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Country Neighbor



February 2006

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What does this tree (shown with October foliage) near Peru, and the Little Red School House in Brownville have in common? Read more on page 4.

Your Window with a Country View.

February is about...

Love. Valentines and love. Groundhog Day and love. Building kites for March winds to carry. Wishing for snow. Avoiding the flu. Dealing with the flu. Taking care of kids and grandkids... with the flu. Preparing for Spring planting. Reading *Your Country Neighbor!* Getting ready for Daffodil Days. Becoming familiar with the Lyceum. Bea's back and she's buzzing about roses... 'cause roses are for Valentines...hope you got one.

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Your Country Neighbor
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Who is this young lady and why is she in this picture? And why with a book? Clue(s) are inside this issue. Explanation in the next issue of *The Nemaha County Voice*, which is published in Nemaha County, Nebraska.

A SPECIAL COUNTRY NEIGHBOR EDITION?

Your Country Neighbor has an unusual request of you this month. We want to publish a special edition of *Your Country Neighbor* which would be available by subscription only. This is an inquiry as to how interested you would be in subscribing to a special edition, if color pictures and postage for your home delivery are included in the price. If you would be willing to subscribe for \$25 per year, send no money now, but let us know your name and address so we can bill you when and if it happens. We need to know how many readers are interested before we begin publishing. If your name is among the first 100 letters, you will receive the first issue free with your annual subscription. Mail to:

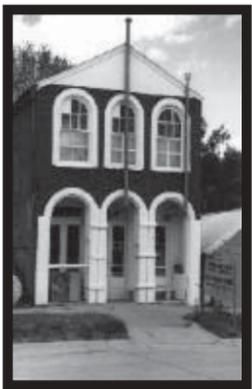
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COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

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Thank you!

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Window on Fifth Street

I notice a lot of the world and a lot of life through my window on Fifth Street, and every day I notice the weather. As I get older, I am becoming convinced that the most important things in life are family, friends, food, and the weather. The first three can be summarized in one word, fun. And yet good weather is fun, bad weather is exciting, which is also fun, so I guess I am saying all those elements of life are important because they are fun.

Weather is the most recent addition to my 'what's important list'. I'm actually surprised at myself for not including it long ago. Everyone talks about it. You find it around you everywhere you go. It's seldom the same even if you stay in the same spot, so it's not often boring; it's often exciting, and always a point of conversation.

I can barely stand being with some of my family members, even when it's just once a year for dinner. Maybe that's because the dinner is one of those important things, and they're interrupting it. That's unfair to say, since family is the most common reason to have big dinners. Even with friends, food is merely snacks and drinks...still important though, because it's with friends.

The weather gives us sunrises, sunshine, sunsets, clear blue skies, white puffy clouds, black stormy clouds, fog, rain, snow, and many other variations of water solids and fluids. One or more weather conditions occur near us wherever we are. If we are inside, we look out the window to check the weather, the temperature gauge, and to see if it's raining. I think most people would find the weather much more interesting to talk about if they didn't take it for granted, and realized how interesting it is.

I suppose I should mention the wind. You never notice the wind unless it's in your face (or at your back), or when it is blowing dust around in the air or garbage cans down the street. Breezes are nice...unless the temperature is too low, then they're not called breezes; the comment is usually, "That wind is cold!" In fact, the wind isn't cold, the air is. The wind may only be a breeze.

Breezes are welcome in Summer, except hot breezes...kind of rare. Wind is expected in March. It's good for kite flying, and since the days are warmer, the wind is not thought of as being so cold as during the Winter.

I don't know of any place in the world where the weather is perfect. I've heard Hawaii, but that's isolated. I've heard Malibu, but they have earthquakes, mudslides, and forest fires. Florida and the Gulf Coast have hurricanes. Arizona is hot; even 'dry heat' is hot. I've lived there. I don't care what anyone thinks, when it's 107 degrees, it's hot! And all people in those places can say about Nebraska or Iowa or Minnesota is, "It gets cold up there!" And I must admit, there's "tornado season".

More and more I am accepting of the weather, especially now that I am finally learning to adjust to it. I try to find ways to photograph it in its 'best light', and when I find that picture, I appreciate the weather more. In any case, it's always part of the view through my window on Fifth Street.

Roles Reversed

by Joe Smith

My wife came down with that flu that is going around. Pretty well laid her out for the count. I turned into a housewife over night. Doing the dishes and cooking the meals, feeding the cats, getting the mail. You name it, I did it. It really makes you appreciate what your wife does every day. We husbands don't have a clue what has to be done or how to do it. Little things like the stove - turn the wrong switch on and make the smoke detector holler. There was something spilt on the foil and it started smoking. I had a hard time getting her to eat any thing, must have been my cooking. Haul wood in for the woodstove. Bring her some tea, help her to the bathroom. She was as weak as a sick kitten. She wandered into the kitchen and leaned on the counter. I asked her if she was all right and she said she was dizzy. I helped her back into the couch in the den. That is our sick room any time one of us gets sick.

There are so many things you take for granted about house keeping and playing nursemaid. I'm here to tell you it is an eye opener for sure. Even running the dishwasher - she had to tell me just how to do it. Personally I hate them, I would rather wash them by hand and put them up, right then after dinner is over. Saturday, I cooked some chili stew; I thought it might boil that flu right out of her. She wouldn't eat it so I had chili stew for two meals. It'll make your eyes water.

Finally today I took her to the doctor and he told her we were doing all the right things. But her blood pressure was way low, and that is why she wanted to pass out, it was 80 over 43. All the time I was playing nursemaid to Marta, I was close to coming down with the same thing. I kept telling myself that I was not going to get this flu. So far all I got was a cough, that is bad enough but not near like Marta had it. I have been taking herbs to build up my resistance and I guess it must be working. That along with positive thinking seem to do the trick. I was wondering for a while if I could pull it off. I have been bragging about these natural herbs and they did come through with flying colors. They do build up your immune system. I didn't miss it all but just about.

I think about all the times my wife nursed me and the kids back to health. I wonder how she did it. I got an email about a fellow that wanted to trade his wife in on a newer model. But you know, I don't think I want to do that. After almost 55 years, we have kinda grown on each other. We have had our ups and downs just like all couples, but trade her in for a newer model? I don't think that will ever happen. The old saying about walking in somebody else's shoes is very true. My hat goes off to the housewife, Thank God we have them. Joe

**For something new and different this year, subscribe to
The Nemaha County Voice; form on page 16.**

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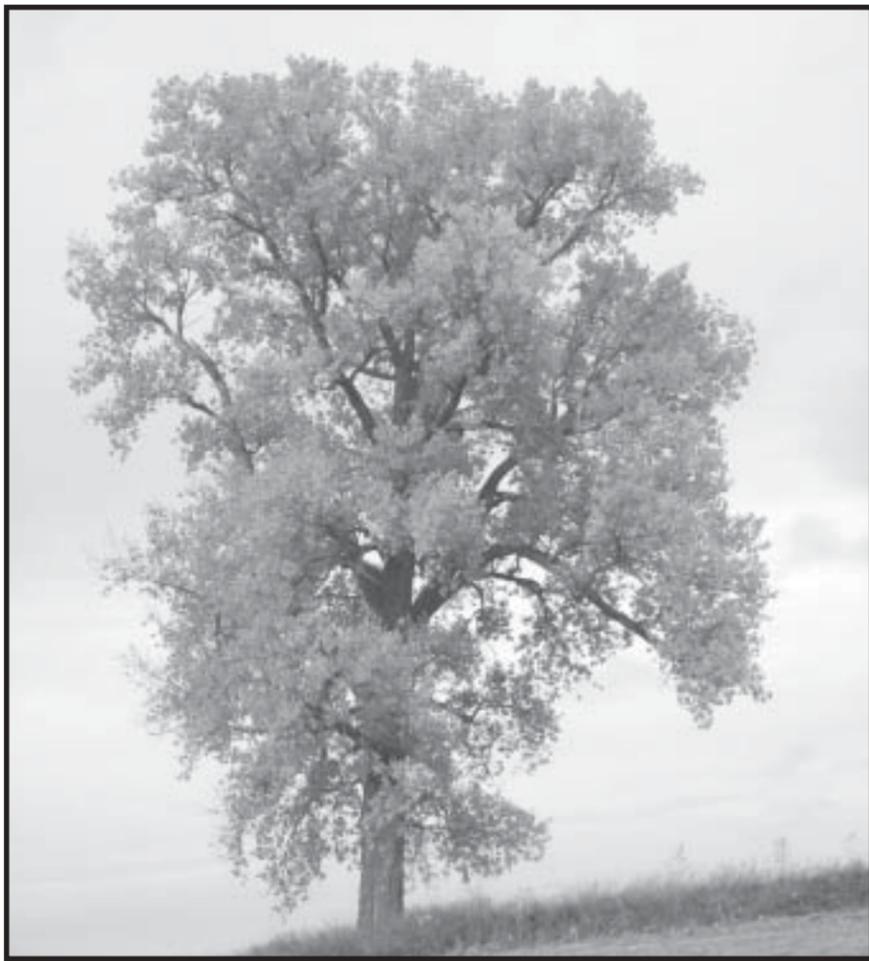
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This majestic Cottonwood tree southeast of Peru has an interesting connection with the 'little red schoolhouse' near the Arboretum in Brownville. It is one of those anecdotes whereby some of what we take for granted everyday have hidden connections to the past. Eventually, some of those connections may be lost. This little mystery will be revealed in *The Nemaha County Voice* published the week of February 19th in Nemaha County, Nebraska.

American Cancer Society Daffodil Days Returns To Help Reduce Burden of Cancer

The American Cancer Society Daffodil Days returns to Nemaha County, Nebraska, this month, bringing the gift of hope and support to local cancer patients. Volunteers are needed to sell daffodils, the flower of hope, in their company, school, church or community organization. Daffodil Days support the American Cancer Society's research, education, advocacy and patient service programs.

Daffodils are available for a donation of \$250 for a case of 500, \$85 for 200, \$45 for 100 and \$5 for a bouquet of 10.

A special Boyds Bear designed exclusively for Daffodil Days can be ordered as part of the Bear and Bouquet for a donation of \$25. The Boyds Bear can be seen at Flowers Plus in Auburn. A Cheer Bouquet that includes a vase and a bouquet is available for a donation of \$15.

Daffodil Days culminates on "Daffodil Sunday," which will be celebrated this year on March 12, 2006. Advance orders will be taken until February 21, 2006. Daffodils will be available for pick-up at the 4-H Building in Auburn, NE on March 9 or 10, 2006. To order or to volunteer for Daffodil Days, please call Ardith Winingar at (402) 872-4175 or Charlotte Parenteau at (402) 274-5599.

Proceeds from the sale of the first flower of spring, and the flower of hope will assist local programs of the American Cancer Society, including youth, tobacco, nutrition and skin education, breast cancer and prostate cancer awareness programs, patient services and free materials to physicians and individuals.

 February is National Children's Dental Health Month



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Lyceum Launches Community Events

“On December 19, 1856, the first meeting of what was known as the Brownville Lyceum was held, a partial organization effected, and on the 26th of the same month it was affirmed by R. Brown and H. S. Brown that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was right, the same being denied by G. W. Bratton and A. S. Holladay. On January 9, 1857, the question was debated as to whether the “Indian has a greater right to complain of the whites than the Negro,” H. S. Thorpe assuming the affirmative, and R. B. Stout, the negative. On January 23, the resolution that all kinds of stock should be restrained from running at large, was defended by J. W. Wells, and denied by Hugh Baker. On January 30, D. L. McGary took issue with G. W. Bratton as to whether the Christian religion, as received and practiced, has been an injury to the human family. How these momentous subjects were decided is unknown.” (Recorded in the Nemaha County Sun.)

In keeping with the spirit of its early history, the Brownville Lyceum will be sponsoring a series of discussions or cafés every Sunday at 2:00 p.m. The first Sunday of the month will feature a political café, the second Sunday a science café, the third Sunday a writers café and the fourth Sunday a philosophy café. The purpose of these cafes is meant to cultivate new habits of discourse in which the primary purpose is to inspire each person within the community of inquiry further to cultivate and discover his/her unique point of view. For the children, there will be a Children’s Reading and Craft by a guest reader every Saturday morning from 10:30 to noon in the Children’s Reading Room. And on the first Saturday of every month at 1:00 p.m., there will be a Spanish Café for those Spanish speaking members of the community and Spanish students to engage in conversation and partake of a special Spanish menu. Of course, the Lyceum Café will be serving lunch before the discussions and will have coffee, tea and dessert available afterwards. The following is a calendar of these events for the month of February:

February 4th

10:30 a.m. Children’s Reading by Audré Blankenship
1:00 p.m. Spanish Cafe (Spanish Conversation & Menu)

February 5th

2:00 p.m. Political Café - Tim Butz, Executive Director of ACLU Nebraska
Presentation & Discussion on USA Patriot Act and NSA Spying
Viewing of short documentary film “Unconstitutional”

February 11th

10:30 a.m. Children’s Reading by Jan Chism Wright

February 12th

2:00 p.m. Science Café - Dr. Charles Austerberry of Creighton University, Biology Dept.
Member of Nebraska Religious Coalition for Science Education Evolution and
Critique of Creationism and Intelligent Design

February 18th

10:30 a.m. Children’s Reading by Jan McMullen

February 19th

2:00 p.m. Writers Café - Brownville Lyceum Writers Guild

February 25th

10:30 a.m. Children’s Reading by Nancy Clarke

February 26th

2:00 p.m. Philosophy Café Topic “Do the ends justify the means?”



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Brownville Art Guild plans art show with the theme, “Art of the Book”, to coincide with Brownville’s annual *Wine, Writers, & Song* festival on April 28, 29, and 30.





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TRANSITIONS

by Devon Adams

It seems as though we are always in transition from one state of mind to another. Our brains hold countless bits of information that are complicated by emotions that trigger memories that aren't always voluntary. However focused our concentration, it is often interrupted by bits and pieces from our past that float across our emotional radar screens like bright little blips. One second our fingers are typing a detailed business report, with a deadline no less, and the next second we are swinging from the old tire swing that Grandpa made for us and hung from the lowest limb of the big sycamore tree by Grandma's garden. Then we are flying across the yard to the kitchen, where oatmeal cookies, hot out of the oven, are calling us with their silent aromas. Drooling commences as we anticipate the taste of those cookies and our business report is forgotten for the moment.

But how did we get from one thought to another? What was the trigger? Maybe a single word we'd read in the morning paper had tripped the lever of a memory, or perhaps we really did smell hot oatmeal cookies as we passed a storefront, or we saw a picture in a magazine of an old farmstead that shifted our gears into reverse time. It seems that everything that has ever happened to us is stored somewhere in our memory. Those we have loved and lost seem to be gone, but are they really gone? Perhaps those funny little blips that come to us unannounced, at odd times and in awkward situations are simply whispers from those we miss. Maybe old times really are not ever forgotten and we can mix the present with the past.

Visit an old farmstead whose buildings are sinking slowly into dust and savor the palpable ghosts who inhabit the empty house and the leaning barn. Think of the countless steps those people took between the house and the barn and the outhouse and the fruit cellar and the corn crib and the workshop and the hog barn and the chicken house. See them working on that old machinery that is rusting and twisted full of brush and vines? Pick up some of those square nails that are lying in the dirt after a rain. Find some old foundation stones that are all that is left of the original farm house that was next to the "new" house that is itself now a derelict. The worn path that leads from the shed to the back porch is narrow and the little feet that walk on it every day don't belong to people, they belong to the raccoons that live in the second floor bedroom. The house has narrow windows with missing screens and the linoleum is warped and twisted from the water that falls through the holes in the roof and runs down the stained and moldy walls. A tattered, dirty sofa leans because its feet are broken and the floor is littered with damp magazines and newspapers. There are old cans of tomatoes and beans on the sink next to the bar of soap. Two workbenches are overturned in the shop and an old light fixture with a beer sign on it dangles from a rusty wire. Old boards and nails and machine parts are dumped on the floor next to paint cans and empty boxes. Straw bales are stacked in the barn and an old mattress is full of mold and mice. The fruit cellar is full of jars. There are magazines in the outhouse. There is a snow scoop leaning against the wall by the back door, which has a storm door in very fine condition. Someone tried to live here not so long ago, but they couldn't make it, and they left so many things behind. It looks as though they ran away from trouble, but the sadness that they left will stay forever. The old place is lonesome for the life that used to be so loud and warm and busy. The barn misses the horses and cows and the yard misses the chickens. Dawns are silent without a rooster's trumpet blast. The workshop is waiting for the sound of saws and drills and hammers, and the voices of the farmers who worked together for each other to keep machinery running and to keep their hopes alive that tomorrows would be better.

Perhaps our sudden memories that come from so far away are reminders that our lives are insubstantial dreams that last for short seconds and then are blown away by time. We should pay attention to the smallest things and hold them tightly.

PETS

by Joe Smith

All of us or most of us have had pets while growing up and some of us still do. This story is true and tells about the pets we had around during Christmas and for a month or so before. My wife and I have had pets most of our lives until we lost our Toby due to old age. We haven't gotten another one because of all the traveling we do going to conferences. But we really enjoyed having all the pets around here lately. In the next few paragraphs, I will attempt to describe them and their character, one at a time.

Bunny, well Bunny is a big tiger cat with a very independent character. She is mostly a housecat, especially in the wintertime. She takes over one of the office chairs during the daytime. At night she jumps on a lap wherever she can find one. Then sneaks up to where her face is right in yours with one of her paws on your cheek. As if to say, "It will be ok, just sit back and relax for awhile". She will stay there for a while and then try the next person. She has no fear of the two dogs at all and will swat at them as they go by. Sometime in the middle of the night she runs up the stairs and plays a tune on the wooden stair banister with her tail. Then she will jump on the bed and curl up at your feet or early in the morning you wake up staring face-to-face with her. She will take off through the house and pounce on poor old Larry, the dog. We kept her for several weeks and miss her now that she has left. I'm sure we haven't seen the last of "BUNNY".

Larry is a 12-year-old dog my son got out of the pound. He is half Lab and half Charpe. Not sure how to spell it. He too is quite a character. He stays with us from time to time also. He is a sweet old dog. When he was younger he loved to chase our outdoor cats. He would run them under a wooden grain bin and then they would slap the hell out of him. He would come out with his tail between his legs. He used to steal the cat's food where we feed them out at the barn until I put an electric fence up. He hit that fence and came whining to the house like a whipped pup. That slowed him down a lot on chasing the farm cats. There were lots of funny stories about Larry. That is just a few.

Blue is my son's new dog. Jason moved down to Missouri to run a sawmill and liked it so well they are planning to move down there soon, both of them. His wife is still working in Gering at the hospital. But as he was down there alone he got lonesome so he got this Blue Healer pup. Blue is quite the dog. He was the runt of the litter and shows it sometimes in his actions. He will grab a mouthful of dog food and take it somewhere else to eat it, like he is afraid some one else is going to steal it. He adores Jason and follows him everywhere. He goes along following him biting at his heels trying to start a fight. He will stand on his head almost in a submissive type motion. He loves to play with my son and has started playing with the rest of us now that he is used to us more. He is hard to pet because he would rather chew on you, not hard just playing. He is very smart and is going to be a good companion for Jason. He is very protective.

Ryan, my grandson has a new pup, part Lab, feet like a saddle horse. So clumsy, can't hardly walk without falling down. Shelby is her name, She will probably have a place in someone's heart soon as she starts to mature out a little. All pets can be a nuisance at times. They are like humans in that way, My wife thinks I'm a nuisance at time also. Joe



Some businesses keep pets as well. This guard-kitty is well known in Weeping Water.



“Bea’s Flower Buzz”

“The Flower of Luv – the Rose”

by Bea Patterson

“Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns. I am thankful that thorns have roses.” Henry Van Dyke

Remember the phrase “And the survey said...” from the old television game show? As our Pick-Me-Up Greenhouse geared up for the season one spring, I got to thinking that it would be interesting to find out what flowers are the most popular with our customers. So, I initiated an informal survey and kept a separate tally of responses from men and women. When asked what they considered to be their favorite flower, “the survey said....**the rose!**” Among the men, it was about the only one nominated, but for women, the rose usually came in somewhere in their top five.

One of my theories is that generally men don’t know many flower names to begin with so maybe the rose was named because of familiarity (having been noted so often on the memo line of checkbooks).

Be that as it may, beyond loving the rose, responses did not point to a consensus on what colors or kinds were the most popular – practically everything was mentioned. But, I’ll take the survey results at face value, and declare *Rosa rosaceae* the winner! and will not contest its supremacy because roses are truly beautiful, versatile, and highly recognizable.

What’s not to love? Roses have great attributes: mega gorgeous color ranges, heavenly fragrances (sources for perfumes), lots of “looks” (simple to fancy), are location adaptable (specimen roses in cutting gardens, climbing roses for gazebo or trellis, shrub types for fences, hedge, or as accents, miniatures for patios and pots), practically carefree to picky special needs roses, useful in crafts and home décor (potpourri, decorations, flower arranging). And they aren’t just pretty faces; they are used medicinally in salves, lotions, teas, etc., and birds like the rose hips to feed from in the winter.

Roses come with quite a history. According to fossil evidence, the rose existed as far back as 35 million years ago. Genus *Rosa* has 150 species spread throughout the Northern Hemisphere, from Alaska to Mexico and including northern Africa. The name refers to its color; *rosa* is Latin for “red.” The Persian word for rose, *gul*, also meant “flower” and was

close to *ghut*, the word for “spirit.”

Roses were used as symbols of war, love, beauty, and politics. During the 15th century, the rose was used as a symbol for the factions fighting to control England. The white rose symbolized York, and the red rose symbolized Lancaster; as a result, the conflict became known as the “War of the Roses.”

At one time roses or rose water was used as legal tender, as barter, and for payments. In ancient times, exotic roses were used in erotic pagan love rites and symbolized excessiveness and privileges of the rich. As Christianity developed, the rose came to symbolize mystical and spiritual love, was connected with the Virgin Mary and with Christ’s blood, and with the crown of thorns.

Roses are still associated with romantic love, hope, and even the mystery of life itself. Interestingly, certain roses have become linked with specific attributes. I’ll just mention a few: Dog rose - pleasure and pain; Green rose – Indicates “I am from Mars.” (Wonder where how that one came about); Leaf rose – Indicates “You may hope.”; lavender rose – enchantment; pink rose – perfect happiness, secret love, grace and sweetness, indecision; dark pink rose – thankfulness; peach rose – immortality, modesty; red rose – Indicates “I love you... respect you... think you are beautiful.”; tea rose – Indicates “I’ll always remember.”; single full bloom roses – Indicates “I truly love you.”; bouquet of full bloom roses – gratitude; one yellow rose with 11 red ones - love and passion; dark crimson rose – mourning.

One of the first roses native to Europe was the Apothecary rose or *Rosa gallica*. Healers used them to cure everything from barrenness to dog bites. Also, the yellow rose came to Europe from Persia. China roses came to Europe in the 18th century and were very popular because they bloomed continually. Among these were the tea roses, which did not smell like tea but were shipped in boxes along with tea. After being crossbred with Hybrid Perpetuals, this variety eventually became the basis of nearly all our modern roses.

Five of the main rose categories are outlined below.

- 1 Hybrid tea roses – tall, long-stemmed roses; flowers one to a stem; in gardens, usually featured in cutting gardens or as single specimen plants.
- 2 Floribundas – large, showy blossoms; blooms more freely, setting clusters of blossoms on a stem; good for border planting.
- 3 Shrub roses – naturally disease resistance; grow in a variety of climates and settings with a minimum of care; grows compactly; very little pruning required; bloom consistently over a very long season
- 4 Ground cover – low growing and cascades over walls or as ground covers in perennial gardens; great at edge of beds and in containers.
- 5 Climbing roses – produce long canes that can be trained to a trellis, fence or other support

While roses have a well-deserved picky reputation, plan ahead to maximize your enjoyment of rose gardening.

1. Select varieties that are appropriate to our Zone #5A.
2. Select a spot with at least six hours of sun in the day, preferable where the plants will get early morning sun so the leaves will dry off early in the day, thereby minimizing diseases problems.
3. Select a spot that provides good air circulation, which will also help minimize disease problems.
4. Test the soil and then add supplements that will enhance the needs your particular rose.
5. Water and keep the soil moistened to a depth of 18 inches every week during the growing season. Test the ground with a screw driver or piece of wire.
6. Fertilize two times a season: once when new growth firsts starts in the spring and again in mid-season. Choose non-burning, natural formulas that feed the soil as well as the plant.
7. Prune and de-head appropriately.
8. Pests and diseases will need to be managed for most roses.

Pest management is nicely outlined on-line at

www.garden.org/Learn&Grow.

Happy Roses Day, Country Gardeners!

How’s your garden growing?

Bea Patterson

bp15624@alltel.net

*“If love were what the rose is,
and I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
in sad or singing weather.”*

Algernon Charles Swinburne

Country Scenes



Scene familiar to Residents in the Talmage Area.



Corning, Kansas



Near Elk Creek



Soley/Hosterman Barn, January Snow.



Summer Country Scene



Your Country Neighborhood has many fine bakers, and now they have more competition. Check out Deb's deserts at the Lyceum.



This farmstead appears to be asleep for the Winter.

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Signs from these Times

Have you noticed these signs? In which communities? Answers next month.



This could be tough...I don't remember where I took this picture.
It might be H-67 southeast of Peru.

This is definitely southeast of Peru at the intersection of highways 67 and 136.

Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
Photo Provided by Author



Fishing:

The Missouri River is low and is looking a little inviting with the unseasonable weather we have been experiencing as of late. I might try throwing in a line if the weather keeps up the way it has been this past month. A guy will still have to remember not to trust the banks. When the frost comes out or the sun melts the top layer of mud on the river bank, it may appear to be all right for walking on and then you're on your back with a shellacking of river mud all over you. You live to do it once and then you'll wise up. I like to take a rope and tie it off on the something on up the bank and use it to keep my balance. "It works for me." It's one thing to come home without a fish, but it's another when you come home with no fish and muddy clothes that need the river mud washed off of them. And don't forget the inside of your pickup. When you get that mud on you, the next thing you know it's all over everything.

Well, ponds are "out" for ice fishing. What ice was there a month ago is now long gone. I have found the last couple of years there is a window for ice fishing in Nebraska and that's usually is about two good weeks. The rest of the winter is waiting for ice to get thick enough to get out on, and on the other end when it's melting off. There is still more winter but I'm not holding my breath that the ice is going to be thick enough to get out on any time soon.

Hunting:

Many hunting seasons have come and gone. Bird season wrapped up at the end of January and the lone rabbit season will linger on until the end of February. And with that final season, in my book, that will wrap up the 2005-2006 hunting seasons. This time of year the Nebraska Game & Parks set the 2006-2007 seasons. And soon it will be time to obtain your spring turkey permit. And the seasons start all over again. Clean up the guns and get ready for the coming year's seasons. They will be here soon enough.



This month's hunting picture is myself with a Big Whitetail Doe take during the late rifle season.

With hunting winding up and the new seasons not yet set, it's time to take a little break in the action. You can still get out and do a little scouting if you're bored. I enjoy doing that this time of year. So get out if you get chance, you won't regret it. 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."

Grass Roots Appeal

by Ann Yates

Here is what I heard on this mornings news:

Conoco	50%	increase in profits in 2005
Shell Texaco	48%	"
BP	40%	"

Now correct me if I am wrong, but weren't we told that the high gas prices were a reflection of the crude oil prices that these companies were being charged by the producers?

Now in my bakery, if flour prices should suddenly double, then I must pass that cost on to the consumer in order to stay in business. This action has no effect on my profits, especially not increasing my profits by 50%.

It is time for action. Please call our U.S. Senators and Congressmen (information to follow). Here is what I told them: "I understand that if crude oil goes up, gas prices must also increase. However, the profits these companies are making are on the verge of throwing us into a depression because wages are not even close to keeping up. I would like to know what our Congressman and Senators are doing about it.

They will then send you something. Mine is on its way and I would be happy to share it with you but that would defeat the purpose. They need to think Americans are on the verge of uprising by the number of calls they get. I urge you to first make your three phone calls, then get all your friends to do the same. If you know people in other states, they need to start the same process. Let Washington know we have noticed.

Taking action will not increase your luck or make you a better person or make God love you more. It is our duty as citizens to stand up and take our place in a government that is greater than any the rest of the world has been able to achieve. Don't let it slip because you don't have five minutes to spare, the term for that is Laodecean (lukewarm-one who coasts without care or passion to act when it is needed).

Please call and be counted.

Nebraska U.S. Senator Hagel 202-224-4224
Nebraska U.S. Senator Ben Nelson 202-224-6551
Omaha office 402-391-3411
Congressman Jeff Fortenberry 202-225-4806
Nebraska office 402-438-1598
Thank you,
Ann Yates

Editor's comment: YCN was able to verify through Internet sources that Conoco's profit for 2005 were \$4 billion, up 66% from 2004. By keeping 95% for "capital reinvestment" Conoco reduces its Federal Taxes significantly. Exxon's profit for 2005 was in excess of \$36 billion! Other sources were not readily available at press time.

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More Sprout Recipes

(How to sprout was in the January edition)

by Ann Yates

Sprouted Oat Cereal: Or “How to keep your Valentine happy and healthy for a very long time.”

Do not let oats grow into visible sprouts, just soak till ends of kernels show signs of sprouting.

Cooking: (you can also do this with unsprouted whole oat kernels) Place ½ cup oats and ½ cup water for sprouts (1 cup water for dry kernels) into saucepan. Bring to boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 to 20 minutes for sprouts (20 to 30 minutes for dry kernels), or until oats are of desired tenderness.

Alternative method of cooking: Place oats and **boiling** water into a good thermos in the evening. Cap tightly. It will be ready to eat when you wake up in the morning (re-heating will probably be necessary)

Serving: Well this part is really up to you. A little peanut butter and honey is my favorite. Real maple syrup is cool too. If you are an active sort, a little real cream won't hurt you. Or stir in a favorite jelly or chopped peanuts and mini chocolate chips or pecans and brown sugar with butter, or dried fruit that has soaked in your favorite liqueur. Stir in marshmallows while it is hot instead of a sweetener. Who would have ever guessed that your morning oatmeal could be so romantic and exciting.

This method also works well with whole wheat or barley kernels.

Egg Rolls: When I was a kid egg rolls were filled with mung bean sprouts, nowadays folks have replaced that with shredded cabbage. The sprouts are added raw and cooking occurs during thickening and egg roll frying time.

Wrapper Batter:

1 cup all-purpose flour (using ½ whole wheat flour makes a fine wrapper)
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons water
1/2 cup milk
3 large eggs
2 vegetable oil
1/2 teaspoon salt

Wisk together all ingredients until smooth. Cover and let stand for 1 hour (otherwise there will be too many bubbles in your wrapper and it will leak). It can be made up to one day in advance if refrigerated.

Pre-heat a small skillet, lightly oiled, over a low-medium heat. You want to cook these gently just till set. Pour about 2 tablespoons of batter onto one side of the skillet while you tip and rotate it with your other hand, making a very thin, round pancake. When top is set your shell is done, no need to turn. Keep under a damp cloth or paper towel while making the remainder of the shells.

Filling:

1 cup sprouts (mung bean being the most authentic)
¼ cup chopped celery
¼ cup drained, chopped bamboo shoots (available in the Asian foods section)
¼ cup drained, chopped water chestnuts (also available in the Asian foods section)
4 T of a good soy sauce (If it has a long list of strange ingredients it is not a “good” soy sauce. The ingredients should read “soy-beans, salt”)
2 T cornstarch

Place all ingredients into saucepan and heat till cornstarch thickens, if more liquid is desired pineapple juice works best, but water can also be used.

Using medium-high heat preheat a skillet with enough soybean oil to cover bottom about ¼ inch. Place about 1 heaping tablespoon of mixture in center of egg roll wrapper. Fold two opposite sides over filling. Now roll from one side to envelope the filling completely. Fry in hot oil till brown on all sides. They are easily frozen and reheated in a lightly oiled skillet.

Variations: You can also add crushed pineapple, chopped nuts and chopped onion or chives

Serving: Traditionally egg rolls are served with hot mustard or sweet 'n sour sauce. To make hot mustard sauce, simply place a small amount of ground mustard (available in the spice section) with a small amount of water to make a paste of medium consistency. Use sparingly or you will snort fire out of your nose (which is actually kinda fun)

Here's hoping you have a healthy and happy Valentines Day with the songs of Love ringing all about you.

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

by Merri Johnson

Well, here it is, 2006. I haven't made any New Year's Resolutions, although I have a hold-over regarding exercise from December when I learned that my LDL cholesterol had gone up 18 points since August. I like to refer to LDL as “low-down lousy” cholesterol; it helps me remember that it's the supposedly “bad” stuff. I don't have a pet name for the other kind of cholesterol, known as HDL; it's just automatically the good stuff.

Anyway, my rise in LDL cholesterol coincided precisely with the addition of fish oil supplements in my diet, which, if you have any cholesterol savvy, you know is supposed to *lower* your LDL level. But, no, mine went up! I don't know why that surprised me. I tried the oatmeal diet, too, with no effect. I ate cooked oatmeal, bran muffins, lots of stuff with fiber, for two or three years – I am serious – to no avail. I'm thinking of suing Quaker Oats for false advertising on that one. But what good would money do me? I suppose I could use it to pay for one of those statin drugs to lower my cholesterol with no effort on my part. But with my track record, I'm pretty sure I'd develop at least one of the unintended, and very negative, side effects. You know what they are, so I won't ruin your appetite by enumerating them here. Or I could take hormone therapy. Falling estrogen is directly related to rising cholesterol for a lot of women. But again, the potential side effects are scarier to me than my cholesterol number.

I think I'd be better off to use my lawsuit windfall to buy a treadmill. Increased exercise is probably my best bet for lowering my cholesterol naturally. I prefer walking outdoors, particularly in the morning, as long as the weather is nice, especially if it's still dark enough to hide the fact that I just got out of bed. But of course, the perfect combination of light, weather and self-discipline don't happen real regularly. So I figure if I had a treadmill, I'd be more likely to hop on when the time was convenient and actually walk off that LDL!

The fact that we once had a Nordic Trac and an Abdomenizer, and still have a pseudo-rowing machine and an exercise ball gathering dust in the basement should not disqualify me for another attempt at mechanically aided exercise. I just never could get the hang of that Nordic Trac. Trying to swing my arms in those ski-pole simulators and simultaneously shuffle my feet in the glide skis, all the while keeping my balance and trying to maintain my target heart rate on the monitor was just too much. The Abdomenizer and the rowing machine belonged to my husband, so I'm not taking any guff for those two items. And I've only had the exercise ball for one year, so it doesn't actually qualify yet for the discarded exercise equipment museum.

Yes, I believe exercise is the way to go. If I can just avoid straining my hip joint while I'm at it, I might at long last become the poster child for lowering cholesterol naturally. Or maybe not.

Poetry, etc.

Old Rocking Chairs

by Kay Marks

Phantom ladies
ride my rocking chairs.

Too ephemeral for reality,
too sensible for ghosts,
they sit.

"We gathered," they say,
eggs from white Leghorns that scolded our fingers,
tart gooseberries from ravines and banks,
gathered babies to our breasts
and rocked
and rocked.

gathered
hay,
wood,
flowers,
soft green peas for the shelling,
water from the pump.

gathered
scraps of cloth for comforters,
scraps of food for soup.

We gathered," they say.

"And now," I ask.

"Now, they say, "We sit and wait
for you to gather us."



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Poetry, etc.



Faded Barn

by Kay Marks

A faded barn
set back
from the road
unnoticed
except for
a photographer lugging a tripod,
a poet lugging words,
several nests of mice,
pigeons looking down from the rafters,
a cranky possum,
and three cats,
two black,
one orange.

Once it held
a rhythm of draft horses stamping away flies,
rangy Holsteins ready to let down their milk,
tightly wound bales of hay,
a succession of cats,
and a farmer dressed in overalls
carrying hope as a shield against
drought, grasshoppers, and hail.

On this winter day,
it hunches down as if on knees
that are hundred-year old weary
and giving out.
Though tormented by the wind's insult,
it keeps its secrets
and
quietly
waits
to
fall.

A Falling Leaf

by Dr. Bob Chitwood

It was one of those autumn days
when a haze hung over the countryside.
The faint breeze against my face felt re-
freshing. I knew it was good to be alive
and that a day such as this was made for
living. It was a day when windows should
be flung wide open. The heat of summer
was gone; the chill of winter was yet in the
distance.

The woodpecker hung on the side of
a dead tree and drilled beneath the surface
for bugs with a relaxed rhythm. There was
neither hurry nor worry in his manner as he
worked away in quiet acceptance of the
glory surrounding him.

A leaf came tumbling down with just
enough green on it to remind me of its
youth; and then another and another. There
was no hurry about them as they tumbled
down, riding the currents, soaring for a
moment, then drifting gently earthward.

I walked on through the fallen
leaves, alike in that they were attached to a
tree, and now that their purpose had been
fulfilled they were detached and drifting
down to lie on the ground.

As I sat on a log and enjoyed my
experience I observed the wind touching
the branches and loosening the leaves from
the branch's grasp. I picked up a leaf and
turned it slowly between my thumb and
forefinger and thought of death. The end,
and yet, not the end.

Everyone must die. There is a time
when the voice whispers and we are loosed
from the bonds of a physical body to be-
come a part of a larger existence. No
longer are we held by the storms, seared by
the heat, chilled by cold. All in a moment,
we are free, and the beauty, the good, the
love that we have experienced and given,
wraps us in a cloak of excitement as we
hear the voice that calls. As relaxed as a
falling leaf we go with the confidence that
those who have gone on before us await
our coming, and they will welcome us into
their midst as surely as the leaves upon the
ground cushion the fall of another who is
coming to join them.

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott

Warm, Windy, Dry...No snow.

“Warm Weather Worsens Drought” announced the Sunday Star-Herald headline. It was old news.....We’ve been reading the story in the rippling shallows of the North Platte River for months.

Ken Dewey, regional climatologist at the High Plains Regional Center said it best; “The ground still knows, Lake McConaughy still knows.....it’s been seven years with a lack of water.”

Is it winter? The ground’s not frozen, and the mornings, while cold, gradually warm to relatively comfortable afternoons. I did some yard work this week; watering lawns, raking up corn husks and leaves, but for the most part the work was just an excuse to get out of the house. Unless we get a heavy wet snow to plaster the stuff to the fields, the next wind will deposit new drifts of trashy corn debris in my yard.....and there’s nothing in the weather forecast that says ‘moisture’ anytime soon...or ever.

My men have kept busy with winter-work: building fence, and moving cows. No baby calves yet, but it won’t be long. The cows are sleek and round-bellied, ready for motherhood.

With few pressing farm chores, other than grinding hay and corn for the feedlot cattle, the guys tinker in the farmshop, fix a flat tire or two in the tireshop, attend meetings sponsored by grain elevators and fertilizer dealers..... and wait for snow which never materializes. There’s an uneasy feeling here in the panhandle. The promise of a wet winter dwindles with each passing day, vanishing into the dry prairie air like a wisp of smoke from a dying campfire. All we can do is wait....and pray.

Will there be water come summer? Will the Mitchell Irrigation District deliver enough to raise a crop? Will seed costs, energy and fertilizer prices stabilize, or move even higher? Can we go on? We are eaten up inside by the wondering, hollowed out by the specter of failure.

I don’t like this life. I want something better, I deserve something better...we all do, all of us who live in this valley of agricultural uncertainty. We’re in a dark place right now; sick and tired of drought, of watching dead-and-buried commodity markets, of cutting back, of pinching pennies, of barely making do while trans-national agri-businesses, carrying sacks of windfall profits, dance across our backs on their way to the bank.

There is a drought in farm-country that goes beyond water shortages...it’s a drought of hope. We have stood helplessly by and watched our families become pawns in a high-stakes game of global finance, seen free-trading deal-makers, in conjunction with theoretical economists, trade away the rural way of life for short-sighted political expediency, and the convenience of big business. Who made these ordinary men into gods, with the authority to decide rural misery is a small price to pay for bigger profits, higher earnings, and larger CEO bonuses. Who gave them the power to pass judgment? I guess, in a way, we all did; that’s the real shame of it. By our appetite for more and cheaper ‘stuff’ we have built our own gallows....we are shopping ourselves right into a hangman’s noose.

If there is a faint glimmer of hope it lies in research, and in the committed, hard-working people who are using modern technology to explore new uses for old crops. Like a construction engineer designing new exits from a familiar and well-traveled hi-way, these dedicated researchers map out alternative routes for farm revenue. I applaud their efforts. Unfortunately progress is slow and methodical, while failure is swift-footed and undisciplined. The sure and steady may win the race if given enough time, but my money is on the rich and powerful taking home the prize.

Then there are those who proclaim farming is already dead. Futurists who say it’s time to tear down the farm houses and cattle barns; time to seed the fields with grass, and stock the open range with exotic wildlife. They foresee the heartland’s future in tourism, in vast hunting empires and wildlife parks catering not to the masses, but to the super rich. But is that what we want for the Great Plains, to become a playground for the wealthy while the rest of us spend our lives in servitude; to widen the deepening chasm which divides the rich and poor, to broaden the growing gap between the have, and the have-nots?

It wasn’t the kind of America I was born to, and it’s not the sort I want my grandchildren to grow up in. So, like women have always done, I use my strengths, hide my weaknesses, and fight back.

A baby on my lap, I shuffle papers on a tire shop desk while the fluctuating prices of corn futures, a barrel of crude oil, and a cubic foot of natural gas flicker across my computer monitor. I schedule private marketing lessons around naptimes, and hope I’m smart enough to learn a new trick or two. I change diapers and sign financial forms, make phone calls and chocolate chip cookies, order tires, and oversee potty training. I chart the course of my family with a fervor bordering on obsession....hoping that it’s enough... knowing deep in my heart it probably isn’t.

I struggle, and pray, and hide the doubt I feel from those I love. After all.....I’m a woman...and that’s my job.

Karen

Farm Pictures at www.yourcountryneighbor.com.

Click on “Photo Galleries”, then browse the pictures collected from Your Country Neighborhood. The archives include pictures taken from the early years of this publication, as well as pictures that show more recent seasonal changes. All pictures on the site are in color, and some are free to download.

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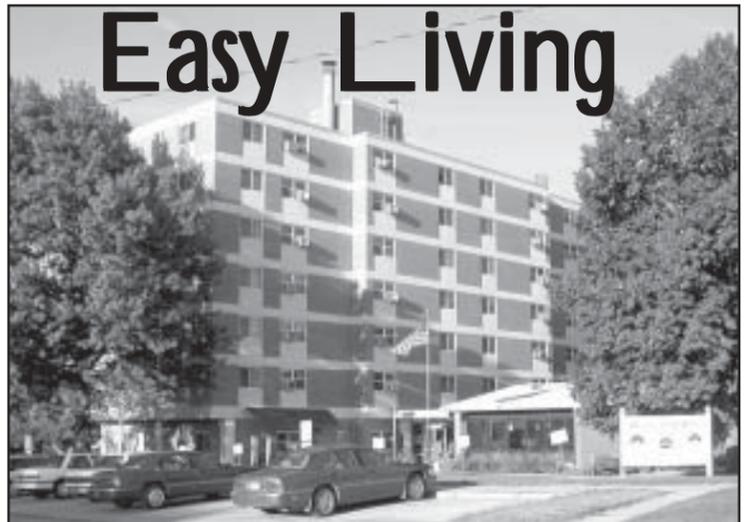
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