

Your

Country Neighbor

FREE!



August 2008



It's Still The Good Ol' Days



The Fourth Annual Truck and Tractor Pull, Johnson, Nebraska

Your Country Neighbor hopes that you will be especially pleased with this colorful issue. There are an extra four pages of color with a Special Summer-time Section for your enjoyment.

Look for more color pictures later this month online at www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Have a good August, and remember to look for Autumn scenes in the coming issues.



More "Green Iron" on page 15

Voices from your Valley

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The last of the wheat harvest was around the middle of July.



This Country Church is next to the *Old Stone Church*, Drive south of the *Rohr's Corner* and watch for the sign.

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Devon Adams | Merri Johnson |
| Frieda Burston | Rhonda Nielson |
| Deb Cox | Karen Ott |
| Vicki Harger | Joe Smith |
| Ron Heskett | Josh Whisler |

Thank You

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Peru, Nebraska 68421

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A Note From Your Publisher

There are more color photos online at www.yourcountryneighbor.com
And two framed enlargements are hanging in Sue's "Flower Country & Gifts" in Auburn.



The Redtailed Hawk is not seen as often as in Spring, but still hunts from poles and posts along the roadways.

PEGGY KUSER

Certified Public Accountant

916 Central Avenue
Auburn, NE 68305

(402) 274-5106

Fax: (402) 274-2580

Country

Scenes



Horses are a Beautiful Part of the Country Scene



A Familiar Scene with a Summer Gown



My Favorite Cottonwood Tree in an Emerald Setting of Tasseling Corn



F-15 Climbing from low altitude during
“flyover” at the Tarkio Airshow.

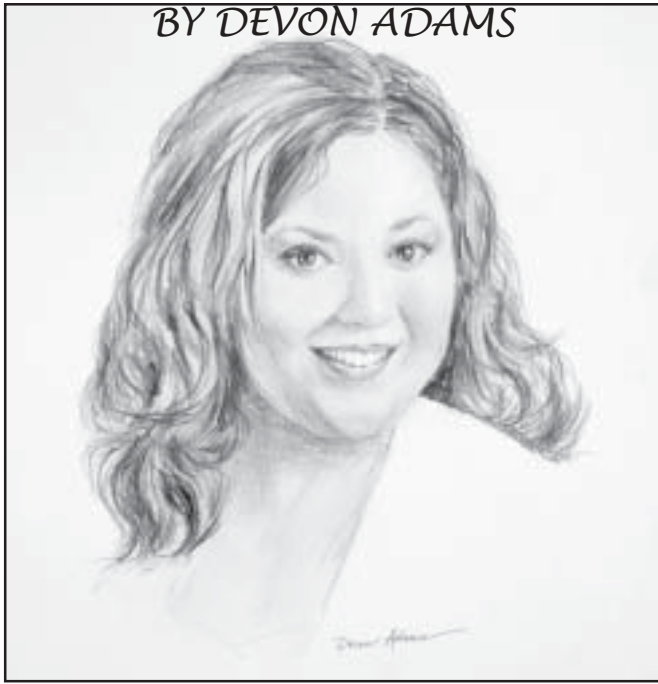


‘Wind Field’ near Rock Port

Color versions of some of these photos will be posted to:
www.yourcountryneighbor.com
Click on *Publication*

PENCIL PORTRAITS

BY DEVON ADAMS



Artist Devon Adams will do a pencil portrait of *children, adults, graduation, wedding, pets, or wildlife.*

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Devon Adams
402-209-9377

P.O. Box 192
Peru, Nebraska 68421

COPY CAT

by Devon Adams

I heard a ghostly sound
from an empty room
that had an open door.
Inside the dark
was a copy machine,
making copies of the cat
that sat upon the screen.

SUMMERTREE

by Devon Adams

In the full of summer,
trees are heavy with green
skirts dancing in the wind.
They sway and sigh
in time to the music
of the fickle breezes.
Noon light from clear skies
turns shadows into black-green
caves beneath the arbor
of the oaks that line
the ridge along the bluff.
Fitful snores from the sleeping
giant that is the wind
flip the oak leaves over
to their silver sides
so that they shimmer
like restless birds.

BLUE STARS

by Devon Adams

Beyond the day sky
there are dancing stars,
as we spin like a slow top
on our wobbly axis.
We can't see them
because they're blue,
covered by the curtain
of the atmosphere
that is opaque
in shades of cobalt,
a reaction of molecules
to sunlight falling
through the delicate haze
that gives us life.
They are there, though,
watching us from behind
a screen of anonymity.
We are under observation
by who knows what
from who knows where.
The distant planets that hang
around those periwinkle suns
may be mirror images of us
just waiting to be seen.

Editor's note:

You can find poetry previously published by Your Country Neighbor online. Just click on "publications" at:

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Jane Zentner
Owner

TURN AROUND

by Devon Adams

Life is not a tunnel,
with one-way speeding traffic.
There is time to turn around.
and notice precious moments
as our journey proceeds.
The guy with binoculars
watching for deer
fails to see the deer
standing behind him,
while the window washer
sees only the glass
and not the view.
Look above the sidewalk
and see the hawks dancing
under the metal birds
dragging contrails across
the endless sky,
but don't forget to look
for the random cracks
that can turn your life
into a train wreck.

REACHING BACK

by Devon Adams

The edge between today and yesterday
is as thin as bony hands
and as brief as a blink.
The photo albums of our memories
come back to haunt us in our dreams,
and those we've lost are there again,
reaching back to love us.

SOLID AS A ROCK

by Devon Adams

There is a pasture, west of houses sitting
on the street beside the creek,
that has foundation stones hiding in the grass.
They'll trip your feet, if you're not careful,
but they'll tell a story, if you'll listen.
They used to be a house, and there was a barn
that sat beside the cool dark cellar
holding summer in its jars.
There are ghosts still living there,
with echoes of their laughter, sweat and tears
falling through the light of dusk.
They were the pioneers who came
to build a town in these blue hills.
The story never ends, because
the roots they planted are still growing
in their children's children, and the
town is living history day by day.

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

When my husband and I learned last fall that we were to become first-time grandparents this June, I immediately began knitting a sweater and cap for the baby's first winter. I intentionally chose a gender-neutral yarn with flecks of primary colors, reasoning sensibly that it could be passed on to a future sibling, or maybe even a cousin, of either gender.

But within about an hour of our granddaughter's arrival, I was gripped with the irresistible impulse to purchase something girly. Penney's just happened to be having a redecorating sale, so I purchased not one, not two, but three newborn outfits. On viewing the miniature fashions, my son noted, with just a *slight* hint of vexation, that Breckin had more newborn summer clothes than she could possibly wear before she either outgrew them or the weather turned cold. I assumed this was just a typical male attitude toward the feminine wardrobe.

But he spoke the truth. On the day she was born, Breckin's clothes already nearly filled three bureau drawers and a closet. This is what comes of knowing the baby's gender in advance. The gift-givers must have all shopped at Penneys, judging by the multiple, identical pink and lavender and mint green onesies, sleepers, booties, and dresses, not to mention enough blankets to stock a hospital maternity ward. Someone had even given her a lovely little Easter dress, but she'll have to wear it at Christmas to make use of it. Fortunately I had kept the receipt for the itty-bitty, warm-weather clothes I bought, so they can be exchanged for merely small, cool-weather outfits in a few months.

My son's family lives in St. Joe, so I haven't been involved with my granddaughter on a daily basis, but I'm getting fairly well reacquainted with the reality of newborns just the same.

When Breckin was ten days old, my son invited me to come spend a few days. I was happy to go and take the night shift so my daughter-in-law could catch up on sleep. Breckin and I would bond during our private time with nothing to intrude. I even took along a storybook to instill a love of reading right off the bat. If recollection serves, the book remained unread.

Nights one and two weren't too tough. But by nights three and four, that second feeding at around four a.m. was grueling. It took all the concentration and coordination I could muster to mix up the instant formula, while cradling the baby simultaneously to keep her contented and quiet so as not to wake her parents.

Then halfway through her 2-ounce ration, she'd fall asleep. But just try to put her back in bed. I'd no more than lay my head on the pillow than she'd start to fuss. Pick her up, she fell asleep. Lay her down, she woke up. She was like those old-fashioned baby dolls that open and close their eyes depending on their position, except that Breckin had the positions reversed, or her eyes reversed, or maybe her days and nights reversed. How could she manage to nap soundly through the barking and yipping of the family's two dogs every time a car drove by during the day, but wake to the slightest disturbance in the middle of the night?

I know I'm not relating anything most of you haven't already experienced yourself. But isn't it amazing how a six and a half pound newborn can command your attention so completely and effortlessly? Babies get to be cuddled and cared for and loved "just because." We should all be so lucky.

Editor's note: *You can read previous articles by Merri online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com*

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I'm Still Here

by Fieda Burston

I'm still here in the Ol' Folks' Home, but I'm not pushing and shoving to get out any more.

I've done a lot of thinking, and I figure that I'm just waiting for the right events to wind down to where moving is the right thing for me. Then it'll happen. I have to be ready for it any time, but I don't need to jump-start it. If it's the right thing for me, it will happen. If it isn't, it won't. My feeling is that simple.

Some people call it "Que sera, sera", "Whatever will be, will be." I call it the old Jewish word "Bah-SHERT". which has a strong flavor of predestination to it. And maybe a sense of events being woven in an out to make a pattern that we can't see until it's finished years later.

Some people believe in Angels, some in spirits, some in ghosts, some in invisibles that interact. I don't know what to believe in, so I just believe in computers, but not too much in them either.

But I believe there's something out there that we just aren't physically equipped to understand. Not as we are.

That idea hit me on the head after Abe died. Literally. I was on the ladder filling a closet loft with new books Abe had brought home and never put away, on top of old books we already had there. One of the old books unbalanced. It hit me on the head, dropped to the floor, and opened. I read what it said when I picked it up.

"What does it matter, that we are parting now? It will not be for long. We will meet again, another time, another place." That was the beginning of many book-openings for more than a year, and all of them were comments on events that were going on. If I was doing it myself, I'd like to know how I did it. If I wasn't doing it, I'd sure like to know who was—

The last book opened a little over a year later— is time a few weeks longer there? It was Verse 35 of Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat: "There was a Door to which I had no Key, There was a Veil through which I could not See. There was some talk awhile of Thee and Me, And then No More of Me and Thee." Sounds like there's a short period where communication is possible, and then something changes, and it has to stop?

But that's not universally true. A friend talked with her father 15 years after he had died in poverty. He came in where she was working, and gave her advice on investments. (Made her a rich woman, too) And another saw a grandmother who showed her where the family jewels were hidden, but Grandma was long gone...

Grandma had waited for the family house to come into my friend's hands— So is there a time limit, with an invisible other-world schedule? Or is Time elastic, outside of this world?

Lots of people believe that death is not the end of the story, but I can't find any one theory that accounts for it all. I don't want to believe firmly in anything that starts out with holes in it. Whatever I believe in, I would want the same shoe to fit every foot. Universal truth, kind of. Until then, I'll go barefoot on the question of souls and eternity and reincarnation and resurrection and afterlives and angels and outer space.

Are you wearing any shoes of this sort? If you have an answer for EVERYTHING, let me know—but I can't accept your religion or mine because no one religion fits all that people have sworn to me as having happened..

Until then, I'll just wait and let events evolve. If there's a place for me up in Sacramento, it will show up at the right time. If it's my place, it will come. All I have to do is wait.

Whatever will be, will be— Or maybe not? There's that too.....
Regards and best wishes, fieda

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The Dulcimer Group

by Joe Smith

Marta and I went over to Beatrice this week a couple times and ended up buying a pair of nice dulcimers. Forrest Smith and his wife Eileen were giving classes and playing over at the Fair in Beatrice. He tells me that Dulcimer groups are springing up all over. They are easy to play, he says, anyway time will tell. They are beautiful to look at and have a nice sound. It seems the more that play the better it sounds. Well we said why not, we can't play anything else, but have hopes of learning to play these. There is a group at Beatrice that meets twice a month, first and third Monday to play and practice. I think it is just like anything else, it takes practice. They will be back in the country in November and could have a class over here if there is enough interest. So if you want to start on one let me know and I will let them know. They are real nice people and I hate to say it, but they actually taught us something today, how much remains to be seen. I always wanted to play a guitar but my big old fingers wouldn't work on the strings. The dulcimer I think I can make work for me. If any body out there in the Country Neighbor land has one, let us know and we will get together and play some music. This goes for the Johnson Rag people too. Joe and Marta Smith

Dulcimer definition: a musical instrument with wire strings of graduated lengths stretched over a sound box, played with two padded hammers or by plucking.

The Loss of a Loved One

by Joe Smith

To lose a loved one is just part of life, life goes on and we pick up the pieces and move on. The loss I'm speaking is a little different; I'm talking about losing your life's partner, your wife or husband. I have several friends that have lost a partner and have come out of it well. My wife and I have lost family members, but we still have each other. I'm glad I'm not talking from experience here, I just trying to describe what I think it would be like. Of course each case would be different. Several of my friends have a new partner. I do know the loss of a loved one is hard to forget, so the loss of a partner seems like it would be harder, unless you fought all the time, then it might be a relief.

I would hate to try to do without my mate. She is all that puts me back together when I get hurt. She feeds me, does my clothes and a lot more. We have been through hell and high water together. We spout off at each other once in awhile, but not bad. My wife says she doesn't want to have to break in another one. Me? I'm not sure any body would want this old coot around anyway. So until death do us part, we still have each other and a wad of grandkids.

The loved one that has past is at home with the Lord and is feeling no pain any more. It is a lot harder on the ones left behind.
Joe Smith

"My Life & Times as Harve Bodine"

by Joe Smith

If you like the stories I write, you would love this story. Harve Bodine was in the Confederate Army, riding for the Quantrell Raiders. He didn't like anything that guy was doing so he and another fellow left before the end of the war and went out West. It seems he turned lawyer.

The story has a lot of human feeling in it, honest emotions, true love (sorry, no hot sex scenes). The story takes place in an area I am somewhat familiar with. Other parts came from Harve himself. I had no idea where it was going. I just wrote it down like Harve told me to. Whether it actually happened or not is for you to decide. Joe Smith.



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Your Country Neighbor

Special SUMMERTIME 4-Page Section

Your Country Neighbor hopes you have taken a weekend or two this Summer to visit Southeast Nebraska. The roadside wildflowers are blomming profusely, the fields of grain mostly emerald green with patches of gold 'stubble' left from the harvesting of wheat. The recent cutting of alfalfa is evident by the large rolls of hay dotting some hillsides.

And you don't have to go to Texas to see Longhorn cattle; just keep your eyes open along Scenic Byway 136 west of Auburn.

If you prefer to view the architecture from the streets of our historic towns, watch for the iconic lemonade stands, and be sure to support our little entrepreneurs.

There's still some Summer left!



Yellow is a common color, but there are also reds and blues.



Large rolls of hay dot some hillsides.



"Where the Longhorn Cattle Roam".



Stop at every Lemonade Stand. It's the American way!

About Janie's

by Rhonda Nielson

After teaching middle school math and science for 17 years, I left the teaching world to try something completely different. In September 2005, I dove head-first into the business world and opened Janie's Confections. What started out as a small truffle and cookie store has evolved into a small truffle, cookie, cinnamon roll, cheesecake, pie, and cake store. Cookies, truffles, and cinnamon rolls are available during regular business hours. Cheesecakes, pies, and cakes are available by special order. I bake



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cakes and cookies for birthdays, weddings, showers (wedding & baby), open houses, business meetings, and small parties. I am located at 616 Central Avenue in the historical downtown business district of Nebraska City, NE. Stop in, say "Hi", try a cookie or truffle (or how about a dozen?), and spend some time in our community.



Did You Miss It?



Johnson Motor Sports Truck and Tractor Pull



Waiting for the parade, July 4th, Brownville.



The Tarkio, Missouri Air Show included fly-overs by the B-2 Stealth Bomber (above), and two F-15's (below).



Germanfest was July 19th in Syracuse.



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Rich, Demi, and Deb

When you visit Auburn, stop in and see Rich, Demi, and Deb at the “Philly Grill”. Enjoy a slice of fresh, homemade strawberry or coconut pie, after a hot Philly sandwich. The *French Quarter* décor includes street lamps that change the lighting during the day. Notice the clock and kerosene lantern. It was Demi’s idea to have a restaurant with a *French Quarter* theme, relaxed atmosphere, and with a dress code ranging from overalls to your best suit.

Deb’s cooking career began in the only country school in Nebraska that included a kitchen for hot lunches. Today her restaurant features home cooking from scratch (no deep fat frying), special pies others try to copy, and stories the family will share about signal lights for the Underground Railroad, *Old West* re-enactments, or having their boat towed by a catfish on the Missouri River. Downtown Auburn on H-75. You can’t miss it, and you shouldn’t.



Brewery Cave(s?)

by Ron Heskett

One of the highlights of touring Whiskey Run Creek Winery in Brownville, Nebraska, is the historic cave built by Conrad Schreiner for Nebraska’s first brewery. It was constructed in 1866 from bricks manufactured in one of the three brick factories operating in Brownville at the time. The floor was laid with locally quarried limestone. The cave provided storage space at a constant 55 degrees for the many barrels of beer produced to sell to the local communities. Prior to the onset of prohibition when the brewery closed down, up to 3,000 barrels were produced annually.

A second larger cave was located in 2004 by the UNL Geology Department and their seismic equipment. They also believed they were receiving reflections off metal within the cave. The new find is just north of the currently restored cave and under the Winery’s parking lot.

Was equipment moved into a second larger cave, a connecting tunnel removed, and the doorway sealed? Could this be how the Brewery reacted to protect its enterprise as the Prohibition Movement approached?

We know that the doorway at the north end of the currently restored cave was sealed with concrete. This was removed, iron gates installed, and a portion of the limestone cave behind it reconstructed



Tour the Restored Cave

when Bob Curtright built Whiskey Run Creek Winery on this site that opened in September of 2002.

So are there actually relics of Brownville’s past preserved beneath the parking lot waiting to be discovered? At some future time we hope to try to pinpoint the north end of this cave, dig down, and enter the backside to see what is actually there.

In the meantime we invite you to stop by and visit the winery and cave to discover for yourself what Whiskey Run Creek Winery has to offer.



The Nemaha County, Nebraska, Tourism Committee Helped Make This Page Possible.

BY THE ROLLING RIVER

by Devon Adams

The rugged bluffs of the Missouri and the gentle valley of the Nemaha are landmarks that cut across the rolling prairie sod. All the creeks snake down through cuts in the hills until they join the currents running toward the gulf that swallows the water of the Mississippi. The low sun of the morning and the evening defines the contours of the sculptured ground in such a way that there is a continuous change of angle as you move from point to point. And the view is always impressive. Massive bluffs rise abruptly from the bottomland, with shelves of limestone that have scratches from the glaciers next to holes hollowed out for nests by swallows. Hundred-year-old oaks grow on the cliff edge high above, their roots clawing to hang on like arthritic fingers twisted by the weather. In summer there are black holes of shadow that never see the sun, and in the winter the ice is likely to stay cold and deep until spring. Moving on the surface of the rolling hills is like sailing in a ship across the waves. Here and there are islands made of cottonwoods or oaks, floating in the corn and beans. And in a separate universe that is the sky are infinite displays of moving clouds that reach beyond the horizon.

Nothing ever looks exactly the same every day. The air of this region has extraordinary qualities of light that alter the perception of distance and color, unlike the hard-edged clearness of the mountains that cuts details in your vision like a knife cuts paper. Here in Southeast Nebraska, the atmosphere is more creative, like an artist painting a scene over and over and changing it every time. Instead of using paint and brushes, the air fills with moisture and dust and wind that combine in so many different ways that the colors alter and we see a landscape that is dynamic from day to day and sometimes from minute to minute. The blues in the bluffs come from this soup in the air and they are a production that rivals any movie ever made. Even if a painter used every tube of blue that



The Missouri River and the Steamboat Trace, Nemaha County, NE

is made and added every other color, and mixed combinations for a year, he wouldn't come close to the hues made from the mix of distance and atmosphere.

I've never felt the compulsion to travel that many people enjoy. The reason is because I perceive that I am in a quite different place every day. I was born with a particular set of genes that wire my brain to notice forms and colors, and this quality allows me to focus on the changes that are especially apparent in this area. Not only are the landforms unique, but the weather patterns here evolve in an extremely active progression through the seasons that results in exciting and vigorous interactions that can be a challenge to observe. There is a new world waiting outside my door every day.

The Nemaha County, Nebraska, Tourism Committee Helped Make This Page Possible.



I expect to see these by the roadside in late August and September, but July?

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Our Current Wine List

Apple Raspberry

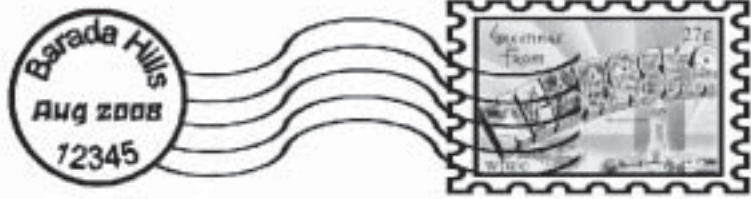
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de Chaunac • Concord • Edelweiss

Frontenac • Levi's Reserve • Marechal Foch

Northern Red • Riesling • St. Croix

Old Home Place
RR 1 Shady Lane
Barada Hills



HEADIN' EAST TO THE MIDWEST...

by Vicki Harger

Smoke billowed from the mountains as I drove down 299 on my way out of California. It looked like Hell on earth.

Wildfire season was here, but I was escaping the smoky inferno by heading East to the Midwest. I needed to do some regrouping, as well.

I'd been living in California for two months—trying to fit my country-girl lifestyle into a city-girl environment. It hadn't worked very well. Claustrophobia had set in almost immediately.

Day after day, I found myself fleeing to the beach and the coastland. I filled the car with driftwood and rocks and shells—much to the dismay of my city-bred fiancé'.

I remember well the last beach-outing that Steven and I took together. I went exploring and soon discovered a real treasure. I thought it was beautiful, but Steven was dumbfounded—even horrified.

"Vic...It's nothing but junk!" Steven said. "Just a 50-pound piece of metal with rocks stuck to it."

"No, no!" I said. "It's a natural phenomenon...one of Nature's finest treasures." I turned the slab over. "It's an iron-ore Conglomerate with rocks and driftwood encrusted on it. Please carry it to the car for me, Stevie."

Steven fumed and grumbled, but finally carried the Phenomenal Conglomerate to the car. That really was the last straw for our relationship—epitomizing everything that was wrong between us. We were just too different...a city-boy and a country-girl with opposing cultures and lifestyles.

A few days later, I found myself packing up my belongings and loading them into the car. I forgot to pack one thing, though....

The 50-pound Treasure now belonged to Steven. It seemed fitting, somehow...A souvenir from Vic.

I thought about it as I drove along. Although Steven and I loved each other, our relationship had failed. You just can't mix city-slickers and country folk.

It made me sad.

A blood-red sun was sinking into the Pacific as I left the West Coast. A thick haze hung over the landscape and the wildfires burned with fierce heat. It looked like something from the Book of Revelation.

I turned on the radio. The news was grim. 1400 wildfires were raging out of control across California. The smoky road behind me had been closed shortly after I went through. There was no turning back.

Strains of a familiar song wafted across the airwaves. It was all about the end of the world...but it ended on a posi-

tive note. Everything would be fine. Just fine. Somehow, the song cheered me a bit.

I turned the radio dial. More bad news poured in...Severe flooding in the mid-west...entire towns were washed away. And up north, the Arctic ice is disappearing so fast, it could be gone by fall.

The stock market plunged 358 points, today. The value of the US dollar is plummeting. There's a Baby Boomer Armageddon underway in the Social Security department. The housing market's dead. Banks are collapsing. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mack are in serious trouble. Oil and gas prices have soared, setting a new record. Five bucks a gallon for gas in NorCal.

Could I even afford to drive home?
Home....

Home to the Midwest—to the farm that had been in the family for generations. What a refuge it was from all this craziness, I thought to myself.

I drove across the salt flats and deserts and mountains, listening to the reports of world calamities. It kept me awake, at least.

Two days later, I arrived at the farm. Pulling into the driveway, I stretched my legs and looked around.

The family farm was intact. No sign of calamity anywhere. No floods, or collapsing banks. No Baby Boomer Armageddons. The pigs were mucking about in their pen, as usual. The calves blinked sleepily in the barnyard.

Then suddenly, all heck broke loose. My father came thundering down the

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driveway in his red pickup. He waved and hollered. "Hey—great to see you home, Vic!"

Dad shoved back his hat and swiped at the sweat on his brow. "You got here just in time. The cows broke through the fence and they're in the corn. We've got to get them out of there and fence 'em off. Can you help me drag that new roll of fencing into the back of my truck?"

I stared at him, too tired to respond.

My father didn't seem to notice. He was talking a hundred-miles-an-hour, waving his arms and pointing. "Tomorrow we've got to run the bull down the driveway toward the pasture. He's a big one. We could use your help!" He paused long enough to jump back into his truck. "Boy, it's sure good to see you home, Vic!"

Dad and the red pickup swirled off in a cloud of dust—with a promise that he'd return momentarily...We had to deal with those cows and the broken fence!

Gathering up suitcases and my scattered wits, I waved at the calves in the barnyard—giving them a Hey!....They bawled in reply.

I smiled....

In spite of the trials, the miles, and the everlastin' journey, it was good to be here. ...So good to be home.

Vicki Harger



A-10's "flyover" in formation at the Tarkio Air Show July 12.

Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
(Photos provided by Author)

Fishing:

The Missouri River is inside its banks and doing a little fluctuating up and down due to a couple of reasons. One reason is that Gavens Point Dam is letting more water loose due to the Dam's Pool is full for the first time in six years. The other reason is the scattered thunder storms passing though last month. These storms are dropping large amounts of rain in a short amount of time, in isolated areas, and blowing right on though. So depending on where you are on the river, the water may be stirred up and trashy when other areas are clear and clean. You think that has fishermen scratching their heads, what do you think the fish are thinking? Normally on the river "River on the Rise" means the fish are biting. So depending on the river surge (up or down) the fish will be active. This can be a matter of hours, the way the storms blow though. I've talked to several fishermen who have said that they would have a lot of action, and then the bites would just shut off. This will change with the river settling out and finding its normal flowing level. What are they biting on? The Big ones are hitting chubs and gold fish. Everything else is hitting crawdads and carp minnows with some action on sand toads.

Hunting:

I know your saying hunting?? But yes "Hunting"! Hunting seasons are coming back around. Starting with Squirrel on August 1st. The locals here hunt them with 22 rifles and if you're going to get out during August you're also going to need mosquito repellent. The woods will be dark with all the foliage on that makes it right for mosquitoes to hang out. (Squirrel limits this year are 7 bag and 28 possession.)

Summer fishing is good right now. Where some of the area lakes are getting blue green algae alerts, the river still offers boating and fishing fun. The river water has warmed up making it perfect for the Flathead Catfish run. And the fish are hitting right now. So get some bait and give it a try. You won't be sorry. Remember I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time "Happy Hunting & Fishing."





Myself with a 30 pound Blue Cat caught the weekend of the 4th of July on a trot line.



Arlan Meints from Steinauer Nebraska shown with a stringer of some nice Channel Cats taken near Peru on the Missouri River.

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Face of Drought

A Farm Report from
Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

A series of storms visited the panhandle this week; some arriving as welcome guests, others as heartless enemies.

In a call so close it gave me a headache to think about it, our yet-to-be-harvested-wheat missed Tuesday's nasty hail by less than a quarter of a mile. For some nearby farm families it was a third year of bad luck: 2006-hail; 2007-killing freeze; 2008-hail.....they deserved better.

The rains were spotty, as summer rains are apt to be; some areas of the valley measured rainfall in inches, others in hundredths. Our southern-most farms, those with the driest fields, received nary a sprinkle, while the Morrill fields were blessed with eight-tenths.

Along with rain and hail the storm system brought the rare phenomenon of high humidity to the valley. Growing corn might enjoy the heavy, wet air, but those of us born and raised on the arid high plains find the stickiness intolerable. I admire those stalwart citizens of eastern Nebraska who manage to live and work under such insufferable circumstances...they're certainly made of sterner stuff than we are.

I'm experiencing technological problems tonight and as a result must cut my message short. It's nothing more serious than fading battery power, but a thorough search of the house has yet to reveal a single AA battery capable of feeding the energy needs of my wireless mouse.

Once upon a time, back when toys ran on imagination instead of Duracells, Evereadys, and Energizers, my battery supply would have

been more than adequate for such an emergency. But nowadays nearly every battery I purchase winds up in one or another of the grandchildren's toys; even blowing bubbles has gone high tech, with cheap, battery powered machines capable of churning out hundreds of bubbles per minute for kids too young, or too lazy, to blow their own.

I'm not as easily seduced by colorful non-necessities as I once was, but in a weak, Lawrence Welk moment I bought one of the darn things. For a while it worked like a charm, spewing glistening clouds of bubbles which popped in tiny bursts of sticky soap and glycerin when they drifted

to my kitchen floor. But eventually the contraption began to emit a tiny growl along with the bubbles, then, in due course, it stopped doing anything at all.

Now, it's just another tawdry piece of Chinese junk waiting for burial in an American landfill. I should have known better.

And this before my mouse blinks off....Potatoes are nearing one dollar a pound here...ostensibly because the farmers in Idaho planted corn instead of their usual crops.

Every trip to the grocery store brings surprises....none of them good.

Editor's note: You can read previous articles by Karen Ott online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at:
www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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A Special Bonus Article by Karen Ott...from her series, *The Face of Drought*

I was about 12 when I signed my name....Karen Kraus..... in bold, green ink, on the copyright page of the book, even though I knew better than to color in a book meant for reading. Printed in 1942, 'Blondie and Dagwood's Secret Service' was illustrated with cartoons adapted from newspaper strips in 1939, 1940, and 1941.

I gave Dagwood an impressive black mustache on page 153, and a pair of grape-purple, polka-dot pajamas a hundred or so pages later.

It's been years since I read the book, but the cover page says it's an "original story about The Bumstead Family of the famous newspaper comics and radio series, and motion pictures "BLONDIE" by Chic Young". If memory serves, the story line dealt with the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, and the actions of a suspicious Japanese fellow, by the name of Togo, who had enrolled, along with Dagwood, in aviation ground school a few months after the raid. Back then patriotism hadn't yet been ham-strung by political correctness; an enemy was an enemy.....and no one was afraid to say it.

By the time I decorated the book's pages with crayons it had seen better days; the thick manila pages were yellowed and brittle with age, the cheap hardback cover stained and sprung. I wasn't the first to leave my mark; on the flyleaf, penned in spidery handwriting, was the inscription 'Merry Xmas to Jerry from Bud, Butch, and Bunky'; a gift no doubt long forgotten by the givers, and recipient alike.

I've often wondered about Jerry. Did he enlist in the armed forces and subsequently march off to war? Were Bud, Butch and Bunky school chums, or a boisterous clan of red-headed brothers who sat glued to their seats at Sunday afternoon matinees dreaming of B52 bombers and Sherman tanks? If they're still alive they'd be old men by now, all their adventures...except the final one, behind them; God Speed Jerry, Bud, Butch, and Bunky...wherever you are.

I own numerous such books, not Blondie and Dagwood per se, but books with forgotten dedications written by unknown hands.

On Christmas day, 1912 John H. Morrison presented Sue B. Hess with Red Pepper Burns, a book in which the chapter headings all begin 'In Which He': In Which He Vows a Vow; In Which He Makes a Concession; In Which He is Unusually Preoccupied.

At first glance John's formal use of Sue's middle initial seems to indicate their relationship was a reserved one; a few brief words after Wednesday night prayer meetings, a tip of the hat and a nod of the head when they met on the street. But there's something more I think, a faint glimmer of hopeful expectation hidden in the brief notation.

If I were a handwriting expert, capable of reading personality into every curve and curlicue I'd say John was the sort of man who always carried a carefully folded, monogrammed handkerchief in the breast pocket of his impeccably tailored suit. His Sue would have been prim and proper, a bit beyond marriageable age and just the kind of woman likely to be swept off her feet by the gentle courting of a dapper, middle-aged widower. They were made for each other.

They would name their first child after his father, John Herman Morrison Jr., and christen their two daughters Susan Hess Morrison and Elizabeth Hess Morrison; family names they refused to shorten to Sue and Beth...on principal.

Years later, on the day John was laid to rest in a tree-shaded cemetery on the edge of town, Sue pulled the book from a shelf in her small living room and began a story her grandchildren would someday retell to their own offspring....."It was Christmas..... and your Grandfather gave me this book."

I'd like to believe that's the way it happened....and if it didn't, it should have.

A 1907 copy of The Range Dwellers, illustrated by Charles M. Russell, looks to be the kind of book a young man would enjoy. Instead it ended up in the hands of a girl. The inscription reads "Miss Maxine Durand, Methodist Hospital, Scottsbluff Nebraska, July 21, 1928...From Mother and Father."

It's near eighty years since Maxine's parents climbed the steps of the Methodist hospital and presented their daughter with the book which now lies on the desk near my computer.

Amelia Earhart had just become the first woman to successfully pilot an aircraft across the Atlantic Ocean, and Mickey and Minnie Mouse would soon make their first appearance in the animated short 'Plane Crazy'. In a few months Eliot Ness would be chosen take over the leadership of the Chicago probation unit, The Untouchables, and in November Republican Herbert Hoover would become president-elect of the USA, carrying 40 states to the Democrat's 8.

In his acceptance speech Hoover would say, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of this land. We shall soon, with the help of God, be in sight of the day when poverty shall be banished from this land." Herbert couldn't have known, during those halcyon days of the roaring twenties, that the stock market was headed for collapse, and the 'Great Depression' waited, like a thief in the night, just around the corner.

Some books, like my 1916 Windermere Series copy of the lavishly illustrated Alice in Wonderland, are inscribed with only one name...over and over and over. Margaret M, whoever she was, managed to pen her name eleven times inside the front and back covers; her signature undisciplined and a bit wild...much like Alice herself. She wrote 'Alice' M. in two places... no doubt a tribute to Lewis Carroll's spunky heroine.

In my assortment of old books you won't find a single rare edition, or first printing; the real value of the collection lies not in money, but in the pleasure of turning pages someone long gone once turned, or finding a corner of a page turned down and wondering what interruption caused the reader to pause at that particular spot.....did the phone ring, the baby cry, or did a neighbor drop by for a visit? Reading inscriptions on flyleaves, and scrawled notes in margins, provides a tangible link to the past, a concrete connection to a real person. It's about time travel in the most real sense... about a chance to touch the past.


So here's to the romantic teenagers who declared their love for each other on the flyleaf of Legends Poems and Stories: Doreen+Douglas; Janice+Jerry; Don+Jane, and to Tansey whose Mama presented her with Heart Throbs on October 20th 1907.

And here's to the twelve year old me.....who signed her name, in bold green ink, on the copyright page of Blondie and Dagwood's Secret Service.


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There was a lot of “Green Iron” competition at the fourth annual Johnson Motor Sports Truck and Tractor Pull on July 19th.



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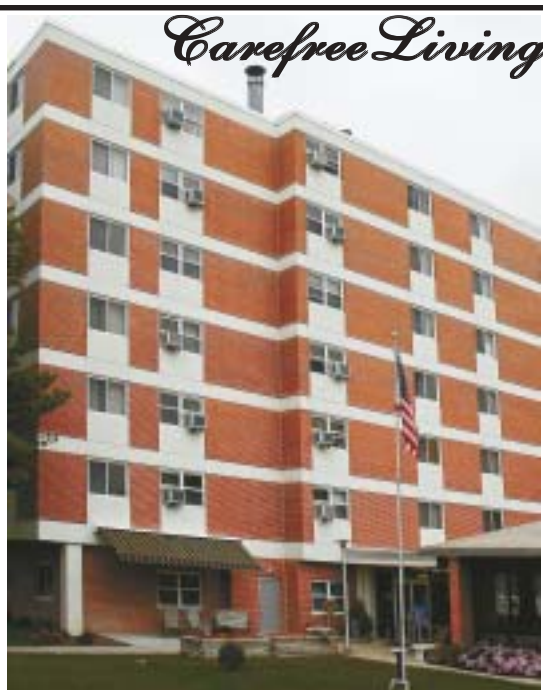
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