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THE COTTAGE IN YOUR HEART

By Arleen M. Kaptur

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Daily life can range from ecstatic to something less than traumatic. It covers all territories in between. Every man, woman, or child will encounter problems, and annoyances, disappointments and pain. No one is given the privilege of not feeling – this in itself would be a major upset. Not to feel is in essence – not to be alive.

Everything life is – all of the components of daily living – join together to form a web that encompasses every living being. No one is immune and yet, this system has survived generations upon generations.

When life proves to be less than perfect, many will turn to placing blame, or passing the buck to someone else. In turn, this kind of action will cause hurt or problems for a person who could have had absolutely nothing to do with our "bad" day. They were just there – kind of in the way – when we were seeking reprieve or solace from daily strife. There is a much better way to handle whatever your day will bring – try it – you will be very pleasantly surprised and energized to face whatever tomorrow will have in store for you.

This is not a magic pill or a wave of a wand – it is allowing yourself to quietly build a fortress in your heart that you can go to, to renew strength and find solace. The gift of nature allows each of us a cooling breeze when problems cause arid in our goals, and relentless storms in our undertakings and ventures. Turning to nature whether in reality or in our heart will guide us through those potentially devastating pitfalls we will have to endure – just because! Here's how it works –

Whenever the pressure of the day or the thunder of hope fading away enters our private world, go down a path toward a cottage in the woods. Just picture it – you're tired, defeated and your steps are very heavy. But there sits a cottage in your mind's eye that has that glow of welcome surrounding it. Your heart is the doorway and inside you are always welcome. But the trip itself to get there is what alleviates the stress and tension. The path is lined with tall, strong pines that give renewed strength to your sagging will. They are proud and stately and have learned to bend just enough with the wind so as not to break. They sway with the breeze but do not give in. Many times their needles will be broken off, but new growth comes. There is a very special "flow" that nature has or "rhythm" that insures

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continuity and lays the groundwork for the future.

The ground is soft and has the aroma of warm earth. It is very distinctive and reassuring. Earth is very basic and gives life to the majestic trees as well as the velvety flowers that grow in places that you least expect. Their colors are a palette of tints that change with the seasons and melt into each other. They are smooth and soft or brazen and rich. They are sprinkled in crevices and corners that seem remote and impenetrable. These tiny plants soak up the warmth of the sun, and welcome the gentle raindrops. If strong winds and storms arrive, their petals may drop but then they line the ground with beauty under everyone's feet. They are aromatic and every breath allows their sweet scents to ease the mind and bring relief to stumbling steps.

The radiant blue sky above serves as a canopy of light and shadow that lets imagination run free. The warming sun keeps thought at bay while a heavy heart finds ways to repair and renew itself. There in the fallen leaves that create a soft, warm bed is a tiny, newborn fawn. Its large gentle eyes take in the entire world, yet are unsure and take note of every movement. The ears are standing to insure that not one sound is undetected, but it filters most sounds to listen patiently for the return of its mother. Confidence is in its tiny heart and strength is growing in its long legs. It remains silent but not sleepy. You have the privilege of seeing this new life, but you have provided a lesson in its ever-expanding search for answers. There's a clear lake to the right that reflects the color the sky and adds a touch of white with each breeze. A family of geese glide cautiously by with their soft, fuzzy goslings. A regal white swan and her new brood swim quietly in the cool water knowing that tomorrow is just over the horizon and a little past the sunset.

Just ahead is the cottage that you have been building since your birth. It is peaceful, serene and so inviting. The door is open and you need not knock. It is furnished with dreams and it glitters with hope. Goals line the walls and spirit brightens each corner. You can rest here until you are ready. Unburden your heart – and place the bundles of hurt or disappointment in the closet. They will be tended to when the time is right but they will not become a part of the cottage.

Once your strength has returned, you may return to your own reality. Before leaving, drink freely of the warm broth of ideas and taste the morsels of endurance. They reach into the closet for your bundles – but to your delight, they have become the size they should be – if indeed, they have not totally disappeared.

The trip to this magical place can take just a few moments in a busy day or a while longer at the end of the day. Whenever and for whatever time it takes to visit – you will be glad you did.

ENJOY !

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Arleen Kaptur has written numerous articles, cookbooks, and the novel: **SEARCHING FOR AUSTIN JAMES** Websites: <http://www.arleensite.com> <http://www.Arleens-RusticLiving.com>
<http://www.webspawner.com/users/rusticlivinghttp://topcia.com/lists.simpleliving>

Preparing For Safe Cottage Life

By News Canada

(NC)—Cottage living is home away from home to Canadians and life at the cottage boasts campfires, fireworks and hearty eating. In fact, Canadians love their cottages and feel more at home there than anywhere else, according to a 1998 Royal Bank survey.

But as with primary homes, cottages require regular upkeep to protect against hazards, and fire safety is especially a key issue at the cottage. However, owners taking a few simple precautions will go a long way in protecting their family and cottage.

According to the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC), first and foremost, it is extremely important that owners maintain fuse boxes, heaters, wiring, stove and other possible heat sources as they would in their primary homes. Test smoke alarms and ensure long-lasting batteries, such as new Advanced Performance Duracell® CopperTop® batteries, are used for protection all summer long.

Fire pits and campfires should be built where the fire will not spread, away from dry grass and leaves and low-hanging trees. Never leave open fires unattended, including barbecues, and supervise kids at all times. Watch out for flying sparks that could set fire to areas close to the cottage and be especially cautious with fireworks around kids.

Around the exterior of the cottage, a basic precaution is to keep grass cut and raked. Dry grass and debris can also collect under open porches, decks and floors, so it is important to keep these areas covered. In addition, stack firewood well away from the cottage.

Keep other highly-flammable objects, like fibreglass boats and canoes, away from the cottage and store them upside down, one meter above ground, either on a clearing or a rock.

By taking these simple precautions, cottage owners will go a long way to ensuring they don't lose their homes away from home to fire.

To learn more about summer fire safety, join Duracell Canada and the CAFC for the Duracell Fire Safety Drive. Starting in June, parents are encouraged to bring their children to participating retail outlets to learn more about the dangers of fire and how to adopt a new and improved fire safety and escape plan for their homes. Visit

for details about an event near you.

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