

'A Hundred Years Ago': Revisited

Woman blogs about recipes, fashion and life of times past

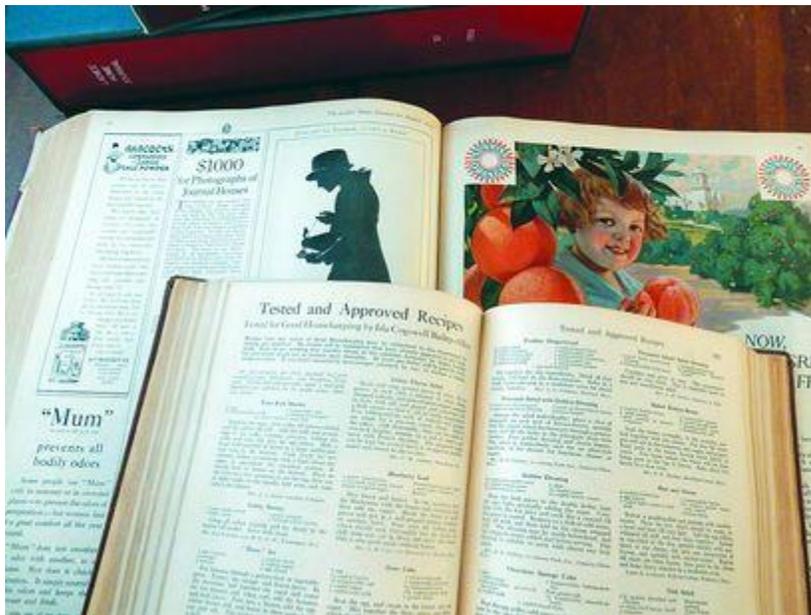
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By BETHANY WIEGAND (bwiegand@sungazette.com) , Williamsport Sun-Gazette
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In May 2011, the Sun-Gazette published a story on a blog, "A Hundred Years Ago," started by Sheryl Lazarus, a native of the McEwensville area. Inspired by a diary that Lazarus had from her grandmother, Helena (Muffly) Swartz, from written 100 years ago, every day she would post her grandmother's diary entry and an entry from today. Four years later, this blog is still up and running, and Lazarus has evolved it into a look back into how life was back then.

With impressive dedication, for every entry her grandmother wrote, Lazarus would post an entry on the same date - which was 100 years later - beginning on Jan. 1, 2011 and ending on Dec. 29, 2014. After, Lazarus took a break from blogging for several months, but kept her readership and page hits still in a high range.

"I wasn't sure at the beginning if I would have ever made it four years," Lazarus said.



Pictured are photos from magazines and recipe books from the time period Lazarus' grandmother lived.

During the break, Lazarus started another blog, again delving into her family history. "I had a great aunt who lived in the Penny Hill area (Montgomery) who took care of her parents until

they died. When she was 45, she joined the WAC (Woman's Army Corps) during World War II and her life began. She made a whole career and it lasted 20 years," she said.

When Lazarus' father passed away in 2013, she found memorabilia from her aunt among his belongings and decided to start a new blog including what she found.

"It was fun, but I had a hard time connecting with that time period," she said. "I enjoyed the simpler times. Less industrialization. I missed the more home cooked, old fashioned food. The mid century was fascinating, but in the end I kept posting less and less frequently." Lazarus decided to end that blog this year.

"I said I was quitting," she said. "I just really missed the interaction though."

In September, Lazarus decided to give her original blog a make-over since the diary was over. She focused on recipes and decided to post twice a week - one post being food-oriented and the other including interesting things from the time period. She noticed almost no drop in readership during her break.

"I was still getting 300 to 400 hits a day," she said. The readership is very extensive still - Lazarus gets hits from Williamsport to New Zealand and has many regular, dedicated readers.

The posts vary from topics on how to wash dishes correctly; keeping your digestive track healthy; and women's suffrage - as well as recipes from magazines from the time period that Lazarus will make herself: apple relish, old opera cremes and honey glazed squash, just to name a few.

Now a resident of Minnesota, Lazarus works at the University of Minnesota in the college of education as a senior research associate. The blog also helped her connect with family members and gave her a sense of her grandmother from a time when she didn't know her. When she started the blog, her father was still alive, and she enjoyed talking to him about his own mother, as well as hearing stories from other family members. She also had an uncle who would wait excitedly for her to post each entry. "He was very into it, he really just enjoyed remembering the older times. I think it also gave him a window into his mother," she said.

The blog has helped her connect to parts of her past in more ways than just family members. One of her grandmother's brothers, James A. Muffly, was a veterinarian who invented the Muffly Magnetic Retriever, an instrument used to retrieve metal from cattle's stomachs if it accidentally was swallowed. Someone from Belleville had the box the instrument came in and mailed it to Lazarus. She and her husband Bill are in the process of converting it into an end table.

As for the future, Lazarus has no intentions of ending the blog yet. "I think this time, I'm gonna keep doing it. One thing I learned from my 'blog-cation' was that I missed doing it. I enjoy the area and also the blogging community."

You can find Lazarus' blog at ahundredyearsago.com, where you can find an archive of her grandmother's diary, recipes and blog posts.

Article Photos



Above is Helena Muffly and Sheryl Lazarus



“Mum”
**‘A HUNDRED YEARS AGO’:
 Revisited**

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PHOTOS PROVIDED
 Pictured are photos from magazines and recipe books from the time period Lazarus’ grandmother lived. Above is Helena Muffy and Sheryl Lazarus.

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