

CHECK INSIDE FOR DETAILS ON LOCAL JULY EVENTS IN ELBERT COUNTY!

## Picking Tobacco

Ray Willis

*I'll never forget the two summers I spent as a teenager picking Connecticut shade-grown tobacco.*

Today promised to be another hot and humid one, with the temps way over 100. We were on the fourth picking now and all happier, as we could finally stand up to pick the bottom three leaves off the tall tobacco plants. As usual, my working buddy Freddy Krafcick and I selected two rows next to each other. We were the two fastest pickers on Woodford Farm and the only ones to make \$100 (a lot of money in 1958) or more per week.

Beeji and his horse, Dagmar, were turning over the earth between the rows we'd just finished picking. A short, wizened old man dressed entirely in gray to match his old gray plow horse, Beeji chewed tobacco and spit constantly. He had no teeth, and when the words spilled out of his mouth, they were as a cackling old witch, which made them inaudible. He had no use for teenaged pickers!

Dagmar must have weighed a ton or more and stood awfully tall. Watching the two of them at work was sheer pleasure, especially during our 10 a.m. water break. Today, Dagmar and the old wooden cultivator stood only a few yards away from our water keg. She had never been so close, and Beeji was nowhere to be seen. Freddy and I walked over to her. I couldn't resist the urge to place my hands on the handles of the cultivator.

"Heeyah! Heeyah! Heeyah, Dagmar!" Freddy commanded to the horse. Dagmar began plodding down between the two rows of tobacco plants. I pulled from behind her, frantically, to stop her advancement with all my strength, while yelling feebly, "Whoa! Whoa, Whoa Dagmar!"

The old horse trudged ever onward, dragging me behind her. We knocked down tobacco plant after tobacco plant from one side of a row over to the other. I heard snickers from my working buddies behind me. Then a cursing Beeji yanked me from behind the plow handles and grabbed onto them to halt Dagmar. He ordered me to wait for the boss man we called "John D."

A few minutes later, John D. jumped out of his jeep and ran over to me with his eyes on fire. "Willis, you're fired! Get your butt into the jeep!"

"John, please give me another chance. My father will kill me if I get fired from this job," I pleaded.

I felt pretty sure John liked me. He stood silent for a minute. "Willis, I've got to dock your pay for all the plants you destroyed. There's one more thing. You and me is going to have a little race. We'll go back to Field 4 and race up two bins and back. (A bin was the distance between two stakes that held up the netting, approximately 75 feet.) You win, you stay. If I win, you're gone! Another thing, you break just one of those leaves you've picked, you're still gone!"

What could I do except to take John up on his challenge? He was a full-time employee of the farm. He had years of experience picking tobacco in the fields before becoming a

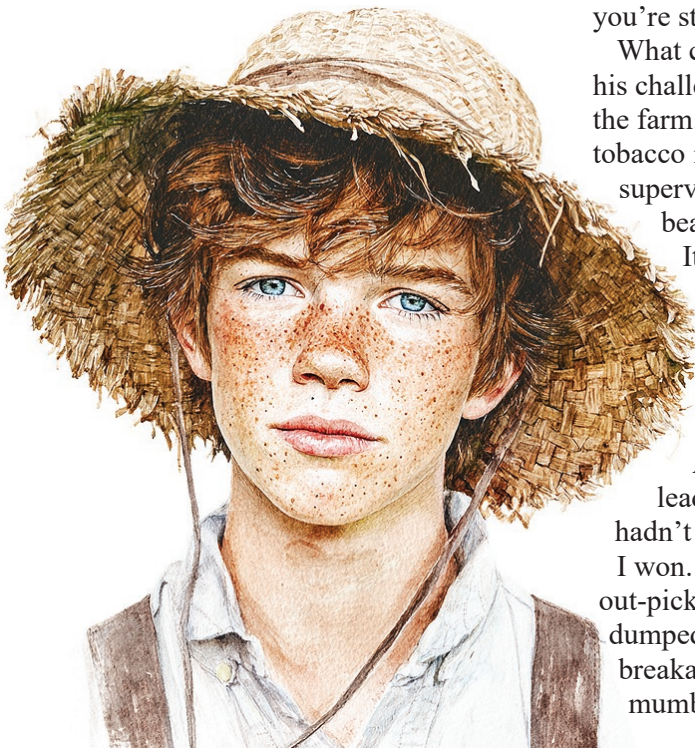
supervisor. What chance would I have of beating him in a tobacco picking contest?

It would be like a sideshow. All the pickers could see John and me as we picked to the death. John got off to a great start and a pretty good lead.

When we rounded the bin marker and started back, I inched closer to him.

About halfway back, I crawled into the lead. I could sense victory, if only I hadn't broken any leaves.

I won. John looked angry but agreed I had out-picked him. He went over to my basket, dumped it, and examined every leaf for breakage. He smiled, ever so slightly, and mumbled, "See you tomorrow, Willis." ♦



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# LEARNING TO LIKE CHANGE

Charity Bishop

## Part of me likes change.

The rest of me, not so much.

I *like* change, when it seems like I am letting go of something tangible to grab onto another tangible thing I want. If I can see results sooner rather than later, that makes it exciting and keeps me motivated through whatever dull, tedious parts there might be in the transition. Painting a wall is changing something, but it has an immediate positive impact on my life.

Recently, I ran into a few challenges with my personal website which meant I would need to shift to a new uploading process. There was no easy way to move over all the files, so as much as I felt excited about a new format, a better search engine, built-in tags, etc., it meant four to six months of manually moving every single page on my website into a new one. I started with enthusiasm, but bottomed out after a long weekend of doing two hundred posts. And my excitement tanked as I realized I had 1,800 more to go and was looking at four to six months of labor before I could share it.

A year ago, I helped a friend move and as we went through her stuff and she packed too much into her boxes, I kept thinking, “A move is a fresh start. You could let this stuff go and make space in your life.”

Yes, it hit me now. *You could.*

I did not have to move 2,000 pages. I could treat the new website format as a fresh start.

A weight lifted off my shoulders, as if I had taken a trailer load of old stuff to a thrift store.

Change can be good, but it's also emotional.

Deciding to forge a new identity online meant letting my past go, to make space for who I am now and what may interest me going forward.

Then came a process of doubt and grief. I wrestled with insecurity, because I didn't know what lay on the other side of emptying out a portion of my life in this manner. What would fill the void? Would *anything*, or would it stay empty? Beyond that lay a sadness. This part of my life represented 28 years of writing, growth, interests, and the “old me.” Memories of people now dead or whom I haven't spoken to in a decade. The online portfolio of a young writer who didn't know proper punctuation, but who now combs through her novels on a ruthless quest to eliminate clutter words.

It surprised me how much I grieved over the death of my former self, and it made me realize as much as I like change on a superficial level, it is also painful and scary to let go of the past. I want to cling to it, fearful what I replace it with won't be as good. But until you open up your life, you don't have room for new things. I tend to keep at things too long, out of a sense of duty and stubbornness, sometimes doing them long after they cease to enrich me emotionally.

This life is full of hope but also anxieties about the unknown. And that is okay. I opened my hand and let the grains of my past flow through them, scattered to the wind.

Sometimes, a blank slate can be a blessing. Maybe there's something in your life it would



feel good to let go of, that is weighing you down even though you're not aware of it. It can be tangible, like stuff related to a hobby you haven't touched in years, an old car in the driveway, a PC packed with old work files, a ton of images you need to sort through on your iPhone. Or intangible, like bitterness over a relationship that ended badly, or an attitude no longer serving you. It might be time to dust off those things, give them one last glance, mourn the person you were, and release them, to make space in your life for new friends, hobbies, experiences, or possibilities.

Life does not stagnate unless we let it. So, let's make the most of it and only keep in our lives what still serves us and makes us happy. ♦

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Janna Benkelman

# Everything I Ever Needed to Know, I Learned from Living in a Trailer

In 1998, my husband and I, and our thirteen-year-old daughter and ten-year-old son had spent the last twelve years in a pleasant suburb of Englewood, Colorado. We lived in a two-story, traditional house with a nice backyard and friendly neighbors. But we were ready for a change! My husband and I had decided several years earlier we wanted to raise our kids in a more adventurous environment.

We found the perfect piece of acreage to purchase in rural Elbert County: thirty acres of magnificent forested and fenced land backed up to huge sections of open country, vast expanses of grassland, brilliant blue skies, and jagged trails that wound their way up small rock embankments. Our dream was to build a home here, do a lot of horseback riding with my sister, who lived up the road a half a mile, and to send our kids to a small and personal country school. We wanted our kids to see the best that nature offered!

After months of preparation, we hired a builder and started construction on our new

home. We put our current home on the market to sell and potential buyers were showing up daily. It stunned us to sell our house within two weeks. We would be homeless within a month!

My brother-in-law John scouted out a 32-foot used travel trailer that had been in a rollover accident and deemed no longer “road safe.” The price was right. We got it to our property and our family all agreed this would be the start of some great adventures! (And a very steep learning curve.)

The day of our move finally arrived. I didn’t want to leave my five-bedroom house for a trailer, but since it would only be for a month or two (or four), I decided to make the most of the experience. We learned life is slower and more laid-back in the country, a fact demonstrated time and time again as our new home took shape, slowly.

Our family learned a lot!

First, we learned patience. To carve out a space for herself, our teenage daughter claimed the living room trailer couch as her “room.” For four long months, she had to share her personal space with two Bernese Mountain Dogs, a brother, cookie crumbs, and the entire family any time we wished to watch TV. My son Chad

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inherited the kitchen table to sleep on, a cramped arrangement that required we dismantle the table and re-assemble it as a bed. This situation worked badly for both going to bed early and sleeping in late. Charley and I took the one bedroom. Since the trailer sat on a slope, the bed slanted sideways and the covers slid off us as we slept. We shared this delightful arrangement with a huge and often muddy

dog, and a ceiling leak that dripped onto my pillow.

Second, we learned tolerance. Over the course of the summer, we became intimately acquainted with raccoons and porcupines shuffling through our belongings stored in the recently built barn. The flies, miller

moths, and mosquitoes were relentless in their pursuit of entering our living quarters. But the most difficult thing of all was learning tolerance for each other.

Third, we learned creativity. I discovered more ways to use a charcoal BBQ than I ever knew existed. We lived in the trailer but hung our clothes in the barn. This is where we dressed, after we scrutinized our clothing for wasp nests before sliding them on. We spent lazy summer days lounging on quilts under the towering pine trees, just enjoying the moment. And Erinn raised four abandoned baby birds in the trailer, along with all the other chaos.

Fourth, we learned gratitude. After spending two weeks with neither power nor water, I developed a new appreciation for taking a shower in an enclosure the size of a fish tank, rather than bathing in a saucepan. I cherished the newfound closeness our family discovered while stumbling over one another, and



developed a great appreciation for the times that it didn’t rain and our bed stayed dry. I loved the beautiful summer evenings when we sat outside enjoying the orange-tinged sunsets and the glittering starlit skies, and reveled in hearing our horses whinnying in the pastures outside our windows as we slowly drifted off to sleep.

When we moved into our new house (with a ladder set up in place of the not yet completed stairway) I often recalled the challenges and the joys of having experienced life in the trailer. We sold our temporary home to another family who were planning to use the trailer as their home just until they finished their house. ♦

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Homemaker's Corner With Abby D. Jones

# Be A Domestic Artist

Everyone is artistic, and art is everywhere. I've believed this as long as I can remember. There are amazing artistic feats in our world: books, movies, video games, paintings, sculptures, and magnificent pieces of music. Yes, art can be very high and special. But it can also be found in charcuterie boards, homemade quilts, sourdough bread, cocktails, soup, and all the ordinary things if we but look and see. Art can be high magic, and art can be ordinary.

As I embraced being a homemaker, I came across the term domestic artist. That label spoke to me because it captured my desire to be an artist. It echoed the never-ceasing call to create that haunts me at all times, and it elevated and honored the ordinary with a sprinkling of fairy dust. It said, "Yes, you must cook today. Three meals plus snacks and drinks. It's your job, but, but, what if, what if instead of looking at it as drudgery, some Cinderella-enslavement, you looked at it as an opportunity to create beauty?"

Not every meal, every outfit, every moment of our day can be a work of art. Some days, we do what we



my childhood. I love leather and lace. Boots and long-flowing things. I like deer heads, linen, skulls, and ruffles. Feathers and dream catchers! But I also love to decorate with open spaces. I love pies and feeding my husband. But look at this! I have a woman in my life who quilts, and that flows out into her decorating. So many of her things are beautifully hand-sewn. If she wants it, she makes it. Another friend grew up in Africa and filled her home with her love of that culture. One dear friend loves plants and grows amazing flowers she uses to create Instagram-worthy bouquets. Another woman isn't super fluffy-feminine, but she has an eye for remodeling and is constantly making improvements on her home: flooring, painting, and more. My sisters, like me, both enjoy a minimalist approach to decorating and all three of us have a special place for coffee. Both my sisters' homes are welcoming and peaceful, even with kids running around like crazy. We're very different, but we're all homemakers who love making our homes.

Homemaking, or what I like to call being domestic artists, lets us dance with life's different stages and different loves instead of being caged in by them. Lots of little ones? Keep it simple. Empty nest? Explore. Somewhere in between? Keep growing. Lots of energy? So many things you can expand into. Lover of slow living? Art takes time. Being domestic artists lets us create unique dwellings for unique phases for us and our people. None of us are bound to a particular look or design or system. Being a domestic artist is the most satisfying job I've ever had. It not only challenges me every day, but it works with me. The boundaries are what I set in place, so I grow as I can. The work never ends, but there is always something else to explore.

What happens when we fully embody being domestic artists? What happens if we let the label

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change our perspective on our work? Shift it into something other than the chores? What if we thought dishes meant food and good times and the healing of souls? What if we saw laundry as a way to keep beauty and cleanliness around us? Our privilege and delight to take care of the food, clothing, cleaning, cooking, gardening, growing the next generation, and tending our people?

What if we embrace the domestic arts and see them as truly magnificent, glorious, and unique arts?

I want to find beauty in the ordinary, and I embrace art in the everyday. Homemaking is one of

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have to do. Some days get upended in the opening credits with a broken washer or a sleepless child. On others, our plans change. Life changes. One minute life looks like this, and the next it's on to something different. The beauty of being a domestic artist is we can create art in any of these moments and in any setting. We can find art in any moment and in any setting.

Armed with this perspective, homemaking is magical. It's flexible. It changes with the seasons and the woman. I am a bit bohemian, a bit rustic, a mixture of rugged and romantic. I grew up a tomboy, but have embraced being a woman in her home since

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those amazing jobs where it is what we make it. It is what we pour into it. If we think it's boring, we won't get anything out of it. If we think it is challenging and rewarding, we'll get the world out of it. Homemakers are artists. We're domestic artists and all the goods of the world are our paintbrushes, music, words, and canvases. Let's create beauty here and now. ♦

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# BIG AL

I scooped up the newborn calf and climbed into the bed of the pickup, nodding for my wife to drive to the corral. I wondered if Jenny, the calf's fourteen hundred pound concerned mother, would join us for the ride. She resigned herself to bawling and slobbering all the way to the yard with her head and tongue nearly touching her precious baby.

Big Al had arrived.

He weighed seventy pounds at birth, but it didn't last long. Mom was a good milker, and Al devoted himself to the task. Almost daily, he seemed to reach higher and higher on Jenny's side as he stood to suck. Like most calves running on good pasture, Al picked at the grass a bit. He would pull up a few blades, tentatively roll these around in his mouth, and shake his head at the foreign taste. It would be a hard sell to convince the calf one day to give up his mother's milk for other fare. Jenny seemed in no hurry to have her burgeoning son weaned, but stood patiently as the four hundred pound "baby" sucked till he worked up a good dripping froth.

Not sharing his Simmental genes made Al bigger than the other calves. He also seemed less prone to romp and chase in the pasture or corral. Big Al was a "momma's boy" and mother and son found no fault in the relationship. Both found weaning traumatic. Jenny bawled until she went hoarse. Al looked lost, like a kid away from home for the first time.

Al had the same gentle disposition as his mother and our son's attentions gave him no fear of humans. He soon proved to be a well bred and well-fed bull. His neck bulge was truly impressive, the legs thick and sturdy, and the distance between his large, soft eyes increased daily.

Jeff had known from the start he would end up selling his "calf." He was too much bull for our little operation. Already he towered over my bull and the prospect of Big Al breeding with my mixed-breed stock cows did not seem wise. Our long-term, next-door neighbor came to the rescue. He ran a hundred and fifty cows and had been experimenting with exotic bulls to produce bigger, faster growing calves. It seemed the ideal solution.

I had time to go with the neighbor when he trucked his cows to summer pasture. After the uneventful forty-mile trip, I watched him unload Big Al with interest. Apart from being taller than all the other animals, and moving at the ponderous and deliberate gait, the young bull fit in well with his new family.

But adventure lay ahead.

All the cattle were being run through a squeeze chute to get shots and have fly tags attached. Big Al did not fit in the chute, even when it opened to its widest. He waited patiently by the side gate for his turn. One by one, the cattle were forced to jump into the chemical concoction at a concrete dipping vat. Most cows plunged right in and, heads held high, navigated the murky mixture before they clambered out the other side. A few hesitated, but changed their minds thanks to the ranch foreman's Aussie stock dog and the shouting of the cowboys.

Big Al approached the unfamiliar vat at his patented ponderous pace. Fifteen feet short of the takeoff point, he stopped. His enormous head swung from side to side as he took in the situation. The assigned route did not appeal to the young bull, but the narrow alley provided only one exit. It only

Charles Oz Collins

required a second or two for Big Al to reach a decision. He could not go back, he could not go around, and he would not go through this mess. He would go over it.

He covered the distance with only two to three long strides. Then, eighteen



hundred pounds went airborne. His aim was true, his windage correct, but he was a mite short on elevation. A wave of cowboys, a couple of truck drivers, and a stock dog fell back from the sides of the vat in full retreat. At a distance of ten feet, they were overtaken by a tidal wave of stock dip. As a wet and dripping Big Al emerged from his first full baptism, the spluttering, spitting, and cussing reached a crescendo. Trying to clear my camera lens, I noticed the ranch foreman, Spud, mopping his glasses with a handkerchief. His

around, my attention moved to a well-used Model 94 Winchester leaned alongside the steering column. As we banged across the pasture trying to get in front of the cows, I realized Spud probably spent as much time in his truck as he did in his house, maybe more. It stood to reason he would have the necessities of life at his fingertips, assuming he could drive and catch whatever he needed as it orbited the cab.

We were gaining on the cattle, and they fell into a steady trot. There was no need to worry, at least for a while. Colorado pastures are huge. It takes thirty-five acres to feed a cow and her calf. We had just turned out two hundred head, so the nearest pasture fence would be over several low hills and miles away. Big Al trotted in the middle of the herd, content to move along at their pace. His long legs helped. It was easy to follow him, even at a distance. You just looked for the big cream-and-white animal a foot taller than the rest.

The cows slowed and scattered to feed, and we headed back to the pens. Only then did Spud find time to talk. He let me know he "hated to cowboy like this." Herding cattle in a Ford was not his idea of how things should be done, but given his age, occupation, and uncounted encounters with range cattle and saddle horses, he had little choice. The fingers gripping the steering wheel pointed in a dozen different directions. Clearly, more than one dally had included more than the saddle horn. His hat and boots had "seen many moons," though not as many as his weather-beaten face. He caught me looking at his 30-30 and said it had been a good year for rattlesnakes. He had killed nine. All he had to do was stick the barrel out the window and the reptile population diminished by one. I doubted the snakes thought of it as a "good year."

We had no news of Big Al for a couple of months until our neighbor said Big Al was doing fine, but had nearly killed a fellow. That did not sound like the Al we knew. Turns out the Association Manager visited the ranch and Spud took him to see the cattle. The Manager got out of the truck and went for a walk. Presently Spud spied the old fellow doing his best to sprint back, followed closely by a huge bull. Big Al missed human contact and assumed the fellow on foot came to scratch his back and rub his giant head.

It seems Spud, stingy with words, had failed to tell the man about Big Al. ♦

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dog was the only one willing to get right back to work. Others milled around at a distance, a few continuing to discuss Big Al's ancestry, or lack thereof.

The gate opened and the cattle entered the pasture. Cows coming off a winter spent in a corral want to explore, to stretch their legs. Or, as an old friend says, "What they want to do is measure the fence." When they broke into a trot, Spud yelled he was going to "head them" and jumped for his Ford flatbed. I joined him. Big Al's response to so much wide open space might be interesting.

I rattled around in a cab half filled with the paraphernalia of ranching and livestock care. There had not been time to remove several empty and half-empty bottles of animal antibiotics from beneath me; I wondered what became of the needle and syringe. Other bottles and boxes covered the floor, along with a lariat, fencing tools, and a spittoon. Before I could wonder about the usefulness of a spittoon bouncing

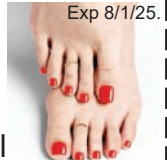
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# The Tree Swing

When Dad built a tree swing near our farmhouse, we kids soared high in the sky with the tree as our flying ship. The swing hung from an eight-foot-long thick limb on two black mulberry trees whose trunks had grown together. The combined trunks were as wide as the length of one of Dad’s yearling calves. My arms weren’t long enough to cover its width. As tall as



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the hay storage and milking barn, and nearly as tall as our two-story farmhouse, this old tree supported our climbing activities and made lots of shade to cool us from the heat. Dad rested in the shade on an empty ten-gallon gray milk can on weekends. Before we had the swing, we climbed the tree on a daily basis. Come to think of it, Mom may have encouraged Dad to set up the swing for us, worried about us

falling out of the playground tree, but we never did. The tree limb chosen for the swing had many smaller branches that produced growing mulberries, which ripened in the summer. Dad tied two thick ropes around the limb and let the ends dangle to the ground. The seat, a thick wide board left over from building the barn, maybe 2”x6”, had holes drilled into each end to accommodate the ropes he threaded through them and knotted beneath it. We learned to pump the swing to gain momentum and height. First, we sat on the seat with our feet on the ground and pushed backwards to start the pendulum motion if our legs were long enough. If not, someone went behind us to push-start the swing into motion. Next, we extended our legs straight out from our hips and leaned back, hanging onto the ropes for dear life to move the swing forward with gravity. A thrill ran through me



leaves shivered with our enthusiasm. We took turns without Mom prompting us, but

to her dismay, still climbed the tree while we waited. This fueled my imagination as I stood in its top branches, staring at the horizon. The purple stain of ripe mulberries stained our fingers, tongues, and clothes. We challenged each other to swing higher on the next turn. The swing movements tore through the bark on that branch, but it remained sturdy and provided shade on hot days. I noticed a small drop that lifted me off the seat once the swing started its downward arc. That scared me and reminded me I could fall off the seat. Birds nested in the higher, smaller branches and were comfortable being in the tree with us. They ate their share of the ripe fruit. Their babies chirped for food, and their parents sang along with our chatter.

When an unexpected wind blew, and storm clouds rolled in from the west and south, the dark gray frown of a squall line brought our swinging time to a halt. The shiny leaves danced and fluttered in the wind and caught the sun as it left us behind. Our birds balanced as branches swayed with the wind. They knew to find shelter soon.

We smelled the hint of sweet moisture which rode the air. It signaled us to run indoors. Mom called, “You guys need to come in the house, now.” Girls or boys, we were all guys to Mom. No more playing today. We knew the danger of strikes when in or near a tree during a storm.

When Mom drove us into the nearby town to get the mail, gas for the car, to school, or her hairdresser appointment, we saw some of our school friends had tire swings in their yards. The open tire looked uncomfortable. How do you sit

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across the sides without being pinched? Their swings weren’t designed to drive us to the flying heights we achieved with our own tree swing. The metal-framed swings on the school playground were practice sessions which helped us become better swingers in the wind. Too soon, we outgrew the tree swing, and it no longer occupied the focus of our daily routines as other activities crowded into our lives. It passed from our consciousness until one day the swing disappeared and became a childhood memory of joy and celebration that lived in the special compartments of our maturing minds. ♦

whenever it went faster. As it swung backwards, we bent our legs at the knee under the seat and leaned forward at the top of the arc. When it moved forward and downward, we extended the legs straight, leaned back at the waist nearly flat and pushed our bodies against the seat. Pumping harder and faster helped us gain a high, wide arc. Wind swooshed past our ears, into our faces, and through our clothes as we defied gravity. I felt weightless at the top of the world! If we wanted to land with a flourish, with tired legs, we leapt out of the slower-moving swing and landed on our feet with our arms wide and an enthusiastic “yay!” The tree limb groaned, popped, and flexed as the



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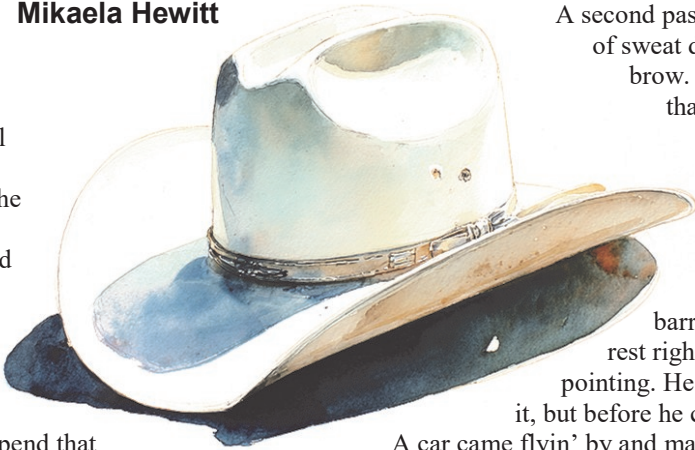
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# White Stetson

Mikaela Hewitt



Now I know there are many who say God doesn't do minor miracles. Many say He won't act unless it's a dire situation, like parting the Red Sea. Well, I'm here to say God performs miracles, both big and small. And I can prove it to you.

The story you are about to hear is true; believe every word of it. It hasn't been altered or hyperbolized. I'm just giving you the straight-up, honest-to-goodness truth.

Not so long ago, a cowboy named Marv strolled along the street, a marked spring in his steps. He was also walkin' a mite taller than usual. Why, you may ask? Well, it had to do with a certain hat perched atop his head.

Now, this was no ordinary hat. This was a brand

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spankin' new, beautiful white Stetson. Any cowpoke can tell you the white Stetson is something to be revered among country folk. Any hat that costs five hundred dollars is something to be held in awe, since most can't and won't spend that much on a hat. But, it's a fact, whoever has such a hat has good reason to sit a little taller in his saddle. Marv was no different. He wasn't riding a horse out on the range, but he stretched up as far as gravity would allow. He held his head high and jutted out his chin with pride. Nothing was going to ruin today, not with this hat crowning his head.

But God had other ideas. He knew He had to show ol' Marv He was in control, and He can do anything He pleases. I imagine the Father smilin' and rubbin' His hands together, just waitin' for the right moment to catch Marv's attention. The moment came. A big ol' gust of wind came up and took that hat right off Marv's head. Before you can say "hushpuppies," that Stetson had flown right across the four-lane road and landed on the other side.

For a moment, Marv just stood and watched that hat fly away, feeling helpless to do anything. Then he remembered something. He remembered he didn't serve a weak God; he served the God strong enough to form the universe. He served the God who held everything in His hands. So Marv marched right over to the curb. Looking at that hat with steel in his fierce blue eyes, he pointed to a spot on that curb and said, "You get back here now!"

A second passed. Marv felt a bit of sweat dotting his bare brow. But sure enough, that hat suddenly lifted up and hovered across the road, flying as easily as a butterfly on a calm spring day. It hopped over the barricade and came to rest right where Marv was pointing. He reached down to get it, but before he could...

A car came flyin' by and made that fancy hat flatter 'n a flapjack. But ol' Marv, he was so happy, he just didn't care. He knew God performs many miracles, and Marv was certain that, with the power of Jesus in us, nothing is impossible. So he laughed, picked up the hat, dusted it off as best he could, and shoved it back on his head.

So, if you ever see some cowboy wearing a white Stetson with a black streak across the front, be sure to ask him what things are impossible with God. I can tell you what his answer will be: nothing. ♦

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Richard B. Whitaker

# The Summer of '54

In the summer of 1954, I went with my dad while he worked for a month at a Utah resort running the trout pond. Driving our 1951 Ford 6-cylinder coupe, he estimated the drive from North Hollywood to Midway would be nearly 800 miles and take two days with a night spent in St. George, Utah.

His preparation was great. On the day we left, he hung a water filled canvas bag in front of the radiator, which helped cool the engine as we drove across the Nevada desert. My mom filled a large brown paper bag with food and he added a large thermos of water. With the car supplied, he tossed our suitcases into the trunk and we were off!

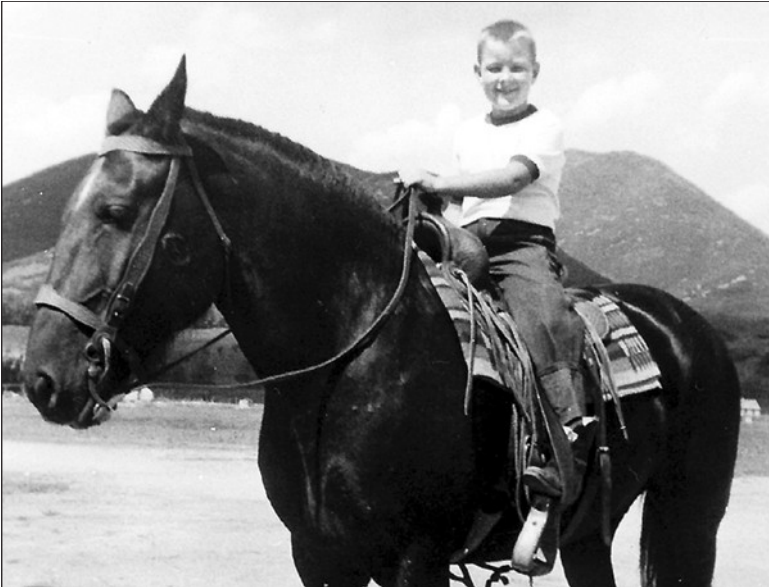
We left North Hollywood at 4 a.m. Since Freeways did not yet exist, we drove north on the two-lane Highway 6 to 138, then transitioned north to 66/91. When we arrived in Victorville, we stopped, filled the Ford with gas, and continued on the two-lane highway that would take us to Las Vegas.

While I slept many of the long miles across the desert, I awakened occasionally and was wide awake when we entered Las Vegas. Traveling down the narrow two-lane highway that would later become the Strip, we continued into downtown, found a gas station, and refilled the canvas water bag. The large thermometer attached to the side of a building read 110 degrees at 11 am!

When we got back into the car, Dad glanced over at me with a smile. "Our next stop is St. George. We'll spend the night there, leave early, and then I have a surprise for you." My eyes widened with excitement. "You're gonna let me drive?" I shouted. "Not at ten years old, I'm not!" He laughed. "It's something else."

I enjoying my time with dad, for it had never happened before like this, and unfortunately, spending that much time with him would never happen again.

We arrived in St. George by mid-afternoon. Dad found a small motel on St. George Boulevard and drove us to Dick's Café, where we had dinner. Since we had a few hours until dark, he asked me if I would like to see some of the pioneer buildings and the Mormon Temple.



We found the Temple and the old Tabernacle, and after some sightseeing, we called it a night.

We were up early the next morning, had breakfast at Dick's Café, and by 7:30 a.m., we were back on Highway 91. Then, dad sprung his surprise.

"We're near to two great National Monuments, Richard, Zion and Bryce Canyons. I thought we could drive through them. How does that sound?"

"Let's do it!" I exclaimed.

Pulling to the side of the road, he removed a neatly folded map of Utah from the glove compartment. Unfolding it, he spread it out against the steering wheel and studied it for a few minutes. Satisfied, he turned to me and said, "This should be fun!"

The drive to Zion took about 90 minutes. At the entrance, the road suddenly climbed. Zion was beautiful, and we met very few cars. We drove a couple of hours to Bryce National Park. Dad turned to me and as he pulled the Ford to the top of the first steep incline and said, "Why don't we see how far we can coast before the car stops?"

I cheered him onward. With the sun high in the sky, dad put the gearshift in Neutral and down the mountain we rolled. With the windows down, laughter filled the car as we traveled rapidly down the steep side of one mountain, around its curves, and struggled as we climbed up the next hill.

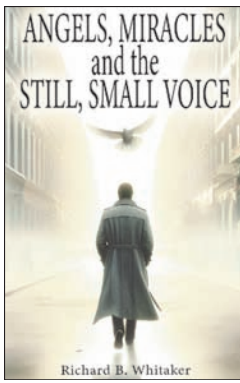
Whenever the Ford slowed, Dad would begin rocking back and forth in his seat in a comical effort designed to give us more momentum. Following his lead, and thinking it actually helped, I placed my hands on the dashboard and rocked while laughing gleefully. When we reached the top of the mountain, I would shout, "We made it, Dad! We made it!"

As we exited Bryce, dad pulled to the side of the road, checked the odometer, and asked, "Richard, do you know how far we coasted Seventeen miles, son! Seventeen miles!"

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July passed quickly at the Homestead Resort. While my dad and I slept in the old fishing shack at the far end of the back pasture, on a lumpy bed, each day brought fresh adventures. Dad's job was to manage the well-stocked trout pond, which offered hotel guests an opportunity to fish for their dinner. Mine was to explore and have fun. Both of which I did very well. Every morning, we would wake early and stroll through the pasture to the resort. Careful not to disturb any early rising guests, we quietly slipped into the swimming pool dressing rooms to shower and prepare for the day.

We ate breakfast seated at the 1950s style soda fountain and then Dad would walk back down to the pond. I saw what mischief I could get up to, which usually began with me walking to the horse corral, where I selected one of the smaller horses for a ride. After lunch, I usually went swimming in one of the resort swimming pools; the largest being a regular, mildly heated swimming pool, and the smaller a mineral rich, hot water pool filled with 95-degree water from the large hot pot crater on the property.

Every Friday night, the resort hosted a hayride for the family and guests. When the

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large flatbed wagon pulled by two horses arrived at the campfire, everyone would climb down, brush off the hay and straw and sit around the blazing flames, singing and listening to ghost stories told by Uncles Scott and Berlin Whitaker. Dad would join in the entertainment and play the tuba as part of the musical group formed to accompany the singing.

The weeks passed quickly. Before I knew it, we had to leave. Grateful for the experience, we said our goodbyes, and dad drove straight home, stopping only when needed. What about me? I slept the entire time! Although 70 years have passed, I continue to be grateful for that wonderful month with dad during the summer of '54! ♦



Don Boyer

# On Being The Adult

In 1977, I was 35 years old with a wife and three children; Barbara (11), Chris (9), and Katie (2). The year before, California school kids started skateboarding in empty swimming pools and videos were appearing on T.V. My older children wanted one.

In those days, there were no helmets, no padding and no rules. You just bought a board and experimented. So, I did. I bought a reasonably priced one for my older children so they could join in the fun.

I considered myself a good father, one who took part with my children when I could. My wife, concerned about the purchase, voted against the purchase, but I swore to her I'd supervise. My children were cautious. Putting one foot on the board and shoving off with the other, they coasted a few feet, then jumped off. I kept telling them to trust their balance and stay on. Still, they were careful and went only a small distance. I had seen the videos and knew how it should be done.

"Let me try," I said. Our sidewalk was on a small slope in a subdivision, still under construction. I pointed the board down the slope and hopped on with both feet. I found balancing easy as the board slowly gained momentum. The cool breeze caressed my face. It felt wonderful.

After thirty feet of travel, picking up a good speed on the board, one wheel encountered a tiny piece of gravel. At this stage of skateboard development, new materials were being developed for the wheels to accommodate tiny obstacles such as this one. My skateboard didn't have that technology. My wheel jammed, and the board slammed to a sudden halt. I tumbled headfirst toward the concrete sidewalk.

I like to think I have a cool head in an emergency. Observing the sidewalk approaching rapidly, I tried to protect my head and stuck out my left hand to absorb the impact. And it did a remarkable job of it as I tumbled onto the grass.

The human skeleton has 206 bones. Of those bones, 27 are in each wrist, 8 of which are carpal bones between the fingers and the arm. This group allows the mobility of the wrist and strength of the hand. One is called the Trapezium. It allows the stability and movement of the thumb. The fall broke mine.

The pain started slowly but grew at an exponential rate. We returned to the house with me hugging my left arm to my chest. As we entered the door, my wife saw my grim face and immediately examined our children for cuts and bruises. "No," I said, "It's my thumb."

Bones need to heal, even tiny ones. But if I wanted my thumb and wrist to work properly, I couldn't move it. This meant that I had to wear a full arm cast from my shoulder to my wrist for two months. My wife warned me not to go on the skateboard wearing the cast. My first thought was, *How did she know what I was thinking?* ♦

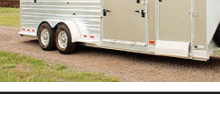


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Don't spend six hours on something that only improves it 1%.  
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Find what you love doing and *don't* monetize it. ♦

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THE WEST OF YESTER-YEAR By Rachel Kovaciny

# A Broken Heart and a Brave Journey: *The Life of Chief Joseph*

Can you recall any quotations said by famous Native American leaders during the days of Western Expansion? I have a hunch a significant number of readers will come up with this: “I will fight no more forever.”

If you were paying good attention to your American History classes back during school, you might even remember Chief Joseph, leader of the Wallowa band of the Nez Perce tribe, said it. But do you know when and why?

Those six words are the end of a speech Chief Joseph gave on October 5, 1877, when he and his followers finally surrendered after a desperate, months-long bid for freedom. A soldier wrote down the English translation for his speech that day. In some ways, Chief Joseph’s whole life had been preparing him for that moment.

Born in 1840 in the traditional Wallowa homeland, which is now part of Oregon, Chief Joseph’s Nez Perce name at birth was Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, but the Reverend Henry H. Spalding, a missionary who had been ministering to the Nez Perce for four years and whom the tribe liked and respected, called him Joseph. The Nez Perce had maintained friendly and cordial relations with white settlers since the Lewis and Clark expedition contacted them over thirty years earlier.

Joseph spent a goodly portion of his childhood at missions operated by white missionaries, while also learning the traditional ways of his people. An important Nez Perce leader, his father got deeply involved in keeping the interactions peaceful and cooperative between the native and white people. In 1855, he and other tribal leaders signed a treaty with the U. S. government that guaranteed their people would keep the lands where they traditionally hunted, fished, and lived. The Nez Perce were nomadic, and the Wallowa band roamed in and around a fertile area now known as Wallowa Valley.

Many of the Nez Perce leaders rejected a second treaty in 1863, but the U.S. government enforced it anyway. It drastically reduced the land available to the tribe, leading to inevitable trouble when more white settlers entered the area. When Joseph became chief of the Wallowa band in the 1870s, relations between the Nez Perce and white officials were volatile. President Grant briefly agreed in 1873 to let them return to the Wallowa Valley, but others rescinded the permission before long. In the spring of 1877, they were told they must move immediately to a reservation in Idaho where most of the other Nez Perce bands now lived.

Chief Joseph faced a fearsome choice. Should he leave the valley his people had called home for generations? Fight against the soldiers and try to win the right to remain on his band’s ancestral land? Or flee to Canada, where Sitting Bull and the Lakota people lived now in relative freedom?

Rather than a great warrior or military tactician, Chief Joseph was a wise leader

valued for his love of his people and their traditions, his good counsel, and his savvy way of dealing with friend and foe alike. His people trusted him, and they proved it by following him on a long and treacherous journey. Over 800 men, women, and

children from the Wallowas and a neighboring Palouse band followed him out of Oregon and eastward across what is now Montana. They were hard-pressed to evade the pursuing soldiers led by General O. O. Howard, but the Nez Perce proved skillful in fending off their would-be captors. Because of the many skirmishes and minor battles they fought along the way, their 1,200-mile journey became known as the Nez Perce War.

In October, the soldiers trapped Chief Joseph and his followers in Montana, a mere forty miles short of their goal of the Canadian border and freedom. Rather than stand and fight yet again, Chief Joseph preserved what remained of his people and their proud heritage by surrendering. Although promised he and his people could join the rest of the Nez Perce in Idaho, Chief Joseph was considered too



dangerous to be reunited with his tribe. He and his followers were taken first to Kansas, then moved to Oklahoma.

Chief Joseph never stopped advocating for his people and even met with President Hayes in 1879 to plead for better treatment and a return to their homeland. In 1885, they were taken back to the Pacific Northwest, where they settled on a reservation in Washington State. Despite a trip in 1903 to Washington, DC, where he met with President Theodore Roosevelt, Chief Joseph could not convince governmental authorities to either let his people rejoin the rest of the Nez Perce in Idaho or return to Wallowa Valley. He died on the reservation in Washington in 1904 at only 64. His doctor stated that Chief Joseph had died of a broken heart.

In 1877, when he surrendered his rifle to General Howard, Chief Joseph made his most-famous speech, which ended with: “It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people—some of them—have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they

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are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find; maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever!” (source: americanrhetoric.com)

Even that small sample of Chief Joseph’s quality of leadership gives us a good idea of why hundreds of people of all ages would follow him into the unknown, and why we still remember some of his words to this day. ♦

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# SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

For a complete schedule visit [www.elbertcountyfair.com](http://www.elbertcountyfair.com)

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE UNLESS DESIGNATED AS TICKET REQUIRED AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ATTEND

## LIVESTOCK SHOWS:

Market Lambs- Tuesday, July 29th 6 PM  
Market Goats- Wednesday, July 30th 2 PM  
Market Hogs- Wednesday, July 30th 6 PM  
Market Beef- Thursday, July 31st 4 PM  
Poultry Show- Friday, August 1st 8 AM

## SATURDAY, JULY 26th

8 AM 4-H Dog Show; Ag Building  
10 AM Mountain States Highland Cattle Show, Horse Pavilion  
5 PM 4-H Fashion Revue Public Showcase, Kiddie Style Show and Awards; Fellowship Hall  
6 PM Centennial Farm and Ranches Banquet; Exhibit Building (\$50 pre-purchased tickets required, visit the website to buy)  
6 PM—9 PM Bubble Tower, kids of all ages welcome, Kiddie Corral/Carnival Area  
7 PM Young Gun Rodeo, Main Arena  
FREE EVENT featuring Mutton Busting, Mini Broncs, Mini Bulls, Youth Barrel Racing  
8 PM Opening Night Concert/Dance featuring The Walker Williams Band; Horse Pavilion area  
9 PM Town of Kiowa Fireworks Show (come for the free Young Guns Rodeo, stay for the live music then catch the fireworks that will be booming at dark on the North end of the Elbert County Fair Grounds. All events free!)



## SUNDAY, JULY 27th

8 AM—3 PM 4-H Breeding Shows

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 30th

6:30 PM 5 Flat Productions Team Roping, Main Arena

## THURSDAY, JULY 31st

8 AM—6:30 PM 4-H and Open Class General Exhibits Open; Ag Building  
5 PM Open Gymkhana, Main Arena

## FRIDAY, AUGUST 1st

8 AM—6:30 PM 4-H and Open Class General Exhibits Open; Ag Building  
10:30 AM Master Gardeners' Education Presentation; Ag Building Conference Room  
1:30 PM Master Gardeners' Education Presentation; Ag Building Conference Room  
4 PM Round Robin Showmanship Contest, Main Arena  
4 PM-8 PM Kiddie Corral OPEN; Carnival Area (free for all!)  
4 PM-9 PM The Mercantile Shopping OPEN; Exhibit Building  
6 PM Pet Animal Contest; Horse Pavilion  
6 PM Horse Pull; Main Arena  
7 PM Horseshoe Tournament; Warm-Up Arena (registration begins on-site at 6 PM or pre-register via website )



FOR SCHEDULE, TICKETS AND TO LEARN MORE PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE!

# JR. LIVESTOCK MARKET SALE

## SUPPORT THE YOUTH! BE A BUYER.

Join us Saturday, Aug 2nd as our hard working youth are on showcase; by bidding, you encourage these future leaders!  
If you're unable to attend in person, visit [stockshowactions.com/auctions/2413-elbertcounty-fair-co](http://stockshowactions.com/auctions/2413-elbertcounty-fair-co)

Pre-Sale BBQ 11 AM  
(buyer and bidder info available)

Auction begins at 1 PM



(FRIDAY EVENTS CONTINUED)  
**8 PM Friday night concert** featuring WMW Band, Horse Pavilion Area  
**8:30 PM - 11:30 PM Youth Fair Dance**; South Pavilion— \$5 per person (Sponsored by the 4-H Youth Council)

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 2nd**  
**8 AM—4 PM Elbert County Health Fair**, Health Dept Building North End Grounds (free and low-cost health screenings and physicals)

**8 AM—6:30 PM 4-H and Open Class General Exhibits OPEN** (Ag Building)  
**9 AM Road Grader Rodeo**, Warm-Up Arena  
**9 AM—9 PM The Mercantile Shopping Open**, Exhibit Building  
**9:30 AM Master Gardner’s Education Presentation**, Ag Building Conference Room  
**10 AM—8 PM Kiddie Corral Open** featuring Small Rides, Petting Zoo, Bouncy House, Giant Slide, Trackless Train, Face Painting. **FREE OF CHARGE**. Kiddie Corral Area/ Carnival Area  
**11 AM EDCLA Barbecue**, Horse Pavilion (meal ticket purchase required)  
**11 AM—1 PM Market Sale Office OPEN**  
Want to buy at the Junior Market Sale? Get your bidder number, get more information, etc. Located under the tent near the Exhibit Building  
**11 AM—2 PM Touch a Truck for Kids**, South of Kiddie Corral/Carnival Area. Climb on the big equipment, get prizes!  
**1 PM Junior Market Sale**, Horse Pavilion  
**5 PM Bulls, Broncs & Buckaroos Rodeo**, Main Arena  
Free event featuring Mini Bull Riding, Mutton Busting, Bronc and Bull Riding (Mutton Busters must pre-register, pay, and fill out waiver on the fair website)  
**8 PM BLACKHAWK Concert**, Main Arena stage (ticket required to enter arena)

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 3RD**  
**8 AM Cowboy Church**, Horse Pavilion (live music, non-denominational, all welcome)  
**8 AM—2 PM 4-H and Open Class General Exhibits OPEN**, Ag Building  
**9 AM—4 PM The Mercantile Open**, Exhibit Building  
**11 AM High Plains Fiddle Fest**, Open Pavilion  
**11 AM Elbert County Fair Parade**: begins downtown Kiowa, ends in front of the Main Arena Grandstands (pre-entry required). Parade is free to spectators along route and entry is free. See events tab under Elbert County Fair Parade on our website for more info.  
**12 Noon—3 PM Kiddie Corral Open** featuring Small Rides, Bouncy House, Giant slide, Trackless Train. **FREE** of charge. Carnival Area  
**12 Noon Garden Tractor Pull**, Warm-up Arena  
**12:30 PM Mutton Bustin’, Kid’s Races and Egg Toss**, Main Arena (Mutton Busters must pre-register, pay and fill out waiver at elbertcountyfair.com)  
**12:30 PM—3 PM Elbert County Fair Car Show**, Fellowship Hall Parking Lot  
**2 PM Ranch Rodeo Calcutta**, Main Arena  
**3 PM Ranch Rodeo**, Main Arena (A don’t miss event to end the fair featuring wild cow milking, team doctoring, trailer loading, etc.)

SEE YOU AT THE FAIR!





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# LIVE IN CONCERT

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 2ND

### 8:00 PM



[www.elbertcountyfair.com](http://www.elbertcountyfair.com)

General admission tickets are only \$10 online or sold on site at the fair.



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## Saturday, July 26, 2025

### ELBERT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS EXHIBIT HALL

Doors open at 6:00PM | Banquet begins at 6:30PM  
Full four-course meal with beef entrée ~ \$50 a plate.

Across the nation, family farms and ranches are disappearing at an alarming rate. The contributions of Elbert County’s farming and ranching families have withstood the pressures of growth, changes in farming methods, storms and drought, and economic conditions to preserve these important pieces of our state and county’s history. Join us as we recognize these amazing families who are preserving our heritage!

For more information go to [www.ElbertCountyFair.com](http://www.ElbertCountyFair.com)



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# WELCOME TO THE



*The best 8 days of the summer are almost here!*

**I hope you will join us in Kiowa for the annual Elbert County Fair July 26th through August 3rd, 2025!**

Whether you never miss the annual county fair or this will be your first time attending, we welcome you because there is truly something for everyone! **FREE ADMISSION and FREE PARKING** always! What a great family-friendly event.

The fair's new website, [elbertcountyfair.com](http://elbertcountyfair.com), has a full schedule, lots of information and is where you can buy tickets to special events.

We will open with a full day of fun on Saturday, July 26th with something to see and do all day long before the night ends with the Town of Kiowa's free fireworks show. The week ahead is full of livestock shows, food and fun. The horse pull is a favorite among attendees on Friday night, August 1st, or maybe the family watches those majestic giants while you jump



into the horseshoe tournament. Let's talk about Saturday, August 2nd; the schedule is full but with so much to do, just come spend the day with us! Parents and kids alike love the free Kiddie Coral featuring small rides, petting zoo, trackless train and face painting; that is open from 10 AM until 8 PM.

The Junior Market Sale is a blast where buyers invest in the future of our hard-working youth; if you've never taken part and would like to buy at the auction join us at 11 AM for the pre-sale BBQ and we'll get you ready to bid at 1 PM. We will welcome Blackhawk in concert on the main arena stage on Saturday night right after the free Bulls, Broncs and Buckaroos rodeo; tickets bought ahead of time for Blackhawk are only \$10 but should only be purchased through [elbertcountyfair.com](http://elbertcountyfair.com). Sunday, August 3rd is a great day to join us for Cowboy Church to start the morning, catch the Fair Parade and enjoy an afternoon of

Mutton Busting and the wild and popular Ranch Rodeo.

Check the website for all things Elbert County Fair; this is where you will find everything you need to plan your visit, sign up



for things like Mutton Busting and where you can buy tickets for Blackhawk in concert, Sips and Spurs-A Ladies Night Out, and the Centennial Farms and Ranches Banquet.

If it isn't ticket required, it's **FREE!**

A huge **THANK YOU** to all of our generous fair sponsors and our volunteers. The Elbert County Fair hopes everyone will mark their calendars and join us for the 91st Annual Elbert County Fair in Kiowa!

Sincerely,  
Tammi Schneider Elbert County Fair Board

## WE ARE LIVE...

Check out the new [www.elbertcountyfair.com](http://www.elbertcountyfair.com)  
Purchase tickets and get excited about the 2025 Elbert County Fair

# DON'T MISS THESE TWO FUN EVENTS!

GET **READY** FOR A **SPECTACULAR** EVENING!



## Sips & Spurs

Friday, July 25 7 PM

Tickets Required.

All Proceeds Benefit the Elbert County Fair Foundation

## FREE Fireworks Show

Saturday, July 26



This year's fireworks show promises to light up the country sky with dazzling colors and patterns. It's the perfect way to cap off a day of food, fun, and festivities with family and friends.

Bring your lawn chairs and blankets, and find a cozy spot on the fairgrounds to enjoy the show. The fireworks will be visible from various points around the fair, but arriving early will ensure you get a prime viewing location.

## Round up your girls for a night of fashion, fun, and Western charm!

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Western vendors. It's the ultimate cowgirl experience—boots, bling, and all!



# Firecrackers

The subject of fireworks enters easily into every conversation this time of year. Either I'm talking about the fireworks ban in my county and/or city, or am reminiscing about years gone by where we shot off firecrackers with reckless abandon. Not everyone could live in a place where we had fireworks displays in our backyard every evening until we ran out of them—at least that's how I recall the situation when I was young, several lifetimes ago.

A group of writers I hang out with were discussing fireworks at our regular Tuesday class. Only two of them remembered the Black Snakes. I said, "After the July Fourth celebration, the number of ugly black spots on the sidewalks in front of your house was like a badge of honor. The more, the better."

Someone in our group Googled Black Snakes and found photos of the process before, during, and after. I don't know why we got such a kick out of lighting those small black buttons and watching them burn and grow into long snaky ashes, only to have the wind come along and blow them hither and yon.

As our conversation continued, I asked if we all had had the experience of burning our hands on sparklers. Oh, yes, everyone remarked.



We concluded there would be few people alive who hadn't burned their hands at least once having fun with sparklers,

firecrackers and other fireworks on Independence Day. It's a given.

My dad loved fireworks. He made sure we had a big box of them every Fourth of July. No matter where we were, we shot off every single one before the day ended. We might be on a road trip through the Snowy Mountains of Wyoming, traveling across Nebraska to attend our annual reunion in the Hughes cabin on the Little

Blue River near Seward, or enjoying the holiday with our cousins at the nearby lake. It didn't matter: I considered fireworks the best part of the day. Maybe even the entire year.

When we were old enough to drive, I went with some of my high school classmates at Sheep Creek. We lit and set off hundreds of Black Cats, holding onto them as long as we could before pitching them into the water. We wanted them to explode just before they hit the water. What a dangerous game! It sounds like something kids would dream up, doesn't it? It's a wonder we all aren't missing a few fingers!

Cherry bombs were the biggest, baddest fireworks we could buy. Invariably someone bought enough to have some left over for use throughout the year. Someone lit a cherry bomb and threw it down the trash chute in my three-story dorm on the campus at Teacher's College. It made the loudest

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boom I ever heard. I swear it shook the building! We were all in trouble for a long time after that prank, but we never forgot it!

I'm blessed to have witnessed in person some famous fireworks displays, including one in Washington, D.C.. Baseball fields often have a fireworks display for those attending after the game ends. I've seen many of those. Country Clubs in most cities share a fireworks display with their neighbors on Independence Day. If I'm alone at home on July 4, I enjoy watching A Capital Fourth on PBS. That's been going on for years. The fireworks display just keeps getting better and better, so sophisticated and complex.

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Today, we're satisfied with the local fireworks shows we can see from our front porches. It's a safe way to celebrate our freedom compared to many years ago when Dad bought the big box of fireworks, brought it home, and we salivated over it until July 4 came roaring in, when we dove into the box and started the show. In an expression of the American rebellious spirit, some of our neighbors ignore the burn ban and Roman candles and other sky rockets come from all directions many evenings before the actual holiday.

Our nation's independence gives us a good cause to celebrate, don't you think? ♦

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# My Grandma's Quilts

Marti French

As I pulled out the bag of fabric scraps to get my granddaughter started on her first quilt, I recalled my first time at about the same age.

We lived near my grandparents' farm, an original Kansas homestead my ancestors settled several generations ago. The demands of farming kept us busy, but my grandma took time in the afternoon to work on her quilt project. When I got old enough to be taught, she took me to the attic, where she had her quilt frame set up along with trunks full of fabrics and supplies. We went through dresses from my younger days and cut some of these into four-inch squares. She gave me a large needle to practice with and a thimble.

We'd spend our afternoons in the attic quilting. After a while, my interest waned, and I played with the dress-up clothes and props: an old wheelchair, a RCA Victrola with records, a discarded violin, a nice and bouncy featherbed, and other treasures for a six-year-old to discover. Grandma told me stories about growing up with three brothers and showed me a special trunk she proudly kept her mother's quilts in. She treasured these over the years, keeping them enclosed in the dome-topped trunk. Some were ornate and others plain, but they were all hand pieced and quilted.

My grandma had a Singer sewing machine, so she would piece the quilt pieces together on it. The fabric pieces were all laid out in order on a feather bed in a spare bedroom off the kitchen where she set up her Singer, handy for her to take brief breaks from kitchen duty to sew a few squares together.

Once the pieces were sewn together and nicely pressed, she spread the coverlet over the batting and backing on her huge dining room table. She spent days hand-basting the layers together. Once she completed that tedious task, we could go to the attic and her frame. That was my favorite place to spend afternoons, regardless of it being summer or winter. Grandma made the tiniest stitches in her quilts.

I tried to make mine as small as hers, but could never quite get them small enough. She would encourage me and remind me I had years of practice ahead to work on my stitches. I slowly but surely graduated to smaller needles, so my stitches improved, becoming much smaller.

When I turned ten, she began a quilt for me of ladies with parasols. We had seen the pattern in one of her magazines. The dresses and parasols were made of fabrics from my discarded clothing. There was enough fabric pieces leftover that she made a second quilt (the mysteries of life: I have two daughters to pass these two quilts down to). This remained my favorite quilt for decades. When I became an adult and no longer had one or the other as a cover on my bed, I hung one on a wall in my sewing room.

The day we started working on "our" Wedding Ring Quilt coincided with my discovery of her wedding dress in the back of a closet. She let me play dress up in it as long as I promised to be careful. We laughed a lot during that winter. She'd quilt around the tiny squares in a circular motion while I put on her wedding dress and sit nearby watching, occasionally getting up to wind the Victrola and dance around, whirling the skirts of the over-long dress and singing along to the music.

One time, Grandma and I drove into town to shop for fabric. Until then, she only used scraps to make quilts. We talked all the way about our color choices and whom we would give the quilt to when we finished it. Even though she did all the work while I watched or kept her company, she always called the finished quilt "ours." We decided on pink and chose several prints and a solid color.

We incorporated these fabrics in with on-hand fabric scraps to make a cheery, bright quilt and entered it in the County Fair that fall. I don't recall if we won or not, but remember the pride of seeing it hanging on the wall of a booth for all to see. We gave it to my mom and dad for their anniversary.

Grandma passed away before I became an adult, but her love of quilting stayed with me. I didn't get interested in the craft until my

thirties, but have been doing it ever since. I feel her spirit with me as I stitch my creations. I'm sure she would be proud of my tiny stitches. She'd be even prouder to know my daughters and granddaughters are all quilters as well.



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I have become the custodian of Grandma's precious quilts. Rather than store them in a dark trunk and deprive them of the love of family, we use them. They are draped on sofa backs for easy access during the winter months for cuddling to keep warm or stacked and hung in various spots in our home. It's such a comfort to look upon one as I'm passing through a room or wrapping up with one while reading a book or watching television, knowing that someone put so much time and love into each one, stitch by stitch. "Our" Wedding Ring Quilt hangs in our family room, admired by all. When I glance up at it, I recall a young girl swirling in a wedding gown among the attic decor.

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Now I share with my granddaughter the love of quilting. She loses interest in the process, but stays nearby watching me make tiny stitches and talking with me. She asks to come over to my house so we can work on "our" quilt projects just as I did with my grandma. ♦

**Dr. Larry J. O'Neill,**  
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# Mrs. Brown's Revenge

Avis Jaenson

When I was twelve, going on stupid, in a small town with not much to do on the weekends, we had to invent our own fun. Our usual game of ditch-em proved dull after we ran out of places to hide and since none of us were yet driving, we searched for new territories to explore. That's how we wound up in Ophelia Brown's yard, the most beautiful, organized garden on one half-acre we'd ever seen. Her name didn't do her green thumb justice. I climbed over the fence after the other kids. They were seasoned in skulking around the neighborhood, but as the newbie to their group, I felt if I said anything, I'd be left out of future fun. I followed, not thinking of the ramifications of trespassing. My family had raised us with good principles; I didn't think we were violating any Biblical no-noes by just exploring her yard.

We passed between row after row of broccoli, cabbage, tomatoes, corn, and other delights. She had divided the area into large squares, each labeled. I had the urge to leave, like being a trespasser in a church. The others motioned me over to a patch with tall, green fronds waving in the cool night breeze. I didn't recognize what grew there until Jack pulled up one plant. He whispered it was an onion and when he took a big bite, we all pulled one and munched on the sweetest yellow onion this side of heaven. It made my stomach burn, so I threw mine away.



onions? They paid the fines, and we went home.

The next day was one of the most humiliating of my young life. We all were taken over to Mrs. Brown's house to pay for our rude invasion of her garden. It was decided she would not press charges for trespass and theft if we would weed, water, pick and pack her vegetables for the farmers' market in town.

We worked all month, taking care of that garden and learning about growing fine vegetables on a small plot of land. At first we grumbled, but when reminded that the alternative involved the county juvenile detention center, we learned to keep our mouths shut. After our time served at hard labor (I'm not exaggerating), Mrs. Brown thanked us for helping her harvest her crops and gave each of us a nice bag of assorted vegetables to take home. She also warned us she didn't want to see any of us again as long as we lived. The others talked badly about the "eccentric" old lady but all agreed we had dodged a bullet by not having to go to Juvie.

The next school year went by quick and we were let out for summer vacation. Then, something strange happened: I missed working in the garden. I walked past Mrs. Brown's house twice, then took a chance and walked up to her front door. Her Basset Hound bayed, and she came around the side of the house. "Thought I told you kids never to come 'round here again!" She clung to a rusted shovel as she waited for me to answer.

"Yes, ma'am, you did, but something happened to me when I worked for you last summer," I said as she stood there with a puzzled look on her face. "I found myself daydreaming about the wonderful smell of the soil and how great the fresh veggies tasted. You can't find produce like this anywhere." I was really hoping she didn't use that shovel to hit me over the head.

She asked, "What's your point?"

"If I couldn't work in your garden this summer, I'd have an empty vacation. If you'd let me, I'd like to come for however many days a week you'd be needing me." I was ready to run out of the yard if she raised

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For the next three months, I worked like a dog for her all the while listening to her teach me about natural, organic farming and every once in a while, I'd glimpse her standing in the kitchen doorway with the hint of a smile on her face. I guess that was her revenge, in a way. I may have invaded her garden, but her garden made its way into my heart. Now, when I get my garden ready each spring, I smile and think of all that "free" training I got from that amazing lady with the green thumb. ♦

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We had only begun exploring the other veggies when several bright flood lights came on! I had seen movies about prisons and prison breaks and there we were in the middle of getting caught by the law. We ran right past old lady Brown, who yelled obscenities at us, she in her nightgown and we dressed in pure terror. We ran through the gates into the front yard where the local sheriff's deputies awaited.

We were handcuffed and loaded into vehicles, then taken to the county office and holding area while our parents were called. We saw the officers laughing and waving their hands in front of their faces as if they had rounded up a group of skunks instead of scared kids. When our parents arrived, they were puzzled at why we got into trouble over a bunch of



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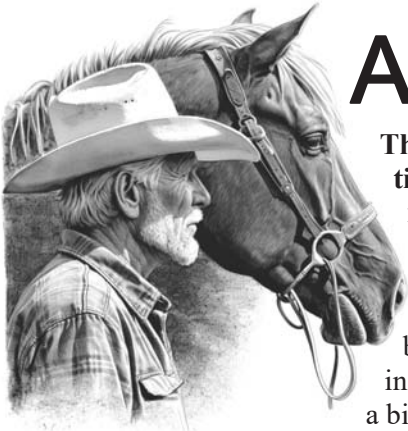
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# A Bit of Dustin'

Prairie Parson

There comes a time in a man's life when he needs to bite the bullet and get in there and do a bit of Dustin'. If you're anything

like me, you know your office can get pretty bad before you even notice the mess it's in. My wife was helpin' me with some things the other day and she said, "Did you realize you have toner all over your printer?" Course I noticed. I'm not blind; just didn't count it as somethin' important to clean up is all. I don't know about you, but I can find five hundred things to do that help me put off Dustin' my office. There's somethin' creepy about findin' a cleanin' rag and puttin' it to work. I got other things to do. My wife rarely sets foot in my office. Don't know why, but I wish she'd get the cleanin' rag

out and help me out a little. Most of it is just dust, after all... except, of course, the toner all over my printer. Well, she wiped off the printer that day and it looked so much better I couldn't help notice the rest of the desk. So, I bit the bullet and went for a rag. When I was all done it seemed to me I'd just worked a miracle. The same piles of papers were there but the dust was gone and somehow it reminded me of putting' a noisy kid down for a nap. I could breathe deep and feel in charge. The office in my home is not the only part of my life that gets dusty. You might think, bein' a pastor and all, that my Bible never gets dusty. Well, you're right... physical dust rarely bothers it, but I can get into the habit real quick of just readin' for the sake of a sermon, forgettin' I'm in need of some truth myself. My recreation time can get a little dusty, too. Sometimes I go from service to service or home to home, givin' givin' and givin' some more when I need to take my wife and head for the hills for a few days, or just turn off the phone and lay on the couch for a while.



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My boots get dusty, too, but it's house rather than road dust. It's easier to hop in the truck and head down the lane for the mail when I need a good old-fashioned walk to keep my heart and my lungs happy. Goin' for a walk without any noise helps me learn to listen to God's voice. How about you? Have you dusted off that Bible, your relationship with your wife, your recreation time, and gone for an old-fashioned walk? It's never too late to do a bit of Dustin'. You might be surprised how good it makes you feel. ♦

## Ima Klutz

# When There's a Bear in Your Tent

My husband, Wilbur, has been touchy lately, so when he suggested a camping trip, I agreed, even though I hate camping. I'm a bit slow, so Wilbur was getting to be quite a bear by the time I got ready to go. Junior was even mad at me, but I decided long ago life is too short to spend it on being mad, so I didn't let it bother me. There are all sorts of things women have to do before leaving for the weekend. Men just don't seem to understand. They throw any old thing into the car and what they forget, they figure they didn't need. Me, I make an effort to be on top of things, which is where I usually end up because the last one in the car has to sit on the stuff in the back seat of our station wagon. When Wilbur yelled out, "Seat belts!" it took me twenty minutes to find one. By then, he really was a bear. I even heard him mumble something about leaving the old bag at home, but I wasn't sure which one he meant. All our bags are in the same shape.



Three hours after we left, Wilbur asked for a Coke from the cooler. I said, "Sure, Hon," and tried to find it. Finally I ventured, "Wilbur, darling, I think we must have left it home because I can't find it." With that, my usually mild-mannered husband blew a gasket. I didn't know a Coke meant so much. He informed me he had put it in himself and it had to be there. His ears were bright red. As I searched again, I remembered sitting it on the ground outside the car (temporarily) so I could arrange my box of novels in the back seat. I opened my mouth to tell Wilbur, but thought better of it. "Wilbur, honey, it doesn't seem to be here. Couldn't we just stop somewhere and buy a Coke? Your ears are bright red, honey. I don't want you having a heart attack over a Coke." He growled something I couldn't hear, turned off the highway, and drove to a small town called Bear

Waller. An appropriate name. We stopped at a little store on the main street and by the time Wilbur came back out to the car, he was smiling. He introduced us to the proprietor. Mr. Winchell seemed to be a friendly sort and invited us to stay at the local camping grounds. He said it was off the beaten track, but clean and restful. Wilbur said something about it wouldn't be when they unloaded Ima, but I let it pass. What did he mean by

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that? He said it might be a good idea to be close to a store since he wasn't sure how much food we'd put in the car. I just smiled. Mr. Winchell reminded me of donuts, so while he gave Wilbur directions to the campground, I hurried in and bought enough to last me the entire weekend. Wilbur reminded me I was on a diet. I got in the car and pretended not to hear. We got lost and two hours later, were back at the little store. Wilbur sent me in for directions. I asked Mr. Winchell to write them down while I bought another box of donuts. When we finally got to the campground, I started unloading the car. Wilbur told me to leave it until later because he wanted to go to the lake. I preferred setting up the tent to being with him, so I said as sweetly as I could, "No, thanks, sugar plum. I'll just unload the car, put up the tent, and fix some scrambled eggs. You and Junior go down to the lake and have a good time." I have never been very good at setting up the tent, but I've had a lot of practice. It only took me an hour this time. After I finished, I carried the rest of the donuts into the tent and hid them under my sleeping bag. I was just getting a fire started and putting the eggs on to cook when I heard the boys come back. I kept up a steady conversation, but all I could get out of them were grunts. Boy, I thought, they are a couple of grouches! Then I heard a growl. My stomach tightened. I turned around. The rear end of a huge brown bear stuck out of our tent! He was making short work of my donuts

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# Life Lessons from my Dogs

Angie Ulrich

Pets bring love, laughter, and joys into our lives and I feel they can teach us things. There have been three dogs that have been a part of my life so far, and here are some life lessons I have learned from each.

In my teens, my family got a spoiled dachshund named Roxie. She adored my brother and me, and it proved love bonds with animals can be very strong. She barked until she got whatever she wanted. Even though we found it annoying, it showed me the benefit of being persistent in life. She also showed me you should do what you're made to do. Dachshunds are champion diggers, and she did her fair share, whether it was in the yard, digging through and opening any wrapped gifts, or trying to dig herself out of a room (when I had wanted her to stay put for just an hour while I left... the carpet did not fair well in that decision).

The second pup, named Maggie, came after my husband and I purchased our first home after being married for two years. This Dalmatian/coon hound mix showed us how 'green' we were for parenthood. She would push the limits every time. We would learn that

it's important to have some sort of order in control in daily life in being parents. She filled a big void for loving company while my husband traveled a lot for work, and she became a best friend for our firstborn, who came a few years later. Maggie taught me the importance of laughter and remaining humble. She pulled many items out of the trash or find underwear somewhere and wrestle it around her head every time we had company. From her, I learned the importance of exercise and it helped me be self disciplined in this area. She had the longest legs that could swipe food products off the back of counters, and the most pointed elbows that woke us up when she stretched, taking up most of a queen sized bed. She also taught us about making hard decisions, when something changes and we can't continue on our path together.

Our third dog, Callie, was one of those 'once in a lifetime' dogs. Smart and affectionate, she loved life and all the people she met. We had two kids under two and I thought my husband was a little crazy to want to bring a puppy home



from the way he acted. I ran for the nearest tree, jumped up, and grabbed the lowest branch. The next thing I knew, I was flat on my back on the ground with the branch in my hand. The bear backed out of the tent. He looked about as mad as Wilbur. I scrambled up a sturdier tree and yelled for my husband. After an inspection of the campsite and the rest of our food, the bear ambled off. No way was I getting out of that tree!

When Wilbur got back to camp, he asked me why I was in the tree and the tent wasn't up.

I sputtered, cried, and finally said, "I don't enjoy sharing a tent with a bear."

He came over, helped me down from the tree, and gave me a big hug. "Ima, I'm sorry. I know I've been a grouch. I'll try to do better."

I opened my mouth to explain, but it felt so good to be hugged I decided to be quiet for a change. When I finished crying, Wilbur suggested I eat a donut, then we'd put up the tent. I said, "No, Wilbur, I'm on a diet." Then I dried my tears, started supper again, and hoped that stupid bear got a bellyache. ♦

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again, but I begrudgingly agreed. She had her moments. The saying that a lab's puppy hood lasts at least four years is correct, but she had so much joy in her. Callie was a best friend and protector of the kids. She showed me the power of boundaries and that working hard reaped many rewards. Her love of nature and water reminded us to enjoy the simple things in life. Her smiling eyes and mouth, dancing back end and thumping tail, always greeted everyone with such passion. It showed me how important it is to show and tell others how much we love them and that we're glad they're here with us. She could sense our emotions and need for a snuggle and would sit with her nose on your lap when there were hard or sad days. Callie taught us in her older years how to age gracefully and deal with pain. She showed bravery, strength, and warmth until the end.

Orhan Pamuk said, "Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen." May we all listen to the things our pets are trying to teach us, especially about love! ♦

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Carol Mayer Guthmiller

## From “Lemonade Lucy” to Dolley’s Dash: First Ladies in History

I came across a book in the library titled *Presidential Wives: An Anecdotal History* by Paul F. Boller, Jr. If you can find it, get it. It gives wonderful insight into their lives and makes them come alive. I would like to share some tidbits I gleaned from reading it.

**Martha Washington**, the first lady of our land, called her days as the President’s wife her “lost days.” She felt like a State Prisoner more than anything else.

**Abigail Adams** was both the wife and mother of a president. The Adams’ were the first family to live in the “White House” after the capital moved from Philadelphia to Washington in the fall of 1800. Abigail wrote to her sister, *“We have not the least fence, yard, or other conveniences without, and the great unfinished audience room I make a drying-room to hang clothes in. However, it is a beautiful spot, capable of improvement and the more I view it, the more I am delighted with it. This Home is built for ages to come.”*

**Martha Jefferson** was a wealthy young widow when Jefferson began courting her in 1770. They were married two years later. In ten years of marriage she bore six children; only two survived infancy. She never regained her strength after the last child. As she lay dying, Jefferson promised never to remarry. He never did. He became President in 1801.

**Dolley Madison** came next. After her death, it was declared, *“She will never be forgotten because she was truly our First Lady for a half century.”* She had been hostess of the widower Jefferson for eight years and became First Lady during her husband’s two terms. When the British headed for Washington in 1814 during the war, Dolley refused to leave the city to a safer area. When the cannons started roaring in the distance, she changed her mind, had her carriage brought to the door and loaded it with papers, books, silver, paintings and china from the Executive Mansion. Not long after, the British invaded Washington and set fire to the President’s House and other government buildings. She endeared herself to the people her husband served.

The story of **Rachel Jackson** is sad. Early in his campaign, the attacks on Andrew’s wife began. She became a major target of Jackson’s enemies during the 1828 contest. Rachel was a married woman when Jackson met her in 1788, but her first marriage was a disaster. She went through a divorce and married Jackson. At least, she *thought* she got a divorce. Due to a legal mishmash, her first husband proved the divorce illegal. The Jacksons remarried to make it all legal... again. All of this got thrown in their face during the election in which Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams. The year the couple was supposed to move to Washington, Rachel went to Nashville to shop for clothes. She got tired and stopped to rest in the office of one of her relatives, a newspaper editor. She read a campaign pamphlet and realized the depth to which her husband’s enemies had sunk to foul her good name. She died two weeks later.

**Louisa Adams**, wife of John Quincy Adams, came to the White House in 1825. She dreaded the idea of living there, saying it would “put me in a prison.” It turned out to be worse than she feared. Congress reacted with indignation to President Adam’s

plans for national unity. The venomous attacks on him week after week drove him into bitter isolation. After they left the Presidency, their final years together were their best. He ran for Congress in 1890 and began seventeen years of productive work in the lower house.

In 1840, when **Anna Harrison** heard her husband had won the election, she sighed. *“I wish that my husband’s friends had left him where he is happy and contented in retirement.”* She wanted him to settle down as a gentleman farmer instead of seeking fame.

When **Sarah Polk**, wife of James K. Polk, came to the Whitehouse in 1845, she enjoyed mingling in Washington society and meeting people in the know. Polk encountered hostility while he served, but his wife received only praise. However, there were certain things people disliked about her. She banned card playing and dancing in the White House and served no wine or refreshments at parties there.

When **Mary Todd Lincoln** entered the White House in 1861, she became a target of abuse. The attacks on her were so vicious the *Chicago Tribune* came to her defense and declared, “ENOUGH!” Her husband receiving

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the Republican nomination for president in May 1860 made her pleased and proud, and she felt happy when he won the election. The nation was on the brink of civil war at the time of the inauguration, but she hoped for the best. Like Lincoln, she found heartbreak, not glory, in the White House. Inseam of quiet and retiring like her predecessors, she was bright, high-spirited, energetic, short-tempered and outspoken. Lincoln’s bid for a second term in 1864 produced one of the vilest campaigns in our history. His opponents showered him with abuse and took after his wife with glee.

In 1869 **Julia Dent Grant**, wife of Ulysses S. Grant, Americans finally had a president’s wife who enjoyed herself in Washington. Eight years were not enough for her. She wanted four more and regretted she couldn’t get them. The American public and even her husband’s enemies left her alone. A society writer at the time stated, *“This has been a roystering season and a social rebound after the anxieties and estrangements of the war.”* Mrs. Grant held receptions where the elegant mingled with poor working class. A social observer stated, *“There were ladies from Paris in elegant attire and ladies in calico, ladies whose cheeks were tinged with rouge and other faces were weather-bronzed by outdoor work; all enjoying themselves.”*

When **Lucy Webb Hayes** came to the White House in 1877, it came to be known as the “Wesleyan White House.” She held daily prayer and Bible readings and Sunday night hymn sings. President Hayes announced a no-liquor policy for the White House. Critics praised the food but said the temperance policy made dull state dinners even duller. Mrs. Hayes came to be known as “Lemonade Lucy.”

Grover Cleveland came to the Presidency in March, 1885 as a forty-eight-year-old bachelor. He became secretly engaged to **Frances Folsom** in August. The press hounded them at the wedding and during the honeymoon. At a dinner in his honor at Harvard university a few months later when he saw reporters staring at his wife, he interrupted his speech to exclaim, “Oh, those ghouls of the press!” Mrs. Cleveland took it all more calmly than he did. The press liked her better than it liked him.

The personalities in the White House are as colorful as the people who put them there. ♦

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Holly Kastler, as told to Marion Tickner

# Cat-a-Tude

Hi! My name is Holly and I live in The Valley. I love to wander around, checking out the neighborhood, looking for handouts. Then I found a place where people go to eat. That turned out to be the best place to hang out.

After my usual outing one morning, I came back home to find my people gone. The house was empty. I'd heard them talking about moving, but shouldn't they have waited for me? They didn't abuse me, but they didn't like me very much either. The first clue was when they called me Nuisance.

After I lost my home, I hung out at that restaurant, self-employed as a greeter. People talked to me, petted me, and shared some food with me. It was a comfortable place to live. Almost.

One day, I greeted a man and lady as they got out of their car. I ran over to them and rubbed against the man's pant leg and purred. I knew right away he had a soft heart for cats when he offered to take me home and give me a new name.

I loved my new home. The man provided everything a cat needs: a bed in a warm place to sleep, healthy cat food and water every day (I didn't have to go back to the restaurant to eat), a scratching board, a brush and a mouse. I didn't like that mouse, though. No challenge, as it wasn't real. I found the real thing outside and wanted to give it to the lady in appreciation for all her kindness. But the lady said, "Holly, you can't bring that thing inside."

My world changed when I discovered a black cat joined my neighborhood. The children named him Jellybean. Since he lived down at the other end of the street, I kept out of his way and he kept out of mine. We got along just fine. Some people think black cats are bad luck. I know that from experience. One day, I watched two little black and white kittens peek out from under the shed. "No, Holly, don't mess with them," my lady said. "They're skunks."

I looked at her as if to say, "What do you know? They're so cute."

I crept up, ready to play, when the mama came out to see what's going on. All at once, the air filled with the worst stink I'd ever smelled. She let me know who's boss in her family.

Would Jellybean do the same thing?

Sometimes I get mad at my family. They have a cage I call a jail. At first, I just wanted to see what that thing was, but then they put me in it, closed the door and took me for a ride in the car. To a vet. It's a place where other cats and dogs are in their own prisons.

The lady at the vet talks to me like she wants to be friends, but she ends up poking me with needles. I don't know if she understands cat language, but I did some swearing at her, using all the naughty words I could think of. When I got home, I didn't even talk to my family. I went off on my own to pout. Now when I see that cage come out, I go hide. Sometimes they can find me and sometimes they can't.

One day, my lady came home from a neighbor's house with a small bag. Was it something for me? I followed her into the house and sat on the floor next to her chair. I wanted to see what was inside. She untied the gold ribbon and dangled it in front of me. I swatted it and she said, "Holly, you can have the ribbon." I swatted it again, and she dropped it for me to play.

That gold ribbon became my favorite toy. I carried it through the house until I found a person. I would drop it on the floor and look up with the saddest eyes I could manufacture. Said person would pick up the ribbon and dangle it for me to swat. That was so much fun.

I watched as my lady picked a few pieces of something out of that bag and ate them. Would she share with me?

"These are jellybeans," she said. "The black jellybeans are my favorite, but they wouldn't be good for you."

Jellybeans? Does that black cat get to have what's in that bag?

Then it happened. Jellybean's family moved away, leaving Jellybean behind. I know the feeling. Lonely, rejected, homeless. That night I had a nightmare. My lady told me black jellybeans were her favorite. Did she like Jellybean more than me? Would she trade me in for Jellybean?

The next morning, I saw that dreaded cage again. Would they take me to the vet and leave me there because Jellybean was



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her favorite? She smiled and said, "No, Holly, we're not going to the vet again. I'm just moving the cat carrier."

We're not going to the vet, but is she going to use it to put me out to pasture and bring her favorite black Jellybean home?

After supper, while my lady watched television in the kitchen, she wasn't paying any attention to me. So I dragged that gold ribbon to her and cried. She reached down to dangle it. But that's not what I wanted. I cried some more.

"What is it, Holly?" She followed me to the living room. "No, Holly. It's not time for me to go to bed. Okay?"

I kept crying. She turned off the light and stretched out on the sofa like she's going to take a nap. I curled up in my bed under the coffee table and went to sleep. I need to see that she gets enough sleep. After all, I'm the boss of the house.

She still loves me and doesn't plan to replace me after all. And Jellybean found a new home with someone else. ♦

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# Walkin' the Dog

Kathy Padgett

My dad saw to it I had many opportunities to develop a sense of patience and persistence in my daily life. He filled my growing up time with a multitude of daughter-dad activities where being with him equaled the two.

Summer, with no school for me and vacation times for Dad, provided many wonderful times for us to get involved with his favorite activity: “walkin’ the dog.” Mind you, we had no dog. For him, this meant fishing.

I tried to cool my heels and be patient while I waited for a “it’s time to go message” from him. It had no words, just a Colorado road map and a Prince Albert tobacco tin. Sometimes I found them on my study desk, or tucked in the arms of my favorite teddy bear, but often they peeked out of my knapsack hanging on the back of my closet door. Whenever I revived one, I knew to get as busy as a bee and pack it with everything I needed for a seven-day visit to Lake City, Colorado.

Colorado’s most geographically isolated city, Lake City, was Dad’s favorite summer retreat because the fresh, high altitude air at 8,672 feet led him to say, “breathe deeply my ‘Li’l Ripple’ (my nickname). Let the crisp, clean mountain air encourage you to persist in walkin’ the dog.”

At four years old, Dad taught me to be patient while he taught me to read the highway numbers on a road map and match them to the route signs along the roads we traveled. As his navigator, it was a piece of cake to guide him from our home in Pueblo to Lake City. Dad and I marveled at the jagged peaks of the San Juan

Mountains that pierced the azure sky and majestically reflected onto Lake San Cristobal, five miles south of Lake City. A rare natural earth flow slide called the Slumgullion Slide created Lake San Cristobal, with its two miles of turquoise water and a depth of 89 feet. This event blocked the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River and formed a stunning new natural lake at the altitude of 9,003 feet. The earth in the Slumgullion Slide still moves about twenty feet each year, adding more soil and rock to the already exiting 800 acres. In 1965, the

Slumgullion Slide became an American National Natural Landmark. Dad and I believed our spectacular Lake San Cristobal painted a picture worth a thousand words and let us be on top of the world every time we were walkin’ the dog.

Dad’s best friend, Skitter Finn, who taught Dad all of his skills, had a rustic log

cabin a short stroll away from Lake San Cristobal. A bright blue sign hanging above the front porch steps of his cabin said, “Welcome to Blue Diamond Rainbow Cottage.” I giggled when I read the fish shaped sign on the cabin door, which said, “If I’m not home, come in and rest, I’m walkin’ the dog.”

It took a lot of get up and go to stay rent free for a week in Skitter Finn’s cabin because it had no electricity (normal for a late 1940s wilderness cabin with only kerosene lamps and a gigantic fireplace.) But it had, at no cost, everything we needed to spend a week there.

Every morning at the lake started when the sun rose. Dad grabbed his mini shovel, I found my Prince Albert tobacco tin, and we headed for the green grass area behind the cabin. Time to dig for a “garden fly,” which is the nickname Dad gave to earthworms. With my tin full of juicy worms, I put it into my knapsack, picked up my rod carrier, gripped his hand, and stepped into the excitement.

As we walked along the narrow dirt path towards Lake San Cristobal, we heard the loud calls of the Steller Jays and the joyful songs of the Chickadees as they welcomed a new day. We laughed at the blueish-purple Old Man’s Whiskers flowers with their gray seed heads that looked like my grandfather’s bushy whiskers. Sometimes we stopped to admire a delicate Blue Columbine, Colorado’s State Flower. The aroma of Ponderosa Pines reminded me of Christmas when Dad and I decorated our holiday pine tree.

On this short walk from the cabin to the lake, I learned to pass with flying colors the ability to count to 500 (an enormous accomplishment for my age). It took exactly that many steps from the beginning of the woodsy path to the edge of Lake San Cristobal We spread a blanket along



the shoreline, put our knapsacks on it, organized our gear, and ate a quick breakfast of hard-boiled eggs and homemade biscuits spread with chunky peanut butter and strawberry jam. Dad firmly believed if we hit the ground running with a high level of food energy, we would be successful.

I needed to be, as Dad said, “a cool cucumber with no cold feet.” So I had to spend a few minutes practicing flicking my right wrist to

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move my right hand up and down in a steady, rhythmic pattern. Once I had a great rhythm established, I took a garden fly out of my Prince Albert tin, put it on the end of my fishing line, and carefully cast it into the lake. Whenever I kept a steady rhythm, moving my lure and bait in a steady zig-zag zig-zag motion through the water, I was truly walkin’ the dog. This unusual fishing technique made snagging a six to eight-inch rainbow trout a sure thing!

I’m truly thankful my dad loved to spend so much time patiently teaching me how to be successful at fishing. Dad is equally proud that I taught my husband and son how to do it. It’s a generational tried and true fishing technique! ♦

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# Hanging in There

Irene Bishop

Easing into the chair, with the breeze blowing through my tousled white hair, I sighed. “Gardening is fun, my pride and joy, but it is a lot of hard work.” My family helped me cut down on the size of my yard, but I still can’t resist planting something in every nook and cranny. This year hasn’t been the easiest for growing things. Oh sure, we have always had to ply our wits over the years, as our country can sometimes be harsh. Even though I may leave sometimes, like a bad penny, I always return.

The last big snow wrecked havoc in our trees and bushes. My son, Jerry, “fixed most of them up” and things are looking great now I have gotten used to the transformation. He trimmed the big cottonwood in the front yard that had branches hanging down over our heads. Now it is fifteen feet to the nearest branch and reaching the sky, it seems. There isn’t as much shade, but it looks better. My grandson JD and I cut a few low-hanging branches off of my husband’s gigantic pine tree on the other side of the walk. Years ago, these two trees (his

and mine) started to reach out to each other, so we had to keep cutting the branches back or we would not have been able to get in the front door by now. They never did touch each other, but now, as I look up, I see Cottonwood leaves gently caressing pine branches thirty feet above my head. They made it! I shed a tear of joyful memories of our closeness, despite obstacles.

Other trees needed propped up, tied up, or pruned. My lilac by the back porch lost some branches and, since it was getting too big and tall, needed a major pruning.

They trimmed all around the sides and left the top, loaded with blooms, to be trimmed later. Everyone worked on it this year, and I finished up by pruning the hedge roses, honeysuckle, forsythia, and spirea. It makes me tired just thinking about it.

Thankfully, we haven’t had a tornado, but the heady winds from first one direction and then another keep shaking off little green apples, peaches, and pears. The grapes froze in a late storm, but I pruned them and they are putting out little green leaves and even have a few clusters of fruit.

My smaller flower garden was prepared and packed full of perennials last fall. We purchased garden soakers to keep it wet and wove them around through the plants. Wow, see them now! They are happy and show it. The plot is brimming with flowers; I added tulip bulbs last fall and annuals this spring. We planted dahlias and rescued some lilies coming up in the area seeded with prairie grasses. One pink poppy survived and put out a half-dozen small but lovely blooms, one each day for a week. “Hang in there little poppy; I’m going to transplant you,” my daughter said. “Anything with that much spunk deserves a break.”

The vegetable garden is making up for lost time. Every day I’m out pulling grass and weeds. My eyes are not as good as they used to be, but I can



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still spot a weed anywhere in the vicinity.

To complete the grooming of my place this spring, the insurance company installed a new roof. Have you ever been in a house while someone pounded on the roof for two whole days? I hung in there for a while but had to make a break. I couldn’t turn on the TV because the antenna was down. I tried turning up the radio but gave up. The second day I spent at my son’s house, napping and pitying my poor cat, who stayed in hiding. The second day, he had just emerged when the banging started. Looking at me with eyes as big as saucers, he vanished. After the job ended, I took a look. It looked nice after they cleaned up everything. I hated to see all those wooden shingles that weathered years of storms and sheltered my family for decades come tumbling down, but it is neater and safer. Once again, my cat can go out, chew grass, roll in the dirt, tease the toad, and lay in the shade.

His peace got shattered the other night when thunder shook the house and the electricity flashed. That lightning strike must have been close! Felix had been sleeping in the big soft



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chair: he jumped and tumbled off on the floor. Gaining his equilibrium, he gave a startled look and headed for the porch, but there was one more calamity he had to endure the next day. JD had washed two pairs of tennis shoes and brought them and jeans to put in my dryer. “Did you ever dry shoes in the dryer?” he inquired.

“Yes.” I answered, thinking about my tennis shoes, not huge things like his! Bang, Boom, Bang! The floor shook. My poor Felix thought the floor was falling in under him or we were being bombed. When he came out of hiding again, I petted and consoled him. After all, he is usually not a scaredy cat.

“Hang in there. Little Buddy,” I told him. “Everything is okay now. Let’s hope there are no more surprise attacks. You’ve had enough this spring and summer to last a lifetime.” ♦



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What are your fondest memories of your hometown County Fair?

Whether it was a parade, the food, fireworks, music or showing your award-winning animal at a 4-H event, the Elbert County Fair can be that end-of-the-summer/just-before-school-starts, local family fun you've been looking for....free parking and free general admission make it an easy choice.

Join your friends and neighbors at the Elbert County Fairgrounds, 95 Ute Avenue, in Kiowa for all the fun from July 25 - August 3 including:

**Music:** From the opening night concert by The Walker Williams Band, the harmonious 90's hits of Nashville recording artist BlackHawk on August 2, to the High Plains Fiddle Fest on August 3, plan to enjoy the music. Walker Williams, WMW Band and the Fiddle Fest are all free attractions. Tickets to Blackhawk are only \$10 during the presale and can be purchased at [elbertcountyfair.com](http://elbertcountyfair.com)

**Food:** Nothing says summer like kettle corn, ice cold lemonade, and more traditional County Fair treats. Only the best are chosen for Elbert County...bring your hunger and thirst to the food vendor alley in the heart of the Fairgrounds.

**Bust your Mutton:** Cowboys and cowgirls ages four - seven, weighing under 70 pounds are eligible for this event on Aug 2 and August 3 - Pre-registration is required and everyone gets a trophy!

**4-H Fun:** Check out our youngest generation of animal enthusiasts as 4-H and FFA are the spotlight at the Elbert County Fair. Join exhibitors and they showcase their livestock exhibitions featuring their dogs, hogs, horses, goats, lambs, rabbits, poultry, beef and dairy animals. A complete schedule of all 4-H/FFA shows can be found at [elbertcountyfair.com](http://elbertcountyfair.com) and join us on Aug 2 at 1 p.m. for the Annual

Livestock Sale and invest in the hard work and dedication of our local 4-H and FFA youth in their award-winning animals. Whether you are a seasoned buyer, a first-time supporter, our youth count on our community to invest in their investment.

Follow the Elbert County Fair on Facebook for information about additional exhibits and entertainment. Visit [elbertcountyfair.com](http://elbertcountyfair.com) for detailed information, pre-registration for events, directions and ticket prices.



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