



The Country Register®


Nov-Dec 2023

Available across the U.S.A. & Canada

Your Complimentary Guide to Specialty Shopping and Events
for Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma & Texas



GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



Life's Lessons from a Cat!

Stay Alert - you never know when you might need to jump! **Be Curious** - you wouldn't want to miss the little things in life, or the magical wonder of nature!

Take care of yourself - you are the only one who really knows what you need.

Be Patient - you might not get your food exactly when you want it, but your turn will come. **Take Naps** - we all need to be refreshed and see a new perspective on the day. **Show a friend support** just by being with them, no need to say a word, just be by their side. **Practise having an independent spirit**, do your own thing now and then. **Balance** your life between work and play, it is one of the keys to a Happy Life. **Pay attention** to those you love, the rewards are many!

Connection is essential, like a nice stroke down your back.

Get outside! The fresh air, the wind in your hair/fur lifts your spirits.

And finally - Find a **Place of Solitude** to contemplate dust particles in a ray of sunshine coming through a window!

You will never know what you have missed until you try it!

Joy & Blessings,

Jody

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

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Be Jolly & Gobble 'til You Wobble!



Our Search for Cover Artwork –

Across the U.S. and Canada, you can always tell *The Country Register* by it's cover. Our publishers seek to find cover art or photos from the state the paper represents. To that end, we are seeking the work of artists from Missouri to feature on our covers. The art must be in good taste and consistent with the theme of the papers.

If you would like your work to be considered, please send an email indicating your interest to countryregister@hotmail.com

About Our Cover Art...

Cathy Shoemaker

As a graphic designer, you can usually find Cathy sitting at her computer creating ads and layouts for print publications and social media. To help offset some of the damage from sitting most of the day, and for her mental health, she takes long walks with her camera in tow. "Being able to share my adventures through my photos keeps me motivated to get outside and take a break even when the weather isn't cooperating. Having Florida as my playground doesn't hurt either."

This issue's cover image was generated with the help of Adobe Express' text to image AI app and Cathy's imagination.

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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's life—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.

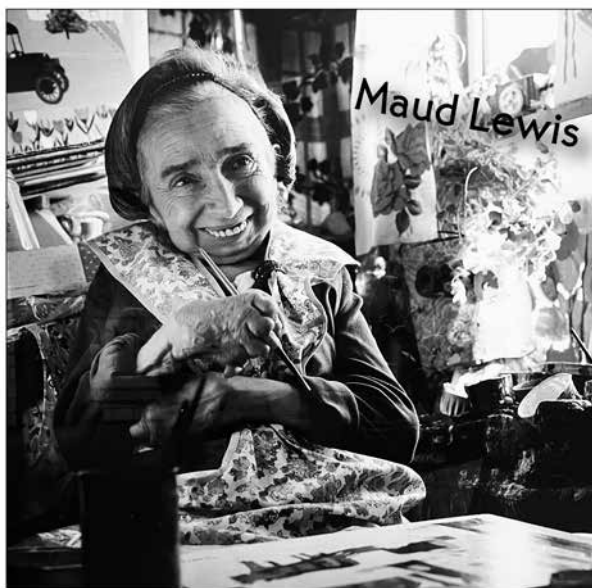
Seeking to prove able to make a life for herself, free-spirited and punky Maud answered an ad for a live-in housekeeper in the autumn of 1937 and began working for Everett Lewis, a fish monger and laborer who lived alone in a small house near Marshalltown.

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



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

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

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 home's original foundation.

We could look through the metal slats and try to imagine what it was like to live there.

The structure had one small window upstairs in the attic area, and the larger window and door downstairs.

Maud, primarily confined to the main level, loved her 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.

(story continues on next page)



Photo by Jan Keller



Photo by Jan Keller



Photo by Jan Keller



Photo by Jan Keller



Photo by Jan Keller

A PEEK INSIDE THE HOME OF MAUD AND EVERETT LEWIS

(story continued from previous page)



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.

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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, here are some recipes to consider for your after-Thanksgiving teatime.

Turkey Sandwiches: Take Two

Turkey-Salad Croissants

Delicious to gobble up with leftover, moist turkey.

Gather

- 2 cups diced turkey
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup diced celery
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise (more if you prefer it moister)
- 2 T. cream or milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lettuce leaves, washed
- Large or small croissants

Directions

1. Mix together the turkey, celery, raisins, mayonnaise, cream or milk, salt, and pepper. Chill the mixture for 30 minutes to blend flavors or until ready to fill the croissants.
2. Slice croissants in half horizontally. Fill with a thick layer of turkey salad. Add a lettuce leaf.
3. Wrap and refrigerate the filled croissants until ready to serve.
4. For large croissants, cut the sandwiches in half. Serve smaller croissants whole.

Makes 2 cups filling

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 T raspberry jam or cranberry sauce (whole berry or jellied)
- Butter

Directions

1. Mix together cream cheese and cranberry sauce or raspberry jam.
2. Spread three slices of bread with the cream cheese mixture. Place 2 slices of turkey on each.
3. Spread butter on the remaining three bread slices. Place them on top of the slices with turkey to close the sandwiches.

4. Wrap and refrigerate the sandwiches until ready to serve.
5. Before serving, trim the crusts. Then cut each sandwich diagonally in both directions to make 4 small triangles.

Makes 12 tea sandwiches

Variation: Turkey Rollups: Substitute three or four 8-inch flour tortillas for the bread. Spread each with the flavored cream cheese, add sliced turkey, and roll up. Wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve. Cut each rollup into six pinwheels.

Festive Cranberry-Orange Scones

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

1. Using your favorite scone mix, replace the liquid in the recipe with orange juice.
2. Add 1/4 cup white chocolate chips and 1/4 cup raisins.
3. Prepare and bake according to the directions.
4. 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.

Praline Pumpkin Pie

Our son's favorite pumpkin pie.

Transform an ordinary pumpkin pie recipe by adding this praline layer on the unbaked crust.

Praline mixture:

- 1/4 cup butter, melted
 - 1/3 cup brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup pecan halves
- Combine butter and brown sugar. Cook and stir until the mixture bubbles. Mix in pecans.

1. Spoon the praline mixture onto the unbaked pie crust.
2. Pour the pumpkin filling over the praline mixture in the crust.
4. Bake according to recipe directions.
5. Chill. Serve with whipped cream.
6. Optional: For a new flavor twist, add 1/4 teaspoon maple extract to the whipped cream.

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. Her books are available through bookstores and online.

The Christmas Trees That Could Not Be Sold

by Nancy J. Nash

Many years ago, my father operated a Christmas tree business in Massachusetts. Every October, he would drive his old Studebaker car to rural Vermont or eastern Canada, keeping an eye out for stands of tall and shapely balsam and spruce visible from the road. He was seeking batches of trees he could line up to buy wholesale in early December. He and a few hired men would return to cut them down, bundle them (wrap twine around the branches to keep them from jostling), and transport them back home to sell in open lots in a nearby city. For now, he drove along and kept watch, and when he spotted a promising patch of trees, he would go looking for the owner.

Usually, he found these evergreens in pastures belonging to nearby farmers. Dad offered them a small amount to purchase the trees, coupled with a promise to return in December with a truck and a crew to cut down the trees and take them off the farmers' hands. They were eager to sell and delighted to have more land freed to plant their crops – sparing themselves the tedious and risky work of felling the trees on their own.

One October was different. Driving past an attractive set of trees, Dad pulled up his Studebaker to the closest farmhouse. Stepping out of the car, he noticed the quiet all around him. The porch was dilapidated. Poverty hung like a shadow over the house.

He knocked on the door, and moments passed. A cat ambled by on the porch. Finally, the door creaked open, and an old man with a long, white beard appeared. My father offered to purchase the stand of trees he had spotted, but the man quietly refused.

Too stunned to speak, my dad gazed at the person in the doorway. The man was scrawny, and his clothes were faded and threadbare. Nonetheless, he had the kindest eyes my father had ever seen. It was a kindness that welled up from the depths of his being, at once gentle and steady. Time stood still in the face of the old man's peaceful certainty. The words my father had planned to say slipped away unspoken. He thanked the man and left.

Still puzzled, Dad headed into town for a bite to eat at a small restaurant, where he struck up a conversation with a local resident.

"Why?" Dad asked. "Why wouldn't the old farmer sell his trees? I'm sure he needs the money."

"I know what you mean," came the reply. "But you see, his wife is very ill. Poor woman has been bedridden for a few years now. He looks after her the best he can. Folks hereabouts take turns dropping by with good, hot meals. They've been helping that way for a long time. He can't afford to pay them, so when Christmas rolls around, he gives these families their pick of trees from his woodlot. It's the only way he knows to thank them, I guess. Saves them money they don't have."

At last, my father understood. He never forgot the old man with the long, white beard and the threadbare clothes and the kindest eyes he ever saw.

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



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WIT AND WISDOM

O Christmas Tree!

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 had 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.



The Christmas Wish

by Deb Heatherly

Ok, I'll admit that Little Sam is not the most original name, but what else do you call a cat that looks exactly like another except for size? Little Sam just seemed to fit.

I'm not sure exactly when he made his presence known, but I clearly remember he was very aloof, coming near only when he knew it was dinner time. For a year he watched me, hiding under bushes and watching my every movement in the yard. At the same time, I watched him and wondered if I would ever be anything but a free meal.

Finally, the day came when I was allowed the honor of petting his head while he ate. Eventually I was allowed to pet him for longer lengths of time and even hold him for short intervals. Still, it was very clear that this feral would always be guarded and that snuggling and cuddling were just not in his nature. I was ok with that and happy to be his caretaker.

His boundaries defined; it took me by complete surprise when Little Sam brought home a friend. Actually, more than a friend. Little Sam brought home a kitten and decided to play mother. The tiny gray and white bundle of fur seemed almost attached to Sam's side as they walked in the yard, and most afternoons I'd see them curled up tightly as they slept in the sun. Male or female, I had no clue for the mere sight of me sent the little one under the house with Sam in hot pursuit. Where Sam was, the kitten was. These two were never far apart.

Sam was a good teacher and the kitten paid close attention. I watched from the window as Sam taught him to chase bugs, climb trees, and use my car tire as a scratching post. He also learned quickly to go in and out of the kitty door of the heated shelter we had on the property. This building had been built for the feral cats we fed and looked out for and it was on one of the kitten's visits to the shelter that I thought it was a good idea to teach him about human contact.

Let's just say that I was the one that did the learning that day. Although armed with leather gloves and determination, I was no match for Sam's little student. After much hissing, spitting, and growling the little one, who I named Spitfire because of this encounter, jumped out of my hands and out the kitty door he flew.

While I did hold him briefly that day, he was too mad at being caught to realize that I only wanted to show him love. Love was not something he desired or something I could force. It was then that I realized that I might have finally met my match. I would have to learn patience if I ever wanted to earn his trust.

Several months passed and Spitfire was becoming a handsome young man. Each day he came closer to me, and seemed to be learning that I meant no harm, but any wrong movement or loud noise sent him into a hasty retreat.

(story continues next page)

(story continued from previous page)

Christmas was quickly approaching and my only wish that year was for our young charge to like me, or at least tolerate me enough to allow me to touch him. I did not desire presents, just the feel of this sweet kitty under my fingers. I shared this wish with my family, but no one gave me any hope.

Christmas arrived that year with bitter cold and a cutting wind. Late in the afternoon I ventured outside to wait for my 'present.' He always showed up around the same time knowing I would feed him but today there was no sign of him.

Fooled again I thought. He was the smart one, probably curled up in the kitty shelter out of the cold while I sat on the backsteps shivering. Three times I rattled the food bowls and called which had always worked in the past but not today. On this chilly Christmas evening he was nowhere to be found.

With cold hands and a sad heart, I was about to give up when finally, I caught a glimpse of him out of the corner of my eye. Then, as if he had lived there all of his life, he marched right up to me, looked at the food dish, and loudly demanded his dinner. Much to my delight, he was far too busy eating to notice when I simply reached down and picked him up. I thought for a moment that I was dreaming.

I snuggled, I kissed, and I whispered soft words to my furry captive. He glared at me and then settled into the 'torture.' I was thrilled with each glorious second, but I could almost hear him thinking: "Ok, I'm putting up with this but only because its Christmas."

I'd like to tell you that after that night we were best friends, but Sam's kitten, like Sam, had a mind of his own. I was allowed to pet him when it suited him and on other days, I was back to being a free meal.

In the end, I decided I was ok with him being the boss. Watching him mature and seeing the love between him and Sam was a gift in its own. I would love him on his own terms and be content in the knowledge that Sam had taught him the most important lessons of all - where to find food, where to find shelter, and where to call home.

Authors note: Someone recently asked me if I had a favorite Christmas memory which brought this story to mind. Although this took place many years ago, I will always remember it as one of the best Christmas days of my life. Each year I reflect on what my family deemed as my impossible wish and what I fondly recall as my furry Christmas miracle.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, "Grids Girls," for tips and inspiration. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/770429649800457/>. Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>.

Visit Deb's website at www.Debcatsnquilts.com.

3 ingredient Peanut Butter cookies

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- 1 cup sugar



Mix all 3 ingredients. Roll into walnut sized balls. Flatten with a fork dipped in flour or sugar, crisscrossing on the top.

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Thanks to Deb Heatherly for sharing this easy and delicious recipe!

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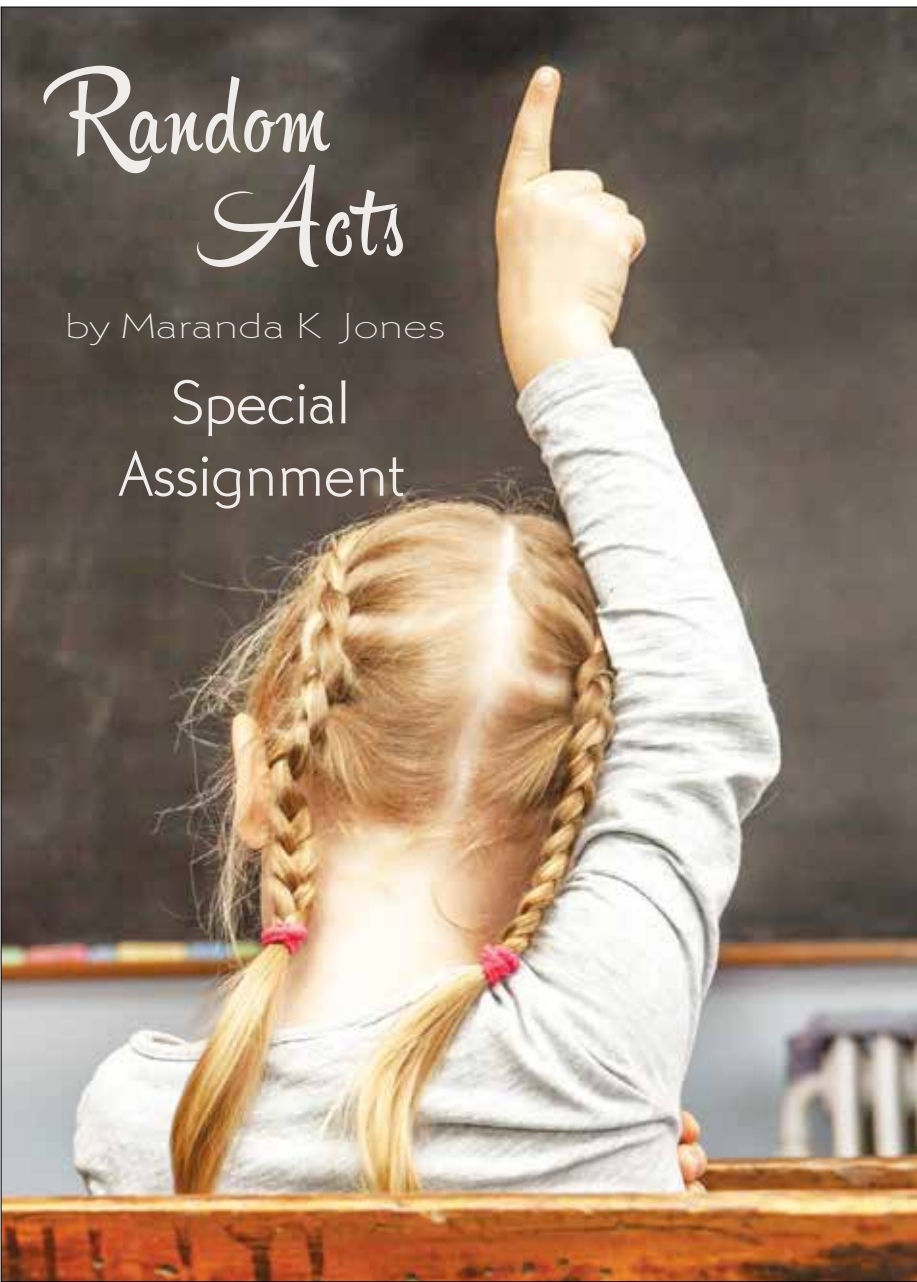
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Random Acts

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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Fill in the puzzle so that every row across, every column down and every 9 by 9 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.
Solution on p. 17

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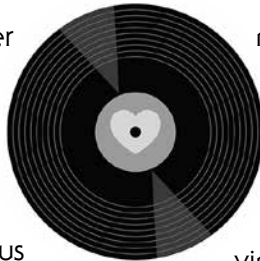
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Be Thankful



VINYL MEMORIES

by Daylyn Miller



I watched as my 33-year-old son Ryan bent way down under the dusty shelves in the back of the storage room. We had finally found a day to be together to start unpacking the basement chaos. It had been 3 trying months since my husband's funeral and my two boys and I were continuing the unsettling process of sorting through their dad's things. The emotions on some days were taking their toll, and tackling one room at a time kept us guessing at what we would uncover. At only 59, Bill had accumulated a ton_of_stuff. Or should say mem-o-ries. Ryan called for me to hand him a flashlight. I searched and found one in the vast pile of camping equipment and handed it to my youngest son, 26-year-old Jeremiah. He crouched down near the shelf ledge next to his brother. I watched them each from behind, and a few sad happy tears welled up in me as I marveled at their broad shoulders. They both so resembled their father, the love of my life since I was a young girl. My 6'7" sons unfolded themselves and lifted out the first of many boxes. My husband had been an avid collector of almost everything. Not only was he an Eagle Scout and a detail-oriented rocket scientist, but the other side of Bill's brain carried a deep passion to beat the heck out of his massive drum collection. A talented musician from the time he was 12, Bill had developed a love of all kinds of music, it was a common bond we shared from the early years of our relationship, and we had various instruments and amplifiers sharing space with the boxes, all strewn across the basement carpet. I watched the boys continue the heavy lifting and let myself stop and remember back to the beginning before our family was born.

At 16, I would sit on Bill's twin size bed in his disheveled typical teenage boys room, listening to old records and watching as he sat behind his drums and prepared to play along with The Four Seasons, Herman's Hermits, and Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass. Bill transformed from his usual quiet shy demeanor into a different person when he started to drum. He would pull out his albums from the box next to his stereo, (it's a stretch to call it a stereo), find the song he wanted, and place that little needle arm carefully along the record's edge. I remember being so impressed with how many songs he knew. From oldies to the Bee Gees to Boston, "More Than a Feeling", and the popular theme song from "Hawaii-Five-O" were his favorites, and he rocked them. I fell in love with him drumming to those two songs.

Bill and I had grown up in everything together, so going through all of this was a cascade of emotions for me. My sons had followed suit with a love of music, and our basement was a percussionist's dream. Bill would play his drums whenever he needed a release. He was very committed to all his various interests and a sentimental giant to boot. It seemed everywhere we looked there was a crate or a bin with a story attached to it, and an unspoken desire that he would get back to it "someday?". I pushed those thoughts aside, pulled myself together, and watched the boys peer back underneath the metal brackets to grab another worn box that had been pushed back against the concrete wall. There were three incredibly heavy cardboard boxes that had likely been put there the day we moved in ages ago. The boys carried the massive weight of them out into the main room, being careful not to let the heavy treasures inside fall out the bottom.

I knew what we had found. I smiled to myself as we opened the tops and started to blow the dust off the old vinyl albums. Not only Boston and Hawaii-Five-O, but all the albums from his youth and the early years of our marriage were in those boxes. There were records from my childhood and classics from my parents' eclectic country collection. Bill had said we should never get rid of any of them. Johnny Cash and Kenny Rogers would've been honored to know the place they held in my basement. We didn't even own a turntable anymore, but it didn't matter. Just looking through the albums brought back many more memories of great music and hopeful dreams for a long future together. Record covers, song

melodies, and liner notes with lyrics of passionate men and women pursuing each other. Love found and then often lost. I ironically pulled out "Big Girls Don't Cry". Wow, we had accumulated quite an extensive collection.

I flipped through the record titles and figured some might be valuable to others. Bill and I had loved going to antique and vintage stores and perusing the albums there. That was one of our many favorite things to do. We'd search through the piles and say, "Do we still have this one?". Well, here they were. The Beatles, and some Elvis, those might be collectibles? But America? One Rod Stewart, and some of my dad's classic Hank Williams? Probably not so much. I was a lover of David Gates and Bread, Dan Fogelberg and John Denver. Most were priceless only to me because they brought back 45-year-old feelings of falling in love anxiously waiting to be able to be together always. "Carry on My Wayward Son" was the first song I ever awkwardly danced with a boy to, and The Beach Boys' "Wouldn't it be Nice", exactly described our teenage courtship, "Hooked on a Feeling" by BJ Thomas, was our song, and let's just be honest, the Eagles "Peaceful Easy Feeling" carried Bill and me out into the desert and pursued attentions that certainly could have gotten us into trouble but mainly made us inseparable.

These records brought this all back to my mind and tugged at my heart. I found my favorite album ever, of which I also embarrassingly owned not only the cassette but the CD too. And these days it's frequently number one on my Apple play list. England Dan and John Ford Coley, remember them? "I'd Really Love to See you Tonight" and "Nights are Forever Without You". We must've played that album 1000 times. Bill's high school garage band had played a pretty good rendition of "Sister Golden Hair", and the gentle side of Bill loved everything Karen Carpenter. I bet he was happy to see her in heaven. We uncovered Seals and Crofts' "I'll Play for You" and my absolute favorite song of all time, "We Will Never Pass This Way Again". Those two songs alone now embrace my being in a whole new way. The emotions took over and memories of 1979 and sitting on Bill's bed rose again in me, and my two big sons enveloped me in a loving bear hug. Their dad had certainly taught them to love their mom well.

Now that Bill is gone, I can't seem to stop listening to all these songs. And even more so now that he's gone, I'm thankful he made us keep these old albums, even if just to look at them and reminisce. I remember dancing at Ryan's wedding to "Amarillo by Morning" and ironically, Jeremiah has his own band now and can play ALL these songs. He DOES own a vintage turntable and was thrilled to add these records to his vinyl collection, or at least the ones I was able to part with once we finished reorganizing that crowded storage room. Everything else is new again. Chicago, Simon and Garfunkel, the list goes on and on.

The fact that I can now easily pull up any genre and song I want to and listen to it on my phone at a moment's notice is almost unreal. Is the memory the same? Sometimes, maybe. I don't have that emotional answer right now. But I will admit I often have Mama Cass singing along with me in my deep, you gotta "Make Your Own Kind of Music". Yes, it's a different life for me now than I ever imagined it would be. I wouldn't trade the memories that came back as we uncovered these boxes. I know my husband and I fulfilled every lyric of every true love song ever written, and I am eternally grateful to him for that.

And now, often when one of our songs comes on that Apple play list, I call my sons, just to tell them how much I love them.

DAYLYN MILLER is a Denver, Colorado writer who loves road trips in the rain with coffee in hand, listening to music and podcasts while driving through the mountains or absolutely anywhere. Before her husband Bill died in November of 2022, they built their teaching and YouTube ministry, RedeemingDoy, which she carries forward, somewhat sentimentally in his



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Memories with Santa Claus

by Kerri Habben Bosman

Towards the end of a year, I sit for a bit and contemplate Santa Claus. Not the one visiting from the North Pole at the mall and not the new decorations in the stores. I just look across the living room and study the form of a 14" stuffed bearded, velvet figure who emerges every December. He spends the rest of the year in a cardboard box that held cans of food 40 years ago.

This Santa has been a part of every Christmas I have ever known.

My great aunt, Aunt Wilma, brought him home in the early 1920's. She was in her early 20's, age-wise. Home then was an apartment in a six family house in Brooklyn, New York that she shared with her mother, three brothers, and a sister, my grandmother. Her father had died suddenly in 1919 when she was 17. She and my grandmother worked as winders in a small knitting mill. Their economic situation was far from prosperous, but somehow there was always enough.

Around the corner from where they lived was a store I've only heard referred to as "the Junkies." I assume it was something like a thrift store. There she found our Santa Claus.

Santa was there the Christmases of 1929 and 1930 that Uncle Henry had to be away at the tuberculosis sanitarium, and he was there through the Decembers my Uncle Bill struggled with a brain tumor in the late 1930's.

Santa listened to the tap of my Uncle Henry's typewriter as he wrote his Christmas correspondence at the dining room table. He was there as my great-grandmother, Nanna, baked and cooked for the holiday. Santa was also there the Christmas of 1958, the first one she wasn't there for.

He was there as the family had grown with

marriages and children arriving. One of those children, of course, was my mother. Santa was there for her first Christmas and every Christmas after. He sat upon the piano as Mom played carols and hymns every December growing up and into early adulthood.

In 1967 Aunt Wilma and Uncle Henry moved from the home that our Santa had known for over 40 years. When Aunt Wilma wanted to toss him out, Mom rescued him. Thus, he has been a part of every Christmas I have ever known.

He was there during my first Christmas in 1973, and he moved to North Carolina with my parents, grandparents, and myself in 1978. He was there through all the changes a few decades bring, including Mom's last Christmas in 2017. Thus, he was saved during the purging of possessions when my husband, Wayne, and I sold my childhood home.

Now Santa has been there for our Christmas celebrations. Wayne's five grown children and their families gather at our house, and we all treasure being together. Santa has seen everyone open their presents, including the knitted and crocheted gifts I make every year with extra love in them.

Our Santa has indeed seen better days. The velvet of his suit is flat and worn, its burgundy red perhaps a bit faded. The once white trim on his clothes is a dull brown in some places and entirely gone in others. His beard is now matted and a yellowish gray, no longer fully glued to his face.

Yet, he exudes more spirit than all the untested, brand-new Santas out there. His fabric face retains every feature with that customary twinkle in his brown eyes. His cheeks are as rosy as if he just arrived on his sleigh.

Our Santa is vibrant with the many decades of December memories that he carries. This Christmas, he will again see what he has seen ever since Aunt Wilma brought him home. He will see love.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer living in Chapel Hill, NC. Her email is 913jeeves@gmail.com.

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Building Harmony

Harmony Christmas

The Effort

by Jeff Cappis

Well, it's Christmas again. I love the traditions and the way it brings people together. Usually you know what to expect. Snow on the ground, a big turkey dinner, family and friends dropping by, and the usual collection of Christmas songs playing over and over. (And over and over...) There are

presents to buy and excited children. Inevitably some one knocks over the Christmas tree. Despite all this I find the routine very comforting.

It is a lot of work. Every year, Cathy and I pull out the boxes marked "Christmas" from storage and decorate the house. On this particular day we put up garnishes, set out ornaments, stockings and wreaths. After hours of decorating and drinking eggnog, we finally got to the main event: the Christmas tree. I have to admit, by that time I just want to sit back and watch a good horror movie, but the boss keeps me going.

We were just about done



when I asked Cathy, "It's a lot of work and we'll only be pulling it all down and putting it away in a couple of weeks. Why do people go to the trouble to put up a tree in the house anyway? When you think about it, this is a very strange tradition." Somehow I wasn't sure Cathy heard me. "Do you think this is all worth the effort?"

Cathy just smiled as she pulled the very last tree ornament from the box. The ornament appeared to be made of crystal. The lights from the tree danced sparkles all different colors through the glass. The ornament had its own small rainbow around it. This wasn't any ordinary ornament and Cathy always put it on last.

You see, Cathy grew up as one of six children. Every year her mother would make six shopping trips (one with each child) so that everyone could keep their presents secret. Cathy loved that time with her mother. You can imagine that being one of six children doesn't afford you a lot of personal alone time with her.

When Cathy was five, her mother bundled her up with a scarf, coat, snow pants, mittens, boots and a hat for the trip to the department store. It was a chilly day and the trip would take two different buses. Cathy could see her breath on the bus' glass window as she watched the houses go by. It was exciting!

When they got to the department store, she found it was filled with wondrous things. There were clothes and toys and jewelry. They looked at it all. Just her and her mother. Cathy thought she was having the best day ever. But it wasn't over just yet.

They finished shopping and were heading to the door when something caught her mother's eye. There was a small crystal ornament sitting in the middle of a bunch of other odd Christmas items. It somehow stood out. Cathy thought it was beautiful. They both admired it.

"Can we get it for the Christmas tree mommy?" Cathy asked with wide eyes and a big smile. Her mother puzzled for a moment.

"Sorry sweetie. We only have enough money for the bus. If we get this, we'll have to walk home." Cathy didn't think about it, she just put on a great big smile and hugged her mother.

So, they set off. It was probably only a half hour walk, but the air was cold. To Cathy it felt like they were going on an expedition across the north pole. The sun would be going down soon. She had to keep her little legs going faster so they'd get home in time. Their breaths hung in the winter air. The snow crunched beneath their feet. All the while Cathy clutched the bag with the ornament in it. Her mother carried the other twelve. She still managed to hold her daughter's hand.

"It's O.K.," Cathy thought. "Mom is with me." The last ten steps were the hardest. The sun had just gone down, it was cold, snow had blown across their front steps. That front door couldn't get close enough. But they made it. Stepping into the warm house, her mother put down all the bags then smiled at her.

She saw Cathy was still clutching the bag with the ornament. Cathy smiled back at her proudly. They pulled it out and thoughtfully hung it on the tree.

"Was it worth the effort?" her mother asked.

"Oh yes!" Cathy replied. She stroked the ornament then she turned to look at me as if she'd just come back from somewhere. I could tell it all from the look in her eyes. We clinked our eggnog glasses, she curled up in my arms and we admired the Christmas tree.

Yes, it's all worth the effort.

Merry Christmas from Jeff and Cathy at Harmony Acres.

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Long sunny harvest days are over. The sunflowers, beanstalks, and pumpkins are gone now.

We’ve raked and spread the gardens with layers of the brittle brown leaves that were once upon a springtime, the “new leaf” we eagerly turned over. Hedgerow trees so lately dressed in voluptuously swaying jade ball gowns are now standing naked and exposed to chilling northerly winds.

November tries desperately to retain his identity; some call him “autumn,” and some call him “winter.” Madison Avenue has made great strides in making November disappear altogether between the Halloween ghosts and the Christmas angels. At Sweetmeadow, we try to keep November all about thankfulness and gratitude. Though some planning is in progress for the fast-approaching holiday season, November brings a restful quietness for hunkering in and valuing time for peaceful introspection. Stepping out on the back deck at nightfall, I understand the conundrum of this beloved “between” month of November. I can be relishing in the smoky smells of a bonfire one moment, and the next, I catch a subtle scent of snow on the wind. Autumn? Winter? Indeed.

We are bird lovers and find great delight in keeping several bird feeders filled faithfully from November until March. I enjoy mixing up and freezing blocks of homemade suet that lasts all winter. We have a stout concrete birdbath equipped with a little warmer to ensure a supply of water that will not freeze. We know all about the debate as to whether this practice is beneficial to wild birds who should know all about the business of how to take care of themselves. But who among us does not like the benefits of having a little easier time when providing for our basic needs? Anyway, we feel the variety of birds that come to our backyard give back to us way more joy than we can ever begin to give to them. Bless their little hearts.

As the year winds down, many of us look more closely at all those folks who have given us reasons to feel thankful and blessed during 2023. We think of the neighbor who took care of our place while we went on short getaways, the doctor who relieved the pain, the church friends who brought friendship and love. We appreciate community volunteers and organizations that generously give time and money toward areas of deep need. We value all the service persons, from the guy who delivers our propane to that mechanic who discovered the problem. We endeavor always to be grateful for all the helpers roundabout and make THANKS-LIVING our aim.

Despite our effort to keep Christmas at bay until after Thanksgiving Day, we do enjoy the colorful lights and festivities that others generously share with the community. I had a friend once who, along with her young family, would drive around and keep a tally of the houses they thought were the best decorated, and close to Christmas Day, they would deliver to the “winning” homeowners a small gift of cookies and candies to say thank you for the joy their holiday spirit gave to them. I think that is a lovely gesture.

In November, my farm kitchen at Sweetmeadow ramps up the holiday baking, as it takes about six weeks to make everything on The List in time for Christmas! I enjoy decorating gingerbread cookies in a wide

variety of shapes and sizes. In memory of a delectable old-fashioned dessert my mother made – gingerbread cake with hot lemon sauce – I like to add lemon extract to the royal icing I pipe onto the cookies. It seems to elevate the taste from kinda ordinary to a “Yum! What’s different about these?” For decades, I’ve kept a little red binder of all the recipes I make annually: the goodies that “it would just not be Christmas without!” Nowadays, these holiday treats are mailed to family members far and wide, who will be reminded that I wouldn’t think of skipping this way of showing my love to them.

As I stand before the frame that holds my prettiest calendar (have you seen the LANG, Field Guide, by Susan Winget?) and physically change the page from November to December, I contemplate the depth of meaning in the symbolic and scriptural phrase: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1). I marvel that the trite phrase, time flies, has become more deeply true the older I get. Back in our 30s and 40s, we would hear all the old-timers throw this comment around at family gatherings, but we had no idea what they were talking about, nor did we really care! It seems that this is just another one of those generational topics we learn to keep on the down-low when we are in the company of our 40-something kids and grandchildren. They wouldn’t really understand either, nor should they have to, as their lives are in full, long-day summer mode! But I digress.

I turn the page to the artistic December cardinals page and pause to ponder the beauty of crisp, wintry days ahead. I choose to see the blessings of all that is to come. The holy moments of advent devotion and the bright expectations of familial togetherness. I envision peace on frosty nights sitting by the fire with hot tea (Bigelow’s Salted Caramel!), a hygge lap quilt, and a good story book (by Laura Frantz!). I imagine the twinkling starshine and milky moonbeams spreading over a light skiff of snow on the meadow. I foresee the white-flocked Christmas tree covered in years of collected redbird ornaments and bright silk poinsettias. I anticipate celebrating the O, Holy Night, the night of our dear Savior’s birth – the thrill of HOPE so this weary world can REJOICE! I pray I’ll fall on my knees and hear the angel voices. I invoke His law of love and His gospel of peace... that chains shall break and all oppression shall cease. I pray we all, a grateful chorus, shout hymns of joy and praise His holy name: Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!

Sweetmeadow Farm is located in the beautiful Missouri Ozarks. Lori and her husband are semi-retired and enjoy relishing the seasons on their small farm. Lori can be contacted at sweetmeadow812@gmail.com.

Solution to puzzle on p.13

1	7	6	4	8	9	3	5	2
3	5	9	2	1	7	8	6	4
8	4	2	6	5	3	9	7	1
9	1	5	7	4	6	2	3	8
4	6	3	8	9	2	5	1	7
7	2	8	5	3	1	4	9	6
5	9	7	1	2	8	6	4	3
6	8	4	3	7	5	1	2	9
2	3	1	9	6	4	7	8	5

Become Inspired Decorating, Entertaining and Living in the Early American Style

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 home's 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

Countryberries Designs Santa Pillow

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.



Whatever craft you choose, have fun and be creative!. Not for commercial use. Please give the artist credit.

Designed by Kathy Graham

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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."

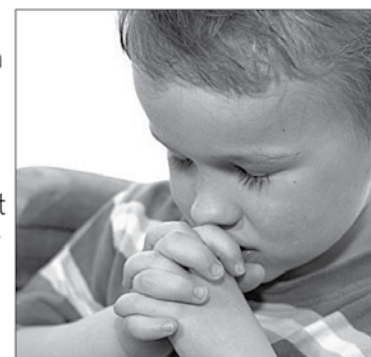
*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.* (Lyrics by Johnson Oatman)

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.



Our Writer's Favorite Holiday Recipes

Candy Cane Crispies

From Lydia's Recipe File

Crisp and buttery cookies that melt in your mouth.

Ingredients:

1 cup butter, softened	1 cup rolled oats
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar, divided	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla	3/4 cup coarsely crushed peppermint candy canes, divided
1 1/3 cups flour	red and green sugar crystals, optional

Directions:

In large mixing bowl, mix together butter, 1 cup powdered sugar, and vanilla.

In another bowl, stir together flour, oats, and salt. Add to butter mixture and blend.

Mix in 1/4 cup crushed candy canes.

Shape dough into one-inch balls. Roll balls into remaining 1/2 cup powdered sugar. Place two inches apart on greased baking sheet (or use parchment paper).

Flatten cookies with fork, making a crisscross pattern. Sprinkle with additional crushed candy canes and sugar crystals.

Bake at 325 degrees for 18 to 20 minutes, until edges are lightly browned.

Cool on baking sheet for 2 minutes. Use spatula to transfer to cooling rack. Store in airtight container. *Makes about 30 cookies.*



Easy Thanksgiving Stuffing

from Nancy J. Nash

Ingredients:

2 packages of stuffing mix (and whatever amount of butter or margarine is specified)
1 large or a couple small onions
garlic and herb seasoning

Directions:

Finely chop the onion. Saute in oil in a frying pan. Occasionally stir the onion while melting the butter or margarine in boiling water in a pot on the stove.

Pour the stuffing mix into the water, then add the onion. Add a generous amount of seasoning and stir the entire mixture before covering and removing from the stove. Let it stand for five minutes before serving.

I use this recipe for 3-4 people. If you have a larger group or want more leftovers, add more of everything.

It may not seem like the onion and seasoning would be necessary, but I find they add extra flavor and freshness, and I get extra compliments!



Peanut Butter Classic Christmas Cookie

from Marty Druck

Ingredients:

1/2 C butter, softened	1 egg
1/2 C white sugar	1 1/4 C flour
1/2 C brown sugar	3/4 tsp baking soda
1/2 C peanut butter	1/2 tsp salt

Directions:

Cream butter, sugars, peanut butter and eggs; set aside. Mix flour, baking soda and salt in a bowl; add to creamed mixture just until it is mixed in. Form into 1" balls and put into mini muffin tins. Bake for 8 minutes at 375. Remove from oven and immediately press 1 peanut butter cup into the center of each. Let cool 10 minutes and then remove to wire rack to cool completely. Makes approximately 4 dozen.



Candy Cane Pie

from Judy Sharer

Ingredients:

1 Oreo pie crust	2 tsp vanilla extract
1 cup heavy cream	1 tsp peppermint extract
1 1/2 cup powdered sugar	1/2 cup peppermint candy canes or mints crushed
2 8-ounce packages cream cheese softened	1 tub Cool Whip
10 drops red food coloring	Crushed peppermint candy for decoration

Directions:

In a large bowl whip the heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Set aside

In a medium bowl cream together the powdered sugar and cream cheese.

Add the food coloring and vanilla and peppermint extract to the cream cheese/powdered sugar bowl and mix until a uniform color.

Mix in the 1/2 cup of peppermint candy bits with the cream cheese/powdered sugar.

Add the powdered sugar/cream cheese mixture to the bowl of heavy whipping cream and mix together on low speed until combined.

Pour mixture into Oreo crust.

Top pie with Cool Whip and crushed peppermint. Chill for 1-2 hours or until ready to serve.



Quick Cake Mix Cookies

from Janet M. Bair

Ingredients:

1 box of cake mix (chocolate works well)
1/3 cup oil
2 eggs

Directions:

Heat oven to 375 degrees.

In large bowl, combine cake mix, oil and eggs; stir by hand until moistened thoroughly.

Shape dough into 1 inch balls. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets.

Flatten to ¼ inch thickness with bottom of glass dipped in flour.

Bake for 6-8 minutes. (These spread into nice circles, so leave enough space on your tray)

When cooled, frost and sprinkle with Christmas sprinkles.

While I Love to bake cookies, sometimes you just run out of time. These have worked well for me over the years and they look nice without too much fuss.



Soft Oatmeal Christmas Cookies

from Donna Jo Copeland, Breezy Manor Farm

An old family favorite.

Cream together

1 stick butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs

Add

Oats
2 T corn oil
1 t. Cinnamon
1 t baking powder
2 1/4 cups flour
Mix well



Directions:

Soak 1 cup of rolled oats in 3/4 cup buttermilk overnight on the counter.

You can add chopped nuts or raisins if you like.

Drop by teaspoons full onto parchment paper lined cookie sheet.

Bake 15 to 20 minutes at 350 degrees.

These are a soft cookie.

Mom's Corn Relish

from Kerri Habben Bosman

Before I was born, my mother created this recipe after enjoying a local restaurant's offering. She tested and tweaked until she felt she'd duplicated it. Her corn relish appeared every Thanksgiving, and it still tastes like the holiday season to me. I make it every year and share it with friends and family between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Of course, it never tastes quite as good as it did when she made it.

Ingredients:

3 stalks celery, diced
2/3 cup liquid from cans of corn
3 cans kernel corn
1 ½ T. dried onion, soaked in water and drained
4 oz. jar chopped pimentos

1 ½ t. celery seed
½ t. dry mustard
½ t. salt
½ c. plus 1 T. sugar
½ c. cider vinegar
2 T. catsup
1 T. cornstarch, dissolved in 4 T. water



Directions:

Cook celery in corn liquid for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, combine all but last two ingredients. Add to celery, mixing well. Cook, covered, over medium heat, stirring often, for 20 minutes. Add catsup and simmer on low for 10 minutes. Add cornstarch mixture and cook for 1 minute over high heat, stirring constantly. Store in refrigerator-it lasts a long time. Makes approximately one quart.

Banana Bread

from Janet Young

Instead of a cookie, quick breads are easy to freeze and keep on hand for unexpected company. Sliced in small square it can be used as a dainty dessert for a tea tray.

Ingredients:

3-4 bananas, smashed
1/3 cup melted butter
1 cup sugar (if want less sweet use 3/4 cup)
1 egg, beaten
1 teas. vanilla

1 teas. baking soda
Pinch of salt
1 1/2 cups flour



Directions:

350 Oven. Smash bananas. Mix melted butter into bananas in a large bowl, Mix sugar, egg, and vanilla. Sprinkle baking soda and salt over the mixture, then mix in. Add flour last, mix. Pour into buttered 4x8 loaf pan. Bake 1 hour. Cool on rack. Remove from pan.

Happy Holidays

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