

With the arrival of an unseen epidemic hitting our country right now, I was uncertain about the best topic for this issue's article.

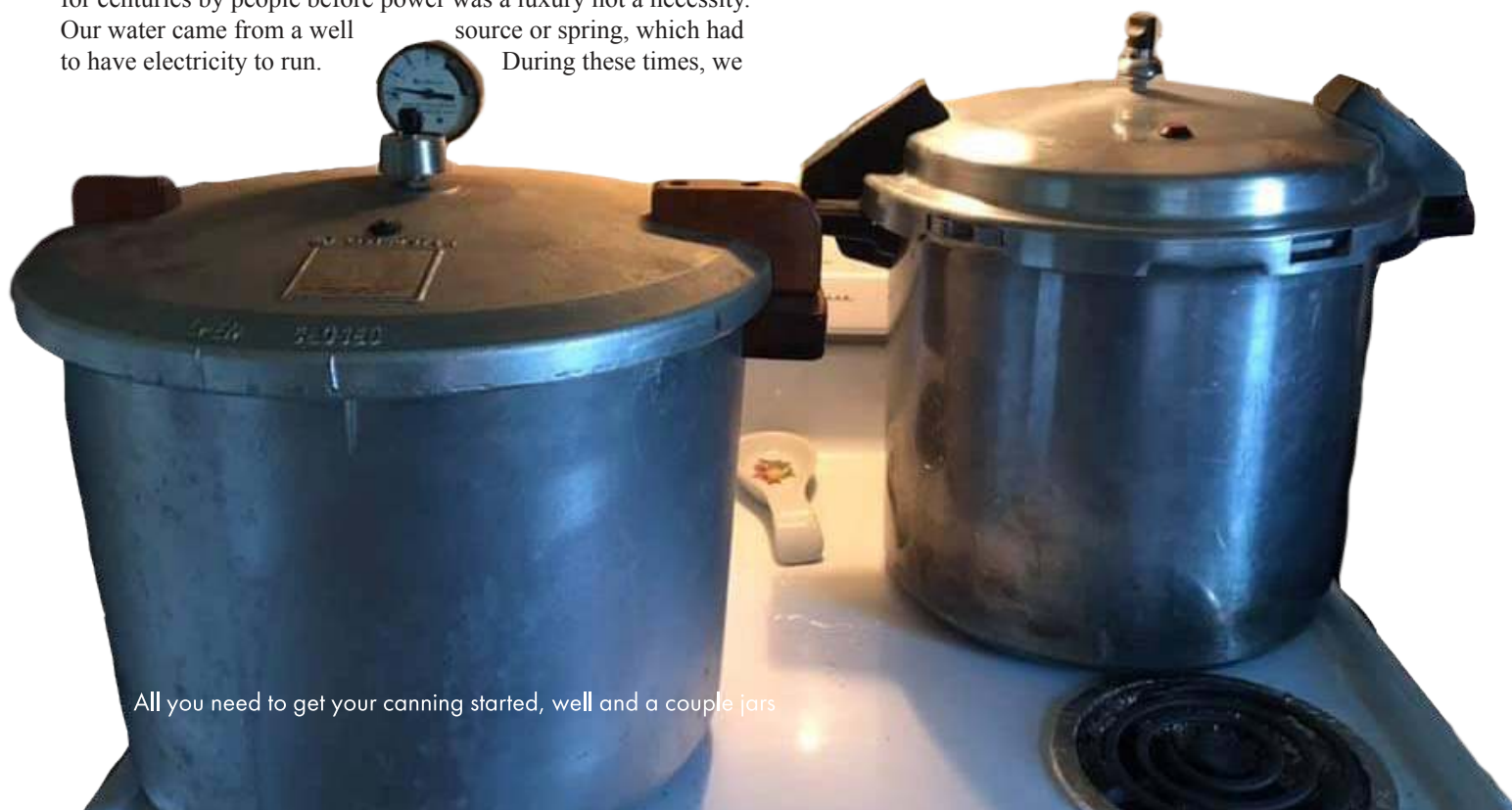
After reflection, the need for canning and gardening seemed to be the topic which hits home most for me. I grew up in the mountains and when the harsh winter snows made travel impossible, being unable to go to a grocery store for supplies was not unheard of. We did without power and water for a day to a couple weeks at a time. Our power lines ran across mountains and not easily accessible, most repairs had to be done by hand by the line crews in our area. Our heat was from a wood or coal pot belly stove which could also be cooked on, or from a wood cook stove used for centuries by people before power was a luxury not a necessity. Our water came from a well source or spring, which had to have electricity to run. During these times, we

relied on creek water and our stores of canned goods from the garden to survive.

Most people are dependent on our grocery stores for their meats, eggs, and produce for their daily needs. They have never been exposed to growing their own food or hunting for their meats. Our next generation has no idea how to provide for their daily needs by gardening, canning or hunting. The thoughts of raising chickens for eggs and meat, hogs for pork, or a garden are a foreign concept. These are necessary skills that have kept the generations before us alive. Foraging for any type of food is a new concept that many do not see as essential, or see it as something that they don't need to do because the grocery store or a fast food chain provides all their needs. This pandemic from the Covid-19 virus has proved how many are ill prepared for the unavailability of meats, vegetables or frozen dinners. The panic and hoarding of toilet paper and cleaners is unprecedented and how a two week travel advisory led to shortages on basic necessities even for people who have food stores.

Older generations were used to this as they relied on themselves, their gardens, hunting and fishing to feed their families, there were no luxuries that we enjoy today. Foraging for food was commonplace. Today these people are called preppers, but generations ago it was a means for basic survival. Growing a garden is simple, even with limited space, a person could grow fruits and vegetables in containers and with care and attention, harvest vegetables all during the growing season. Children could be taught the way to plant and harvest and grow to love the idea that they are growing their own food. Children exposed early will learn an appreciation for growing their own food if encouraged.

Canning meats and vegetables was essential to the older generations. The canning jars have evolved over the years. Sealing with wax at one time was the only means of preserving foods and the jars were not airtight and susceptible to spoilage. The jar manufacturers changed those methods to meet that need. They began



All you need to get your canning started, well and a couple jars



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manufacturing zinc lids, these were somewhat better. The next step was the advent of the rubber seal and glass lid, while this method was better, the cost was too great on people in depressed areas. The movement to the rubber gasket flat and ring with machined jars has made this as the best option and is still used today. The jars can be reused over and over again, so the cost is not as high.

Our new generation needs to be better prepared to handle crises than they are now. Teaching our children to garden and make it an enjoyable activity is key. Kids can plant in container gardens and be responsible for watering and weeding their plants. Most children see this as fun, what kid doesn't want to play in the dirt and get their hands dirty. Gardening and exposure to the world outside also boosts a child's immune system, and being outside playing in the sun is an added benefit. Children learn to appreciate where their food comes from, not just a grocery shelf. The skills needed are fundamental, dirt, water, sun and seeds that anyone can learn to do.

Growing your own vegetables can be great for the body and mind, as well as some great food later on!

Hunting for food, deer, squirrel, any meat source, fishing, are all activities that can be enjoyed. Those meats can be preserved in canning jars or frozen for future use. The smokehouse was a huge advantage for people as they salt cured their meats to make it last longer. Chickens were kept as a meat and egg source, pigs were raised for their meat when the frost came and was normally a neighborhood get together, the men would move from neighbor to neighbor helping each other with the harvest of the hog as this was an arduous task given the size of the animal.

In spring, when the woods started coming to life with plants, we would head up into the mountains, flats, anywhere, and collect the fiddle fern heads, morel mushrooms, and other edible mushrooms. The dandelion was dug up and the root used to make a tea, the leaves were used in wilted greens with bacon grease and wild onions. Plantain and creasy greens were another delicacy that was enjoyed as this was the first fresh food of the gardening season. The cellars were being prepared for the new growing season. Jars were inspected for spoilage and cleaned, potatoes were checked for sprouting, and the best were kept to eat. The sprouted





wrinkly potatoes were returned to the garden and planted for the next crop. The land started to come alive as the garden was tilled, planted and we waited for the next harvest.

The older generations lived through epidemics of their own as there wasn't the medical services available to them that we enjoy today. People died from the illnesses we can now be vaccinated against, children and elderly adults, not unlike what is happening with us today. Visit any old cemetery and you can see evidence of this on the headstones, the ages and the year they passed away. People in the mountains were more isolated than we are today, the distances and the travel options were limited. Even though our family sizes are smaller than they were generations ago, the towns and cities are more populated. The spread of viruses was still a reality even though people did not do much traveling.

They congregated at churches and the general stores, worked away from home in mills and factories. As seen even during WWII, factories have converted their production lines to accommodate the needs of the medical and the public's needs. Distilleries are using their alcohol production to hand sanitizer production. Even with factories closing production lines, the medical staff, first responders, fire departments are still on the front lines. Truck drivers are delivering more goods, even at the expense of time away from their families. The hoarding and closures have affected their ability to do their jobs, getting food and necessities on the road. We must remember, their trucks are their homes during their journey.



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This article, I know, is different from the others, but it still brings to mind the past that we must preserve. Without the generations that preceded us, lived without the modern conveniences we enjoy and consider necessities, knowledge and foresight our lives would be dependent on commercial institutions for our daily needs. Going back to our roots we will be better able to sustain ourselves during times of global crisis.

Until next time, stay safe, stay strong and keep Preserving The Past!!

One season of growing and look what you can do, and a few to trade with the neighbors

