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Page 23

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March 2024

Dawn Rike

## friends are like hats

Friends are like hats. Some are casual and others formal.

Sometimes we get a new one, but our old ones are hard to part with; there's a sentimental involvement. We keep a comfortable one longer than one that isn't our style. They come in a great variety. We can find practical and conservative ones; or those warm, durable, and protective. Others are humorous, loud, fun. There's the calm, quiet type or the flashy, flamboyant, colorful type.

A friend can help us form our identity or change it. Those that fit others perfectly don't always suit us. Sticking with the old ones brings a sense of security and we go back to them because change can be threatening. Or we just find them comfortable. Sometimes we can wear them out or even abuse them.

Some of us change them frequently, wearing a different one for each occasion, to make the right impression. Others of us have only one and wouldn't dare be seen with another. Some are cheap and others are priceless. Did you ever notice that what you invest in them is what you get out of them? You get what you pay for.

Several years ago, I had a fleece hat. It wasn't much to look at and my husband teased me. But it was comfortable, warm, and it looked good with every coat I had. It was a gift, which made it even more special. My husband was a church Youth Director, and we took the kids for a hayride on a cold fall evening. One girl had no hat or mittens so I loaned her mine, telling her the hat was my favorite and to take good care of it. I never dreamed anything would happen to it. Sure enough, I never saw it again.

In college, I had a special friend, my roommate of three years. She became the sister I never had. She taught me how to share my belongings and a lot about friendship. Around campus, we were famous for our relationship and people were envious we got along so well. I still think of Karen as the dearest girlfriend I ever had, yet I lost her. She's gone, along with my fleece hat. I had a personal investment, and it is no more.

Sometimes we lose one and think it is gone forever. Recently, my mother-in-law cleaned out her house and found a fleece hat almost identical to my lost one. When she sent it to me, she did not know how meaningful it would



be. A delightful surprise, like reconnecting with a friend from my past. A person who once held importance to us, but upon rediscovering them, we find new richness in friendship.

I have another friend different from any other I have ever known. He invested His whole life in me before I even knew who He was. On His head, He wore an incredibly hideous hat... a crown of thorns. He loves me and is committed to me no matter what I do. He will never walk out of my life. He fits me perfectly even though sometimes He isn't comfortable (the times I get rebellious and would rather He be loose-fitting). He is my covering and helps my other hats fit better.

Besides the friend hat, I wear those of daughter, granddaughter, sister, wife, mother, grandma, aunt, therapist, neighbor, etc. With Christ in my life, I can depend on His faithfulness to help me maintain the best fit possible in each connection with others. It's when I look in the mirror and by myself try to get the hats on that I get into trouble and look ridiculous. All that I invest in my kinship with Him has eternal value and I will never lose it. He is the best hat ever!

What about you? Are you casually acquainted with Jesus or intimately involved? Are you investing in the relationship or taking it for granted? Is He special to you or a friend you spend time with when you want something? Do you put Him on in bad weather and take Him off when you don't want to be embarrassed? He longs to be the hat you wear and is waiting for you to choose Him. ♦

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## FROM THE EDITOR

# Make IT FIT

My grandma once gave my mother a piece of advice: "Never buy bigger pants." Now that I think about it, maybe that applies to life (never buy a bigger container!).

A container is a way of putting a limit on your life, and that may be a good thing. I thought about Grandma this week as I tried to cram too much stuff into a smaller cupboard. As there isn't room for a bigger one, and I don't want to install shelves and stare at my plates, I had to work with the space I had.

I helped a friend downsize for a move, and we discovered whatever space she had, she filled. Most of us do this, fill it full to bursting, or we overflow it or assume we need more boxes or a storage unit for the excess. Instead of limiting ourselves to our existing container, we rent a storage unit or buy a shed or install shelves. But when we force ourselves to stay within our container, we bring home less.

My mother pointed out to me the other day when I had a floor to ceiling bookshelf for my movies, I kept buying more... and when I minimized it for aesthetic reasons, I stopped. I became selective on what came into the space. I knew everything had to fit into a smaller container, so if I brought in a new movie, another one might have to go. No longer did I dig through movie bargain bins, because I knew I'd have to weed something out to make room.

The things I loved the most went in first, then I filled the rest of the space with second-tier "loves." It's true if you limit yourself to a container, you will be more discerning. I have only as many tea cups as will fit into my curio's top shelf.

Someone in a group I am in the other day said, "HELP! We're moving across the country and our quote for moving our stuff was \$20,000! What do I do?" The advice was, "Measure your new home and only take what will fit. Get rid of everything else."

Humans are pack rats. We like shiny things and we enjoy keeping them, but in collecting them, we overflow our containers. And it doesn't seem to matter until we have to move.

But there's where my grandma's advice comes in; she meant, watch your weight. We can say the same of our homes as our waistlines. Clothes being too tight is a signal we need to curb our habits, not to buy bigger pants. Clothes bursting out of a dresser means we need fewer clothes, not a bigger dresser.

What about your mind? Is there so much going on it, you feel you need a bigger container? I love a quote from Sherlock Holmes where Watson was incredulous that Holmes knew nothing about the solar system. Holmes listened to him with interest, and told him he'd now forget it, because "there's only so much room in one's brain attic," and he didn't see the point in filling it with stuff that had nothing to do with his interests.

I have an easier time putting overflow movies into the donate pile than going into my mind and rearranging, but a friend gave me a piece of advice. He said, "Is what you are thinking about serving you? If not, let it go or train yourself not to dwell on it."

## CHARITY BISHOP



If this is not enriching your life, get rid of it. Some of us need to let go of our anxiety, or a hurt. To stop negative self-talk or comparisons to other people. Move on from a breakup or stop stalking your ex, since that keeps them fresh in your mind. Quit drowning your sorrows in a bottle. Forgive someone who hurt us twenty years ago, or let go of that \$\$ thing you bought that guilt-trips you when you look at it, since you have never touched it. Maybe you have too much stuff that is bogging you down, making it hard for you to move away or grow, or maybe your stuff is mental or emotional.

How is it serving you? *Is it serving you or self-harming?* If so, what are you going to do about it?

It's habitual for us not to notice our own clutter, which can be in a drawer, or in our schedule (am I doing too much?), or our minds (is this thought, behavior, or attitude serving me?). We dig grooves in our mental landscape that let us navigate a path without thinking about it. It's how you form and keep up habits. But we also do this with things that don't serve us (every time I think about that person, I get so mad!). Sometimes, the things we think about hurt us, keep us trapped in the past, prevent us from healing, or keep the pain alive... they do not "serve us," and we need to notice how often we return to them and choose not to dwell on them.

There is only so much room in your brain attic. So keep the things in it that enrich your life, make you smile, remind you of your worth, or contain precious memories of your family, friends, or pets. Let go of what does not serve you. ♦

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Kimberley Hamelin

# THE GARDEN

First, he took me to his temporary greenhouse in his bedroom.

Under the picture window on the south side, he had an improvised table made of two sawhorses with a piece of plywood resting on top. Little plants in tiny containers grew on top of it. He explained how you buy starter seeds and put them in the little cups to root them first. Their sprouts were just starting to peek out from the rich brown soil. It charmed me.

Then he took me out to the garden. He'd planted one the year before, but the deer had eaten all the plants. He explained how the new fencing he'd installed would prevent last year's disaster from being repeated. I made appropriately approving comments even though I couldn't tell deer proof fencing from regular fencing. Then we went in the gate. The tilled, rich brown soil smelled earthy and wholesome. He instructed me on the proper way to fertilize the ground

to get the best yield from the crops, but most of it went right over my head. I nodded and smiled. He obviously knew what he was talking about.

Time went by, and the little plants on the makeshift table grew. He had beans, corn, tomatoes, and a lot of other things. He would water them and then spritz the

young leaves to simulate rainfall. I watched the sunlight glinting from the dewdrops of water clinging to the fresh green plants. As they got taller, it became easier to distinguish one kind of plant from another. "This one here," he would say, "you see these leaves? That's going to be green beans. And that one

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there? That's corn." I had grown tomatoes on my window sill before, so those plants I could easily pick out, but I enjoyed learning about the rest.

He would often tell me how soon he could walk out into his garden and pick a salad to go with dinner. He'd be able to go get a fresh ear of corn whenever he wanted to throw one on the grill. The time for planting grew nearer, and he was getting excited, but there was still a lot of work to be done. The fencing had to be readjusted to compensate for the settling of the ground. Then the ground had to be fertilized and left to soak up the water he fed it daily. Lastly, he tilled the ground again.

Finally, planting day arrived! His roommate got out her gardening gloves and a hoe, and started making the furrows that would separate the rows of different plants; one row for beans, one for corn, and so on. She labored under

the hot sun for hours and came in to report the job done. My friend strung a hose from the house to the garden and attached a sprinkler to it, so he turned that on for an hour, and called it a good day. For the next week, every day, the garden got its water. The sprinkler went back and forth in the bright sunlight, throwing rainbows of color as it passed at just the right angle.

From the house, he could see something growing, so he took me down to investigate. It puzzled me at first. All the plants looked the same, and weren't growing in rows. I didn't want to show my ignorance by asking about this, but I didn't have to. There, on the outside of the fence, all shriveled and brown, were the lifeless stalks and stems of the plants my friend had lovingly tended. We both stared at them for a moment, not really comprehending what had happened. Then he realized his roommate had never gotten the seedlings into the ground! She had prepared the garden and missed the seedlings! How could this be? After hours of work, the plants were left to die. And in the garden? Nothing but weeds. He'd been watering the weeds for days. "So much for fresh vegetables," he said. "I'll try again next year." ♦

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Sandy Smith

## The Couch

I have an ancient, hand-me-down, worn out couch.

It is so comfortable, great for naps, curling up to read, or nights of insomnia. The family is used to it. Some time ago, I wanted to host a bridal shower for a granddaughter with a few family members. At the last minute, a guest told me she wanted to bring a couple of friends. Panic and pride set in—what could I do about the old, well-worn couch? I covered it with a nice blanket and secure it with little curly pins, which I screwed in at strategic places. It looked quite nice. I felt better.

The shower was lovely—good fellowship, food, celebration and gifts. Time for some pictures. Everyone piled on the couch for a group shot. Big loud noise! Someone commented, "that didn't sound good." Oh, brother! All the little curly pins POPPED off and went everywhere! It really was funny! We finished picture time and everyone helped find all the pins to protect bare feet.

It gave me a lesson in humility and a reminder it's not about "the couch." It's about relationships, memory-making, and hospitality before pride. ♦

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# Paradise Apples

Gwen Cooper

“Let’s go find the apple trees,” I suggested, or rather instructed, my husband one morning as we began settling into our new home.

I scanned a map left of the apple tree locations by the previous owners, and felt eager to go apple tree hunting. We had transformed our dream into a reality, having recently moved from the suburbs, and we now lived on sixty wooded acres of beautiful land. The fresh spring air beckoned as freedom and tranquility awaited us outside our front door. Waking up to peace, fresh air, and wildlife each morning was surreal, and I felt most days as if I had gone on vacation and never returned home. The possibilities here were endless, and we were excited to embark on this new journey of tending to our newly acquired apple trees and harvesting our first little crop in the fall.

We strolled down our path, basking in the slight morning breeze and warmth of the sun, making our way toward the red barn. We found our first apple tree, admiring it for a moment, taking in all its splendor. The only conundrum we encountered was the map didn’t label this specific tree as far as which type of apples it produced. All the rest were clearly labeled, but this one by the red barn remained a mystery.

“Maybe try that plant identification app you downloaded on your phone,” my husband suggested. “Brilliant. I totally forgot about that!” I replied, momentarily wondering what people ever did without such technology. Snapping a photo, I stared in eager anticipation as the app on my phone analyzed the picture.

Images of beautiful golden red apples flooded my screen, and my mouth watered slightly. I could smell the heavenly crisp apple

scent, and I secretly wished for fall to make its presence sooner than later. As I stared back into reality, my eyes lovingly embraced the white blossoms adorning our beautiful tree by the red barn.

“It’s a Paradise apple tree. How perfect!” I squeezed my husband’s arm. The other trees we discovered were recently planted and too small to produce apples this season.

The Paradise apple tree was our golden child that year. We poured all our time and energy into caring for it in eager anticipation of the delectable fruit it would bear. We root fed, found organic means to keep pests away, and had a great time learning and spending time in our new outdoor paradise.

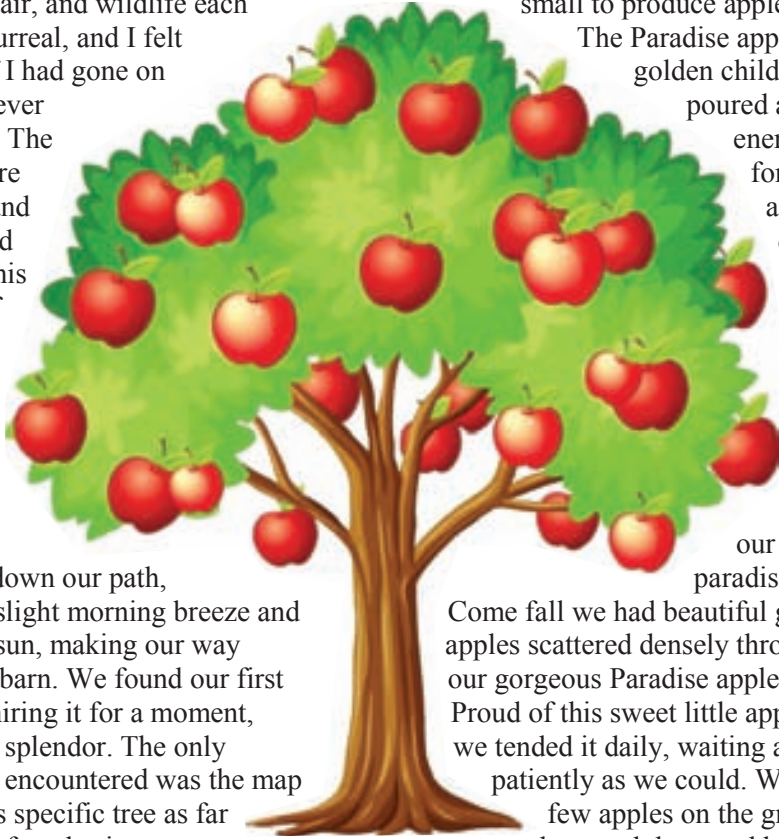
Come fall we had beautiful golden apples scattered densely throughout our gorgeous Paradise apple tree. Proud of this sweet little apple tree, we tended it daily, waiting as patiently as we could. We saw a few apples on the ground here and there and knew the time must be coming soon for that gorgeous red hue to tinge through.

Eventually, we noticed there were more and more making their way to the ground, yet no red shone through in any of our apples. “Are you sure these apples are supposed to turn red?” my husband asked. “I keep taking pictures at

different angles and running it through the app. Every time it identifies it as a Paradise. Everything I search for shows that they are red!” I furtively scanned around on my phone once again for further guidance to our conundrum. “Maybe I will reach out to the people who used to live here and see if they have any insight.”

My husband snagged an apple off the tree and sunk his teeth into it. “Mmmm.” He crunched down on the golden fruit. “Tastes good to me. I think they are ready.” He shrugged his shoulders.

“Let me see what they say back, and if we don’t hear from them, I guess



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let’s get picking tomorrow.” I shrugged back with a smile of jilted curiosity on my face.

I sent a text message and awaited their response. Late that evening, they solved our mystery. They said the apples by the barn never turned red. If the seeds are brown inside, the apples are ready.

Well. There it was. After we read that text message, we could not stop laughing at the hilarity of our apple adventure that year. We checked the seeds inside the apples, and sure enough, they were brown. We plucked our apples off that tree the next day and have since downgraded our reliance on technology as we continue to learn and grow in our gardening endeavors. ♦

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# Letters from Nam

Avis Jaenson

It was the summer of 1966. My girlfriends and I were “cruising” the park and dragging Main Street like hundreds of new high school grads trying to meet Mr. Right.

Most of the girls I ran around with were latch-key kids who had more freedom than ones with both parents to police them. We were young and employed and had money to buy go-go boots to wear with our hot pant outfits. As the frugal one in the group, I made all my own clothes to save money for college and got pretty good with my mother’s old white sewing machine. I was always sewing a shirt to wear or a pair of shorts that looked better than what you could buy at Sear’s Department Store. I got so I could fashion an outfit in about four hours and wear it the same night.

I had one such outfit ready for our spring fling night out with all the girls riding in one car to Jerry’s Keg Room. We weren’t old enough to drink, but didn’t care because we were more interested in dancing to Judy in Disguise and Big Girls Don’t Cry. I had on my lavender dress with hot pants underneath and purple suede knee-high go-go boots. I curled my long auburn hair and made it flip up on the ends. All the girls looked fantastic, and we were ready for a fun night of dancing.

Alas, I spent most of the night sitting and watching all the other girls having fun. I even went to the ladies’ room by myself to check and see if someone had written “I can’t dance” on my back as a joke. My inspection of my hair, dress and shoes turned up absent of answers. I shrugged and walked back to my perch alone at the bar. I must’ve looked horribly sad because an amazing looking young man walked up, took off his suit coat and covered up my legs with it. “Those legs are liable to get you in trouble. I’d better cover them up!” With that, he walked over to talk to some other girls and then came back to me. “Mind if I sit here to guard you?”

There weren’t many times I’d been speechless, but that night was one of them. I nodded, and he sat next to me. He

told me his name was Ronnie and how he’d just returned from boot camp on leave and would ship out to Vietnam in two weeks. I knew little about the “conflict” in Vietnam, but didn’t want this handsome guy sitting next to me to be shot at by anybody.

We danced for hours and talked about how



he and his buddies were all drafted and did boot camp together. He told me how lonely he felt. I somehow felt like I really was being guarded by this brown-haired, handsome man. The more we talked, the more we realized we were supposed to meet that night. He asked for my phone number and we spent the next two weeks having the best time of my life. He was funny, loved race cars, had a GTO he let me drive, and had dreams of becoming a teacher when he got discharged. I thought he was the smartest man I’d ever known and at the end of his leave-time we vowed to write every day. The week after our last kiss, I read everything I could about Vietnam and why we were 8,000+ miles away, helping these people fight to keep their freedom. The more I read, the more I wanted Ronnie to come home. Letters came and went from my house every day like we’d planned and even though he couldn’t tell me the entire story about where they were going next, he said all the important stuff. He missed my smile, kissing me, and dancing half the night away with his girl. I don’t know how people fall in love in two weeks, but we had a bond and closeness a lot of married couples would envy. Some of his letters were water stained from all the rain and moisture. There were days I’d wonder if I’d ever see him again, but we always wrote. Ours was a love that spanned more than halfway around the world. We prayed for each other. I knew we’d always be together.

Eighteen months went by and the letters were more infrequent, but still filled with love. I started nursing school and got crazy busy with my class schedule. Every time I looked into the microscope or sat through a lecture, I’d think of Ronnie. I prayed so much for him and

wondered when he’d come home to me. Then the letters stopped coming regularly. When there was another offensive move on the

enemy, their battalion would change strategy. The letters were vague about where he was, but at least I knew he was safe. I entered my last year of nursing school and had a grueling schedule. We had labs, classroom lectures, and team leading in an actual hospital. My class and I were in a surgical ward with ill patients. I

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got busier than I’d ever been in my life, but all the while wishing for a letter from the one I loved. Then the letters stopped.

My own letters started coming back. I felt heartbroken after two months of no contact. I spent more hours praying than reading my textbooks, hoping nothing had happened to the man who had become my best friend and love. Another month went by and my fellow nurse mates and I were officially on spring break. It had been a hard semester, and I was ready for a little rest of my own. I met my girlfriends at Jerry’s and we grabbed a table. I looked around the room by force of habit but saw no one I knew. A few of my friends ordered food, some danced. I sipped my drink and made a bathroom run.

When I returned, there was someone sitting in my chair. I was about to ask him to move, but he turned around and smiled. The all-too-familiar green eyes of his were bright as he handed me a packet with many months-worth of love letters. Ronnie stood and kissed me while I let the tears flow freely. He’d been in the hospital after contracting malaria in Nam. He held me and said how sorry he was, but his kisses told the story of a love that had traveled around the world to get to me. I read every letter and thanked God for bringing Ronnie home safe. ♦

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# An Icy Stare and a Steady Hand

Darkness settled heavily on the quiet North Hollywood neighborhood.

Void of streetlights, the only illumination that concerned the darkly clad figure huddled in the bushes came from a full moon that sat high in the winter sky. Aware of this one enemy, he slowly pushed his crouching body deeper into the shrubbery, never taking his eyes off the small single family home across the street. Patiently, he watched as a lone male exited the front door, entered a small VW Bug, and drove away.

The figure slid the cuff of his long-sleeved black shirt up a few inches and glanced at his watch. The hands read, 9:45.

Leaning deeper into the shadows, he decided to wait another 15 minutes before making his move.

With two small girls tucked snugly in bed, and her husband off to work, Cheryle Whitaker felt deep

satisfaction. It had been a busy day, and although she loved being married to a young Los Angeles Police Officer and raising two daughters, many days left her exhausted. Sitting on the second-hand rattan couch, her mind raced into the past and she felt a deep gratitude to be living in a quiet neighborhood, rather than in a small apartment on a busy crime-ridden street.

Anticipating a good night's sleep, she lifted her tired body from the cushions and turned off the lights in the house. After checking the front door, and guaranteeing secured locks, she walked into the lighted kitchen just off the small living room. As she turned off the last light, the darkly clad figure darted across the street and took up a position on her backdoor stoop, guaranteeing the outline of his body would not be visible through the curtains that covered the door window.

Cheryle heard the old doorknob click as it rotated back and forth. As she stood frozen in

the dark, the knob turned from side-to-side. Through the curtain, she watched as a figure pushed firmly on the door to force it open. When it failed to budge, he tried the knob again, shaking it more vigorously.

Silently, she hurried into the bedroom, where I kept a small .25 automatic pistol on an upper closet shelf. Stretching high on her tiptoes, she reached up, and when her fingers located the weapon, she slid it off the shelf. Placing it in

her left hand, she used her right hand to rack the slide, sending a live round into the chamber. When she stepped from the bedroom, she shot a quick glance at the door to the girl's bedroom. Stepping to their open door, she eased it shut. Cheryl tiptoed back into the darkened kitchen. Standing in the middle of the floor, she waited. As the moon shone brilliantly through the kitchen window, her breathing became rapid and she felt moisture form in the palms of her hands. Again, she heard the doorknob jostle and heard

the muffled impact of a fist striking above the knob.

Reaching onto a darkened counter, her left hand found the telephone. Lifting the receiver from its cradle, she used her left index finger to dial, "0."

"Number, please," the Operator responded.

Holding the mouthpiece held close to her lips, she whispered, "My husband is a Los Angeles Police Officer, and he is at work. Someone is trying to break into my house and I need help!"

The Operator patched the call through to the Los Angeles Police Department. An officer picked up the call. In a strained whisper, she said, "My name is Cheryle Whitaker. My husband is a police officer. I have two small children in the house and someone is trying to break through the back kitchen door. I have a

gun and I need help!"

He asked for and received her address. In seconds, he relayed the info to a black and white patrol unit. Officer Jimmy Reid acknowledged the "Code 3" call and flipped the switches, activating his red lights, while his left foot slammed down on the siren



Richard Whitaker

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button on the floorboard.

"The police are on the way, Mrs. Whitaker. Please remain on the phone with me."

Again, she heard another determined jostle of the knob. Cheryle moved from being a wife and mother living in a quiet suburb into being the defender and protector of her children. Her eyes narrowed as she focused on the intruder at the door. The phone held snugly between her shoulder and her head, she extended her right arm to give her gun hand support. Holding the weapon steady, she aimed at the middle of the curtain. Her right index finger softly resting on

the trigger, she took a deep breath and exhaled. In her toughest, most authoritative LAPD cop's wife voice, she yelled, "I have a gun! The police are on their way. If you come through that door, I will shoot you!"

The door handle stopped shaking. In the distance, she heard the faint wail of a siren. In mere minutes, a knock on the front door echoed

through the house.

"I need to put the phone down and check the front door," she told the officer.

"You do that; I'll wait until you return."

After placing the receiver on the kitchen counter, she walked through the darkened room and stood against the front door. Easing her head forward, she looked through the peephole. To her relief, she saw a uniformed police officer. He identified himself and said another unit checked the back door and someone or something scared off the suspect. Cheryl let him inside, told the officer on the phone it was all right, thanked him for his help, and hung up.

As Cheryle explained to Officer Reid what happened, he broke into a hearty laugh. "Mrs. Whitaker, you did well. Where is the gun?"

"Behind you on the kitchen counter," Cheryle said, her hands shaking.

Reid took it outside to unload it. Unable to get it out any other way, he discharged the live round into the lawn. When he returned, he smiled and returned the gun and the magazine. "I'm sorry for the noise. It'll be our secret."

"Thank you, Officer Reid. Yes, it will be our secret!" ♦

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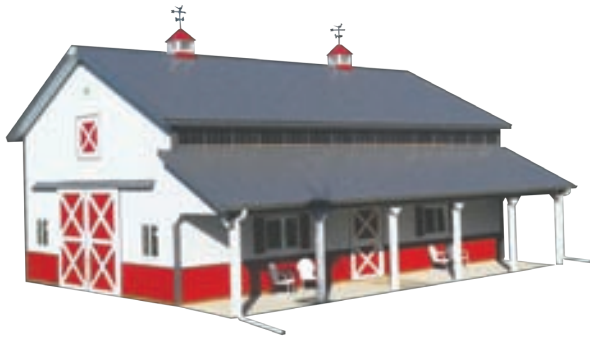
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**Gerald Lockhart**

# The Pony Tony

We moved to Ericson in the spring of 1927 when my father bought the blacksmith shop.

I was in the sixth grade and town school was different, but we made out all right. Dad kept the ranch where we had been living and rented it out. He was looking ahead to when we boys would get in high school and be able to go back out to the ranch and again raise some livestock, do a little farming, put up the hay, etc. It seemed like in those days the motto was “Keep them busy and they won’t have so much time to think up a bunch of foolishness.”

When we moved into town, we kept a cow to milk and Tony, the ornery pony. By this time, we boys had ridden him a lot, but he still bucked us off whenever he wanted to, and he had that ornery streak most ponies do.

Back then, quite a few people in town kept a cow or two. In the summer, we pastured them in a big pasture a little over a mile out of town. We’d drive them there every morning and bring them back in the evening. The pony came in real handy for this chore and we were the envy of some of the other boys. We even took on the chore of driving home cows for people who didn’t have kids at home anymore.

They gave us a dime a week per cow for this chore and we thought it was a good deal because we were going by with our own herd anyway (big money).

About this time, Dad came up with another work project to keep us busy. He rigged up a two-wheel cart with a pair of old mower wheels he had. It had a long, narrow wood box we built with a pair of shafts so one horse could pull it. That was where Tony came into use.

Most everyone in town raised a garden. Cows and horses make manure and manure is good for fertilizer and commercial stuff hadn’t come into being yet. We started hauling manure from people who had a cow or horse—or both—and putting it on the gardens. Everyone was glad to get rid of the pile and to have it scattered on their garden. Twenty-five cents a load was the going rate and if some of them didn’t have the quarter, we let them have the manure, anyway. We always had plenty of help. Our good friends were always wanting to help, and that was welcome to us. Of course, it was kinda like Tom Sawyer.

We were doing a land-office business... we thought. I rigged up a board across the front for a seat and my good friend Earl and I sat up there with me doing the driving. The other kids had to ride on the back. We were coming

down the street with a good load and were in front of where Earl lived when a wheel came off. Down that side went with an awful WOMP. Earl hit the street a running for home and just disappeared.

Tony gave an awful jump when he heard it hit and broke the tug on one side.

The next jump broke the other side. He jerked the lines out of my hands and away he went.

He headed west out of town, doing about ninety miles an hour, and kicking and bucking as he ran. There we sat in the middle of the street with a load of manure and no horse. Dad and a couple of other men were looking out the door of the blacksmith shop and saw the whole fracas. They were bent over laughing and thought it the funniest thing in town. When they got through laughing, much to my

embarrassment, Dad got the car and we headed west after Tony. He stood next to an old wooden bridge about a mile out of town—he hated that bridge, so he hadn’t crossed it. All he had left of the harness was a collar and hames with the broken tugs still attached. Everything else lay scattered along the road. We gathered up pieces all the way back to town. Since we always had a good supply of harness parts in those days, we got it fixed up and got the cart jacked up and put the wheel back on and we were back in business. We made sure we didn’t lose any wheels after that, but the pony was sure spooky of that cart for a while. ♦



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Wilma Gundy

# GENES IN JEANS

My first child was a girl. Dresses, hair ribbons, and dolls lured me into thinking I had experience in child raising and was ready for my second. Except, it was a boy!

I'd read, been told, even observed that boys differ from girls. In my girlhood, I memorized the nursery rhyme that says "boys are made of snips and snails and puppy dog tails, and "little girls are made of sugar, spice and everything nice." But there's nothing like your own hands-on model to observe, and to be indoctrinated about the differences in the DNA, in the genes.

Lew rolled over sooner than Terry ever did. I could not lay him on a bed or couch and expect him to lie there. After I barely caught him from a tumble, I placed him securely in his playpen. Sometimes I put him on a quilt on the floor, but he crawled long before I'd learned to Lew-proof the room. Then he started to climb. And climb! Climb on whatever was in his way to seeing, getting or tasting whatever fascinated his curiosity. Babies learn through all their senses but, seemingly, more so by taste. He pulled out the drawer where I had potatoes and onions stored and chewed with delight on the onion he found there. In two blinks of my eye, he discovered he could use that drawer as the stepping stone to climb into the sink, then from there on up to the top of the cupboard. Back to the supposed safety of the playpen!

He was walking before ten months, which

opened me up to a new barrage of dangers he could get himself into. When we moved to a house in Arvada, his bedroom had a window several feet off the floor. One day, I placed him in his crib for a nap, shut the door and caught up on household chores. Fifteen minutes later, the doorbell rang. My neighbor stood there, clutching Lew's hand. He'd crawled out the window and, clad only in a diaper, gone visiting.

My husband and I loved to take Terry and Lew to picnic in the park with our friends in the summer. After lunch, as my friend Luverna and I chatted, Lew climbed onto the picnic table and fell, hitting the back of his head. With blood streaming down his back, he screamed and cried. I went weak in the knees, hands and head. I couldn't think of what to do. Luverna picked him up and rushed to her car. When we arrived at the hospital, I was crying but he wasn't. Some stitches closed his wound, but I felt I had been careless and had not prevented the accident.

Jump! Jump! And jump again! Jumping was another distinctive boy trait. Not jumping rope like a demure girl, but putting objects in the path of his tricycle so he could crash into them and jump the trike over. Later it was his bicycle, then (only I never learned for sure)



probably his car. He jumped into every mud puddle he ever saw. He was a natural at diving into the swimming pool.

Mechanical ability was another distinction that became apparent at an early age. I have trouble unscrewing the cap off a bottle, so the amazing ability of my son, husband, and grandson to get nails to go in straight, make appliances run, and induce engines to roar leaves me slack-jawed in amazement. I have pictures of my husband at age three "fixing" his tricycle, my son at the same age crawling under his trike to repair it, and of my three-year-old grandson lying under his trike with a screwdriver. Genes will out.

Our daughter longed for a horse from the age of four, and we gave her a yearling for her twelfth birthday. Our son begged for a puppy. When he was nine, my husband built a fence around our backyard. Then he and Lew went searching for a dog. At the local pound, they found the love of both their lives, a darling Schipperke puppy they named Frisky. Since I am allergic to animal dander, she was an outdoor dog. When she was due to have

puppies, Lew insisted he sleep on the back patio to be near her. At three a.m., he raced into the house, turned on all the lights and yelled, "The puppies are here!"

Daughter Terry studied the flute; Lew wanted to pound on drums. His Christmas gift at age twelve was a snare drum. Drums, I learned, multiply, and before I knew it, he owned a drum set. His bedroom was in the basement and soon it became the practice room for the local "band." (Fortunately, our next-door neighbors still speak to us.) By high school, he belonged to a band that played

weekends at Roller City for the skaters. Well-known drummers were his idols. When he was fifteen, I took him to a club in Evergreen so we could experience Buddy Rich making the place jump with his drumming.

The hunting instinct is another innate characteristic of the male species. At fifteen, Lew was eligible to take hunting lessons and begged to go. I believed it was important he learn the proper way to handle a gun, so I took him to the classes, where he learned the procedures for loading, handling and storing it. Most importantly, he learned to respect how dangerous they are. Shortly after the classes ended, I came home from teaching and grading papers to find a note on the table: "Mom, Tom and I have gone hunting."

Hunting to me meant guns. The city ordinance forbade shooting within the city limits. Since he was fifteen, not old enough to drive, I reasoned they could not have gone far on their bicycles. My mind twirled with anxiety as I imagined them with guns shooting at something within city limits, endangering all within range. Where could they have gone? I concluded it was probably a lake at one of our nearby city parks. I jumped in the car and raced to that location and there they were. The guns were actually bows and arrows.

When they learned to drive, Terry got a car stuck in the mud (much to her father's disgust); the police stopped Lew's car. Ice and snow covered his car windows, and he hadn't cleared them properly. The cop asked, "Why didn't you stop for that school bus?" Lew's reply, "I didn't see any bus." (Since he got only a warning, it was years later before I learned of this escapade.)

Sometimes boys get falsely accused. I was grading papers at my desk when I received a call from the Lakewood Police. "Do you have a son named Lewis?"

"Yes."



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**THE WEST OF YESTER-YEAR**

Rachel Kovaciny

# THE COURAGEOUS MARY DONOHO

Can you imagine being the only woman on a two-month journey over land, accompanied by over three hundred men?

Or traveling almost nine hundred miles while walking on your own two feet or riding in a wooden wagon over what could barely be called a trail, much less a road? And doing all of that while caring for a nine-month-old baby?

When Mary Donoho accompanied her husband William over the Santa Fe Trail, she did all that. She became the first female US citizen to travel the entire trail going south from Missouri to New Mexico.

Mary, her husband William, and their nine-month-old daughter were part of a large wagon train that included traders, soldiers, and freight wagons. The wagon train was massive, made up of over three hundred people and a hundred wagons carrying nearly two hundred thousand dollars' worth of trade goods. (That would be about six million dollars today.) William was one of many who invested trading items bound for what was then called *Nuevo, Mexico*. Items like bolts of fabric and farming tools were readily available in Missouri, but difficult to get in far-flung Santa Fe, which was part of the newly independent Mexican nation. Many people made vast fortunes trading along the Santa Fe Trail, and William and Mary Donoho intended to do the same.

Mary was born in 1807 to James and Lucy Dodson, who lived in Kentucky. Her family moved several times when she was growing up, finally settling in Missouri. There, Mary met William Donoho, and the two married in 1831, when Mary was twenty-four. Two years later, they left Missouri and headed for new lives hundreds of miles away. They would have to

skirt around territory belonging to the Comanche, cross deserts and mountains, and face extreme weather. Mary, William, and their baby were hardy folks and handled the trip just fine.

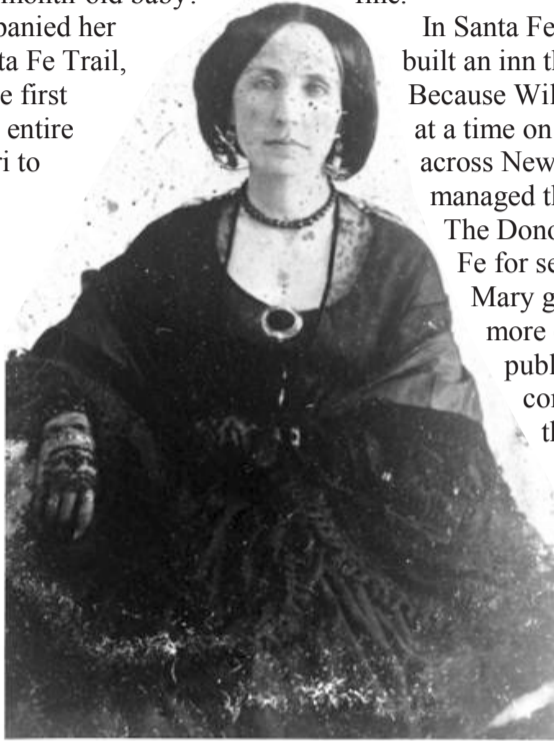
In Santa Fe, Mary and William built an inn they called La Fonda. Because William left for months at a time on trading trips all across New Mexico, Mary managed the inn by herself.

The Donohos lived in Santa Fe for several years, where Mary gave birth to three more children. She hosted public dances and other community events at the La Fonda, besides managing the hotel and caring for her family.

Unfortunately, in 1837, the Perez Rebellion made the area unsafe. Mexico's President Santa

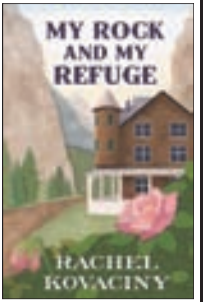
Anna had appointed Colonel Alberto Perez the governor of New Mexico, but Perez was not from New Mexico. An outsider trying to govern them offended the Mexican citizens. Tensions escalated from grumbling to all-out rebellion, and the Donoho family fled to Texas for safety.

They settled in Clarksville, where they built the Donoho Hotel. Mary birthed and raised two more children while managing their



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new hotel. William Donoho died in 1845 and did not leave a will that passed ownership of the hotel to his wife. Since it was uncommon for women to own property like a hotel at the time, Mary spent six years battling to legally retain ownership and control of the Donoho Hotel. She eventually won her court cases. Under her management, the hotel became renowned for her peerless hospitality and fine accommodations.

Mary Donoho learned a valuable lesson from her husband's mistake—when she died in 1880, she left a detailed, nine-page-long will that bequeathed everything to her son, James. He was her only remaining child—she had outlived all five of her daughters.

James eventually sold the Donoho Hotel and returned to Santa Fe. In a newspaper interview there, he described his mother as a practical and intelligent businesswoman. One can only assume she was also courageous and determined to have endured and accomplished so much! ♦

## GENES IN JEANS, CONTINUED

“Two girls have accused him of vandalizing their car. We want you to bring your son in to talk with us.”

When I phoned Lew to tell him of the accusation, he began to cry and say, “Mom, I didn't do it.” I knew my son well enough to know he told me the truth. If he were guilty, a more natural response would have been a vehement denial and no tears.

At the station, a policeman explained two girls had identified him as the person guilty of vandalizing their car on Halloween. When I questioned how the girls knew his name, the cop said they had shown them yearbooks from different high schools. When the girls saw Lew's picture, they recognized him! I protested that naturally they would accuse him after seeing the name “Gundy,” as the accusers were two former high school students who flunked my class. I was angry when I learned that without telling me, the police subjected Lew, age sixteen, to two lie detector tests before they became convinced of his innocence.

Today, that boy is the man made of heart and soul with the mechanical know-how to keep my car running and to troubleshoot the puzzling dilemmas I have with my computer. I celebrate the difference of the genes in the jeans! ♦

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Author Unknown

# The Ticket

Jack took a long look at his speedometer before slowing down: 73 in a 55 zone. Fourth time in as many months. How could a guy get caught so often?

When his car had slowed to 10 miles an hour, Jack pulled over, but only partially. Let the cop worry about the potential traffic hazard. Maybe some other car will tweak his backside with a mirror. The cop stepped out of his car, the big pad in hand.

Bob? Bob from church? Jack sunk farther into his trench coat. This was worse than the coming ticket. A cop catching a guy from his own church, a guy who was a little eager to get home after a long day at the office, a guy he was about to play golf with tomorrow.

Jumping out of the car, he approached a man he saw every Sunday, a man he'd never seen in uniform. "Hi, Bob.

Fancy meeting you like this."

"Hello, Jack." No smile.

"Guess you caught me red-handed in a rush to see my wife and kids."

"I guess." Bob seemed uncertain. Good.

"I've seen some long days at the office lately.



I'm afraid I bent the rules a bit—just this once." Jack toed at a pebble on the pavement. "Diane said something about roast beef and potatoes tonight. Know what I mean?"

"I know what you mean. I also know you have a reputation in our precinct."

Ouch. This was not going in the right direction. Time to change tactics. "What'd you clock me at?"

"Seventy. Would you sit in your car, please?"

"Now wait a minute here, Bob. I checked as soon as I saw you. I was barely nudging 65." The lie seemed came easier with every ticket.

"Please, Jack, in the car."

Flustered, Jack hunched himself through the still- open door. Slamming it shut, he stared at the dashboard. He was in no rush to open the window. The minutes ticked by. Bob scribbled away on the pad.

Why hadn't he asked for a driver's license? Whatever the reason, it would be a month of Sundays before Jack ever sat near this cop again.

A tap on the door jerked his head to the left. There was Bob, a folded paper in hand. Jack rolled down the window a mere two inches, just enough room for Bob to pass him the slip.

"Thanks." Jack could not quite

keep the sneer out of his voice.

Bob returned to his police car without a word. Jack watched his retreat in the mirror and unfolded the sheet of paper. How much was this one going to cost? Wait a minute. What was this? Some kind of joke? Certainly not a ticket. Jack read:

*Dear Jack, Once upon a time I had a daughter. She was six when killed by a car. You guessed it—a speeding driver. A fine and three months in jail and the man was free. Free to hug his daughters. All three of them. I only had one, and I'm going to have to wait until heaven before I can ever hug her again. A thousand times I've tried to forgive that man. A thousand times I thought I had. Maybe I did, but I need to do it again. Even now. Pray for me. And be careful, Jack, my son is all I have left.*

Jack turned around in time to see Bob's car pull away and head down the road. Jack watched until it disappeared. A full fifteen minutes later, he too, pulled away and drove slowly home, praying for forgiveness and hugging a surprised wife and kids when he arrived. ♦

June Domes

# The Wonder of Antiques

I bought my first antique at eleven.



I had collected many glass horses of all breeds and needed a cabinet to show them off. My mother's girlfriend had an old barrister bookcase, perfect for my needs. I saved up and bought it for fourteen dollars. I'm afraid I didn't appreciate its worth back then. Its crystal knobs and springs on the doors are unmatched today. Sixty years later, it still holds a prominent place in my home, displaying interesting books and trinkets.

We recently purchased a beautiful old China hutch. I look at it in awe and wonder how many Thanksgivings and Christmases it has given up its treasures of fine dishes, platters, soup bowls, sugar and creamers only to have them returned at days end, all clean and sparkling, behind its fine, glass doors once again. Today it holds my mother's china and paraphernalia. The light from the fireplace strikes its fine, old wood, showing off its beauty once again.

My mother gave me my great grandmother's bedroom set. I have an idea it's from England. I wonder how many babies were born in this wonderful old bed? It's nice to have dreams of the past, and antiques are treasures, gifts, and reminders to cherish. ♦

Suzan Wiener

# My Little Fiasco!

One day, my husband and I went downtown to eat a nice dinner and to buy a television in one of the large department stores.

We had fun walking around window shopping and dreaming of things we wished we could buy. I pointed out a beautiful curio cabinet I would get if we had enough money, or a mahogany table and chairs that would look great in our apartment. Maybe later in life it would be affordable, at least we hoped so. We went into a store with an amazing amount of televisions and stands, etc. They were expensive, even then.

After all that walking, a wave of tiredness swept over me. I looked for a chair to rest in, but didn't find any, so I eyed a TV stand that seemed sturdy enough for me to sit on. I am medium built, so I thought it would be alright to take a chance. Alas, I miscalculated and when I sat on one of them, I heard an agonizing crack! I felt so embarrassed. When the manager came over to ask what happened, I showed him the dent. To our amazement, even though we offered to pay for it, he said it wasn't necessary and called it an accident. I don't think that would've happened today.

The scene had drawn a laughing crowd, and my face turned as red as a beet. We hurried out of the store and away. Later on, Howie got used to my little foibles, calling them Susie-isms. We didn't look around at the televisions, but knew one day one of them would be in our apartment, and we'd have a good laugh about it. Just not in that store! And it would always bring to mind my little fiasco. ♦





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# Saturday Baseball

Darlene Prickett

Most Saturday afternoons in the 1950s and early 60s, you could find Daddy and me in front of the television set in the living room.

He sat back in his recliner, and I lay on the big rug in the center of the room. He loved the New York Yankees. So did I. Their games came on in the afternoon, so I made sure to complete my chores so I could watch the game with him. He loved the game of baseball but, most of all, he loved to hear Dizzy Dean and Pee Ree Reese announce the game. He said one afternoon, "The best television is during a baseball game with Dizzy and Pee Wee announcing."

I loved to watch all the actions of the Yankees. The cameras would pan to the dugout and saw the players yell and cheer for their team. Then it moved to the bullpen, where the pitchers were warming up, just in case the manager called them to relieve the current pitcher.

Then the cameras shifted to the on-deck circle where the up to bat players were warming up.

The Yankees dominated baseball in the 1950s and 60s, at least in my home. We were not casual Yankee fans. Whenever she could,



not a lovable one. I never understood what he meant.

"They win with cold efficiency and Stengel juggles the lineups to get the best out of the players." Daddy said one chilly winter afternoon. Didn't make a lick of sense to me. I still loved to watch them play the game and all the action in the ballpark.

Dizzy Dean's favorite song was *The Wabash Cannonball*. When play got slow or people began squirming in their seats before the seventh inning stretch, he would begin singing, "Listen to the jingle, the rumble, and the roar, as she glides along the woodland through the hills and by the shore. Hear the rush of the mighty engine. Hear the lonesome hobo's call. As she travels through the jungle on the Wabash cannonball." I really enjoyed hearing him sing. Daddy sang along with him. Now, understand, Daddy didn't sing. It was extremely rare to hear him break out in song. Dizzy was the only one he would sing with. Daddy did a running commentary during the game. "Now, Maris (Roger), you know you are a good outfielder, but don't do dumb stuff!" He then continued with, "Did you know the Cincinnati Red Stockings were the first professional baseball team?" They are now known as the Cincinnati Reds. He knew a lot of baseball trivia.



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Mamma joined us, but it was rare. She enjoyed the game, but had "more important things to do." Can't imagine what! The Yankees were the best.

Casey Stengel managed them during this time, and somehow, he found a way for them to win, most of the time. Under Stengel they won eight American League pennants and six World Series titles during the 1950s. It was the era of Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Roger Maris, Whitey Ford, Joe DiMaggio, and Casey Stengel. They were a constant and dependable team, but Daddy said they were

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One Saturday, I asked why he liked baseball so much. "It is the Great American Game! It is something anyone can play. All you need is a ball, doesn't even have to be a good baseball. It can be any kind of ball. Then you find a stick of some sort. You are ready to play! Baseball is a game the common man can play. It is the game of the rich and the poor. Anyone can play and enjoy it! It is a spectator sport. Each person has had enough personal experience to consider himself an expert at the game."

He loved the sport even though he didn't get to play during his youth. He often said he wished he'd gotten the chance to play. But

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times were difficult and, like many during his era, he went to work to help at home.

Daddy laughed loud and often during the games. One of my favorites was Dizzy Dean talking about his days with the St. Louis Cardinals. His manager, Frankie Frisch, told him not to throw a fastball to Tony Cuccinello. Dizzy objected, "He can't hit my fastball." He and Frankie argued back and forth. Finally, Frankie said, "Go ahead!" Dean threw his famous fastball. Cuccinello hit it out of the park. "Well, Frankie, I guess you are right for once." Daddy found this hilarious.

Dizzy Dean loved to tell stories about what was happening on the field. The manager walked to the mound to talk with the pitcher. "You know, Pee Wee, I'll bet Stengel is talking with him about that shotgun he's got for sale! Pee Ree would always answer, 'Of course, Dizzy. I'm certain that's what they are talking about.'" Then

they would both laugh. Daddy laughed, too!

Baseball speaks of small towns and simple times. We live in a world of unending change. Baseball changes very little. For that, and for those Saturday afternoons, I am grateful. ♦

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# Honey, Wake Up!

Christine Collier

For many years, my sister Becky home schooled her children.

She did a wonderful job and spent hours reading and preparing lessons. It was a full-time endeavor.

She often made the comment that unless you undertake home schooling, you would never realize how involved it is. Their home had

an extra room they used for a classroom with desks, bookshelves, and a color copier for lessons. They learned crafts, home skills, and had music lessons on Friday. Reading is one of their greatest enjoyments and their schoolroom is a home library for the entire family.

Becky's youngest son is in high school and she volunteers at his school every day, helping children that have problems with any subject. Everyone comments that her genuine gift is helping children to understand their schoolwork.

For their wedding anniversary a few years ago, Becky suggested to her husband Mike they spend the afternoon at Barnes & Noble. This would be their gift to each other, an afternoon away from the kids, just them in a huge bookstore. Grandma volunteered to babysit. Maybe they'd find new reading

material to take home for the family. It may sound like a boring anniversary to some, but not them.

They arrived at the bookstore and casually browsed the aisles. Becky decided she'd find a stack of books and sit in the café. She collects children's picture books. She'd enjoy a mug of tea and a treat, maybe a cookie spoon coated in chocolate! Mike enjoys the outdoors, hiking, carpentry, archery, and hunting dogs and said he'd relax in the magazine

section. The many themed magazines he loved packed the tall wall units. He found a comfortable easy chair and settled in for a read.

Each person got lost in their reading, in separate areas. It dawned on Becky a long time had gone by, and she had finished her tea and cookie. Also, she had slowly browsed through a large stack of books. Where is Mike? He must have found some very interesting magazines! She left the café area and walked to the magazine section; stopping to look down each long aisle for Mike. He wasn't in the magazine section; she

walked the entire store several times, looking everywhere for her husband. He was nowhere to be seen. She even waited on a bench outside the restroom area for a while, thinking he might have taken a bathroom break.

*Don't tell me he abandoned me on our anniversary,* Becky thought. Would he leave the store without telling me? She looked in the magazine section one more time, although she knew he wasn't there. She had a clear view of the people and chairs in the aisle. As she walked toward the magazine wall units, she heard a

strange noise, one rarely heard in a bookstore. She stopped and looked down. It was Mike! He had fallen asleep slouched so low in the chair you couldn't even see the back of his head! *Good thing I walked completely down this aisle or I would have never found him.*

"Mike," she whispered, "Honey, wake up! You're embarrassing me." Mike woke up, not in the least bit embarrassed; Becky had a question for her husband. "If you fall asleep on our anniversary date now, what will you do when we've been married for thirty or forty years?"

Mike did what he often does when asked a question he doesn't have an answer to: he grinned. Slowly, he got out of the chair. "Did you find anything good to eat in the café?" ♦



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Pamela Gilsenan

# Baby Blue

My friend Kiki was from Texas and she did everything well. She was gracious and big-hearted, too.

It intimidated me when she moved in next door to me, a mere country bumpkin. She had a late model expensive car called Baby Blue. It made my old van, the Periwinkle Speed Wagon, look even worse. I had gone to the trouble of getting periwinkle eye shadow to match, but the van was one of those years with some issue with the paint sticking correctly when manufactured. There was more bare metal than paint.

As time passed, we became friends despite her accent and big city ways. She did everything with a flourish and attention. Dissatisfied with what our town offered, Kiki forever drove off for more and better things. I tried to get her to get to know the locals and eat at the Country Café, but she saw nothing

on the menu she liked. She was good at her job, so folks took her with a grain of salt. Soon, they reasoned, she'd wise up. In time, she'd see how wonderful it is to live in a small town.

One freezing winter day, her car acted up. It didn't want to start. A few days later, it refused to start. Baffled, she stayed home from work. One of her coworkers came over to jump the battery, to no avail. "I will have it towed over to the County Seat Garage," she said. Her coworker pleaded with her to take it to a local shade tree mechanic in our town. He had a great reputation. He could fix anything with a motor!



We talked over coffee that night. Since it was a foreign car, she insisted it needed the computer diagnostics. "My insurance covers a tow into the big shop," she said.

"Give him a chance, I pleaded. "If he doesn't figure it out, go to the big shop."

After a sleepless night, she called our town wrecker and asked them to tow Baby Blue into the local shop. I took her to work where I imagine she was useless all day from worrying. A coworker brought her home. At dusk, my phone rang. "I know it is dark and cold," she said, "but Baby Blue is fixed."

"What was the matter?" I asked?

"I really don't understand," she replied,



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"But can we go right now? I don't want Baby Blue to be out in the cold another night."

Our local mechanic, Bob, explained what had caused issues with Baby Blue. "Do you keep this car in the garage?" he asked.

"Of course," she replied, "it's heated!"

I didn't know what was coming, but knew I shouldn't let her see me

laugh, so I walked over to the window and stared out at the stars. Bob got right to the point. "Mice chewed some wires under your hood, so there was no regular connection when you tried to start your car. I have replaced the damaged ones. You probably don't need to take your car in for the diagnostic review, but you probably should get rid of the mice in your garage and turn off the heat."

Kiki nodded and pulled out her Texas size check book to pay him. "Okay," she said. As we were leaving the repair shop, she said, "I am so glad that Baby Blue is better. Let's celebrate at the Country Café."

I smiled in the dark, glad she finally trusted the people in her little town. ♦



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## Our Morning Walk

Jerry Bishop

Barney rises slowly, gives a long stretch, wags his tail a few times and looks about, giving a few muffled barks.

After enjoying his breakfast as only a dog can, we start up the big hill east of the house. Spring is still a ways off on the high prairie, but there are hints everywhere. Along our dirt road, I notice a few purple hyacinths peeking out to greet us. The slushy wet snow from last week's storm has mostly vanished, going deep into the ground to bring forth new life. Soon the prairie will burst open with wildflowers singing their songs of yellow, white and red.

As Barney and I top the ridge, a distant herd of antelope, down a long slope to the east, spot us. Raising their heads from an early morning breakfast of tiny green grass sprouting from the wet ground, they glide off in unison, keeping an eye on us. Soon this herd will break into small groups of two or three, preparing for birthing time. The does are not that wild. One stops to give us a long look. I think she recognizes us from our walks during seasons past. These animals return to their summer home, the same place where they were born, to give birth to the next generation. Glancing up, I see a pair of golden eagles circling high in the bright blue sky. These two are long-time residents, returning every year to raise their brood. The big rough nest in the top of a tall dead cottonwood has served them well. I've often wondered what it's like to endure a summer thunderstorm in the top of that tree.

Barney stops to examine a small hole in the side of a dirt bank. No sign of life yet, but it won't be long before the little ground squirrels will be all in a frenzy, digging new passageways and remodeling their summer quarters. These are prairie chipmunks, complete with stripes, small spots and twitching tails. If there's a tiny Coffee House in one of these holes, I'm sure these little guys will frequent it often.

When we arrive back at Barney's pen, I give him a large Milk Bone treat. He promptly deposits it in a bucket to enjoy later.

Yes, Spring is around the corner. Yes, there will be cold days and more snow, but the promise of new life is everywhere. The Easter of the risen Christ and the empty tomb are glimpses of the loving creator's intentions for all of creation—complete renewal with victory over death. Good News indeed. ♦

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Herb Higgins is a Vietnam combat veteran, former prison guard lieutenant, successful business owner, and an accomplished public official. He and his wife Doris live in Elizabeth and have been residents of our county for 8 years.

Prior to coming to Elbert County, Herb served with distinction as a City Councilman and Mayor for 15 years, where he fought for his constituents against higher taxes, out-of-control government, and high-density housing proposed by greedy developers.

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# Stranded in Winter's Icy Grip

It started on a sunny day with fun in the snow. It ended in the dark of a New Year's Eve with me agonizing over the fate of my husband and son.

Snowmobiles were, in December 1969, a novelty to many people who sometimes failed to observe proper safety precautions such as "take along a pair of snowshoes," or "always go into the back country with two machines." For weeks, we'd planned to careen over the snow on this peppy, recreational vehicle. So on December 31st, we rented one, loaded it on a trailer behind our car and headed for the deep mountain snows behind Fairplay, Colorado.

After parking just off Highway 9, we unloaded the machine. Lloyd, my husband, took our 12-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter for a quick ride. Then I climbed on behind him. A bone-chilling wind swept down off Mount Sherman, picked the snow off the ground, pummeled it through the air, and pelted my eyes, the only part of my body exposed. I didn't know what the word chill factor was, but it felt cold, like below zero. "Bitter cold" is what my mom would have called it. I called it Monster Cold as, despite three layers of clothes, it soon held me in its grasp, making my teeth chatter and my entire body shake. I didn't ride long before I'd had all of this I could stand.

My husband, however, gets exhilarated by cold and snow and blizzards. Stories about polar expeditions fed his boyhood psyche. He lived vicariously with Admiral Byrd in that Antarctic snow cave and trudged across the frozen tundra onto the ice fields and through the disorienting blizzards with Perry. To him, the icy wind and blowing snow was a challenge the snowmobile could easily power through.

So he proposed we go over the snow-packed trail through the trees for about 7 miles to some mountain property we'd purchased the previous summer. On the warm, sun-drenched day, we'd bought it. It was gorgeous, surrounded on three sides by National forest, without another cabin or human within miles. "Come on," he urged. "Just imagine how beautiful and peaceful it must be with all the snow. Let's ride up there and have a look."

I was too much of a wimp even to think about it. Besides, my woman's intuition, that unscientific gut feeling that logic can never explain, was kicking in. I said I thought it best he wait until some other day when it wasn't so

blasted cold. He replied if I didn't want to go, he could take our son, Lewis, because he'd enjoy it and our daughter, Terry, could remain in the parked car with me.

Here came that ESP again, some premonition that prompted me to ask, "What if you run out of gas?"

"There's no chance we'll run out of gas," he assured me. "The tank's practically full."

Reluctantly, I agreed, asking how long they'd be gone. Lloyd thought over the distance and said, "Two hours at the most."

I looked at my watch which showed 1:05 pm. Half jokingly, I asked, "And what if you're not back in two hours?"

Knowing I'd be a real klutz if I tried to back the trailer and car across the cattle guard and onto the icy highway, he shrugged and said, "Hitchhike into town and get help."

Lloyd and Lewis climbed onto the snowmobile, raced the motor, roared across the snow and disappeared into the trees. Terry and I hibernated in the car, running it intermittently to keep warm.

I glanced at my watch every few minutes.

1:15—how I wished they'd come back;

1:30—clouds completely blocked out the sun;

2 o'clock, the wind whistled with increasing fury around the car, whipping the snow so much we couldn't see the line of trees into which they'd driven, although it was only a few yards from the car.

I waited two hours and not a minute more.

"Okay, Terry," I said, "They're not coming. Let's hitchhike."

The second car that came by, a brown van with a young father and small son inside, stopped to ask if they could help. We explained briefly, and he agreed to take us into town, where we went into the Fairplay Hotel to ask

where to find the sheriff's office.

Fortunately, it was right next door to the hotel, so Terry and I hurried over there.

Having watched many television shows and movies about the West, I expected to walk into a sheriff's office and find a man, star on his chest, feet on the desk, chewing



on a toothpick or smoking a cigarette, ready to help any fair damsels in distress. The room we entered was completely empty, not a soul to greet us.

Lloyd, stranded seven miles from the closest highway, was frantically trying to start a fire. The trouble my ESP had foreseen with the snowmobile was not running out of gas—no. It was a frozen gas line. After the engine sputtered and died, Lloyd tried to restart it. No luck. After trying repeatedly, he realized it would not respond. Our son complained of dizziness from inhaling exhaust fumes on the ride up, so Lloyd

brushed snow off a log and had him stretch out.

Using a hatchet he'd taken along, Lloyd tramped through waist-high snow to hack branches, bark, twigs, to build a fire. The twigs were damp, and he knew they'd never light, so he dug in his billfold for old receipts and scraps of paper. Fortunately, the trees protected them from the full blast of the wind, so shielding the lighted match carefully, he ignited the bits of paper, and soon had a blazing fire. If that hadn't worked, he would have used what paper money he carried in his billfold.

The fire burned so fast, scrounging wood for it from the surrounding trees was an endless job. Lloyd became exhausted from plunging through snow up to his thighs with every step he took as he searched for branches. He'd already used the most accessible ones. He realized he had neither the strength nor fuel to keep the fire burning through the night.

Back at the sheriff's office, we cleared our throats, tapped on the desk, and shouted, "Anybody here?" A secretary responded to our call, and we explained the situation. "Can the sheriff help?" I asked.

"No. He's out in his patrol car. The wind and snow are so bad in South Park they're having to close the highway."



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“Can’t you radio him?”  
 “No, his car has no radio.”  
 “Is there a rescue team in town?” Terry asked.  
 “No.” We both stood in stunned silence for a while. Sensing our desperation, the secretary asked, “Is there anybody at all you know here in Fairplay?”

No, but my mind leaped about trying to think of something or somebody. Then a stroke of luck. I remembered the name of the lady at the real estate office where we’d bought the property. “Can you call Mrs. Gray?” I asked.

“I’ll give you the number and you can call.”  
 Mrs. Gray’s husband answered the phone and again I explained. “Wait right there,” he instructed. “I’ll come get you in my pickup.”

Mr. Gray took us to the local service station, where the owners had two newly purchased snowmobiles. I explained Lloyd and Lewis were planning to go to the end of the road on Little Sacramento Creek. After discussion, Mr. Gray and the owners decided the best strategy was to use three snowmobiles for a rescue—two to each carry a rescued passenger and one as backup with extra equipment of snowshoes, etc. They borrowed another machine and soon all three were racing through the blinding snow to find my husband and son.

As darkness fell, winter increased its icy grip on the stranded pair. Lloyd knew there was no way they could walk back to the highway without snowshoes. He realized as he looked at the meager stack of wood he’d labored to collect that he could not keep the fire burning much longer. But it had burned long enough for the rescuers to see it. Soon Lloyd and Lewis heard the welcome roar of the oncoming snowmobiles.

At the Fairplay Hotel, Terry and I had been walking back and forth in the lobby for hours when Lloyd and Lewis, exhausted and chilled to the bone, stumbled through the door. We all agreed we had more than New Year’s Eve to celebrate.

“It’s an ill wind that blows no good,” and the good that day’s icy wind blew was that the donation we sent to the people of Fairplay formed the nucleus of a fund to start an organized rescue squad. ♦

Freeman G. Scholield

# Titter & Pucker

Uncle Foster was a husky built fellow, very capable and good-natured.

He had a ready smile for everyone. His pleasant manner and automatic grin seemed to bother him, as though he feared he might smile at the wrong time. To avoid a situation like that, he developed a habit of puckering his mouth. But nearly always the smile won out, anyway.

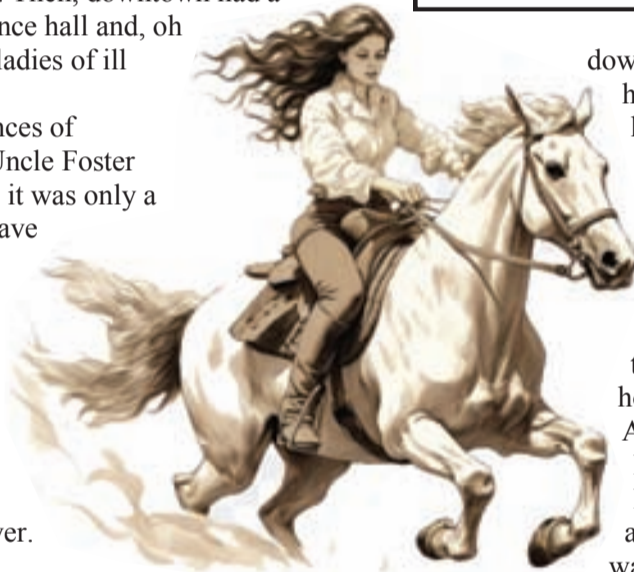
He married a woman by the name of Anna Twite. Aunt Anna was a good woman. She had a forceful personality and kept up with community affairs well, so much so, she got nicknamed “Queen Ann.” Her inquisitiveness harmed nobody as she too was good-natured, with a ready but suppressed musical laugh.

At the time of this event, they lived a few miles out of the nearest town. I don’t know its name, but it was a typical, everyday Western town. The country roads in those days took the way of least resistance, winding right or left around any obstacles too large to be moved by a team of horses. Uptown had its grocery, dry goods, hardware, and similar stores. People met and exchanged pleasantries at the ever-present blacksmith shop. Then, downtown had a pool hall, cigar store, dance hall and, oh yes, the brothel with its ladies of ill repute.

One day some differences of opinion arose between Uncle Foster and Aunt Anna. Perhaps it was only a discussion, but it must have become a little heated, because Uncle Foster grabbed his hat and said, “I’m going downtown,” and down the road he went a-foot.

After he had been gone awhile, Aunt Anna began thinking things over. “What had Foster said?”

Then she recalled, “He said he was going



downtown. Oh! It’s hard to tell what he might do in the frame of mind he is in. I’d better go catch him and talk him into coming back.”

Hurriedly, she changed into riding clothes. On the way to the corral and barn she thought, “I’ll put the saddle on Pet.” Reconsidering, “No, I’ll take the Gray. He is a faster horse.”

All the while, Uncle Foster was hiking toward town. Then he heard a galloping horse approaching from the rear. He was in no mood to talk to a

neighbor or anyone, so he got himself off the road and hid behind a large tree. With a sudden flurry the Gray flashed by like a ghost, carrying Aunt Anna, her elbows pumping and scarf flying in the wind like the horse’s tail. It surprised Uncle Foster, indeed. He thought a moment and said to himself, “Well, if she’s going to town, I’ll go back home.”

Aunt Anna spent a couple of hours hunting for him. No one had seen him. Eventually, she gave up and dejectedly started home. As the Gray plodded along, thoughts troubled her mind. “I wonder what Foster could have done. Where could he have gone? Surely he won’t leave forever. How quiet and lonely it would be without him.”

When she rode into view of the barn and corral, there stood Uncle Foster at the gate as if awaiting her arrival, puckering his mouth to hide that ready smile. As Aunt Anna rode up, he could hear her embarrassed, but happy titter. ♦

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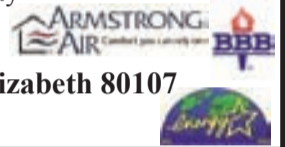
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# Ask Permission

Don Parsons

On the opening weekend of the pheasant season, a wet snowy day, Dale, Duke, and I went out east of Sterling looking for a likely cornfield.

“This place looks good,” I said. We drove up to the farmhouse, and I went up and knocked on the door. A lady answered. I handed her two dollars through the screen and asked if we could hunt in her field. She said yes, she thought it would be all right. So we stumbled off down the rows of wet, muddy corn and within five minutes, two colorful pheasants jumped up. We blasted away, missing them both.

“Told you we should have practiced,” I muttered. At the crash of our guns, a farmer came running up to us. “Hey, no hunting here. You’ll have to leave.”

“Oh, okay,” we answered. We did not mention that his wife said we could hunt. No doubt she had enough problems.

We drove on to the next farm. “You know,” I said, “we should try a different approach. We should offer the farmer a cold beer. Most of them drink a little, so that should work.”

At the next farm we encountered a husky young farmer and offered him a cold Coors. He gulped it down, and we talked for a while, then we asked if we could hunt on his place. “Oh

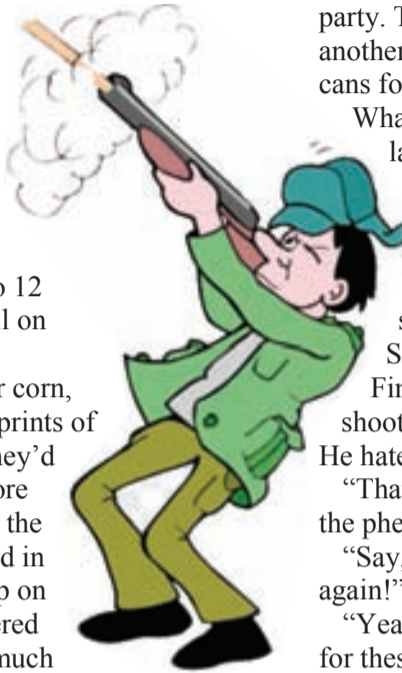
no,” he replied, “my aunt does not allow any hunting around here. Sorry.” We said so long and drove on.

A few miles over, I approached the door and inquired about hunting. The lady said yes, but could we give her some shotgun shells because her husband had none? We each contributed a few shells, which she stacked on her kitchen table with many others she had collected.

Everything from .410 to 12 gauge. She is doing well on shells, we thought.

Tramping through her corn, we observed many footprints of hunters but no birds. They’d all been chased out before our arrival. Meanwhile, the Bronco game had started in Denver. We picked it up on the car radio. Duke offered his opinion that it was much more exciting to be out here “hunting” than watching the game. Dale argued he would much rather be at the game than out here in the muddy fields looking for pheasant, and asking permission to hunt. I kept quiet while they disputed the merits of watching football instead of hunting.

We drove on to Nebraska, where we had hunted the previous season. We pulled in to the same farm and found the owner in his yard. After offering him a cold beer, we asked about hunting. “Oh,” he said, “I never post my land against hunting. Never! But you know at the end of last year’s season, I found nothing but



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scattered beer cans. Those guys would make one run through my cornfield, and then have a party. Then they would walk back and have another party at the other end. Those empty cans foul up my corn picker. Sorry.”

What could we say? Duke bent over, laughing. “Those dirty dogs, how could they do that?” and he laughed and laughed. Dale and I tried to keep straight faces. We nodded and agreed parties in his corn field would have to stop. Can’t have that at all.

So we drove on, Duke still laughing. Finally, Duke reminded us that if we didn’t shoot them, we wouldn’t have to clean them. He hated cleaning birds.

“That’s true,” I replied. “And look at it from the pheasant’s point of view.”

“Say, let’s tune in on that Bronco game again!”

“Yeah, do that,” I said. “Who wants to hunt for these poor birds, anyway?” ♦

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# Rearview Reflections

Crystal Moore

Memory lane is not the road less traveled for me. And now that I’m putting mileage on myself, I go there often—sometimes making many trips in a mere twenty-four hours.

Going down that road takes me back to my “good old days.” I never know whom or what I’ll see there, but more often than not, it’s my mama and daddy who passed away ten years ago.

This homesickness for days gone by brings to mind the *Twilight Zone* episode “Walking Distance” about a man who suffers car trouble and sets off on foot down a memory lane of sorts and ends up back in the yesteryear of his youth where he longs to stay.

I wonder if it would have surprised him as much as it did me to learn the origin of *nostalgia* comes from the Greek words “nostos” (“homecoming”) and “algia” (“pain”). *Pain*? Now that I think of it, when nostalgia hits, it’s a hard hit-and-run out there on memory lane.

And if the etymology of *nostalgia* hadn’t surprised me enough, a recent reading of



Ecclesiastes 7:10 was like a slam on the brakes: “Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.” Solomon certainly made me rethink any future trips down memory lane with that advice.

Should I bypass it from this point on? As familiar as it seemed, was it taking me in the wrong direction? If I stayed on it, would it lead me to living in the past, whereby I was no longer mindful or appreciative of present-day blessings?

Wanting to revisit a time I thought of as better reminds me of the Israelites and how they wanted to return to the life they once knew in Egypt. I know if I were to remove the rose-colored glasses and take a long hard look in the proverbial rearview mirror, I’d see the “good old days” weren’t always a sunny, appealing place. But even the days of old that truly were wonderful can’t compare with what God has prepared for those who love Him (I Corinthians 2:9).

So the next time my mind veers down memory lane, I’ll smile fondly while thanking God for those special moments and then get back to my journey on this road of life. ♦

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# Warm Strawberry Soda Pop Charles Oz Collins

My late father, Dennis J. Collins, was born and spent his early years in the mountains of northern Georgia.

I loved to hear his tales of a far-off land, so different from the plains of northeastern Colorado. We visited there twice as a family, once when I was six and again at eighteen. Both trips provided interesting experiences and confirmed some of Dad's tales. But when Dad and his brothers Ed and Corb got together, and sister Vella, how the stories would fly.



It did not take long to see Dad had experienced some "firsts" in his life that had to do with the isolation of southern Appalachian mountain living, and the rapid rate of innovation he experienced from his birth in 1906 to his death in 1991. As a boy, he witnessed his first automobile navigating the mountain roads. He vividly recalled his first "picture show" outdoors on the side of a building. In one scene, a locomotive came straight at him and he took refuge, ducking behind the chair in front of him. When the danger passed, and he stood up, he noticed several others nearby doing the same thing. If the car had been unfamiliar and a mite scary, the train engine bearing down on him was downright frightening.

Grandpa Arley, like many of his neighbors, lived a frugal and simple life. He was not ashamed to tell you he had never owned a telephone, a television, or an automobile. The family moved frequently, with Grandpa renting a bit of land to farm and hiring himself out as a laborer. Level land in the Blue Ridge Mountains was scarce and only found in the creek and river bottoms. Only when he bought a small piece of farm ground could he settle

down with his family. Most of the land was only fit for lumbering, grazing animals, hunting, and gathering berries, nuts, and medicinal plants. Arley kept a cow, a few hogs, and some chickens to help feed the family. Much of the land was open range and unfenced. In that manner, animals, especially hogs being omnivorous, could run loose and find most of their own feed in the abundant nuts, roots, and native vegetation.

The big economic event of the year for many was selling hogs. Because they seldom penned the animals, this called for cooperative effort. In some areas, multiple families would conduct a hog drive and take their animals on foot to a regional market. It meant at least one night of camping on the road and maybe two, going and coming.

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As the oldest son, Dad went along on the trip. For a young mountain boy, it must have been the height of adventure to see new countryside, to travel outside the county, to spend time with the men. No doubt young legs and an eager spirit were welcome among the veteran farmers. Sleeping out under the stars, listening to the men tell stories, eating "camp" food were all a welcome change of routine.

Eventually, they reached the market town, and the men sold their hogs. Grandpa Arley bought supplies of things not readily available in small mountain towns. The one thing Dad mentioned was a bottle of Strawberry Soda Pop, his first. It was no doubt warm, but that didn't matter. It was sweet, and better still, novel. Dad made that bottle last as long as possible and only took the occasional small sip. Whether it lasted a day or all the way home, he never said. But he recalled the experience with pleasure.

As a young man, Dennis Collins left the Georgia mountains on a whim and boarded a train for Colorado. There he would marry, father three sons, acquire and improve a sizeable farm, bury a son and his wife, and return to his birthplace. By God's grace, he renewed contact with a former schoolmate, now a widow, married Fannie, and spent his final years in a relationship sweeter than that first Strawberry soda pop. ♦

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## Frugal Possibilities

With the cost of living going up, here's a few frugal tips that might help you save \$\$.

**Sell unused vehicles:** not only does it get money up front, you need no longer pay license feeds or insurance on them, or keep them protected.

**Consolidate car trips:** make lists and do all your shopping at once, in bigger towns once a month and smaller ones once a week. You may find waiting for an item for two weeks means you no longer want it.

**Reevaluate the things you buy on auto-pilot:** do you really need body wash or is it a luxury item?

**Unfollow social media:** notice which social media influencers make you feel compelled to buy things and mute them for thirty days. Same with Facebook groups and ads. Which ones make you unhappy?

**Use up what you have:** is the lotion *all* gone, or *half* gone before you buy another one? Cut open the container to get the last bit out of the bottom before you toss it. Go through your pantry and use up what's there before you buy more food items.

**Use cloth rags and napkins instead of paper towels or napkins:** it cleans up the mess and is washable, so it makes less trash and less waste.

**Consider cheaper alternatives:** a bunch of tortillas costs less than a bag of chips, you eat less, and can make more meals out of them. Store brand items are just as good as name brands.

**Stop drinking pop:** not only will your wallet thank you, you'll be drinking 15 pounds less sugar-water a year.

**Delete automatic renewals/automatic shipping:** You may find you don't really need that automatic delivery once a month, and you don't want it bad enough to have to order it.

**Save \$\$ on streaming:** quitting cable and paying month to month to stream with one provider for a few months, watching all you want to see on that platform, then switching to another one, is more cost-prohibitive than paying for 300 channels.

**Use the library:** your taxes are paying for it, so you may as well be using it to read books, watch movies, listen to audio books, check out video games, and a whole host of other things.

**Shop around:** make it an annual practice to look for cheaper rates rather than sticking with one provider. Sometimes your current provider will want to keep you bad enough to match the lower price offered by a competitor.

**Shop in your home first:** often you can repurpose an item or find something useful you already own, rather than needing to purchase something new. (If you need drawer organizers, for example, the low cardboard trays that come with many cat food cans work just as well as a plastic bin.)

**Try a no-spend month:** for a fun challenge, commit to a no spend month, where you buy nothing but food (you *can* replace items that break). You will be surprised how much you saved after a few weeks! ♦

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# Red Ambrosia Buffet

John Fleming Sr.

“Attention, this is Colonel Robert Nightcrawler. I have set July 2nd as the date for our annual Palm Beach County Avocado Buffet...”

Lieutenant Slim Picking will lead a six-man undercover team to locate the ideal location. The team will fly their search mission disguised as Monarch Butterflies. Cpl. Jack Stem has secured six fake Monarch Butterfly wings for the team to wear. Sgt. Harry Crawler will act as Lieutenant Pickings assistant. Silvia Slime will be responsible for the health and welfare of the event. Martha Moth will assist her. Are we clear, Pickings?”

“Yes Sir!”

Lieutenant Pickings called his team together. “Sgt. Mealworm, it is our responsibility to ensure the secrecy of our mission. Last year’s buffet was a disaster when we were discovered and sprayed halfway through our feast. We must avoid any suspicious activity on our part that would reveal our actual intent. Therefore, snacking during our mission is forbidden. It could cause us to be discovered and ruin our party, like last year. Private Evergreen is still recovering from the effects of last year’s Bug Control raid.”

The six-man team searched for a week without success until one evening they flew over The City of Atlantis.



Cpl. Mealybug excitedly reported to Lt. Picking. “Sir, we have found a perfect location for our avocado buffet. Atlantis is heavily landscaped, with an abundance of plant-based food. Many homes in Atlantis are owned by Canadians and empty during the summer months. The less humans we have to contend with, the better chance we have to enjoy our buffet without being discovered. Even better, we concluded our mission with a low altitude, city wide, aerial survey. The survey proved conclusively that by dusk over eighty percent of the city’s population are enjoying cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, paying little attention to anything else. Our proposed location is a villa with a giant, full blooming, ripe avocado tree hidden from walking and street traffic. It’s a lushly landscaped villa with plant-based food trees. The avocados are exceptionally large and would accommodate up to ten of us on each one. The one hundred men and women in the battalion could dine at one setting. There is ample seating, resting and chewing areas surrounding the bush.”

Lieutenant Pickings called the battalion to attention. “General Jeremy Caterpillar will address the battalion.”

The general looked out over the colorful sea of starving Red Ambrosia troops. “I want to thank Lieutenant Pickings and his squad for the excellent scouting and survey work. I have approved the Atlantis location for our 40th annual Avocado Buffet. Please do not invite any of the Omnivorous Looper crowd. They proved last year to be too noisy and gluttonous. We will fly directly to the site in three separate formations of twenty and fly fifteen minutes apart. The formation will help camouflage our arrival. There will be no eating until the entire battalion has arrived and is in place. The buffet will officially begin on July second at six o’clock in the

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evening and end on July third with the last bite at precisely six o’clock in the morning. In a single formation, we will fly out of Atlantis and back to our base. Bono, Petite.”

On July second, the entire battalion, having flown in unseen, stared hungrily at the delicious avocados, eager for the signal to begin the buffet. By six o’clock the next morning on July third, the battalion, with delightfully full stomachs and green lips, assembled to lift off and return to their base. They looked down on the naked, once green, avocado tree and cheered in unison, “This was the best Avocado Buffet in battalion history.”

The buffet was a glorious success. Every bite a “Bonne Bouche”

The only worry was that with their added ounces of weight, could they maintain the altitude needed to fly home? ♦




### Life as a Female Bear


If you’re a bear, you get to hibernate. You do nothing but sleep for six months. I could deal with that. Before you hibernate, you’re supposed to eat yourself stupid. I could deal with that, too. If you’re a mama bear, everyone knows you mean business. You swat anyone who bothers your cubs. If your cubs get out of line, you swat them, too. I could deal with that. If you’re a bear, your mate expects you to wake up growling. He expects that you will have hairy legs and excess body fat. I wanna be a bear. ♦



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**Greg 303-944-0343**

The summer I turned sixteen, my younger brother and I were walking in a dry creek bed out in the prairie.

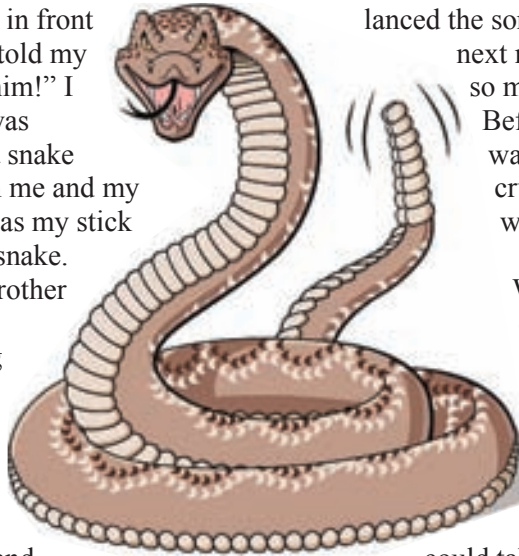
As we approached a prairie dog town, we saw rattlesnakes laying all over the grass and on the mounds. We got it into our minds to kill as many as we could, so I used a 2"x 2" stick approximately 6 feet long and my brother used a piece of wire to fish them out of the holes.

I spotted a large one coiled on a dog mound about 15 feet in front of me. Being a smarty, I told my brother, "Watch me get him!" I was so intent on what I was doing, I failed to notice a snake coiled in a weed between me and my target. He struck me just as my stick came down on the other snake.

"He struck you!" my brother yelled.

I pulled up my pant leg and could see two dots of blood the width of its fangs. It surprised me, because I hadn't felt a thing. I grabbed the wire my brother was holding and tied it around the calf of my leg, then began walking toward the closest farm, which was a mile away. I sent my brother on ahead to get help.

By the time he got help and we drove the sixteen miles to the doctor, it had been three hours and my leg had swollen up over the wire.



The doctor had to use wire cutters to cut it loose.

When time the doctor finished his work, I was really in a lot of pain. I stayed with friends that night and the doctor had to be called because of my discomfort. He loosened the bandage and lanced the sore. I've still got the scar. The next morning, my leg had swollen so much it looked like a balloon. Before it was all over, my leg was black and blue. I was on crutches a week before I could walk on it.

That was October 12, 1941. When I recovered, I was determined to learn as much as I could about rattlesnakes. This led to me designing snake catchers I still use today. I also designed double-walled cages so I could take them into classrooms and give lectures.

Rattlesnakes can only strike about 3/4 the length of their bodies and are not usually aggressive toward people. They will retreat when given a chance and almost always give a warning rattle.

When I give lectures, I encourage children to

be careful when out walking on the prairie and never go into prairie dog towns. Never step over a log or rock. Look first to be sure a snake is not hiding there. The greatest danger is stepping on a rattlesnake. Another danger is putting your hand on one when climbing up rocky inclines. It's better to just stay out of areas where there are rattlesnakes.

I warn hunters that their hunting seasons always coincide with the rattlesnake migration to find a suitable den for the winter. The rules for them are the same as for the children. "Listen, look before you sit, watch where you are walking, and stay out of prairie dog towns."

I've gotten asked many times what I take with me when I go hunting. My reply is, "My respect for them." Today I use my snake catching skills by safely removing snakes from areas where people and livestock are in danger.

Snake hunters supply researchers with the means to develop methods of preventing and treating snake bites. I'm proud to be a part of the process and if it saves one person from a snake bite, it will all be worth it. ♦

## Time to Paint?

Ima Klutz

This time my daughter came over and told me she was ready to paint my dining room.

I, for once, was without words. I thought when Patty left after giving our house the "one-two," I wouldn't see her for a while. I was still recovering with the giant de-cluttering she'd insisted on. Now she wanted to paint?

She didn't wait for a response, but snuck past me and gave me a smile only a mother can love. It was then I noticed she was dressed for a day of painting. I wasn't even dressed yet.

Patty set down the tools she'd brought along and handed me a few paint chip cards. "Mom, look these over and pick the color you want for your dining room."

"You mind if I go get ready?" I asked as I wondered off toward the bedroom.

I could hear her making noise in the dining room. Sounded a lot like pulling nails, then I heard a screwdriver. I began to wonder if I should hurry a bit so I could keep an eye on her.

When I did show up she had just finished removing the last picture from the wall.

"Why are you doing that?"

"You didn't think we could paint without taking down the pictures, did you?"

"But why are you taking the screws and nails out?"

"It's better to patch and prime before you put things back on the wall. You may discover you like a smaller amount of pictures than you had."

I didn't think so, but who am I to question? The house did look better after the de-cluttering and I found it easier to clean, but making everything look different?

She came over and gave me a hug. "It's going to be fine, Mom. You will survive this and you'll thank me for it."

I blinked and started looking at paint colors. I wasn't planning to thank her, but who knows? It might look better without all that stuff on the walls... ♦



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# Spring Fever

Judy McMillie

Here comes spring!

If I didn't find out by looking at my calendar or listening to the nightly news, I would know because I

am wiping my nose every few minutes and trying not to touch my eyes that are itching like crazy. Something about spring sets my allergies to the "alert" setting. I think it's called Spring Fever. It's always worse in the mornings. At our house we call it the "The Morning Show."

Despite the downside to early spring, it is my favorite time of year. I love how it feels on my face. The balmy breezes and warm sunshine. I love how it sounds. The song of the nesting birds and the laughter of children playing outside. I love how it smells. The wafting aromas of a honeysuckle bush or an apple tree in the blossom stage. And there's no prettier sight than pregnant leaf buds on deciduous trees bulging with hope and anticipation in their lime green and light

brown garb, poised and eager to burst open.

We could call spring baseball in Arizona and Florida "Spring Fever." Every year hundreds of thousands of people descend into the southern states and spend the month of March watching baseball. There are dozens of baseball fields from which to choose. Baseball fans are a cheerful bunch of people. They're mostly middle-age or older, and they love their sport. Restaurants, bars, malls, gyms, grocery stores, delis and other retail places burgeon with guests during spring baseball season.



I'm aware of Phoenix residents who get a little cranky this time of year. By the time spring baseball rolls around, they have endured the crowds brought in by professional golf tournaments, NASCAR races, a couple of football playoff games, and even professional basketball games. They are tired of standing in line for an hour to eat dinner at a restaurant. The additional vehicles clogging the streets and highways frustrate them. And here comes spring baseball!

Personally, I like spring, even with the allergies it brings. It gives me the chance to go outdoors again after a winter of hearing the furnace blow and keeping the windows and doors tightly closed. Give me the fresh

-air smell in the house and on the clothes I put outside to dry on the clothesline. Show me the new little plants peeking through the soil

and let me listen to the songs of the new baby birds from nests high in the trees. I like to see the Virginia creeper on our property-line fence greening up. Most of all, I enjoy the sleepy feeling spring breezes give me. I like the feeling of my eyes half-open, and my shallow breathing as I sit and enjoy the weather. Sometimes I'm even too lazy to make my chair rock. I just want to sit still and soak in the atmosphere.

I love to see the baby birds learning to fly or the resident turtles emerging from their hibernation hideouts. The early roses and peonies blooming and the lily-of-the-valley and crocuses as they perform their role as the harbingers of spring. Learning to appreciate nature is what we spring-lovers do and teach our children to do.

Reminiscing about vegetable gardens from my past is a great pastime. I suddenly have an urge to have a sizeable garden again. I recall the print version of the Gurney's catalog coming in the mail in January. Those

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 Keith Dashnaw

Gurney's people know what they're doing. January is when we plan for the summer, and imagine all things different from the recent cold and snow and ice. In the days long before online shopping, Gurney's would send us a pleasant catalogue surprise mid-winter and we sowed our dream-seeds with Gurney's catalog in hand.

Eventually, we had to get serious about

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our order from Gurney's. Oh, my, peas and carrots, green beans and squash, we ordered it all! What fun! We were excited about the lettuce and radish seeds we

planned to plant as soon as the seeds arrived in our mailbox and the ground thawed. Soon we'll have enough fresh produce, we can't eat it all. We give everyone we know bounty from our garden. The little green onions are so tasty and sweet in the Spring, and the radishes and lettuce fill our longing for fresh veggies.

Alas, spring also brings lots of work. Weeds are everywhere. They recognize spring sooner than humans do, so they get a head start on us. We work feverishly to pull them, dig them, poison them and/or

mow them down. It's a good feeling to have that ugly chore behind us.

Count me among the "Spring Fever" fans who welcome another year, another spring, another chance to make this world a better place in which to live.

Happy Spring, friends! ♦

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# Onward... and Upward

Isabelle L. Farnham

Where is it that Grandma said the world is going to in a hand basket?  
 "To H.E. double toothpicks," is what she always said.

This saying tickled me. Anyone with half an eye could see that world is too big to fit into a hand basket! As for what the double toothpicks stood for, I hadn't the faintest idea. I know what it means now. And I know that, even though I first heard the saying over 75 years ago, we haven't yet got to the place where she said we were going. However, there are many people who still think we are on that road.

I think otherwise.

I think this is the most civilized time in human history, and we are slowly but surely getting better. One has only to listen and observe with acute awareness.

Take, for example, the way we treat animals. One hundred years ago.... a mere glitch in the endless march of both recorded and unrecorded time .... you could beat your dog if you wanted to. You could mistreat your horses and nobody would lift a hand. I can remember reading a book about the checkrein which kept the horse's head erect and proud. It took legislation to stop such a hurtful practice.

In the olden days, children as young as six had to work endless hours in dark, dangerous factories. Legislation changed that practice, as well. Unfortunately, there are enclaves in other countries that still enslave children, sometimes to the embarrassment of US manufacturers seeking the cheapest possible labor. Hopefully, the wave of compassion which started in England will engulf these countries. But it will take a long, long time. Change comes to one heart at a time, and it travels slowly.

If you read historical novels, you know today's world is heaven compared to 500 years ago. James Michener's book Caribbean is a stunning revelation of conditions civilized people inflicted on the natives of the islands in the short time after Columbus discovered them. Any historical novel about the life and times of the inhabitants of England before the reign of Victoria would cure the reader of thinking about how romantic that era must have been. Brutality was a fact of life from the lowest peasant up to the king's court.



Nothing in history was as good as it is now, the tragedies of Africa and elsewhere (including our own country) to the contrary notwithstanding. How many years ago was it that a battleship steamed toward starving African countries carrying not guns and soldiers, but food? Think about that! A battleship full of food! Remember the

Farmers' March of the 60s or 70s? I do, but dimly. What were they marching for? Food! Somewhere in the world there was hunger, and many people went to a

lot of trouble to overcome it. Even the dogs get into the act. Years ago, there was a puppy march, or a doggie parade in Denver. For what? To raise money to cure disease. There are marches, runs, and bicycle rides every year, for funding a good cause. Depend on

it, behind each of these activities was a caring individual. These activities were not in evidence fifty years ago.

Compassion is the hallmark of the times within our memories in which people are becoming better, led by other people whose vision sees a better world. In the book Human Destiny by du Nouy, the author describes the slow march of humanity from self-centered beginnings to altruistic completeness, at which time all human beings will put the good of others before the good of self. This, he suggests, will be heaven. "People get better by littles," says du Nuoy, who lived in the 19th century.

Don't wait for everything to be perfect by ten o'clock next Tuesday. To hasten the process, each individual could take to heart the song popular at religious services: "Let peace begin with me." What a great place to begin! If everyone did this, a hand basket would never be needed. And we could forget all about the double toothpicks! ♦

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Constance J Grote

## The House I Loved

As a child in 1945, in Topeka, I lived in a white two-story house with a porch that spanned the width of the front.



Lilies of the valley grew next to it, crowding the latticework that guarded the opening underneath. My room was upstairs.

A wooden swing hung from chains on the porch ceiling. I delighted in swaying back and forth while watching the thunderstorms, rain and lightning play havoc in the heavens.

The persimmon tree in the front yard blew back and forth as I dared to climb as high as I could, loving every minute. My lips puckered if I bit into its tart fruit. In the backyard, the thick limbs of a maple tree provided sitting and delightful scampering spots and held up a tire swing. Our chores included digging up the potatoes that grew in the field nearby.

A cistern provided water. My siblings and I took turns bathing in the galvanized tub. I jumped in first as, in those days, you used the same water for all the bathing and it became pretty murky when the fourth washing came around. I wondered how clean we could get by the last one. That's where the saying "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water" came from.

No one thought twice about having to use an outhouse. It was a way of life. Across the road, a field of corn hid my siblings and me in its greenery as we played hide and seek.

The wonderful old house had heat registers in the floor, giving views to the downstairs where I spied on my brother's activities. I also listened in as he got in trouble because of me. Mom and Dad kept the Christmas presents hidden in a closet upstairs and I had been snooping around trying to see what we got. He got blamed for it.

We had an old yellow dog named Pete and baby chicks, little fluffy yellow fur balls.

I loved that old house, although it probably wasn't nearly as large as I remember, and will always treasure the innocent, poignantly sweet memories of my childhood. ♦

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# WHAT A DAY THIS HAS BEEN

Warren Bostrom

As we encounter life, certain days stand out.

One was the day I spent with my son Gary examining the water works that helps feed Colorado Springs and enjoying nature as we saw it on the back side of Pikes Peak.

During the day, we saw ten Bighorn sheep, which is

Colorado's state animal. All ten rams were standing on the same boulder with their magnificent horns. I thought it would be neat to make a statuette out of them and have it on my desk as a constant

reminder of nature's wonders. Yes! I told Gary it was one of the most beautiful sights possible. Gary said, "Dad, you are a world traveler and yet you are making such a fuss over these sheep." I think I even heard one b-a-a-a.

We saw a cathedral-like rock spiraling its way skyward. It interested me to see Lake



Moraine where ancient glaciers had hollowed out a bowl-like area. This area is now filled with water. A procedure siphons off much of this water to Colorado Springs. Runoff helps keep the lake full. We saw other reservoirs and

went over 13,000-foot Blizzard Pass. For a short time, Gary and I traveled parallel to the Pikes Peak Cog Railroad and were privileged to see a train wending its way toward the top. The road we traveled reminded me of

the High Plain's roads of the early days because some of it was washboard or corrugated. I really admired the men of yesteryear who built the mountain highways, which must have been downright dangerous. Gary talked with several workers in technical terms about the intricacies of getting and

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furnishing the water necessary to supply Colorado Springs. Gary and the workers had considerable know how and respected each other. I came away with a deep respect for the skills that make our lives more comfortable. It is amazing how we take for granted the means that gets us water.

That day on Pikes Peak reminded me of the words, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, your God reigns." The mood was such that a person could easily buy the concept of the clapping of the trees portrayed in the Bible—along with the whispering pines tuned to envelop the entire mountain. Yes! This was a day of days to remember. A day with my son amidst some of nature's best. You might say a day in the sun with my son! What a day! ♦

## FULL BLOOM

Elaine Parsons

The trick of gardening is to get what you want to grow to grow where you want it.

However, nature wants stuff to grow everywhere and anywhere.

This year, I planted a lot of flower seeds. (I have a dream in which the flower beds seed themselves and strangle the weeds by themselves, too). A few flourish in the beds. One is coming up by the back porch. I'm assuming the wind helped it move. I'm leaving it there. A few flowers were in the yard—until the mower got them. Portulaca (moss roses) are coming up. I didn't plant them. I haven't had them in that bed in 4 or 5 years. How long can those little seeds sit there before popping up and blooming? My aunt forbade me to call them moss roses. If anyone said it, she would correct them. Now whenever any of us hear someone say, "moss rose" we automatically say, in unison, "portulaca" like people saying "Bless you" when you sneeze.



Grape vines grew in my back flower bed. I pulled down all the vines, which had invaded the lawn chairs on the deck. I tried pulling the root out. It soon got the better of me and left me sitting on the ground. I got a trowel and tried to dig it out. No deal. It has established itself under the deck. Huffing and puffing and getting red in the face, I grabbed a shovel. It was still too deep, but I severed it. It wasn't a complete victory, but if it comes back—and it will—I will take the pruning snips to it.

I have a nice bed of tiger lilies because of the generosity of a friend of mine from down state. She gave me the bulbs, and I planted them. Every year, before they come up, beautiful little blue flowers precede them. Obviously, they were hitchhikers in the dirt the bulbs came in. Welcome, little guys.

Weeds grow thick and fast in the flower beds. So does the grass. I wish I could get the grass to grow in the yard as well as it grows in the beds. My father used to say everyone should just plant crabgrass on the lawn—it's hardier than anything else and nothing gets rid of it. Of course, he also saw no reason to get rid of dandelions—you can eat the leaves,



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make a tea from the roots, and wine from the heads. How can any plant be more useful than that? Sometimes, Dad made a lot of sense.

So I'll just keep trying to get things to grow where they're supposed to. I haven't been successful so far. But I have to admit, I do like the gaillardia that's blooming in the front lawn right now. ♦

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# Elbert County Connection

Keeping citizens informed and up-to-date on county government

## ELBERT COUNTY DEPARTMENTS AND THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE

Elbert County Government is in the customer service business. All departments provide direct customer services to its citizens with the exception of facilities, human resources, finance, I/T, and fleet maintenance. This month, we showcase the departments that fall under the guidance of the Board of County Commissioners and the supervision of the County Manager. What follows is a brief overview of the services each department offers and information that lets you contact them directly (minus planning and economic development, which we covered earlier). In future editions, we will provide information regarding the departments that fall under the other elected officials.

### Road and Bridge

- Performs all aspects of road maintenance on county-maintained roads within the county.
- Performs snow removal and other emergency operations (such as the flooding of 2023) on county-maintained roads.
- Assists emergency services operations (such as wildfires) when needed.
- Oversight of road building and road improvements associated with development.
- Oversight of road improvements performed by contracted companies initiated by the CIP and other assessment processes.

[www.elbertcounty-co.gov/237/Road-Bridge](http://www.elbertcounty-co.gov/237/Road-Bridge)  
303-621-3157

### Human Services

- Community Support Division
- Financial Assistance (Adult Financial, TANF)
- Food/Medical Assistance (SNAP, Medicaid)
- Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)
- Child Support Services
- Low Income Energy Assistance (LEAP)
- Protective Services
- Adult Protection
- Child Welfare
- Foster Care System

[www.elbertcounty-co.gov/208/Human-Services](http://www.elbertcounty-co.gov/208/Human-Services)  
303-621-3149

### CSU Extension Elbert County

Do you sometimes feel like you're on information overload? With hundreds of television channels to choose from, social media options such as "X" and Facebook, and more and more websites popping up

every day, it's challenging to know which information to trust.

**Colorado State University Extension** can provide relief by offering reliable, research-based data to help you make informed decisions. The Extension Office serves as the community's front door to Colorado State University. Our county office puts Extension resources within easy reach. Whether you have a question about health, financial literacy, pasture or livestock management, weeds, pests or gardens, 4-H or youth development, elder or child-care issues, or renewable energy, CSU Extension can connect you to the latest, most accurate data and experts.

### 2 of Extension's Flagship Programs:

**4-H:** For ages 5 - 18, youth benefit from Extension's 4-H programs by participating in hands-on projects including: environmental science, rocketry, foods and nutrition, animal science, photography and more. As a result, they learn valuable life skills such as leadership, ethics, decision making, record keeping, responsibility and community service.

### Colorado State Extension Master Gardeners:

Certified and trained volunteers work to enhance Coloradans' quality of life by extending knowledge-based education to local communities, helping individuals make informed decisions about plants and fostering successful gardeners while protecting neighborhood environments.

[elbert.extension.colostate.edu/](http://elbert.extension.colostate.edu/)  
303-621-3162

### Office of Emergency Management

OEM provides the following daily public services:

- Support CodeRED education and sign up
- Provide public education annually on emergency preparedness and response
- Act as a liaison/conduit between emergency services and the public
- Review event permitting for event communications, evacuation considerations, and severe weather monitoring
- Facilitate organization & large event preparedness planning with emergency responders
- Provide public preparedness communications via social media
- Facilitate disaster recovery and mitigation efforts for the public and other government agencies
- Coordinate reunification, warming center, and

evacuation sites and related support

[www.elbertcounty-co.gov/174/Emergency-Management](http://www.elbertcounty-co.gov/174/Emergency-Management)

### Public Health

#### Clinical Services:

- Primary Care Clinic (including sick care, reproductive health clinic)
- Maternal & Child Health (including pregnant & lactating Moms, and children up to age 21)
- Lab testing (i.e., blood tests, lipid panel, blood glucose, basic metabolic panel, liver panel, etc.)
- Adult & Child Vaccination program
- Care coordination (community resource navigation)
- Tuberculosis testing and case management
- Workplace drug testing
- Sports physicals for student athletes

#### Environmental Health Services:

- Onsite Wastewater treatment Systems (i.e., septic) permits and inspections
- Retail food permits and inspections (including restaurants, food trucks, and school cafeterias)
- Child care center inspections
- Epidemiologic investigations
- Rabies investigations
- Public swimming pool inspections
- Environmental hazard investigations (i.e., chemical spills)

#### Vital Records

- Birth Certificates
- Death Certificates

#### Emergency Preparedness

- Emergency Support Function #6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services
- Emergency Support Function #8 – Public Health and Medical Services

#### Health Promotion

- Healthy Aging Promotion & Education
- Tobacco Education, Prevention and Cessation
- Behavioral Health Promotion & Education
- Blood Donation events

[www.elbertcounty-co.gov/206/Public-Health](http://www.elbertcounty-co.gov/206/Public-Health)  
720-595-3620

## IN MEMORIAM: RIC MORGAN, VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Ric Morgan. Since 1998, Ric had served the citizens of our county as Elbert County Veterans Service Officer. He dedicated his life to serving our veterans with unwavering commitment and compassion. His legacy of selflessness and dedication will forever inspire us. The loss of this respectful and kind gentleman will be deeply mourned in our community. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. Ric was a blessing to this county. He will be deeply missed but his impact will live on in the lives he touched.

### Continuity of Service

Elbert County salutes the tremendous service Ric Morgan provided our veterans for the past 26 years and join our community in mourning his passing. Ric had a passion for serving veterans and we know his focus would be on ensuring high-quality and timely service continues. That now becomes our mission.

Until his position is filled, the El Paso County Veterans Service Office will provide interim support to Elbert County. Please note the updated contact info online at [www.elbertcounty-co.gov/353/Veterans-Services](http://www.elbertcounty-co.gov/353/Veterans-Services) and do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.





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 Steve 720-231-0138

**Steel storage barn for rent:** 50' x 27' storage or hobby workshop, store up to 8 vehicles. heat available. In Elizabeth \$799 per month.  
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**5 KW Diesel Generator,** less than 300 hours. Produces 240 volt @ 30 amps. Needs batteries, but has trickle charger. \$1800 OBO/trades. Text 530-515-8468.

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## Prairie Parson trust but verify

Jeff is a good kid, so I trusted him to put the roofing on my shed. I told him real plain to put the roofing cement on first, then the roll, so one of our Colorado northern gales don't rip it off. Then I left to do some ranchin' duties, mainly fixin' fence. When I got home, it looked real good and he'd nailed it down, so I paid the teenager and he went home. It impressed me I still had some roofing cement left.

It looked real nice until this past week, when one of them northern gales came up, and near about tore off the roof on my shed. I spotted it when out feedin' bucket calves, a strange strip of roofin' rolled up on itself. It didn't please me none. The gale came up on the day before it was due to snow, so I had to haul a ladder out there and climb up on the roof to see if I could fix it. And what did I find? No roofing cement. Jeff had decided to cut a step out of his job and not put the stuff down to protect the plywood. Had he done so, the roof would have stuck to it and not got the gale under it and lifted it like a pair of my grandpa's overalls off my grandma's old washin' line.

If'n I'd left the roof the way it was, the snow would have sat on it and ruined the wood, so me and the ranch hand had to get up there in a 60 mile an hour gale, roll up the roofing, and cuz it was too cold to paint cement on, cover the whole roof with water-proof 12" Gorilla tape. I'll have a talk with Jeff the next time I see him, but I reckon it was a good reminder of that parable in the Bible that tells you not to build your house on shifting sand. Because then a storm will come along and wash it all away.

If you don't build yourself on values, and have real things you believe in (like doin' a good job roofin' a shed, or raisin' yer kids, or bein' honest with yer neighbors), the storms of life are gonna come and knock you over, and not leave much left to cling onto in a gale.

I also learned one other thing. When you hire someone to do a job, you better watch 'em to make sure they were trained to do it right. As a former president said, "Trust... but verify." ♦

## AD INDEX

Advanced Quality Auto	14	Cleary Building	7	Global Propane	4, 22, 24	Mountain Heart	11	Son Country Church	16
All Roof	6	Diesel Repair	11	Higgins 4 Commissioner	13	My Bath Colorado	3, 21	Steel Corner	3
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