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January/February 2026

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The Maryland Register

Maryland's Guide to Specialty Shopping & Premier Events



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**Deadline For the March/April 2026
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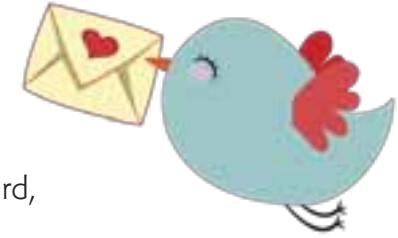
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Camilla Younger of Washington DC won a copy of By the Yard Comics for Quilters calendar by Jen Lopez.

Congratulations Camilla!

Winter Word Search

submitted by Shirley Ross

I	E	A	D	D	O	S	R	O	O	N	V	A
C	D	C	F	T	S	S	E	R	D	H	O	C
N	V	A	N	R	L	A	N	T	I	O	R	S
S	R	V	T	A	E	D	I	E	A	C	K	N
M	E	W	T	E	D	A	T	G	L	K	R	H
L	A	I	R	H	M	G	N	I	W	E	S	B
S	W	N	I	E	R	I	E	O	T	Y	N	O
D	I	T	S	I	H	E	L	T	T	M	B	E
S	S	E	R	T	S	M	A	E	S	T	V	A
T	H	R	O	U	L	P	V	D	V	N	U	N
V	C	L	O	V	E	L	L	S	T	O	O	B
T	C	P	A	A	E	O	I	L	G	H	H	W
L	S	E	W	V	C	N	E	H	S	L	O	S

Words are forward and backward, horizontal, vertical and diagonal.

boots	pattern
button	seamstress
clothing	sewing
cold	shovel
dance	skates
date	sled
dress	snow
farm	spouse
heart	thread
hill	valentine
hockey	velvet
love	winter

Recipe: Banana Crumb Coffee Cake
by Margaret Hoase

Ingredients:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup butter at room temp.
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 3 bananas mashed
- 2 cups flour
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup milk

Crumb topping and filling

- 1 cup butter, cubed
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 2 cups flour

Frosting Recipe

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1-2 tbsp milk

Directions:

By hand mix together sugar and butter. Add eggs, vanilla and bananas. Stir until blended. Add flour, baking powder, salt and milk and blend well. Set aside. Use pastry blender to combine until crumbly. Pour 1/2 of batter into a 9x13 pan. Spread 1/3 of topping on the batter. Pour remaining batter on top of the topping. The rest of the topping goes on top of the batter. Bake for 50-55 minutes at 350°. Mix together frosting ingredients and drizzle over coffee cake.



Where in Maryland?

Somewhere in Maryland the image to the right can be found.
Where is it?

(Answer on page 10 of this issue)



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Love is the beauty of the soul.

KISSed Quilts

by Marlene Oddie

Inspiration Comes From Service Time Love Letters

As we approach that annual day when valentines are shared, I wanted to share a new and special collection from Lumin Fabrics/Island Batik called "Missing You". This was designed by Terri Vanden Bosch of Lizard Creek Quilting in Rock Valley, IA.

"This fabric collection is a tribute to enduring love, heartfelt devotion and the quiet strength found in life's most tender moments," says Vanden Bosch. Her father-in-love was a veteran. During his military service he and his wife wrote daily. These letters were found, wrapped in a cotton string and served as inspiration for this collection.



Terri created a variety of tjaps with the following themes: mail, cross stitch hearts, morse code words, ribbon meander with bows, ink splat and air mail love.



"This collection is my tribute, to love that lasts, to moments that matter, and to the quiet beauty of hand-written words. May these hand-drawn fabrics evoke your own cherished memories and offer comfort, connection and peace to all who use them."

Terri has put together several beautiful quilt designs, including "Mail Call Block of the Month", "Hometown Hearts", "Linen Letters", "Care Packages" and "Convictions". Other designers have also used the collection to create additional quilt patterns. I've used the collection to make up two versions of my Hugs and Kisses pattern originally designed to send a subtle hug and kiss from a mother to a teenage daughter. Do you see a large X and a large O in both of these? Squint at the picture. One has a blue X behind a light O and the other has a burgundy O in front of a light X. Placement of colors and values makes all the difference.

Ask at your local quilt shop that carries Island Batik fabrics for these fabrics and patterns. Check out Terri's website at lizardcreekquilting.com. The Hugs and Kisses pattern can be found at KISSed Quilts.

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>



Maryland Quilt Guild Listing



Faithful Circle Quilters Guild
Dedicated to perpetuating the heritage of quilting, sharing the skills and knowledge of quilting and stimulating fellowship and education among those interested in quilting.
Contact: communications@faithfulcirclequilters.com
Website: <https://faithfulcirclequilters.com/>



Uhuru Quilters Guild
Promote the work and accomplishments of African American quilters and to preserve the traditions, culture and history of quilting.
P.O. Box 47332 District Heights, MD 20747
Meet monthly on 3rd Saturdays at St. Barnabas Episcopal Anglican Church, Upper Marlboro, MD
Website: www.uhuruquiltersguildinc.org



Village Quilters of Catonsville MD Quilt Guild
Preserve and promote the art and heritage of quiltmaking.
We meet September - June on the third Thursday of the month.
Meeting place: The Stafford Hall, Catonsville, MD
Contact: contact@villagequiltersmd.com
Website: <https://villagequiltersmd.com>

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Become Inspired

by Annice Bradley Rockwell

A Silent Snowscape

When the busy days of holiday festivities draw to a close, we often feel a significant shift to the steady and slower pace of winter. Glancing out at a silent snowscape changes our perspective and suggests that somehow nature's pause in the rhythm of the year might be a welcomed one for us as well.

Cozy Winter Days

On a frosty, cold weekend we might invite ideas of our own to come to the surface for a full day of country crafting. With a homemade meal of beef stew cooking on the stove all day, we can relax and begin planning an ideal, cozy winter day at home. We might decide to fashion some fully scented accents for Valentine's Day made from the spicy notes of cinnamon and clove. We can decorate hand crafted twig heart wreaths with dark red "scarves" to adorn our doors for the season of winter. We might also delight in our "day off," to happily dream of country outings that make the most of the snowiest of days.



The Wonder of Winter

An old-fashioned experience of family sledding and snowshoeing is one that is always memorable. Enjoyed by all ages, a day outside in the bright sunshine bundled up against the cold, can be a fun way to welcome winter. And after a few racy runs down an icy slope, a mug of hot cocoa can be enjoyed around a fire in the cauldron made with twigs collected from our country yard. Our warm treat can be made even more special with the addition of whipped cream and peppermint sprinkles to be relished by all.

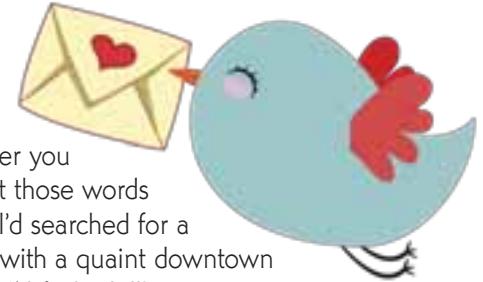
And even the most familiar woodland hike becomes almost completely reinvented when blanketed with a beautiful fresh coat of snow. We can easily see tracks from our small animal visitors from their ventures into the new landscape of winter. The inland marsh takes on a unique mirrored glow on these winter days, hardening just enough to transform the entire view. All around us as nature shifts, nature is also quite active. Just underneath the surface of silence lives the spirited promise of spring.

This winter, savor the wonder of the season. Embrace the slower days to recharge and pursue your creative ideas. Take time to plan invigorating country outings for your family to appreciate. Shift your perception to see winter as a special and powerful blessing. And as you do, you will be reminded of the magnified magic that nature always provides.

--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)

Wherever You Go

by Shelby Kottemann



There's a saying that goes, "Wherever you go, there you are." I learned a lot about those words when I went on my first solo vacation. I'd searched for a small town in a state I'd never been to with a quaint downtown and a hike able arboretum. Northfield, MN fit the bill!

Upon arrival on a Friday, I realized the innkeeper was lonely, so I listened earnestly to her story late into the night. I explored downtown Saturday morning, but when I came back to get my hiking shoes, a melancholy guest, traveling for work, walked through the door. I stayed back hoping a caring talk might lift her spirits.

Sunday morning came. I was about to step out into the fresh morning air when the innkeeper rushed up to me in a panic. "My car is in the shop and I have no way to get to church. Can you give me a ride?"

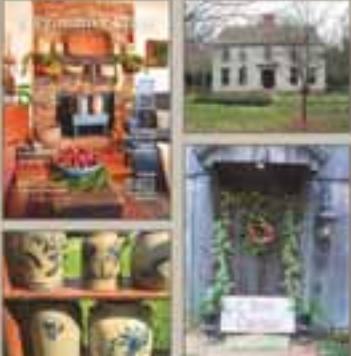
"Of course." I answered. The still dreary guest asked to come too. "The more the merrier!" I replied. Unbeknownst to me, the innkeeper's church was over an hour's drive away. The good deed took half my day and half a tank of gas by the time I returned. The tagalong houseguest didn't like hiking and instead wanted to go out to eat and be brought back to rest.

Now it was Sunday night and I needed to go home. I had four long hours to think about how little fun I'd had. I hadn't seen the arboretum or even the rest of town! At every opportunity, I'd slipped right into my habit of putting everyone around me first. On my only vacation nonetheless!

This isn't a sad story though! In one of the downtown shops, I'd met a warm, wise woman with whom I'd shared a long, deep conversation. She struck me as one of those people who touched others' lives without realizing it so it saddened me to hear that she struggled with depression. The following winter, I sent a Christmas card to her little store with a handwritten message inside telling her how special she is and that she'd been the highlight of my trip. I hoped my letter would bring her some light. In February, I received a response! She'd been truly touched by my letter. We exchanged phone numbers and we have shared long phone calls twice a month for five years since! Sharing life's musings and ups and downs, we've built a loving friendship that enriches both of our lives beyond compare. In the beginning that solo vacation may have taught me about the burdens of being a caring person, but in the end, it showed me the ever-lasting gifts. For better and worse, wherever you go, there you are.

Shelby Kottemann is an Author, Reiki Master and Founder of "Love's Nature LLC" for the love of nature and the nature of love. Her email is contact@inlovesnature.com. To learn more, visit the website www.inlovesnature.com

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Wit and Wisdom

by Judyann Grant

Ready or Not

When covid became part of our daily reality many routine doctor appointments were replaced with tele-health visits. One of the first tele-health visits I had was scheduled one morning for 9:20 a.m. with my primary care physician. Thinking this visit would be akin to an in-person visit, (i.e., a long-time languishing in the waiting room) I figured I had plenty of time to get up, get dressed, fed and in my right mind before the call. I was wrong . . .

My loving husband was preparing our breakfast when the phone rang. The nurse was calling to complete the intake paperwork prior to my appointment. The phone call only lasted a few minutes. Then, just as Don put my warm breakfast plate on the table, the phone rang again – this time I heard my doctor's voice.

I had planned to be pulled together, seated at my desk, prepared with all my vital information for the tele-conference. Instead, I was sitting at the kitchen table in my rumpled pajamas and bathrobe, my hair sporting "bed-head" and my breakfast getting cold.

Instead of the usual wait in the office, which always gave me time to collect my thoughts, the doctor called an hour and a half before my scheduled appointment. And I was not ready . . .

How are you feeling? *Fine (though I wanted to say hungry as I eyed my breakfast.)* How have your BP numbers been? *I don't know! I didn't have time to find my record book.*

What was your blood sugar this morning? *I don't know! I haven't taken it yet.*

The pointed questions and vague answers went on and on. After the call, still in my pajamas, I ate my cold breakfast and contemplated how the pleasant scenario in my head differed drastically from the unpleasant reality that occurred.

Tele-health visits aren't the only area of life that will be impacted by lack of preparedness. The Bible tells us that Jesus is coming again. Will this be the year? Only the Father knows the time and day (Matthew 24:37) so it's best to be prepared.

God isn't concerned about what I wear or if my hair is combed, but He is concerned about the condition of my heart. Am I devoted to Him? Am I living according to His standard? Am I letting my light shine so others are drawn to Him?

If you feel unprepared for the Second Coming, there are steps you can take: Read your Bible daily. Seek God through prayer and meditation. Worship in a Bible-believing church.

By keeping our hearts right with God, we will be prepared for His call.

Judyann Grant's newest book, "Reflections: Walking in the Light of God's Word" contains one year of daily meditations that reveal the hand of God at work in the ordinary and extraordinary events of life. For more information and to purchase, please contact the author at: witandwisdomwriters@gmail.com



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Life in Skunk Hollow

by Julie A Druck

The Day That Frosty Melted



This week I undid the house of all its holiday finery and put the Christmas decorations away for another year. That is all except Frosty. I have a vintage plastic blow mold Frosty decoration from the '50s. Every year for decades he stood sentinel next to the front door of my grandparents' home. As a little girl I often had a Christmas picture taken next to him. When my grandfather died 13 years ago, I inherited Frosty and he has proudly stood sentinel on MY front porch for those years. But alas, Frosty has begun to melt.

I noticed how bad he was last night. We had an extremely windy day, and Frosty had blown over. When I went to set him back up, I saw what I have been unwilling to acknowledge for the last several years. Frosty's base was becoming more and more brittle and cracked. My husband has been telling me for a while that Frosty's time has come, but I didn't want to hear it. Last night, I couldn't deny the truth.

It sounds crazy that I'm mourning the loss of a Christmas decoration. But, in my mind, Frosty represents something much more intangible than a hunk of plastic. I lived with my grandparents for three years as a little girl and then for another ten years right next door to them. Their home was a haven of comfort and peace and joy to me. Every day was a holiday with my grandmother. Our supper table always looked like a lay-out from a vintage women's magazine – deliciousness and simple beauty were always on the menu. And when any holiday rolled around, my grandmother went full tilt into making it special in every way. As for my grandfather, he was a bright beacon of warm light who loved me – not for what I did or didn't do – but simply because I was his Julie.

So, you see, in my mind, Frosty is a symbol of all the love and joy I received in my grandparents' home. But as I set Frosty upright again, I knew it was time to say goodbye. I went in and tearfully told my husband that Frosty could go with three stipulations: that he would take one last photo of me with my snowman, that he would dispose of the remains without telling me how or when or where he did it and that he would remove Frosty's little metal shovel and save it for me as a keepsake.

As I contemplated my decision further, I realized that just because Frosty goes, doesn't mean that the memories he represents have to go. I still hold all the dearness and love of my grandparents in my heart that I can access at any time. And so, though Frosty won't be back again someday, he, and all that he stands for, will forever hold a warm place in my heart.



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

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A Broken Thread

by Wayne M. Bosman

Anyone who has read my recent articles in The Country Register will undoubtedly notice one thread running through them. One way or another, my mother has appeared in almost all of them. That thread is soon to be broken. I am writing this at the kitchen table of the house I grew up in, which we are clearing out in the time leading up to her funeral. She was 104.

Clearing out another person's home can be a deeply personal, almost embarrassing, task. Not so much here.

She spent these last years preparing to make it easier. Little stickers with names appear on many of the potential keepsakes. She insisted that we take some things home with us after visits to reduce the burden after she was gone. Her army of admirers understood that presents to her were no longer a practical idea. That was her way.

Little handmade items were still welcome, if not too expensive to make. Kerri and I focused on crocheted or woven items that she might actually use because of the love they were made with. Shawls, scarves, lap blankets all worked for her, as did little heart-shaped coasters. She kept some things in her drawers or on display because they were too pretty to use. That also was her way.

Kerri and I are spending our days helping my sister sort through Mom's things, trying to make sure that every family member has some meaningful keepsake to remind them of Mom every time they see it. Many of these are little ornaments or pictures that were made for her when her grandchildren were very young. Mom lived long enough to have great-great grandchildren who made her little things. Kerri kept Mom's soup ladle. I kept a cake plate that had survived potlucks and large family meals. I also brought home a herringbone scarf I wove for her a few years earlier. She was proud of it and proud of me for adding weaving to my life skills while in my 60s. She never ceased being proud of her children and grandchildren. To some degree, our successes were hers.

My sister has a list that Mom wrote with her of things that she wants different grandchildren to have. She is doing her best to carry out Mom's wishes about keepsakes. Then comes the rest of it all. My sister has a list of charities to best use everything in the house. From clothing to furniture to kitchenware and knick-knacks, there is a place for everything. Almost nothing ends up in the landfill. That was how Mom lived.

Mom was a giver by nature and nurture. It made her happy to help my sister prepare things for the Giving Circle, a local project to give tangible help to people who needed it. As she got older and less able to make things herself, her job became to wrap up crocheted washcloths that went into each package. Age slowed her abilities, but not her desire to give.

My sister, Linda, inherited Mom's desire to give back. After the big push every year for the Giving Circle, the cycle starts again. By mid-January, the bin boxes are starting to get filled with scarves, hats, and other necessities for urban areas in the northern US. An active church group contributes year round to keep poverty at bay. For Linda, her friends, and for Kerri, the knitting and crocheting doesn't really stop, the focus just changes. Prayer shawls for the aging and lap blankets for people in Hospice are a never-ending need.

Mom lived a full and long life. Although her thread is broken, the love she wove into so many lives is still strong.

For Mary A. Bosman (December 17, 1920-November 2, 2025)

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



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Wrapped in Love

by Janet M. Bair

Every quilt made is an act of love. We may have fallen in love with the fabric and want to make something unique. We may have a special occasion such as a wedding, graduation, birthday or Christmas gift in mind when we start sewing. We may be sewing for charity and will never see the recipient.

The amount of time it takes to piece and press the top, quilt it and sew on the binding requires a big commitment of time. Time that ends up being an act of love. As quilters, we love to sew and we love to bless others with our gifts. If we sew a lot, we have to find people to give our quilts to, or we would have no room in our houses.



Whenever I think of those blessing others with their quilting skills, I think of my mother-in-law, Leone Bair, who was a talented quilter. She loved to make small Sunbonnet Sue doll quilts. She made dozens of these little quilts for her family, friends and friends' grandchildren. She also made many items for her church's yearly Christmas fair. All gifts of love.

Although she passed away twenty years ago, the two doll quilts still at my house are in good condition even though my girls played with them while they were growing up. At that time, I was not yet a quilter.

I looked at the doll quilts more closely the other day. She hand-embroidered all around the Sunbonnet Sue girl appliquéd and the four appliquéd hearts and then hand quilted the rest of the quilt with small hearts. I know it took a lot of time. The doll quilt is now forty years old. Dare I let my grandchildren play with it? I think I may set that one aside as there is another one, all machine appliquéd and machine quilted that is similar.

Without realizing it, I guess I have carried on her legacy. Last year, after practicing making half square triangles with a charm pack, I turned it into a dolls Christmas quilt. This year I am making teddy bear quilts using another charm pack of bears with guitars for my grandson. We all enjoy being wrapped up in a cozy quilt on a cold winter's night. Wouldn't a bear love one too?

Some people think Valentine's Day is just for sweethearts but over the years, as I did pre-school story hours, I felt it was important to read stories about love to the children. The world can use more love and understanding.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God" 1 John 4:7 As we remind ourselves each February to love others, let us use our gifts of sewing lavishly on this hurting world.

© 2026 Janet M Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at librarybair@hotmail.com

Learning Sewing and Needlework with Grandma and Great-Grandma

by Nancy J. Nash

My father's parents passed away before I was born, but my mother's mother lived until I was a young adult. My great-grandmother lived until I was a sophomore in high school. Both were skilled seamstresses and together with Mom, they taught me basic stitches and techniques.

I felt like I was exploring a new land with comrades. As I made new discoveries, they kept pace with me and they cheered me on. There is nothing like sharing a project with those who love you and encourage your efforts. This may explain why, after all these years, I enjoy mending clothing. It brings back memories of working peacefully side by side, our minds solving problems and our fingers plying needle and thread through fabric. Varieties of textiles - with their endless range of designs, arrays of color and pleasing textiles – continue to fascinate me and attract my attention. I learned to love such things at an early age.

I picture my great-grandmother sitting in a chair by a window, mending socks for the "menfolk" in our family. Her stitches are so tiny that we joke that they are machine made. My father pulls up a chair and she regales him with stories of her youth, like the time a few of her brothers ran out of town the young man hired to run their small village school.

She was a stately woman, fairly tall with ramrod-straight posture. Her white hair, soft as milkweed silk, was pinned up on top of her head. It had turned white in her early twenties from a fever she barely survived. To me, she exemplified perseverance. My mother used to tell me how my great-grandmother had walked home from weekly shopping trips in order to save her bus money to purchase a watch for my great-grandfather. When he later passed away before his scheduled retirement, she was denied any of his pension, so she rented rooms in her house and managed to scrape by. During the Great Depression, she made dresses for my mother to save money for the family.

She could be quite spontaneous. Once a year we'd invite her to a country fair in a nearby town. "I'll get my sweater," was her quick reply. With her love of life, no wonder she lived into her 90s!

My grandmother opened my eyes to new horizons. She instructed me as I tried my hand at crocheting and knitting. However, when my grandmother got bogged down attempting to turn the heel of a knitted sock, I came to the rescue by poring over the pattern's written directions. I managed to figure out how to do it and told Grandma, and then she took over. She mastered the technique and gave away that first pair of heavy socks to one of the "menfolk." Outdoors in cold and snow, the socks kept feet warm and dry. Almost instantly, a waiting list formed for Grandma's winter socks, both menfolk and womenfolk cherishing their thick warmth.

Grandma introduced me to a pattern for a patchwork quilt called Grandmother's Garden. It intrigued me that scraps of cloth could be made to represent a house, a walkway and clusters of flowering plants. I delighted in how our imaginations could play with an abstract design. Years later, I came across an article that juxtaposed photos of old quilts with photos of abstract art by famous modern painters. There were amazing similarities between the intricate geometric patterns of the quilts and the paintings done on canvas.

Most of the quilt makers were probably farm women with little formal education and yet they produced designs strikingly similar to those of highly educated artists. It is not surprising that the art quilters of today produce work with the primary purpose of uplifting the mind and soul of the viewer.

As I look back, one of the main lessons I absorbed from my grandmother and great-grandmother was the importance of perseverance – the ability to plow through thick and thin to reach a goal. Perseverance is necessary for a child to learn skills and to develop vision for what can be done with them. It is vital to life's journey at any age.

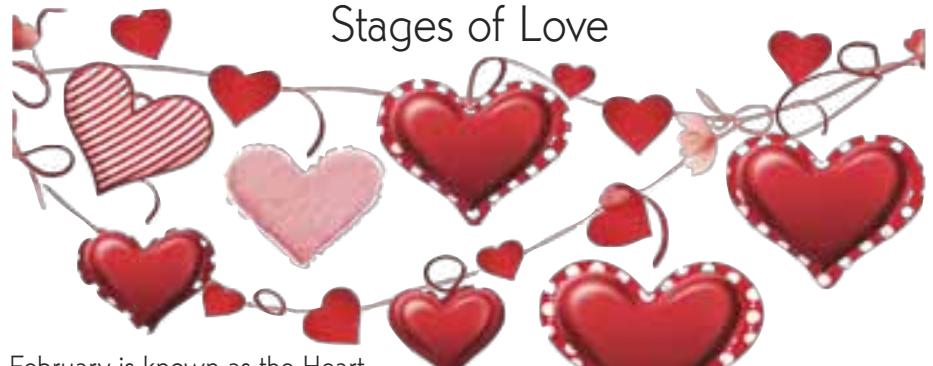
© 2026 Nancy J. Nash is the author of Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story and Little Rooster's Christmas Eve. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. nancynash341@gmail.com.



Over the Teacup

by Janet Young

Stages of Love



February is known as the Heart Month. This is the time when thoughts of love and romance begin to blossom as we get closer to Valentine's Day. Of course, most recently February is also known as Heart Month, reminding us of our cardiovascular health and how to stay healthy. But let's get back to the original meaning, the meaning that comes to mind when we think of Valentine's Day.

"The love in your heart wasn't put there to stay, Love isn't love till it's given away." This is a familiar quote that is often found on pillows or in catalogues or even posters. When I read that, it got me to thinking. From the moment of birth, we are beginning to feel what it is like to be loved. As an infant, we may not know the meaning, but we feel the love that our parents bestowed upon us the instant we were born. As we grow into childhood, it becomes evident that our parents love us, even when they punish us.

Fast forward to our teenage years. This is a time when we may experience what we perceive to be true love, only to experience our first heartbreak. Love can be the most wonderful thing in the world, but it can also bring pain and sadness. Does that mean we never love again? Of course not. As a young person, you will have many opportunities to date until one day you know that you know, this is that perfect person, the one you want to spend the rest of your life with.

Soon you start a family. And again, as you welcome that child into the world you will experience a love that you have never experienced before. And this love will be in your heart until your last breath. This love will take you on a journey unlike any love you experienced before, for no matter what that child does, even if it brings heartache or disappointment, you will always love your child. This is called unconditional love.

Years move on, you are now empty-nesters and perhaps retired and now you can devote your time and love for one another. Your many years of marriage is a testimony of how great love can be.

Unfortunately, there will come a time when you will lose a spouse. This is when you will feel a loss like you never felt before. Your life will never be the same. That is the power of love.

If love can bring pain and heartache, why do we love at all? I believe it is our innate nature to love and be loved. When all is said and done, I think you will agree you would have rather had life full of love than one of loneliness and sadness.

Remember not only on Valentine's Day, but every day, let your loved ones know how much they are loved. Remember: "The love in your heart wasn't put there to stay, love isn't love till you give it away."

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

Recipe: Tossed Broccoli Salad

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds fresh broccoli, trimmed and cut into 1" pieces
- 1/2 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 medium red onion, chopped

Dressing

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp cider vinegar

Directions:

In a large salad bowl, combine broccoli, bacon, cheese and onion. In a separate bowl, combine dressing ingredients. Add to salad and toss. Chill.



Happy Valentine's Day!

Life on My Farm

by Donna Jo Copeland, Farmeress

My Vacation in Hard Times



To paraphrase Merlin when he counseled King Arthur, "sometimes the only vacation is the past." Pretty good advice in troubled times when life comes down hard. The comfort of remembering. Sitting in my drafty unwinterized old farmhouse with snow not too far off, I am vacationing in the distant past. Not just mine but also my ancestors.

Bringing to mind the stories I heard as a child, longing to hear them again. The women, men and children who managed thru hard times, wars, upheaval and somehow made a life.

When I feel beat up (as I age that is more often) stories from my great grandmother Ora come to mind. Her parents homesteaded in Kansas. Her father died after 18 months there, losing the land. Her mother was allowed to load one mule and walked back to Indiana with her 2 babies. I marvel at her strength. I also remember Grandmother Ora telling me a farmer's wife had no business wearing white. I think of that every time I get barn dirt and manure on my white t-shirt, and I never wear white shorts!

Another grandmother was one of four daughters who were given away by their father after the death of her mother, to anyone who wanted them. Fortunately, an older childless couple gave her a good education (I have her 6th grade Latin book). She married a nice man and raised two kids. But somehow there was always a sadness about her.

And I think of how hard my mother worked to raise us five kids in another drafty farmhouse. Quilts hung over windows and doors, rooms closed off in winter. Layers of wool clothes for barn chores. Lots of biscuits and gravy and pots of green beans.

Tonight, I laugh at my old quilts hanging over windows and doors. Rooms closed off. Even hung some up on these uninsulated walls. And the layers of wool I wear to the barn and get chores done even now. I learned well!

The old quilts are a comfort in themselves. Some are family treasures; some I've made and others from friends or estate sales. The estate sale ones carry their own grief –no one in the family wanted them. They are welcome and loved here.

I find it sad that textiles, the necessity of life, are so unappreciated. I'm one who patches barn jeans, replaces zippers. I keep a couple of good jeans for trips to town. I even darn socks; thankful Grand Dad taught me (and to mend horse harness.)

With the coming snow I think of walking thru deep drifts to the barn and out the lane to the neighbors to catch the bus at 7am, wearing plastic bread sacks over our shoes as we had no boots. I'm thankful today for my lined boots.

With a hot cup of tea and chocolate chip cookie I savor memories of conversations around the old kitchen table. Just daily life. As an older farm gal, I'm glad to have the memories, the family and generational stories. The very stuff of life. And I grieve for families today who don't have the comfort of kitchen table talk.

Walking through the past helps me face the future, reminded I'm of strong stock. And I know I need to do a better job of writing down these stories as I'm now the crone of the family. Damn, how did I get here so fast?

One thought while I'm on vacation, I really need to document our family textiles for whomever comes after (side note, the only thing I have from great-great grandmother Fields is her Prairie bloomers.)

May you all take a memory vacation, pause and remember, laugh, cry and be thankful. Deep winter can be hard but we can manage.

Great Aunt Ethel's Cracker Jack

Pop about 2 gallons of popcorn, put in large bowl or pan. Set aside.

2 c sugar

1 c sorghum molasses

4 T water

2 T cider vinegar

1 t salt lump of butter

Mix into a heavy pan, cook until a drop forms a hard ball in water. Stir in a pinch of baking powder, stir well. Pour over popped corn, mix well, pour out on marble table to cool. Store in airtight container.

© 2026 Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor in Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owners/operators, Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life



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

Chicken Noodle Casserole

recipe from Sloane Layton

- 12 oz wide egg noodles
- 2 (10.5 oz) cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 3 cups cooked, shredded chicken
- 1/2 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
- 1 (12oz) bag frozen peas and carrots
- 1 1/2 cups crushed butter crackers
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- chopped parsley, to serve

Preheat the oven to 375°. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over medium-high heat. Add the egg noodles and cook, stirring occasionally, until just al dente, about 7 minutes. Drain and set aside. Stir together the cream of chicken soup, milk, cheese, pepper, and salt in a large bowl. Stir in the chicken, onion, celery, peas and carrots. Gently fold in the egg noodles. Transfer to a 13x9 inch baking dish and spread in an even layer. Stir together the cracker crumbs and butter in a medium bowl. Sprinkle mixture evenly over the casserole. Bake until heated through and the topping is lightly browned. About 30-35 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.



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Pieces From My Heart

by Jan Keller

Last Times

I've always appreciated the mystique and charm created by the mere mention of past Christmases, birthdays, or any other special occasion celebrated together with family and friends. They're times when I seem to reflect on priceless memories.

This past holiday season I found myself reflecting on the bittersweet memories of a Christmas past. It was a wonderful day. Full of feasting, family and festivities. Yet, because of the reality of my mother-in-law's diagnosed cancer, just beneath the surface of conscious awareness lurked her uncertain future.

Following what had been a fun-filled day, Mable gave each of us a hug and a kiss while preparing to leave and head for home. It was then, as Mable collected her dishes from the kitchen, that I saw how hard she was struggling to hold back her tears. I sensed she was wondering if this particular Christmas would prove to be the last time she would have a physical presence at any Christmas celebration.

This particular Christmas also happened to be the last time I saw Mable adorned by her own hair. For, by the time a week had passed and the New Year arrived, chemotherapy had played one of its typical nasty tricks.

When we went to visit on New Year's Day, Mable greeted us at their door wearing her new wig and looking as if she wanted to break down and have a good cry. The tension of the moment was broken when she melted into my arms, saying, "If you want to see my hair, it's in the bathroom wastebasket."

That was the last time I ever saw her cry.

Many of the last times I remember were ordinary and typical. Commonplace. At least they seemed common at the time.

The last time she visited our home.

The last time she cooked us a meal.

The last time we talked together on the telephone.

The last time we got a note from her in the mail.

The last time I saw her sitting in her recliner, busying herself with her handiwork.

The last times I remember go on and on, and yet, there is one last time I especially like to think about—the last time I saw Mable smile.

It was the Saturday, one week after she walked with help into the hospital for what would be the last time.

It had been a week which brought with it rapid physical deterioration. Her arms had become useless attached appendages. While family and friends took turns being there to lovingly feed her, Mable's own arms and hands lay heavy and motionless at her sides.

Her legs, too, fell victim to cancer's vicious attack. No longer could they stand in support of her weight. Why, they couldn't even change their position under the covers on the bed.

Her vision had dimmed so much that the big schoolroom type clock could no longer tell her the time. Hauntingly it hung on the wall in her hospital room, constantly ticking away the moments we had left to spend together.

The relatives who gathered for one final visit filled her room to overflowing. Instead of being clear and distinct individuals, they had become shadows—recognizable to Mable only by the voices that accompanied them.

It was into this setting that one of Mable's nephews brought his beautiful baby granddaughter for a get-acquainted visit.

As all of the relatives gathered in the room and around Mable's bed took joy and delight in the baby, someone looked at me and said, "Take the baby close to Mable so she can touch her."

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Obliging, I picked up the baby and carried her close to Mable, where I held the infant up and over the rails of the bed. Then, to allow Mable to feel the baby's presence, I firmly grasped her hand and raised it up to the baby's head.

The baby, who wasn't a bit happy about being interrupted in the middle of a bottle, decided to voice a loud protest amid all this commotion by starting to cry.

At that moment, in response to a sound ringing clearly with promise for the future, an unmistakable and memorable smile spread across Mable's face and brightened her countenance.

Recalling how difficult and different life was after Mable's passing still brings tears to my eyes. And yet, through my tears, I catch sight of a rainbow. This rainbow of promise for the future comes in the form of my memory of the last time Mable smiled. By smiling in the midst of her personal pilgrimage through the valley of the shadow of death was as if Mable gave a sweet benediction to life and all it represents.



Love at First Sight

by Becky Van Vleet

"How do I look, Mildred?" Alberta fluffed her hair and stood on tiptoe next to her bed at the shipyard.

"Just lovely, sweetie." Mildred pulled her hand. "Come on. Time to go. I want to beat the boys."

When the girls arrived at the St. Julien restaurant in San Francisco, Alberta scooted into the half-circle cushioned burgundy seat surrounding a round wooden table to wait for her blind date. Had she done the right thing? Mildred had twisted her arm, that's for sure.

When two sailors meandered toward them, Mildred elbowed her. "That's them. My boyfriend, Robbie, is on the left. The other one, umm, the other one must be your date."

Alberta gulped. She rubbed her damp palms on her skirt beneath the table. She whispered, "He's so handsome. What's his name?"

"Walter."

I'm passionate about family stories and preserving them, one at a time, for the next generations. I tap into my imagination for how events may have happened. Sheer fun for me. Moments I never actually witnessed come alive in vivid color in my movie mind.

As a baby boomer, I grew up with parents who occasionally shared relics about the Great Depression and World War II. Truth be told, I wish I'd asked more questions. At the time, I had no idea historians would one day crown their resilience as the Greatest Generation. But now, I esteem their stories more than ever.

My parents' WWII romance narrative is unique. A whirlwind romance if I've ever heard one. For some background, my mother, Alberta Thomas, hitchhiked from Indiana with her best friend, Mildred, to California after high school to serve the WWII effort. Her friends had scattered. Boys had joined various military branches faster than sparks flying from a fire. Many of her girlfriends had joined the female military counterparts.

But my mother's adventurous spirit took her on a different path. She set off across the country with her thumb up to hitch rides to eventually arrive at Mare Island Shipyard. Of course, hitchhiking during the early 1940s was much safer, and even somewhat common for women without cars. Upon arrival at the shipyard, she converted to a Rosie the Riveter with her welding assignments.

In the meantime, my father, Walter Troyan, served as a young gunner on the USS Denver in the South Pacific, enlisting at age seventeen. When a torpedo severely struck his ship, the vessel traveled to Mare Island Shipyard for major repairs which lasted from January to May 1944.

Although the sailors were still required to work during the overhaul time, they were granted a 30-day liberty leave. The 50,000 civilians working at Mare Island, mostly women, also had some time off from their six-day workweek. Sailors itching for dates with female employees was not uncommon.

Robbie, my father's friend, had already linked up with a new girlfriend, Mildred. He convinced my father to go on a blind date to meet Mildred's girlfriend, Alberta. My father thought, why not? Still a teenager, he'd already witnessed more battles and carnage than he ever imagined.

My parents fell in love instantly at the restaurant where they met. Between their working shifts, more dates followed, sometimes with my father's shipmate, Eddie Page, and his wife Emma. At the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco, my mother eagerly accepted his proposal, barely a month later, when he slipped a diamond ring on her finger. Within days, my father's parents hosted their engagement party from their home in Santa Rosa.

Before his ship left Mare Island to reenter the war, the couple squeezed in a few more dates, cementing their commitment. From May 1944 to November 1945, they exchanged letters for the remainder of WWII. Wasting no time, they married on December 2, 1945, just eleven days after my father stepped off the ship. We've all heard the expression, love at first sight. It was for them. Their unwavering commitment, staying married until their deaths, remains an inspiring example to me.

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



Walter & Alberta Troyan
Newlyweds after WWII

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February 22, 1980: In one of the most dramatic upsets in Olympic history the underdog U.S. hockey team, made up of college players, defeats the four-time defending gold-medal winning Soviet team at the XIII Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid, New York.

Happy New Year!

Blueberry White Chocolate Mug Cake

- 1/3 cup Original Bisquick™ mix
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tbsp plus 1 teaspoon milk
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1/4 tsp vanilla
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup fresh blueberries
- 1/4 cup white vanilla baking chips
- Fresh whipped cream



1. In a medium bowl beat Bisquick, sugar, milk, oil, vanilla and egg until just a few lumps remain.
2. Divide batter into 2 ungreased mugs.
3. Top each mug with blueberries and white vanilla chips. (Do not stir)
4. Microwave both mugs at the same time for 2 1/2 - 3 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.
5. Cool Slightly.
6. Top with whipped cream and more blueberries.

Recipe by Betty Crocker

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