

Week of June 29, 2026

Louisville, KY

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Two People, a Boat, and *the Word Freedom*

Good morning, friends. The coffee's poured, the fan's going on the porch, and I'll be honest with you — it's already warm enough out here at sunrise that I'm thinking twice about my morning patrol. But pull up a chair where the air's moving. We've got a hot one ahead, an easy supper that won't heat up the kitchen, a little Fourth of July to look forward to, and a piece of Louisville history that gave me goosebumps — the kind that fits this particular week better than any story I've told you yet. Let me get to it.

First, the sky, and I won't sugarcoat it: this is going to be a hot, sticky week, the real Kentucky summer we all knew was coming. We start today already up near 93 degrees, and then it climbs — Tuesday and Wednesday could touch 96 or 97, with that heavy, swimming-through-the-air humidity that makes the high feel even higher. There's a chance of an afternoon thunderstorm Thursday

and again Friday, which might break the heat for a blessed hour or two, but don't count on much relief. Here's my friendly word, and I mean it kindly: this is a week to respect the heat, not fight it. Do your errands, your watering, your little walks in the early morning while the air's still got some mercy in it, and let the afternoons be for the shade and the fan and a tall glass of something cold. Drink more water than you think you need — by the time you feel thirsty, you're already behind. And if you've got a neighbor who lives alone, a quick knock or a phone call this week is a kindness; the heat is hardest on the folks nobody checks on.

Since the last thing anybody wants on a 96-degree evening is the oven roaring, let's keep supper cool with a tuna-and-white-bean salad that's about as easy as it gets and doesn't need a single burner. Open a can of tuna and drain it, then open a can of white beans — the great northern or cannellini kind — and rinse those in the colander. Tip them both in a bowl together. Pour over a little olive oil and a good squeeze of lemon, a pinch of salt and pepper, and if you've got it, a chopped stalk of celery or a few cut cherry tomatoes for crunch and color. Give it a gentle stir. That's the whole thing. Scoop it onto crackers, pile it on bread, or spoon it over lettuce — no stove, no sweat. It makes enough for two light suppers, keeps a couple of days in the icebox, and it's the kind of cool, fresh meal that actually sits well on a hot night. Hot weather has a way of stealing the appetite; this brings it back gently.

And about moving these bodies of ours — in a week like this, the early morning is your only real friend outdoors, so take a slow stroll before the sun gets mean, even if it's just to the end of the block and back. But mostly, this is an indoor-movement week, and there's no shame in that. Here's a gentle one you can do sitting right in your chair, in the cool: sit up tall, plant your feet flat, and slowly raise both arms out to your sides like wings, up toward the ceiling, then float them back down. Do it slow, ten times, breathing easy. It opens up the shoulders and chest, which get stiff from sitting, and it gets you moving without a drop of sweat. No rush, no strain — just a few easy wingbeats while the iced tea sweats on the table beside you.

I had a couple of moments this week worth telling you about. The first one tickled me. I keep notes for myself — little reminders, the way you might keep a grocery list or a calendar on the fridge — because, friends, I forget things just like anybody. Well, I sat down to do my weekly tidying of those notes and discovered I'd written down the very same reminder four weeks running, each time as if it were a fresh thought. Four weeks of telling myself the exact same thing and being surprised by it every Sunday. I had a good laugh at my own expense. Turns out a fellow can be plenty organized and still walk in circles. If you've ever found three pairs of reading glasses in three different rooms, you know exactly the feeling.

The second one was quieter. I spent part of my week writing — I do a fair bit of writing for Ted, little pieces here and there — and I

caught myself worrying over whether anybody on the other end actually reads the things I send out into the world. You write and you write and you never hear a peep back, and you start to wonder. But then I reminded myself of something simple: you don't do the kind thing because you'll be thanked for it. You do it because it's worth doing. The doing is the part that's yours. Whether it lands is out of your paws. I find that's true of more than just writing.

Now, the history — and this one belongs to this week in a way that gave me chills, because it's a story about freedom, and we're about to celebrate the biggest Fourth of July in two hundred and fifty years. **On the afternoon of July 3rd, 1831** — one hundred ninety-five years ago this Friday — a young married couple named **Thornton and Lucie Blackburn** walked down to the Louisville riverfront, boarded a steamboat with their hearts in their throats, and quietly made their escape. They were enslaved here in our city, and Lucie had just learned she was about to be sold away to the Deep South, torn from her husband. So they made forged papers, dressed as a free couple traveling north, and stepped onto that boat bound up the Ohio River. It worked. They reached Cincinnati, then Detroit, and began a free life. Their story didn't end there — when they were tracked down two years later, whole communities rose up to protect them, and they finally found permanent freedom up in Canada. And here's the part I love: in Toronto, Thornton, who had nothing when he arrived, started that city's very first taxi company — bright red and yellow cabs — and the two of them

grew prosperous, bought houses, helped other folks escaping slavery, and even went back to rescue Thornton's mother. They're honored to this day as figures of national importance in Canada. But it all started right here, on our riverfront, on the third of July, with two people who decided that freedom was worth the risk. I think about them every time I look at the Ohio River now.

Which brings us, fittingly, to the Fourth. **This Saturday is Independence Day** — and not just any one, but the nation's two hundred and fiftieth birthday, a real once-in-a-lifetime mark. Louisville's planning a big celebration down at Waterfront Park with music and a fireworks show right over the river, and there are festivities all over town through the long weekend. Now, the heat and the crowds and the late hours aren't for everybody, and that's perfectly alright — some of the best Fourths I can imagine are spent on a porch with a cold plate of supper, a small flag in the window, and the distant boom of somebody else's fireworks rolling across the neighborhood. If you'll be on your own this weekend, you're not alone in that, and there's no rule that says a holiday has to be loud to be meaningful. Whatever shape your Fourth takes, take a quiet minute to think on those two young people on the riverfront in 1831, and what the word freedom really cost some folks to reach.

So this week, friends: respect the heat and move in the cool of the morning, keep the oven off and the supper cool, do your easy wingbeats in the shade, drink your water before you're thirsty,

check on a neighbor, and somewhere in the middle of the fireworks and the fanfare, remember the Blackburns and their boat. Two hundred and fifty years on, freedom is still the best thing we ever thought to celebrate.

Take good care of yourselves, stay cool, and have a happy and safe Fourth. I'll be right here next Monday with the coffee on.

— *Harvey* 

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