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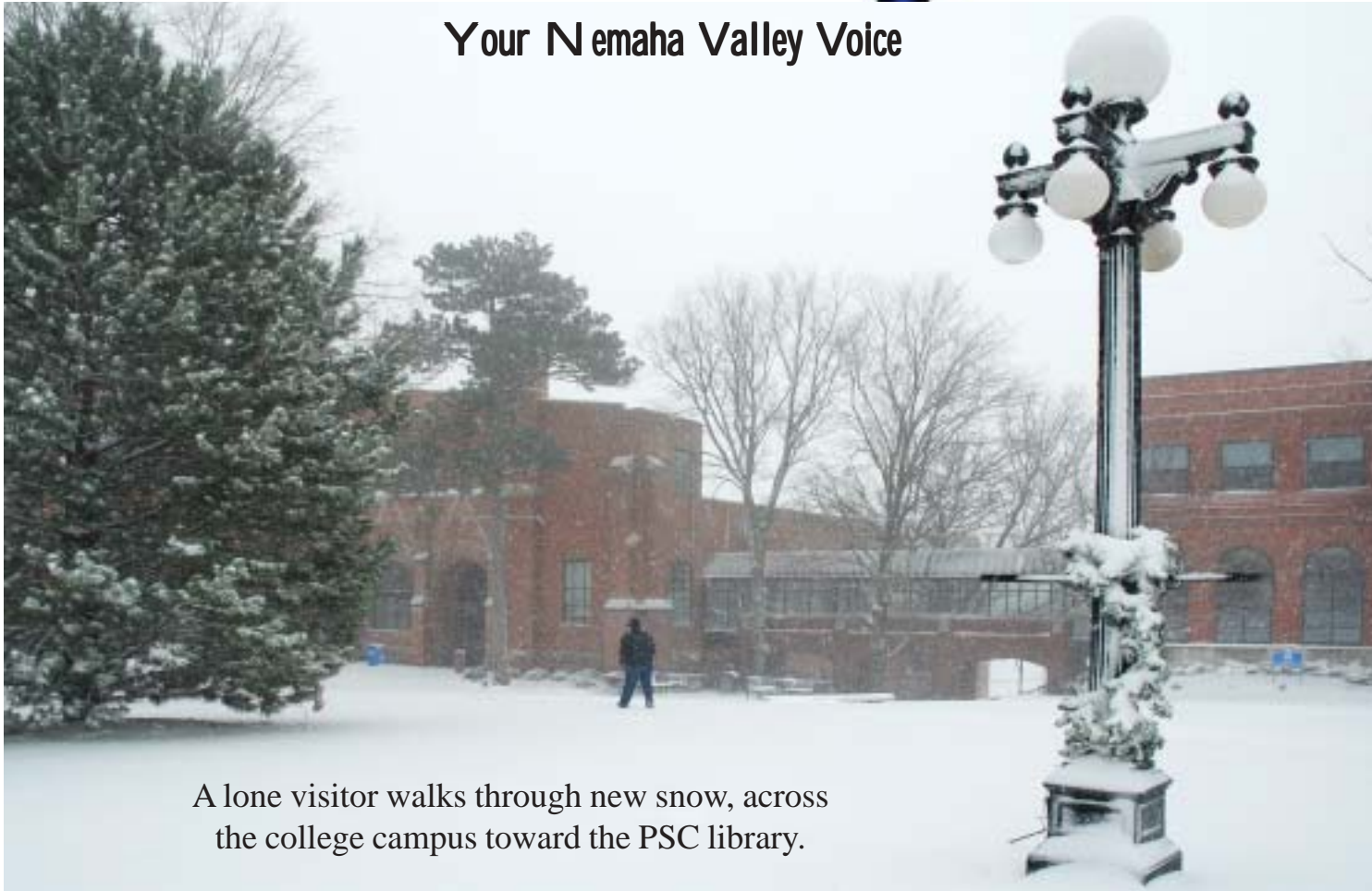
Country Neighbor

FREE!



February 2007

Your Nemaha Valley Voice



A lone visitor walks through new snow, across the college campus toward the PSC library.

Until recently our Winter has been mild here in the 4-corners region, with temperatures in the fifties not uncommon, and occasionally a 60-degree day. So most of us welcomed the snow, for its beauty, its moisture, and for its tasteful 'covering' of dry grass and bare branches.

But February is probably this Winter's last chance at a legacy, regardless of ground-hog shadows, 'cause it's less than six weeks until Spring!



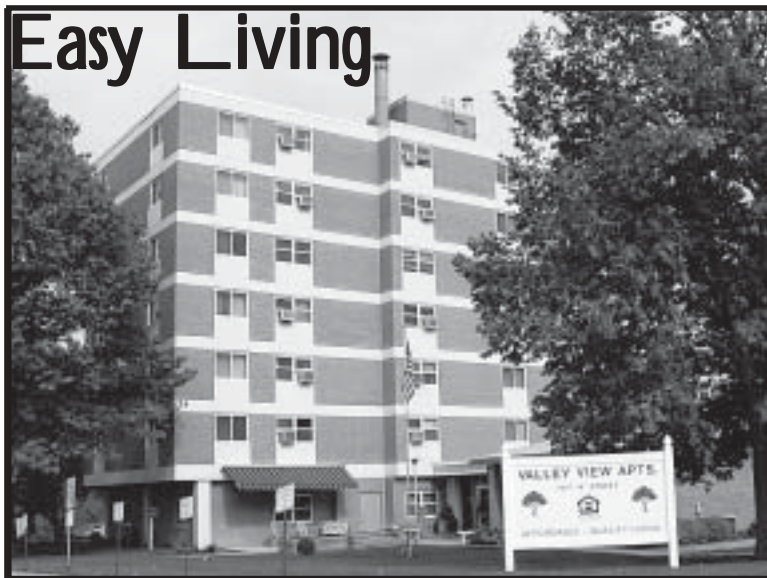
Hamburg, Iowa

Your Country Neighbor was delivered to fifty towns in the 4-corners region last month. Its stories and pictures bring the reader and browser a window with a country view of architectural landmarks, iconic farm scenes, and recorded experiences from rural, Mid American life.

Once you pick up *Your Country Neighbor* magazine, plan on reading it cover-to-cover. Pull up close to the fire (or heat register) and get cozy, because you'll find sights and stories you will recognize as your own.

Voices from the Valley

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State Representatives Ask for Assistance

Lincoln, NE--- Nebraska State Senator Annette Dubas (District 34) and a coalition of nearly thirty State Senators in coordination with Governor Dave Heineman and the Rural Response Network came together last month to stress the need for individual aid via donations and continued assistance to the residents of the 57 counties affected by the December ice storms in central and western Nebraska. Senators representing each county included in the federal disaster declaration signed by President George W. Bush attended the event held at the State Capitol in Lincoln to show their support for the private out-reach effort.

Said Senator Dubas, "I am very concerned about the rural areas and the people and communities who are dealing with the extensive ongoing costs of the December ice storms. I have heard accounts of generators costing between \$200-300 per day. I have exhausted all avenues in a humble attempt to provide direct relief through a government entity to those in need. It simply cannot be done. But, I believe that the people of the state of Nebraska will come together and help those in need at this time. I have appealed to the Governor and my colleagues to raise the level of awareness about this ongoing situation, and I am very pleased with their overwhelming response to assist in this effort."

While power has been restored to most communities, the recovery effort will take months. For those who've had to rely on generators during the recent cold snap, the costs associated with this disaster have quickly piled up, and there are many who could benefit from some help in paying those bills. The Governor encouraged every Nebraskan to consider ways they could reach out and provide some much needed help to residents.

Representatives of several agencies and relief organizations involved with providing assistance to Nebraskans affected by the storms attended the event, including the Rural Response Emergency Network, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, the Nebraska Chapter of the American Red Cross, and representatives from Southern Public Power District and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Nebraskans interested in making a donation to support the ongoing relief effort are encouraged to send a check to the Rural Response Emergency Network or to contact the organization directly to ask about other opportunities to support the residents of communities impacted by the storm.

Donations can be mailed to the following organization:

Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska
Rural Response Emergency Network
215 Centennial Mall South, Ste. 300
Lincoln, NE 68508-1888

The Rural Response Emergency Network can also be contacted by phone at 800.464.0258.

See 'Country Neighbor' pictures for sale at:

Tootie's Art & Frames

on Stone Street in Falls City, Nebraska

Among the artworks on display this month
are three by *Your Country Neighbor*:

Two photos of Nebraska windmills, each 16 x 20.
Photo of White Egrets at Nemaha Wildlife Area, KS, 8 x 10.

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Your Nemaha Valley Voice

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Bea Patterson
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Thank you!

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EDGE business class registration extended

The 2007 EDGE business planning class start date has been postponed to Thursday, February 1. That means you still have time to register. But, class size is limited and only a few seats remain, so don't delay. Classes will be held Thursday evenings at 6:30 at the NPPD Sheridan Training Center in Auburn.

Over 70 Southeast Nebraska businesses and entrepreneurs have taken the EDGE course since 1999 and it can benefit you, too, whether you're looking for help in improving an existing business or wondering if your business idea could succeed. EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs) participants will investigate all aspects necessary to prepare a complete business plan with the help of experts in key business elements, utilizing a nationally recognized curriculum that was named a best business practice by the National Governor's Association. Individual attention by virtue of small class size and one-on-one consulting also enhance student learning and success.

Tuition for the course is \$400 and can be paid by VISA, MasterCard or personal check. To register or obtain more information, contact instructor Karen Fritschle at 402-209-0808, Howard McNiff at Five Rivers RC&D at 402-335-3347 or T.O. Davison at 402-274-3894. Pre-registration is required.

The EDGE class is supported by the NebraskaEDGE program of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is coordinated by the Southeast Nebraska EDGE Coalition, which includes Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee and Richardson counties.

Nemaha County Development Alliance January meeting

The Nemaha County Development Alliance held their first meeting in 2007 on January 10th at the Peru City Hall. Two guests were present and introduced, Carla Patterson and Linda Tynon.

An update on the Nemaha County Housing study was given with the use of the executive summary of the survey and a report from Mary Kruger and TO Davison on their visits with the Brownville and Nemaha village boards. A brief outline of what participation would be expected from each town for the housing fair was explained. A meeting has been scheduled with Peru, Johnson and Brock in the near future to exchange the information and outline their roles for the housing fair.

The Nemaha County Foundation committee has a meeting scheduled for Monday, January 15. Kris Rogge gave a report on alternative ideas about fund raising for a Foundation that had been presented at a Center for Rural Affairs Conference last week.

Linda Tynon asked for a letter of support from NCDA for a grant she is applying for her business. The grant will enhance her capability to promote private businesses in tourism and to upgrade her website promoting tourism. The support from NCDA was approved. Linda also informed the board that there will be a special program on Outdoor Life about hunting in Southeast Nebraska, presented early this spring on NETV.

Teresa Hahn was again asking NCDA for mentors for the high school entrepreneurship class at Auburn High School. We had about 6 or 7 volunteer to assist her with this program.

Kris Rogge, TO Davison and Mary Kruger had attended a workshop at Beatrice on Tuesday and are considering applying for a grant with the Building Entrepreneurial Communities Act with the goal to develop leadership training with our youth.

Carla Patterson was the guest speaker. Her topic was the unique idea of the window display for Fine Art that NCDA was sponsoring. She was very supportive and said NCDA had unlimited opportunities in which they could expand the program to Southeast Nebraska and even State-wide. She gave a number of examples for funding sources and networking.

Our Governor

Joe Smith

When our governor ran for office this time he said he would work on the taxes. Well now we find out he is only working on the taxes for people that don't really need relief. The people who make less than \$50,000 a year are just out of luck. The property tax relief is out of his mind, he is going to turn that over to the local people who need more help from the state on schools before they can drop property taxes. All he wants to do is help the people that don't really need it. The people on the lower end of income scale are just out of luck.

Our governor reminds me of Bush and his tax cuts. Did that big 100 dollar cut help you at all? It really helped the people that didn't need it. Down here where we are is where we need the tax relief, not up there in the higher middle class and the rich. People are moving out of this state for one reason, the high property taxes; about tenth in the nation I think. What is it going to take to wake up the people in our state government that now is the time to do something about our property tax. The Governor is talking income tax relief. I paid less than \$200 income tax and over \$3000 property tax. Now which one would you want relief from?

We as a state voted down the bill that would limit the state spending. Colorado still has it even though they took a few years stay on it. They have lowered their property taxes way down. But it doesn't really make any difference what the people want or vote for, our state government finds some way around it. Ignore it or have it run through the courts and thrown out as unconstitutional. Sometimes you wonder, "Why even vote?" What it amounts to is, once they are in office they do just as they please, not only our state government but our national government too.

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Small Town U.S.A.

Joe Smith

Johnson is in that category of being a small town. Small towns make up a big part of our life, all over the world. There may be more people in the big towns but they sure can't claim to be better people. In a small town people that claim a town may live five miles out of town, but it makes no difference how far out you live.

It is a good feeling to live in a small town where most of the people know you and you know them. When something needs doing in town, it gets done. All a person has to do is just let someone know they could use some help. Maybe not as much as it used to be, but it is still the same out on the farms. A farmer gets hurt and a group of farmers go over to help. This town joined together to help build the Veterans building. When it needed new shingles there were many people that pitched in to help.



Volunteers roofing the Veterans building.

Every year, the high school students build electric cars and the money is donated. The rescue squad has no paid members and charges nothing for their calls. To raise money every year they have the pancake feed. This is to keep equipment up-to-date. The fire department is all volunteer also. They do it because it needs to be done. These are the people that make up small towns.

Two groups of ladies get together several times a week to drink coffee and visit. The farmers meet early in the morning and shoot the bull for a while before going to do the chores. Sometimes the card players get together and have an afternoon card game. We have in our town many people that go out of their way to help, and do it on a weekly basis, not just once in a while.

This is what makes small towns so desirable, a good place to raise kids and good communities to live in. Towns like ours also have to be on the watch for bad elements. Drugs and other things that can lower the quality of life here. Our town board is doing a good job of seeing that that doesn't happen here. I personally am proud to be in the community area. I live about 4 miles from town and in another county, but still call Johnson my home, if that is all right with the rest of you.

Joe Smith

Why We Ended Up In Nebraska

Joe Smith

In 1966 my wife and I came up to Nebraska and visited kinfolks in the Brock area. Marta was born in Auburn, Nebraska, but moved to New Mexico when she was young. I met her while in high school. We started dating each other in our junior year, and one thing led to another and we ended up getting married after one year of college.

We decided to try to buy a farm up here. That didn't work, but we did buy one in Tucumcari and lived there for three years. About that time Marta's uncle, Merle Young, died and her aunt called up and wanted us to move up and manage the Farm. It took some doing, but we did sell the farm in Tucumcari, loaded all our stuff, and moved to the Brock area. It took many loads with an old truck and a couple of pickups and trailers, but we made it okay. Marta came with some of the kids and I had some with me. Kelly, our oldest had a broken leg at the time. With the help of good people at Brock we moved into a place west of town. I think we lived there for three years and then moved to a farm south of Johnson which we farmed for several years, and then made a down payment on the place west of town where we still live. That was in the last of 1971. All of this time I ran a welding shop somewhere and that was probably why we survived. I still have one on the farm today. I have retired from farming but still do work in the shop for friends and other people.

Would we do it again? In a heartbeat we would. The feeling you have in a move like that, a chance for a new start in a new country, I can't describe it. You let your imagination run away with things. I feel sorry for people that have lived in one spot all their life. They missed all the excitement of the move and all the new challenges that we met and overcame.

We had help from my father to get started. We rebuilt a farm for him in Deming, New Mexico and he came out with a good profit so I got some of that when we decided to buy this farm. Has it been a cake walk? I don't think so. We have had many trials and tribulations, the loss of several children also, but we are still here and if the taxes settle down we will stay here more than likely. All our friends are here, the graves of our children and a community that is willing to put up with the likes of me. Can't beat that now can you? Marta likes the friends she has made here and so do I.

We have had some interest in my stories and thought it would be nice to let people know the facts about us and our life, why we came here and where we came from. So there you have a short version of it. I will be 75 next month. Joe Smith

Our Trip of 2003

Joe Smith

On the first day of July, which was our 52nd wedding anniversary, we started for California. We were going to a Dowsing conference at Santa Cruz on the coast near San Francisco. We drove all day and ended up in Rock Springs, Wyoming. I told the fellow at the motel that we were celebrating our 52nd wedding anniversary, so he put us in the honeymoon suite. Looked just like any other room to me. The next day we made it to Reno about 5:00 in the evening, got a room, and then walked down to a restaurant for supper.

We watched TV for a while but soon went to sleep. We left Reno without pulling one slot machine lever. We didn't even see one to pull.

We made Auburn, California by breakfast time and stopped at a nice little place in Old Town. We made it through all the traffic and down Highway 17, where a short time after we left there was a runaway truck that killed a small girl and hit at least 10 more cars. California traffic is something else.

I will say all the people we saw were very nice and courteous. We were at the conference four or five days, and then went down the coast to Vandenberg Air Force Base where our granddaughter lives with her family. We spent two days and three nights with them. We had lots of fun with our great-grandkids. Geez that makes me feel old.

We left there Saturday morning and drove back to the San Jose area. We stopped at the Winchester House and took a tour. It was very interesting. Dowsing indicated that there were numerous ghosts around some of the rooms. I found nine in the séance room. After that we went to a friend's home nearby. We stayed two nights with them, very nice people, Dr. Ron Blackburn and his wife, Susan. He works for Lockheed. They live in a million dollar house. Of course that is in California. In Johnson or Peru it sure wouldn't be worth that, maybe \$250,000 at the most. On Sunday we drove over to a town close by and gave a six-hour program on dowsing. The program turned out very well. It seemed a little funny to me though. The room was full of people that had many years of schooling, some had doctorates. Marta and I just barely had one year of college and we were the teachers??? Monday morning we left early and made it to Salt Lake that night, a long drive.

We are getting a little long in the tooth for those long days in 105 temps. I can remember those trips without air conditioning. All we had was 240 air conditioning, open 2 windows and drive 40 mph. We've got it easy now, cruise down the highway at 75, air, comfortable seats, rest stops every so often. I can remember the day when the men went one way and the women went the other, and all hunted a bush. Boy are we getting soft.

From Salt Lake we drove to Melbeta, Nebraska to see our son Jason and his family. He has just got a new home, so we got to see it. The next morning Jason and I went to try and catch some trout in some small streams. That was a bad idea, the skeeters about had us for lunch. Out there they have had some of the Nile Virus show up; dead birds. Went back to town and got some Deet spray and went somewhere else without much luck. Oh well, it was fun anyway. First time I tried my 'over 70' fishing license.

We went out to eat Mexican food that night, that was goood! Left there to come home the next day early and pulled into home around 3:30 p.m. Just in time to go to the post office to get all the mail; two full sacks worth. We found plenty to do around the farm. Marta's garden was loaded with tomatoes and other stuff, lawns to mow, waterways to mow, and much more after 17 days on the road. Man that old bed felt good the first night. Had over 200 messages on the email. A lot went in file 13.

We drove over 4000 miles. We drove because we had too much stuff to get on the plane as we take a lot of pendulums and other things we make to sell at the conference. It sure helps pay the way. Marta says never again but that is what she said last time.

Not a drop of rain coming home and none here, maybe we need to pay the preacher more? Joe Smith



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Country

Scenes



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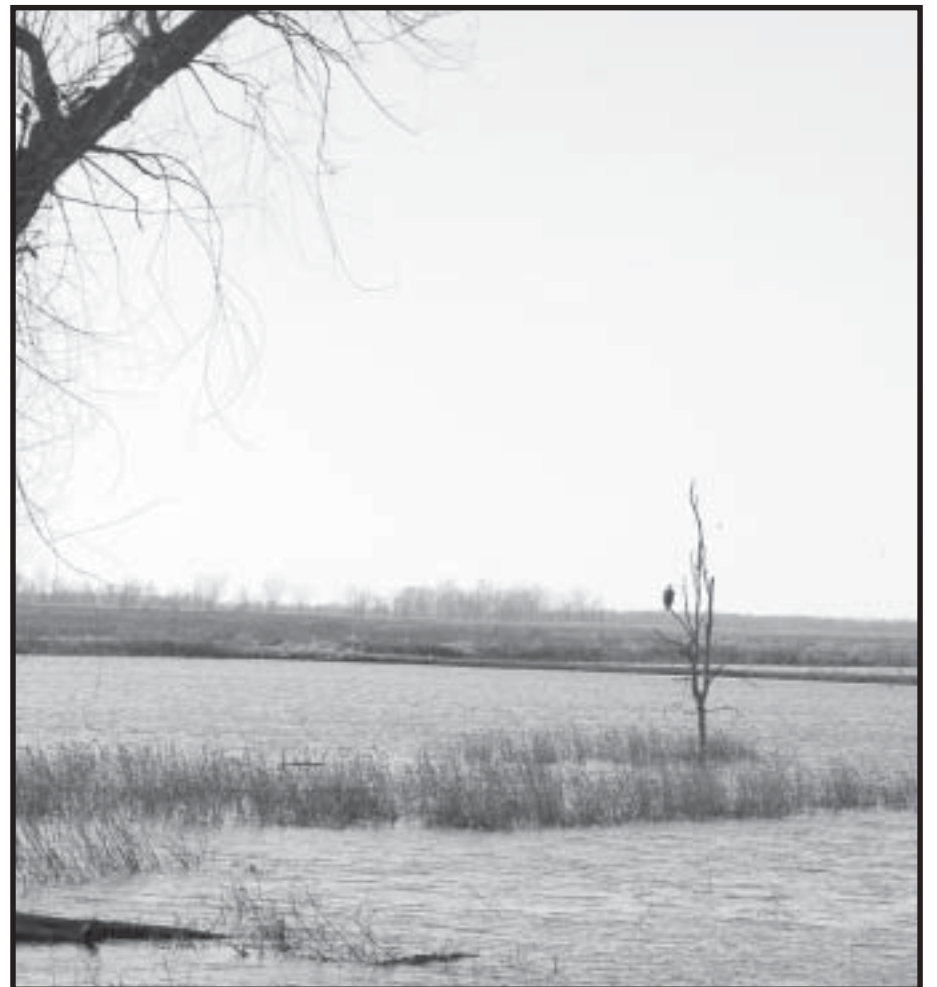
Vacancy



A country church north of Weeping Water, Nebraska

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A Bald Eagle at Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge




A snowy landscape on highway 67 near the Falls City turn



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
Photos provided by Author



Fishing:

It's time to look for some place north or south of here to do any fishing for awhile. The Missouri River is full of ice lilly pads from the recent near 0 temperatures. But it hasn't been cold enough or long enough to put any ice on area ponds and lakes. The recommended thickness of ice is four inches of clear ice but it's one of those things "the more the merrier" or should I say "safer." This area doesn't get that thickness for long, so one must be ready to take off work or dedicate a weekend if one wants to enjoy a nice mess of Panfish. The snow and sleet we got when it turned off cold didn't do the pond and lake ice any good either. When these are mixed with the freezing surface water it gives the ice a frosty look that doesn't make it as strong as clear ice, so you have to wait even longer for thicker ice when is the case. The frosty look is much like when it is melting off a lake in the spring – it's not clear, and therefore not as strong. Ice fishermen call this "rotten ice." You can fish out on it but much more than the recommend four inches is required – I suggest twice as much (eight inches or more). I'm going, but I just don't know when right now – I'll let you know how I do. Pan fried Panfish sounds pretty good to me right now.

Hunting:

This year's hunting is about to end as the hunting seasons close one by one. But there are other seasons still open. One such season is the cottontail rabbit season that lasts to the end of February. With the snow cover on, now it's time. Morning and evening are the best times, but once in awhile if there is a storm moving in they will be out foraging for food in the

middle of the day. I hunt them with a .22 rifle and wait for a still shot, while others take shotguns to catch them on the run. Either way there seems to be plenty of rabbits this year. Bagging a few of them shouldn't be problem. Limits are seven bag (in the pouch) and 28 possession (in the freezer).

Late Rifle Deer Season came and went. And I'm here to tell you "it was a cold, white one." It rained, then snowed, then got colder than all get out in a couple of days time. This weather all began at the very start of the season and the cold lasted all the way through the two weeks of late season. I never saw a lot of hunters out during this season myself, but I saw a lot of deer herded up. I saw deer in areas that I hadn't seen any deer moving around for months. The bitter cold and the ground covered with snow really brought them out in droves to feed, especially in the evenings.

The hunting seasons are drawing to a close one by one, so get out and enjoy some good small game hunting while you can. There are some fishing opportunities opening up also – weather permitting. So get out and get yourself some. You won't regret that 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."

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This month's hunting picture is of Jack Gene Whisler with a Late Season Doe. Taken with an Old Enfield .303 British Caliber Rifle.



This month's river picture shows the Frigid Brownville Nebraska Bridge surrounded by Ice Lilly Pads.

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Bea's Flower Buzz



"The Affectionate African Violet"

Bea Patterson

For the gardener, January hasn't got much to offer outside. Beautiful white snow is the only relief the landscape can expect to enjoy and even that gets a little tiresome over several weeks. What is needed this time of year is **color** - a little green, a little pink, a little **violet**.

As I write this piece, I look to my little collection of African violets for the cure. They are blooming away profusely in the south window and have been over these last several months. One has dark purple blossoms bordered in white with a bright yellow center. Another is pretty in pink ruffles. Multi-layered white blossoms bordered in violet adorn my newest addition. Six different beauties, each with their signature softly fuzzy leaves, are displayed on my mother's violet stand - my own indoor color garden.

The botanical name is *Saintpauli* (after the German father and son team who brought the plant to Europe in 1892), and the family name is *Gesneriaceae*. They are relatives of *Streptocarpus*, the household *Gloxinia*, and the more distantly related pansy.

Perhaps you have heard that African violets are picky, but I haven't found that to be true. Think Tanzanian mountain tropical rain forest, which the natural home environment actually emulates quite well, and you will have clues as to what suits an African Violet. They need...

' ...lots of light but not direct sunshine because violets are easily sunburned. A sunny location with a sheer drape or blind to diffuse the light works well. Violets thrive under artificial light. (That's a whole 'nother story.)

' ...moderate temperatures between 50° - 80° during the day and cooler at night; keep away from cold drafts.

' ...a watering system that allows the soil to stay slightly moist to slightly dry without the roots or plant ball sitting in water. The leaves help water by collecting moisture from the air, so to supplement, water from the bottom by using a self-watering violet pot, a "wicking" system*, or a water mat. Water from the top occasionally to re-distribute the soil and fertilizer residue more evenly (avoid the plant stem and leaves.)

' ...fertilizer made for violets (easily found at garden supply). Important.

' ...a loose potting soil or "soiless" mixture made just for African violets.

' ...one plant per pot; carefully remove "suckers" or off-shoots. The plant loses its shape and gets lopsided, and I think suckers decrease blooming. Suckers are perfectly viable plants, which can be rooted and potted.

' ...a pot appropriate to the plant's size. A pot too small restricts the plant ball and roots. A pot too large allows the radiating leaves to rest on the soil, which causes rot. The proper pot is large enough for plant growth but also allows leaves to radiate over and out beyond the rim. I used to place little piece of foil over the rim where a leaf rested, but I found that if the plant is getting sufficient light, leaves seldom rest on the rim. So, as the plant grows, increase the size of the pot one increment.

' ...their leaves protected. Water or dirt sitting on the leaf's surface suffocates the furry hairs which trap and separate moisture from the air. After occasionally rinsing the plant with a warm water spray, carefully towel dry the leaves.

' ...dead-headed (spent blossoms and leaves pruned away).

African violets are easy to share through propagation. Select a healthy mature leaf (usually I accidentally break one off when fiddling), stick the stem in water or moist sand, and leave for a few weeks. Roots and a new crown will develop, which can then be potted and given to a friend.

Beautiful, inexpensive (\$4-\$8) plants can be purchased at grocery stores, large department stores, and most garden supplies places. While African violets are rather old-fashioned and not found in homes as often now, they still have a wide fan-base, especially on-line. Just Google "African Violets."

With Valentines' Day coming, may I suggest giving the cozy, cheerful African violet a try? She'll *love* you for it!

Roses are red,
African violets are blue,
A colorful nose-gay for your sweetheart,
Saying, "I cherish my beautiful you!"

Bea Patterson

Pick-Me-Up Greenhouse

bp15624@alltel.net

*A good description of "wicking" can be found at www.jimmietoney.com/wick.html

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

Merri Johnson

My husband was looking for the receipt for a plumbing fixture the other day, which led him to our archives of owner's manuals. We generally attach the receipt to the manual with the naive hope that if something breaks down, it will still be under warranty *and* we'll be able to prove it. Or at least be able to fix it with the help of the manual.

Anyway, the manuals fill three hanging files, weigh a good ten pounds, and take up half a file cabinet drawer. And those are just the manuals for stuff we actually still possess. Imagine if we had the owner's manual for every appliance and gadget we've acquired and disposed of during 35 years of housekeeping. We'd need a whole file cabinet, not just half a drawer.

As I was perusing the contents of those files, I did come across a *few* manuals for items that have since gone to the "white goods" graveyard, but escaped previous document purges. "Oh, look, here's the Kelvinator manual. We bought that refrigerator when we bought the little house on 14th Street back in '88. Can you even still buy a Kelvinator? This could be a collectors' item." He snatched the manual and tossed it onto the discard pile. Typical man reaction. Keep only what's necessary. No value in old paperwork.

No value in old paperwork?! I tell you I could reconstruct a large part of our shared history (not to mention open a truly revealing discussion of what motivates people to buy certain things) through an analysis of those owner's manuals. There were multiple manuals for small items like lawn sprinklers, fishing reels and the meat grinder, as well as for bigger, motorized stuff like air conditioners and garage door openers. And the occasional oddity: an inflatable boat, which we keep in the garage attic. Go figure.

I held up a de-humidifier manual and asked my husband if he knew if it pertained to the model currently in our basement. He replied that it must, because he is positive that it's the first brand-new de-humidifier we've ever owned. This being due to the fact that *I* never allowed him to buy new, good stuff before, and that he'd only purchased garage-sale dehumidifiers prior to this one.

Hmmmm. There seems to be a Kirby Classic Omega vacuum cleaner manual, dated December 19, 1973, here. No receipt, but a Kirby was and still is *pretty expensive*. So much for his theory that I never allowed the purchase of "new, good stuff." That Kirby manual is the only one in the file printed in full color on glossy paper. I put it back in the folder, despite the fact that we no longer have the vacuum. Perhaps if we had repaired it when necessary, we wouldn't have three upright floors-only models in various stages of mechanical failure today, plus two hand-held varieties for stairs and other small spaces. (No wonder my closets are so crowded.)

Then there's the freezer receipt. I didn't need to read the date to be reminded that we purchased it right after our son left for college. He took it as a personal insult that we didn't have a large freezer stocked with all manner of snack foods when he was growing up; instead, we waited until he moved out. Exactly. If you don't have freezer space for all that junk food, you don't buy it and your kids don't eat it. At least not at home. My husband fills the freezer with long-term supplies of locally grown red meat and gallons of aronia berry juice. Pretty much the opposite of junk food.

When I had finished thumbing through all those manuals, my husband recommended that I organize them into separate folders. Perhaps putting those for large, permanently installed devices like bath fixtures, the water softener and the boiler in one folder and those for smaller, more-or-less disposable appliances in another. That would seem to be a more efficient arrangement. But I don't know. Finding the appropriate manual in 30 seconds or less wouldn't be nearly as interesting as the trip down memory lane that my current arrangement affords.

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Poetry, etc.

When You Marry

Jan Chism Wright

It 'ppears that when you marry,
too quick you realizes
that handsome prince you got
is a grab bag of surprises.

Oh sure, he's still a charmin' guy
but lord, he snores a lot
and spends less time romancin'
and more time on the pot.

And he still likes his dancin'
but oh the aches and pains.
I'm gettin' tired of waitin'
till he's rested up again.

Oh he'll help with the cookin'
but he makes such a mess.
And he's still a natty dresser
but he's slovenly at best.

Oh the things we used to do,
the goin' here an' there.
Now his favorite place to go
is 'at big ole lazy chair.

You gotta take it all, I guess,
the good comes with some bad.
Afterwards you can't be sure
just what you thought you had.

The thing that counts the most tho'
that stands him in good grace;
Not only does he know my faults
but loves me anyways.

(c) Jan Chism Wright 5/15/96



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Poetry, etc.

TO LIGHT A FIRE

Devon Adams

The low sun rolls across the sky of winter,
hiding, sometimes, behind cold clouds.
It is the masses of air which flow
from other realms of earth
that determine ambient warmth,
not the weak light rays
glancing sideways through the atmosphere.
Days are passing fancies, lacking substance,
racing from dawn to dusk
without regard for human comfort.
We awake in the dark and peer
through the short tunnel of daylight
to the black and infinite night.
We must rely for warmth on the
false suns of burning coal plants,
nuclear generators or the churning
waters of hydroelectric power.
Our last resort is to burn wood
in fireplaces and wood stoves.
It is the most primitive, and possibly
the most satisfying to the soul,
this bond between our fossil past
and our present need for heat.
As we huddle near the glowing embers
and the dancing flames, we can feel
others gathering behind us, in the dark.
They are our ancestors, crouching near
the fires of yesterday, roasting meat
and crafting weapons, making drawings
on the cave walls, carving totems
from stone and ivory,
planning strategies for survival
in the wilderness of antiquity.
The edge of civilization,
the edge of madness,
lies just beyond the circle of firelight.
We are only a breath away from being
back in mortal combat with life and death.
Fire is our salvation from extinction,
and we exist on a whim from
the invisible gods hiding
in the dusty gas that haunts the universe.

PENCIL PORTRAITS

BY DEVON ADAMS



Artist Devon Adams has been writing poetry and essays for *Your Country Neighbor* for several years, and now you can have **your portrait** or portraits of your children, grandchildren, or pets drawn by this talented artist. Order your personal portrait by calling 402-209-9377. Or mail your photograph(s) and your check for the applicable amount as shown in the price list below.

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SNOW RAIN SNOW

Devon Adams

Snow-rain in spring applies cotton wool
to branches bare as wire from winter sleep.
Snow by only a few degrees,
it falls heavily in the way of
the false snow inside small glass bubbles.
Rain-snow, on the edge of winter,
changing form with altitude and temperature.
From my window I see white stars clinging
to green needles of two old pine trees.
Apart from each other by only thirty feet,
their bristled crowns meet
in needle-crossed antagonism.
The sticky snow cones on sunflower seed heads
repeat themselves a thousand times
across the muffled field of summer memories.

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The Face of Drought

A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

This week's commodity markets didn't like the fact that corn was given short shrift in the President's state of the union address so they took a 'drop like a rock' nose dive the following day. Funny how that works.....I didn't hear the words nitrogen fertilizer or diesel but those prices didn't budge an inch. I'm fairly confident commodity prices will rebound but the idea that one piddley little word could raise such a ruckus rubs me the wrong way.

The talk here is water, water, water; how much, how little, how long? Worrying about irrigation in January takes all the fun out of winter; what we once called 'the easy season' has become a time of anxious restlessness. As weeks pass without a major snow-storm in the watersheds conversation increasingly turns to the 'what ifs' of drought farming: what if I contract corn and come July we experience a record breaking heat wave; what if our irrigation season is cut short by three weeks; what if the districts are forced to ration water, what if my wells are shut down by the state?

Forward thinking farmers in more fortunate parts of the country are locking in prices for their 2007 and 2008 corn crops while we find it hard to plan past tomorrow.

Our drought stricken Wyoming neighbors made an emergency trip this past week to Cheyenne, hoping beyond hope to persuade their lawmakers that the projected well shut-off isn't the only option available to the state as it tries to comply with the 2001 Ne/Wy Modified Decree settlement. A former legislator who made the trip said "the alternative that I favor is a change of philosophy in the way we use water in Wyoming. I'm ready to throw out this philosophy to save the farms and ranches." Talk of a collapsing Goshen County (Wy) economy had bankers and businessmen standing shoulder to shoulder with the frightened farmers.

Oddly enough, in order to get the remaining 5,000 acre-feet of water needed to comply with the 2001 settlement (1,300AF has already been purchased) Wyoming has proposed shutting off 209 wells with a pumping capacity equal to approximately 40,000AF.

Those of us in the Nebraska panhandle are eager to see how Wyoming state officials respond to the situation, especially after the director of the Nebraska Department of Natural resources recently suggested to more than 100 farmers and NRD officials in the Republican basin that irrigators within two miles of the river and tributaries cut their groundwater pumping in half. The director later said the proposal was just an idea presented to frame the water problem in the area, that it wasn't a plan for the basin but simply an indication of the nature of the problem.

That's just what the Goshen county farm families believed about the likelihood of their wells being shut down.....until now.

Deny the possibility.....then make it happen.....that's how government works.

Our youngest grandson turns two on Sunday. For the past month or so he's been spending much of his time perfecting his tantrum-throwing technique. Like the saying goes, 'practice makes perfect.' I doubt there's another two-year old toddler in a one hundred mile radius who can fall to the floor, bang his head, kick his feet and bite the carpet like Luke. He's a master.

I'm taking it all in stride. I learned a long time ago there's not much use in trying to tame a two-year old, so unless he's in danger of hurting himself, one of my knick-knacks, the housecat, or his brother, (not necessarily in that order) I ignore him. It's easier on both of us.

For those who didn't know, and probably don't care, the world's most influential designers showcased their new spring collections on the runways of Paris, Milan, New York and London this week. What a parade of bony, emaciated models; we've got fence posts with more curves.

What those girls need is a big Nebraska helping of mashed potatoes and gravy.

Enjoy your weekend.

Karen

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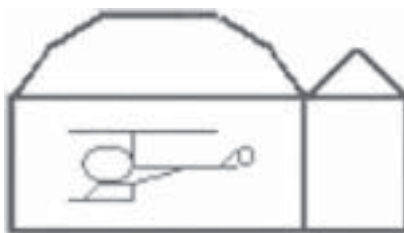
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Click on the windmill
by the fence, or the caption
below the picture

Disease Susceptibility: The Food Connection

Ursula Waln, N.D.

Our susceptibility to most diseases is deeply influenced by two factors: diet and stress. This month I will write about diet, and next month I will address stress. When I use the word diet in this context, I am referring to a person's general fare – the foods that one eats on a more or less regular basis. I am not referring to any weight-loss regime. In assessing the role of diet in our health, I propose that we consider three aspects of our diet: nutritional balance, dietary irritants, and individual sensitivities.

Nutritional Balance

Regular consumption of either too much or too little of any particular nutrient can create a nutritional imbalance that undermines our health. Ready access to affordable foods and the convenience of packaged and restaurant-prepared foods do not necessarily result in a well balanced diet. Whether we are struggling to provide sufficient food for ourselves and our families or have the luxury of being able to buy whatever food items we like, we must make an effort to balance our own diets. And to do so, we must have some basic knowledge of what that means. A healthy diet includes moderate amounts of protein and fat and plenty of complex carbohydrates. While not everyone agrees about the health effects of animal-derived foods in the diet (meats, eggs, and dairy products), it is widely recognized that most Americans consume too much sugar, refined flour, white rice, and potatoes (refined carbohydrates) and too few fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds (complex carbohydrates). The latter are important for several reasons: 1) these foods contain vitamins, minerals, bioflavonoids, and other constituents that we need to maintain healthy bodily functions and fight disease; 2) they contain fibers that help keep our digestive systems functioning properly; and, 3) their complex carbohydrate content helps maintain healthy blood sugar regulation [as I have discussed in previous articles]. While taking a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement can provide some of the nutrients missed when we don't eat enough wholesome plant foods, this is not an adequate long-term substitute for these foods in our diet.

A majority of Americans consume meats, dairy products, and wheat (breads, pastas, baked goods, etc.) on a daily basis. This is a very limited menu, and while it does provide proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, it is not sufficient as a diet in and of itself, especially if the wheat products are made with refined flour. (The refining of wheat flour converts it from a complex carbohydrate to a simple carbohydrate and removes vitamins, minerals, oil, and protein.) A variety of plant foods in our diets helps to ensure that we get all of the nutrients we need for health maintenance. And, when we have this variety, we are less likely to eat too much of any particular food because our appetites are satisfied and our cravings are reduced.

Dietary Irritants

Some foods tend to be irritating to our bodies, and when consumed regularly and/or in excess, can be destructive. Sugary foods, for example, can inflame and damage blood vessels and in-

terfere with immune function. Simple carbohydrates that are exposed to high heat (as in deep frying potatoes and baking pastries) form carcinogens and sticky, abrasive molecules that damage tissues. Partially hydrogenated oils destabilize cell membranes and interfere with normal tissue function. Red meats contain significant amounts of arachidonic acid, which promotes our bodies' natural inflammatory processes. This may be good when we are fighting infectious organisms, but chronic inflammation leads to atherosclerosis and predisposes us to autoimmune processes and other degenerative diseases.

Some food additives irritate by over-stimulating – draining energy, fatiguing systems, and/or preventing regeneration. Aspartame (NutraSweet®) and monosodium glutamate (MSG), for example, are neurostimulants (sometimes referred to as excitotoxins). Their over-stimulation of nerve tissues can disrupt metabolic processes, interfering with normal development of the nervous system in children and healthy cognitive function in children and adults alike.

Individual Sensitivities

Food sensitivities have become increasingly common in recent years. The causes are thought to be multifactorial. Predisposing factors include heredity, exposure to environmental toxins, chronic infection, poor digestive function, and stress. Signs and symptoms include migraine headache, difficulty concentrating, foggy-headedness, drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, depression, heartburn, stomach pain, intestinal gas, diarrhea, muscle pain, restless leg syndrome, and even full-blown allergic reactions (asthma, hives, blisters or swelling in the mouth or throat, or anaphylactic shock). Energy used to deal with foods that “don't agree with us” is energy that we don't have for general health maintenance and restoration. Sensitivity reactions produce inflammation, tax our immune systems, and disrupt our digestive processes. Regular consumption of foods to which we are sensitive creates chronic stress within our bodies and can predispose us to other health complications.

Food sensitivities are no fun and can severely limit a person's dietary choices. There is no easy cure, and what works for one person doesn't always work for the next. The naturopathic approach to dealing with food sensitivities is two-fold: 1) seek to identify and address – where possible – predisposing factors and 2) identify and avoid the offending foods.

Detoxification may be called for if there is a history of toxic exposure. *Candida albicans* (yeast) overgrowth is one example of a chronic infection that can predispose people to food sensitivities. *Helicobacter pylori* is another (bacteria associated with ulcer formation). Low stomach acid production – often caused by chronic stress or use of antacids – can impair digestion of proteins, and this makes us more prone to develop food sensitivities. These are just a few examples of possible predisposing factors. Supporting the digestion with the use of bitter herbs, hydrochloric acid supplementation, and/or enzyme supplementation is sometimes helpful. When these treatments are necessary, however, there is usually an underlying stress situation that still needs to be addressed.

Identification of problem foods can be accomplished in various ways: keeping a record of foods eaten and symptoms noted, fasting and then introducing foods one at a time while watching for reactions, or simply paying more attention to what one eats and how one feels. Total avoidance of problem foods is not always practical, especially when multiple sensitivities are present. Limiting consumption to no more than once every four days greatly reduces the severity of most sensitivity reactions. However, with severe allergic reactions, complete avoidance is necessary (until a tolerance to the food can be reestablished).

Some people have successfully eliminated food sensitivities through major dietary revision, such as switching over to a macrobiotic diet, a blood type diet (as advocated by D'Adamo), a raw food diet, a mucus-free diet, an alkalizing diet, or a diet emphasizing vegetable juices. Some people have also found relief through the use of various herbal or homeopathic treatments.

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