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Wishing you a Merry Christmas! **DECEMBER 2012**



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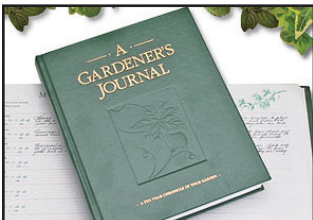
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The History of the Christmas Tree Walk - A Family Tradition

By **Ralph McKinch**
ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

The Christmas season is a time of traditions. Perhaps your family makes a yearly trek to a Christmas tree farm or lot to pick out that perfect real evergreen. Nothing smells better than the smell of that fresh pine once it is placed in a special spot inside the home. Maybe you continue a tradition in your own family that you remember when you were a child. In my family it was always looking forward to being able to open one present on Christmas Eve – and then having to wait for all of the others until Christmas morning. Whatever the traditions are, these become part of our collective memory of what Christmas is all about and often become important rituals to pass down from generation to generation.

One yearly event that has become a family tradition for many Thumb area residents is the History of the Christmas Tree Walk that is held each year at the 9,500 square foot log home of Allen and Diane Kodet in Clay Township (Algonac), Michigan. This year will mark the ninth year since the Walk began. Over 60 Christmas trees are decorated and displayed inside the home on all three levels. The trees showcase authentic ornaments from the entire period of Christmas tree decorating in America, beginning with the 1850s and continuing through each decade until the present. The immense collection is the end result of the Kodets' 30 year passion for researching and collecting Christmas ornaments and decorations.

During each of the eight

nights of the Walk, knowledgeable guides are available on each level of the home to answer questions about the Christmas trees, ornaments and decorations and about the log home itself, which always generates a lot of interest as well.

Five bedrooms, seven bathrooms, an indoor swimming pool and a magnificent natural stone fireplace that towers through all three levels in the center of the home, a seven foot chandelier made of naturally shed elk horns in the living room coupled with rustic furniture and décor themed around Michigan wildlife are some of the reasons that the home was twice featured in national log home magazines.

Visitors to the Christmas Tree Walk will find signage by many of the trees that are helpful in understanding the history of various ornaments and decorations. Most people spend an hour or more relaxing and reminiscing about ornaments and memories from their own childhoods. Places to sit and relax and enjoy a cup of cocoa and Christmas cookies are also provided.

A small sampling of the unusual ornaments that are displayed on the trees are:

- Scrap Ornaments - From the Civil War until the late 1900s, a scrapbook craze swept across America. Almost every woman and child kept a scrapbook. The German's perfection of the printing process led to a vast array of embossed chromolithographs which were used in greeting cards, calling cards and calendars. Many of these were cut out and added to scrapbooks. By the late 1890s, the printers made the figures with mirror-image reverse sides which could now be pasted

See *CHRISTMAS WALK*, Page 6



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.

~ Norman Vincent Peale

It is true, isn't it? Christmas – not just December 25 – but the whole season of preparation up to that special and holy day seems to bring out the best in much of humanity. Families who may be separated for much of the year come together and enjoy the warmth and comfort of being with one another. They catch up on what they have missed in the everyday lives of their loved ones. Individuals who may not think about donating time or money during the rest of the year to worthwhile charities often feel more generous during this season under the wonderful spell of Christmas magic. As we patronage stores and malls, even though we have to deal with larger than normal crowds, we seem to see more smiles on people's faces and hear more laughter than at other times of the year.

I admit it. I love Christmas. I love the true religious significance of the holiday, but I also love the commercialism. Some may argue justifiably that the Christmas décor seems to come out earlier every

Christmas, children, is not a date. It is a state of mind.

~ Mary Ellen Chase

Let us remember that the Christmas heart is a giving heart, a wide open heart that thinks of others first. The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all history, because it has meant the pouring into a sick world of the healing medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost two thousand years... Underneath all the bulging bundles is this beating Christmas heart.

~ George Matthew Adams

year in businesses, but the lights, the decorations, the tinsel, Santa and his reindeer, candy canes and gingerbread houses – they all put me in a happy, festive mood, no matter what month it is. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the positive vibes this season brings could last all year long?

I would like to wish all of the readers of ThumbPrint News a most blessed, happy and enjoyable holiday season. But most of all, I hope that you will join me in keeping the special feelings and significance of Christmas alive in our hearts for all of 2013 as well. Just think about the positive effects we would all have on our families, our towns, our state and all of humanity.

ThumbPrint News

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Spotlight on Mount Clemens: Taking a Bath in “Bath City”

By William Easton

ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

Mount Clemens, county seat of Macomb County, has been called “Bath City”. That nickname dates back to the late 1800s when people from across the country and abroad traveled there to bathe in its famous mineral waters. Although the last bath house closed about 1972, presumably those minerals still remain in the waters of the Michigan Basin.

The southeastern shore of the state from Saginaw all along the Thumb to Detroit boasted many salt mines. Some are still operating beneath metropolitan Detroit and the city of St. Clair. Most of what is now mined is Halite (rock salt) which is used in the winter on the roads and not table salt that we consume. Across the St. Clair River in Ontario oil was discovered and that may have been what Michigan explorers were digging for when the unusual tasting water came to the surface. According to a local unsubstantiated tale,

an infirm horse regained strength after drinking/laying in the surface water.

Various minerals were found in the Mount Clemens wells, primarily sulfide and sulfur compounds. Today the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires that to be classified as mineral water to be sold for human consumption it must contain 250 parts per million total of dissolved solids. Balineology is the name given the study of therapeutic mineral baths. The temperatures and nature of minerals in the particular water varies from among locations. One study reports that the most common minerals include: calcium, sodium, magnesium, potassium, iron, chloride and hydrogen sulfide. Although just how they affect the bather may depend on the complaint, at the very least it is known that they increase blood circulation.

Of course over 100 years ago those seeking relief from ailments, including arthritis and diabetes, didn't know just why an hour soaking in the rough wooden tubs

of Mt. Clemens mineral baths seemed to relax and dissipate the pains. During this time well to do Americans, no longer tied to the long hours of farming and factories, sought healthier lives. Mineral springs developed commercially in other parts of the United States as well. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a polio victim as a young adult, found relief in Warm Springs, Georgia, where he died at the Little White House in 1945. In New York State along the Vermont border Saratoga Springs attracted the wealthy for horse races and mineral waters. Banff in the Canadian Rockies has an excellent spa with soothing waters – as I know from personal experience.

At about the same time that the baths became popular in southeastern Michigan, further west, the Kellogg Brothers, Seven Day Adventists and advocates of healthy lifestyles, including the consumption of large quantities of water, discovered corn flakes, leading to its commercial success.

An individual, Dorr Kellogg, no relation to the Kelloggs of cereal fame, has claimed to be the first to use a crude wooden tub for bathing as a cure for his eczema in Mount Clemens.

The surge of visitors to the still small village of Mount Clemens (population 4748 in 1890) meant that accommodations and feeding must be made available. The bath proprietors built adjacent hotels, many in the grand 19th century style. *The Centennial History of Mount Clemens 1879-1979* has a chapter on the mineral bath era. There are numerous pictures of bath houses and hotels. According to



Interior of Clementine Bath House in Mt. Clemens, MI, circa 1940

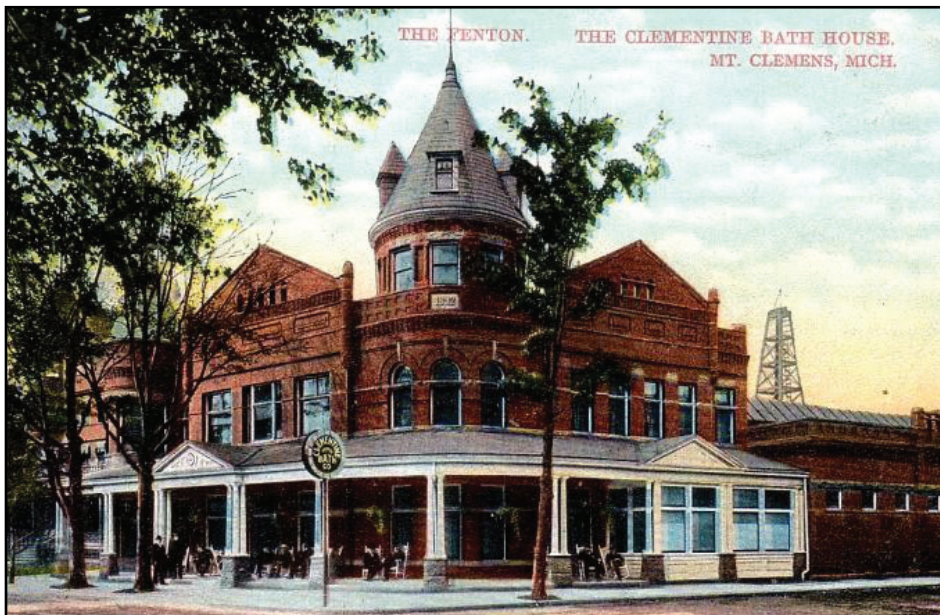
this text edited by long time journalist, Dorothy M. Magee, there were at least eight facilities operating at various periods of time until the 1970s when the last one closed. The first one, appropriately called “The Original Bath House”, burned and was rebuilt several times. Costs were advertised that baths were 50 cents plus 25 cents more for the assistance of an attendant, sometimes called a “rubber”. They were, of course, segregated by sex. Also a truly “separate but equal” bath

house and hotel was built by and catered exclusively to the “Colored Only” population. That establishment operated until the 1960s.

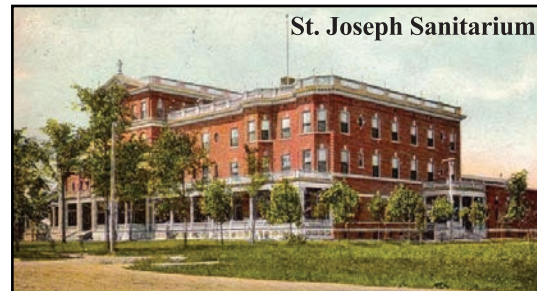
One of the most impressive

buildings still standing today was the St. Joseph Sanitarium and Bath House financed by the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph at the end of the 19th Century. It became a hospital and under the current ownership provides mental health services. Although the baths were discontinued in 1952, the 200 foot long structure facing on 215 North Avenue remains shuttered

See *Bath City*, Page 23



Clementine Bath House in Mt. Clemens, MI, circa 1940



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CHRISTMAS WALK

Continued from Page 1

together and used as decorations on the Christmas tree. These were then embellished with tinsel, ribbon and other items.

- Dresden Ornaments – Collectors of Christmas ornaments often regard discovering a Dresden ornament a highlight of their efforts. Made primarily of cardboard, they acquired the name “Dresden” as the majority of these ornaments were manufactured in or near Dresden, Germany, between 1880 and 1910. There are both flat and three-dimensional Dresdens, which often represent people, animals and household objects.



- Pressed Cotton Ornaments – Some of the older ornaments that have withstood the test of time have been those manufactured from pressed cotton. Most of these were fashioned from the mid-1870s to the early 1900s. The cotton ornaments that have disappeared can be mostly attributed to the



fact that, although they did not break, they were often hung on the lower branches of the trees and children would take them off and use them as toys!

- Kugels – One of the very first blown glass balls that were produced for Christmas trees, kugels appeared as early as 1848 in advertisements. They are extremely heavy compared to the blown glass ornaments of later years and range in size from under one inch to 14 inches in diameter. They were produced in a wide range of colors and color effects the price, with red being the most rare.



- Blown Glass Ornaments – In 1870, a leading glass factory owner in the village of Lauscha in Germany perfected, with the help of a pharmacist, a new silver coating recipe that was able to replace the heavy liquid lead used to line Kugels. This new process led the way to lighter ornaments and ones that could be blown into molds. The molds took the shape of almost every item imaginable and became a cottage industry in the town



of Lauscha that brought the people out of misery and poverty. Almost every family there was involved in the process of ornament making up until the turn of the century. Today, these are some of the most reproduced ornaments. However, the authentic ones are also some of the most intriguing of all ornaments on an antique tree.

If you haven't had the opportunity to enjoy the History of the Christmas Tree Walk in the past eight years, perhaps this will be the year to start your own family tradition. You definitely won't be disappointed. The hardest thing will be trying to decide which of over 60 trees will be your favorite! 🌲



Victorian Christmas tree in living room

Editor's Note: Please see the full page ad for the History of the Christmas Tree Walk on page 7 of this issue for all of the details on dates, times and how to purchase tickets.

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A Trip of a Lifetime

The Last Frontier and Beyond

Editor's notes: In the September 2012 edition of ThumbPrint News, Keith Kodet chronicled his family's adventurous and sometimes humorous road trip to Alaska which he combined with delivering a load of motorcycles for his shipping business, Route 55 Transport. After returning home to East China, Michigan, for 15 days, Keith headed back to Alaska – this time without the rest of the family – to explore the back roads and byways of The Last Frontier once again, this time by bike, and then to complete delivery of another load of motorcycles across the U.S. Keith shares with our readers his memorable adventures.

By Keith Kodet

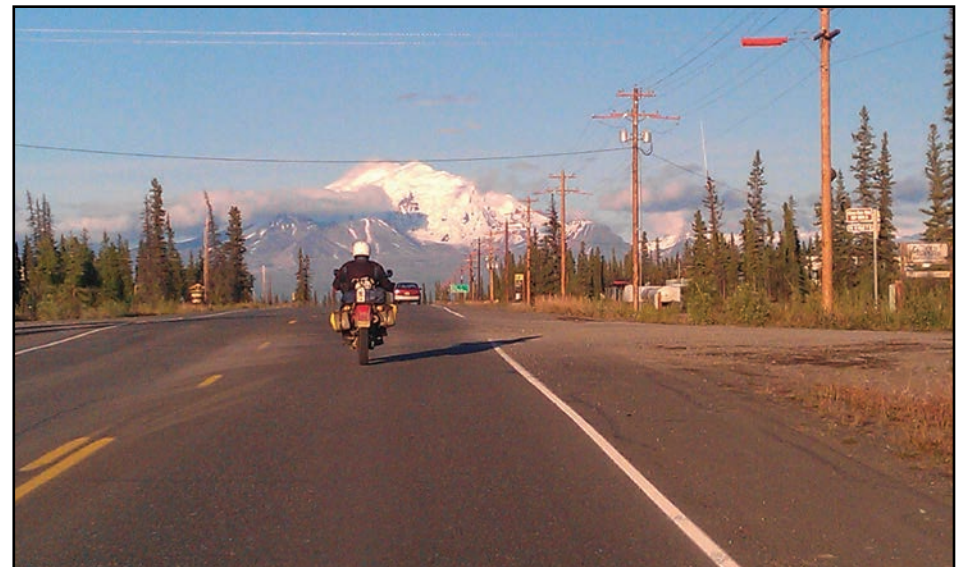
ThumbPrint News Staff Writer

Being back home in Michigan only 15 days before the second leg of my Alaskan cross country adventure barely gave me enough time to adjust to the time change, to catch up on visiting with family and friends and to take care of a million little things that I had let slide while we were gone the first time. However, that gypsy blood in me still made me anxious to resume my travels.

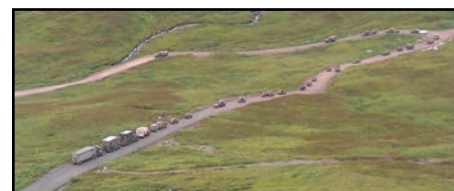
While hauling client's motorcycles to Alaska on the original journey, I had also taken along my motorcycle and my life-long friend Lucas' bike. Lucas would join me on my second Alaskan adventure.

I left both bikes in another friend's garage (Brian), who lives in Anchorage. Brian also would join Lucas and I when we returned. My truck also remained in Alaska when I flew back to Michigan with my family awaiting another load of motorcycles to haul back on my second trip.

So, after a short stay in Michigan, Lucas and I headed to Detroit Metro Airport for our long flight to Anchorage. It was well after midnight when we finally arrived. Brian picked us up. We were exhausted and ready to crash at his house. After sleeping in the next morning, we spent the day prepping our stuff and the bikes for our adventure so we could take off the first thing the following day.



We weren't even an hour into our ride the next morning when the first of several mishaps occurred. Brian decided the best route to travel was right through the Knik River, which gave his bike a good washing. However, when Lucas followed, he promptly fell over, dousing himself and the right side of his bike. Even though he got out quickly, the bike wouldn't restart, so Brian had to help him push it back across the river. We let the bike dry out for a few hours but the continued cranking had killed the battery. By swapping Brian's battery into Lucas' bike, we finally got it restarted.



Back on the road again heading out to Hatcher Pass we ran into a convoy of historical WWII and Korean War Jeeps, trucks and assorted vehicles traversing the tight gravel switchbacks. There were over 100 of them and it was quite the sight. Topping the cool factor were two T6 WWII trainer planes that kept buzzing the convoy.



Later in the day we finally made it to Talkeetna where we met up with some

old friends from Michigan who moved to Alaska several years ago, Ryan and Heidi. Ryan is an airplane mechanic and pilot and he showed us around his shop, including a 1955 DeHaviland Otter that was really awesome. Heading out to the lake we also got to see Ryan's Maule floatplane and we helped him with a quick repair on his exhaust.

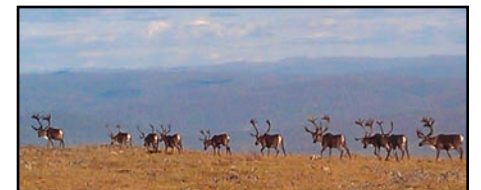
The day ended with us sampling a few barley pops and having a great dinner at Heidi's restaurant/brewery Twister Creek in Talkeetna. Ryan and Heidi put us up for the night, for which we were grateful.

The next day was one of the most scenic as we followed Brian on our bikes for about 250 miles of some of the most beautiful country I had ever seen. Plenty of stops were taken along the way. At one point, Mt. McKinley could have been visible but the cloud cover prevented us from getting a good view.

Camp that night was made at Fielding Lake. It was overcast and very chilly, but the sights were awesome! I opened up an old tent that I had found in my attic and had brought along for the trip (without checking it out first). It ended up having a zipperless door and was a teal and purple Barbie looking thing. Brian and Lucas had great fun teasing me about it!



Keith's turquoise tent - perfect for a Barbie hide-out



Continuing on our adventure, we climbed Taylor Mountain with our bikes the next day, which was quite steep and rocky. Towards the top we ran into two herds of caribou to which we were able to



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get very close. From there we traveled the Top of the World Highway, stopping finally in the town of Chicken.

Legend says that the town founders wanted to name the village Ptarmigan after the state bird but couldn't agree on how to spell it, so they just went with Chicken! The tiny town was full of interesting humor and downright fun.



Brian, Keith and Lucas enjoy the fresh Alaskan air.

had been traveling by bike for over a year, traversing the entire world. We enjoyed sharing a few stories and beers together.

Another time we ran across a family from the U.K. who had been on a round the world trip themselves. Talking to them we learned that their son, nine year old Max, was the youngest person ever to reach the summit of Mt. Kenya in Africa.



Leaving Chicken the next day we continued on to Poker Creek (population of two), the furthest north U.S. crossing. From there it was on to Dawson City, Yukon. In order to get there we had to cross the Yukon River in a very swift current on the free ferry service. Heading into town where there is no pavement, we thought we had traveled back to the 1890s. Lunch at the infamous Downtown Hotel/Saloon turned out to be quite unique. It is famous for its sourtoe cocktail, which has a petrified human toe in it! The toe is moved from drink to drink, and if you eat it you have to replace it! Other interesting sights in town included the bank at which the famous Alaskan/Yukon poet, Robert Service, worked, and an old paddle wheel steamer in the middle of town. I could have spent a few days in Dawson City, but we needed to move on.

One of the highlights of the trip for me was meeting other travelers. As we were eating one day, an Australian walked up and introduced himself. We quickly learned his story, which confirmed that even though we were on the trip of a lifetime for us, we were just part timers. He



Crossing the Yukon River by ferry

It was almost time to return to Anchorage as Lucas was only able to spend one week with us. Checking out a glacier was one of the last great sights that we saw before heading into town and joining the large crowds at Moose's Tooth, a local popular pizza joint with pizza and micro-brew beers to die for. After that we said our goodbyes to Lucas and dropped him off at the airport.

I was staying on for another week, but not for more biking adventures. I had promised Brian that I would help him to re-roof his house, which ended up being

See *TRIP OF A LIFETIME*, Page 26





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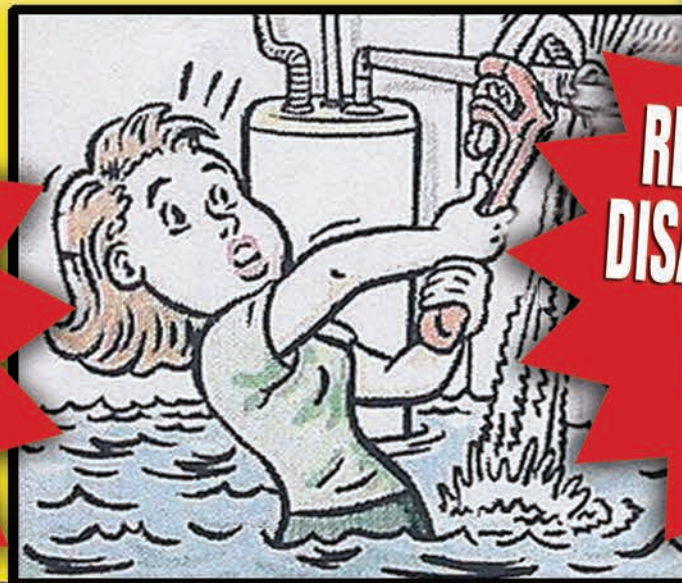
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The Angel Advisor

Give the Gift of Time to Your Homebound Loved One This Holiday Season

By Jeffrey Johnson

ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

When an elderly parent is homebound for the holidays, it can become a stressful, demanding season. With gifts to purchase and wrap, places to go, and people to visit, both the senior and the caregiver become exhausted to the point of illness and begin to count the days until the season is over. By casting a fresh look on the opportunities a family holiday can offer, both the senior and their primary caregiver can relax and enjoy the true meaning of the holiday season. The key is to enlist other family members in the planning, and hold the family gathering in the parent's residence or assisted living residence.

★ **Plan ahead:** Call siblings and relatives a month or two in advance and discuss the pros and cons of hosting the holiday event at your parent's home or your home. This pre-planning can save time and reduce the stress. Ask for volunteers that can show up a week in advance to help with the cleaning and other preparations, such as your parent's shopping and gift-wrapping needs.

★ **Keep it Simple:** Consider making the majority of the meal potluck, or ask each relative to bring a specific dish to share. Make sure there's an area for younger kids to play in without fear of breaking an heirloom treasure, and remember that your parent will most likely need some rest time. If your parent is in an assisted living facility, check with the administrator so you know exactly what is and isn't allowed.

★ **Recruit the younger generations:**

Ask each generation to volunteer some time dedicated to their elder. For example, a teen could offer to read for half an hour; adolescents can take Grandpa for a walk or talk about their latest sports game, and younger children can plan to color a special picture for their grandparent. This will give a needed break to the primary caregiver while the elderly parent basks in the attention of their offspring.

★ **Don't be shy:** Tell your family members exactly what will or will not work. If you're the primary caregiver, you know from experience what's best for Mom or Dad and can gently point out the pros or cons of each idea in order to make the day go smoothly. Since those requiring senior care at home often have few material needs, it's a good idea to make a list of things that would truly be appreciated – whether it is a large print book, a new bathrobe, or a box of candy. Add practical things to the list, such as gift cards from a favorite restaurant or grocery store or a contribution to the electric or prescription drug bill.

In conclusion, instead of dreading the stress that often comes with holidays and other family get-togethers, this year plan your celebration around your homebound loved one or assisted living resident parent. By holding the celebration at home and with contributions from other family members you can all enjoy a peaceful celebration, and both senior and their caregiver will emerge unscathed by the usual holiday hassles. 🌱

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Telephone - Then and Now

By David Gillis

ThumbPrint News Columnist



I'm confident that the story that's about to unfold has been told before. In fact, I believe one similar was published in *ThumbPrint News* not too long ago. But, a recent conversation with a grandson prompted me to look back once more to a different time when life just seemed less complicated.

The conversation I engaged in was with a 16-year old offspring of one of my sons. He was explaining how his cellular telephone worked and all the amazing benefits of owning one. And, although I too own a cellular telephone, it is only for an occasional call home or to receive a call from someone else. Certainly my entire life is not centered on the communication tool that has captured the digital brain of our youth.

My memories of our first telephone as a very young boy growing up in Algonac became vivid as I held his iPhone in my hand. I recall the polished black device setting on the corner of my father's desk. It was black because that was the only color available and there was never even a thought about a different design.

At that time, people did not own their telephones. They were all owned by Michigan Bell Telephone Company and, if you were lucky enough to have one, it was leased to you. My sisters and I were not allowed to use it except with permission and then only when supervised by my mother.

Our first telephone number was only three digits. To make a call you would simply pick up the receiver and, after a brief delay, a voice would say, "Number please." By telling the voice at the other end the number you were calling, you would then be connected with the person you were calling. If that person did not answer, the telephone would continue to ring until the pleasant voice reappeared and allowed you to know that there was no answer. Today we have voice mail, message machines and call transfer services, all with digital voice patterns and certainly not as pleasant.

Our ability to make calls to others or, for that matter, to receive calls was complicated by the party-line system that was in existence for most people. Initially, we were one of two households who utilized the same service line. So, if you picked up the receiver and heard someone talking, you couldn't make your call. You'd excuse the interruption, hang up and just wait for another opportunity. It reached a point where you actually knew who the other party-line occupant was and you could address him or her by name. I can recall more than once lifting the receiver when no one was looking and eavesdropping on someone else's conversation.

The telephone operators were local residents who worked varied shifts at the telephone company's small white building at the corner of Michigan and Fruit Streets. Everyone knew who they were and would normally address them by their first name when making a call. Of course you just knew of the possibility that these fine ladies were aware of everything going on in town.

Then came the day when we were given a new type of telephone, still black in color and along with it a new telephone number. The device had a dial wheel that initially took some practice in order to know how to use it. We lost our simple three digit number, which was replaced with seven numbers. I'm sure looking back that the telephone company was convinced that people would not remember seven numbers, so they designed a word-number combination that made recall easier. For the Algonac area the word was "SWIFT" and we would use the first two letters combined with five numbers. Ours was SW4-3689. I have no idea why I remember that today. I rarely can remember my age.

The new modern system made most calls easier, except for those that were long distance. Then you still needed to call the operator and she would say, "Information please." Then you would tell her who you were attempting to call.

Now, telling a sixteen year old adolescent in 2012 about experiences with telephones in the 1950s is like talking to a tree. There is absolutely no understanding and only varied puzzled looks and comments like, "No way!"

A mid-teen youngster today is probably using his or her fourth or fifth cell phone. Certainly, they do not use it to converse verbally, so don't expect them to answer when you call. If you can text a message you'll probably get an immediate reply even if they are in school. They don't wear a watch anymore because the cell phone has a digital time piece built in. And, if you want a current photograph of the person, just ask. You'll have it in minutes, plus others you didn't request and may not even want.

There's no longer a need for an operator for information because you can now access the world-wide web on your cell phone and know whatever you want to know instantly. Want to see a good movie? Check your phone. Need to know what the weather will be tomorrow? Check your phone. Need driving directions? You got it; check your phone.

I recently attended a seminar that addressed technology's impact on our kids. The instructor explained how this small hand-held tool is reshaping the way our youth think, read, speak, write and analyze information. But, at less than 50-years of age, how could he really know how the telephone has changed us? With that I will conclude with this simple message: It's just 2G2B4G. BBFN. SYS. 📞



Let's Speak About Puppy Socialization

By Katerina Rekowski
ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

Most trainers agree that dogs should socialize on a regular basis to live a wholesome life. It is important to introduce your pet to other dogs at an early age. During the first two to three months after birth your puppy spends most of the time at home interacting with his siblings and parents. Any strange dog outside of the usual environment may scare the little one, especially if this new dog is bigger in size or looks different from your puppy's mom and dad. Your pet may need time to become friendly with other dogs. Here are some ideas on how to socialize your puppy:



- Find a dog park nearby where you and your pet can visit on a regular basis. At the park, your puppy will have a great chance finding a friend.
- Talk to your friends and find out if anyone else has a new puppy in need of socializing. In most cases, it will be easier for your little one to get along with another puppy rather than an adult dog.
- Find a neighbor who has a friendly dog. You may be able to take morning walks together. When your puppy is being treated well by an adult dog it builds his confidence.
- If your puppy does not show interest in other dogs, don't physically push or place your pet closer to strangers. Your puppy needs time to observe. It's ok for your pet to keep the distance in the beginning.
- Pay attention to how your puppy interacts with strangers.

Pull away from an aggressive dog. However, if you see that the encounter is going well, stay back and relax. Sometimes your puppy may lay back and show his belly to the other dog. This behavior is absolutely normal! Your pet may act strange while meeting new friends, but it does not mean there is something wrong. When several dogs get together they may start showing the behavior typical to a pack/herd.

- Find a good book on dog behavior. Besides Cesar Milan there are some other great dog behaviorists who have publications in the U.S. Konrad Lorenz, an Australian scientist and a Noble

Prize winner, wrote a book called *Man Meets Dog*. Leon F. Whitney and Bill Tarrant are also great writers about dog psychology and training.

Don't wait. Take your puppy to meet other dogs. Observe behaviors that you might have just read about. Knowledge and experience will help you better understand your puppy's needs. 🐾

Editor's note: The author, Katerina Rekowski, resides in New Baltimore, Michigan, and is a certified Michigan dog trainer. Her website is www.midogtrainer.net.



Katerina

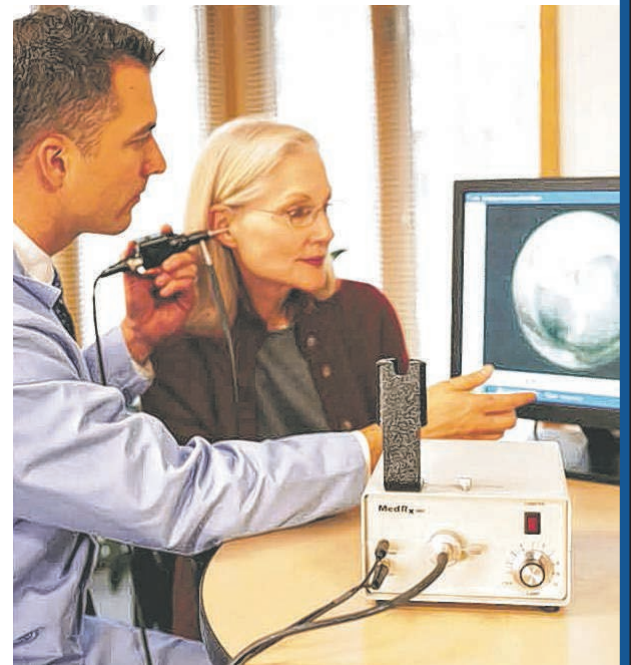
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YOUR INCREDIBLE, EDIBLE BACKYARD

By Stella Otto

ThumbPrint News Columnist

Gifts, Gadgets and Gizmos for the Garden

Looking for a unique gift for your favorite green thumb? Consider these:

I always enjoy the winter respite by pouring over my favorite garden magazine, *Garden Gate* (PO Box 37113, Boone, IA 50037-2113. Ph: 800-341-4769).

The six yearly issues are packed with tips, plant features, product reviews, and best of all ...beautiful, realistic garden plans with layouts, plant suggestions and sketches.

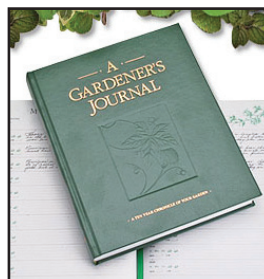
For the "crafty," a flower press preserves the garden's beauty permanently. Conventional models press greenery between absorbent paper and wood boards



to dry for several weeks. For the quick approach, a new model with broadcloth and wool drying pads between terra cotta tiles, pops into the microwave. The job is done in minutes. (<http://www.leevalley.com/US/garden/page.aspx?p=10208&cat=2,50560&ap=1>)

Gardeners with a yen for writing will treasure *A Gardener's Journal - A Ten Year Chronicle of Your Garden*. This beautifully bound volume

from *Lee Valley* offers hints and tips along with over 500 pages of space for musings, drawings and recordings of your personal garden. (<http://www.leevalley.com/US/>



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Busy lives make it hard for even a passionate gardener to get to all the outdoor chores on time. Make their day by "buying them some time," or more practically, a timer. Automatic timers are great insurance and labor savers; useful for turning on grow lights to bring a favorite orchid into flower or to control the irrigation in the vegetable garden. Look for location appropriate features - indoor or outdoor - and a manual override in case the green thumb occasionally wants to take matters into their own hands.

Successful seed starting often requires "keeping the heat on." Help your gardener keep the soil and roots at just the right temperature for germination and early growth with a heat mat that sits under seed starting trays. The mat will also save lots of time moving tender seedlings out of chilly nighttime window sills.

A maximum-minimum thermometer will keep any gardener in the know, whether it's keeping an eye on tender blossoms or just keeping abreast of local conversation.

An old-fashioned dibble, now available in high tech metal with handy depth measuring marks, makes light work of making just the right planting hole for a hill of seeds or for singular small bulbs.

Know a gardener who is bonkers over berries, totally into tomatoes, or has the hots for peppers? A large framed poster

that focuses on their passion can make as much of a statement in their decor as the plants do in their garden.

Don't forget those stocking stuffers! Unusual seeds such as tomatillos, goofy gourds or ethnic vegetables will always offer a fun way to explore the joys of gardening for kids or adults.

Especially for your junior gardeners, a packet of cactus seeds makes a stocking stuffer they can't resist and plants that will stand up to the occasional lapse in watering frequency as well. 🌵



Editor's note: Stella Otto is an award winning author, horticulturist, and Master Gardener instructor. Her books The BackYard Orchardist: A complete guide to growing fruit trees in the home garden and The BackYard Berry Book: A hands-on guide to growing berries, brambles, and vine fruit in the home garden are available as signed copies at her website www.stellaotto.com. Also at her website, find The Backyard Fruit Gardener with information and a subscription "Ask the Expert" Q&A resource for all of your fruit gardening needs.



YUM in the THUMB



By Ralph McKinch

ThumbPrint News Staff Writer

This month, *ThumbPrint News* received three reader recommendations for great places to eat in the Thumb of Michigan.

KAUTZ SHORE LANES – 6840 Lakeshore Rd., Lexington, MI, (810) 359-5211.

Dennis Venuto, of St. Clair Shores, Michigan, writes:

I read the ThumbPrint News all the time. If I was ever asked in any survey of publications that ThumbPrint News was a part, I would have to rate the ThumbPrint News in the TOP 10 of all others.

I live in Saint Clair Shores, Michigan, although I can honestly state that the most of my 65 years young the best of these years was spent in Lexington, Michigan.

In the ThumbPrint News you have invited readers in this column to suggest great places to eat in the Thumb. Well, I have one which is in a very interesting place. Who would ever think that a bowling alley would have a remarkable restaurant in it? Let me tell you that there is such a place. It is called Kautz Shore Lanes.

Kautz Shore Lanes has a fantastic dining room with the greatest food, lowest prices, highest quality service and much more. The décor is most relaxing which you will surely notice when you experience it. There is a separate section for the youngsters to enjoy high tech pin ball games and more when they get a bit restless. The bowling alley is completely separate from the restaurant and unless you are aware that it is a part of the complex you probably wouldn't even notice that it was there.

You must try Kautz Shores Lanes, one of the finest eateries in the Thumb of our great state of Michigan.

ROME CAFÉ – 125 S. Main St., Romeo, MI, (586) 752-2396.

Ken and Merry Van Heck, of St. Clair Shores, Michigan, write:

We would like to suggest the Romeo Café located at 125 S. Main St. in Romeo. Eating at the 100 year old Romeo Café is almost like going to Greenfield



Village. Its tin ceiling and wainscoat walls will take you back in time.

The food also is home cooked. The owners, Chris and Jennie Stevens, will be your friends after just one visit. Jennie makes an awesome coffee cake from scratch that is available Monday through Saturday. Chris has a Saturday special of corned beef hash, and if you enter through the back door early Saturday morning, you can watch him making it. The oatmeal, if ordered, takes ten minutes to get because it is cooked in a pot, not instant or microwaved. Because we always enter through the back door, we've also seen the biscuits being made from scratch. Also, look for the daily specials which give you new menu choices. Remember, come in hungry and leave with new friends.



RED DOG CAFÉ – 208 S. Main St., Yale, MI, (810) 387-9031.

Sue Harb, of Yale, Michigan, writes:

I know you spotlight local businesses and I just wanted to tell you about a wonderful little café in Yale, Michigan.

It's called the Red Dog Café. It's only open for breakfast and lunch Tuesday through Saturday. It's got such a great atmosphere! It's like you walked into someone's dining room but they have the cutest dog pictures everywhere. The food is all homemade including the soups and is reasonably priced!

I love the girls that work there! They are very personable and it looks like they love what they do!

Editor's note: So, do you have a favorite eatery to recommend in the Thumb area of Michigan? If so, please tell us all about the restaurant. What makes it special? What kind of décor does it have? What would be your menu recommendations? Please include the name of the restaurant, the address and phone number as well. If there is a website, that is always helpful. We also need your name and city of residence. Email your information to thumbprintnews@comcast.net. Bon Appétit!

A Nostalgic Dream

By Colleen Campbell

ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

Two friends were talking about the good old days and how they missed many of their childhood favorite places in downtown Port Huron.

That is when Mary Willing and Colleen Campbell decided to recreate a little bit of it. They decided to open a restaurant, even though people told them in this economy they would not survive six months.

Colleen and Mary decided to go ahead anyway and now they have been open six months and have been fulfilling their dream at the Crossroad Café L.L.C. at 706 Lapeer Avenue in Port Huron, Michigan. Crossroad Café is a cozy little place where people come in and visit or meet others and laugh in a relaxed setting while enjoying daily specials and a menu of real homemade from scratch food using fresh ingredients. Specials are offered on most days of the week, including sliders (or gut bombers) on Tuesday, all you can eat spaghetti on Wednesday, and all you can eat waffles on Sunday, all at very

reasonable prices. Menu items are also available for take-out, so the wonderful homemade food can be enjoyed at home without cooking.

Crossroad Café is known for its unique menu of quality food and the owners' and employees' hospitality towards everyone. Hopefully, when you visit Crossroad Café, the customer's experience will feel different, as if it were like one that is born from a place where family is valued and the owners are present and care about family, their cafe, their customers, neighbors, strangers and their community.



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THROUGH Laura's LENS

By Laura Smith
ThumbPrint News Columnist

The Talent and Degrees of Professional Photography

Photography is a talent, and like singing, acting or playing an instrument, photography is one of those artistic endeavors that will require a level of natural born talent

or flair. Even if you have all the education, training and degrees, you still have to have talent.

No matter how good the non-professional photographer thinks what they photograph is great, it will always be subjective. One

cannot depend upon friends or family members for critique as they may not tell you the truth so they do not hurt your feelings. The truth comes when one enters prints in a paid competition and is rejected, or another professional photographer bluntly says, "You have no photography talent".

A good way to determine if a person has talent is to take a college photography course. If the person shows no improvement, pursuing professional photography is not recommended. However, there are other support areas, such as sales, photography assistant or photography store manager.

In my first photography class there was a MD who thought he had talent. He paid our instructor to set up a darkroom in his home with all of the latest gadgets. His photographic portfolio consisted of poorly lit and slightly out of focus family portraits, wooden wagon wheels, fences, flowers, old locomotives and travel photos. He told the instructor that his patient's were giving him positive feedback after he hung up some prints on his waiting room walls. The doctor asked the instructor if he could help him sell his prints and the instructor told the doctor as kindly as he could that the doctor had no talent. This upset the MD and he withdrew two weeks before the course was over.

In regards to the four year degree, in over 20 years I only had two inquiries about my educational background. First one was from two doctors who were getting married and when they discovered I did not have a photography degree, they said I was not a true professional and

therefore they would not hire me.

The second inquiry came from a couple looking for a wedding photographer. The guy had attended the Brooks Institute of

Photography and as he looked at my portfolio books, he found what he considered technical photography errors. At the end of the interview I told him that I was going to pass on being considered for their photographer because I worried that he might sue me. This

upset the couple and they bolted for the door.

The photography technique you need to take great photos can be learned in about four college photography courses. It will help hone your talent and provide valuable feedback from an instructor with at least a master's degree and/or who is a current working photographer.



However, if one plans to work for a magazine, newspaper or as a commercial photographer for an advertising company or work in the movie industry, one will need at least a bachelor's degree. I personally have tried to get a job in those above venues and, despite my photography awards and business experience, I was not hired because I did not have a four year degree.

Laura Smith lives in New Baltimore, Michigan, and is a professional photographer who started her business back in 1990. Laura will be offering tips to photographers of all skill levels – from beginners to professionals. Laura's website is www.photographyplusbylaura.com.



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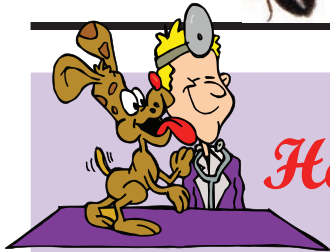
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Maple Veterinary Hospital's *Holiday Do's and Don'ts*

By **Dr. DiBenedetto** *ThumbPrint News* Columnist

Here are some general tips to help make your pet's holidays fun and safe!

- ◆ Stick as closely as possible to your pet's normal routine. Try not to vary his feeding, walking or playtime schedules. On those days when there will be change, just taking a few minutes for belly rubs or some extra hugs will help.
- ◆ Holly, mistletoe, Christmas cactus and poinsettia plants are poisonous to dogs and cats. Make sure they are kept in places your pet cannot reach. They can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and possible central nervous system depression. If ingested, call your veterinarian as soon as possible for medical advice.
- ◆ Do not put lights on the lower branches of your tree, especially with puppies or kittens in the house. They can easily get tangled in the tree lights which

can cause them to panic and knock over your decorated Christmas tree.

- ◆ Avoid glass ornaments on the lower branches of your tree as well as they can break easily and may cut your pet's feet or mouth.



- ◆ Beware of electrical cords. Pets often try to chew them and can get shocked or electrocuted. Place them out of reach by running them through PVC piping or empty paper towel rolls to cover the wires, secure the wires to the floor, or place them behind or beneath furniture.

- ◆ Use a sturdy tree stand. Use craft wire or heavy fishing line to anchor a very large tree to a wall or ceiling to prevent it from tipping over. Dogs may jump on the tree and cats may climb inside the tree, causing the tree to tip.

◆ Do not add aspirin or chemical preservatives to your tree's water. These additives can be harmful to your pet. Use a heavy tree skirt to cover the tree stand.

◆ Tinsel can be dangerous for dogs and cats. It may cut off circulation if it wraps around a paw and, if swallowed, it may cause a blockage in the intestines that may require surgical removal.

◆ Keep burning candles in glass or out of the way of your dog's wagging tail or your cat's curious whiskers. Besides the obvious fire danger, spilled hot wax can burn them.

◆ Don't give your pet scraps from your holiday buffet. Consuming excessive amounts of fat and sugar can cause serious problems, like pancreatitis. Treatment for pancreatitis can require several days in the hospital on IV fluids.

◆ Other foods that should never be given to pets include: chocolate (especially unsweetened baking cocoa), onions, grapes, raisins and macadamia nuts. Onions are especially toxic to cats.

◆ Even with the best of care, some accidents are unavoidable and pets will sometimes

become ill. Having the location and phone number of the nearest veterinary emergency hospital is helpful in case of an after-hours emergency.

All of us at Maple Veterinary Hospital hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday season!!!! 🐾

Editor's note: Dr. DiBenedetto is a veterinarian at Maple Veterinary Hospital located at 2981 Iowa in Troy, Michigan. The hospital website is: www.MapleVeterinaryHospital.com. Dr. DiBenedetto can be reached at (248) 585-2622 for other pet related questions.

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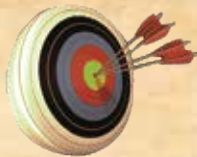
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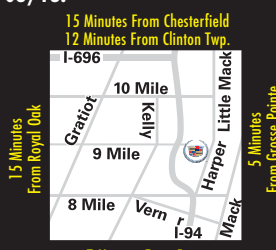
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Candles

By **Rennae Hardy**

ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

Historically, the origin of candles is accredited to the Egyptians. Rushlights or torches were made by soaking the pithy core of reeds in melted animal fat. Although the Egyptians were using wicked candles in 3,000 B.C., the ancient Romans are generally credited with developing the first wicked candle. By dipping rolled papyrus repeatedly in melted tallow or beeswax, the Romans produced a candle used to light their homes and aid travelers.

Variations and improvements on candle making followed, including the contribution provided by colonial women who fashioned candles from the extracted wax of bayberries and spermaceti... a wax obtained by crystallizing sperm whale oil. Additional advances occurred during the 19th century. In the 1820s,



French chemist Michel Eugene Chevreul discovered how to extract stearic acid from fatty acids, leading to the use of stearin wax and in 1834, an inventor, Joseph Morgan, developed a machine allowing for the continuous production of molded candles utilizing a cylinder with a movable piston to eject candles as they solidified. Paraffin wax was introduced in the 1850s when chemists learned how to efficiently separate the naturally occurring waxy substance from petroleum and refine it.

Candle making began to decline with the arrival of the light bulb in 1879. Candles enjoyed renewed popularity during the first half of the 20th century and remained steady until the mid-1980s when increased interest led to the emergence of numerous shaped, sized and scented candles. Today, for the first time in more than a century, new types of candle waxes are available, including soybean and soy lotion accompanied by an unprecedented surge in popularity. Candles have surpassed their initial

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Candles equally symbolize the human consciousness. When words escape expression, the candle focuses our meditative thought. The flickering flame

of light exemplifies our faith. Most importantly, the candle dispels darkness, bringing light and the promise of God's love. As we acknowledge the approaching holiday, let's contemplate a brighter new year. Let's stand like the radiant candle and be proud bearers of light. Merry Christmas!! 🌿

Editor's Note: Renna Hardy is the owner of Radiant Beings, 25962 Knollwood S. in Chesterfield. Renna is a certified energy practitioner and offers many choices for alternative healing. Contact Renna at (586) 949-0112 or (586) 489-8611.



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Memoirs from The Restless Retiree The Coffee Cup!

By Gabriel Jones, ThumbPrint News Columnist

Seniors... isn't it true that every family has developed some form of household rules or guidelines after many years of marriage?

You all can probably name some "such" rules, but here is one that all senior men have broken many times.

DON'T PUT ANY COFFEE CUPS ON A WOOD TABLE WITHOUT A SAUCER UNDERNEATH IT.

Let's face it men... When you want a cup of coffee, it's easy to get a coffee cup, but then you have to look for a saucer.

IT'S TOO MUCH TROUBLE!

We all just want a cup of coffee... We don't care what it looks like as long as there's coffee in the cup.

HOWEVER... wives have been correcting us over and over to put a saucer underneath the cup.

Now... let me tell you what happened just last night.

I saw my wife put a coffee cup down on a wood table in the family room.

THERE WASN'T ANY SAUCER UNDERNEATH THE CUP!

I saw my chance...

"Love..."

"Yes, dear."

"There's a coffee cup on that wood table. I wonder who put it there."

"Gabriel, you know that I put it there.

Why are you asking?"

(AHA! I GOT HER!)

(Now, it's my time to turn the tide.)

"Love, you know the guidelines of the household... Don't put a coffee cup on a wood table without a saucer underneath the

cup. You're always after me saying that it will mark the table with a blemish."

"But dear, my cup wasn't hot or wet."

"What do you mean, it wasn't hot or wet? What's that got to do with it? You're always after me that I shouldn't do it, and now it's ok if you do it. You told me

this for many a year in our marriage, so why can't I get after you for the same thing?"

"Gabriel, love..."

If a coffee cup is hot or wet and placed on a wood table, it will mark the table with a blemish. But if a

coffee cup is cool and dry, it's ok to put it on a wood table."

"You never mentioned that part about the cup being cool and dry."

"Dear... sweet dear... You only listen to part of what I have to say when I try to tell you something. You start to listen but somehow you stop listening while I'm still talking."

"So, what you're saying is... that I don't really listen to you entirely when you're talking to me."

"Not always, dear, but sometimes..."

"All this, because I brought up the fact that you put your coffee cup on a wood table without a saucer underneath it?"

"GABRIEL!"

"Yes, love."

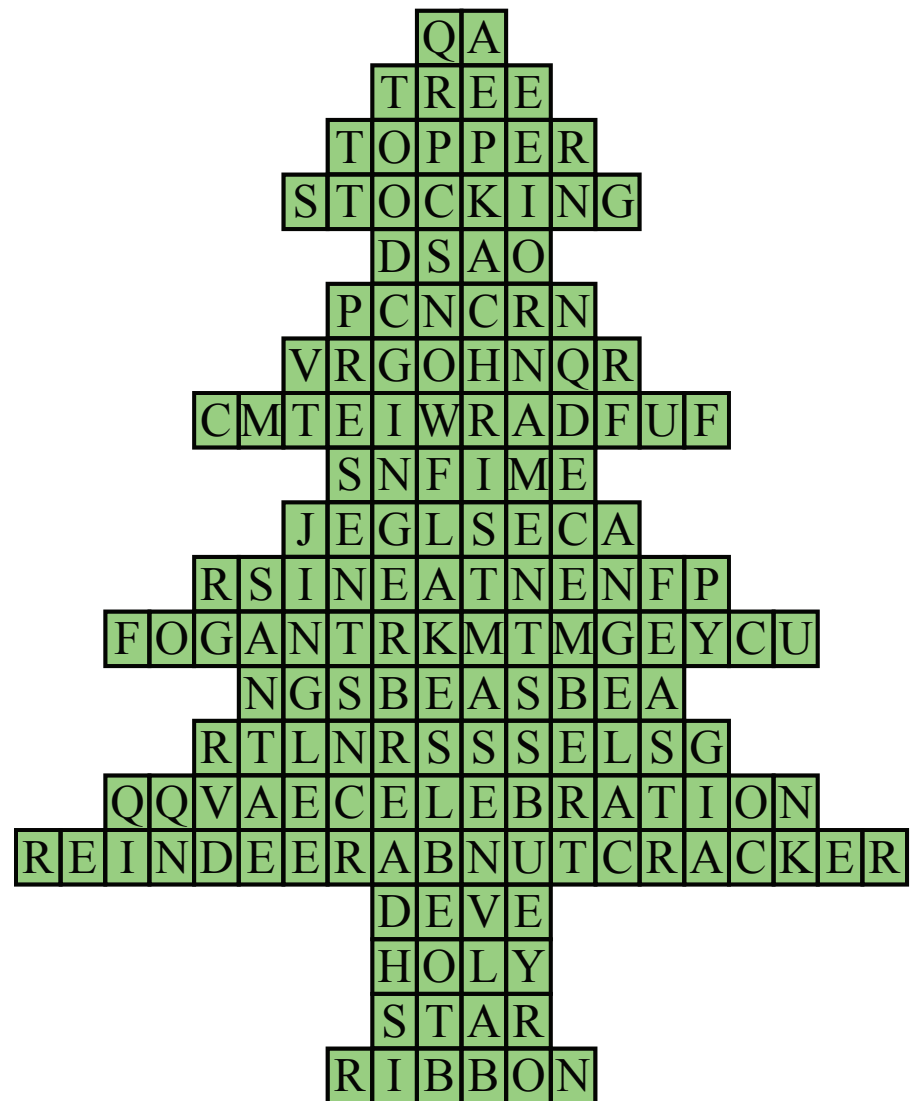
"LOOK, I'M TAKING MY COFFEE CUP OFF OF THE TABLE!"

"Thank you, dear. Now I feel better."

Another lesson learned by The Restless Retiree. 🐾



Christmas Word Search for Kids



Find all of the words in the list below in our holiday Christmas tree. Words can be found both horizontally and vertically.

Good luck and have a very merry Christmas!

WORD LIST

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EVE
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FOG
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HOLY
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Watch for my article in next month's issue!



THE OLYMPIA BATH HOUSE, MT. CLEMENS, MICH.

SPOTLIGHT ON BATH CITY

Continued from Page 4

but denoted by a state historical marker containing valuable information about its history.

A bit of irony noted by this reader who likes to spot ironies of history was that Mt. Clemens was named for Christian Clemens, one of 13 children of a Mennonite farmer in Pennsylvania who paid fines instead of doing military service during the Revolutionary War. Although Christian came to the area as a surveyor for Lewis Cass, he bought a distillery, apparently the first building of what was to become his namesake village.

Many of the country's mineral baths capitalized on bottling their mineral water as much as using it for bathing. Mount Clemens also engaged in some of that business, although on a much reduced scale. According to the *Magee Edited History*, the Mount Clemens Bitter Water Company was formed by several prominent business men in 1886. In addition to bottled water, it sold mineral soaps. The referenced chapter states that the drinking water came from springs on the other side of the Clinton River, while the bath waters were pumped from wells in the center area of the city. It is unclear exactly when the bottling business shut down.

The boom period of mineral baths and mineral waters of Mount Clemens is over. Today people seeking similar relief might patronize massage parlors, steam baths and saunas. Still seeking relief from the same ailments that plagued



Interior lobby of the Olympia Bath House

their grandparents, they may try holistic medicine, homeopathy, herbs or meditation. The web site of a commercial venture claiming ownership of the sole remaining Mt. Clemens well boasts that its 34 minerals work to "reduce muscle and joint aches, combat acne, blemishes and impurities on the skin, and improve circulation."

Whether or not these modern methods are an improvement over the baths of Mount Clemens remains open to questioning. However, they may prove as financially profitable as Mt. Clemens mineral baths of yesteryear. Relaxing in a hot bath still appeals to this writer – while still enjoying the traditional hard-covered book. 🐿



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Thumb Area Activities & Events for December 2012

If you have an event in January that you would like listed in the January issue of *ThumbPrint News*, email it to ThumbPrintNews@comcast.net by Dec. 12, 2012. There is no charge for the listing. Limited space is available for publishing events in this section. If it becomes necessary to eliminate some submitted events, we apologize. Events that were submitted earliest and non-profit events will be given the first priority.

Editor's note: Before traveling beyond your home town to attend any of these events, please call ahead for any changes in dates or times or for any cancellations.

Genesee

Flint – December 1

YMCA of Greater Flint Santa Run/Walk, 411 East Third St., 12:00 p.m. 5k Run/Walk, 1 Mile Run/Walk. Every participant will receive a five-piece Santa suit to wear during the run/walk. This is a family friendly event, strollers and children are welcome. Registration closing date is November 30, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. For more information go to www.flintymca.org/santarun.asp.

Huron

Harbor Beach – December 1

Zion Lutheran Church Bazaar and Bake Sale, Zion Lutheran School, 299 Garden St. Crafts, bake sale and luncheon. You are given a tin to fill with homemade cookies of your choice. For more information call (989) 479-3615.

Lapeer

Almont – December 8

Almont Lions Euchre Night, Lions Hall, 222 Water St., doors open at 6:00 p.m., play starts at 7:00 p.m. There will be two sets of five games each with a break in between. Refreshments and lunch will be served during the break. Generous prizes are awarded to the top three points holders. \$15 donation at the door. If a player brings a first time player, they both play for \$10 each. Proceeds benefit area humanitarian projects. For more information call Don at (810) 798-9609.

Macomb

Macomb – December 2

27th Annual Crafty Christmas Show, L'Anse Creuse High School North, 23700 21 Mile Rd., 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Admission \$2. No strollers please per Fire Marshall. Hosted by Band Boosters. Call Julie at (586) 749-1120 for more information or email LCNBands@yahoo.com.

Chesterfield – December 6

Images of America: Richmond, Chesterfield Public Library, 50560 Patricia, 6:30 p.m. Lori Nye and Norm Gibson will be discussing their book. There is no admission. For more info. contact macombhistory@yahoo.com.

Oakland

Lake Orion – December 1

Holiday Parade "Magic on Broadway", village of Lake Orion, 6:00 p.m. For more information visit www.orionlightedparade.org or call Bill at (248) 802-5521.

St. Clair

Algonac – December 1

Annual Paint-Your-Own Christmas Ornament with Santa and Mrs. Claus, Algonac-Clay Library, 2011 St. Clair River Dr., 9:30 a.m. Moms and dads, bring your camera as your kids paint a ceramic ornament provided by Bea and Martha Sands and visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Registration is recommended by calling (810) 794-4471.

Capac – December 1

Cranberry Christmas, Capac Historical Museum, 401 East Kempf Ct., 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Craft show, museum tours, rustic furniture, fresh greens, horse drawn wagon rides, live Christmas music, refreshments, bake sale, handmade chocolates and a blanket collection for the needy. Co-hosted by Council on Aging and Capac Historical Society. For more information call (810) 395-2859.

Lakeport – December 1

Skippy & Dave's Rock & Roll Christmas, Burtchville Twp. Library, 7097 Second St., 10:00 a.m. Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, The 12 Days of Christmas (disco style) and Jingle Bell Rock (with audience participation) are a few of the seasonal songs performed in this happy holiday favorite. This fun, interactive, humorous holiday musical is performed by Dave Parker, professional ventriloquist, and Skippy, the puppet. Registration required by calling (810) 385-8550.

Marine City – December 1

Family Fun Saturday with Santa, Marine City Library, 300 S. Parker, 10:00 a.m. Join us for a special morning filled with songs, crafts and a visit from Santa. Bring your camera. 10:00 a.m. – noon will be craft stations and 11:00 a.m. – noon will be visits with Santa. For more information call (810) 765-5233.

St. Clair – December 1-15

15th Annual Salvation Army Christmas Fund Drive, Cap'n Jim's Gallery, 201 N. Riverside, Suite C-4. Marine Artist Jim Clary will give a color print of "Bringing Spirit" to anyone making a donation of \$20 or more on the dates above. Prints will be only available at the Gallery and all funds donated will go directly into the Salvation Army kettles. Checks or cash only. For more information contact Jim at (810) 329-7447.

St. Clair – December 1-23

St. Clair Art Association Annual Yuletyme Fair, Alice W. Moore Center for the Arts, Riverview Plaza, downtown, Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Sunday, noon to 4:00 p.m. Unique Christmas gifts produced by local artists, many one of a kind and very reasonably priced. Contact (810) 329-9576 for more information.

Capac – December 6

Family Holiday Ventriloquist, 111 N. Main, 4:00 p.m. Come get into the Christmas spirit with a fun puppet show for all ages put on by Vikki Gasko-Green. For more information call (810) 395-7000.

Kimball – December 8

Visit from Santa, Kimball Township Library, 1955 N. Allen Rd., 9:30 a.m. Bring the kids to sit on Santa's lap and tell him what they want for Christmas. We will take pictures but

bring your camera too. A craft project will also be available. For more information call (810) 982-9171.

Marine City – December 8

Marine City Civic Women's Club Annual Christmas Home Tour, 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Features homes decorated for the holidays, Red Brick School House, Pride and Heritage Museum and Quilting Dreams home/business. St. Martin's Lutheran Church will have music and refreshments. The Methodist Church will be a rest and warming station. Tickets are available at Vera Grace Emporium, The Sweet Tooth, Parkside Printing and Suzanne's Fashions, or call (810) 765-0248.

Marysville – December 8

Winter Wonderland, Marysville Library, 1175 Delaware, 11:00 a.m. Visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Parents, bring your cameras. Create a make-and-take snowman ornament with artist Jane Weis. For more information call (810) 364-9493.

Memphis – December 8

Christmas Comedy Show, Memphis Library, 34830 Potter St., 5:00 p.m. Join us as Jason Abbott's comedy/magic show, just prior to the Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, leaves you in stitches as he attempts to escape from a straightjacket. This is one show you won't want to miss. Registration preferred by calling (810) 392-2980.

Yale – December 8

Holiday Make It & Take It, Yale Library, 2 Jones St., 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Stop in and make a holiday craft to take home. For more information call (810) 387-2940.

Port Huron – December 10

The Fabulous Fighting Falcons Family Fun Night, Port Huron Library, 210 McMorrin Blvd., 6:30 p.m. Our own hometown hockey heroes will be making a live appearance at the library. Stop in and show your fighting Falcon spirit. Listen to an exciting story read by one of the players. Discover hockey tips that you can use on the ice. Autographs, popcorn and more. Join for some family fun! For more information call (810) 987-7323.

Marine City – December 11

The WLC Dancer's Christmas Program, Washington Life Center, 403 N.

Mary, 11:45 a.m. Come and enjoy the dancing and a delicious lunch before the show. Following the show, the dancers will be dancing for the shut-ins at Mallard's Landing, River Bend and Medilodge. For reservations call (810) 765-4724 (at least 24 hours in advance).

Marine City – December 13

Veteran's Club Christmas Dinner, Washington Life Center Cafeteria, 403 N. Mary St., 6:00 p.m. Members, spouses and friends are welcome to attend as we remember Pearl Harbor. Where were you and what were you doing on December 7, 1941 when you heard about the attack? Enjoy a delicious dinner catered by COAST. \$8 per person. For reservations, call (810) 765-3523 by Dec. 5.

Fair Haven – December 15

Visit with Santa, Ira Township Library, 7013 Meldrum Rd., 1:00 p.m. Come visit with Santa! Tell him your wishes and hear a story. For more information call (586) 725-9081.

St. Clair – December 18

Game Night, St. Clair Library, 310 S. Second St., 6:00 p.m. Come hang out with friends, play games, eat snacks and have fun! For more information call (810) 329-3951.

Sauilac

Lexington – December 1

Fireside Christmas Bazaar and Cookie Walk, Trinity Episcopal Church, 5646 Main St., 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Old-fashioned ornaments and decorations, cookie walk and baked goods, homemade cookies. Vendor tables with jewelry, knit and crocheted items, candles, painted bags, teas, lotions and crafts. Coffee station with cookies and hot chocolate. For more information call (810) 359-8741.

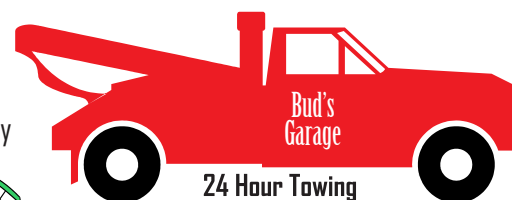
Tuscola

Vassar – December 1

Vassar Rotary Club's Tree of Light 2012 Lighting Ceremony, downtown in Veteran's Plaza, 5:00 p.m. Lights were dedicated by donors who paid \$5 per light to assist the Rotary Club with the annual "Coats for Kids" program. Red lights are for remembering those we have lost, white lights are for celebrating those we cherish and blue lights are for honoring those who have served.

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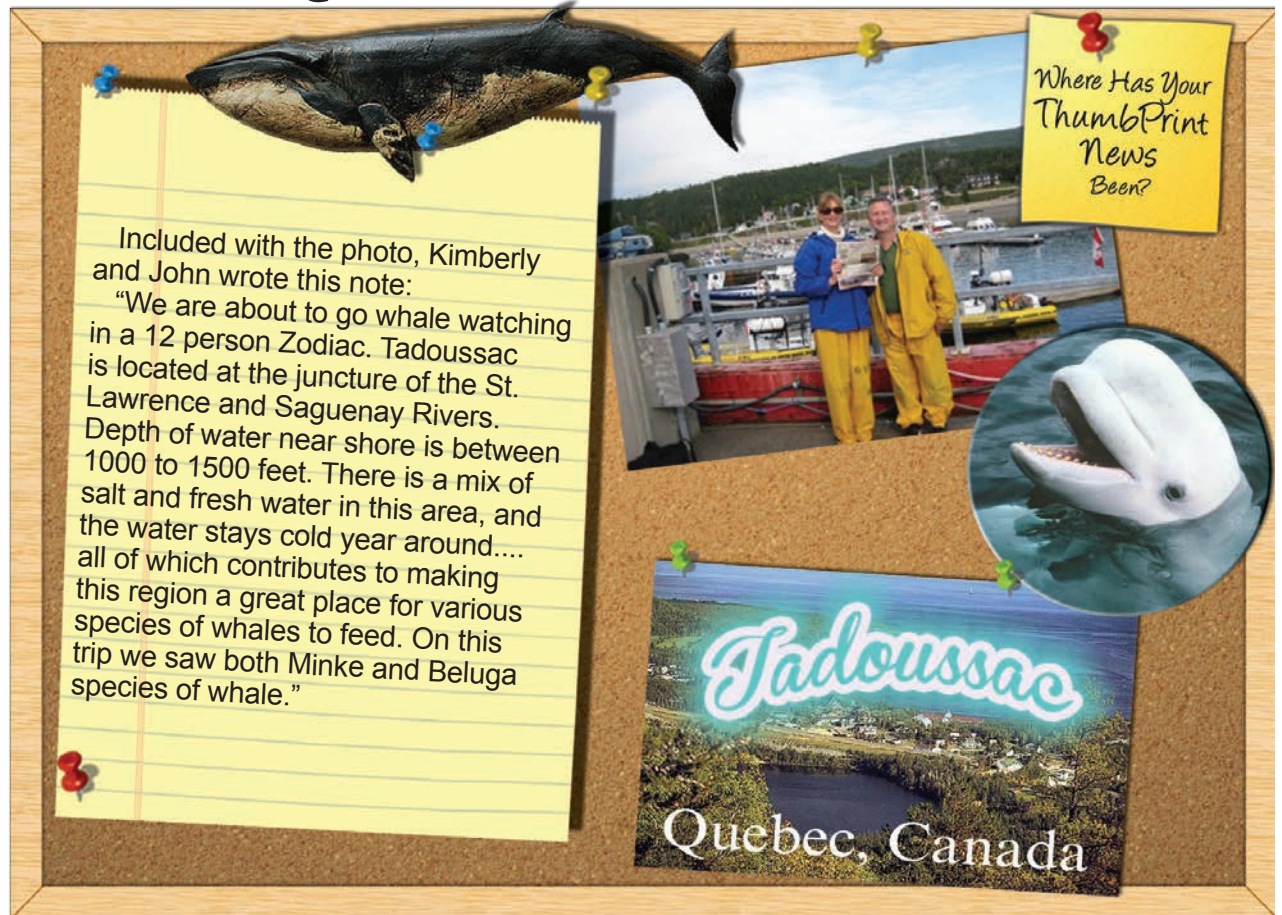
ThumbPrint News Travels to Quebec!

ThumbPrint News has been traveling the world! Not only has it been seen in many areas of the Thumb of Michigan (over 980 businesses in eight Thumb counties are now drop locations for the newspaper), but *ThumbPrint News* has also traveled to the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Utah, and to the countries of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Belize, Bonaire, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Iraq, Jamaica, Kiribati, Mexico, Nigeria, St. Lucia, Spain and Wales. *ThumbPrint News* was even seen on television on the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno*!

When we began inviting our readers to submit photos of where they have taken *ThumbPrint News*, we never expected such an overwhelming response! The newspaper has even traveled to all of the seven continents. This month *ThumbPrint News* traveled to Quebec with Kimberly and John Morden of North Street, Michigan.

If you are a reader of *ThumbPrint News* and have taken our newspaper with you on a vacation or to an unusual place – or if you have been able to get a famous person or character to be photographed with our paper, you may submit an email and photo to us at thumbprintnews@comcast.net (jpeg format preferred). Please tell us a little about the photo and include your name, address and phone number. Please be patient as you wait for your photo to appear in *ThumbPrint News*. When it does appear, we will send you a complimentary edition.

There are many places where *ThumbPrint News* has not yet been – and lots of famous people to track down. Who will be the next reader to help us in our mission? 🐞



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TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Continued from Page 9

traversing the entire world. We enjoyed sharing a few stories and beers together.

Another time we ran across a family from the U.K. who had been on a round the world trip themselves. Talking to them we learned that their son, nine year old Max, was the youngest person ever to reach the summit of Mt. Kenya in Africa.

It was almost time to return to Anchorage as Lucas was only able to spend one week with us. Checking out a glacier was one of the last great sights that we saw before heading into town and joining the large crowds at Moose's Tooth, a local popular pizza joint with pizza and micro-brew beers to die for. After that we said our goodbyes to Lucas and dropped him off at the airport.

I was staying on for another week, but not for more biking adventures. I had promised Brian that I would help him to re-roof his house, which ended up being a huge tear off and re-sheeting job. I was a roofer a long time ago, but hadn't done one in over a decade. Various muscles were put to work that hadn't been used for a long time! While at Brian's, my newest customers filtered in with their bikes, which I would be transporting back to the States on my return trip home. Many had great stories of their own to tell, but luckily everyone had a great time with no major breakdowns or disasters.

One of the last nights I was there before starting my long journey back home, I headed into downtown Anchorage to a huge bar/complex called Chillcoot Charlies. Essentially it is one big building that has been there for 50 years, but on the inside there are over half a dozen different themed bars, including a rock bar, a country bar, a tropical bar, and even a bra bar!

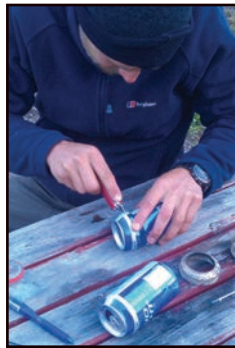
It was now time to depart Anchorage and start on the homeward journey. Traveling Alaska and northern Canada alone can be quite lonely. Most areas have

little or no radio stations, so bringing along CDs or an Ipod can definitely help.

The last bit of civilization before entering Canada is a little crossroad town called Tok. Here I stocked up on food and fuel. Thinking I would be singing to myself for the rest of the journey across Canada otherwise, I made the decision to pick up some hitchhikers just outside of Tok. After some quick introductions, I found that they were trying to get as far down the Alaska Highway as they could, so I had them hop in. I didn't know it at the time but Karolis and Evelina from Lithuania would become lifelong friends.

Karolis and Evelina had been traveling the world hitchhiking and couch surfing for the last eight months. They started out in Europe, worked their way down through the Middle East including Iran, over through China, down to Australia, up to Hawaii and eventually to Alaska, with many stops in between. These guys are true adventurers! They travel on a budget of \$9 per day for the both of them! They lived off simple dried foods, and many times nuts and berries they found in the woods near where they happened to camp. Karolis had an ingenious way of making a simple stove to use for cooking which he made out of two beer cans and some rubbing alcohol.

Little did my new friends know that they were going to be treated to some of my MacGyver-like skills as they traveled with me for four days, traveling the entire Alaskan Highway down to Dawson Creek. Out in the middle of absolutely nowhere, with no cell service, and few if any cars coming by, the truck's lift pump died. Knowing that the pump could not pull fuel uphill into the engine from the tank, I decided to try something



unconventional. I removed the fuel tank from my motorcycle and jammed it into an old laundry basket to keep it upright. Then I strapped it to the roof of the truck. Ripping some old propane lines out of the trailer, I rigged them up to the engine. Fuel could now run downhill. Since my bike tank is only 3.9 gallons, I had to pull over every 33 miles or so to top it off from my auxiliary fuel tank. But the set up did work and got us on our way down the Highway. In fact, I ended up running my truck that way for over 1,500 miles until I finally reached Washington State where I was able to replace the lift pump!

After the day's fiasco, arriving at Laird Hot Springs just an hour before closing, Karolis, Evelina and I were able to spend a relaxing evening in the hot springs. We then capped off the night around a campfire, enjoying a bottle of Yukon Jack and a superb display of the Northern Lights. We knew we were in paradise.

Arriving in Dawson Creek the next day, I had to part ways with Karolis and Evelina, who were heading to Chicago to renew some passport papers. I was heading to Seattle to deliver some of my load, so we said our sad goodbyes. However, in a month or so I plan on meeting up with them again, as they head down the Mississippi River in canoes, so it won't be long until we meet up again.

Leaving Dawson Creek, I worked my



When Keith's lift pump failed, he did some unique rigging that helped him travel another 1,500 miles.

way down through British Columbia, replacing trailer tires seven times and burning up the set on the truck as well. I found Southern British Columbia to be absolutely gorgeous, with many little towns on lakes and rivers that I'd love to explore. Unfortunately, that will have to wait for a future trip, as I had deadlines for deliveries that I had to meet.

My last border crossing from Canada into Washington State ended up being a nightmare. The U.S. border patrol decided



Keith, Karolis and Evelina

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to do a full search of the truck, trailer, the bikes, and to check the VIN numbers on everything. They emptied most of the bags on the bikes onto the trailer floor and held me for over four hours. Finally, after deciding that I wasn't a smuggler, I was allowed into the country.



The next few days I had several stops all over Washington, Oregon, northern California and Reno, Nevada. Part of the way I enjoyed listening to some great traveling stories from another hitchhiker, Ashgar, who was from Iran and who had been on the road for over a year. In northern California, I ended up with my truck and trailer being covered with soot and ash as I traveled through a huge wildfire that was raging right up to the edge of the road on both sides. Temperatures were soaring often above the 100 mark and, of course, this was the point that my air conditioning decided to stop working, instead of in the cooler temperatures of Alaska. In fact, the peanut butter I was carrying in my truck for lunches got so warm that it turned to liquid!

My route next took me across Texas, where I had one of my final misadventures. As I was traveling through downtown San Antonio, my truck started blowing white smoke out of the tailpipe and I couldn't even make it up the slightest incline. The head gasket was blown. Limping along at about 10 mph in very heavy traffic, I came upon an incline that it just couldn't handle. The truck was done! All of the sudden as I was parked alongside the road, a fireman in full gear ran up to me and asked where the car fire was. Someone apparently had seen the smoke and called it in. After a quick explanation, they left, all except two police officers who offered to escort me off the freeway. I got the truck to run a bit and followed them down a ramp. They took off, but I found quickly that they had pulled me into a very tight residential area and there was no place to park, so I pulled back on the freeway and made it about 10 miles before the truck broke down again.

Within a few minutes, the same police officer showed up with another four or five cars. He got out and started yelling at me. I explained that there was nowhere to park and that I needed a large lot or something. They escorted me, full lights blaring, and shouting directions over the loudspeakers, into the back parking lot of a rundown motel in a ghetto. Gangs and women of the night were everywhere and it

was obvious that many of the rooms were drug houses and permanent residences. The officer told me to remove all valuables from my truck and not to get back on the freeway or risk having the book thrown at me. I had no choice but to hunker down for the night.

The next morning I woke in my bug filled motel room to a torrential rain. Another tropical storm had hit the Gulf and had come aground in Texas. Packing up my things I plotted a route using only surface streets, which was quite lengthy and difficult in San Antonio. Many of those streets were backing up and flooding. After visiting AutoZone and getting some "mechanic in a bottle" stuff that promised to solve my problem with the truck temporarily, I continued driving through the monsoon across Texas to Florida where my second to last drop off was.

By the time I reached Sarasota, Florida, the rain had finally stopped. My drop off was only a mile from my parent's second home, and since they were there, I stopped in for the evening and relaxed outside in their new tiki hut which had just been built.



Early the next morning, I took off once again to work my way up to South Carolina for the final drop off and then back home. The "mechanic in a bottle" stuff was still working.

In fact, my truck made it all the way back home. As I rolled into my yard and unhooked the trailer I had a chance to take a good look at everything. Several repairs were going to be necessary, but overall the rig did quite well on her big trip. I noticed that there were now just under 559,000 miles on the ticker. This whole two-part Alaska, cross-country adventure was the trip of a lifetime. For now, though, I think I will be content just to sit back, relax and enjoy a bit of down time here in East China, Michigan. That is, until my gypsy blood starts to boil again making me yearn for new places to experience and explore. 🌱



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TRASH TO TREASURE

By Cindy Fockler

ThumbPrint News Guest Writer

A few years back, my husband and I were browsing through one of the local Goodwill stores when we happened upon this old china cabinet. It was painted already in a creamy white color and was missing the glass out of the top cabinet doors. We picked it up for \$50.00 and brought it home. For a while it lived in the kitchen where it held my tin can collection and then it housed my blue glass collection. Eventually it made its way from the kitchen into the bathroom where it became the perfect cabinet for my towels and bathroom items. In order for it to work in there I had to cut an opening in the back so that I could still access the plug in the wall behind it. I ended up taking the crisscross wood pieces out of the doors and inserted a board that I had Modge Podged scrapbook paper onto.



Recently I happened to have an antique dresser given to me (which I will probably write about in the future) that worked wonderfully in the bathroom. So the china cabinet either needed to go or be given a new purpose in life. A new purpose it was!

Since we needed a new TV stand in the living room I thought, hmmm, why can't we just take the top off this thing? After looking



at it a little bit longer I realized that in fact I could take the top right off. This cabinet just happened to be two pieces! Of course the one you find to modify may not be that way so you would need to saw the sides and back in order to take the top off. Mine merely was screwed together, so it was just a matter of unscrewing the screws and pulling it apart, which I did.

This modification was going to be a breeze until I realized that the top shelf

part of the bottom cabinet was actually a thin cheap piece of wood that broke into pieces. Well, I could always use a piece of wood from the stash in the garage. Then it came to me. I had always loved the top of the cabinet so why couldn't I take the very top of it and attach it to the lower part. It worked out beautifully! Once it was all glued and screwed back together I had to repaint it. Not wanting to go with the distressed look, I chose paint from the local hardware store called Pavement. It's a deep brownish black color. It took two coats of paint to cover the cream color. I removed the drawer completely and painted inside where it used to be. I needed the open shelf for the satellite box. My husband used a hole saw to cut two circles out of the back of the cabinet where the drawer was so that the cords could go through easily.

After the paint dried completely, I then used my die cutting machine to cut two ovals out of some toile scrapbook paper and adhered that to the front doors, and then I put the original handles back on. DONE!

It fits perfectly with our style. It is just the right size for the living room and for the TV. I

love having the extra storage in it also as it hides all the movies and old VHS tapes that I just can't part with yet!!

I hope you are enjoying reading these columns as much as I am enjoying writing and sharing them with you.

Next month I'll be writing about taking a new "damaged" item and making something wonderful out of it! Until then.... HAPPY JUNKIN! 🌱



Editor's Note: Cindy Fockler of Crosswell, Michigan, has been crafting and repurposing items since she was a child. Her favorite mediums include polymer clay, paint, paper and fabric. Many of her creations are pictured on www.facebook.com/CindysCreativeCrafting or www.cindyscraftstore.blogspot.com.



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ThumbPrint News Contest

Each month, *ThumbPrint News* prints a photo of an object or a place for our readers to identify. If you think you know the answer, email us at thumbprintnews@comcast.net and put "Contest" in the subject line. Be sure to include your name, phone number and full address. Of all persons submitting correct answers by the 15th of the month, one person will be randomly selected to be entered into a drawing for a gift basket valued at over \$100 at the end of this year! On December 31, 2012, one winner will be drawn and the lucky person will be notified. In November's edition, we asked our readers to identify the object pictured below:



Randomly selected from those submitting correct answers was John Houlihan of Chesterfield, Michigan, who correctly identified the object as a toast splitter. John will be entered into our year

end drawing for a gift basket valued at over \$100.

This toast splitter, a gadget that will hold a regular slice of bread so that it can be sliced in half, makes two extra thin slices. Another advantage is that this gadget allows one to slice whole grain breads and those containing nuts and seeds, which doesn't work very well with the traditional method.

The teeth on the inside of the gadget hold the bread slice in place and when it is closed there is a slot for the thin-bladed bread knife to slice the bread in two.

For our December contest we are asking the question, "What is it?" Identify what the object below is and what it is used for. Email your answer to thumbprintnews@comcast.net. Again, be sure to include your name, address and phone number in case you are correct and are entered into the random drawing at the end of the year for a gift basket valued at over \$100. Good luck!

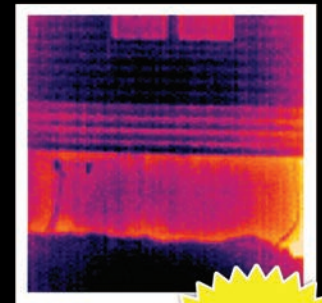


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I enjoyed reading Mr. David Gillis' article, "Leadership - Lost and Found". It was very well written and accurately exposed the deficiencies in the modern usage of the words "leadership" and "hero", and also the lack of true leadership qualities of many people that hold those positions in our society today. Kudos to Gillis and thank you!

Ed Hadam, Jr., Ira Twp

I wish we could put up some of the Christmas spirit in jars and open a jar of it every month.

Harland Miller

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WHAT HAPPENED ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY?

By Diane L. Kodet

ThumbPrint News Editor

DECEMBER



- 1** On this day in 1750, the first American school to offer manual training courses opened (Maryland).
- 2** On this day in 1957, the first U.S. large scale nuclear power plant opened (Shippingport, Pennsylvania).
- 3** On this day in 1931, Alka Seltzer first went on sale.
- 4** On this day in 1836, the Whig party held its first national convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
- 5** On this day in 1792, George Washington was re-elected U.S. president. 
- 6** On this day in 1849, Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery in Maryland.
- 7** On this day in 1926, the gas refrigerator was patented.
- 8** On this day in 1962, a 114-day newspaper strike began in New York City.
- 9** On this day in 1941, Hitler ordered U.S. ships torpedoed.
- 10** On this day in 1945, Preston Tucker revealed his plan to produce the Torpedo, a new 150 MPH car.
- 11** On this day in 1866, the first yacht race across the Atlantic Ocean began.
- 12** On this day in 1822, Mexico was officially recognized as an independent nation by the U.S. 
- 13** On this day in 1913, the painting, *Mona Lisa*, stolen in August 1911 was returned to the Louvre.
- 14** On this day in 1911, the South Pole was first reached, by Norwegian Roald Amundsen.
- 15** On this day in 1935, the Detroit Lions won the NFL championship.
- 16** On this day in 1835, fire consumed over 600 buildings in New York City.
- 17** On this day in 1777, George Washington's army returned to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.
- 18** On this day in 1976, "Wonder Woman" debuted on ABC. 
- 19** On this day in 1950, General Eisenhower was named NATO commander.
- 20** On this day in 1803, the Louisiana Purchase was formally transferred from France to the U.S. for 27 million dollars.
- 21** On this day in 1620, 103 Mayflower pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.
- 22** On this day in 1941, Winston Churchill arrived in Washington D.C. for a wartime conference.
- 23** On this day in 1776, Thomas Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls". 
- 24** On this day in 1818, "Silent Night" was composed by Franz Joseph Gruber and was first sung the next day.
- 25** On this day in 1741, astronomer Anders Celcius introduced the Centigrade temperature scale.
- 26** On this day in 1825, the Erie Canal opened.
- 27** On this day in 1871, the world's first cat show took place (Crystal Palace, London).
- 28** On this day in 1945, Congress officially recognized the "Pledge of Allegiance".
- 29** On this day in 1862, the bowling ball was invented.
- 30** On this day in 1879, Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance," premiered.
- 31** On this day in 1783, import of African slaves was banned by all of the northern states.

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