

# musings

of Millbrook Baptist Church



AUG 2025

ISSUE No. 05

**SUMMER  
STORIES**

**SPIRIT  
TELLINGS**

**FUN &  
ADVENTURES**

## musings

noun [plural]

UK /ˈmjuː.zɪŋz/ US /ˈmjuː.zɪŋz/

your thoughts or comments on something you have been thinking about carefully and for a long time:

When we dreamed of creating *Musings* in early 2024, we envisioned a literary space that would invite expressions from our entire community. This marks our fifth issue of *Musings*. We're excited to report that there have been 70 submissions from 31 unique Millbrookers. That means *Musings* is YOUR creation. *Musings* continues to offer an authentic glimpse of what's happening in the life of Millbrook!

We also imagined that *Musings* would be a form of worship. We hope these pages offer sacred spaces in the place, time, and mood of your choosing. You'll notice *Musings* is not time-stamped. We believe its contents will be as relevant in the future as they are today.

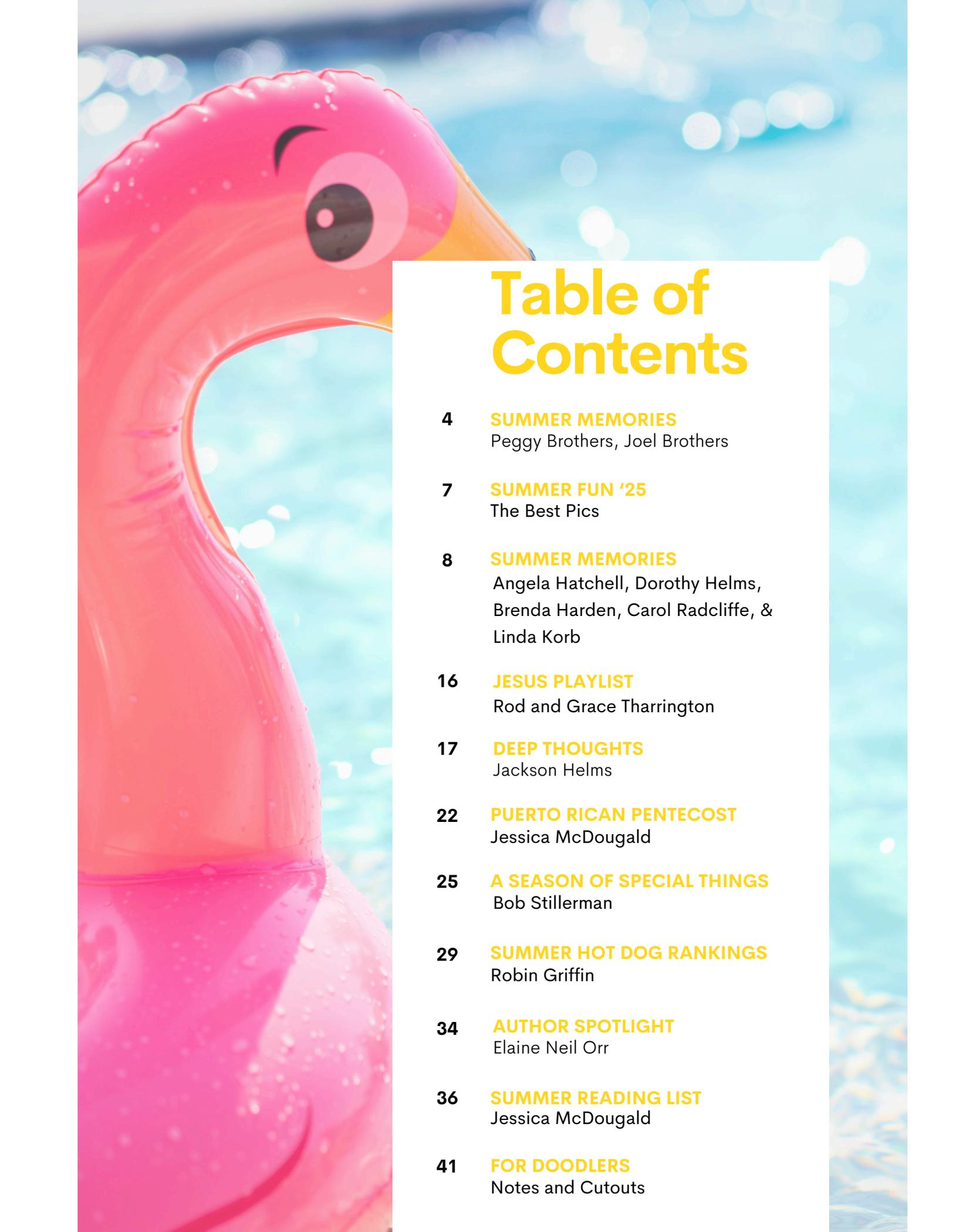
A word about this issue: Summer is often considered a scattered season – we're all off doing our own things. Liturgically, it's called Ordinary Time, a season where we reflect on the ministry, teachings, and everyday life of Jesus. But there's nothing all that scattered or ordinary about summer. In fact, it's quite the opposite. We believe that summer is a season of both connectivity and extraordinary wonder. We asked people to share why summer is special to them. We draw joy from our memories and dream of new adventures. And we remember that we live SO much of life in these longer, brighter, hotter (did we mention hot!) days.

As always, may you find a spirit of love in these pages. And may that love help inform your worship.

Agape!



RESIDENT MUSES



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## SUMMER MEMORIES: SEA TURTLE VOLUNTEERS, 2020

*Peggy Brothers*

The last two weeks of August 2020 in Corolla were quite an experience. We had been involved with the Network for Endangered Sea Turtles (NEST) on the Outer Banks for 15 years or so. Joel rode the beach on an ATV one morning a week during the summer looking for new turtle nests that had been laid during the night, mainly by loggerhead turtles. I was involved with nest sitting, waiting for the turtle eggs to hatch. Training was provided by the Wildlife Education Center, and we became official Sea Turtle Volunteers.

This summer we had our first loggerhead turtle nest in our Crown Point development, at the base of our steps to the beach. It was laid June 29 and was Nest 11. Our area covered from the Virginia border down through Nags Head and at last count we had 34 nests. We were really excited and planned to be in Corolla to be nest sitters for "our nest." Baby turtles usually hatch 55-65 days after being laid. The first night of preparation was August 19 (day 52), which was a little early. We went to the beach each night around 7 PM and prepared a runway for the little turtles to make it safely from the nest to the ocean. We also had to rope off the area to maintain social distancing.



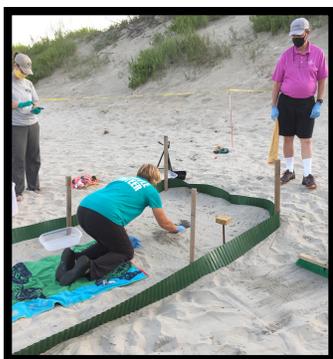
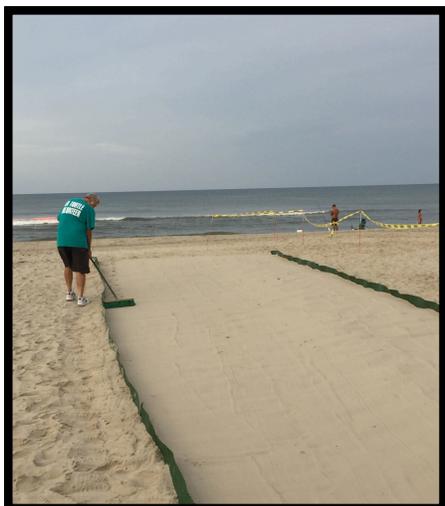
*Baby sea turtle, Corolla Beach, NC, August 2020  
About the size of an Oreo Cookie*



## SUMMER MEMORIES: PEGGY BROTHERS

This routine went on each night until finally on August 24 (day 57), we had one little turtle emerge and make it safely to the ocean. Then, no more turtles until August 28 (day 61). We actually had a "turtle boil." At 9:15 PM turtles started emerging and it took 30 minutes for 83 turtles to emerge and make it to the ocean. It was dark and hard to see so many little turtles (about the size of an Oreo cookie). We had to constantly be on the lookout for ghost crabs and their holes, and also foxes. One little turtle had almost made it to the ocean, but fell in a deep ghost crab hole. Joel quickly dug him out and he went on his merry way.

There were a few more nights of nest sitting and a few more turtles made it out. Excavation of the nest was done August 31, finding 3 more live turtles which were released that night. Official counts for our nest were 102 total shells, 96 live hatchlings, and 6 unhatched eggs with 4 eggs being stage 3 and almost made it. So quite a successful nest. Hopefully, one of our little baby turtles survived and will make it back to our little spot in Corolla in 20 years (2040), as a mother, and lay her eggs.



## SUMMER MEMORIES: HOMEMADE ICE CREAM

*Joel Brothers*

Summertime at our house when I was growing up always involved making homemade ice cream. My Dad, as with all other things, had his way of making that happen. To begin with, we had a 5 quart, White Mountain, cedar, hand crank ice cream maker. No piddling 4 quart, motorized job for us! The process began by going to the ice plant in town (Elizabeth City) to buy a 25+ lb block of ice "because it was colder than anything you could buy in a plastic bag." By the time we got home with the ice, my Mother would have the ice cream mixture in the can ready to freeze. The ice would be chipped up with an ice pick in one of my Mother's wash tubs and mixed with rock salt. It was a rare summer when the wash tub survived intact without being punctured by the ice pick (which brings up another separate story).

Once the cranking began and the ice was added to the bucket, you couldn't stop cranking for any reason. As the ice cream got harder along with the cranking, burlap bags were placed on top of the crank head and someone had to sit on it to hold it in place. When it was obvious that no one had the strength to crank another turn, the bags and crank head were removed. Then came the tricky part of removing the top of the freezer can along with the dasher from inside the can without getting any salt in the ice cream. Once the lid was cleaned and a cork was inserted in the hole in the top, the whole concoction was packed in ice and salt, and covered with several burlap bags and a foot tub and left to set up for 4-5 hours until it was time to eat it. As I recall, we were never disappointed with the finished product, and the labor involved was quickly forgotten. The stabbing headaches between the eyes from eating too much too fast are well remembered, however!!



# SUMMER FUN '25

We checked in to see what the MBC kids have been up to this summer



## SUMMER MEMORIES: A SLIDESHOW OF SUMMERS PAST

*Angela Hatchell*

***My memory plays a slideshow of summers of the past:***

Fun-filled days sitting on the front porch or around a picnic table in the backyard,

Spending time with my family and friends, spending time at my grandmothers' homes,

Fans blowing in the house, push-up or banana popsicles, fly swatters, bare feet, watermelons, tomatoes, peaches, coke-a-colas in a glass bottle, and home-made ice cream,



Swimming in the pool, riding bikes, and staying out until the streetlights came on, playing in the creek,

The sound of ice cream trucks, snow cones, lemonade, and the sight of lightning bugs,

Playing jacks, jumping rope, board games, kick ball, and playing on the playground,

Running through sprinklers, radios playing catchy tunes, the warmth of the sun,

Going to the beach, picking out a favorite Bert's Surf Shop t-shirt to wear with pride,



Picking up bottles to return them for the deposit, cutting grass, and summer jobs,



## SUMMER MEMORIES: ANGELA HATCHELL

Calling friends to see what class they were assigned to in school, picking out what we would wear the first day of school,

Going to camp, Vacation Bible School, making crafts, and writing letters.

Today summers are often much more fast paced and I often long for the past – a simpler time to just slow down and enjoy time with each other and listen to the sounds of summer – frogs croaking, crickets chirping, bugs buzzing, and the day slowly winding down.

Today, I am thankful for the time I get to spend with family and friends, grandchildren giggling, pool time, time to read and knit, and seeing the occasional lightning bug.



## SUMMER MEMORIES: LOOP-DE-LOOP

*Dorothy Helms*

I remember two summers ago, we went to Busch Gardens, Water Country USA, and historical Williamsburg. It was very fun. That trip was probably the first time I went on big roller coasters and rides, besides the State Fair. My favorite was Busch Gardens, and I went on tons of roller coasters with my Dad, because we were the only ones brave enough to go. My Mom was definitely brave enough but my sisters weren't, so someone had to watch them. All of the roller coasters had very big drops, and even though I wanted to go on the rides didn't mean I wasn't scared.

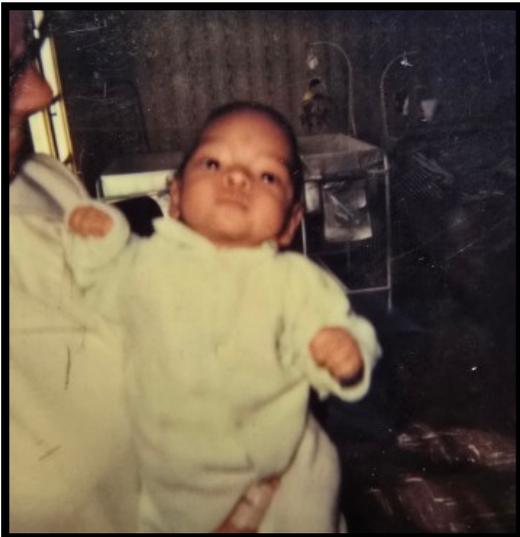
The first thrill ride we went on was the Griffon, which was great and very scary at the same time. It was one of those rides with seats that made your legs dangle, touching nothing, while most rides have your feet on the floor. We had to wait in a short line, but that is good for an amusement park. We had to get seat belts and over the shoulder restraints on. Then, it started. We went up the big hill, which is the worst part in my opinion, since you are waiting in anticipation of the drop that is sure to take your breath away. When we finally got to the top, unlike I expected, it had a flat top. Most roller coasters, you get to the top and you go down almost immediately. It was different. You got to see the view, because it was a very large drop. It smelled so crisp, because down on the ground it smelled like hot dogs and french fries. Eventually we got close to the drop, and I prepared myself, but right as it was going down, it stopped, right on the edge. For a half second, I thought it was not planned, not supposed to happen. But it was. The people in the very front had the loudest thrilled/terrified screams. Your legs are dangling, of course. After a good 5 seconds, which felt like a million, it started moving down the drop, and to the loop-de-loops and swerves and minor drops, like a typical roller coaster. The screams, hands in the air, and surprises just added to the experience. It was really fun, but also one of my most memorable roller coaster/summer memories.



## SUMMER MEMORIES: MEETING JOHN

*Brenda Harden*

To Brenda, summer is an exciting reminder of when she adopted her son, John. She flew to Bogotá, Colombia in August of 1984, and brought John home with her! Here are pictures from John's homecoming:



Welcome Home

## SUMMER MEMORIES: CREATION AND A LIGHTHOUSE

Carol Radcliffe

Jerry  
and I used  
to sail a 26 foot  
Catalina Capri sailboat  
and for many years we enjoyed  
sailing on the Neuse River near Oriental.  
We had gone over to Cape Lookout and spent  
a  
few  
days  
anchored out there. As we were leaving early one  
Sunday morning, WCPE began playing Haydn's  
*The Creation*. The sound of that music with  
that beautiful lighthouse silhouetted against  
the morning sky is one of our most  
memorable summer recollections.



## SUMMER MEMORIES: RV VACATION, AUG 22-31, 2011

*Linda Korb*

In 2011, Lee and I planned our first RV vacation to visit friends and see selected attractions on the way there and back. Some of the campgrounds were our favorite ones from past weekend trips. We left our home on Sunday, August 22, and first stopped at the Wytheville, VA KOA for the night. On Monday, we got to enjoy paying tolls in West Virginia on I-64 as we made our way to Milton, WV. We spent the night at the KOA there. On Monday afternoon we visited Huntington Mall and Hobby Lobby before dinner. We found the Bienko Glass Factory and enjoyed a visit there on Tuesday. Lee took pictures of the Visitor Center and the workers making glass items. See our pictures at the end of the article.



Our next stop was in Dayton, OH. Unfortunately, the GPS system had us take a drive on mountain roads for 30 miles before we could get on a four lane road. It was very nerve racking, especially since the road was narrow and had traffic going both directions. Luckily, we found a Bob Evans restaurant near a 4 lane highway to stop for lunch. We arrived at the Dayton KOA mid-afternoon for 3 nights and 2 days. Lee was really interested in visiting the National Air Force Museum. One of his hobbies was building aircraft models, etc. He and his father had been former members of the Air Force and Army, respectively. We saw the special hangar of 4 presidential airplanes and experimental airplanes on Wed., August 24. Lee took 200 pictures there. Needless to say, we were both tired at the end of the day.

## SUMMER MEMORIES: LINDA KORB

Laundry day was on Thursday at the KOA. We had lunch at the 1940's diner in Brookville, OH and enjoyed their special homemade peanut butter ice cream for dessert. Then it was my turn to select a place to visit, which was a living historical farm, Carriage Hill Farm and MetroPark. Lee took pictures there. See our pictures below.

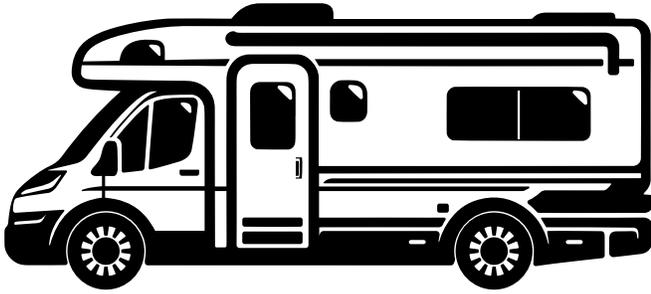


*Carriage Hill MetroPark, Huber Heights, OH*

On Friday, August 28, we left Dayton to travel to our friends' home in Florence, KY and spent the weekend there. We slept in our RV that was parked in their driveway. On Saturday, our friends took us to Cincinnati to see the Legends of Flight 3D show, a Lego store at a large mall, and we ate at a local Italian restaurant. On Sunday morning, we left Florence and traveled to the Milton, WV KOA for the night.

On Monday, we decided to stop at the travel plaza in Tamarack, WV. This was the same route on I-64 with tolls. We stopped at the Fancy Gap Outlet where I was able to purchase some cross stitch supplies. The Fancy Gap KOA is near there, and we had camped there in the past and found this outlet. I guess you can tell that we like to stop at hobby stores to browse and purchase any new items.

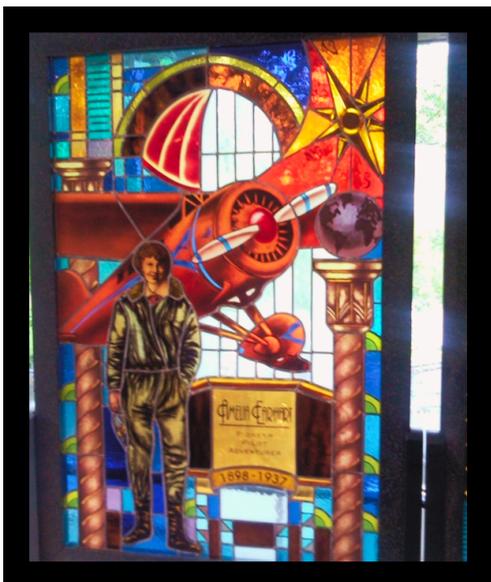
## SUMMER MEMORIES: LINDA KORB



Then we decided to stop at Mt. Airy's Mayberry Campground for our last night of vacation. This campground was a favorite place to camp when we had a RV/fifth wheel trailer. Since then, the campground has added a tiny home for rent and I go there now with my sister several times a year.

On Tuesday, August 31 we left the campground and stopped in King, NC where the RC Hobby Shop was located. Lee shopped there to add to his RC collection of airplanes, etc. which he enjoyed flying at Dorothea Dix fields and other locations. Then we came home. This was the longest trip in an RV that we had experienced in 12 years of RV ownership. Unfortunately, Lee's health prevented us from traveling via RV after October 2011.

I hope you enjoyed reading about our RV trip in 2011. I enjoyed reminiscing about the great time I had on this vacation.



*Blenko Glass Factory, Milton, WV*



*Carriage Hill MetroPark*

# Jesus Playlist

Rod and Grace Tharrington



## My Sweet Lord

George Harrison



## Jesus is Just Alright

The Doobie Brothers



## Spirit in the Sky

Norman Greenbaum



## Jesus Just Left Chicago

ZZ Top



## Shine a Light

Rolling Stones



## Personal Jesus

Depeche Mode



## DEEP THOUGHTS FROM THE SHALLOW END

### Reflections from a summer evening at a kids' swim meet

*Jackson Helms*

It was a hot June evening after a long day kettled up in my home office. Bound to my desk, by endless Zoom meetings and task lists. Some days I barely go outside—cabin fever is rare now; the pandemic taught me how to be very comfortable at home. But tonight was different. It is summer swim team season, and there was an away meet.

I was exhausted from work—normally at this hour I'd be collapsed on the couch—but instead I was melting into a tailgating chair. No breeze. I forgot the personal fan, which always helps at these things. You know that point when you're about 150 feet from home and you are too lazy to turn around for something you forgot? I'd passed that point. The only things worth turning back for are your phone or a child. I'd made a big mistake.

Still, I felt pride watching my daughters swim. They're braver and more athletic than I was at their age. Summer swim is its own kind of memory-making ritual—friendly competition, time with friends, a treat from the snack bar after the breaststroke. These are the kinds of details that will likely stay with them into adulthood. But I was hot. I was tired. I wasn't in a social mood. I was just trying to be present for them, even if that meant being mostly quiet and still.

Another likely pandemic-era skill I've picked up is the ability to endure long, patience-testing moments—waiting in line, a food order that is taking too long, hearing Olivia Rodrigo on repeat. "Alexa, volume down two levels." On the outside I go quiet and still, arms crossed. On the inside, my mind drifts. Yet at the same time, I become hyper-observant of the world around me. During moments like this, odd thoughts bubble up. Some feel fleeting. Others feel significant.

This night they all seem to circle a common question: ***What exactly is going on with the way we see other people? (If you read that in Seinfeld voice, insert slap bass interlude.)***

### ***A Stranger in a Lonely World***

A pop song played on the PA system—something I've heard a thousand times. "Just a small town girl..." And I had this quiet, familiar thought: *Why is this song part of my life?* I don't dislike it—in fact, I admire Steve Perry's vocal chops. But I never chose it. It just keeps showing up. How many times have I *actually* heard this song? Every note is imprinted in my mind.

SMALL TOWN  
Girl

LOLEY  
NLY



And it's not just songs—famous people are imprinted, too.

Certain celebrities become part of the background fabric of our lives in the same way. Over and over, they appear: in old shows, in ads, in headlines. Even long after they've died, some of them seem to linger like permanent residents of our consciousness.

I would struggle to recall the sound of my grandfather's voice—someone I loved deeply, my greatest role model. But I can instantly mimic Christopher Walken. I've never met the actor, but his cadence lives rent-free in my brain. *Did you know he started as a dancer?*

What feels strange about celebrity isn't the talent or popularity—it's the randomness and inescapability of it all. Why do we keep seeing people we'll never meet, never know, but somehow recognize instantly? We didn't choose them, but they became part of our personal and cultural landscape.

Is there meaning in Elvis' face on a commemorative plate?

Their presence becomes oddly intimate and strangely hollow at the same time. We know their expressions, their scandals, their quotes. But we know nothing real about them. It all feels strangely meaningless—like an episode of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*.

### ***Uncanny or All Wet***

Back in the heat of the meet, I sat quietly, observing. Parents. Grandparents. Volunteers. Teenagers. Everyone chatting, cheering, enjoying Sunset Slush. Just... people.

And an unexpected thought came over me: how unusual it felt to be surrounded by unfiltered, ordinary faces. No hashtags. No vanity lighting. No link in bio. Just real people, as they are. And their faces—though normal in every way—almost looked unfamiliar to me. The heat and exhaustion had transformed the mundane into the uncanny. It was like one of those hyper real baby dolls or a deepfake, but in reverse.

*Someone get this man some water!*

I realized I've spent so much time in isolation. Outside of my nuclear family, I'm surrounded online by curated, polished images, so that perhaps my sense of what people actually look like has shifted. Sometimes when I see real, imperfect, everyday people now, it's almost jarring.

But it's not just about appearance. It's about presence. Every person around me carried a full, unseen world: memories, relationships, heartbreaks, childhoods, private jokes. I would probably never know any of it. I was surrounded by deep, rich lives—but in that moment, they were just background figures. Not through any fault of theirs, just through the limits of what I could see.



### ***Lives I Can't Imagine***

In travel shows—especially those set in developing countries—it often seems that the presence of a camera draws a crowd. Curious onlookers. Sometimes the American host attempts to engage them in spite of the language barrier. Other times they are just background figures or passersby. I'll feel this uncomfortable flicker of a thought: *What is their life really like? It's hard to believe they have the same kind of inner life I do.*

It's not something I believe, and certainly not a thought I'm proud of. But the thought happens. They just seem too different and distant. Different environment, different expressions, different rhythm. These figures cross the screen in the news and documentaries too. I see someone fighting for survival, and I'm stewing over the tone of the last email I got at work.

As a child, this feeling of distance was stronger, harsher. But even now, I sometimes sense the echo of those proto-thoughts. I know better, and I correct it quickly. But its very presence reminds me: truly imagining someone else's experience is hard work. Especially when their world is so far from mine.

*What are the limits of empathy?*



### ***Last Lap***

What I've been noticing, in all these moments—celebrities who won't go away, strangers who seem strangely ordinary, distant lives that feel unreachable—is that we are constantly surrounded by people we don't really know. Not just passersby, but even people we see every day.

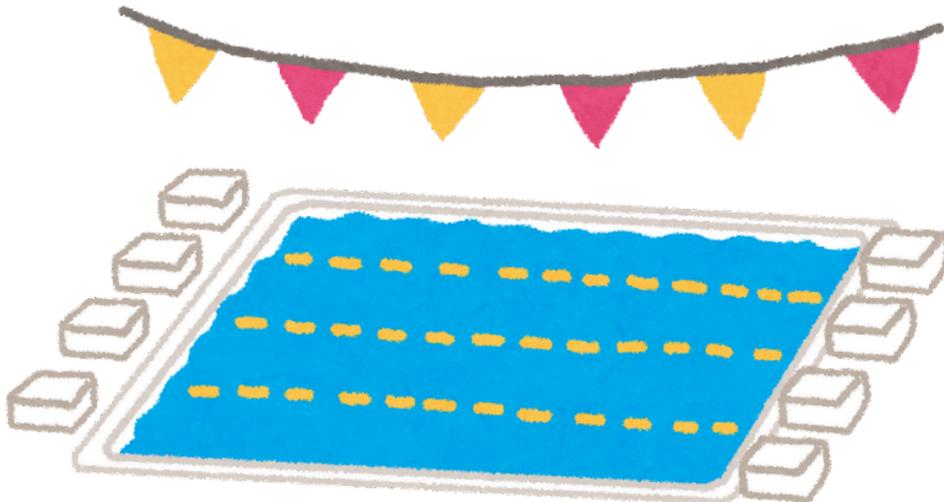
And it's easy—too easy—to flatten them. To reduce people to categories or background noise. Sometimes because they're famous. Sometimes because they're far away. Sometimes because they're just "normal."

And yet, every single person carries a life as intricate and meaningful as my own. That's both a beautiful and deeply strange thing to realize. It reminds me that other people are not props in my life—they're full realities in their own right. With stories I'll never hear, thoughts I'll never guess, and meanings they're trying to make for themselves, just like I am.

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Well—we won the swim meet. Sweet relief is near! The girls have ribbons to show for it. I hastily pack up the chairs, snacks, and soggy towels and head back to air conditioning and rest. But the thoughts about all the unseen worlds around me linger.

Next time, I'll turn around to get the fan.



## PUERTO RICAN PENTECOST

*Jessica McDougald*

The summer between my freshman and sophomore years of high school, my church youth group packed up and went on a week and a half long mission trip to Puerto Rico. We were there to join forces with a local organization and help build houses in the neighborhoods of Juana Diaz. Bless whoever thought it was a great idea to give power tools to 80+ inexperienced and wild teenagers.



There's simply no way those houses are still standing.

We were staying in a hostel with a few other church groups, some from other areas of Puerto Rico and some not. At night we'd have worship services in a giant open building - picture a gigantic picnic shelter nestled right smack on the beach with the most dazzling sunset you can imagine in the background, complete with palm tree silhouettes and a heavy breeze blowing in from off the Caribbean Sea.

One night in worship we were led in the familiar contemporary worship song "Prince of Peace." As I began to sing the words that I knew by heart, I heard around me that someone was singing the words wrong - actually a lot of someones. I listened closer and realized that the words weren't being sung incorrectly - they were being sung in Spanish. Half of the worshippers were singing in English and the other half were singing the exact same song in Spanish.

I had to stop singing just to listen - this was a moment that will remain carved into my brain for my whole life. This was my own personal Pentecost - the Holy Spirit swooping in and snatching my complete attention. For the first time it hit me that my God was big enough to understand and receive praise in two languages at once.

## PUERTO RICAN PENTECOST: JESSICA MCDUGALD



*The room where it happened*

This was my first true glimpse at the universal church, right there standing sweaty in the Puerto Rican humidity, my jaw left hanging open. Our God is so big, and the Body of Christ – so thrillingly diverse.

That evening started for me a quest, of sorts. Where else was God? If the Spirit could find me on the southern

coast of Puerto Rico, pockets full of sea glass, farther than I'd been from home in my whole life at that point, where else could we find each other?

A few years later, I found myself in the village of Ahero, in Kenya, nestled softly between Nairobi and Lake Victoria. I'd wake each morning tangled in mosquito netting to the sound of the muezzin calling all of God's children to prayer. It was a haunting, humbling, holy sound – one in which the Spirit vibrated, one that woke the birds in the trees, the roosters on the ground, and the sun in its cradle. On Sundays in Ahero, a local church group rode around town on top of a giant bus – standing right there on the roof, singing and beating drums. Concentrated, joyful, magnificent worship; worship you feel in your shin bones.

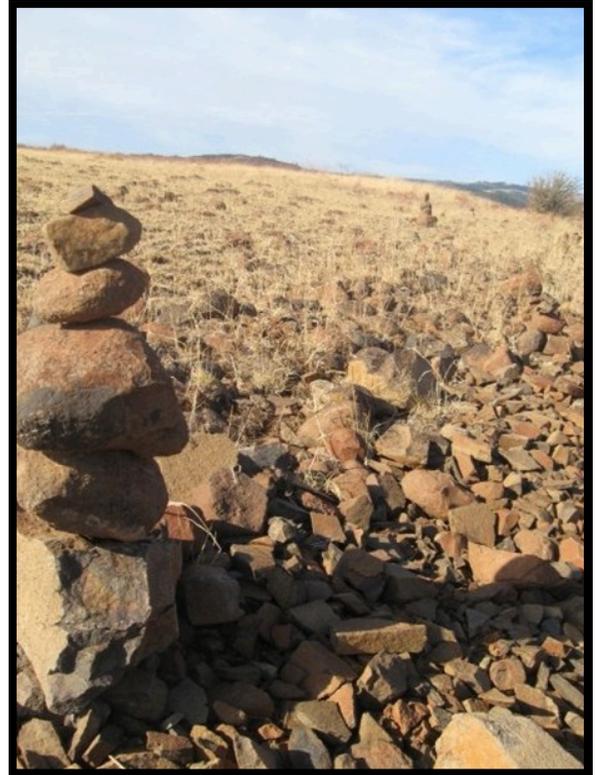


*A view from my window in Ahero*

## PUERTO RICAN PENTECOST: JESSICA MCDUGALD

I spent some time, one summer, on the Yakima Reservation in Washington state, sleeping on the floor in an un-airconditioned building by night and sweating through my clothes in a man named Larry's yard by day. At lunch one day, he ushered us all into his living room and showed us his paintings. In each one, he'd painted a line of triangles, pointing in the same direction. "The Spirit," he said, "this is how I draw it." And there, hidden in the shadow of Mt. Adams, Patu, as the Yakama called it, the spirit found me again.

Time and time again, the spirit arrives unexpectedly. It was there on that Puerto Rican beach, riding the sound waves of the Muslim call to prayer over Ahero, wafting with the eucalyptus through a Peruvian square, in countless other places. It smells like the citronella growing wild along the Kenyan streets, tastes like a steaming cup of coca tea in Cuzco, Peru, sounds like the rattle of the rattlesnake on a path past Fort Simcoe. The spirit is swirling, encompassing all things and all people and in all places. A wild, delightful, living thing from which we cannot look away, pointing us, like Larry's triangles, in one direction - towards our Creator.



*On the Yakima Reservation, right before I almost stepped on a rattlesnake*



## A SEASON OF SPECIAL THINGS

*Bob Stillerman*

Before my preaching days, I earned a living working in advertising. I never realized I was just doing pastoral care for clients. And it turns out that writing creative briefs for ad campaigns requires many of the same skills/thinking for writing a sermon: drawing out truth, condensing that truth, and presenting it in relevant and compelling ways. It also turns out that in both ministry and advertising, no two days are the same, and you are always meeting the most interesting people, and working on things you never imagined you would work on. And, man, summer is the season where this is most true.

So...the project I am most proud of in my advertising career is also the weirdest one! In the summer of 2016, of all things, I coordinated a Major League Eating contest. You've seen Joey Chestnut eat all those hot dogs on the 4th of July, right? Well let me tell you, he and his buddies eat other things, too, and they travel all over the country eating ridiculous amounts of chicken wings, pies, doughnuts, the list goes on.

I was living in Charlotte, and we were working with a local burger chain. Their restaurant featured a behemoth sandwich called the Roadstar, which included 1.5 pounds of hamburger meat, six slices of cheese, and 4 halves of a bun. After consulting with MLE, the sanctioning body of food-eating contests, we developed a contest where the world's best eaters would attempt to eat 4 (FOUR!) of these sandwiches in less than 10 minutes. (Note: for legal and safety reasons MLE capped the consumption at 6 pounds of beef. Gross!). The MLE also suggested we host the event in mid-July, because hot weather is much more conducive for competitive eating (GROSSER STILL!).



## A SEASON OF SPECIAL THINGS: BOB STILLERMAN

I proceeded to dedicate 3 months of my life (while simultaneously pastoring a church and nesting with Jacqueline, who was in her third trimester with Mary Allen) to planning the event. I secured permits. I created a WWE-style belt for the winner, as well as an obscenely-large trophy. I secured misting-machines to keep the crowd cool, coordinated delivery of porta potties, booked an Eagles cover band, wrote press releases, and signed 8 of the world's top 10 eaters to compete in Charlotte, including Joey Chestnut himself!



Top Left: Jacqueline with Davena's shirt Top Right: 2016 Roadstar Challenge  
Bottom Left: Bob with Joey Chestnut Bottom Right: The Roadstar Burger

## A SEASON OF SPECIAL THINGS: BOB STILLERMAN

The day before the event, I was Joey's handler, and we did a PR blitz of all the local TV and radio shows, and for the TV shows, I also had to put on an eight-foot hamburger mascot suit. The day of the event, 500 screaming fans watched in fascination/horror as Joey and the others devoured their plates – Joey ate his burgers in about 8 minutes, a new world-record. We also managed to get Carolina Panthers superstar Thomas Davis to make an appearance. Special shoutout to Jacqueline, who befriended Mrs. Davis (TD's wife), and arranged for a Zoom call with TD and our Super-Panther-Fan Davena Rice. Sadly, Davena passed away before the call came to fruition, but she was SO pumped at the idea. Also, the restaurant had its biggest sales day ever.

I also think back to the three summers I spent in divinity school. One summer, I worked as a chaplain at the homeless shelter in Greensboro. Every day, I met new people, and heard about so many varied experiences. The next summer, I spent three months in London, England, interning for Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. I met people from all over the world. And here's some more weirdness.

The church supplemented a good bit of its budget by renting rooms for auditions for local theatres and the BBC. Before it was a hit show, and before the cast was recognizable, *Call the Midwife* did their call readings in the fellowship hall. And Queen's *We Will Rock You Musical* held its annual tryout for two weeks in the church basement. It was SO-SO-SO awesome to walk into a 19th-century sanctuary each morning and hear young musicians belting out classic rock anthems. But sweeter still, to see 70-and 80-year-old church ladies console/encourage anxious auditioners dressed in the wildest, most provocative and scandalous outfits you've ever seen!



## A SEASON OF SPECIAL THINGS: BOB STILLERMAN

In my last summer, I helped plan and lead service retreats for intergenerational church groups in Appalachia. Again, I met the sweetest, most profound people. And I remain awed by the beauty of the Cumberland Gap.



Each year, when the grass gets green, and the tomatoes finally get their act together, and the sweet corn gets just the right kind of sweet, and the watermelons ripen beyond all reckoning, I am reminded that summer is here! And I am reminded that it's another season with opportunities to meet people I haven't met, and experience things I haven't experienced, and to be absolutely, completely, totally, wonderfully blown away by the weirdness and wildness and whimsy of the Spirit. May it be so again this year for each of us!



## SUMMER HOT DOG RANKINGS

*Robin Griffin*

I like a good hot dog. A good beef hot dog to be specific. The summer is the best time to enjoy one, but I'm a fan of a good grilled (moderately burnt) hot dog at any time. To honor the season and one of its staple foods, here's a list of several hot dog spots that I enjoy.

### **Roast Grill**

**7 S. West St.**

**Raleigh, NC 27603**

A Raleigh institution that I'd been meaning to get to but in my 15 years here had not managed to until now. I could not do a hot dog list without including them. Located downtown, this simple, no fuss hole-in-the-wall is known for its straightforward menu of hot dogs, drinks, and chips. And don't you dare think about asking for ketchup.



The hot dogs at Roast Grill are solid. Nothing fancy but exactly what a hot dog is supposed to be. Roasted on a simple griddle next to a bun steamer with ingredients specifically selected by the owners, Kathy and George. You can have mustard, onions, chili, or slaw added to your dog. I opted for one with mustard and another with mustard and chili. I preferred the one with just mustard as it let the dog stand out, plus it was quality mustard. But the chili was good and had a nice little zing, you can purchase it on its own, in addition to homemade pound cake and baklava.

Roast Grill is just an experience. I had fun talking to the owners, who are the third generation to run this classic establishment, and viewing the nostalgia on the walls and shelves. You can tell the regulars are like family, and I was welcomed quite warmly. If this place isn't on your must try or Raleigh bucket list, it should be.

**3.8 / 5 dogs**



# HOT DOG RANKINGS: ROBIN GRIFFIN

## ***Freddy's Frozen Custards & Steakburgers***

***Multiple locations in the Triangle, the closest being in Wake Forest***

***11708 Retail Dr.***

***Wake Forest, NC 27587***

***www.freddys.com***

Now Freddy's is known for frozen custard and burgers, hence its name, but they do have a hot dog on the menu. What I like about their hot dogs are the toasted split top bun, which is reminiscent of Friendly's, a restaurant I grew up with. They had a Friendly Frank that was one of my favorite menu items with the very same type of bun. I wish more hot dog places used it. I think the warm, buttery toasted bun is a game changer.

What I also like about Freddy's is the red and white theming in the restaurant. It gives a classic diner theme. And when I've visited the Durham-Watkins Rd. and Wake Forest locations the employees seem to be having fun amongst themselves and with customers. I appreciate that. One wish I do have is, for the hot dog's sake, they had spicy mustard. It would complement the dog well.

**3.7 / 5 dogs** 🌭🌭🌭🌭🌭



## HOT DOG RANKINGS: ROBIN GRIFFIN

### ***Corbett's Burgers & Soda Bar***

***Have expanded in the last several months,  
the closest location is in Wake Forest***

***13200 Falls of Neuse Rd.***

***Raleigh, NC 27614***

***corbettsburgers.com***

Corbett's is a homegrown spot, starting out in Cary and growing to multiple locations in the past year. I frequent the Cary location and always enjoy myself. Walking into the restaurant, the smell of the grill surrounds you. You know you're getting fresh, grilled food. And the grill is the best way to prepare a hot dog.

What is great about Corbett's is the loads of toppings (like chili, mushrooms, and jalapenos) so there are tons of customizations to be made, and you can choose between red, beef, and even smoked sausage. I don't know about you, but I like options. One time I ordered mine with gouda and bacon and it was quite the treat. And they toast the bun, albeit the standard hot dog bun.

Bonus: Their seasoned waffle fries are the best! I HIGHLY recommend an order with your dog. And they have loads of bottled sodas to choose from. If you're adventurous, you can try some unique flavors, like Kickapoo Joy Juice or Butterscotch Beer. But standard flavors and fountain drinks are also available.

**3.9 / 5 dogs** 🌭🌭🌭🌭



## HOT DOG RANKINGS: ROBIN GRIFFIN

### ***Wicked Links***

***Setup at multiple Lowe's locations, the closest is off Capital Blvd.***

***4601 Capital Blvd.***

***Raleigh, NC 27604***

***wickedlinkscatering.com***

These are the folks outside of local Lowe's home improvement stores. They are clutch. I don't know if we give enough credit and appreciation to hot dog carts and stands. Perhaps thinking that their mobility, simple setup, and choice of location limits their quality, but Wicked Links gets it very right. I've enjoyed my food every time I've ordered from them.

This last Memorial Day I wanted a hot dog (to kick off the unofficial start of summer of course!) and many places were closed. I held out hope that their hot dog cart outside of the Lowe's off Lynn Rd. would be there, and indeed they were. Most definitely clutch. And quite the deal for two hot dogs, chips, and a drink. They hit the spot, and I was very happy.

Plenty of choices are available. They have a wide assortment of drinks and chips. You can choose to add any toppings at no additional charge, including chili, cheese, and sauerkraut. And they also often have sausages and bratwursts to order as well. Their selection of ingredients is top notch with Sabrett's hot dogs and Martin's potato rolls. You won't be disappointed stopping by on the way back to the parking lot from purchasing tools or supplies.

4 / 5 dogs 🌭🌭🌭🌭



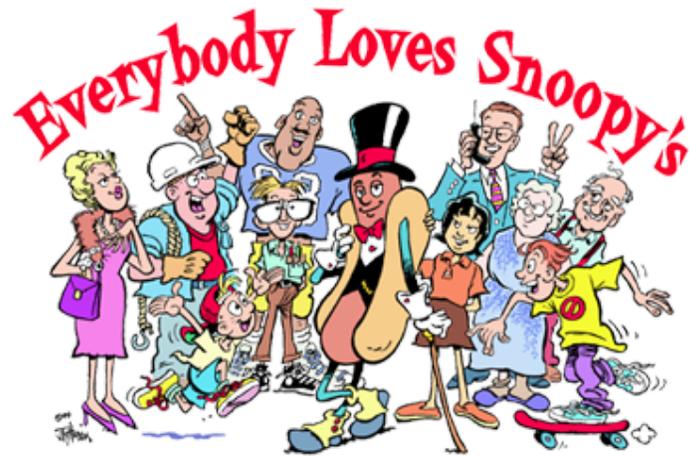
## HONORABLE MENTIONS

***Cloo's Coney Island***  
***2233-102 Avent Ferry Rd.***  
***Raleigh, NC 27606***

Personally, I am not a fan of their hot dogs but many people I know are. I do love this place for their burgers. And their fries are perfection! Everything is made to order and sometimes it takes a tad longer than expected but it's worth it.

***Sonic Drive-In***  
***Multiple locations***  
***sonicdrivein.com***

Yeah, yeah. I know. It's fast food. But I do like a chili cheese coney. It's better than some of the more well-regarded hot dog places that I've been to so I felt it deserved to be included. (I'm not advocating for the local location on Atlantic Ave. Haven't had the best service there.)

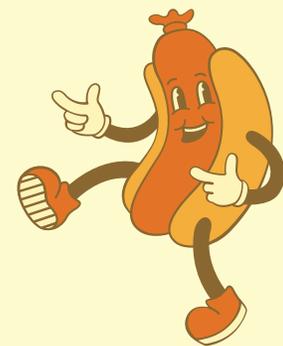


***Snoopy's Hot Dogs & More***  
***Multiple locations***  
***snoopys.com***

I can't mention hot dogs locally and not add Snoopy's to the conversation. Their hot dogs are pretty good. My usual order includes chili, cheese, and mustard. I think their chili has a good flavor with the slightest hint of spice. It's one of the better hot dog chilis. Similar to Roast Grill, if you live in the area, it's worth a try.

## WURST JOKES EVER

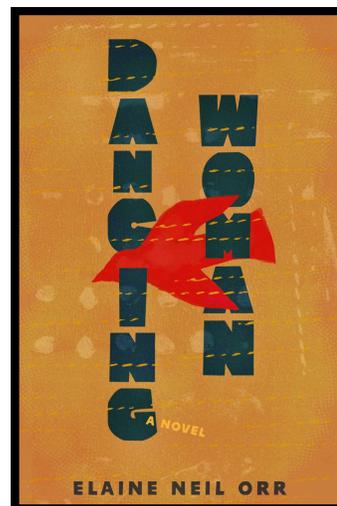
1. What do you call an honest hot dog?
2. How did the hot dog get a date?
3. How do hot dogs propose?
4. Why are hot dogs slower than hamburgers?



***Answers: 1. A frankfurter 2. They mustard up the courage to ask. 3. With an onion ring. 4. They can never seem to ketchup.***

## AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: ELAINE NEIL ORR

In the past year, we've featured several authors who are connected to our extended Millbrook community. Elaine Neil Orr, sister of Becky Albritton, and daughter of Anne and Lloyd Neil, recently published a new novel, *Dancing Woman*. Below is an article from *Bloom* — a literary site devoted to highlighting, profiling, reviewing, and interviewing authors whose first major work was published when they were age 40 or older.



### An Excerpt from Elaine Neil Orr's novel, *Dancing Woman*

Posted on October 22, 2024 by CHSUMMIE

In her forthcoming new novel, *Dancing Woman*, Elaine Neil Orr writes overtly for the first time about feminism and the need for women to have women's art—and to create art. Her powerful story has earned glowing praise from Charles Frazier, Toyin Falola, Rachel M. Harper, and more. Please enjoy the excerpt below.

*She led her visitor to the sunroom. The dancing woman struck her as she had the first time Isabel laid eyes on her, mysterious and essential as the Rosetta stone.*

*"So you have created a shrine? I can't blame you. This one is quite rare." The man stood close enough to the terra-cotta to breathe life into her or, more likely, to draw strength and courage from her. "There are very few female Noks and almost none in such good condition. You did an excellent job in your excavation."*

*"I had endured some difficulties when I found her. She seemed to restore my soul. The Sarki has told me I must discern her meaning."*

*"It is quite interesting that you should put it that way. We are trying to imagine what these sculptures were for. We have found nothing else of the people who made them. No tools. Not even bones. Yet as you say, they are powerfully made and seem to carry a divine energy. You can feel it, can you not? What has it said to you?"*

## AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: ELAINE ORR

*Isabel put her hands on the table. Did this guy know Bobby Tunde? They spoke in a similar way. "I believe she has something to say about the importance of women in culture. After all, we raise children. But I also believe a woman made this figure." None of this had quite distilled in Isabel's brain before this moment.*

*"It is likely there are others in your compound, still in the ground. They are congregated where people long ago built settlements." Mr. Igede finally stepped back. He was ignoring her observation about the significance of the sculpture for women in particular. Isabel had a vision of an archeological dig in the backyard, a discovery of pavers laid out in a circle, one Nok, if she must call it that, set in the center, the others facing in. For surely, they were meant to be in conversation. A sky, pink as a guava, had opened before her that day as she dug. There was a second world reflecting on this one, a second Isabel who observed her life even as her daughters clamored for her attention and her broken husband banged around the kitchen and she stumbled with her Hausa. She felt a presence emanating from the dancing woman, as one might from a true mentor, a kindly god. She felt purified, her outer coarseness lessened. This feeling was compounded when she practiced her own art, which was not nearly as profound as the terra-cotta, but somehow her paintings existed in the same stream. She wished she had a name for the stream. She felt a great need to tease it out, to understand what she was trying to do in her paintings. She could not live in her parents' world or Nick's world. She had to create her own world, her own nature. Painting took her there. Right here in this place some woman long ago had felt the same need and created the dancing woman.*

Elaine Neil Orr is the author of five books, including the novels *A Different Sun* and *Swimming Between Worlds*. She was born and grew up in Nigeria, the daughter of missionary parents, and most of her writing is grounded in both the American South and the Nigerian South. She is a professor of literature at N.C. State University and serves on the faculty of the Naslund-Mann Graduate School of Writing. She lives in Raleigh. [Learn more.](#)

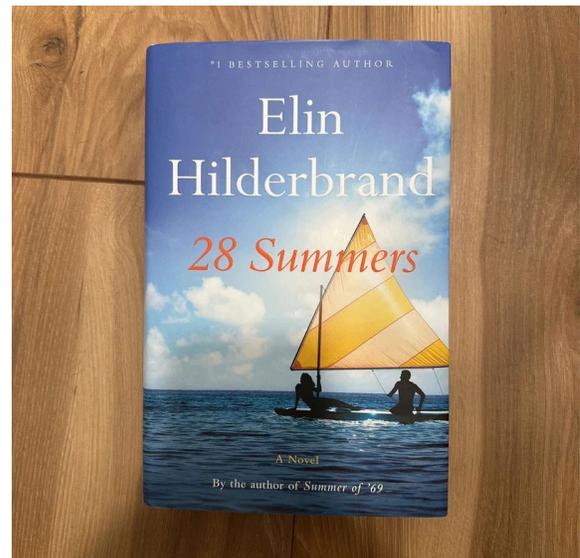
## SUMMER READING LIST

Jessica McDougald

Need a book to read this summer? Jessica has made her list and offers five recommendations best read poolside!

### **28 Summers, by Elin Hilderbrand**

*I've been slowly working through Hilderbrand's entire catalog; she's the beach-read queen, in my opinion. 28 Summers is my fave by her (so far); I laughed, I cried, I Googled trips to Nantucket.*



### **Here's your Goodreads summary:**

*When Mallory Blessing's son, Link, receives deathbed instructions from his mother to call a number on a slip of paper in her desk drawer, he's not sure what to expect. But he certainly does not expect Jake McCloud to answer. It's the late spring of 2020 and Jake's wife, Ursula DeGournsey, is the frontrunner in the upcoming Presidential election.*

*There must be a mistake, Link thinks. How do Mallory and Jake know each other?*

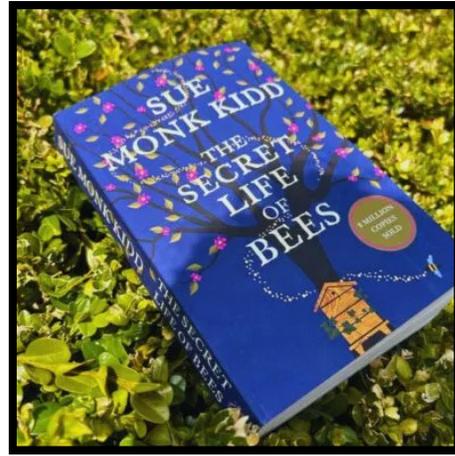
*Flash back to the sweet summer of 1993: Mallory has just inherited a beachfront cottage on Nantucket from her aunt, and she agrees to host her brother's bachelor party. Cooper's friend from college, Jake McCloud, attends, and Jake and Mallory form a bond that will persevere -- through marriage, children, and Ursula's stratospheric political rise -- until Mallory learns she's dying.*

*Based on the classic film Same Time Next Year (which Mallory and Jake watch every summer), 28 Summers explores the agony and romance of a one-weekend-per-year affair and the dramatic ways this relationship complicates and enriches their lives, and the lives of the people they love.*

## SUMMER READING LIST: JESSICA MCDUGALD

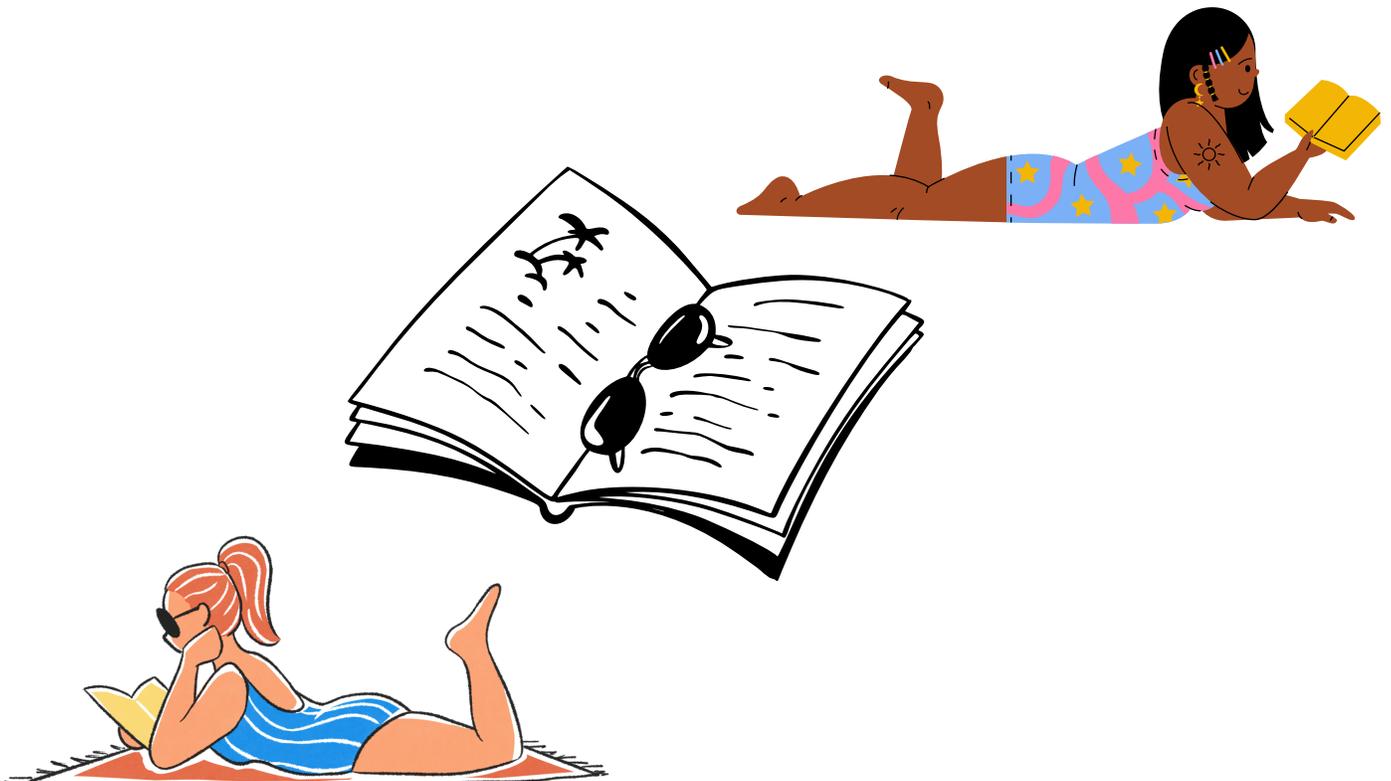
### ***The Secret Life of Bees,* by Sue Monk Kidd**

*Has Kidd ever written a bad book? What I love about her writing is that she's amazing at writing down the feel of a place, which is important for a summer read!*



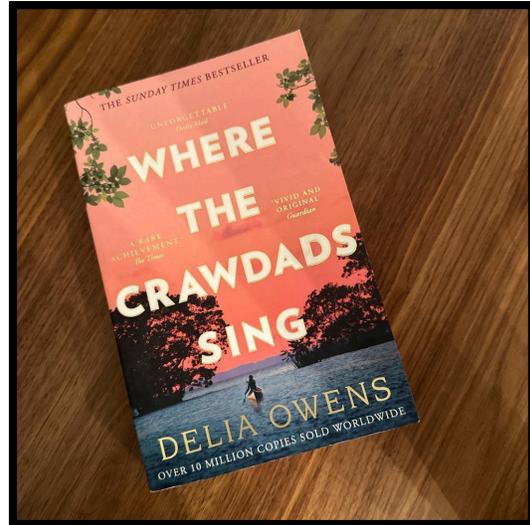
### **Here's your Goodreads summary:**

*Set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted Black "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the deepest racists in town, Lily decides to spring them both free. They escape to Tiburon, South Carolina--a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by an eccentric trio of Black beekeeping sisters, Lily is introduced to their mesmerizing world of bees and honey, and the Black Madonna. This is a remarkable novel about divine female power, a story women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.*



### ***Where the Crawdads Sing*** **by Delia Owens**

*This is another great summertime book, because Owens is great at writing atmosphere!*



#### **Here's your Goodreads summary:**

*For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet fishing village. Kya Clark is barefoot and wild; unfit for polite society. So in late 1969, when the popular Chase Andrews is found dead, locals immediately suspect her.*

*But Kya is not what they say. A born naturalist with just one day of school, she takes life's lessons from the land, learning the real ways of the world from the dishonest signals of fireflies. But while she has the skills to live in solitude forever, the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. Drawn to two young men from town, who are each intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new and startling world—until the unthinkable happens.*

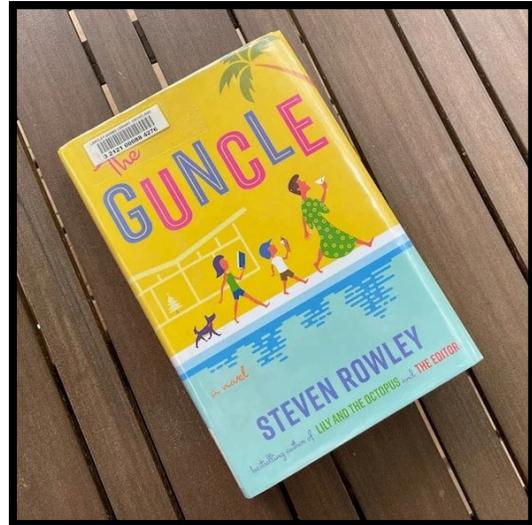
*In *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Owens juxtaposes an exquisite ode to the natural world against a profound coming of age story and haunting mystery. Thought-provoking, wise, and deeply moving, Owens's debut novel reminds us that we are forever shaped by the child within us, while also subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.*

*The story asks how isolation influences the behavior of a young woman, who like all of us, has the genetic propensity to belong to a group. The clues to the mystery are brushed into the lush habitat and natural histories of its wild creatures.*

## SUMMER READING LIST: JESSICA MCDUGALD

### ***The Guncle,* by Steven Rowley**

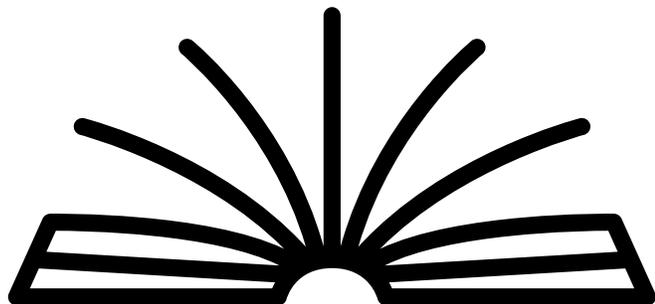
*I loved this book because it was funny, poignant, and relatable all at the same time. There's a sequel now, *The Guncle Abroad*, but I haven't read that one yet!*



### **Here's your Goodreads summary:**

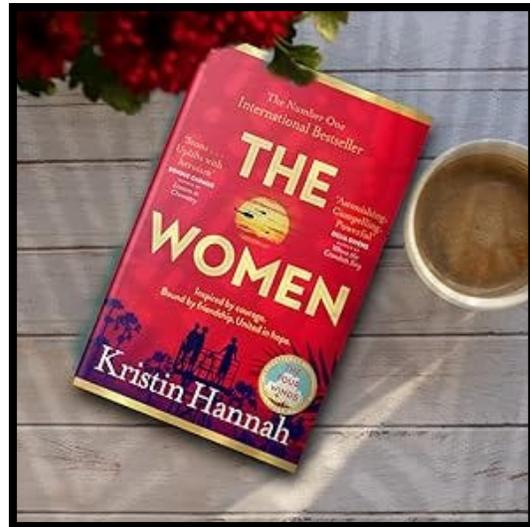
*Patrick, or Gay Uncle Patrick (GUP, for short), has always loved his niece, Maisie, and nephew, Grant. That is, he loves spending time with them when they come out to Palm Springs for weeklong visits, or when he heads home to Connecticut for the holidays. But in terms of caretaking and relating to two children, no matter how adorable, Patrick is honestly a bit out of his league.*

*So when tragedy strikes and Maisie and Grant lose their mother and Patrick's brother has a health crisis of his own, Patrick finds himself suddenly taking on the role of primary guardian. Despite having a set of "Guncle Rules" ready to go, Patrick has no idea what to expect, having spent years barely holding on after the loss of his great love, a somewhat-stalled career, and a lifestyle not-so-suited to a six- and a nine-year-old. Quickly realizing that parenting—even if temporary— isn't solved with treats and jokes, Patrick's eyes are opened to a new sense of responsibility, and the realization that, sometimes, even being larger than life means you're unfailingly human.*



### ***The Women,* by Kristin Hannah**

*Kristin Hannah is the boss of historical fiction, probably. This book, like all her other books, is one I didn't want to put down.*



#### **Here's your Goodreads summary: Women can be heroes.**

*When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these words, it is a revelation. Raised in the sun-drenched, idyllic world of Southern California and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly dares to imagine a different future for herself. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path.*

*As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is overwhelmed by the chaos and destruction of war. Each day is a gamble of life and death, hope and betrayal; friendships run deep and can be shattered in an instant. In war, she meets—and becomes one of—the lucky, the brave, the broken, and the lost.*

*But war is just the beginning for Frankie and her veteran friends. The real battle lies in coming home to a changed and divided America, to angry protesters, and to a country that wants to forget Vietnam.*

*The Women is the story of one woman gone to war, but it shines a light on all women who put themselves in harm's way and whose sacrifice and commitment to their country has too often been forgotten. A novel about deep friendships and bold patriotism, *The Women* is a richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose idealism and courage under fire will come to define an era.*

# SUMMER ADVENTURES

*Make your own Summer Bucket List*



## BUCKET LIST

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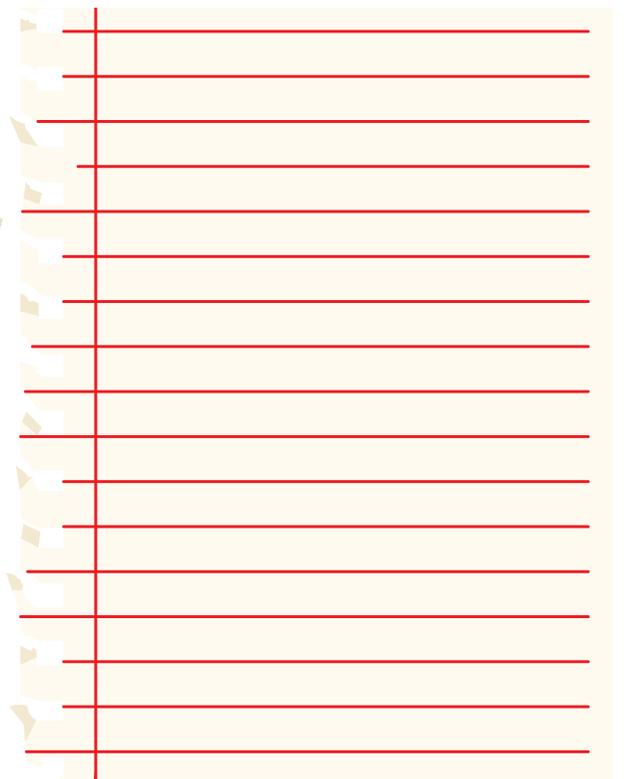
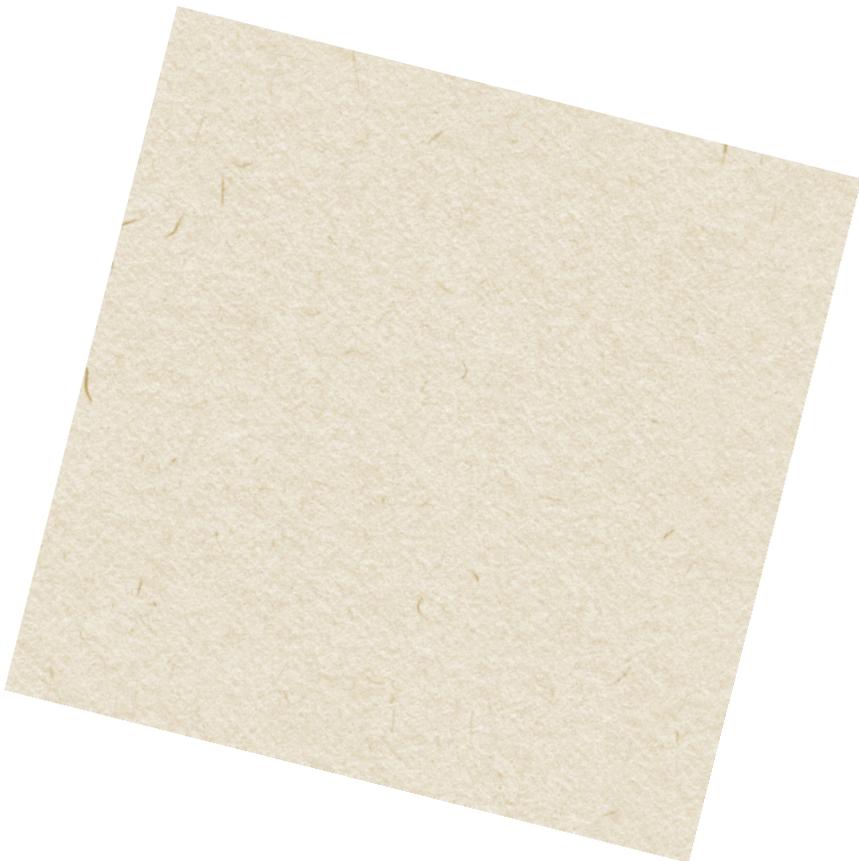
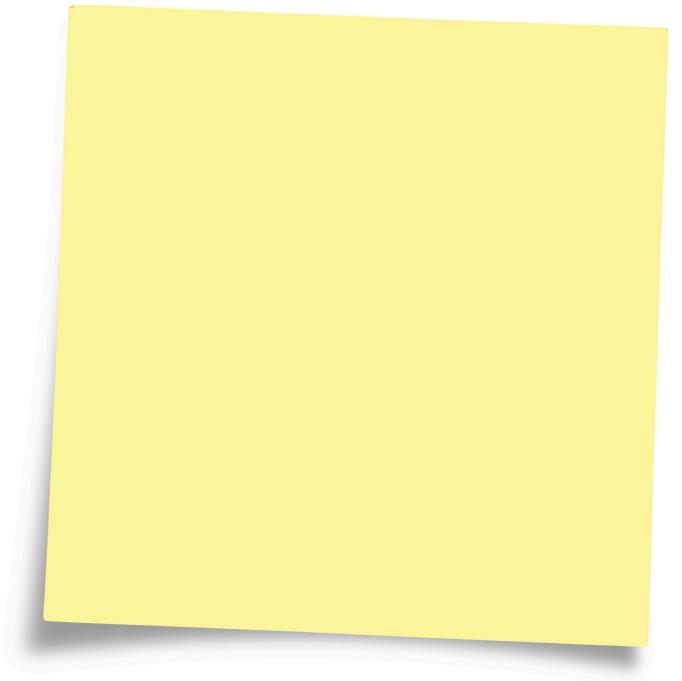
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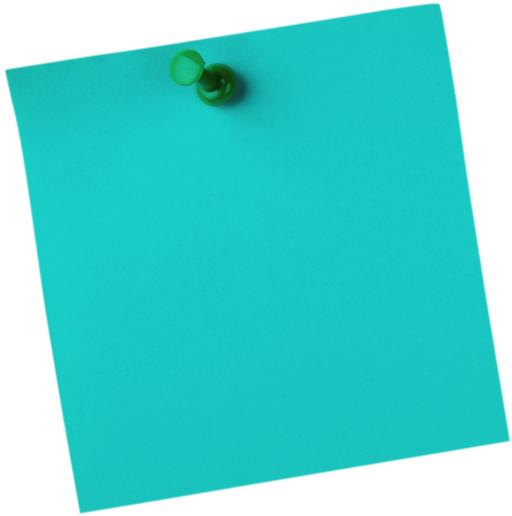
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# PERSONAL MUSINGS

*Use this space for your own summer musings*





*Thank you for reading and connecting with us!*



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