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Don H. Homan, Jr.

Blue Eyes Aloft

I've always had a certain weakness for the intense and otherworldly appearance of a horse, any horse, with blue eyes.

It's more than a passing fancy. I own one. I've always heard, just as you have, about glass-eyed equines: They're unpredictable. Sunshine interspersed with shadow spooks them. You can't trust them. They're downright crazy!

Let me set the record straight. I bought my blue-eyed boy a handful of years ago when searching for a suitable mount for my granddaughter to train up to her liking. I'd like to say I found him, and immediately loved both his personality and his conformation, but it's a lie.

He watched me as I approached the horse tied next to him with my hand on my wallet, a large and imposing bay gelding, and refused to release me from his otherworldly glare. The intensity of his penetrating stare was startling—even a tad frightening—but I couldn't look away. He had already chosen me. I just hadn't yet realized it.

"What's the story of this bald-faced chestnut?" I asked the auctioneer, pointing toward the blue-eyed phantom with the perfect feet. "Those are some seriously intense eyes! I've seen blue-eyed horses before, but his eyes are downright intimidating. I'm afraid to turn my back on him."

"Nobody ever really trusts a horse with blue eyes," was the auctioneer's predictable response, trying desperately to re-focus my attention on the young and handsome (and decidedly more expensive) bay standing at the rail.

"I thought I had my mind made up and was ready to outbid everyone on this beautiful bay," I said, "but I think I'll shift gears and take crazy horse here off of your hands. There's something about him I can't resist. Just let me know his reserve price and I'll write you a check."

We settled the deal on the spot, and within the hour, I was loading 1,100 pounds of crazy-eyed dynamite into my trailer. My purchase thrilled my granddaughter. She's had splendid success with him in competitions and gymkhanas in the region. None of the rumors surrounding blue-eyed horses have proven to be true, not in the slightest, though his intense gaze never fails to startle someone, often small children, when they see him.

"Horses aren't supposed to have blue eyes," one small girl of six or seven informed me at a local competition as I played my role of mounting block by giving my granddaughter a leg up on her increasingly well-known boy.



"Blue-eyed horses are special," I replied. "I'll bet you didn't know that blue-eyed horses fly on clear nights when the moon and stars are visible. Their blue eyes enable them to find their way, using the moon and stars as a kind of road map."

"Really!" she said, her own blue eyes shining every bit as intensely as the horse that stared back at her.

The story of blue-eyed horses being able to fly became a staple at the competitions we attended, as well as the stable where we keep him during competition season. I never pass on an opportunity to share the "story" of flying blue-eyed horses with children that come in contact with our companion.

Depending on the age of the child, they meet the story with astonishment, disregard, or disbelief, but is always fun... if not outright funny.

A talkative six-year-old boy whose own horse occupies a stall in our common barn came up to me as I finished with my grain chores and

stopped abruptly when coming into contact with an intense pair of wide-open blue eyes watching his every move.

"Have you seen eyes like that before?" I asked.

"No!" he replied. "They look scary!"

"Do you want to know a secret about blue-eyed horses?" I asked him.

"Sure," he said, unable to look away.

"Blue-eyed horses fly around at night. They carry the spirits of old cowboys to heaven," I continued, unable to resist taking the story a step further. "They use the moon and stars to find their way."

"I don't think so," he said, looking at me as though I had two heads.

"Why do you say that?" I asked, wondering what this charming little fella was thinking, as he appeared to be deep in careful thought.

"He's a horse," was his answer.

"That's right, but a very special horse."

"Everyone knows horses can't fly," he told me, thinking I had lost my mind. "Only unicorns can fly, and I don't see a horn!"

And I consider myself a good storyteller, I thought, absent-mindedly rubbing the white-haired swirl on the forehead of my blue-eyed boy—and searching for a trace of horn. ♦



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FROM THE EDITOR

CHARITY BISHOP

YOU TRAIN YOUR BODY

It's not easy coming up with an editorial per month that might be of interest to a bunch of people. Often, I have no idea what I'm going to write about until the deadline smacks me in the face. Should I talk about the "yellow brick road" outside our house (a driveway framed by sunflowers)? About how I walk the cats before dark around the yard fence, and have to carry one of them, protesting, indoors while the other tags along? How much I love an unobstructed view of the pasture, and the horses across the fence?

Or how about how we train our body to expect certain things?

Like most people, I've come to rely too much on caffeine. I made a decision awhile back to keep my "get up and go" going I'd drink something with caffeine in it before breakfast. I started doing it, and before long, my body craved it. More recently I decided, as my waistline started adding inches, that I needed to break my reliance. I knew I had a

problem: sugar and caffeine. Both of them make me hungry and then I snack on stuff no good for me. So, I decided to cold turkey quit. No more sugary foods, no more snacking on ... well, snacks. No more diet sodas. (Which can create less bone density, besides making you hungrier so you eat more.)

I introduced healthier, filling, low-calorie stuff at the same time (did you know you can eat a whole bowl of broccoli, and it fills you up, for few calories? Of course not, because nobody likes to eat broccoli). The first day I felt good, because, you know, Healthy Choices. I could feel myself getting thinner already! Then came the headache, the muscle cramps, the hot

flashes, and the sleepless night. All of that, because my body was throwing a little tantrum (*I want my sugar! I want my bread! I want my diet soda!*). That lasted a couple of days.

On day five, I was so starved for sugar I daydreamed about cake for an hour. Knowing myself, I had thrown out the sugar and the last fourth cup of flour, and stuffed my fridge full of fruit and veggies, so I would have no choice but to behave myself. I ate some frozen fruit and survived another day.

It's now a week later and my headaches are almost gone.

But I still have an intense craving for "stimulation" before breakfast. It turns out for six months, I trained my body to want instant gratification and caffeine when it woke up, and it's still kicking up a bit of a fuss. Apparently, how dependent you are on this stuff

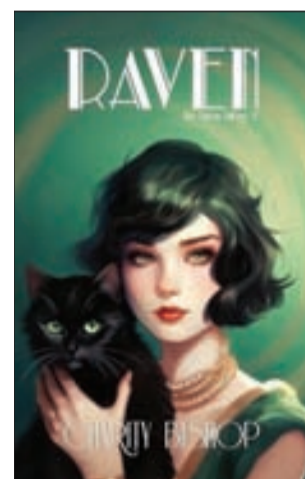
indicates how long it will take you to get off it without any side effects. For some people, it can take a month to detox from caffeine, sugar, or your personal poison of choice.

My healthy lunch tastes good and is filling. I have less blood sugar dips in the afternoon. I still want mid-afternoon snack, but I now eat frozen fruit. Believe it or not, I'm finding I like some broccoli! It goes nicely with an air-fried set of sweet potato fries and pickles. It's slow, but who knows. Maybe someday, cake won't sound good. Or maybe I'll save it for special occasions, like it should be. ♦



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Don Boyer

My Guiltiest Pleasure

On a hot July day in 2002, I was driving from Denver to Longmont and musing about my work history. I had worked continuously from one job to another for over forty years with only two layoffs, 9-11 causing the second one. That layoff happened before Christmas of 2001 because of the economic slowdown.

The government extended unemployment benefits for an additional three months but those benefits were exhausted. My wife had accepted a full-time job as a retail sales assistant, but I was still looking for work. With over two hundred resumes sent out, three telephone interviews and no prospects yet, it was time to worry about our future.

Idle time weighs heavily on me. I am always busy with something. Instead of fretting about no work, I started developing technical training material shortly after the layoff. I created my own consulting company without knowing who my clients would be or how to find them. (It would be another six months before I got my first customer, but that's another story.)

The previous Christmas, I figured we would be broke in six months. We made sacrifices, simple compromises. We got our books from the library instead of buying them. No chocolates or soft drinks entered our grocery cart. No birthday presents. Luckily, our children were on their own. We pared down our lives to the essentials and stretched our dollars further than I ever imagined we could. And it was working. We were paying the bills and eking it out.

I don't remember why I was in Denver that hot July day, but I had time to think about the previous six months; all the worries, obstacles, frustrations. Then I looked at the scenery, farmland, and the majestic foothills to my left. The sky was light blue, dotted with white, puffy clouds. I rolled down the window and let the hot air blast into my car. The dry Colorado air evaporated my sweat.

Then the thought hit me. Everybody else is at work, inside and missing this. Like I had been all my life. Locked in a cubicle all day. Time off for lunch and a peek outside. I had a full day and many more. I could enjoy this all I wanted. It was the most pleasurable thought I ever had. I felt euphoric. I wanted to stop the car and wander the fields, smell the grasses and grains, feel the dirt slide under my feet, maybe run a little. But I didn't. I couldn't. I had to get home. I had to get back to putting my materials together for the business. I had to find work. I didn't have time to fool around like this. There are things to do.

I spent the rest of the trip feeling guilty. You're not supposed to enjoy unemployment. But for that moment, I did. ♦



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Cold and Rainy Days

Marion Tickner

Even though now it has been over fifteen years since my husband passed away, our wedding anniversary day is important to me. More important than my birthday.

When planning our wedding date, I thought September should be a pleasant month to get married. By then the hot summer days would have passed, the days would be bright and cheery, and the leaves would turn to reds, yellows, orange. Alas, the day we chose in 1972 turned out to be cold and rainy. In fact, one out-of-state couple didn't stay for our simple church basement reception because they claimed to have seen snowflakes in the air. Snowflakes in September? That would be a surprise.

Another surprise was that God matched me up to Norman, who was Supervisor of Housekeeping at Syracuse University. I don't claim to be the greatest housekeeper, but during our 35 years of marriage, he never once criticized my methods.

Throughout our marriage, we enjoyed spending a week at the ocean to celebrate our anniversaries: New Jersey shores; Virginia Beach; Florida, and finally Ogunquit, Maine. As we grew older and didn't feel like driving that far, we settled for a few days in the Adirondack Mountains.

After Norman died, I thought about spending a few days at the lake in the mountains. During the day, I could sit by the water and read or check out the little shops, but what would I do in the evening? Sit alone in the motel room and cry? I scrapped that idea.

Each year, I looked forward to "our day" when I could go out and do something special. I could take a day trip to the mountains, have lunch in our favorite restaurant, and come home before dark. I could drive to a nearby lake and sit by the water. Or go to a local restaurant for dinner. But I didn't really have to decide, because every year our anniversary fell on a cold and rainy day. At least that's how I remember it.

A few years ago was no different. The weatherman predicted rain and was right. Another cold and rainy anniversary day. As I had my devotions that morning, I confessed I felt disappointed and asked the Lord for a surprise. I'd planned to cook a special meal for myself and took a package of steak out of the freezer for supper and spent the day washing my summer clothes, ready to put away for another season. Then came time to think about getting supper. I opened the package of meat. What I had thought was steak was only a package of sliced beef that I had bought for sandwiches. Surprise!

Not exactly what I wanted, but what I had asked for. Instead of being upset, I laughed. God has a sense of humor.

As I look forward to another anniversary day this year, it's the day which the Lord hath made, (I) will rejoice and be glad in it." I will remember it's the day God united Norman and me as one.

PS: The best surprise He could have for me is a day of warm sunshine so I could sit in the breezeway with a glass of iced tea and a good book to read. ♦



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Brenda Flipse

Charles Oz Collins

Willow Flies Are Out!

Growing up on the farm, I cringed when I heard something was “out.” Be it chickens, hogs, or cattle, it was not welcome news, since it involved a lot of running around, followed by fence mending. However, when my Grandad called from the mountains to say the Willow Flies were “out,” I received the news with an entirely different attitude.

Willow Flies were big multi-winged insects often found clinging to the willows growing along the Poudre River. I knew these critters had something to do with the helgamites we sometimes found in the river when we overturned rocks. Helgamites were reportedly good trout bait, but I saw nothing a Rainbow or German Brown seemed to relish as much as a fat Willow Fly during the week or two of their hatch.

It was not always possible to get away from the farm when the fly hatch was on, but sometimes we made it. Grandad would be waiting for us as we pulled into his yard and we headed straight for the river. I could count on the fact that Grandad had already collected a bunch of flies, invariably stored in either a Prince Albert or Sir Walter Raleigh tobacco can, the pocket-sized variety. Two ancient bamboo fly rods waited under the eaves of the garage, supported by ancient nails driven into the wall for that purpose. Rods in hand, Big Oz and Little Oz, Grandad and I, headed out.

Depending upon our time of arrival, we either fished along behind the house or climbed into a well-used Studebaker pickup and headed upriver. It didn’t seem to make much difference where Grandad fished, he always



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caught some. I, on the other hand, required a decidedly more cooperative class of fish to gain any bragging rights. Late arrival meant we squeezed a few minutes of fishing in before Nano called us to dinner. We tried to not miss dinnertime on two counts: Nano could look pretty stern (perhaps it was her steel-rimmed glasses and the way she kept her hair tightly pulled back and fastened in a bun) ... and her cooking, which in the

summer usually included fresh-caught and skillet-fried trout. Fortified with a couple of these, a biscuit or two, some green beans, and a dried apple “tarch,” Grandad and I were ready to head upriver.

One such day comes clearly to mind. I can see Grandad now, khaki shirt, old grey felt hat, broad suspenders, and the ever-present pipe filling the Studebaker cab with sweet-smelling smoke. At a blistering twenty-five miles an hour, we made our way along the river. To me, every pool looked like it needed fished, but Grandad had favorite spots. Whether these were places he had recently caught fish or just that “the water looked good,” he didn’t explain his choices to me and I had no reason to question his judgment. If Grandad said it was a suitable spot, then you would not convince me otherwise. We eased to a halt along the roadside and parked on the grassy edge. I had both feet on

the ground before we came to a stop and I reached into the back of the pickup for “my” rod. Too young to be allowed to wade in this swift river, putting on boots didn’t slow me down. An old army surplus bag served as my creel and this took just an instant to sling over my head. As usual, the old gentleman did not seem in a hurry, and I was thankful he had only to relight his pipe instead of going through the complete process of re-stoking it. The latter called for tapping the blackened pipe on his shoe heel, scraping out the bowl with an ancient jackknife, and then carefully tamping in a new measure of tobacco and sucking the flame from a kitchen match deep into the bowl. I had witnessed the operation uncountable times but happily, today it was unnecessary.

Grandad reached into the bed of the Studebaker and instead of grabbing his fly rod, picked up only his long-handled wading net



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and a tobacco can of willow flies. By now I was partway down the path other anglers had worn in the grass. The old man’s longer strides overtook mine, and we reached the water’s edge. He threaded a fat fly on my snell hook and I looked at the raffle in front of me.

By example, and occasionally by a few quiet words, Grandad had taught the importance of standing in the right spot and of controlling the rod and line. These trout were not the sort to hook themselves but would bite once or twice, and this suddenly, before settling back to the bottom or taking refuge behind a sheltering rock. While he seemed to hook most of the bites he got, my record was slowly improving, but left a lot of fish in the river for another day or another fisherman. This did not set too well with me since I wanted very much to be like my Grandad and hopefully, to please him.

Moving along the bank to about the midpoint of the raffle, I swung the fly upstream and just below a sizeable rock, a place where the water

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curled together and slowed. Just as I raised the rod tip to make sure my line was tight and the bait was under control and moving with the current, the tip dipped sharply. I struck quickly, if a bit too strongly. To my delight, a ten inch German Brown torpedoed out of the water, arched over my right shoulder, and nearly crashed head-on with my fishing partner. I grinned broadly; he smiled quietly around the stem of his pipe.

Over the next fifteen minutes, I treated the old gentlemen to a combination feeding-fishing frenzy. More than once consecutive casts produced consecutive strikes, and a time or two consecutive fish. I reached my youth limit of five fat trout and, despite a monumental internal struggle, I reeled in my line. Then Grandad unveiled the full scope of his plot with three memorable words: “catch mine, too.” He didn’t need to repeat the request.

By the time we climbed the bank up to the Studebaker, my creel was full, but not as full as my heart. Grandad was also feeling a bit “fulsome” as well. We deposited fish and rod in the pickup box and climbed in for the triumphant trip home.

I was already rehearsing my account of this successful outing when Grandad provided another memorable treat. After re-supplying his pipe and cranking the Studebaker, he revved the engine, looked over his shoulder for traffic, and plowed smack into a fat, solid guard post. He had squeezed into a parking space right between two of the brightly painted roadside pillars. I hadn’t noticed because I only had eyes for the river. But now, years later, I realize he must have parked at that spot many times to fish that riffle. How did he forget that post? Could it be his excitement? Was he rehearsing his own stories about his young namesake? Could be. I know this: We hit that post a good lick. It gave us a start, and a chuckle. And it caused the old gentleman to let his pipe go out. That’s how I know we hit it pretty hard. ♦

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Suzan L. Wiener

“Say Cheese?!”

The first few days of summer, my mom announced we were going to spend the time we had off from school on our aunt’s farm! We were really excited. We had never been to one, but we knew my aunt Joan had all kinds of animals, goats, cows, horses, chickens and even piglets. She also had a cute dog named Puddles. He got the name because he enjoyed jumping in them when it rained. We laughed whenever we saw it.

My sister Terri and I were more than happy to pack and get ready for the trip. It would take a few hours by car, so we brought ham sandwiches and a thermos of milk. We could hardly contain ourselves. We knew we were close to the farm when we began seeing cows and horses. “Wish we could ride a horse,” I said. Terri agreed. She was in a good mood, which I appreciated. Sometimes she could be testy.

At the farm, my beautiful aunt hugged us with open arms. She smelled like strawberries. My stomach growled, and I realized we hadn’t eaten our sandwiches. Terri and Mom said they were hungry too, so we sat down and ate them on the bench outside the house. Our aunt had one too, and we enjoyed them and the milk. She chuckled, and said, “Guests who bring their own food are always welcome!”



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That afternoon, we relaxed and played Uno while Mom and Auntie talked a lot. The next day, Auntie told us to put on our swimsuits, and we could go swimming. She had a really nice pool. Even Puddles jumped in, really enjoying it like we did. We stayed for hours until she called us in for dinner. She ate early, around 4 pm.

The day after that, Aunt Joan gave me a slice of cheese. She knew how much I loved it.

Puddles must have smelled it because he kept jumping up and down to see if he could take it, but I was too fast. I turned around and kept saying, “Wait, Puddles!” I gobbled that cheese down as fast as I could. A disappointed Puddles went into his doghouse to sulk. I felt bad for him. The next time Aunt Joan gave me a piece of cheese, I shared it with the dog. It made us both happy, and I learned it’s always good to share. Thanks, Puddles, for teaching me a valuable lesson. ♦

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Richard B. Whitaker

One Name Under Heaven

My work as an actor and technical advisor in the Motion Picture and Television Industry provided me with many wonderful experiences after a stroke in 1981 ended my career in law enforcement. It gave me a new career. I found some of the work repetitive, but that changed on a Science Fiction movie titled *The Hidden*.

One of the major sequences found us filming in an old, abandoned Los Angeles County jail facility. On our first day at this location, I arrived early in anticipation of a scene I would be in with Michael Nouri. Standing in front of the building, there was no beauty to be found in the structure. Its glory days were long gone. It rose from the dark pitted asphalt like a weather-beaten iceberg that had passed through a terrible storm. The front was a dirty white, while rusted iron bars covered all the windows, including the below street level entry door. It had three stories above ground, and a roof surrounded by concertina razor wire. After examining the entire structure, I found our location manager and asked him about it. He told me that below ground sat an enormous basement jail that had housed violent prisoners.

The basement cellblock contained a main concourse that separated the left side housing unit from the right side unit. Both the left and right units contained seven short corridors that shot out from the main concourse. Each of those corridors contained eight cells, four on the left-hand side and another four on the right, a configuration that let them house a maximum of 112 inmates when filled to capacity.

I entered the building and located the stairs to the basement. As I walked down the concrete stairwell, I felt a change in temperature. A coldness that hinged on being uncomfortable replaced the warmth of the main floor.



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At the bottom of the stairs, I stepped into a small reception area with a long counter that sat behind a long mesh screen—the area used for processing prisoners. As I turned to face the cellblock, I tried to envision who might have occupied that area. I stepped forward and slid open the gate. Another step and the coldness increased again as the air thinned, which forced the cellblock to take on a palpable eeriness. Since there were no windows, dark shadows hung heavily down the main concourse as a single iridescent light at each end flickered, leaving the fourteen individual cellblock corridors dark.

The large cellblock was quiet, too quiet. An uncomfortable quiet. It was also cold, too cold. Something did not feel right, but I shook it off, chalking it up to nerves in anticipation of filming my scene.

As I examined the four cells to my right, a familiar feeling told me I was not alone. Something or someone was behind me.

A pressing on my spirit told me to leave.

On my way back, I turned back and saw hundreds of evil spirits in the cells. Their clothing and countenances were black as a moonless night, and they shouted, screamed and wailed at a deafening pitch. Their bodies writhed back and forth, as their wailing, ranting and screaming filled my ears. These were not the normal screams of the living, but the anguished cries of the damned. I had

entered their domain... their home. In stepping through the gate onto the cellblock, I became an unwanted intruder.

Their blood-curdling screams caused the hair on my arms and back

of my neck to stand on end while my skin rippled with goosebumps. Slowly and deliberately, they closed the semicircle that surrounded me, their faces distorted into expressions of hatred. There was no light in their clothing or in their beings. None. It was a darkness I had seen before, but never in this volume or with this intensity. The increasing pressure I felt from them was so intense that it impaired my breathing and paralyzed my body.

Remembering from my previous experiences that only one thing could free me from an evil spirit, I said, "As a servant of the Most High God, and in the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to depart!"

At His name, the hundreds of spirits bowed at the waist, but their wailings and gnashing of teeth continued, as did the flaying of their heads, which sent their long black hair flying in all directions. Yet, even in their greatest anguish, they moved back, one-step at a time until they were some distance from where I stood. They never took their eyes off of me. Pure hatred emanated from their evil faces as they continued to retreat. I stepped over to the entry gate and hurried up the concrete stairwell and out into the warmth of the day.



Kyle MacLachlan, Richard Whitaker, Tom Beck.

As I walked through the parking area, feeling weakened by my recent experience, one of the film's still photographers told me he needed to take a small Passport-sized photograph of me to use on the police identification card I would wear in my scene. I followed him into the back of a utility sized box truck outfitted as a photographic studio, sat for my portrait, and went about my day.

Five minutes later, the same man ran up to me. "Whitaker, I can't use the picture we took. We need another."

"What was wrong with it?" I asked.

"Look at it," he said. "I don't know what happened."

I stared at it. A vibrant white light surrounded my head. I knew what it was and what caused it. This

light of unnatural brightness appeared when I commanded the evil spirits to depart.

"Do you mind if I take another photo?" he asked sheepishly.

"Not at all," I responded.

He took the image from me and crumpled it up, before I thought to ask to keep it. In the next photograph, the brilliant band of light had disappeared. I have never forgotten that experience and the intense evil that surrounded me, nor what it took to dispel them. ♦

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Stop and Smell the Spiders

Oma Gilbreth

All too often (as we are all too aware), we are in too much of a hurry to get to where we are going and do whatever it is we are going to do. We're so driven with our eyes on the goal that we miss all the treasures along the way. We not only miss the fragrance of the roses, we don't even see them.

One day, I was busy building a barn. I stopped to take a break and noticed my five-year-old watching a rock behind our house. It riveted his attention. My curiosity overcame me. I walked over and asked what he was doing. "Watching the spiders," he said matter-of-factly. I had sat on this rock several times, deep in thought, watching the sun go down and seen no spiders, so I sat down beside him and waited (and slowed down). Soon I saw a tiny spider scurry out of a little pocket, hurry over to another one, and disappear. Then another did the same on the other side of the rock. Pretty soon, I saw them scurrying all over the place. I also noticed three different kinds of ants looking for food, a couple of other insects, and a disoriented stink bug. Here was an entire ecosystem under my nose and I had never noticed it. I wondered how many other treasures I had missed.

In my younger days, I lived in a cabin in Alaska. My goal was to slow my time down, so I measured it in days and seasons instead of in minutes and hours. I tried to make each day last longer than the one before it and succeeded. Then I "grew up," got a 40 hour/week job, became more responsible, and drove right over the roses and spiders along the road. For the last nine years, my job in construction took me all over Northern Colorado, from south Denver to Greeley to Pingree Park. After eight hours of work and two or more hours on I-25, the last thing I wanted to do was smell a bunch of stinking flowers.

All I wanted to do was sit on the deck and let all the tension of the day evaporate. When I became an unemployment statistic, I couldn't have been happier. I caught up on some of the neglected things around the homestead and helped the neighbors out with some of their projects. I made friends with my kids again. My oldest son somehow was now an eleven-year-old and not the seven-year-old I remembered him to be. My daughter was pushing ten and becoming quite a beauty with her father's dry sense of humor. How had I missed these wildflowers lining my driveway? My six-year-old spider watcher was doing things on the computer I didn't know you could do. Now, when I go out



and help friends finish their basements or build a fence, I take my eleven-year-old with me (one benefit of being home schooled) and teach him how to work.

I spend time with him, listen to his dreams, tell my stories, and share our lives together.

When he's grown, I am sure he won't remember any of my battles on the Interstate or how I spent the whole day redoing the non-work of a careless employee. I am pretty sure he will remember the days when I showed him how to hang sheetrock, shared a warm soda pop, and told him about the time we found a rattlesnake inside a bale of hay. And maybe he will remember there are roses planted all along the road of life and spiders hiding in pockets of rocks waiting to be discovered by those who take the time to look. The smell of roses is a lot sweeter than the smell of exhaust on I-25. ♦

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Judy McMillie

church bells and chimes

My heart beats responsive to the ringing of church bells and chimes each day. The music they make reminds me of a time past, a remembrance of a special event, a daily reminder that just might awaken my faith to a higher level, or just a quick break in an otherwise mundane workday.

I dearly love to hear those bells and chimes. I particularly like the old hymns they send out, hymns like *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere* or *Bringing in the Sheaves*. They cause me to pause and ponder, to remember the times I heard my mother and grandmother sing those old songs. They're etched in my memory. I often awake with one of those old tunes in my head, waiting for me to recognize it and sing it to myself, whistle it quietly, or pray the lyrics as if they were an original thought or sudden praise, or deep and fervent requests for help.

We've used church bells for many centuries to call communities together for all purposes sacred or secular. The bell ringers were timekeepers of sorts. They call people to work, to lunch breaks, to daily prayer and to special gatherings in small towns or areas of town, and to the end of the workday. In past years, the bells and chimes might announce a baptism or a wedding. They called people to worship on Sunday mornings.



They spread the good word and the good news.

I remember clearly the September morning in 1945 when the church bells and sirens sounded in our small town in Iowa to mark the end of World War II. My mom, my grandma and I stood on the back stoop and turned our faces toward heaven as we gave thanks for the end of the many years of a tremendously sacrificial time. We cried, and all tearfully repeated, "At last Daddy's coming home, at last Daddy's coming home." The ringing of the church bell in the belfry in my hometown was a desired assignment for the boys in that church. It was a special duty to be asked to ring the bell the coming Sunday to announce services. The single bell had a big rope attached to it that hung down 20 feet with a knot at the bottom. The ringer had to take the long rod with a crook in the end and capture

the knot to ring the bell. What fun! The boys were proud of being asked and doing such a colossal task.

Years ago, I worked in USA Today. Our building sat near the Iwo Jima Memorial, which had a carillon bell tower. I spent my lunch hour walking around that park, observing the statues and people, and listening to the bells play wholesome tunes. It was so uplifting.

It seemed as if each note had a message for me, no matter what song the tower was playing.

I am a church bell ringer, albeit a novice if ever there was one. Not all church bell choirs have chimes to compliment the hand bells, but I appreciate those who have mellower chimes. Some big church-belfry bells have chimes to complement their music. I love the chimes and I like to play them better than actual bells. They are lighter and easier to handle, and it takes less effort to make their sounds. But they are a side-effect, not for the continuous and major tune. Old hymns are my favorite music to play in the

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bell choir, but the instruments lend themselves to many kinds of music like zydeco, Cajun, patriotic, show tunes, etc. Recently, I attended a concert given by a hand bell choir in Denver. It was exciting and amazing. The musicians were so well prepared and exceptional with their many bells. What a great experience!

The next time you hear a church bell, whether it be a single bell rung by a young boy or a carillon bell tower concert, or anything in between, recognize it as something good and special and take it into your heart and give thanks for such a wholesome treat. ♦

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THE WEST OF YESTER-YEAR

Rachel Kovaciny

The Colt Walker 1847

If you've ever watched *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), or even just the movie posters for the film, you've seen a splendid pair of Colt Walker 1847 pistols in action. Clint Eastwood brandishes a pair of these long-barreled handguns on the poster and wreaks his vengeance with them throughout the film. It makes sense that Josey Wales would have acquired this particular weapon, since he was a Confederate living in Missouri. The Colt Walker 1847 was created for the Texas Rangers, and Texas was part of the Confederacy, so having Josey Wales carry these makes historical sense. It also makes him look extremely cool, because the extra long barrels attract the audience's gaze, and their formidable firepower makes Josey Wales a fearsome adversary within the story.

The Colt Walker 1847 came to exist because Captain Samuel Hamilton Walker wanted a better handgun for the men serving under him. It was 1846, and he was an officer in the Texas Rangers as well as in the United States Mounted Rifles. Both the Rangers and the U.S. Military were engaged in the Mexican-American War, and they needed better close-range weapons. Captain Walker and his fellow Texas Rangers were pleased with the five-shot Colt Paterson revolver many of them carried, but Walker came up with a list of improvements he hoped could be implemented. So, he traveled to New York City to meet with Samuel Colt and discuss these improvements.

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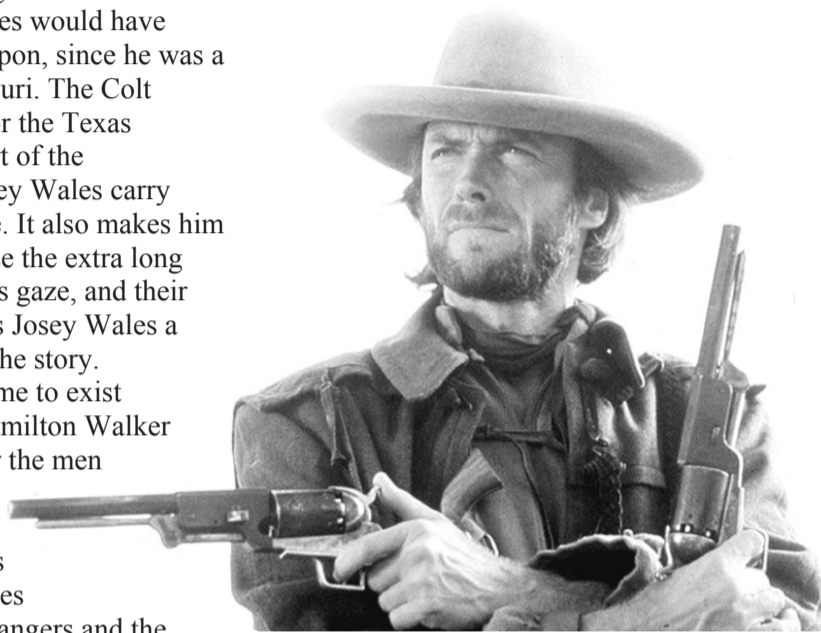
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The trouble was, Colt had actually closed his firearms manufacturing company because it wasn't turning a profit. However, he thought Captain Walker's improvements would definitely make a superior firearm. Walker wanted a handgun that would provide a lot of power for close-range shooting, being powerful enough to kill an enemy up to 100 yards away. He wanted Colt to add a sixth shot. And Walker made several suggestions for ways to make the pistol easier and faster to reload.

Colt hired Eli Whitney, Jr., to help design this new pistol. Captain Walker was so pleased with the results, the Republic of Texas ordered one thousand of the pistols. This order made Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company economically viable, and the popularity of the pistol led to more and more innovations for Samuel Colt. When he died in 1862, he was one of the richest men in the country.

The Colt Walker 1847 model was a large and impressive weapon. When unloaded, it weighed 4.5 pounds. Its barrel alone was 9 inches long,

and it fired a .44 caliber bullet. Unlike later Old West pistols that used cartridges containing bullets, this firearm used .44 caliber lead balls that were propelled by a charge of black powder. This particular pistol used almost twice as much powder for each shot as



most handguns, which is what gave it such deadly power. In fact, this pistol is considered one of the most powerful handguns ever issued by the American military.

This size and weight made this pistol somewhat unwieldy, especially for soldiers on foot. But the Colt Walker proved to be an especially effective weapon for mounted troops, and it quickly became popular. Captain Walker and many of his fellow Texas Rangers

carried the Colt Walker into battle during the Mexican-American War in 1847. When Walker was killed by a sniper's bullet later that same year, he was armed with his namesake pistols.

The Colt Walker had some drawbacks. If you didn't fill the cylinders with powder properly, it would either misfire, burst the cylinder itself, or even cause the whole pistol to explode. Almost a third of the pistols were returned damaged to the manufacturer for repair. But once a soldier or Ranger got used to how to load the pistol properly, it became a favorite weapon for most. And it led to Samuel Colt creating a number of other popular handguns that helped to tame the American West.

One of Colt's most important contributions to firearm manufacturing was the use of interchangeable parts. If part of a pistol broke, you could replace that part, you needn't replace the entire weapon. The use of standardized parts also meant that Colt could use an assembly line to produce the weapons—the Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company was one of the first to use an assembly line for mass manufacturing.

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Only 1,100 of the 1847 Colt Walker model were manufactured. One thousand of those went to the Texas Rangers, and the additional one hundred were sold to private citizens. Because fewer than 200 of these are still known to exist, they are now very valuable. According to the *America's 1st Freedom* magazine issue of July 2018, the only known Model 1847 Colt Walker pistol to still have its original case was

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sold by Rock Island Auction for \$1.84 million. It holds the record for being the most expensive single firearm ever auctioned!

If you'd like to find out for yourself what Josey Wales experienced when using this particular firearm, there are replicas available that don't have the same explosive drawbacks the originals could experience. ♦

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Whose Line Is It, Anyway?

Susan Klimack

We all have several defining moments from our upbringing. One of mine occurred in 1969, at sixteen years old.

After serving in World War II, Dad rose up the ranks at the factory he worked at in Cleveland, first as a draftsman, then machinist, foreman, and finally as superintendent.

Upon that promotion, our family of four (Mom, Dad, my brother Ken, and I) moved out of humble, and a tad downtrodden, Garfield Heights. The newly built home with attached two-car garage in Seven Hills was the upwardly mobile piece of the American pie that my parents coveted, and achieved.

From the Big One (the war) to The Big Time (a home in the suburbs), this move represented the culmination of an aspiration. Finally, my parents had square footage, approximately 1,700, rather than the 900 to 1,100 we lived in at The Cracker Box in "Garbage Heights." We lived on a quiet street with other brick ranches, close to the corner of a major intersection with semis barreling down the road at all hours, causing Mom to constantly rearrange the mirrors and framed

pictures on the walls. I can still feel the house shaking. One day soon after settling into the 'burbs, Dad put up a clothesline, seeing as Mom had two at the Garfield Heights home, one in the backyard and one downstairs. They didn't own a dryer.

After a while, a woman from down the street came to the house, knocked on the door, and told Mom: We Don't Hang Clothes on a Clothesline in Seven Hills. With a desire to fit in and not make waves, they took down the clothesline and ordered a dryer for the basement. Mom never hung clothes on the line again.

I did not witness this encounter, but boy, did it ever make an impression on me.

Twenty-three years later, in 1992, my husband and I moved to our new home, and I decided I needed a clothesline. Country Rustic

is probably a good descriptor for this thing, because we put it together with spare parts lying around the

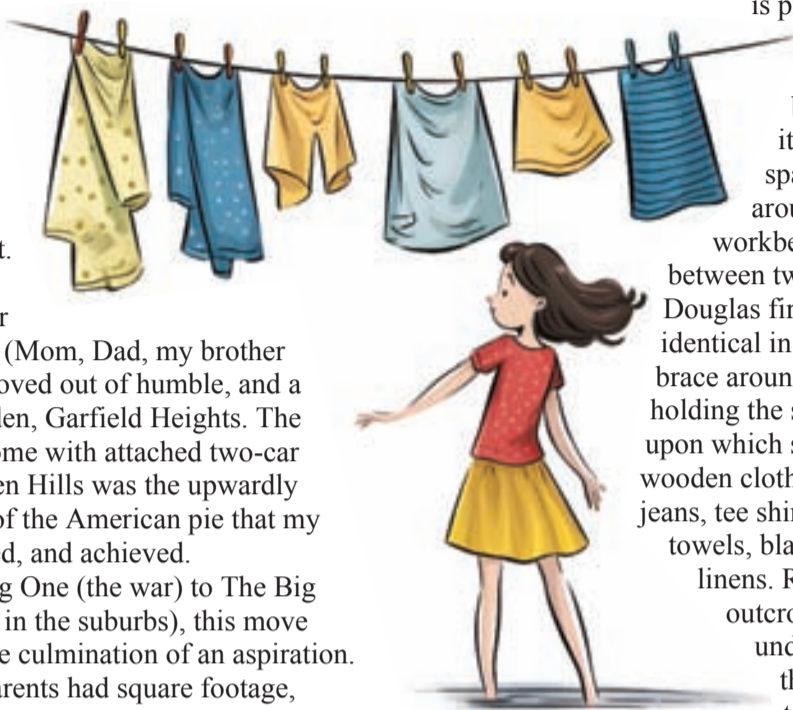
workbench and hung it between two 40-foot Douglas firs nearly identical in size. There is a brace around each tree holding the six wire lines upon which spring-loaded wooden clothespins fasten jeans, tee shirts, hoodies, towels, blankets, and bed linens. Rock outcroppings lie underneath the thing, so I need to use steady

footing out there.

Sure, I have to knock stray pine needles, and bugs off the items when I take them down, the wind blows something off the line from time to time, and I'm not always able to solve the sunshine-turning-to-clouds-turning-to-a-rainstorm equation, but this clothesline means something to me. Not only do I have the most wonderfully scented sheets and pillowcases and save money on my electric bill, it reinforces my personal identity as a do-it-yourselfer.

But here's the nitty-gritty: I'm Not Offending Anyone's Sensibilities Because I Have a Clothesline. I decided all those years ago that Homeowners' Associations and covenant controls weren't for me.

I like the randomness of my neighborhood. People raise goats here, alpacas, chickens, llamas, horses, and lots and lots of dogs. Most everyone has a garage, yet park four-wheel-drive vehicles and tractors, ATVs and



motorbikes, plow blades and trailers all over the place. Did I mention the tool sheds and outbuildings? I'm talkin' a sense of personal freedom. One can have a perfectly manicured yard, or not. There is, after all, only so much we can do because deer-proofing our properties often means covering flower beds with netting, and our dogwood bushes have to be sprayed with deer repellent (they really like dogwoods; they're a special treat.)

My clothesline has held up remarkably well all these thirty-two years. The wires get tightened up every so often, but that's about it. I've really bonded with it and with all that it represents. No one has ever given me any flack about having one. Yea, to me. It's Personal.

Wow! I've got my own Status Symbol. ♦

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—Mark Twain

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Sunny

Avis Jaenson

Do you believe in love at first sight? I do, and I bought him with my birthday money.

After trying on endless outfits at the mall in search of something to spend my birthday cash on, I stood staring into the sweetest pair of caramel-colored eyes framed by a full blond face and a gaze that captured my heart. His eyes followed me as I started to leave the mall, but I couldn't. I turned and walked back to the window, where the sweetest little face was staring at me. He was the cutest Golden Retriever puppy I'd ever seen (and I'd seen plenty!). He didn't take his eyes off of me, nor I him. I entered the pet store and headed straight for his cage. He leaped into my arms and the store attendant came running over. He was an older man and knew quite a bit about animals.

"Never saw a puppy jump over his enclosure like that! Kind of strange because he's been really sick." The man stroked the puppy affectionately as he talked. "I have to be honest with you; I can't sell this dog to you."

"Why not?" The puppy was madly licking my chin and cheek.

"I have standards in my store. This dog has been sick and taken to our vet three times for intestinal problems. I can't in good conscience sell him to anybody. I may have to put him down."

"No, you're not! I'm taking this puppy home today and he will live a long, healthy life! Bring me the papers and I'll sign a waiver. How much is he?"

"His brothers and sisters have all sold for \$250 each, but I'll take \$50 for him, if you're sure?"

I handed him a fist-full of cash, signed the papers, and walked out with my new puppy. He squirmed to get down outside the mall and relieved himself before getting into the car with me. On the way home, he never took his eyes off me. Somehow, I think he knew I would take good care of him. On the way, we stopped at my trusted vet and had him check my new member of the family. Dr. Hahn was very kind and when I told him how sick the puppy had been; he called the pet shop and got more information. He put the puppy on a gentle antibiotic, some digestive enzymes, and gave him some herbs. I thanked him amid his cautionary instructions.

"Don't get too attached to this dog, okay?" he said.

"Too late." I scooped up my puppy, paid Dr. Hahn, and headed for our farm. All the while, the sweet little clump of white fur slept

peacefully on my lap. I prayed for him to be a healthy dog.

When I got home, with dinner in the crock pot, I sat in the afternoon sunshine on my front porch. The puppy chased after one of my cats and, with tail wagging, walked back to where I sat and plopped down on my lap. "Guess I should give you a name, huh?" I

looked down at his face. "I'm going to name you Sunny, because you bring sunshine into my day." He looked up at me and I swear he smiled. "Guess you like that name, huh?" Sunny licked my hand with affection.

When my children came home with personally designed birthday cards for me, they went crazy when they saw my recent addition to the family. I told them to play gently with the puppy and he'd been sick, but would soon be fine. They respected my wishes and that night we had my birthday dinner and went to bed early. We filled the next day with raking and burning leaves, pruning peach trees, stacking firewood, and picking the last of the grapes. Sunny followed me and resisted tagging along after the children. I was glad he stuck by me so I could watch over him. Then something unusual

happened. I had the radio on in the kitchen and the Steve Miller Band came on with their song, *Jungle Love*. One part had whistling in it. Sunny spun around and cocked his head to the side as if the song had been written just for him. The kids laughed and rolled on the floor



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with Sunny barking and playfully nipping at their noses.

The following months were filled with different medications from Dr. Hahn until we were sure Sunny was over his problems. He was healthy and full of energy. Even at an early age, he guarded the kids and me. He met any strangers coming onto our property with barking and bearing of teeth. He followed me

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everywhere and when the kids wanted to have Sunny sleep in their room, Sunny would stand behind me in protest. There wasn't a day that went by over the years that I didn't thank God for that sweet dog I fell in love with at the mall. I never stopped speaking positives about my dog and he never stopped bringing sunshine into my life. ♦

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The Weasel and Me

Susan Sundwall

Several years ago, when we owned and operated a small computer store, my husband received an Amazon gift card as a reward for answering a business survey. Being a big-hearted guy, he handed it to me and said, "Get what you want."

Delighted, I thought of many uses for it. Oh, the glory of a free trip to the online giant. Later that evening, I danced over to my computer and began my hunt. Okay, I didn't have gobs of money to spend, but you'd be amazed at all the things you don't need that are suddenly quite enticing because they're free. I began with clothes, moved on to shoes, checked out home goods and then sat back.

I gazed out the window. Trees surround us, standing and fallen, along with bushes and piles of stones and all the wildlife you can imagine. We feed the birds and watch for the appearance of the tornado shaped holes in the yard that signal the return of the skunks each spring. The chipmunks appear and the squirrels come out of the trees all summer long to check out the bird food. The deer step gently out of the woods to gobble up the old pumpkins I set out after Halloween.

All this worked on me as I gazed at the screen and suddenly I knew. It only took a few clicks to find the National Audubon Society Field Guide to Mammals. Yes! Now I could identify all the wandering critters and their

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habitats, their preferred food and seasons. I would stun my friends and family with my command of the subject. I couldn't wait for that guide to arrive.

Before long, I sat with the richly bound treasure poring through a wealth of beautiful photos featuring every mammal in North America. I ventured deep into their world. How many of these animals would I see in my lifetime? I'd never even heard of an Olympic Marmot, but there he was, staring at me from page 228. I was having a ball.

One afternoon in the late winter, I was alone at home. I'd gathered a bunch of garbage to put outside, which may have included some

ratty old shirts of my husband's. What wife hasn't had to sneak old clothes out while the man is away? Boots on and hands full, I opened the back door and froze. Right out the back door sat our winter load of wood. Days of cutting a splitting had given us many stacks of it for the season, so we'd have it at hand for the wood burning furnace and our two fireplaces.

From the depths of the maple and elm chunks, I heard a rustling noise. Was that a nose sticking out from the pile? I held my breath. At first I thought it was a squirrel. They have no problem coming round the back door looking for me. After all, the mistress of the house should

be informed when the birdseed was running low, right?

But this was a different nose. It was pink. I didn't want to frighten it or have it frighten me! It only took a few seconds, but after the nose came the lanky body and in a flash, the long tail appeared. The whole animal was white, except for the tip of the tail, which was black. I held my breath, not wanting to release the moment, but the little thing scooted out as soon as our eyes met and dashed away in a blink. I called to her, "Betty, come back!" Okay, I didn't really yell that, but I should have. Maybe Betty wasn't her name. Anyway, I dumped my trash, ratty shirts and all, and ran for my guide.

I flipped madly through the pages until I found the right picture. I found Betty in the Weasels, Skunks and their Kin section. It turns out my gone in a wink critter was a long-tailed weasel in her winter coat. How cool is that?

Interesting, too, that she's kin to skunks. When we find those



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tornado shaped holes all over the property in the spring we know we've had a grub seeking black and white visitor in the night. If I ever see Betty again, I'll ask her if she knows any of the local skunk clans and maybe some of their lore. I wish there had been someone home besides me and the dog that day. Or that I'd had a camera in my hand and enough wits about me to snap a photo to share. That would have been nice to have, along with my first-hand sighting of a weasel and my accumulated guide knowledge.

I've looked for weasels ever since, but have not seen another. It is, however, one of my favorite critter tales and I'll probably blather on about it for years to come. I also highly recommend field guides now, too. ♦

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Darlene Prickett

Cathead Biscuits

Until my early teens, I paid little attention to the *names* my family gave to certain foods. There were several odd ones. Bellywashers are soft drinks (some people call them pop or soda). There were dipsey doodles, which are chocolate ice cream on a stick, and a litany of other odd names for simple foods. Mostly, the names made no sense for the food they represented. But that's what we called them.

One evening, Daddy came in the back door from work. He took his favorite mug from the cabinet and poured himself a cup of coffee from the percolator on the stove. He sat in "his chair" at the kitchen table and casually asked, "We having cathead biscuits for supper, Toots?"

"Yep, just as soon as I finish snapping these beans and get them on to cooking, then I'll get the biscuits in the oven. I'll fry the pork chops while the biscuits are baking." Mamma replied.

What did he say? Cathead biscuits? Sounded like someone had taken a cat and used their head to make biscuits. Who would do such a thing? I could only imagine all the fur in those biscuits and I certainly wasn't eating fur, no matter what animal it came from!

I deliberated the cathead biscuit situation all afternoon as I did my homework. When I finished, I asked Mamma if I could help in the kitchen. She looked at me like I had just said the sky's falling. "You want to help in the kitchen?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes, if there is something I can do." I thought I could ask her about those biscuits and why they had such a strange name.

"You certainly can. Begin by peeling those potatoes in that colander so I can fry them to go along with the pork chops."

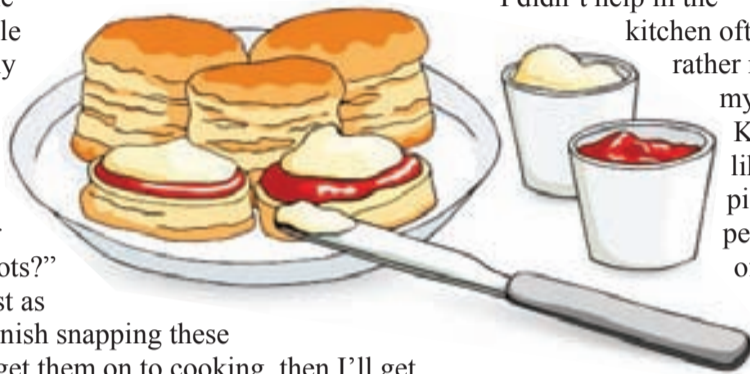
I didn't help in the kitchen often. I would much rather ride my bicycle or visit my best friend, Doris. Kitchens didn't seem like much fun. But I picked up the potato peeler and began slicing off the peelings, watching what Mamma was doing. She put on her apron first, the one her mother had made her many years ago. It had a bib attached to a half front skirt with long ties attached to each side that tied in the back. She wore the apron often. Cooking and cleaning the house could be messy. Just like making biscuits.

Her mother's huge wooden mixing bowl sat on top of the refrigerator. It was one of several kitchen items that had belonged to her

dough into the cast-iron skillet. She put in each delicate biscuit with one hand. Then, with the fingers of the other hand bent at the knuckles, she left little knuckle prints in the soft dough as she pressed each into place. She put the skillet into the center of the hot oven and closed the door.

About fifteen minutes later, Mamma carefully removed the cast-iron skillet from the oven with those glorious biscuits brown and shining. She said, "These are cathead biscuits. They are called that because they are as large as a cat's head!"

Oh! So that is what they meant, I thought. Daddy was right. They were so good at supper! ♦



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mother. She treasured each one, including her mother's well-worn cast-iron skillet. Mamma reserved this skillet for biscuit making, and biscuits only. It served no other purpose. Mamma kept it separate from other cookware and in a special place.

Taking the bowl down, she sat it in the center of the kitchen table. She went to the cupboard, pulled out flour, lard, and retrieved the buttermilk from the refrigerator. She filled the wooden bowl with flour, made a deep well in the center, poured in the buttermilk, and plopped a gigantic piece of lard on top. Mamma greased the cast-iron skillet before she began mixing. Then she began her beautiful artwork. As she mixed everything together, I could hear the slap-slap sound of her hands as she blended the ingredients together to make those beautiful biscuits. She didn't mix long, and when she got one shaped just right, began placing large clumps of

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Let's Care About Our Water Rights

An Interview with Byron McDaniel, Running for Elbert County Commissioner

Elbert County is about to welcome two new County Commissioners following the November election. This is your chance to get to know Byron McDaniel, from District 3.

Byron comes from a background in firefighting and law enforcement. He was a volunteer with the fire department starting in 1984 in Brandon, Mississippi where he did the training to become a Jaws of Life instructor and dispatcher. Byron then attended the police academy and became the chief of police in Brandon. He chose to be transparent with the public in that role, and created a positive relationship with the media, which he hopes will be of benefit in his new role as commissioner. "I think all public officials

need to be completely transparent with their constituents," he said. "People need to know who we are, what we are doing, and why we are doing it. I want the public to know those things, and what to expect, right down to knowing which roads are being graded and when. I don't like to sit in an office. I want to be out there doing things. If you call me and say there's a problem with your road, I'm going to drive out there and look at it."

Byron and his wife moved to Colorado nineteen years ago, where he worked in police and fire emergency management, learned to oversee large

budgets, focusing on life security, building evacuations, risk management, child safety, etc. He misses law enforcement, but feels good about being able to contribute more to his local community. "I feel that my background in law enforcement is an asset," Byron says, "because I understand what fire departments and police departments actually need, in terms of budgeting." He's also very concerned with human trafficking, and the fact that Highway 86 is one of the human trafficking hot spot highways. "People need to be aware of this, and we should do what we can to save the lives of children." But there's also little things he wants to do at home, including petitioning to install a crosswalk in Kiowa across 86 ("It's a dangerous road for a family to cross to get into one of the small businesses").

Byron's primary concern heading into public office is about the future water rights of Elbert County. "There's a rumor going around that I and Mike Buck are considering selling our water rights when we get into office," he said, "and that couldn't be further from the truth." Byron is all about keeping water local,

and water conservation. "I will NEVER give up our water rights. I have been attending work sessions, studying our water resources, and exploring options for the future. There is no quick fix to this problem however, but we must start the process now. That includes working with our neighboring counties of Douglas and Arapahoe. We only use close to 5% of the water in the aquifers. Douglas and Arapahoe are the ones with the largest demand. It's a big job, but we will certainly make this a top priority."

How can the commissioners do this? By ensuring our water doesn't leave the county, encouraging citizens to use less of it, and informing the public of how best to conserve natural resources. If people just take one fewer shower a week, or get out ten minutes earlier, that saves water. Xeriscaping, or creating natural environments that use little water, can help in terms of lawn maintenance (natural grasses, rock landscaping, etc). Some emphasis also needs to be placed on fire prevention, because not only does it threaten humans, pets, livestock, and wildlife, it takes thousands of gallons of water out of local water towers and aquifers to put out fires.

"These are issues we can agree on, regardless of our background," he says. "We all want the same thing for our county, to ensure we have enough water in future years, that our small businesses are flourishing, that we don't turn into an over-crowded county, and that our children are safe and well-educated."

In terms of growth, Byron believes "we have to review and update our comprehensive plan. A lot has changed in this county since the last plan was created. Next, we need to meet with the developers and be clear on our expectations as a county and stick to it. We must also consider our infrastructure. I am not saying that we should stop growth. In fact we



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only had 2% growth in the county last year. We need a little growth to maintain the current services this county expects, everyone knows about cost of fuel and equipment. It's ridiculous. We can sure regulate it and do a better job of communicating about it with our citizens."

Byron understands that establishing and overseeing the execution of the county budget is the primary role of County Commissioners, and feels qualified because, "I have managed multimillion dollar budgets for the last 25 years. My present job's current budget far exceeds what the county budget is currently. Being within the constraints of a budget is a must."

He would like to change the board meetings to evenings so ranchers and people who work in the day can attend if they like. "I also think we need to be more transparent and post in our local media a bi-weekly update of things like road and bridge schedules for grading, show what our sheriff's offices has been doing etc.. I think people will be shocked to see how much is done on a daily basis." But at the same time, he wants to keep government involvement in your life small. "I will never vote for things like the red flag law. I am for less government control and more citizens rights! Government overreach is worse than ever! We must protect our rights and follow our constitution. We must protect our largest industry in this county which are the ranchers! We must try to get our citizens to buy in Elbert county instead of neighboring counties. Estimates are that Elbert County is losing millions each year in lost sales tax revenues. Just think, if we could capture some of that, it would go a long way to helping fix our roads."

When Byron is not doing his homework about water conservation, he's busy helping deliver rescue animals across state lines to their new homes, and taking care of his family. He said, "Elbert County reminds me of my hometown. The people here are down-to-earth and genuine, just like those I grew up with. There is plenty of open space to enjoy, and the community is grounded in conservative values. Our schools are excellent, and our Fire and Law Enforcement teams work diligently to keep our neighborhoods safe. We are truly blessed to live in this wonderful place and to call it home. I look forward to serving as your next county commissioner and protecting our values." ♦

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Childhood Games

Wilma Gundy

In the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, my friends and fellow students and I played games that entertained us, established camaraderie, and taught us honesty and fair play. And we had fun, fun, fun! Whoever heard of being bored? Part of our delight in games stemmed from our isolation on the farm. We went to school in a one room building where one teacher taught all eight grades, and it was our only chance to play with other kids. Going outside for recess was the high point of our day.

In elementary school, we played games like Ring Around the Rosey, Hot Potato, and Mother, May I? Ring around the Rosey was more popular with girls than boys. Students joined hands and either walking or skipping around in a circle they sang "Ring around the Rosey, pocket full of Posey," then with hands making motions like rain falling, "ashes, ashes, all fall down." At this time, all the participants would squat. It makes no sense to our adult minds, but the children would immediately get up and repeat the rhyming and skipping, again and again.

Hot Potato was a game of non-threatening elimination and appealed to kids' love of chanting a rhyme in accompaniment to physical activity. The children bounced a large ball from one to another while standing in a circle as the group chanted "One potato, two potato, three potato, four," (slight pause) "five potato, six potato, seven potato, more." The person with the ball when "four" and "more" were called left the game. The game went fast, and whoever was standing last won.

"Mother, May I?" required focusing on what was said and replying properly. Students stood in a line. The leader faced the group and said, "John, take three steps forward." then had to remember to say "Mother, may I?" and get permission before performing the task. If he failed to remember, he left the game. The leader then called on someone else to perform a different activity, perhaps "skip two times," or "jump forward, then backward." The teacher chose a new leader, after a set number of commands, usually five. This endless repetition taught us how to ask for permission.



As we grew older, we liked more games. Besides softball, we played Red Rover, Red Rover and Drop the Handkerchief. You play Red Rover with two teams of equal numbers. The teams stood several feet apart in opposing lines. Team members joined hands or grabbed the wrist of the persons next to them. One team challenged the other by saying, "Red Rover, Red Rover, send Susan right over." Susan would get a running start and try to break through the links between members of the other team. If she succeeded, she chose a member of the team whose ranks she had breached to join her team. If she failed, she had to join the team that had held her. At the end of recess, the team with the most members won.

A certain amount of flirting usually lent intrigue to Drop the Handkerchief.

Everyone played the game in a circle, each person separated from the next by two feet.

"It" would take a handkerchief or small scarf and go around the circle and, after speeding up, he or she would drop it behind another player. That person, after picking up the object, would chase "it"

trying to tag him before he came back to the vacated spot. If he did not tag him, then he had to be "it." If the chaser tagged

"it," the same person continued as "it." Flirting entered the game because a person often dropped the handkerchief behind the boy she was keen on, or vice versa.

When it was too snowy outside, we played games inside the schoolhouse during recess. Among our favorites were Blind Man's Bluff and Hangman. Blind Man's Bluff required limited space. Usually, there was an anteroom at the back of the schoolhouse we used; if not, we sectioned off part of the main room by arranging desks to show boundaries. "It" had to be blindfolded. Groping his way around the space, he'd try to touch someone. All the other players were ducking, twisting, moving to prevent being touched. If "it" was having too much trouble tapping another player, we made the circle smaller to make it easier. The person touched became "it." We continued the game then or at the next recess.

Two students could play Hangman. One would think of a word or phrase and make blanks on the chalkboard, indicating the number of letters. The other student guessed letters. If he was correct, a blank or blanks got filled in. If he was wrong, the first student would start constructing a pole with a noose, then draw with stick figures a head, body, arms, legs, etc. Each part of the drawn figure was one stroke of the chalk. The object of the game was to figure out what the word or expression was before the person who was "it" hung you. Boy, did I hate getting hung.

Sometimes the boys wanted to play with boys, and the girls wanted a game that excluded the boys. If the boys chose Marbles, girls played Jump Rope, which is still popular

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today. Two girls hold a long rope on either end and swing it rhythmically. A girl enters the circle of the swinging rope at a strategic time, and jumps over the rope each time it is rotated. Several girls can jump all at once. A chant accompanies the game, which for us was:

*Cinderella, Cinderella, dressed in yellow
Went upstairs to kiss her fellow.*

How many times did she kiss him?

One, two, three, four. Etc.

We had enough kids in our family to play games at home, but it took Dad to organize us. Mother rarely joined in. She thought we were "burning daylight" with the foolishness of games. With Dad, we played Hide the Button. It was supposed to be Hide the Thimble, but since we could never find a thimble and a button or some other small object was available, we changed the name. All of us kids would leave the living room while Dad hid it. Returning, we'd start searching. If we were a long way from the object, he'd say "Oh, you're so cold" in a voice that shook with cold. If we were getting closer, he'd say, "You're getting warm," or warmer as we got closer and closer. He was not above deliberately misleading us and then grinning at our bewilderment. Whoever found the button got to hide it for the next game.

In summer, Dad had us play Rover, Rover, Handy, Handy Over. This game required only a small rubber ball. Two or more players would stand on one side of the house and an equal number on the opposite side. Shouting "Rover, Rover, Handy, Handy, Over" we'd throw the ball over the roof. The opposite team scored by catching it. Then they threw it to the other side. Naturally, the thrower would try to throw the ball where he thought no player on the opposite team would be standing. Dad loved to throw it erratically! It didn't take us long to catch on and place a "spy" from our team on the opposite side of the house.

Just as you suspected. Sometimes we needed help with our "fair play." ♦




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What a Shock

Jean Davis

My hand stopped in midair—my mouth open far wider than necessary to accommodate the bite of food poised on my fork. Aunt Alpha looked up from her lunch and repeated. “Your dad made the best moonshine whiskey in the country. It was so smooth. Didn’t you know?”

I couldn’t believe my ears. Dad, a bootlegger! Impossible! He had always insisted he didn’t drink and had never been drunk. I guess just because he made whiskey doesn’t mean he had to drink it. True, we always had a bottle in the pantry. When any member of the family started getting a cold, Mom fixed a “hot toddy” which seemed to stop it right there. But my father? A bootlegger?! I had a real problem believing that.

After that revelation, I got determined to dig deeper into the family history. It proved to be interesting. This began when, on my father’s passing, I got assigned the duties of taking care of all his property, since my mother had passed away several years earlier, and it would have been difficult for my brother since he lived a distance away, and had a demanding career.

My grandmother, Cora, was born in Pennsylvania and came to Colorado in the late

1880s with her sister, Sarah. Here they met the Newkirk brothers, John and Andy. Cora married John in 1894 and Sarah married Andy the following July. My grandfather, John, made his living by hauling freight from Kansas City to Denver in a horse-drawn wagon. The men who did such work kept things interesting by creating

competitions between each other. These consisted mostly of betting who could carry the most freight, the farthest, and the fastest. Their wagering medium was the “harness rings” made from slices of elephant tusks two inches wide, then rounded and smoothed off. These hung on various parts of the harness to keep the straps in place. Granddad was a pretty determined drayman because he had a lot of harness rings he won during that time. My children used these rings for “teething rings.”

In 1912, Grandad and Grandma moved from Longmont to Wyoming with their seven remaining children. (One of their sons died in

infancy.) They moved first to the Wheatland area, where Grandad became the first farmer to try his hand at raising beets in the area. It wasn’t a successful venture for him. After a couple of years, they decided to homestead on the Laramie Plains. They were building a log house when the flu epidemic of 1917 hit. The first to get struck by the deadly plague, Granddad Newkirk died within a few days. My father, Bob, rode his horse to Wheatland, thirty-five miles away, to get the proper help to take care of the situation. Upon his return, he found the disease had taken his older brother. That left my father to finish up the house and help support the rest of the family.

This was a hard time. Money was short everywhere and jobs were scarce. People did whatever they could to pay their way. Living on a ranch allowed families to live off the land, but there were still things that required money. After Grandad’s death, Grandma went to Laramie, eighty miles away, and got a job so she could ship needed food and supplies to her family by mail, which was delivered twice a week to a mailbox seven

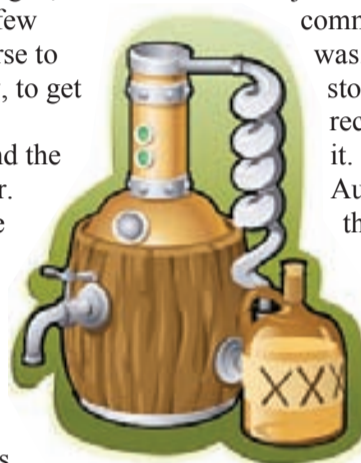
Atkinson Ranch, fifteen miles north of our place. The two friends made whiskey at this location, then they took it to the Watkins home, where Mrs. Watkins kept a supply of it in a “chamber pot” under her bed. When a customer came by, she took a gravy ladle into her bedroom and dipped the “good stuff” out into a Mason jar. Grace was not a primary commodity in those days—but whiskey was. I have often wondered if that storage idea ever caused anyone to reconsider drinking it—but I doubt it.

Aunt Mary’s husband stepped in at that point, telling me how the revenuers made periodic raids on the area, breaking up stills, dumping the moonshine on the ground, and (if possible) arresting the owners of these illegal enterprises. “On one occasion,” my uncle said, “I learned the law was in the area and they had a good idea about where to find Dad Watkins’ and Bob’s still. I got on a horse and rode across the hills to warn them. I probably saved them from a lot of serious problems.”

As I listened, I had to remind myself this was my father we were discussing, not a movie about some family in a remote mountain area that an author dreamed up. My father! My family! A man I’d known all my life. I had never dreamed he’d been involved in such activities. But delving into the story, I realized it was a matter of making money to live by whatever means necessary. During Prohibition, people wanted whiskey—whatever it took.

America struggled during this era. Prohibition ended in 1933, but by that time the country had fallen into a severe depression. Looking through my father’s papers, it stunned me to see his annual income reports showed a maximum of \$350. I knew we weren’t rich, but that’s so little by today’s standards. Not only did they manage on little money, their door stayed open for whoever came by. During the Depression years, we often looked up and saw someone coming to our house for help. My folks took them in and gave them food and a roof for as long as necessary.

My father was a creative and determined man. If he needed something, he figured out how to make it. In 1918 (at twenty years of age), he made a violin, which he played by ear all his life. He sheered our sheep and spun the wool into yarn for sweaters. Cut cedar trees and made tables, chest, cabinets, etc. He cooked for Chappell Brothers & Chappell for the crew during their last roundup. The men who went out and rounded up the horses got \$40 a month, but the cook got \$50. He loaded



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miles from the house. The mailman’s route was fifty miles one way, accomplished on a horse. The rest of the family did whatever was necessary to keep the family together, fed and well. One of my father’s sisters assumed the job of teacher for her siblings and taught them the basics so they could get by at least.

Aunt Mary contributed to my small storehouse of information by telling me about a friend of my father’s: a man named “Dad” Watkins. I had never heard the name, but he must have been quite a guy. She told me my father and “Dad” Watkins had a “still” on the

Carol Mayer Guthmiller
The Sweet Corn Dilemma

When I heard the words “we’re going to have a lot of sweet corn this year!” flow from my husband’s mouth, I knew we were in trouble. Not that sweet corn is trouble; the process of gathering it, cleaning it and putting it away amounts to a lot of trouble. Remembering years of stomping around in the field by myself to gather it, I announced, “We’re all going to go out there together to bring it in.”

By golly, it worked.

The sweet corn was planted inside our field corn. You had to wade through and count twenty-two rows to get to it. These days field corn plants grow so closely together, it’s like maneuvering through a jungle to get the prize.

Having all that done, the Subaru was now loaded down with sweet corn in the trunk, on the seats, and anywhere else we could squeeze it in. The next process involved removing all the husks.

By this time, everyone else had more important jobs to do, but I didn’t care; at least I wasn’t stuck tromping around in a cornfield by myself. I drove the Subaru under the old cottonwood tree for shade and began my job as the dogs found comfortable spots to snooze. It isn’t a terrible job. I’ve endured far worse.

Next, I had to haul everything into the kitchen, remove the silks, and get organized to minimize the time spent on the task. My husband, Delmar, cut the corn off the cobs as I removed the silks and cooked it to prepare it for the freezer. We had fans going because the air conditioner couldn’t keep up with the heat we were creating.

About three-fourths of our way through the job, Delmar’s arthritic hands began taking on the shape of a corncob, but he persisted to the bitter end.

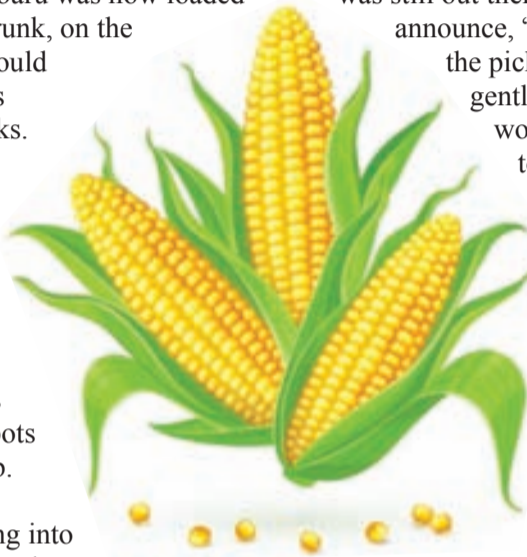
“What are we going to do with the rest of the corn in the field?” I asked.

The seventy-five bags we put away were only a fourth of what was still out there. The next day at church we had the minister announce, “There is sweet-corn at Guthmillers, free for the picking,” but we had only one taker, an elderly gentleman with heart trouble who announced he would be at our house at 8 am the next morning to go out into the field. None of the young able-bodied were interested.

Delmar went out that evening and filled up the Subaru again. The next morning, 8 rolled around and no one appeared to pick up the sweet corn and I panicked. I finished burning the morning’s trash, straightened up the house from Sunday’s hodgepodge, got in the Subaru, and began my mission.

I drove door to door to church members and begged them to take some. They did. Then I drove through our little town to see if there would be any takers there. It appeared there is enough sweet corn in the country to feed everyone.

I got rid of most of it and happily drove home. One elderly lady said it well. When I asked if she could use some sweet corn, her reply was “Honey, if I get anymore sweet corn I will look like an ear of corn!” ♦



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up his wagon with everything necessary to take care of the crews, went out on the plains, and even baked bread for them without a stove in a “Dutch Oven,” which was a large cast iron pan with a recessed lid and a bale for a handle. My father dug a hole in the ground, started a fire in it, and let it burn until he had a good supply of coals. After placing the dough in the pan, he put the lid on, with some coals in the recessed area. This allowed the bread to brown on the top. Using a hook, he lowered the Dutch Oven into the hole where the rest of the coals baked the bread.

After this, my father took on a contract to build dams in the area. One time, he hired a young man from Wheatland to help. Mom and my brother and I went with them to help with the side work. We lived in a tent close to the work site and slept on the ground. My brother and I were out scouting around for firewood one day and stumbled onto an old Indian teepee down by the creek. I have often wished I could remember where; I would love to pay that area another visit.

As I worked my way through the information I had, I got more and more proud of my dad, bootlegger or not. He was creative, determined, and loyal in every aspect of life.

My memories of him are among my most precious treasures. ♦

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The Family Dinner

Beth R. Kiteley

“Aunt Fern? It’s me, Chrissie.”

Fern smiled into the phone. “Well, good morning, Chrissie. How are you today?” Fern lowered her apple dumpling body into her rocker and set it swaying.

“Oh, I’m fine, but Mama’s not too good. You know she doesn’t get around so great with her new knee yet. I said I’d be hostess for the family dinner this month.”

“That’s nice of you. Do you have room in your house for us all?”

Chrissie laughed.

“No, it’ll be at Mama’s, but I’m doing the organizing. Just wanted you to know. I want you to bring angel food cake.”

No “please,” no “if you’d like.” Hmmm!

“I thought I’d bring green beans this time, since my garden is doing so well and I can’t eat them all.” *And am too tired to can anymore*, she thought.

Chrissie giggled. “They wouldn’t go too well for dessert, Aunt Fern. We need the cake. Thanks! See you there!”

The phone went dead in Fern’s hand. She set it down and rocked. Milo’s family had a potluck dinner once a month for years. It started when Milo and his three sisters were newly married and eager to keep their family ties strong. As the children came along, they also thrived on the togetherness. Fern and Milo hadn’t had children, but their nieces and nephews helped fill that gap.

Milo had been gone five years, but the family still expected Fern to attend the dinners and to bring angel food cake. She sighed. Not the box kind, nor what you bought at the store. The real deal. One with thirteen egg whites and a ton of beating and holding your breath and hoping it turned out well. And then trying to get rid of thirteen yolks.

“I don’t want to do that!” she said.

Her old cat raised his head from his paws and looked at her with wise yellow eyes. *Then don’t*, he seemed to say. *I only do what I want, and look how happy I am*. He yawned, put his head down again and closed his eyes.

“I’ll think about it,” Fern decided.

It had been a wonderful year for gardens. Everything had grown well and produced

enough for Fern’s use and to share with friends and neighbors. The green beans had outdone themselves. Downstairs in the basement, a shelf gleamed with jars of them. She’d even frozen a few, though she didn’t care for frozen green beans.

A bountiful garden requires mountains of work to keep it in a generous mood. Fern had given her garden all of her attention, time, and elbow grease. She groaned as she stood up from the bean patch on Friday. Another pan full! That meant more time spent cleaning, snapping and either cooking them or stuffing them into jars and processing them. “It’s time you stopped,” she said severely to the vines. “Just stop!” She limped to the house, hips and knees protesting. She emptied the bucket of beans into the sink and ran water over them, then retreated to the rocker.

“My poor old bones!” she sighed. And she still had that dratted cake to make before Sunday! After church on Sunday,



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Fern treated herself to an extra cup of coffee, then tidied her hair and dress. She took a fleeting look at herself in the mirror. Oh, who cared! They could take her as she was. She picked up her container, her purse, and petted the cat on the way out the door. Chrissie’s branch of the family lived twenty miles away in the next town. One brief stop, then a pleasant drive on a late summer day.

Chrissie met Fern at the door of her mother’s house. “Here’s Aunt Fern with her lovely cake—come in!” She took the container from Fern and ushered her in, chattering all the way.

“Chrissie—” Fern began, but her niece rattled on, pointing her to a chair.

“I’ll take this to the kitchen,” she said.

“Chrissie—” But she was gone.

Oh, dear! Fern sighed and sank into the chair next to her sister-in-law. “It’s nice of Chrissie to fill in for you,” she began.

“Fill in?” snorted Chrissie’s mother. “She’s taken over! None of us may do a thing—she wants to run it all.”

“Well, maybe it’s time the younger ones took charge,” Fern soothed, and rubbed her aching knee.

Dinner got ready later than usual, since Chrissie insisted on doing everything herself. She sat the table with a linen cloth, flowers and her best silver and china. The last few years, they’d used paper plates and napkins. *Easier*, thought Fern. But it was nice to eat elegantly again. The dishes went round and round—the potato salad, baked ham, biscuits—from a can, Fern thought, but that was all right. Waldorf salad, frozen corn, Jessie’s good pickles and Helen’s jelly. A fine meal.

“Now for dessert,” said Chrissie, standing. “Everyone pass your dirty plates to the end and I’ll pick them up. No, no, sit still,” as Fern and Jessie got up to help.

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“Chrissie—” Fern began, but the young woman had left. *Oh, dear!*

Two minutes later, Chrissie stood in the doorway. Her face red, her eyes furious, she unclenched her jaw enough only to say in a tight voice, “Aunt Fern, would you come here a minute?”

No one paid much attention as Fern pushed her chair back and limped out to the kitchen. “Chrissie—”

“This isn’t angel food cake!” Chrissie hissed, pointing at Fern’s container full of green beans.

“I know! I tried to tell you—”

“What am I supposed to do, put them on the ice cream and call it a bean sundae?” Chrissie started to cry. “Aunt Fern, how could you?”

Fern put her arms around the girl. “Chrissie, I tried to tell you I wasn’t up to making an angel food cake. And besides, my dear, this is a potluck dinner, remember? We bring whatever we want to.”

“But I planned the whole thing.” Chrissie raised her head. “Remember the time everyone brought chicken?” A smile twitched at the side of her mouth.

“Or when you were tiny—one time we all brought pie—every single one of us!” They both laughed.

“I wanted everything to be perfect,” said Chrissie.

“Haphazard is fun, too,” Fern said. “Maybe we need a bit of both. You planned a lovely dinner today, but I wasn’t up to making a cake, and I needed to get rid of those beans. Tell you what.” She fished her car key out of her pocket. “Go look on my back seat.”

Fern helped pick up the used dinner plates, and carried the serving dishes to the kitchen, then she and Chrissie brought in the dessert—ice cream and angel food cake. Smiles went around the table, and several people exclaimed how good it was of Fern to bake for them.

“And Fern brought something else!” Chrissie said. “Each of us will have a nice share of her green beans to take home!”

Old Sam declared Fern a jewel who had outdone herself this time—the cake was the best ever. Fern wasn’t sure this was a compliment, but thanked him, went back to the kitchen and stuffed the cake box from the bakery a little deeper in the trash can. ♦

Trainin' Rex

Every so often, you get a hankerin’ for a pup to train up in the right way to handle cattle. If you’re smart, you buy a pup when your ole ranch dog is still keen enough to have common sense, so’s the pup can learn manners from him.

We brought Rex home a cute bundle of too-long limbs and reddish hide. I taught him basic commands and took him out with our ole dog, Bud. Bud is the kind o’ dog that comes along once in a lifetime. Natural talent with cows, can stare critters down without balkin’, and even Old Bessie the “boss” of the herd listens to him.

I figured Rex would do what all young pups do, their first time checkin’ a herd. Get all excited and forget every command he ever heard. Sure enough, he barked and ran around and chased the steers, while Bud gave me a look that said, “Why did you bring this greenhorn onto my ranch?” All of my careful-taught commands (“come by,” “lay down,” “stand!”) made no difference, not that I thought they would. I just stood by and waited for Old Bessie to teach him a lesson. And she did.

Folks with cattle know there’s a boss cow. She gets a prime spot in the herd by bein’ cussed. If she ain’t got horns, she acts like she does; most things learn pretty quick to get outta her way. She can’t be bossed, she’s gotta be coaxed. Bessie is the type of cow a coyote don’t wanna meet, and if they do, they’ll avoid meetin’ her again.

Rex thought he could “herd” Bessie. He got used to cows runnin’ from him, but she didn’t. She held her ground, just like the barn cat that taught Rex another lesson *last* week. This confused him, so he stopped and looked at her, then barked. She kept her eyes on him and stood in the pond. He went in for an ill-advised nip, and she caught him under the midsection with her big head and gave him a toss. Rex landed a few feet away, confused and unhurt, but licked.

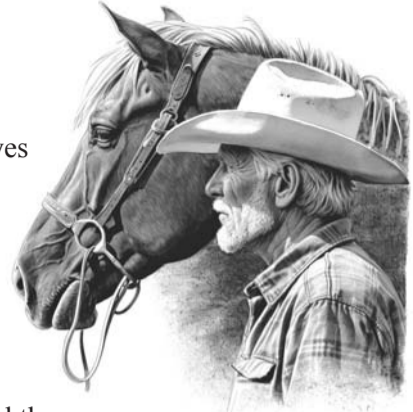
the billy goat

It happened on the day after the election, 1948. Harry S. Truman was the newly elected President of the United States in a hotly contested race. Almost every eligible voter in the country had turned out to express his or her choice.

I was teaching in a one-room one-teacher country school. We’d had Election Day off because the schoolhouse served as a polling place. The next morning, the students and teacher showed up, but we weren’t allowed inside because the judges were still counting the paper ballots. The count for each judge had to tally. It was a long, laborious process.

Luckily, it was a nice fall day, so playing outside presented no problem, except the balls and bats were inside of the school. We organized a game of tag and were playing with all the enthusiasm of Olympians when Jerry, a second-grade student, appeared riding an odiferous Billy goat! It broke up the game of tag in a hurry. I know just how the teacher felt when Mary’s lamb came to school. I had

Prairie Parson



A smart dog knows when it looks in the eyes of a cow what it’s made of, and a dumb dog tries a few times to force it to do things. Rex falls somewhere in the middle, since he high-tailed it back to me and the horse. I looked down at Bud and said, “Fetch her in, Bud.”

That ole dog went in a wide circle around her, so she had to turn to look at him, and in so doing, got her out of the pond and headed down the hill. He never got within five feet of her, and left her some dignity.

I’m hopin’ Rex learned from that.

In my experience, there’s two kinds of folks on earth. Those like Bud that learn how to “come by” the easy way and know how to get along with others, and those like Rex who gotta learn stuff the hard way. I’ve learned never to judge a dog or a man by their initial actions, but to give ‘em time. A good dog, and a good person, tries not to make the same mistakes twice. The blessed thing is God knows we’re dumb and gives us a lot of chances to get it right. He picks us up when life gives us a toss, and invites us to walk with him rather than challenge the whole herd. I reckon with a bit of patience, a lot of treats, and a few more lessons from Bessie and Bud, Rex will be a fine dog one of these days. ♦

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had no experience with Billy goats on the playground, and lost control of the group. The little kids forgot the game of tag and took a turn riding that goat around the schoolyard at least one or two times. I was



biting my nails, worrying about some fellow falling off of Sir Billy or, worse yet, being trampled.

All the children, like at Mary’s school, laughed and played to see a goat at school. There could be a presidential election every day of the year as far as those kids were concerned.

At ten o’clock, the last of the ballots were counted and the weary election judges left the building. I went inside and rang the brass school bell and the children came in and sat down. There was a lot of discussion about how much fun it was to ride a goat and the question came up, “Why didn’t you ride, teacher?”

What about Sir Billy? I asked Jerry to take him home, and we never saw him again. But from the first of November until school let out in the spring, every time I leaned over Jerry to help him with his schoolwork, I caught a whiff of Billy Goat. ♦

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Tim Tutton

Cabin on the Island

Frogs were croaking. A full moon reflected its light on the shiny surface of the pond, and a cool breeze rustled through the trees into the cabin where I lie awake. It was summer, the best time of the year. I loved sleeping in the cabin on a warm summer night. It was always cooler there, and the rest was much more refreshing than in the house.

Years before, my dad traded lumber harvested from our woodland to a lumberman with a new John Deere bulldozer. The trade required the lumberman to build a pond in the meadow below the large hill we called the mountain. The meadow had several springs and Dad decided it would be a great place for a large pond.

The pond covered almost two acres and included an island at one end. It didn't take long to fill with water. Dad had been right. It made a great pond. I claimed the island. I was ten.

Dad bought a large rowboat, and I became adept at maneuvering it around. I loved going out to the island and exploring. It didn't take me long to realize it needed trees. I asked Dad, and he said he would see what he could do. Several weeks later, he presented me with seedlings from the forestry service. There were northern white pine, scotch pines, and blue spruce. It was my job to plant them and no one volunteered to help.

I planted over forty on my island. Of my selection of seeds, I only planted white pine and blue spruce because they looked the best. I knew how to plant from helping Dad and my older brother in previous years. I got pretty good at using the tree planting hoe and putting the seedling into the ground and stumping it with the heel of my work boot.

The trees grew quickly, and the island looked nice. About this time, I got an idea. My

older brothers had a cabin in a grove of trees on another part of the farm, so I decided I wanted one and for it to be on my island. I talked to Dad about a cabin. He came back to me a few days later and asked if I would like to have an A-frame. I got excited when he drew out a sketch of what it would look like. It looked very different from my brothers' cabin. That made it even more appealing. I asked Dad how we could build it. He had definite steps in mind. First, we needed the frame. Dad said I could use the cross-arms he had stored next to the horse-barn from the telephone poles the phone company had recently taken down. I would have to cut off the wooden pieces that held the insulators to the cross-arm. This had to be done by hand. I think this was a test to see if I was really serious about the project. He made it clear I was going to do the work and he would be the supervisor.

It was hard work cutting off all those pieces from thirty cross-arms using a handsaw. Once I finished, we had a bigger job to do and Dad had to help. We had to build a bridge to the island to bring over all the materials. We used some cross-arms for it. They were creosoted like the poles and Dad said they would last a long time, even in the water. That bridge lasted over fifteen years. We built it in three sections. A ramp went up to a flat part and then descended to the island. It was wide enough to walk and even roll a wheelbarrow.

Seldom could I wait for Dad to get home from work to move materials to the island. A wheelbarrow became my trailer. I loaded it up with cross-arms or boards overlapping the sides. It was three-quarters of a mile from our house to the pond. Down the road I'd go, across the bridge over the creek (waiting to be sure no cars were coming because there wasn't enough shoulder to keep from taking up a lane of traffic) up the hill to the driveway, up another hill past the apple tree and the grove of sumacs to the pond bridge. This is where it got tricky. I had to balance the wheelbarrow just right to make it over the one plank wide bridge. Usually I carried the boards one at a time, but other things I tried to wheel over. As time went on, I got good at it.

Dad helped with the frame and making sure we had a level foundation. I nailed the frame parts together and in the evening, Dad would help me set them up. It only took a few days. Next we put in the flooring. Dad had some



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wood stored in the barn he called "ironwood." It was awfully hard to saw by hand and worse to nail. There were a lot of nails bent in putting on the flooring.

After the flooring came the roof. On an A-frame, the only walls are on the ends because the roof comes all the way to the ground. It took a lot of work putting on the boards for the roof. The cabin was ten foot wide and twelve and a half feet long. I used rough-cut pine lumber for the roof. Every board had to be cut by hand. There was no electricity at the pond. We had no portable power tools, just plain ole muscle power.

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Dad donated the lumber from our woodland. I didn't have to buy much. I wanted a tongue-n-groove knotty pine floor to cover the ironwood. That cost some money. I had to buy a window for the north wall and a window to go over the doorway. Dad built the door and small windows on each side of the door. I had to buy tarpaper and used white asphalt shingles for the roof. My total investment was thirty-two dollars and lots of sweat.

Occasionally, I would talk some of my buddies into helping me, like Tom Sawyer.

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They were hard to get because it meant they had to ride their bikes to my house. My closest friend lived five miles away.

I finished the cabin late in the summer and I figured I needed a stove. I felt determined to sleep in the cabin even when it snowed. My mother had an extra Ben Franklin stove in the barn. I talked her out of it. Into the wheelbarrow it went, but I had to get the stove over the bridge in the wheelbarrow. If it tipped over and the stove went into "the drink," I had little hope of fishing it out again. After much deliberation and hesitation, across the bridge I went, trying to judge my momentum to reach the top of the bridge, but not too much so I could control it on my way down the other side. Praise the Lord; all went well, and the stove made it to the cabin. We cut a hole in the roof and installed flashing around the opening. I had a chimney pipe and bought a stove mat for the stove to sit on. It was done.

I spent many nights in that cabin before I went off to college. Every time I returned on vacation, I made at least one trip to the cabin. I watched the trees grow. Some became twenty feet tall. One vacation I spent thinning out the forest on the island and building a new bridge.

Many years have passed and the "new" bridge is gone. Is the cabin still standing? I haven't been there in years. I live too far away now. But even if it isn't, the memories are still there. Memories of cooking bacon, eggs and toast on the top of the Ben Franklin stove, coming out of the door in the morning and seeing white-tailed deer in the early morning mist drinking from the pond, seeing ducks and geese landing and taking off, talking to my buddies late into the night, of my brother, John, setting off fireworks in the middle of the night to scare us.

Nothing can replace the opportunities of growing up on a farm and having the freedom to accomplish dreams and make wonderful memories. ♦

"So, Ed, this new forty acre parcel you got for sale, about how many trees would you say are on it?" Max asked.

"Not a one."

"Great, so I guess if I want to buy that property, trees are extra. And exactly how much does a tree cost out there?"

"Not much, just \$2,500 and you bring the spade and the rain."

"Yea, like I can't plant a seed. Dream on, Ed."

"Dreamin' is what made this country great, Max. Just ask any land man. He'll tell you the same."

Max waved Ed off with a grin as he left the office and ventured out onto the small town's boardwalk. Children's giggles wafted down the street. He climbed into his old beater truck.

"So what'd he say?" Shelly asked.

"He said it's time to turn our dreams into a realty." Max put the vehicle in reverse and headed to the Colorado State University Office. The walnut tree, the mustard seed, the cherry pit, the aspen leaf, the rose hip, and the hop vine had given Shelly the nurture and nature in her life at the old house. They had signed on the dotted line three months earlier

for a mortgage on forty acres with a modular, a detached oversized garage, a small barn, and a corral. Yet, like the other acreages, there wasn't a tree on the horizon.

Living on the high plains with only yucca, greasewood, and sparse prairie grasses, regardless of their natural beauty, was not giving Shelly the nurturing environment she needed to be happy. Her great grandmother had homesteaded, her grandmother had homesteaded, and her mother had homesteaded. Shelly knew she had it in her and she could plant a few trees to improve a property, too.

Max parked and popped out of the truck, disappearing

through the office building's glass door. Not five minutes passed before he appeared at Shelly's window, motioning for her to roll it down. "Hey, they got their plant order in and had an extra two hundred pine seedlings someone ordered and didn't pick up. We can buy them for next to nothing if it is for a windbreak. Want to plant a windbreak?"

Thrilled, Shelly exclaimed, "Oh, Max, you bet!" Before Max could step away from the door, she jumped out of the vehicle. "Where are they? Where do we pick them up? I think we can fit them on the flatbed. Do you think we have room?"

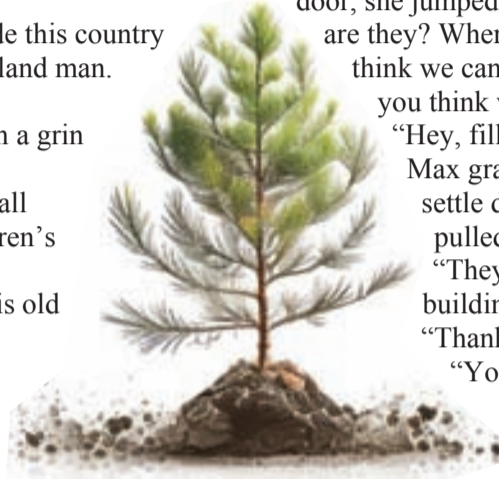
"Hey, filly, idle those jets of yours." Max grabbed both shoulders to settle down her excitement and pulled her close for a big hug. "They will bring them around the building and help us load." "Thanks, Honey."

"You bet."

After a quick peck on the cheek and with an enormous grin, Max

released his hold on Shelly and strolled to the back of the building. Shelly pulled down the truck's tailgate and moved some items in the bed out of the way to accommodate the seedlings. Soon a four-wheeler came around the corner, pulling a trailer, with Max dragging

Continued on page 22.



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his feet.

“Okay, Max, I know these are heavy, but you take one and I’ll take the other. Do you want them in the bed of this mighty fine farm vehicle?” asked Scott, an employee of CSU.

Shelly readied herself to help in the event the trees were heavier than the men could handle. She watched Max from a view blocked by the four wheeler. He pulled the package off the trailer and brought his load to the tailgate. Huffing and puffing, he said, “Man, those *are* heavy.”

She went around the truck to look and found a bundle of green sticks seven to eight inches tall in a wrapped package that she could lift with one hand.

“And here is the other hundred.” Scott put the second bundle on the tailgate.

“You big babies,” Shelly laughed,

giving Max a slam on the shoulder for his foolishness. “Thanks, Scott. It’s a good thing you to go to the gym daily.” Shelly grabbed the two bundles and jumped in the front seat.

“What gym? I grew these pecs by using fertilizer as a moisturizer.”

“Yeah, and Max is Paul Bunyan’s grandson. Bye, Scott.” Shelly waved goodbye as the truck pulled out. Regardless of the plants’ size, once home, Shelly felt pleased with their acquisition.

“Max, these are great. I was thinking we could plant them all along the irrigation ditch and up on the hill northeast of the barn, and maybe one or two for the yard.” She paused and turned in the other direction. “On the other hand, it would be nice to plant a few along the west fence or twenty feet north of the lane as a snow break. This is so exciting. I’ll go get the tires and we can protect them from the wind.” Poof—Shelly ran over the hill to load up the trailer and tractor.

Leaning against the truck, he took off the farm cap and wiped his brow. Her actions reminded Max of years past when, as a teenager, she brought home her first palomino. Shelly, sitting tall on the pony tractor, and grinning from ear to ear, drove back over the hill.

Within two hours, the tires created a

dotted line denoting where the windbreak would stand and they planted a seedling inside each one. It took them three days. As if working on an assembly line, Max removed the tire, dug a shallow hole, and replaced the tire. Following with a wheelbarrow filled with a mixture of manure, finely chopped wood chips and dark, moist, rich soil from garden Shelly bedded the hole with mixture and with the tenderness of any new mother, made a small indentation and placed God’s small gift in the soil. Max poured a bucket of water within the tire as Shelly surrounded the tiny plant with more of the same mixture and finished with a light patting and blessing before she moved on to the next one.

To avoid the scorching sun, they rose early and worked until lunch. After the hottest part of the day ended, they worked until twilight. On the last evening, they looked over their work, evidenced by the change in the landscape.

“We done good,” Max announced.

After a moment of silence, Shelly responded, “Then let’s celebrate!” She reached up and gave Max a hug before walking into the house, pulling off her leather gloves. Taking two ice-cold drinks from the refrigerator, she rejoined her husband in the front yard, relaxing in a lawn chair and enjoying the glory of the summer sunset.

Taking the drink with one hand, Max grabbed Shelly around the waist with the other and pulled her to his lap, giving her a sweet kiss. In silence, the couple watched the changing

colors of the sky’s clouds, enjoying the cool breeze that accompanied the sun’s rotation beyond their view. The night sky embraced the bright stars. The couple appreciated the crisper view of the sky from their new home, where stars need not compete with the lights of town to be appreciated.

Shelly felt pride in what they had accomplished and knew her mother, grandmother and great grandmother would be proud of them. *Dreamin’ is what we have to do, and this planting was one more step into the dream of our future*, Shelly thought. *We make a good team.*

Shelly hugged her teammate and said, “I love you, Max.” ♦

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Commissioners Place Term Limit Question on the Ballot *Should Certain Offices be Eligible for a Third Term?*

At the August 28 meeting, of the Board of County Commissioners approved the following question for placement on the general election ballot this November: *Shall Elbert County voters have the right to elect the candidate of their choice for the offices of Assessor, Clerk and Recorder, Surveyor, and Treasurer, up to but no more than three consecutive 4-year terms as permitted by state law and in Article XVIII, Section 11, of the Colorado Constitution?*

Currently, Article XVIII, Section 11(2) of the Colorado Constitution restricts elected officials to serving no more than two consecutive terms. But the Constitution allows voters to modify these term limits through a majority vote during any November election.

This question began as a citizen initiative brought forward and discussed at BOCC meetings over the past several months. Constituents have expressed, through online surveys, a belief that extending the term limits would lead to better and more efficient governance by allowing experienced office holders to continue serving beyond the current two-term limit. Specifically, the request was for all elected offices of the county to be allowed a third term with the exception of the Commissioners. The logic provided for not including the members of the Board of County Commissioners is these positions are policy makers and have broad discretion regarding how they carry out our duties. The other

elected positions were presented as technical in nature, requiring specialized training or experience and bound by statute, regulation, and strict procedural requirements. The original request was for a separate ballot question for each office.

With only a few specific exceptions, only the Board can place a question on the ballot. Since they were imposed by Amendment 17 in 1994, Commissioners have placed various term limit questions of the ballot at least five times. All previous questions have failed.

During early discussions of this proposal, it was decided individual questions could be viewed by voters as a referendum on the current officeholders and not a question regarding the unique requirements of the positions. Finally, based on discussions during the public meeting held on August 14 we determined that based on the logic presented (these offices being non-policy/non-discretionary and largely procedural) the Office of Sheriff and Office of the Coroner did not fit the question proposed. Constitutionally the Sheriff has tremendous discretion regarding how he provides law enforcement for the county and the judgment of the Coroner can determine if a death

is from natural causes or the result of a crime.

Out of respect for the justification presented by those asking for the ballot question and to remain consistent with the logic they presented in the public survey conducted, we felt is best to proceed with the offices of Assessor, Clerk & Recorder, Surveyor, and Treasurer at this time. If the measure is successful, other positions can be considered in future elections.

We recognize continuity and retaining expertise in key positions throughout the county is critical to efficient and effective operations, but once the question above was approved for placement of the ballot, no county resources can be expended to support its passage. For this reason, we recommend citizens who have questions regarding this measure review information the citizen proponents make available. We look forward to seeing the results of our voter's decisions on this measure in November.

Respectfully,
Chris Richardson, Commissioner District 1
Dallas Schroeder, Commissioner District 2
Grant Thayer, Commissioner, District 3

Commissioners Approve New Election Equipment Vendor *Dominion Machines to be Replaced*

At a regular meeting of the Elbert County BOCC, Commissioners Richardson, Schroeder, and Thayer voted unanimously not to renew the county's contract with Dominion and join Douglas and Garfield County in using Clear Ballot's equipment starting in 2025.

County Clerk & Recorder Rhonda Braun, who formerly served the county as Elections Manager and is now the elected official that oversees county elections, made a strong recommendation for the change. In a letter to the BOCC, she noted the two systems were comparable in price, Clear Ballot was easier to program for ballot design, provided more robust support, was easier to use for adjudication of ballots, and could read torn or stained ballots so duplicates need not be produced, so original ballots can be retained. She also noted that Clear Ballot has the ability to produce ballot images for public viewing at no extra cost and can tabulate (count) ballots from other systems for audit purposes.

Commissioner Schroeder, former County Clerk & Recorder, stated that he was much more comfortable that Clear Ballot is less prone to connection to the internet and Clear Ballot is actively working to produce machines without internet capability, and very importantly, cannot produce election results prior to the close of polling without a record of this happening.

Commissioner Richardson appreciated the openness of the Clear Ballot demonstration on May 15th and how it contrasted with Dominion's refusal to participate in any public discussion with the Commissioners during the evaluation process.

Following discussion, a vote was taken to move forward with finalizing a contract for service with Clear Ballot starting in the coming year and notify Dominion that their contract will not be renewed. ♦

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