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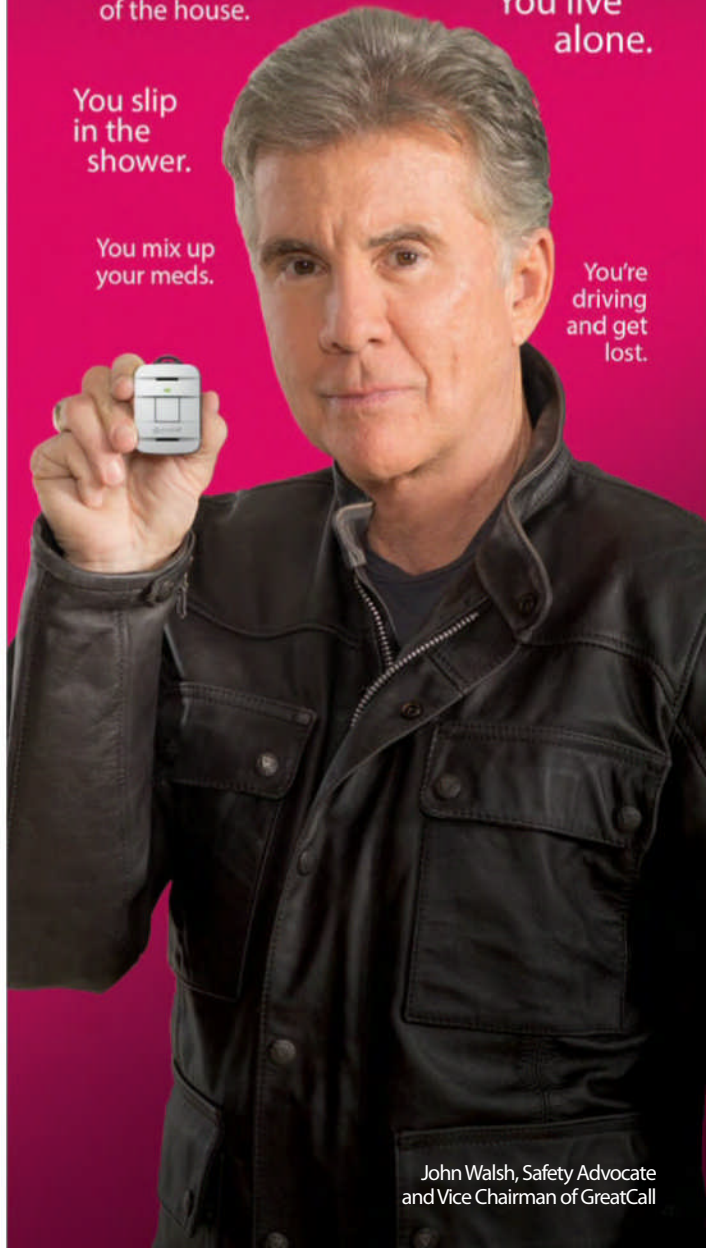
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Features

32

Winning Photos

See our favorite snapshots from the Country Life Photo Contest.

40

God's Country: Iowa

Waterfalls, river bluffs and pastoral landscapes dot the Hawkeye State.

52

This Place Matters

A long, rich history and lush natural beauty meet in St. Augustine, Florida.



Historic St. Augustine
PHOTO BY PAT & CHUCK BLACKLEY

Contents

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2018 // VOL. 32 NO. 1



24

Out & About

- 12 Fresh Air**
Experience the joys of country life in this reader roundup.
- 16 Road Trip**
Bird enthusiasts have reason to rejoice in McAllen, Texas.
- 18 The Country Almanac**
Set your sights on spring with the helpful hints in this calendar.

The Good Life

- 22 Backyard Blessings**
- 24 View From Our Place**
Meet Tawny Nelson, winner of the Our Country Home Contest.
- 30 What's Cooking?**
Show your valentine some love with sizzling steak and mashed potatoes.

Heart & Soul

- 58 Looking Back**
- 60 Country Churches**
An Ontario church family welcomes Elissa Ennis to small-town living.
- 62 Animal Tales**
- 64 Humor**
Go on, laugh a little at the stories and jokes *Country* readers tell.
- 70 Life In Focus**
Snow gives way to brisk blue skies in this collection of reader photos.
- 76 On the Farm**
Emily Gibson reflects on her daily walks to the barn, chores and all.



30



32

In Every Issue

- 6** From the Editor
- 8** Winter Photo Contest
- 80** Submission Guidelines
- 80** Hidden Needle Contest
- 82** Parting Shots

COVER Madison County, Iowa
PHOTO BY JUSTIN ROGERS



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Love of the Land

If you believe that Iowa is flat and boring, please turn to page 40. There, Justin Rogers will show you why the Hawkeye State is God's country. With its weathered barns, covered bridges, pastoral landscapes and the genuine character of those who call it home, Iowa captures the spirit and beauty of America's heartland.

Justin became a contributor to the magazine thanks to the **Country Life Photo Contest**. Last year, his image of a foggy morning sunrise at Iowa's Badger Creek State Recreation Area won the scenery category. I was so intrigued by the photo that I reached out to him, and we turned his enthusiasm for photography and Iowa into a cover story.

That's what makes the **Country Life Photo Contest** special—the people who enter share with us not only their snapshots, but also their love of the land. We've gathered this year's winning and honorable mention photos in a collection that starts on page 32. The grand prize winner is Dana Foreman of Old Fort, North Carolina. In her contest entry, Dana wrote that looking at the famous Schwabacher Landing in Wyoming's Grand Tetons in her image gives her a feeling of peace.

And on page 24, you'll meet Tawny Nelson, the grand prize winner of the **Our Country Home Contest**. As a kid, Tawny dreamed of living in the country. Today she grows hay on 80 acres in Oregon. Her story is an inspiration to all who dream of a simpler life.

Readers like Justin, Dana and Tawny take some amazing photos. In 2018, we'll give all you shutterbugs out there more opportunities to enter and win. First up is our **Winter Photo Contest**. If you have fun snapshots of snow play or gorgeous winter scenes to share, turn to page 8 for details. We hope the contest will inspire you to get outside and capture the beauty around you.

Marija

Marija Andric, Editor
marija@country-magazine.com

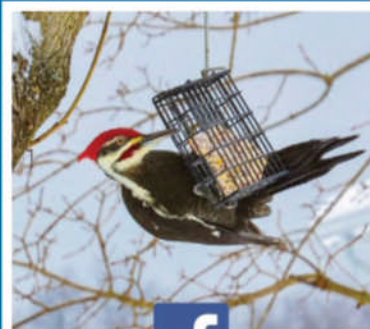


Justin at Arizona's famous Horseshoe Bend

Photographer **Justin Rogers**, author of this issue's God's Country, is based in Des Moines. He and his wife, Jonah, travel the country together pursuing their passion for photography. Justin's love for Iowa's people and its beautiful landscapes offers a unique perspective of the state.
rogersphotography.com

COUNTRY ONLINE!

Find all sorts of extras from *Country* readers on Facebook, *rd.com* and Instagram. If you aren't following us regularly on social media or visiting *rd.com*, here's what you're missing.



Candy Thompson takes care of the birds that visit her feeder in winter. She took this photo of a pileated woodpecker snacking.
facebook.com/countrymagazine



Kerysa Ford's photo of tulips at the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vermont, made us long for spring.
instagram.com/country-magazine



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"The quality of their watches is equal to many that can go for ten times the price or more."

— Jeff from
McKinney, TX

"Blue face watches are on the discerning gentleman's 'watch list'."
— watchtime.com

STONE COLD FOX

So good-looking...heads will turn. So unbelievably-priced...jaws will drop.

Every once in a while a timepiece comes along that's so incredibly good looking, masterfully equipped and jaw-droppingly priced, that it stops us stone cold. A watch that can take you seamlessly from the 18th hole to the board room. A watch that blurs the line between sports watch and dress watch. We're talking the **Blue Stone Chronograph**, and it sits at the top of the discerning gentleman's watch list.

Striking in appearance and fully equipped with features, this is a watch of substance. The **Blue Stone** merges the durability of steel with the precision of crystal movement that's accurate to 0.2 seconds a day. Both an analog and digital watch, the **Blue Stone** keeps time with pinpoint accuracy in two time zones.

The watch's handsome steel blue dial seamlessly blends an analog watch face with a stylish digital display. It's a stopwatch, calendar, and alarm. Plus, the **Blue Stone** resists water up to 30 meters, making it up for water adventures.

A watch with these features would easily cost you thousands if you shopped big names. But overcharging to justify an inflated brand name makes us blue in the face. Which is why we make superior looking and performing timepieces priced to please. Decades of experience in engineering enables Stauer to put quality on your wrist and keep your money in your pocket.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Experience the **Blue Stone Chronograph** for 30 days. If you're not convinced you got excellence for less, send it back for a refund of the item price.

Time is running out. Originally priced at \$395, the **Blue Stone Chronograph** was already generating buzz among watch connoisseurs, but with the price slashed to **\$69**, we can't guarantee this limited-edition timepiece will last. So, call today!

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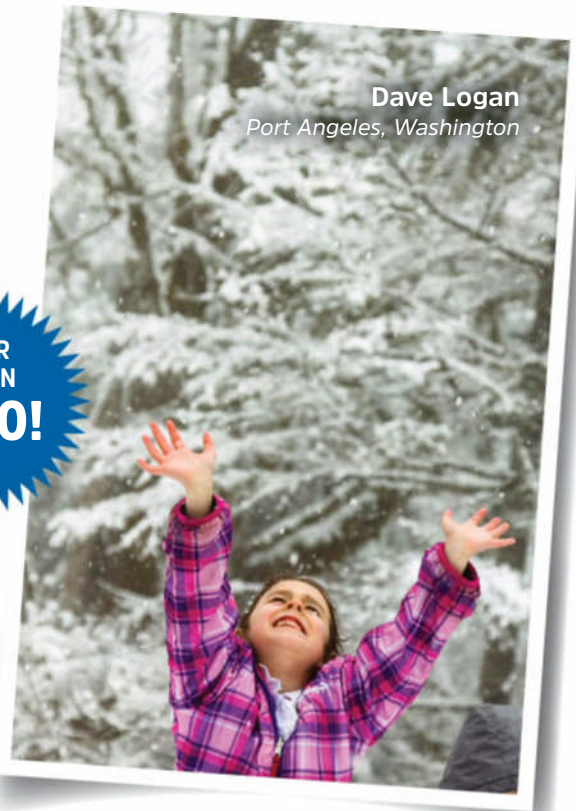
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Country
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PHOTO CONTEST



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Dave Logan
Port Angeles, Washington

Enter your best snapshots in *Country's* first ever **Winter Photo Contest**, and you could win \$250! You've got until March 23 to submit as many images as you'd like in each of the four categories: **Animals, Scenery, People, Kids.**

It's easy to enter. Go to country-magazine.com/contests to upload your photos and read the official rules.



John Kuehnert
Sierra Vista, Arizona



Wendy Jones
Bellevue, Idaho

Submit your entries online at
country-magazine.com/contests by March 23, 2018.



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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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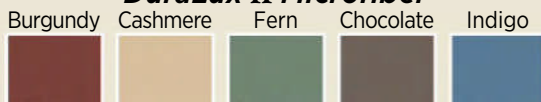
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Out & About

Live every moment

In Yosemite National Park, the clouds moved in quickly as if to give the El Capitan rock formation a big hug—like saying hello to an old friend.

ROBBIN CHERRY
San Jose, California



Reader Greg Catchur hit a roadblock similar to Cathy's on a drive through Utah.

FRESH AIR

The Ride Home

AS I DROVE on our two-lane country road one evening, the cars going in both directions suddenly stopped ahead of me. All I could see was a dog running in and out and around the cars, seeming quite intent.

I assumed we were stopped so we would not hit him. This went on for several minutes, and I wondered why he wasn't afraid of all the cars. Soon enough, I saw the reason for the commotion, on a dirt road off to my right. The dog lay still and flat on the ground, his eyes locked on about 20 sheep standing in a pack.

A truckload of sheep had somehow gotten loose. They were running all over the street, and the dog was rounding them up. The dog's owner stood by her truck, waiting for him to finish. Thankfully, there were no casualties, and we all drove slowly past as soon as it was safe. Only in the country would we have such entertainment on our way home from work!

CATHY NEUMEISTER
Cottonwood, California

Animal Lover

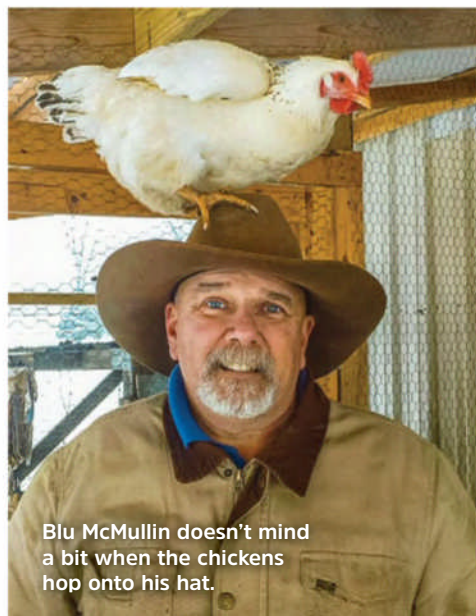
My son Blu McMullin is always helping those in need, especially animals. He and his wife, Jan, live on Paradise Farm. It really is 25 acres of paradise.

As we enter their drive, we see 12 beautiful horses grazing on the green grass, and geese and chickens in the barnyard. Three farm dogs meet us in the driveway and there are four smaller ones in the backyard. All rescues. Blu also has ducks on two ponds, one stocked with bass and the other with catfish.

He volunteers at the Charleston Dog Shelter and has helped find happy homes for more than 100 puppies. Once, Jan and Blu had six 2-day-old puppies that they bottle-fed every four hours. All of the puppies survived.

Animals make Blu's world a happy place. He says he feels closer to God in the pasture with his animals.

BEVERLY McMULLIN
Springdale, Arkansas



Blu McMullin doesn't mind a bit when the chickens hop onto his hat.

SHEEP: GREG CATCHUR

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— Pat Boone, Singer/Songwriter

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— Robert Forbes, M.D., California

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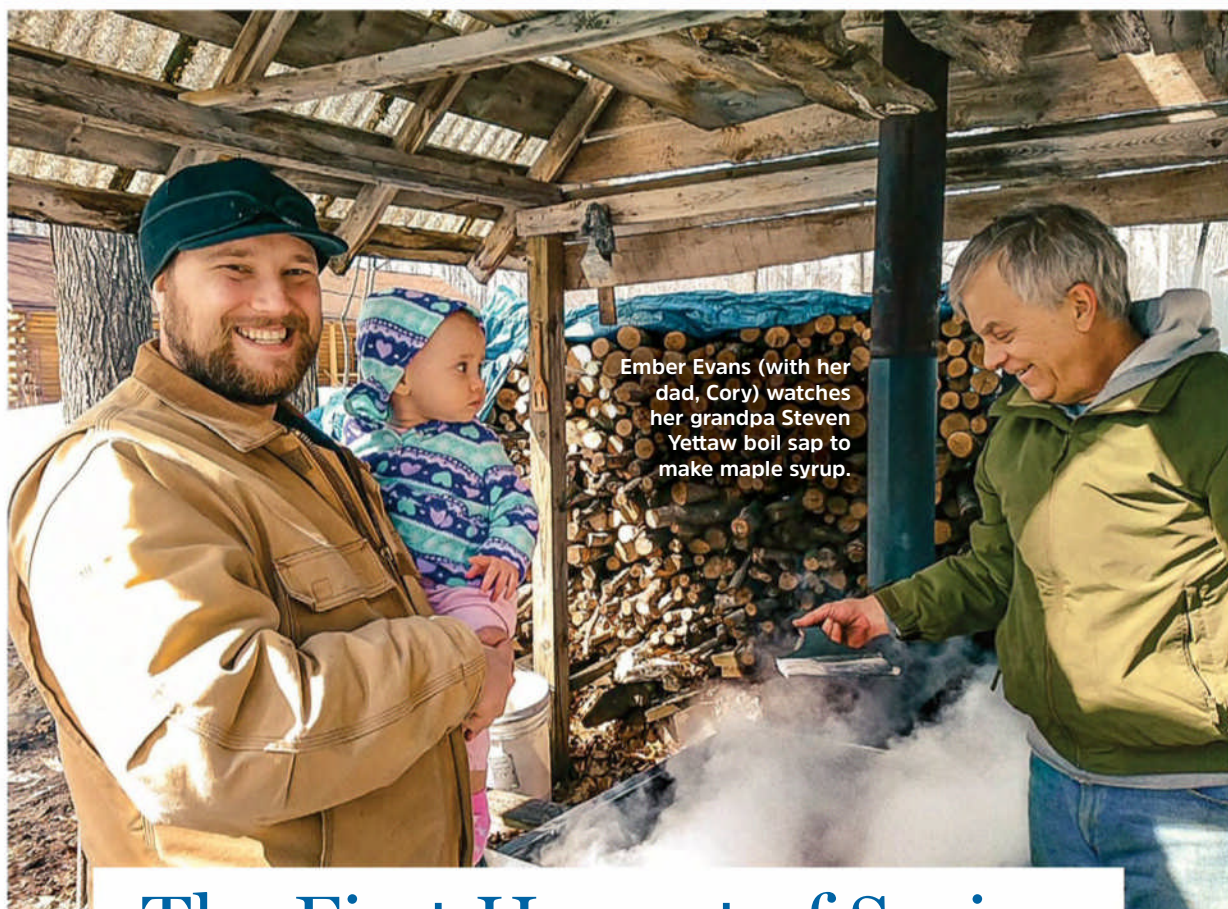
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“On these still-cold days, when the clear air is heady to breathe, it is wonderful to put on my warmest old clothes, go outside and feel the weather.”

— JAN BLANKENBURG *Donnellson, Iowa*



Ember Evans (with her dad, Cory) watches her grandpa Steven Yettaw boil sap to make maple syrup.

The First Harvest of Spring

Vermont is usually what comes to mind when people think about maple syrup. However, in the hills of northern Michigan, maple trees abound, and there are many folks who head out to the sugar bush to tap trees each spring. My family is among them.

In early March, Dad shovels out his “sap shack” to get ready for the impending start of the sweet stuff. As a child, I always loved maple syrup season because it meant longer days outside enjoying 45-degree weather (practically tropical after a long, snowy winter) and gathering buckets full of sap.

My folks always made it fun. While the sap boiled

down into a delicious syrup, we had a cookout. Mom made potato salad and baked beans, and we roasted hot dogs on the fire, with s’mores for dessert.

I moved away after college, but five years ago, my husband, Cory, and I decided to return home to northern Michigan. Our daughter, Ember, was born in March 2016—a lucky month, I think! The following spring, she helped her daddy and grandpa make maple syrup for the first time. I am blessed to see her savor the sweetness of spring with her grandparents just like I did as a child.

JESSICA EVANS
Harbor Springs, Michigan

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Visitors to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge cross a suspension bridge to glimpse McAllen's official bird, the green jay (below).

ROAD TRIP

McAllen, Texas

Fly to this tropical bird lover's paradise.

DEEP IN THE SOUTHERN tip of the Lone Star State, along the twisting Rio Grande, there lies a 120-mile ribbon of lush, semi-tropical habitat that is home to a delightfully diverse number of birds and butterflies. Situated right in the heart of this natural paradise is McAllen, the region's largest city and the perfect base for a visit to the Rio Grande Valley.

Chief among McAllen attractions is the urban sanctuary of Quinta Mazatlan, a historic, Spanish Revival-style adobe hacienda with 20 acres of butterfly and bird habitat. Stroll under the shade of native plants as you admire buff-bellied hummingbirds, great kiskadees, green jays and Altamira orioles.

If you have a checklist of species to spot, stop at the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center, and

the Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. And be sure to add Estero Llano Grande State Park to your itinerary. Congregating there in the shallow waters are hundreds of wading and shorebirds, such as spoonbills and ibis.

One of the region's biggest events is the five-day Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, held every November. With some 500 documented bird species in the four-county area, this is a bird lover's bonanza.

In addition to birding, this Texas town, which began as a farming community, is esteemed for its museums, dining and shopping. You're sure to find something for everyone among McAllen's many art galleries, or in the restaurants and shops of Main Street.

SCOTT SCHILLER
Art Director



Did you know?

The Rio Grande Valley boasts 39 bird species found nowhere else in the United States. It is also home to green parakeets and red-crowned parrots. Visit theworldbirdingcenter.com for details.



There's More to Explore in McAllen

Go to visitmcallen.com to find trip ideas and begin building an itinerary. Here are a few of our favorite, must-see spots to help you get started.

MUSEUM OF SOUTH TEXAS HISTORY
mosthistory.org

NUEVO SANTANDER GALLERY
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1) Freestyle Plugs come in uncut sheets containing a maximum of 150-1" plugs. Freestyle Plugs allow you to make each plug bigger if you want-you decide. Min. size 1" sq.

2) New Super Plugs are ready to plant-precut into individual 3 x 3 inch plugs. They arrive in easy to handle trays of 15 Super Plugs.

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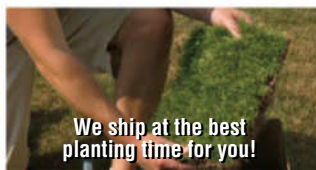
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The Country Almanac

February/March 2018

The shortest month of the year begins in the frost of winter and leads to the promise of spring.

FEB.
2



Groundhog Day

Make your own weather prediction. Place a stuffed animal on a flat surface outdoors. If you see its shadow, you can expect six more weeks of winter.

FEBRUARY 14

Happy Valentine's Day!

Feb. 19 Presidents Day

Did you know that President George Washington was a dog enthusiast? The man known as the father of our country is credited with helping develop the American foxhound breed. He had more than 30 of these hunting dogs.

MARCH 20

First Day of Spring

MAKE IT, DON'T BUY IT!

Stock your pantry with homemade staples.

1 Vanilla Extract: Place 6 vanilla beans, split lengthwise, in a tall jar; cover with 2 cups vodka. Seal jar tightly. Let stand in a cool, dark place for at least six weeks, gently shaking jar once a week.

2 Spice Mix: Combine ½ cup paprika with 3 Tbsp. each onion powder, garlic powder and cayenne; 2 Tbsp. each white pepper and pepper; and 4 tsp. each salt, dried thyme, oregano, cumin and chili powder. Use for up to six months on grilled pork, chicken and veggies.

3 Peanut Butter: Process 2 cups unsalted roasted peanuts and ½ tsp. salt in a food processor for about 5 minutes. Add 1 Tbsp. honey and process until just blended. Store, sealed, in the fridge. Best PB&J ever!

Go to tasteofhome.com for more money-saving tips.



“On that glorious day when the breezes begin to ripple warmth across the land and rain showers gently tease, my soul comes alive!”

LYNELLE WEAVER *Port Trevorton, Pennsylvania*

2/7

Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of *Little House on the Prairie*, was born on this day in 1867. Rocky Ridge Farm—where she did most of her writing—is now a museum and opens for the season on March 1. lauraingallswilderhome.com

Saturday, March 3

Iditarod mushers and their mighty sled dogs set off to win the storied Iditarod race, which winds through the Alaskan wilderness from Anchorage to Nome.
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The Good Life

Savor the simple pleasures



On our last visit to my grandparents' farm, my daughter, Josie, played her violin for the cows while they ate. She loved that they all stopped eating and listened.

SARAH COLLINS
Waldo, Ohio



Cardinals and an upside-down nuthatch (left) are among Debbie's frequent visitors.

BACKYARD BLESSINGS

My Feathered Neighbors

Cheerful cardinals, chickadees and Carolina wrens lift my spirits on a snowy spring day.

BY **DEBBIE KAIMAN TILLINGHAST** Chepachet, Rhode Island

The bite of winter lingers on this March day, but seeing my feathered neighbors outside cheers me up.

I savor my coffee in the warmth of a south-facing window while they gobble the seed and suet treats.

Today's snow has brought a flurry of activity, and I am captivated by the birds' quirky personalities. An upside-down dining nuthatch arrives first, and he spreads the word, "Breakfast is ready!"

Soon at least 50 birds are vying for a spot, like diners with a punch card they can't wait to fill.

The cast changes throughout the

day. At noon a flock of goldfinches comes to snack on the thistle seed, while brilliant red cardinals prefer tranquil, late afternoon dining. Chickadees and titmice stay all day, sampling every feeder, afraid they might miss a tasty morsel.

Two tiny chipmunk birds share a block of suet. They're lively little fellows with reddish brown backs and white stripes over their black eyes. Although the bird books call them Carolina wrens, I think they look like feathered chipmunks.

Most of my visitors are content sharing—they occasionally flutter and fluff at each other but then settle down and eat peacefully.

This harmony is only disrupted by the raucous blue jays that behave like cranky children who don't want anyone else to play with the toys, even though there are enough for everyone.

The bleak day speeds by as I return to my cozy spot, delighted by the outdoor entertainment. As the light begins to fade, I venture out to restock the buffet. Two chickadees stay for a talk; perched near my head they chatter, as if to ask, "Where have you been?"

When the feeders are full, their tone changes: "*Chick-a-dee-dee-dee*," which I translate as, "Thank you for the yummy food!" ❁

A Sliver of Heaven

Rolling up my sleeves and digging in the dirt on our Oregon farm is the life I dreamed of as a kid.

BY **TAWNY NELSON** North Plains, Oregon



I was an ocean-loving girl, born in the sunny state of California. However, when I was about 4 years old, my family uprooted and moved to Washington state, where for a short time we had the privilege of living one field over from where my maternal grandparents lived.

During those two years of my young life, the country grew roots in me deeper than the great depths of the ocean. The warm soil on my toes; the lush green, rain-ripened

grass fields; trees with great limbs for climbing; old red barns and sweet carrots pulled fresh from the earth are just a few of the things that have never left my blood.

Three decades later, I finally get to live on my own piece of paradise on a little mountain in Oregon. My husband, Ben, and I farm hay on 80 acres, where we are raising our 20-month-old son, Michael, to be a true country kid.

Our home is located in the small town of North Plains, Oregon, near

the Dixie Mountain Grange hall, in the middle of the Willamette and Tualatin valleys. This area has rich, fertile land where folks raise livestock and grow grass seed, hay, grapes and other fruit, pumpkins, nuts and Christmas trees. Multi-generation farms stand side by side with new ones.

After spending so many years in cities, I've had to learn how to farm and garden. Driving a tractor to cut, rake and bale hay was completely foreign to me. And,

The Nelsons grow hay on 80 fertile acres that have been in the family for almost a century.

Tawny and Ben show their son, Michael, some outdoor fun—fishing on the Columbia River in Astoria, Oregon.





Michael and his buddy, Elsa, peek into the barn to spy on the chickens.

“The country grew roots in me deeper than the great depths of the ocean.” – TAWNY NELSON



Elk often graze a few feet from Tawny's home.

honestly, although Ben is a great teacher, it's still intimidating to work on such a large vehicle.

I always longed to grow my own vegetable garden like the one I used to raid at Grandma's, but I didn't know how. I have gotten guidance from Ben and my in-laws on how to plant seeds and fertilize, and on how much to water and when to stop watering—but there's also been a lot of Googling and trial and error. I'm still always learning how to garden and how to can.

When it comes to flowers, I seem to have a black thumb (which I do intend to fix), but I'm in a constant state of euphoria when I roll up my sleeves and dig in the earth, care for little chickens with my dog pals by my side, cook fresh-picked

vegetables, walk along country lanes, ride four-wheelers all over the mountain or sit by a campfire.

Our house sits squarely in the middle of rolling hay fields that are surrounded by trees, secluding the fields from the outside world in their own little paradise. In our yard, Ben hung a swing from the shade-giving branches of a black walnut tree because of the swing I cherished at my grandparents' place as a child.

Here, the elk meander in and out, sometimes only a few feet from our house. Bright daffodils and orchards give us a grand floral show each spring. I love the slight elevation that can blanket us in snow in the winter, when the townsfolk usually only get rain.

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Clockwise from top left: Evergreen violets nearly make a carpet of golden sunshine. Delicate western trillium arrives around Easter, and red-flowering currant and purple oaks toothwort color the fields.

I love our serene ponds, tucked into the swaying green fields, where a duck couple or two may decide to rest for the night.

I love the hand built red barn, which looks beautiful in a blanket of dense fog; or shining in glory in the sunrise; or surrounded by the flaming yellows, oranges, reds, and pinks of sunset; or covered in fresh white snow, set in the expanse of hay fields in contrast with the bright blue sky.

I love my in laws' history with this place, which is nearing its

century mark. Almost everything here was made and cherished by a previous generation. My husband's paternal grandfather bought this land in 1945 from the original homesteaders. They then cleared the fields of old growth timber by hand. Ben's dad remembers his father dynamiting each and every stump, afterward smoothing the dirt for hay and, at one time, also for strawberries.

I love the rickety old shack where pigs were bred; the barn's milking stations; the machine shop.

I love the dip in our lawn where the farm's original dirt-floor house used to stand. I love the newer, not-dirt-floor house built in the '50s that Ben and I renovated together to make our own.

And I love that our son gets to grow up here, Lord willing, as the next generation to enjoy the beauty of creation, learning the values of hard-but-satisfying work, the faith and patience it takes to wait for crops to grow, the compassion and care for neighbors and little animals, the reward in feeding and helping those around us. This truly is a piece of heaven, and we are blessed to enjoy it together. ◉

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Dinner for Two

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DELUXE MASHED POTATOES

VIVIAN BAILEY CEDAR FALLS, IOWA

PREP: 30 min. • BAKE: 35 min. • MAKES: 6 servings

- 4 to 5 large potatoes (about 2½ pounds)
- 3 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 Tbsp. chopped chives
- ¾ tsp. onion salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- Paprika, optional

DIRECTIONS

1. Peel and cube the potatoes; place in a saucepan and cover with water. Cook over medium heat until tender; drain. Mash until smooth (do not add milk or butter).
2. Stir in cream cheese, sour cream, chives, onion salt and pepper. Spoon into a greased 1½-qt. baking dish. Dot with butter; sprinkle with paprika.
3. Cover; bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until heated through.

BEEF FILETS WITH PORTOBELLO SAUCE

CHRISTEL STEIN TAMPA, FLORIDA

PREP: 20 min. • MAKES: 2 servings

- 2 beef tenderloin steaks (4 ounces each)
- 1¾ cups sliced baby portobello mushrooms (about 4 ounces)
- ½ cup dry red wine or reduced-sodium beef broth
- 1 tsp. all-purpose flour
- ½ cup reduced-sodium beef broth
- 1 tsp. ketchup
- 1 tsp. steak sauce
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. ground mustard
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. minced fresh chives, optional

DIRECTIONS

1. Place a large nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray over medium-high heat; brown steaks on both sides. Remove from pan.
2. Add mushrooms and wine to pan; bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Cook until liquid is reduced by half, 2-3 minutes. Mix flour and broth until smooth; stir into pan. Stir in all remaining ingredients except chives; bring to a boil.
3. Return steaks to pan; cook, uncovered, until meat reaches desired doneness (for medium-rare, a thermometer should read 135°; medium, 140°), 1-2 minutes per side. If desired, sprinkle with chives.



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— CHRISTEL STEVIN

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Readers sent us almost 2,000 submissions, and picking the grand prize and category winners wasn't easy. Here are those images and the honorable mentions. Congratulations to everyone!



GRAND PRIZE (Scenery Category)

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Reflections
Dana Foreman
Old Fort, North Carolina

This image of Schwabacher Landing in the early morning light gives me a feeling of peace. I often revisit the memory of taking this photograph in Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. The view is a gift from above for us mortals, a glimpse of what Heaven must be like.



Kids

\$100

Hen House Helper

Sara Rogers

Coxs Creek, Kentucky

Gathering eggs is my daughter's favorite chore on the farm. Cora is compassionate and has a strong sense of responsibility.

Animals

\$100

Mustang Love

Jerry Cowart

Chatsworth, California

I was in New Mexico taking photos of wild horses when I came upon a small herd of mustangs grazing on the open range. As soon as I got a little closer, I captured this loving shot of the stallion and his mares. Having the opportunity to be out in nature, moving among this herd of majestic animals, is an experience I will never forget.





People

\$100

A Veteran of Life

David Zimmerman
Pecatonica, Illinois

This is a chance photograph of my late father, Charles “Chuck” Zimmerman. He was in the final stages of Alzheimer’s disease and was unable to verbally communicate. He was being cared for in a nearby nursing home and my mother, brother and I were having Christmas lunch with him. For one brief moment, he looked out a nearby window with this thoughtful, dignified pose. I was lucky to have my camera with me. He was a World War II veteran, a farmer, and a kind, caring person. I think this is a fitting, final portrait in his honor.



Oh, Hello There!

Rachel Clelland

Lake Norden, South Dakota

One of our newly hatched baby chicks peeks out from under Momma's feathers. It is hard to believe there are nine more underneath her!



Starry Night

Heidi Novak

Pine City, Minnesota

We paddled across the lake to this tiny island under the Milky Way on a perfect summer night. As the fog rolled in across the lake, we turned off our headlamps so we could see. The loons cried in the distance, and I heard the occasional tail slap of a beaver or a jumping fish. It was so peaceful and quiet. Nothing says country living like stargazing.





Cow Kisses

Shantel Wenger

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

I love visiting my sister at the dairy farm where she works. It's always fun to see the newborn calves as well as visit the heifers. The girls love the attention and will try to lick anything within reach!



The Next Generation

Hilary Kollasch, *Whittemore, Iowa*

My husband, Matt, and 2-year-old son, Charlie, are the sixth and, hopefully, seventh generations to work this cornfield. Each year, we hope for a greater outcome than the last. The land is our future.



Good Old Dog
Ashley Ford
Hamilton, Missouri

Cooper, our Labrador retriever, sat in the back of our '52 Chevy enjoying the sunshine when I took this photo on a chilly morning. He may not look too impressed—he's used to me taking pictures of him.

Cooper is a farm dog and loves to ride in the truck.

Sunset View
Darla Young
Sheridan, Arkansas

Stout's Point in Petit Jean State Park is my favorite place to sit and enjoy the view of the farms in the Arkansas River Valley. The rocks add a fantastic foreground and make for wonderful seating as well.





Perfect Timing

Shaye Cobb

Blairsville, Georgia

On a warm day this past winter, my daughter, Trinity, begged me to take her to the hay fields so she could pick dandelions and make wishes. I took several snapshots while we were down in the fields. Just as Trinity blew the dandelion to make her wish (for a unicorn, as usual), a breeze came along and blew the seeds back into her face.

The Farm Report

Ashley Emerick

Fort Wayne, Indiana

During a recent harvest, Britain rounded up a handful of soybeans as his little brother, Lachlan, looked on. I can just hear him saying, "Well, Brother. It ain't no bumper crop." Regardless of the yields, we love being a farming family!



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GENUINE KINDNESS.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **JUSTIN ROGERS**



A gorgeous sunset paints the sky over an old corncrib in Dallas County, Iowa.

Many people think Iowa is just another flyover state.

But anyone familiar with the region can tell you Iowa is much more than that. So what draws folks to the heart of the Midwest? Maybe it's the affordable living. Or the stunning sunrises and sunsets over the gentle rolling hills of the countryside. Or perhaps it's the mantra of Iowa Nice that greets those passing through.

Iowa has a way of spreading kindness, as evidenced by the Hawkeye Wave, which takes place at university football games in Iowa City. After the first quarter, everyone in the stadium turns and waves across the street to the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. Inside, patients and their families wave back. Even the opposing team waves.

Beyond kindness, Iowa holds other treasures. My wife, Jonah, and I live in Des Moines, but we are both from Fort Dodge, in the north-central part of the state. We enjoy the beauty of the four seasons, and we appreciate living close to family.

From our perspective, Iowa is flat. But once you head northeast from Des Moines, it's amazing how many hills there are.

Iowa's entire eastern border is carved out by the Mississippi River, the second-

longest in North America. Last fall, I took a three-day photography trip to document and discover the gorgeous eastern region of the state.

My journey started in Winneshiek County, home of the small college town of Decorah. Here, Palisades Park sits on a bluff east of the Upper Iowa River and provides a great vantage point from which to view Decorah. Another must-see spot is Dunnings Spring Park, which is home to a 200-foot waterfall—Iowa's tallest.

I followed River Road along the Upper Iowa River, then I hopped a bit to the east to connect with the Driftless Area Scenic Byway, a 100-mile stretch that zigzags across Allamakee County. While heading northeast, I continued to follow the river, which twists and turns through valleys carved out of the landscape.

In New Albin, I merged onto the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Iowa's 328-mile section of the byway parallels the state line. Gigantic bluffs line the length of the Mississippi River into Wisconsin and Illinois, and farms dot the countryside.

During the winter months, bald eagles

Roseman Covered Bridge, built in 1883, was featured in the film *The Bridges of Madison County*.





Clockwise from above: In 2015, Iowa farmers harvested 2.5 billion bushels—140 billion pounds—of corn; a windmill stands tall against the rising full moon; a riverboat docks on the Mississippi.





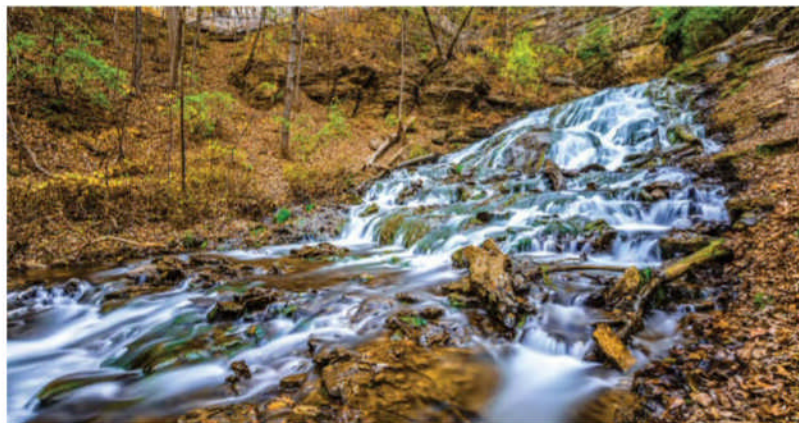
Justin's Must-See Scenic Treasures

1 DUNNINGS SPRING PARK

A 200-foot waterfall (right) is the star attraction of this park in Decorah. parks.decorahia.org/decorah-parks

2 MOUNT HOSMER VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK

On a bluff high above Lansing, this park boasts panoramic views of the Mississippi River Valley. lansingiowa.com/outdoor-fun



3 YELLOW RIVER STATE FOREST

Camp, hike, horseback ride, fish or cross-country ski at this haven for outdoor adventure. iowadnr.gov

4 EFFIGY MOUNDS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Learn about the history and culture of native peoples at this protected sacred space (left). nps.gov/efmo

5 PIKES PEAK STATE PARK

Hiking trails traverse wooded bluffs and valleys hundreds of feet above the Mississippi. iowadnr.gov

flock to the open waters of the Mississippi. (The river doesn't freeze at the state's 11 locks and dams.) Between December and March, the bald eagle population here increases from 500 to 3,000, according to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. That's when birds from neighboring states and Canada migrate here to fish.

If you want to see these majestic birds in action, special events are planned throughout January and February along Iowa's riverfront, like Eagle Watch and Cabin Fever Day in Guttenberg, about 58 miles from New Albin. Several charming river towns also offer sightseeing locations.

Head south to Lansing and take in the panoramic views from Mount Hosmer Veteran's Memorial Park. Perched on a bluff 450 feet above the town, this park allows you to see for miles into Wisconsin and affords visitors a wonderful aerial view of the Mississippi riverbed below.

Between Lansing and Harpers Ferry, you'll find a lovely church nestled into the hills overlooking a cemetery. Immaculate Conception Church at Wexford is the oldest Catholic church between Dubuque, Iowa, and St. Paul, Minnesota, and still has an active congregation today.

The Yellow River State Forest is a choice destination for the outdoors enthusiast—camping, hiking, horseback riding trails and cross-country skiing are among the amenities this natural area has to offer.

Just north of Marquette, you will find Effigy Mounds National Monument. The park preserves more than 200 prehistoric mounds built by Native Americans of the Woodland culture. Numerous mounds there are shaped like bears and birds.

Fourteen miles of trails lead hikers past the ancient mounds and to scenic views of the Upper Mississippi River Valley. If you're lucky, you may spot a train or a barge moving cargo through the valley or the storied waters below.

Pikes Peak State Park, near McGregor, is one of the more popular destinations in the area. A viewing platform on a 500-foot bluff allows you to see islands on the river, as well as Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, across the border.

Last but not least, if you're journeying along this stretch in Iowa, a visit south to Balltown is essential. This was the last stop on my trip, and it did not disappoint. Overlooks high above the land provide that quintessential Iowa view of farmsteads and

Sunflowers offer a warm welcome to visitors at the Badger Creek State Recreation Area in Madison County.

Gigantic bluffs line the length of the Mississippi River into Wisconsin and Illinois, and farms dot the countryside.

- JUSTIN ROGERS



In summer, Iowans gather at events such as the National Balloon Classic in Indianola (top) and the Iowa State Fair (above). The fair attracts more than a million people each year.

pasture as far as the eye can see. A bonus is Breitbach's Country Dining, a sixth-generation family-owned restaurant that is Iowa's oldest eatery.

I returned home to Des Moines with confirmation that my beautiful state has plenty of opportunities for not only the adventure seeker, but the photographer as well, all within a few hundred miles. Maybe that line from the movie *Field of Dreams*, filmed not far from Balltown, in Dyersville, had it right:

"Is this Heaven?"

No. It's Iowa. ⚙️



Justin's book, *Images From the Heart of Iowa*, available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

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D5	SAPPHIRE			

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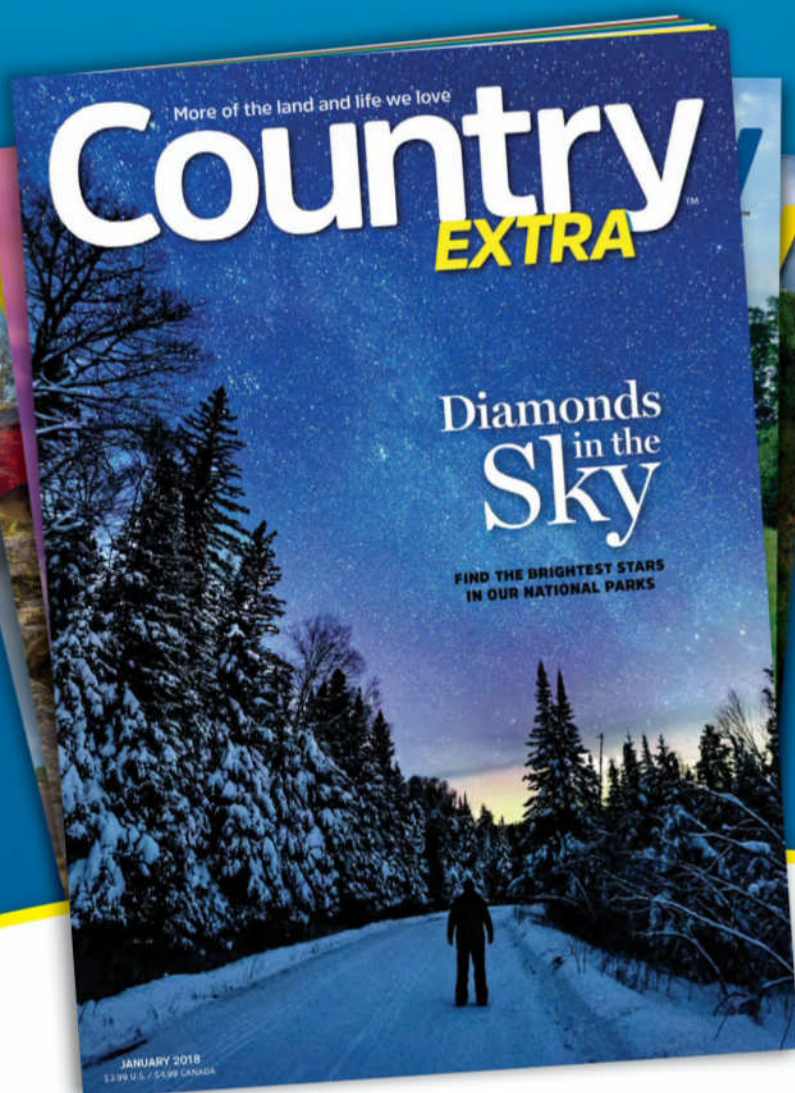
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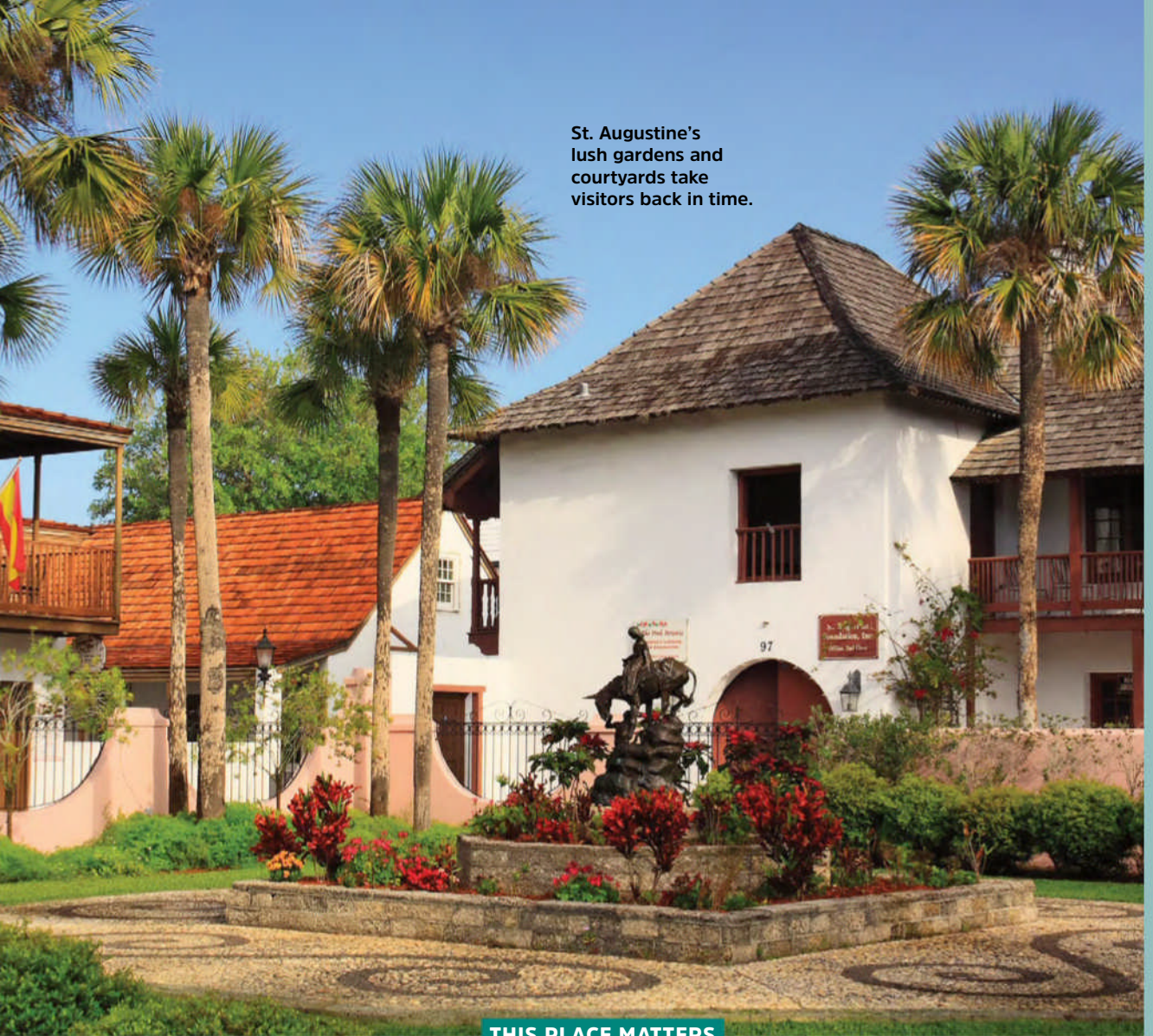
Love. Laugh. Inspire.

A close-up photograph of a woman wearing a light blue bucket hat and dark sunglasses, looking intently at a cholla cactus with bright red flowers. The background shows a desert landscape with reddish-brown soil and sparse vegetation.

Spring awakens brilliant wildflowers in the Utah desert. While hiking in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, we stopped to admire cacti.

CHRISTOPHER BROWN
Park City, Utah

St. Augustine's lush gardens and courtyards take visitors back in time.



THIS PLACE MATTERS

America's Oldest City

Coastal beauty, colonial architecture and a storied past await travelers in St. Augustine.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PAT & CHUCK BLACKLEY

With a fascinating past and more than four centuries of history, St. Augustine is the nation's oldest continuously inhabited city—and an American treasure. Located on Florida's Atlantic coast, it is home to many fine examples of European colonial architecture and wild, scenic vistas.

In 1513, while searching for the storied Fountain of Youth, explorer Juan Ponce de Leon happened upon this land. He called it La Florida and claimed it for Spain. Then, in 1565, conquistador Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles established a settlement here, which he named in honor of a Catholic saint. Except for a 20-year period of English rule, Florida remained under Spanish

governance until the United States took control in 1821.

In the years after its founding, the city was attacked by the French and English, and by Native Americans of the Timucua tribe, who are said to have shot flaming arrows at the city's fort, setting it ablaze. More recently, nature has battered the region with successive hurricanes—Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2017. ↗

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³ Value depends on graduates' use of services available to them.

Still, St. Augustine endures. As the region recovers, visitors shouldn't overlook it.

A few years ago, we traveled a portion of northeast Florida's A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway, a 72-mile drive that starts in South Ponte Vedra Beach and ends near Flagler Beach. Our route covered the 23-mile section that begins in St. Augustine. Along the way we found historic sites, state parks and national monuments.

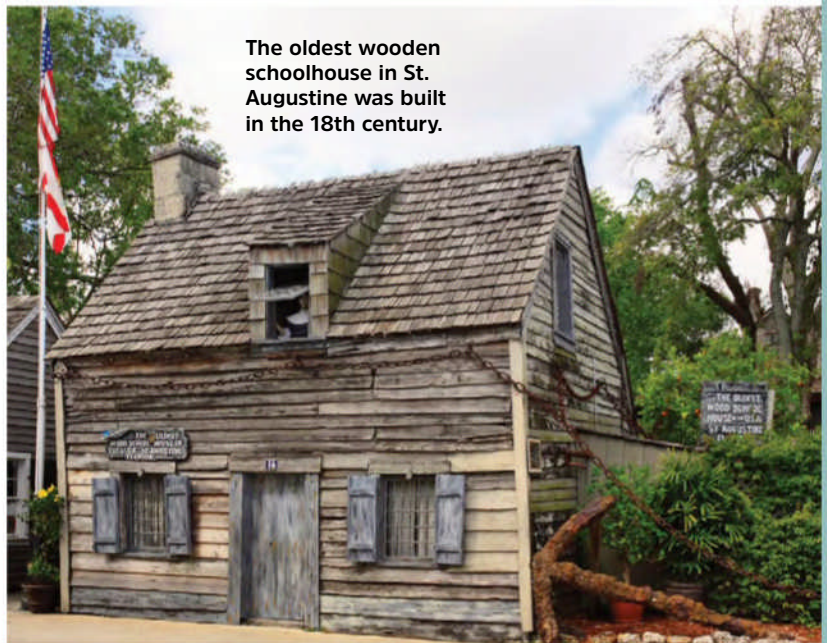
This enchanting city is a joy to wander, with narrow cobblestone streets lined with buildings in a mix of architectural styles, such as Spanish, French and English. The Castillo de San Marcos is St. Augustine's oldest structure. Built in 1672 to repel British attacks, it's the oldest masonry fort in the continental United States and a national monument.

St. Augustine's transformation into a prime vacation spot for the elite began in 1888, when wealthy entrepreneur Henry Flagler built the magnificent Hotel Ponce de Leon. The structure, designed in Spanish Renaissance Revival style, is now part of Flagler College's stunning campus.

Southeast of St. Augustine, we crossed the Matanzas River on the Bridge of Lions to Anastasia Island. There, we met family who were camping in Anastasia State Park, a beautiful 1,600-acre park with nature trails, tidal salt marshes and 4 miles of unspoiled beaches. While on the island, we visited the nearby St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum. Climbing to the top of the 165-foot tower rewarded us with spectacular views of St. Augustine, Matanzas Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

As we continued, we traveled through a few pristine beaches before stopping at Fort Matanzas National Monument. From the visitor center we were ferried to

Live oaks thrive in nearby Washington Oaks Gardens State Park. Far right: Grace Methodist Church



The oldest wooden schoolhouse in St. Augustine was built in the 18th century.



MAP ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT SCHILLER

How To: Fix Your Fatigue and Get More Energy

Founder and Director **Dr. Steven Gundry** is a world-renowned heart surgeon, a best-selling author, and the personal physician to many celebrities. But his breakthrough could be the most important accomplishment of his career.

Dr. Gundry has unveiled a simple — yet highly effective — solution to issues that plague millions of Americans over 40: low energy, low metabolism and fatigue.

“When you’re feeling low energy, that’s your body screaming **HELP!**” Dr. Gundry’s radical solution was inspired by a breakthrough with a “hopeless” patient who had been massively overweight, chronically fatigued and suffering from severely clogged arteries.

The secret to his breakthrough? “**There are key ‘micronutrients’ missing from your diet,**” Dr. Gundry said, “If you can replenish them in very high dosages, the results can be astonishing.”

Users of this new method is what led Dr. Gundry to create an at-home method for fatigue.

“They’re reporting natural, long-lasting energy without a ‘crash’ and they’re feeling slim, fit and active,” he revealed yesterday.



Dr. Gundry’s team released a **comprehensive video presentation**, so that the public can be educated as to exactly how it works.

Watch the presentation here at **www.GetEnergy33.com**

Within just a few hours, this video had gotten thousands of hits, and is now considered to have gone viral. One viewer commented: “If this works, it’s exactly what I’ve been praying for my whole life. I’ve never seen anything like it before...the truth about my diet was shocking and eye-opening.”

It makes a lot of sense, and it sounds great in theory, but we’ll have to wait and see what the results are. Knowing Dr. Gundry, however, there is a great deal of potential.

See his presentation here at **www.GetEnergy33.com**

the fort, where we examined its unique building material, coquina, a type of limestone consisting of shells and shell fragments. We also explored the officer's quarters and the powder magazine as well as the observation and gun decks.

As of this writing, in the wake of Hurricane Irma's devastation, the ferry service is suspended, but the

grounds and visitor center remain open to the public.

Farther south, we stopped at Washington Oaks Gardens State Park. Elaborate formal gardens are the park's main attraction, with exotic and native species displayed around ponds and along pathways. The park also boasts a stretch of beach known for its coquina rocks.

St. Augustine has weathered much in its long history, as the city's monuments and wild spaces testify. Hopefully, visitors will come and perhaps cruise Scenic A1A for many years to come, supporting the Florida coast's recovery while discovering its centuries of history and miles of coastal beauty. ☀

Coquina rocks were used to build Fort Matanzas, now a national monument.



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Ann (in her cousin's arms) grew up under the loving care of her mother.



LOOKING BACK

I Remember the Mountains

When the wind blows, it takes me back to my childhood in rural West Virginia. **BY ANN WILKINSON** Crystal River, Florida

Though I'm all grown up, I can still feel the peacefulness and see the pastoral beauty of my childhood home in West Virginia.

My parents, three older brothers and I lived in a huge old house on a ridge. Often I felt the wind on my face and in my hair. When it blew hard, I was sure that if I jumped, it would pick me up and fly me over the mountain. I could never seem to jump high enough, though.

A wooden table stood in the center of our kitchen. From my chair I watched Mom move from counter to sink. Our water came from a hand pump. To get it flowing, Mom pulled the handle up and pushed it down with all her might. No water since has tasted as good.

Occasionally I was permitted to sweep the yard. My grandchildren didn't believe me when I told them I'd used a straw broom to clean the hard clay and stone. But it was fun and a challenge to keep the wind from blowing the dirt onto my brothers as they played.

Fern, a close friend of Mom's, visited our mountaintop from time to time. She liked to walk over the pastures and would take me with her. One afternoon, an airplane flew close to us. I had not seen many planes, so this was exciting. We could see the pilot, and Fern took off her floppy hat and waved at him. He waved back.

At night the stars seemed close enough to touch. They covered our ridge like a blanket. It didn't dawn on me to be afraid of the dark.

Being a young child, I'd have to get up at night to go to the out-house. I would tiptoe into Mom's bedroom to wake her. She was never cranky; she would simply put on her coat, bundle me up and walk with me. She let me hold her finger as we walked, counting the birds we heard and telling me their names. The owls often answered my shrill hoots.

My upstairs bedroom was cold on winter nights. Mom must have piled half a dozen quilts on top of me. The weight of them held me snugly. I'd breathe through a tiny opening and feel the cold air on my face while the rest of me was warm. I slept well.

I remember feeling safe in that house. Maybe that's why I still love the mountains. ☉

WORDS of WISDOM *When you are good to others, you are best to yourself.* —Benjamin Franklin

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Frequent nighttime trips to the bathroom, embarrassing leaks and the inconvenience of constantly searching for rest rooms in public – for years, I struggled with bladder control problems. After trying expensive medications with horrible side effects, ineffective exercises and uncomfortable liners and pads, I was ready to resign myself to a life of bladder leaks, isolation and depression. But then I tried **BetterWOMAN**.

When I first saw the ad for BetterWOMAN, I was skeptical. So many products claim they can set you free from leaks, frequency and worry, only to deliver disappointment. When I finally tried BetterWOMAN, I found that it actually works! It changed my life. Even my friends have noticed that I'm a new person. And because it's all natural, I can enjoy the results without the worry of dangerous side effects. Thanks to BetterWOMAN, I finally fought bladder control problems and I won!



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Pastor Joachim and wife Sandra, Elissa's husband Tom Kenyon, and Lynn Allison (left to right) enjoy Soupfest. Inset: St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

COUNTRY CHURCHES

'We Are Truly a Family'

This congregation embraced me the moment I stepped through the doorway.

BY ELISSA ENNIS Winchester, Ontario

Eight years ago I moved to the small town of Winchester, Ontario. I fell in love with this place but was missing the church I'd left behind.

I went to work at the hospital, where I met a co-worker who offered to take me to her church.

The next Sunday, off we went. I walked into St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Dunbar and immediately felt at home. I was welcomed with open arms, and the pastor, Joachim Barkley-Probst, and his wife, Sandra, included me in the service by introducing me to the congregants and thanking me for attending.

Fast forward to today: St. Luke's has connected me with the Lord and given me my church family. When someone is unwell, going

through some financial hardship or celebrating a special event, the congregation is there to help.

Joachim is more than our pastor. He and Sandra are our friends who help create a familial atmosphere. Joachim delivers sermons that go straight to the heart.

Sandra is our organist and has the most amazing singing voice. The only time I can say she faltered while playing the organ was when a ladybug landed on the keys!

St. Luke's Church hosts baby showers, an annual potluck and meetings. I often stop for a minute or two and watch the hustle and bustle of everyone setting up tables and chairs and putting out enough food to feed an army. Interspersed with all this activity is plenty of warm conversation and laughter. We are truly a family.

My husband, Tom, and I were married in St. Luke's. It was a small gathering that included our friends and relatives, which makes the church even more special to us.

Every February, Tom and I host "Soupfest." We provide the soup, and guests bring sandwiches and dessert. It's our way of enjoying the fellowship of our loved ones and chasing away the winter blahs. We always have a wonderful time.

In this day and age, small churches like ours are slowly closing their doors. But St. Luke's endures, thanks to an especially generous gift from one beloved congregant we affectionately call Uncle Graham.

If your travels should ever bring you to Dunbar on a Sunday morning, please stop in and say hello. You will be welcomed! ☺

WORDS of WISDOM *It isn't the mountains that wear you out; it's the grain of sand in your shoe.*



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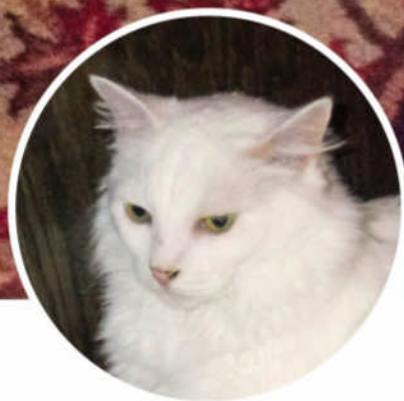
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This beautiful stray cat sought refuge at our church.



ANIMAL TALES

Our Miracle Cat

My family wasn't ready for another pet, but after Snowy was lost, we couldn't imagine life without her.

BY RICHARD E. GEUL IV St. Petersburg, Florida

When I was about 9 years old, a beautiful white cat showed up at our church.

The pastor's wife left food out for the stray and named her Snow White. The cat had such a sweet temperament, and it soon became obvious she was pregnant.

Not long after becoming an inside cat at the parsonage, she gave birth. Snowy, as we called her, and her babies then moved to our house to live with my family.

As much as my sisters and I loved her, we already had several pets and would have to put the cats up for adoption.

It was quite a drive to the shelter. We got the kittens out of the car.

But because Snowy was considered feral, my parents were unsure if the shelter would take her. As they discussed the situation with the staff, Snowy bolted from Mom's arms and ran away.

My family kept in contact with the shelter, since Mom and Dad were determined to keep her if she was found. Shelter workers said they saw her sometimes in the evenings, raising our hopes. We hung posters and returned with her favorite cat food to call her.

After three weeks, our optimism began to fade. The cost of frequent trips to find Snowy was adding up. Mom and Dad decided that we would look one last time.

A couple in the area said they'd seen Snowy behind a restaurant.

My sisters and I went to look for Snowy and brought some food. We called for her. Sadly, again nothing happened.

As we were pulling away, we saw a cat on top of a stack of pipes behind a chain-link fence. Her white coat was streaked with dirt, and she'd lost so much weight that she looked like a kitten. We didn't mind her bedraggled condition. We had found our cat!

Snowy eagerly rubbed up against us as we rode in the car. Our hearts, once hopeless, rejoiced.

I'm now in college, and Snowy is still a much-beloved part of our household. We'll always treasure our miracle cat. The experience taught us that love always finds a way home. ☺

.....
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HUMOR

Lavada's Web

My sister's fast-paced life caused her to miss an important detail.

BY LAVINA LITKE Coupeville, Washington

You could say my sister Lavada is a farmer's wife who lives in her SUV.

Whenever I talk to her, she's in her car, either picking up her grandkids from school or running to the store to buy parts for the farming equipment. At noon you will find her delivering lunch to her husband, Les, out in the field. This is where she probably picked up the little black and orange hitchhiker.

Lavada is always in a hurry. A couple of weeks ago she had to run to town to get a part for the combine. Les told her that he absolutely needed the part to harvest the grain. So when she opened the door to her vehicle and noticed a large spider web right under the driver's dash, she ignored it, got a broom and swept the spider web away. The part was more important than her fear of spiders.

Later she told me she was a little nervous on the drive into town knowing there was a spider loose in her car. She prayed it wouldn't suddenly appear on her head while she was driving. She tended to her business and hurried back to the field to deliver the part for the combine.

The next day she had a meeting with her book club, but first she had to go to the bank. Running to her SUV, she threw open the door and saw a smartly placed spider web below her steering wheel. Again, she brushed the web away. Out of the corner of her eye she thought she saw a flash of black. She prayed it wasn't a venomous black widow spider.

Oh well. She told herself she'd take care of it at home that evening. But the drive to the bank made her nervous. She visualized a black widow hanging inches away from her. What if it landed on her? She told herself to stop thinking about it.

Lavada hustled into the bank, stood in line and joked with other customers. When her turn came, Lavada strolled up to the counter.

The teller looked kind of startled and said, "Lavada, there's a black widow spider sitting on your shoulder."

My sister looked over at the spider and flicked it off. The spider flew through the air. The bank was full of customers, so you can imagine the screaming. A brave soul found the offending creature and smashed it.

Lavada skipped the book club. She drove straight home and bug bombed her car. ☼

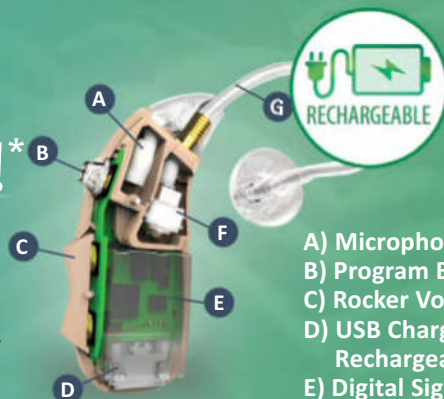
.....
WORDS OF WISDOM *If God sends a storm, He will also steer the vessel.*

NEW Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aid Technology Only \$199!*

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Outstanding Product! "This product is outstanding. Dad loves it, my mom loves it, and I am grateful! Don't believe that you have to spend a lot of money to get a quality hearing aid"

- Gilmore B.

Wonderful Company! "I will definitely recommend your company to my patients."

- Dr. Arun P.

Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aid - For Only \$199!*

The new HearClear™ HCR2 Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aids are now available to you for an unbelievable price! This quality digital hearing aid has the same key elements that all high end digital hearing aids share, but is also rechargeable. The **microphone** picks up the sound and sends an electrical signal to the **digital signal processor** which is the "brains" of the hearing aid. The sound is then adjusted to amplify important speech sounds as well as filtering out unwanted noise. Once the digital processor has amplified the sound, it is passed to the **receiver** (also known as the speaker) which emits a corrected and amplified sound through the **sound tube** into your ear.

Most importantly, your new HearClear HCR2 hearing aids work at a **fraction of the cost** of name-brand hearing aids, and you don't have to keep changing the batteries! You will also love the comfortable, lightweight Open-fit design.

You can spend thousands for an expensive hearing aid or you can spend just \$219 for a hearing aid that is great for most hearing losses (**only \$199 each when you buy a pair - hear up to 3 times better than wearing just one**). We are so sure you will love our product, that we offer a **100% Money Back Guarantee - Risk Free** if you are not satisfied for any reason.

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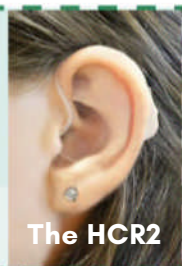
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JOKES

While passing by a park, my son Zach shouted, “Look, Mom! A tater-totter!”

ALANNA TAYLOR *Redmond, Washington*

Planting Wisdom

When weeding your garden, there's an easy way to tell the difference between a weed and a vegetable or flower. Pull on it, and if it doesn't come up, it's a weed. But if it comes out easily, it's not.

JOYCE ANCRILE
Vienna, West Virginia

Prayer Request

After dinner one night, I asked my son Jimmy to fetch a broom from the back porch so I could sweep the floor. Complaining, he said, “But it's dark out there. I'm afraid.”

I said to him, “It's OK, God is with you.” Slowly Jimmy opened

the porch door and said, “God, if you're out there, would you hand me the broom?”

LOIS RITENOUR
Galesburg, Illinois

My Undersized Load

Shortly after we moved to rural South Carolina, we found out Clemson Ag Extension was selling all sorts of berry and fruit trees at great rates. We needed quite a few things because the property we bought was cleared cow pasture and, besides a huge pecan tree, had no other trees on it.

So I ordered blueberry and blackberry bushes and apple, peach and pear trees. When it came time to pick up the order, my friend called to ask if I could

pick hers up, too. I told her we'd better take two trucks.

When I got to the extension office I was shocked to find the pickup area empty except for some little bundles of twigs tied with string. I asked where my order was and the attendant led me to one of those bundles. They were bare root cuttings, which take up very little space. I could lift mine in one hand.

I mentioned to the attendant that I felt silly bringing a truck to pick up the order. It was then that I noticed a man behind me. He ruefully stated, “Don't feel bad; I brought a trailer.”

CANDY GOERG
Donalds, South Carolina

Student Life or a Wife?

A retired rancher decided to go back to school. He made an appointment with the dean of admissions at a university.

The dean asked him, “Are you pursuing a bachelor's degree?” The rancher replied, “I want to, but I can't. I'm still married.”

MATTHEW THOMAS JR.
Bedford, Virginia

Chicken Farmer's Folly

My daughter Pam sent me this message: “Things never to do list. Go grocery shopping and forget you put eggs in your hoodie pocket after collecting them from the chickens, then lean against the meat counter. It makes a mess!”

PATRICIA BUTTERFIELD
Kearney, Nebraska

MAKE US LAUGH!

Share a joke, funny story or photo and we may print it here. Details on page 80.

Now That's Funny!



My great-niece put her drink on the ground and stretched up to imitate her dedicated Great Dane, Ace, performing noise inspection on the neighbor's backyard.

KENYA KRAFT
Bethany, Oklahoma

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Our graded death benefit whole life insurance policy can be used to pay funeral costs, final medical expenses...or other monthly bills. You know how important it can be to help protect your family from unnecessary burdens after you pass away. Maybe your own parents or loved one did the same for you. OR, maybe they DIDN'T and you sure wish they would have!

The important thing is that, right now, you can make a decision that could help make a difficult time a little easier for your loved ones. It's a responsible, caring and affordable decision. And, right now, it's something you can do with one simple phone call.

You may have been putting off purchasing life insurance, but you don't have to wait another day. This offer is a great opportunity to help start protecting your family today.



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50-54	\$11.50	\$9.70	\$18.50	\$15.50	\$36.00	\$30.00	\$88.50	\$73.50
55-59	\$14.20	\$11.95	\$23.00	\$19.25	\$45.00	\$37.50	\$111.00	\$92.25
60-64	\$17.20	\$13.30	\$28.00	\$21.50	\$55.00	\$42.00	\$136.00	\$103.50
65-69	\$20.50	\$16.00	\$33.50	\$26.00	\$66.00	\$51.00	\$163.50	\$126.00
70-74	\$27.40	\$21.40	\$45.00	\$35.00	\$89.00	\$69.00	\$221.00	\$171.00
75-79	\$37.00	\$30.10	\$61.00	\$49.50	\$121.00	\$98.00	\$301.00	\$243.50
80-85	\$50.50	\$42.55	\$83.50	\$70.25	\$166.00	\$139.50	\$413.50	\$347.25

The rates above include a \$12 annual policy fee.

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Not available in all states. In NY, during the first two years, 110% of premiums will be paid. Website unavailable for NY residents.

EASY WAY Whole Life Insurance is underwritten by United of Omaha Life Insurance Company, Omaha, NE 68175, which is licensed nationwide except NY. Life insurance policies issued in NY are underwritten by Companion Life Insurance Company, Hauppauge, NY 11788. Each company is responsible for its own financial and contractual obligations. *Age eligibility and benefits may vary by state.

***In FL policy is renewable until age 121.

How To: Fix Crepe Skin

Many noteworthy displays were featured in 2017.

Cosmetic surgeons, John Layke and Payman Danielpour (of the Beverly Hills Plastic Surgery Group), have made a revolutionary **at-home technique** to help fight the appearance of crepey skin.

The doctors have shown, in user groups, this new technique was found to improve **the appearance of skin around the arms, neck, chest, legs, and other areas.**

According to their research, **loose skin adds significantly more years to a person's perceived age than wrinkles, fine lines, or pigment changes**—which is why they trained their focus on this particular situation.

And when the doctors demonstrated just how quickly and effectively it worked it became clear that their discovery is nothing short of groundbreaking.

Many users have achieved outstanding improvement in their



appearance using a simple process, which can be self-administered. But the latest development in this story came when the video version of the presentation was made available to the public online.

As of this writing, the video has over four million views and is quickly becoming a social media phenomenon.

Watch their shocking presentation at
www.BHMD81.com

Breakthrough technology converts phone calls to captions.

New amplified phone lets you hear AND see the conversation.

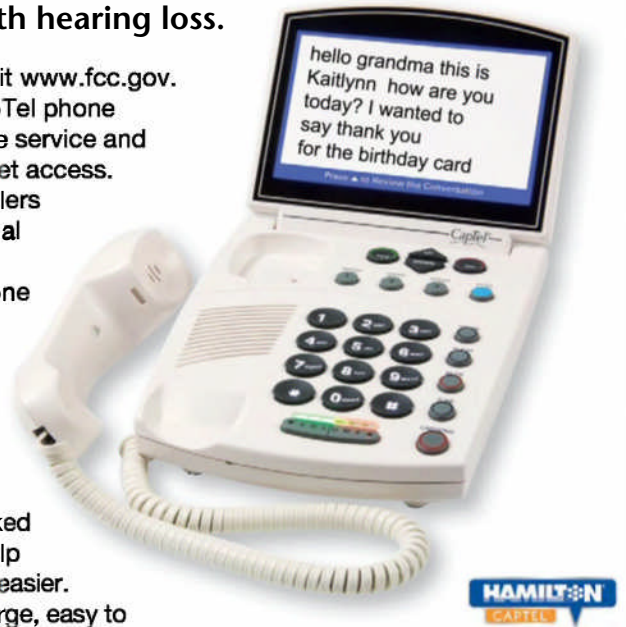
The Hamilton® CapTel® Captioned Telephone converts phone conversations to easy-to-read captions for individuals with hearing loss.

Do you get discouraged when you hear your telephone ring? Do you avoid using your phone because hearing difficulties make it hard to understand the person on the other end of the line? For many Americans the telephone conversation – once an important part of everyday life – has become a thing of the past. Because they can't understand what is said to them on the phone, they're often cut off from friends, family, doctors and caregivers. Now, thanks to innovative technology there is finally a better way.

A simple idea... made possible with sophisticated technology. If you have trouble understanding a call, captioned telephone can change your life. During a phone call the words spoken to you appear on the phone's screen – similar to closed captioning on TV. So when you make or receive a call, the words spoken to you are not only amplified by the phone, but scroll across the phone so you can listen while reading everything that's said to you. Each call is routed through a call center, where computer technology – aided by a live representative – generates voice-to-text translations. The captioning is real-time, accurate and readable. Your conversation is private and the captioning service doesn't cost you a penny. Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) is regulated and funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is designed exclusively for individuals with hearing loss.

To learn more, visit www.fcc.gov. The Hamilton CapTel phone requires telephone service and high-speed Internet access. WiFi Capable. Callers do not need special equipment or a captioned telephone in order to speak with you.

Finally... a phone you can use again. The Hamilton CapTel phone is also packed with features to help make phone calls easier. The keypad has large, easy to use buttons. You get adjustable volume amplification along with the ability to save captions for review later. It even has an answering machine that provides you with the captions of each message.



“For years I avoided phone calls because I couldn't understand the caller... now I don't miss a thing!”

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No Monthly Fee

BREATHE IT IN

My husband and I pulled over at the lower end of Lake McDonald in Montana's Glacier National Park for one last look before leaving. The clouds briefly lifted, exposing the base of the peaks we'd been trying to see all throughout that gray, wintry day.

DENA WARREN

Reva, Virginia



LIFE IN FOCUS

Winter's Last Shots

Brisk blue skies and shimmering snow give way to green in these reader photos.



▲ **REFRESHING RIDE**

My wife, Diane, took advantage of a warm winter day (20 degrees) to ride Lakota on an ice-covered lake.

DOUG BELLEFEUILLE
Rochert, Minnesota



◀ **FOWL PLAY**

I love how candid and fun this photo is. The chicken wanted to peck her bright blue fingernails.

CRYSTAL LAWRENCE
Victor, Montana



▲ **ROCKY ROAD**

My wife, Christie, and I live close to Rocky Mountain National Park and often spend Sundays on Trail Ridge Road, which soars to 12,183 feet above sea level.

BRUCE SHAVER
Longmont, Colorado

► **HIGHWAY VISTA**

An early spring drive on California's Pacific Coast Highway is especially beautiful.

MELISSA MAZZUR
Dallastown, Pennsylvania



◀ **SUNSET DINNER**

My youngest daughter wanted some pictures of her horse. During feeding, I couldn't help but notice how beautiful the setting sun was, so I ran back for my camera to capture the moment.

MATT JACKSON
Newport, Ohio



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3 GALLON, 100 PSI OIL-FREE

A. HOT DOG
ITEM 69269/97080 shown
B. PANCAKE
ITEM 60637/61615 95275 shown

Customer Rating ★★★★★
SAVE 59%
NOW \$399.99 \$58.99
COMPARE TO \$98.82
PORTER-CABLE MODEL:PCF90203

• Air delivery: 0.6 CFM @ 90 PSI, 1 CFM @ 40 PSI

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 5/26/18*

Bauer SUPER COUPON
SAVE \$34

20 VOLT LITHIUM CORDLESS 1/2" COMPACT DRILL/DRIVER KIT

Customer Rating ★★★★★
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• 1.5 amp hour battery
• Weighs 3.4 lbs.

NEW
COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE \$99
MODEL:PC6501L8
NOW \$64.99 \$74.99
ITEM 63531

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PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON
ATV/MOTORCYCLE LIFT

1500 LB. CAPACITY
• Lift range: 5-1/2" to 17"

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SAVE 22%
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ITEM 61632 60536 shown

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HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

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• 5400 lb. capacity

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SAVE 69%
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COMPARE TO \$64.99
MIBRO MODEL:426920
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LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 5/26/18*

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900 MAX. STARTING/700 RUNNING WATTS 2 HP (63 CC) 2 CYCLE GAS GENERATOR

Customer Rating ★★★★★
NEW
NOW \$899.99 \$109.99
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ALL POWER MODEL:APG3000A
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• 5 hours run-time @ 50% capacity

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 5/26/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY
• 1000 lb. capacity

Customer Rating ★★★★★
COMPARE TO BUFFALO TOOLS \$16.43
MODEL:HDFOOLY
NOW \$7.99 \$17.99
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LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 5/26/18*

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29 PIECE TITANIUM

Customer Rating ★★★★★
SAVE 83%
COMPARE TO DEWALT \$60
MODEL:DW7569
NOW \$99.99 \$17.99
ITEM 62281 61637 shown

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 5/26/18*

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PRESSURE WASHER

1750 PSI ELECTRIC
• 1.3 GPM
• Adjustable spray nozzle

NEW
SAVE \$99
NOW \$199.99 \$99.99
COMPARE TO BRIGGS & STRATTON \$179.33
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12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT

Customer Rating ★★★★★
SAVE 70%
NOW \$99.99 \$18.99
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COMPARE TO OPTRONICS \$33.59
MODEL:TLK218K

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3/8" x 50 FT. RETRACTABLE

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• Accepts logs up to 18" long and 6-1/2" diameter

Customer Rating ★★★★★
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MODEL:LJ10M
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4-1/2" ANGLE

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COMPARE TO PERFORMAX MODEL:2411-1
ITEM 69645/60625 shown

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10 FT. x 20 FT.

Customer Rating ★★★★★
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COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC \$205.99
MODEL:23522
ITEM 63054/62858 shown

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HaulMaster SUPER COUPON
MOVING BLANKET

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Customer Rating ★★★★★
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NOW \$59.99 \$89.99
COMPARE TO BLUE HAWK \$19.99
MODEL:77280
ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 5/26/18*

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► **BLEATING HEARTS**

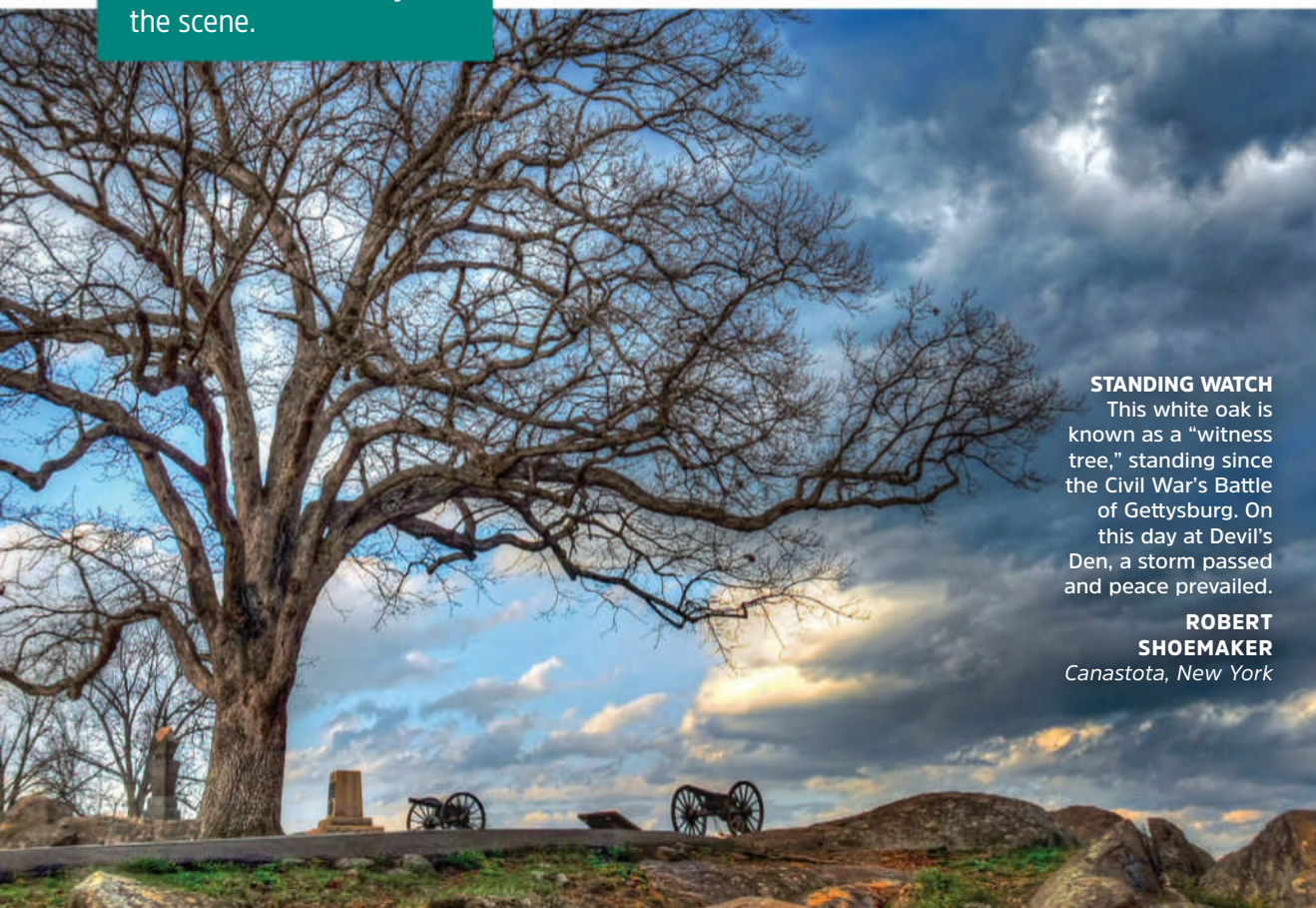
Eleven-month-old Otti Jean was excited to meet the goats on her grandparents' farm. Her face lit up as she turned to make sure Mom was seeing what she was.

MADI ELVESTROM
Willard, Washington



PHOTO TIP

Add drama to your photo by shooting important elements against the sky. In this photo, Robert shot the tree and the cannons as silhouettes against a stormy sky, lending an air of mystery and impact that match the history of the scene.



STANDING WATCH

This white oak is known as a “witness tree,” standing since the Civil War’s Battle of Gettysburg. On this day at Devil’s Den, a storm passed and peace prevailed.

ROBERT SHOEMAKER
Canastota, New York



Life may change,
but farm chores
remain constant.

ON THE FARM

My Steadfast Journey

Though my thoughts may wander, the path to the barn never leads my feet astray. **BY EMILY GIBSON** Everson, Washington

Twice each day I walk the same downhill path to the barn for chores. Sometimes I'm half asleep, sometimes weary from working a long day in town. I walk most often in the dark, sometimes sliding on icy snow or slipping in mud from unending rain, sometimes wading through a sea of overgrown grass.

The constant in this twice-daily journey is the path itself and where it always takes me, no matter the time of year, the weather, or how temporarily difficult it is to discern. I have learned the way by feel as much as by sight—the twist here, the dip there, the aromatic stretch through the stand of wild mint—all while trying to avoid stepping on

the playful farm dogs or the barn cat underfoot.

I prefer to take the demarcated path to the barn because it keeps me focused on the task ahead of me. If I deviate, I'll surely find weeds to pull, a woodpecker to admire, a cluster of cherries to eat, or a sweet pea blossom to smell. The distraction may be welcome, but so much work remains. I must find my way back to the path and stick to it.

As a teenager, I was a trailblazer, bushwhacking my way through brambles to see what might be on the other side, simply to prove I was stronger than the brush. In my middle age, I tend to stick to the familiar. I like knowing where my feet will land, what work my hands

will touch, and where my head will rest. The adventure of the unknown, so attractive in my youth, is less appealing now. The visible path, even when difficult to follow due to cover of snow, sea of mud or abundance of overgrowth, is reassurance that I have a purpose and a destination. I can see where I am going.

We tread many paths during our time on this soil—some mundane, leading to barns and chores, and others a matter of faith, trust, heart and spirit. As tempting as it is to deviate from the path, it is there for a reason. It is rarely straight. But it must be true, steadfastly leading us to where we are called and back again to where we belong.

It's time to pull on my boots. ◉

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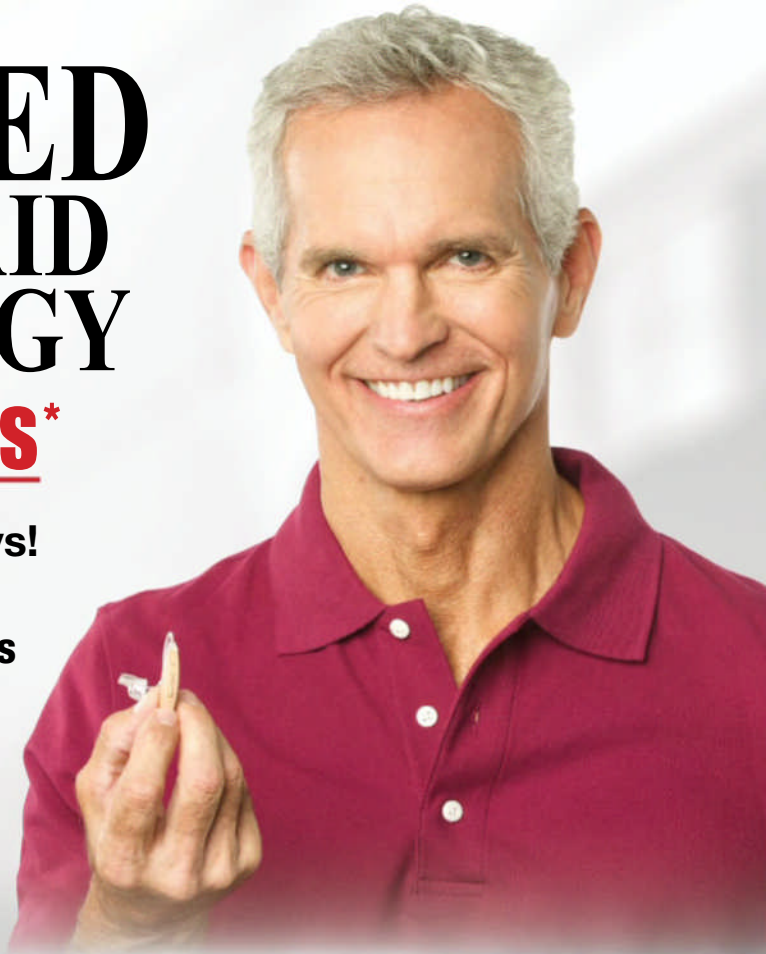
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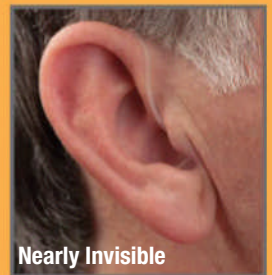
— Edward S., Wayne, NJ

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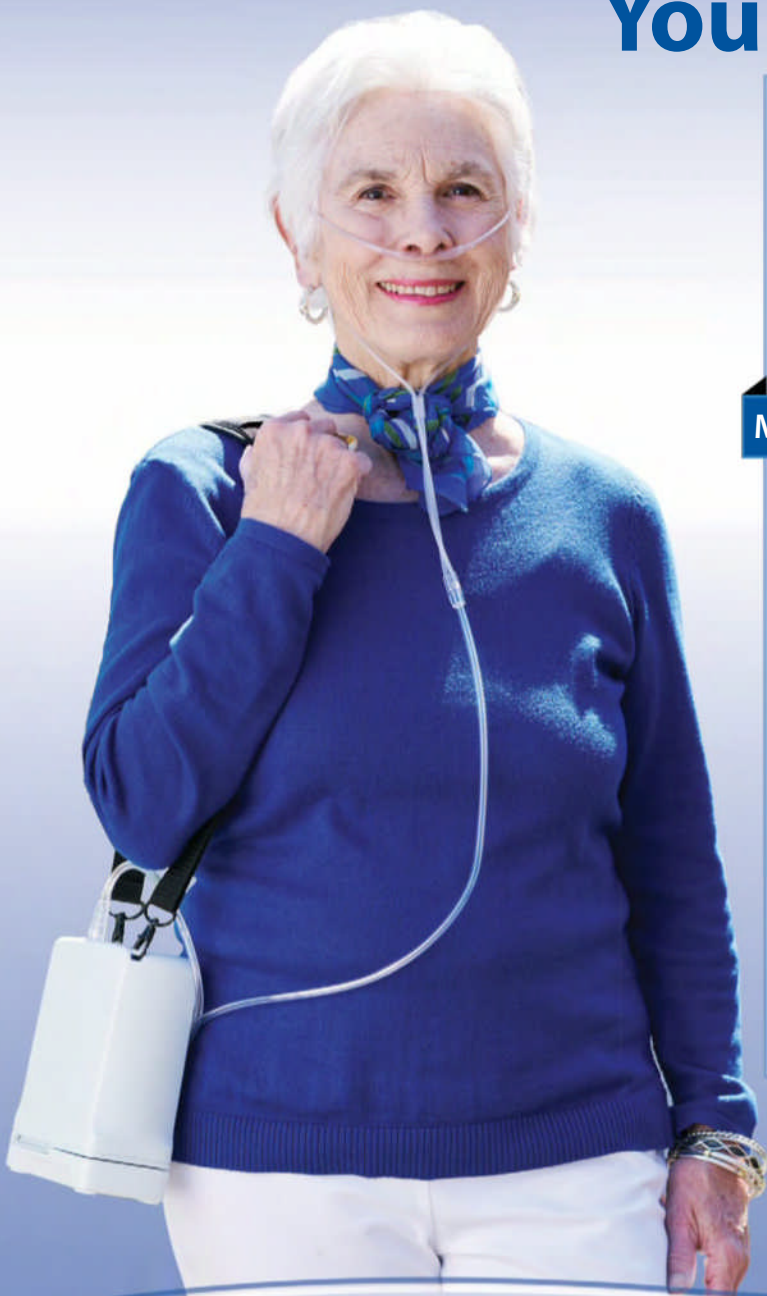
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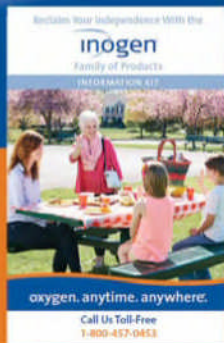
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In each issue we hide a needle (black or white). If you find it, enter online at country-magazine.com by clicking the Contests link at the top of the page. We'll draw winners from all the correct entries. Winners receive a one-year subscription to *Country*. In the December/January issue, we hid the needle on page 22.

No purchase necessary to enter to win. Purchase will not improve your chances of winning. Sweepstakes is open to legal residents age 18 years or older of the U.S., its territories and possessions. Sweepstakes begins on Jan. 18, 2018, and ends on March 20, 2018. For official rules, visit country-magazine.com. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. Sweepstakes sponsored by RDA Enthusiast Brands, LLC.

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Eliminate Belly Fat with Vinegar!

Find Out How...

by James Victor

If you want to lose weight and keep it off -- hate dieting and are tired of taking pills, buying costly diet foods or gimmick "fast loss" plans that don't work-- you'll love the easy Vinegar way to lose all the pounds you want to lose. And keep them off!

Today, the natural Vinegar weight loss plan is a reality after years of research by noted vinegar authority Emily Thacker. Her just published book "Emily's Vinegar Diet Book" will help you attain your ideal weight the healthiest and most enjoyable way ever.

You'll never again have to count calories. Or go hungry. Or go to expensive diet salons. Or buy pills, drugs.

If you like food and hate dieting, you'll love losing weight the Vinegar way.

Suddenly your body will be energized with new vigor and

zest as you combine nature's most powerful, nutritional foods with vinegar to trim away pounds and look years younger.

You'll feel and look years younger shedding unhealthy pounds that make one look older than their age.

In fact, the book's program is so complete that it also helps you:

- Learn secrets of ageless beauty and glowing skin
- Help build the immune system, to fight arthritis and disease
- Speed the metabolism to use natural thermogenesis to burn fat

PLUS so much more that you simply must use the book's easy Vinegar way to lose all the weight you want to lose-- and enjoy all its other benefits-- before deciding if you want to keep it.

TO ORDER A COPY of *Emily's Vinegar Diet Book* see Savings Coupon with Free Gift Offer

Hydrogen Peroxide Can Heal WHAT?

by James Victor

Hydrogen peroxide is trusted by every hospital and emergency room in the country for its ability to kill deadly germs like E. coli and the swine flu virus. In fact, it has attracted so much interest from doctors that over 6000 articles about it have appeared in scientific publications around the world.

Research has discovered that hydrogen peroxide enables your immune system to function properly and fight infection and disease. Doctors have found it can shrink tumors and treat allergies, Alzheimer's, asthma, clogged arteries, diabetes, digestive problems and migraines.

Smart consumers nationwide are also discovering there are hundreds of health cures and home remedy uses for hydrogen peroxide. A new book called *The Magic of Hydrogen Peroxide* is now available that tells you exactly how to use hydrogen peroxide by itself... and mixed with simple everyday kitchen items... to make liniments, rubs, lotions, soaks and tonics that treat a wide variety of ailments.

It contains tested and proven health cures that do everything from relieving chronic pain to making age spots go away. You'll be amazed to see how a little hydrogen peroxide mixed with ordinary kitchen items can:

- Relieve arthritis, rheumatism & fibromyalgia
- Treat athlete's foot, foot and nail

fungus • Clear up allergies and sinus problems • Soothe sore throats, fight colds and flu • Help heal boils and skin infections • Whiten teeth without spending a fortune • Destroy dental bacteria and heal gingivitis • Help heal cold sores, canker sores • Relieve insect bites and stings • Soothe sore feet, soothe muscle aches • Help minor wounds and cuts heal faster • Clear up acne, rashes and yeast infections

The Magic of Hydrogen Peroxide also shows you how to make money saving household cleaners that:

- Kill germs on kitchen surfaces and utensils
- Make a powerful scouring powder that works wonders on sinks, refrigerators and ovens
- Disinfect coffee makers, tea pots and blenders
- Sanitize wood cutting boards and spoons
- Make wood floors, grout and linoleum gleam
- Kill bacteria on fruits, vegetables and meats
- Clean toilets, tubs, showers
- Clean and disinfect pet stains
- Remove mold and mildew
- Remove wine, ink and blood stains
- Boost laundry detergents
- Clean windows & mirrors
- Rid pets of parasites
- Make plants flourish

TO ORDER A COPY of *The Magic of Hydrogen Peroxide* see Savings Coupon with Free Gift Offer

Vinegar is like a Drugstore in a Bottle

by James Victor

Thousands of years ago ancient healers trusted apple cider vinegar, and modern research shows - *vinegar truly is a wonder cure!*

From the Bible to Cleopatra to the fierce Samurai warriors of Japan, vinegar has been documented as a powerful tonic to ensure strength, power and long life.

You'll get easy recipes that mix vinegar with other common household items to help:

- Calm an upset stomach
- Ease leg cramps
- Soothe sprained muscles
- Control appetite to lose weight
- Relieve coughs
- Banish nausea
- Arthritis pain
- Make hiccups disappear
- Cool a sunburn
- Boost memory
- Reduce sore throat pain
- Relieve itchy skin
- Lower blood pressure & cholesterol
- Eliminate bladder infections
- Chase away a cold
- Treat burns
- Reduce infection
- Aid digestion

- Improve memory
- Soothe sore feet
- Treat blemishes & age spots
- Remove corns & calluses
- Replace many household cleaners

And that's just the beginning of the over 1000 new and improved hints and tips that you'll get.

Strep and Staph infections? Vinegar is a powerful antiseptic and kills even these dangerous bacteria on contact.

Headaches will fade away with this simple vinegar concoction.

Feel good and look good with these hair and skin-friendly vinegar remedies.

You'll learn when you should *and should not* use vinegar.

Yes that's over 1000 tried-and-true remedies and recipes in this handsome collector's edition and it's yours to enjoy for 90-risk free days. That's right, you can read and benefit from all 168-pages without obligation to keep it.

TO ORDER A COPY of the *Vinegar Anniversary Book* see Savings Coupon with Free Gift Offer

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Savings Coupon

Here's how to get the *Vinegar Anniversary Book*, *Emily's Vinegar Diet Book* and *The Magic of Hydrogen Peroxide* on a 90 day money back guarantee. Simply fill out this coupon and mail to:

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Qty ___ HP *Hydrogen Peroxide* Total Enclosed _____

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ANN MARIE EBERHART
GIG HARBOR, WASHINGTON

PARTING SHOTS

A Walk on the Wild Side

Wintry wildlife endure the season's final frosts.



▲ I saw this gorgeous mountain goat in the South Dakota Black Hills. The wildlife and scenery there are my favorites in the whole country.

LAUREN BASSART
SHERMAN OAKS
CALIFORNIA

◀ A sleek red fox hunts in the snow at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

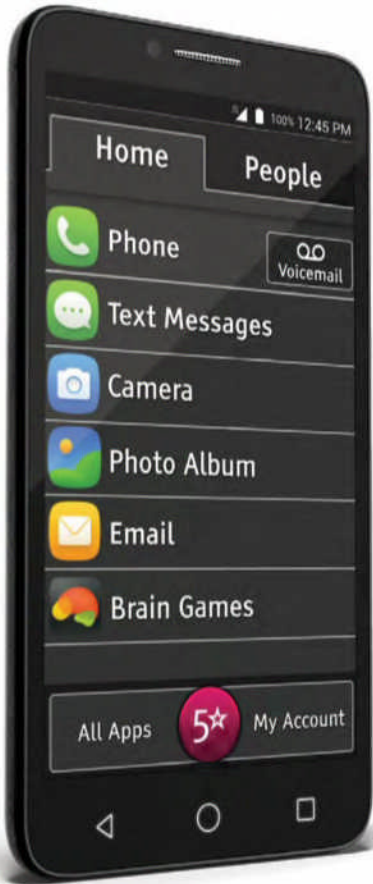
ERICA HARVEY
RAPID CITY
SOUTH DAKOTA



No contracts
No cancellation fees

jitterbug[®]
smart

Finally, a simple smartphone.



Introducing the all-new Jitterbug[®] Smart from GreatCall[®], the simple smartphone with our biggest screen ever, now with exclusive health and safety apps.

EASY The Jitterbug Smart is designed to be easy to use from the moment you turn it on. A new, bigger 5.5-inch screen makes it even easier to stay connected. Everything you want to do, from texting and taking pictures, to emailing and browsing the Internet, is organized in a single list on one screen with large, legible letters. Plus, new Voice Typing makes writing emails and texts effortless.

Plans with
data as low as
\$17⁴⁸
month²

SMART Turn your Jitterbug Smart into a personal safety device with GreatCall's award-winning health and safety apps, like 5Star[®]. In any uncertain or unsafe situation, simply press the button and a highly-trained Urgent Response Agent will confirm your location, evaluate your situation and get you the help you need, 24/7.

AFFORDABLE Other companies make you pay high monthly fees for expensive phones, while GreatCall provides quality phones at a surprisingly affordable price. GreatCall has a variety of data plans starting as low as ^{\$}2⁴⁹ per month. Compared to other cell phone companies, you could save over ^{\$}300 per year.

The Jitterbug Smart phone plans are the most affordable on the market and come with dependable nationwide coverage. Friendly customer service agents will help figure out which phone plan is best for you, and with no contracts or cancellation fees, you can switch plans anytime. You can even keep your current landline or cell phone number. **Ask about our new Unlimited Plan!**

Powered by the nation's largest and most dependable wireless network.



NO CONTRACTS
No cancellation fees

25% OFF
PLUS, GET A FREE CAR CHARGER



LIMITED TIME OFFER
1/28/18 - 2/25/18

Why the Jitterbug Smart is your best choice for a new smartphone:

No contracts to sign, ever	Keep your current phone number	Award-winning, U.S.-based customer service and tech support	No hidden monthly fees	Brain Games powered by Posit Science [®]
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To order or learn more, call
1-800-263-0565

or visit us at
greatcall.com/Country



¹25% off device applies only to MSRP of ^{\$}149⁹⁹ and is only valid for new customers or new lines of service. Sale price in stores may vary. This promotional discount does not apply to prices below MSRP. Offer valid 1/28/18 through 2/25/18. ²Monthly fees do not include government taxes or assessment surcharges and are subject to change. Plans and services may require purchase of a GreatCall device and a one-time setup fee of ^{\$}35. ³\$300 savings calculation based on market leaders' lowest available monthly published fees. Coverage is not available everywhere. 5Star or 9-1-1 calls can be made only when cellular service is available. 5Star Service tracks an approximate location of the device when the device is turned on and connected to the network. GreatCall does not guarantee an exact location. Car charger will be mailed to customer after the device is activated. Jitterbug, GreatCall and 5Star are registered trademarks of GreatCall, Inc. Copyright ©2018 GreatCall, Inc.

Imagination is the eye of the soul.

JOSEPH JOUBERT

Flower in Big Bend National Park
DANA HANDY Sherman, Texas



GOD BLESS AMERICA