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Since then the paper has flourished and spread. Look for the paper in your travels.

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# What Rhymes with Gratitude?

by Becky Van Vleet

We started a Thanksgiving tradition in our home more than forty years ago for each person around the table to share something they were thankful for. In more recent years, I have asked our grandchildren what they are thankful for at other random times, not just a national holiday. It does my heart good when I hear the Grands say they are thankful for dress-up clothes, dinosaurs, pets, and books. Smile!



What rhymes with Gratitude? Attitude!

Tecumseh, a Shawnee Indian chief, stated, “When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself.” Pretty strong words here, right? I believe he’s saying attitude is part of gratitude.

Cultivating an attitude of gratefulness is one of the best ways to remind ourselves of all the good around us. We foster a heart of gratitude when we count our blessings for what we already have. I’ve noticed the more I choose contentment, the easier it gets. When I exercise an appreciative attitude, my gratitude muscles respond.

When I was a young girl, my father was the song leader at our church. One of my favorite hymns he led our congregation in was “Count Your Blessings.”

*When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.* (Lyrics by Johnson Oatman)

In our home, it was not at all unusual for our mother to say to all of us, “Count your blessings.”

With the Thanksgiving and Christmas season upon us, and in our materialistic culture, I hope we can all look around at our blessings and cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

What are you thankful for?

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](http://www.beckylvanvleet.com).



# SIMPLY CHRISTMAS

By Roxanne J. Ferguson

IF I lived in a place away from the throng  
With Christmas not celebrated, not even in song...  
With no stores to shop in, no gifts to wrap,  
No cards to send, with no friends to chat...  
If I had no tree to decorate  
Or Christmas cookies I had to bake...  
If I had no choir in which to sing,  
If I had no last minute anything...  
What would I do to celebrate the day  
When our Savior was born and laid in the hay?  
The quiet around me, I’d think about Him,  
The Babe born long ago in Bethlehem.  
In the still of the night, the only sound I’d hear  
Would be the angel choir of yesteryear.  
My surroundings so plain, no gift would I bring,  
But only my heart to the newborn King.  
My fellowship would be with the Lord alone.  
I’d worship Him in this humble home.  
I think I would find in this simple way,  
The most joyous, wonderful Christmas Day.





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This Santa has so many possibilities! He was designed to be a wool applique pillow top with bells or buttons but could also be a table mat or wall hanging. He could be a punch-needle or hooked rug piece. If you're a painter, create Santa on paper, wood or canvas. He'd make a cute note card.

Enlarge this pattern to your desired size.

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Designed by Kathy Graham

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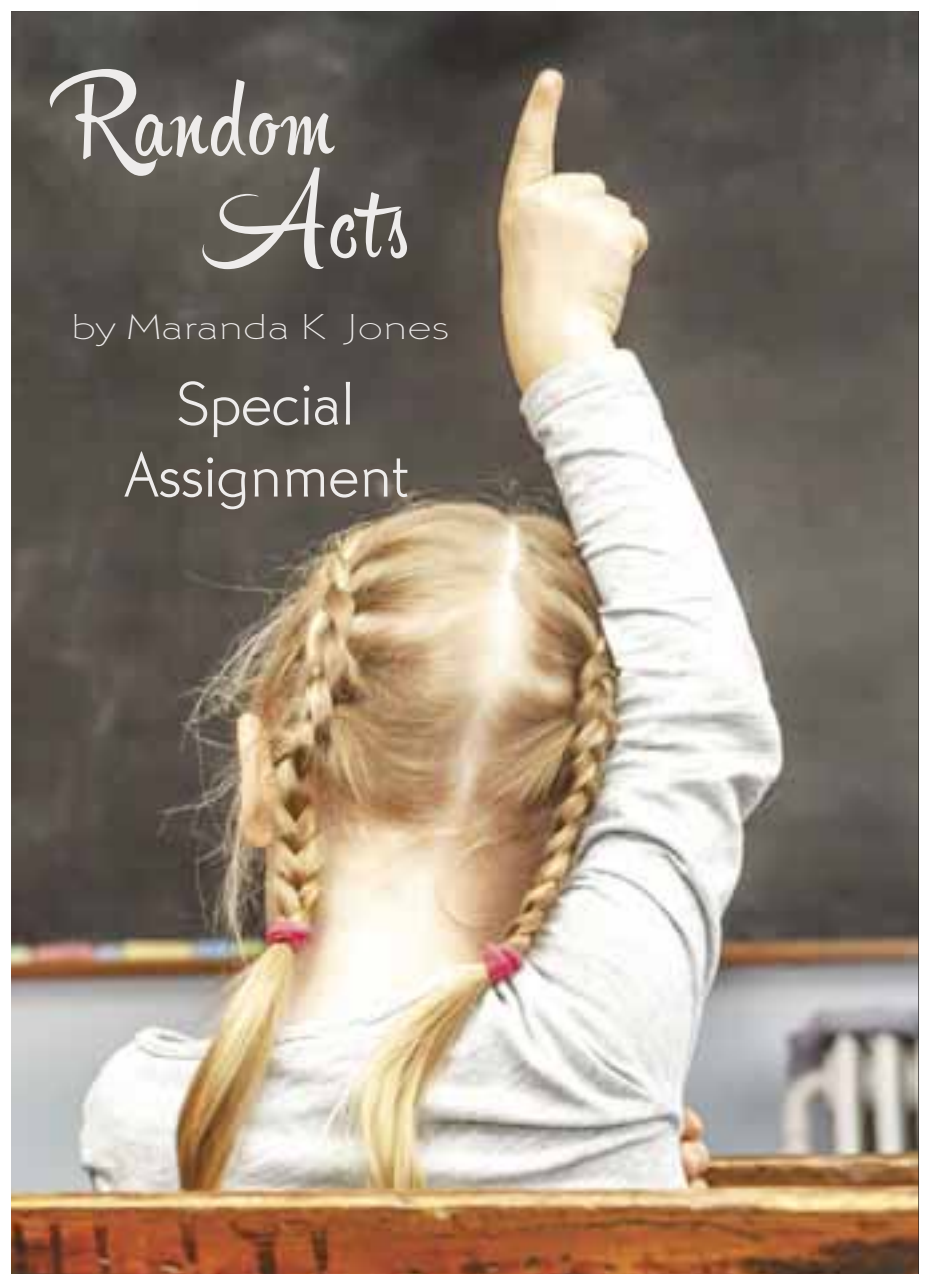
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## Random Acts

by Maranda K Jones

### Special Assignment

Today I asked my first grade class to think of a special place. Quiet moments filled the room before they raised their hands to share. They sat and pondered their favorites with smiles on every face. They happily listed locations they had considered with great care.

Their ideas filled the board as I wrote their thoughts out loud. Some said their homes, some said school, and others specified states. Each person's point of view made someone else think "Wow! I'd like to spend some time there too. I can definitely relate."

Now the first graders may not have said those exact words... But the sentiment was sincere.

"Hey! Me too!" is what I actually heard, And the conversations took off from here.

Each child had a reason as to why they chose that place. What makes it so special? Is it the 'who'? The 'what'? The 'where'? Each child had an idea of how to state their case. They shared stories of swimming pools, Grandma's house, and their favorite chair.

The kids talked about camping and about playing with cousins. Some chose the mountains, and some chose the beach. One chose our classroom where we read books by the dozens. One selected space because it's just so far from reach.

We listened and smiled at the special places brought to mind. I listened and smiled at the young children being so kind. We did not get the writing done but we discovered common ground. It feels like this assignment itself is a special place to be found.

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# Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski



## Finishing the Work

This past calendar year, I have taken on a number of projects which were started by a stranger. The first was a plastic baggie full of quilt blocks, accompanied by a computer print-out of a patchwork quilt throw, two smaller shapes of quilt fabric, six 10" squares of solid fabrics, and one 5" square cardboard template with notations on how to cut more of the smaller shapes.

I had selected the plastic baggie from a counter of fabric "donations" displayed at my local quilt guild's January meeting. I didn't find the courage to tackle the contents within the plastic baggie until May; I didn't actually finish it, though, until August.

If you are feeling a bit of déjà vu, thinking, Jeanette, I've heard about this project before, you could be right. I spent a good eight or nine months of my life obsessing over it, because I was scared of it.

Scared of fabric? Yes.

I haven't had too many opportunities, up to that point, to tackle someone else's unfinished projects. I approached this one with fear of doing a disservice to the original owner of the fabric. What did the original quilter have in mind when starting this project? What would it have been used for? (What happened, that it ended up for donation to the quilt guild members?) So yes, scared of fabric because I wanted to honor the intent of the original owner of the baggie.

Finishing the project (which is now stored in the trunk of my car, for random summer picnics I hope to use it for) has actually inspired me to tackle other such orphaned quilt blocks I have acquired from strangers. For instance, the set of 5 nearly-matched 8" quilt blocks have morphed into an autumn table runner with two placemats; the 12" red-and-green block grew into a 19" holiday table square which I mailed to a friend; the other four 8" and 9" random blocks are still waiting for inspiration.

Those accomplishments gave me the confidence, then, to take on the greatest challenge to date: my mother mentioned how a friend of hers had sorted through a fresh donation of fabric to the church. Another quilter had passed, I guess, and the "stash" was donated. The donation had been sorted for acceptability by the lead church quilter—and "a box" was designated for the trash. "No, no, no!!" I practically screamed into the phone with my mother. "No fabric should be thrown into the trash! It should be thrown my way, instead."

Was it a joke, when I initially stated those words to my mother?

A number of days later, my mother said, "That box of fabric is here for you, the next time you come." Yep, she had told her friend about my reaction—so when an apologetic custodian met the lead quilter at church the next time, with an "I'm sorry I forgot to get that box out," he was forgiven. And I gained new projects!

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



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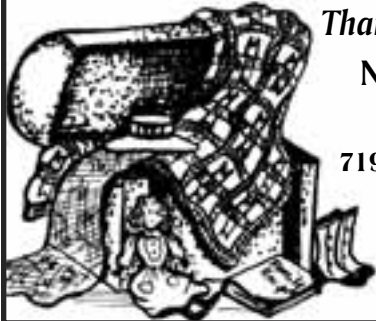
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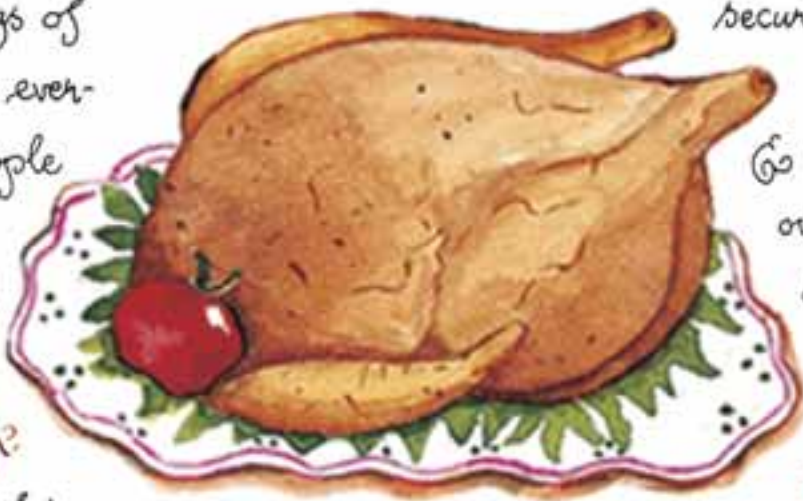
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# Oh, No!-Vember!

by Barbara Kalkis

When warned of Romeo because he was from a rival family, Shakespeare’s Juliet replied, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet.”

Sadly, as we all know, that perky view didn’t turn out well for Juliet—or Romeo—and somehow, it doesn’t work for November either. Maybe it’s because the month’s name begins with the word “No.” It’s hard to get to a rousing “Yes!” from there.

It just seems that November arrives like a mourning dove late to the bird feeder when only scattered crumbs remain. All the vivacious reds and oranges, yellows and golds of October have faded. Pumpkins and corn stalks have been escorted to the dumpster or sit forlornly in a corner sagging with age. Jolly, spooky, funny Halloween decorations are packed and stuffed in the garage under Valentine’s Day decorations, awaiting another year. Face it—no one even uses the word “cheer” or “merry” until December.

Poor November wasn’t even assigned 31 days like its two neighbors. It’s as if the ancient wise men determining months didn’t want it to stretch out any longer than necessary. Days are shorter. Nights are longer. Jack Frost arrives with determined icy winds and bloated clouds the color of slated roofs and the cold that seeps into every nook and cranny. I ask you, is this how staring at the ceiling became a valid past-time?

Is that all there is to November? No!

When my niece was born in November, I started examining the month for all its other gifts, besides her beautiful presence. And so...

November begins with the remembrance of those loved and lost. Election day celebrates our democracy and our duty to protect our freedom. Veterans’ Day brings a different kind of remembrance about the price of war, of those gone and those who still serve with dedication. Thanksgiving warms us as we gather in home—or heart—with the cheerful noise of togetherness. November is hellos and goodbyes and I-remembers. It reminds us that the year—for all its ups and downs – has been a gift with all its celebrations—birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, the first and last days of school, vacations and gatherings with friends.

This, then, is what makes November special. It’s not about struggling over our list of Christmas presents. It’s not about the frantic search for a perfect tree and poinsettias. It’s not about decorating the house with all the strings of lights we hauled out of the store during last year’s after-holiday sale. It’s about remembering and cherishing what we have.

Psychologists and other experts tell us that the best way to reflect, meditate or relieve daily stress is to sit alone in a quiet space and let our thoughts drift by like a gentle breeze or a leaf floating in a lolling brook. That breeze may feel like a hurricane wind and the leaf may disappear in a torrent, but at some point we understand November’s true purpose. We can take a break, pause and shelter-in from our hectic daily schedules. We can be peaceful and thankful, then get up and reach out and warm each other. November allows us to prepare ourselves for December’s hectic pace and the anticipation of a new year.

I understand Juliet’s logical view that people and flowers are the same regardless of their name. But I think she was wrong. November, with its word “No,” is perfectly placed in the calendar. Its tranquil gifts of peace and remembrance make November’s personality one-of-a-kind.

©Barbara Kalkis is an educator, consultant and author of *Little Ditties for Every Day...*  
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And finally - Find a **Place of Solitude** to contemplate dust particles in a ray of sunshine coming through a window!  
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Jody & Blessings,

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.  
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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

**Sage Pork Chops with Apple Cider Pan Gravy**

From Colleen Gust, publisher of  
*The Country Register of Manitoba/Saskatchewan*

The sauce on this is delicious, plus it's easy to prepare. It also cooks up quickly, which is vital if you're trying to get supper on the table on a weeknight!

4 pork loin chops	1/2 tsp salt
1/4 pepper	3 Tbsp dried sage leaves
1/4 cup flour	2 Tbsp butter
2 Tbsp vegetable oil	1/2 cup chicken stock
1/2 cup apple cider or juice	1/4 cup whipping cream

Sprinkle the pork with the salt and pepper and rub in the sage. Dip in the flour to lightly coat.

In a large skillet, heat the butter and oil over medium heat. Brown the pork on both sides. Remove from the pan.

Add the chicken stock and apple cider to the skillet. Bring to a boil, and stir to loosen the browned bits from the pan. Add the cream. Cook and stir until thickened. Reduce the heat to medium. Add the pork. Cook covered until the pork reaches at least 145° for approximately 5-7 minutes.





# Sweet & Savory Memories

by Judy Sharer

Pies. There are all kinds of pies: fruit, cream, custard, impossible, mountain, cheese, pizza, pot, Shepherd, and that's probably only the beginning. Growing up, I practically lived at my Aunt Thelma's house. She taught me all I know about making pie including some unusual ways to make crusts; ways we haven't had to use since WWII times. During those days, when supplies were not readily available, you used what you had and made do.

Here are some of Aunt Thelma's tips that I learned over the years:

Sweeteners like honey, corn syrup, brown sugar, molasses or sorghum can be used in place of sugar to sweeten fruit and cream pies. Light honey and corn syrup are the mildest sweeteners. Aunt Thelma would substitute brown and maple sugar for white sugar using equal amounts, one cup for one cup. Replacing white sugar with brown or honey beat with egg whites makes a yummy meringue.

I remember one time when I was in a hurry, I didn't incorporate the sugar into the fruit and just sprinkled it on top. The pie crust was disappointingly soggy, but we ate it and I never made that mistake again.

Aunt Thelma would add bacon grease or rendered fats from a chicken (schmaltz) to stretch the vegetable shortening or lard she used in her crusts. In hard times she would add a crumb topping made with oatmeal or cornflakes, a little fat, and a sweetener instead of a second crust.

She taught me to chill the ingredients, including the water. Here's one of her handy tricks: freeze the butter and coarsely grate it into the ingredients; and to beware of heating the pastry by too much handling. The sudden temperature change of a chilled pie placed into the hot oven makes for a light and flaky crust.

To keep things cold, Aunt Thelma would roll out the crust on a marble slab and use a chilled, glass, rolling pin. Many times, I wish I had that rolling pin and my aunt's baking dishes. Perhaps you have a family member or friend who taught you some baking or cooking skills. It's not too late to pass that knowledge on to someone, to share a recipe, or invite them over to bake or cook with you. While my Aunt Thelma is no longer with me, I still use many of her tips.



It is my pleasure to pass them along.

Pies! I love them all! Do you? Do you have a favorite?

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

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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Sour Cream Plum Kuchen

From Colleen Gust, publisher of  
The Country Register of Manitoba/Saskatchewan

Kuchen means "cake" in German. This recipe is a personal favorite of mine as I'm a massive fan of anything with plums. Plus, it uses up some of my apple jelly stash. I think I have enough made to last until we retire!

1 lb. of plums	2 Tbsp packed brown sugar
1/2 tsp cinnamon	1/2 cup butter softened
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar	3 eggs
1 Tbsp grated orange or lemon zest	
1 tsp vanilla	
2 1/4 cups flour	
1 1/2 tsp baking powder	
1/2 tsp baking soda	
1/4 tsp salt	
1 1/2 cup sour cream	
1/3 cup vegetable oil	
3/4 cup apple jelly	

Grease and flour a 10-inch (3 L) springform pan; set aside.  
Pit plums and cut into 1/4-inch thick slices. In bowl, toss together plums, brown sugar and cinnamon; set aside.  
In a large bowl, beat butter with granulated sugar until fluffy. Beat in eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in orange/lemon rind and vanilla. In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In small bowl, stir sour cream with oil. Stir flour mixture into butter mixture alternately with sour cream mixture, making 3 additions of dry ingredients and 2 of wet ingredients. Scrape into prepared pan; smooth top.  
Arrange plums in concentric circles on top, leaving about 1/2 between circles. Bake in a 350° oven until cake tester inserted in the centre comes out clean, about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Let cool in pan on rack for 10 minutes. Remove side of the springform pan.  
Transfer cake to serving plate. In small saucepan or microwaveable dish, melt apple jelly, and brush over top of cake.  
Serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

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# Christmas Blessings

by Tammy Page

The birth of our Lord and Savior is the best Christmas blessing there ever was. I have no doubt that without my faith I would not have anything else in my life. I try to give thanks daily for the many gifts he has given me and be appreciative of my own blessings.

This year will be even more special to our family because the day after Christmas last year, we welcomed our twin grandsons into our world. They were seven weeks pre-mature and we're very lucky they were born with very few problems. They were in the NICU for only two weeks—until they could breathe on their own and start to gain weight. Children and grandchildren are such a precious commodity and as the Christmas season gets nearer, I consider them one of the best gifts I could ever receive.

Families spend hundreds and thousands of dollars to show their children how much they love them, but this past month, since my husband has been diagnosed with colon cancer, the gifts to present to my family have become less important. Not only to me, but to them as well. We've all hugged more, called more and visited each other more. These have become more important than any expensive gift we could give. The prayers and thoughts have been abundant surrounding our family and those gifts can only come from the Lord and the love we have for each other.

I always saved money and put it in a Christmas Club account all year round. I worried and fussed about getting the perfect gift for each family member and friend. At times, I've been frantic worrying if I bought just the right gift, and would it be enough? In the past I planned, watched sales, had family give me suggestions but this year, my priorities have changed and my beliefs have made a turn-around. People have said when you experience a life-changing event, your priorities change and you take a long look at your life and what changes should be made. I have recently experienced this and want to make a change for the holiday season. I no longer want to stress about what I'm buying for my loved ones. I have a peace now that they are okay with the gift I select and that it's okay for me to adjust my gift-giving thoughts and actions.

You see, my husband of 45 years has just been diagnosed with colon cancer. He will soon have surgery to remove 12 inches of his colon in hopes that all of the cancer will be removed. We live each day at a time and thank the Lord for each moment we get to spend with our loved ones.

Just last weekend we were able to see our children, their spouses, and all seven of our grandchildren. We were able to hug and kiss each one and fill our hearts with more love and affection. They have been pitching in and helping with our farm chores, our yard work, calling daily, bringing food, and lots and lots of prayers. I now feel loving relationships are the best gifts we can give each other. Letting each other know we are thinking of them often. Calling those we normally would just send a text here and there and just planning a visit to catch up.

I know gas prices are very high right now, but I am willing to forgo other things in exchange for gas in my tank to drive to see a special friend or family member. I'm willing to give up the stress and worry about getting the perfect gift for Christmas, I'm willing to forgo "me time" for those that need a drop-in visit or a card in the mail.

As the holidays get closer, I'm looking forward to this new part of my life, this new attitude and to the many blessings I'll receive because of it.



Tammy lives on a working farm with her family in Indiana, farm animals and many pets. She enjoys writing, decorating and collecting vintage homewares.



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# Congratulations Book Winner!



The lucky winner of Lydia's book, *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids!* is Irene Thompson of La Junta, CO.

# Gingerbread Mug Cake

### Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tsp molasses
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1/4 cup milk
- 5 tbsp flour
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- pinch nutmeg
- pinch salt
- whip cream
- Christmas sprinkles

### Directions:

1. Microwave butter on high for 30 seconds or until melted.
2. Add molasses, milk and sugar.
3. Whisk together until evenly combined.
4. In a separate bowl add whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ground ginger, nutmeg and salt.
5. Add the dry ingredients into the mug gradually mixing in between each addition.
6. Microwave on high for 1 minute and 15 seconds.
7. If the top of the mug cake is still wet, microwave for 10 more seconds.
8. Top with whip cream and sprinkles!



Recipe by Nibble and Dine





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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

German Apple Cake

From Colleen Gust, publisher of  
The Country Register of Manitoba/Saskatchewan



We have two apple trees in our yard, and I always try to utilize our harvest. I had to try this recipe as it looked quite pretty with the hasselback (sliced not quite all the way through, in thin even layers) cut apples. Our garden apples are a bit smaller than McIntoshs, so I prep a couple of additional apples.

- 5 small McIntosh apples peeled, quartered and cored
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice freshly squeezed
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ cup milk
- ¼ cup butter melted and cooled slightly
- 1 ¼ cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¼ cup icing sugar for garnish



Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare a 9" fluted pan with removable bottom or a spring form pan by greasing the bottom and sides very well. Place the prepared pan on a baking sheet.  
Prepare the apples. Peel, quarter and slice off the core portion of each apple (you should have 20 quartered pieces). To cut the apples hasselback style, with a sharp knife slice the tops of each piece 6 times, close together, without cutting right through. Place the apples in a medium-sized bowl and toss with lemon juice and cinnamon. Set aside.  
In your mixing bowl combine eggs, sugar and vanilla on medium low speed. Add milk and melted butter and stir again until well combined. Add flour and baking powder to wet ingredients slowly until all the flour has been absorbed and the batter is smooth. Batter will be thick.  
Spread batter into the prepared pan smoothing it evenly. Arrange apples on top of batter with the scored sides up leaving at least a ½" or 1" border around the outside edge of the pan so the apples are not touching the edge of the pan. Press the apples down lightly.  
Bake for approximately 45 minutes until the cake is lightly golden-brown. Cool cake in the pan on a rack for 30 minutes then transfer cake from the pan to a platter. Sprinkle cake with icing sugar.

Become Inspired!

by Annice Bradley Rockwell

In the month of November, the leaves on the trees have lost their luster and the days are some of the shortest of our year. As the vibrant colors fade, there is a cold snap in the air signaling a clear seasonal shift. As our landscape changes right before our eyes, we are naturally drawn indoors where the glow of candlelight paired with a crackling fire in our fireplace happily warms us and welcomes us home. We are entering into a spectacular season of anticipation where we begin to plan for festivities intended to share joy.

JOYFUL INTENTION

Often associated with being fast-paced and frenzied, the holiday season can actually be a time of quiet creating and planning when we plan with caring intention. Designing a perfect family dinner that honors time-tested family recipes can be a soulful experience bringing up wonderful memories of childhood joy. Taking the time to recreate and share that magic with those you love is one of the most worthwhile endeavors. While the meal simmers on the stove and all of the finishing touches come together, we tend to become grateful for having the opportunity to bask in the comfort of family.

SACRED TRADITIONS

Our efforts to create holiday magic are seen in our homes as well. Our sacred traditions to highlight the splendor of the season are a special gift to share with family. Whether we are spending an evening together making festive evergreen wreaths for our barn and home, or whether we are assembling a traditional gingerbread house to be lit and enjoyed by all on Christmas Eve, there is a soulful joy in the keeping of traditions.

As our families and friends gather together to share in the wonder of this special time, there is a sense of deep satisfaction that comes with knowing it was planned with joy and love. A Christmas Eve surrounded by the warm glow of candles in every window of our country home and Christmas trees nestled in all of our favorite spaces, we are reminded that the sharing of what we create for others is perhaps the greatest gift of all.



Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques  
She is currently working on her book, New England Girl [NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com](mailto:NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com)





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# A Cup of Tea with Lydia

by Lydia E Harris

## An After-Thanksgiving Teatime

The holidays are here, creating such a happy time of year! First, we welcome Thanksgiving with feasting, football, and counting our blessings. Then the joy and excitement of Christmas quickly follow. Between these two holidays, why not plan and enjoy a relaxing “after-Thanksgiving” teatime? A friend shared that after hosting their Thanksgiving dinner, she and her daughter create a simple teatime for the two of them and perhaps a friend. “It’s a time to slow down, relax, and make memories.” The foods and flavors of Thanksgiving are ones that people love to gobble up beyond that holiday. So why not turn your Thanksgiving leftovers into a quick and tasty teatime? By doing so, you can extend the season of gratitude and serve up a festive prelude to Christmas. As you count your blessings, consider this recipe for your after-Thanksgiving teatime.



### TURKEY-AND-CREAM-CHEESE SANDWICHES

- My youngest granddaughter loves these made with raspberry jam.
- Gather
- 6 slices white or wheat bread
  - 6 slices deli turkey (or leftover homecooked turkey)
  - 1/2 cup (about 4 oz) cream cheese, softened
  - 1 1/2 Tablespoon raspberry jam or cranberry sauce (whole berry or jellied)
  - Butter

Directions

Mix together cream cheese and cranberry sauce or raspberry jam. Spread 3 slices of bread with the cream cheese mixture. Place 2 slices of turkey on each. Spread butter on the remaining three bread slices. Place them on top of the slices with turkey to close the sandwiches. Wrap and refrigerate the sandwiches until ready to serve. Before serving, trim the crusts. Then cut each sandwich diagonally in both directions to make 4 small triangles. Makes 12 tea sandwiches.

### TEAS TO PLEASE

Consider fall and holiday flavors of tea, such as pumpkin, cranberry, apple, Republic of Tea Ginger Peach, and spicy flavors such as chai. Brew at least one decaffeinated tea. Our family’s favorite herbal tea is Celestial Seasonings Country Peach Passion.

’Tis the season to share a cup of tea with family and friends. Won’t you join me?

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast, grandmother of five (Grandma Tea), and author of *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*, *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*, and her new release—*GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids*.

## From Lydia’s recipe file: Festive Cranberry-Orange Scones

My daughter-in-law transforms an ordinary scone mix this way.

Using your favorite scone mix, replace the liquid in the recipe with orange juice. Add 1/4 cup white chocolate chips and 1/4 cup raisins. Prepare and bake according to the directions. Optional: While scones are warm, drizzle with a glaze made with 1/2 cup powdered sugar, 1 tablespoon orange juice, and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla. Garnish with small slivers of orange peel.

# Wit and Wisdom

## O Christmas Tree

by Juleann Lattimer

Last Thanksgiving, when the talk turned to decorating the Christmas tree, my grandchildren gleefully offered to help. I gently declined their enthusiastic invitation and carefully steered the conversation in another direction. Last year I vowed our tree would be perfect – no haphazard, lopsided hanging of ornaments here and there. I envisioned a “sophisticated” tree, one to rival a magazine picture—perfect—with every bauble, bead and bangle arranged just so. While our children were growing up, our holiday tradition was to put on a Christmas movie or music, make hot cocoa and then let the children have free reign in decorating the tree. When the grandchildren came along, they happily continued the tradition of trimming our tree. But that tradition was about to change. After studying several magazines, I placed an order for eighty glittering gold and sparkling silver ornaments and a tree skirt trimmed in winter white. While I awaited their arrival, I sorted through totes of stored ornaments, giving away many that wouldn’t fit my “gold and silver” theme. Others, because of sentimental value, I tucked back into the totes for another year or to hand down to my children and grandchildren. The ornaments and skirt arrived in all their sparkling splendor. When the day arrived to decorate the tree, I was home alone with my ornaments. Carefully, as if I were performing surgery, I strategically hung each globe, one by one, upon the boughs. And no colored lights; just strings of star-light white, there would be no departing from my theme!

Lights up, decorations hung just the right distance apart, I added the tree skirt and then stood back to admire the results. The tree was sophisticated. It was coordinated and symmetrical. It was also sterile. Lifeless. It lacked spontaneity and authenticity. It needed something—hauling out the tote of old ornaments, I chose a few to add among the branches. Just a few—a stained-glass tree ornament edged in gold, a porcelain manger scene my mom painted decades ago; a tiny silver basket with antique holly berries that belonged to my Brooklyn granny, three mini-knitted stockings created long ago by our pastor’s wife, three tiny, crocheted balls created by a now-departed friend, a green and white jeweled ornament from a friend’s missions trip to the Ukraine, beaded ornaments I made years ago, a sequined pumpkin and a plastic smiling moose head. Then I added ornaments our children made from foam and felt and popsicle sticks, a blue 3-D Christmas card ornament, a mouse nestled in a walnut shell my sister had made; a needlepoint “Peace” ornament my other sister had made and a raccoon ornament hand-painted by my sister-in-law. Before I knew it, the tree was literally covered with all the ornaments I thought I had outgrown in my sophistication. After I added all the touches from years’ past, I again stood back to admire the results. This time I smiled. The tree was mismatched, ornaments were hung a big lopsided, but it was homey, filled with memories and beautiful! Forget the glossy magazine pictures, this year I will not only let my grandchildren help me decorate, I will make an event of it like we used to with our own little ones.



Judyann Grant and her husband, Don, live in the snow belt region of eastern Lake Ontario in New York State.

## Free Pattern

Use this pattern for embroidery, wool applique, punch needle or rug hooking, painted projects or whatever your imagination can dream up! Reduce or enlarge pattern as desired.



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## Countryberries Designs Snowman Soup



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 wool applique and embroidery but can be needlepunched, hooked or even painted. Enjoy a mug of hot cocoa and mini marshmallows while you work yum!

Designed by Kathy Graham

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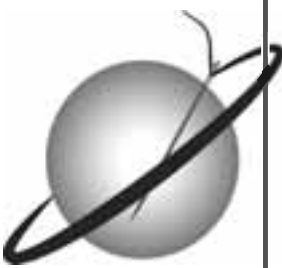
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## THE MAILBAG

My mother is 91 years young and is a master quilter, having had three of her quilts in national magazines, along with patterns for these quilts. She continues to quilt and share her love with others. She looks forward to each edition of *THE COUNTRY REGISTER*! Thank you!  
*Rosalyn Velasquez, Monte Vista*

## Recipe Word Search

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

### Pecan Pie Cheesecake

recipe by Leah Maroney, The Spruce Eats

#### Graham Cracker Crust:

18 graham crackers  
1/3 cup brown sugar, packed  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract  
8 tbsp unsalted butter, melted

#### Pecan Topping:

1 1/2 cups pecans  
2/3 cup brown sugar, packed  
2 tbsp unsalted butter  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
2 tsp pure vanilla extract  
1/2 tsp salt

#### Pecan Topping:

1 1/2 cups pecans  
2/3 cup brown sugar, packed  
2 tbsp unsalted butter  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
2 tsp pure vanilla extract  
1/2 tsp salt

Preheat the oven to 500°. Pulse the graham crackers and brown sugar in a food processor until they are fine crumbs. Pour the melted butter and vanilla over the crumbs with the food processor running. Mix until combined. Pour the graham cracker mixture into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan. Press the mixture down to create an even crust.

Make sure all cheesecake ingredients are at room temperature for even mixing with fewer lumps. Beat together the cream cheese, brown sugar, heavy cream and sour cream. Beat until completely smooth and very fluffy. Beat the vanilla, salt and cornstarch. Beat in the eggs one at a time until the batter is smooth and completely incorporated. Pour the batter over the prepared graham crust. Bake at 500° for 5 minutes. Then turn the heat down to 200° and bake for an hour and a half or until the internal temperature reaches 160°. The cake will jiggle slightly when gently shaken. Place on a cooling rack and allow to cool to room temperature. Cover the cake with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator overnight or at least 4 hours.

For the pecan pie topping, preheat the oven to 350°. Toast the pecans on a sheet tray for 5-10 minutes shaking occasionally. Add the brown sugar to a large saucepan. Heat on medium high heat until the brown sugar melts. Add the butter and heavy cream into the pan. Stir gently with a wooden spoon and allow to come to a boil. Turn the head down and add in the vanilla and salt. Toss the pecans with the finished caramel. Pour the pean mixture over the top of the cheesecake and serve immediately.

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Yvonne Hollenbeck

## The Quilting Flu

*It started innocent enough,  
some fifteen years ago;  
it was well into the winter,  
the ground was white with snow.  
He was laying in his easy chair  
while staring at TV  
as she was reminiscing  
about the way things used to be.*

*She looked at hubby laying there  
...across his lap he'd laid  
an old and faded patchwork quilt  
her Grandma Sarah made.  
The rolling channels bored her,  
the housework was all done,  
so thought she'd try to make a quilt,  
she thought that might be fun.*

*She got out grandma's patterns  
that were packed away upstairs  
within a box of pretty scraps,  
then soon was cutting squares.  
This urge that overtook her  
never really went away  
in fact, you'd call it "sickness"  
if you visited her today.*

*The house looks like a fabric shop,  
there's quilts on every wall  
the basements been converted  
to a fabric storage hall.  
There's projects on the table  
and more on all the beds  
and many that's unfinished  
packed in totes out in the shed.*

*There hasn't been much cleaning done  
since fifteen years ago,  
when she cut those pretty squares out  
and made a little throw.  
But, she is not alone  
as all her friends are quilting too,  
it is like they caught a sickness  
diagnosed, "The Quilting Flu."*

*A guild is their support group,  
but there really is no cure  
and the only medication  
is a frequent shop-hop tour.  
Experts call it an addiction,  
there is not much they can do when  
you're overcome with this disease  
that's called "The Quilting Flu!"*

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

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# Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

## Loose Ends at Christmas

Why is it that this time of year, just when we need them most, all our organizational skills seem to disappear? During the weeks leading up to Christmas my house is absolutely littered with half-finished projects.

For instance, one day I was almost finished wrapping presents downstairs when I ran out of tape. I had to hide the curling ribbon from the cat, who is sitting on my work area in case I need her help, because she might eat it while I'm gone—and there's no time to take her to the vet for emergency surgery! I went upstairs to look for more tape but remembered I hadn't moved the sheets from the washer to the dryer, so I stopped to do that. Then I saw a few last Christmas cards on the kitchen table that still needed stamps. Do I need to tell you that I went back downstairs without the tape?

One night as we were ready to go out on a Christmas errand, I had two black gloves in my hand, but then, inexplicably, I had one. We looked everywhere but I finally gave up and got a different pair of gloves because it is very cold and snowy in Colorado in December. When we came home the missing glove was in the middle of the living room floor. My husband Jim blames the cat for that one, which is a good reason to have pets at our age—who else would empty-nesters blame?

I refuse to believe this unsettling existence is permanent. Yes, we struggle with misplaced keys, sunglasses, tickets, and sundry other items all year long, but rarely do I feel this absent-minded—and considering the way people are driving in parking lots these days, I don't think I'm alone! The good news is that it will all be over soon, and that gratefully this isn't the part of Christmas that matters most anyway. I may feel "at loose ends" getting ready for the holidays, but when I stop to focus on the true meaning of Christmas I realize that there was nothing left undone in God's original plan.

So, collectively, let's all take a deep breath and stand by the manger. There we see the Blessed Babe, tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes, with no loose ends at all. From the beginning, God knew that He would need to send His Son to earth to die for our sins so that we might be reconciled to Him for eternity! Christmas acknowledges the unveiling of His perfect plan, and Easter celebrates its glorious completion.

And so, whatever happens, we can rest in the knowledge that God left no loose ends for those who accept the gift of His Son. He presents us with the gift of Christmas, the free gift of salvation, all neatly wrapped up in the Baby in Bethlehem. Celebrate His gift this Christmas! And may you and those you love be blessed.

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](http://www.nancyparkerbrummett.com).







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**P**reheat oven to 350°. Put cranberries in an ungreased casserole. Sprinkle over sugar but don't stir. Bake 35 min, stir 3 times while cooking. Good hot or cold.

*With LOVE from the Heart of the Home to me, Susan Branch*  
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# Ann's Lovin' Ewe

by Ann Stewart  
Time Sensitive

Whenever I see TIME SENSITIVE in an e-mail heading, I take high alert. It means sooner rather than later. This column is indeed time sensitive. Oddly, the idea for this column actually began by staring at the gigantic weeping willow spreading all the way across our front yard. You see, planting that tree was time-sensitive. My daughters gave it to me as a Mother's Day gift twenty years ago when the tree was shorter than they were. I would not experience the splendor of the far-reaching boughs if the gift had arrived years later. Now my tree provides shelter, beauty, and shade. It was a time sensitive gift. That's how it is with memories that grow into traditions. They, too, are time sensitive and need to be planted early and allowed to flourish. With the many holidays during fall and winter, and the flavors, scents, and music of these holidays, it's the perfect time to create memories that will become traditions.

Many families have Thanksgiving traditions around giving thanks. Some place five kernels of corn on each plate, prompting each dinner guest to share five things they're thankful for. Some families leave a thankfulness jar out all year long for family members to write out their gratitude to be shared on Thanksgiving Day or New Year's Eve.

Perhaps you have a tradition around your Thanksgiving cornucopia. We have a family favorite Thanksgiving tradition that began many years ago. We gather with other families the day AFTER Thanksgiving, and we are only allowed to bring our leftovers. No additional food is cooked; we just reheat and serve. It's wonderful to share the flavors from other households and use up the leftovers in such a delightful way. The work has already been done and now we relax in the company of others.

Christmas is another opportunity to make memories big or small. I remember a certain Christmas album my parents played each year. Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians sang "Ring Those Christmas Bells". The record was scratchy, and in one of the cuts the bells were quite out of tune, but it wasn't truly Christmas until we heard those songs. I don't have the record, so now the first song my daughters and I play when decorating for Christmas is Amy Grant's "Tender Tennessee Christmas."

When my children were young and gathered with their cousins, our family tradition was to don Nativity costumes and re-enact the Christmas story. Oh, how I treasure those photos of sheep, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, with the littlest in a cradle as baby Jesus.



If you ask friends about their Christmas Eve and Christmas morning traditions, it's a great conversation starter and you'll get a plethora of ideas, some of which are time sensitive.

One woman told of their tree-cutting tradition. When they saw off the bottom inch of the tree trunk, they save the slice and label the year. They have a large bowl of wood from their many years of evergreen Christmases. I lamented I didn't know about that tradition earlier. It's like the weeping willow, it takes years to grow memories.

On New Year's Eve, if you're not invited to NYC to watch the ball drop, or invited to a big gala, go out for Chinese food or stay-in and fix chili to eat by the fire. Make your own memories, for whether the memory is big or small, it just takes a little time. Make a fall or holiday memory that becomes a beloved tradition. It's time sensitive. Start sooner rather than later. Start small. Your memories will grow and take root in the lives of your family and friends.

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Words can be found in any direction  
(including diagonals) and can  
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U M D E H G E O S Y L R B L G J W C R H  
E G Z M B U U I U A R J A L G U N E M L  
I A N O F F I H C G H R X B J F I P C I  
N L Y T O M H B S H Q V E N U S K H C B  
B E X S O J C A K K V V C H O H I Z Q L  
T T P T B Z H G M Y L J I O C C R O Z U  
H T Z R N E E V C A W I H G K Y N H K E  
L E Z A T F E B B C E K S E K E E K F B  
C N X W J H S D C X X R N X Y Y W F D E  
D I O B B E E L S T C A C B G E X E O R  
X K D E M M C K Q S H N A C E P K O M R  
C P X R K I A K L I M R E T T U B E P Y  
O M K R A L K C B V I B K A W R R E L U  
C U T Y E S E U O E L P P A O I A R X E  
O P D Y T H G S O N B H W Z N C J Z Z O  
N A Z W S N D T A B G N P G H K E K A N  
U O E W G C E A P O O B U B U U C Y R V  
T C W W Z T O R Q J J E F A Y C Z S B M  
Q F N O M E L D F D P F K G P Z A T S G

Apple	Chiffon	Lemon	Rhubarb
Blueberry	Coconut	Lime	Silk
Buttermilk	Cream	Meringue	Steak
Cheesecake	Custard	Peach	Strawberry
Cherry	Galette	Pecan	
Chicken	Hoosier	Pumpkin	





# Pieces From My Heart by Jan Keller



## The Resilient Maud Lewis

As a young girl, Maud Lewis enjoyed painting Christmas cards with her mother, and then trudged door-to-door, selling them to friends and neighbors. Painting brought color and joy to Maud—and proved to chart the course of her incredible life.

Maud, born in 1903 with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, had acutely sloping shoulders, curvature of the spine, and a severely recessed chin. Despite her deformities, discomfort, and teasing by children, she enjoyed a relatively normal and pleasant childhood, growing up in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia with her parents John and Agnes (Genmaine) Dowley, and older brother, Charles. Her father, a harness maker and blacksmith, provided a comfortable life for his family.

As Maud grew into adulthood, her life darkened. In 1928, at the age of 19, unmarried Maud gave birth to a daughter. Her family told Maud her baby had died, but instead they put her daughter up for adoption and told her the child had been a boy. In 1935 Maud's father died. Her mother died two years later. At first Maud went to live with her brother Charles and his wife Gert, but when that didn't work out, she moved to Digby, Nova Scotia to live with her maternal Aunt Ida, who believed young women should behave with propriety and restraint.

Seeking to prove able to make a life for herself, free-spirited and spunky Maud answered an ad for a live-in housekeeper in the autumn of 1937 and began working for Everett Lewis, a fish monger and laborer who lived alone in a small house near Marshalltown.

It is an understatement to say Everett's one-room house was small. It was tiny! To be exact, it was a 12' x 13' cabin with a cookstove for heat and no electricity or running water—only an outhouse.

After a brief courtship, the couple married on January 26, 1938. Everett, ten years Maud's senior, and a reputation for his cantankerous personality, grew up in the local orphanage and couldn't read or write. Despite inevitable challenges, their marriage endured until Maud died in 1970 of pneumonia when she was 67.

From these unlikely circumstances, Maud Lewis became a highly acclaimed primitive artist.

I can't remember when or how I first learned of Maud Lewis, but when my husband and I recently took a trip to Canada's maritime provinces, I knew I wanted to go to the Maud Lewis Memorial Garden at the site where Maud and Everett lived on a highway outside of Marshalltown. There, an open metal replica of the original home has been constructed on their



Photo by Jan Keller



Maud Lewis painting in her home near Marshalltown, Nova Scotia.

Photo taken from the sign at the Maud Lewis Memorial Garden.

window, where she could sit and work on her bright and colorful paintings. With no formal art instruction, her primary inspirations were the images from her youth, which she had vividly stored in her memory. Her father working in his blacksmith shop. Oxen harnessed up and plowing the field. The bright ocean, skies, landscapes, harbors, boats, seasons, trees, birds, and flowers.

Her paintings were 'primitive' in style but complex in composition, balance, and color selection. She initially painted on scraps of board or shingles with oil-based house and boat paint. Her inexpensive brushes were purchased at the local hardware store. To advertise, Everett put up a sign Maud painted, which simply said, "PAINTINGS FOR SALE."

Tourists traveling the highway through rural Marshalltown, located between Yarmouth and Digby, saw the sign, stopped, and purchased. By then, it wasn't just the sign that captured their attention, but also the bright adornments Maud added to the exterior of their home. In addition, she painted brightness to everything in the interior—from the walls and stairs to cooking pots and trays.

Maud began selling her paintings for \$4.50. Over the years she raised her price, but never to more than \$10 to \$15. Most of her paying customers were tourists who stopped in, looking for a souvenir to represent and help them recall their summer vacation. Maud sold paintings to the people who passed by and her art featured the scenes most popular with her customers. On the exterior and interior of their small abode was where Maud could paint images for personal joy. Their home ultimately became her largest canvas.

Fame and notoriety increased after a

Canadian CBC documentary on Maud and Everett aired in 1965. When Richard Nixon was President, he ordered two of her paintings. Maud, who lived quite isolated and without electricity, had no idea who Richard Nixon was and replied that he would need to mail the money before she could fill his order.

After Maud died in 1970, Everett lived alone in the same small house until his death in 1979. He was 86 when a young man broke in after hearing stories about money being hidden in and around the house. Everett was killed in the encounter. Reportedly, in addition to over \$22,000 in the bank, there was an estimated \$20,000 tucked into Mason jars and hidden around the property. Today, \$42,000 could possibly buy one of Maud's original paintings.

You might think Maud's resiliency had come to an end—but you would be wrong. There's more to her amazing story!

In 1980 the little house by the side of the road was sold to the Maud Lewis Painted House Society. The memorial park John and I visited marks the site where it originally stood.

The province of Nova Scotia acquired the house in 1984 and relinquished it to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Today, Maud's little painted house by the side of the road has moved to a permanent home inside the protective walls of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax. There it is enjoyed by tourists who travel to see it from all over the world.

On our final day in Nova Scotia, we drove north along the east shore from Lunenburg, past Peggy's Cove lighthouse, and on to the art gallery in Halifax.

For many years it had been a personal dream to see Maud's painted house, so I almost had to pinch myself as I stood in the Maud Lewis gallery and tried to imagine tiny and stooped Maud smiling up

at me as she painted in front of her big window. Both John and I were charmed, and in addition to the display of many of Maud's original paintings, there were also a couple Everett had painted.

In 'Maud Lewis—Life & Work', author Ray Cronin eloquently summed Maud up, writing, "She is renowned for her smile and for her

perseverance in the face of poverty, disability, and chronic pain. Her life was not always happy, and indeed, had many shadows in it. But despite all of that, her paintings remain as a testament to her optimism and courage in the face of adversity." He then went on in reference to Maud's 1965 CBC documentary, quoting Maud saying, "I'm contented here. I ain't much for travel anyway. Contented. Right here in this chair. As long as I've got a brush in front of me, I'm all right."

NOTE: In 2016 a movie, "Maudie", brought Maud's remarkable story to theaters. Sally Hawkins (Maud) and Ethan Hawke (Everett) were both nominated for Academy Awards. It can be found online.

Photo by John Keller



Photo by Jan Keller



Photo by Jan Keller

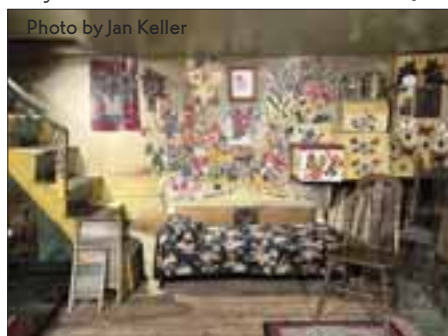


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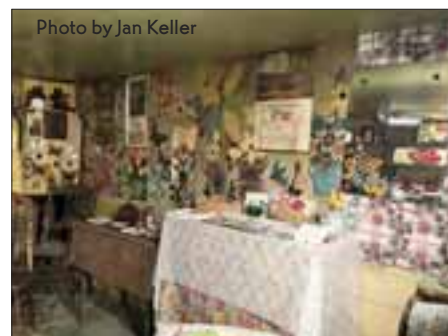


Photo by Jan Keller

### A PEEK INSIDE THE HOME OF MAUD AND EVERETT LEWIS

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