

Look Out!

August, 2009
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Depending on how it's delivered, "Look out!" can be a warning just before the mishap occurs: a ball sailing through the air aimed at your head; a shifting flower pot that tumbles over the upper deck ledge; a jumble of rocks let loose heading right for you on an upward climb of a mountain. I like to use the term "Look out" as a daily reminder to always be on the lookout—for beauty.

It's certainly in the garden. After patient waiting, the tomatoes have finally ripened to give nothing but pure glory on the vine. Scarlet runner beans have climbed the teepee just as I hoped they would, making a cool nest for visiting grandchildren. The pumpkins are twisting and vining, getting ready for their autumn debut. I've made my favorite peach pies and felt the juice running down my arms while biting into a fresh one. Blackberries are ready to be picked for luscious cobbler, and what is August without corn on the cob? I bask in the sight of tawny fields of golden tasseled corn on drives to the valley, and who can deny the sweetness of freshly picked corn dripping with butter and munched on with delight. Most summer days, the air is full of the sound of bees.

August is a time for "putting up" all those fruits and vegetables we've planted and waited for. It's reward time. Whether we can, dry, or freeze, August is the time to reap what we've sown, gather in the bounty. I'm always amazed at what I can glean from the garden at the end of the season: onions, beets, herbs, potatoes, beans, and garlic—enough for a feast or at least some good soups.

With every August comes fun—for-the-whole-family fair time. The Tillamook County Fair, "Where Pigs Fly," was not only a time for young people to show off their animal husbandry skills, and a place to earn a blue ribbon for flowers, photography, clothing and preserves, it was a time when we could flock together to indulge in the seductive thrills of mass hypnosis, horse racing, carnival rides and demolition derbies while eating fair fare like cotton candy, pronto pups and curly fries!

Beauty can be found in the community spirit that thrives in our small towns. In Wheeler, a strong group of volunteers epitomizes U.S. anthropologist Margaret Mead's quote: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Through sheer effort and tenacity in the face of one challenge after another, this group created a beautiful waterfront park. Their hard work and dedication to community brought them together to do what needed to be done to create a park on the bay for all to enjoy. One volunteer told me the reason she moved to Wheeler in the first place: "I fell in love with the bend in the river."

In the early days of summer, which seem a long time ago now, we threw the camping gear in the truck and headed for Lake of the Woods Fire Lookout, 21 miles northeast of Gold Beach in the Siskiyou National Forest. Access to the lookout at 3400 feet above sea level was by county road and one lane gravel Forest Service roads that took us up and up until we reached what seemed like the top of the world. Our reward was a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean, Wild Rogue Wildernesses and the Scenic Illinois and Rogue River canyons. From our lookout at the top of the world, we were surrounded by beauty, day and night.

I look up and laugh at the tomato plant growing up the chain of the hanging basket instead of draping down; I look down at the garter snake, ants and ladybug my grandson shows me; I look out at the Captain Bell steamboat chugging along Nehalem bay on a breezy summer day. Whether out, up or down, the key word is look. As Jean Webster said in her 1912 novel, Daddy-Long-Legs, "It isn't the great big pleasures that count the most; it's making a great deal out of the little ones."