

# THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

COURTESY OF GAN JING WORLD



Above, a cooking show on Gan Jing World. The social platform's mission is to create entertainment free from violent, erotic, criminal, and harmful content.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### A New Social Platform Is Rewarding Uplifting Content

By Terri Wu

Goodness pays, literally, in Gan Jing World.

This social platform offers new creators cash rewards for achieving followership and viewership milestones in their first 90 days. For example, a creator may get up to \$1,000 for building a community of 20,000 followers and get up to \$250 for two videos reaching beyond 200,000 views each.

"Gan Jing means clean," reads the official website of the platform, founded by Chinese Americans in New York in 2022. "Our mission is to create the world's largest entertainment community, providing uplifting and meaningful content and family-friendly entertainment for all ages. We want to create an online platform free from violent, erotic, criminal, and harmful content for kids and adults alike to enjoy safely."

The cash reward campaign shows the company's confidence in its business model and that goodness and profit are achievable simultaneously.

#### A Different Platform

According to Nick Janicki, Gan Jing's director of media relations, the company's economics is no different from those of other social platforms. However, Gan Jing's uniqueness stems from "the combination of having clean content and educating the consumer on how this stuff works," he told *The Epoch Times*.

In the tech industry, advertisers are customers, he said. Users, who consume content, are considered end products because advertisers pay for results, which are ultimately driven by mining and operating on user data.

Janicki pointed out that only two industries call their consumers users: the tech and drug industries. In that light, the recommendation-generation algorithms on other social media platforms keep users on the addiction loops to maximize

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This Mother's Day, give the woman who brought you into this world a reason to smile, chuckle, or giggle.

## MOTHER'S DAY

### Give Your Mom the Gift of Laughter

Brighten up Mother's Day with some lighthearted jokes and joy

Recollection is a fine way to honor our mothers, both the living and the deceased.

By Jeff Minick

Some toddlers give that gift every day to their mothers. How about you? For 2023, Mother's Day is on May 14. Maybe you've already wrapped some gifts and made your plans to honor Mom on her special day. Maybe you've been overloaded and are just now scrambling for ways to throw the spotlight on Mama. Or maybe you've forgotten this holiday entirely and the words written here just hit you like a bucket of cold water in the middle of a nap.

If the last two categories describe you, have no fear. It's still not too late to swing by the Hallmark shop, the florist, or the grocery store and walk out with the necessary accoutrements: a card, a bouquet of spring flowers, a box of chocolates, or some other treat. If Mom isn't nearby, you can try overnighting a gift to her, but above all else, one detail is crucial: the all-important Mother's Day phone call. Write yourself a reminder note—a huge note—fix it to the fridge, and make the call.

But here's another thought for everyone celebrating Mother's Day. Laughter, they say, is the best medicine. It's also a vitamin, a morale

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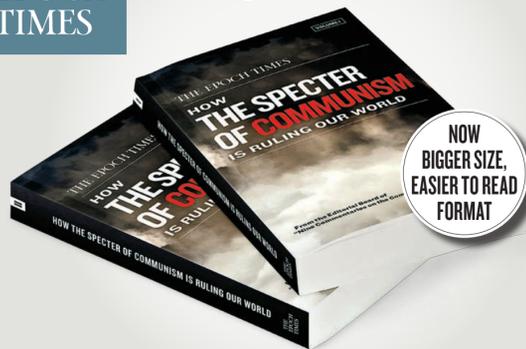
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## HOW THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM IS RULING OUR WORLD

The specter of communism did not disappear with the disintegration of the Communist Party in Eastern Europe

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Gan Jing allows users to configure their virtual environment by letting them set up categories they are most interested in.

ENTERTAINMENT

## A New Social Platform Is Rewarding Uplifting Content

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advertisement revenue or sell more premium subscriptions for an advertisement-free experience, he said.

Researchers have identified the biological substance for social media addictions: dopamine. "Social media platforms drive surges of dopamine to the brain to keep consumers coming back over and over again. The shares, likes, and comments on these platforms trigger the brain's reward center, resulting in a high similar to the one people feel when gambling or using drugs," said Nancy DeAngelis, director of behavioral health at Jefferson Health, a regional health care provider, according to its website.

Janicki said that, unlike other platforms, Gan Jing is transparent about how it works and allows consumers to configure their virtual environment. Upon registration, one can set up three main topics or categories of one's top interests. Then, the algorithm will use viewer history and topics configuration to recommend other content. "That's how Gan Jing helps an account owner to achieve self-improvement, according to Janicki.

"All of the biology being used against you is now for you to go find more and better uplifting content," he said. "With Gan Jing World, you can select what categories you want to see. And it's still going to use dopamine to give you a jolt of joy, but it's going to give you a jolt of joy to something that uplifts you or educates you."

No other platforms have afforded this transparency and control to viewers or "end products," he said.

**Is Clean Content Profitable?**  
Is clean content profitable? Gan Jing believes so.

"The marketplace and the demand is there for clean content, without a doubt," Janicki said.

One example he gave is Pure Flix, the clean version of Netflix. Pure Flix is a faith-based family video subscription platform; Sony acquired it for an undisclosed amount in 2020. Pure Flix's subscription fee today is \$7.99 per month or \$69.99 per year. Its YouTube channel has 221,000 subscribers, and NBC reported in 2018 that the streaming platform had 125,000 subscribers who paid \$10.99 per month.

"God's Not Dead," a \$2-million 2014 movie co-produced by Pure Flix Entertainment, which wasn't part of the acquisition, grossed about \$65 million at the box office. "Miracles From Heaven," a Christian drama film distributed by Sony Pictures, grossed \$74 million at the global box office in 2016, with \$18 million during its first five days in theaters.

"G-rated movies are some of the best movies in the world in terms of engagement. Just because it's clean doesn't mean it cannot be engaging," Janicki said in response to the question about whether clean content might be boring. "That problem will easily be solved once more content creators come on Gan Jing World."

That's why Gan Jing is working to attract influencers on other social platforms with milestone-related cash rewards. He said the current rewards offer, which Gan Jing markets as "challenges," remains active until further notice.



The logo for the newly launched Gan Jing World, a clean-content streaming platform founded in 2022.

## DEAR NEXT GENERATION

Advice from our readers to our young people

### 'Dear Older Me'

Write your older self a letter, and in so doing discover who you want to become

There's a song called "Dear Younger Me" by a popular Christian group, Mercy Me. In listening to it one day, I began to think that the younger me should have written "Dear Older Me" in order to envision what kind of person I would have aspired to be. So when I read The Epoch Times' offer to write wisdom to the youth, I thought I would challenge the young people in our world to do just that, to write themselves a letter.

I would encourage you to actually write three letters and put each in a time capsule, to be opened in 10, 20, and 30 years. Write not so much what you desire to do in

life, but rather who you desire to become. Because regardless of whether you are rich or poor, successful or not so much, what you do doesn't really matter if you lack character and relationships. So who you become is much more important than what you become. Hopefully, one thing on your list is to be and to have a good friend.

True friendship isn't found on social media. Your real friends are close enough to hold your hand, hug you, and tell you in words breathed from their mouths how much they care about you. They will show up in person when you need them, and be a phone call away. Social media friendships are fake news. No one, absolutely no one, lives 100 percent of their lives as they portray publicly. It's in our most private thoughts and moments that we understand who we really are and who our

MOTHER'S DAY

## Give Your Mom the Gift of Laughter

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booster, sunshine on a cloudy day, and fireworks on the darkest night. So along with those pink roses—this color denotes elegance, sweetness, and appreciation, perfect for Mom—and that celebratory brunch, bring the woman who brought you into this world a reason to smile, chuckle, giggle, and guffaw.

Here are some ideas that might tickle the funny bone of even the most proper matriarch.

Put the Little Ones in the Limelight

Knock Knock  
Who's there  
Anita  
Anita who?  
Anita give you a hug for Mother's Day!

Most kids love knock-knock jokes, and you'll find several dozen of them just by searching online for "Mother's Day Knock Knock Jokes." Have your 3-year-old recite one or two of these, and that child will melt Mom's heart.

If you're serving Mom a special breakfast, have the younger crew gather around and sing to add some sparkle to the moment. Lots of kids, for example, know "Good Morning to You," and with just a couple of word changes, they're ready to belt out some special lyrics:

Good morning to you!  
Good morning to you!  
We're all in our places  
With sun-shiny faces;  
Oh, this is the way  
To start Mother's Day!

Don't forget to break out the crayons, pens, and paper and have the kids make homemade cards and posters celebrating the day. Have them do the same for Grandma as well, and if need be, get those cards into the mail.

Touch the heart, and you bring a smile.

Quotes and Jokes Offer Loving Strokes

So you're sharing a meal with Mom. Maybe you've reserved a table at a Ruth's Chris restaurant. Maybe you've gathered at Chipotle or Cracker Barrel. Maybe you've whipped up a special luncheon at home. The location doesn't matter, but why not make this occasion even more memorable? After the meal, have everyone present pay tribute to Mom. If friends or others outside of the immediate family are present, invite them to do the same for their own absentee mothers.

If you want to add to these salutes, slip everyone a motherhood quotation, humorous or inspirational, in an envelope, then have that person open the envelope and read aloud from the enclosed slip of paper.

Here's one from Erma Bombeck: "When your mother asks, 'Do you want a piece of advice?' it's a mere formality. It doesn't matter if you answer yes or no. You're going to get it anyway." And an old Spanish proverb is perfect: "An ounce of mother is worth a ton of priest." You can find these and many other such quips online.

Jokes—gentle ones, no sarcasm al-

lowed—can also brighten the festivities and are abundant online. Here's a common one: "Son: 'Why is a computer so smart?' Mom: 'It listens to its motherboard.'" All new moms think their babies are the best, so here's one for them that should bring a smile:



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Mother's Day exists to pay homage to the ideal of motherhood itself, a foundation stone of civilization. "The Music Lesson," 1877, by Frederic Leighton. Guildhall Art Gallery.

lonesome. Mom: I have the perfect son. Stranger: Does he smoke? Mom: No, he doesn't.

Stranger: Does he drink whiskey? Mom: No, he doesn't.

Stranger: Does he ever come home late? Mom: No, he doesn't.

Stranger: I guess you really do have the perfect son. How old is he? Mom: He'll be six months old next Wednesday.

Small Surprises, Big Smiles

This gift requires a little preparation and stealth, but otherwise, it's as easy as can be. Write out some notes to Mom—quotes, poems, jokes, riddles, or just little love bombs—fold them, and plant them in places where she'll be sure to find them: the refrigerator, the dishwasher, her briefcase, her jewelry box, or under her pillow. If she misses finding some of them on her special day, all the better. When she comes across the note later, she'll take as much, if not more, pleasure from the discovery.

Anyone who can read and write can undertake this project. If you aren't feeling particularly creative, you'll find plenty of

online sites encouraging you to use their materials for cards and letters. At LaffGaff.com, for instance, we find one-liners such as this one from old-time comedian Milton Berle: "If evolution really works, how come mothers only have two hands?" If you're aiming for some quirk you've joked about in the past, here's an example: "Happy Mother's Day. Thanks for providing me with a love that's as never-ending as your voicemail!"

Search online for "funny Mother's Day poems and quotes," and you'll find a treasure box of material waiting for you.

Storytime

The oldest of my four children was 20 and the youngest was 9 when my wife, their mother, died. Today, all have children of their own, but even now, nearly 20 years later, Mother's Day is tinted for them with reflection and sadness. Inevitably, however, that mood lightens when we tell stories about her, little bits of family lore about her sweet eccentricities, goofy humor, and loving touches.

Recollection is a fine way to honor our mothers, both the living and the deceased. And that word means exactly what it says—we collect and polish up bits of the past, pieces of ourselves and, in this case, of our mothers. These stories keep the past, and even the dead, alive in our mind's eye. In my case, none of my grandchildren ever met their grandmother, but they know who she was through the loving stories that their

parents share with them. Share the good stories with Mom, or about her, and you're spreading joy.

Laughter, delight, and surprise are the candles on this cake of memories for our mothers if we take the time to bake it.

The Big Picture

For a number of people, Mother's Day brings sadness and even anger. Their own mothers were cruel and uncaring when they were children, or they're mothers themselves, but estranged, for a multitude of reasons, from their children. Others have lost mothers or children to death or were unable to have children of their own. Some of these women would be more than happy to see Mother's Day abolished.

Here we might remember that Mother's Day exists to pay homage to motherhood itself. However we might honor our own mothers—and here I've sought the way of happiness and laughter—this is also the day we pay homage to the ideal of motherhood itself, a foundation stone of civilization.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.

friends really are, and we are all mostly imperfect in every way. Fake is the enemy of the genuine. Fake news, fake bodies, and fake food are all poisonous to the real. To be genuine is to be true, pure, and free from anything false or counterfeit (Webster 1828 dictionary). Isn't that what we all desire in our relationships? So doesn't it follow that we would want to be genuine as well?

So I ask, what kind of person do you aspire to be—today, and in the decades to follow? Not what, but who will you be in 10 years? In 10 more years? In 10 years after that? Who you become is up to you. Decisions you make today will determine who you are tomorrow. Your friends, those you follow, those you lead, and those you spend time with all impact those decisions. What you feed your mind and your body will answer those questions.

When you are 30 or 40 or 50, what do you want to say while looking back on your younger self? Will you be regretful? Or thankful? Will you be proud of the choices you made and the relationships you nurtured? Will you look back on the social media you engaged in (yes, it is all being recorded, even if you "delete" it) and be

proud of what you said and did? Will you be glad for the decisions you made, even though they were challenging and difficult at the time? Even if those decisions meant you had to stand alone? Will your body thank you for how you fed it and the care you gave it? Will your thoughts be healthy and your mind sharp? Will your soul be pure? Will you have learned from other people's mistakes and successes, or will you have blindly stumbled into the future with no thought of the consequences of your choices? Will you have listened to those older and wiser than you?

What will your older self have to say about your younger self? Answer this question and you will have set a path to real success in life. It doesn't matter what you become, it only matters who the genuine you is, and who you will become. So map out a plan, and ask your older self to review it. Ask those who truly love and care about you to help you with it. Take the advice of those who have lived out both the young and the old self, because they have a perspective that your young self can never have. I'm sure they would be grateful to assist you on your journey, to help you avoid the mistakes even they made. Proverbs

19:20 in the Good Book says, "Listen to advice and accept discipline, so that you may be wise the rest of your days."

It requires wisdom to discern the difference between fake and real. And in this world, the fake is growing daily. I hope you, young person, will make it your aim to be a genuine person. So start your letter, "Dear Older Me."

—C. Ralston, Nebraska

**What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?** We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to: Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

Mapping out a plan for your future and writing it in a letter to your former self is a way to review today's decisions in light of who you want to become tomorrow.



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## LITERATURE

# Manners and Miss Austen

The importance of custom and courtesy

By Walker Larson

Who's the greatest British writer of all time?

According to a 2022 poll of 2,000 Brits, the answer is Jane Austen.

While we may debate the correctness of this poll's conclusion (William Shakespeare, anyone?), what's beyond question is that Austen remains remarkably popular with British and American readers alike—even 200 years after her death. Film and TV adaptations of Austen's work, for example, have proliferated in recent decades, the latest installment being PBS's "Sanditon," a "Jane Austen inspired" TV series. Regency period dramas are perennially appealing to modern audiences.

Austen deserves this high place among British writers. Her wit, elegant prose, and profound study of human character render her a novelist of the highest caliber. In Austen's analysis of human frailty and frivolity, nastiness and nobility, manners play an important role and offer something unique to contemporary readers. In fact, some of her popularity with people today may be due to the allure of a lost world of civility that her novels depict. Austen shows us the value of gentlemanly and ladylike behavior according to a time-honored tradition. While modern, independent, and equality-minded Americans find intricate rules of etiquette a bit stifling, we seem to be at the same time paradoxically fascinated by them, like a mysterious and beautiful artifact from an antique and exotic land. And with good reason.

## Revelation of Character

Manners in Miss Austen's work can be viewed from a number of angles. In the first place, they're a tool for the revelation of character. Teenage boys aren't known for their love of early 1800s romance novels. The last time I taught "Pride and Prejudice" to them, they couldn't understand why the novel didn't talk more about the men going out and "doing stuff." We can understand this objection from a young man who struggles to sit still at his desk for the 45-minute class period. What's all this about parties and afternoon teas and carriages? How about they go build something or go to war?

But what I try to get my students to focus on is not the (seemingly) arbitrary rules of social interaction, but rather what the



The Rice Portrait of Jane Austen by British painter Ozias Humphry is the only known oil painting of Jane Austen, who was likely 14 at the time.

characters' reactions to those rules say about who they are.

Take, for example, the infamous Mr. Wickham in "Pride and Prejudice." The heroine of the novel, Elizabeth Bennet, is at first charmed and infatuated with Wickham, who turns out later to be no true gentleman, but rather a dastardly rogue.

In one of their first interactions, Wickham talks freely about how he was mistreated by Mr. Darcy (which is, of course, untrue). He doesn't hesitate to speak ill of Darcy in

a room with several other people present.

This is not only backbiting, it's bad manners. At the time, Elizabeth convinces herself that Wickham's openness is refreshing and a sign of honesty, but once she learns the truth about him, her perspective shifts:

"She perfectly remembered everything that had passed in conversation between Wickham and herself, in their first evening at Mr. Phillips's. Many of his expressions were still fresh in her memory. She was now struck with the impropriety of such

communications to a stranger, and wondered if it had escaped her before. She saw the indelicacy of putting himself forward as he had done, and the inconsistency of his professions with his conduct."

## 'Indelicacy'

"Indelicacy," that's the word used to describe Wickham's behavior. Though his words and actions in that early interaction with Elizabeth weren't exactly scandalous, they were uncivil, and that was a clue to

ly became a full partner and the branch manager in 1465.

By the time of their marriage in 1470, Tommaso was about 42 years old, and Maria 14. But by virtue of the painter's artifice, the husband appears younger in the portrait and the wife much older. While wrinkles appear around Tommaso's eyes and forehead, they're either covered by his curling hair or rendered colorless, blending so well into the varying skin tones as to become almost invisible. Whether for her mature features, majestic dress, or calm composure, Maria is presented with a matronly gravitas that harmoniously balances Tommaso's virile severity.

This artist was Hans Memling, the most sought-after portraitist of the day. Having mastered the technique of oil painting, he exploited its potential for the naturalistic depiction of the surface qualities of the jewels and garment, as well as the facial features of his sitters. The close attention to the tonal gradation of the skin, the anatomical structure of the skull, and the subtle physical details served well to capture the real likeness of the figures. But most extraordinary is the painter's ability to express his patron's state of mind, rendering spiritual qualities with mere material pigments.

That state of mind, as Memling and the Portinari emphatically insist, is one of religious piety. Indeed, the pair



"Tommaso di Folco Portinari (1428–1501); Maria Portinari (Maria Maddalena Baroncelli, born 1456)," circa 1470, by Hans Memling. Oil on wood. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

the panels made to commemorate their marriage.

The two sitters, Tommaso and Maria Portinari, came originally from Florence, Italy, where trade and culture

flourished under the stewardship of the powerful Medici family. As the successful Medici bank expanded its business into the Netherlands, Tommaso found work at its Bruges branch and eventual-

STAN HONDA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



First charmed by Wickham, Elizabeth Bennet soon discovers his real character. Illustration C.E. Brock 1895 edition of "Pride and Prejudice."

Wickham's true character, which Elizabeth failed to perceive at the time. If she had, she might have preserved herself and her family from a lot of heartache later on.

Other examples could be given: Mrs. Bennet's passive aggression, endless chattering, and lack of subtlety make her, in a word, rude, so much so that Mr. Darcy objects to his friend, Mr. Bingley, marrying into such an indelicate family. The standards of polite society were higher than they are now, and as grating as Mrs. Bennet can be to us, in the ears of a regency gentleman or lady, her prattling would have been downright intolerable. Enough to call off a wedding, apparently. Mrs. Bennet's insensitivity to standards of social interaction reveals much about her: that she, in the end, is a pretty willful and selfish individual.

## Austen shows us the value of gentlemanly and ladylike behavior according to time-honored tradition.

Even some of Austen's heroines reveal themselves through their manners (or lack thereof). In a famous scene in "Emma," the titular character makes a little fun of an older woman, Miss Bates, who's a bit simple. It's a small offense, but it triggers a crisis moment for Emma and a turning point on her journey to self-knowledge when she is confronted about it by her friend (and future husband), Mr. Knightly. He says:

"Were she [Miss Bates] prosperous, I could allow much for the occasional prevalence of the ridiculous over the good. Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed!"

Emma reveals a weakness of character here that goes beyond just this particular social misstep. Her general inconsiderateness of others, her tendency even to treat them as playthings, and her tendency to

focus on self lie at the root of the problem that Mr. Knightly here attempts to address.

It's worth noting, too, that Emma's insulting behavior is worse because of the inequality of social standing between her and Miss Bates. Interestingly, because Miss Bates comes from a lower class than Emma, Mr. Knightly expects Emma to behave even more civilly toward her, not less. This idea of hierarchy, in which the superior should be extra attentive and considerate toward the inferior, has largely been lost in modern times. Our ideas of class, unfortunately, tend to view higher classes as proud and tyrannical toward lower classes. But Austen shows us that need not be the case and wasn't always the case historically.

In Miss Austen's world and in ours, manners can provide a measuring stick with which to assess the quality and integrity of strangers and close acquaintances alike. In a sense, then, rules and customs of social interaction are meant to protect us. It doesn't take a great leap of imagination to realize that people who defy seemingly small rules of society might not hesitate to defy bigger ones. A violation of courtesy should be a red flag. Wickham, for example, chose to violate the rules of common courtesy when he dragged Darcy's name through the mud. This was predictive of his willingness to violate some of the most sacred rules of society when, at the climax of the novel, he scandalously runs away with Lydia, devastating her family and potentially destroying her and their reputation forever.

There was a time when manners, courtesy, and kindness—gentlemanly and ladylike behavior—were seen as the bloom of charity. In other words, the little signs of consideration grew out of and pointed toward a deeper respect for the dignity of other human beings. They weren't, therefore, insignificant, even if they seem a bit stiff and impractical to us now. Austen gives us a valuable glimpse into that time, and valuable lessons for this.

*Walker Larson teaches literature and history at a private academy in Wisconsin, where he resides with his wife. He holds a Master's in English literature and language, and his writing has appeared in The Hemingway Review, Intellectual Takeout, and his Substack, "The Hazelnut."*



Hypothetical reconstruction of the portraits of Tommaso and Maria Portinari with "Virgin and Child," circa 1470, by Hans Memling. Oil on oak. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

devotion was probably a reminder for themselves and for posterity, that worldly wealth boasts nothing without faith and virtue.

*Da Yan is a doctoral student of European art history. Raised in Shanghai, he lives and works in the Northeastern United States.*

## Correction

The article "In Sickness and in Health," published in the May 3 edition, incorrectly stated the date that Rembrandt inscribed on his "Portrait of Saskia as a Bride" sketch. The correct date is June 8, 1633. The Epoch Times regrets the error.

## MUSIC

# The Golden Age of Country Music

By Rebecca Day

While country music of the 1940s was known for its honky-tonk ditties perfect for two-stepping, the 1950s ushered in a more polished, story-driven approach to the genre. This transformation paved the way for a new kind of country, a style focused on relatable, poignant cowboy tales and classic romance pieces. The genre's modernized songwriting focus and updated production brought it into the mainstream.

## The Honky-Tonk Craze

Throughout the 1940s, country music publishers released one barroom number after the next. Fans of the genre loved danceable hits like Bob Wills' springy "San Antonio Rose" and Hank Williams's late-1940s top-20 hit, "Honky Tonkin." But country music was still considered to be a niche genre without much crossover appeal. There was a lot of promise in the instrumentation, with soaring fiddle and thumping bass, but the lack of depth with the compositions' subject matter kept the genre's popularity location-based, with hubs residing in Southern states like Tennessee and central states like Texas.

In the 1950s, that all changed.

The genre matured tremendously in post-World War II America, with songwriters exploring more intimate themes relating to life, from love and loss to fear and triumph. Suddenly, a style of music championing night-life and bustling honky-tonks began releasing hits that were equal parts prayer and praise, with a little bit of confession thrown into the mix.

With a nation focused on healing and returning to peace with an emphasis on family and community, musical and cultural forces collided to give us countless enduring hits. The influence of these artists created a lasting impact that transcended country music. Their work affected the entire American musical landscape.

## The genre matured tremendously in post-World War II America.

## The 'Story Songs'

This transformation began with the early 1950s' releases of "story songs," narrative pieces that told tales featuring everything from cowboy adventures and beautiful love stories to full moon confessionals like Patsy Cline's moving hit "Walkin' After Midnight." This eloquent, pensive ballad begins with a moonlit search for love, but ends with the songstress embarking on a journey to find herself.

Her poetic turning of events in the song's story arch would go on to become a staple songwriting technique in country music and its many subgenres.

Rhythms varied as well, from Lefty Frizzell's languid, swinging "Mom and Dad's Waltz" to rising star Johnny Cash's upbeat chart-topper "I Walk the Line." These newly explored cadences were well-received, with audiences tuning in to radio shows like never before to catch a quick performance of one of their favorite artists, like the legendary Hank Williams or beloved

singing cowboy Gene Autry.

"El Paso" by Marty Robbins could be considered the magnum opus of 1950s country. It was a number one hit that plays out like an epic: a cowboy in love traveling far and wide and battling enemies to try and win over his leading lady once and for all. By the end of the almost five-minute song you feel like you've lost yourself inside a high-stakes western musical. The popular track was the first song to win a Grammy for "Best Country & Western Performance."

## 'The Nashville Sound'

With the '50s came sleeker sound production as well. A more polished approach was taken with recordings thanks to the burgeoning world of audio equipment. These smoother, warmer-sounding recordings further helped the country music genre garner national attention.

With a healthy dose of competition from rock 'n' roll music like that of Elvis Presley, producer-musicians like Chet Atkins got creative and traded in the more rough-and-tumble, grainy sounds of honky-tonk recordings and replaced them with silky, pop-inspired elements like background harmonies and strings sections.

Listeners everywhere eagerly embraced the changes.

The evolving sounds of country music were front and center at The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. Hosted at the famous Ryman Auditorium, these showcase performances gave the genre a home base, and an in-demand destination for fans everywhere to visit and immerse themselves in a night of country music's finest.

By the mid-'50s, the modernized music experiment of "The Nashville Sound" had so much success that it became an officially recognized sub-genre of country music, one credited with making innovation a key part of the genre as a whole.

Into the '60s, the story-song trend and Nashville sound experiment proved to be more than a flash in the pan. Jimmy Dean hits like 1961's "Big Bad John" tells the rousing feat of a towering, near-indestructible man and his heroic actions that saved the lives of 20 men in the depths of a coal mine. Releases like this one meant the "story song" torch would be carried into a new decade.

## The Evergreen Legacy

Singer-songwriters of this powerhouse decade are still celebrated today and their original works are some of the most widely covered songs in the business. The legacies of the era's performers, from Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline to Marty Robbins and even eclectic artists like Tennessee Ernie Ford, are all woven into the fabric of the contemporary country music landscape.

In a society that can listen to more kinds of music than ever before, country music of the '50s proves to be timeless. From 2022 to 2023, Johnny Cash ranked as the genre's "fourth most-listened-to artist" on YouTube.

*Rebecca Day is an independent musician, freelance writer, and frontwoman of country group, The Crazy Daisies.*



Set at Madame Tussauds Hollywood featuring country music legends (L) Hank Williams Sr., Patsy Cline, and Johnny Cash.

RACHEL MURRAY/GETTY IMAGES

DEAR JUNE On Family and Relationships

# Financial Gifts Between Sisters

What do you do if a sibling hands you money you don't want?

Dear June, My 90-year-old sister recently gave me \$200 for picking her up for church. I didn't want to take it, but rather than make a scene (there were a couple of others in the car), I reluctantly took it. My first thought was to mail it back to her, but she's easily offended. I don't want the money. What should I do? A Sister Not in Need

time and manner to return it. For example, if she has children she relies on for care, you could give it to them. If she's mentally sound, then giving it to you probably gave her some sort of comfort and satisfaction. Do you think perhaps she worries about being a burden and will feel more comfortable asking you to drive her

places because of this? I can't know what is in her head, and it sounds like she has a strong personality, so I don't see a reason to challenge her on this particular issue. And if perhaps it's the case that her giving money to you was a way of demeaning you in the relationship, I would still accept it and at the same time accept her for who

she is. Be as gracious and kind as you can (still maintaining healthy boundaries) and your good heart may help hers become better.

And as a final thought, you received this money as you drove to church—perhaps it was a divine hand, giving you this gift so that you and your sister could bless someone else.

Sincerely, June

Dear Sister Not in Need, I think you did the right thing to take the money and not make a scene. And I think you are right not to send it back and risk offending your sister. Assuming that your sister is both financially and mentally stable, then I would give it away, either to someone you know who is in need or anonymously to a charity. If you have concerns about her mental or financial well-being, then you might hold onto it and see if there comes an appropriate



The bond between siblings can be difficult to navigate at times, but kindness will go a long way.



Do you have a family or relationship question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Send it to DearJune@EpochTimes.com or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY, 10001

June Kellum is a married mother of four and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics.

MOTORTION FILMS/SHUTTERSTOCK

# The School Year Home Stretch

Keep up the good work, and finish the year strong

By Barbara Danza

Whether you homeschool or send your children to school, for most parents of school-aged children, this time of year is a busy season. Calendars tend to fill quickly with recitals, concerts, ceremonies, project deadlines, and all manner of end-of-the-school-year happenings. While daydreaming about the simpler summer season on the horizon, we may suddenly become panicked recalling the party snack we forgot to prepare or the coach's gift we need to get. Energy is low, the to-do list is long, and we just want to retreat to our vision of a hammock under a palm tree.

The key to finishing strong, encouraging and supporting your children, and maintaining a happy household along the way is to recognize the nature of this season and take a few extra steps to see it through with excellence.

### Breathe Deep

Don't let the pressure of this time of year sneak up on you. The demands on your time, energy, and patience are about to increase. Take good care to ensure healthy foods are stocked in the kitchen, sleep

schedules are regular, and screen time is minimized. Be generous with your hugs and coax everyone out into the sunshine as frequently as possible. Schedule a time of rest each day. You're all in this together and it's going to be great.

### Organize

Ensure your calendar is up to date with deadlines, appointments, and events. Then, reviewing your calendar, list any actions you'll need to take in preparation for the events, along with reasonable deadlines for each.

In addition to a to-do list, a habit tracker can be a helpful and motivating tool when the going gets tough. Staying on top of habits such as home cleaning tasks, exercise, email management, nutrition goals, and nighttime routines can do wonders when life throws a lot your way.

### Finish Well

Lots of things wrap up this time of year. Whatever you're managing, envision what it looks like to finish well and get that done. The urge to procrastinate may surface frequently in this season. Resist and focus on finishing. Perfection is an illusion, so do the very best you can with the resources

you have. Teach and encourage your children to finish well.

### Push Yourself

It isn't uncommon to lose momentum or feel fatigued at this point in the school year. The pencils are down to the stubs, the folders are ripped, and the lunchbox has seen better days.

When you're tempted to start mailing it in rather than maintain the personal standards you normally hold for yourself, push yourself just a little. Take the extra five minutes to prepare the healthier lunch, take time to write the heartfelt thank-you note to the coach, go for your afternoon walk even when you don't feel like it—push just a little to do well what you should do.

### Envision Success

As you go, envision what a job well done will feel like—for you, your spouse, and your children. Picture yourself celebrating at the end of the year and then enjoying summer with a sense of pride and satisfaction knowing you all did your best.

### Celebrate

Don't forget to enjoy this exciting time of year and celebrate each accomplishment along the way. "The days are long, but the years are short," as they say. While demanding, these times are sure to become precious memories in your family's life. Don't forget to enjoy and celebrate together.

EUGENIO MARONCHI/SHUTTERSTOCK



The key to finishing the school year strong is to recognize the nature of the season and take a few extra steps to see it through with excellence.

# 7 Things Parents Should Do Before Summer

Prepare your children and family to thrive and embrace the best of summer

By Barbara Danza

Summer's on its way. As every parent knows, summers are precious opportunities to embrace the very best of childhood and, at the same time, periods of potential challenge when it comes to day-to-day thriving as a family.

To make the most of the former and minimize the latter, here are seven things to do before summer starts.

### 1 Tighten Screen Habits

Begin to tighten the reins when it comes to screen time in your home. As much as possible, minimize the amount of time your children (and you) spend staring at screens of all kinds—phones, tablets, televisions, and computers.

Come up with a strategy, a set of rules, or guidelines that you'll carry into the summer to ensure that the family is focusing

on the real life in front of them, not the digital one delivered through screens.

### 2 Declutter

Get through your spring cleaning and assess what may be needed for summer wardrobes. Rid yourself of items in your home that no longer serve you, and make your home one that's easy to tidy. This way, when you enlist the troops to clean up after themselves all summer long, they'll be able to do so easily.

### 3 Finalize Your Calendar

If you still need to sign up for activities, book your summer vacation, or plan get-togethers with family and friends, take care of it now. A summer sprinkled with fun things to look forward to and a predictable schedule is one the whole family can enjoy. Reviewing your calendar at a glance before summer starts will also allow you

to ensure you've got enough downtime for relaxation and serendipity to take hold.

### 4 Solidify Your School Plan

Yes, I know this school year is still going, but take a gander at next school year. What's the plan? If you're homeschooling, this is a great time to make your plans for next year so that you can enjoy a free summer. Perhaps you're rethinking your children's schooling, like so many parents are today. Handle those decisions before summer begins if you can.

### 5 Stock Up

As summer approaches, make sure everyone has the bathing suits, goggles, sandals, and shorts they need to enjoy the warm weather approaching. Further, begin to gather healthy snacks and beverages to have on hand. Why is it that kiddos need 10 times more snacks in summer than any

other time of year? Stock up on the basics you'll need for a delightful summer.

### 6 Schedule Time for Yourself

Summer can be a demanding time for parents. It's great fun, but it can wear you out. Pencil in some downtime for yourself if possible. Perhaps there'll be a day or two that your spouse takes the lead and you head to the spa or the coffee shop. Perhaps the grandparents would like to host the kids for a weekend this summer. Plan ahead to give yourself a breather. A little break can help propel you forward by being both something to look forward to and something that rejuvenates you.

### 7 Lighten Up

The weight of the world seems to be heavy on most people's shoulders these days. Aim to take the optimistic view this summer. Reduce your news consumption, tell silly jokes, dance around the backyard, and have fun with your family. Begin now to shift your mindset to one that's a bit more hopeful and more appreciative of the beauty in the present moment.



# FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Week 19, 2023



## Nest Eggs

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Birds all the sunny day  
Flutter and quarrel  
Here in the arbour-like  
Tent of the laurel.

Here in the fork  
The brown nest is seated;  
Four little blue eggs  
The mother keeps heated.

While we stand watching her  
Staring like gabies,  
Safe in each egg are the  
Bird's little babies.

Soon the frail eggs they shall  
Chip, and upspringing  
Make all the April woods  
Merry with singing.

Younger than we are,  
O children, and frailer,  
Soon in blue air they'll be,  
Singer and sailor.

We, so much older,  
Taller and stronger,  
We shall look down on the  
Birdies no longer.

They shall go flying  
With musical speeches  
High over head in the  
Tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom  
And sensible talking,  
We on our feet must go  
Plodding and walking.

JULIYA SHANGAREY/SHUTTERSTOCK



## HOW DID THE PANDA OPEN HER MOTHER'S DAY GIFT?

WITH HER BEAR HANDS

## A mother's arms are made of sleepiness, and children sleep soundly in them.

VICTOR HUGO (1802-1885), FRENCH AUTHOR



SALMONNEGRO-STOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

# This Week in History

## EAST MEETS WEST

On May 10, 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad was completed, uniting the East and West coasts of the United States.



This allowed frontier settlers to avoid making the often treacherous journey west via wagon and had a lasting and unifying effect on the country as a whole.

Samuel Reed, general superintendent and engineer of construction, at the site of the completion of the first U.S. transcontinental railroad in Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869.



ALL PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

A photograph of the first transcontinental railroad, circa 1869.

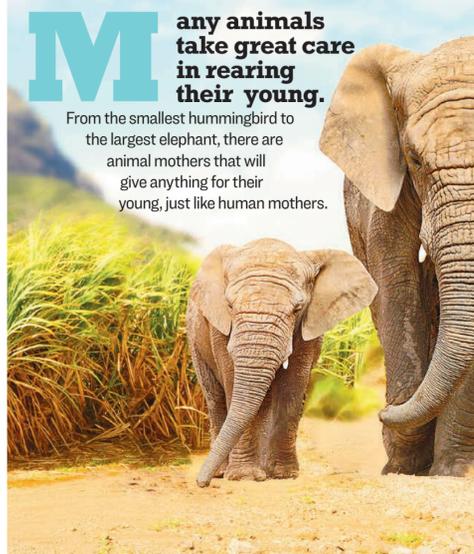
By Aidan Danza

# MOTHERS IN NATURE

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

## Many animals take great care in rearing their young.

From the smallest hummingbird to the largest elephant, there are animal mothers that will give anything for their young, just like human mothers.



### AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Elephants are raised in what are referred to as "matriarchal herds," or groups of elephants that consist only of females and their young. They are led by the oldest female, which can be considered a grandmother to all the elephants living in the herd. When a female elephant becomes pregnant, she carries her calf in the womb for 22 months, which is more than double the time of a human pregnancy. When the calf is born, it may weigh up to 360 pounds and stand three feet high. Within two hours of birth, the calf is up and walking. The calf's aunts and other adult relatives will provide a lot of help to the new mother, helping the calf learn to suckle from its mother and teaching it which plants are edible and which ones aren't. A mother elephant is also extremely protective of her young, and she can be quite dangerous if she perceives a threat to her calf.



A female ruby-throated hummingbird.

A male ruby-throated hummingbird.

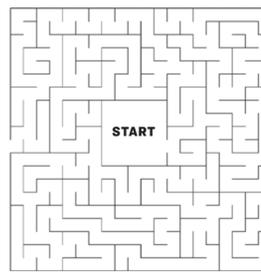
### RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

In stark contrast to the world's largest land animal, we have one of the very smallest birds, the ruby-throated hummingbird. The hummingbird mothering process is very quick compared to the elephant's. While the elephant remains pregnant for 22 months, a ruby-throated hummingbird can raise a brood of three chicks in around six weeks, including the time it takes to build a nest to house the young in.

The hummingbird's nest is made mostly of thistles,

dandelion seeds, and spiderwebs, and measures about two inches in diameter and one inch deep. The nest can house one to three peazoid eggs, which hatch in around two weeks. Though most adult hummingbirds subsist solely on flower nectar (and tree sap, when there is no nectar), the mother feeds her young a nutritious diet of regurgitated insects, which contain healthy proteins that the babies need to grow.

# AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1



Solution For Easy 1

1 x 9 + (2 + 2)

Medium puzzle 1



Solution for Medium 1

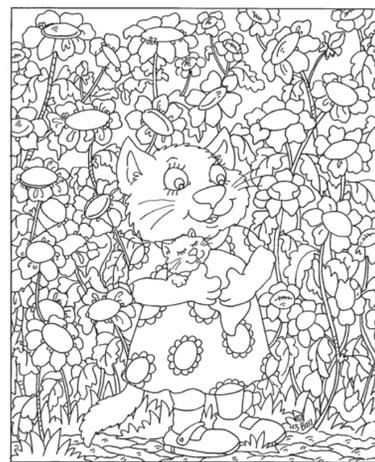
2 - 9 + (5 + 8)

Hard puzzle 1



Solution for Hard 1

21 - 9 + 91 + 28



HIDDEN TREASURES by Liz Ball  
www.HiddenPicturePuzzles.com

WORD SEARCH: Happy Mother's Day!

P	R	O	T	E	C	T	O	R	F	R	I	E	N	D
Y	K	A	E	V	V	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E
E	I	D	N	L	H	A	H	E	L	P	E	R	F	V
M	S	V	C	A	Q	R	S	M	I	L	E	R	L	J
A	S	I	O	U	D	I	B	X	Z	I	O	U	O	V
I	E	C	U	G	H	N	W	A	R	M	F	Y	W	T
L	S	E	R	H	U	G	S	R	K	T	U	E	T	
I	H	E	A	R	T	K	O	D	H	I	E	C	R	E
S	C	O	U	Z	T	W	E	G	I	L	N	G	S	A
T	O	Z	I	J	T	U	W	B	S	K	G	Y	C	
E	A	M	N	C	O	O	K	I	N	G	D	L	H	H
N	C	Y	G	V	H	G	I	V	I	N	G	L	O	E
E	H	R	E	T	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	O	N	R
R	C	D	Y	B	O	U	Q	U	E	T	L	V	O	U
S	U	P	P	O	R	T	E	R	P	H	E	R	L	

- Advice
- Baking
- Bouquet
- Caring
- Chocolate
- Coach
- Cooking
- Cry
- Devoted
- Encouraging
- Flowers
- Friend
- Giving
- Heart
- Helper

- Honor
- Hugs
- Kisses
- Laugh
- Listener
- Love
- Protector
- Respect
- Smile
- Supporter
- Teacher
- Thoughtful
- Warm
- Warrior



Andy and Marylin Humphrey with their transport truck used in the production of maple syrup.



The Humphreys stand by some of their maple syrup products in their soon-to-be-outgrown supply store, a converted tack shop.

ALL PHOTOS BY ANNIE HOLMQUIST

## ENTREPRENEURS

# Tapping Into Success: Couple Turns a Childhood History Project Into Thriving Business

It all started with a school project, a father's guidance, and some old maple syrup tapping spouts

By Annie Holmquist

It's often said that one person's junk is another person's treasure. Andy Humphrey would likely agree, because the old maple syrup tapping spouts he found in his family's junk drawer in fifth grade turned into the thriving business he owns and operates today.

An ambitious set of entrepreneurs from America's heartland, Andy and his wife, Marylin, are proof that the good old Protestant work ethic and American ingenuity aren't as dead as we may think. Although they're both only 26 years old, the couple already has more than a decade of business experience under their belt—experience they're putting to good use as they rapidly expand their various enterprises.

In addition to farming several hundred acres and raising beef cattle, the couple owns and operates A&M Pure Maple Syrup in Dallas, Wisconsin.

The expansion has been rapid. Last year, they produced 5,000 gallons of syrup, bottling it under their own brand, but also selling it to a wholesaler in Ohio, who, in turn, sells it to well-known companies such as Trader Joe's and Cracker Barrel. By building relationships and offering higher prices for the syrup of other producers in the area, the Humphreys' operation is thriving and becoming an important part of the local community.

But the Humphreys don't just stick to plain old maple syrup. Inspired by a bottle of cinnamon-infused syrup on a Walmart shelf, Andy and Marylin began experimenting with their own flavored syrup, three of which include wild orange, coffee, and bourbon. And because maple syrup needs a partner, the couple recently acquired Kripple Kreek Syrup Co., which boasts a pancake mix made with maple sugar, often sold at many tourist locations across the country.

### Raised to Venture

The success of A&M Pure Maple Syrup would have been far less likely, however, had Andy's parents ignored opportunities to teach their son the principles of good business at an early age. Raising five children, Andy's father sought to find the interests of each child and taught them how to turn those interests into money-making ventures. Andy's sisters chose sheep and horses, while his brother pursued auto mechanics, and today, three out of the five children are self-employed and running successful businesses.

Andy is one of those three. At first, he followed in his sister's footsteps, starting a small flock of sheep and eventually expanding to beef cattle. This growth was fostered by his father, who gave each child the capital to start their endeavors, offering them three options once they gained footing in their respective business enterprises.

The first was to "keep the money and spend it on stupid stuff," Andy explains. The second was to sell the product and invest the money in something else, while the third was to keep the product—in Andy's case, his lambs—and expand on it.

But Andy's interests didn't only revolve

around sheep and beef cattle. As mentioned earlier, Andy came across a couple of old sap spouts in the family junk drawer while in fifth grade. Needing a topic for his Wisconsin state history project, Andy researched the maple syrup industry in his state, tapping a few trees and collecting the sap in the process.

An ambitious set of entrepreneurs from America's heartland, Andy and his wife Marylin are proof that the good old Protestant work ethic and American ingenuity are not as dead as we may think.

His interest in maple syrup grew, and in 2012, his father sectioned off a small portion of woods, helping Andy build a sugar house to boil down the sap. Although the season was a bad one and only lasted three days, it was a fun family venture, and Andy decided to try it again. Although he didn't know it at the time,

Andy made a valuable business move in 2013 by conning one of his high school classmates, a girl named Marylin, into helping him with the syrup season. The two met in welding class and "sparks flew," Andy said jokingly. But the time on the farm wasn't quite the hot date that Marylin anticipated, as she soon discovered that she was "free help." "I stuck around longer than his fam-

◀ The Humphreys run A&M Pure Maple Syrup in Dallas, Wis., in addition to raising beef cattle and farming.

ily because they realized it was hard work!" Marylin says. "It was just Andy and me, hauling buckets, into the night, cooking syrup."

Those long nights were literal for Andy, who spent the early years of maple syruping sleeping in a hammock in the woods in order to keep an eye on the collection and processing of the sap.

The couple married the following year, two weeks after high school graduation. Opting out of college, Andy started doing highway construction work, a job that not only made him more money than would have a college degree but also laid him off during the winter, enabling him to prepare for and run the syrup season each year.

### Expanding and Teaching Others

By 2016, the syrup business was expanding so much that Andy and Marylin knew they had to "go big or go home." They chose the former, learning from their mistakes along the way, including buying an old evaporator they refer to as "the locomotive" because of the black plumes of smoke it spat out while processing the sap.

"I should've [run] when I saw it!" Andy says, noting that they didn't make any money off it the first year.

"We're in too deep now!" Marylin says of their current state. "We're addicted to it—it's a fever!"

And that's a fever they like to spread to others. Driven by their own desire for easily accessible parts, the Humphreys decided to become maple syrup equipment distributors a few years ago. They sell everything from little evaporators for hobbyists, to monster evaporators like the one they have in their own sugar shack. Doing so has allowed Andy and Marylin to support economic growth and industry in their community.

"I think farmers have yet to realize that you can actually make money with maple syrup," Marylin says.

It's a fairly good investment, offering a quick return. The Humphreys seek to smooth the way on this investment, setting up the tubing equipment for farmers and servicing it when needed, while also buying any sap and syrup the surrounding farmers make.

It's a win-win situation for both sides, for the farmers do the job of watching all the trees and tapping on location, providing manpower that the Humphreys don't have, while the Humphreys remove the production burden from farmers through their established operation. Farmers also get a tax write-off for their land because tapping trees turns it into agricultural usage.

The couple has big plans to continue expanding their business and are hoping to help their neighbors discover the untapped maple syrup potential in their state.

"If Wisconsin was to utilize all its [maple] trees, it would make more [syrup] than Vermont," Marylin says.

Their plans also include passing along the business principles Andy's dad instilled in him.

"If we ever have kids someday, I would do the same thing my folks did," Andy says. "It really teaches you values, how to handle money."

Annie Holmquist is a cultural commentator hailing from America's heartland who loves classic books, architecture, music, and values. Her writings can be found at Annie's Attic on Substack.

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