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Mark Bliss holding one of his large airplanes.

(Continued on Page 7)

**FARMLAND NEWS –
A Gift That Lasts All Year!**

Poor Will's Farmland News Almanack

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January 7 - 13

*A new year begins.
Every morning this morning.
Every day begins today.
Another year passed.
Sunlight. Clouds. Birds on the wing.
Only this moment. At last.*

Sam Hamill, "Two Songs for Tanabata Matsuri"

Phases of the Bedding Plant Moon And the Tufted Titmouse Moon

January 4: The Bedding Plant Moon is full.
January 11: The Moon enters its last quarter.
January 19: The Tufted Titmouse Moon is new.
January 26: The Moon enters its second quarter.

Meteors

The Quadrantid meteors fal every night during the first week of January, especially on January 3 and 4. Look for them after midnight below the handle of the Big Dipper a little east of the North Star.

The Quadrantids will be close to the horizon, so shooting star watchers might do best to do their observing from a position north of urban areas.

The Sim

Perihelion, the pointat which the Earth is closest to the Sun, occurs on January 4.

Weather Trends

High-pressure systems are due to cross the country on or around the following dates: January 1, 5, 10, 15, 19, 25, 31.

The New Year's front is usually one of the most troublesome systems so far in the winter, and it is preceded by sleet or snow, sometimes as far south as northern Florida.

After its passage, temperatures are typically quite cold. A secondary disturbance often causes additional precipitation on the 2nd and 3rd.

As the year's second major front approaches, due on January 5, milder temperatures and more precipitation are likely; thunderstorms are not uncommon in the South.

After this high passes through, however, the cold returns, and the 8th and 9th are associated with some of the most chilling weather so far in the winter.

Weather history for the second week of January shows rapidly increasing odds for colder weather.

Chances for highs only in the 20s or teens increase to near 50 percent on the 8th, 9th, 14th, and 15th.

Below-zero readings occur most often on the 9th, 11th, and 16th (20 percent of the years in my record).

With a general increase in the cold, skies have fewer clouds this week of the year, and the 12th, 13th, 15th and 16th bringing a 60 percent chance for sun.

The cloudiest day of the week is usually the

14th, with only a 35 percent chance for clearing. Precipitation occurs two years out of three between the 12th and the 14th, with the 14th bringing snow to central Ohio more often than any other day of the entire year.

The Countdown to Spring

One week until the tufted titmouse begins its mating calls and pines start to pollinate.

Two weeks until owls and foxes mate and the Big Dipper's Merak and Dubhe, pointers for the North Star, are positioned east-west after dark.

Three weeks until the traditional January Thaw time and blue jays give their bell-like mating calls.

Skunk cabbage blooms in the wetlands

Four weeks until cardinals start to sing before dawn

Five weeks until doves join the cardinals, and maple sap starts running

Six weeks until the first red-winged blackbirds arrive in the wetlands

Seven weeks to major pussy willow emerging season

Eight weeks to snow crocus season

Nine weeks to the beginning of the morning robin chorus before sunrise

Ten weeks to daffodil time

In the Field and Garden

Check houseplants, and especially plants that were brought inside before frost, for spider mites, scale and aphids.

Early winter is often the time when these and other insect pests reach the level at which they can do serious damage.

Make sure your bees have enough ventilation to prevent moisture condensation within the hive.

Also consider putting an entrance reducer in your hives to keep mice from coming in.

Cold weather reduces the impact of barn odors on our noses - but don't lighten up on your maintenance schedule: keep pens clean and bedding fresh - especially as lambing, kidding and calving time approaches.

Dig any root crops still in the garden. Plant live Christmas trees soon, and mulch heavily.

While the moon is still dark, take out suckers, dead and crossing branches as the moon wanes.

Don't prune what will bloom before June, and wait for July or August for the maples.

Increase energy feeds to animals in severe weather. Many people believe that feeding energy foods in the evening produces the best results.

A Rough Timetable For the First Crow Calls

Early this morning crows flew westward over the prairie, cawing in the fresh, temperate air, their voices as always filling the morning with the promise of spring.

August Derleth, *A Countryman's Journal*

Among the most consistent morning companions are crows. They leave their roosts and call about 15 to 20 minutes before sunrise throughout the year, and are especially welcome be-

tween September and January, when most other birds have either stopped singing or have left for the South.

In something of the same way that bells on churches or public buildings announce the passage of the hours, the crows call out the passage of the year. When the weather is coldest, the crows usually awaken between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m., depending on temperature, cloud cover and precipitation. As the sun begins to rise earlier, however, they follow a more rigorous timetable a little like the one given below (in Eastern Standard Time).

No matter what the actual sunrise time, the interval between daybreak and the crows' rough song will be similar to the following:

Date	Sunrise	Crow Calls
January 1	7:57	7:45
February 1	7:44	7:20
March 1	7:09	6:50
April 1	6:20	6:00
May 1	5:36	5:15
June 1	5:09	4:50
July 1	5:10	4:55
August 1	5:33	5:15
September 1	6:02	5:45
October 1	6:31	6:16
November 1	7:04	6:50
December 1	7:37	7:25

Journal

1992: Seven pots of wandering Jews hang against the greenhouse windows, safe from the wind on the other side. My tomatoes hold motionless to their trellises.

The violet hibiscus bloom and fall without a sound, are replenished every day. The cacti below them neither increase in size nor die back. Winter zinnias have retained their color and shape for the past month.

I have a journal of the greenhouse and the outside cycles. I keep a planting and nature log, and I carefully measure the natural progress of year.

But now I'm losing interest in the records, am turning to plants that change the least. I want things to stay the way they are. I don't care if equinox comes.

I wish winter would never end. I'm comfortable with its limits. I'm content with the finite number of species in the ten by thirty foot greenhouse.

I know the static world better than I will ever know the new emerging world. Since the end of October, I've kept this season stable and warm, arbitrarily favored coleus over calendulas, jade trees over geraniums, angel wing begonias over marigolds.

Even the white flies and the mealy bugs contributed to equilibrium, their hunger offsetting growth.

At night I sit by the immutable, invulnerable leaves. I identify with them, hide with them behind this glass south wall, feel our alliance and our common purpose.

No April birds are singing. There are no fireflies

(Continued on Page 3)

ALMANACK

(Continued From Page 2)

or crickets to mark the mark the passage of the year and of our lives, no signs that any of this could ever end.

**ALMANAC LITERATURE
PROBLEM SOLVER****By Jamie Roof****Kansas City, Missouri**

I have a ram whose antics have given me a few laughs. My first sight of this ram when he was just a lamb should have enlightened me. He was in a very unsheeplike posi-

tion, halfway up a wall eating from a hanging bucket.

"Hmmm," said his breeder, "So that's where the llamas' food is going."

I took him home anyway.

He earned his name, P.S., for Problem Solver, when he jumped out of the ram pen to breed two ewes in February.

Well, I wanted a ram without out-of-season breeding potential. It's not unusual for rams to climb or jump fences for ewes in heat or for food, but I underestimated the range of his interests.

Late winter and early spring, I

have round bales of hay delivered regularly. Hay delivery is a festive day for ewes and lambs.

The ewes and I scamper behind the flatbed trailer as the bales are unloaded.

They want to sample, and I am moving the hay feeder panels from old bales to new.

Meanwhile, the lambs hold riotous games of "king of the hill" on the mounds of uneaten hay.

The hay guy, Dave, and I paused in our work to watch the lamb game.

Sometimes a few of the ewes will join the fun and this time, a huge ewe ran up and quickly took com-

mand of the hill of hay.

"That's a good-looking ewe," said Dave.

"Yes," I agreed as I stared at the "ewe" and tried to figure out who she was.

Finally, I realized it was P.S. He was almost two years old, and he wasn't willing to watch the party from the boring ram pen.

He defended his place on the hill from the hoards of Lambiputians until, panting from the effort, he was satisfied.

Boredom problem solved, he trotted back to rejoin the other rams.

FN

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Christmas Comes To A Close

Words of Inspiration

By Pastor Ashley Rosa-Ruggieri

Christmas season officially ends this week!

I know that so many people feel like the end of the Christmas season comes right after December 25th, but the truth is that Christmas Day is only the beginning of the Christmas season!

When we talk about the 12 days of Christmas, those start on December 25th and go until January 5th, leading to the Festival of Epiphany on January 6th every year.

The joy of the Christmas season is found in the birth of our Savior as a human baby.

Our God chose to become Emmanuel, or "God-with-us," and give all humanity an amazing gift—a relationship with our God.

That Good News of great joy is proclaimed on Christmas Day, as well as in the full season of Christmas, but when we get to Epiphany on January 6th, even more is added to the story.

Epiphany remembers the journey of the Magi, or Wise Men, who journeyed from far away, following

the star, and eventually found the newborn king and gave him extravagant gifts fit for a King rather than a child.

The story of the Magi starts with them meeting King Herod, who is jealous of the child, and he urges the Magi to find him, and then return to tell Herod where he can find the child himself.

King Herod has dangerous plans in store for this young child whom many are referring to as King.

After the Magi have journeyed to Mary, Joseph, and young Jesus, they receive a warning in a dream, and they do not return to King Herod, and instead go home by another road.

This is the story that we remember on the Festival of Epiphany!

A story about how the stars led the Magi to encounter a child Jesus, gave him gifts fit for a king, and then ignored the mandate of King Herod, who was only bent on Je-

sus's destruction.

The Magi are an excellent example for those who wish to listen to our God, and worship Jesus.

So, do not let the Christmas Season be tossed aside before it ends!

Allow it to be fully present and then follow the path of the Magi by kneeling at Jesus's feet, listening for the call of God, and ignoring the harmful requests like those of King Herod.

One way to follow in the Magi's footsteps is to choose a "Star Word" for the year.

This can be any word that guides you during 2026, much like the Magi were guided by the star to Jesus.

You can use this word for prayer time throughout the year, and meditate on where God might be calling you this year now that the Christmas season has come to a close.

May the Lord be with you as we enter the season of Epiphany, and throughout all of 2026, guiding you just as the Magi were guided by the star!

FN

**Trinity Lutheran Church****398 S. Shoop Avenue****Wauseon, Ohio 43567****(419) 335-5651****<https://trinitywauseon.org>****Thursday Worship ~ 6:00pm****with Holy Communion****Sunday Worship ~ 9:30am****with Holy Communion**

Good News For Christmas Giving And The US Economy

"If you want love and abundance in your life, give it away." Mark Twain

It's still the Christmas season and the world is bustling with economic activity.

In my last article, I explained Black Friday and how it developed into a very important economic indicator for the health of the consumer economy and the overall economy in general.

The trends reported in the last article have held true.

Substantial increases in Black Friday sales and the subsequent Cyber Monday sales have continued into the following weeks.

It's going to be a good Christmas retail season and this demonstrates that people have money in their pockets and are willing to spend it.

The US economy is flourishing despite what some pundits and polls are claiming to the contrary.

But what about the less fortunate?

Sure, we see lots of great consumer gift giving all around us.

But we all know people who are not participating in this financial bounty for one

Good News In 2025

by Vern Brown

reason or another.

Lost jobs, lost relatives, lost housing are all too common during this season.

Cold weather means struggling families have to spend precious financial resources on increased heating and electric bills.

Lots of folks just don't have any extra to participate in all the Christmas gift giving.

There is a new trend that emerged in 2012 that addresses this seasonal issue of financial lack during the holidays.

GIVING TUESDAY is now a thing.

It is celebrated on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, directly after Cyber Monday.

GIVING TUESDAY is a global generosity movement that encourages people to give back through donations, volunteering, acts of kindness, or advocacy.

It promotes "radical generosity" as a way to build shared

humanity and community.

Note that this is a global movement and it's active in over 80 countries so far.

This year, GIVING TUESDAY set a record with an estimated \$4 billion raised in the U.S. alone, involving 38.1 million participants.

That's up 13% from \$3.6 billion I 2024.

Not bad for a movement that started just 13 years ago.

This year participating donors are projected to give \$100 per month which is up from \$50 per month in 2024, and half of that will be donated during the holiday season.

Interestingly, 40% of all annual charitable donations are made in December and the last 3 days of the year usually account for 12% of all yearly giving.

At my local Kroger, the bell ringer now has an "electronic bucket" where people can make donations from their phone using Apple Pay

or Google Pay and other digital payment platforms.

I tried it and it works just fine, although the minimum donation is \$5.00 with no option for less.

But it's still great idea to make it easier for people to donate.

My most vivid memory of Christmas giving involves my father.

He was about the most community minded person I ever met.

And he loved all his different involvements with local community organizations.

A lifelong member of the Lions Club, Christmas was always full of Lions Club obligations for passing out charity gifts and taking turns ringing the bell for the Salvation Army at our local Walmart during the Christmas season.

Sadly, he developed inoperable cancer at the end of the year and went downhill very

quickly.

But one of his last acts of community service when he could barely stand up was to take his turn ringing the bell at his post at

Walmart where he could chat with his many friends and twist their arms a little bit for a donation to the red kettle.

He had lived a life of service and was determined to continue his own personal giving right up to the end.

The example he set that day will be an inspiration to our family and others for years to come.

I hope everyone reading this can heed the words of our friend Mark Twain and give our life and abundance to others so that we can receive it back in our own lives during this wonderful Christmas season.

Vern Brown is a 6th generation farmer from Jonesville, Michigan. He resides on the family farm which was homesteaded by his family in 1835. His current projects are centered around export of live breeding cattle to Africa and Eastern Europe. FN

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January 13, 14, 15, 2026**

**Tuesday, January 13
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, January 14
9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday, January 15
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Admission Is Free!!**

The Fort Wayne Farm Show, one of the Midwest's premier agricultural events, is set to welcome over 25,000 farmers and industry professionals once again this year.

Known for showcasing the latest in farm technology and innovation, the show provides attendees with access to the region's largest variety of equipment and services, all conveniently located under one roof.

The Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District, in collaboration with Purdue Cooperative Extension Services, will offer daily education seminars designed to address key topics in modern farming.

This year's show is also highlighted by a grand prize giveaway: a 54 inch Toro TimeCutter Zero Turn Lawn Mower, generously provided by Plevna Implement, located at 1503 Wiant Dr., Garrett, IN 46738. Entry for the grand prize is free.

Supporting the future of agriculture, the Indiana FFA Scholarship Foundation will hold a fundraising auction at 1:00 PM on both Tuesday and Wednesday of the show.

A wide range of donated items will be up for bid, with proceeds benefitting the scholarship program.

The Benefit Auction annually raises over \$20,000 for the Indiana FFA Foundation.

The Fort Wayne Farm Show is produced by Tradex-

pos, Inc., who also organize the North American Farm & Power Show in Owatonna, Minnesota and the Topeka Farm Show in Kansas.

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January 14 – 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.
January 15 – 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

TUESDAY
Appleseed Room A

10:00 a.m.
**Market and Weather
Outlooks**

Moderator, Elysia Rodgers
Market Analyst
Rob Winters
Market Analyst
David Kohli
Market Analyst
John Cavanaugh
Weather
Ryan Martin

12:00 p.m.
**Barnyard Mirror:
How Animals Reflect Our**

Own Health
Elysia Rodgers, Purdue
University Educator

2:00 p.m.
**Pesticide Applicator and
Anhydrous Ammonia
Safety**
Office of the
Indiana State Chemist
Ann Kline, Purdue
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WEDNESDAY
Appleseed Room A
10:00 a.m.
Purdue Market Outlook
Moderator, Bill Horan
Michael Langemeier,
Director of the Center
for Commercial
Agriculture,
Purdue University

11:30 a.m. Luncheon
Appleseed Room B
Sponsored by: Indiana
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and Whitley County Farm
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Brianna Schroeder
Attorney with Janzen
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2:00 p.m.
**Biosecurity Essentials for
Livestock Owners**
Dr. Jennifer Strasser,
BOAH

5:30 p.m.
**Code Red: A Practical
Tool For Your Family
And Farm Contingency**

Plan
Purdue EDGE in Ag Team

THURSDAY
Appleseed Room A
10:00 a.m.
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The Tin Man escaped from Oz.

FUN

(Continued From Page 1)

by Ron Bliss

About sixteen years ago my son Mark was a forklift driver for a firm in Archbold.

His supervisor noticed that he had been struggling getting on and off the forklift.

Eventually the company sent him to a rehabilitation center for two weeks evaluation.

At the end of that period

the company placed him on permanent disability.

He was just forty-eight years old at the time.

This was an entirely new experience for him.

Time was an element that he had always been able to fill, however now he was at a loss for something to do.

He knew he had to fill his hours with some sort of activity, and he knew it must be something he would enjoy.

His pastime had always been music but that was not enough to carry him



This tree has implants.

through all his vacant hours.

One day his eyes landed on a gardening catalog.

The Beauty of Flowers

Since he had never been fond of vegetables, he ruled that out but then he thought about flowers.

Yes.

Flowers.

His yard could use a bit of beautification.

To occupy his winter months he started ordering seeds and constructed a makeshift greenhouse in his garage.

When spring arrived, he had a wonderful array of flowering plants to place in the beds he had prepared around his house.

In the beginning he experimented with every imaginable flower, annual and perennial.

Mark did not embark on his flower growing hobby with a colossal bang.

There was a lot of give and take, live and learn by trial and error.

He started out small and gradually grew into what he plants today.

He had to learn how to take care of his plants.

Some required more frequent watering than others.

Some would tolerate much more sun than others.

Some preferred bedding as opposed to a pot where they became root bound.

More than one plant said, "Mark, I'm not happy with how you've treated me."

And died.

Yes, live and learn.

Favorites

Over the years he has



That old rocking chair got me.



The old pink Cadillac

narrowed it down to some of his favorites and eliminated others.

For example, if it has the name Lily in it, he no longer plants it.

He says they live a few weeks, and they are done.

He searches for flowers with longer blooming times.

Some of his favorites are Lantana and Verbena.

He also likes succulents and Morning Glories.

In addition to his flower beds, he expanded to a lot of hanging baskets.

A few years ago, he de-

(Continued on Page 8)

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Mark putting the finishing touches on this beauty.



This plane is one of Mark's favorites.

FUN
(Continued From Page 7)

decided he did not want to use traditional flowerpots any longer. So he searched for anything unusual. As an example, he has a child's cradle full of flowers along with two baby dolls. He also has two chil-

dren's strollers, four nail barrels, a train, and a snake made from tires. A pair of trousers that hangs from a tree with a bra that says, "implants". Included are a little red wagon, a tricycle and a pedal car. A pair of Cowboy boots are set on a wooden chair with flowers in them.

Oh, and let's not forget the white tiger. Recently he placed soft green lights around his house that he turns on in the evening. He is delighted that so many individuals in Defiance have stopped by and commented on his flowers. His home is located at the corner of Emblanche and Baringer Dr. If you are in the Defiance area drive by and have a look and if you see him out, stop and say hello. He is always ready to talk about his flowers.

In addition to his flowers, he loves to feed the birds and squirrels. In his home he maintains two carnivorous plants. One is a Venus Fly Trap, and the other is a Pitcher Plant. He also has a Bonsai Tree.

What Is Next?

About eight years ago he concluded that the flowers, even though they were a big part of his life, they did occupy a sizable portion of his time however and it seemed like he still had hours to kill. Out for a drive on a beautiful day he drove past an airstrip where he saw individuals flying radio-controlled aircraft. He stopped to talk with them and that was all it took. The bug bit him and he had to acquire an airplane and join the group. Mark has been a member of the club now for the past eight years.

The club is called, "Defiance Prop Floppers", and currently has twenty members. They are always looking for new members and would like to expand to as many as fifty. After Mark was in the club for awhile he started planting some of his home grown flowers at the airstrip. Recently they expanded the activities of the club from flying model aircraft, by adding a racetrack for model race cars and are currently in the process of installing a rock crawler course around an obstacle course for crawler vehicles.

(Continued on Page 9)



What an artistic beauty.



These planes are all lined up for flight.

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Mini car person.

FUN

(Continued From Page 8)

This division of the club is called USA Raceway.

To participate in the club's events, flying, race car and crawler division would require a membership in the American Model Association (AMA) and would involve paying dues.

The AMA is a nationwide organization and for any sanctioned racing, membership is required.

The cost is relatively inexpensive compared to many other hobbies.

Prop Floppers is a local organization, relative only to the flying of model airplanes.

Prop Floppers and the American Model Assoc. clubs are maintained as two separate entities.

Current members' ages range from as young as fifteen and the eldest is eighty.

The club President is Jody Shaneyfelt while Nick Merrit serves as Vice President and Mark Bliss is Treasurer.

Club meeting night is each Thursday.

During the winter months when the weather does not permit flying or the use of the race and crawler courses the club tries to meet once a month for lunch.

This allows them to conduct meetings to discuss ideas and improvements to the club and the direction they would like to move in the coming year.

The air strip and race-course are located at 21487 Kiser Road, Defiance.

The actual property is owned by the city of Defiance and is leased to the club.

The property consists of a flat stretch of land ideal for club use.

There is also a clubhouse and parking lot.

There is also a small picnic area and bleachers where the public is always welcome to sit and watch events as they transpire.

The runway where planes are launched and land is about three hundred feet long and forty-five feet wide with two side approaches.

Generally, starter airplane kits usually run for about \$300 and that includes the radio control device.

After that you can spend as your heart desires.

Some are as low as \$200 and if you want you can go up to \$1000 and beyond.

It is all according to your taste and wallet.

Race cars can cost between two hundred and fifteen hundred dollars.



Come on dad, we are ready to fly!

Most of the purchases of planes, vehicles, and parts are done online at Horizon Hobby (www.horizonhobby.com).

One of the flyer's nightmares is flying a plane too low in an area where trees are growing.

If care is not exercised old Mother Nature can reach out and snare a plane and hold it at the top of a tree.

This has happened on more than one occasion.

Club Information

Some flying clubs utilize gas operated planes, however, due to a noise ordinance and limited space our Defiance club flies only radio-controlled craft.

Prop Flopper's Club events and benefits include: cook-outs/picnics, Club Newsletter, Regular Club Meetings, Events Open to Other AMA Clubs/Members. Other Planned Club Activities, Community Events, AMA Logo/Material on Display, Supports Charitable Causes

Club Details: Pilot instruction training, Open membership, Guest pilots welcome, General public welcome, AMA membership required, and Youth programs.

Activities Permitted Include 3-D, Ducted Fan,

Electric, Fixed Wing, Fuel/Gas, Giant Scale, Helicopters, Jets, Park Flyers, Pattern, Radio Control, Cars, First Person View and Multi-Rotor model craft.

Turbines not allowed.

Prop Flopper's often do events such as Balloon Fest and Automobile events when possible and they try to do a show for Memorial Day and the Fourth of July.

Information relative to the launch area includes a:

- Grass Pit Area
- Covered Shelter
- Fire Extinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Gated Entrance
- Night Flying
- Park Flyer Area
- Portable Restrooms
- Safety Fences
- Setup Tables
- Spectator Area
- Spectators Welcome
- Windsock Poles
- Windsocks
- Workbenches and Start-up Stands

Drugs and alcohol are not permitted on club grounds.

Contact Information

Anyone interested in belonging to either club should contact: <https://www.modelaircraft.org/club/defiance-prop-floppers> or Jody Shaneyfelt at Email: [shaneyfelt_motors-](mailto:shaneyfelt_motors-ports@yahoo.com)

ports@yahoo.com or Contact Information: 419-807-3530

Farmland News would like to thank Mark Bliss for sharing his story with our readers.

Ron was born in McClure, Ohio, raised in Napoleon and has lived in Wauseon for the past 64 years. A Navy veteran, he worked in Quality Control at Campbell Soup Company for almost 37 years. He's been writing poems since he was in school and has self-published 21 books of poetry. FN

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Take 'Em On Top or Don't Take 'Em At All

In the world of bass fishing there are many ways to catch both species, the large-mouth and smallmouth.

Yet, there are many, many anglers who would rather catch a bass on a top water lure than by any other method.

One of the most notable is popular television angler Bill Dance, who at one time was considered to be the best top water angler in the nation.

I love taking 'em on top, but I don't confine myself to only one type of fishing.

However, when the water warms to 58 degrees and the bass invade the shallows prior to spawning, I start looking through my top waters.

So, let's go over a few of the most productive ways to score a fish or two on the surface.

It is hard to beat the tried and true Jitterbug.

Invented many decades ago by Fred Arbogast in Akron, Ohio 0, this surface wiggler became an instant hit.

It's difficult to fish it wrong.

I was taught to cast it and then let it sit on the surface until the rings in the water had spread out to about 20 feet.

Then, give it a twitch or two with the rod tip and expect an explosion.

When the bass are in the shallows, they are there for one of two reasons: to feed or to reproduce.

When they have the feed-bag on and something plops down on the water, their natural impulse is to smash it.

They usually do so with great enthusiasm.

When the rings have dissipated and no fish has

Graybeard Outdoors

by ol' Graybeard

struck, begin the retrieve.

With the rod tip at about 2:00 slowly reel the Jitterbug back to the boat or the shore.

The big metal lip will wobble from side to side and any fish in the vicinity will notice.

When the strike comes, pause for a split-second until you feel the weight of the fish and then set the hook... Hard!

No good bass angler would hit the water without at least two or three buzzbaits.

I recall an incident many years ago that made me a believer in these "whip-the-water-to-a-froth wonders"

A friend and I were fishing a big reservoir in east central Ohio when I noticed a big tree stump in the water.

I cast a vintage top water known as a Neal Spinner and made several passes on both sides of the stump.

With no takers, I decided that they might want a little noise, so I tied on a Strike King Timber Buzz.

One cast past the stump brought a tremendous strike from a 4-5 pound large-mouth.

One roll and he was gone, leaving me with my heart in my throat, and my friend muttering words that you won't hear in church.

Top waters can provoke violent reaction strikes.

How well I remember the halcyon days of early morning bass fishing with

my late uncle, casting in my sister's farm pond.

We usually began by casting Neal Spinners, Heddon Lucky 13's, or Heddon Zara Spooks into the shallows of the pond.

The Neal was retrieved in a steady cadence, the 13 was popped across the surface and the Spook was "dog walked" back to the boat.

Man, did we have fun, plus we caught lots of fish!

All three lures are very effective "bass getters", and the bass smashed them with reckless abandon.

Some of the most productive days were before sunrise, high humidity, cloudy and overcast.

Sometimes the bass strike out of a response to hunger, sometimes they hit in what is known as a "reaction strike".

This means that they were not in an aggressive mood, but when something plopped down on the surface, or when the surface was broken by what looked like a small creature in the water trying to make it to shore, they strike out of instinct.

They wanted to kill it.

We caught lots of fish and had lots of fun.

Isn't that what fishing is all about anyway?

While any top water lure can catch bass under the right conditions, there's one method of taking 'em on top that is more fun than all of the others combined.

I'm talking about "rat fishin".

Previously, I have written of this, but a review of the technique is in order.

Decades ago a great bass fisherman named Tom Mann, from Eufala, Alabama, invented a buoyant lure that resembled a small rat.

With turned up hooks on both sides it was meant to be fished over weed mats and it soon became a sensation, revolutionizing top water angling.

Since then many clones

have been put on the market, some look like rats, some look like frogs some snakes and even one or two that resemble birds.

So, what are the basics of rat fishing?

A stout casting rod, a high capacity reel and either very strong mono or, preferably very strong braid, such as Berkley Fireline.

The rat is tied directly to the line, no snap swivel, with a Palomar knot, or a Trilene knot.

From the shore or from a boat, a long cast plops the lure right down on top of matted weed beds or into thick concentrations of algae.

Allow it to rest for a few seconds, then begin a slow, steady retrieve over the weeds.

Hold the rod tip at about 10:00 to keep the rat moving easily.

If nothing happens on the first cast or two, try retrieving with a twitching cadence.

When the strike comes, there will be no doubt.

The bass bust up through the mess to engulf whatever little creature is making a ruckus in the vegetation.

Sometimes they miss the hooks, knock the rat up into the air and hit it again when it lands.

This type of fishing is not for the weak of heart.

When the bass strikes, reel up the slack line and set the hook... Hard.

The fish will want to dive into the weeds, so use that stout pole to keep its head up, and try to retrieve it across the surface.

If it becomes entangled in the weeds, either wade out to it or move the boat closer until you can lip it and retrieve the hooks.

This is a wild and woolly type of fishing and unlike any other method that I know.

Is top water fishing the new plus ultra of angling?

Absolutely not.

Two of my biggest bass were caught on artificial worms worked across the bottom.

But when it comes to explosive action, top water fishing is hard to beat!

John Bennett is an outdoor writer from Lima, Ohio. He's a retired educator and a historical reenactor. Graybeard is his "camp name." In addition, he's a husband, father and grandfather, as well as a four-season outdoorsman.

FN

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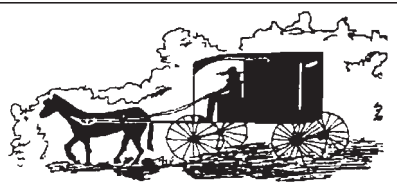
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The Amish Cook

by Gloria Yoder



Gloria is taking the final week of 2025 off to spend with family.

But she wanted to share this recipe, a “healthier” version of a chocolate treat to begin the near year as people look for lighter options after the holidays!

Enjoy these delicious “healthy bars”

Scrumptious “Healthy Bars”

- 2 cups of oatmeal
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2/3 cup chocolate chips (opt)
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds (opt)

Mix altogether and press in a 9 by 9-inch container. If desired top with the following chocolate con-

coction:

Healthy Chocolate

- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Place coconut oil in a saucepan.

Heat just until oil melts.

Remove from heat and add remaining ingredients.

Whisk together.

Optional: add 5 tablespoons heavy whipping cream for a milk chocolate effect.

Readers may write Gloria with culinary or cultural questions at: Gloria Yoder, 10510 E. 350th Avenue, Flat Rock, IL 62427. FN



Delbert McLain smiled at the sign in Marvin Pin-cus’s yard as he walked briskly up to the front door and knocked.

Marvin had seen him coming and opened it with a big smile and a handshake. “Delbert!

I’ve got to tell you I’ve really been looking forward to seeing what kind of flies we can tie up to improve your love life.

You want some coffee?”

“Love life?” Del said.

“Oh not today, Marvin, not today.

I’m here on chamber business.

Yessir.”

Delbert McLain is our Chamber of Commerce.

We have all designated him ... well ... okay, I guess Del kinda designat-ed himself to let the world know we adore progress, our community is the healthiest, safest and most prosperous place to raise children or crops or make widgets.

“Official business, Del?”

“Yes indeed, Marvin.

Now that you’re a lo-cal businessman, you’ll be needing the services of the chamber to put your love counseling and fly tying service on the map.

The world (he waved his arms) is waiting to hear

about the (he looked out the front window at the sign)... “The Fly Tying Love Center.”

“Does it cost money to join?”

“Fifty bucks a year, Marvin.

That’s for a whole year!”

“And what do I get for that?”

“We list you on our chamber business list, and of course there’s the month-ly lunch meeting at the Mule Barn.”

“Oh, you pay for lunch at the Mule Barn?”

“Uh ... no...”

“I eat there every day now, Del, and the guys tell me how to run my business and live my life, for free.”

On the way back out to his car, Del thought how some businesses just weren’t very progressive minded.

Not at all.

Brought to you by “I Honked My Horse But the Tree Didn’t Hear,” which will be published as soon as I locate the bravest publishing company in the world. FN

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Recipe Of The Week

Better Than Takeout Fried Rice

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 3 cups cooked white rice (preferably chilled) | 1 small onion, chopped |
| 3 tablespoons sesame oil | 2 teaspoons minced garlic |
| 1 cup frozen peas and carrots mix | 2 eggs, lightly beaten |
| | 1/4 cup soy sauce |

In a large skillet or wok, heat the sesame oil over medium-high heat.

Add the chopped onions, peas and carrots mix; saute until onions are soft and vegetables are tender (about 3-4 minutes).

Stir in the minced garlic; cook for another 30 seconds until fragrant.

Move veggies to one side of the pan.

Pour the beaten eggs into the empty side; scramble until fully cooked.

Add the cooked rice; stir everything together and break up any clumps.

Add seasoning if desired.

This Recipe of the Week is from Mary Schroll, McComb, Ohio

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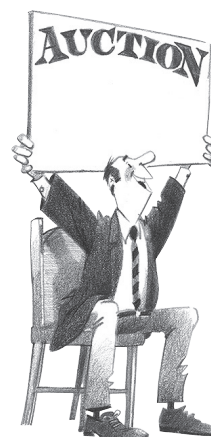
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12/1/2025 12/8/2025 12/15/2025 12/22/2025 12/29/2025
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Small Squares	Low	High
Straw.....	1.75	- 3.20
1st Grass.....	2.50	- 5.00
2nd Grass.....	2.50	- 6.00
1st Alfalfa Grass.....	3.00	- 3.00
2nd Alfalfa Grass.....	4.50	- 8.50
3rd Alfalfa Grass.....	2.75	- 8.50
4th Alfalfa Grass.....	6.50	- 7.75
1st Alfalfa.....	2.00	- 6.75
3rd Alfalfa.....	4.25	- 5.75
4th Alfalfa.....	6.25	- 7.00
Clover.....	2.25	- 3.00

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Straw.....	15.00	- 31.00
1st Alfalfa.....		
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3rd Alfalfa.....	47.50	- 70.00
1st Alfalfa Grass.....	30.00	- 70.00
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