

YOUR COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

FREE
September
2026



Prairie Communities River Towns

Helping people notice what is worth noticing in the places they call home.

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September 2026 Historic Reminder SYRACUSE, NEBRASKA

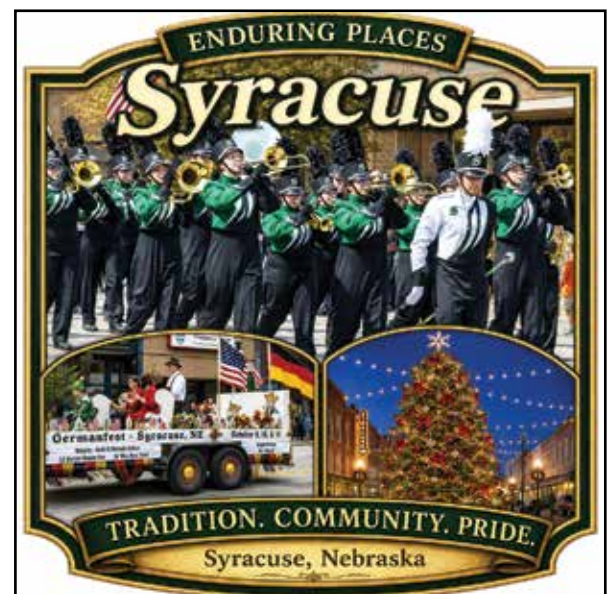
Recognized by

"Your Country Neighbor."

(Historical summary compiled from public records.)

Syracuse has endured by knowing the value of community. From its beginnings as a railroad town and agricultural center to the growing community it is today, Syracuse has continued to find reasons for people to gather, participate, and take pride in where they live. Its German heritage remains part of that identity, celebrated through traditions such as GermanFest, while the Otoe County Fair and the Tannenbaum Festival continue to bring generations together. The school, the businesses, the farms, and the many volunteers who keep community traditions alive all contribute to something larger than any one of them. Syracuse demonstrates that a town does not remain strong simply because it has a history. It remains strong when people continue to add themselves to that history.

That may be Syracuse's enduring strength: the willingness to keep building community without forgetting where it began.



Your Country Neighbor

Your "2-cups-of-coffee" companion
including local photos and articles
with the flavor of rural America.

This is “Your Country Neighbor” Territory
Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Johnson • Julian • Nebraska City
Nemaha • Papillion • Peru • Rock Port • Syracuse • Tecumseh • Verdon

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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Thank You!

*“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead
where there is no path and leave a trail.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*“People will forget what you said, people will forget
what you did, but people will never forget how you
made them feel.”*

Maya Angelou

September

by a countryneighbor

September has a way of changing the pace without announcing
that anything has changed.

The mornings are cooler. The evenings arrive a little earlier.
Gardens that demanded attention through the heat of July and
August are beginning to slow down, while fields that seemed to
stretch endlessly toward harvest are now being watched a little
more closely.

Around Southeast Nebraska, September is a month of move-
ment.

School is underway. The courthouse square has settled back
into its familiar rhythm. Football lights glow after sunset.
Farmers watch the weather and the calendar. Gardens produce
their last generous offerings, and somewhere along a country
road, the first leaves are beginning to wonder whether it is time
to turn.

But September isn’t quite autumn.

There are still warm afternoons, green trees and evenings when
a porch is the best place to be. Summer hasn’t disappeared; it
has simply stopped insisting on being noticed.

Perhaps that’s what makes September such an enjoyable
month. It gives us a little of what is ending and a little of what
is coming.

So as you turn these pages, you’ll find some of both—the
people, places and stories between the river and the plain here
in Southeast Nebraska, along with a few reminders that the
seasons are always moving forward.

For now, though, there is still time to enjoy the afternoon sun,
leave the windows open a little longer, and wonder where the
summer went.

Welcome to September.



A New Kind of Cancer Vaccine?

A Public Service Announcement from “Your Country Neighbor”

The word vaccine usually makes us think of preventing an illness before it happens. But scientists are now exploring a very different use for vaccines: helping the body's immune system fight cancer that has already developed.

One of the most encouraging developments involves melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer. Merck and Moderna recently announced positive results from a large Phase 3 clinical trial of an experimental personalized mRNA treatment. The treatment, called intismeran autogene, was given along with the cancer immunotherapy Keytruda to patients whose high-risk melanoma had already been surgically removed.

An mRNA vaccine is then designed specifically for that patient's tumor. The goal is to teach the immune system to recognize those cancer-specific features and attack cells carrying them.

In the Phase 3 study of 1,137 patients, those receiving the personalized mRNA treatment plus Keytruda had significantly better outcomes in two important measures: the cancer was less likely to return, and it was less likely to spread to distant parts of the body, compared with patients receiving Keytruda alone.

This is not yet a cancer vaccine available at your doctor's office. The treatment remains investigational, and the companies have not yet released all of the detailed trial results. Regulatory discussions and review will be necessary before it could become an approved treatment.

Researchers are studying similar approaches against other cancers as well. The hope is that mRNA technology might eventually allow treatments to be tailored not simply to a particular type of cancer, but to the unique characteristics of an individual's tumor.

For now, the message is neither “a cure has been found” nor “cancer vaccines are ready.”

It is something more measured—and still encouraging:

Cancer treatment continues to move toward greater precision, and the immune system may become one of medicine's most powerful tools in that fight.

As always, medical decisions should be based on advice from your healthcare provider and not on experimental treatments reported in the news.



Auburn High School Band in the Nemaha County Parade



Johnson-Brock High School Band in Nemaha County Parade



Humboldt-Table Rock-Steinauer High School Band in Nemaha County Parade

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This September



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A Prairie Journal

September in its Own Time

September arrives on the calendar before it arrives on the prairie.

Across much of southeast Nebraska, the fields are still green beneath a warm September sun. Corn continues to fill, soybeans stretch across the countryside, and pastures still hold their summer color after plentiful rain.

There is no reason for the prairie to hurry.

We sometimes expect September to announce itself with cool mornings, yellow leaves and the first suggestion of frost. But the land does not read our calendars. It follows the weather, the soil, the water and the sunlight.

And this year, at least for now, the prairie seems content to remain green.

The days are becoming shorter, even when afternoons remain warm. School is back, football is underway, and the calendar quietly reminds us that summer cannot last forever.

The fields, however, are still busy with their own work. Corn is moving toward harvest. Soybeans are filling their pods. Gardens continue producing, and pastures are still feeding cattle.

Farmers know better than most that the appearance of a field on any particular day tells only part of the story. There are still weeks ahead.

Rain may come. Wind may come. An early frost may arrive, or warm weather may continue well into the month. There are things no farmer can know yet.

Perhaps that uncertainty is part of farming. Perhaps it is part of life as well.

We like to think we know what comes next. We put dates on calendars and expect summer to give way to autumn. But the prairie has never been particularly concerned with our schedules.

A warm September afternoon can make us forget that October is approaching. A cool morning can remind us. The first Friday night football game can feel like autumn even when the trees remain completely green.

The signs are there, but they do not all arrive at once.

For now, there is still green to see, gardens to harvest, warm evenings and roads bordered by fields stretching beneath the Nebraska sky.

Soon enough, the combines will appear. The leaves will change when they are ready. The first frost will eventually silver the grass.

But not yet.

Perhaps September's quiet lesson is simply this:

Not everything has to change just because the calendar says it should.

Sometimes a season has a little more to give.

And if we are willing to notice, there is still plenty of prairie left to see.

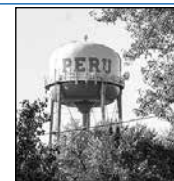
PERU CITY NEWS

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Growing Up In Auburn

Tom Combs

Ice was delivered every so often to his folks house. This was a good business before refrigeration was perfected. Most people had old wooden ice boxes. When the ice man came he chipped away ice from a bigger block so it would fit in the ice box. Pieces would always drop in the yard when he carried it in. During those hot days of summer, the kids scooped up some of the ice for a summer treat. It didn't take much to make a kid happy back then. There was a small lake on the east edge of town where every winter men worked sawing ice into blocks. Then they'd haul the huge ice blocks to the ice house that was dug into the side of a hill. This ice was then covered with straw and saw dust and would last all summer.

Many sawmills sold their saw dust to ice storage facilities in those days. You can still see a depression in the landscape covered with trees and brush on the east side of town. I always wondered if this was the ice house or the old brick factory?

The Spanish Flu Pandemic killed 550,000 Americans and 20 million people world wide, Although overshadowed by World War One, and sometimes confused with the death totals, it was such a terrible and fearful disaster, that nothing of its kind ever equaled in the 20th century. World War I total death count was 116,516 Americans, and World War II American losses were 405,399. Both war totals did not surpass the Pandemic deaths in America. It was a terrible disaster for the country and world, and it's strange there is little recorded in the history books about it. Witnesses to the losses said many would become sick in the morning and be dead before the night was over. Just as mysterious as it all began in the winter and early spring of 1918, it seemed to dissipate rather quickly in the fall of the same year.

At this time of sickness and dying, Dad and another kid were told by their parents to play outside of town during the day. This was to hopefully keep them from getting sick. They played in the creek east of where El Portals Mexican Restaurant is today. They stayed away from the townspeople most of that summer.

A lot of schools were closed so they may have stayed out there during the month of September. This was outside of town in those days and at the bottom of what was called the town pasture. There was no junior high building or football field there in those days. He said many people in town had a milk cow or a horse that needed to graze. They brought them out to the town pasture to stake them out, then came and got them in the evening.

The President's House

John C. Chatelain, Omaha

The President's house on the north edge of the PSC campus has always been pleasing to the eye. Constructed in 1892 by Peru banker and builder, Jacob Good, it endures as a Peru landmark. Mr. Good also built a fine house on Park Avenue, later owned and occupied by the Tynon sisters. 1 In more recent years, Jack and Luella McIntire renovated and expanded the Park Avenue house.

While not among Peru's earliest pioneer families, the Goods rank well among the more prominent. Jacob Good was one of nine children of Salathiel Jackson and Eulila Templin Good who had arrived in Nemaha County on September 24, 1856, following a trip by wagons pulled by oxen and mules from Richland County, Wisconsin. After crossing the Missouri River, the family spent the first night in Nebraska City. 2

J. Sterling Morton offered to trade an 80 acre farm for the Good's wagon, team of mules and \$250 in gold, but Mr. Good refused. 3 Salathiel stated, "I'm going to find me a farm." The family settled on a 160-acre parcel, which includes the present-day Glenrock Cemetery, living in tents and wagons for many weeks, while a log cabin was being built. In 1861 Jacob Good married Barbara Ellen Lash. The couple farmed in the Glenrock/Brock area, before moving to Peru in 1883. In 1889 Jacob was one of the organizers of the Bank of Brock. 4

In 1891 Jacob organized Citizens State Bank of Peru, along with George Townsend, Robert Thomas McAdams and David Wood. It was located at the northwest corner of 5th and Park Streets, in the building now occupied by Western National Bank. 5

Jacob and Barbara had six children; Ellis Ellsworth (1863-1931), who served in the Nebraska Legislature from 1903 to 1921; Elmer Franklin (1865-1934); Marcena Em-mison (1867-1939); Oliver Maurice (1875-1933); Edward, born in 1880 and Ada Belle (1882-1960).

Marcena (M. E.) married Ina Robertson. They lived in Peru their entire lives. 6 Another Peru landmark, at the northeast corner of 6th and Park Streets, was their home. 7

In addition to helping his dad in the bank, M. E. operated a department store just south of City Hall, on the west side of 5th Street. Following the sale of his business in 1920, M. E. established an apple orchard southeast of Peru. He served on the Village Council for 22 years and helped establish Peru's first electric power plant. M. E. and Ina had two sons, Everett Hale (1895-1981) and Herbert Wayne (1897-1965). Everett Good attended Indian Hill School, Peru Normal and Iowa State University, at Ames, majoring in Horticulture. He developed "Good View Orchards" three and half miles southeast of Peru. Two sons were born to Everett and his wife, Virginia; Lawrence Robertson Good and Richard Hale Good. 8

Jacob Good sold the fine home on Hoyt Street, north of the campus, to President, James Crabtree, who sold it to President, D. W. Hayes. It was later purchased by President, E. L. Rouse. To augment the chief executive's compensation package, the State Board of Education purchased the house in 1921, as a permanent presidential residence. A. L. Caviness, who served from 1921 to 1923 was the first President to reside in the home as a state-owned property. 9

On several occasions over the years, I have been a guest in the President's home. It has always been well maintained and updated. After one hundred thirty-four years, President Robert Mock and his lovely wife, Bethany, are enjoying the house that Jacob Good built.

1, 3, 5 & 7: Across the Wide Missouri, Peru, Nebraska 1854-1991, by Ernest Longfellow, pp.48 and 173;

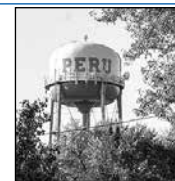
2,4, 6 & 8: History of Nemaha County, p. 167;

9: Nebraska's First College: Shaping The Future Since 1867, p 80.

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Tuesday Literary Club Reads

DiAnna Loy and Cathi Snyder, Tuesday Literary Club

Continuing with our theme of celebrating our 250th birthday, Cathi Snyder presented the book *Rise to Rebellion* by Jeff Shaara. It is a historical novel which spans the time period from the Boston Massacre to the signing of the Declaration of Independence (1770-1776). It exemplifies the American Colonies' push to throw off the shackles of British oppression. The novel is unique in that it fleshes out historical figures, giving them clear motivations for their actions while adding emotional weight to the writing.

With the Boston Massacre we see what started as a street brawl between American colonists and a lone British soldier turn into a riot, with soldiers eventually firing into the crowd and killing six. The massacre galvanized anti-British sentiment.

As the novel moves along, Shaara gives voice to historical figures such as John Adams, principled revolutionary, balancing duty and conviction; Benjamin Franklin, inventor and diplomat, an original defender of England; George Washington, charismatic leader seeking to unify the colonies, who believed in their right to self-govern; Thomas Gage, who struggled to enforce British authority and prevent open war; Abigail Adams, a morally grounded person who melted pewter for musket balls and acts as a voice of conscience for her husband; and King George, who remained relentless in his belief in the absolute authority of his monarchy and drove the colonists to rebellion with his failure to compromise. Shaara firmly establishes each one's place in history.

Other characters Shaara includes in his book are Samuel Adams, Governor Thomas Hutchinson, Dr. Joseph Warren, Major John Pitcairn, Patrick Henry, Benedict Arnold, and others who represented both the American Revolutionaries and British officials.

Much like today, those who lived at this time were not always in agreement. They came from different walks of life; lawyers, merchants, farmers, and others, indication the movement was not limited only to the elite. Patriots were anxious to rid themselves of British rule even if it meant many uncertainties. Loyalists' or Tories' thoughts were shaped by a mix of religious conviction, fear of disorder, economic interests, and belief in England's role as protector of the colonists.

The colonists' struggle for independence required six years of hard combat with an unprepared army. Many times, it appeared that the British with their well-trained, well-equipped army had the upper hand against the colonies. But again, and again the colonists managed to rebound from defeats, overcome hardships, and what were often surprising victories such as the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, the Siege of Boston, the Battle of Trenton, and the Battle of Saratoga.

While King George and his ministers were utterly confused by their military's lack of success against the colonists, it was yet another sign of their arrogance. The eventual victory of the colonists signified that there was more to victory than manpower and ships. The colonists had the home-field advantage, and they had a very personal cause to fight for, two factors the British lacked. The British understood this and the relentless harassment of their army by the colonists eventually sapped their resolve,

This book ends with Washington watching the approaching the British fleet with a feeling of optimism and promise.

"Happy reading!"

September First

Sheila Tinkham, Lincoln

Sometimes you feel like a rump roast ready to be sliced on both sides
Poland's geography
One side Russia
One side Germany
Has not been auspicious
And on September 1, 1939
Germany carved Poland
And World War II officially began
Tragic because Germany had built a huge military for years
And Neville Chamberlain's peace treaty was not worth its print
It might have been possible with the united forces of Europe to stop Hitler earlier
No one had the guts or resolve to build up their military
And through strength prevent war
Sounds familiar does it not?
Poland learned its lesson
It has the 4th largest military in world....

September 11, 2001

Sheila Tinkham, Lincoln

Thousands died because we did not believe
That fanaticism needs to be fought
There had been an earlier bombing
Seven men bombed the parking garage
Under the Twin towers
The goal was to collapse one tower and send it into the second one
Sound familiar?
1993
Six people killed by Islamic terrorism
A dress rehearsal for 9/11
When we were attacked for no reason
Except we love freedom and the American way...
The US flags were everywhere
We love America and all for which it stands
Be prepared as the Boy Scouts say
Be prepared....

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Petals May Fall

Brody Bindle, Falls City

Put the pictures on the piano
Have a drink and pass the time
Fill out my death certificate——
Then order the flowers on my last dime.

Pick the best pictures of my life
Ones of Bold, Brash, and dark colored green
Give respect that I am due
Knowing I took time to remember you.

Take those pictures, and put them in a book
So there's a chance I might not be gone
Take the time to look and cry
Gather yourself, please at least try.

I am in the casket, and you are all looking down
My best friend, tucks me in with a note——
She wrote it sobbing, even kissed it goodbye.
Help her cope—she planned the damn thing, don't let it go awry.

So when I'm below and laughing out loud
Remember the sound, my feel, my warmth
My laugh is my gift to the world
Take it because you have to.

Michael Forsberg At Peru State College

Micheal Forsberg is an accomplished photographer, conservationist, author, and filmmaker who has been perfecting his craft for 30 years. He is a Nebraskan and has many journeys and stories throughout the Great Plains.

Peru State College and the PSC Foundation will be hosting Forsberg Thursday, Sept. 3, in the College's Performing Arts Center. The event will be free and open to the public. The event will begin at 7 p.m. Here is the link to sign up: <https://alumni.peru.edu/e/michael-forsberg-2026-event>. You may also call or email the PSC Foundation at 402-872-2304 or pscfoundation@peru.edu to register. Or scan the QR code included with this article!



Moonrise prior to 96% total eclipse.
Top of PSC Sports Dome in foreground.



Aug 27 eclipse. Almost half in shadow.
Haziness due to thin clouds.

Haunted?

The Empty Farmhouse

by a wandering neighbor

There is something unsettling about an abandoned farmhouse. You may have passed one without giving it much thought. A weathered house stands back from the road, perhaps behind a row of trees that have grown too large for the yard. The windows are dark. The paint has long since surrendered to the weather. A porch sags slightly, and an old outbuilding leans nearby.

Nothing moves.

Yet somehow, you look twice.

Perhaps it is because a farmhouse was never meant to be empty.

A farmhouse was built for voices.

There were children running through its rooms, boots beside the kitchen door, dishes being washed after supper, and someone calling from the porch that dinner was ready. In winter, the kitchen would have been the warmest room in the house. In summer, the windows would have been open to the sounds of insects and livestock.

Then, one day, the voices stopped.

Nebraska's abandoned farmsteads are more than remnants of old buildings.

They are reminders of how dramatically rural life has changed. The farm where I grew up was one of three family farms along an east-west section-line road. Our 160 acres occupied the northwest corner of the section, and at the crossroads stood the little one-room schoolhouse where I spent most of my elementary school years. The road, the farm, and the school made up a small world that was mine. My home, my school just down the road, and the neighbors were all part of the landscape of my childhood. I know how easily such a place could disappear from the countryside without anyone from another generation knowing it had ever been there. Years later when I revisited the location, the buildings had been bulldozed to make room for crops. The school had long been closed due to consolidation. It was gone. Sold to a farmer for storing farm supplies. Many of those small family farms have disappeared. Some were demolished as was mine; others were simply left behind as farms became larger and families moved elsewhere.

And that may explain why an empty farmhouse can feel haunted even when no ghost story is attached to it. We know someone was there. We know someone slept in those rooms. Someone looked through those windows and watched storms move across the fields. Someone marked children's heights on a door frame. Someone brought home a Christmas tree. Someone sat at the dining room table and worried about the weather, the crops, the mortgage, or a son who had gone away. Perhaps someone stood in that very doorway for the last time and wondered whether they would ever return. Usually, they didn't.

The house remained. The roof leaked. The weeds grew taller. The barn became a weathered gray. Eventually the windows broke, and the wind entered rooms where people had once carefully closed the doors. And then, years later, someone driving down a country road sees the house and slows down. Was it haunted? Maybe. But perhaps the better question is: What happened here? That question is sometimes more powerful than a ghost story. Because an abandoned farmhouse isn't really empty. It is full of evidence that ordinary lives once took place there. And perhaps that is why these old places can make us uneasy. We aren't necessarily afraid that something might still be living inside. We are reminded of everything that once was.

Perhaps an abandoned farmhouse doesn't need a ghost to be haunted. Sometimes memory is enough.



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Volleyball Action-Photos of the first PSC Home Game, a WIN! Aug 27, 2026

Football Action Photos of the first PSC Home Football Game, a Loss! Aug 29, 2026



The Libero sets up after the serve.



Incomplete Pass to Grand View Receiver.



Spike Coming.



Fumble Recovery by PSC!



PSC Students were “In The Game!”



A Prairie Love

Chapter Eighteen: A Light in December — 1924

December arrived quietly.

Snow had fallen just after Thanksgiving—not enough to stop travel, but enough to soften the fields and cover the wagon tracks leading past the cabin. By morning the prairie seemed larger somehow, its familiar boundaries erased beneath white.

The north wind had found every weakness in the house. Lyle spent part of one afternoon stuffing strips of cloth around a window frame while Cora held the lamp.

“I thought you said you built this place tight,” she teased.

“I did.” The flame flickered. Cora raised an eyebrow. “Mostly tight,” he amended, and she laughed.

They were learning that a first winter revealed things autumn had politely overlooked. The woodpile diminished faster than Lyle expected, one of the hens stopped laying, and a hinge on the barn door cracked. Cora became more careful with flour and sugar and found another use for nearly everything that might once have been thrown away. Neither of them spoke of economizing. They simply did it.

The cabin continued becoming theirs. Cora finished curtains for the front window and tucked dried lavender among the bedding. In the evenings they sometimes read aloud from the *Prairie Farmer* or the *Nebraska Farmer*. Other nights there was no reading at all. Lyle worked at the ledger while Cora mended or wrote in her journal, the stove ticking softly between them.

Silence had changed since their marriage. At first Cora had sometimes wondered whether quiet meant something was wrong. Now she understood that two people could sit without speaking and still be together.

As Christmas approached, she began setting aside little things. There wasn't money for much, so she embroidered Lyle's initials onto a white handkerchief, working on it whenever he was outside. The letters weren't perfectly even, but she decided to leave them as they were. They were hers.

Lyle had secrets of his own. Twice Cora found him in the barn with a small piece of wood in his hand, quickly covered with a rag.

“What are you making?”

“Nothing.”

“You're spending a remarkable amount of time making nothing.”

“Trade secret.”

A few days before Christmas, Lyle came home from Oakdale with two slender candles, one green and one white.

“Necessary farm supplies?” Cora asked.

“Absolutely.”

She smiled and placed them in the center of their small table. They hung a pine bough above the door and tied it with red calico. Cora baked molasses cookies, setting several aside for the Beckers and their three children. On Christmas Eve they walked the half mile to deliver them.

By the time they returned, darkness had settled over the prairie. Their cabin appeared ahead of them, lamplight glowing through the front window and reflecting faintly on the snow.

Cora stopped.

“What is it?” Lyle asked.

She looked at the little house. “Nothing.”

12 September 2026 Your Country Neighbor

But it wasn't nothing.

Only months earlier it had been boards, nails and plans. Then it had become the place where they lived. Standing there in the snow, Cora realized she no longer thought of it as the cabin.

It was home.

After supper, Lyle lit the two candles and reached behind his chair for a parcel wrapped in brown paper.

Inside was a wooden comb. He had carved it himself, sanding the wood until it was smooth and etching small stalks of wheat along the handle.

Cora ran her thumb across them.

“Lyle...”

“I know it isn't much.”

She looked up. “It's beautiful.”

He seemed embarrassed by the compliment. “I wanted to give you something that would last.”

She leaned over and kissed him.

Then she retrieved the handkerchief she'd hidden away. Lyle unfolded it and studied the initials. “L.M.”

“They're a little crooked.”

“They look exactly right.”

Later, after the candles had burned low, they stepped outside. The wind had disappeared. Moonlight lay across the snow, and the windmill stood motionless against a sky crowded with stars. Far away, a coyote called.

Cora slipped her hand into Lyle's.

“Merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas, Mrs. Miller.”

She smiled at that. She was still getting used to the name.

For a while neither spoke. Then Lyle looked toward the barn and the fields beyond it.

“Next year ought to be better.”

Cora remembered her mother's letter.

Look at the horizon together.

She squeezed his hand.

“It doesn't have to be better tonight.”

He turned toward her.

“No?”

“No. Tonight can just be enough.”

Behind them, two candles still burned in the window. From across the snow they were hardly more than points of light, easily lost against the enormous Nebraska night.

But they marked the place where Cora and Lyle belonged.

And for their first Christmas together, that was enough.

Continued in October

Letters from the Prairie

Christmas, 1888 Nemaha County, Nebraska

18th Letter from Anna Wilhelmine Bauer to her sister Klara in Germany

My dearest Klara,
Christmas has come to the prairie once again.
I find myself thinking of last Christmas and how uncertain everything still felt. We had been in Nebraska only a short time then, and every snowstorm seemed to remind me how far we were from the life we had known in Germany.
This year feels different.
Perhaps the prairie has changed.
Or perhaps we have.
The first snow came early, covering the fields and softening the fences and buildings until everything seemed part of one great white landscape. Johann says the snow is welcome because it protects the winter wheat, though I confess I find it beautiful whether it serves the crops or not. The house is warm now, and the children have learned that winter chores are not optional. The boys carry wood, break the ice from the water troughs and help Johann with the livestock. Lena follows me everywhere.
She has been waiting for Christmas for weeks.
Yesterday we brought a small cedar into the house. It is not much to look at compared with the Christmas trees I remember from Germany, but Lena decorated it with such enthusiasm that no one would dare call it small.
She tied red ribbons to the branches and hung little paper ornaments the children made themselves. When she stepped back to admire it, she said, "It is beautiful, Mama."
So I told her it was.
And it was.
I think I understand something now that I did not understand last year.
We spend so much time trying to make our new life resemble the old one. We search for familiar foods, familiar songs and familiar customs. We wish for the trees and streets we knew as children.
But perhaps a new home should not be an imitation of the home we left.
Perhaps it should become its own place.
We still sing the hymns we learned as children. I still think of your Advent wreath and wonder whether you have made one this year. I still remember the smell of bread baking in Mother's kitchen and the sound of winter wind against the windows.
Those things belong to me.

But so does this little cedar tree.
So does the sound of the children laughing in this house.
So does the prairie beyond our door.
And, Klara, I think Nebraska is beginning to belong to me too.
That is a strange thing to admit.
There are still days when I miss Germany with a longing that surprises me. I wonder what the old village looks like beneath its winter snow. I wonder whether the church bells sound the same. I wonder whether you walk past places we knew and think of me. I hope you do.
But I also hope you know that I am not unhappy here.
We have worked hard. There have been disappointments. There have been days when the wind seemed determined to test our decision to come west.
Yet there have also been good days.
Neighbors have helped us when we needed help. Johann has found satisfaction in the land, even when it has been stubborn. The children have begun to think of the prairie as simply the place where they belong. Perhaps that is how a new life begins.
Not with one great moment, but with many small ones.
A cedar tree.
A warm kitchen.
A child's laughter.
A familiar hymn.
A neighbor stopping at the door.
And someone far away remembering you.
Tonight, when the children are asleep, I shall sit beside the lamp and think of you. It will be Christmas Eve, and I know there will be a quietness in the house after the children have gone to bed. Perhaps I shall sit for a while beside our little cedar tree and listen to the wind outside.
Perhaps you will be doing the same.
And though there is an ocean between us, I like to imagine that for a moment we are sitting together as we did when we were girls, listening to the winter wind and waiting for Christmas morning.
May this Christmas bring peace to your home, Klara.
May you be surrounded by those you love.
And may you remember that no matter how many miles separate us, you have never been forgotten.
With all my love,
Anna Wilhelmine Bauer

Continued in October

Westward With Lewis & Clark

Chapter 14: A Different Country

The river changed before the land did.

For several days after leaving the high bluff, I noticed that the Missouri seemed less willing to carry us westward. The channel narrowed in places, forcing the boats close to banks that offered little room for error. Sandbars appeared where open water had been the day before, and the current twisted around them in dark, restless channels.

The men complained about the extra work, though no one complained for long. We had learned by then that the river cared little for our opinions.

Our days began before sunrise. The cook fires were built while the eastern sky was still dark, and by the time the first light touched the tops of the bluffs, the boats were already being prepared.

There was little conversation in those early hours.

Men saved their strength for the towline.

We had been traveling together long enough that each man seemed to know what was expected without being told. One man tightened a rope. Another checked the boats. Someone carried water. Someone else counted the remaining provisions. Drouillard moved quietly among us, noticing things the rest of us overlooked.

He had a way of studying the country without appearing to study it.

One morning I asked him what he was looking for.

"Tracks."

"Of what?"

He pointed toward a patch of damp sand near the water.

I saw nothing.

He smiled. "That's why I look."

Later, I found the tracks he had shown me. Small hoof-prints disappeared into the grass beyond the bank.

The country was beginning to reveal animals we had not seen farther downstream.

Lewis was especially interested.

Whenever the boats stopped, he seemed compelled to leave the river and investigate whatever caught his attention. A plant, an unfamiliar bird, a strange mineral exposed in a bluff—each became a subject worthy of examination. His journals grew thicker while the rest of us grew more tired.

Captain Clark, meanwhile, seemed to belong to the river itself.

He was constantly measuring distances, studying the bends and examining the land from which he intended to draw his maps. More than once I saw him standing alone on a rise above the river, compass in hand, turning slowly as though trying to make sense of a country that refused

Continued on page 17 >>>>>

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events September 2026

All activities held at Morton-James Public Library (unless otherwise noted), 923 1st Corso, Nebraska City, NE 68410
For questions call 402-873-5609 or visit morton-jamespubliclibrary.com All Programming is Free and Open to the Public

Chess Club Every Thursday, 4:00PM - 6:00PM

ALL ages and experience levels are welcome to join Chess Club on Thursdays. If you have never played, members will teach you! Chess boards provided.

Library Story Time

Wednesday, September 2, 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Join us for a story time about different jobs and what you might be when you grow up! We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then enjoy activities with NEST 529. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families. Free, no registration. Repeated on Sept. 3.

Yarn Crafters Club

Wednesday, September 2, 1:30PM - 3:00PM

This is for all levels of crafters. Bring your own hooks, yarn, needles, whatever you need to make your yarn craft. Club members will be here to help those beginning. MJPL will have some patterns available. Everyone 15 and older is welcome!

Library Story Time

Thursday, September 3, 4:00PM - 4:30PM

Join us for a story time about different jobs and what you might be when you grow up! We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then enjoy activities with NEST 529. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families. Free, no registration.

Humanities Nebraska: Meet Buffalo Bill

Thursday, September 3, 7:00PM - 8:00PM

William F. Cody reflects on his life as express messenger, teamster, buffalo hunter, scout, actor, showman and builder of the West through a series of true-life adventures—from Bill's perspective, of course.

Papercraft Party Saturday, September 5, 9:00AM - 10:00AM

Calling all scrapbookers, junk journalers, and collage makers! Join us for a Papercraft party on select Saturdays. Bring your own project to work on. We provide paper/stickers/tape/markers and scissors. Any type of papercraft welcome! New members will receive a scrapbook to fill! Bring your own pictures!

Robyn Williams Author Talk

Saturday, September 5, 2:00PM - 3:00PM

Williams is the Founder of Esther's 3 Days Ministry, the Event & Engagement Coordinator at Kimmel Orchard, a poet, writer, wife and, above all, a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. She has been joyfully married to her husband for six years, and together they call Nebraska City, Nebraska, home. Shaped by seasons of both joy and heartbreak, victory and adversity, Robyn has come to know that God often births our greatest purpose from our deepest pain. Those experiences inspired *Beauty for Ashes: The Take Back*—a powerful testimony to God's redeeming love and His unfailing ability to restore what has been broken and reclaim what the enemy has tried to steal.

Lego Club Monday, September 7, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Join us at the Library every first and third Monday of the month from 3:30 - 5:00 pm for Lego Club! Free build with Legos at the club or bring your own sets to work on. Ages 8 and older.

Library Board Meeting Wednesday, September 9, 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Engaging Mature Minds

Thursday, September 10, 10:00AM - 11:30AM

Join us to engage your mind by connecting with other seniors while acquiring wisdom through community. Different topics/speakers each class. Free to attend, no reservation needed. Optional free will donations to support the library accepted. Topic is the local airport.

Afternoon Book Club Tuesday, September 15, 2:00PM - 3:00PM

The Last Unicorn by Peter S. Beagle

Afternoon Book Club meets the third Tuesday of the month. New members are always welcome.

Library Story Time

Wednesday, September 16, 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Join us for an apple-themed story time. We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then color a wooden apple ornament. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families. Repeated on Sept. 17.

Evening Book Club

Wednesday, September 16, 5:30PM - 6:30PM

The Library Book by Susan Orlean

Evening Book Club meets the third Wednesday of each month. New members always welcome!

Library Story Time

Thursday, September 17, 4:00PM - 4:30PM

Join us for an apple-themed story time. We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then color a wooden apple ornament. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families.

Harry Potter Party

Friday, September 18, 6:00PM - 7:00PM

All ages are welcome to join us for a Harry Potter party with themed activities, grab bags, and photos with cosplay characters. No registration needed. Free to attend. Costumes encouraged but not required.

Craft & Color at the Library

Saturday, September 19, 10:00AM – Noon

Join us for a roundtable-style writers workshop! Share writing and give feedback to others. Zoom option available. Please email mjplibraryww@gmail.com to have a Zoom link sent to you if you cannot attend in person. Bring a short piece of your writing to share! This program is for writers aged 18 and older.

Lego Club Monday

September 21, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Join us at the Library every first and third Monday of the month from 3:30 - 5:00 pm for Lego Club! Free build with Legos at the club or bring your own sets to work on. Ages 8 and older.

Engaging Mature Minds

Thursday, September 24, 10:00AM - 11:30AM

Join us to engage your mind by connecting with other seniors while acquiring wisdom through community. Different topics/speakers each class. Free to attend, no reservation needed. Optional free will donations to support the library accepted.

Adult Craft Class *Registration Required**

Tuesday, September 29, 6:00PM - 7:00PM

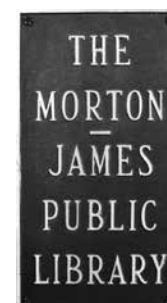
Ages 19+ can register to make a button wreath in this free class at the Library. All supplies provided. Spots are limited so call the Library at 402-873-5609 to reserve your seat.

Smithsonian Salon Pop-Up Theater

Wednesday, September 30, 5:00PM - 8:00PM

Call for information 402-873-5609

“Apples of Uncommon Character,” a hybrid presentation with Author Rowan Jacobsen, complete with heirloom apple tasting.



ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City



Weekend 1 - Traditional AppleJack

Friday, September 18

- 10 AM to 4 PM - Grandma Paula's Country Store - 5215 I Rd.
- 2 PM to 6 PM - AppleJack Flea Market
3rd - 5th & Central Avenue
- 5 PM to 11 PM - AppleJack Carnival**
6th & Central Avenue

Saturday, September 19

- 7 AM to 10 AM - AppleJack Pancake Feed**
Nebraska City Fire Station
- 7:30 AM - AppleJack Fun Run/Walk
Steinhart Park
- 9 AM to 7 PM - Vendor Fair
Kimmel Orchard
- 9 AM to 6 PM - Eagles Club Craft Show
Eagles Club
- 10 AM to 4 PM - Sweet Pickins Craft Show
Lourdes Central Catholic High School
- 10 AM to 5 PM - Barn Market
Arbor Day Farm Historic Barns
- 1 PM to 11 PM - AppleJack Carnival**
6th & Central Avenue
- 11 AM to 2 PM - Neb. City Firehouse Grill
Nebraska City Fire Station
- 1 PM - AppleJack Parade**
Central Avenue

Sweet slice of American tradition!

**September
18-20 & 26-27**

Weekend 2 - All About Apples

- 11 AM to 3 PM - Plant Bingo
Arbor Day Farm Depot
- 1 PM to 6 PM - Cider Stroll**
Central Avenue
- 7 PM - Central Ave. Cinema showing Cars
Sunken Parking Lot Downtown

Sunday, September 20

7 AM to Noon - AppleJack Fly-in/ Drive-in Pancake Feed **Nebraska City Airport**

- 8 AM to 3 PM - River City Car Show
Central Avenue
- 9 AM to 5 PM - U-Pick Flowers
Arbor Day Farm
- 10 AM to 4 PM - Vendor Fair
Kimmel Orchard
- 10 AM to 4 PM - Sweet Pickins Crafts
Lourdes Central Catholic HS
- 11 AM to 3 PM - Plant Bingo
Arbor Day Farm Depot
- 1 PM to 4 PM - Live Music
Kimmel Orchard Pavilion

Saturday, September 26

- 9 AM to 4 PM - Pressed Botanical Art
The Keeping Room Boutique
- 9 AM to 6 PM - Eagles Club Craft Show
Eagles Club
- 10 AM to 5 PM - Barn Market
Arbor Day Farm Historic Barns
- 11 AM to 5 PM - AppleJack Harvest
Market**
Downtown Nebraska City

Sunday, September 27

- 9 AM to 4 PM - Jaycee's Craft Show
Nebraska City Middle School
- 9 AM to 4 PM - Eagles Club Craft Show
Eagles Club
- 9 AM to 4 PM - Pressed Botanical Art
The Keeping Room Boutique
- 9 AM to 5 PM - U-Pick Flowers
Arbor Day Farm
- 9 AM to 5 PM - U-Pick Apples
Arbor Day Farm
- 11 AM to 3 PM - Plant Bingo
Arbor Day Farm Depot
- 5 PM to 9 PM - Sunset Orchard Wine
Tasting
Arbor Day Farm

**Orchards Open
ALL Weekend**
Arbor Day Farm
Kimmel Orchard
Union Orchard

Complete Schedule
of Events at:

www.NebraskaCity.com/Events/AppleJack

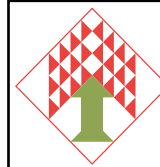
ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

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HERITAGE NEEDLEWORK GUILD

Quilt & Needlework Show
2026



Who

Admire quilts made by our **featured quilters** and members - "Two Budts & a Hug", Delta Budt, Donna Budt and Linda Hug. Three sisters who have been challenging each other for 21 years!

When

Friday, September 18	4 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Saturday, September 19	9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday, September 20	10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Where

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
315 S 16th Street, Nebraska City, NE

*Handicapped accessible
and lots of parking!*

Admission

\$5 at the door to support our community service projects *Thank you!*

Come and enjoy a close up look at **over 150 quilts and needleworks** made by the Heritage Needlework Guild. This show appeals to quilters, makers, and craftsmanship admirers alike.

Submit your votes for favorite bed quilt, lap quilt, baby quilt, wall hanging, needlework, and more!

Enter to win a member-made raffle quilt and themed baskets, and more!

*"Heritage Square"
Raffle quilt!*



Heritage Guild Quilt Show Returns During AppleJack Festival

The Heritage Needlework Guild's annual Quilt and Needlework Show returns to Nebraska City during this year's Applejack Festival, offering visitors a weekend filled with exceptional craftsmanship, creativity, and tradition.

Held in the lower level of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 315 South 16th Street, the show will feature approximately 200 quilts and needlework creations handcrafted by Guild members. This year's special exhibit honors featured quilters Linda, Delta, and Donna, three sisters known as "Two Budts and a Hug," whose collaborative quilting journey spans more than two decades.

Visitors may also purchase handcrafted potholders created by Guild members and browse themed raffle baskets, with proceeds supporting the Guild's educational and community service projects.

The Guild's annual raffle quilt, Heritage Square, a beautifully handcrafted 90-by-90-inch quilt created by Carol Woerlen, Sharon Clark, and Pam Estrada, will also be on display throughout the show. Raffle tickets remain available for \$1 each or seven for \$5, with the drawing scheduled for 4 p.m. Sunday, September 20. The winner need not be present.

The Quilt and Needlework Show opens Friday, September 18, at 4 p.m. and continues through Sunday afternoon. Admission is \$5, making it an affordable opportunity to enjoy remarkable quilting artistry while supporting one of Nebraska City's long-standing community organizations.

Whether you're a quilter, collector, or simply appreciate the beauty of hand-made craftsmanship, the Heritage Needlework Guild invites you to make the Quilt and Needlework Show part of your Applejack Festival weekend.

Arbor City News

is a monthly news section in
Your Country Neighbor

A Southeast Nebraska
Regional Magazine (w/News)



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ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

Westward, *Continued from page 13*
to offer a proper shape.

One evening I asked him whether he ever became lost.

He looked at me and smiled.

"Not yet."

I wasn't certain whether he was joking.

We had begun encountering signs of people who lived along the river long before we arrived. A broken stick placed deliberately near a trail. A fire ring long since cold. Footprints along a sandbar.

Then, one afternoon, we saw smoke.

It rose in a thin column beyond the trees.

The men noticed it almost at once.

For a moment the camp became unusually quiet.

We had seen no one, yet the knowledge that someone was nearby changed the feeling of the river.

The captains ordered us to proceed cautiously.

Before long we saw them.

They stood at a distance along the shore, watching the boats.

There were several men, and behind them others remained near their camp. They did not come rushing toward us. They simply watched.

We watched them too.

I remember thinking how strange it was that after so many weeks of seeing nothing but our own faces, the sight of another human being could make the whole country seem suddenly occupied.

The captains went ashore to speak with them.

I remained with the boats, close enough to hear only fragments of conversation. There were gestures, greetings, gifts and words that I could not understand. The captains had brought instructions from the President and presents intended to establish friendship with the nations along the Missouri.

I understood very little of the discussion. But I understood the importance of it.

We were not traveling through an empty country.

The land had names before we gave it our own.

The river had trails beside it before our boats entered its current.

People knew these bluffs, these islands and these bends better than we ever could.

That thought stayed with me long after the meeting ended.

That evening, the men talked quietly around the fire. Some wondered what tribes we would encounter farther upriver. Others spoke of the country ahead as though it were merely another stretch of wilderness waiting to be crossed.

— Elias LeGrand

Continued in October

My Yard

Bruce Madsen

I don't know if I have ever seen
The surrounding countryside look so beautiful and green
The grass always needs mowed, and gives you no time to catch your breath
The very thought of another mow, could be reason enough to cause my death

I asked for it though, when Spring Fever was running rampant
I put on a double dose of fertilizer and added a growth surfactant
So, grow it did with the added help of rain
Now, I look at my yard with a tired disdain
"cause its rapid growth is causing a great amount of mental strain

At least my mower is big enough to handle the job with ease
I got a big one to ride, it has lots of power, chugs like a truck with a turn of the key
But there are a couple problems as I make each pass
I try not to spill my beer, and try not to think about four dollar gas

Oh well, at least I'm not smokin' it
Have thought a time or two about getting someone to bale it
I could get sheep and let them eat it
But if I did, I think the neighbors might object to it

So I'm thinking now as I again get ready to mow
That probably this winter when I'm on my driveway shoveling snow
I won't be able to wait for Spring and the grass to grow
And I'll have to check the price of fertilizer and make sure my mower is ready to go.



inspired DENTAL

General & Cosmetic Dentistry

Maribel Caudillo, DDS, practices a full scope of general and cosmetic dentistry with expertise ranging from dental implants to dentures, crowns and root canals. Dr. Caudillo and her team can now provide a wide variety of dental solutions to create healthy smiles that will last a lifetime.

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by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

EASY LIES

Truth is easy to remember
because it doesn't change,
but when you twist it out
of shape it is a ghost that
haunts your brain, breaking
into puzzle pieces that won't
ever fit together again.
A lie multiplies, spawning
more lies that don't fit either.
You work yourself into a trap
that can't be sprung. I'd guess
it feels a little like a noose that
keeps getting tighter and tighter
around your neck.

MAJESTIC MATES

They are up there in
the blue of the sky, so
high and away from land
they may never have to
come down again.
They start to carve spirals
around each other, ever
closer and closer until they
lock talons and free fall
into space, down and
down, twisting and pulling
like they are forever tied
together.
An ancient eagle ceremony,
sacred and violent, sealing
their devotion for life, for as
long as that may be, as they
burst apart over the old river
that runs through time.

YOU CAN'T FORGET

Long day, short sleep.
Images and words come
back on the super movie
screen of memory.
But the past is set in the
cement of time. Like fossils
in a museum, your past
days are shadows now.
But if you go into the hole
with them and stay there,
you will miss being alive,
for however long that may
be. There is only time to
live and sing, and not
enough to die in dreams!

By Artist, Devon Adams

PENCIL AND WATERCOLOR

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Done from your photographs.



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8x10 mat size: \$45
11x14 mat size: \$70
16x20 mat size: \$100

PENCIL

8x10 mat: \$25
11x14 mat: \$60
16x20 mat: \$90

Send your photo to: Devon Adams
1220 Oak Street, Apt. A, Box 9
Nebraska City, NE 68410

Phone: 402-209-9377

adamsdevon07@gmail.com

SOFT FROST

It is there one early morning,
lying on the grass like a wet
blanket, but cold and crystalized.
Your shoes slide sideways and
so does the rest of your body,
until you grab the top fence
board. Proof in person that
Autumn sneaked behind
Summer and plans to stay.
Play while there is still time
before movement is work in
the hard freezes that will come.
Nature doesn't make it easy
to dance around the circle of
seasons, but there is always
beauty here if you look for it.

STORIES IN STONE

A bent fence stands against
time and wind and the prairie
grass growing over the boundary
between life and death.
Old stones hold their ground
in a lingering fight to keep the
memories of those who are
buried beneath them.
Names and dates are blurry
now from years of weather
and sun, but the hearts and
souls of the folks lying deep
below know a peace that is
forever, far away from life's
trauma and drama. Long ago
they worked their humble
homestead at the edge of a
wild and beautiful prairie,
and now they are a part of
that place, ghosts in the
winds of time.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

There used to be “sock hops” in small towns on some Saturday nights; street dances for teens. I guess the teens would dance in their stocking feet, but I’m not sure because I wasn’t there. It might have just been a reference to the “bobby sox” that girls wore to the dance with their “poodle skirts”.

I do remember teens driving up and down Main Street after school, much to the chagrin of the ‘stuffy’ adults. Cars would honk occasionally to each other as a greeting. Many adults found this annoying. Some small towns even had ordinances against such “rebellious behavior”.

The following is an article I wrote several years ago and have reprinted here a few times. I think it’s always appropriate this time of year. For me the article is both nostalgic and time-less. Here it is;

As I look out my window on Fifth Street, I see it’s back-to-school season; school buses, football practice, and cruisin’. The freedom to get in a car and go anywhere I wanted was once just an anxious teenager’s dream. Now, whenever I want, I can take my comfortable car with air conditioning, stereo CD player and power windows, and tour the rural countryside or even drive to the Rocky Mountains. This is one freedom I cherish but often take for granted. Before I received my driver’s license, I didn’t have that freedom of movement.

Before I had a driver’s license, travel was viewed from the back-seat of an old Ford Fairlane. Often, a parent’s head would obstruct my view, so I just looked out the side window and watched my world go by about 45 miles an hour. There were the ever-changing fields of grains and grasses; the lavender of blooming alfalfa or the gold of ripening oats. Now and then a train passed by on the tracks that ran parallel to the unpaved country road.

As my father steered into town, we connected with the highway and coasted down the hill to the traffic light and the drive-in on the corner. High school kids stood around in small groups with their red and black letter-jackets sipping Cokes and Pepsi’s and Dr. Peppers and munching on hamburgers. Some sat in cars and leaned out of windows in conversation, or listened to the latest rock and roll song. I wanted my red and black letter-jacket. This was a new town, a bigger school, and new friends. I was fifteen and dreamt of going to college, of breaking out of my rural world and into the real world of NASA missions, the nuclear age, and muscle cars.

But my world was not the images I saw on the new color TV in the old Iowa farmhouse where I was painfully trying to grow up. My world was the school bus before dawn ten miles from my homeroom. My world was trying to learn chemistry and geometry, while having to learn English Composition. My world was one of solitude and three wishes; I wished that I were a star on the basketball team, that I were popular enough to go out on Saturday nights with the prettiest girl in school, and that I would get my name in the paper as one of those on the semester honor roll. Those three wishes were never heard by any Genie in my world. And so for me, my world in high school amounted to getting my homework done and trying not to get beat up.

It helped a lot that I got a car my Senior year. That old ‘53 Chevy was freedom from school buses, and freedom to go see friends if the urge came up. It was independence and image; it was a new dimension in my life. Occasionally, during school lunch break, I would drive a few friends around town, me, showing off my “wheels,” and they, going for a “joy ride.” And if we saw another group doing the same, an exchange of horn honks was not only a greeting, it was like saying, “How about this? This is living!”

So when you look out your window on your street, try not to shake your head in disgust at those young people who might seem a bit noisy. Not all of them are popular or athletic, and few are geniuses, and they are all struggling to fit into a world so much bigger than they are. They are trying their wings. They are exploring freedoms withheld from them while they were children. They are beginning to experience what we adults take for granted; freedom is fun!

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Labor Day falls on September 7 this year, which just happens to be the 55th anniversary of that fateful day when Hubby and I wed in Alameda, California. You may wonder at my use of the adjective “fateful” to describe our wedding day. Shouldn’t I be referring to it in a more positive way? Something along the lines of “the happiest day of my life” or “the beginning of wedded bliss” with “my soul mate, a/k/a, the love of my life”? In my opinion, every wedding day is fateful in the sense that two people are vowing to stick it out together no matter what fate delivers to them. You know, in sickness or in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse... Unless the couple devises their own vows with a fail-safe clause included to allow bailing out should they change their minds. No sense in locking yourself into a life-long SNAFU if you can avoid it, right?

Not so fast, I say.

Hubby and I have had our share of challenges, troubles and down-right fiascos. I, for one, never seriously considered pulling the plug. I will not speak for Hubby, but I’m pretty sure he would agree with me. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that the good far outweighs the bad. My philosophy of marriage is pretty much the same as my philosophy of vacations: it’s the quirks and unexpected situations that make a vacation memorable. The best stories come out of the way we respond to those things. Smooth sailing is nice, but you don’t learn much from it.

Now, I’m not excusing intentional bad behavior, but there are generally two sides to every disagreement. That is where the Labor Day connection comes into play concerning marriage. It can seem like a sentence of hard labor at times. Am I right? Of course, I am. But hard work is generally rewarded...eventually. I concede that arriving at a place where minor faults are overlooked, good qualities are fully appreciated, and communication actually solves problems may not happen overnight. But it certainly won’t happen if you throw in the towel.

The flip side of the marriage/Labor Day connection is that everyone needs a break from labor at times. In a marriage, that may mean a few days apart periodically. Hubby has his annual golf and fishing trips. I have my annual weekend with my real soul mates: my sisters. Husbands and wives do need their own space at times.

So, there you have it: how to make it to 55 years of marriage, in 500 words or less. And it didn’t cost you anything.



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