



BOB'S THOUGHTS
BOB BAUM

Exploring my roots in the Grande Ronde Valley

I have pioneer roots somewhere in my citified soul.

My mother was a Gekeler whose grandparents were among the first white settlers in the Grande Ronde Valley.

There is Gekeler Lane, of course, in the same general area where the family settled. And there are descendants scattered about the valley and beyond, some still farming the same land.

George John Gekeler was born on June 14, 1833, in Lancaster, New York, the son of German immigrants. He married Catherine “Kate” King in 1859. He was 20. She was 16.

They moved first to Falls City, Nebraska.

That I know this and many other details of their migration west is because of a marvelous compilation of the Gekeler family history written by various family members over the years. The thick booklet I have was picked up by my sister at one of the Gekeler family reunions.

My great-grandfather and great-grandmother, along with infant son Edward, joined the Yount wagon train and, on May 7, 1862, began their journey to the Oregon country.

The women mostly walked, some carrying a child. When one of the Gekeler oxen died, George hooked up the milking cow, which abruptly went dry but at least pulled the wagon faithfully.

“About the third day out from Fort Laramie, they celebrated the Fourth of July,” the Gekeler family document reads. “A flag was flown from a tall cottonwood tree. A member of the train made a speech. Williamson had a fiddle which several played to furnish music for the merrymaking and dancing.

“There were several Southern sympathizers in the train who failed to celebrate with as much enthusiasm as the others, but these were disregarded.”

Alas, the fiddle was placed on the ground and crunched by a wagon wheel the next morning.

On Sept. 13, 1862, the 42 wagons eased over the hills near Hot Lake and arrived in the Grande Ronde Valley.

Joe Yount, the wagon train’s leader, loaned George Gekeler a team of horses and he made a trip to The Dalles for a load of flour. George took the flour all the way to miners near Boise. He got to keep half the load for his trouble.

The journey took six weeks.

Meanwhile, Kate Gekeler and her baby slept in a tent made of sheets near the river, waiting for her husband to return.

Eventually, the Gekelers had 11 children. Two died in infancy, including the couple’s first, George. The couple must have liked the name, because their fourth surviving child, my grandfather, was named George Oscar Gekeler.

My great-grandfather eventually amassed a large farm and left each of his children 50 acres.

On his land, George Oscar settled in with his wife Lena and their three children. My mother was the youngest.

She loved her father, tagging along and running through the fields. When he came home from work, he would swoop her up in his arms and on to his shoulders.

My grandmother had come to Eastern Oregon by train. Decades later she would remember that her bonnet blew away when she poked her head out the window.

She was old-fashioned, to say the least. My grandma hated it when women wore short hair or long pants.

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Dealing With Stress-Related Diet Difficulties



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

A snack that combines protein carbs and fat — such as these ginger and molasses energy bars — help you feel satiated when you’re stress eating.

SMART SNACKS

■ Stress can lead you away from a healthy diet, but there are tasty options

By **Gretchen McKay**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Is COVID-19 stressing you out?

Me, too.

I know that to be a fact, and not just because I’m having trouble sleeping and feel sick to my stomach when I watch the news. I’m also eating. And eating more, even though I’m no longer training for any of my spring races.

It’s so easy to do, even if it’s not particularly enjoyable. A handful of chips on your way from the kitchen to the living room. A mindless slice of cheese while you’re aimlessly perusing the contents of your refrigerator like a hungry middle-schooler. And a glass of wine, or beer, before it’s 5 p.m., even on week-days.

No one can blame you. In fact, it’s understandable. While some lose their appetite in times of anxiety — and what are we during this pandemic if not anxious — many others soothe the negative feelings with food, even when they’re not particularly hungry.

“People grab the foods that comforted them during childhood and the pleasure chemical in the brain is released, which is self-soothing,” says Kelsey Hutter, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator with Allegheny Health Network.

According to the data tracker Nielsen, we’re not just stocking



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

Hummus, a creamy Middle Eastern dip made with chickpeas and tahini paste, is perfect for mindless dipping.

up on toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Americans also are buying a heck of a lot of chocolate, ice cream, popcorn and potato chips. Sales of pastry also has soared.

Mindless eating doesn’t just wreck havoc on the waistline;

it’s also bad for your health. Poor nutrition can compromise your immune function, and with the coronavirus spreading across communities, do you really want to increase your risk of getting infected?

When it comes to meals and everything else in between, staying healthy means watching not only how much you eat but also what you eat, along with where and when.

To that end, Hutter says one should try to be cognizant of what he or she is consuming — a practice that’s known as mindful eating.

“It’s about being present and savoring the flavors with your senses,” she says. How does it taste? What’s the aroma and texture?

It’s also about determining your hunger level. For instance, is your stomach grumbling or are you simply munching in front of the computer or TV because you saw that bag of chips on the counter?

“It encourages you to slow down and pay attention to food,” she says.

This can be difficult now that so many people are working from home and within steps of their kitchens and pantries. What can help, if you have a tendency to graze or binge eat, is to come up with a plan Hutter calls “the role of fives.”

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Greening grass tells the season’s story

If you are luckier than me, you’ve either mowed your lawn, had lawn service, been able to rent a sheep from a friend, or hired someone to bale the lush first cutting of your lawn. Yes, it’s that time of year.

We all wished for spring. Even though it doesn’t always feel like spring yet, the lawns are really in the spirit; especially since we had a bit of rain. Rain does wonders for growing lawns.

Lawns are one of the most costly ways to fill your landscape. There are other ground covers such as decorative bark, rock, gravel,



BETWEEN THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT

sand, groundcover plants such as sedum, low-growing shrubs such as roses and juniper. Most of these are drought-tolerant or have low water requirements.

Garden chores

- Begin sprays for fire-blight-susceptible apples and pears using an agricultural streptomycin.
- Gradually remove mulch from strawberries as the weather begins to warm.
- Enjoy but don’t disturb the many wildflowers.
- Look for flowering dogwoods in bloom.

- When buying bedding plants, choose compact, bushy plants that have not begun to flower.
- Oaks and hickories bloom during this time.
- When pruning hedges, shear the top narrower than the base so sunlight will reach the lower limbs.
- Look for morel mushrooms when lilacs bloom and the forest floor turns green.
- Hummingbirds begin to return from their winter home in Central America.
- Soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems help you save water and money.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!