

Charles Oz Collins

THE WATERER

I was couple of months shy of 12 before I knew a waterer could be something besides me! I watered chickens, the dog, flowers, hogs, and cows. My brothers were waterers before I got promoted. Mom and Dad had a turn before them. It ran in the family, probably because we all were born and grew up on farms.

One day, I visited a local dairy. Right smack in the middle of a big corral sat a box that looked like a refrigerator lying on its back with the doors missing. I did not see any way this thing could replace a big, galvanized stock tank with a hydrant hanging over one edge. That corral must have had sixty Holstein cows, and anyone could see the box would not hold enough water for a quarter of them. And there was no hydrant! What did they do, fill it with buckets? The dairy family was sizeable, but it would take all those kids in a bucket brigade to water those cows. Maybe they just pulled a hose out across the corral, but I didn't see any hydrant, especially not one close to the little box. I was glad I wasn't the one pulling a hose out of the corral. That would be a slick job, for sure. That would be worse than chipping ice out of that contraption.

Then they explained it to me. The water came from a buried hose that came up inside the box. Great! No slick hose, no hose to drain every day of winter, but what kept the box from overflowing? Who turned it on and off? I couldn't imagine the dairyman liked his cows dragging their bags through the mud before coming into the barn at milking time, and it would cost a small fortune to put skates on 60 Holsteins. They told me it was "automatic."

That day I went home mystified and envious, and maybe even a little resentful. An automatic box that did my job better had replaced me, with fewer accidents and complaints. Isn't science wonderful?

Fast forward 40 years. The wife and I get a little place in the country. We bought livestock since we grew up with animals, me a few and she a lot on a dairy farm. Money was tight, what with building a house, and we discussed getting a stock tank and filling it with a hose. Nope! We were going to get an automatic waterer. We did. I set it in concrete with an angle iron rail around it welded by our son. The thing worked great, in all seasons. Not only did a water supply pipe run underneath it but also electricity! Our little herd had water on demand, 24/7, 365 days a year, holidays

included. What a lucky bunch of bovines. What a lucky me! Our old tomcat Dusty loves it because he sees birds drinking there and waits to catch them. He hasn't figured out yet he might need to hide a bit while stalking them.

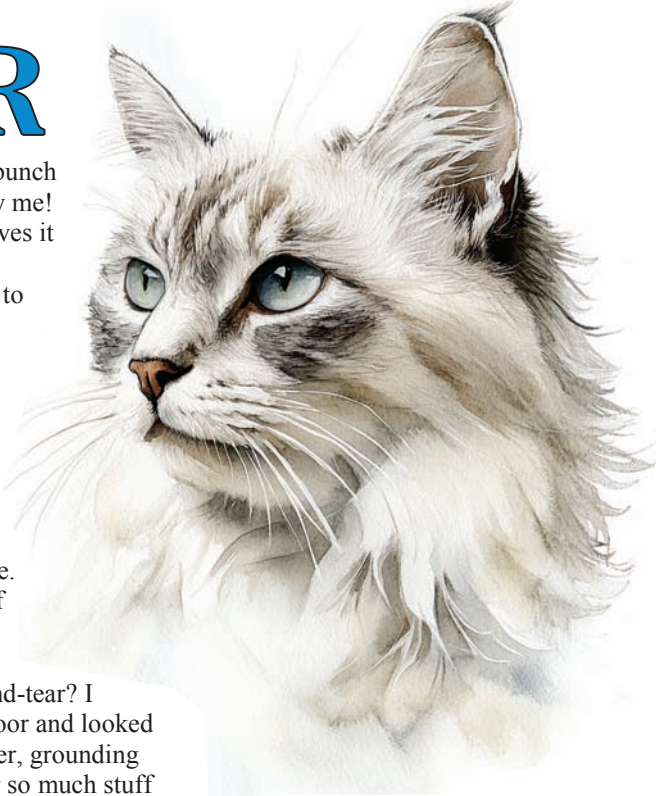
Then it happened.

It was only a small wet spot. But it didn't go away. With the first cold spell, it turned to ice. Could it be after years of faithful service, my reliable friend was showing a bit of wear-and-tear? I removed the insulated door and looked inside. Wires, pipe, heater, grounding rod... I didn't remember so much stuff (and water) not supposed to be there. I got a small can and scooped out some. The level of the puddle did not change. It refilled! Yes, this was for sure an automatic waterer.

Off came the protective rail and the cover for the float valve, out came the basins and heater. Screws, bolts, nuts, washers were all stored in my pockets. I tightened anything I could reach. Some of the hardware in my pockets mysteriously disappeared, and finding replacements wasn't easy. After a trip to town to the hardware store, I reassembled it. Sometimes these mysterious small leaks will seal themselves. I've heard about that happening, but not necessarily to me.

Next morning, I had a larger ice cap. Animals were slipping and sliding a bit. I knew I didn't have enough skates. The disassembly went quicker this time and I found the new flashlight I thought my wife had misplaced still shining inside the waterer. If everything is tight down below, it must be the float valve. It's the only moving mechanical part that should get any wear and tear. Shutting off the water, mostly, I took it off and examined it. It appeared to have shrunk since my son and I installed it... during the Bush administration? Maybe it needed new parts.

To my relief, the Feed Store carried the identical float valve. The price was a bit more than a 1200-pound bale of good second cutting alfalfa, but I took that half-a-handful of plastic home with me. I knew from long experience it's best to dope the threads when attaching anything that holds water under pressure. Having had



good luck with Teflon tape, I opted for that, even having the foresight to include it with the cartload of tools I brought to the corral. Tape went on and I snugged it down with water pump pliers. On went the water and up came the level in the basin. It stopped, too near the top of the basin. I'd seen the wind funnel around the loafing shed and across that corral strong enough to blow water out of the basin.

A bit tired, I saved time by adjusting the float without shutting off the water. It was just a thumb screw that locked the float arm in the desired position. Two minutes and I'd be done and on my way to supper. The wind made it chilly in the late afternoon. Fingers were getting cold. I was down at float level when the blast of high-pressure water hit me in the face and chest. My brain screamed, "You over-adjusted!" Many turns of the shut-off valve later, I wiped my bifocals and went hunting for tiny internal parts of my new float valve that had blown past me. I only found two and hoped that was enough.

A cold quarter hour later, I tested the valve. Can you believe it? They sold me a defective valve that leaked! Another ten minutes switching the position of the two valve parts and it appeared I had repaired the new float valve to the point it leaked no more. The next morning, I awoke to an ice field. I called Matt, who arrived with a pickup load of tools and a head-load of knowledge. Out came an electric jackhammer. Concrete flew. He exposed the PVC pipe, glued a new fitting into place, put on a shiny new supply valve, and healed the waterer.

As much as I respect his workmanship, I feel he cheated. He turned off the water supply at the meter. It made the job look simple that way and it only took him half an hour. Truthfully, I think he could have done it in fifteen minutes if I hadn't helped him. ♦



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A Stock Tank, an Angry Rancher, and The Mink

Ernest Hartnagle

Sometimes a person doesn't know where to start. In this case, square one has more avenues of approach than the number of tentacles of an octopus.

Our subject qualified for more than one moniker, but none of them seemed to fit. My friend Lyndie just brushed himself off as a "piece of work." It became the consensus of those close to the source that "they" broke the mold when they manufactured him. It wasn't until Orin Green (now deceased) christened him as "The Mink" that it stuck. He was now permanently identified and branded for the rest of his days on Mother Earth!

To accurately describe him, other than a list of larceny



and without using a plethora of phrases, one word, "foul," would blanket them all. Webster, in his dictionary, defines foul with fourteen definitions. The Mink unknowingly subscribed to at least seven of them. He had a flexible personal hygiene, basic or otherwise. In wintertime, he deemed it too cold to bathe. In springtime, he didn't need a bath. Summertime was ideal. If he got into a rancher's stock tank while the rancher was gone, he was "home free." He could "soak his pork" in the cool water, might even use his bar of ivory soap that would float. The downside of luxury was the livestock wouldn't drink tainted water. It forced the rancher to drain the tank and refill it with pure, clean water, a highly time-consuming task that fostered immediate revenge if he ever got caught.

On one sultry Sunday afternoon, the curtain went up on the last episode of this heretofore luxury. On his way over the hill, he stopped in to see Uncle Andrew. He rattled the screen door to no response as Uncle Andrew was away. Boy, what a golden opportunity to bathe in Uncle Andrew's three hundred gallon cement stock tank! He skinned off his duds, including his long handled underwear, which had changed from spotless white to dingy autumn gray.

He evidently lost the element of time. Uncle Andrew came home and decided to chore a little early, being Sunday. The routine began with topping off the water trough. The temperature changed when Andrew went around the corner of the well house to see the Mink fully immersed in the tank with only his head in view.

Uncle Andrew let out some selective epitaphs and dived after the Mink, but with his one crippled leg was not fast enough as the Mink shot out of the tub and laid down some fast tracks. Andrew met him as he was attempting to hightail it out of there, still yanking on his long johns. Andrew shook his fist in the Mink's face and professed to him that he'd drown him if he ever caught him in the tank again.

The Mink believed him, too, without comment. ♦

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THE PLAYGROUND

My elementary school in the 1940s and '50s had a nice playground. Since it had no fence to keep us kids in or out, we spent a good part of our free playtime there. We could really “pump high” the metal swings on long chains. The seats were chunks of 2x6 boards.

I loved those swings.
I didn't frequent the metal merry-go-round much since it made me dizzy and sick to my stomach as it spun. Nor did I play much on the metal teeter-totters with wooden seats, because I couldn't find anyone to balance on the other side with me. But I had a lot of fun on the tall metal slide. Since tall trees surrounded our playground, we didn't have to worry about the metal being so hot it burned our legs and seat. Our metal jungle gym had thin pipes welded together for kids to climb on. We called it “the bars.” I could sling one leg over a bar about three or four feet off the ground, lock my fingers together around my leg, and jump-start my body to go around the bar, with my coat as a leg protector on the slippery surface for easy going. Around and around I went until it was someone else's turn.

But my favorite piece of equipment was the giant stride. It was the absolute best and most fun of all the pieces on that playground, a tall metal upright pipe with a big ball bearing around the top. Hooked onto this ball bearing were six or eight long chains. At the bottom of them hung a wooden-and-metal device for our hands to grab onto as we swung around the center pole. We ran to get the device started. If big kids were riding with you, you had to run as fast as they did! Then everyone would fold up their legs and feet and we'd glide around the pipe in the grandest manner. We all had to stop at the same time to avoid being smacked in the head with someone else's chain. I dearly loved that giant stride.

Metal and wood were the only good sturdy building materials available in those days. As an adult, I wonder where all that playground equipment came from. Was there a local business that built them? Did they have a forge and welder and all the other necessary heavy metal machines to make our playthings? I'm grateful we had a playground full of good sturdy things to play on.

Dirt and gravel lay beneath these enormous pieces of equipment. If you fell and skinned your knee or shin, you dealt with it. That's what made us so tough. We brushed ourselves off and continued to play.

Playgrounds today wouldn't recognize playgrounds of yesteryear. Today's equipment is all brightly colored molded plastic so no one ever has a possibility of getting hurt. There's soft fine sand or grass underneath it to break a fall or prevent a scrape. Today's playgrounds are much safer and more suited for younger children than my favorite turn-of-the-century playground made from factory parts. It was a sign of the times, and a welcome break from work.

We worked hard back then, but we also played hard on metal equipment. And we survived. ♦

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The Dash to Freedom

Berene H. Ingram

When our dairy cows made a dash for freedom to the city, they used a stealth strategy. It happened at mid-morning. We didn't know about it until someone drove to the farm to tell us or called. "Your cows are eating my garden."

Cows are intelligent, present a peaceful demeanor, and anything beyond contented grazing in the field is unexpected unless it involves protecting a calf. If we approached the bull, he warned us with a snorting lowered head and hooves that dug up dirt. The cows grazed the pasture throughout the day, but also gathered around the water trough, sought shade under a large tree, and stood at the barn to be milked in the evening. They often planned how to taste the green grass on the other side of the fence.

"Good fences make good neighbors," Dad said. We needed quality pasture fencing, maintained and monitored often. We shared a four-strand barbed wire fence attached to six-foot posts with the neighbor farm to the south. Our herd included 15 to 20 Jersey-Guernsey dairy cows, calves and one bull.



fence posts were broken or weakened with rot, he replaced them with the trunks of small trees, the width of a large hand. Some neighbors used metal posts and used an auger to dig the hole. Dad used a posthole digger, two shovels screwed together with a hinge, fitted with tall wooden handles inserted in the hinge to open and close the shovels to lift the loosened dirt out of the hole. The new fence posts were inserted into the three-foot deep holes, leaving six feet above ground, with the dirt packed around the base. Large wire staples attached the four

strands of barbed wire to the new posts. When a pasture needed rest from the grazing to let the grass grow, Dad closed the gate on that pasture and opened a gate to another pasture for the cows to graze. One of my daily activities included walking along the cow paths with the dog in the pastures for about an hour after dinner. "Look at the condition of the fences when you walk." Dad said. I told him of any problems observed. During their grazing freedom dash to the city, our cows enjoyed various patches of grass and the green leafy vegetables from several neighbors' gardens along the way. The cows timed their mid-morning escapes during the spring and summer weeks when the new grass grew green, sweet and tender. When notified,

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The farm neighbor had white-faced brown beef cows. Our cows visited over the fence with the near neighbor cows. The beef cows required minimal human hands-on activities, other than assurance they were in their assigned space, had enough hay during the winter, and water in the creek or the troughs every few days. The second neighboring farm to the south had a large herd of Black Angus and more land. That owner flew a small plane low over his farm every afternoon between four and six to observe the condition of the fences and the herd location. We ran outside to the back porch when we heard the plane's engines, or if we were already outside, we jumped, waved our arms and sent him big smiles. A dipped plane wing sent his greeting to us. We didn't see him fly back, so he took a different route to his home airport. During weekends, Dad maintained, repaired, and inspected fences around the pastures. When

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Mom drove my brothers to the cows' freedom location, and walked the cows toward the farm, first along the city streets, and through our pasture's gates. The rest of the day, the cows resumed grazing as if nothing had happened. They stared at us

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with big brown eyes, long lashes, poker faces, and remembered the new flavors discovered on their outing as they chewed their cud. Near the evening milking, they walked to the barn to wait their turn to be milked, with docile and contented expressions that didn't reveal the leader of the outing or their schemes for freedom. When Dad came home from work, he repaired the weakened fence. On any given day, the cows tested the strength of fences around the pastures. They stood by the fence and leaned against it. If it held strong, they moved along to other parts of the fence. If the post had rotted in the ground or

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broken after repeated testing, this marked the place for the next freedom walk. If the post didn't break, but the fence staples popped out and the wires became loose, the cows took this opportunity to step through the barbed wire strands and walked to town. The bull and older cows led the younger cows and calves on their mission to discover new grass flavors. Discrete smiles accompanied our rescue missions to bring them home. However, we would never know when the cows implemented their secret plans for the date and time of the next freedom dash. They used natural technology and quiet reserve with perfect precision. We waited for the next call for help. ♦

Spring Cozy

Abby Jones

Spring is a time to notice. It's short, yet abundant in magic. Trees bud out overnight. Daffodils, a flower linking back generations of women, emerge in a cheerful yellow. We dig through last year's detritus and find flowers springing up in the warm earth. In just a few short weeks, the winter—gray and monochrome—is beaten back by a riot of colorful blooms. Brown and gray are replaced with rich green. The sky sparkles. The birds sing. Everything is busy and alive with life! We still want to fill our homes with coziness, but we long to throw off winter and feel "bright-eyed and bushy-tailed." We want to stretch and laugh with delight.

What are some things we can do to stay cozy in our homes but take advantage of spring's budding out?

- Change out heavy blankets for light ones
- Transition closets even if layers are still needed
- Trade out velvets and wool for cotton and linen
- Get new sheets
- Introduce fresh colors into your home
- Make or bring out of storage spring pillow covers
- Air out the beds
- Explore the library's seed catalog
- Buy or make floral bouquets
- Berry salads
- Painted eggs
- Explore Resurrection stories

- Buy a new dress
- Enjoy a traditional Easter feast
- Incorporate a nature journal into your home and learn about local flora and fauna
- Lighten meals with more salads and bright green veggies
- Open your windows
- Enjoy the sound of rain
- Read the *Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis
- Visit a plant store
- Enjoy the first glass of iced tea
- Spring clean!
- Plan planting
- Plant!

All this and more are wonderful ways to embrace spring and create coziness, while encouraging your home to release the sleepy hibernation of winter. Growing up, spring was the time we started our gardens and baby

animals were born. It was a busy, busy time of the year, but also a time for exploring. Not only did the forest and hills take on new life as they shook off the winter chill and the sides of the road became decorated with wildflowers, but seedlings sprouted and baby birds chirped their high-pitched hunger at their parents. Each day had new green growth as beans reached for

the sky and the oaks leafed out. Spring is broad, but also very close and small. This is why we deep clean in the spring! It's the tried-and-true method of whisking away the winter cobwebs for the vivid green of spring.



I almost never have time to "spring clean." The year starts off with a roar and the next thing I know, it's June. But spring cleaning seems hard-wired into our DNA. I *want* to do it. I crave the energy and ability to shut life off for a week and clean until my entire house gleams. I've even thought of hiring a cleaning crew. Maybe one day I'll do that. Or maybe I need to spring clean from March through May and just give myself more time.

Either way, spring is a time of life, a blossoming, a slow start, and then a brilliant dance as everything bursts into color. Cozy doesn't drift off with the winter blues. It continues to serve our people dressed in brighter hues. ♦

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Ice Cream for Me

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Growing up, ice cream was always a part of my life, since every important social event included it! When I went to birthday parties, they had hot dogs, baked beans, cookies, and often cake. If you were really lucky, you also got vanilla ice cream. Flavors like spumoni, pineapple and butterscotch were big hits with adults, but we kids never ate them.

Sometimes, in the Summer, one of the local churches had an ice cream social. They served other food with it, but we all know the reason we went. Most of the time they hand-cranked it rather than bought it, and everyone got a turn. Small children, like me, were given an earlier turn, since the ice cream, as it froze, became harder to crank. Once or twice, I had to ask for help. Using my best muscle was not enough to turn the crank. There were benches and tables to use, but many of the children sat on the grass as part of the experience.

We had an ice cream social once at our house. I watched in amazement as my parents made tons of ice cream. Daydreaming about all the sweet treats we could eat for weeks, I realized it was almost gone and ran to the end of the line.

The ice cream we got at school came in small cups with a wooden spoon. I had to pull hard to

get off the top. Not a daily occurrence, this treat usually accompanied school parties for holidays or as a dessert ahead of Christmas vacation. We also got it as a reward for our parents showing up for a PTA meeting or completing our projects for the Science Fair on time.

We went to a parochial school as children and had to pay to ride the bus. As a treat, at the end of the school year, the driver took us all to Dairy Queen. It was usually before opening day. Back then, Dairy Queen was only open part of the year. They would open on Memorial Day and close after Labor Day. Some years, the Dairy Queen opened just for us. It thrilled us to be the first kids of the summer to go there and have soft serve ice cream for the season!



Whenever Mom bought ice cream in the square cartons, she would open it and cut it with a large butcher knife into equal portions. Since there were ten of us, we never had leftovers. I often got a bigger bowl at other people's houses. Yum!

As time went on, stores like Bresler's, Bridgeman's, Howard Johnson's and Farrell's opened. Eventually, we had Baskin Robbins. A friend of the family used to take us for ice cream. As we debated over flavors, he would order vanilla. If we suggested he order something more exciting, he ordered *French Vanilla*.

Even now, my husband and I celebrate occasions and minor victories with ice cream. It makes life special. We are continuing the ice cream tradition that began when I was a child.

Is today an ice cream day? ♦

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Without Reservation

Linda O'Connell

My husband, Bill, is driven to drive. I don't know if it is the call of the road or the hum of the tires, but once he gets behind the steering wheel, he is determined to cover as many miles as possible. The year we reached senior citizen discount eligibility, we tossed caution to the wind and traveled like free spirits, without an itinerary. No, we didn't load up a daisy bedecked Volkswagen bus; we packed our small Toyota with two suitcases and agreed we may be older, but we were still young at heart and up for an adventure. Our vacation started in the Midwest in the gray dawn, continued to develop like the shades of an old Polaroid picture as we headed west, and ended with a deep crimson blush in Colorado.

After a cup of morning coffee, we were ready to hit the road. "Are you sure you have everything now?" He-who-forgets-nothing quizzed me as he fastened his seat belt and put the car in gear. "Yes. Colorado, here we come." I gazed at the stars, imagining how much brighter they'd be out west. Then I remembered what I forgot. "Wait!

Sheepishly, I bowed my head and mumbled. "I forgot to close the front door. It was standing wide open. You think subconsciously, maybe we really don't want to head across country, unprepared? You think we should have at least made reservations?" The guy who is hooked on driving said, "Don't worry, there are hundreds of motels along Route 66. We'll play it by ear and pull off the Mother Road when we get tired. They have little mom and pop roadside motels everywhere."

After driving for fifteen hours with a few brief stops to eat and refuel, my honey asked if I felt like I could drive a little farther. What could I say? I hadn't driven at all. At 10 p.m. we passed a town with a dozen motels, all with neon signs flashing "No Vacancy". "Next town, we'll stop for the night," my chauffeur assured me. Every "next town" had lots of motels but no vacancies. We had driven all the way to the Colorado border. A local radio station disc jockey announced that a raging storm had come through earlier, and most of the campers had abandoned the mountains for the local hotels. There was no room at any inn. By 2 a.m. Bill felt too exhausted to drive on. He pulled off the highway and onto the darkened parking lot of a closed auto body shop and reclined his seat. Within seconds, his snoring reverberated and steamed up the windows. I sat and squirmed for four hours, wishing for a bathroom and a comfortable bed.

My imagination ran wild, wondering if we were in the hood or in a friendly neighborhood. I decided if we got robbed, I'd give up my purse, but not our money. So, I removed the cash from my wallet and stuffed the wad of twenty-dollar bills into the stretchy waistband of my shorts.

When dawn crept over the horizon, I spied a convenience store two blocks away. I opened the car door cautiously so as not to wake my husband, and I slipped out of the car without fully shutting the door. I stretched my arms, inhaled the crisp Colorado air, and shook the cramps out of my stiff legs. That's when it happened. One after another, twenty-dollar bills unfurled and fell down the right leg of my red shorts. The wind whisked them up and when they came down, they stuck to the damp pavement like adhesive stamps on



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an envelope. I picked up one, two, three bills and stood up. Then another twenty-dollar bill rolled down my leg and blew away. I chased that cash down the block as the bills continued to rise and fall. Finally, I retrieved them all. That's when I looked up and noticed the shift change workers with their faces plastered to the window at the truck weigh station across the road. No doubt they thought me a working woman. I can only imagine what they thought when Bill opened the car door, jumped out, leaned over the top of that Toyota, and shouted, "Hey, what's going on here? Where do you think you're going?" "To find a room," I shouted. "A restroom!" We made it to our destination in record drive time, without reservations, but what a price to pay: green on the ground and red on my face. ♦



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Stop!" I darted back into the house for my pillow. "Ready now?" my honey teased. "Did you notice I didn't forget my pillow?" "No! You only forgot to lock the back door! Didn't need my key. We would have come home to an empty house." As we pulled onto the road, no traffic in sight, I said a quick prayer for safe travels, and cast a backwards glance at our home. I grabbed Bill's arm and screeched, "Stop! Make a U turn, now!" I felt frantic, speechless, and too embarrassed to tell him what I'd forgotten. Once again, I dashed into the house, returned to the car and said, "Got it! Let's head out now." "So? What was it this time?" Bill asked when he noticed I didn't have an object in my hand. "Exactly what did you forget?"

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An Angel in the Vestibule

Anne Forcella Skalitza

There is a vestibule in one of our parish churches, accessible from the street, which opens onto the middle of the church. This small room is only ten square feet, with stairs leading to the choir loft. The floors, walls and even the ceiling are dark brown polished wood that smell of lemon oil. On one wall is a wooden rack that holds the weekly bulletin and some dog-eared pamphlets. Two aged metal street signs with the words “Funeral Zone” embossed on them stand sentinel in a corner. Many people enter this side room and don’t give it much thought. They’re cold and can’t wait to get warm, or hot and can’t wait to cool off in the air conditioning or they’re late and


One day, after entering the tiny vestibule, I peered around me. An older man who seemed slightly crippled sat on the choir loft steps and seemed tired. Perhaps he didn’t want to bother being in a pew and getting up for others seeking a seat. He could barely make it through the door. A young girl, no older than a teenager, prayed with the congregation. I could not hear her voice, but I saw her lips moving. She knew the prayers by heart. She seemed so shy, she barely raised her head. Beside her stood an able-bodied, alert older woman who sang every hymn loud and clear. I could not fathom why she stood here in this small space with us, but then, looking at my son and me, no one could see our reason for being there either. I realized only God knows what we feel and think, and no one may judge others. I had spent much of my life thinking my way was the only way. Now that I had a child with special needs, I could empathize with those around me. I prayed with the congregation: those who were inside the main part of the





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need to find an empty space in a pew—and fast. This is a place used by people who are late or those cradling crying babies. Or people like me.

Ushers are told to encourage worshipers to enter the body of the church in order to become a true participant of the Mass. As a child, I always sat up front. As a teacher of a children’s religious class, I spoke to the families about sitting as far front as possible so the children would become actively involved. When my children were babies, I sat in the front pew with my husband and little ones. My older child was quiet and attentive. The younger one was a little restless, but nothing a slight rocking wouldn’t calm. As the months went by and my older son stayed quiet and calm, my younger son became more fidgety and restless. He became agitated at being among people and extremely upset when in a crowded place. Slowly, we began our retreat to the pews toward the back of the church, but eventually that too did not work. So there we were, a family relegated to the little vestibule on the side of the church, with a few other regulars and some who visited this tiny room when they were very late. Now, as one of “those people” I felt sad. No longer did I feel a part of the service. I had become a mere observer.

church, and those of us who were in this little area. How nice it would be, though, to have a place to sit!

As if on cue, an usher made his way towards us, bearing four folding chairs. He smiled at our little group and opened them in our little corner, facing the congregation. Our older man now sat comfortably. The parent with a crying baby could now sit for a moment. The man who appeared did not question. He understood. And with that, he slipped away into the sanctuary. I tried to find him as soon after the service ended, but he was gone, as if he wore the wings of an angel.

And I quietly gave thanks. ♦

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Fixin' Fence

George Rice

I grew up during the thirties on a ranch in the sand hills of Yuma County. I started helping with the chores at about the same time I learned to tie my shoes. My most vivid memory of those days was “fixin’ fence.” Seven miles of barbed wire stapled to two thousand posts encircled the ranch. Keeping this fence intact occupied my eleventh summer. The fence kept our cattle in, the neighbors’ cattle out, and provided more toward my practical education than much of my formal schooling.

Soon after dawn each day, Dad and I hitched our team of bay mares to a wagon, threw in some posts, pieces of wire, and tools. We filled the water barrel anchored near the tailgate and the mares and I rattled and clattered off to spend the day patrolling the pasture fence while Dad went to the field with another team. My job was to follow the fence line until I found a broken wire, a loose staple, or a broken post and make repairs. When I found a wire broken by some errant critter in search of greener grass, I pulled the ends together with the wire stretcher and either twisted the broken ends together or put in a splice, hopefully without ripping jeans, gloves, or flesh on the rusty barbed wire. While not really hard work, it was exacting.

A broken post had to be dug out and a new one installed. During those drought years, the dry sand ran through the pincers of the posthole diggers like a broken hourglass. This was one reason for the water barrel. I dug a small indentation, poured in a bucket of water, and waited for it to seep into the sand so it would support a vertical hole. It made the digging easier, but a lot heavier.

This was hot, dirty, lonesome work. There was no shade, and the temperature often raised to over a hundred, driven into my senses by a hot, maddeningly persistent south wind that carried a

fine dust, turning sweat into gritty mud that caked my eyelids and turned my shirt collar to sandpaper. In the rare times we had no wind, hovering black swarms of flies and gnats found their way into my ears, eyes, and nostrils. There were huge black horseflies and tiny “no-see-ums” whose sting was like a burning coal, and gnats without a sting but whose numbers and persistence made them a living, humming, malicious cloud dedicated to testing my sanity and driving me to pray for that awful wind.

It was not all bad. I savored the solitude, and I absorbed the sights, sounds, and smells. I can still hear the gentle swish of the mares’ tails and the creak of harness. I can see the soaring. The sense of smell is the most enduring. My most indelible memory is of the pungent smell of sagebrush, horses, sweat-soaked straw hat, newly turned earth, and, on rare occasions, the sweet freshness of approaching rain.

The horses were my transportation, my guardians, and my clock. They knew when it was time to move to the next repair and when to quit for the day and told me with shaking heads and impatient feet. We always rumbled into the yard as Dad came in from the field with his team. Together, we hung up the harness, brushed the horses, and fed them. Then Dad



and I washed up together and relished the delightful aroma of Mom’s cooking in the kitchen.

After dinner, we listened to the news on our battery-powered Zenith. Dad explained about the wars in Europe and Asia, and Mom smiled at us as she and my sister talked about girl things. While aching tired, I’d done an honest day’s work. I knew what it was to be trusted, and I had genuine love. I knew real contentment.

I learned a lot about life by fixin’ fence. ♦

Spring Break

Debbie Unruh

Spring Break had come and the kids on the bus were talking about their plans. Disneyland, the coast, visit to grandparents and traveling were discussed over the seats. I remembered all this when my sister came to visit me over our children’s Spring Break. “Do you remember what we did on Spring Break when we were kids?” I asked her.

“We cleaned ditches!” we said in unison. Spring Break may have arrived at school, but it sure didn’t come to the farm! Instead, the work continued to speed up as we prepared the ground for planting, put in crops, and answered the need for irrigation.

Dad’s plan for us during Spring Break was to clean the miles of cement ditches that covered our farm. Some sections had only an inch of silt, but the heavy mucky smelly sections took forever. Being hot, cold, or windy didn’t matter. We had to take our shovels out every day and clean out another long stretch.

The morning after Spring Break, we got on the bus and heard of the waves, sun, and carnival rides. We may have come back with a tan, but the blisters lining the hands told our story. That’s what you did when you lived on a farm. You worked together as a family and learned how to get along with your siblings. And the times you didn’t get along, the work lost any appeal. But it was satisfying to look back and see the ditches clean and ready for the water to roll in. Daydreams of playing in it helped the digging go a little easier. And someday we would also go to Disneyland, when the work was all done, and the snow covered the ground. We would head off for the coast and enjoy a taste of spring while winter coated our farm. ♦



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THE WEST OF YESTER-YEAR

Rachel Kovaciny

Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo

Was he a shrewd leader? A power-hungry politician? A loyal *Californio*? An opportunistic land-grabber? A skilled military commander? A rebel traitor?

During his lifetime, you could have found people who believed all those things about General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.

Vallejo was born to an aristocratic Spanish family in Monterey, California, in 1807. According to his family lore, his great-great-grandfather served as the viceroy of New Spain, as California was originally called. His family also claimed as ancestors an officer serving under Cortés and the ship’s captain who transported Columbus back to Spain in 1500.

Although that family history is hard to confirm, the Vallejo family held significant power and influence in Alta, California, well before Mariano’s birth.

Alta California was an exciting place to grow up in the early 1800s. As a boy, Vallejo witnessed Argentinian pirates looting and

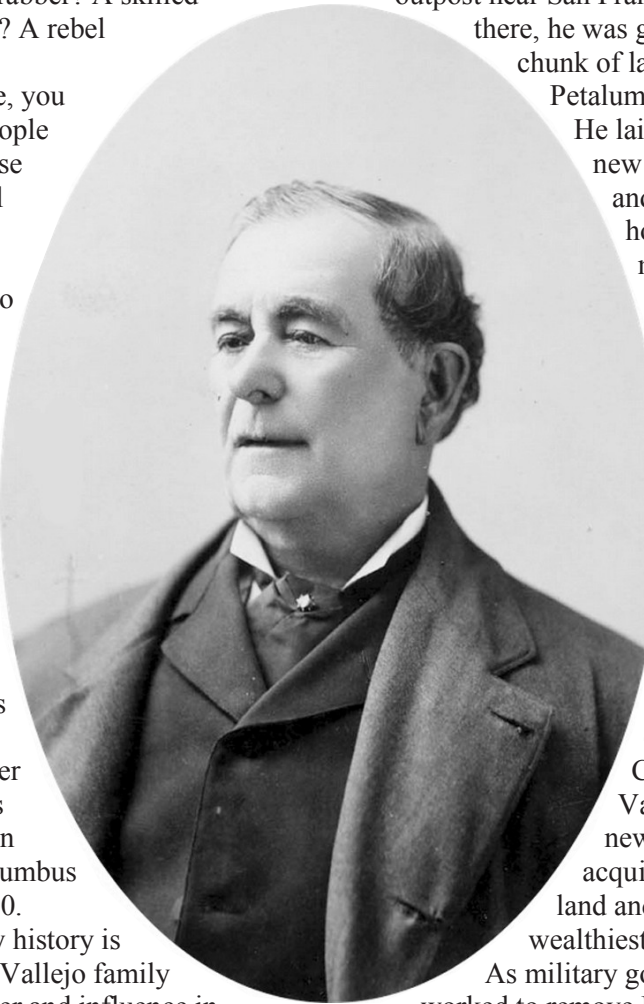
adulthood. One year after their marriage, Vallejo went north to establish a new military outpost near San Francisco Bay. While there, he was granted a sizeable chunk of land called Rancho Petaluma east of the mission.

He laid out street plans for a new town called Sonoma and built himself a big house there by the new military barracks.

Before long, he had been declared military commander of all of California north of San Francisco. In 1836, Vallejo’s nephew, Juan Alvarado, led a revolt against an unpopular Mexican governor. When the dust settled, Juan Alvarado was the new civil governor of California, and Mariano Vallejo had become the new military governor. He acquired quite a lot of new land and became one of the wealthiest men in California.

As military governor, Vallejo worked to remove Russian settlements from northern California, and carried out orders to remove British and American citizens who had moved into California. Despite that, Vallejo favored building strong ties with the United States. Like many *Californios*, he believed the Mexican government was too far away to effectively govern California. He was open to the idea of an alliance with the United States.

However, during the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846, rebel leader John C. Fremont did not believe Vallejo truly agreed with the idea of California leaving Mexico and becoming part of the US. He threw Vallejo and many other



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high-ranking *Californios* into prison and did not release them until the conflict had been resolved. Despite this, Vallejo became a member of the California State Constitutional Convention in 1849. Not only that, but he was elected to the first California state legislature.

As he grew older, Vallejo became passionate about preserving the history of Alta California, especially as the region rapidly left its Spanish and Native American roots behind and became anglicized. He worked with historians to collect oral histories from aging *Californios*, many of whom agreed to have their histories written down by the historians only because they knew and trusted Vallejo. Besides assisting with that project, he also wrote more than a thousand pages in five volumes, his own detailed history of Alta, California.

General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo died in 1890 and was buried in Sonoma, the city he planned and helped build. In 2017, that city honored him with a life-sized statue. His great-great granddaughter, Martha Vallejo McGettigan, gave a speech when the statue was dedicated. While he lived, he served first the Spanish government, then the Mexican government, and finally, the California state government once it became part of the United States of America. While some detractors pointed to this as a sign Vallejo was an opportunist, maybe even a traitor to his Spanish origins. I think it shows that he was loyal to California and her people above all else. ♦

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pillaging Monterey. As a teen, he served as the personal secretary of the Spanish Governor until Mexico won her independence from Spain. While working as the governor’s secretary, Vallejo learned to speak French, English, and Latin.

Vallejo eventually entered military service and rose quickly through the ranks. He won great fame and popularity by leading his troops against an uprising of Miwok Indians and subduing them. By 1830, in his early twenties, he became the military commander of all troops stationed in San Francisco.

Vallejo soon married Francisca Benicia Carrillo, daughter of a prominent *Californio* family. The couple had sixteen children, ten of whom lived to

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I don't know what his last name was,
although I suppose I must have heard it. We
just called him Norman the Chore Man.

Then he went to free form. “No good, deflated, cross-eyed, snot-nosed, flat headed, ingrown, low--life, smart-mouthed, dumb acting, overblown, under-inflated, head in the clouds, off kilter, bowlegged, toupee wearing, indecent, over educated, under thinking, blacker than coal, thin skinned, thick headed, round heeled, pigeon toed, buck toothed...”

“Fake-a-loo, big bellied, galled, son of a dim-witted English Lord, you ain’t no better than the sweat off a pig’s snout! It’s a wonder you can walk and spit...”

“Rumble-seated, fringe bottomed, two horse hook up, on a three horse hitch, jaundiced looking, albino eyed, hard-hearted, over painted, underdressed...”

“Sloughed dwelling, sun baked, moon eyed,
ham shanked, puppy mannered, dung related,
beetle browed, half-shaven, girlie looking, soul
searing, Billy The Kid-acting...”

whatever he was cussing out. “Slick sided, too tall, cold shouldered, neighbor baiting, devil may care, late running, sun damaged...”

“Rattle brained, thin skinned, slow motion,
rat tailed, cold-hearted, slick down hair, sunken
cheeked, ridge running, barren...”


He'd walk across the main room, turn on the light, then come back inside his room to put on his shoes. The bed springs went *sproing* as he sat down. He'd hold his breath as he reached down to pick up a shoe. After a long time, he'd start breathing again. Grunts, as he pushed his foot into it. His foot hit the floor with a bang, and he'd hold his breath as he reached for the other shoe. Then he'd leave again. As he left, he slammed his door closed again. Hard. Twice.

With the door closed tight, he'd pick up the flashlight he kept on a table, just outside his door. It clicked as he checked the light. He mumbled breathless to himself, unscrewed the end of it and took out the batteries. They clicked as he turned them over in his hands, and he'd invariably drop one. He'd stomp out to the shower area, where he kept extra batteries, clump back in, and change them next to the little table. I don't remember him ever not changing the batteries. At that point, I could go back to sleep, because he'd go to the barn to start milking.

weather acting, un-natural, mealy mouthed, wouldn't say cheese if you had a mouthful..."

“Broken down, snake hipped, forked
tongued, wormy, down in the mouth, scissor
billed, shovel handed, south pawed, north end
of a southern faced petunia, ape like, giraffe
necked, big mouthed, squinty eyed...”

“Tempest in a teapot, bag of bones,
mildewed, water logged, downhill, cross
tied, ship wrecked, parrot beaked...”



I never saw him use his strength to harm anyone or anything. It was almost funny to watch him chase his cows into or out of the barn. He carried a piece of leather, but never hit them with it, just yelled at them. He could have kissed them harder. They'd switch their tails and meander wherever they wanted to go. He'd cuss and swear

“Half a bubble off, tilted off kilter, galley west, pirate hooked, one eyed, hoodwinked, patched up, wonder brained, dim-lighted, sharp as a doorknob, pancake high, grass fed, boogered up, table topped, under bit, slab sided, garden variety, low I.Q.’d, whiskey blended, wino crawling, two holed outhouse of a debt ridden son of Satan.”

By this time, he'd be pretty well warmed up, and if we were still laughing, he'd go on some more.

Norman was a great guy. ♦

Wed Though Wet

B. B. Bunting

She stood in front of the mirror, twisting her long auburn hair into a tail, turning her head from side to side to decide how it looked best. I thought she looked lovely from any position. Her younger brother mimicked her movements, looking like an agile monkey behind her. When she ignored him, he shrugged his shoulders and went back to gluing car pictures in an album.

“How I wish I could take a trip across the Atlantic,” she said. My daughter was at the “I wish I was rich” stage and I had reminded her of the many joys we had in our lives. All in vain. “I’ve lived here for sixteen years and I haven’t even been to another state. The *Queen Mary II* just left on its maiden trans-Atlantic voyage,” she murmured dreamily. “Just imagine the luxury of it all. The biggest cruise ship in the world and fabulous people just mixing and mingling.”

“You wouldn’t even know what jeans to wear,” sniggered her brother. “And why would anyone want to mingle with you?”

“My dear, sea trips aren’t always wonderful. Even if they do cost thousands of dollars,” I told her. “Did I ever tell you about Grandma and Grandpa’s first trip together?”

They sat on the carpet in front of the television, legs crossed and the children waited eagerly for one of my tales. I leaned back in the old rocker that was my favorite story-telling chair.

Shortly before their marriage, my mom and dad decided on something different as a honeymoon trip. Secretly, not letting anyone in the family know. Two weeks of bliss, they agreed, with the chance to mend fences in private. Luxurious service and gorgeous weather included. It would take all their savings, but what was money? They’d make more, so they left together without saying a word to anyone at the reception. When they got off the train two days later in New York, their baggage went to the dock, got hefted up in a sling and dropped into a hold. Luckily they had thought to keep a small valise with them, which a steward snatched up and asked, “Which cabin, sir?”

The ship was everything they could wish for. New York City was alive, full of people of all colors and sizes. Traffic bustled even in the dead of night, when they had arrived at Grand Central Station. They were going to



remember this for the rest of their lives. They would photograph everything, starting with the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty. But the real pleasure would be crossing the world’s most traveled ocean with rich and famous people.

As the boat left the dock, a brass band trumpeted stirring music and the crowd waved, cheered and sang. When they found cabin 26AA, it was indeed luxurious. An enormous double bed with vases of flowers set on the chest of drawers and a private dining suite. Each room had a porthole that gave them a marvelous view. Strangely, the bedside table had a number of pieces of paper on it.

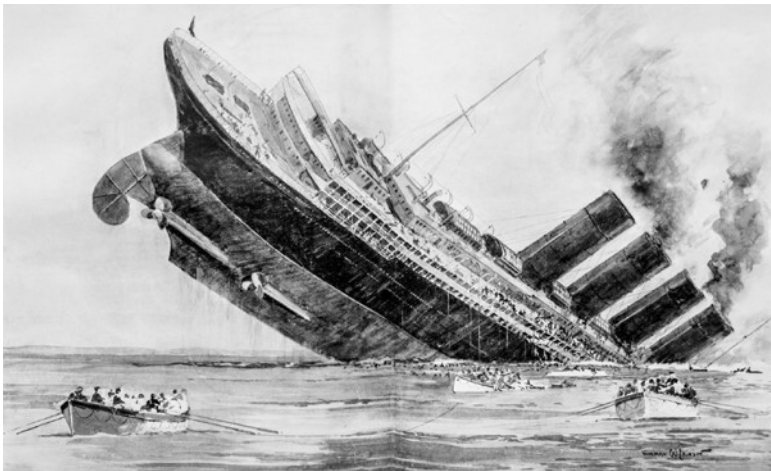
“They’re cables!” Dad cried.

“How on earth did they get them to us?” Mom gasped. “No one knew we were here!”

“Well, obviously someone knew!”

The stewards greeted the couple with knowing smirks, although the service was excellent, as was the food and the entertainment. As with all the ships of the line, while the meals were served in the dining rooms four times a day, stewards were able, and willing, to produce fabulous foods to the cabins any time they were requested. They expected magnificent service throughout the voyage, and the service to the cabins would be equally gracious. Games on deck would be available all day, all night. The ship’s program was printed on board and it showed dancing to well-known live orchestras that varied nightly. The swimming pools were fun, despite the constant rolling with the seas, and nationally known singers, dancers, comedians and actors were going to perform every day of the voyage. They could even radio-telephone from their cabin if they wished.

Mom and Dad snapped dozens of photographs of everything and everyone on board. Passengers were so friendly, and they felt they would have new friends for life after they settled down back in Colorado. One slight discomfort, they found on retiring, was that the air cooling shut off in their cabin. Calling the cabin steward failed to bring anyone to help. That first night, they had left their



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← cabin door ajar, and slept without covers or night attire. It was not the lovers’ nest they had hoped for. In the morning, Dad complained bitterly to the steward, who promised it would not happen again.

On the second day out, following a subdued warning from the captain that passengers should be prepared to use their lifeboat training if necessary, the ship shuddered. A loud explosion went off throughout the vessel. Swiftly, lifeboats swung out on the davits and crews herded passengers to the upper decks. The *Lusitania* had been torpedoed. Most of the lifeboats were submerged as the boat canted sharply to starboard, and many passengers slid overboard and were drowned.

The year was 1915, the vessel, British. Despite the fact that most of the passengers were American and a few were European, the German U-boat captain had done his duty, as he saw it. The ship sank with considerable loss of life in less than twenty minutes. Of course, my parents survived or I wouldn’t be telling you this story. A polish ship headed for America picked up the lifeboat they jumped into after a few hours. Days later, they returned to Colorado. Naturally, everyone at home had been worried when they heard about the sinking, so they were heroes for a while.

Mom asked a crew member as they were being put off the ship how the crew knew about their honeymoon. “Everybody on board knew,” he told her. “The congratulatory cables came in after one of your wedding guests contacted your travel agency. We’re all just sorry you chose a British ship.” He laughed, despite the situation they were in at that moment. “The cabin steward jammed your cooling so you’d have to leave the cabin door ajar, and half the ship’s crew listened at the door to hear what newly-weds said on their first night together.”

I grinned at my children. “People were just the same then as now, and you can’t begin to imagine your grandparents’ horror on discovering their honeymoon had been sabotaged. To them the ship sinking, and the loss of everything they had taken with them was a minor concern. They really never got over having been sabotaged on their wedding night, till the end of their days.” ♦

Liver and Onions: a Symbol of Resilience

Bridget Cole

Everyone has a favorite meal—a dish that feels like a warm embrace, offering comfort, or one that marks a notable occasion. Comfort foods hold a special place in our hearts. They’re the meals we turn to in times of sadness or when we simply need a little extra care.

For some, it’s a grandmother’s famous pecan pie or a father’s perfectly marinated grilled spare ribs. Other favorites might include creamy macaroni and cheese or a bowl of buttered mashed potatoes. For my daughter, it’s quesadillas.

Yet, there is one dish I suspect would not make most people’s list: liver and onions. Just the mention of the meal is often met with grimaces and a chorus of “Yuck”! To be fair, it is an acquired taste.

It’s not my favorite meal either, but one I appreciate. For me, liver and onions are more than a meal; they are a symbol of resilience and perseverance. It brings me back to when money was tight and life demanded resourcefulness. Those memories, and the meal itself, remind me not only of the hard times but of the hardiness and adaptability that grew from them.

Feeding five children on a teacher’s salary required ingenuity, a trait my mother held. Despite our modest budget, she seemed at ease, transforming our meager supplies into daily meals. She would create a delicious meal from a pot of simmering beans or make a single chicken last for a week’s worth of dinners. Liver and onions became a regular in her rotation, a dish that reflected her practicality. Those days between paychecks slowed to a snail’s pace. But during those lean times, my mother emerged as a hero. She recognized the value of liver as a budget-friendly yet nourishing option for our family.

Liver often takes the back seat to more conventional cuts of meat, but it is a nutrient-dense food, providing many essential vitamins and nutrients. According to the USDA, a single serving of beef liver provides over 20 grams of protein.

Yet, despite its benefits, liver has earned a poor reputation. I am sure many have heard the phrase “What am I, chopped liver?” Its origins can be traced back to the fact that chopped liver was served as a side dish, thus making the phrase a perfect metaphor for someone being ignored. According to the Urban Dictionary, chopped liver is defined as: “Someone perceived as being of little value or worth.”

Cooking liver is finicky-it must be cooked with precision. Cooked too long, it becomes dry and grainy. If it’s not cooked long enough, the liver has a metallic taste. My mother found the

balance. First, she rinsed and soaked it in milk for an hour, a trick she learned from her grandmother. Then she fried slices of bacon in the cast-iron skillet, filling the kitchen with their irresistible aroma. After cooking the bacon, she sautéed thinly sliced onions until they were tender and golden. Only then did she add the liver, frying it gently to perfection.

Throughout our childhood, we dined on this staple without complaints. My mother’s stories transformed this dish into a delicacy. She touted its health benefits and told us how her grandmother had savored its deliciousness.

Later, as an adult, I relied on meals of liver and onions out of financial necessity. Trips to the local slaughterhouse yielded a fresh beef liver, sometimes at no cost. I prepared it just as my mother had and froze the rest. My mother did a better job of extolling its virtues to her children than I

did. Neither of my children ever developed an affinity for the meal!

What began as a meal born of necessity has grown into a symbol of resilience and gratitude. Reflecting on those lean years, I see how they shaped my values and approach to life. The lessons of resourcefulness and determination have carried me through countless challenges. Today, liver and onions are more than just a dish—they are a reminder of the strength and perseverance that sustained me. ♦





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Keeping Bunko Healthy

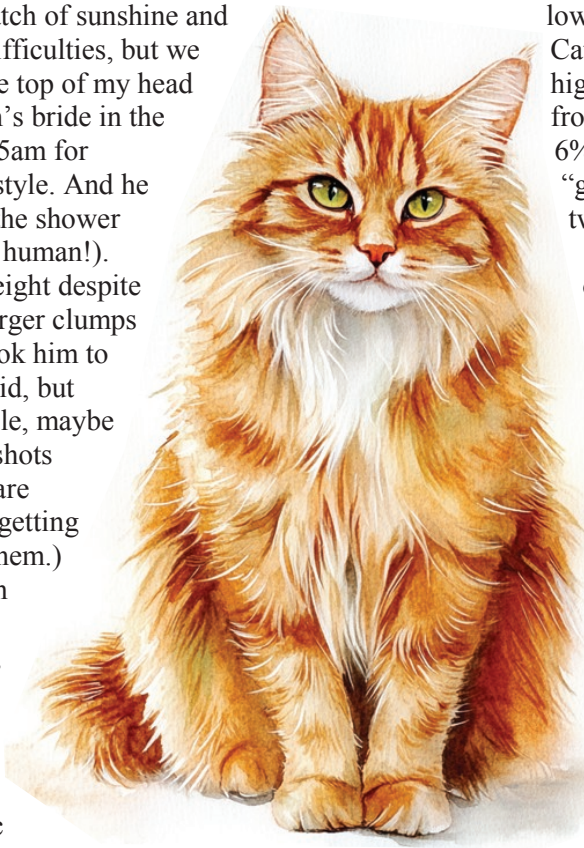
Bunko is the love of my life. He’s a fifteen-pound tabby cat with a gentle disposition and a love of bird-watching. He came to me an adorable but flatulent kitten with a sensitive stomach and needed a change in his diet. He’s so mild-mannered when other cats come around, rather than scream at them through the screen door, he lays in a patch of sunshine and ignores them. Bunko and I had some difficulties, but we adore each other. He loves to rub on the top of my head and leave me looking like Frankenstein’s bride in the mornings. That is how he greets me at 5am for breakfast, to give me a brand-new hairstyle. And he wants to do the same after I get out of the shower (how dare I wash off his scent! I’m his human!).

When I noticed Bunko was losing weight despite a voracious appetite and peeing a lot larger clumps in his litter box, I got concerned and took him to the vet. I’m glad I did. Diabetes, she said, but with the right diet and insulin for a while, maybe he can go into remission and not need shots twice a day. That is what Bunko and I are working toward. (He isn’t too keen on getting shots, and I’m not too keen on giving them.)

Diabetes isn’t just for fat cats (though they are the most at risk). Bunko has never been fat. It’s not just for old cats, either. Bunko is only seven. But the symptoms are the same: eating a lot but losing weight, drinking a ton and peeing gallons.

One of my friends also had a diabetic cat diagnosed at only seven years old, so I thought, “What are the odds of that?”

Turns out, it’s getting higher all the time.



Callie M.

Why?
It’s their diet.
Most dry food is high carb, low protein.
Cats need

high protein, low carb. Any carbs they get in the wild come from the rodents they eat. Bunko has to have a special diet of 6% carbs or less. To put this in perspective, one of his favorite “gravy” wet foods has 32% of carbs a can, and he wants it twice a day. His dry food has 31 carbs.

Unless it is freeze-dried meat, dry cat food consists *mostly* of carbs—potato, peas, rice, barley, or other varieties of grain. It is baked twice and by the time it goes into their bowl, it’s not really “food” anymore and their body isn’t sure what to do with it. (Kinda like us?) That’s why cats who eat too much of it get fat, throw it up, or get diabetes.

Your beloved fur-baby is better off eating the cheapest wet cat food two or three times a day than free-feeding on dry food. If you stop dry food for your indoor kitties, you may save yourself a lot of costly vet bills down the line.

If you want to know which wet cat foods are higher or lower in carbs, you can go here: <https://shorturl.at/Rzhwk> to access a list put together by a cat owner, who called each company and asked for the carb count in every tin of cat food. A good rule of thumb is this: no gravy.

Stick to pate or broth or “all natural.” A can of tinned chicken for people or for kitties has zero carbs. Most of the pates, broths, and all natural brands have 6 or 7% carbs, which will keep a pre-diabetic cat in remission. The only low-carb cat food I know about is Dr. Elsey’s and it costs \$50 for a 6 lb. bag. *Not* something you want them to free-feed off of all day long.

Think about your cat as what it is: a carnivore who needs meat to be their best, most thriving self. The same things we eat that make us overweight (carbs) will also make your cat or dog overweight (canine diabetes is on the rise for the same reason).

It may be a pain to check your pet food for a carb count before you order 12 cans of it (which the cat will decide it does not want once it arrives), but it’s a lot better than pricking their ear for a drop of blood to test their blood sugar, before you give them an insulin shot twice a day. I have hope for Bunko. If we do this right, maybe he’ll be in remission in no time. ♦



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On the Wrong Side of Big C Prairie Parson

A young friend came by to help fix my fence after the big wind and snowstorms. We were stretchin’ some wires when Doug turned to me and blurted out, “Jim, do you think this whole Jesus story is true? I mean, about him dyin’ and comin’ back to life and all that stuff?”

I said, “Well, Doug, if I was goin’ to make up a story and wanted people to believe it, I wouldn’t make it that far-fetched. Probably it was true. Lemme tell you how I think of the Easter story, in cowboy terms.”

This is what I told him. Maybe some of this will resonate with you, or be different from how you hear this “old story” year after year.

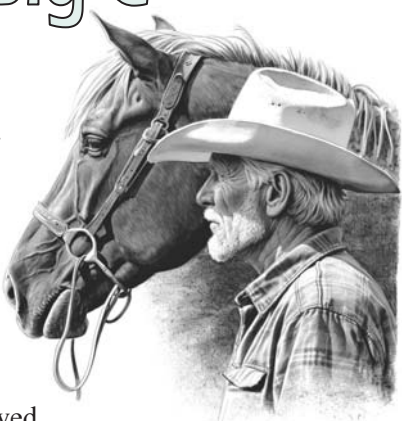
Jerusalem in Judea in the old days was like a big spread, with a bunch of people who didn’t get along. The head of the ranch was the Romans, sorta like a nasty, corrupt government that makes all the rules and enforces it with violence. Floggin’s, hangin’s, you name it. In those days, a Roman could make you ditch yer donkey and carry their stuff a mile (hence, why Jesus told his buddies to carry ‘em *two miles*).

also healed people from every kind of physical and mental illness. Things like that don’t happen every day, so giant crowds followed him around to receive healing or just to see what he was up to next. I can’t say I blame ‘em. His parables were puzzles for them to work out and his miracles were sometimes bold and showy, other times quiet. He fed thousands of people from a little boy’s lunch basket and turned water into wine at a friend’s wedding. Stories circulated about him scarin’ the wits out of his disciples by walkin’ on water and calmin’ down a violent storm by commandin’ it to stop. And for that time, he was a real radical. Jesus wasn’t the least bit afraid of treating women the same as men and socializing with the down-and-out folks during his travels.

There were even accounts of dead folks brought back to life by him. Jesus made controversial statements like “if you want to know what God is like, look to me.” He also said he could forgive sins. Well, this whipped the locals into a frenzy. Big C and his gang had rules for everythin’. They were great at splittin’ hairs using long scholarly dissertations. Jesus tried to show that faith in God can be simple while Big C and his posse had made it complicated. They had rituals and observances for everythin’ under the sun. Jesus said the whole point of obeyin’ God was to love him with your whole being and to love those all around you as you love yourself. Put it this way. Imagine yer living on that spread, dealin’ with a corrupt government all the time. You’d want a gunslinger to ride into town and rescue you, right? Not somebody who says “forgive those who mistreat you.”

That’s what the folks wanted. Another King David. They hoped the messiah would saddle up his horse, load his gun, and run off the big bad gang that was oppressin’ the little folk, then establish headquarters in Jerusalem. A lot of ‘fake’ messiahs tried to do just that, and the folks in charge kept killin’ em off. Well, Big C and his gang got worried if the Roman leaders heard about this new messiah, they might just kill everybody in Jerusalem. Besides that, Jesus had the gall not only to break their tons of rules but call himself the Son of God as well! Big C thought maybe it would be better for Jesus to wind up six feet under than all the rest of ‘em.

The Roman rulers couldn’t care less about local religious beliefs since they had dozens of their own gods to choose from. Provided you paid yer taxes and didn’t riot, they didn’t give two hoots. What the Romans didn’t want was trouble, since folks in those days tended to riot and kill people. Big C and his gang got the people stirred up about Jesus, so the Roman rulers started paying attention, too. Since Big C didn’t have the authority to execute him, his gang forced the Romans to do the job.



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It was sorta like havin’ no options, no freedom, and no fondness for the bullies who knocked yer hat off regularly and spit on ya. So it’s no wonder the down-and-outs were lookin’ for a king to come along and whip those Romans. But more on that later. Underneath the corrupt government was the Jewish temple leaders, whom I’ll call Big C (the high priest, Caiaphas) and his gang. They made sure the ranch ran okay, and nobody did



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wrong by the ten thousand laws of the time, which included not workin’ on the Sabbath. That’s when Jesus rode into town, a regular cowboy who came to rally folks, give ‘em hope ‘n’ healin’ and who wound up makin’ a big stink with Big C. Like a longhorn in a herd of shorthorns, people either loved or hated Jesus, cuz he *upset* things. He seemed to know what people was thinkin’ by reading their minds. He

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Nobody got the messiah they *wanted*, a real gunslinger to liberate the town from outlaws. But we all got the messiah we *needed*. Almost everyone in the Western World has heard the brutal story about the execution and death of Jesus on a Roman cross. We’ve also heard the story of his re-appearing alive and visiting his friends on that first Easter morning. For weeks after, there were reported sightings by large numbers of people of the risen Jesus. Folks said they conversed with him, or even ate with him. There’s plenty of proof Jesus existed, but can we believe the stories?

Here’s how I see it. You ain’t willin’ to die for a lie, and Jesus’ pals all went to their deaths years later still talkin’ about him as the Son of God, resurrected from the grave. They believed in him enough to be okay with dyin’ in his name. And they tried to live by what he told ‘em. The way I figure is, if Jesus is who he said

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he was, believin’ in him is a good thing. If’n he ain’t, you still lived a good life by treatin’ others with the kindness he told us to treat ‘em with. It can’t hurt. It does our soul good. I told Doug, “Yes, I believe the Jesus story. He wants to forgive us of the evil things we have done; all we have to do is ask him and mean it. He wants us to talk to and pour out our hearts to him through prayer. He promised when we belong to him, he will never leave us, and his presence will be with us always. Because Jesus overcame death, we too will overcome it and live on. Our last enemy, Death, has been defeated. So, Doug, what are you waiting for? Stop sittin’ on the fence.” ♦

On May 8, 1945, celebrations erupted around the world to mark the end of World War II in Europe, and soon afterward, many servicemen returned home to Southern California. It didn't take them long to find wives and start their families. In North Hollywood, the John B. Monlux Elementary School opened on July 1, 1945. As a Magnet school, it provided unlimited funds for educational programs focusing only on scholastics, art, music, literature, and even gardening. In July 1948, my parents bought a home in North Hollywood and in January, a few months shy of my fifth birthday, I entered Monlux.

On my first day of kindergarten, with me gripping her hand, my mother walked me into my classroom. As we stepped through the door, a pretty woman approached and introduced herself as Mrs. Beverly See, my teacher. Her soft smile put me at ease, and my mother left. As the door closed, Mrs. See asked her class of kindergartens to quiet down and find a seat on one of the small wooden chairs arranged in a semi-circle in the middle of the room.



With that, a remarkable journey began. In December, 1949, as the end of my first year of school approached, Mrs. See asked my parents if they would give their permission for me to take part on the Art Linkletter radio program called *The House Party*, scheduled for Friday, January 20, 1950. My parents gave permission.

When the big day came, they cut my blond hair in a stylish boy's haircut, and dressed me in a new pair of jeans and my favorite Roy Rogers cowboy shirt. I felt ready to enter the world of radio! On the day of the broadcast, my parents drove me to school, where a large limousine sat parked in front of the school offices. Four kids, ages five to seven, crowded the backseat. When

After arriving at the CBS Studios in Hollywood, we entered the recording studio and took our seats on the stage, facing the audience. As the broadcast began, the host, Art Linkletter, started with me, and asked me questions. “Now look at the first little boy with his hair all slicked back.” Mr. Linkletter beamed at me. “What’s your name?”

As laughter filled the studio, Mr. Linkletter smiled, winked at me and moved to the next child. After the broadcast, we received some gifts and were driven to the famous Brown Derby Restaurant for lunch.

Now, fast forward seventy-five years.

My wife Cheryle and I have been married sixty years, and have many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. On a recent visit with some of them, five-year-old

As our visit continued, she got restless, so I invited her to go outside to the large play area in the backyard that held a children's jungle gym with a slide, trapeze bars and playhouse with me. After crossing the spacious green lawn, Jema ran up a rock lined foot path to a large, wooden jungle gym. Eagerly, she swung



Seated in a wrought-iron chair, I marveled at her enthusiasm and stamina. After returning to the trapeze and jumping off, she stopped and looked at me. Placing her hands on her hips, she smiled and asked, “Grandpa, can I give you a kiss on the cheek?”

Taken aback, I beamed. “Grandpa would love a kiss on the cheek.” She bounded forward, her feet digging into the sand, and upon reaching me, threw her arms around my neck, pulled my face close to

hers, and kissed my left cheek. "Thank you, Jema! That was wonderful. How old are you?"

“Five, Grandpa.”

"I can still remember when I was five!" I laughed. "That was seventy-five years ago, and I appeared on a radio program with a famous man named Art Linkletter."

Dear sweet Jema stopped dead in her tracks and asked a question that drove home the mighty changes that occur over time. “Grandpa, what is a radio?” ♦

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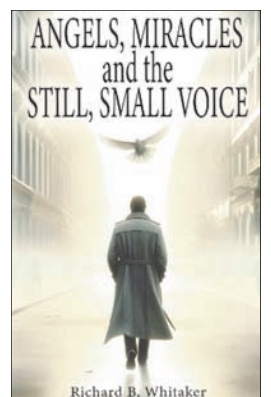


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run with the dogs

Charles Julius

In the early 1960s, Dad leased a large ranch near Parshall, Colorado, north of William Peak. Our sheep grazed on the National Forrest that abutted the ranch during the summer months. Every few days required a trip to the sheep camp to replenish the sheepherder’s stock of groceries, sheep salt and oats for the horses. It was also necessary to discuss any problems the herder had, evaluate the range conditions, and discuss any health problems with the herd.

My brothers and I looked forward to the trip to sheep camp. There were deer to be seen. Elk crossed our path. A trip to sheep camp was always an adventure.

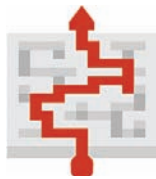
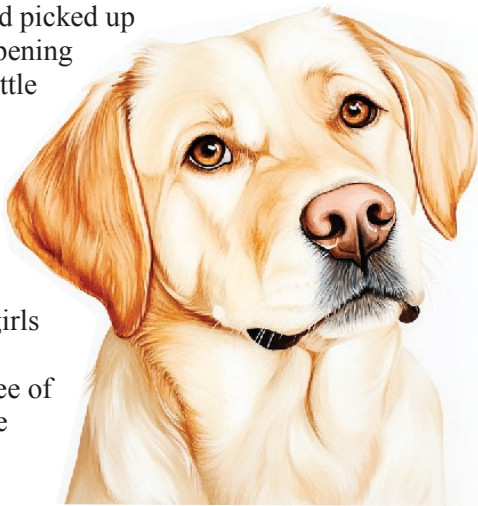
Dad had a 1949 Willies Jeep with a hard top. He would let down the tailgate to provide a rear facing bench for Jon (8), Carson (5) and me (6) to ride on. Andy (11) sat in the passenger seat. Certain privileges came with being the oldest. Not only was Andy the co-pilot, being second in command meant Andy didn’t have to open any gates.

Gates were a challenge. They were the loose wire variety, spanning the road and stretched tight to a wooden brace post. The tightness of the gate required the rest of us to work as a team to get the fastening wire off the top. Jon would lean his shoulder into the gatepost, reach with his arm to the fence post and squeeze for all he was worth. I did the same from the fence post side. A wire loop held the gate post securely to the fence post. Carson’s job was to push the loop up over the top of the gatepost as soon as it had enough slack. We would drag the gate open, Dad drove through, and we repeated this, but in reverse.

The primitive jeep roads we traveled to and from sheep camp were steep and rough. Dad let the dogs run beside and behind the jeep as we slowly traversed these high country paths. No doubt the dogs panting along, sometimes right among our dangling legs, gave Jon an idea. Carson and I learned to dread Jon’s ideas. This one was no different. The interiors of most ranch vehicles are littered with a collection of odds and ends left over from the chores the vehicle had been used for. Our old jeep was no exception. There were bits of wire, bridle and saddle parts, empty sheep salt bags, and fencing pliers. While bouncing along on the tailgate, Jon sat fastening an old bridle rein to a stick he had picked up at one of our many gate opening stops. Carson and I paid little attention to Jon’s manufacturing as we sat merrily enjoying the scenery and swinging our legs (until Jon eyed us disgustedly, informing Carson and me that only girls swing their legs).

At the next gate, the three of us piled off the back of the jeep. Following our established routine, we struggled to get the gate open and closed. However, as Carson and I returned to our seat, we found Jon there, holding his completed project ... a whip! Carson and I tried to regain our seats but before we could, “snap” went the whip. “Run with the dogs!” Jon commanded. “Are you on back there?” Dad hollered without turning his head. “Yea, Dad, go!” was Jon’s enthusiastic response. Before Carson or I could open our astonished mouths, off Dad went. The growling jeep dusted its way along the rutted road. Carson and I had no choice but to “run with the dogs!” Up and down the hills, we trotted. Carson in one track and me in the other. Panting along with the dogs. Occasionally one or the other of us would draw near enough the tail gate to reach out for the supporting chains to re-board. With a cackle of pure delight, Jon drove us back using his whip. “Run with the dogs!” he cried.

Somehow, Jon knew the limit of Carson’s and my endurance. Before we collapsed, he would relent and let us clamber to our seats



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Brenda Flipse

on the tailgate. Jon also seemed to know how long it took us to regain our strength. As soon as he felt we were rested, he would shove us off the jeep’s tailgate, declaring, “It’s time to run with the dogs!”

“Running with the dogs” became a standard routine for Carson and me whenever we went to sheep camp. Once in a great while, Dad had other work for Andy. At those times, Jon rode in the passenger seat, leaving Carson and me to relax on the trip.

I don’t know how many miles Carson and I shared with the dogs that summer. The dogs were delighted for the company. Dad never seemed concerned that Carson

and I were scrambling along behind the jeep, something I still find a mystery. The rear-view mirror had long since been a victim to an anonymous tree, so perhaps Dad never saw us jogging miserably behind or thought we were touched in the head. Dad explained years later that he never heard Jon order us to “run with the dogs.” Andy knew Carson and I were back there eating dust in our effort to keep up, but tattling went

against all protocol. Besides, Andy thought a little exercise was good for his little brothers. Dad did scratch his head in confusion once after we arrived at sheep camp. Jon poured some water in a pan and commanded Carson and me to “drink with the dogs!” ♦

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Susan Sundwall

It shocked me when one of my sisters told me our sister-in-law used her good china out on her deck and served food on them! Had she no shame? What if something broke? There may not be another piece of her pattern anywhere in the known universe. I imagined all kinds of scenarios where using her “good dishes” to serve hot dogs with a side of pungent sauerkraut could go oh so wrong.



And then I snapped out of it. Upon calm reflection, I examined the situation from several angles. My navy officer husband bought my set of China when he served our country in Vietnam. Let me gush about it. It’s an excellent brand name, is a setting for twelve and has lots of extra pieces, like a gravy boat and platters. He sent me a brochure to look over and boy was that fun! I finally settled on white with a light powder blue rim trimmed with delicate flowers traced in white and black. Each piece is edged with silver. Was I the lucky girl or what? Then times changed. Slowly, society became more mobile and younger generations didn’t

want to be saddled with extensive collections of household items. Kitchen dishes and paper plates were good for almost any occasion. Well, maybe not in the White House or high end hotels, but in the general scheme of things. I used my China less and less. You know that saying about what goes around comes around? Or do you remember the one about everything old becoming new again? There are others, but you get my drift. These old maxims bring me back to the shock I expressed up there in the first paragraph. The wheels in my old noggin turned. I came around. What is the “good” China anyway, pretty dishes that sit patiently and wait for an occasion? Dust collectors behind glass cabinet doors for others to admire? Lovely and carefully chosen patterns we’re scared to death will float away in the dishwasher? It wouldn’t matter if they did. Dishes should be used. But, and I caution you, there are real dangers in this modern notion of everything casual. Think of the ghost of your mother-in-law who bragged to her sister about how expensive that pile of China was: “Honey, the shipping cost alone could bankroll a small

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country for a year.” This was said with an air of great pride in her son’s ability to buy and send such luxury. And you were going to toss it into the dishwasher with the stuck on mac ‘n’ cheese bowl and a spoon the dog licked. Oh, the scandal. Yeah, that thought is tucked tightly back there in your emotional file cabinet and will be mentioned to you by the devil himself at regular intervals. But you can’t let that crush your widening view of how to live in this century. Soldier on. These are your dishes, your personal possessions. You are the four-star general of their existence and have the prerogative of using them how and when you think fit. That being said, I must confess that in the last few years, when I’ve hauled mine out for a special occasion, I’ve felt pleased and proud of my table. My pretty blue and white china appears almost as perfect as the day it arrived off the mail truck so long ago. They look especially lovely in the spring when the pale blue and pristine white complements the pastels of my Easter floral centerpiece. Nice china is about looking lovely, after all. Going a couple of rounds in the dishwasher would change that. What a dilemma. Shall I keep the china my kids don’t want all packed away or use it at will and whenever I feel like it? Maybe a little of each. The dessert plates, the least used, will be my first attempt as the General of the China to break out of the confines of old thinking. A nice tuna sandwich and a pickle on the side might do. I’ll hand wash them when lunch is over as a nod to their beauty. How does that sound? I guess it all boils down to: use your china. ♦

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Scars

Don Boyer

In my youth, only sailors had tattoos. My days preceded Beatniks and bikers. World War Two had ended, and we were taught to cower under our desks should an atom bomb drop. Everything steered us to conformity. We tried to look alike and to live in wooden subdivisions. We learned to barbeque and to use hair oil and mouthwash.

Only our scars set us apart. Each one had a story. Some could be heroic if we told them correctly. I longed for more impressive marks, but the few I had were everyday results of clumsiness and blunderings. Most disappeared after a few weeks, since the wounds were small and inconsequential. As a carbon copy of my friends and neighbors, I had no stories to tell.

Then one spring I went wading barefoot in an after rain puddle and stepped on a broken milk bottle. I bloodied the ground as I limped home to Mom with a deep gash. She bandaged my foot tightly, but I finally had a lasting scar on my left foot instep. I now had a story to tell. Not a very interesting one, true. Not one I had occasion to share. But at least I was unique. I had an identifying mark in case my body needed to be identified.

A few years later, I tripped over a kid's chair while going to the bathroom in the middle of the

night. The chair leg pushed the surface skin of my right calf aside, exposing some tissue just under the surface. It didn't hurt much, but the mark is still there today, seventy years later. Another scar, another dull story.

Me and my friends always had a knife of some kind. They were small pocketknives to fit in our small pockets. We could sharpen sticks and throw the knives into the ground. We could dig out rocks and roots and poke at things. And we could also cut ourselves, accidentally, of course. More scars on hands and arms.

Then came the teen years and the hormonal acne scars. Everyone had those. Nothing unique about them. I had no physical scars that made me unique enough to be noticed.

It turned out physical scars were not that important. Broken bones were more interesting. But broken bones rarely show afterward and are hard to bring up in conversations.

What could make me different in a world of sameness and conformity? Emotional scars. That's where the stories lie. The trauma of seeing a dead animal and understanding death for the first

time. The first rejection from someone you are attracted to. The betrayal of a close friend. These were the building blocks of a character and the makings of a good story.

Scars are simple. A sharp pain which we soon forget, followed by a healing cycle and then



I Start My Own Business

Ima Klutz

Three weeks ago last Friday, I ran into a couple I haven't seen for ages. They were driving a Lincoln and dressed like a million bucks. They recognized me right away after I told them who I was. I told them all about my wanting to run a business from my home. I told them I was going to go into counseling, but they just laughed. (I wonder why people laugh when I tell them that.) Anyway, Paul said I should be into sales. He said I was a born salesman.

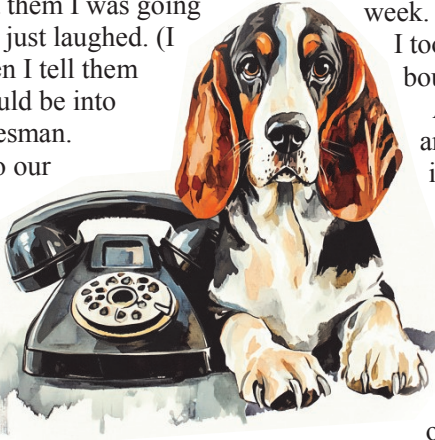
Paul and Sheba came over to our house and told us all about a business opportunity they would highly recommend. Wilbur felt skeptical, but I fell for it hook, line and sinker. The company is called "Easy Way" and they have absolutely tons of things for sale.

Everything from detergent to hand lotion. I can buy my nylons and fingernail polish from them! They said for \$500 I could get in at the bottom of the pyramid and in six months I could be a district manager if I signed up one new distributor a week. Well, Wilbur said, "No Way!" so I took money from my savings and bought into the company.

About a week later, boxes started arriving. I cleaned out a room down in the basement and put up shelves. I bribed Junior to help me carry things down and put them on the shelves. He grumbled quite a bit, but it was worth three pans of brownies and a six-pack of pop to have his help. I called my accountant and got the scoop on deducting that room from my taxes. Will I save money! Wilbur will be thrilled.

I go to meetings twice a week and really get excited. Wilbur asked why I'm excited, but I couldn't remember. So far, I have two people interested. I'm doing pretty well for a beginner and when I told Wilbur that, he just grunted. I am becoming so organized, it is unbelievable. I used to get up at 10 am and fiddle around until noon, but now I'm up at 9:45 sharp and in my office by 11:30. I spend a lot of time calling my friends that might be interested. We talk a while, then I give them my sales pitch. Some aren't into it, but I figure the 5th time I call they will be and I'll get another satisfied distributor.

Paul and Sheba stop in now and then to help me get organized. They say my real thrust should be in getting distributors because that's where I make my money. I



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visual evidence of a past occurrence. Scars may be unique but are not uncommon.

What separates us is how we feel and how we express ourselves. What we feel is colored by our emotional scars. A Boulder professor once lectured if he were told when you were born and where you were born, he could predict your personality, unless you had experienced a significant emotional event, such as a near-death experience. Such events can change a personality.

And there we have it. We go through life like pin balls in the machine, bouncing off emotional experiences one after the other. Each bounce altering our outlook. An unending process of adjustments and reactions. That is where our uniqueness come from. Our ability to absorb and assimilate the impact. That is our story, not the marks left on our bodies. ♦

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asked them one time who sells the product. They said they didn't really know. I wondered aloud about that to Wilbur and he said that he thought the company actually made all its money from the people who forked out \$500 to get into the program. That makes sense to me.

I've been using the products in my home, and it has really made a difference! I can actually see myself in my bathroom mirror. Wilbur said a drop of ammonia in a bottle of water would have done the same thing—that I washed it made all the difference. He's such a pessimist! All the products are concentrated so they last ten times longer than the kind I used to buy in the store. They have a policy that I have to buy \$30 worth of product each month to stay active. Boy, will those shelves be stocked! I don't know if I will ever run out of anything! It will save me lots of money because I won't have to run to the store all the time.

I feel wonderful having my own business and as soon as I start making money, I'm going to take Wilbur out to eat and celebrate. When I told him, he just said he'd be too old to go by then. Sometimes Wilbur is such a killjoy.

Well, I better go. My telephone is waiting! If your telephone rings this afternoon, don't be surprised if it's "Ima's Easy Way Pyramid," the business of the year! ♦

Suzan L. Wiener

I Dont Scream for Ice Cream!

When I was three years old in the stroller, my mom took me to the beautiful green, tree-lined park across the street from our apartment building. Almost all my mother’s friends were there every day because the neighbors were housewives and didn’t work in the city. It was very nice, even I could tell.

Every afternoon around 2 pm we heard the ice cream man’s bell. All the kids were a little older than me and so excited! They were given permission to buy the ice cream themselves, too. Joyful shouts always greeted the ice cream truck when it rolled to a stop. A kind fellow, they named him Mr. Ice Cream! Not me though, I just wondered what was going on. I didn’t like ice cream, but mom insisted on buying a small cup of chocolate for me, hoping I would eventually change my mind. I wouldn’t eat it, except for the first taste and last. Poor mom. It embarrassed her. Even though she knew I wouldn’t eat it, she bought it for me anyway, so she wouldn’t seem like she didn’t care about her little girl, which she



so did. She would say, “Susie is sweet enough without ice cream!” Mom always tried to get me to have at least a bite, but I wouldn’t budge. It just wasn’t for me.

At six-years-old, Mom threw a birthday party for me and invited all the neighbors and their children. We had a lot of presents and food, including cupcakes, chocolate birthday cake and candles. It looked great. Then she brought out ice cream cups for everyone! I wasn’t happy about it, but my cousin Greg gave me a spoonful. I relented. What was this creamy and delicious discovery? To say I loved the flavor would be an understatement. I really felt bad. They all laughed when I said with a frown, “Look at all the wasted ice cream I could’ve had!” From then on, ice cream became my favorite treat! At over 70, I haven’t changed my mind! ♦

Hometown Bakery

As I recall my days at Loback’s Bakery in Buena Vista, I think of all the customers who became so dear to me, especially the summer folks we looked forward to seeing every year. Days began early at the bakery. The baker was usually up by 3 - 4 a.m. to make all the preparations for the day’s baking. The bakery had been passed down from father to son for three generations, but Chet Loback did all the baking when I went to work for them. He and his wife, Donna, were the mainstays, with a little help from his mother, Edna, who had mostly retired by that time. She came in every evening to join them for their evening meal and helped prepare it. They ate in the little kitchen off of the main baking area and still used the old cast-iron stove.

When I began working there, my day started at 7 a.m. I helped with taking the fresh bread out to cool and then came glazing the doughnuts and arranging the cake doughnuts on trays, washing pans and dishes and filling the empty doughnut trays in the showcase, waiting on



Georgina Cornish

customers and keeping the coffee going. Summers were a busy time. We hired extra help to see us through the busy season. We were the only doughnut shop in town. Chet usually needed help too in the summer, and his son, Randy, lent a hand. Eventually, he and his wife, Beth, took over, and he became the baker. The bakery was a meeting place for folks from all walks of life. The mechanics from Smitty’s Garage were there every day. Donna performed little services for the customers, such as making newspaper logs for their convenience, which she left by the door. She also gave apples to one and all from her little tree outside the back door. She

had a picture on the wall by a chalk artist who came to First Baptist Church every few years. It proclaimed her faith to all who entered. Applesauce doughnuts were the Saturday special and everyone put their order in early. Holidays brought forth special culinary delights, hot cross buns for Easter, fruit cakes at Christmas, pumpkin and mince pie at Thanksgiving, and every Wednesday, that wonderful rye bread. I can’t forget the beautiful wedding cakes Chet baked and delivered. They also provided the little wafer-like crackers for our church’s communion services. The bakery was an institution of fellowship and camaraderie and I hope it goes on forever, for it will be sorely missed when they close their doors. How thankful we all are for their many years of faithful service. ♦

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Lorraine
Theall

I turned the page of a Sears Spring Catalog and found the perfect dress for Easter. Blue with white ruffled lace around the collar and sleeves. The buttons had flowers painted on them. When I showed the picture to Mama, she also thought it would be the perfect dress for me, but unfortunately it was too expensive. I was so disappointed my eyes burned with the held back tears.

As always, Mama saved the day. She looked at the dress carefully. "I am sure I can make one just like this for a lot less money. Maybe your sisters would like one also—in different colors, of course," she said. She decided my dress would be blue, with my sisters dressed in yellow and red, our favorite colors. Blue seemed to go with my blond hair and blue eyes. With her brown eyes and hair, my big sister looked so cheery in yellow. Daddy called little sister a firecracker so red was just right for her.

Once a month, Mama had to go uptown to pay the bills and do whatever shopping she needed. Each time she went to town, she would take one of the three girls with her. This was a special treat and the next time, it was my turn to go with her. There were five children in our family and we prized alone time with Mama.

Mister and the little ones?" he asked. He said exactly the same words every time we went there. The old man counted the money Mama paid him. Mama asked for a receipt for Daddy. We then walked to the Light & Power

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Company in the next block to pay the electricity and water bill. After buying a new frying pan from the hardware store, we went to Beno's, the best store in town. Mama looked at the fabric, deemed it too expensive, and we went next door to Woolworth's. She found the perfect fabric at a good price. She bought lace trim for my dress and for big sister's dress and rickrack for little sister's dress. Little sister did not care for lace. I twirled the revolving racks of buttons and found some with flowers painted on them!

When we finished shopping, we had yet another treat on this glorious day already filled with so many pleasures. We went to the lunch counter in the dime store and sat on the short stools that spun around. Mama let me order a ham salad sandwich with potato chips and a Coke. I felt sophisticated and grown up sitting at the counter eating lunch with Mama.

The next day, Mama brought out her box of patterns from the top shelf in the closet. I loved looking at all the different dress ones. She picked out three patterns. She said she would use the bodice of one pattern, the skirt of another and the sleeves and collar from yet another. In that way, she could make any kind of dress we wanted.

I stood by the table and watched as Mama selected the pattern pieces she needed, pinned them to the fabric, and cut out



each piece. I sat by her as she sewed them together, handing her pieces as she needed them. She leaned over her Singer sewing machine, pumping hard on the treadle. A few days later, I could try on the dress. Would it look right? Would it fit right? Would it be the dress I wanted? Of course, it was always just right.

A week later, the three dresses were ironed and hung on the back of the door of our room. We tried them on again. I looked in the mirror. Mama had duplicated the dress from the catalog. I threw my arms around Mama and gave her a big hug and kiss. She was the best mother in the entire world. ♦

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When the day came to go shopping, Mama put on her nicest navy blue dress with her red shoes and red pocketbook. Although she worked hard and was quite serious, the red shoes showed a more fun-loving side of her than we usually saw. Mama let me wear my best Sunday School dress that day, a previously unallowed delight. I felt as well dressed as Mama.

We walked to the corner where the streetcar stopped and climbed aboard when it came. The streetcar ride itself thrilled me. When we got to town, our first stop involved paying the rent at that dim, musty office on the second floor above the bank. The old man behind the desk peered over his glasses at us. "So how's the

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Avis Jaenson

Lessons Learned on the Farm

When I was a young wife on a farm in Palisade, Colorado, I didn't know that much about raising vegetables, organic or otherwise. The internet wasn't around so I couldn't look up the best soils and nutrients needed for my garden. I had to depend on my neighbors from the nearby farms and orchards to teach me about healthy peach, apple and grape arbors.

They were all busy, no matter what the season, but if you kept your eyes open, you could catch someone outside working their land. My dog, Sunny, would help me by barking at the edge of my land anytime one of my neighbors came close to my trees.

My husband was a pilot for a small operation in Grand Junction, so if the trees were to be pruned, thinned and irrigated, he left it up to me. The children were in school for six to eight hours a day, so they could only help on the weekends. Yup, it left me and my dog to keep up on the work centered on growing healthy trees and vegetables for our table. We had a fenced chicken coop with grey and white hens who laid the most lovely teal-colored eggs I'd ever seen. I only needed one

not-so-friendly neighbor from the next orchard waved and pointed down at my dog. I ignored him until I got within ear-shot of him.

"Your dog's pretty ferocious, ain't he?" I smiled, shading my eyes from the bright sun. "Only with folks he doesn't know yet."

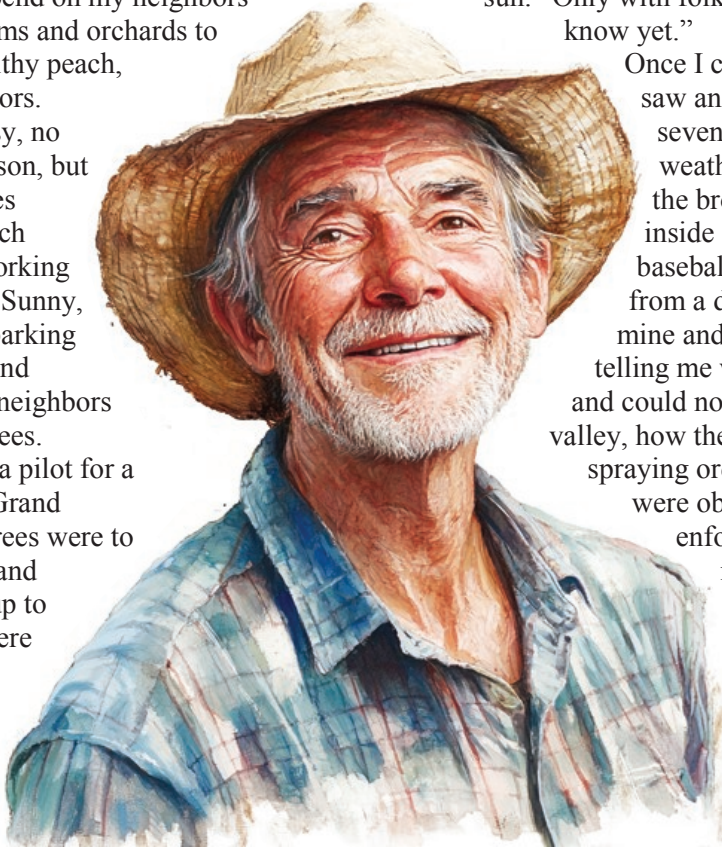
Once I came closer, I saw an older man in his seventies with weathered skin like the brown, cracked inside of an old baseball glove. He came from a different era than mine and started out telling me what we could and could not do in the valley, how there were spraying ordinances that were observed and enforced with fines

if we didn't comply with them, and how he'd been farming peaches and alfalfa since before the Nixon

administration and knew everything about peach trees. I thought I might be in for a long lecture, so I invited him to sit on the patio and tell me about it. Then I softened his heart with some hot buttered bread and fresh jam served with a steaming cup of coffee. We sat for an hour while he munched on my crusty bread and slurped coffee in the sunshine on my patio. Soon, Sunny was sitting next to old Jim, begging for the last bite of that morning's snack. Jim complied and then motioned for me to follow him out to the trees beyond the patio.

He talked about the root system and how to build it so it was strong and able to feed the heavier scaffolding limbs and how you had to prune out the inside, smaller limbs to "open up the inside of the tree" so the sun could reach all the fruit, making for uniformed fruit. All the peaches had to have a chance for the sun to reach them so they would become juicy and sweet. You had to prune and thin out the young fruit to three inches between each one or you would have bushels of small peaches that wouldn't bring as much money as the larger fruit.

He said to compost the rejected green peaches in the garden away from the orchard, so it wouldn't leave any rotting fruit around the trees, drawing the wrong insects. One tiny insect good for orchards is a Mack, which when their babies hatch out, they will eat the nasty bugs and worms that harm your trees. I listened for hours as he told me the proper way



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to prune and care for my trees. It fascinated me how much old Jim knew about natural farming and listened intently, logging all the knowledge into my memory for use.

Hours later, I ran inside to get my neighbor a loaf of bread to take home. He and Sunny had made friends and, as old Jim tipped his hat to me and told me to come visit him and his wife, I smiled and thanked him for teaching me how to take care of my trees. He ambled slowly back through my orchard towards his own and I quietly thanked God for sending someone to teach me.

Over the months and as the years went by, I felt like there was no question I could not ask Jim and his wife, Velma. Their friendship and companionship was so valuable to me. When my children had a beef with me, they'd run over to Jim and Velma's. I loved how they could hear the same instruction from the old folks and accept it more readily than when mama laid down the law. Somehow, Jim and Velma became adopted grandparents to my children.

When harvest time came around, my son Jeff would be responsible for five or six long rows of trees, then box and sell the fruit out of our driveway for money to buy his school clothes. He learned to farm and how to earn his own money, which gave him a sense of ownership and pride. My daughter worked for

Clark's orchard in a large scale operation where they shipped fruit to Kroger's and King Soopers in the city. It paid little, but all the teenagers worked there, which made it more fun than home.

When I think back on those years on the farm, my eyes mist over as I am ever grateful for my farming neighbors and how God wove our lives together and the invaluable learning I received from old Jim. The kind of learning one could not get in a school or agricultural program, but lessons that were taught with loving hands from one farmer to another. ♦

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egg for a mess of biscuits that would feed four at dinner. The eggs were that large.

One day, after the children were off to school in the old yellow school bus, I heard Sunny barking outside, to the Southeast of our orchard. He used the bark that meant a human, low and loud, with a guttural growl to scare off the meanest intruder. I turned off the oven and set the bread on a rack to cool, then used the back stairs to head out to the orchard. My

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Easter Kittens

Joell A. Haws

Every morning, I go for a walk in the large open fields near my home. This day, I started off bright and early. It was cold and fresh, with a little coastal fog softening the sun’s early rays. I changed direction from my usual path and started walking toward the main road. I met no traffic, since most of my neighbors were still asleep. As I walked along the side of the road, I spotted something small near the white center line. I thought it might be trash. I couldn’t see exactly what it was. My curiosity got the better of me and I walked out to the middle of the street.

“Oh, no!” I saw two tiny kittens lying so still I thought they must be dead. I kneeled down to get a better look and noticed the little gray kitten’s paw tremble. Carefully picking them up, the tiger mewed weakly, but the little black and white felt cold and stiff in my hands. He was barely breathing.

I looked around for any sign of the mother cat or other kittens. I saw nothing and no one. Just me, the kittens and the cool, quiet morning sunrise. “Well, little ones, in you go,” I said and tucked them inside the pouch of my sweatshirt. *This is something*, I thought, shaking my head in bewilderment as I headed home. I never walk here and if I had entered the road a little farther down, I would have missed finding these precious souls. Holding them securely in my sweatshirt, I hurried



along, praying they would be okay. My son was up when I walked into the house. “Dale! Look what I found out on the road,” I called out. “Two kittens nearly frozen to death.” He came over and gently took the black and white one from my hand. “He feels stiff. Are you sure he’s alive?”

“Yes, he’s still breathing. I know it’s hard to tell, but if you put your finger on his tummy, you can feel it move. Let’s try to get some warm milk down them.” Cupping their tiny heads in my hand, I tried to gently spoon milk into their closed mouths. The little tiger swallowed a few drops, but the black and white didn’t respond.

“I don’t know what to do,” I said desperately, while massaging his body, trying to warm him. “Mom, it’s like cryogenics,” said Dale. “We

told myself. “Lord, the rest is up to you.” When we arrived home, we hurried in to see if the kittens were still on their little warming pad. “Dale! They aren’t here!” “What? They have to be. Let me look.” He got down on his hands and knees, searching around the room and, sure enough, he found them behind the desk, walking on shaky legs and mewing softly. “We did it, Mom. They’re going to be fine. We defrosted them!” “Thank goodness. Let’s get them some food. They must be starved.” I got another saucer of warm milk and they hungrily lapped it up. We had three more challenges to meet that day: our dog. Our Shih Tzu, Wookie, walked around the kittens, sniffing and examining them with her tail wagging, picked each one up gently by the neck and carried it to her bed, and immediately started licking them, giving each one a good bath and massage. Even though she had no milk, she let the kittens nurse. She had adopted the babies. Dale smiled at me. “Well, Mom, looks like we’ve been replaced.” We were happy, Wookie was happy, and the kittens were thrilled with their new mom. I will always remember that special Sunday and my Easter Kittens. ♦

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studied it in science class. They’re so cold they’re near dead. Maybe if we warm them up, they will be okay.” “Well, we have to try.” I went to get a towel and put it over a heating pad, turned it on low and snuggled the kittens into the soft warming folds. As we were doing this, we realized they were Manx kittens. No tail and six toes on the front paws. “You are very special kittens. We don’t see too many like you,” I whispered to them. I thought maybe they were wild and the mother cat could have been moving her litter and dropped them. We live in a rural suburb, and I couldn’t let myself believe someone had dumped them on the road to die. Not today of all days. Not on Easter Morning. We left the kittens while we changed clothes and went to church. “We’ve done all we can,” I

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From Disaster to Recovery: The Unsung Heroes of the FEMA 2023 Elbert County Flood Response



Left to Right: Corynne Zudrow, Chris Zudrow, Ashley Deanne and Monty Hankins

In 2023, Elbert County faced one of its most challenging moments with the presidentially declared flood disaster. Amidst the chaos and destruction, a cohesive and determined team emerged, committed to restoring order and aiding the community.

The Elbert County Public Works team, led by Monty Hankins, Director of the Public Works Department, worked tirelessly to navigate all phases of the recovery project. With Corynne Zudrow, Public Works Administrator, ensuring clear and consistent communication with the public, data entry, and tracking expenses, and Chris Zudrow, Public Works Drainage Foreman, tackling the immense physical repairs during the storm’s aftermath and attending majority of meetings and helping with documentation, the team showcased remarkable dedication. Supporting their efforts was Ashley Deanne, serving as the FEMA Point of Contact (POC), who played a role in coordinating meetings, submissions, adhering to policy and procedures, and ensuring smooth communication between all stakeholders. Together with the entire Public Works (Road and Bridge) Department, they successfully managed the disaster recovery process.



The team’s meticulous collaboration extended to meeting FEMA’s stringent requirements, coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers, and adhering to environmental compliance guidelines. Through their efforts, the project has reached its final stages, securing a total reimbursement of \$1,995,291.98 against total damages of \$2,280,333.70. This achievement not only eases the financial burden on the taxpayers but also reinforces the community’s confidence in the team’s ability to manage resources effectively.

The contributions of the Elbert County team have not gone unnoticed. Their achievements were highlighted at the Colorado Emergency Management Association (CEMA) event, where valuable lessons and insights from the response efforts were shared. The team’s exemplary work was recognized on a state level, with representatives selected to take part in the prestigious Public Assistance Working Session (PAWS) event. These acknowledgments reflect the collaborative strength and dedication of everyone involved.

As the project draws to a close, the focus remains on the collective efforts of the team and the invaluable lessons learned along the way. The Elbert County team’s response is a testament to the power of working together in the face of adversity. Their story shows that, through resilience and teamwork, extraordinary results are not only possible but inevitable. ♦

Elbert County’s Emergency Management Director Honored as Regional Emergency Manager of the Year

Elbert County’s commitment to emergency preparedness and public safety has been recognized at the state level. Aaron M. Borne, Director of the Elbert



County Office of Emergency Management, has been named the 2024 Regional Emergency Manager of the Year by the Colorado Emergency Managers Association (CEMA).

This prestigious award highlights the dedication and collaborative efforts of Elbert County’s emergency management team, first responders, and community partners in ensuring the county is prepared for disasters and emergencies.

“Our mission has always been to enhance public safety, improve disaster readiness, and build a more resilient community,” said Borne. “This recognition reinforces our commitment to proactive planning, strong partnerships, and continuous improvement.”

Under Borne’s leadership, Elbert County has strengthened emergency response coordination, expanded community outreach efforts, and improved disaster preparedness initiatives. This award serves as a testament to the county’s progress in mitigation, response, and recovery efforts.

“I’m proud to serve Elbert County and will continue working to ensure our communities are safe, prepared, and supported in times of crisis,” Borne added. “Thank you to our emergency responders, local leaders, and residents for your support in making this possible.”

Elbert County residents can take pride in this recognition, knowing that their emergency management team remains committed to protecting lives, property, and the future of the community. ♦