



A CHALLENGE FROM THE DNA SLEUTH | Page 6

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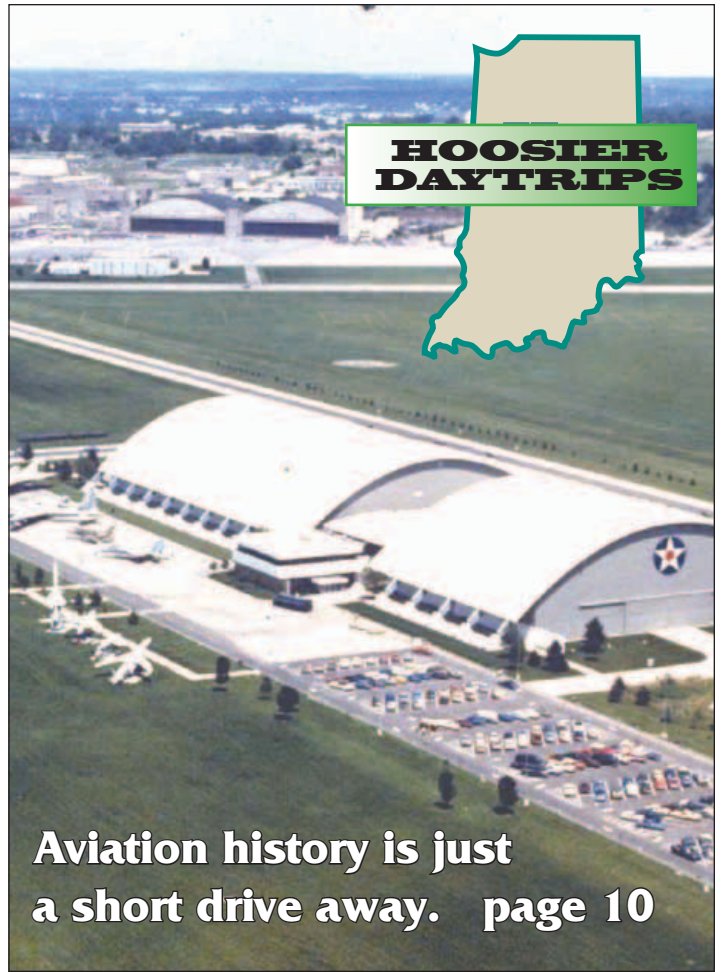


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Watch for our **Winter** edition
in early December



Aviation history is just
a short drive away. page 10

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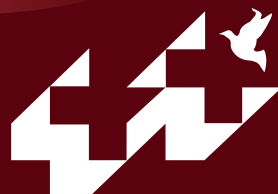


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**CHRISTIAN
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A man and his motorcycles

BY MARK MILLER

Dan Butcher has had a career working with electronics that has spanned more than 60 years, mostly at the General Electric plants in Decatur and Fort Wayne. And he's still at it, admitting that electronics is something he enjoys. However, "I like things mechanical," the Decatur native and lifelong resident will tell you, "more than electronics." Which has resulted in a list of refurb-

Cover Story

bished antique motorcycles over the years. How many? He's never kept track.

Butcher began working in the GE production lines at the Decatur plant shortly after graduating from Decatur High School in 1963. He was offered a position in the tool room and began taking toolmaking classes. He decided he wanted more variety in his workday so he sought and acquired a supervising position at the Decatur plant.

A few years later, he bought his first motorcycle, a 1958 Zundapp 250 Super Saber from Dave Kitson, who owned D&A Cycle Salvage in Decatur and proceeded to work for him part time.

"I found that I really enjoyed not just motorcycles, but these older foreign models," Butcher said. "And Dave helped me out. I learned a lot from him on how to work on them and refurbish them."

While he continued to learn and work on motorcycles, there was an interruption of sorts when he got married in 1979. He and his new bride, the former Barbara Sheets of Decatur, took their honeymoon on his motorcycle.

"Let's say it was a rather wet period of weather," he said, and laughed. "My motorcycle days were over."

Actually, they would continue to take an occasional trip and he continued to putter around along with a friend, but his career at GE and life moved on to other priorities.

After the Decatur plant closed in 1988, Butcher found more opportunities at the historic Fort Wayne complex, eventually overseeing operations on the fourth floor of the Broadway plant, where about 60 people produced frac-



Dan Butcher in what some would consider the ultimate man-cave. He converted an empty garage in an industrial complex into a workroom to refurbish antique and collectible motorcycles. (Photo by Mark Miller)

tional horsepower motors primarily used for operating the main drive in large computers. But, as had happened in Decatur, that work was soon shifted to other plants in Mexico and other countries, eventually resulting in a six-month layoff for Butcher. But he had faith that he would get a phone call.

"You know, I never drew unemployment during my entire career," he proudly noted.

Indeed, he was soon called back to work in Fort Wayne's engineering

department in 1992. "I really enjoyed this," he noted. He worked primarily on drafting and documentation, in which his toolmaking experience came in handy, he said.

However, the Fort Wayne plant, which once employed more than 20,000 people, was winding down. He and another employee were the last two in that department when the doors closed Aug. 1, 2009. He was 63 years old.

"I remember that I took about six months just taking walks," he said. "In the county annex in the winters, wherever I could in nice weather."

However, as the plant was closing down, GE sold some of the product lines. John Taller, another former GE employee, called Butcher seeking advice about a product line he knew Butcher had worked on. In March 2010, Butcher and another former employee helped Taller move the machinery and operations into the old International Harvester complex and set up what is now Excellon Technologies.

"It's a small operation — just six people. We make specialized DC motors," he explained. He had made it clear to Taller that he only wanted to work 20 hours a week, and still does.



Dan Butcher is just finishing restoring a model much like his first motorcycle: a German Zundapp.

“I still do all the ordering for material,” he continued, “and some consulting and I help in production sometimes, too. Whatever’s needed, I do enjoy that.”

Meanwhile, the Butchers were enjoying life in a stately home on North 4th Street in Decatur where Dan had a garage area large enough to perform some home maintenance and keep his mechanical skills somewhat sharp. When it came time to downsize about 14 years ago they chose a one-story villa. And now in a semi-retirement mode, his interest in older motorcycles was rekindled.

He refurbished a small cycle, basically a motorized bicycle, but then found “a little 50cc French Solex,” he said. “It didn’t run at all.” He discovered that much of the fun came in finding the parts for these relatively rare, foreign models.

The major change in his avocation came about five or six years ago, he recalled. He was doing some maintenance work in his wife’s beauty shop in downtown Decatur when one of her customers told him she had a motorcycle.

“She just insisted I buy it from her,” he recalled. “It was really kind of funny.”

It was a 1974 Triumph. “A big motorcycle,” he said, noting that he had been focused almost entirely on smaller bikes. He took it to their villa but quickly realized that if he was going to do this, he would need a lot more room. He felt fortunate to find a small garage that had been part of a small industrial complex for a sandblasting company, located only a stone-throw from the old Decatur GE plant.

“It took the better part of a year to get it set up,” he said. “And I started buying equipment.”

While Butcher did much of the work to convert a basic shell of a garage into an insulated work shop, some work such as insulating the ceiling, was outsourced. He was able to find such large machine pieces as a mill, a drill press and a sandblaster and came across a large lathe that the owner was just happy to part with. “This is a freebie,” he chuckled, standing next to the machine.

The Triumph was his first project. His wife’s customer had told him it hadn’t run in 12 years, but he soon had it “cleaned up and running,” he said. “But I didn’t want to keep it; it was too big and had a kick start. I need to have an



The “before” picture of the 1958 Zundapp Bella that Dan Butcher has restored. He now enjoys “riding it around town” and has won awards at car shows. (Photo provided)

electric start at my age.”

He has since bought, refurbished and sold “a half-dozen or so, maybe 10” collectible motorcycles. “I don’t have room to keep them.” Besides, the fun is in finding the parts and “getting them running again,” he said. “Finding the parts can be a real challenge and it’s turned into a joy.”

His most recent project is a 1958 Zundapp Bella, a small German motor scooter that “I literally drug out of a shed,” he said. It needed body work, new paint and mechanical work. He ran down parts in the Netherlands, Germany and Greece. He depends on the assistance of several local people for painting, upholstery work and powder coating. The result is a “fun thing to drive around town” and he has won some awards at car shows.

He is also finishing up a 1963 Zundapp 250 Super Saber, a newer model year of his first motorcycle.

“It was in similar condition as the Bella,” he said, “but it came with a bonus: a mouse nest inside the seat.”

Both cycles got the full treatment: the body parts striped down, disassembled, refurbished, repainted and a rebuilt engine, all using refurbished parts or new when needed. A 2010 Sach Madass bike is also in the process of a renewed life.

“I really, really enjoy bringing these bikes back to life,” he said. “I get a kick

out of that and I want to do it as long as I’m able.”

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

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A most moistest apple cake

BY KAYLEEN REUSSER

The advent of fall always makes me think of apples and the seemingly limitless ways to prepare them. Nearly every cookbook contains a plethora of apple treats.

After finding this one in a cookbook published by a Bluffton organization from 1976, I will stake a claim: it is one of the moistest — if not the moistest — apple cake you'll ever eat!

That is saying something, I know, but I really believe this vintage cake recipe from almost 50 years ago will knock your socks off. Its cinnamon-sugar crusty surface and soft filling is deli-



Vintage Eats



cious!

The filling calls for four cups of apples. I mostly choose Gala for baking. With all of the lovely apple types available, I branched out. A type called Pink Lady caught my eye. It was perfect for this recipe!

Upon doing research about the Pink Lady apple, I discovered that it is named after a cocktail mentioned in a novel called "The Cruel Season" by Nicholas Montsarrat.

The recipe was in a cookbook put together by the Bluffton Masonic Lodge published in 1976.

What is your favorite type of apple for baking?

Apple Cake

Note: I thought the cinnamon crumb topping was enough sweetness, but you may want to serve this with ice cream.

4 c. diced apples (I used my food processor to make fine pieces)

2 c. sugar

½ c. cooking oil

2 eggs

2 c. sifted flour

2 t. baking soda

2 t. cinnamon

2 t. vanilla

1 t. salt

1 c. chopped nuts (I left these out)

Mix all ingredients together.

Bake in 9"x13" greased pan at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Bon Appetit!

*Have a vintage recipe and story to share?
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An update and a challenge from the DNA Sleuth

BY BETH STEURY

As you might imagine, the official designation of October as Family History Month gets a round of applause from me. While not considered an actual holiday — I did check — this observance has enjoyed official status since 2001 when Congress declared that the 10th month of the calendar year would, henceforth, be designated as such.



The DNA Sleuth

Around our house, every day of every month finds us celebrating family history, but I love that, officially, an entire month has been set aside for our nation's people to acknowledge and remember, commemorate and revel in our ancestral roots. I guess that's even better than a single-day holiday.

In a minute, we'll dive into resources and events to add energy and excitement to both your everyday and Family History Month genealogy pursuits. But first, I'm anxious to share news about my recent DNA search angel activities.

Answers for Karen born in Ohio

Last month I found a 95-year-old birth mother, whose 73-year-old relinquished daughter had been desperately trying to piece together her origins story. Placed in an adoptive home at the age of three, Karen had enlisted the assistance of her very caring and tech-savvy granddaughter Kaitlyn to solve the mystery.

Days after Karen's DNA results came in, we pieced together the probable scenario. Birth mom Helen, now living in a nursing care facility in Ohio, fell on hard times in the mid-50s and surrendered one, possibly two young daughters. Karen's younger, also adopted sister, may actually be her biological sister. I'm guessing they're full siblings, but a soon-to-be-submitted DNA test for the younger sister will definitively



The Steury family in 1957. We will gather together to commemorate Family History Month the first Saturday in October. Much laughter is anticipated.

answer that question. Karen has also applied for her original birth certificate from the state of Ohio who opened records to adult adoptees in 2015.

Karen and Kaitlyn have circled a date on their September calendar to make the four-hour trip from central Indiana to visit Helen. They've considered that Karen's existence may be a secret to Helen's family. They understand that age may have robbed Helen of sufficient hearing, comprehension, memory, or all of the above. But Karen longs to know from whom and where she came, and she's overjoyed at the prospect of meeting her birth mother. Our collective fingers and toes are crossed that this visit will move our 99% certainty to 100%.

Two promising telephone calls connected Karen with a paternal half-sister, Mary, who recalled rumors that her dad had fathered two daughters years before she and her brother were born. More evidence that Karen's younger sister is indeed her biological sister. The plan is to also visit Mary when they journey to Ohio to visit Helen.

“Asking for help” — Sarah from Virginia

On July 2, I received an email with the above subject line from Sarah, a Virginia sort-of-adoptee who didn't learn of her sort-of-adopted status until 10 years ago at the age of 36. When a routine request for a copy of her birth certificate revealed that she had not been raised by her biological parents, her world imploded.

Scant information from Vital Records coupled with never-before-shared facts from a much older sister revealed that Sarah had been left with the babysitter who chose to raise her as her own daughter. Except that said babysitter — who had passed away five years before Sarah's life-altering discovery — had never officially adopted Sarah. Rather, she'd replaced Sarah's surname with her own surname and called it good enough.

The news had a traumatizing ripple effect across Sarah's life, impacting her ability to obtain a job as employers tightened their adherence to proof-of-identity requirements for employees.

Continued on page 23



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In search of the Indiana grave of America's original 'Uncle Sam'

BY TANYA ISCH CAYLOR

This summer we took a drive in search of a little known Northeastern Indiana historical monument — the purported headstone of the legendary figure known as Uncle Sam.

I had never realized there might be a real person the character was based on. But according to a book of tourist sites along the Lincoln Highway, some historians believed that guy was Samuel Wilson, who is buried near the tiny town of Merriam in Noble County.

According to the origin story recounted in “The Lincoln Highway: Coast to Coast From Times Square to the Golden Gate Bridge,” Wilson was a meatpacker who shipped supplies to the U.S. Army during the War of 1812. Each barrel was stamped “U.S.,” which Wilson jokingly suggested stood for “Uncle Sam” Wilson.

“From then on,” wrote author Michael Wallis, “soldiers used ‘Uncle Sam’ to refer to anything government issued, and eventually the name came to symbolize the federal government.”

Wallis noted that “it takes some searching to find the grave; there are no flags, no patriotic mausoleum, nothing to remotely indicate that this is the resting place of Uncle Sam.”

On our visit, the Saturday before Independence Day, there were flags on every veteran’s grave in Merriam’s Christian Chapel Cemetery. We focused our search on the oldest of the flag-bearing headstones, using a photo from the book as a guide.

Wilson’s headstone was flanked by veteran’s war service markers, one for the War of 1812 and one for the Civil War — though he celebrated his hundredth birthday in 1865, if the date on his tombstone is to be believed.

Wilson’s true date of death is just one of the uncertain facts in a three-decade controversy that began not quite a century ago to determine the “original Uncle Sam.”

A 1928 bill introduced by U.S. Rep. David Hogg of Fort Wayne asked Congress to recognize Merriam’s Sam Wilson as the original Uncle Sam and requested an appropriation “for a suitable marker at his grave,” according to an account written by Merriam resident and retired school teacher Wilmer Walker around 1931.

Trouble was, at least three other towns were making similar claims.

“Much has been written and several claims have been entered ... but the facts stated here seem so conclusive that they eliminate all



Hoosier Fun



This tombstone in Christian Chapel Cemetery near Merriam in Noble County, was part of a three-decade controversy claiming that Indiana’s Samuel Wilson was the man originally known as America’s “Uncle Sam.” (Photo by Bob Caylor)

doubt,” Walker wrote, describing an interview with Sam Wilson’s granddaughter, Clara Zumbaugh, who described a childhood memory of her mother burning a book purporting to detail Wilson’s war record and Uncle Sam ties due to negative publicity in the newspapers of the era.

“No one will ever believe that he was the ‘Uncle Sam’ and since it was used to abuse Lincoln we hope they never find it is the truth!” Zumbaugh recalled her mother saying.

The conflict eventually settled into a two-town battle between Merriam and Troy, N.Y., which championed a Samuel Wilson with a similar origin story.

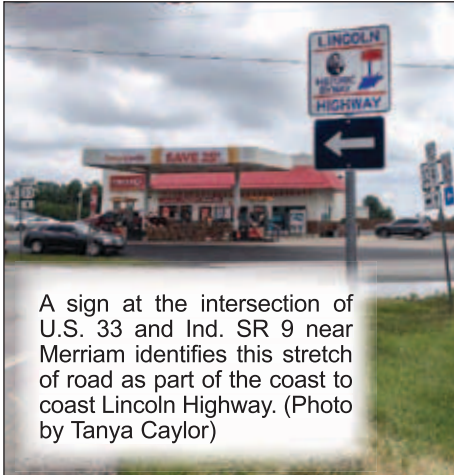
Finally, in 1961, Congress sided with Troy, which parlayed its victory into a tourist attraction that includes an annual parade in honor of Uncle Sam.

There are reasons to doubt Troy deserved the win.

Historian Albert Matthews, in a 1908 paper published by the American Antiquarian Society, noted that in the years following the War of 1812, “no fewer than three accounts were published in the Troy newspapers on the origins of Uncle Sam, and in none is there any allusion to the Samuel Wilson story. It is difficult to believe that had the Wilson story then been in existence it would have escaped the attention of the editor of the Troy Post.”



This is the only known photo of Samuel Wilson of Troy, N.Y., whom Congress selected over Samuel Wilson of Merriam, Ind., as the original Uncle Sam in 1961. Interestingly, some details of both men’s stories seem to intersect.



A sign at the intersection of U.S. 33 and Ind. SR 9 near Merriam identifies this stretch of road as part of the coast to coast Lincoln Highway. (Photo by Tanya Caylor)

Matthews noted the first appearance of the term can be traced to 1807, when a regiment of United States Light Dragoons wearing caps with the initials U.S.L.D. were teased by a bystander that the letters stood for “Uncle Sam’s Lazy Dogs.”

The term also appears in an 1810 diary entry in which a seasick young sailor in the U.S. Navy wrote that he feared “Uncle Sam, as they call him,” was about to lose his services.

Ultimately, however, Matthews argues that Uncle Sam is modeled on John Bull, a caricature of the British government that first appeared in John Arbuthnot’s 1712 pamphlet “The Law Is a Bottomless Pit” and a follow-up that same year, “The History of John Bull.”

In 1816, someone using the name Frederick Augustus Fidfaddy published a book modeled on Arbuthnot’s pamphlet, “The Adventures of Uncle Sam, in Search After His Last Honor,” skewering the U.S. government on the policies leading up to the War of 1812.

Was this the book that was burned in the childhood memories of Clara Zumbaugh, Sam Wilson’s granddaughter? We’ll never know.

All these years later, along the lonely stretch of the Lincoln Highway known locally as U.S. 33, Indiana’s Sam Wilson and his underground neighbors in the cemetery greatly outnumber the residents of nearby Merriam.

All my husband and I found in modern-day Merriam was a church, a convenience store and, coincidentally, a meat-packing operation.

It was fun to imagine how different things might be here now if Congress had voted in favor of Merriam in 1961.

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

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100 Years of flight history

BY ROD KING

What started in Dayton, Ohio in 1923 as a small engineering study collection of technical artifacts is now the largest military aviation museum in the world. And this year, the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

It's more than a place to see airplanes and missiles! It's the history of flight from the Wright brother's initial flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina and the use of planes in transportation and military combat to exploration of space. It's all here in four enormous air-conditioned buildings.

The museum is divided into galleries covering broad historic trends in military aviation. They run the gamut from the Early Years, World War II, Korean War and Southeast Asia Galleries to the Cold War, Missiles, Presidential, Space and Research and Development Galleries.

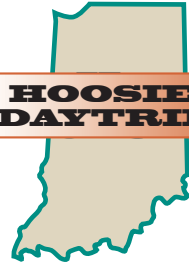
There's also a Holocaust exhibit with a detailed timeline of the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party to power in Germany, their calculated extermination of Jews and other people they deemed undesirable to their eventual defeat at the close of World War II.

As one docent commented "it could take several days to take in everything." That's because there are 22 acres under roof housing more than 300 planes. The museum's total collection is 2,900 planes. Some are on display outside and some are at other museums around the country.

Some of the most notable planes on display include a replica of the 1909 Wright Military Flyer, the World War II B-29 Superfortress that dropped the atomic bomb on Japan, the B-52 Stratofortress, the Cold War era B-2 Spirit

stealth bomber, the U-2A spy plane, the Space Shuttle Trainer and seven presidential planes which are open for viewing. One is the plane that took President and Mrs. Kennedy to Dallas November 22, 1963 when he was assassinated. Vice President Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as president aboard the plane and it carried Kennedy's body back to Washington, D.C.

HOOSIER DAYTRIPS



The Boeing B-17F Memphis Belle is a main attraction. It became a symbol of the heavy bomber crews and support personnel who helped defeat Nazi

Germany in World War II. It was one of the first heavy bombers to complete 25 combat missions after which it and its crew returned to the United States to boost the sale of war bonds. Memphis Belle was featured in a 1944 documentary, two motion pictures and a 1990 Hollywood feature film.

Along the way there are life-like vignettes with uniformed mannequins attending to planes, loading ammunition, climbing into the cockpit and doing pre-flight inspections. One is of a young pilot getting chewed out royally for running his fighter plane into a fence, up-ending it and damaging the propellers.

Visitors can get the feeling of flying in one of the flight simulators located in the Korean War Gallery. There's a charge to find out what it's like in the air. A huge C-124-C cargo plane is open for viewing as is a B-29 fuselage. Guests can view aviation and space-oriented films (for a fee) in a large-format theater with surround-sound.

Visiting the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force is a fun way to get an effortless and painless history lesson. And get this...It's free! And so is the parking.

The writer, a Fort Wayne resident, may be reached at cknoll75@yahoo.com



From a replica of the bi-plane built by the Wright brothers for the U.S. Army Signal Corps in 1909 featuring twin 4-cylinder pusher engines to the prototype of the B-70 nuclear armed deep-penetration supersonic strategic bomber in the late 1950s (top photos), the National Museum of the United States Air Force includes more than 2,900 displays including (above photos from top) the B-17F Memphis Belle, one of the first heavy bombers to complete 25 combat missions in World War II. The plane and its crew returned to the United States to sell war bonds. • The space shuttle training aircraft. It was designed by NASA to duplicate space shuttle approach profiles and landings. • The Boeing VC-137C that took President and Mrs. Kennedy to Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963 and returned his body to Washington, D.C. following his assassination there. Vice President Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as president on the plane. (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)

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Watch out! It's a scam!

A few tips on avoiding trouble.

(StatePoint) Scammers are getting better at what they do all the time. According to the Data Book, Americans reported losing \$10 billion to scams in 2023, a full \$1 billion more than in 2022. While anyone can be a victim, elderly people are often targeted, as they are presumed to have more savings.

According to Certified Financial Planner professionals, you can help safeguard your financial future with these tips:

- **Slow Down.** From romance scams to debt and IRS scams, many scammers use emotional appeals to scare or charm their victims into giving up personal information or their money. Before acting, take a deep breath and speak to a trusted friend or relative who may be able to help you spot a potential scam. Remember that the IRS initiates contact only through the U.S. mail, not via email, text or social media.

You can also do a bit of investigative work yourself. For example, if you receive an email claiming to be your bank or another institution asking you to click on a link, first make sure the request is legitimate. Do the return address and URL look right? Are there spelling errors? If you're contacted by text or with a phone call, look up the number of the bank or company and call them back directly, not with the number provided.

- **Be Choosy.** As you age, it's common to enlist friends and family to help you make financial decisions and with everyday administrative tasks, like paying your taxes or your bills. Select who has access to your sensitive documents and online accounts carefully.

- **Be Careful.** Also, never leave bills, statements and other identifying information lying around. You may want to invest in a paper shredder or a file cabinet with a lock so you can dispose of and store documents carefully. You should also ensure all your online accounts have strong passwords that are known only to you.

- **Consider Auto-Pay.** Finally, consid-



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er setting up automatic bill payments. This not only has the benefit of keeping you up-to-date on payments and helping you avoid late fees, it will also reduce the amount of sensitive paperwork you have in your home and receive by mail.

to other people. But scam tactics are becoming more sophisticated, and anyone can be targeted. The best defense is staying abreast of the latest tactics and arming yourself with the assistance of trusted advocates.

- **Seek Assistance.** A certified financial planner can help you avoid becoming a victim in the first place by helping you monitor your accounts and by setting up notifications from your financial institutions when suspicious activity is detected. As a fiduciary, they have an ethical obligation to work in your best interests at all times and can be a valuable member of your money team.

It's easy to think identity fraud and other financial abuse is something that happens only

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5 signs that you might be ready to move into a seniors' residence

Are you wondering if you should move into a seniors' residence? Here are five indications it may be time to take this step.

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2. You need daily support. If shower-

ing or bathing is strenuous and getting dressed is a struggle, you could improve your quality of life with the care services offered by most seniors' residences.

3. Your loved ones are worried about your safety. Do you tend to fall or forget to lock your doors? Have you ever almost started a fire by leaving a pot on the stove for too long? Residences are places where safety is a key consideration. You and your loved ones will sleep better knowing help is available if

you need it.

4. It's hard to eat a healthy diet. Do you often eat frozen or canned meals? If grocery shopping and cooking are major chores for you, remember that in a seniors' residence, you'll have access to a variety of healthy meals every day.

5. You want more opportunities to socialize. Do you long for lively conversations and enriching encounters? In seniors' residences, there are many opportunities to make new friends.

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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Dave Heltz began with a remarkably well-preserved '72 Cadillac and made it better.

BY BOB CAYLOR

“Better” is inevitably subjective. For many car collectors, nothing surpasses an all-original survivor. That’s what Heltz, who now lives in northern Adams County, began with in 2006 when he saw the ‘72 Cadillac for sale in Cadillac, Michigan.

“I always wanted a Cadillac, but I wanted a ‘61-66,” Heltz, 83, said. But by the turn of the century, prices on those early-to-mid-60s models had crept high enough to send him looking for alternatives. That’s what led him to the 1972 model.

“Not a bit of rust on it,” he remembered. The owner of the car had spent every winter in Florida, and the Caddy spent every winter secure in a garage.

“To this day, it’s never seen a winter,” Heltz said. “All the chrome on it is the original chrome. It’s never been redone. All I did was polish the stainless steel.”

It was beautiful, yes, yet Heltz always wants to put his own stamp on his

Classic Car Corner

project cars. In the case of this car, the most important difference was the new paint job he designed. It’s a two-tone, with the lighter tone being a relatively narrow strip just a few inches below the windows. It makes the Caddy look lower, longer and much sleeker than the stock, solid-color appearance the car brought from the factory.

The interior was original, until a single rip opened in the driver’s seat. That was intolerable in a car he enjoyed showing off, so he ordered matching upholstery to recover the seat.

“When we got (the upholstery), it was nowhere close,” he said. So he and the upholsterer ordered different fabrics and designed new looks for the interior, plus a matching cover for the full-size spare in the auditorium-size trunk.

Structurally, most of the car remains the same. The body, frame and suspension are all as they rolled off the assembly line half-a-century ago. He pulled the brand emblems off the hood and trunk of the car, which cleans up its appearance even more.

He did swap out the 472-cubic-inch V-8 that came standard with most Ca-



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Before and After (top photos): Dave Heltz's 1972 Cadillac was an usual foundation for a project car, because it was in nearly perfect condition when he bought it 18 years ago. Now repainted, the new two-tone color scheme made the car look even longer, lower and sleeker. ("Before" photo provided, all other photos by Bob Caylor)

Group at left, clockwise from top left: Dave Heltz replaced the 472 engine that came with this Cadillac with the 500-cubic-inch engine meant for the Cadillac Eldorado. • He added these gauges because he doesn't want to rely on the stock warning lights. "They call them 'idiot lights,'" he said, "because by the time you see those lights, something has already been ruined." • He had a matching cover made for the full-size spare... • ... to match the new upholstery for the interior that he designed.

dillacs that year. He bought a salvaged 500-cubic-inch engine intended to the massive, front-wheel-drive Cadillac Eldorado and fit that in his Cadillac instead.

He has a hard time tolerating the warning lights that came stock in the car. "They call them 'idiot lights,' because by the time you see those lights, something has already been ruined," Heltz said.

He made a console for gauges that rests on the center floor in front. It includes an oil-pressure gauge, an ammeter, a tachometer and a thermometer showing engine temperature.

Heltz, who graduated from high school in Muncie in 1959, moved to Michigan in 1963. He'd been recruited by a brother-in-law who was a Michigan state trooper to join that police force.

But he'd grown up working on cars occasionally — his father was a mechanic — and it became a major side job for him in the 1970s. That's when he began buying cars that had been totaled, repairing them, then paying to have their bodywork and paint finished. From the 1970s through the 1990s, he figures he repaired and sold 140-160 cars. Sometimes he had as many as five rebuild-

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Dave Heltz, 83, brought his 1972 Cadillac to the Swiss Days car show this year.

and-resell cars in his yard at a time.

He has the proceeds from this work to thank for his project cars, including the 1972 Cadillac.

“I did that because I told myself I would never take money out of my pay-check and spend it on cars. I’ve seen too many people get in trouble doing that. And too many divorces,” Heltz said.

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

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Is it safe to travel this fall? Yes, but ...

BY CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Like many Americans, I'm traveling this fall. And like many Americans, I'm wondering: Is it safe to travel this fall?

It all depends, experts say.

"This fall, there are a few things travelers should be concerned about from a safety standpoint,"

notes John Gobbels, chief operating officer of Medjet.

For example:

- Have you seen the "TOURISTS GO HOME" signs in Europe this summer? Some popular destinations are slamming the door in our faces, fearful that too many tourists will destroy their cities. It's a valid concern, but you don't want to be caught in the middle of that.

- Instability is on the rise. The wars in the Middle East and Ukraine are more complicated than ever and unlikely to be resolved by this fall. In fact, the war in Gaza is threatening to spread to other parts of the region, potentially complicating travel to destinations now considered safe.

- The U.S. elections aren't helping. This presidential race may be the most contentious one in recent memory, which could affect your safety. "Americans should be mindful of local feelings toward them, and have a plan if negative sentiments actually start to feel threatening to their safety," says Gobbels.

In other words, if you're taking a short, domestic trip, there's nothing extraordinary awaiting you. But if you're going abroad, things may get interesting this fall.

"It's going to be a relatively normal travel pattern," says John Rose, chief risk and security officer for AllTour, a travel management company. But you will still need to take some precautions.

Here's where I'm headed this fall — and why I'm a little nervous

I'm on the road 365 days a year, which means I think about travel safety



**On
Travel**

constantly. I'm planning to be in several destinations this fall and frankly, I'm a little worried.

Here's what I'm doing to stay safe:

- I'm starting my itinerary in Dublin, which has a fairly good reputation for safety — although there are parts of the city that I would be wise to avoid. I plan to spend most of my time working in my apartment and sightseeing in all the popular attractions. Tourist traps with lots of foreign visitors can be scary because they attract petty thieves and criminals, so careful planning is a must.

- I'll also be in Istanbul — a city with a reasonable safety record unless you are stupid. And by "stupid" I mean accepting an invitation to a bar from a friendly stranger and then getting suckered into buying overpriced drinks, which is a well-known scam. I'm also wary of discussing politics and religion of any kind in Turkey. If I keep my head down, I should be absolutely fine.

- My final stop this fall is Doha, Qatar. I visited this place during the pandemic, just as it was gearing up to the World

Cup, and I found that it was one of the safest places on the planet. I will be there during the U.S. presidential election, and I have promised myself that if asked about Trump or Harris, I will immediately change the subject to the weather.

So when it comes to safety, I'm right there with you. And I'm a little worried, too.

Pro advice for staying safe when you travel this fall

You can avoid dangerous situations this fall by following these simple tips from security experts.

- **Research your destination very carefully.** Don't book a trip somewhere without doing your homework, even if you've been there many times. Things change, says Jeremy Murchland, CEO of Seven Corners. "Something that should be top of mind for every savvy traveler is what is happening politically at your destination," he adds. "From overtourism protests to election cycles to labor strikes, current events can impact your ability to travel.

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In extreme circumstances, they also can put you at higher risk than normal.” Seven Corners has been monitoring the security situation, and Murchland says he’s noticed an increase in tensions heading into the fall travel season.

• **Make a plan and follow it.**

Once you know what potential dangers you face, you’ll need to come up with a plan, according to Carrie Hartman, president of the global business travel and relocation platform 3Sixty. For example, consider this fall’s predicted hyperactive hurricane season. “Having an emergency plan in place — including knowledge of local shelters and emergency contacts — can literally be lifesaving,” she says. Don’t wait until you arrive before coming up with a plan, because by then it might be too late.

• **Stay away from politics.** As tempting as it might be to talk about your favorite candidate, don’t. “The presidential election in the United States is looked at very negatively in most of the world, regardless of which side of the political spectrum you might fall on,” says Rose, the AllTour security

expert. “Because of this, it’s highly advisable to refrain from any political discussions, especially about the countries that you’re visiting. Visitors can actually be jailed in some countries for creating a discussion on that country’s



politics, especially if they consider it to be negative in tone.”

Bottom line: You can stay safe by taking a few simple steps — and avoiding dangerous places. And there are also a few new tricks that will help you stay out of trouble.

“While it’s impossible to eliminate all risks completely, there are proven ways to significantly mitigate them,”

says Daniel Durazo, director of external communications at Allianz Partners USA.

Allianz has released a new version of Allyz TravelSmart, its travel app, that has dedicated safety alerts. Anyone can download and use the app, which also offers a hospital finder to quickly point you in the direction of a nearby healthcare facility, and a medical dictionary.

Also, if you don’t mind letting the government know where you’ll be, you can register for the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). It’s a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. The State Department will notify you if there’s a problem at your destination and may be able to offer assistance.

So is it safe to travel this fall? Yes — as long as you take a few common-sense precautions.

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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BY KAYLEEN REUSSER

The Vietnamese barber spoke fluent English and chatted easily and often with his American customers. His ability to speak well, he explained, was because he had spent time in the United States prior to the war.

Tom Paxson of Bluffton, had met the barber whom the Americans discovered cut hair well.

But the friendly hair stylist had a secret.

One night, when American troops received small arms fire from enemy forces in a cemetery across the road from their base, Paxson and others leveled the area. The next day the body of the barber was found among the rubble. He had been a Viet Cong in disguise.

“We learned never to trust anyone,” said Paxson. “‘Charlie’ could be listening.”

Paxson had enlisted in the Army in the summer of 1966. He completed basic training at Fort Knox in Kentucky where the recruits were not allowed to call their rifles “guns” but “weapons.”

At Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, tests for Paxson’s Advanced Individual Training (AIT) showed he had a mechanical aptitude. His military occupational specialty (MOS) became that of grader, or heavy equipment operator.

This was no surprise as Tom’s father, Fred Paxson, had performed similar tasks as a seabee in the Pacific theater during World War II.

Upon arriving in Vietnam in December 1966, Paxson was assigned to the 46th Engineers at Long Binh post near Saigon. The 46th used D7 Caterpillar bulldozers (the crew referred to the machines as “cats”) and Clark 290M earth movers to clear jungles, as well as build roads, runways and foundations for buildings. The unit also used semi-trailers and dump trucks to build an ammunition dump.

Such projects were a strain for the crew, as underneath three feet of solid soil was muck like jello. Paxson offered advice to new drivers so they would not get stuck. Monsoon rains created their own devilry with excessive mud.

As if environmental challenges were not enough, Paxson’s unit was often fired on by the Viet Cong. The Ameri-



Tom Paxson with one of the Caterpillar bulldozers he operated in Vietnam, building roads and runways. (Photo provided)

cans were issued M-14 rifles and ordered to carry them at all times. Admittedly, it was not easy returning fire from inside the cabs of their equipment.

The infantry carried M-16s which were light and carried more ammunition than the M-14s. Paxson preferred the M-14s which had more fire power and dependability.

Troops working on roads knew they were easy targets for the Viet Cong. But they believed they would not be targets because the enemy wanted what they were using and building and could be patient until the war was over.

In January 1968, Paxson traveled home for a 30-day leave. He surprised his mother, Audra, by walking into her classroom at Columbia Elementary School in Bluffton where she taught third grade.

She was delighted at his visit, believing he was home for good. When Tom stated that he was only home for a short visit and was extending his time in Vietnam for six months, she was furious. She tried to talk him out of it, but Tom told her he knew what he was doing and had friends there. He was not working in the jungle on patrols and felt fairly safe.

Plus, he didn’t want to be sent to Germany for military service, which he thought would happen if he re-enlisted.

Paxson returned to Vietnam for six

months and adjusted again to the sight of baboons threatening troops around the base and bugs floating in their water. He chose to drink iced tea so they were not as noticeable.

He went home for another 30 days in August 1968 and returned in September 1968 for his final tour, leaving Vietnam for good in March 1969.

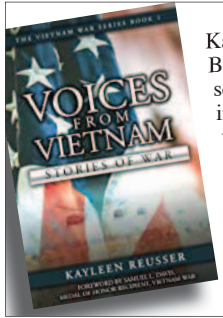
The exact date of March 15 would never be forgotten by Paxson as it was his birthday. “It was the best birthday present I ever had,” he said.

But the hazards of being in-country were not always obvious. At one point, Paxson attempted to grow a garden on the roof of his bunker. The project was short-changed when the military sprayed a substance over the entire compound. The spray killed each of his sprouts, just as it did the thick brush of the jungle. The purpose was to enable the American infantry to see the enemy through the tall elephant grass.

Unfortunately, the spray, which became known as Agent Orange because of the color of the barrels it was hauled in, was later blamed for causing a variety of health problems for the troops and people in the area.

Paxson was discharged in March 1969 after serving two years and seven months on a three-year enlistment (he extended his tour of duty twice).

A few months after returning home,



Kayleen Reusser, of Bluffton, has written a series of books, sharing the stories of area veterans. This is an excerpt from “Voices From Vietnam: Stories of War” It is available at The News-Banner office in Bluffton and on Amazon.

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.

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Paxson married. He and his wife, Cindy, became parents to two children. He worked 33 years for the Bluffton Fire Department and drove an ambulance for the Wells Community Hospital.

In recent years, as a result of exposure to Agent Orange, Paxson has experienced various health maladies, including neuropathy, diabetes, skin cancer, and atrial fibrillation, a type of arrhythmia, or abnormal heartbeat.

Still, he is proud of his time as a soldier in Vietnam. “It was a war we should have never been in, but we have a great country and I’m proud to have served,” he said.

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The DNA Sleuth

Continued from page 6

Although her sister shared the name of Sarah's birth mother, the sister died before she could help Sarah unravel the details of this monumental mystery.

And then, in her foster mom's belongings — the term Sarah now uses to refer to the woman who raised her — Sarah found a copy of her original birth certificate, altered via white out and an old typewriter, to name foster mom as her biological mother. You can't make this stuff up ...

I "ran with" the name shared by Sarah's sister, a woman with the initials S.M., searching in the Washington D.C. area where Sarah was born and across the border in Virginia where Sarah grew up with the babysitter's family. Of course, multiple people possess the same name as S.M., so it was a process of potential eliminations versus favorable prospects.

The first S.M. I tracked seemed iffy. But then I found an S.M. whose location, age, and life details seemed much more likely. And because I'll never cease to be intrigued with family resemblances, I couldn't resist comparing a picture of this promising S.M. with Sarah. They shared a noticeable resemblance, especially in the eyes.

What I did not do is share the pic comparison or any of the details I compiled about the maybe-correct S.M. with Sarah. Her DNA results will quickly confirm or deny whether I've tagged the right S.M.


And if I've found birth mom, then the search for birth father will commence. And so, we wait, for the "Your results are in!" email message to hit her inbox.

Now, Back to Family History Month

Genealogy and history buffs researching in Adams and Wells counties will find a wealth of resources as well as knowledgeable staff who are ready, willing, and able to aid in their genealogical research efforts. I'm most familiar with:

The Heritage Room at the Berne Public Library

If you have family ties to Adams County, the Heritage Room will be an excellent resource. Their database, built with the Brothers Keeper software, includes over 228,000 people, from 88,000 families. With a few fingertip clicks, this program will compile ances-



The National Genealogical Society's website is a treasure-trove of information, tips, and resources, including:

- Cool helps such as pedigree charts and templates, research tips, and detailed steps for family tree building
- Free downloadable PDFs with tips on writing, sharing, and recording family stories as well as scanning and labeling pictures
- Courses (for a fee) from beginner to advanced on a variety of topics ranging from how to utilize DNA results to how to read old handwriting to coursework toward becoming a professional genealogist

Check out all the NGS has to offer at www.ngsgenealogy.org

Resources for making the most of Family History Month

tral charts (family trees) and will also compute relationships. Have you wondered if your neighbor or your spouse might also be a cousin? If both families have roots in Adams County, it's likely that question can be answered with the help of this extensive genealogical database.

Their collection of microfilm provides access to some very old Swiss church records, various Bluffton newspapers dating from 1851-1993 as well as Berne newspapers from 1896 to 2020. A vast assortment of family history books, yearbooks, clippings, records, and indexes fill 19 filing cabinets and line the room's floor-to-ceiling shelves.

Digitized copies of the Berne Witness and other Berne newspapers, published from 1896-2016, can be accessed from the comfort of your home. Many of the Heritage Room's scanned photographs — 6,266 to be exact — are also available to peruse on one's personal device. The links to these fascinating resources can be found on the Berne Public Library website under the Heritage Room tab.

The Heritage Room will celebrate Family History Month with an Ancestry DNA Class and a Cemetery Walk. Fol-

low them on Facebook for more information about these upcoming events.

The Indiana Room at the Wells County Public Library

The Indiana Room houses the library's Genealogy Collection that includes many helpful resources, with some of the most popular items being Bluffton newspapers and Census Records for Wells County (1840-1930, missing 1890) on microfilm, a birth index covering 1883-1920, a marriage index covering 1837-4/12/1980, yearbooks, and family history books as well as an index of the Indiana Territorial Census of 1807.

The Genealogy /Local History Club meets at the Bluffton library the first Thursday of the month from 5 to 6:30 p.m. for an informal time of connecting with and learning from fellow history and genealogy enthusiasts. Participants may bring questions and their personal laptop or use one of the library's. It's a great time to indulge in your love of or obtain a greater appreciation for local history, genealogy, or both.

The Wells Co. Genealogy Society will host a Cemetery Walk on Oct. 6 at 2 p.m. at the Wells County Historical Mu-

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Solution to puzzle on page 21

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

seum Annex. The program will feature significant historical figures buried in the Murray Cemetery, portrayed by volunteers in period costumes. A flag will mark the gravestones of these noted men and women to assist those interested in visiting the Murray Cemetery after the program.

Our three local library systems — the Heritage Room (Berne), the Indiana Room (Bluffton), and the Adams Public Library, with locations in Decatur and Geneva — each provide access to Ancestry.com’s library edition. This opportunity offers researchers an opportunity to experience the well-known site’s vast resources before purchasing a subscription.

A Family History Month Challenge

Thanks to cousin Mark urging the family to put action behind good intentions, we’re gearing up for a “Steuiry Cousins Reunion” the first Saturday of October. It’s been five years since the last gathering of the first cousins who grew up swinging from the hay mow in the barn on the Steuiry homestead.

We already know the Heritage Room’s database contains many generations of information on both the ancestors

and descendants of the Christian P. and Emilia (Habegger) Steuiry family, so we plan to print and distribute family trees.

We’ll play “Name that Cousin” with high school graduation photos. And chuckle over the antics and mischief the rambunctious cousins managed to keep from their parents these many decades.

I envision many “Remember when” conversations, some that will likely lament the turning gray and turning loose of many a cousins’ hair.

I challenge you to participate in at least one event or activity related to family history this October. Pop into one (or more) of the libraries. Pull out an old photo album and peruse it with your son or daughter, sister, cousin, or grandchild. Phone a family member who shares your interest in family history and plan to get together. Vow to do something this October to discover and to preserve the rich tapestry of your family history.

— — —

Need suggestions on next steps for solving a family mystery? Have you received your DNA results and find yourself asking, “What now?” Drop me a message at bethsteuiry@gmail.com

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