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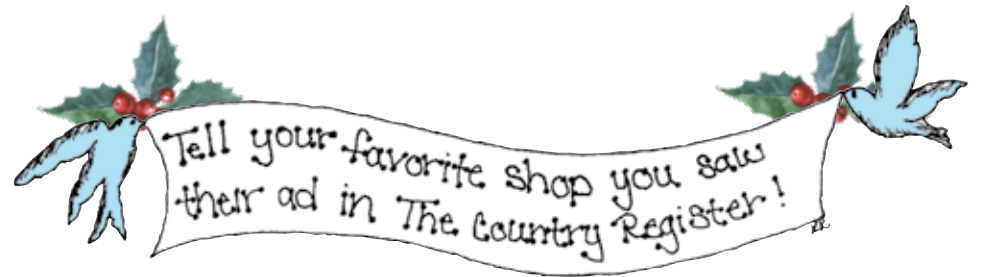
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 December/January 2026 Issue**

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## Meet our cover artist:

### Deb Strain

An art teacher for nine years, Deb Strain left teaching in 1994 to devote herself to her family and the development of her own art. Her husband, three children and twin grandsons are her pride and joy. Their beloved Saltbox home is filled with laughter, creativity and love. It is in the peaceful woods surrounding their home where Deb finds her inspiration. Drawing on memories of growing up in Ohio and times spent with family and friends, she seeks to convey a kinder, gentler way of life.

"Art is my passion, but my "real-life" love is my family," explains Deb. "My two daughters are both artists and my husband and son are our biggest supporters. We are very fortunate to share such a wonderfully bonding interest." Deb feels continually blessed by her family's closeness and being able to follow her dream to create art and share it with others. Her art can be found world-wide on a number of products from fabric to greeting cards to figurines.

To view Deb's art prints, go to [www.PennyLaneFineArt.com](http://www.PennyLaneFineArt.com) or call Penny Lane Fine Art at 800-273-5263 for more information.



Building Harmony

## Christmas 2025 - Building Memories

By Jeff Cappis

It's that time of year again. I love Christmas! We get to reconnect with family, see the magic in things and eat too much. Out here, the countryside gets covered in a blanket of snow that never gets disturbed. It looks good, even at -40 degrees.

The one thing I like are the memories. You can know what you were doing this time last year, or maybe thirty years ago. (I won't admit to looking back more than that). Both Cathy and I have great memories of our childhood Christmases, so naturally, we wanted to create some for our grandchildren as well.

Our property around the house lights up nicely at night, so we decided to create a small winter wonderland for the kids. We put Christmas lights around some of the trees. I dug a small toboggan run through the snow. The ice on the pond froze over so we had a small skating rink.

Cathy found some yard ornaments of deer that light up, move their heads from side to side and go "Moo." (We all know that deer don't go "Moo," but I guess the Chinese manufacturer didn't). They scared away the real deer too. Soon we were into a large inflatable Santa and an inflatable snow globe we saw at a department store. When plugged in, it inflates and lights up to reveal a large snowman inside with snow falling around him. Then we got another one, only with a working carousel in it. After that, out went the electric candy canes. We even found some little elves who busily work making toys. The icing on the cake was a series of five fireworks. All this was connected to a single switch so I could turn it all on at once. We picked out the Christmas music to play and Cathy decided we'd serve hot chocolate.

I have to admit, it looked great! We took a few test walks through our creation. It made us feel a little like children again. A couple of glasses of wine didn't hurt either. The colors, the blinking lights and all the activity looked great. All we needed was a fresh blanket of snow and wait until Christmas. Bring on the grandkids.

On Christmas Eve we had a filling dinner, then promised the kids Hannah, five and Hunter, three, that we had a surprise for them. They got excited as we all put on our snow suits. Cathy poured us all hot chocolate and we headed out onto the deck where the spectacular could be seen the best. Then came the count:

"Five, four, three, two, one..." and I hit the switch.

I am happy to say that somewhere in the world that night there were children laughing and running around a winter wonderland. I am unhappy to say that it wasn't at our place.

One of the deer went "Moo" then fell over. Only one of the five fireworks went off. It went straight up, then straight down into a snowbank without going off. The inflatable snowman and Santa began to emerge from the snow like 2 ghouls rising from their snowy graves. Hunter spilled his hot chocolate all down the front of his coat. Hannah hid behind Cathy. Then one of the candy canes shorted out and everything went dark.

We all stood there stunned for a moment. Then the firework went off in the snowbank, blowing snow all over us. Through the cold, quiet darkness I could hear Hunter say, "I'm hungry. Can I have some potato chips?" Hannah said, "Let's go watch a movie."

Nothing went as planned. For Cathy and me it was a bitter disappointment, but still we never forgot it. In fact, we all laugh about it now. I guess real memories happen, they're seldom designed.

Here's hoping you have memories of this season. Merry Christmas and best regards from all of us at Harmony Acres.

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### Our Search for Cover Artwork -

Across Canada and the U.S. you can always tell *The Country Register* by its cover. Our publishers seek to find cover art or photos from the province/state the paper represents. To that end, we are seeking the work of artists from Ontario 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 [OntarioCountryRegister@gmail.com](mailto:OntarioCountryRegister@gmail.com)



## Free Pattern

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# I'll be home for Christmas if only in my dreams!

By Sharon Atkinson

Many, many a year has come and gone from those Christmases of long, long ago. But each year, I always find myself looking back and remembering. There was for me a special place, a special time & special people who continue to inhabit my memories.

Let's take a trip back home. A trip down a winding country road. An old gate stands ajar & beckons you to open the door to an old farmhouse. A door to memories. I know I always found comfort there.

We can't go home again to that old farmhouse with its broken shingles & vacant windows, as it is now a house with nobody in it. But it was a house that once did what a house should do. A house is just four walls, but a home puts its wooden arms around you & embraces you. Home is where your life story begins. Come home, weary traveller. This house echoes with laughter and greetings of "Merry Christmas". The aroma of a large turkey simmers in the old cook stove. This enticing scent mingles with the smell of cranberries, homesteaders relish, mincemeat pie, Christmas oranges, homemade bread & butter, rich gravy & the traditional Christmas pudding.

Somehow, there is room for all around the old wooden table with its seasonal red & green tablecloth. We will gather round & feast upon the sight of the food & the grandparents & their offspring gathered there.

Prior to the meal, everyone seems to talk at once. The men gather in the kitchen with the shiny green painted walls; sitting on the wooden chairs or old couch where there is always a Western Producer, The Dalesman (from Yorkshire), or Country Guide lying reposed waiting to be picked up & read after the company is gone. Talk is predominantly of last year's harvest, current cattle prices and catching up on changes & events in rural & urban life.

The women sit & chat in the room, always appropriately called "the sitting room" (never the living room). The glass in the old pot-bellied stove glows red & yellow from the fire within. "My, how you've grown.", "What grade are you in now?", "So what have you been up to since we last were together?". Those words bounce off the cream colored tin walls in that room as recipes & stories of raising children are exchanged.

The children are here, there & everywhere. Excited voices ask: "What did you get for Christmas?" "What games are we going to play after the dinner is cleared away?" "What time did you get up to open your presents?"

A time before the internet, video games, and just imagine - there wasn't even a telephone in that old house. A simpler time. A time of innocence. A time before that group of children assembled there, worried about career choices, mortgage payments, and all those other issues that were to await them in adulthood.. We didn't know what life held in store for any of us. Almost like guessing by shaking & prodding that mysterious box under the tree addressed personally to you...life can sometimes hold unexpected happiness, sadness or just plain unpredictable surprises. Looking back, did you become the person who hoped you would be & did your life satisfy you like that home-cooked Christmas meal? I hope so.

After the table is cleared away & the dishpan is filled with hot water from the reservoir on that old, glistening black & shiny chrome cook stove & the special dishes & cutlery, used only at Christmas, are washed, dried & stacked in the cupboard, then Uncle Joe always brought out the wine. Always from Australia, always strong, always just one glass & usually accompanied by that rich, delicious fruit cake made by Aunt Doris.

So, savour the smells, the Christmas memories & enjoy those special moments. When you look back, it is the little, everyday moments that really count & make up a life.

So take a moment and remember all those with whom we no longer share Christmas with. Time & life marches on. But I remember a special, simple country home and a door that was held open to welcome you in. Thank you, Grandpa, Grandma, Uncle Joe, & Aunt Doris & all those who gathered there for making memories, making moments, making many positive, lasting impressions that continue to enrich & sustain us.

...Now let's mentally bundle up in our toques, mitts, scarves and winter coats as we sled down the coulees, or stroll through 'Silver's pasture' to once again, if only for an imaginary moment, skate on the frozen pond as our excited voices echo now on a crisp & very still prairie landscape.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL...

I would like to wish everyone the best in 2008, and that you enjoyed this journey down memory lane with me as much as I did.

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*Favorite Holiday*  
Recipes

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## Chocolate Éclair Cake

From the kitchen of Deb Heatherly

### Ingredients:

- 2 small boxes of French vanilla instant pudding  
(Can also use regular vanilla)
- 3 cups milk
- 8 oz. of cool whip.
- 1 Box graham crackers



### Directions:

- Mix pudding and milk. Fold in cool whip.
- In a 9" x 13" dish, layer graham crackers, pudding, graham crackers, pudding and a final layer of graham crackers.

### Topping Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup cocoa
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 stick butter
- Vanilla extract

### Directions:

- Bring to a boil.
- Pour over graham crackers.
- Refrigerate for several hours.

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**Home for the Holidays**

There is so much joy in creating country ambiance within our homes. The warm glow of flickering candles in our windows as the evening creeps in, is a welcomed sight on a cold, crisp day. Newly arranged vignettes of our favorite primitive antiques suggest a changing of the season and a shift to a time of gathering and celebration. Our homes become a perfect backdrop for our decorating ideas. An early tavern table might be an ideal spot to showcase a primitive red sled as a riser, decorated with fresh greens and tall glass candle jars filled with cranberries and large ivory pillar candles to enjoy all season long. Crocks with beautiful cobalt blue designs might be utilized as vessels to hold a twinkling country decorative tree with our homemade gingerbread men ornaments to brighten a corner of our quaint kitchen. Our upholstered country furniture can be rearranged to create new hearthside spaces that welcome cheerful conversation and sharing.

**Spirit of Good Cheer**

The holiday season is the perfect time to gather and take part in the spirit of good cheer. With the daylight hours at their shortest of the year, a special evening dinner can be made even more festive when we can enjoy all of our home's seasonal splendor. Our fresh balsam trees and candle centerpieces transform our home into a place of warmth and wonder. With special care, our homemade meal can be savored in our tavern or the keeping room in the spirit of earlier times. Eating a homemade meal like roast pork with cranberry and onion chutney by the fireside in a unique setting helps to create a memorable night to be enjoyed.

**Keepers of Tradition**

These meaningful joys can easily become welcomed and anticipated each year. As the keepers of tradition, we delight in taking a night off during our busy weeks to spend baking a vibrant variety of classic cookies to be appreciated by our family. And the simple satisfaction of making an extra batch of our handmade gingerbread ornaments to be tied onto our country gifts at Christmas time is a soulful blessing to cherish.

Dressing up in our best warm winter attire to join the local carolers as they make their way from one colonial home to the next in our charming country town's village is another fun way to keep our cherished traditions alive. So, this holiday season consider taking part in some of the tried-and-true events within your hometown. Gather with neighbors young and old to share the magic of Christmas traditions. As you do, you will provide those around you with the reminder that taking part in the ways of the past often provides us with comfort and peace. It is one of the most treasured gifts of the season that we can give.

--Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques.



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## C Is for Cookie— That's Good Enough for Christmas!

by Colleen Gust

If there's one thing that makes holidays super cozy, it's the smell of cookies—no, biscuits! No, bikkies! No, galletas! I don't care what you call it, I eat it anyway! In UK, people say biscuits, in Australia, bikkies, in Germany, keks, in Italy, biscotti... everywhere, humans call them something different, but Cookie Monster says: C IS FOR COOKIE! These little sweet things? Perfect for bribing Santa, sneaking for breakfast, or just nom-nom-nomming straight from the tray. I say: more cookies, more Christmas cheer!

Cookies, of course, are as varied as the snowflakes on your windowpane. Every region, and family seems to have a favourite. Here in Canada, holiday trays often feature classics like butter tarts in bite-sized form (yes, technically not a cookie, but good luck finding anyone who'll argue while eating one), and Nanaimo bar-inspired squares that sneak onto the plate because, well, who's really policing "cookie" definitions? Nanaimo bars are a personal favourite, so I store them in the downstairs fridge, to slow my consumption, plus I get in a bit of exercise! Across the Prairies, shortbread cookies topped with glace cherries practically melt in your mouth, while in Newfoundland, the boiled raisin cookie holds a special place at Christmas tables. Chewy, spiced, and comforting, it's proof that even a humble raisin can rise to the occasion.

Other Canadian favourites often include buttery shortbread and jam-filled thumbprints that make every tray look festive. And then there are cowboy cookies—hearty rounds packed with oats, coconut, and chocolate chips, the kind of cookie that's rugged enough for a blizzard but sweet enough to win a place on Santa's plate.

Of course, we can't forget our southern neighbours, whose cookie culture has given us some delightful additions. Think snickerdoodles, which sound like a cartoon character but taste like cinnamon-sugar perfection. And then there's the all-time classic: the chocolate chip cookie. Warm, gooey, and best enjoyed while pretending you're only "testing the batch." (Spoiler: you'll "test" at least three.)

Cookies also come with stories—sometimes funny (and frustrating) ones that get told for years. Our first Christmas as a married couple, I had all my baking done weeks in advance and carefully tucked away in tins in the freezer. Feeling quite proud of my domestic planning, I went to grab a few cookies one evening—only to discover that the tins were nearly gone! My new husband had been sneaking them out, one by one, to share with his co-workers. I guess you could say the marriage was off to a sweet start, even if my cookie supply took a crumbling hit.

Of course, holiday baking isn't just about the cookies—it's about the atmosphere. Many a December evening finds me in the kitchen, apron dusted with flour, keeping half an eye on the oven and the other on a Hallmark Christmas movie (no judgment, please—sometimes you need a small-town love story and a snowstorm). Other times it's Christmas with the Kranks playing in the background, reminding me that no matter how much chaos the season brings, it's better shared—with family, laughter, and yes, plenty of cookies.

Then there's our chubby little Pomeranian, who supervises the baking with a big eye and a woof. She's extremely fond of the plain shortbread cookies (hold the glace cherry, thank you very much) and will sit politely... mostly... hoping for Cowboy Cookies.

## Cowboy Cookies

The recipes have a little bit of something for everyone between the nuts, pecans, chocolate chips and coconut. Well, except for my coworker Patrick, who hates coconut. Can't win them all!

- 1 cup butter, melted until browned.
- 1 ½ cups brown sugar, packed
- ½ cup white sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 2 1/3 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 ¾ cups old-fashioned oats
- ¾ cup sweetened flaked coconut
- ½ cup pecans, roughly chopped
- 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips



Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper; set aside.

In a large bowl using a whisk, beat together the browned butter and both sugars until well combined, about 2 minutes. Whisk in the eggs and yolk, beating until well combined. About 45 seconds. Whisk in the vanilla.

In a separate large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, oats, coconut, pecans, and chocolate chips.

Fold the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, mixing just until combined.

Scoop 1-inch balls of cookie dough onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving 2-inches between each ball so they have room to spread.

Bake, one sheet at a time, in preheated oven for 12 minutes, or until cookies are golden and set at the edges and still slightly soft in the center.

Cool cookies on baking sheet for 10 minutes before transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely.

## Chocolate Clusters

This is a good recipe to make while you have a Hallmark Christmas movie on. There's a bit of waiting between steps where you shouldn't really leave the kitchen. I'll usually make a few batches and just keep adding cream and chocolate as I go for the dipping. If you don't have a silicone muffin pan, really, really spray a non-stick one.

- ½ cup toasted, slivered almonds
- 24 caramels, quartered
- 2 cups bittersweet chocolate chips
- 4-6 Tbsp cream, divided

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Lightly grease a SILICONE mini-muffin tins. Place 1 tsp of the toasted, slivered nuts in each of the muffin cups.

Unwrap the caramel candies, cut each candy into quarters and place 4 quarters (1 candy) in each of the muffin cups on top of the nuts in a single layer. Bake in the oven until the caramel is just melted and beginning to spread, about 8 minutes. The goal is to just melt the caramel you don't want it to bubble as it will become hard. Place the mini muffin tins in the refrigerator for 5 minutes to cool. Remove the nut clusters from the tins and set aside.

Melt the bittersweet chocolate in a double boiler over low heat. Whisk 4 to 6 Tbsp of cream into the chocolate to slightly thin the chocolate for coating the clusters. Dip the nut clusters in the bittersweet chocolate and place on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Return the clusters to the refrigerator to harden, about 30 minutes.

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Life in Skunk Hollow

## The Day That Frosty Melted

by Julie A. Druck

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](mailto:thedrucks@netzero.com).*

Kirby's Korner

## A Clean Sweep

by Kirby Gust

If your household is anything like ours, the colder weather, shorter days, and extra time spent indoors often lead to increased cleaning. Especially with the upcoming holiday season and the chance that company may drop in. Colleen and I have what would be considered a fairly traditional household. Colleen does the lion's share of the cooking and laundry. I take care of the yard, vehicles, and household repairs. The household's day-to-day chores, such as cleaning and vacuuming, are shared equally when time allows. We are both very good at taking on extra household duties if the other one is working on a special project or putting in overtime at our full-time jobs.

Now, all of that seems to be too simple if you read it in that one small paragraph above. So let me break it down a bit more for you.

### Meals

I would say it is fair to say that more than 95% of all our meals, including work lunches, are prepared in the home. In fact, that number is more likely closer to 99%. Still, I will stick with a lower percentage for now, as I don't have enough recorded documentation to prove otherwise. But I am confident enough in the 95% that I can share it with conviction. Of said meals, Colleen is responsible for the exact percentages as above, and with the same reasoning.

Colleen has a vast selection of "go to meals", her words, that she prepares, dictated mainly by what is on sale at the grocery store. She also uses our home as a test kitchen for all the recipes that she shares in the Country Register. She has tried-and-true recipes that she shares with our readers on a regular basis, but she is always on the lookout for new ones. When she does come across a new recipe that piques her interest, she will not share it with our readers until she has tried it herself, usually more than once. Once she has made it according to the original ingredients and instructions, she then makes needed changes to account for local availability of ingredients. She is also a master at knowing just what to add, remove or substitute to improve the flavour. Quite often, she omits preparation and or cooking steps that she deems unnecessary and time-consuming. My job in all of this is just to sit down at the table and eat. A job I do my best to describe as a hardship to my friends and family. So far, no one believes me.

### Laundry

Again, here I must give Colleen credit for the vast majority of this chore. I have ruined some of her clothes, not intentionally, in the past, thinking I could just toss them in the dryer like most of our clothes. Because of this, we have agreed that she will take care of the clothes, and I will take care of things like bedding and towels.

Household cleaning

This one we share as evenly as I think we can. I am very seldom at home or in the house most of the week. Because of that, Colleen does the picking up and wiping down of surfaces when needed during the week. I don't want anyone to get the wrong idea. Along with working full-time, I also do handyman jobs, restore antiques, and build custom, handmade furniture as a home-based business. But we have one day a week that we set aside for giving the house a good going over. The balancing out of this chore comes on that day because while I am mucking around, cleaning bathrooms and floors, Colleen is in the kitchen, cleaning and cooking. This is also the day I do my best to fix things around the house that need tending to. Colleen always says that being married to a carpenter and handyman is akin to "the cobbler's children have no shoes."

She has to ask to be added to my waiting list when larger jobs around the house arise and require more than just a few minutes of attention.

### Yard

Colleen and I live on a half-acre lot, so taking care of that is no small task. I take care of most of the yard duties, including mowing the grass and tending the garden in the summer, and snow clearing in the winter. A snow blower is a godsend when you have a yard and driveway as big as ours. I also do all the maintenance on the yard equipment.

*(story continues on next page)*

(story continued from previous page)

## Vehicles

Colleen hates the smell of gasoline, and therefore, I make sure to keep her car filled up for her. Sometimes I forget, and she lets me know that the little gas pump warning light is on. We both have winter tires for our respective driving choices. Every spring and fall, I take on the task of jacking both vehicles up and swapping the tires from all seasons to winter tires and vice versa. Our vehicles aren't new, so some repair work is required from time to time. I recently just finished changing all the brakes and rotors on Colleen's car.

As I stated at the start of this column, we have a fairly traditional household when it comes to division of duties. But that is nowhere near where I set off to when I started writing this column.

I had sat down to share tried-and-true tips that we have learned over the years, not to bore you with trivial details of how dull our busy lives are, as we do nothing but work, clean, and cook.

Here are some tips to help you get through the winter when we all have a few extra minutes to spend on things like the hard water ring around the toilet bowl that has been driving you crazy.

## Citric Acid

Let's start off with those hard water stains that most of us have around our houses. We have found that nothing works better on these than simply treating them with citric acid. Citric acid powder can be easily found at most health food stores. It can also be found at some fabric stores that use natural materials and fabric dyes.

To prevent calcium build-up in the fill mechanism or on the flapper in your toilet, which can eventually lead to tank leakage into the bowl, wasted water and a higher water bill, I recommend adding a heaping tablespoon of citric acid to the water in the tank and leaving it to sit overnight every 3 months or so. It will not only clean the calcium off the moving parts inside the tank, but it will also remove any rust and calcium build-up from the tank walls. If you want to remove a hard water ring around the bowl of the toilet, the same method can be used. It works best on a windy night when the water in the bowl is moving up and down due to air movement from the wind in the air stack, keeping the ring wet with citric acid-treated water.

We have come across a brand of home cleaning supplies that just seem to work. We have all fallen for misleading promises on cleaning bottles or in advertisements. I had never seen an ad or any mention of this brand until I stumbled across it. The brand is Surf Pro® and is a Canadian company based in St. Amable, Quebec. The "buy Canadian" movement could be the reason this product has come to the surface (no pun intended) on store shelves.

They offer a variety of cleaning products, including glass, grout, and floor cleaners. They even have a spray for eliminating odours in the home. We have only tried two of their many products, but we are more than impressed with both.

Here is an unsolicited review of the two Surf-Pro® products we have tried.

## Shower Buster®

I believe most people are familiar with a product called Gel-Gloss®, which has been around for years and is recognized for its exceptional ability to clean shower walls and prevent them from accumulating dirt and grime. Shower Buster® is a similar product, except that it does not work like a paste wax, as does the Gel-Gloss®. Gel-Gloss® must be rubbed into the surface, then let to dry, and then the leftover film buffed off. Any grit and grime left behind during the application procedure can be trapped in the wax-like finish. Shower Buster®, on the other hand, is a double-spray application. The first spray application is left on for approximately five minutes and then simply rubbed with a wet cloth, followed by rinsing clean. Having a handheld showerhead certainly helps in this regard. Once rinsed, simply leave the shower or tub to dry completely, then reapply Shower Buster® to the surface, allowing the product to dry naturally. This will leave the shower looking filmy and streaky, but don't worry, these streaks are simply rinsed away either after the product is dry or the next time you have a shower. The difference between this product and the old tried-and-true paste wax type is that if you miss a spot when wiping down with a wet cloth in the first step, that spot will stand out like a sore thumb once the shower is dry after the final rinse. Any grit or grime left behind will form a sort of alligator skin on the surface. Any of these spots can be easily spot-treated and cleaned with the Shower Buster once again.

## The Intelligent Soap®

After being surprised by the performance of the shower cleaner, we thought we would give the brand's floor cleaner, The Intelligent Soap®, a try, hoping for the same results. We were surprised, and at the same time, slightly embarrassed and disgusted. Having pets, our floors are washed regularly to clean up muddy paw prints and other unmentionable things. I am one of those floor washers who rinse the cleaning pads on our floor mops until the water runs clean after mopping the area I am working on. This typically happens on the second mop, sometimes on the third mop if the floor is dirtier than usual for some reason. With the Intelligent Soap®, the second rinse was dirtier than the first. The third rinse was more like mud than water. By this point, I was really starting to doubt my previous floor washing abilities. Then I read the rest of the label on the product, which states, "The exclusive vibrating organic compound technology allows water to do the cleaning." That was when I realized the water was doing just that.

The floor was left wet after each mopping, and while I was rinsing the mop heads clean, the product was deep cleaning and pulling years' worth of dirt and grime to the surface. This was especially noticeable on the hardwood floors, which have seams between each piece of wood that collect and hold debris. We have been painting and doing some home repairs, so I am looking forward to seeing what this cleaner extracts from the floors next time around. We have three extra bottles of the cleaner in our cleaning cupboard, just in case everyone else finds out how well it works, leading to us not being able to find it on store shelves.

My next tip is for those with gas lawn mowers and snowblowers. Never use anything except premium fuel in these tools. Regular gasoline, due to its alcohol content, can clog the fuel system on these engines, leading to what is referred to as fuel varnish. This varnish can severely restrict the amount of fuel reaching the carburetor or gum up the carburetor completely, leading to a frustrated operator who cannot figure out why their equipment won't start or run properly once started. In addition to using premium fuel, I highly recommend using a fuel additive such as Sea Foam® or a similar product. Fuel stabilizers help keep the fuel itself from going bad, but they do little to help an engine run better. Products like Sea Foam® not only work as a stabilizer for the fuel, but they also clean the engine. In fact, I have brought back a varnished-up engine that wouldn't run simply by adding fresh fuel treated with Sea Foam® to the gas tank. Once it sat long enough to work its way through the fuel lines and into the carburetor, the engine started effortlessly. I have been using products like this in my lawnmower since I first purchased it, and, believe it or not, in 20 years of mowing, I have never had to change the spark plug. It still starts on the first pull each spring.

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season, and maybe, just maybe, my helpful hints will make it a little easier to get through the long, dark weeks of winter, whether you are stuck inside cleaning or outside trying to get the snowblower started.

## Blueberry Torte

from Kerri Habben Bosman



### Crust:

3 cups well-crushed graham crackers  
 ½ cup butter  
 ½ cup powdered sugar  
 Blend well and spread into a greased 9" by 13" pan.

### Custard layer:

8 oz. cream cheese  
 2 eggs  
 ½ cup sugar  
 1 t. vanilla  
 Mix well until smooth and spread on top of graham cracker crust.

Bake 15-20 minutes at 350 degrees or until custard is set. Allow to cool and spread one can of blueberry pie filling on top. (I often make my own pie filling from either frozen or leftover fresh berries)  
 Spread whipped cream (8 oz container) on top of berries and cool baking dish in refrigerator for at least a few hours.

*My mother-in-law gave me this recipe the first time we looked at recipes together as she knew it was one of my husband's favorites. Now our whole family enjoys it whenever I make it. It is a very refreshing dessert during the holidays or any time of the year.*

# Golden Christmas Coins

by Janet M. Bair

Chocolate money! How rich we felt as children, when my brother and I got gold foil-covered chocolate coins in our Christmas stockings! We looked forward to those all year. There was something magical about having money you could eat. We saved them for a while too, eating them slowly.

At the time, money held little meaning for me. My parents bought what I needed and because we lived in the country, there were no city display windows to ogle over, and we didn't watch much TV.

With little money or access to stores, I grew up making my own Christmas presents and cards. I would make up a puppet show or song review for my brother and I to do for our parents. I made small loom pot holders, embroidered doilies, and made various Girl Scout projects using natural materials. Who needs money when you can make it yourself?

As a result, I seldom look for expensive items for gifts. Being retired and living on a fixed income, my first inclination is to look for an experience our family can share, preferably for free. Many local libraries offer holiday concerts, movies or crafts programs with no charge. One library near us presents a one-man show of "A Christmas Carol" every year that is very entertaining.

A favorite of mine is touring the Osborne Homestead Museum (Derby, CT) when it is all decorated for Christmas. The local garden clubs each select a room to decorate according to a specific theme. Whether it is music, children's stories, nature or "Christmas Around the World" the creativity and talent these groups have shown are a delight to see.

We also search for special light displays to visit. One year when we were in Florida for Christmas, we took all the grandkids to see a special home that was decorated with dozens of light-up figures outside, complete with a snow machine. A costumed Santa and the Grinch welcomed the long line of guests on their street.

When we get together with our four grandchildren, I always plan a special craft we can do, as well as a cookie baking session. One year I sewed green stockings for each child. Then they Mod Podged all sorts of trims to decorate them to create their own individual stockings. We've also painted lots of wooden ornaments with glitter paint over the years.

Reading Christmas stories out loud to them is one of my favorite things to do. To me, it is priceless. I also enjoy reading many Christmas novels during the season for my own pleasure.

It is easy to get swept away in the high cost of gift giving in this season. However we spend our coins, let us make golden memories with our families and friends this year.



## Woven Fabric Hot Pads

By Deb Heatherly

Here's a great project for any time of year.

**Cutting for one hot pad:** Finished 7" x 7"

(12) 4" x 7" strips (6 each of 2 colors OR use 12 different fabrics for a scrappy look.

(1) 7" square for backing

(1) 2 1/2" x WOF strip for binding

(1) 6 1/2" square of Insulbrite

### Directions:

Fold the 4" x 7" strips in half and press.

Fold both long edges to the center and press. Fold again and press. Strips should be 1" x 7" after pressing.



On the backing wrong side, find and mark the center.

Working from the marked center, place 6 folded strips as shown. Sew 1/4" from the edge to hold them in place. Note: If using only 2 colors, place 6 of the same color.

Slide the 6 1/2" square of insulbrite under the strips.

**Optional:** If you weave tightly the insulbrite will not show through, but you can add a 6 1/2" piece of fabric, right side up, on top of the insulbrite and under the strips if desired.

Weave the remaining 6 strips as shown. Sew 1/4" from the edge to hold the woven strips in place.

Trim and straighten edges as needed.

Add binding.



Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, "Grids Girls," for tips and inspiration, and two free mysteries each year. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/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](http://www.Debcatsnquilts.com).



## GIRLFRIEND WISDOM

**Friendship is a Found Treasure!!!**

In all cultures, friendships are important relationships throughout a person's life span. It is always characterized by companionship and shared activities. Friendships can enrich your life in countless ways. Good friends teach you about yourself and challenge you to be better. They encourage you to keep going when times get tough and they celebrate your successes when a project is completed or a goal has been reached. Friendships are healthy for our mind and soul. A good friend is truly a found treasure!

**GIRLFRIEND WISDOM:**

Friendships also need to be nurtured. Is there a long-time friend you haven't connected with lately? Time flies by so quickly, take a moment and text or call that special friend to let them know that you are thinking of them. Most of all, schedule time for lunch, a walk, or an activity to grow and add valuable memories with that good friend. You will be twice-blessed when you do!

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](http://www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com)



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Sands   
of Time



So let's begin!

## 1. Planning

Start by making a guest list. Who could you invite? Keep the number small and personal.

Would a midmorning brunch with scones, fruit and tea suit you? Or an afternoon tea with favorite holiday sweets? If you want to serve a three-course tea with sandwiches, scones and sweets, consider lunchtime for your get-together, then find a date and send out the invitations.

## 2. Preparing

To decorate, focus on the setting for tea. For instance, Christmas offers many themes: bells, Christmas trees, stars, Nativity characters, candles, holly, candy canes and more.

For a casual tea, you could gather around the fireplace for a warm, cozy time.

For a formal tea, prepare the table with linens, teacups and saucers, and a festive centerpiece. Fresh flowers are beautiful, but you may have a holiday decoration that suits your theme. Holiday-themed cookie cutters make fun napkin rings and you can send them home as party favors.

What's on the menu? Whether you plan a light tea or a luncheon tea, a simple or fancy tea, here are menu ideas.

**Sandwiches:** Choose one or more fillings, such as chicken, egg or tuna salad; ham and cheese; or cream cheese-and-cucumber sandwiches. Make dainty sandwiches using white or wheat bread or both. Leave the sandwiches open-faced or top each one with another piece of bread. Cut sandwiches into shapes with cookie cutters. Or trim the crusts and cut each sandwich into quarters, three finger sandwiches or four triangles (cut diagonally).



**Scones:** Prepare your favorite scone recipe or mix. If desired, add raisins, white chocolate chips, chopped nuts, chocolate chips or grated orange rind. Cut scones into wedges or simple holiday shapes such as bells or circles for balls. Serve with butter, honey, jam, lemon curd and whipped cream.

**Sweets:** Select your favorite holiday recipes for candies, cookies or cakes. Cut them into small pieces. Consider frosted brownies with crushed candy canes on top; lemon bars; cut-out Nativity-shaped sugar cookies (order Nativity cutters online); shortbread; fudge; small cupcakes. Or bake Candy Cane Crisps (recipe included). You could also ask guests to bring favorite cookies and the recipe to share.

**Tea:** You will find holiday blends for sale in grocery stores, tearooms and online. Look for peppermint or fruit-flavored herbal blends and teas blended for the season, e.g., Winter Spice, Nutcracker Sweet and Cranberry Vanilla Wonderland. Serve the tea from a teapot with bright ribbons and bells tied to the handle.

## 3. Hosting

I like to pray for each guest before the party. Then welcome them with a smile and holiday music playing in the background. The lovely setting and delicious food will make guests feel loved and special.

"The pot is on, the cups are waiting,

Favorite chairs anticipating,

No matter what I have to do,

My friend there's always time for you."

(Anonymous)

May God bless you with love, joy and peace this holiday season.

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

## Candy Cane Crisps

### From Lydia's Recipe File



#### Ingredients:

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

#### Directions:

- In large mixing bowl, mix together butter, 1 cup powdered sugar, and vanilla until blended.
- In another bowl, mix flour, oatmeal, and salt. Add to butter mixture and blend.
- Mix in 1/4 cup crushed peppermint candy.
- 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 tines, making a crisscross pattern. Sprinkle with additional crushed peppermint candy and sugar crystals.
- Bake at 325 degrees for 18 to 20 minutes, until edges are lightly browned.
- Cool on baking sheet for 2 minutes; transfer to cooling rack. Store in airtight container.

*Makes about 2 1/2 dozen cookies.*

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## Christmas in 1952

by Nancy J. Nash

When watching television was starting to become a habit for Americans in the 1950s, there was a popular weekly program called "This is Your Life." Usually each episode featured a clueless celebrity who had unknowingly been lured into an auditorium in Hollywood abuzz with a live audience. The unsuspecting celebrity was often accompanied by a not-so-clueless family member or friend who had casually suggested that they take in the show. Then, as they sat in the audience, an emcee approached and surprised them, announcing "So-and-so, this is you life!" The emcee escorted the celebrity to the stage, where what ensued was a panorama of appearances by acquaintances old and new, each initially hidden from view and ready to recount an event from the past. As they spoke, the celebrity tried to guess their identity. Tears, laughter, and hugs followed.

In 1952, the Christmas Eve episode did not feature a celebrity but an unknown woman from tiny Monowi, Nebraska named Ruth Eiler. Ruth was the middle-aged mother of nine children, three of whom were overseas in military service. One by one, old friends and relatives filled the stage, along with Ruth's farmer husband and a number of grandchildren. Amazingly, and to Ruth's complete surprise, the three sons who were serving their nation abroad appeared onstage at the end of the program. With the assistance of the Defense Department, the TV producers had managed to get them temporarily released from duty (including one stationed in Korea) to take part in the TV show and share Christmas with the rest of the family.

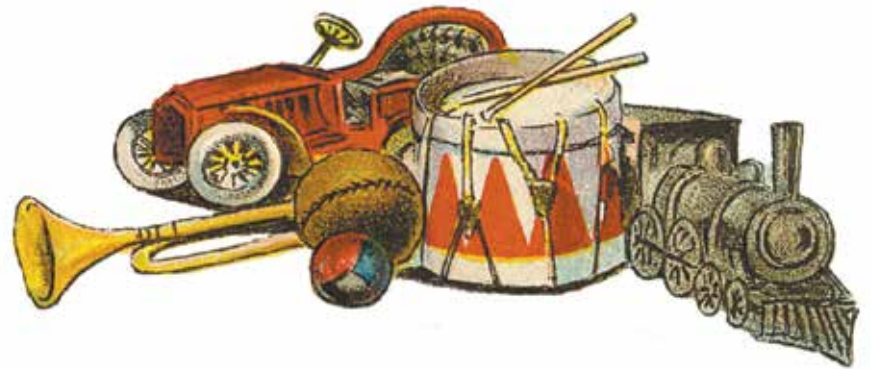
The program was a tribute not only to Ruth but to other parents of children in uniform during the Korean War. It was a reminder of the courage and sacrifices of parents and of the homespun closeness of many families who lived through poverty and war times in the first part of the twentieth century. Imagine being farmers who moved about with only horses and wagon for transportation. Imagine walking almost five miles to school. One of Ruth's daughters later commented that they were happy and didn't think of themselves as poor.

Many years after this TV episode was aired, I met Ruth's son Keith, who had become a distinguished military officer and scholar. He was known for being quiet, soft spoken, courteous, and a joy to be around: a true officer and a gentleman.

More recently, a cousin of mine visited Elsie Eiler in Monowi, Nebraska. Elsie is a daughter-in-law of Ruth. Having outlived her husband, she is the sole resident of Monowi and its mayor - at the age of 94.

The world has changed since Christmas, 1952, but some things endure. This Christmas, let us think of a baby born in poverty, surrounded by livestock, and laid in a manger on a night 2000 years ago. May this child, who grew up to make a willing sacrifice of himself for our sakes, transform our hearts into temples of love and joy.

-© 2025 Nancy J. Nash, who is the author of *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve* and *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story*. She holds a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. She may be reached at [nancynash341@gmail.com](mailto:nancynash341@gmail.com).



## Collections

by Shelby Kottemann

I'm not a pack rat. You might say I have "collections." Recently, I collected my favorite cozy socks so that when they inevitably go out of fashion, I'll have no worries. My feet will be warm forever! On a shelf in my closet rests a small bag filled with my favorite lipstick, that did get discontinued! I'm so glad I have my collection!

I don't just collect small things. My great-grandmother's tea cart stands across the room from me, serving as my coffee bar. The morning sun is shining on the small oak kitchen table where my family sat together for 26 years. In the windowsill beside it sits a geode I found tucked at the back of my grandpa's bookshelf, the last remnant of him after my uncle cleared their home out for sale. It's always been near me.

Some of my collections are for creating. Like some adorable stickers from the 90's that are prime for scrapbooking and pique my interest just as much as they did when I was a child. There's a collection of authentic vintage fabric scraps sitting on my sewing table right now. Some are the leftovers from colorful aprons and homemade dresses. Others are printed flour sacks from the 1930's. My great-aunt, Vera, gave them to me one day.

"These were my mother's. I want you to have them because I know you're the one who will do something with them," she said with resolve.

Indeed I am. I'm currently making a quilt from them. I'm going to give it to my mom for Christmas so that she can snuggle up with her grandma's love. I even found the "Shower to Shower" powder that Grandma H used every day. With a light dusting, the quilt will bring back that comforting memory too.

I'm what they call an old soul. Throughout my life, I've had more close friends in their 80's than of my own age. There's Marvin, the retired farmer, Jeanne, the wise artist. There was Bill, the WWII Navy veteran, Yvonne, the church pianist, Dave, who could have been a great comedian. With my gravitational pull toward this salt-of-the-earth generation comes more loss. I keep my collection of memories with them written in a notebook. I don't ever want to forget how special they were.

You see, collections can be so much more than clutter. I don't want the things I love to go away, so in my own way, I keep them, like that family kitchen table. I give them new life, like Grandma H's scraps. I honor them, like the stories of my old friends. To me, they're collections of all the love I've encountered in my 32 years of living. I imagine as I grow older, my collections will only grow more meaningful to me -and larger!

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](mailto:contact@inlovesnature.com). To learn more, visit the website [www.inlovesnature.com](http://www.inlovesnature.com).



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### Ginger Shortbread

from Julie Druck

1 C. flour  
1/2 C. brown sugar  
1 tabl. ground ginger  
1/2 tsp. baking soda  
1 stick of butter

Combine first 4 ingredients with a fork. Cut in the butter. Press into an 8" round cake pan, then prick evenly with your fork. Bake at 325 for 35 minutes (sides will puff slightly and will be firm to the touch). While still warm, slice into 12 wedges. Let cool slightly then lift them out of the pan and cool the wedges completely on a plate.



### Holiday Instant Hot Chocolate Mix

submitted by Donna Jo Copeland of Breezy Manor Farm

1 box Hershey's or Nestle instant chocolate powder  
2 to 4 cups powdered creamer (any flavor)  
1 box (14 oz or so) powdered milk  
Mix well, store in glass jars.

To make...add 3 tablespoons to a mug of hot water, stir gently until well mixed. Add some miniature marshmallows and a sprinkle of cinnamon.





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## Piecing Life Together

## Traveling

by Barbara Polston

Most of us, I believe, plan to travel, whether that's for business, family obligations or pleasure. I'm planning a trip to visit my oldest daughter and will be flying. In addition to all the things that need to be packed - clothing, toiletries and the like - whenever I travel, I spend quite a bit of time thinking about what I will be bringing along to fill spare moments.

There is always a book or two to read on the plane. On this trip, I'm bringing the latest selection of my book club. I expect I will be done with the reading and ready for our meeting, occurring the evening after I return home.

What seems to occupy most of my thoughts is what sewing or crafting project will come along. There are several things that must be considered. One of the first things is the size of the project. With airlines charging for additional bags or too much weight, this is important. Currently, I have some finishing handwork that needs to be done on two good-size quilt projects. Either would take up quite a bit of valuable suitcase space or

require a second suitcase and additional baggage charges. Shipping the projects ahead of time seems like an unnecessary expense and risks them getting lost in transit, going or coming back. Neither of those projects seem like good options for this trip but would be strong contenders if I were driving. If I had a quilting project that could be broken down into small units of handwork, such as an English Paper Piecing project, that would be a good choice. Unfortunately, I don't have such a project planned for the near future, so that won't work either.

As luck would have it, I am ready to start a new counted cross stitch project. I was gifted another embroidery project, Japanese sashiko, that is ready to go and I am anxious to try. Both projects fit nicely in my embroidery bag and won't take up very much space in my suitcase. These will be coming along with me, giving me plenty of things to work on while I'm away and relaxing with my daughter. She is thinking she will work on some embroidery projects while I'm there, a plan we are calling mother-daughter parallel crafting. She was gifted with the same Japanese sashiko kit and I'm wondering if we will truly be in parallel, working on the same project but bringing our individual interpretations to the work. I am looking forward to a bit of a surprise.

Safe travels! Happy stitching!

@Barbara Polston, July 2025. Barbara is the author of *Quilting with Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects* (Schiffer Press, 2015) and a series of children's books inviting young children to share in *The Adventures of Puppy Brian* ([www.puppybrian.com](http://www.puppybrian.com)). Contact Barbara at [barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com](mailto:barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com).



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## Try a Round Robin Quilt!

by Judy Sharer

The excitement of making a round robin quilt is creating it with friends and not knowing exactly how it will look once completed. If you are in a quilters guild or have a social group of friends who sew this could be a great project.

There are two ways to create a round robin. First is as a single quilt that begins with a themed center, which is usually made by the owner. The center is passed from person to person each adding another border to the quilt contributing to the theme the original person chose. To complete this add a border quilt, whenever the quilt top is in your possession, you choose what to add to all four sides of the piece. It can be appliqued or pieced. Each quilt is usually passed within the group one time around the circle of members as the masterpiece grows. A certain time frame for the piece to be passed to the next person is set by the group. As you exchange the quilt top the group decides whether to show the progress that's been made or keep it a secret until the end to show the owner of the original block.

The second way a round robin can work is each member in the group makes an individual block for the original person to assemble into to a quilt top. Smaller groups may choose to make more than one block per person, but each person makes a block for the other people in the group. The original person chooses the block size and a pattern for the block or they leave the pattern up to the people making the block for a scrappy quilt look.

In both cases often the original person chooses the colors and can even give each member a cut of fabric to use in the border or block they make. The colors and fabric help tie the quilt together as they add to the border or make the block to grow the quilt into a piece of art.

Over the years I've been involved in making several round robin quilts and it's always fun. It can also be a little nerve-wracking at times as you worry whether or not the final owner of the quilt will like what you've made. Then on reveal day you wait on pins and needles to see what your finished piece or quilt blocks will look like.

One of the members in our small group was pregnant and we decided to make a round robin baby quilt to surprise her. You could also do a round robin quilt with family members as a birthday present or make one for a family reunion. Clubs can also use this method to make a raffle quilt. Regardless, if it's for yourself or to give away, give it a try! This technique is a fun and exciting project to make with friends.

-© Judy Sharer, who is the author of a sweet historical romance family saga series titled *A Plains Life*. This four-book series published by The Wild Rose Press is appropriate for the entire family and is available online wherever books and eBooks are sold. Visit Judy's website [judysharer.com](http://judysharer.com) and follow her on Facebook and LinkedIn. Please leave a book review if you enjoy the writing. Look for Judy's next release titled *Secrets in Room Four* coming this spring.

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## 2 Minute Lift

TWO MINUTE READS TO FLIP OUR SCRIPT

by Kathy J. Sotak

Flipping Our Script Lessons from the Past  
My Stories Unlocking the Door

### On the Search for Significance

Where did this year go? Here we are, tinseling trees and excess shopping. We are on automatic, swirling in a stew of obligation and expectation.

I've gotten lost, somewhere between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Everywhere I look, there's signs telling me what I should do and feel. It's time to decorate, light, give, plan, wrap, cook, bake and celebrate. If it's all meant for something, then why am I on auto-pilot?

It's okay that we are busy, you and I. That is inevitable. The time between Thanksgiving and New Year's is a wind tunnel; we can accept or ignore it, but we're in it. There's only one way to slow it down: *find meaning*.

While I was growing up, my parents found their meaning then wrapped it into intense action. They lit up our rural farmstead with hundreds of thousands of lights and Christmas displays. Their meaning was to share the light and message of Jesus, who lit up their hearts. After the fall harvest, my parents would spend weeks in the workshop, designing and building displays that matched their meaning.

Every December, we had hundreds of cars from the tri-county area slowly drive through our farm with headlights off, to wonder at these oversized, hand-designed, custom-built displays. Besides, you can't find these at your local Home Depot store. For example, the full side of the barn was lit up with not one, but three murals with messages such as "JOY" or "PEACE ON EARTH" and images that supported it.

The craziest idea my parents had was when they decided to move an entire row of large round hay bales to the edge of our driveway. Imagine 16 five-foot tall hay bales double-stacked, each with a round piece of plywood attached with one oversized letter each, to eventually spell: MERRY CHRISTMAS. You could see it from miles away in the flat, treeless prairies.

The point of this story: find your meaning. *Run for it*. Search for significance. I don't care what it is. Don't decorate on auto-pilot: find your meaning. Don't buy gifts on auto-pilot: find your meaning. Don't bake cookies on auto-pilot: find your meaning.

Yesterday, my entire family went out on an expedition and we came home with a cart-full of decorations and a second Christmas tree. What is my meaning, you ask? **To light up what is in my heart. To light up this world.** There is darkness around us; literally and figuratively, as we draw close to the shortest and darkest day of the year. No matter how dark the world may appear, the choice is ours. Our light can shine no matter what is around us. I can choose how I show up, regardless of the shade around me. That is my meaning. My words are imperfect, but the meaning is there.

The next time I see you, I'll see you in your pilot seat. I'll see that you've switched your mode of operation. I'll see that we both have slowed down, which is what happens when we are **steeped in significance**.

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3 tsp. sugar	1 egg
1 tsp. baking powder	1 c. blueberries
2 tsp. cinnamon	maple syrup, heated
1/4 tsp. salt	

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On a lg. bowl, whisk together first 6 ingred.; whisk in veg. oil until lumps are gone. Add milk & egg & stir until just blended. Gently fold in blueberries. Drop batter by spoonfuls into hot oiled skillet; use back of spoon to spread batter in pan; cook over med. heat. When edges are crisp & brown turn & do other side. Keep warm in 250° oven. Serve in a puddle of hot maple syrup.

With Love from the Heart of the Stone & me... ♥ Susan Branch

For more festive ideas, please visit my website: [www.susanbranch.com](http://www.susanbranch.com)

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<b>Alliston</b>	<i>Quilting Corners Guild</i> We meet at St. Johns United Church at 7pm on the first Tuesday or each month, except January.	<b>Meaford</b>	<i>Georgian Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Meaford Opera House, Sykes St. at 1:30 pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month.
<b>Almonte</b>	<i>Almonte Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Almonte Civitan Club, 500 Almonte Street Active at 7:00 pm from September through June (no meeting in December).	<b>Mississauga</b>	<i>Cawthra Senior's Centre</i> We meet at the Cawthra Senior's Centre at 7:30pm on the first Thursday of the month (except July and August). <i>Mississauga Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Tomken Twin Arenas at 7:30 pm on the first Thursday of the month (except July and August).
<b>Ancaster</b>	<i>Ancaster Quilter's Guild</i> We meet at the Marshall Memorial United Church, 20 Gilbert Ave. at 7pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from September to June.	<b>Miramichi</b>	<i>Miramichi Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Seamans Hospital at 7:00 pm every Tuesday and 10:00 am every Thursday.
<b>Amprior</b>	<i>Amprior District Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Christian Education Centre, 257 John St. N. at 6:30 pm on the fourth Wed. of each month from Sept. to June.	<b>Mount Forest</b>	<i>Four Corners Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Mount Forest & District Sports Complex at 7 pm on the second Tuesday of the month from September to June. For more information email <a href="mailto:4cornersquiltersguild@gmail.com">4cornersquiltersguild@gmail.com</a>
<b>Barrie</b>	<i>Simcoe County Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Simcoe County Museum, 1151 Hwy 26, Midhurst at 1:00 pm on the Fourth Thursday each month except the 2nd Thursday in Dec and 3rd Thursday in June, from September to June. <i>Kempfenfell Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Lion's Gate Banquet Hall on Blake Street, the 3rd Thursday of the month from 7-9pm <i>Barrie Modern Quilt Guild</i> We meet at All About Sewing 565 Unit 1-M, Barrie Ontario the last Thursday of alternative months from September to May - 7pm and on various Saturdays during the alternate months, for Activities and Workshops, from October to June.	<b>Napanee</b>	<i>Heritage Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Strathcona Paper Center at 7:00 pm on the third Tuesday of each month from September through to June.
<b>Belleville</b>	<i>Quinte Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Recreation Centre, 116 Pinnacle Street. At 7:00 pm on the first Wednesday of each month.	<b>Newmarket</b>	<i>The Region of York Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Newmarket Community Centre, 200 Doug Duncan Drive on the fourth Wednesday of the month from September through May. <i>Moraine Quilt Guild</i> We meet in the hall at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church - 484 Water Street, Newmarket at 9:30 am - 12 Noon for Social Sew and 1:00-3:30 pm for the Meeting on the first Wednesday of each month year round.
<b>Binbrook</b>	<i>Binbrook Country Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Binbrook United Church, 2623 Binbrook Rd. 7:30 pm the last Monday of the month from Sept - Nov and Jan - June.	<b>Niagara Region</b>	<i>The Niagara Heritage Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Merrion Community Centre, 7 Park Ave., St. Catharines on the third Wednesday of each month.
<b>Bracebridge</b>	<i>The Pine Tree Quilters' Guild of Muskoka</i> We meet at 56 Salmon Avenue, Bracebridge, Ontario at 1:00 pm on the 2nd. Thursday of the month from September through June.	<b>Nobleton</b>	A chapter of the <i>Modern Quilting Guild</i> We travel to various locations in Southern Ontario on a rotating basis.
<b>Brampton</b>	<i>Brampton Quilters Guild</i> We meet on the 4th Thursday of each month from September to June at 7:30 pm. Meetings are held at Jim Archdekin Recreation Centre, 292 Conestoga Dr, Brampton.	<b>Norwich</b>	<i>Quaker Quilt Guild</i> We meet at 89 Stover St N, Norwich at 9:30 am on the second Monday of the month.
<b>Branford</b>	<i>Brant Heritage Quilters</i> We meet at St George United Church at 7:30 pm. on the second Thursday of the month.	<b>Orangeville</b>	<i>Dufferin Piecemakers' Quilting Guild</i> We meet at the Orangeville Event Centre at 7:30 pm on the third Monday of the month from September through June.
<b>Brockville</b>	<i>The Thousand Islands Quilters' Guild (TIQG)</i> Meets the 4th Thursday of the month at 7pm both in person and zoom except July/Aug/Dec at the Bethel Christian Reformed Church located at 117 Windsor Dr., Brockville, On K6V 5V5. Library opens at 6:30pm.	<b>Orilla</b>	<i>Orilla Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at ODAS Park, 4461 Fairgrounds Road, Orillia at 1 PM on the third Wednesday of each month except July.
<b>Buckhorn</b>	<i>Buckhorn Area Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Hartley Hall, St. Mathews / St. Adian Anglican Church at 9:00 a.m. on the last Wednesday of the month (excluding July, August and December).	<b>Orleans</b>	<i>Common Thread Quilt Guild</i> Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 7pm at MIFO, 6600 Carriere St, Orleans. <a href="http://www.commonthreadquiltguild.ca">www.commonthreadquiltguild.ca</a>
<b>Burlington</b>	<i>Halton Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Mainway Recreation Centre, 4015 Mainway Dr. at 7:00 pm on the first Thursday of the month from September through June).	<b>Orono</b>	<i>Ganaraska Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Seniors Activity Centre, 200 Station St. W at 7:15 pm on the last Wednesday of the month.
<b>Caledonia</b>	<i>Caledonia Grand River Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at 7pm on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from September through June.	<b>Oshawa</b>	<i>Durham Trillium Quilters'</i> We meet at the Zion Christian Reformed Church 409 Adelaide Ave. E, Oshawa at 7:00pm every second Monday Sept. - June
<b>Cambridge</b>	<i>Busy Hands Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Preston Scout House, 1580 Queenston Road at 9:30 am on the third Monday of each month.	<b>Ottawa</b>	<i>Ottawa Valley Quilters Guild</i> Our guild meets both in-person and on the ZOOM platform September to December and April to June and only on ZOOM for the January, February and March meetings. The meetings are held the second Monday of the month. In-person meetings are at the Riverside United Church, 3191 Riverside Drive in Ottawa. Email: <a href="mailto:ottawavalleyquiltersguild.org">ottawavalleyquiltersguild.org</a>
<b>Chatham</b>	<i>Chatham-Kent Quilters' Guild</i> Meetings are at 7:00 pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Meetings are held at St. Paul's Congregational Church at 450 Park Ave. West, Chatham, ON. <a href="http://www.ckquiltguild.com">www.ckquiltguild.com</a>	<b>Owen Sound</b>	<i>Bluewater Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, 1900 3rd Av E at 7:00 pm every third Monday from March to December (except May which is on the second).
<b>Collingwood/ Wasaga Beach</b>	<i>Slope to Slope Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Wasaga Beach RecPlex, 1724 Mosley St, the first Thursday of the month, 7-9 pm, September to June.	<b>Paris</b>	<i>Paris Quilting Bees</i> We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from September to June at the Paris Fairgrounds at 7 PM. For information email: <a href="mailto:parisquiltingbees@gmail.com">parisquiltingbees@gmail.com</a> .
<b>Cornwall</b>	<i>Cornwall Quilters Guild</i> We meet at St. Mathews Lutheran Church, 1509 Second St West at 7pm every third Monday evening from September through May.	<b>Penetanguishene</b>	<i>Georgian Bay Quilters Guild</i> Meets every month from September to June at the Penetanguishene Arena, 61 Maria St. Penetanguishene, Ontario. Monthly meetings (except for December & June) are the 4th Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. December & June meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month with the June meeting starting at 6:00 p.m.
<b>Courtice</b>	<i>Clarington Quilt Guild</i> We meet at Faith United Church, 1778 Nash Road, Courtice on the 3rd Thursday of each month from 1 - 3 p.m. We are a day time Guild	<b>Peterborough</b>	<i>Kawartha Quiltmakers' Guild</i> Meetings are at the Westdale United Church, 1509 Sherbrooke Street, Peterborough on the first Wednesday of each month at 9:30 am.
<b>Dryden</b>	<i>Sunset Country Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at 84 St. Charles Street at 7 pm on the 4th Tuesday of each month.	<b>Perth</b>	<i>Lanark County Quilters Guild</i> We meet at Lions Hall, Perth Fairgrounds at 7pm on the 4th Tuesday of the month.
<b>Dunnville</b>	D.O.T.S. Quilt Guild (Dunnville's Own Tiny Stitchers). We meet at Maple Creek Community Church, 110 Inman Rd. @ 6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month from September to June.	<b>Petawawa</b>	<i>Pembroke Log Cabin Quilters</i> We meet every 3rd Tuesday of the month during the school year in the basement of 1163 Victoria Street. Our social time begins at 6 pm and meeting at 7 pm. Email: <a href="mailto:pembrokeklogcabinquilters@gmail.com">pembrokeklogcabinquilters@gmail.com</a> , FB: Pembroke Log Cabin Quilters, Web page: <a href="http://pembrokeklogcabinquilters.ca">pembrokeklogcabinquilters.ca</a>
<b>Elliot Lake</b>	<i>Elliot Lake Quilt Guild</i> We meet at Gentle Shepherd Church, 3 Ottawa Ave. at 7:00 pm on Tuesdays from September through June.	<b>Pickering</b>	<i>Rouge Valley Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Peace Lutheran Church, 928 Liverpool Road, Pickering at 7:00 pm on the 4th Monday of the month September through May, excluding December.
<b>Elmira</b>	<i>The Elmira Needle Sisters</i> We meet at the Elmira Mennonite Church at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of the month.	<b>Port Loring</b>	<i>Argyle Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Lions Den in Arnstein on the second Thursday of the month.
<b>Espanola</b>	<i>North Shore Pins &amp; Needles Stitchery Guild</i> Meetings are held every 4th Wednesday of the month, upstairs at the Legion Hall, 370 Annette St. at 7 p.m. Sept-Nov & Jan.-May first meeting free	<b>Port Perry</b>	<i>Port Perry Patchers</i> We meet at the Hope Christian Reform Church, 14480 Old Simcoe Rd. in Prince Albert at 7:00 pm on the third Monday of the month, at 7 p.m. from March to December.
<b>Etobicoke</b>	<i>Etobicoke Quilters Guild</i> We meet at Neilson Park Creative Centre - 56 Neilson Dr. at 7:00 pm on the third Monday of the month.	<b>Prince Edward</b>	<i>Prince Edward County Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the BCR Church in Bloomfield at 7:00 pm County on the second Wednesday of each month.
<b>Georgetown</b>	<i>Halton Hills Quilters Guild</i> We Meet at 8958 Trafalgar Rd, Georgetown, ON L7G 4S5. 6:45pm till 9pm from September till June on the fourth Monday of the month.	<b>Rayside</b>	<i>Rayside Balfour Quilting and Stitchery Guild</i> We meet at the Chelmsford Arena (Upstairs) 215 Edward Avenue, Chelmsford, Ontario at 7:00 p.m. every Monday from September to May.
<b>Gloucester</b>	<i>Common Thread Quilt Guild</i> We meet at Le Mouvement D'Implication Francophone D'Orléans (MIFO), 6600 rue Carriere in Orleans at 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month from September through June.	<b>Renfrew</b>	<i>Quilt Guild Renfrew &amp; Area</i> We meet at the Horton Community Centre, 1005 Castleford Road, Horton from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from September to June.
<b>Goderich</b>	<i>Goderich Quilters' Guild</i> We meet once a month on the 2nd Tuesday.	<b>Richmond</b>	<i>Richmond Area Quilters Guild (RAQG)</i> We meet at the Richmond Legion, 6430 Ottawa Street at 7:30 on the third Wednesday of each month.
<b>Grimsby</b>	<i>Grimsby Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Livingston Activity Centre at 7pm on the third Thursday of the month.	<b>Ruthven</b>	<i>Erie Shores Quilter's Guild</i> We meet at the Ruthven-Olinda United Church every third Tuesday.
<b>Guelph</b>	<i>Royal City Quilters' Guild</i> Monthly meetings are held at 7pm (Eastern) on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from September through June. Monthly meetings are virtual and feature a guest speaker. A Zoom link to the meeting will be emailed to all members and registered guests the day before the Guild's Meeting.	<b>Sarnia</b>	<i>Sarnia Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Redeemer Christian Reformed Church 5814 Blackwell Sdrd, Sarnia at 7pm the first Monday of each month.
<b>Gwillimbury</b>	<i>Gwillimbury Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Sharon-Hope United Church, 18648 Leslie St. at 1:00 pm on 4th Monday of the month from September through May.	<b>Sault St. Marie</b>	<i>Stitches From The Heart Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Senior's Centre on Bay St at 7pm the last Monday of the month.
<b>Hagersville</b>	<i>Haldimand Quilter's Guild</i> We meet at the Hagersville United Church at 7:00 pm on the first Monday of the month from September through June.	<b>Scarborough</b>	<i>Rouge Valley Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Peace Lutheran Church, 928 Liverpool Road, Pickering at 7:00 pm on the 4th Monday of the month September through May, excluding December.
<b>Haliburton</b>	<i>Haliburton Highlands Quilter Guild</i> We meet at the Stanhope Community Centre, 1095 North Shore Rd, Algonquin Highlands at 1:00 pm on the second Wednesday of each month.	<b>Simcoe</b>	<i>Twilight Quilters' Guild of Norfolk County</i> We meet at the Old Wyndham Church, 30 Glendale Crescent at 7:00 pm on the second Monday of the month.
<b>Hamilton</b>	<i>Hamilton Quilters Guild</i> We meet The Church of Resurrection, 435 Mohawk Rd. W. at 7:00 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from September through August.	<b>Stittsville</b>	<i>Norfolk County Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Vittoria & District Community Centre on the first Tuesday of each month except October.
<b>Ingersoll</b>	<i>Oxford Quilters Guild</i> We meet monthly at the Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre, 125 Centennial Lane (in Victoria Park) the first Thursday of the month at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. and also have virtual only meetings for the months of January, February and March. A zoom link is emailed to all members and registered guests the day before the Guild's meeting.	<b>St Marys</b>	<i>The Quilters Club</i> We meet at the The Pretty Street Community Centre at 7:00 pm on the third Monday of the month.
<b>Kanata</b>	<i>The Kanata Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Glen Cairn United Church, 140 Abbeyhill Dr. at 9:30 am on the second Wednesday of the month from September to June.	<b>Stony Creek</b>	<i>The Stonetowne Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the End Zone Room of the Pyramid Centre at 9:30 am on the third Tuesday of the month from September to May.
<b>Kemptville</b>	<i>Kemptville Quilters Guild</i> We meet pm at the Kemptville Pentecostal Church 1964 County Road # 43 at 7:00 pm on the second Monday of the month (except for holiday Mondays).	<b>Sudbury</b>	<i>Stoney Creek Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Royal Canadian Legion, 12 King Street East, at 6:30 pm on first Wednesday of the month from September to June.
<b>Kenora</b>	<i>Lake of the Woods Quilter's Guild</i> We meet at St. Louis Catholic Church, 912 Superior St in Keewatin at 7 PM on the second Thursday of the month.	<b>Sudbury</b>	<i>Sudbury &amp; District Quilting &amp; Stitchery Guild</i> We meet at 140 Durham Street at 7:00 pm on every Tuesday from September to April.
<b>Kincardine</b>	Kincardine Sunset Quilters Guild. We meet the second Wednesday of every month except July and August, at 10 a.m. in the basement of St. Anthony's Church on Russell St. in Kincardine.	<b>Sutton</b>	<i>The Georgina Pins and Needles</i> We meet at the Knox United Church 34 Market Street at 7:00 pm on the first Tuesday of the month from September to June.
<b>Kingston</b>	<i>Kingston Heirloom Quilters</i> We meet at St. Johns Anglican Church Hall in Portsmouth Village at 9:30 am on the first Tuesday and 7:00 pm on the first Thursday of each month. <i>Limestone Quilt Guild</i> We meet on the first Wednesday of the month. September to December we meet at Our Lady of Lourdes church hall, 490 Days Road, Kingston Ontario. January to April we meet on Zoom. Doors open at 6:45, with meetings starting at 7:00 pm.	<b>Teeswater</b>	<i>5 Star Quilt Guild</i> Meets the 4th Wednesday of the month at the Community Center in Teeswater
<b>Kingsville</b>	<i>Erie Shores Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Kingsville Arena, 2nd floor at 7p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month.	<b>Thunder Bay</b>	<i>Thunder Bay Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Calvin Lutheran Church on Edward Street at 7:30pm on the 3rd Monday of each month from September to June.
<b>Kirkton</b>	<i>Huron, Perth Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Kirkton/Wooddham Community Centre at 9:00 am on the second Tuesday of the month from September through May.	<b>Toronto</b>	<i>Etobicoke Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at the Neilson Park Creative Centre at 7:15 pm on the third Monday of the month. <i>Pleasant Nights Quilters' Guild of North Toronto</i> meets the second Wednesday of each month. During COVID-19 meetings will be held via Zoom. Guests welcome. <a href="https://www.pnag.ca">https://www.pnag.ca</a> .
<b>Kitchener - Waterloo</b>	<i>The Waterloo County Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Parkside Community Room of the Parkside Arena in Waterloo at 1:30pm and 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month.	<b>Toronto</b>	<i>Toronto Modern Quilt Guild</i> We meet at The Workroom Studio, 46 Nobel St Studio 102 at 3:00 pm on the last Sunday of each month. <i>York Heritage Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Toronto Botanical Gardens on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from September through May. <i>Yorkshire Rose Quilters' Guild of Toronto</i> We meet at Danforth Mennonite Church, 2174 Danforth Avenue at 7:30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month from September through May.
<b>Lambton</b>	<i>North Lambton Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the Port Franks Hall on the 4th Wednesday of the month.	<b>Waterloo</b>	<i>The Waterloo County Quilters' Guild</i> We meet the Albert McCormick Community Centre at 1:30 pm and 7pm on the third Wednesday of each month from September through June
<b>Lindsay</b>	<i>Lindsay Creative Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Jennings Creek Christian Reform Church, 206 Angeline St. N., Lindsay ON at 1:00 pm every 2nd Monday of the month except for October, December and June.	<b>Whitby</b>	<i>Kindred Hearts Guild</i> We meet at the Whitby Baptist Church on the third Tuesday of the month.
<b>London</b>	<i>London Friendship Quilters Guild</i> We meet the 2nd Thursday of the month from September to June. The meeting usually runs from 7pm to 9pm. We are located at St. George's Presbyterian Church, 1475 Dundas Street, London, Ontario N5W 3B8. To contact us: <a href="mailto:lfqg.president@gmail.com">lfqg.president@gmail.com</a> or our web page: <a href="http://www.lfqq.org">lfqq.org</a>	<b>Windsor</b>	<i>Windsor Quilters' Guild</i> We meet at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 594, 5030 Howard Ave., Windsor, ON N9A 6Z6 at 9:00 a.m. the first Wednesday of the month from September to June.
<b>Manitoulin Island</b>	<i>Island Quilters Guild</i> We meet at the Community Hall in Mindemoya at 7:00 pm on the third Thursday of the month from September through June.	<b>York Region</b>	<i>The Moraine Quilt Guild</i> We meet at the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church at 1:00 on the first Wednesday of the month.
<b>Markdale</b>	<i>Queen's Bush Quilters</i> We meet at Annesley United Church, 82 Toronto St. at 7:00 pm on the 1st Tuesday of the month from September to June.		

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## Welcome the season change.

As Winter sneaks in, we stand at the doorway of a season that whispers to us to slow down and invites us to focus more inward. I will be the first to admit that I did not embrace this change. In fact, it was more of mourning the loss of a friend to see everything change from the vibrancy of summer to the abrupt monochrome silence of Winter.

After sitting with that for some time and processing those feelings. I realized there is nothing left but to embrace the change of season whether we like it or not. It is something that we cannot change (unless we move somewhere). Understanding and learning by observing nature's cycles.

There is beauty in every season. Spring feels like Hope. Summer feels like a celebration. Autumn feels like Wisdom. But what do we see Winter as? Unless it looks like what's in a snowy snow globe scene. Typically, it gets a negative rap due to its harshness. So, this is a great opportunity to see it in a different light. Otherwise, it can make a person miserable. To be focused on 'the weather' which can dictate how your day goes, if you let it. So how do you get past your feelings about the weather, without surrendering the steering wheel to it?

Winter teaches us what no other season can. Rest is not laziness, and pause is not a green light for feeling guilty. We are not taught how to embrace the rhythms of nature. In fact, the slowdown is an opportunity to focus inwards. To create the indoor spaces of Zen to retreat to. Enjoy the moments of a quiet morning slowing down with your coffee and feet up a bit longer than you normally would. Allowing and giving yourself permission to pause and rest more. This is the time to breathe. To reflect and to gather gratitude like snowflakes on warm mittens. It gives us the gift of stillness. We need to get away from the self-criticism that may come with learning how to do this. Recognizing that this is your time to honor and go with the flow. Make a choice to give it more space than you are used to.

Have gratitude for those little moments. Gratitude doesn't always need to be loud and bold. It can be small moments and whispers.

We think that time is unlimited. But it is not. So, we must learn to embrace the moments that matter more. The To-Do list can wait. Instead, give more time and prioritize like you do with the to do tasks to the ones you really enjoy doing. At the end of our lifetime, we are not going to say: 'Oh, I wish I had cleaned the bathroom' rather than play with my child or being with the ones you love or take more time to recharge your own batteries.

Allowing yourself to recharge is a quiet rebellion against the myth that worth is earned only through motion. It's choosing to see yourself not as a machine built for output, but as a living, breathing being who deserves restoration as much as accomplishment.

When you make a conscious choice to recharge. Watch how your inner perception shifts from 'I must keep going and keep busy' to 'I am allowed and give myself permission to return to myself.' To recharge my batteries and embrace the slow down.

Yes, some days it is going to be this struggle of your inner self saying, 'you should be doing this,' and feeling somewhat guilty. Your nervous system won't know how to unclench instantly. It takes time. Once you set boundaries respectfully and re-write the program to allow for more self-acceptance. It will become easier and grow naturally to where it's second nature to you. In fact, it then becomes the priority.

As we remind ourselves, we remind you to embrace the season. Pause. Breathe. Restore. Your energy is the currency of your life and everything you love. So, take care of you! We encourage you to accept mother nature's invitation to interact with and experience winter's majesty. Immerse yourself and be present in all the season has to offer.

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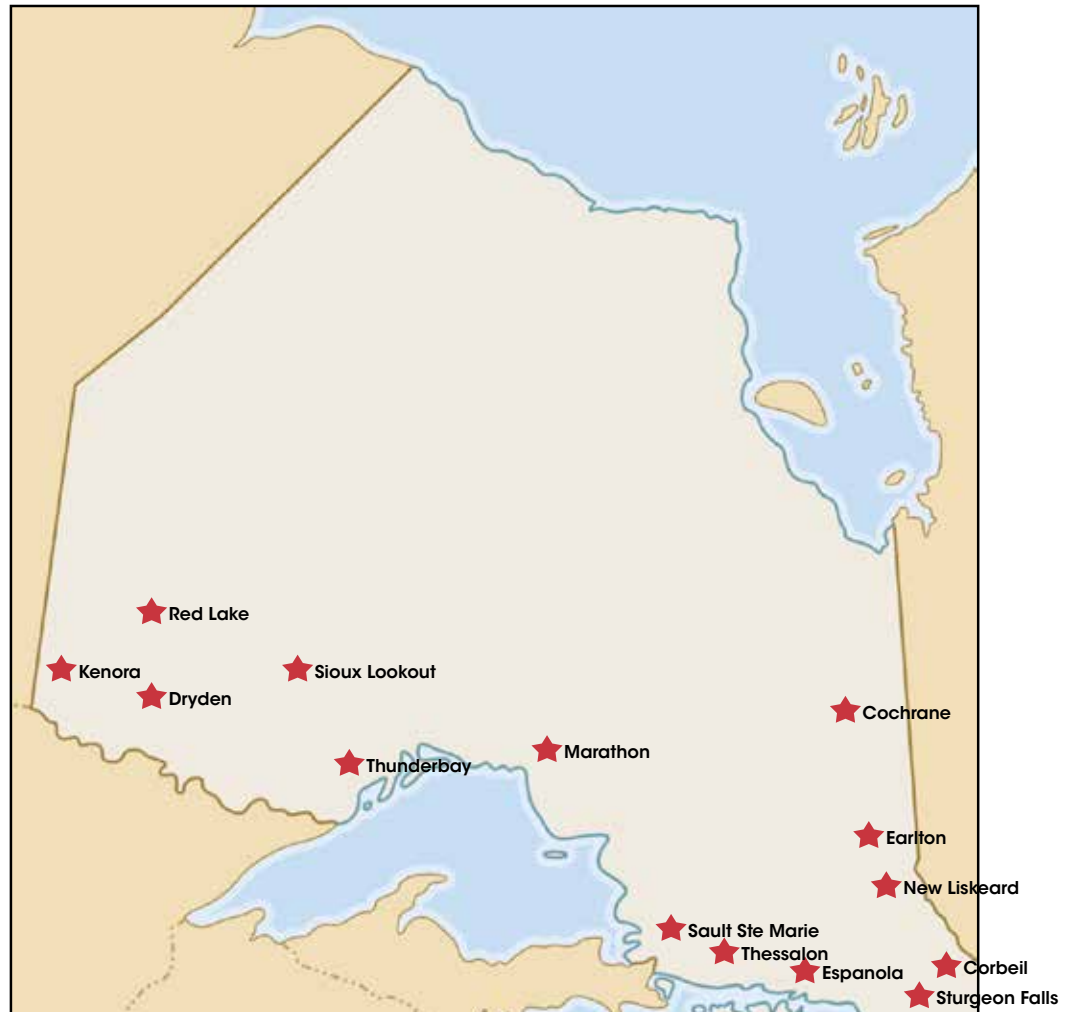
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## Grampa's Maple Tree

by Wayne M. Bosman

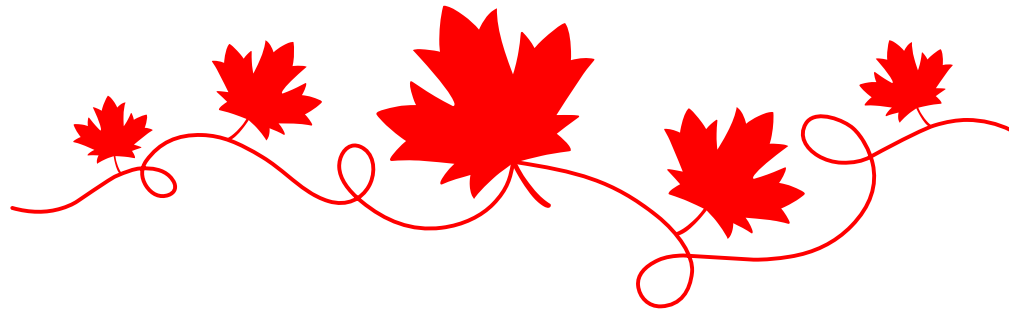
Planting a tree is in some ways a major act of faith. Often when an adult plants a tree, a thought passes through their mind that they may not even be alive when the tree reaches maturity. That is one of the reasons that garden stores supply half-grown trees and deliver them with heavy equipment. Instant gratification and assurance of success. This story is not about one of those trees. Rather, this is about a tree that was almost an afterthought that succeeded mightily.

When my father returned from World War II, he and Mom lived for a while in an apartment in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He was a laborer at one of the local factories, which were all very busy during the post war boom. He was a farmer at heart and they dreamed of having some land out in the county to raise the children who were still just part of the dream. Dad's nephew was willing to sell him 10 acres adjoining his farm at a very good price, so all they needed was a house. Fortune smiled on them. A local church wanted to put in a bigger parking lot, but there was already a house on the property. The house was not very old and it had been built by a building contractor for his own use. He built it to last forever. They made a deal to buy it and have it moved to the rural location.

Dad's family pitched in to get the house ready to move. Mom learned to use the tractor to dig a basement. She laughs now to think of her 26 year old self running the tractor and hauling loads of dirt. Dad and his brothers poured the concrete and built the cement block walls for the basement. The house was placed over their work and lowered into position. Their work must have been good, because almost 80 years later it is sitting as securely as the day it was finished. That was 1946.

I didn't come into the picture until 1951, the fourth child out of an eventual six. By that time, most of the landscape was in its' prime. Four apple trees, one cherry and one plum were already producing fruit. Dad's garden covered a full acre and we ate well. Mom's garden had flowers

Priddis, AB



that ensured something was in bloom from spring to fall. We ate from the currant bushes before they had a chance to ripen and got to the raspberries even before the birds could. But this story is about Grampa's maple tree, isn't it?

Grampa, Mom's father, was already getting old by the time the house was planted. He couldn't run a tractor or do any physical labor. He didn't drive, so he and Grandma came out sometimes on Sunday after church to survey the progress. One Sunday they brought with them a maple sapling. It had been a volunteer that had sprung up in their back yard, the beneficiary of the good soil that they had nurtured for 25 years. He suggested that it would provide good shade for them someday. It was planted before the rest of the fruit trees were even purchased. It was always referred to as Grampa's tree, and it still is. I had to dig through some long ago memories to find out the story of the tree.

The fruit trees are long gone. The plums went first. I was still a child then. One by one the apple trees died off, only the memories remain of climbing in the "Monkey tree" and eating (and throwing) apples. But Grampa's maple tree, from a spindly little sapling, still towers over the yard of the house that Mom has lived in for the last 78 years.

Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic. His email is [wbosman1@gmail.com](mailto:wbosman1@gmail.com).



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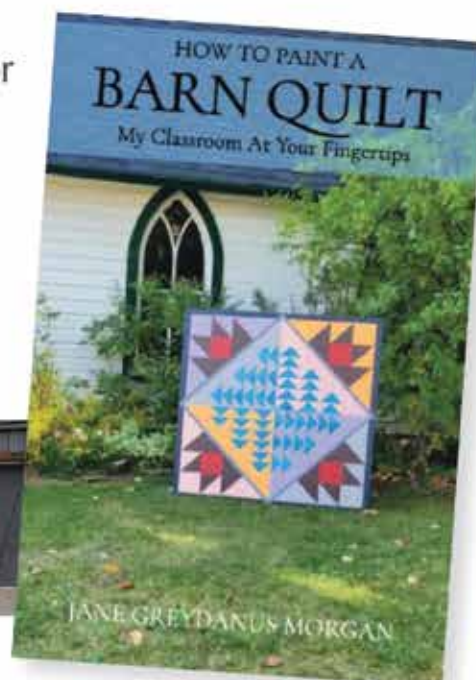
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