

The Plain and Practical

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“Live simply, that others might simply live.” Elizabeth Seaton

Reality Television—Be Your Own Reality Show Producer

Americans each watch 19 hours of television a week, on average—and in 2013, prepare for 176 NEW Reality Shows across English-speaking television. Reality Shows, in which the camera goes into a house or apartment or workplace, and films seemingly unplanned interactions (but these are scripted, do not be fooled), have been a large part of the entertainment venue since The American Family came into the marketplace in 1971, featuring the Loud Family. The irony is not lost on me.

What I’d like to propose is that these shows, which feature screaming, or bad behavior, or pretending to be vampires, or trashy lifestyle, is enough to make the stars famous and give them the eye of America every week, I’d like to propose that instead, we have reality shows that feature Foster Family of the Week, or Community Group Cleanup: Vinton County. How about “Sewing For Stillborns,” where my friend Judy and her peers could show how to make the tiny little dresses they hand-make and donate to the local hospitals, so bereaved parents can have a beautiful little gown for their child to wear at last parting. How about a weekly show that visits the community centers around the country, and show their most successful programs such as after-school child care that really helps the children with homework and social skills, as well as games and gymnasium time. Let’s have a weekly Reality Show that visits people who go after work to downtown venues and teach free music lessons, so kids in schools with no music program still have that option to improve their lives.

How about a Reality Show called “Minister To The Homebound,” where each week we could go with a minister of some small church as he visits his elderly or sick parishioners who can’t travel, as he gives them comfort and holds their hand, prays with them, and notices if they need food in their cupboard or their sidewalk shoveled and tells them he’ll send a church volunteer out to do that soon. Let’s have a weekly show where we see the back of a thrift store, called “Twice Around” where stuff comes in and the employees are taught job skills, mentored and guided to handle and stock the goods, and all the ways those sales help others.

Let’s have “Small Farming This Week,” where we visit a handful of farms and see what this season requires, are we getting new piglets ready, is it time for putting wheat in the ground, how is haying different from a place with a tractor, to a place with horse-power? Can we visit some greenhouses? Look at making your own catfish pond? How to train your dog to fetch in the livestock, or ways to make your own fence? How to get started raising your own chickens and eggs?

How about a show where moms and teachers of toddlers and small children show their ideas that work—how to teach kids to pick up their rooms, share toys, write their first letters, dress themselves, showing only positive things, with a light perspective and a little fun music in the background, human interactions that raise bright, curious children no matter where in the social strata you find yourself.

Instead of Crazy Preppers, let’s show things from a historical perspective. “Self Sufficiency For Everyone” could demonstrate pickling, making wood storage boxes, how to make your own household cleaners, weaving rugs and making creosote. How about a week’s episode where we learn how to winterize the lawnmower and get the windows ready for blowing snow. Another episode could do 50 things to help you cool off! That show could really help me writing this newspaper, I’d be watching every week.

There’s lots of religious shows on Sunday morning that either yell or admonish or otherwise tell you what’s in the Bible, or what they feel you should be believing, I think maybe that’s what gave me this little idea.

Instead of sitting on the couch each week at such-and-such a time and tuning into one of these reality shows, how about this plan. Any of those suggestions above sound like something you’d want to watch, if you could? Well, you can. Just develop your own “reality show” and stand up and walk out the door to go “see it.” Want to clean up the neighborhood? Invite a buddy to meet you, bring two trash bags and a reacher-grabber or sticker-stick, and clean up a small section of your world.

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Postal Rate Increases

Before you plan your next box you are shipping by USPS Flat Rate or Priority, or APO boxes to the military, take note that there were significant increases in the prices of these items, as well as stamps increasing one cent each. Forever stamps are of course still usable but new supplies will cost more.

The highest rates of increase are those costs to ship internationally. Some of my friends are evaluating whether they can continue to find customers in Canada, with the new fee increase. So before you ship, check with your post office to see if it’s still a viable option for you.



Using Common Sense

We’ve had a number of occasions, just as we do every winter, with poor road conditions. What surprises me, is how often people have “taken chances” and then are surprised at the situation they find themselves in.

Here are some smart road tips. If you know and employ them all consistently, good for you! If you have a younger driver in the family, please share.

1. Don’t drive in rush hour unless you have to—if you are just running an errand, wait until 9:00 to 2:30 to do that.
2. Take time to think about your left turns—if the road is partially plowed, and you are going to be sticking out into a lane, best to go further, turn around, and return.
3. Know your vehicle—does it need sandbags in the back for traction? Is your battery old, and you should replace it?
4. When sidewalks are not shoveled, people who must get somewhere on foot are likely to use the streets. Take extra care.
5. It gets dark earlier. If you have a problem driving in the dark, time your errands accordingly for the change of season.
6. Leave a lot of extra distance for stopping.
7. Leave those distractions alone—concentrate on yourself and other cars.

In February

2nd—Groundhog Day
3rd—Super Bowl Sunday
12th—Mardi Gras
13th—Ash Wednesday
14th—Valentine’s Day
18th—President’s Day, legal holiday
24th—Purim



Meal Toss-up for Cold Winter Nights

Winter is the time I most feel like I’m serving the same things over and over and over. My hand clutches back when I see the prices on many fresh foods this time of year, so the staples of the season tend to get repeated a bit too much. Here’s my agenda for “waiting until spring,” and I thought maybe the list would give you some ideas, too:

Refrigerator Slaw Salad	Roasted Vegetables
Cabbage-veg soup with tomato juice	Toasted rough bread with honey
Oatmeal-raisin cookies	Grits and fried eggs
Turnips and Tops	Glazed carrots
Oat Cakes with Fruit Preserves	Corn with chopped peppers
Snack platter with hardboiled eggs, cheese, crackers, and pickles	

February 2013

Second Month

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

“Oh, they’re weighin’ the fish at the fish weigh-in Down at Mercury Creek, The prize is a boat and a thousand bucks For the biggest fish of the week I caught me a nice little sunfish It’s gonna make me a winner Not from the weight of the fish itself But the ball bearings I fed it for dinner”
Red Green

Can you find some things to make and do on a cold winter's day?

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

Backgammon	Jacks
Pick Up (and)	Sticks
Skittles	Clean
Book	Tops
Sew	Piece
Poker	Marbles
Cards	Matching
Write	Dolls
Go	Ur
Knit	Fix
Oil	Mancala
Rummy	Nap
Chess	Scrabble
Bingo	Mah Jong
Checkers	Dominoes
Repairs	

Whether you fill the hours with tasks of daily living, or a bit of education, or entertainment, remember to take time for contemplation and self-evaluation.

Rabbit Meat

There's a bunch of reasons why rabbit meat is a smart idea. Grandfather Max and I discovered that the Angora rabbits I wanted for their fiber, were just as important as a meat product on our farm. I was timid about slaughtering them (I've been vegetarian since age 19) but he had no problem with that, and you can always find a hunter in the area to dress them out if you want to pay for the time or trade with whole rabbits after the deed.

Rabbits are considered the "cleanest" rancher's meat. There is an absolute minimum need for antibiotics or veterinary care, as they mature from birth to butcher weight in 10-12 weeks. They require no hay, can be raised indoors, and their droppings are immediately useful in the garden, so they are low-profile enough to raise in a shed or basement and nobody knows you're supplementing your meat diet independently.

The hides are also useful as a second product; they can be an angora breed and give you some spinning fiber (four rabbits is more than most spinners need) or something with a stouter, less matting hair, that would be excellent for mittens, hats, collars and vests.

Some rabbits do bite, but I've been bitten by cows, horses, pigs, and pecked on by chickens and ducks, and a goose split my lip one time in a farmyard parole violation, and Rabbits are at the bottom of that pain list. If you wore some leather gloves when handling them, that will pretty much take care of the risk.

Imagine a clean, extraordinarily fat-free meat you could raise in your own garage or basement or sunroom, free from additives and biological agents. Imagine a meat so small and containable that even a child could be responsible for feeding and watering it, and maybe you assist with lifting the cage twice a week and helping with cleaning the tray into a bucket and dumping it outside.

Water drippers, stoneware non-flip dishes, a salt rock, two cages, a big bag of rabbit pellets, plastic cutting board to stand on, shredded newspaper or wood shavings, and a pair of rabbits. That's your entire list. Compare that to the fencing of pastures, vet bills, property tax, devoted barns, hay and equipment that you'd need for cattle or other large-scale critters. There's no extra insurance to raise six or eight rabbits, no extra housing, a minimum of equipment. After your first two, that's your investment of stock; two females and a male and your herd grows quite quickly. Expect 2-6 surviving bunnies *every few weeks*. You'll have extras to sell or give to other self-sufficient folks.

And, it's nice for the planet. Rabbit meat has a 6:1 ratio in cost and environmental impact, compared to beef, meaning six pounds of home-raised meat that you KNOW its background, compared to one pound of beef from an UNKNOWN background. When you process it yourself, you are sure of how it's been kept, stored, cleaned, and cooled, not just the cooking part at the very end. There is a smaller ratio of bone to meat in rabbit than even in chickens, and rabbit waste/bones are considered acceptable as a Raw Foods Diet for dogs (that's a movement in which commercial processed/dyed foods are discarded and the dog is fed a more natural diet). Some rabbit breeders find their entire pellet cost is offset by selling the frozen "scraps," packaged in zip locks ready to thaw and serve, to dog lovers in the area. Others tan and use the hides as a hobby, making and selling a craft made with material they grew on-site themselves, independent of imports.

Your local livestock auction, the 4-H sale at the fair, or a slip of paper pinned up at the grain mill, or Craigslist, will get you started. If you are handy enough to slap together some cages or resourceful enough to find used ones, all the better. There's a lot of information out there to help you.



(Reality shows, Cont'd)

Or sign yourself up for a class and your reality show can be called "Improving Your Self." Start cleaning out a closet and donating 50% of what's in there to a local scout troop or the thrift store, and that show can be called "Anti-Hoarders: The My House Episode." Go to a museum with your bag lunch to eat in the cafeteria, and you are staging a live performance of "How To Support The Arts on \$10 a Day."

Then when you've managed to build up enthusiasm, start grouping tasks together. A weekend away can just be a Saturday night hotel room in a city that has museums and art galleries and little sidewalk gems like delis and libraries and train stations and maybe a river to admire, and like all those travel shows, you can just wander around and see where your feet take you, eat new things, try a new flavor of coffee, admire a painting, talk to someone with a different accent. After all, people travel from THERE to come HERE and it's exotic and new and different for them, so why not enjoy that experience for ourselves?

There's a show where woodsmen cut down trees and get stuck in mud and yell at each other. Let's instead go to the woods and walk around and tell our children how lichen grows and why the trees are so straight and what this seed is, and while we're there, have a little chat with the Lord above. There's a show where people dress up fancy and do their make up and nails and remove hair and all manner of grooming, let's instead get a list from the minister of who needs some companionship and go there and help them get washed up, repair their clothes and do laundry and change their bedding and fix *them* up nice.

For even more fun, take a couple pictures of each "show" and stick them into one of those photo albums, and at the end of the year, you can tell your friends you have the Boxed Set, Limited Edition, of My Own Reality Shows, and you can let them look through it while you're hanging out on the porch with some lemonade and a nice breeze or having a cup of hot cider at your warm kitchen table. One idea, supported by prayer, will lead to another and another, and pretty soon, your "Reality Shows" will be your, well—reality!

Ways to Recycle An Old Sock

- Put it over your hand and use it to dust above doors and windows
- Put it over your hand and buff shoes and boots
- Fill it with a rolled up old towel and let the dog fetch it
- Fill it with soap scraps and hang it in the shower as “soap on a rope”
- Poke a hole in the heel, and it’s emergency mittens
- Cut it in a 1” spiral and it’s a pass in your woven rug
- Cut it into small slices and give it to the birds for making nests
- Cut into disposable squares for cleaning oily tools
- Place four socks, flat, under a heavy piece of furniture on the floor, and you’ll be able to slide it back and forth by yourself
- Slide your mason jar soup delivery inside a stretched sock, and it won’t clink on the way, and keep it warmer, too
- Make fingerless work gloves
- Put one on your hand when you change the new light bulbs, and you won’t get oils onto the bulb (oil on the surface can cause them to break)
- Groom an animal with the sock over your hand, gets the dandruff!

Here’s a fold-over recipe card for you—use the left side for a shorter recipe, or cut out all four “sides” and fold it for a longer set of instructions. Your time-trusted recipe is a nice way to share your heart with someone!

This Month’s Crazy Idea

Even with increased postage, I am surprised how many people could be gathering something that’s free, and selling it. I’ve bought huge pine cones and 14-inch needles from Oregon, driftwood fingers from the Great Lakes, oyster shells from Louisiana, and willow whips from Indiana. I just shipped wood scraps from the workshop, to Arizona, and you know there are lots of boxes of scraps under lots of band saws between here and there, but people want to buy something and get it as soon as possible for their project, and folks who have one or two jobs and two or three kids, or don’t drive, they like to turn to the internet.

So my crazy idea is that you look around and see if there are natural materials you can gather and sell, or donate to a place doing crafts. Are you recycling your crafting by-products to others who can use small bits? At your workplace, maybe they throw out packing materials, if you list them on Craigslist for a nominal price, someone will PAY you for those, which is good for the bottom line (even if it only buys pizza once a month for the crew) and it recycles, saving you disposal costs.

Whether you are rural or urban, there is waste to the left and the right—gather it, organize it, and you can not only make a donation or a few bucks, but get it used another time around, too.

A Recipe Just For You

“When I’m feeling down, I make myself a big bowl of Up Soup.
The bowl only looks empty, but in reality it’s full of hope”
Jarod Kintz



“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

John 13:34

Editor's notes

Owners: Craig and Valerie Hibbard. Expenses covered by Editors. Ads selected by Editors and given freely, and we reserve the right to refuse any ads. Email comments to valerie@plainandpractical.com, or mail to: 216 S. Plum Street, Marysville, OH 43040. We’d like to hear your comments. You may read PNP free on the web at www.plainandpractical.com, or order print copies by writing or emailing the editors. Valerie sells her things on Etsy, at www.apronsrecycled@etsy.com, and has a blog for diary entries, at www.plainandpractical.typepad.com

Paracord Projects

Here’s a fun wintertime hot-chocolate craft that boys and men get a practical kick out of—paracord bracelets and belts and key holders. Paracord can be found at hardware stores, general merchandise stores (look in the sporting goods section) and camping suppliers. It has a colored outer sheath, smooth and woven, and inside you’ll find six or seven smaller strands. Having some on your person, means the following are possible anywhere you are:

- Emergency halter or lead or dog collar
- fishing line
- securing items and gear
- hanging food from animals
- trip wire
- bowdrill fire
- shelter building
- tool repair
- tourniquet
- rifle sling
- belt
- laces

The best method is by setting up a two-pass “bridge” between two points—7” for a boy, 9” or more for a man—and then working your way back with half-hitches of more rope, so that a wide, flat braid is created. Your choice of knots should be something that you can fairly quickly unravel for use, not something you’ll have to pick apart while fighting cold fingers or a rushed need. 14 feet can easily be worked into a boy’s bracelet, 20 into a man’s size, and 50 feet in a belt is neat and flat. Even 10 feet in a key fob, how many times could you have used 10 feet of rope?

These make great gifts for handy guys who find themselves out in the woods or back in the pasture, camping or hunting or wayfaring. Whether tying a find into a bundle to tote home, or leading a lost dog to find its owner, a quick brace for the catch of the day or quick repair to the tailgate, a bit of rope on your person could be a convenience, or even a lifesaver.

A Few Plain and Practical Resources for Self-Sufficiency

Need something for the Home, or Clothing?

- Lehmans, 877-438-5346, or write for a catalog, 289 N. Kurzen Rd., Dalton, OH 44618.
- Healthy natural soaps and salves, Cindy High, 905 Egeler Lane, Dexter, MI 48130
- Gohn Brothers, Box 1110, Middlebury, Indiana 46540-1110, toll free number 1-800-595-0031. All sewing done by local seamstresses to your measurements, at very reasonable prices for good quality.
- Prayer caps, Plain and Simple Head coverings, Bayley Thompson, P. O. Box 185, Bagdad, KY 40003.
- Aprons, Dresses and Coverings, Mennonite Maidens, <http://www.mennonitemaiden.com>, or orders by phone, 703-622-3018 or 304-492-5590. Wide variety of all offerings, reasonable prices.
- GVS, clothing for the entire family, baby supplies, toys, stationary, sewing supplies—many hard to find items. Highway 5, Versailles, MO 65084.
- Sisterthreads is a group of three Christian women who sew together in the daughter's house amongst her four children, one of which is special-needs. Although they focus on quilts, they also do a variety of purses and organizers for knitting needles, crochet hooks and other sewing items. By mail: Sister Threads, P. O. Box 91, Herrietta, MI, 49638, or telephone, 231-389-0253.

Need something wholesome to read?

- The Budget, a Mennonite rural newspaper, P. O. Box 249, 134 N. Factory Street, Sugarcreek, OH, 44681. Several editions, so ask for information, 330-852-4634.
- Keepers At Home magazine (Plain homemakers) \$13 year/4 issues. 2673 Township Road 421, Sugarcreek, OH 44681
- Quaker Hill Farm, children's books, P. O. Box 10, Harrisville, MI 48742 (recently featured on Animal Planet!) Quaker Anne has all kinds of good things made from her farm, web site is www.quakeranne.com
- An Encouraging Word, P. O. Box 374, Covert, MI, 49043, \$20/year includes yours and one gift subscription.
- Plain Interests newspaper (Plain lifestyle), 420 Weaver Road, Millersburg, PA, 17061. Monthly, \$16 yearly.
- Young Companion, Pathway Publishers, 2580N=250W, LaGrange, IN 46761, scripture-rich moral stories for young people, many are reader-contributed. They also produce Family Life, as well as Blackboard Bulletin, and I recommend all three as suitable literature to leave around where you find yourself spending a few moments in the day, they are uplifting, spiritual, and helpful. \$23 annually for all.
- Pendle Hill, 338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford, PA 19086. Quaker literature resource.

Want to stop and get bulk food on your next trip?

- Clintonville Community Market, 200 Crestview Road, Columbus, Ohio, 43202, 614-261-3663
- Yutzy's Bulk Foods, 614-873-3815, 6010 Converse Huff Road, Plain City, Ohio 43064
- Countryside Bulk Foods, 4230 West Pike, Zanesville, OH 43701, telephone 740-450-1595
- Bulk Food Depot, 5457 Radford Road, Athens, OH 45701, 740-594-5053.
- Apple Hill Ltd., 8690 Vermilion Road, Amherst, OH 44001-9475. Telephone 440-965-7077
- Coon's Candies, 16451 County Highway 113, Harpster, OH 43323, telephone 740-496-4141
- American Harvest 51323 County Road 16, Coshocton, OH 43812, 740-622-2855
- Swiss Village 309 S. Broadway St., Sugarcreek, OH 44681, telephone 330-852-2896

Need supplies for Making it yourself?

- handspun yarns for knitting, soy candles, black walnuts for dyeing: Beverly Thorne, 1941 S. Camp Ten Road, Elmira, MI 49730.
- Leather: Scrap Leather, lacing, and hides, all American leather, Real Leather People, P. O. Box 251, Sonora, KY 42776 or 270-369-8880 or sales@realleatherpeople.com
- Make your own brooms—Broomcorn and supplies at R.E. Caddy, Box 14634, Greensboro, N.C. 27415, 336-273-3609.
- Sewing Supplies, Home-Sew Inc., P. O. Box 4099, Bethlehem, PA. 18018-0099, 1-800-344-4739, homesew.com.
- Linen and wool fabrics, 1-888-546-3654, FabricsStore.Com, 6325 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite #102, Hollywood CA 90038
- Countryroad Fabrics and Gifts, 2195 N 700W Shipshewana, Indiana, 46565, good resource for fabrics, snaps, prayer caps, and more.
- Knit Picks, P. O. Box 870760, Vancouver, WA 98687, 1-800-574-1323. Fine quality wool and wool blend yarns—their natural color, dye your own selections are especially well priced. Many sock yarns, patterns, and superior quality needles. Online also.
- Raw Wool for Spinning at \$2-4 pound, also well priced natural roving, and shepherd's supplies, Mid-States Wool Growers Co-op, 9449 Basil Western Road, Canal Winchester, OH, 43110-9278, 614-837-9665, call for hours and directions.
- Wm. Booth, Draper. 18th century reenactment supplies, I get my linen thread, horn thimbles, and other well-made, old fashioned items from this resource, 2115 Ramada Drive, Racine, WI. 53406, or, <http://wmboothdraper.com>, or 815-648-9048.
- Discount fabric, Guhl's, 710 E. Main Street, Jackson, Ohio, cash only, closed Sundays.
- Makes Scents, candle supplies, wicks, waxes, jars and bottles. 10465 Columbus Parkway, Pataskala, OH 43062. 740-927-3526.

Self-Sufficiency and Preparation Supplies

- Bathtub liner for 100 gal. water storage—Water Bob, from Way Safe Florida, Inc, 14175 Icot Blvd, Suite 100, Clearwater, FL 33760 1-800-966-8044, approximately \$25. Available on Ebay as well.
- Seeds to store, \$55 for small garden, non-hybrid—Baker Creek Seeds, 2278 Baker Creek Rd., Mansfield, MO 65704.
- Archery supplies—Obsession Archery, 8289 Burden Rd. Machesney Park, IL 61115, 815-877-1212
- First aid supplies—a number of professional-level kits from \$71 to \$415, First Aid Supplies Online, 1-800-874-8767

Honey and Honey Products: Honeyrun Farm, 9642 Randle Road, Williamsport, Ohio. 43164, 740-225-2462. Candles of the rolled beeswax as well as poured, beeswax in all amounts for sewing and crafting, honey straws, honey and combs. On Etsy, Honeyrunfarm.

Art and Scrap Box—paper, drapery and wall paper sample books, yarn, wood scraps, fabric scraps, tubes, all \$7 fill a paper grocery bag: 581 State Circle, Ann Arbor, MI (734) 994-0012.

Arts and Scraps—more sewing and yarn than previous listing, lots of paper, mat board, interesting magazines and books to cut up, wood scrap, tile section, posters to recycle: 16135 Harper, Detroit, Michigan, 48224, (313) 640-4411, Tues-Sat. \$6.50 fill-a-bag.

There is a free store in Commercial Point, Ohio, the United Methodist Church runs entirely with volunteers and community donations. It's open Saturdays 9 a.m. to noon; Mondays from 6 to 8 p.m. It's on E. Scioto Street, right in the center of town, you can't miss it. Clothing and household items, they will take a cash donation if you twist their arm but it's all free. Bring your unwanted and drop them off while you're there.

An Important Reminder

Especially for those of you who live alone, or a ways out from a hospital or other medical help—have you gone through and checked your first aid kits lately?

It's easy to forget removing a box of bandaids, or using the saline wash. This is a good time of the year to either maintain and refill out-of-date or missing supplies from your existing first aid boxes, as well as consider other places around the home that you might need to add one or two. Do you have one in the garage, and does it have the sorts of things you need for the tools you use out there? Think in terms of where you are likely to be hurt while working around your home—does the kit nearest to those locations, contain the items you need for that kind of injury?

Remember to put important contact information in your car, on the inside of the back door, on your phone. Just in case.

