sized bowl, mix together flour, baking powder, and salt. Combine the dry ingredients with the creamed mixture. Press the dough into the bottom of a well-greased 9×13-in. pan. Use moistened fingers to smooth the top of the dough. With a pastry brush, brush a little milk across the top of the dough. Sprinkle with sliced almonds. Lightly press the almonds in.

Bake 18–20 minutes or until beginning to brown around the edges. Do not let the bars brown. Cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Then cut into bars with a knife. If too soft to cut, cool longer. Carefully transfer the bars to a wire rack. Cool completely before icing.

ICING

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 cup powdered sugar | 1/4 teaspoon almond extract |
| 1 to 2 tablespoons milk | To make the icing: |
| Add a tiny bit of milk at a time to the powdered sugar. | |
| Add flavoring to the icing. | |

Tip: If too thick, the icing won't drizzle nicely over the bars. If too thin, the icing will melt into the bars. If unsure, test a bit of it on the edge of one bar before drizzling the icing over the entire batch.

When icing is firm, store Almond Bars in a covered container. Place wax paper between layers of cookies.

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast and the author of three books for grandparents: *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids*, *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*, and *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*, all available at amazon.com.





Clutter Happens

by Julie Pirtle

Summertime Wheels & WWF Mantras!



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 RVer, 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 her hair out, 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 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 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 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 the parking experiences have been flawless. Some might say it was because we had pull-through spots both times. I'd like to think 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, Facebook: clutterhappens or her website www.clutterhappens.com.

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Don't Forget to Renew Your Quilt Guild Membership!

By Janet M. Bair



In the swirl of summer activities, it's hard to even think of fall. But summer is often the time to renew your Quilt Guild membership. Our guild has a late fee, probably so members would contribute enough to be able to pay the dues for the meetings on time. Besides listening to interesting speakers and learning new skills, I have enjoyed our quilt guild's "Show and Tell" each month immensely. I love seeing what other members are making, looking at the colors they chose and I can appreciate all their hard work.

One of the many blessings of being part of a quilt guild has been the generosity and sharing from other guild members. There is a table at our meetings where members can put out fabric, lace, ribbon, yarn, patterns, and quilting magazines and books that they no longer need. As a newcomer to the quilting world, I have really appreciated the opportunity to pick up quilters' magazines and extra fabric. Most of what I sew goes to charity, so this has been a huge blessing.

I also sew a lot for my two granddaughters. Recently, my daughter was given seven 18 inch "American Girl style" dolls! Her two girls were thrilled. One of them asked for a doll sweatshirt but when I looked through all of my patterns, I didn't find one.

Sadly, I went to Joann Fabrics one last time before they closed to look through their patterns. This has been my favorite fabric and crafts store for fifty years. I found a doll sweatshirt pattern but it was \$24! I don't even like spending that much on a shirt for myself let alone for a doll.

To my amazement, when I went to my quilt guild meeting, someone had donated over fifteen brand new doll patterns the exact size I was looking for. Among the patterns was one for a doll sweatshirt. Proverbs 10:22 came to my mind: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

Besides the many fabric pieces, I have gained, I have made some very special friends over the past three years. If you ever had any doubts about joining a quilting group, don't hesitate any longer. The benefits and the inspiration from a group are well worth the membership fees.

- © Janet M. Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at librarybair@hotmail.com



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Chipotle Beef Tostadas
recipe by The Food Network

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
 - 1 pound ground beef chuck
 - 1 large white onion, minced
 - Kosher salt
 - 1 to 1 1/2 tsp chipotle chile powder
 - 1 - 10oz can Mexican-style diced tomatoes w/ green chiles
- 1 - 15oz can pinto beans, drained
 - 1 medium zucchini or yellow squash, diced
 - 2 cups coleslaw mix
 - juice of 1 lime, plus wedges
 - freshly ground pepper
 - 8 tostada shells
 - 1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef, half of the minced onion, 1 tsp salt and the chipotle chile powder. Cook, stirring and breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon, until the meat is browned and the onion is tender, about 7 minutes. Add the tomatoes, beans and zucchini and cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is just tender, about 6 minutes. Meanwhile, toss the coleslaw mix, lime juice and salt and pepper to taste. Divide the tostadas among plates and spoon the beef mixture on top. Top with the cheese, slaw and the remaining minced onion. Serve with lime wedges.

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Food and Photographs Worth a Thousand Words

by Kerri Habben Bosman

"Love that someone is there for it," the text reassures.

I am transported to a high school gym on an evening this past January as I sent my stepdaughter, Kira, photos of her daughter cheerleading. I had inundated her with images, so I said I hoped I wasn't being a pest. She answered, "Not at all! Love that someone is there for it!"

It was the last text I would ever receive from Kira. She wasn't at the game because she was in a cancer center three hours away. Her condition deteriorated suddenly, and a week later she passed away. As all the family and I sat with her those days, I quietly said to her that we would love her children as our own. She has three children, Kaylie (20), Emma (18), and Hunter (15).

In these months since Kira's death, we've continued being there for her family just as we did when she was with us. My husband, Wayne, and her husband, Vic, work on projects in their garages together and this spring we went to nearly all of Hunter's high school lacrosse games. His team won the State Championship in May. He will be his team's main goalie next year. And, he has a 4.0 grade point average! Not that we're proud of him or anything.

Often, Wayne and I pick up Hunter from school or after practice. We take him to and from his friends' houses and to see his girlfriend's soccer games.

When Hunter and I are sitting in the car, I silently pray. I ask that Kira's love for Hunter surround us. I ask that my own love for him be infused with hers, and that he will feel our combination of energies supporting him.

Because he is a teenager, he says little during our drives. But as we ride along, the quiet isn't awkward. It is just a comforting silence.

My mother taught me that food sometimes speaks louder than words. So, I cook Hunter's favorite meals and bake brownies and cookies for him to share with the lacrosse team. Sometimes he says something like "those meatballs were delicious," or "you make the best sandwiches." And I am filled with a happiness I cannot fully explain.

Throughout his lacrosse season this past spring, I shot photos at nearly every game using my zoom lens. Over the months I could see my own improvement at capturing the moments. I not only take photos of Hunter, I also take pictures of other players. After each game, I send the photos to Hunter, and he and his friends on the team enjoy them. By the end of lacrosse season, I was on the side of the field with the team photographer and the local newspaper reporter.

After one mid-season game, I told Hunter I'd found a good spot to take pictures. He answered, "I know. I saw you." From then on I never left the side of the field until the game was over. I wanted him to see me there supporting him, whether he had a shut-out or let in a few goals.

I know my role as a bonus grandmother; Hunter has his mother, who is always within him. He has his grandmother, who has been there his whole life and, then there is me in this unique space of loving him through his grandfather's and his mother's eyes. And through my own eyes, which sometimes fill up with tears when I know he isn't looking. They are not tears of grief, they are a tangible release of this not completely definable love that overflows within me. In those moments, I know that my car-ride prayers have been answered.

And that somehow, some way, Kira knows someone is there.





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SILENT SALUTE

by Barbara Kalkis

*They are not scarlet poppies fluttering in the breezes as of long ago.
But, determinedly, gently, they are planted row on row.
Nor do they fade as daybreak bows to dusk and twilight.
No, they keep solemn watch throughout the bleakest star-less night.*

*These sentinels stand for those who can no longer speak or share
Tales of sacrifice, fear, determination, dedication and care
To fight when country and duty called
In any land around the world.*

*Yes, in red, white and blue the flag of our birth proudly waves
Next to each name etched in the cold stone of a grave.
Stay a while and remember. Give thanks to this silent multitude
That cannot speak but earned the flag of honor and gratitude.*

Barbara Kalkis
©2025

Cowgirl Poet, Quilter, Entertainer

Yvonne Hollenbeck

Old Eagle Eye

He can tell if a heifer is starting to calve, I swear from a mile away,
and see if he needs to go pull the calf by just simply looking that way.

He can see if a windmill is working or not from his horse on a faraway hill,
and tell what direction the wind's coming from by watching the tail on the mill.

He knows if a coyote or badger is near by watching the tracks in the sand,
and see if a staple is loose from a post on the fence that encircles his land.

He's got eyes like an eagle for finding new calves their mamas have hidden all snug;
so why can't he see the mud on his boots that he's tracking all over my rug?

Order Yvonne's new book, "A Stitch in Rhyme" at
www.yvonnehollenbeck.com — just \$15 + \$3.50 postage.

© Yvonne Hollenbeck; 2025

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>



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28th Annual Black Canyon Quilt Show

July 11th, 12th & 13th • Montrose, CO

The 28th annual Black Canyon Quilt Show, will be held July 11th-13th, in Montrose Colorado. The show will feature approximately 150 quilts plus a variety of vendors selling quilt related products. One vendor is offering scissor while you visit the show, so bring your scissors and knives to be sharpened.

Guest teacher and quilt artist, Jean Impey, will teach classes on Friday and Saturday and present an entertaining lecture and trunk show which visitors will enjoy at 2 pm on Saturday afternoon. Lecture cost is \$15 at the door. In addition, there will be a boutique with handmade quilts and quilt related items for sale to benefit the youth organization, Art Partners.

Show visitors may want to participate in the raffle of the 93" x 93" "Aspiring Stars" quilt, pattern by Renee Haitt and Lynn Wheatley. The quilt was made by guild members and quilted by Patrick Whalen. The quilt drawing will be held at 3 pm, Sunday, July 13th. One need not be present to win.

The quilt show will be held at the Montrose Pavilion, 1800 Pavilion Drive, in Montrose, CO. Show hours are 9 am - 5 pm on Friday and Saturday, as well as 10 am to 3:30 pm on Sunday. Admission to the show is \$5.00.

To view the raffle quilt and purchase raffle tickets, visit the Black Canyon Quilt Show website: <https://blackcanyonquiltshow.com>. Class details, registration information and supply lists can be found under the Education tab on the website. Quilt appraisals will be available by appointment on Friday and Saturday. Details about appraisals can be found on the website under the BCQS Show tab.

How Do You Choose Fabric?

by Deb Heatherly

People have told me time and time again that choosing fabric is the hardest part of the process when making a quilt. When I owned my quilt shop, customers would tell us that they just did not know what would look good together, once the quilt was complete. Here are a few suggestions.

If you have a local shop, go in and let them help you. My employees had "a great eye" and loved helping customers put together stunning fabric combinations. Once you voice your preferences such as bright, muted, floral, novelty, etc., let them point you toward those fabrics and help you audition pieces that look great together.

Do you have a fabric in your stash that you've had forever because you absolutely love it, but have no clue what to use it for? Take that fabric with you to your local shop and ask them to help you pull companion fabrics that will make you smile. There's nothing like being surrounded with lots of options and many times the perfect combo might contain fabric you would never have purchased on your own. Be open to suggestions but remember you have the final say.

Kits are another great way to pick your next project. Many times, shops will have a sample hanging that catches your eye. They already have that fabric or something similar in a kit, so it's a win, win! You already know you are going to be happy once the quilt is finished because it will look similar to the one that was in the shop. Grab that kit and let the fun begin!

What about a scrappy project? To me using scraps is like visiting old friends. I love to reminisce about the quilts that each of the fabrics was used in. For a challenge, toss them in a bag and without peeking, vow to use each one in the order they were pulled. This can be a fun thing to do with a group of friends. You can even take turns pulling from each other's bags. Laughter and fun are sure to follow.

Finally, let the project go to the dogs, or in my case cats. When unsure of a fabric to begin, lay out several on the floor and let your dog or cat decide. Max loves this game and will quickly walk on them all and then pick one to lay on. When we play that game, I always take his 'advice' and begin selecting companions to go with his choice. It makes for some interesting quilts and you never know what will jump start your next masterpiece.

My last piece of advice is to just do it! Start sewing and see what evolves. Every quilt is a work of art and there is always someone who would love to snuggle under it, build forts with it, or use it on a teddy bear picnic. Get sewing and think of the possibilities.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, "Grids Girls," for tips and inspiration, and two free mysteries each year. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/7704296498004571>. Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>. Visit Deb's website at www.Debcatsquilts.com.





Over the Teacup

Summer Fun!

by Janet Young

It has been said, “The most precious jewels you’ll ever have around your neck are the arms of your children”. Most mothers would agree with that. Only now, you are in the middle of summer with a house full of one or more children, who are probably telling you daily how bored they are. What to do? Why not do some of your favorite activities with a twist.

For example, suppose they want to set up a lemonade stand. There are various ways you can get them involved. They set up the table, make signs, and why not let them help make home-made lemonade. This could be a challenge even for you, but together you can squeeze the lemons, add the sugar syrup and water, stir it up, and add the ice cubes. The twist, is in the making of real home-made lemonade.



Another project might be to go picking for strawberries. When you get home, you clean them up and make some strawberry shortcake with the help of the kids. There are lessons to be learned from this activity from beginning to end. First, they learn where strawberries come from, and then how to make shortcake from scratch.

In the evening you might want to get the fire pit going and tell scary stories (appropriate for the age of the child). Or, put up a sheet outdoors and have movie night. Stargazing is another fun thing to do. Watching the sunset or sunrise is a beautiful awareness of nature.

There should always be time set aside daily for reading. Perhaps you could set up a tent in the yard or inside where you can gather for reading, and to slow down and relax for a little while. A corner nook would also make a nice reading area filled with pillows, a soft blanket and books. Another approach would be to go to the park, and pick up trash. Or, write a letter to a resident of a retirement home.

For exercise try volleyball or pickleball since it is all the rage right now. Perhaps your child would like to hike on a trail, or ride their bike on the trail or at the park. How about a water balloon battle on a hot sunny afternoon? Another day have a picnic, or a tea party. Remember part of the fun is allowing the child to help prepare the menu.

The list goes on and on. You adjust the activity according to the interest or the age of the child. The thing to remember is the memories you are making together. It won’t be long before the neck-hugging will stop, and will be replaced by a quick kiss as they hurry off to play with their friends.

Remember summer is a time for fun and relaxation. These ideas are nothing new, and I know as a mother, how difficult it is to entertain your children all summer long. But if you focus on how you are impacting their lives, and on the memories, you are creating, take pause and everyday ask God to give you the strength to do this one more day. He will see you through.

Happy Summer!

© Janet Young is a Certified Tea and Etiquette Consultant, Co-Founder of Mid-Atlantic Tea Business Association, and prior owner of Over The Teacup

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Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

A Satisfying Summer

In Colorado we wait so long for summer to arrive in full that we tend to savor every minute of it. Not until Memorial Day do we feel the probability of another snow or frost is low enough that we can plant vegetables and flowers. Not until July can we bravely don tee-shirts and sandals and leave the house without a wrap.

Whatever keeps us distracted, concerned, confused, or fearful throughout the first half of the year seems to gratefully dim in the light of summer. Once she makes her appearance, she does so in a spectacular and satisfying way.

In summer my husband and I have extra time on our hands which we choose to spend outside walking, swimming, or gardening whenever we can. We’re actually getting tan through the sunblock this year! That’s summer.

After ten years in this house, we finally have our own charm (the group name) of hummingbirds. One morning I counted five at the feeder at once! I know for some of you that’s still a paltry few, but since sightings have been so rare for us it was exciting enough for me to put up an extra feeder. Each morning and evening I’m charmed by their antics. That’s summer.

Our flowers are outdoing themselves. The clematis and rose bush by our front walk are in full bloom, and the pots of annuals on the deck are performing profusely too. There’s just something almost sacred about going out barefooted early each morning to water your plants. That’s summer.

The farmers’ market brings us fresh green beans, peaches, and homegrown tomatoes, and my son’s vegetable garden provides us with a bountiful harvest, too. Grilling on the deck and adding fresh sides is such a treat. That’s summer.

We’re blessed to have two parks near us and the sound of children playing brings us joy. We hear the crack of the bat from pick up baseball games, get to pet all the dogs on their way to the dog park, and occasionally stop to watch someone fly a kite. That’s summer.

This year our summer is bookended by celebrations. We celebrated the high school graduation of one grandson in May and will celebrate the wedding of another in August—and we never take such celebrations for granted.

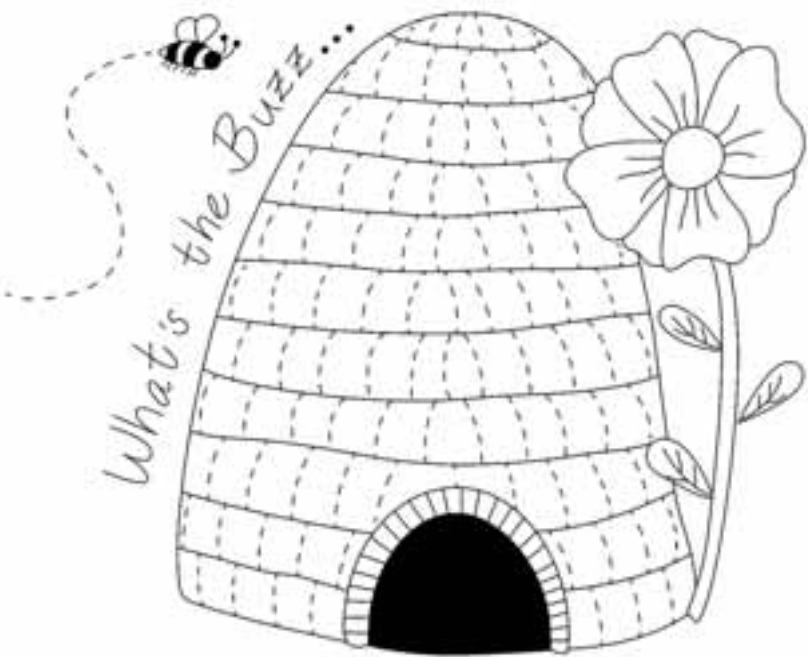
It’s not too late to embrace summer where you live! Set aside your worries and get outside so summer can speak to you. You’ll find her message both soothing and satisfying.

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.

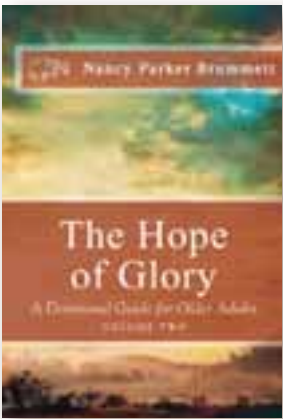


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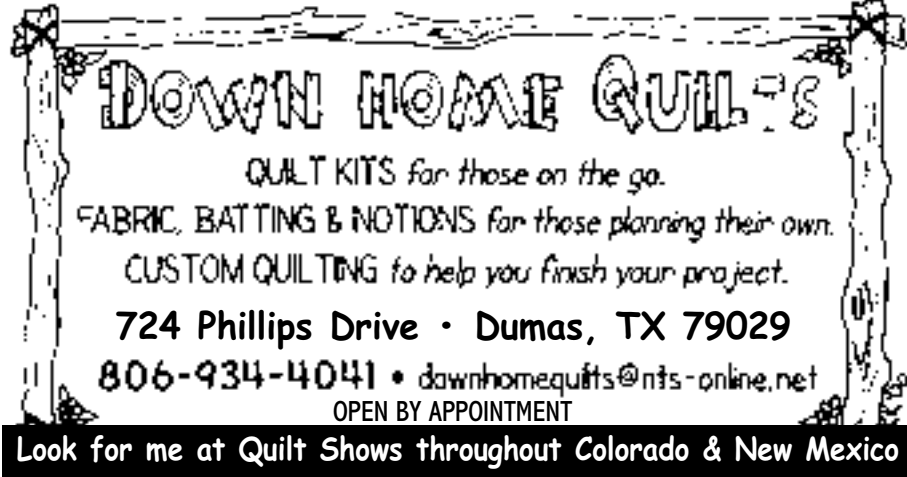


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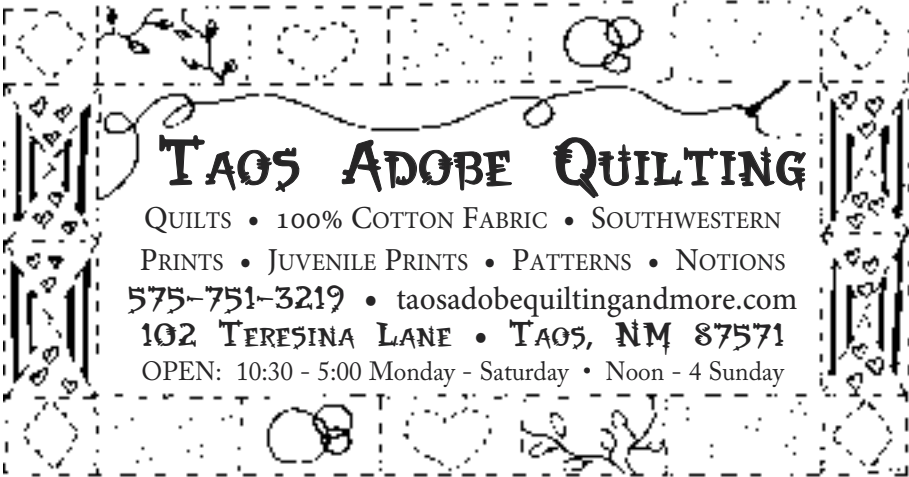
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Ten Things I Love About Summer

by Nancy J. Nash

- **Rare days.** The poet James Russell Lowell wrote: “What is so rare as a day in June? Then, if ever, come perfect days....” You wake up in the morning, and the sun is shining in a clear blue sky that holds a few puffy white clouds. You don’t need a sweater. The air is comfortably warm and dry, and life seems perfect. This is a rare June day, the month when summer officially makes its debut. Birdsong is everywhere.
- **Ice cream.** It’s the universal treat. I’m reminded of this as I sit in our local “homemade” ice cream shop. People stand in line to choose all sorts of flavors, from black raspberry to mocha moo. It doesn’t matter if you are young or old, or what your ethnicity or walk of life. Is there a person anywhere who doesn’t like ice cream?
- **Outdoor eating.** Whether it’s a juicy burger or fresh potato chips or a slice of sweet watermelon, food seems to taste better outdoors!
- **Trees.** The light green leaves of May have given way to the darker greens of June. Somehow, I think of the trees in our yard as grand and gentle guardians of us humans. They are there, quiet and sturdy, as we come and go in our busyness.
- **Deer grazing in a meadow.** Recently I spotted a doe with a fawn in the back pasture. The fawn was so tiny that it fit under the doe and craned its neck, evidently seeking to nurse. Then it walked and pranced and followed its mother. A week later, I saw them again. As the doe leapt gracefully across the pasture, the little one followed like a streak of lightning. Deer are among the loveliest of animals, are they not?
- **Fireflies.** The pasture behind our house is a showcase for these bioluminescent insects at the start of summer. At first their briefly flashing pinpoints of light appear chaotic, but then they seem to form patterns, as if an invisible conductor is orchestrating musical notes made visible in the darkening night. Who doesn’t find them fascinating?
- **Fireworks.** You know there are fireworks nearby when you hear a loud boom and see a flash of light above the horizon. The skyline on evenings around the Fourth of July is filled with sparkling kaleidoscopes of colors. Fireworks never cease to amaze me as they shimmer against the night sky before dropping from view.
- **Porch breezes.** Whether you’re repotting a plant on the back porch or watching the world go by from the front porch, gentle breezes are welcome friends. Have you ever noticed how even a warm August breeze can be soothing to the soul?
- **Flowers.** The variety of colors, sizes, and shapes delight us. Do we ever tire of looking at them? My favorites include Queen Anne’s lace, pansies, verbena, and Sweet William. Simple or intricate, bright or muted, natural or elegant, they invite us to abandon our cares.
- **Katyids and crickets.** They begin to sing in August, reminding us that the season is beginning to wind down. Take time to savor summer’s lingering sounds!



On this day in History

- July 1, 1963:** The United States Postal Service introduces the Zone Improvement Plan as part of a plan to improve the speed of mail delivery, inaugurating the use of machine-readable ZIP codes to facilitate the efficient sorting of mail at a national level. In 1943, the Post Office had created numbered zones for more than 100 urban areas around the country. But in the post-WWII boom, that system quickly became inadequate. Between 1943 and 1962, annual mail volume doubled from 33 billion to 66.5 billion pieces, and the average mailed letter passed through an average of 17 sorting stops. Suburbs were sprouting exponentially, and mail transport was shifting from railway to highway and air, making old urban hub systems obsolete.
- August 10, 1939:** The Wizard of Oz, starring Judy Garland has its world premiere in Green Bay, Wisconsin. It would open widely in U.S. theaters some two weeks later.

Information found on www.history.com

Kissed Quilts

by Marlene Oddie

Fireworks on Display

It is that time of year when we celebrate our nation’s independence, often with fireworks! Can you believe next year is 250 years? Many years ago I enjoyed seeing the fireworks on the Mall in Washington D.C. What are you doing to prepare for the celebrations? I’ve got a quilt that might inspire you!

The Island Batik division of Lumin Fabrics has produced a patriotic batik collection called Jubilee that I thought was just perfect to make into a quilt that some how represented Fireworks.

With these fabrics, I created stratas—a collection of strips sewn together like layers. Next step is to cut triangles from the strata which yields two versions of triangles. Use each, paired with a single fabric to get squares. Join four of the same squares to get two different 4-patch blocks and alternate them in the quilt. This is a quick way to show off these fabulous Jubilee fabrics. I imagined the night sky and fireworks exploding in the air.

This quilt design I’m calling Fireworks Display. Ask at your local quilt shop that carries Island Batik fabrics for these fabrics and pattern. You can also find this pattern and some fabrics while supplies last here at KISSed Quilts.



2025 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. 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 nancy-nash341@gmail.com



Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene’s adventures via <http://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>




GIRLFRIEND WISDOM

I LOVE

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Trends are spread by people! One by one, either creating a product that emulates a design or even a phrase. Remember, "Where's the Beef?", or noticing a style of jeans that you decided looked great so you purchased them, then your friends liked them too, and the **trend** was growing. Right now, if you notice, Highland Cows are everywhere! Folks are purchasing the actual cows, and images of the cute - long hair creatures are everywhere. They are a current trend!

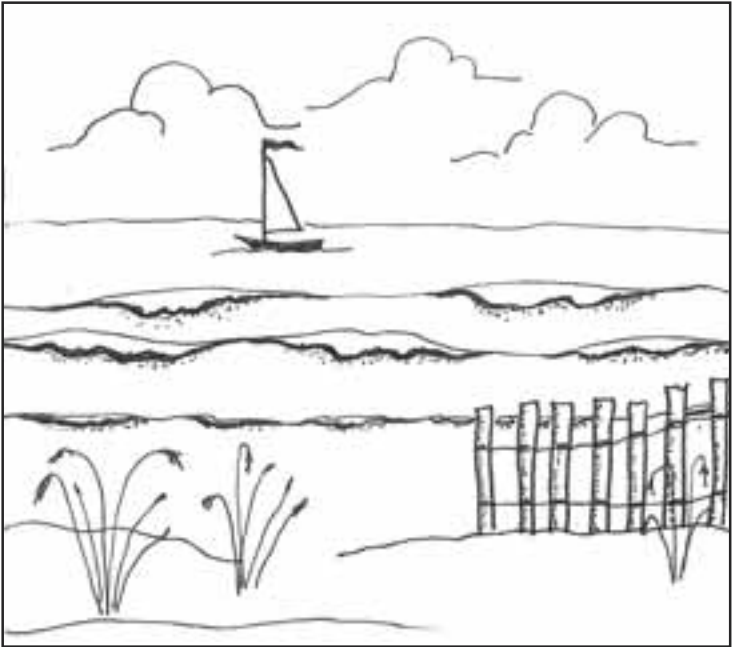
GIRLFRIEND WISDOM:

Let's start a Trend of Kindness! All it takes is a moment to be nice, to smile at a person as you stand in line, or pass them by on the street. Nod your head as you make eye contact with a stranger. Kindness is contagious, we can make it a Trend! Have fun!

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

Countryberries Designs Peaceful Shore



This pattern is free for you to use. Please give the artist credit. Not for commercial use. Enlarge this pattern to your desired size. This pattern was designed for a watercolor painting but could also be used with other paints, pastels or even embroidered. Have fun!

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Exploring the World of International Quilt Festivals: A Global Journey of Inspiration

Part 3 of 4

by Kim Caskey of Kim Caskey Tours

The Festival of Quilts in Birmingham, UK, is the largest quilt festival in the UK and truly one of the highlights of the quilting calendar. Although held in a convention centre, it is renowned for its unique "vignette" atmosphere and extensive array of exhibits. This festival draws thousands of quilters, textile artists and enthusiasts from all over Europe and beyond. With hundreds of quilts on display, the festival showcases a breathtaking variety of styles and techniques, from traditional piecing and applique to avant-garde art quilts and experimental textile designs. The competition categories span everything from novice to professional levels, offering attendees a chance to admire the work of both emerging and established artists. It is easy to see why this is one of my favorite events, as it embodies the diversity, creativity and excitement of the quilting world.



Knitting & Stitching Show

The vendor mall at the Festival of Quilts has a welcoming, open layout winding throughout the exhibition hall rather than in a rigid row-by-row setup. This inviting arrangement encourages exploration, making it easy for attendees to wander from one vendor to the next while discovering an incredible variety of fabrics, tools and quilting supplies. The international vendors bring unique products, from specialty textiles to innovative quilting tools, giving visitors access to materials often hard to find elsewhere. This thoughtful layout fosters a sense of community and discovery, adding to the friendly, vibrant atmosphere that makes the Festival of Quilts such a beloved event.

Additionally, the event features a full schedule of workshops, lectures and demonstrations led by industry experts, allowing quilters to learn new skills and connect with others who share their passion. The sense of community, the quality of exhibits and the chance to engage with quilters from all over make the Festival of Quilts an unforgettable experience every year.

The Knitting & Stitching Show™, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, UK, is a series

of annual events held across the UK, celebrating all things related to textiles, knitting and stitching. These shows have become a staple for quilt, textile and craft enthusiasts, offering a rich blend of exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations. They attract makers of all skill levels—from knitting and crochet to quilters, embroiderers and textile artists—



Knitting & Stitching Show

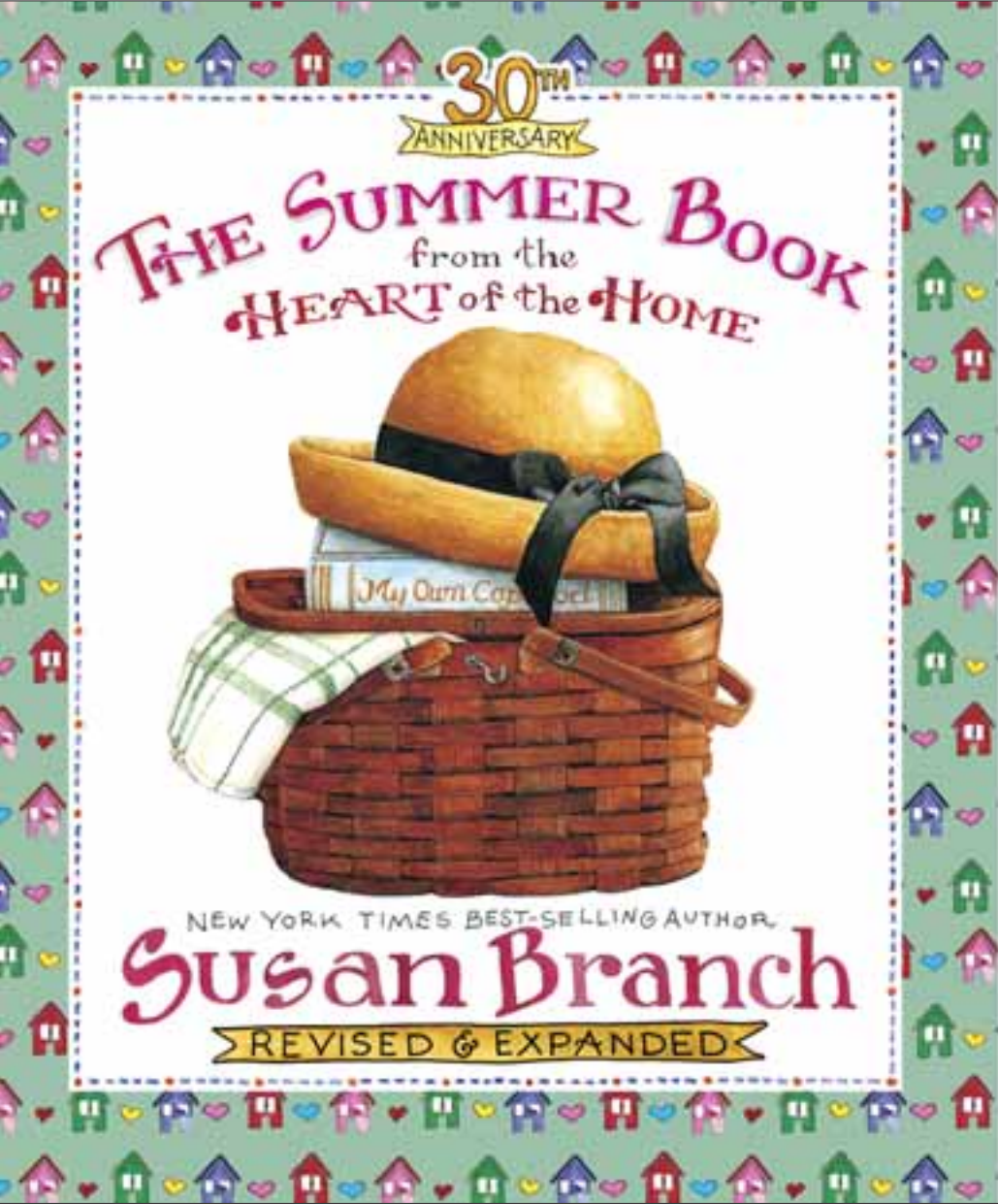
providing a welcoming space to explore new techniques, discover innovative materials and gain inspiration. The shows feature a wide array of exhibitors, including yarn and fabric suppliers, tool vendors and artisan craftspeople, offering unique products which cannot always be found in local shops.

The largest of these events takes place in the beautiful spa town of Harrogate and offers an expansive exhibition hall filled with creative showcases, including contemporary textile art, historical needlework displays and interactive installations. In addition to the stunning exhibitions, the event features a full schedule of hands-on workshops and talks, led by industry experts. Of course, the atmosphere is one of creativity and collaboration, with attendees eagerly exploring the latest trends, meeting fellow crafters and learning new skills. The competitions at this event are often open, encouraging a broad range of entries which blend quilting with other textile techniques, such as embroidery and knitting. This creates a dynamic showcase of interdisciplinary creativity.

We'll cover *Pour l'Amour du Fil* and *The European Patchwork Meeting*, both held in France, as well as the *Japanese Quilt Festival* in Japan in the next issue of *The Country Register*!

Kim Caskey, who is based in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, is a professional longarm quilter and owner of Kim Caskey Tours. Kim hosts specialized textile-based tours in numerous international destinations with unique and exclusive textile visits and activities creating memorable experiences for quilters, stitchers, their family and friends. Everyone is welcome on Kim's tours! www.kimcaskey.ca/tours, kim@kimcaskey.ca, 1-780-288-9008.





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Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

Public Opinion

A number of months ago, an online quilter presented viewers with an interesting cheer of encouragement: "If you have ever considered entering your work into a quilt show," she said, "do it!"

I don't know if those were her exact words, or if they merely represent the way my brain retained the message. What I do know is that her words hit their mark! Yep, this is the year I am jumping off the couch. I'm sharing my unprofessional quilting abilities with the public in very intentional ways—eek!

First up: a contest with what I think of as a local quilt store. I didn't pursue this competition with the goal of winning. Rather, I really just wanted to see if my work would be good enough to be accepted into their collection of pieces to be displayed at quilt shows for the year. For the woman who doesn't have the courage to share finished projects with her local quilt guild, this is a huge leap! I blame (or credit) this year's fabric colors and theme of the contest, as they intrigued me. After the required fabrics and thread arrived, I pulled out a sketch pad and plumbed the depths of my creativity. It took longer than I expected to complete the small (20" square) project—partly because I was hesitant to begin, and partly because the techniques I experimented with were new to me—but I was able to submit my application fee and submission photographs a week before the deadline. (The verdict will come sometime this month.)

The second leap: I submitted a larger (approximately 80" square) quilt project to the county fair for the town in which I now live. I had purchased the fabric for this project in December 2023, and finished binding the quilt before I moved in March 2025. Inspired by the quilt shop's owner, this project is built around a theme presented by a fabric designer. The unconventional designs embodied in the fabrics might be the exact thing which peaks the interest of younger people, and I'm totally in support of drawing new quilters into the ranks! (If my first, small project isn't accepted by the quilt store's contest, I'm thinking I will add it to the county fair's summer exhibit.)

My dear friend is a phenomenal quilter, and shares her work all of the time. She shares at monthly guild meetings on a regular basis, and has been awarded a number of blue ribbons on projects she has submitted to her county fair (too many for me to count anymore). Does she question her ability as much as I question mine? Or, is she just motivated to share because we both agree that the world needs a bit more beauty?

Although I'm nervous to hear what people think about my projects, I will admit that the "anonymity" of these two venues gave me a bit more confidence to "just submit!" as the online quilter encouraged viewers. I'm nervous, but exhilarated!



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