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FIELD TRIP:
A road trip to Rochester, MN,
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REGIONAL NEWS

Barn Swallow Theatre

The Barn Swallow Theatre is excited to announce its first show since March 2020. Open auditions, ages 11 and up, for *Annie* will be Thursday, September 23 at 6:30 pm or Saturday, September 25 at 10 am. Performances will be December 2-4 at 7:30 pm and December 5 at 2 pm. *Annie* will be directed by Lizbeth Benjamin. For a summary of the show and to preview our upcoming season, please visit www.barnswallowtheatre.com. If you are interested in volunteering at the community theater, the membership form is online. Please join them at a future board meeting.

Federal employees to meet

On Tuesday, SEPTEMBER 28 at 5 pm, the Southwest Michigan Chapter 572 of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees will hold their monthly meeting in a member's home at 2894 Sandra Terrace, St. Joseph. Current and retired federal employees, spouses and friends are welcome - you do not need to be a member to attend. There will be updates on pending bills in Congress. For directions to meeting, call 269-428-0667 For info, call Jean Rowe, 782-2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

Cass County Historical Society

Several fun-filled, educational events are scheduled for the next few months. **OPEN HOUSES**
The historic Newton House, 20689 Marcellus Highway, Decatur, will have open houses for touring the house and grounds from 1:00 to 4:30 pm on the following dates: September 5, October 3.

FALL PROGRAMS:

September 14: Historic Mills and Dams of Cass County, Speaker: Jeff Van Belle, Cass County Drain Commissioner. Meeting to be held at Cass District Library, M-62, Cassopolis
October 19, Ordinance of 1787 Speaker: Dr. John Geisler, WMU Professor. Meeting to be held at Cass District Library, M-62, Cassopolis
FALL FESTIVAL

On October 3 from 1 to 4:30 pm the Historical Society will hoist a fun-filled family event with many activities:
Tour of historic house
Free food
Petting zoo
Hayride through Russ Forest, with children, adult games, music and more.
CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

On November 7, the Historical Society will host a Christmas Open House at the historic Newton House. See the house at Christmas time.
For more information about the Cass County Historical Society, contact Allen F. Butchbaker at 269-244-8479 or allen-butchbaker@gmail.com.

Water Quality Survey

Throughout the summer, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission will be conducting a survey of residents in Berrien and Cass counties to assess the community's knowledge and level of concern with local water quality issues. The survey only takes 5-7 minutes to complete. Visit www.letskeepitblue.org to take the survey online.
The survey is part of the Storm Water Public Education Plan (PEP) for

southwest Michigan. The goal of the PEP is to educate the public about water quality issues and the measures that can be taken to reduce pollution. The land in Berrien and Cass counties is either within the lower St. Joseph watershed, Galien watershed or has drainage flowing directly into Lake Michigan. Much of the polluted runoff, which flows into local streams, rivers, and lakes, begins at home due to everyday activities associated with lawn and pet care, septic systems, infrastructure development, and other general auto and home maintenance actions.
The proper disposal of trash, auto oil and fluids, lawn byproduct such as pesticides/herbicides and fertilizer as well as grass clippings, animal wastes, and home cleaning products can assist in reducing pollution. Properly maintaining septic systems and employing green infrastructure techniques such as rain gardens and rain barrels can help reduce polluted runoff into local streams, rivers and lakes.
The goal of the survey is to assess change in community behavior and awareness concerning local water quality issues. This information will be used to adjust the goals and practices of PEP to more effectively reach and educate residents of southwest Michigan about water resources and their protection. Learn more at: www.letskeepitblue.org.
Two speakers scheduled
Two more speakers are scheduled at the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum this year. They include:
Thurs., Sept. 16, 7 p.m.—Darrin Schaap — Darrin Schaap's presenta-

tion, scheduled for 2020, also has been moved to the 2021 season. Schaap, the owner of Clear H2o Tackle in Edwardsburg, is a columnist for the Edwardsburg Voice. He will focus on changing technology in the world of fishing, as well as how to use different lures for different fish.
He graduated from Edwardsburg High School in 1995 and earned his business administration degree from Central Michigan University. He managed Brett's Place on the Bay in Benton Harbor for five years.
His is the first of two presentations that complement the seasonal display, Hooked on Fishing, which opens Aug. 18.
Thurs., Oct. 21, 7 p.m.—Jeff Duck
— Jeff Duck has the fisherman's dream job. The Edwardsburg native, a professional fishing guide out of Port Alsworth, Alaska for nearly 20 years, will share highlights of that work as part of the Hooked on Fishing display. He will speak on the similarities between fishing in Michigan and Alaska and share photos of his experiences.
No amateur before the camera, Duck was a part of a documentary by the Discovery Channel, has appeared in an episode of River Monsters, and can be seen in professional videos on fishing for northern pike and rainbow trout. He heads tours for individuals as well as professional photographers in day trips in the Bristol Bay Region, an area covering thousands of miles south of Anchorage. While his focus is on five species of salmon, northern pike, rainbow and lake trout, steelhead and the grayling, he also conducts tours of glaciers and volcanoes.

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REGIONAL NEWS

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Face Mask Recommendations from Van Buren/Cass District Health Dept.

As you may have know, the CDC has updated its recommendations for mask wearing. To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, the CDC recommends everyone – including fully vaccinated individuals – wear a mask indoors in public if in an area of substantial or high transmission. Given new evidence, the CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools,

regardless of vaccination status, indicating that children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Van Buren/Cass District Health Department support the CDC recommendations and encourage schools and businesses to consider the recommendations when determining mitigation strategies for your building(s).

To assist business and school leaders in determining which mitigation strategies to follow, Van Buren/Cass District Health Department will provide a transmission matrix, displaying where our

local infection data intersects with suggested minimal mitigation efforts by the CDC and MDHHS. At the present time, both Cass and Van Buren County are in a level of substantial community transmission, with 38 cases and a 6.4 percent positivity rate in Van Buren County and 28 cases and a 6.6 percent positivity rate in Cass County (7/18 - 7/24/21). At this time, in Cass and Van Buren County, mask wearing is recommended for all individuals – fully vaccinated and unvaccinated – while indoors in public.

We share in the frustration brought on by the length of this pandemic and the changing recommendations and require-

ments. While we are still learning about this virus and the new, more serious variants, what we do know is that the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is our best defense against the virus. We encourage county and community leaders, businesses and schools to join us in urging all residents to get the vaccine as soon as possible. For information on where to get a COVID-19 vaccine locally, visit www.vbcassdhd.org/covid-19-vaccine or www.vaccines.gov.

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department leaders are committed to keeping our community up-to-date with COVID-19 mitigation recommendations.

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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

September 5, October 3 - Newton House open houses, 28689 Marcellus Highway, Decatur, 224-8479, allenbutchbaker@gmail.com

September 14 - Cass County Historical Society meeting on Cass County mills and historic dams, Cass District Library, 6:30 pm

September 16 - Edwardsburg Historical Museum presentation by Darrin Schapp on fishing lures, 7 pm

September 23 - Open auditions for Annie, Barn Swallow Theatre, 6:30 pm, also Sept 24, 25 at 10 am

September 28 - Southwest Michigan Chapter 572 of the National Association of

Retired Federal Employees monthly meeting, 2894 Sandra Terrace, St. Joseph, 5 pm, 428-0667, jeanrowe70@comcast.net

October 3 - Cass County Historical Society Fall Festival, 1-4:30 pm, Newton House, 28689 Marcellus Highway, Decatur, 224-8479, allenbutchbaker@gmail.com

October 9 - Dowagiac Under the Harvest Moon Festival, 10 am - 4 pm

October 19 - Cass County Historic Society meeting with Dr. John Geisler on the Ordinance of 1787, Cass District Library, 6:30 pm

October 21 - Edwardsburg Historical Society presentation by Jeff Duck on fishing

in Alaska, 7 pm

November 7 - Cass County Historical Society Christmas Open House, 28689 Marcellus Highway, Decatur, 224-8479, allenbutchbaker@gmail.com

December 2-5 - Barn Swallow Theatre presents Annie, 7:30 pm (2 pm on Dec. 5)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the pandemic all events are subject to change or cancellation. Please check with event organizers prior to attending any events.



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CASS LIBRARY EVENTS

September 2021 Programs - Cass District Library Programs

All program information can be found on Facebook and at www.cassdistrictlibrary.org. Program guides and calendars are available at all branch locations.

All Month, all branches - "Library Card Sign-up Month"

Since 1987, Library Card Sign-up Month has been held each September to mark the beginning of the school year. During the month, the American Library Association and libraries unite in a national effort to ensure every child signs-up for their own library card.

Throughout the school year, public librarians and library staff will assist parents and caregivers with saving hundreds of dollars on educational resources and services for students. A library card is one of the most cost-effective back-to-school supplies available.

Sign up for a card during the month of September and receive a special welcome package. For more information and requirements for a library card, visit www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/about/get-a-library-card/

Beach Story Time at Stone Lake Beach September 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 - 11 am

Meet us at the beach for story time! This program provides opportunities to have social interaction and to develop a love of reading. Story time includes some variation of stories, songs, games or other hands-on activities, and making crafts. Designed for children ages 3-5 years old and their caregiver. This program is weather permitting.

Adult Craft Club, Main Branch September 8 am - 1 pm

Join us at the Main Branch for a monthly craft club! Space is limited and registration is required. Supplies will be provided. Contact Stephanie at (269) 749-1384 for more information and to register.

Patriot Day Art, Edwardsburg Branch September 9 am - 3 pm

In remembrance of September 11, 2001, come create a flag art piece to honor the lives that were lost by the terrorist attacks on the twin towers 20 years ago.

Origami Take and Make Kit, Howard Branch Week of September 13

Transform a sheet of paper into an adorable animal! Learn how to make origami animals with paper and instructions included in this take and make kit. Kits are available while supplies last.

More Than A Book Club Edwardsburg Branch September 16 - 10 am & 6 pm

Join us for a discussion of One Thousand White Women by Jim Fergus. The historical fiction book is told through the fictional journals of May Dodd. She and others volunteered as part of a peace treaty between the U.S. Government and the Cheyenne Indians in which one thousand white women were traded for one thousand horses. Follow her remarkable journey as she became a bride and a mother.

STEAM Cotton Swab Glider Take and Make Kit All Locations

Week of September 20

Create your own glider with this STEAM take and make kit! Using a q-tip and cardstock provided, construct your own micro glider and test how it flies. Kits are available while supplies last.

Introduction to Libby and Hoopla Mason/Union Branch - September 20 - 1 - 3 pm Edwardsburg Branch - September 21 - 4:30 - 6:30 pm Howard Branch - September 22 - 2 - 4 pm Main Branch - September 23 - 10 - 12 pm

Curious about reading or listening to electronic books but don't know where to start? The library offers several platforms to read, listen and watch movies and books for free! Stop by one of our tables to learn more and get help setting up your device.

Day of Peace and World Dream Day Edwardsburg Branch September 21 - 3 pm

Celebrate International Day of Peace and World Dream Day by joining us for a read-aloud story and puffy-paint cloud, dove, and peace sign masks.

Banned Books Week Teen Art Challenge Edwardsburg Branch September 27 & 28 - 3 pm

To commemorate the importance of working together against censorship and infringement of reading freedoms, teens are invited to join us for an art challenge on Sept. 27 & Sept. 28 from 3-4 PM in relation to the topic. Challenges differ both days; you're welcome to join both!



Get Fit, Stay Fit

The Cass County COA has outstanding fitness centers at both locations. Each center offers a variety of cardiovascular fitness machines and weight training equipment as well as In-Person and Zoom Fitness Classes. Trained instructors provide assistance, advice and class instruction to help you meet your fitness goals.

- Balance, Stretch & Stability
- Cardio Challenge
- H.I.L.I.T.

- S.E.A.T.
- Tai Chi
- Yoga



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LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Happy all the time days

by **Jane Boudreau**

If the sailboat photo doesn't say happy, what does? Well, it makes me happy because I snapped it with my phone one gorgeous day while out on the lake. No filters or fiddling with. I've never gone sailing but my boss claims he does.

When I was very young and the beginnings of a voracious reader, one of my favorite books was Happy All The Time. Days like this bring that book to mind. It's impossible but a wonderful thought.

This wasn't the best summer for me on the lake. Or in Chicago. Or anywhere. And that's tragic because I was vaccinated in March and ready to roll. Then my good 'ol back started to act up and I had to have another spinal fusion. Yes, two in 3 years. All those things I wanted to do in my gardens, all the friends I wanted to have visit us at the lake, a trip or two to the mountains, I couldn't shake the pain of this one and at the risk of feeling sorry for myself, I felt like my body was starting to fall apart just when I really needed to take care of it.

We are so fortunate that our little buggers who once romped on this very same beach, now keep it neat, clean, weed free, and set up so colorfully for their own little spawns. We like our little cove; it's perfect for having a beach. Kayaking and paddle boarding is smooth and easy here. Diamond View Bay was once a lagoon before a channel gave it access to the lake. You may have cruised through this little paradise before, we are next to Sail Bay.



The weather was quite nice this summer, a little humid but not a lot of rain. The flowers I planted are doing well and I'm starting to get more varieties of birds and butterflies. This brings me to a wee little story about one of the strangest things that happened to me back in June. I'll keep it quick cuz I know you'll need a little something for that fire pit tonight. One morning I stepped out on to my front porch with my first cup of coffee. I looked at the beautiful blue sky and my pots of flowers on the steps. I saw some movement in a pot of lantana and held myself perfectly still. It was the cutest little hummingbird (but aren't they all cute?). I was so thrilled to see one just five feet away from me that I was afraid to even breathe and scare it away. And then, by the grace of God, it flew up toward me and hovered just inches away from the ratty T-shirt I'd slept in. Mere inches. It was almost as if it was considering clinging to said ratty T-shirt. As I have considerable experience in hand feeding and raising birds of all sorts, my instinct was to extend my index finger for it to perch on. And then it was as if we both realized at the same time, it wasn't meant to be. Hummingbirds are meant to be elusive. And I, in my ratty T-shirt, had no business being on the front porch looking like something the cat dragged in. But I did bring the plant back to Chicago with me in case there are any hummingbirds here that want to hang out with me in the morning.



Zinnias. My grandfather grew them in abundance along the fence surrounding his backyard. And he had the proverbial picket fence to boot. When we visited, he would take my sisters and I for a little tour around the perimeter of his yard. All I remember is buzz of bees, dragonflies, and my allergies going crazy. And ... the monarch butterflies. They freaked me out. They seemed determined to land on me. My Grandfather wasn't really pleased but what can I say? I now love to garden but I still do not like anything that flies or crawls. And I still have that love for zinnias. Last summer I was walking my dog along Tulip Tree Lane near my house. There is a home with zinnias surrounding the mailbox by the street, and I often stop to look at how pretty they are and I think of my Grandpa Doll. And no, I didn't name a doll after him, this was our maternal family name. My mother was forever grateful she wasn't named Barbie. But I digress ... this lovely woman who lived in the home with the mailbox came out and introduced herself and after I interrogated her, I found that her zinnias were grown from seed and every year more seeds dropped and so forth. It sounded so simple and thus I planted a packet of seeds this year and voila, nothing. I can just hear Grandpa Doll chastising me, "Well, you little ninny, if you cry over butterflies, you're not meant to grow beautiful flowers!" And in my once evil eight-year old mind I would be thinking, you should have been named Ken.



You can't deny, when the zucchini blossoms turn into that delicious, versatile veggie that makes no excuses for how it gives and keeps on giving, you're going to be thumbing through cookbooks and Pinterest looking for something new to create this summer. And don't forget to bag some up for your friends and neighbors, who likewise will be drumming their fingers on the kitchen counter feeling overwhelmed also.

I'm here to help. I pride myself on food storage. You might remember my numerous articles on food freshness dates, how long you can keep condiments once open, and the shelf life of frozen roast beef. Well, I have good news about zucchini. You can be enjoying it this winter, no matter how bizarre that may sound.

So start with shopping for or stopping the growth of your own planted zucchini when it's medium size. Avoid washing them (isn't that a game changer?), but pat them down with a paper towel before storing. You want to avoid moisture at all costs.

Next, you want to store the zucchini in the crisper drawer in your fridge. You know, I never really knew or cared which drawer I put things in. Sometimes I think I should spend my summer vacation just researching how to store fruits and veggies. The squash should last about a week but if you feel it getting soft, use it right away. Maybe the old standbys: zucchini fries, bread, or muffins. They also need ventilation so store them in a bag that's open at one end or a sealed bag that you've poked holes into.

This next nugget of advice is the one I wanted to hear. You can freeze zucchini. I never thought that would be possible with something I can so imagine getting soggy. So here's what you do. Slice your squash into 1/2 inch thick rounds. Place them in a colander in your sink and blanch them with boiling water. Let them sit for about 2 minutes as they turn a bright green and then plunge into a bowl of ice cold water and drain again. Pat dry and place the rounds in a freezer storage bag, squeezing out as much air as possible. You can keep them in your freezer for up to 3 months. You may want to freeze in quantities you will use.

(Please note that I research most everything I share such as this, and information and methods are fact. The source for this information on zucchini is from EatingWell.com)



Puff Pastry Zucchini Tart

If your mind just goes blank when you start bringing in that bumper crop of zucchini, this recipe is something you will go to again and again. Serve it as a meal with a light salad or fresh fruit, or cut smaller pieces for appetizers. The best part of this recipe is that it is so simple and you'll find the ricotta cheese is a nice twist on the often used mozzarella.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 sheet of puff pastry, thawed but cold*
- 2~3 small zucchini, thinly sliced
- 3/4 c ricotta
- 2 T grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 t lemon zest
- 2 t olive oil
- 1/4 t red pepper flakes
- 1/2 t salt

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Roll out the sheet of puff pastry on a floured surface just to thin it out a bit. Pinch and score a 1/4 inch border all around and then using a fork, prick the surface randomly. Bake for 10 minutes, checking occasionally to press down any large puffs with a spatula.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mix together the ricotta, Parmesan, and lemon zest. When you take the pastry crust out of the oven, spread the ricotta mixture on it while it's still warm, getting all the way to the edges. Top with the zucchini slices overlapping slightly. Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and red pepper flakes.

Bake for another 20 minutes until zucchini are cooked through and the pastry has browned.

Cut into six slices and serve. *Pepperidge Farm Puff Pastry comes with two sheets so I usually double the recipe ... it's that good! Also, the pastry only takes about 15 to 20 minutes to thaw and be workable. If it's sticky, put it in the fridge for 5 minutes. And if the seams give you trouble rolling out, dab with a little cold water.



Broccoli Salad with Bacon

Broccoli isn't something a lot of us grow. I did, however one summer when I first moved to the lake and had a large expanse of grass which I turned into a very ambitious vegetable garden. That first year it did so well; I grew everything

Continued on next page. See:

JANE

LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

JANE

Continued from previous page

from tomatoes and squash, to broccoli and turnips. The first time I cut a few heads of broccoli I steamed them, then seasoned it all up with lots of butter, salt and black pepper. I had no idea what a treat I was in for. It was in a league of its own. So if you can grow broccoli, do it. If not, get it locally. The flavor you get is insane.

INGREDIENTS:

- 24 oz. broccoli florets {about three large heads}
- 8 slices of cooked bacon, crumbled
- 2/3 c slivered almonds, toasted*
- 2/3 c dried cranberries
- 1/2 c red onion, finely diced
- 1/2 c crumbled feta or goat cheese
- 1/2 c mayo
- 1/3 c sour cream
- 2 T apple cider vinegar
- 3 T honey
- 1 t Dijon mustard

DIRECTIONS:

Make the dressing by whisking all the ingredients in a small bowl until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Combine the salad ingredients and drizzle the dressing over. Toss gently until combined. This salad can be stored in the refrigerator for up to three days in a sealed container.

*To toast the almonds, scatter them in a dry skillet and toss them around until they start to brown and soften.



Healthy Black Bean Salad

If you're still doing that grilling-out-door- entertaining-light meal sort of thing in September, pencil this recipe on to your calendar to have with dinner or lunch, to have for dinner or lunch, or to have on the buffet or picnic table when you are hanging with your friends under sunny skies. And I hope you don't equate healthy with bland, this will be another

summer staple for you, I promise!
INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 c thinly sliced red onion
- 1 medium size ripe avocado, pitted and roughly chopped
- 1/4 c. cilantro
- 1/4 c lime juice
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 t salt
- 8 c mixed salad greens
- 2 c. frozen corn, thawed, or 2 mediums ears of corn, kernels removed
- 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 15 oz. can black beans, rinsed and drained

DIRECTIONS:

Place onion in a small bowl and cover with cold water. Set aside. Combine avocado, cilantro, lime juice, olive oil, garlic, and salt in a mini food processor. Process, scraping down the sides as needed until creamy and smooth.

Just before serving, combine the salad greens, corn, tomatoes, and beans in a large bowl. Drain the onions (soaking them in cold water takes away a little of the 'bite') and add to the bowl along with the avocado dressing. Toss gently and serve.

*Arugula is a great choice as one of the greens with it's peppery flavor and texture.

**Grilling the ears of corn makes a huge impact with that smokey flavor. If you use the frozen cobs, after thawing, pat dry and either grill or cut off the kernels and toss around in a dry skillet over high heat until they look a little toasty.

Without further ado, I wanted to spend just a little time on some tips, specifically for baking, and even more specifically cakes. And then I'll go off on my merry way til next month.

I'm not a baker, I mean I really don't know if I'd bake even if I was good at it. I love to cook because I have license to change up and do what I want with a recipe or in creating recipes. The hubs told me long ago to write down recipes after I made whatever I made us. Considering no one was keen on helping with clean up and doing dishes, I wasn't going to fiddle writing stuff down. Maybe in a future post I can share a little bit about putting together a recipe straight from your own head and heart.

So in spite of my distaste for baking I have started making cakes. And I use box cake mixes. Okay-shoot me. I have brought my cakes everywhere; all sorts of parties and celebrations and everyone is sort of surprised to see a cake. Now, this is what you can do to take a boxed cake mix over the top and then I'm going to give you the recipe for my very own top-

ping/filling that will have people oohing and ahing.

~Any cake mix will benefit from a small box of pudding. Something bland like vanilla. And just the mix, not prepared. Add it in with your dry ingredients.

~Substitute buttermilk for water or dairy. It gives a nice little tang!

~Add an extra egg--always. You have now elevated the plain old boxed cake mix to your own creation.



This is a vanilla cake I made for a small family party at my daughter's home. It was on a table with cookies and a lot of treats for adults as well as kids. Once someone took over and cut into the cake and made several plates, they want-

ed to know how I made it. I just mumbled a bit about the pudding and extra eggs.

The frosting is simple. I made this in a springform pan but the frosting is so delish I'd do the two pan method next time to get more of that filling.

Here you go:

INGREDIENTS:

- 3/4 c heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 c mascarpone cheese
- 1 t vanilla
- 1/2 to 1 T honey
- 2 T cocoa powder

DIRECTIONS:

In a mixer, beat the mascarpone cheese until smooth. Add the cream and whip until soft peaks form. This will take about 2-3 minutes. Add the vanilla and honey and whip until combined. Dollop frosting on cake and spread around with the back of a wooden spoon to create hills and valleys. Sift cocoa powder over.

* This is not meant to be a crunchy, sugary frosting. Taste a bit before you spread on cake. If it needs more sweetness, add a teaspoon of sugar or tablespoon of powdered sugar.

**I added mini chocolate chips to top the cake with.

Have yourselves a great September. Eek out all of the sun and warm temps as you can. After this it will be very much fall and we've kissed another summer behind. There's still so much ahead this year--always look forward! And be happy all the time!

Jane Boudreau is a writer and blogger from Chicago with a home on Diamond Lake and a little place in the mountains of North Carolina. You can reach her at blndy9@yahoo.com

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Fall home maintenance to-do items

By **Charlie Retherford**
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

Happy Fall! It is such a beautiful time of year. I seem to say that about all the seasons because in one way or another, they are all beautiful. My best friends, Rufus and Ruby and I are looking forward to crisp, cool days for our walks.

It's also a great time of year to make sure you are ready for the long, cold winter ahead. A few relatively simple checks could save you from a potential disaster in a future cold snap.

The furnace needs to have its annual inspection and you should probably stock up on the appropriate furnace filters so they are handy when you need to change them, generally every 3 months. Heating vents need to be clean and free of obstructions that may block air moving in or out of the system.

You may need to caulk gaps near windows. Old caulk can dry out and allow moisture to invade the wood. Check your door seals. Look for daylight and use spray foam insulation to fill in any gaps. You should check your gutters once all the leaves have fallen. A professional can clear them out so they will work properly over the winter.

Using the fireplace in the winter can be cozy and romantic but it can also be a necessity. If the power goes out or if you supplement your main heat source with



the fireplace, you want it to be in excellent working order. You should have the chimney cleaned by a professional each year to help prevent a chimney fire. If you use the fireplace a lot, you might need to have it cleaned even more often.

Make sure you replace batteries in smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Keeping doors and windows closed to the cold means any carbon monoxide escaping from your mechanicals is

trapped inside. You should have a professional make sure your furnace and water heater have proper ventilation to help prevent this dangerous situation.

Be sure to drain all water lines that serve the exterior of the house. You may already have a professional service to drain pool and sprinkler system lines but make sure you turn off water to any exterior spigots. You can turn the water off to that faucet from inside, then go out-

side and open the exterior spigot to allow the water to drain out. Do not turn that spigot back on until next spring.

Make sure you trim back any trees that touch your house. Branches can damage soffit and fascia areas of the home, providing an entry for rodents and birds into your attic.

Finally, dig out that snow-blower and make sure it is ready for that first snowfall. Put the snow shovel in a convenient place with your salt. If you need a new shovel, now is the time to buy one! Remember that you will need to keep your sidewalks, porch steps, etc ... clear of snow and ice following storms. Depending on circumstances such as length of time since the storm or continuous snow and ice, you could be liable for a visitor's bodily injury.

If you spend your winters in a warmer climate, be sure to winterize your Northern home before you leave. Frozen pipes can lead to catastrophic flooding inside a home. The flooding can also lead to major condensation and that will damage furniture as well as ceilings and walls throughout the house. While not as dangerous as a fire, water damage can be just as devastating.

Be sure to discuss coverages with your insurance agent because coverage is dependent on policy requirements. Feel free to call or visit us at Kemner Iott Benz. We will be happy to help you with any of your insurance questions.

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OUR CHILDREN

Nurturing financial literacy

by SANDY FLEMING

We don't often think about it, but things have changed in the world of money since we were kids (and the older you are, the more it has changed). Let's take a look at how and why parents can and should help their children learn about money and finances. After all, there's a reason why so many people equate financial success with life success.

First of all, here's the "why." Financial literacy is more crucial than ever for becoming a successful adult. Not only do scams abound where bad actors want to separate people from their money illegally, but even the most innocent of financial mistakes can set up huge barriers to solving problems down the road. Your children need information, and they need to have it mastered well before they strike out on their own. And there is a lot to learn! It's not a subject that you should be just starting to tackle when they are seventeen and a half, or a month before they leave for college. No, teaching financial skills begins in early childhood and continues all through the children's growing up years, until finally, in their late teens, they are ready to take on the world on their own because they have a solid financial education.

Parents also need to start on this process now. There is a lot to teach and learn, and the older your child is, the more important it is to get going on it now. Plus, part of the learning is an attitude and habits, and the more time you can spend preparing, the better off your child will be.

So now we get to the "how." Of course, the exact things to do and discuss vary dramatically across the age groups. Plus, if you are starting from the beginning with older kids, you might need to grab some of the ideas from the sections about what to do with younger children.

For Babies and Toddlers:
The littlest children just need to know what money is and that it exists. Let the littles see you use money (in all of its forms), and don't be afraid to talk about the costs of things even though they don't understand numbers yet. As kids grow into the pretend play stage, play store in lots of forms, where one of you "buys" an item with play money or even pretend money, and the other one pretends to work for the store and take the money. Even though it seems a little silly and basic, kids will be learning that money is exchanged for goods and services, which is a basic economic principle. There are loads of good play money sets out there. Younger kids will appreciate the oversized versions because they are a bit easier to handle. As your child approaches preschool age, consider using a set that looks as much like real money as possible.

As you play together, you will be laying the groundwork for some very important ideas, including that money is countable, money comes in several forms, and money is a reward for doing a job or task. Don't be surprised if you hear a young child talk about "monies;" it's a natural part of learning about how language works. Be sure to introduce related vocabulary as you play, as well. Words like "cost," "buy," "sell," and "count" are all part of the foundation of learning about money.

Get your child the neatest piggy-bank you can manage, too, for real



money. Coins are fun- they clank and rattle in the most delightful ways! Don't let your child handle them until you are sure they won't be put into the mouth, though. But you can look together and talk about the physical attributes of the coins- quarters are the big ones, dimes are the small ones, pennies are the brown ones, and so forth. And it won't be long before your baby knows that paper money is more desirable than even coins!

Finally, as soon as possible after your child is born, set up a children's savings account at your local real bank. This should be separate from any account where you are saving real money intended for college expenses and the like, but rather an account that your child can use for spending money when he or she is ready in a few years. You can open an account with just a couple of dollars, and it's usually doable to add a few dollars every once in a while to make it grow a bit. It's also a great place to stash birthday money that comes to your child so that it doesn't get "frittered away." A savings account is a tool that your child will use from now until he or she is ready to set up their own account as a teenager, so don't neglect this important step.

Preschoolers and Young Elementary Kids
By age three, your child should have a solid connection between money and buying things. Take him or her to the store with some loose change and watch the growth and learning. "If I buy this, then I cannot buy that." "I have enough money for this but not for that." Kids learn so much on these trips to the toy counter or the dollar store.

Preschoolers are also old enough to start connecting money to work. There are a few ways to go about it, so think ahead and decide what will work best for your family. Some parents choose to give an allowance, or a regular amount of money each week or month, to the kids. Be sure to tie it to being responsible for age-appropriate chores or family duties though, to help make the connection between work and reward. Other families assign a pay rate to common chores and pay out according to how much work is done. And some families mix the two methods- an allowance for the bare minimum of chores and extra money for extra chores. Whichever way around you choose to do this, help your youngster make a solid connection between effort and getting the money for the fun things.

That's the beginning of the "work ethic" that supports nearly all of us in adulthood.

Once they have a little bit of income, it's time to teach how to "budget" the money. Help your kids understand that it's important to save some of their loot just on general principles, and that if they can control small impulse purchases, they can accumulate larger amounts of money to buy more desirable things. Consider enforcing a percentage of money being saved. For example, tell your child that half of whatever they get must go into that savings account at the bank. Some families with strong religious ties also use these tools to help kids learn to give to their church or community. They may set a percent to put aside for weekly giving. Take the savings to the bank regularly, like weekly or monthly, and help your child make a deposit. Notice I did not say "make a deposit for them." It's really important that they physically help as much as possible with the process, including going to the bank and handing over the cash to the teller for deposit. It makes the experience a whole lot more real and tangible, plus it lays the groundwork for later understandings about how bank accounts work.

Elementary aged children can manage with simple financial responsibilities, as well. Perhaps in your household, the kids are responsible for buying any extra snacks or treats they want at the grocery store. Maybe they have to buy their own school lunches or pack them before class each day. Even splitting the money out into the amounts to save, to donate, and to keep are a part of this process.

Finally, don't forget to teach young children to recognize real coins and bills and to understand their value. A good rule of thumb is that preschoolers should be able to identify the currency, early elementary kids should be able to count groups of coins (first groups of all the same type of coins, and then later, mixed groups of coins), and middle elementary kids should be learning to make change.

And keep up the conversations about how money works. Add in talk about putting the family money in and out of the bank, the idea of paychecks from your job, and how you choose what to spend your money on. It's perfectly fine (and necessary) for kids to learn that you don't have enough money for everything you want. Talk about the differences between wants and needs, too (they do in school even in kindergarten). This way, when

you have to say no about a purchase or an expense, you can talk about it in terms the kids understand.

Teens:
The teen-aged years are where the rubber hits the road, so to speak. Your time to teach and influence is winding down, so make the most of these last few years. Kids should be using money wisely and regularly. They should have a strong connection between work and cash flow, a good idea of what is a want and what is a need, and a beginning understanding of budgeting. The bank account that you started way back when has hopefully grown quite a bit, though you've allowed the kids to make occasional withdrawals for big, important expenses.

This is the time to teach budgeting in detail. Write down your teen's income from all sources (birthday money, money from odd jobs, money from a real job, allowance, and so forth). Have them make a list of their expenses. These could include some extra, fashionable clothing, new video games or devices, helping pay for a party they'd like to host, eating out with friends, gas money, and the list goes on. Help and guide them so that they keep their expenses in line with their available cash flow. And avoid "bailing them out" frequently. That's what their savings habit is for. If they haven't been able to learn to save, then they face the consequences of not having the money they want for a special event or purchase. How much better is it to have to miss out on a trip to an amusement park because you overspent, as opposed to later not having money for rent because you overspent? The lessons at this age are not life-altering, if you allow them to make mistakes and fail at times. If you consistently open the Parent Bank and make a loan or a gift, they will learn nothing about managing their own money.

Somewhere around middle school or early high school, do an exercise (maybe even more than once) where the kids research the career under consideration to find out the starting salary. Have them lay out a budget for living on their own using real numbers from your area, like rent for an apartment, price of a good used car, typical grocery, utility, and other bills. Now compare the two. Often kids find that their desired lifestyle does not match the common pay rate for their proposed job. This is the perfect opportunity to talk about the choices we face- either live more frugally or find a better-paying job.

Finally, do some very intentional teaching about the world of credit, loans, taxes, investments, and other adult financial tools. Help them learn how to avoid scams, how to manage a credit or debit card (many banks have teen versions of plastic cash cards with options for tight parental controls and notifications), how to work with a checking account, and what goes into doing the family taxes. It won't be long before they need to navigate the world on their own, and every bit of information you can arm them with will help. Consider taking a finance class or two together- many banks offer programs, and there are many good options online. It will be a great refresher course for you and wonderful knowledge for the kids.

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor and writer living in Edwardsburg. Get more information, as well as great learning tips, at her website, <http://www.sandyflemingonline.com>.

FIELD TRIP

On a road trip to Rochester, MN
PLEASE HOLD THE MAYO!



So, my wife and I just finished a five-day long road trip to Rochester, Minnesota (no, not to visit the Mayo Clinic, we're both fine, thanks) to attend a good friend and former neighbor's wedding (actually it the renewal of vows after one year that when their first wedding was unattendable because of COVID), where we met a group of friends from the Midwest and celebrated the day with the bride and groom, Calvin and Elizabeth King (congrats kids).

The trip involved a lot of hot weather driving, and, being old people with a lot of time to make such a drive, we split the trip there into three days, stopping at the delightful tourist destination of Galena,

Illinois for a night, and at La Crosse, Wisconsin for a second night.

Along the way, we encountered a variety of interesting things, not the least of which was a really neat old hotel, a spectacular, old stone and coral grotto (at the Holy Ghost Catholic Church in an off-the-beaten-track town of Dickeyville, WI), a panorama of beauty along the Mississippi River, more shopping than you can shake a credit card at, a variety of restaurants, bars and pubs, about a hundred buildings named "Mayo," some really bad drivers and a host of friendly Midwesterners in the five states we visited.

Here are some photos of the beauty and some of the oddities we encountered on our adventure.



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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of area's past

In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes in our area.

Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20 years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

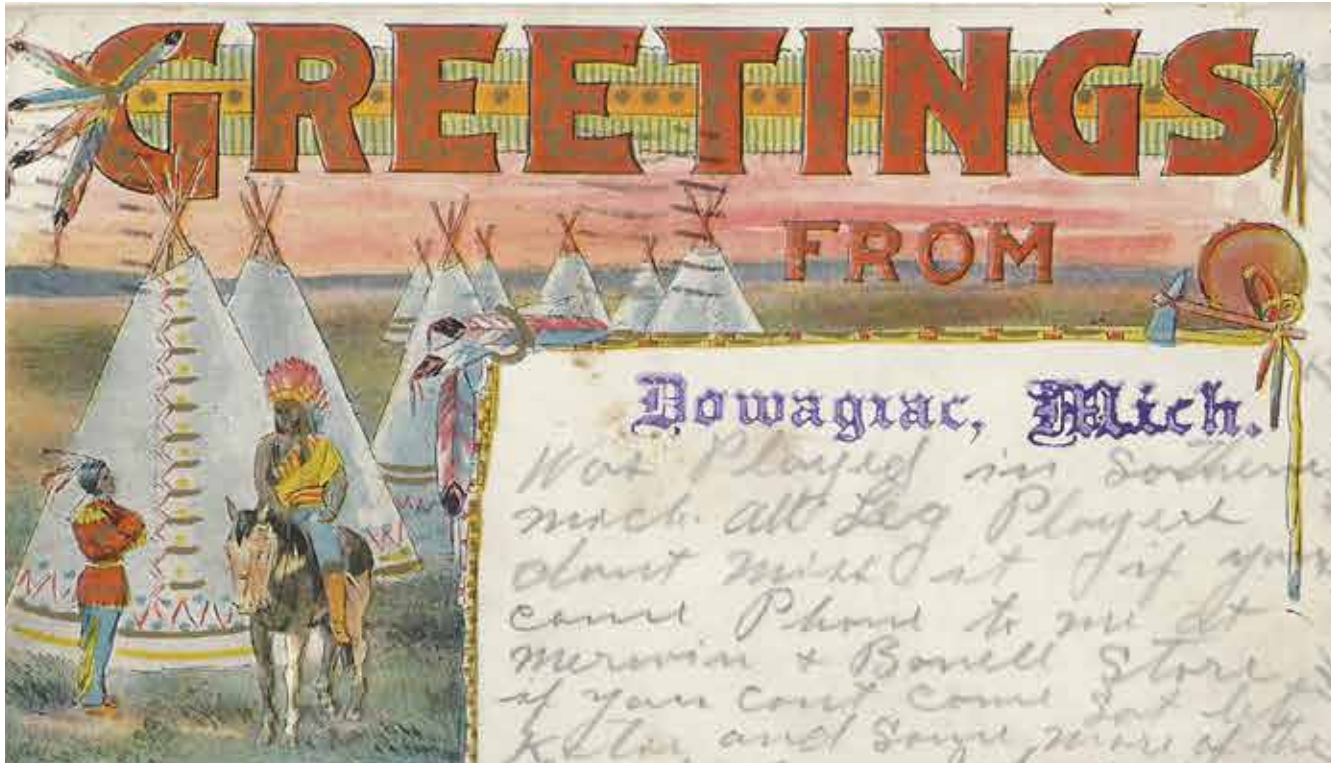
Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

Among other places, the book may be purchased at the Jerdon Real

Estate office on M-62 West, and at Whistlestop Gifts, which is operated by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: www.arcadiapublishing.com

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various places around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.



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NATURE NOTES

Late summer birds around the area

*Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch*

Peggy and Mike Roberts live in Galien Township and have watched a pair of sandhill cranes this year as they have successfully raised a chick in a wetland and fields around their home. Peggy snapped several nice photos of the crane family as they were out for a stroll on June 29. The young chick has certainly grown since this photo was taken over a month ago, and is now nearly as tall as the adults and is acquiring similar plumage. The young bird will stay with its parents until late winter or early 2022 when spring migration begins.

Sandhill cranes were once found over nearly all of Southwest Michigan where suitable wetlands were present, up until the Civil War era of the 1860s, after which they underwent a population decline due to extensive wetland drainage and unregulated hunting.

The statewide sandhill crane population hit an all-time low sometime in the early 1900s, but has been increasing ever since. By 1954 the entire breeding population of sandhill cranes in the Lower Peninsula was just 43 pairs, but by 1973 it had risen to 157 pairs.

During the 1960s through the 1980s the sandhill crane was a regular spring and fall migrant through Berrien County, but it did not nest here until the early 2000s when nests were discovered at Mud Lake Bog in Buchanan Township, Grand Mere State Park in Lincoln Township, and the Brown Sanctuary owned by Sarett Nature Center in Benton Township.

The local sandhill crane nesting population has continued to increase to where many of the large wetland areas now host at least one pair during the summer. I have recently seen smaller wetland areas in Berrien County hosting breeding pairs of sandhill cranes, meaning that pairs are looking for more marginal habitat in which to nest because the larger wetlands are occupied.

Kathy and Dan Sherman of St. Joseph Township spotted a green heron at the base of their bird feeder on July 5.

Green herons are common summer residents in our area around ponds, rivers, lakes and other wetlands. They migrate from the Southeastern US, Mexico and Central America to eastern North America, arriving in Berrien County around the last week in April although they do not become commonly seen until May 1.

They can raise up to two broods per year, and green heron pairs may nest singly or in small colonies. Nests are constructed in trees at lower heights than the great blue heron.

Green herons stick close to water and feed mainly on fish and other invertebrates. Occasionally they will catch small mammals, which is a possible explanation for the individual's appearance at the base of the Sherman's feeder. It might be there to prey on a mouse or chipmunk.

Brad Anderson snapped a photo of a Caspian tern on July 12 as it rested on Weko Beach in Bridgman. The Caspian tern is noted for its large size, being about 2 feet in length, in relation to other tern species that occur in Michigan. Look for its large red-orange bill.

The Caspian tern breeds across portions of every continent with the exception of Antarctica. In eastern North America scattered nesting colonies exist



Top left: Sandhill crane adults and young chick, June 29, 2021 along Cleveland Avenue, Galien Township. Photo by Peggy Roberts of Galien Twp.

Top right: Green heron below a bird feeder on July 5, St. Joseph Twp, Kathy Sherman.

Middle left: Caspian tern on July 12, 2021 at Weko Beach, Bridgman, Brad Anderson.

Right: Brad Anderson of Bridgman photographed young barn swallows waiting and then being fed by a parent July 12, 2021 at Warren Dunes State Park. Photo by Brad Anderson.

on the Atlantic seaboard, Great Lakes and portions of the Gulf Coast.

Some unmated Caspian terns wander the Great Lakes shoreline during June and July while southbound post breeding individuals may well be on their way south at the same time. Thus, it is difficult to determine if the individual in Anderson's photo is an unmated individual spending its summer on our beaches, or one that is resting on its way to the Gulf of Mexico or south Atlantic coastline for the fall and winter.

Migrating individuals in the fall peak along our Lake Michigan shoreline during August through the middle of September. During the spring they are most commonly seen in April and May.

Brad Anderson of Bridgman photographed an odd occurrence last month of a young group of barn swallows that had recently fledged their nest, and while waiting to be fed were visited by a red-eyed vireo which plucked a feather from

one of the young birds. I suspect the red-eyed vireo may have been after mites that may have been on the feathers, on which it may have fed.

I have discounted that the vireo would have been trying to extract a barn swallow feather for nesting material because July 12 is late for a red-eyed vireo to be constructing a nest and vireos are not known to use feathers as nesting material.

The red-eyed vireo is a common summer resident throughout forested areas of eastern North America. They spend most of their time high among deciduous forest treetops, with nests being constructed from 5 to 35 feet high solely by the female.

During the summer months while the species resides in North America, it preys upon insects and has a preference for butterflies in larvae and adult forms, including eastern tent caterpillar and gypsy moth. Red-eyed vireos suffer when

pesticides are used to control such pests as the gypsy moth.

Red-eyed vireos begin migration to their wintering grounds of Central America and northern South America in late August and it peaks in Southwest Michigan around September 10-15. The species is generally hard to find locally after the last of September with occasionally lingering birds seen until October 10.

Shorebird migration peaks during August and September in Southwest Michigan, and the solitary sandpiper is one of many species passing through to its wintering grounds.

Most shorebirds are found in Southwest Michigan not only along the Lake Michigan beaches, but in flooded farm fields, wet meadows and other areas near water. Reliable locations to look for

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NATURE

NATURE NOTES

NATURE

Continued from previous page

shorebirds in Berrien County, other than the Lake Michigan shoreline, is the Three Oaks Wastewater Ponds viewing area located off Schwark Road in Three Oaks Township. Depending on the water level, the Brown Sanctuary which is owned by Sarett Nature Center in Benton Township is an excellent spot for shorebird viewing.

John Ripley of Niles Township sent in a photo of a male scarlet tanager that he saw on his deck in May. While the adult male scarlet tanager in summer is instantly recognizable by its red body with black wings, before winter it will molt into a yellow-greenish body with black wings.

Scarlet tanagers produce one brood of young per year, and by the middle of August most young have fledged the nest in our region. Fall migration begins in August and peaks during the middle of September. On average the last reported scarlet tanager in the county occurs around September 27 each year. October sightings are rare. One exceptional sighting was an individual that visited a bird feeder in Niles during late November through early December 2000.

Please report sightings to Jonathan Wuepper at wuepperj@gmail.com.



Above left: Solitary sandpiper on May 11, 2021 along Galien River, Warren Woods State Park. Brad Anderson.



Right: Male Scarlet Tanager by John Ripley of Niles Township, May 2021.

LOCAL HISTORY

South Disbrow St. in Cassopolis over 90 years

Provided by **Jonathan Wuepper**,
Branch Manager of the Cass District Library
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

The photograph featured in this month's article shows south Disbrow Street, Cassopolis and was taken by Melissa Blanche Graham Harrison between 1920 and 1922.

The building seen dead center in the photo served as a blacksmith shop, as told from the 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in conjunction with the sign seen on the building in the photo. It was operated and perhaps also owned by John Cox, born in Volinia Township in 1882, and who was listed in the 1920 US Census as living in Cassopolis, occupation listed as blacksmith.

The building to the right served as a storage shed or store for agricultural implements, according to the 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

When the next edition of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Cassopolis was issued in January 1925, the large building was no longer listed as a blacksmith shop, and was listed as a storage shed. The Smaller building that had been used for storing agricultural implements according to the 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map was in 1925 used as an auto repair shop.

Disbrow Street was named in honor of Henry V. Disbrow of Monroe, Michigan Territory who in 1831 was one of three commissioners appointed by Michigan Territorial Governor Stevens T. Mason in charge of selecting the seats of justice for Branch, St. Joseph and Cass Counties. The two additional commissioners were George A. O'Keefe and Thomas Rowland, both of Detroit.



Above: South Disbrow Street, Cassopolis, circa 1920-22 looking southeast by Melissa Blanche Graham Harrison. At the time this photo was taken, the village was approximately 90 years old. Largest building on the right with white sign was being used as a blacksmith shop, then operated by John Cox (1882-1945). Courtesy Keith Harrison of Holt, Michigan.

At right: South Disbrow Street on August 17, 2021. Photo by Jonathan Wuepper, Cass District Library.



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THE LAST WORD

by Phil Vitale
aka sailorphil

Thank the heavens for homegrown tomatoes



he dog days of summer are barely over according to the Farmer's Almanac, but as I write this the mercury in the thermometer on my deck just busted out of the top of the little tube and evaporated into a silver mist of thin air, and my poor dog, just in from a short walk to take care of some afternoon business in the heat is now, after a short stop at her favorite water bowl, sprawled across the cold tile floor in the kitchen, her eyes rolled back and half-closed and her tongue is hanging out as she pants.

Even though the days are named after dogs, I'm pretty sure my dog hates this weather as much as I do, although unlike her, no matter how hot it gets outside I almost never drink out of the toilet or lie on the kitchen tile and pant (the wife says both are unseemly).

I've got a friend named Jim who moved to Florida a couple years ago to escape Michigan winters. Says he doesn't mind the heat in Florida. Says most of the time the heat's not much worse there than what we've been having here for the couple of weeks. Says 95 degrees in Florida doesn't feel as bad as 95 degrees in Michigan.

Horse hockey.
Ninety five degrees is hot. Anywhere. Everywhere. Damn hot.

Too hot if you ask me and my dog.
I'm pretty sure that my dog (who's ancestry traces back to Labrador) would rather put up with zero degrees than 95. I know that in hot weather like this both

my dog and I start acting like a sickly energizer bunny who's batteries have gone dead. My dog has her way of dealing with the heat on the kitchen floor ... as for me, I turn into a baked couch potato in the summer, although some days even the couch is too hot.

Last week my wife and I thought we might be able to escape the heat for a while by taking a road trip to attend a friend's wedding in Minnesota.

Minnesota, where it's usually cold and summer is a fairy tale they tell their kids about. Minnesota, where mufflers are around your neck, not under your car. Minnesota, where the ice on Lake Wobegon has been know to thaw on a Monday and freeze over again Tuesday.

Didn't work. It was over 95 there. And believe it or not, 95 degrees there might be even worse than in Michigan.

When it's 95 there, the Minnesota state bird (the mosquito, I'm told) can actually get airborne, a peril to humans (and dogs I expect) since the bigger ones have been know to carry off lighter-weight people (and dogs) and take them back to their nests so they can feed on them later ... I'm told.

At least here in Michigan the mosquitoes rarely get bigger than a wren (except in parts of the UP), so dousing yourself with a gallon or so of deet a day will usually keep them away.

And when it's 95 in Minnesota, I sweat every bit as much there as I do here. My shirt was soaked. My forehead was drippy. My armpits ... well, I don't even want to think about them (although I'm told that anyone within noseshot of me could think of little else).

So you probably get the idea that I don't care too much for hot weather.

As Charlie Chan used to say, ah so (which means "damn skippy" in modern English, I'm told).

Of course I don't hate everything about summer, but even the parts of summer that I like have a bittersweet edge to them.

One of the things I like about summer in Michigan is that I don't have to wear layers of clothing. I bet I've only had long pants on three or four times since April (although I occasionally wear a sweatshirt with shorts on cool evenings and mornings).

But baring skin in summer provides a target-rich atmosphere for mosquitoes.

I do like the lake where I live in summer ... jumping into the lake is a lot more pleasant in summer when I can land in water; landing on the ice in winter has been know to leave some serious bruises on my landing pad.

But between the sweat and jumping into the lake to cool off all the time, I'm afraid I might be growing a mess of moss in my armpits.

Another thing I like about summer is that I don't have to shovel summer off my driveway ... but summer storms can leave the hickory nuts ankle deep.

I think the one thing I like the most about summer is Michigan is the summer food, especially when it's time for homegrown tomatoes.

When he visits the area , a musician friend often sings a song that has a line in it that goes something like this ...

"Homegrown tomatoes, homegrown tomatoes; What'd life be without home-

grown tomatoes; Only two things that money can't buy; That's true love & homegrown tomatoes."

Kind of a catchy tune that always makes me smile. My dog doesn't eat tomatoes so she doesn't smile much, but for my part, tomatoes in the summer, almost make up for the stupid-hot weather; for the sweat that pours off my body and for the mosquitoes and all the other nasty summer plagues that I hate.

Almost.

And then, just when I'm finally getting used to summer and discover that I can almost overlook all of those horrid things that I hate (more than I hate Minnesota mosquitoes and Florida 95 degree days), just when I'm finally coming to terms with all that, all of a sudden, September shows up outta nowhere.

And that means I have to start packing the summer toys away and the leaves start turning weird colors and falling off the trees and piling up in the yard and I have to brake out the rakes and start raking and burning and the aching in my back from all of the raking in the yard makes me wish it was still summer.

And September is still too hot for the dog, so she doesn't like it much either. I guess there's just no pleasing some people. Or dogs.

My one consolation this time of year is that there's usually still plenty of tomatoes around in September.

So I think I'll go jump in the lake one more time, and then maybe I'll open a cold beer and fry up a BLT.

I guess summer's not that bad after all ... at least not as long as the tomatoes hold out.



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