

FOX VALLEY REVIEW

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MAY 1, 2026



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New Perspectives, New Places, and the Stories That Move Us

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A Fox Valley Story of War, Loss, and Remembrance (New Series)

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01 Mission & Vision



WHO WE ARE

WHAT WE DO
WHERE WE AIM TO GO

FOX VALLEY REVIEW is a regional digital magazine dedicated to curating and elevating the voices, stories, events, and cultural expressions of the towns and communities along the Fox River. We strive to inform, inspire, and connect residents through thoughtful storytelling, critical reflection, and celebration of the local from neighborhood events to regional art, food, and civic life.

We envision a more connected and culturally vibrant Fox Valley where every town and resident sees themselves reflected in the stories we tell. Through inclusive journalism, creative expression, and civic commentary, Fox Valley Review aims to become the cultural compass of the region, building bridges between communities, generations, and ideas across the river.



**FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR IN CHIEF
DR. BAUDELAIRE K. ULYSSE**

As we welcome May, we do so in a season of remembrance, renewal, and gratitude. The trees are fuller, the river paths are busier, and the Fox Valley once again reminds us how closely memory and movement live beside one another. Spring asks us to look forward, but it also invites us to honor what came before.

This May issue reflects that balance. Rick is equal part pithy, witty, inspirational, spiritual, and historian with his piece on **The Sacred Heart Grotto**. Also, we are proud to introduce a powerful new legacy series, **Three Missions from Home: A Fox Valley Story of War, Loss, and Remembrance**. In Part I, **The Mission and the Loss**, Diane reports and Sue

Grommes helps bring to life a moving story of family sacrifice, service, and the first heartbreak that changed everything. It is a reminder that history is not distant; it lives in names, homes, letters, and the people who still carry it.

Cynthia returns with the continuation of her thoughtful series, **Alone Together in the Fox Valley**, where she reflects on grief, loneliness, and the search for belonging in a time when many feel disconnected. Her voice continues to offer honesty, wit, and

courage in equal measure.

Jeff Weisman brings us **Winning When Losing**, a warm and quietly profound story about fatherhood, perspective, and the small victories that often matter most. Granny returns with **We Wore Our Sunday Best to Pottawatomie**, recalling an era when polished shoes, picnic quilts, and a trip to the park made Sundays feel like the finest day on Earth.

We also celebrate two beautiful local reflections: Tricia's **The Fox Poetry Box**, marking ten years of poetry

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*LET THIS BE
YOUR WINDOW, YOUR MIRROR,
YOUR INVITATION!*

”

quietly meeting passersby on a St. Charles sidewalk, and Mary Ellen’s **From This River Town**, a lyrical portrait of Elgin shaped by the steady presence of the Fox River. And in *Red Man in Blue Land*, we follow one man’s journey of relocation, identity, and the surprising discovery that home can sometimes be found where we least expect it. As Memorial Day approaches, we pause to honor those who gave their lives in service to our nation. Across

the Fox Valley, monuments, flags, and quiet places of remembrance stand as lasting reminders that freedom has always carried a cost. Thank you, as always, to our contributors, readers, supporters, and growing community. Your trust and encouragement continue to shape what Fox Valley Review is becoming: not simply a magazine, but a living archive of place, people, and shared memory. May your month be filled with sunshine, reflection, and moments worth

A NIGHT OF LOCAL CULTURE

From friendly games of darts to meaningful conversations, shared food and drinks, and laughter throughout the room, the evening captured the very essence of the Fox Valley: community-driven, creative, welcoming, and full of life.





APRIL RELEASE PARTY | GLOBAL BREW | SAINT CHARLES, IL



remembering. Most importantly, Happy Mother's Day to all mothers here and out there without whom none of us would be breathing, living, writing, and reading!

Baudelaire Ulysse
Editor in Chief,
Fox Valley Review

The Sacred Heart Grotto

And The Sun Shall Shine

WRITER: Rick Moser

PH: Rick Moser

Need a quiet break from it all, close by?
Come experience a hidden gem right here in the Fox Valley, just south of the Geneva Metra station and Third Street district, behind the Kane County Government Center.

Perched on a hill above a gently flowing stream, the Sacred Heart Grotto is a quiet, peaceful, sacred place to pause, reflect, and pray. The Grotto is a leftover relic from the property's past life. A creek gurgles by in the background, adding a soothing soundtrack to your visit.

"A quiet, peaceful, sacred place to pause, reflect, and pray."
Before it became the Kane County headquarters, the property was the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary. High



"A quiet, peaceful,

sacred place to pause,

reflect, and pray."

“Birds sing, water moves, and the noise of everything else fades.”



school students were taught here from the late 1920s until 1971, when the grounds were sold. A German priest from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart High School built the Grotto back in 1929, using rocks from the local Fox River beds to create the small chapel-like structure. Colorful mosaics adorn the walls and the floor of the sheltered interior space. The sound of birds chirping and the rushing water of the nearby creek is a striking contrast to the hustle and bustle of commercial Third Street and the roar of diesel engines pulling Metra cars east and west.

“Birds sing, water moves, and the noise of everything else fades.” The heaven and earth panel is bordered with the Latin phrase, “Ignem veni mittere,” which translates to “I have come to bring fire (the Holy Spirit).” The lighthouse is underlined by “ego sum lux mundi,” or “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Beneath the central arch’s ceiling, depicting a blue sky pierced by rays of light, stands a white Sacred Heart of Jesus statue. Years ago, the Fox Valley marked the

western edge of the Chicago metro, with nothing but farm fields to the west. The Sacred Heart Seminary closed in 1971, and the land changed hands. Today, the Elburn area west of Geneva is filled with housing developments, and the last stop on the Metra UP West line has pushed farther west.

Through it all, one thing has remained: the Sacred Heart Grotto. Built in 1929, it still stands, nearly a century later, quietly holding its place as the world grew up around it. Did the German priest who built it ever imagine it would still be touching lives in 2026?

People come here to remember, to pray, to sit in stillness. Bring a cup of coffee, a camp chair, and see for yourself.

You can even be part of its story; memorial bricks are available to support its preservation.

Learn more or donate: <https://genevagrotto.org/>

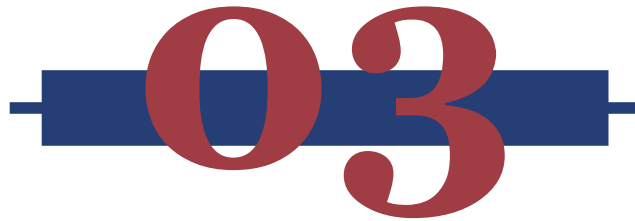
Rick Moser
Author, Fully Brewed Christian Bible Studies
Order: <https://linktr.ee/fullybrewed>
Glen Ellyn, IL

“Built in 1929, it still stands, quietly holding its place as the world grew up around it.”

Legacy Series

Three Missions from Home: A Fox Valley

Story of War, Loss, and Remembrance



Part I: The Mission and the Loss

THE LAST LETTER HOME

WRITER: Diane & Sue

PH: Sue

We extend heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Sue Grommes for sharing her mother's story with the Fox Valley Review, along with historical materials related to a 2004 Memorial Event in Perigny, France, honoring U.S. Airmen of the

349th Bomb Squadron.

As we enter May, anticipating both Mother's Day and the solemn remembrance of Memorial Day, I find myself reflecting on my late mother: her strength, her sacrifice,

“

Their time together was heartbreakingly short. He was just three missions shy of coming home.

”

and the life she carried forward after profound loss. Hers is a story shaped by love, war, unwavering faith, and resilience intertwined with a moment in World War II history and the enduring compassion of a small village in Perigny, France.

Patricia Wenzel, my mother, was a dynamic and devoted woman, an extraordinary parent, a beloved aunt, and a cherished member of the Aurora community. Born in 1925, she grew up on a farm in Centerville, Iowa. Though her family endured the hardships of the Great Depression, they considered themselves fortunate, never having to rely on government assistance for their livelihood.

During World War II, like many Americans of her generation, my mother answered the call to support the war effort. She relocated with members of her family to the Fox Valley, where they worked in defense plants. She

often spoke of the deep sense of national unity at the time, a shared willingness to make personal sacrifices for something greater than oneself. While some of her family returned to Iowa after the war, my mother remained in the Fox Valley.

She had married Alvin W. Samuelson of Big Rock, Illinois, a co-pilot in the 349th Bomb Squadron of the Army Air Corps.

Their time together was heartbreakingly short. “He was just three missions shy of coming home.”

On August 8, 1944, Alvin lost his life while serving his country. He was only 24 years old.

That day, Alvin and his fellow crew members were aboard a B-17 bomber known as Varga Venus, flying from England toward St. Sylvain, France.

Their mission was to strike a German stronghold. Positioned at the edge of their formation, an exposed and

vulnerable location, the aircraft was an easier target for enemy fire.

The operation required precision. The crew had just 90 seconds to release their bomb load.

They never got the chance.

The aircraft was struck by flak, anti-aircraft fire that bursts into lethal fragments in the sky. The plane was engulfed in flames, exploded, and broke apart, scattering debris across a wide stretch of farmland near the village of Perigny.

Eight of the nine crew members died at the crash site. One man, critically wounded, survived the initial impact but died hours later. Only one airman escaped, parachuting from the aircraft. He was captured by German forces and later released.

Among those lost were:



Alvin W. Samuelson

- First Lt. John P. Keys (Pilot)
- Alvin W. Samuelson (Co-pilot)
- 2nd Lt. Patrick H. Lawless (Navigator)
- 2nd Lt. Elton Dickens (Bombardier)
- T/Sgt. Frank Thomas (Radio Operator/Gunner)
- T/Sgt. Harry D. Park (Top Turret Gunner)
- T/Sgt. Peter P. Martin (Ball Turret Gunner)
- Sgt. Donald V. Reiger (Tail Gunner)

S/Sgt. Gilbert A. Borba (Waist Gunner) was the sole survivor. Another member of the 349th Bomb Squadron, Sgt. Joseph A. Costanza, was not aboard the aircraft that day.

Just one week before the mission, Alvin had written to my mother. In his letter, he shared that he was only three missions away from completing his tour. Soon, he would be home.

They were both looking forward to that moment, to beginning their life together after the war.

That reunion would never come.

Today, as we approach Memorial Day, I am reminded not only of Alvin, but of all the men who served alongside him, young men with families, dreams, and futures that were never realized. They were sons, brothers, husbands, and friends. Their stories did not end with the war; they live on in the lives of those who remember them.

In 2004, my mother and I traveled to Perigny, France, where a memorial now stands on the farmland where the plane fell. The names of these men are etched there, a permanent tribute to their sacrifice.

But remembrance does not belong to stone alone.

It lives in stories like this one in the quiet act of speaking their names, in the reflection of lives interrupted, and in the enduring gratitude we carry forward.

“They were sons, brothers, husbands; men whose stories live on in those who remember.”

In the months ahead, I will continue to share more of this story: of loss and resilience, of unexpected connections across continents, and of the remarkable humanity that emerged in the aftermath of tragedy.

For now, I wish you a meaningful and reflective Memorial Day, one grounded in remembrance, gratitude, and the quiet honoring of those who gave everything.

~Sue Grommes (reported by Associate Editor Diane Kondatowicz and edited by the Editor in Chief Baudelaire Ulysse)

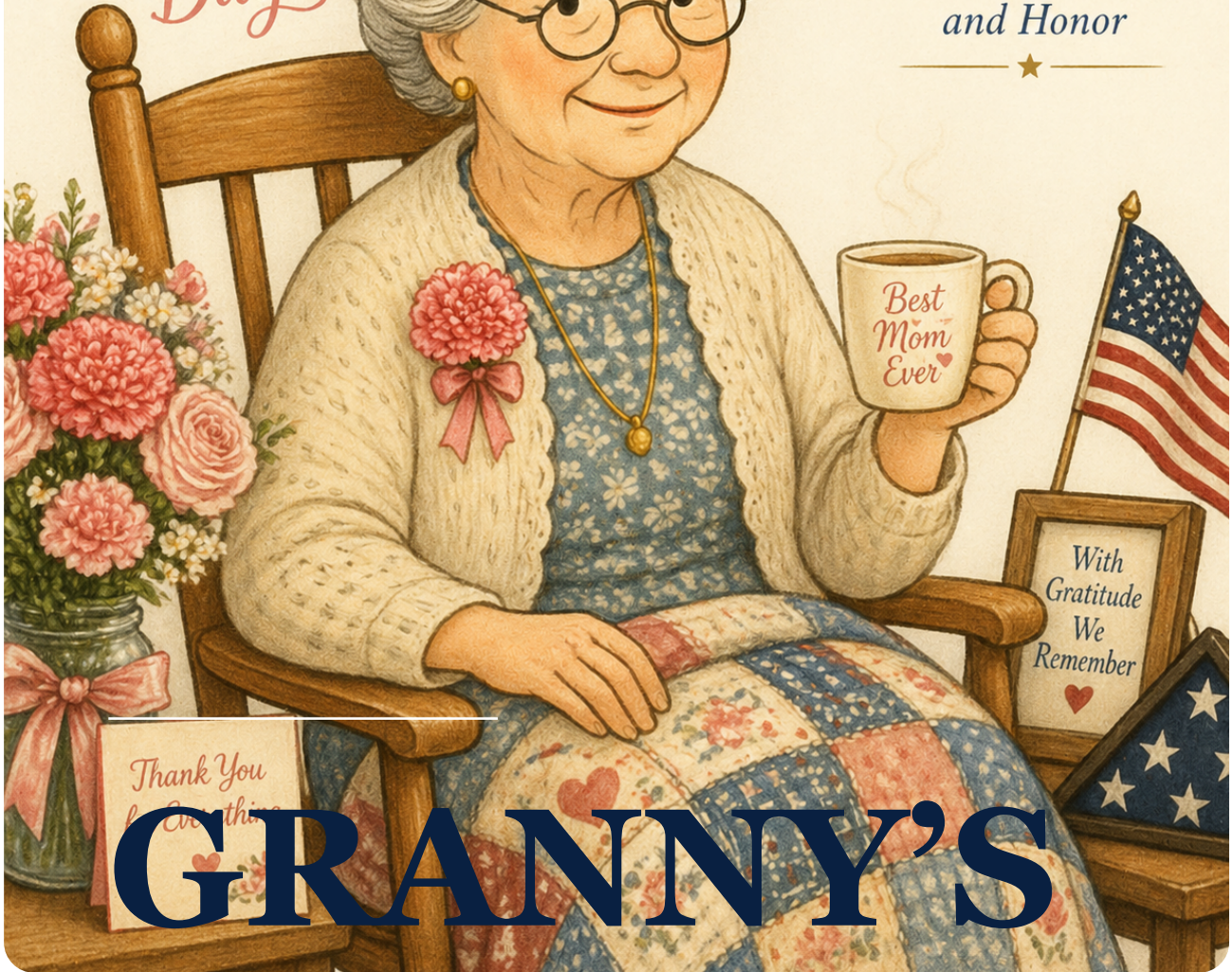


Memorial Display in Perigny, France

*Happy
Mother's
Day*

★
MEMORIAL DAY

*We Remember
and Honor*



GRANNY'S

WOVEN QUILT SERIES

WE WORE OUR SUNDAY BEST TO POTTAWATOMIE

“

*TEA’S READY, DARLING;
SETTLE IN FOR A BREEZY STORY.*

”

WRITER: GRANNY
PH: STAFF

Tea’s ready, darling. And as you settle in, I’ll tell you a story that smells like sun-dried linen, fresh-cut grass, and a little river breeze.

Back when folks said “Good morning” and meant it, Sunday wasn’t just another day; it was the day. The day we wore polished shoes, pressed dresses, and bows that caught the light just so.

And if we were lucky, and if we behaved in church, we got to go to Pottawatomie afterward.

That park was sacred ground to us, not because it was holy, but because it was ours. The swings creaked with laughter, and the carousel spun with colors brighter than the stained glass we’d seen just hours before.

Mamas unwrapped peanut butter sandwiches from wax paper, and daddies, still in dress shirts, pushed rowboats out onto the lazy Fox.

I remember holding onto my little sister’s hand so she wouldn’t trip over her lace socks, and how Grandma’s quilt made the best picnic blanket,

04



smelling like lavender and stories.

There were no cell phones, no selfies; just memories stitched together with laughter, skinned knees, and grape soda in glass bottles.

And when the sun began to dip low behind the trees, casting long shadows over the park paths, someone would always say, "Let's take the long way home."

Because none of us wanted it to end, not the day, not the magic, not the way we belonged to each other and to that park.

So the next time you drive by Pottawatomie, slow down a bit. Roll your window down.

Maybe, just maybe, if you listen real close, you'll hear a carousel horse whinny or a little girl giggle with sticky hands and a grape mustache.



A quilt, two sisters, and a summer afternoon: some memories, once etched and told, never fold away.

Because once upon a time, we wore
our Sunday best there. And it was the
finest place on Earth.

~Granny



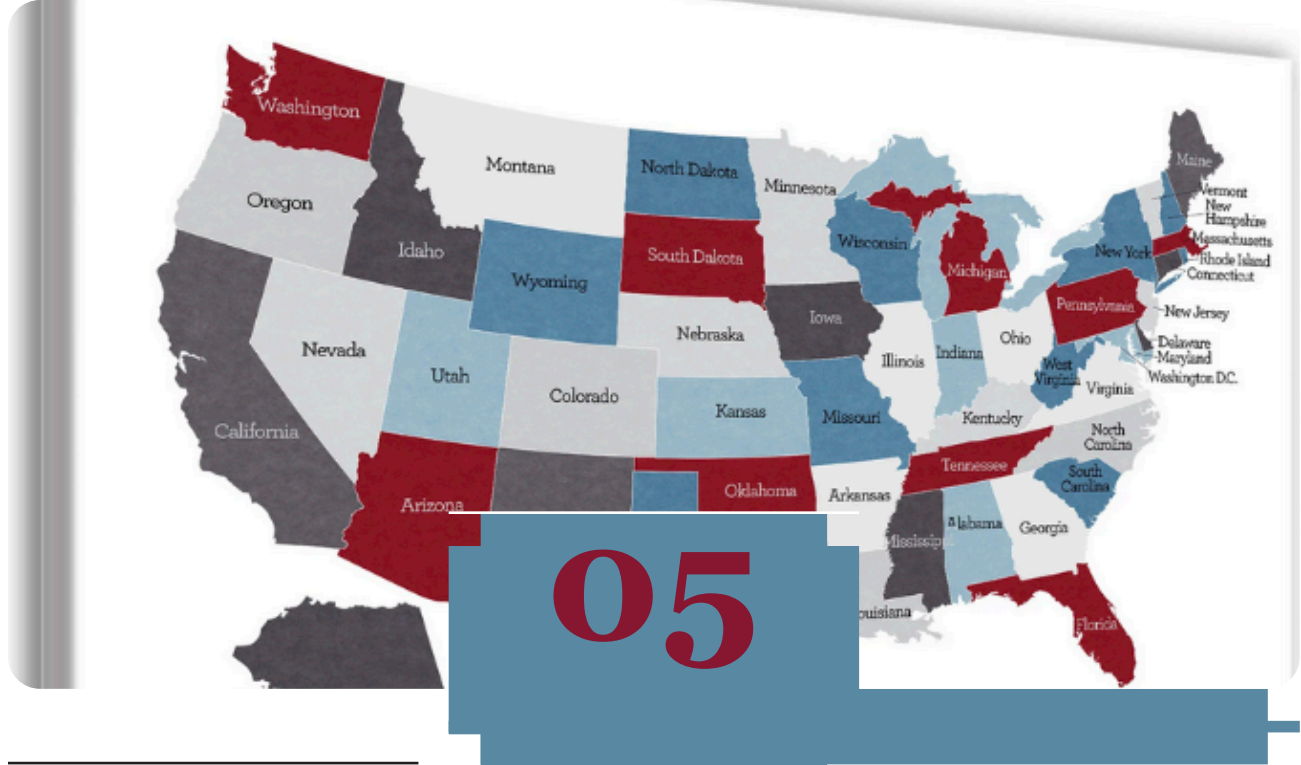
Where today's paths meet yesterday's footsteps, Pottawatomie still remembers.

Stay tuned for the next story from Granny's Women Quilt Series. It's coming up in the June Issue.



Patrick at Global Brew

Patrick works hard, but he enjoys stopping at the Global Brew Tap House in Saint Charles where he connects with familiar faces over a chilled beer.



WRITER: Fox Valley Review

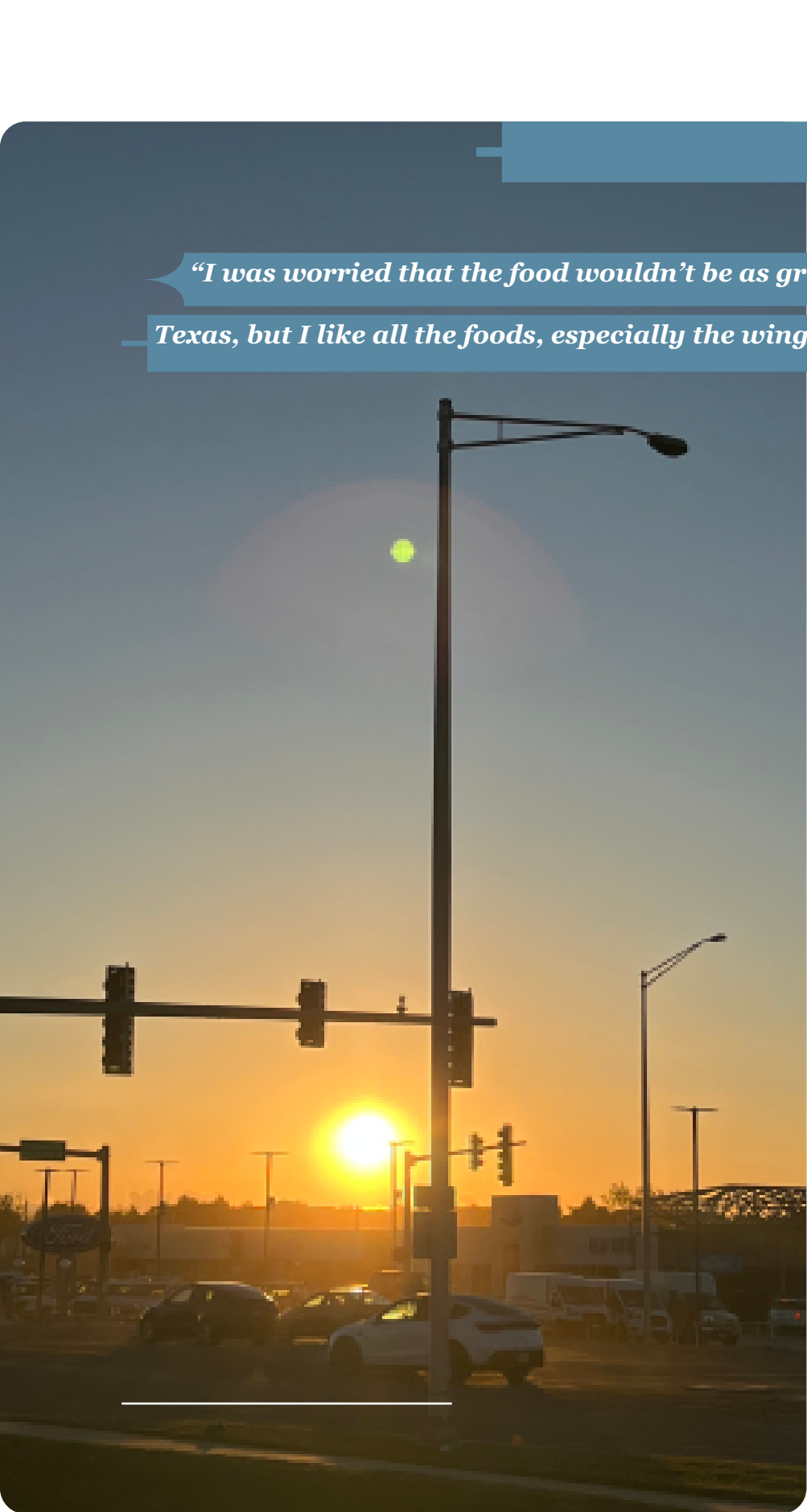
PH: Etsy

Red Man in Blue Land

Meet Patrick, lades and gentlemen! There's a particular kind of courage that doesn't make headlines. It doesn't come with spectacle or ceremony. It looks, instead, like a quiet decision, a man packing up his life, leaving behind the familiar rhythms of one region, and stepping into the unknown of another.

Patrick's story begins in Philadelphia, and he spent 25 years in the Philly and D.C. area. But, over the two decades, he lived in Texas, a place where identity runs deep, where culture is worn proudly, and where

“He was, in his own words, heading from ‘red country into blue land.’”



“I was worried that the food wouldn’t be as great as Texas, but I like all the foods, especially the wings and the bread.”

lifestyle often feels inseparable from geography. Texas wasn’t just where Patrick lived; it was how he lived.

So, when a professional opportunity emerged, one that would require relocating to the Chicagoland area, Patrick hesitated.

Not because he lacked ambition. Not because he doubted his ability. But because he understood what such a move represented: not just a change in address, but a shift in culture, norms, and expectations.

He was, in his own words, heading from “red country into blue land.” That phrase carries weight in today’s America. It suggests more than politics; it gestures toward differences in worldview, lifestyle, and even everyday interactions.

For Patrick, those differences felt real and immediate. He owned firearms, a normal part of life in Texas, but something he knew would be regulated



“The people here are extremely friendly.”

very differently in Illinois. Before making the move, he did his homework, diving into state laws, concealed carry regulations, and compliance requirements.

It wasn't fear that drove that preparation; it was respect. Respect for the place he was entering, and a willingness to adapt without losing himself. And then, he made the move.

The journey north wasn't just geographic. It was symbolic. Mile by mile, Patrick crossed not only state lines but cultural boundaries, moving from the wide-open ethos of Texas into the layered, nuanced fabric of the Midwest. He landed in the Fox Valley.

What he found wasn't what he expected.

“I was worried that the food wouldn't be as great as Texas,” Patrick admits, laughing now at the memory. “But I like all the foods, especially the wings and the bread.”

It's a small detail, but a telling one.

Food, after all, is often the first bridge between cultures, the quickest way to feel at home in a new place. And in towns like St. Charles and Geneva, Patrick discovered something unexpected: not just quality, but character.

He felt right at home in Saint Charles. The downtown area, with its riverwalk charm and inviting storefronts, left a strong impression. Geneva, with its blend of boutique elegance and small-town warmth, offered its own distinct appeal. Irish and American flags waving on St. Patrick's Day brought back strong memories of home. These weren't just places; they were experiences, layered with history, hospitality, and a quiet sense of belonging. But more than anything, it was the people.

He had legitimate concerns about Chicago politics and crime, primarily based on news reports in the media. To his surprise and delight, he says: “The people here are extremely friendly,”

Patrick says. And there's a tone in his voice, not surprise, exactly, but a kind of recalibration. A recognition that assumptions, however reasonable they may seem, don't always hold up against lived experience.

That's the deeper story here.

Patrick didn't just relocate. He crossed a narrative boundary, one that many Americans recognize but few interrogate. The idea that “red” and “blue” America are irreconcilably different.

That crossing from one to the other means stepping into opposition. What Patrick found instead was something quieter, and perhaps more important: continuity.

Yes, there are differences. Laws change. Norms shift. The landscape itself feels different. But beneath those surface variations lies something more stable: a shared humanity expressed through friendliness, community, and the simple pleasures of good food and welcoming streets.

In the end, Patrick's story isn't about politics.

It's about movement. Adaptation. Discovery.

It's about what happens when we leave behind what we think we know and allow a new place to introduce itself on its own terms.

From red land to blue land, Patrick, though open-minded, didn't lose himself.

He found something refreshingly new.

A PLAYGROUND DEBACLE

WRITER: Jeff Weisman

PH: Staff

Winning When Losing



“Excitedly, my daughter ran across the playground to the monkey bars under the tower.”



When my daughter was little, I tried very hard not to swear around her. It was tough at times, but I didn't want to be the one to expose her to those kinds of words. I would step out of the room if I had to swear, make up some word if I absolutely needed to say something; just do whatever so that I wasn't the one teaching her that kind of language.

She understood that there were "bad words" she shouldn't say, and I was glad about that. I did a pretty good job, too. Sure, I had a slip here or there but, overall, I held the line.

However, all of that went out the window one afternoon when I took her to my local playground after school. And no, the problem wasn't me (or my daughter, to state the obvious).

She had only been home from school for about a half hour, just long enough to have a snack and she wanted to play outside for a little while. Since I still needed to do some work, I took her up to the playground so she could burn off some energy. (It never really worked, but it was better than nothing.)

Approaching the playground, I noticed four teenagers, three boys and a girl, maybe thirteen, sitting inside the

connecting tube between the slide and the covered tower deck, mostly hidden from view, talking. I didn't think anything of it. I had no reason to. Excitedly, my daughter ran across the playground to the monkey bars under the tower.

It was a cool spring day. She had just turned eight.

"Take it easy, sweetie," I called, trying to keep up with her. "Don't hurt yourself before you even get there."
"Come on, Dad," she replied, still running. "Let's go."

"I am, I am," I said, following along, the back of her shoulder-length hair bouncing as her light blue jacket hugged her small frame.

"How long do you think I can hang, Dad?" she asked, grabbing the monkey bars.

"I don't know," I said. "Let's see."
(We played this game often; I'd count how long she could hang while she flopped and flailed like a fish out of water.)
"Count, Dad."
"Okay."

As soon as I got to "three," I started to hear the kids in the tube swearing. And when I say swearing, I mean



Across Batavia, Geneva, Montgomery, Oswego, and Ottawa, memorial scenes stand in quiet dignity, with flags stirring in the breeze, stone monuments weathered, wreaths laid with care, and names etched into history. These places remind us that remembrance lives not only in grand ceremonies, but in town squares, riverfront parks, and everyday communities that continue to honor those who gave everything.



“The thought of saying something

to those kids lingered

the entire time.”

every word in the book; plus variations I didn't even know existed. In a strange way, it was almost impressive. This went on for a good minute. Of course, she didn't hang from the bars that whole time (I had her try again after she dropped at twenty), and I considered telling the kids to stop. But I didn't want to make a scene. And somehow, my daughter seemed completely oblivious.

So we just kept playing.

We stayed a little longer before heading home, since I still had work to do. The thought of saying something to those kids lingered the entire time. (In hindsight, I probably should have told them to watch their language. But like I said, I didn't want to deal with it and I knew they weren't trying to hurt anyone.)

Walking home across the field, the playground fading behind us, my daughter said,

“Those kids were saying a lot of words I can't say.”

I looked down at her, surprised; there was a maturity in her expression that caught me off guard.

“They were, weren't they?” I said.

“Their dads should tell them not to say those things,” she added, surprising me even more. The soft swish of her jacket filled the quiet as I thought about how she knew.

“They should,” I said. “But at least you know better.”

“I do, Dad.”

“Good,” I said, as we kept walking.

And in that moment, it hit me:

Sometimes you win, even when you're losing.

~Jeff

WRITER: Cynthia Adamson-Kotlicky

PH: Staff

Finding a Third Space



the faith



the music

THIRD
WHE
bee

Alone Together in the Fox Valley Series



coffee shop



the bar



the game



the handshake



the league

SPACES
RE WE
long.

As I shared in the first installment of this series, I lost my son, Tristan, under tragic circumstances. He was a student at the University of Minnesota, and as someone on the autistic spectrum, he experienced social dynamics differently than most. This made life a struggle, but it also made him incredibly kind and empathetic. He once told me about an elderly woman he became acquainted with because he saw her sitting alone on the same park bench every day.

One day he stopped and sat with her, and they started talking. She was lonely after her husband passed, so he made it a point to stop at the bench often. Sometimes it makes me sad to think she doesn't know why he just stopped showing up.

Like the elderly woman, I sometimes feel lonely and isolated. Since the U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness a public health crisis, I think many people feel as I do. So how do we find each other?

Once upon a good ol' day, people regularly attended "third spaces" to make connections: social groups like the Elks, Moose, Kiwanis, Shriners, VFW; bowling and darts leagues; and places of worship. These names sound familiar, but they don't play the central roles in the fabric of community that they once did. Maybe it's time for a renewal.

My husband and I live in Batavia, very close to Mooseheart and Moose Lodge #682. Their website states, "The lodge provides a wide array of activities to participate in both as an individual and as a family."

With all that, and a full bar, how could we not give membership a try?



Sometimes it makes me sad to think she doesn't know why he just stopped showing up.

"The design aesthetic might be described as your Uncle Rick's basement circa 1977."

There's a vibe to any Moose lodge. The design aesthetic might be described as your Uncle Rick's basement circa 1977, but I'm not ashamed to say I'm good with that. The Uncle Ricks of the world were awesome, and they had lots of friends, which is our goal, right?

If a good Friday night to you involves clubwear, excitement, and people with no wrinkles, you might not like a Moose lodge. If you prefer to go out in whatever you're wearing right now, and are of a generation whose parents didn't know where you were playing as a kid, the lodge might be your place.

The food and drinks are apropos to the atmosphere. The cocktails people order around you will suddenly make you remember how your Great Aunt Edna smelled. When was the last time you had a 7 & 7? Yeah, I thought so. Me? ... Tuesday. Perhaps perversely, this is all welcomingly nostalgic for me; I feel comfortable there, and I think we're more likely to make connections in places where we feel like ourselves.



sideways on that bench,
I can turn sideways on
my barstool.

At the Batavia lodge, there is a room with big windows right next to the bar where kids can play.

I think some nights the room is staffed. I've seen people bring their kids there already in their pajamas. I'm a high school teacher and my husband is a die cutter; you know how many times we paid a babysitter so we could just go drink and play darts? Exactly 0.

Parenthood can be its own source of loneliness; had we belonged to the lodge then, we could've been there socializing with adults while our kids were near but not underfoot.

It is not entirely in my comfort zone to strike up a conversation with strangers, but if Tristan could turn sideways on that bench, I can turn sideways on my barstool.

Image 1 : Third space illustration.

Image 2: From quiet bench to mingling socially.

Image 3: Batavia Memorial shrine.



Every time I talked to the person next to me about something on the TV behind the bar, or about something the bartender said, or about a performer in the lodge, I was greeted with a smile and an encouraging comment back. No one there ever acts like it's weird that I would want to talk to them.

Every time my husband and I walk in, multiple people greet us directly and say, "Hello!" "How are ya?" "Welcome." It's not true friendship yet, but it's a social start.

In her article entitled *We've Lost the Spaces that Foster Friendship*, author Dr. Alicia Walker suggests that "close ties" often develop organically over time "through repeated exposure, shared activity, and gradual self-disclosure."

If one needs repeated exposure to achieve true connections, random bar exchanges are unlikely to lead to that. However, within the lodge are smaller communities like Women of the Moose, or commonly occurring activities like line dancing, cornhole, and kubb leagues. These are more likely to attract the same members, leading to repeated contacts.

So I look forward to exploring those.

Maybe I will see you there.

Ten Years of The Fox Poetry Box

WRITER: Tricia Whitworth

PH: Tricia Whitworth

To my knowledge, my Poetry Box is the only one in St. Charles so far.

“Ten years...standing quietly beside a sidewalk every day, in every season.”

Ten years of The Fox Poetry Box, standing quietly beside a sidewalk on 12th Street in St. Charles every day, in every season.

In 2016, I decided that I would like to have a Poetry Box installed in front of my house. I'd seriously considered having a Little Free Library when I discovered one during a night walk through the neighborhood. It was lit up, and I was completely entranced by the Library as well as the idea.

But after doing some research, I learned about Poetry Boxes, which have gained popularity and appealed to me because, well, I'm a Poet. They were "born" in Oregon, and the concept has been taking off in other states.

I purchased my hand-crafted cedar wood box through poetryboxes.com, and my husband mounted it on a post for me in November of 2016. I gave it a name in honor of the region (and the rhyme): The Fox Poetry Box.

And I decided that I wanted living poets to be displayed within, not just dead famous ones



***Fox Poetry Box in Saint Charles,
Illinois***

(although they're there too).

I've met many wonderful Poets locally and throughout the world in this way and displayed their work. Notes have been left inside by passers-by.

***“My box exists because poetry is
for everyone.”***

Hawks and coyotes visit; dogs mark the spot. No known sightings of foxes yet. People take photographs. Fresh displays go up every two weeks. A second box replaced the first one after a few years. The original post remains, now extremely weathered. A new logo was just commissioned in 2026 by Maine artist Jim Lagasse. The Fox Poetry Box has its own Facebook page and was featured early on in The Kane County Chronicle and Elgin-based Bravo Magazine.



***Bridge over the Fox River
with utility building in sight***

At night, it's lit up so the poem within can be read by someone going for a walk. It looks...entrancing.

My poetry box is part of the Poetry in Public Places/Spaces movement. This is a worldwide initiative that wants to de-mystify poetry and put it in places where people will come in contact with it unexpectedly, with open minds. A well-known endeavor is Poetry in Motion in New York, adopted elsewhere. There, poems ride the buses and subways along with humans. My box exists because poetry is for everyone.

***“Hawks and coyotes visit...No
known sightings of foxes yet.”***

In memory of Lennart Lundh (1948–2026), IL Poet & Creative, Friend & Contributor to The Fox Poetry Box.

From This River Town

WRITER: Mary Ellen Goodwill

PH: Staff

The wide brown Fox River runs strong toward the dam at Kimball Street, where it gleams as it crashes to the lower-level surrounding Walton Island with its magnificent American Flag sculpture.

Elgin is a river town. With the river come bridges, and with the bridges come artistic banners and, in season, lovely hanging baskets full of ivy and colorful flowers.

With the river come the train tracks and the trains, which hoot and whistle in all types of weather, muffled in spring fog, piercing in the icy air of winter, companionable on a sultry summer night.

Ours is a river town of oak groves, eagles, and a library as big as a gambling boat. We have porches and stoops and parks and sidewalks. We have a bike path which runs alongside the river.

The river provides drinking water. It encourages fishing and boating. It provides a destination for walkers and sitters and ruminators.

It separates the east side of town from the west side of town.

Elgin is a river town. Here I live and document the daily slices of life which capture my attention: squirrels climbing the bird feeder, a kid standing at the bus stop, a car rolling through the stop sign at the corner.

If I walk 572 steps from my backyard, I will be standing in the Fox River.

Mary Ellen Goodwill



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