



Auburn Bulldogs 2008 - 2009 Nebraska State Champions

Voices from your Valley

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Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

- Devon Adams
- Janette Brungardt
- Frieda Burston
- Merri Johnson
- Vicki O’Neal
- Karen Ott
- Joe Smith
- Josh Whisler

Thank You

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Your Country Neighbor

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Editor’s note:

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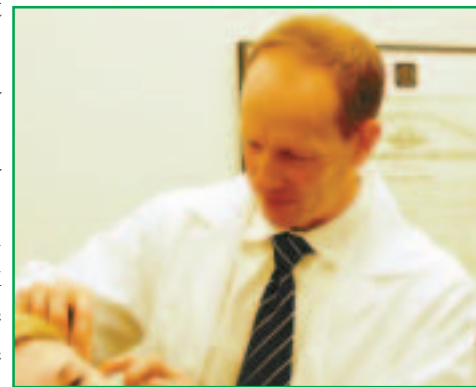


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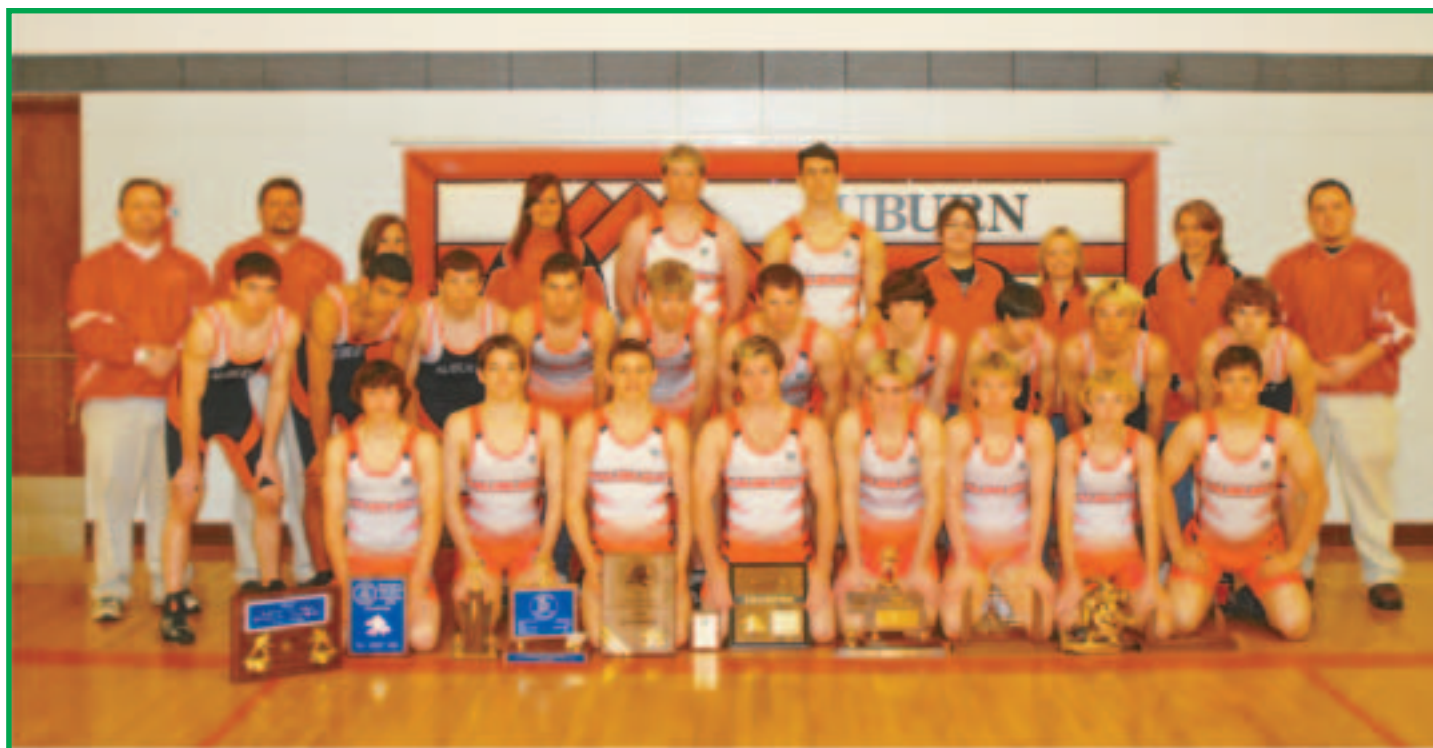

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Glad To Be Here

by Frieda Burston

So it's blowing like a typhoon and my new patio chair just went flying across the patio—and I put on my old rabbit-skin coat to sit out on the porch and watch the leaves stream by, and I'm still too cold—and nobody is out on the street anyhow—and even the dogs in the back yards are silent and shivering—and I'm still glad to be here.

I ran out of computer ink and I can't figure out how to put new ink in—and I haven't finished unpacking my last sewing box so I don't know whether I really bought that coat pattern or not—and by the time I finish the coat, if I do, spring will be here, hopefully—

And with all this rain, we won't have the yard cleaned up and where did the time go? I've been here two and a half months already, and got nothing done?

But the country has gone into a crisis, and California is dead broke (D-D and Jim work for the State, which has declared a cut in salary to enable the money to go around—it's disguised as mandatory furloughs, but means cuts in hours and in salary—) and prices shot way up, and stores are going out of business. Nobody is doing anything any more than I did, but things are happening all the time. To everybody. And not necessarily the greatest things.

The medical business still seems to be the only one really working hard. I had to make a new set of medical records because my old ones never came and I didn't bring names and addresses of my doctors. These doctors, who belong to the U of Cal, have entirely different ideas of what they want to know about my insides, and it takes them lots more time to find it out. On the other hand, I want to know less. All I really want to know is what I have to do to stay moving. Anything more is icing on the cake.

I don't want to know the different kind of medicines the doctors want me to take, or the amateur books and products that users peddle. But I am quite taken with some of these computer sites that don't sell anything. Instead, they get together to pool their ignorance and relate their adventures in self-healing, and somewhere they hook the attention of someone who rattles the box and changes the shape. That's what interests me. I came across an unusual one yesterday.

It isn't really new. I came across it when I was in Israel while Lulu was still alive, only it was just in diapers then. A few people into self-help had come across a biochemist in Bangkok who had trained in England, and he was willing to answer questions because he was trying to experiment on himself with simple samples of what he had. I looked at it last night, and it is all grown up. Nothing amateurish about it. Jillions of plain everyday ol' substances discussed, nothing but letters from people saying how much of what, and how often they took it—and what the result was. No rigorous protocol. Oh, you felt like holding a teaspoon of olive oil in your mouth for 7 minutes? And what happened when you spit it out, when you couldn't stand it any longer? You say it came out all frothy and white, and right after that, you say you could breathe well for the first time in a week? And you aren't sure, but you think maybe your teeth shine, too? Or you say nothing happened, you just spit it out, that's it, and your sinuses were no different? I like that kind of science. Anything goes. No rules, no regs. Just tell the truth and be counted. Or don't tell the truth. Readers will interpret results according to their own bias. Just one thing—if the resulted report isn't logical, the biochemist tries to find out why. That's one thing keeping people honest. You get reports finding out why those are dead ends. Big Brother is counting heads after all....

So if you like, try www.earth.clinic.com and see if drinking vinegar can reduce your blood pressure, or whether painting your soles with iodine can re-grow your hair—and thumb your nose at the dreary winter weather. And watch it, I think that's a dot between earth and clinic....don't let the cold rains drown out the fun stuff—best wishes, frieda

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Poetry by Devon Adams

NIGHT PATROL

Once again, there is a fox
living in the hollow by the creek.
He's been walking through the
long grass of the pasture
on his way to check out
all the scattered neighbors.
His scent is spotted here and there
along the busy trails that
are the highways of the night
for both prey and predator.
If I listen, when the moon
is full and bright, I will hear
the coughing bark that says,
"I want everyone to know
that Fox is on patrol."

ECHOES OF SPRING

A haunting echo fell
through the bare branches
of early April days.
It was soft and indistinct,
like a dream hanging
in the back of
our memory closet.
Low and musical and
persistent, the sound
penetrated over and around
other busy sounds that
were louder and stronger.
It was the timeless voice
of the turtledove,
singing his prayers for tomorrow.

WARM GRASS

The ground is warm again,
on the south side of
the steep hill, when
the sun of equinox
smiles away the winter.
I will lie in the dry grass
and dream of summer,
when twilight touches dawn.



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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

It's time for another installment in the minor misadventures of my husband, who shall continue to remain nameless to protect the guilty.

You may recall reading of the incident last December in which my husband walked into our son's next-door neighbor's unlocked house, making it all the way through the garage and upstairs to the living room before realizing his mistake. Fortunately, no one (except a dog which looked *nothing* like our son's dog) was at home to confront him, and he managed to escape with his dignity intact. Until he told the rest of us what he had done. I bring this up *purely* because today's story also involves a visit to our son and daughter-in-law.

A few weeks ago we traveled to St. Joe to help our son and daughter-in-law move. I was really on top of things, packing my overnight bag and taking care of things that needed doing the day before, instead of waiting until the morning of departure, like usual. I even loaded a stack of newspapers into the car that my son had requested for packing breakables.

The next day, about halfway to St. Joe, my husband asked if we would be helping to pack or just moving boxes. "They still have some packing to do," I answered. "That's why I'm taking those newspapers along."

Brief silence. Oops. "You meant to take those along? I took them out of the back seat when I put our luggage in."

So much for being on top of things the day before.

He figured I was just hauling the newspapers around until I made it to the recycling trailer. He thought it would helpful to get them out of the way. It never crossed his mind that I meant to take them along. Hmm. Eggs and bacon. Salt and pepper. Packing and newspapers. Some things just naturally go together. Besides, I haven't recycled newspapers in years.

Why is it that husbands and wives are so seldom in sync on things like this? I manage to remember to pack the newspapers, and my husband manages to unpack them.

Well, never mind the newspapers. It gets better.

When we visit family overnight, my husband takes his own eggs and sausage along (I'm not kidding) to ensure that he gets what he wants for breakfast. (Have I mentioned that he's a little obsessive about breakfast?) So, I made sure that my daughter-in-law knew not to pack and move the necessary cooking utensils until after breakfast. Wouldn't you know, my husband had decided, unbeknownst to me, that trying to cook in the middle of moving would be too much hassle. He'd just run out and get something.

O.K. Fine. Eat in, eat out. Whatever makes you happy. My husband, before breakfast, is a little like a bear coming out of hibernation. I generally just stay out of his way.

So, he headed for a restaurant and I stayed in to eat whatever I could find.

About half an hour later, my cell phone rang. It was hubby. "Could someone bring my wallet?" Seems Bob Evans prefers cash to help in the kitchen.

Lest you think I'm abusing my husband by revealing his foibles, let me assure you, he gets to have the last word before the article goes to print. "That's pretty funny," he chuckled, after reading this one. "Too bad it's all true."



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Getting on in Years

by Joe Smith

My wife and I reached 77 this year. It gets to be a comedy of errors and other things to laugh at. My mother-in-law said old age ain't for sissies. I never thought about it 'til I got old, and she was right. My wife has two hearing aids and that doesn't help. Sometimes she can't hear what you say and you raise your voice and she says, "You don't have to raise your voice, I can hear you." That goes on every day or two. Yesterday she came in the office to talk to someone that was on the phone, then she takes out her right ear piece. She must have dropped it on the floor and our sweet little angel of a dog bit down on it and busted it. It was just \$2000 or a little more.

I went to a sale the other day at the Lutheran consignment sale. I had a bunch of stuff on the sale. I'm not sure why they call it a sale. It was more like a big give-away program. Way too much stuff for a one day sale. As I was headed home, I was parked way west and a fellow with a trailer gave me a ride down to my pickup. I got out and opened my door and his trailer fender caught the door. As things went it, was not a good day. So I spent a couple of days repairing it. It looks about as good as the rest of the pickup. It already has a couple of patched up spots on it.

As we can't decide what to do about the farm, we have looked at lots and different places. Do we sell the farm or just lease it out? If we move, what are we going to do with all our stuff? And the dog who by now is part of the

family, would she be happy if we moved to town? I know my wife would, She would move tomorrow if we were ready. I'm not sure I want to move. That is a heck of a lot of work. I still work in the shop some, but not much. I have a health problem, so that is what will dictate if we have to move or not. We have talked about adding a small bedroom on the north end of the office, which my wife is not too happy about. Stairs might be a problem later. This big old house is a chore for her to keep up, as she isn't getting any younger either. She wants to go down to Summerfield, Kansas and look at some pre-manufactured homes. That would be okay I guess, if we had a place to put it. But then I would need a shop too, as long as I can still do something. So right now we are in the "where do we go from here," stage? When we moved here 35 years ago she said, "No more Moves."

We moved to the Deming, New Mexico area in the 50's, then to Tucumcari, New Mexico area seven years later. Then, within three years we moved to Nebraska. We have moved several times since we came here. That was moving farm equipment and all. It was a heck of a job with four kids to boot. Maybe that is why I'm dragging my feet on moving to town. That, and I'm not a town person. I think we lived in town for about three years total. Why am I writing this? I guess to help me make up my mind of what next? I thought about this time in life it would get easier. Boy was I wrong. Joe Smith

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Spring Has Sprung

by Janette Brungardt *The Village Gardener*

I don't need a calendar to tell me Spring is here. I can tell by the happenings around "The Farm". Buds on the trees start to swell; plants in the greenhouse are sprouting; tulips are poking up through the ground and Mommy Raccoon is back.

Mommy Raccoon gives birth and raises her babies in my window well under the porch. Her arrival is always announced by my dog Lacey. When Lacey lies on the porch, for hours, and sniffs at the cracks between the boards I know Mommy is back. From the basement I can watch her through the window. She seems to know that she is safe and my two dogs and I don't pose a threat. Last year she raised two babies. This year I will have to put a curtain on the window because I have been raising plants, under grow lights, in the basement. No, not that kind, perennials to sell in the garden store.

My living room window offers another indicator of Spring. Under the eaves, a few years ago, a barn swallow family built a nest on the rain gutter down spout. They raised their first brood then left. Every spring there is a succession of Lookie Loos that check out the fixer upper nest. It usually starts with a family of finches. I can almost hear him saying, "Sally, come look at this. With a little work it will be really nice." I'm sure she is thinking, "This place is a dump. I deserve better." They work on it for a few days then for whatever reason, perhaps Sally's complaining, they move on.

Next a sparrow family arrives. "Matilda, check this out." They also work on it for awhile. The nest gets some really interesting additions. It usually has strings of dried weeds hanging all around it. When they seem just ready to move in the finch family comes back and starts fighting with them. Then the barn swallows show up and let the other bird families know who the real owner is. The swallows throw all the "junk" out that the other birds have added; put a few dabs of mud on the nest then move down to the barn. Perhaps they are trying to keep it intact for their retirement.

Ah Spring!

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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
(Photo provided by Author)

Fishing:

The Missouri River is really low right now, so the rock formations and the sandbars are pretty apparent. There have been several boats out on it but I haven't heard anyone catching a lot of fish. Yes - they are biting but nothing of any size, mostly small channel cats along with the drum and carp hitting pretty steady. Once again I need to warn about the river banks this time of year, "They can be Dangerous". It's still pretty cool at night so the ground freezes and then the sun hits it and thaws the top layer which appears to be in wet but stable condition and that's where things go south. Looks can be deceiving. The next thing you know you step out on it and you're on your back. In the wrong place you may even be wet. That's not good either. So please watch your step going down the bank to the rivers edge.

"What are they hitting on," You ask? Crawlers and shad strips right now with some luck on dough baits. The bites aren't real strong this time of year, they kind of mouth it a lot, but if you hang with it and get their biting habits figured out you're in for some fun.

Hunting:

Spring Turkey Seasons are opening and you can buy you permit RIGHT NOW at the Game & Parks Web page <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/hunting.asp>.

The Spring Turkey Archery Season starts March 25 with the other seasons to follow. This year a hunter can have up to 3 permits for this spring season.

2009 Spring Turkey Seasons:

Shotgun Statewide — April 18 - May 31

Archery Statewide — March 25 - May 31

Youth Archery — March 25 - May 31


Youth Shotgun — April 11 - May 31

Spring Turkey Permits are available and there are plenty of birds this year. Fishing has finally opened up. So re-string your pole and polish up your shotgun because you can pretty well pick what you want to do outdoors right now. 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."




This month's picture is of a low Missouri River - check out the sandbar.

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Your Country Neighbor



Michael took me on a road-trip to Central California. The weather soon turned ugly and the roads became slick. It was I who suggested we stop and buy new tires at a local Walmart.

Bad idea.

Our car was high on the hydraulic lift at Walmart. I was in the photo department, scanning our wedding pictures, when I heard the sound of footsteps and urgent voices. I looked up to see the store emptying rapidly.

“Two officers were killed at a bombing, yesterday. And now we’ve got a bomb threat, here!”

What? Officers killed! Bomb threats...?

I snatched my digital card from the photo-machine and joined the other folks heading for the exit.

I found my husband in the parking lot. “Look, Michael!” I said. “Everyone else gets to drive away...And our car is stuck on the tire-rack. We should’ve never come to the City!”

He merely took my hand and walked me to a nearby Mexican restaurant. We ate chimichangas while the world outside teamed with cops and sirens and flashing lights.

It seemed to take forever, but at last the yellow police-tape came down and the *All-Clear* was given. Relieved, we went to fetch our car from the tire shop.

I was sure we should make our escape, now. But not my husband. He took us even deeper into the Asphalt Jungle...He drove us to the state capitol building in Sacramento.

Michael walked me past the prattling tourists. Through the metal detectors...Past uniformed guards who eyed us narrowly.

“Years ago, I testified before the Senate, here,” Michael said. “It wasn’t like this, back then. No metal detectors and guards.”

We climbed a staircase and walked the corridors—passing stately sculptures and marble-head busts. Michael pointed down a hallway. “That’s where I had to give testimony,” he said. “Down there in the Senate Chambers.”

I stared, trying to imagine Michael down there... talking to VIP’s about greedy lumber companies and the clear-cutting of ancient Redwoods.

“Oh my,” I said. “I hope you taught those city-slickers a thing or two!”

“Well, darling...I tried. I had to address both the Senate and the State Assembly.”

“Both of them?!”

He nodded. “It was aired live on TV monitors throughout the capitol...and on National Public Radio, too. Ten million listeners across the country.”

“*Ten million!*” I felt faint. “It makes me sweat just thinking about it. How did you do it?”

“Just acted confident, I guess...” Michael’s steps slowed. “Confidence is everything around here,” he said. He paused, and stood looking at the ornate doors in front of us.

The gold lettering above the entrance said: “*Arnold Schwarzenegger ... Governor of California.*”

An armed guard stood there, preventing anyone from entering the office...but he was momentarily distracted by a passerby. It was then that Michael stepped past the guard and strode into the Governor’s office. The ornate doors closed behind him.

My chin dropped. *What in the world?* I almost hollered, but caught myself just in time. The officer finished up his conversation and returned to his military stance.

A moment later, my hubby reappeared.

He walked past the startled guard and handed me one of the Governor’s gold-embossed business cards. “A souvenir from Arnie’s office,” Michael said.

He took my arm and the two of us walked away. “...And that’s how you do it, honey,” he added. “You assume an air of confidence, and you can go anywhere in the building.”

“*Insanity!*” I said. “That guard had a loaded gun.”

“Aw, darling...” Michael said. “I’ve been in Arnie’s office before. You have to understand these folks. That’s all.”

I just looked at him. What kind of a guy had I married, anyhow? I’d never catch up with this man. Never in a lifetime.

Leaving the capitol building, we drove on to Berkeley...or “*Berserkly*” as the locals call it. We went to visit one of Michael’s childhood haunts...the old Main Street of town. It was a place of strange contrasts. Old and new all mixed together.

We stepped into the Beanery Coffee Shop—an old refined café that had a futuristic look, as well. It was the scene from some Sci-Fi flick—rows of robotic people sitting silently at tables...half-hidden behind the screens of laptop computers. Brows knitted, fingers tapping. They sipped their lattes and espressos, their eyes glued to computer screens.

Not a word was spoken between them. Not a glance exchanged. An occasional murmuring broke the stillness, but it was only a one-sided conversation on a cell phone...One of those Blue-tooth devices.

Bizarre. Robots mumbling to themselves. It was an alien world to be sure.

“When I came here as a boy,” Michael said, “People actually talked to each other. They laughed and joked. Now, they just come here for a caffeine fix and to go online.”

Michael took me outside and pointed at an abandoned building on the corner. “That used to be *Ozzie’s Soda Fountain & Pharmacy.*”

“*Ozzie’s!*” I said. “You’re kidding!”

“It was the hub of life, here,” Michael said. “Old folks got prescriptions. Kids drank sodas and bought penny-candy. It was a wonderful world—far removed from the modern mess of today.”

He pointed at the robots in the Beanery Coffee Shop. “That’s a pitiful substitute for the happiness of Yesteryear. A real sad commentary on life, today.”

We stood staring down the Main Street of Berserkly...at the cobwebby depths of Ozzie’s store. And the strange innards of the Beanery.

At last, we turned to go. It was time to head home...Time to leave this alien world of Blue-tooths and laptop cults. Metal detectors...Armed guards and bomb threats.

Time to go back to the Country where life was simple. To the land of sunrises and sunsets...where the meadowlark warbles and the little grosbeak sings his one-note song.

The hills were beckoning us and we were glad to go.

...Far away from this Asphalt Jungle.

Vicki O'Neal
www.VickiO'Neal.com

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



I'd almost given up hope of ever hearing our young rooster cock-a-doodle when last Saturday afternoon, at a quarter of three, he managed to cough out the rough approximation of a morning wake-up call.....his internal clock clearly still in the developmental stage.

With his deep rust-red body accentuated by a spectacular, black-green tuft of tail feathers he's quite the looker, but in a way it's false advertising: he may look macho, but he's still immature enough to be confused about his position in the hen/rooster scheme of things. We're certain he's matured past the "Get out of the way....I'm eating first" stage because a few days after his first-time crowing Dale heard him inviting the girls to a feeder of freshly cracked corn before he dug in, but he has yet to sidle up alongside a shapely hen and whisper sweet-nothings in her delicate ears. He's still a Bashful Bob when it comes to romance.

I wasn't certain how raising chicks over the winter would work out; up until last November I'd never purchased them during any season other than early spring. But I was pleasantly surprised at the outcome: forty chicks ordered...forty four delivered... all forty-four hale and healthy today. The gals will be spared the chopping block as I purchased them specifically for layers, but as soon as I get these russet beauties moved from the brooder house to the hen house I'll be ordering chicks for fryers.

Half of the girls will be traveling 10 miles east to my cousin's recently remodeled chicken house, a regular "Volailles Hilton" with its new steel siding, flashy windows and fancy fence tall enough to corral a giraffe. My gals are accustomed to country living, but I doubt it will take them long to adjust to life in their new 'French' chateau.

The one thing they'll have to do without is the night-time chicken house visits by our resident skunk.....which turned up last night with a friend. I'm praying the tag-along was an old

college roommate and not a new bride, or we could be in for some stinky trouble come summer.

On the cow/calf front one clumsy cow managed to step on her calf, (Dale hauled the little guy to a Torrington veterinarian for a leg cast) while three fertile mothers were blessed with twins...or perhaps 'blessed' is somewhat inaccurate since two of the new moms accepted only one of their respective offspring, leaving the second newborn to fend for itself on the cold hard ground; only one mother was willing to take responsibility for both her babies. Her reward is an extra ration of feed to ensure adequate milk production.

The two unfortunate foster-calves are surviving on an expensive milk-supplement which is bottle fed three times a day. Like baby formula the price of the powdered milk replacer continues to go up and up: I remember when

it cost just \$25.00 a sack...this latest bag came dearer at \$67.95.

Inflation is beginning to flex its muscles; I fear the day when it's fully awake.

That's all for tonight: I could regale you with a story about the small herd of mule deer I saw walking past our house one quiet, misty morning, or discuss the results of my unofficial planting intention survey (55% undecided), or tell you Dale saw a robin yesterday....the first one this spring, but I'm farm-wife tired tonight so instead you'll have to settle for this simple wish...

Happy Spring from Horse Creek Farm....and from everyone who calls it home.

Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

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