



A different Brownville, October 2008



The November earth welcomed the October leaves and an early Winter snow dusted all with frosting.

Voices from your Valley

Photos of Country Scenes	3
Poetry	4 - 5
Merri's 'Diary'	5
Frieda's Moving!	6
Four More Pages of Color	7 - 10
Hunting & Fishing	11
Vicki and the Good Ol' Days	12
"The Face of Drought"	13
Joe Smith	14



Still splendid in gold, a species different from the still-green pines stands 'above' the bare limbs and evergreens.



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Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

- Devon Adams
- Jody Anderson
- Frieda Burston
- Sheri Mayhew Dowding
- Vicki Harger
- Merri Johnson
- Karen Ott
- Bea Patterson
- Joe Smith
- Josh Whisler

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Thank You

Your Country Neighbor

P.O. Box 126
 Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@alltel.net

Editor's note:

More than three years of this publication are online at:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Country

Scenes



Reflections on a Winter Pond



Sunday morning brought more than a dusting, and this little leaf couldn't hold on any longer.



Saturday Morning's "Dusting"



East of Brownville, west of Rock Port.



The end of November brought a dusting of snow to areas around Peru. This farm is southeast on H-67.

December 2008

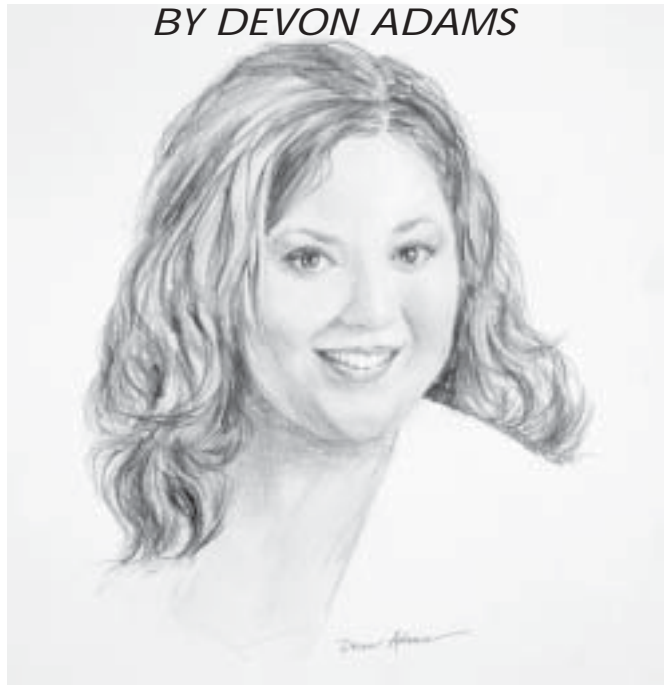
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A PLACE OF PEACE

by Devon Adams

The crack of dawn breaks
night apart, as shattered light
explodes across the sky.
A bundled figure walks
across the roughly frozen
ground beside the barn.
Her breath defines the frigid air
in small fogs that follow her.
The metal latch clatters as
the weathered door is opened.
Bales of prairie hay are stacked
and smell of sage and summer.
Friendly whinnies echo as horses
welcome the person that they
trust to be there for their care.
She never lets them down,
and their lives are intertwined,
like braided ropes that
tie their hearts together.
This is a place of peace and
reverence, where every breath
is a prayer of thanksgiving for life.

STAR LIGHTS

by Devon Adams

Deep in the country dark,
where the cedars grow,
snow fell like feathers,
lighter than a breath.
It decorated branches
with crystal flakes,
stacked in angled puffs,
balanced like ballet
dancers poised on point,
resisting ordinary gravity.
Then the full moon rose
and ignited rainbow prisms
on all the branches, illuminating
the night before Christmas.

DEAR SANTA

by Devon Adams

Please give me
what I need,
because if you
give me what I want,
I will never know
the simple joy
of having enough.

REAL TREES

by Devon Adams

Green is a relative term
that isn't always truthful
when it comes to pine trees
being sold in parking lots
for the Christmas season.
Give some thought to
honest country trees,
like the wild cedars that
grow at random, grabbing
soil with grasping roots,
like hands that hold on
to the soil for dear life.
They won't let you down
by dropping needles before
you can wrap strings of lights
around them, and their fragrant
aroma will take you back
to childhood memories,
when trees were real.

WINTER TOO SOON

Sheri Mayhew Dowding

Winter is coming
Just look around you
The sky is turning gray
No longer a clear blue

The trees are bare
Naked branches stiffen in the breeze
Ice on the edge of the pond
Compliments of the last freeze

Walkers have piled on more clothes
They're almost gone from the street
With thoughts of cocoa and warm fires
They've done a hasty retreat

Bird feeders are full
For which the squirrels compete
Waiting is now the game
To see who gets to eat

Curl up with a good book
If it leads to a nap
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You're caught in winters trap

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The True Meaning of Christmas

by Jody Anderson

Candles beckoning, glowing in icy windows
Animated nutcrackers moving in rhythm
White and gold angels posing perfectly
Bell ringers begging for shiny pennies
Teddy bears squealing at plastic picnics
Children unwrapping mysterious trinkets
Newly fallen snow coaxing anxious sledders
Tinkling ice cubes mingling for a toast
Tots gleefully pointing to shiny ornaments
Wreaths hanging with sparkling decorations
Holiday parties soothing the lonely
Shoppers trudging the crowded aisles
Santa enchanting wide-eyed children
The true meaning of Christmas!!??

CHRIST IS CHRISTMAS!
Peace and goodwill to all!

ONE THING AT A TIME

by Devon Adams

There are days when I can function
in five directions at one time,
and by evening, tasks are finished.
My list can be crossed off
and sleep will come easily.
But the big issues that are
crucially important will shift
my gears to another level.
Concentration will center on
one over-riding thought,
or problem, until it is resolved.
It is like being blind or deaf
to everything else around me.
I can attempt to think through
other issues, but the circuits
are busy, the road is blocked,
the door is locked and that
room is dark and empty.
However, when a solution comes,
the light goes on and my brain
is open for business once again.
We have all been dealing with
computer glitches since the day
we were born, but our wiring
connections depend on chemicals
and electric impulses inside our skulls,
and we can't take the hard drive
to a store to be fixed.

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

My husband and I have an understanding on finances. He's a big picture person and I'm more detail oriented. He takes care of the investing and retirement planning; I pay the bills, prepare the tax returns and reconcile the bank statement. It's not a perfect system, but it works a whole lot better than it would if we tried it in reverse.

If you listen to Talk Radio around here, you're probably familiar with the accountant flunky, Nerlman, in the Accountemps® commercials. If my husband had his way, we'd do as Nerlman suggests and just skip the bank reconciliation altogether.

"Just put an extra hundred in the account, but don't record it in the check register. That way you always have a cushion," he reasons. I'm no accountant myself, but I worked in a bank for five years. You don't deliberately fail to record transactions and you certainly don't "just skip" reconciliation. That would be like suggesting to my husband that he just ignore those out-of-bounds shots and skip keeping score when he's golfing. Ain't gonna happen.

Now that we use a computer accounting system, reconciling the bank statement is not nearly the nightmare that it used to be. You remember those days. Scratch-outs, white-outs, numbers scribbled in all over the margin of the register. Hours adding and re-adding on the hand-held calculator. And I haven't even gotten to the cursing yet!

But there is a downside to the ease of the computerized accounting system.

I can tally my husband's golf expenditures in a couple of mouse clicks. \$869.86 this year!!! And that's just the local courses. The courses he played on vacation are in a different category. I'm not even going to look at that one.

Then there are gourmet coffee beans. I know I should just be glad that he makes his own gourmet coffee instead of buying it by the cup at Starbucks® every morning. Never mind that we don't have a Starbucks® or any other pricey coffee shop around here. If I think about the cost of those beans too much I may pop a blood vessel.

Then there are all those little things you notice when you're keying in the debit card transactions. My husband just gives me all his cash register receipts to record, rather than entering them in his checkbook register like he used to do. In the good old days I knew only the payee and the total purchase amount from the register (except when I couldn't read his handwriting). Now I see the detail of every item he purchased.

Take a recent Pamida® receipt. It lists Suave® Body Wash. Hmm. I'm pretty sure I just purchased that for him. Surely he didn't use the whole bottle already. I check the bathroom cabinet. Sure enough, there's a full bottle. I check the shower. There's another full bottle in a different scent. There's also a nearly empty bottle of conditioner in yet another fragrance, but there's no shampoo, and no shampoo on the shopping list. Not all that surprising, since my husband clips what little hair he has practically to the scalp. He probably just shampoos with the body wash.

So, if he doesn't bother with shampoo, why bother with conditioner? My penchant for digging to the bottom of financial details won't let me rest until I figure out the rationale for this purchase. I suspect my husband mistook the conditioner for body wash. (Without his glasses in the shower, he wouldn't be able to tell the difference between "conditioner" and "body wash" on the label.) That explains why I couldn't find the body wash in the fragrance he specified on the shopping list a week ago. *That* fragrance is restricted to hair conditioner.

So. I fail to buy the product in the desired fragrance. He goes to the store himself and attempts to find the conditioner fragrance in a body wash bottle, and he also fails. This explains why we have two full bottles of body wash in different fragrances, neither of which is the fragrance he wanted, because you can't get that in body wash!!

Sometimes today there's just too much information available – and too many body wash and hair product fragrances – for our own good.



"SIMPLY CELEBRATING"
by Bea Paterson

This article is actually about holiday decorating tips, but first...

Consider the Christmas Story: A poor family, Mary and Joseph, takes refuge in a primitive shelter to give birth to an extraordinary baby, Jesus Christ. Wisemen come to honor Him. Shepherds come to praise Him. Evil comes to try to destroy Him. Much of the world eventually comes to worship Him. The account is rather brief, simple, told without a lot of detail but told in the Bible's powerful language and imagery.

Within the humble Christmas story one can find many elements of any birthday celebration:

Birth Announcement - The prophet Isaiah predicted the Messiah's birth in the 8th century B.C. "...the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14).

Invitations - A star invited the wisemen, "For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" "...and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, 'til it came and stood over where the young Child was." (Matthew 2: 2 & 9) Angels invited the shepherds, "...for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12)

Music - Tradition has interjected lots of praise singing into the Luke 2:13-14 account, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Guests - Shepherds and wisemen were the honored guests, but tradition has also invited basic barn animals.

Gifts - "...And when they [the wisemen] had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, myrrh" (Matt. 2:11)

See - a birth party, and do we ever love to celebrate birthdays! But I suggest this particular celebration was meant to first and foremost center around simple worship and quiet reflection, our families, and the love of God.

But celebrate we should because the intent of the Christmas story is as true as ever; the Christ Child was born to show God's love for us and to be our Saviour. We not only please God through worship, but we also focus on the symbolism of the story and how we fit in as heirs, members of the family of God. Infusing visual reminders/symbols makes the celebration even more meaningful for me, and I enjoy decorating my home, church, and office, giving gifts, connecting with friends and family.



Because of the difficult economic times and often overwhelmingly busy lives we lead, why not keep Christmas observances uncomplicated, close to the heart, and avoid excess? Even our environment is staggering under the toxic excesses of human beings. We need fewer "things" to burden our time and energy. Why burden Christmas with excess and more stuff? Getting ready for the *birthday* shouldn't be more involved than celebrating *the birth*.

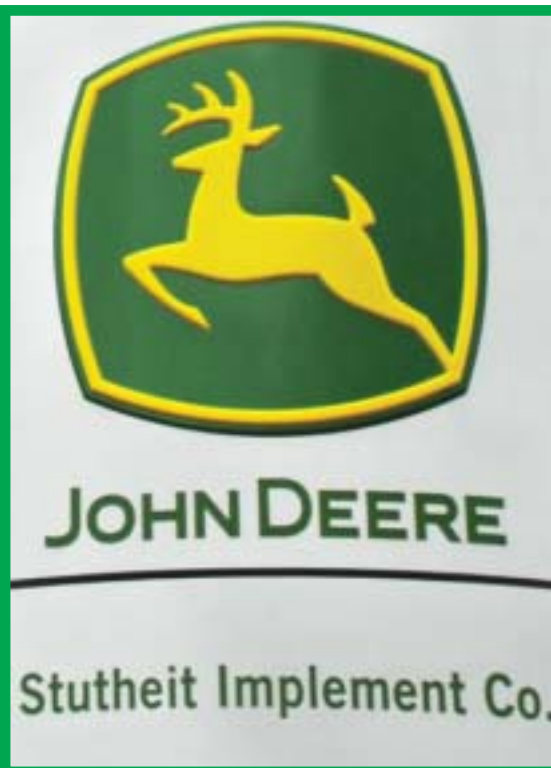
Back to holiday tips. So, my themes this year are "simplify" and "think green."

My decorating center piece will be a crèche (nativity scene) I made when my boys were little. To that grouping I'll add a Bible opened to Luke 2, a candle ("light of the world"), fresh evergreens (eternal life), and a real poinsettia (royalty) for atop my china cabinet. Christmas music inspires a renewed response to the Christmas story, so into Husband's old tool caddy lined with seasonal tablecloths goes vintage holiday sheet music and records for on the piano. (Yes, I said *records*; I have a Gene Autry "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer" 78 ☺). A collection of red plastic gingerbread cookie cutters Mom used when I was a kid will go in the kitchen, hung from garland looped above the sink and partnered with child-sized kitchen ornaments and real gingerbread cookies (I bought at the store) plus handwritten recipes. Our "tree" will be the 9 foot cactus (from my California son) that's in the dining room; we decorate it very simply with little white lights, pinecones, and little birds.

Outdoors doesn't get much. The outdoor lamp post gets a vintage plastic Santa head (free gift when natural gas came to Peru). Husband will string lights to form a large tree out on the patio (very pretty, especially from a distance).

Most all of these "things" were collected over time, mostly inherited, and pulled out for use. You, too, can "simplify" by using what you already have that's meaningful to you. #1 Identify the space you want to use (a refrigerator top, a piano, above a door...). #2 Partner at least three elements similar in some way (in color or theme or...) and add garland (or something that serves as garland). #3 Recruit some help.

Bea's column is continued on page 14 >>>>>>



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To Become An Author

by Joe Smith

I wish I knew all the answers. I can tell you what I have tried to do. I wrote a story of a past life experience. My wife corrected my work. It took a lot of one winter for me to write and rewrite the story. My typing leaves a lot to be desired. Two fingers is my method. I finally got it written the first time and looked for some one to put it in a book form. I found a company in Lincoln that took a look at it and wanted to edit it for a big fee. They didn't like the way I write. My wife and I did the editing our selves and got them to print it. It turned out good and it was listed in the Amazon.com. as "My life and Times as Harve Bodine". We sold around a couple hundred and then I wanted to correct some parts. So my wife and I went back through and checked out all the typos and spelling mistakes again. We found a printer in Missouri that would print it for a lot less money. While correcting the story I added three chapters to it, making it a more complete story. We had a bunch printed up, of which I still have a lot of them left. It seems if you are not an established author, nobody thinks it will be any good. So I started reading some of these so-called best sellers, I wasn't impressed with them, nor was my wife. I bought one down in Branson from a John Wayne type person who has sold 10,000 books right there in Branson. I read his book, one of a series and again I didn't think too much of it. Maybe I'm too critical to judge theses stories, and yet they have sold a lot more books than I have. I joined the Nebraska Writers Guild, with the thought of learning what to do. So far it hasn't panned out like I wanted it to. Time will tell, for sure. I would like to write another book like the last one. But if I can't get this first one to move better it will be a waste of time. The quality of the work seems to have very little with it, if you don't have some New York Times story or some body telling every body how good it was. I tried to get the papers to even look at the book. So what I'm trying to tell you is, it is hell to get your work noticed. I have sold books and sent them to Australia, Germany, and all over the states. So I am at a loss to figure out the right way to do it. So to become a successful author I haven't a clue. I do it because I like to write. The fact I got a book published a book does not make me an author according to a lot of people.

"Harve Bodine", alias Joe Smith



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
(Photos provided by Author)

Fishing:

The Missouri River has been running pretty high for this time of year due to the recent rains we have been receiving. But that hasn't slowed the water fowl hunters down much there are still boats and blinds going out regularly from the Peru Boat Ramp. Not much to report on fishing this last month although the hard core fishermen have been hitting the bank with a some luck. Nothing real big being reported, (mostly small channels) but enough action to keep them coming back.

Hunting:

The hunt is on right now – you can just about pick your season on what you want to hunt that day. Deer seasons are open and in full swing along with turkey and upland game (quail and Pheasant). There is also the option to go out of state whether it's South Dakota for Ring Neck Pheasants or Colorado for Elk there are lots of opportunities open right now. The cost goes with those choices so do your home work.

Hunting is on and you can pick your sport that's for sure. You need to get out and enjoy the outdoors while the hunting is good because we know what's around the corner – lots of snow and bitter temps. You won't be sorry you did. 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."




Joe Whisler from Peru with a Colorado Elk harvested this month.

Reese Whisler with a Whitetail doe taken with a Seasons Choice Permit.





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by Vicki Harger

There you sit in the twilight of a winter eve, hugging a cup of hot cocoa with your hands, staring out the window at the drifting snowflakes.

You're thinking about a lot of things...past, present, and future. But mostly, you're dreaming of Christmas Past. Ah—to be back in the Days of Yore.

Those good ol' days. Before the stock market tanked. Before banks and corporations began going down like dominoes. Before the dire announcements about a Global Economic Crisis “unlike any since the Great Depression of '29.”

You ponder these matters.

Steam rises from the cup of hot cocoa...a warmth steals over you. You start to relax and unwind. Your thoughts skitter back in time. How can the magic of Christmas be restored?

Inevitable thoughts arise.

The cozy yesteryears. The memories. They're woven into a warm Christmas tapestry...a montage of sights and smells and sounds that forever tugs at your heart. Wood smoke curling up and up through the twilight. The sweet aroma of eggnog and apple pie. Flickering candles. The sound of church bells echoing through the dark hills.

Family togetherness....

The gang piles out of the car, returning from a Christmas Eve service at the country chapel....tramping through the snowdrifts to fill the house with noise and snowy footprints and good cheer. Close-knit times...reading the Christmas story from the Bible...praying together before the holiday feast.

A country Christmas Eve in the Heartland. Happy chatter. Children staring through a Jack-frosted window—staring into the icy heavens above—watching for shooting stars in the darkness. Talking about the Star of Bethlehem and the little baby.

“He was so teeny-tiny in his manger. The cows were there too. And you know what? In that barn there must've been—eeee-yew!...What if Mary stepped in it? And what did they do when the goats sneezed on the baby Jesus...or butted him! Goats do that, you know. They're no good.”

The chatter of children. Laughter. The strain of Christmas Carols wafting through the hills. The sound of past generations continues on and on...echoes of family gatherings at the old Home Place.

Are the good times lost forever?
I think not.

Our economic crisis has brought us

back to reality. We've turned a corner and are staring at a future that looks increasingly scary. We're back to what really matters. Peace on the Earth... Good will toward men. We're forced to face ourselves and our mounting dilemmas.

The days of extravagance are over—all those credit card bills and piles of unnecessary packages and massive parties (that we're still paying for next Easter.) All those unwanted gifts to be returned to the store.

The scourge of debt and holidays-gone-awry.

The razzle-dazzle-frazzle. The headaches. The churning in the stomach. With the modern version of Christmas wiped out, we're forced to think about other Christmas possibilities...More pleasant ones, perhaps.

We sip our hot cocoa and ponder and dream in the winter twilight.

Two cups of cocoa later, we're still there at the table...still sitting and contemplating our options. What choices do we have? We want the Good Ol' Days again...we really do. But how do we get there?

How do we take a sleigh ride across that old bridge to yesterday? How do we flip the pages of the calendar back to the Days of Yore? How do we show our kids what Christmas can and should be?

Actually—I think I've discovered the answer—quite by accident, I might add. It happened near Christmastime one year, and I've never forgotten. You, too, can have that same experience of discovery and adventure, my friend. But you have to be brave. Even desperate.

It doesn't take a lot of work. It only takes an instant, folks. A mere flick of the wrist.

Don't tell anybody you're going to do it, of course...(except for your spouse—if absolutely necessary.) Just be brave and Do it.

Go and flip the switch on your electrical breaker box, and see what happens. Your busy, buzzy world suddenly stops. A heavy stillness prevails in the house—an echoing silence. Lights vanish. Darkness descends. Out comes the lantern and the candles. A fire in the old wood stove. The crackle of burning wood and the whistle of a tea kettle are the only sounds in the entire house.

It's cozy. It's scary. The furnace has gone off. So has the microwave and the fridge. You're thrust into the primitive world of your ancestors. Back to the Days of Yore.

The Play Stations won't play. The

video games are dead. The TV's and computers sit in mute dismay...One-eyed monsters staring blankly at a world suddenly gone dark and silent.

The kids are upset—they're just beside themselves, at first! If they're like my teenager, they'll wander about the house saying: “We're gonna die...we're gonna die.”

But you don't die. You learn to appreciate what you have. You learn the importance of being prepared for whatever calamity might befall your family. (You realize that it might not be a bad idea to stock up on candles and lanterns and lamp oil. Food. Water. Emergency supplies. Just in case.)

You learn that a world without electricity is a strange one, indeed.

But best of all, you learn that this primitive world can lead to a rather splendid Christmas. Imaginations come alive. Old board games come out of hiding. Your children learn to play checkers and chess and Parcheesi.

Together you watch shadows dance on the ceiling as the lantern light flickers. You get to breathe the same air as your ancestors...the scent of woodsmoke and candle wax and burning lamp oil.

Suddenly, new ideas spring to life. What if we....? Do you think we might...? Did Grandma and Grandpa do this kind of stuff in the old days? Fresh ideas replace the stale ones.

It can happen. All with the flick of a wrist at the electrical box.

It might be the best Christmas gift you could give your kids. Could be the smartest thing you've done all year.

Hours later, after the newness wears off a bit, you can mosey to the utility room and quietly flip on the switch. Lights burst forth. Fans and furnaces whir. Computers and video games and TV's spring to life again. Talking heads and ratchetting jaws. The agony of politics and crashing economies...the racket of a modern world gone awry.

The kids start fighting again over who's going to watch what. Who gets the remote...? Who gets to play which game on what mechanism...? A flood of noise and confusion will wash over you like a tsunami of monstrous proportions.

Then you can slip away to your little kitchen nook and sink into your chair once more.

You can sip a third cup of cocoa...and wish for the Good Ol' Days, again.

The

Face of Drought



by Karen Ott

Thanksgiving Past:

1621: Colonists of Plymouth Plantation hold a celebration of food and feasting.

1789: President George Washington sets aside November 26 as a “Day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer.”

1863: President Abraham Lincoln issues proclamation calling for the observance of the fourth Thursday of November as a national holiday.

1939: President Franklin Roosevelt moves Thanksgiving to the third Thursday in November to extend the Christmas shopping season and boost the economy.

1941: President Franklin Roosevelt moves Thanksgiving back to the fourth Thursday in November after a storm of public protest.

Thanksgiving Future:

2025: Wal-Mart (the only surviving retailer in the U.S.) proclaims Thanksgiving a dead holiday and moves the Christmas shopping season kickoff to November first. “By skipping Thanksgiving and moving straight into the Christmas season the day following Halloween we believe we can dramatically increase America’s 4th quarter economic activity.”, says Wal-Mart CEO and presidential cabinet member Samuel J. Spindelot.

Thanksgiving Today:

Dale: ground hay and corn for the cattle, fed feedlot calves and pasture cows, greased the combine, picked up plastic ditch

Karen: washed and dried clothes, raked and burned leaves, baked six pounds of sweet potatoes, saved young hens from fiery death

Matthew: worked on an anti-freeze-leaking Rail Crew-Express Van in the

tire shop (and replaced a blown-out tire for a customer who noticed his vehicle parked in front of the building and took the chance he was inside.)

Adam: hauled hay bales in from the field, then out to the pasture cows

Devon: acted out the kindergarten version of ‘first Thanksgiving’ story for my parents who later declared him the smartest six-year-old they’d ever encountered

Luke: complained in his little three-year-old voice he ‘didn’t want to be dressed like a farmer’ after I slipped his arms into a John Deere sweatshirt

Farmyard Dogs: slept the day away after a night of barking at howling coyotes

Farmyard Cats: did whatever cats do during the day

Old hens: clucked, scratched, laid six eggs

Rooster: crowed, strutted, looked after his harem

Young hens: attempted to roost on the extension cord to the heat lamp, knocked lamp to the floor where it charred a circle of wood chips and floor underneath...brooder house filled with eye-watering, throat burning smoke (a few chops with an ax—on the floor, not chicken necks—and two buckets of water later the floor stopped smoldering)

And yes....we took out a couple of hours to give thanks, eat turkey, and reminisce with relatives.

All in all it was ordinary Thanksgiving Day on the farm. Karen

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Magic is not a Dream

by Stephen Hassler

When reality is a nightmare, fear and pain consumes. Solitude ceases being a source of personal power and becomes heavyhearted loneliness. Trust is betrayed, and love is a lie.

Loneliness imagines a place where everything is beautiful. A princess rides a magic horse with wings of light through a dreamland of wonder and happy endings. Loneliness and fear is left swirling in silver stardust behind flying hooves, and through wind and light she rides to a place of peace and love where pain does not live.

As habit demands, one goes back to what is familiar, believing the familiar to be manageable, and that everything could be okay this time with a little more effort. But when disappointment dissolves hope, even outstretched hands are declined.

Strength can be found in solitude, but if trust is replaced with fear, the only remaining power is being able to lie, and the only remaining hope is to not get caught.

A life of fear and pain is a nightmare. Life is supposed to be magic! When reality is a nightmare, magic seems only to be a fairytale. Waking from the nightmare is knowing when to walk away; surviving is taking the first step.

The first step is a lonely and scary one, but the second and third come with assistance. There are those who understand the loss of trust. There are those who know that sometimes others need help. No one is an island. When one suffers, so do we all. It takes courage to live, but it takes bravery to change one's life.

>>> *continued from page 7, Simply Celebrating by Bea Patterson*

🔔 Got some beautiful dishes? Group the tea pot, sugar bowl, and creamer on beautiful platter (element 1), tea cups (element 2) stuffed with ornaments or candles (element 3), garland (element 4) - you're done.

🔔 Love egg nog? Save those now empty cartons (I even purchased a beauty from an antique store once), spice tins, egg nog cups, garland - you're done.

🔔 One of my favorites is as traditional as tradition: evergreen garland, apples, oranges, bananas, pears, pineapple, pomegranate, votive candle in a goblet, sprinkle nuts in and around, and you can eat your arrangement and won't have to store anything. Better yet, do the nutmeg pattern thing with the oranges - you're done. Getting the idea?

🔔 Got pix? Favorite photographs on firm holiday paper, a few vintage toys you've saved, ornaments the kids made at school - you're done.

🔔 Popular at work were vintage postcards in garland, simple statuary (of carolers or...), vintage ornaments - and, I was done.

🔔 Natural themes: Colorful dried twigs arranged on your space, silk or ceramic birds, real nests, buck brush berries, bittersweet vines, rose hips, dried ornamental grass, acorns,

buckeyes, etc., and after the holidays, you can throw the whole thing away - you're done. Spiffy up your house plants with an ornamental floral pick. How simple and earth friendly is that?

🔔 Who doesn't have some Christmas story books or games or...? Yes, you've got the idea now; starting with the garland...for atop the TV...

Most all of the arrangements above infuse symbolism or imagery from the Christmas story, and a few are just for fun.

Better yet, involve your family in pulling things together around a theme. Challenge them with one rule, nothing new can be purchased. You will be surprised what they come up with. I was!

In conclusion, remember: **Simplify, think green, relax, don't worry** - "God provides" - "less is more." I know how difficult that can be. Please have a truly blessed (and fun) Christmas with Christ at the center! You can do it.

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<<<<< *This article by Joe Smith is continued from page 6*

Anyway, Norman came flying out of the chute but Cap stayed in there. He threw him seven times in a row and he had to unsaddle him so he would leave the chute.

How many of you know of Chili's restaurant? Norman Brinker started the company. I've kidded him about Cap several times. A fellow that worked at the Ammonite Saddlery told me all about it. Here we have this expert horse man and a mustang horse that got the best of him. And he was a excellent horseman, just not the mustang type.

That summer I went to work for Walter Jones out on Pinelodge road about 25 miles west of Roswell. He had both cattle and sheep. When I got out there I was working Cap up and down the fence and he got ticked off and started bucking. He must of bucked for minutes (seemed like), I couldn't let him throw me. Walter was watching. I finally got him settled down and all was okay then.

One day we had a bunch of big cows in the corral west of the ranch house. Walter wanted one Heifer roped for some reason so I roped her. She turned right back down the fence toward me and Cap stepped over the rope. I couldn't pull the slack up fast enough. I knew what was about to happen so I bailed off. I knew there was fixing to be a wreck and I wanted out of it. Cap went straight up as usual and kicked with both hind feet, one of which went through my straw hat that had been on my head just before that. Lucky for me it had left my head when I bailed off. The wreck ended up with the horse and the cow looking at each other and the rope tight as a bow string. We did what we wanted with the cow and turned her loose. That is why you use a neck rope tied around the horse's neck and run the lariat through that. It turned out okay, just another day at the office. Cap worked good the rest of the day.

Later I worked for the New Mexico Institute in the stables. Kenneth was running the stables and hired me for awhile. They had indoor polo fields there and we played polo there. Cap got so good that I sold him to Kenneth's brother. Marta and I were married at that time and I needed to settle down and stop playing cowboy. Marta and I went to Colorado to try our luck. I got a half Shetland quarter horse mare in a deal. But that is another story. Cap only weighed about 850 lbs soaking wet, dark bay with black legs and mane and had a white C on his nose. His feet were so hard we never had to shoe him even in the rocky country. He was lean (and mean sometimes). Joe Smith

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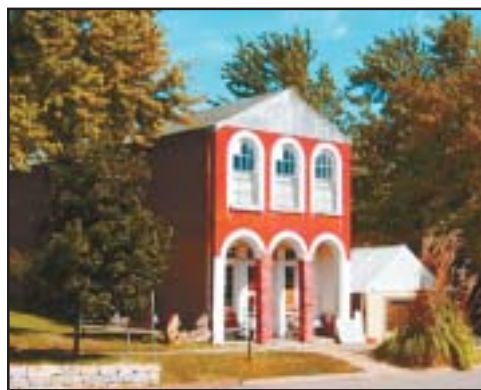
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