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Winter 2023





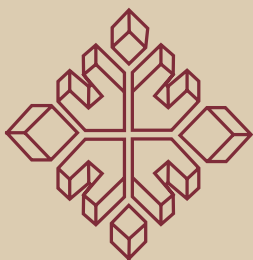
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What's Inside

Historical mystery solved 3
 Mom's box of recipes 6
 A Hoosier history lesson 8
 'Tis the season for scams 10
 A memorable Z/28 14
 The Ossian WASP 16
 Hearty holiday meals 18
 A winter travel survival guide 22

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Watch for our **Spring edition**
 in early **March 2024**



Learning about our veterans. page 12



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One historical mystery solved

Were two adopted daughters of Bluffton's most famous scientist biological sisters? Read on.

BY BETH STEURY

One evening in August, I listened as my long-time writing friend, Wells County native Alan Daugherty, shared the details of his latest creative endeavor. Alan was putting the finishing touches on a five-year labor of love



focused on naturalist/botanist Edward Bruce Williamson (1877-1933).

The DNA Sleuth

The famed scientist, an authority on dragonflies, and hybridizer of irises who went by E. B. in his professional life, was known to family and friends as Bruce. The man and his many achievements had captivated Alan, compelling him to compile a biography of the world-renowned Indiana native who spent much of his adult life in Bluffton. Combining several of Alan's beloved interests — history, Wells Co. history in particular, nature, and extensive research — the project seemed a perfect fit for him.

My interest piqued when Alan noted that Williamson and his wife Anna had three adopted daughters, the younger two said to be biological sisters. Their genetic parentage had never been determined despite the efforts of various family members and Alan to solve the mystery.

"DNA," I murmured, leaning closer to the conversation. My mind whirred, calculating the level of challenge in piecing together the origins of Dorothea, born in 1905, Mary, born in 1909, and Jane, in 1912. But I couldn't resist the prospect of tackling three mysteries in one family. So, later that night, I compiled a family tree for E.B., Anna, their adopted daughters, grandchildren, and greats. The next day, I phoned Alan, suggesting (strongly!) that he share my contact info with the living descendants he'd encountered during his research, just in case any of them



At right, Anna and E.B. Williamson in a photo believed to have been taken in 1915. The world-famous Bluffton scientist and his wife adopted three girls. The above photo of Dorothea, Jane and Mary was taken in 1913. The DNA Sleuth took on the challenge to see if Mary and Jane were — as rumors persisted — biological sisters.



wanted to further pursue solving their grandmothers' parentage. And I crossed my fingers that I'd hear from someone.

Within an hour, Tammy Cromie-Wilkins, whose mother Mary Wilkins Nichols was Jane Williamson's daughter, called me, thrilled to accept my offer of assistance. She shared her results from testing with 23andMe (another ancestry-assistance website) and then immediately ordered a test kit from Ancestry.com.

A side note: While *both* companies offer accurate, to-be-trusted information, Ancestry's database of testers is much larger, meaning more DNA matches for most testers. And, Ancestry is known for their free family-tree building feature that, coupled with the larger database, offers a clear advantage to people using DNA to solve genetic mysteries.

Alan had compiled clues about the girls' parentages from a variety of sources, but to me, the info seemed too detailed to be truthful. Because who shares publicly — in news articles and in various written content over the years — the adopted child's birth name and/or the birth parent's name? Both Alan and the Williamson descendants had followed up on the various clues to no avail, leaving most folks to assume the clues were either mistakenly passed-on information or, more likely, intention-

ally shared tidbits meant to mislead anyone from discovering the truth. These sentiments I found to be very plausible, so I put the information on a side burner.

During the four-week wait for the Ancestry results, I made good progress in identifying and placing several of Tammy's 23andMe DNA matches on a family tree, separate from the one built for E.B. and Anna. When the "results are in" message from Ancestry landed in Tammy's email, I dove in, trying to hold at bay the *how cool would it be if we could really solve this?* giddiness.

While several more DNA matches found a place on the family tree, several others evaded my best efforts to identify them. A survey of the connections scattered across the tree drew my attention to a woman named Bertha Harrison, born in 1888. Tammy had DNA matches on both sides of Bertha's family who hailed from various parts of Indiana. And those matches lined up in the right places for Bertha to be Jane's mother.

The next step: Peruse birth records for a female born on Jane's September 8, 1912, birthdate, in the Indianapolis area, per the information that had passed down through the years. Because each of the girls' birthdates fell before the state began to seal adoptee's

original birth certificates in 1941, I hoped the original record of Jane, before she was Jane, would be floating about. Unfortunately, nothing obvious jumped out at me.

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But while I had the birth index open, I decided to take a peek at April 11, 1909, Mary's birthdate. And there it was, one Minnie Beatrice Sering born to none other than Bertha Harrison and husband Thomas Sering on Mary's 1909 birthdate. No documents existed for Minnie past the 1910 census where she was listed as a one-year-old living with her divorced mother Bertha in the home of Bertha's employer Joseph Foltz. Was that because Minnie Sering had become Mary Williamson?

And then an *AH-HA!* moment jolted me. If Jane's granddaughter's DNA led to Mary's biological mother, then Jane and Mary had indeed been biological sisters — half-sisters with the same mother but different fathers.

I dug deeper into Bertha Harrison's history while also poring over the Indiana birth index, looking again for the original Jane. I broadened the birthdate search to any day in September 1912.

Still nothing. Knowing that changing an adoptee's birthdate was commonplace, I extended the search to include August. And there she was, Mary Katherine born on August 31, 1912, to Bertha Harrison and husband Marian Giggy.

Remember those clues I'd delegated to a side burner? A news clipping announcing Jane Williamson's adoption noted that she had been Mary C., the daughter of Marion Griggery/Griggey, spelled both ways in the same news article. Followers of this column have heard me bemoan, repeatedly, the fact



At left, Jane Williamson as a young woman. The undated photo may have been for her high school graduation. Above, Tammy Cromie-Wilkins, far right, with her Great-Aunt Mary Williamson, center, holding Tammy's one-year-old daughter Hannah in 1985. (All photos provided)

that, in decades past, spelling seemed not to matter much. Certainly not in the way it does today.

I waited until a respectable hour to telephone both Alan and Tammy with the news that I felt sure we'd solved the parentage of Mary and Jane Williamson. Alan was astonished, and Tammy jumped for joy. When I questioned both about the August 31 versus September 8 birthdate for Jane, neither was surprised. In his research, Alan had found

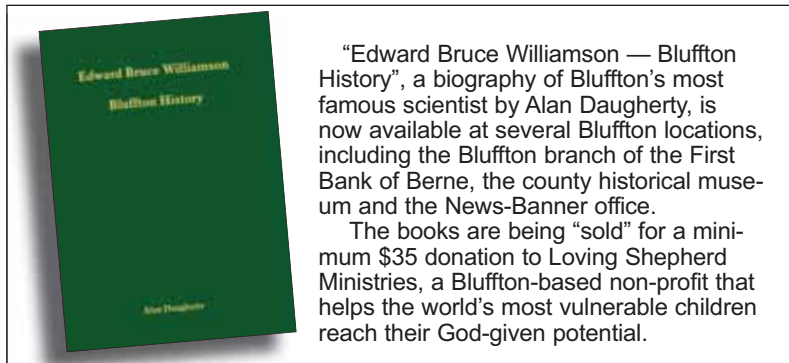
Between Tammy's DNA pointing to both Bertha Harrison *and* Marion Giggy, the located birth certificates of infants whose documented history had ended abruptly, and the confirmation of the long-held clues, I had no doubt that we'd solved the mystery of from whom and where the younger two Williamson girls had come.

The how and why of the girls being relinquished and placed with the Williamson family still remained unanswered, as often happens when those who could provide firsthand accounts have long passed away.

Only one mystery remained, and you can be sure that this time, I did not push aside the name associated with Dorothea who was reported to be Anna McMillen born in Pennsylvania. I pored over Ancestry's Pennsylvania birth records, broadening the search dates and spelling both "Anna"

and "McMillen" oodles of ways. I did the same for Ohio and Indiana. But without DNA to guide the investigation, the search proved both daunting and unsuccessful. It didn't help matters that the database of Pennsylvania births began in 1906, one year too late to lend its handily sorted records to this case.

While researching E.B.'s biography, Alan made contact with several of Jane's descendants. However, Mary



"Edward Bruce Williamson — Bluffton History", a biography of Bluffton's most famous scientist by Alan Daugherty, is now available at several Bluffton locations, including the Bluffton branch of the First Bank of Berne, the county historical museum and the News-Banner office.

The books are being "sold" for a minimum \$35 donation to Loving Shepherd Ministries, a Bluffton-based non-profit that helps the world's most vulnerable children reach their God-given potential.

both dates associated with Jane. Tammy noted that while the August date was accepted in the family as Jane's birthdate, she celebrated her birth on the September date for reasons Tammy had not been privy to. And then Tammy shared the name that had been found tucked away after Mary died—a name that she'd not shared with me or Alan. Now, it was my turn to be astonished. The name found in Mary's belongings? Bertha Harrison Sering.

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Baking up some goodness

Inheriting mom's box of recipes helped Keith Keller find his niche.

BY MARK MILLER

He is reluctant to use the word “ministry.”

“I don’t know,” Keith Keller says. “It just makes me feel good. People have bent over backwards to help me.”

Whether he might be “paying back” or “paying it forward,” the rural Berne resident has never given it that much thought. It is clear that he likes to bake pies and he enjoys making people happy.

Cover Story

He is not sure when it all started. His mother “was a fantastic cook,” he

says. “I didn’t really help her, but I remember watching her in her kitchen.”

It may have been in the Boy Scouts. On his first camp-out, “we were tasting other guys’ cooking and I was sure I could do better than that,” he says. So at the next Jamboree, he and a friend were prepared.

“While the other guys were making hot dogs and chili, stuff like that, we were making stuffed pork chops and fried chicken,” he recalls. “We took along a Dutch oven and made peach cobbler and pineapple upside down cake.” He chuckles at the memories.

“And then when mom passed away, maybe that’s when it took off,” he muses. “I inherited her recipe box.” He discovered that making her dishes, particularly her recipes, gave him a chance to remember her.

“Just the fact that the recipes were written in her handwriting,” he says.

He tackled a couple of mother-daughter banquets at the church they were attending at the time, Bethel Brethren, feeding up to 130 people.

“I like a challenge,” he says. The menu included homemade dinner rolls

and what has become his signature — pies.

Several years ago — he is not sure when (“20, 50 years ago?” he supposes, laughing) — he began to deliver a pie to a fellow church member’s house if they were recovering from surgery or a sickness. At first he did it stealthily, leaving it anonymously on their porch.

“My wife didn’t even know I was doing it for awhile,” he continues. “But people knew my pies, they figured it out.”

Also at some point, he began including a book with his pies. He had come across the series by Philip Gulley, a former Quaker minister from Indiana. “They have a message, they’re fun to read,” he explains, “and the stories are only about two minutes each, which is about the length of my attention span.”

A Jay County native, Keller graduated from Bryant High School, class of 1966. It was during his high school years that he met two men who had a “huge impact” on his life.

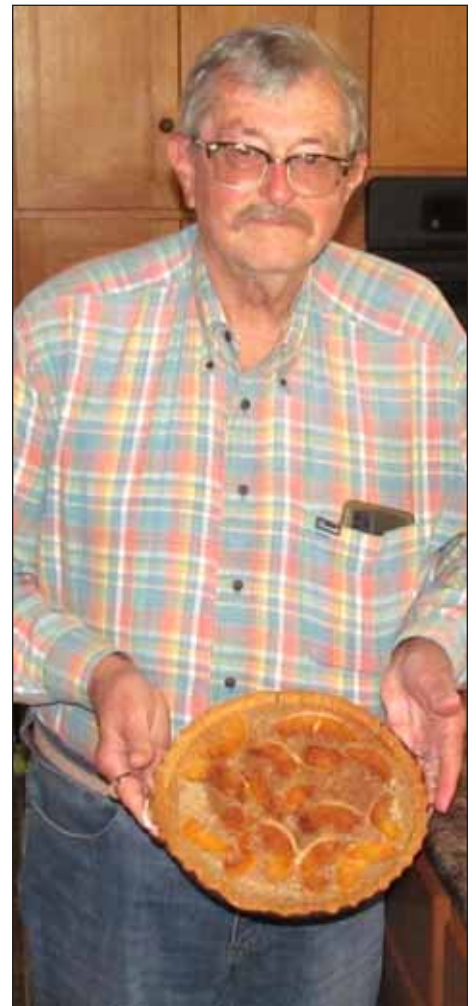
“I don’t see it as a sad story,” he explains. “It’s just what it was. I was used to not fitting in.”

Keller describes himself as an “overweight kid,” the last to be picked in the choose-up games in the playground. But when he went to a Youth for Christ meeting, “the two directors, they must have seen something. They gave me responsibilities I’d never had before,” he continues.

“Wes Christian and Jim Leonard,” he pauses. “They changed my life. When they died, I cried like a baby. I owe them so much.”

After high school, he worked at Berne Furniture for 21 years, which is where he met his wife, the former Linda Mat-tax.

“I proposed to her on our second date and we were married two-and-a-half months after we met,” he says, noting



Rural Berne resident Keith Keller displays one of his favorites, a sugar cream pie with slices of peach. “It’s just something I enjoy doing,” he says.

that despite what some might see as too short of a courtship, they’re now in their 52nd year of marriage. “Seems like it turned out all right.”

They are the proud parents of two — Travis and Meghan — and have five grandchildren and two “greats.” It is evident from their home’s furnishings that they spend some time helping with some child care. He enjoys sharing stories, particularizing about one of the “greats.”

Now in retirement at age 75, he works a few days a week at Alpine Falls in Berne, along with baking pies and cooking for church events. He contributed to a very thick church cookbook that he keeps handy.

The couple began attending St. Luke’s Church, northwest of Monroe and close to the Adams-Wells counties’ border. As Covid came and went, he went through

Continued on page 24



BRAIN EXERCISE

Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9. Answers on page 24.

"Most of them are done in her handwriting," Keith Keller says. He believes his interest in cooking really took off after he had inherited his mother's box of recipes.

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History lesson builds interest in Hoosier towns across the river from Louisville

BY TANYA ISCH CAYLOR

I've always thought of Jeffersonville as something you drive through to get to Louisville. So when we made plans to attend our daughter's golf tournament near there, I assumed we'd spend most of our free time on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River.



Hoosier Fun

But the Louisville Sheraton with the riverfront view my husband booked for us turned out to be on the Indiana side of the border. With so many riverfront restaurants and other sites within walking distance, we never did make it to Louisville.

The thing I'll remember most about that September weekend was something I didn't even know existed when we left home.

Well, technically the Clark Cabin doesn't exist anymore. Not the original, built by Revolutionary War hero George Rogers Clark, nor the replica built by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, which was burned by vandals in 2021. But that cabin – the site where the explorers Lewis and Clark met up before embarking on their two-year exploration of what became the Western half of the United States – sure took root in my imagination.

I hadn't realized Indiana played a role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which is generally described as having a St. Louis starting point. It turns out the explorer William Clark was the war hero's much younger brother. He grew up in Virginia and Kentucky before joining the Army, where he became close friends with Meriwether Lewis. When Thomas Jefferson selected Lewis to lead the expedition, aka the Corps of Discovery, Lewis wrote to his old friend, asking him to serve as co-captain.

William Clark, then 33, was living on his family's plantation near Louisville.



This statue commemorates the explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark meeting at Clark's Pointe, Ind., in October 1803 before embarking on the Corps of Discovery exploring what eventually became the western half of the United States. (Courtesy photo)

George Rogers Clark, who was deeded a large chunk of land in the Northwest Territory as compensation for his war efforts, was building a retirement home across the Ohio River near Clarksville, the oldest European settlement in the territory, dating to 1787.

Clark helped his older brother, then 51, build a cabin at what became known as Clark's Pointe, overlooking the Falls of the Ohio. At the time, this sharp turn in the river was a treacherous stretch of rapids none dared navigate without a seasoned river guide.


William Clark stayed with his brother in the summer of 1803, recruiting frontiersmen to join the expedition. That August, Lewis left Pittsburgh and jour-

neyed down the Ohio River to meet up with Clark. On Oct. 15, 1803, Lewis arrived at Clark's Pointe, where he was greeted by his old friend.

"When they shook hands," wrote historian Stephen Ambrose in *Undaunted Courage*, his book on their mission, "the Lewis and Clark Expedition began."

Today that handshake is memorialized in a statue outside the Interpretive Center at Falls of the Ohio State Park.



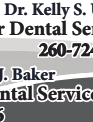



A charred chimney, meanwhile, is all that remains of the site where Clark's Cabin once stood. Though the site offers an excellent view of the river, the Falls are not nearly as formidable as they once were. A canal and dam have



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Revolutionary War Hero George Rogers Clark, left photo, was deeded a large chunk of land at Clarksville, Ind., which was the oldest European settlement in the Northwest Territory, dating to 1787. William Clark, above right, the much younger brother of Revolutionary War Hero George Rogers Clark, joined his old Army buddy Meriwether Lewis on the Corps of Discovery, meeting up along the Ohio River near Clarksville before embarking on their expedition.

expanded the shipping lanes through this portion of the river, where exposed bedrock provides a rich source of ancient fossils.

Viewing the spot where the cabin once stood, I found my initial excitement over Indiana’s role in the Lewis and Clark saga wavering. Was this statue just an example of local boosterism? Did anyone outside Indiana recognize the significance of this place, where Lewis and Clark camped for 11 days, picking the war hero’s brain on his frontier experience as well as his battles and negotiations with numerous Indian tribes?

The Interpretive Center was closed for repairs when we visited, so it wasn’t until later that I learned Indiana’s connection to the expedition has grown in validity in recent years.

In 2019, Congress expanded the National Lewis and Clark Trail to include an additional 1,200 miles and five states, including Indiana. The addition includes the preparatory portion of the journey, from Pittsburgh to Wood River, Ill., where the contingent camped and trained during the winter of 1803-1804.

Though no land was purchased, information on the trail is compiled by the National Park Service at nps.gov, with links to the Indiana DNR and other pertinent sources. It was there, for instance, that I viewed a map of the Falls of the Ohio in their more fearsome state.

I didn’t expect to get immersed in the topic of slavery in Indiana during my own journey down the Lewis and Clark rabbit hole, but it was fascinating to

learn that one of the explorers on the expedition was William Clark’s slave, York. George Rogers Clark, the former Virginian, also owned slaves — though he converted them to indentured servants under the new laws of the Indiana territory, formed shortly before he built his cabin at Clark’s Pointe. It turns out that U.S. Census data reveals there were hundreds of slaves and indentured servants in southern Indiana, even after it became a state in 1816.

The Indiana Lewis and Clark Expedition Commission, created in conjunction with the 200th anniversary of the Corps of Discovery, continues to research and promote this portion of Indiana history. Its only source of funding is donations; one way to provide support is through the purchase of a “Lewis and Clark in Indiana” speciality license plate.

I don’t know how much further I intend to pursue my interest in Lewis and Clark. But I do know the next time we find ourselves down that way, there’s plenty more I hope to explore — on both sides of the river.

The writer, a Wells County resident, can be reached at tischcaylor@gmail.com.



This charred chimney is all that remains of a replica of Revolutionary War Hero George Rogers Clark’s cabin at Clark’s Pointe near Falls of the Ohio State Park in Clarksville, Ind. The explorers Lewis and Clark — the war hero’s younger brother, William Clark — spent several days at the cabin in October 1803 before embarking on the Corps of Discovery. The DNR-built replica of the cabin was burned by vandals in 2021. (Photo by Bob Caylor).

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'Tis the Season for Scams

In today's hyper-connected digital universe, cyber criminals have more information than ever before, with the ability to reach you through unsecure public Wi-Fi, your email inbox, via text message, and more.

According to a Scam and Robocall Report from T-Mobile, Americans lost an estimated \$39.5 billion to phone scams in 2022. Lucky for you, there are several ways to protect and safeguard your personal information to help prevent scammers from scammin' this holiday season.

• Avoid Public USB Ports

Traveling by plane this holiday season? The FCC warns that cyber criminals can download malware to public USB charging ports to gain access to your information. Prevent this by using an AC power outlet instead.

• Beware of Charity Scams

It's the season of giving, but the FCC warns many cyber criminals take advantage by creating fake charities staged as real nonprofit organizations to gain access to your payment informa-

tion. Woof. To prevent this, don't click on suspicious email or text links and verify the organization is registered at the National Association of State Charity Officials or Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance before donating this holiday season.

• Screen Your Calls

Scammers are continuously upping their game, with total robocall attempts up 75% from 2021 to 2022. Detecting whether an incoming call is a potential scam isn't always easy. So there is one easy way to tell: If you don't

recognize the phone number, don't answer the call. If it's a genuine call, they will leave a message.

• Shop Smarter Online

According to Statista, 57% of holiday shoppers plan to use their smartphone to make holiday purchases this year, and scammers are onto them, ramping up activity during the two weeks before Christmas. To minimize any cyber



5 Ways to protect yourself

Grinches trying to steal your personal info, monitor your financial accounts regularly for suspicious charges and sign up for your bank or credit card company's text or email notifications to stay on top of fraudulent activity.

• Use Secure Tools

Safeguard your online accounts with Multi-Factor Authentication, which requires users to enter two different kinds of information to log in, like a password and one-time PIN code. It's like having a digital bouncer to make sure only you get into your accounts. Another protection is a

password manager, giving you the ability to securely store passwords across multiple platforms and websites. The tool also provides an autofill password function and a new password generator.

While cyber threats are on the rise, you can sleigh scams by staying vigilant and incorporating these best practices into your life this holiday season.

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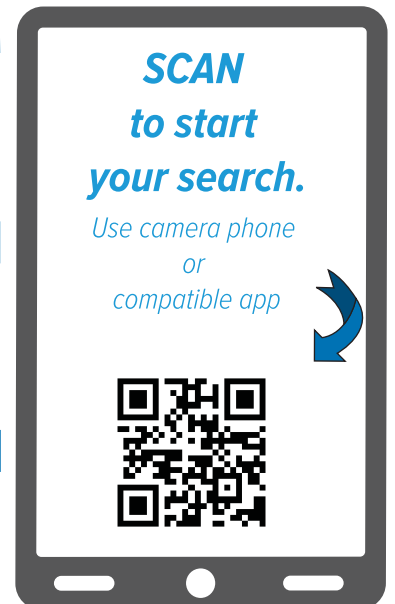
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Fort Wayne museum traces American conflicts

BY ROD KING

The grand opening of the W. Paul Wolf War History Museum at the Veterans National Memorial Shrine and Museum in Fort Wayne on O'Day Road was held earlier this year. The new facility features interactive displays telling the story of the different wars the United States has been involved in starting with the Revolutionary War.

Each war has its own section with photos, artifacts, weapons and uniforms from that period. Curator Robert Thomas says “the new graphics, war history maps, uniformed mannequins

and reader boards outlining the timelines make a visit here an educational journey for all visitors, as well as veterans who served. It covers 6,000 square feet and is three times larger than the old museum.”

Primary benefactor of the museum is W. Paul Wolf whose name appears over the entrance. He is a U.S. Air Force veteran of the Korean War. Estimated cost of the new facility is \$450,000.

One particular exhibit of interest is the Ghost Army fabricated in England during World War II. It features world renowned fashion designer and Fort Wayne native Bill Blass. The two-sided display tells the story of how the Allied forces utilized inflatable tanks, trucks and artillery to fool German aerial reconnaissance planes during the war.

Diorama of World War II medics in action is one of the highlights of the new War Museum. Timelines trace the start of the war in Gdansk, Poland to its end in Berlin, Germany.

Located in the garage opposite the museum is the 40 & 8 box car that was donated to the State of Indiana by the French people after World War I. This rare box car was designed to carry 40 men and eight horses. This year marks the 75th anniversary of its coming to the United States.

World War I veteran Eric Scott and his wife, Cleo, created the Memorial Shrine and Museum on their O'Day Road property. It opened in 1951 in a portion of their house and later expanded



Touring the W. Paul Wolf War History Museum is like taking an educational journey through the history of the conflicts that the United States participated in starting with the Revolutionary War and going through the present. This photo was taken during the grand opening ceremonies held, appropriately, during Memorial Day weekend. (Photos by Rod King)

into the garage where it has been until everything was transferred to the new building. Scott was 19 when he enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the Third Infantry Division Sixth Combat Engineers in France. When he returned, he vowed that he would found a place “where no veteran will ever be forgotten.”

A new chapel is under construction on the grounds, a Civil War memorial was dedicated this past summer and a replica of the Korean War Patrol Me-

morial was dedicated on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2023. It's also the site of an 80 percent replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.

The Veterans National Memorial Shrine and Museum is located at 2122 O'Day Road in Northwest Fort Wayne. Hours are Monday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

There is no admission fee, but freewill donations are accepted.

The writer, a Fort Wayne resident, may be reached at coknoll75@yahoo.com



photos, artifacts, weapons and uniforms from that period. Curator Robert Thomas says “the new graphics, war history maps, uniformed mannequins

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The two-sided World War II Ghost Army exhibit features Fort Wayne native and world renowned fashion designer Bill Blass. That's him in the stand-up photo. The Ghost Army utilized inflatable tanks, trucks and artillery to fool German aerial reconnaissance flights.



Diorama of World War II medics in action is one of the highlights of the new Veterans National Memorial Shrine and Museum on O'Day Road.



Revolutionary War map shows locations of the various conflicts during the War for Independence.

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Classic Car Corner

His Z/28 brings back memories, emotions



BY BOB CAYLOR

In 1973, Mark Braun had a chance to buy a car that he had admired for years. It was a 1968 Chevrolet Z/28, the flashiest version of the Camaro, a car introduced in 1966 as General Motors' best shot at creating a Mustang fighter.

Braun had come to know that car well. A pair of brothers who lived near him had owned it and driven it hard, often within earshot. Its roaring exhaust and revving engine couldn't help but

make an impression on him when it roared past his home on U.S. 224 east of Preble.

Then he spotted it for sale at a dealership in Berne. In those days, he most often obtained cars by trading other cars instead of offering cash deals. What he was driving then was a custom Pontiac GTO.

"It was really hopped up," Braun said of the GTO. And it was no trade at the

Berne car lot.

"We can't trade this in Berne. It's too radical," the salesman told him. So he went looking for a tamer trade. He found that blander trade in the form of a Ford Mustang Mach I. He only owned the Mach I for about 15 minutes before he swapped it for the Z/28.

The Z/28 was past its prime, Braun remembers. The same hotrodding brothers who owned it before him had blown its engine. "Its clutch didn't work, and it had a junk engine," Braun said.

Then Braun found that he needed to kick in \$300 — plus the Mach I! — to land the remains of the car that had impressed him so when he was a teenager.

Braun, now 70, finally had the car he'd appreciated at a distance, and then he had to set aside the project car for years. When he finally got back to it, he did most of the work himself in a restoration that took 15 years. The car's public debut was at a Decatur car show in 2011, 38 years after he successfully traded for it in Berne.

That public debut was the occasion for a uniquely satisfying reunion. One of its previous owners spotted it there and asked Braun if he could sit in his old car.



When Mark Braun bought this 1968 Z/28 50 years ago, its previous owners had blown its 302 V-8. It took him years, but he finally replaced it with another 302.

Meanwhile, he preserved its row of gauges under the center of the dash, a decision that would be greatly appreciated by another previous owner.





Fifty years after he bought this Chevrolet Z/28, the car leads a pampered existence.



During his frame-off restoration of the Z/28, Mark Braun painted and clearcoated the chassis. (Photos by Bob Caylor)



Mark Braun sits in his 1968 Z/28 outside his home near Preble.

“He sat down in this car and didn’t move for about 20 minutes,” Braun said. The previous owner was amazed at how familiar it was.

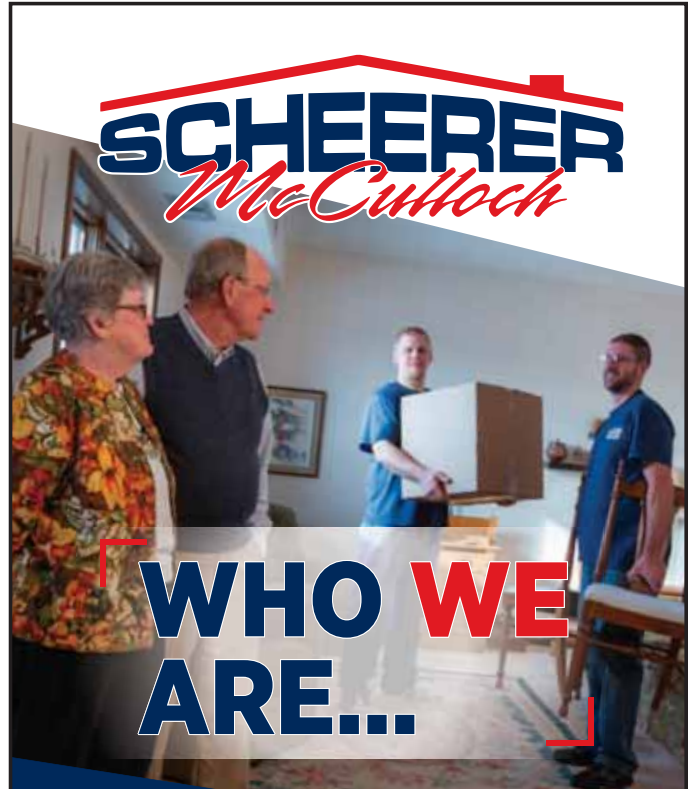
“You kept my gauges. You kept my shifter,” he told Braun.

In the years since he completed his restoration, he avoids rain and gravel roads, and he doesn’t often take his Z/28 for idle joyrides these days. But his appearances at nearby car shows provide him with continuing rewards when the car triggers fond memories in others.

People browsing at shows can’t resist sharing their memories of cruising or dating in cars similar to his.

“It’s getting to be a nostalgia show,” he said.

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How an Ossian native became a W.A.S.P.

BY KAYLEEN REUSSER

Elizabeth ‘Betty’ White’s interest in flying began when a family member paid for her to take a plane ride at Smith Field in Fort Wayne, Ind. The year was 1934 and White, who was born in Ossian, was 12 years old. Even though aviation was in its infancy, her interest was cemented. “Amelia Earhart was my hero,” she said.

Upon graduating from Ossian High School in 1940, White studied at Manchester College for a year, then worked at General Electric in Fort Wayne.

Her interest in soaring through the skies was renewed in 1942 when she read a magazine article about a new program in the military that needed women as pilots. The article explained that female pilots were being recruited to help the war effort on the home front. The women would be called WASP (Women’s Air Service Pilots). They could ferry aircraft, test planes, instruct male pilots, and tow targets for anti-aircraft artillery practice.

Applicants were required to have 35 hours of flight time. White paid for lessons at Smith Field at a cost of \$10 per hour. It was an exorbitant amount for a young, single working woman on a budget. “I didn’t eat much,” she said.

Prior to being accepted into the military, White traveled to Sweetwater, Texas, where WASP training was held. She met Jacqueline Cochran, the woman in charge of the program. White submitted her application and was accepted. Among the 25,000 applicants, White was one of 1,830 applicants selected to train and serve as Army pilots. She left for Texas in January 1944.

The seven-month WASP program was equivalent to training given to male pilots. “We had ground school in the mornings that included college-level courses in math, physics, Morse code and navigation,” she said.

In the afternoons the women, wearing belted men’s jumpsuits because they



On Betty Dybbro’s 95th birthday, members of a local flying club offered her the opportunity to fly in two planes she had flown in as a young pilot, a Piper Cub and a Stearman bi-plane. (Photos provided.)

had no uniforms, completed hands-on training with Stearman and AT6 aircraft. “We had to take an airplane engine apart and put it back together,” she said. The women learned how to navigate by instruments only and had to complete a 2,000-mile solo flight from Texas to California before earning their wings as pilots.

When White had her wings pinned on her in August 1944, she was one of 1,074 women who completed the WASP program.

Not everyone was thrilled with women pilots. At a base at Marfa, Texas, a male commander would not allow White and other WASPs to fly. White transferred to a gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada, where she towed targets with a B-17 for live target practice by male pilots. “Some planes were hit but not mine,” she said.

By December 1944, the war in Europe was turning in favor of the Allies. Male pilots, needing a rest from combat, were sent back to the States. The WASP program abruptly ended so the men could resume control of pilot positions held by the WASP.

White was disappointed, but had fallen in love with a fighter pilot, Robert Sheehan. They married and Betty lived with her in-laws in Washington State

while her husband was sent to India to continue with the war in the Pacific.

After the war, Betty and Robert became parents to two children. Sadly, Robert was shot down over Korea during the war there in the 1950s. His body was never recovered.

Later, Betty married Phil Dybbro and their family grew to include six children. Betty provided flight instruction for several years after the war.

At the time of the WASP dismissal, the women were awarded no honor or military benefits. That changed in 1977 when President Jimmy Carter granted the women status as veterans. In 2010 a group of WASPs was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington DC.

In 2017, on Dybbro’s 95th birthday, members of a local flying club near her home in Seattle offered her the opportunity to fly in two planes she had flown as a young pilot – a Piper Cub and a Stearman biplane accompanied by fellow pilots. “It was a wonderful experience,” she said. “I really enjoyed it.”

Do you have a story to tell or know someone who does? kjreusser@gmail.com

Editor’s Note: At last report, Betty Dybbro remains active and was honored in March as the last surviving Women’s Auxiliary Service Pilot in Washington State.



Betty Dybbro



Kayleen Reusser, of Bluffton, has written a series of books, sharing the stories of area veterans. This is an excerpt from “We Gave Our Best.” It is available at The News-Banner office in Bluffton and on Amazon.

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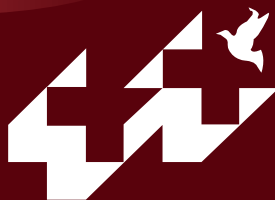
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Make the holidays magical with hearty meals

Capturing the magic of the holidays often happens at the dinner table as loved ones toast the season with stunning meals worth celebrating.

These dishes from chef David Rose call to mind the extravagant holiday gatherings of yesteryear with modern twists you can claim as your own.

Crab Stuffed Lobster Tails with Dirty Rice

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4

Dirty Rice:

- 2 cups jasmine rice
- water
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 pound Ground Beef
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1 teaspoon black pepper, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium red bell pepper, small diced
- 2 green onions, minced
- 1 cup small diced yellow onion
- 1/2 cup tomato-based sofrito
- 3 1/2 cups chicken broth

Crab Stuffing:

- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons seafood seasoning
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 lemon, juice only
- 20 butter crackers, finely crushed
- 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat

Crab Stuffed Lobster:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 4 Lobster Tails (5 ounces each), halved lengthwise

To make dirty rice: Rinse jasmine rice with water until water is clear. Drain.

In large saucepot, bring vegetable oil to medium-high heat.

Add ground beef, 1 tablespoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, garlic powder and smoked paprika; saute 5 minutes until browned.

Using slotted spoon, remove browned beef and set aside.

Add butter to pot then add red bell pepper, green onions and yellow onions. Saute 2 minutes until lightly car-



melized.

Add sofrito and jasmine rice to pot; saute 1 minute. Add cooked ground beef and chicken stock; bring to boil. Once mixture boils, reduce heat to simmer 10 minutes. Turn off heat and leave lid on pot 5 minutes. Fluff rice with fork and season with salt and pepper, to taste.

To make crab stuffing: In medium bowl, whisk mayonnaise, seafood seasoning, Dijon mustard, Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice.

Gently fold in crushed butter crackers and crab meat. Set aside.

To make crab stuffed lobster: Preheat oven to 425 F.

Stir melted butter, salt and lemon juice. Brush lobster tails with butter mixture.

Divide crab stuffing into eight portions. Stuff each lobster tail half with crab stuffing, pressing stuffing into lobster. Place stuffed lobster tails on aluminum foil-lined sheet pan and bake 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve with dirty rice.

Pepper-Crusted Prime Rib with Creamy Horseradish Sauce and Crushed Potatoes

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: about 2 1/2 hours

Servings: 4-6

Creamy Horseradish Sauce:

- 15 ounces crema or sour cream
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons horseradish
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus

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- additional, to taste, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika

Pepper Rub:

- 3 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon ground peppercorn medley
- 2 teaspoons ground guajillo chili
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves

Prime Rib:

- 1 Prime Rib Roast (4 pounds)
- pepper rub
- 1/4 cup grapeseed oil

Crushed Potatoes:

- 1 pound baby red skin potatoes
- cold water
- 1 pinch kosher salt, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons finely minced Italian parsley
- ground black pepper

To make creamy horseradish sauce: In medium bowl, whisk crema, mayonnaise, horseradish, vinegar, chives, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, hot



sauce, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, onion powder, garlic powder and paprika until well-incorporated. Season with additional salt and white pepper, to taste.

To make pepper rub: In small bowl, stir salt, peppercorns, chili and thyme. To make prime rib: Pat prime rib dry with paper towels. Season on all sides with pepper rub and bring to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 250 F. In large cast-iron pan, bring grapeseed oil to medium-high heat.

Sear prime rib on all sides until golden brown, 2-3 minutes per side.

Place seared prime rib on wire rack-lined baking sheet. Bake according to cooking chart for cook time and desired

doneness. Use meat thermometer to ensure doneness. Cook until internal temperature is 10 F below desired doneness.

Rest prime rib 15-20 minutes. Slice to desired thickness.

To make crushed potatoes: Preheat oven to 425 F.

Add potatoes to stockpot. Cover with cold water by about 1 inch and add 1 pinch salt. Over high heat, boil 8-10 minutes, or until fork tender. Drain and completely cool with running cold water.

Once cool, carefully crush potatoes with palms until skin breaks and potatoes are slightly crushed.

In medium bowl, whisk olive oil, garlic and parsley.

Place crushed potatoes on aluminum foil-lined baking sheet and toss lightly with olive oil mixture. Season potatoes on both sides with kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste. Roast potatoes until crisped and golden brown, 15-17 minutes.

Serve prime rib with crushed potatoes and creamy horseradish sauce.

(Family Features)

Source: OmahaSteaks.com

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One historical mystery solved

Continued from page 4

never married or had children. And Alan had difficulty locating any of Dorothea’s living descendants. So, I put on my detective hat and went after contact information for Dorothea’s grandchildren. At the time of this column’s publication, Alan has made contact with several grandsons, and I’m crossing my fingers that one or more of them will be interested in pursuing the parentage of their grandmother with the assistance of DNA testing.

By all accounts the adopted daughters of E.B. and Anna Williamson were loved and well cared for by the couple. What they may have known or how they felt about their situation will never be known as they chose not to discuss such matters with family members who tried to broach the subject. While there’s potential for making second, third, or fourth cousin connections, long-held secrets tend to create barriers that can be difficult to hurdle decades later.

Was there a

Foltz-Williamson connection?

While putting the finishing touches on this article, I checked further into the household where Bertha worked in 1910, wondering if retired farmer Joseph Foltz might have had business dealings with E.B. Williamson. I did an internet search for “E.B. Williamson + Joseph Foltz” on the chance that a documented relationship between the two men might pop up.

A document titled “E. B. Williamson – Letters from the Walls of Time” topped the list of results. The PDF featured letters retrieved from a wall cavity in the

Williamson home, transcribed by Alan Daugherty, and then uploaded to the Bluffton News-Banner website in 2021. The name E. May Foltz Eichhorn appeared once in the 103-page document. A search for May led me to her parents, Joseph and Hulda Foltz, and husband William Henry Eichhorn, a Wells County attorney.

Turns out that farming wasn’t the connection after all. Alan took the Foltz surname and again donned his research hat. He discovered that May Foltz and E.B.’s mother were charter members in a literary organization that formed in Wells County in 1891. Dubbed the May Foltz Circle in 1894, the club focused on the study of classical literature. Known by various names across the years, including the Foltz Reading Circle and the Foltz Literary Club, the organization exists today as the Foltz-Bayview Literary Club.

Do you have a mystery or question for The DNA Sleuth? bethsteury@gmail.com



Tammy Cromie-Wilkins and daughter Sarah continue the family legacy by planting Amigo Irises in the Cook-Williamson Park in Bluffton.

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Extreme weather ahead!

Here's your El Nino travel survival guide

BY CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Brace yourself for a hard winter, fellow travelers.

"Prepare for the worst," warns aviation expert David Doughty. "You might encounter ice storms, blizzards and other treacherous weather conditions."

These won't be ordinary storms, either. Meteorologists say they'll be

powered by climate change and El Nino. Last month, the National Weather Service issued an El Nino advisory, predicting the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Will El Nino affect your next trip?

Crazy weather could sink your winter vacation, and meteorologists expect the erratic conditions to continue through early spring. But there's a way to weatherproof your next trip, and the time to do it is now. I am, but my solution is a little bit contrarian. I'll tell you more in a moment.

Why this winter could be difficult for travelers

Traveling during winter is hard enough, with snowstorms, rain and flooding always a possibility. But El Nino has the potential to turn it up a notch. El Nino disrupts regular weather patterns and can trigger intense storms.

What does that mean for domestic travelers? Most of the action will happen in the Southeast, which will be wet and stormy, according to Ray Schmitt, president of the weather analytics company Salient Predictions.

"The East Coast, in general, should be rather wet, but not too snowy," he predicts.

Paul Pastelok, the lead long-range forecaster and senior meteorologist at AccuWeather, says the Pacific Northwest could have active, El Nino-fueled storms later this year, with more "hit or miss" weather heading into 2024. For late November and December, he sees



**On
Travel**

more storms and precipitation across California extending into the central Rockies.

"El Nino will be strong and can be a dominant factor in the forecast," he says.

Translation: Remember the winter storms in January that prompted the cancellation of thousands of flights? You might see a few more of those early next year. They'll be bigger than last year's storms and bring more rain and snow.

Flexibility and awareness are important

El Nino could ruin any trip in late 2023 and early 2024, including yours, experts say.

"You should be mindful of this when you're booking a flight to somewhere in the Northern Hemisphere that is prone to adverse weather conditions," says Doughty, who is the CEO of an aircraft charter company.

Airlines use what's called a hub-and-spoke system, which means if you're flying somewhere, you might be making a connection in Atlanta, Chicago, or Dallas. So even if you're headed somewhere that isn't prone to extreme weather, you might be making a stopover there and subject to El Nino weather patterns.

If you're driving, you'll want to make sure your vehicle is ready for winter weather long before the first winter storm hits. Winter tires, a first aid kit, and maybe brushing up on your winter driving skills are a must.

Let's talk about travel insurance

Yes, travel insurance can cover an extreme weather event like an El Nino-powered blizzard. But the time to think about it is now.

"Once an event impacting a destination is named, like a severe winter storm, it's too late to purchase travel insurance and have your prepaid expenses




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protected,” explains Daniel Durazo, director of external communications at Allianz Partners USA.

Don’t forget to read the policy. Some insurance coverage is general, covering weather disruptions. But other policies can get quite detailed, and you need to know what’s covered before a big storm slams into your airport.

“Insurance is a small investment that can save you a lot of stress and money,” says Ajay Kumar Shrestha, a trekking guide in the Himalayas. “But you have to make sure it covers weather.”

How to avoid El Nino weather disruptions

There’s only one way to avoid extreme winter weather and still travel — and that is to select your destination carefully to steer clear of the worst of it. Head south to avoid severe blizzards. Or travel to Asia or Europe to escape the worst effects of this climate pattern.

That’s how I’m planning to sidestep El Nino this year. My next writing assignment is taking me to South America for the southern hemisphere summer in December, January and February. I’ll be in Chile next month, which experts say will be a little warmer than usual be-

cause of El Nino. But, thank goodness, no snowstorms.

Elliott’s El Nino travel tips

- Find a travel advisor who can handle a crisis. Agents who specialize in adventure travel and business travel should fit the bill.
- Give yourself more time to get there. “I personally always plan extra time on either end of my travels during the winter to ensure I’m not cutting it too close and missing an important meeting or event,” says John Gobbels, chief operating officer of Medjet.
- Download a weather app and set up alerts at your destination. No one gives weather smartphone apps a second look, but you need them in an El Nino year. Here’s a good place to start: Set up weather alerts for your destination. That way, you know what kind of trouble lies ahead. Bookmark the National Weather Service site and check out an app like MyRadar, which allows you to track a storm.

Christopher Elliott has authored a number of travel books. His columns appear weekly in USA Today and the Washington Post. email him at chris@elliott.org.

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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Biggs Rental Properties..... 10
 Bluffton Roofing.....20
 Bluffton Woods / Silo Farms7
 Capri II Apartments..... 19
 Christian Care Retirement
 Community 17
 Dale, Huffman &
 Babcock Attorneys.....2
 Daniel's Jewelers..... 13
 Decatur Dental Services.....8
 Edward Jones..... 19
 Experience Audiology22
 Gersh's Carpet Cleaning21
 Goodwin-Cale & Harnish
 Memorial Chapel7
 Hiday Motors Service20
 HomeCourt Home Care..... 13
 InTrac Relay Indiana Back Cover
 Jerry Flack & Associates 11
 Kintz Insurance.....18
 La Fontaine Center.....Inside Front
 Mary Kay - Becky Goshorn.....20
 Moser & Son Heating & AC20
 Myers Funeral Homes21
 Ossian Health Communities.....5
 Raymond James Financial
 Services.....9
 Scheerer-McCullough
 Auctioneers..... 15
 State Health Insurance
 Assistance23
 Steffen Group - Isaac Stoller 12
 Steffen Group - Nick Huffman20
 Swearingen Elder Law..... Inside Back
 The Mattress + Furniture Store23
 Wells County Foundation 1

Solution to puzzle on page 7

4	9	3	2	6	5	8	1	7
7	2	1	4	9	8	3	6	5
8	6	5	3	7	1	2	4	9
3	7	4	1	5	6	9	8	2
9	5	2	8	3	4	1	7	6
6	1	8	9	2	7	4	5	3
1	3	6	7	8	2	5	9	4
2	8	7	5	4	9	6	3	1
5	4	9	6	1	3	7	2	8



This collection might be titled "Keith's favorites." It includes, clockwise from top left, a recent and thick collection of recipes put together by his church, a couple of Philip Gulley books, his mother's recipe box, another Gulley book and a sugar cream pie he had baked that morning. "There are a lot of fantastic cooks in our church," he adds. (Photos by Mark Miller)

Mom's box of recipes

Continued from page 6

10 chemotherapy treatments to treat colon cancer, had a procedure done to address a diagnosis of Afib — atrial fibrillation — and also contracted Covid. Although he admits that it's been a "rough couple of years," "God was good to me," he says. "I never got sick from any of those treatments, I was able to go back to work quickly and I never missed church."

He pauses as he recalls the Sunday morning when it was announced that he had been given a clean bill of health from his doctors. "People have only applauded for me two times in my life," he shares. "One was at one of those mother-daughter banquets, and then that Sunday at church."

He enjoys his part time job. He also enjoys cooking for family gatherings. He enjoys sharing his pies and his books.

"I guess I've kind of found my niche," he says.

Do you have a story to tell or know someone who does? seniorliving@adamswells.com

A postscript

I constantly have my antennae up and often ask my network of people to pass along any possible stories for Senior Living. Kayleen Reusser, who has written for our publications for years and has become a friend, alerted me to Keith Keller, her fellow church mem-

ber, and got us connected.

As I was visiting him in his home in the midst of Amish country northeast of Berne, he mentioned those Philip Gulley books.

"Hmm, I'm not familiar with him, I'll have to check that out," I told him.

"Well, I'm sending one home with you," he replied.

"No, Keith, I'm writing a story about you, I can't do that," I said. We journalists are supposed to have something we call "ethics." No freebies from our subjects.

"Well, you're not leaving without it."

I've also found it is useless to argue with some people who are bent on doing nice things.

Shortly, it was time for a few pictures. He had, of course, thoughtfully baked a pie that morning for a picture. "And you're taking this home with you, too," he said.

What ya gonna do?

I can personally testify to Keith's prowess in the kitchen and to his taste in books. Indeed, the next morning, my very first Philip Gulley reading answered a prayer for direction in something I was struggling with that particular day.

I don't believe in coincidences. Or, as Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "Coincidences are God's way of remaining anonymous."

— Mark Miller

As a resident of the Wells County community for decades, Attorney, Gerret J. Swearingen, has devoted his legal practice to assisting clients in preserving the family assets from the high cost of Nursing Home and In-Home Healthcare.

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