

Your **Country Neighbor**



FREE!

February 2009

Some of us are just hangin'....waitin' for Spring.

Voices from your Valley

Country Neighbor Photography Show	2
In Memory of Bea	3
Devon's Poetry	4
Merri's 'Diary'	5
More Pages with Color	5 - 8
Hunting & Fishing	9
"The Face of Drought"	10
Vicki's Wedding day	11

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

Devon Adams
Dorothy Barrett
Frieda Burston
Merri Johnson
Vicki O'Neal
Karen Ott
John Patterson
Joe Smith
Josh Whisler

Thank You

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Your Country Neighbor

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Editor's note:

More than three years of this publication are online at:

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For when to visit, see the Lyceum Cafe hours on page 5.

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In Memoriam

Bea's Flower Buzz

Written and Submitted by Husband, John Patterson

"Making room for sadness can clear the way for happiness, and then tears can be followed by smiles." I found this note in her own writing while composing an obituary for Bernice. These words give us comfort in a sorrowful time for her family.

Bernice was born to her mother and her Navy father in Seaside, Oregon on March 16, 1945. Bernice was the first of six children born to Bernard and Anna Symns Jones. Shortly thereafter they moved to Emporia, Kansas, then to Atchison, Kansas.

Bernice attended Atchison Public Schools, then Atchison High School, graduating in 1963. Bernice attended Emporia State College for one year, married, and raised two son's; Andrew and Matthew. Though struggling with life, she managed to find the time, energy, and resources to earn an Associates of Arts degree from Highland Community College and later a Bachelor of Science degree from Peru State College.

Always a hard worker she worked as tole painter, crafter, made Dilly bars, stripped tobacco, worked in a design studio, and a Para-Professional coordinator, sometimes some of each in the same week. Through all of this she found time to attend and enjoy the boys' school activities.

While taking dance lessons in St. Joseph she stopped at a local pub to practice dancing, met John, dated three years, and married 24 years. During this time her son's grew up, married, had daughters (add John's two children and three grand daughters), and Bernice became Grandma Bea.

Grandma Bea's granddaughter weekends were a flurry of activities painting, crafting, reading, playing piano and the biggie, "the tea party". You see, Grandma Bea thought every young girl should know how to enjoy a

tea party; practice at home, then the real thing at real tea houses in Auburn, Atchison or Weston.

In Peru, "Bea", to everyone but John, found herself the perfect pastime. She still worked but found the outlet of community service. She was an early participant in the "Depot Gandies", President of the Peru Historical Society, Spearheaded the Peru 150th celebration, and was a devoted member of the Peru Community Church.

Bernice's family. What can I say? They meant everything to her. From all the family meetings, farm projects, work days, birthday parties, holidays and egg in the eye. More I'm sure.

Is this a fitting tribute to Bernice? Probably not, but is there ever enough time or space to talk about all the good things a person does in life? Is there ever enough time or space to talk about all the good times a person has with someone in their life? I'll close.

Bernice Jones Patterson passed away (too young) January 17, 2009, age 63 years, 10 months, 1 day.

Survived by husband John, Children: Andrew Clements (Kim, Kaitlyn and Madison), Matthew Clements (Danel), Gaye Lynn Sudik (Kourtney), Jay Patterson (Jennifer, Mikala, Jaiden), Siblings: Steven Jones (Vicki and Family), Sharon Shouse (David and Family), Cindy Hoverson (Raymond and Family), Betty Jones (Dennis), and Mark Jones (Pandora and Family), Patsy and Charlie Fike, Jerry Patterson and Family, Bob McAdams and Family, nephews, nieces, and many Friends.

"Making room for sadness can clear the way for happiness, and then tears can be followed by smiles."

Editor's note: *Bea Patterson was one of my best friends in Peru, Nebraska, but many people can claim that honor. Bea passed away on January 17, 2009. She wrote many articles in Your Country Neighbor. Most were under the heading, Bea's Flower Buzz. With each article Bea included a color-pencil drawing of a flower. Her last article was in the December issue; the subject matter was more Christmas holiday tips, but her illustration was printed in color for the first time. Remarkably, her next Flower Buzz was going to be the "Forget-me not". We will not forget you Bea, we will not.*

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Poetry by Devon Adams

THE EDGE OF THE WIND

It was a winter of wind, that blew
from all directions, and the speed
was a factor that sharpened the
cold steel blade
that cut through clothes,
until we were chilled to the bones.
The fossils remember years of change,
but they don't shiver anymore.
Time drags for those of us who are
alive, and trying to stay that way,
in the arctic blasts that compare
to massive air strikes in the war of winter.

APPLES IN THE SNOW

Days are short, and
snow is deep under
the twisted branches.
But the gentle doe
knows there are apples
hiding under winter.

ASHES FROM A COLD FIRE

The sky is burning
with a cold flame.
Ashes are falling
in infinite numbers,
filling the air
with icy kisses,
that melt on wet lips.

BRIGHT HEARTS

Deep in the heart of winter,
trees are hitting each other
with their bare limbs,
as the incessant wind
rakes across the prairie.
In the shelter of the cedars,
birds are gathered for lunch
at the year-round feeder.
The ground flutters with wings
as a flock of snow birds
searches for tiny edibles.
Woodpeckers gobble morsels
of fat from the suet,
as chickadees and nuthatches
chatter and hop from branch
to branch to branch, while
cardinals steal the show.
They are perched in the arms
of the redbud, males and females,
crimson red and russet, glowing,
like apples waiting for harvest.
They are the heart and the hope
of the long dark days of cold, a
bright promise of the distant spring.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

My husband began lobbying for a high-definition, flat-screen TV when they first hit the stores several years ago. He was entranced by the prospect of distinguishing individual blades of grass on the fairways of the country's championship golf courses. I am not nearly as enamored of television viewing (or of golf) as my husband, so I found it quite convenient that our living room had practically no bare wall space to accommodate his dream. The room was all doorways, colonnades, windows, radiators and built-in cabinetry. Nixing the suggestion of getting a bigger TV was almost too easy.

Sorry, honey, there's just no place to put a big TV. Besides, what would we do with the beautiful cabinet you so masterfully built for the TV we have now?

Yes, I could safely share his pain without fear of having to actually do anything about it.

Then we decided to build a house. A house with a larger living room. A living room with not one wall, but two walls, big enough for the object of my husband's desire. A house with a basement rec room and a perfect place for the old TV and its hand-made, future family heirloom cabinet. Once we moved into our house, the pressure was on. But I held out.

Technology will probably improve next year. We should wait. Prices will come down.

Well, prices did come down as holiday shopping season neared. But not because the technology had improved. The economy was in a bona fide slump. The consumer advice last fall was all about hoarding one's cash. "No one in their right mind should be making a non-essential purchase such as a big-screen, hi-def television right now," the voices of wisdom and caution pronounced. *Did I hear that correctly?* The experts were actually condemning the purchase of the very thing my husband wanted more than new golf clubs! They were on my side! What a boost of credibility this gave to my argument.

On the other hand, the economy needed stimulation. "Sales people at the electronics stores have to make a living, too," my husband noted. A little Reagan economics was in order, he argued. We should "spread the wealth" Johnson-family style. Still, I was conflicted, caught in the middle just like the economy-at-large. Spending the money for a television we didn't "need" seemed imprudent, but falling consumer spending was having a disastrous ripple effect on many businesses and their employees. How could I not stand up for my free-market principles of growing the economy with money spent directly, and willingly (sort of), from my own disposable income? That's right; I caved.

Economic policy principles notwithstanding, my husband won the television battle. The TV dominates its make-shift stand, fashioned out of a mini, folding scaffold topped with the leaf from our old dining room table, and covered with a white table cloth. (Its resemblance to an altar has not gone unnoticed nor unremarked.)

Now my husband needs to get busy building custom shelving to properly house the TV and replace all the built-in cabinets we left behind in our old house. Then I'll be able to finally unpack and display the books and other items those built-ins contained. I guess we'll be stimulating the economy a little more, too, buying lumber and hardware. But, it's all good. Lumber salesmen have to make a living, too, you know.

And, besides, building the shelves this winter will keep my husband from watching too much golf on TV.



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Yes, there are Snakes in Paradise.

by Frieda Burston

No, they aren't the big dragony serpents slithering through the pages of illustrated bibles. If you look at them a second time, they shrink down to garter snake size, not threatening anything, just big enough to add a green shine to the flowers.

First the weather turned cold here, and I like to have froze to death at night. I tried to slide things up and down on the thermostat and punch buttons. but I couldn't raise the temperature above 65 no matter what finger gymnastics I did. So I called D-D. She came over to explain the thermostat technology to me. I explained it back to her and then did it. Nothing. She then did it to show me. Nothing. A little failure goes a long way with her, so she went home and brought me back an electric heater. One control on it— Move it this way, on. Move it back, off. I mastered the lesson and lived in one room comfortably until two days later when the heater man came and diagnosed a dirty filter.

Well, I had been living in one room for two and a half years at the old folks' place, no problem. I enjoyed the new warmth in the whole house, and went on sliding buttons up and down like a computer geek.

That was the first serpent. Second serpent was when I reached under the sink for my box of Hanukah candles, and my hand came up wet. I called D-D. She came over, took everything out, and called Jim. He came over and told us to call the garbage-grinder man. He came and shrank this serpent down like the last one.

Didn't bother me. I was still happy that I moved in here. I can remember back in War II, renting a back bedroom in somebody's house and kneeling by the bathtub to wash our bed sheets and bath towels and Abe's uniforms. Remembering how my mother washed clothes in a zinc-plated washtub. And feeling grateful that I didn't have to heat the water on the stove in buckets, like Mama did. You expect me to feel angry that I spent all this money and couldn't use half the kitchen sink for a few days?

Not me. I'm still happy that I'm here.

To be continued in the March issue.

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CHERRY PIE

by Joe Smith

When I was around a junior in High school, a friend and I decided to look some guy up and try to beat him to a pulp. That would have been a big order for us as he was bigger than either one of us. We needed some liquid courage. So we dragged south main in my 36 Plymouth. We picked up an older fellow that was looking for a ride out to the night club, the Blue Moon. We told him we would take him out there if he would buy us a pint of whiskey. He agreed. So we hauled him out there, gave him some money, and he went in and got us a pint of Old Granddad or something along those lines. My friend and I went back to town and bought some pop to mix the drinks. We didn't like it straight. He used to work at a bakery in town and knew that while the trucks were being loaded that the front compartment of the trucks had pies in them. This was late at night, probably 1a.m. in the morning. So he slipped up there and swiped a couple of pies. By this time we had forgot about the guy we were looking for and were feeling no pain. I had sense enough to pull into my dad's car dealership and quit driving around. We parked in the lot close to the shop and finished off the booze and were working on the pies. We got into a friendly fight in the front seat of that car with pieces of that cherry pie. These old cars had cloth lining and took well to the cherry pie. We ended up getting out of the car and throwing pie at each other. Boy that was a blast. I knew we couldn't drive any where in our shape. My dad had traded for a '41 Dodge coupe, the ones with the long trunk. The guy that had it had a mattress in the trunk and you could crawl in from the side doors. . It wasn't cold so we just climbed in there and went to sleep. There was a house nearby and they must have called the cops on us. In about 30 minutes of sawing logs the cops came and opened the door. They hauled our little butts to the police department office. They asked us a lot of questions about where we got the booze and who we were. Once they found out that my dad owned the place they calmed down, loaded us back in the squad car and hauled us both to our homes. The officers knocked on the door and my dad came out and the policeman told him they had his son, slightly inebriated. Dad opened the door and let me in. My folks never said anything about it after that.

Dad just smiled at me trying to clean up the mess. I guess he felt I learned enough just having the cops bring me home. It was just a little embarrassing to say the least. We were lucky it didn't involve a wreck of some sort. The moment I felt unsafe to drive, I parked my car in my dad's car lot. I hope this message gets young people to go easy on the booze, it is very easy to get the booze and very easy to get some one hurt or killed. You have to make up your own mind to let it go 'til you are old enough. I was lucky, you may not be. So you see this problem is not new and it will be around as long as we have teenagers and cars and booze that is easy for them to buy, just make sure you are not the one that is responsible for your life or someone else's. Joe Smith

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FOR RENT-ONE MOTHER

by Dorothy Barrett

The children have grown,
Here I sit with knowledge galore.
Qualifications for the women now alone –
Are as follows: Raised children numbering four.
Can bake chocolate cookies by the ton.
Can get grass stains out of sports uniforms.
Also can get supper for a family on the run.
I've survived opening a week-old gym bag.
Can settle arguments before the blows.
Can sew a crotch seam that's been torn –
In either a straight tear or a jag.
Didn't panic when one ran through barb-wire fence
Or fire-crackers in a pocket did blow,
Also a potato fork through a big toe.
"You drank charcoal lighter fluid? Oh, No!"
Can stand the numb of an anatomy part
from setting on a bleacher seat –
While watching sports or a musical performing act.

What do I do with all this know-how?
I need a job to pass the time now.

What's that? Not for hire after all.
Here comes a grandchild, I'll have a ball.
Now listen my children and you shall hear –
This is the way I would do it my dear –

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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



Fishing:

by Josh Whisler
(Photos provided by Author)

The Missouri River is lower than it has been in the last couple of months and the ice flow is pretty steady with the lower temperatures as of late. So that body of water is pretty much out for fishing, but the ponds and local lakes are plenty good to get out on with some reports of seven inches of ice or better. With a little checking I found that the local sports shops have wax worms, meal worms, and minnows available. So I'm going to get my gear out and give it a try. It always seems to last a few weeks a year and a warm spell comes though and ruins the ice. So a guy is going to have to jump on this opportunity. I'll let you know how it works out.

Hunting:

Winter hunting seasons are winding down with the end of muzzle loader deer season at the end of December and the late antlerless season from January 1st to the 15th. And we can't forget the small game season still open – Rabbit until February 28th.

Hunting and fishing are both challenges this time of the year but it does get you out of the house and puts food on the table most of the time. So get out and give it a try, 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."




Randy Perry Jr. shows his season choice Whitetail Doe taken during the late rifle season.




Shown is a Whitetail Buck Cape from a buck taken by Lloyd Buchmeier during the deer muzzle loader season.

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The

Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



North Dakota.... 1936

It was the worst of times: thirty eight percent of all US families had an annual income of less than \$1000.00, the Gross National Debt topped \$34 billion dollars as government expenditures rose for relief programs, and three million eight hundred and fifty thousand Americans were employed not in the private sector, but by federal agencies hoping beyond hope to bring about economic recovery by putting people to work on public projects like Morrill's red brick library. We're 'adding wealth' to the country crowed a 1936 WPA handbook, a pamphlet which outlined worker rules and answered frequently asked questions such as "If I take a government job am I still on relief?" (NO) and "Am I supposed to work in water without boots on?" (NO, you should have boots.)

Drought, flood, and other conservation works, roads, water and sewer systems, parks and playgrounds were considered public works, as was the Dickinson North Dakota ceramics project. Established in July 1936 the twelve employees (eleven women and one man) were headquartered in two small rooms at the Woodrow Wilson School under the supervision of Laura Taylor, a farm girl who had shown such talent for ceramics in high school she was able to further her education at the University of North Dakota, studying and working with one of the most successful and influential potters of the day. The lone male employee, apparently hired for brawn, not artistic proclivities, was responsible for collecting clay from a twenty mile radius of Dickinson, hauling it back to the women who fashioned 'Dickota' pottery under Miss Taylor's tutelage.

Six months later, in January of 1937, Laura was appointed state supervisor of the North Dakota WPA, and the ceramics project was relocated to Mandan where it was housed in the basement of the local grade school.

She was flattered when the opportunity to demonstrate pottery making at the 1939 New York World's Fair came along and it was there she would meet the man she would later marry. Together they founded a pottery company they christened Rosemeade, digging buff colored clay from an enormous bed four miles west of Mandan, and

creating ceramics reflecting the native flora and fauna of Laura's farm childhood.

When she died at age fifty-six her beloved pottery company faltered, then, two years later, closed for good. Eventually the Rosemeade pieces went out of style, fading into oblivion when modern home-makers, who'd never heard of Laura Taylor, shoved them into the dark recesses of dank basements, sold them for pennies at garage sales, or tossed them away like tacky trinkets.

Today Laura's pieces are considered collectibles, and although prices for good specimens range from two hundred and fifty to six hundred dollars the real value of the small ceramic pieces isn't dollars and cents, it's the account of their birth....the inspirational story of a North Dakota farm girl who faced hard times, and in spite of them persevered.

Nebraska.... January 22, 2009

"Grandma, look what Great-Grandpa gave me. It's a deer. He said I could have it." As five year old Katelyn placed the dusty, buff-colored fawn in my hands I turned it over; on the bottom was etched a single word: Rosemeade

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I'm not sure what caused such madness. Maybe it was the full moon, or perhaps it was the rendezvous between Jupiter and Venus in the heavens...

Whatever the case, Michael and I suddenly decided to get married during the hectic Holiday Season.

We'd keep it simple, though. A small ceremony in Eureka, California. A reception in the ancient Redwoods beside the river. Towering trees. Sunlight filtering through the branches. A stone plaza and blazing fireplace.

Perfect...!

There was just a problem or two. The first was minor, but irksome. I kept referring to our wedding as a *funeral*... A common Freudian slip to be sure, but it was small comfort to my groom.

The other problem was far greater. We had bad weather heading across the Pacific and it would be here by the weekend. We were forced to move the wedding up to Thursday—just a couple of days away.

We didn't panic. In fact, my groom-to-be completed his list of preparations in record time.

And I...? Well... Being a writer, I succumbed to foolishness and the lunacy of love. I began typing gibberish. I wrote pages of it...how weddings are really funerals in disguise. How we must die to ourselves, and be reborn into a union of One.

I emailed this stuff to friends, family and foes, alike. It took hours. Even days. Before I knew it, our wedding day had arrived. I awakened to the dim reality that I was woefully unprepared.

I had no time for a bridal-bubble-bath. Worse yet, I had no cake. No flowers. No decorations. Nothing but dozens of emails, and many pages of foolishness.

I crawled out of bed. Time to go into high gear. Turbo-charge. Overdrive.

My bridesmaid came to help. Together, we began throwing stuff into the car—dresses, cameras, and shoes. We jumped inside and roared down the highway.

"Leah," I said. "You go and buy the decorations...I'll get the cake and flowers. In an hour, we'll meet everyone at the Oriental Buffet, as planned. Then we'll go on to the courthouse. Oh, but first..." I said. "Can you pull these curlers from my hair?"

She obliged, pulling out curler after curler as I weaved through traffic.

I dropped her off at the Discount Dollar—shouting final instructions at her from the curbside. I hurried to the grocery store and picked out the most

promising-looking cake from the bakery, then grabbed a bouquet from the nearby flower cooler. Minutes later, I was heading out the door with both cake and flowers—my confidence fully restored.

This wasn't so hard, after all. And to think that most brides spend months agonizing over these decisions. I could give them a few lessons...Maybe even start my own wedding-planning business....

"Vic's Time-Saver Weddings. *Everything done in an hour—why take longer?*"

I hurried back to Discount Dollar where I'd left my bridesmaid. Leah was just finishing up her shopping. Six helium balloons floated above her head. A shopping basket sagged on her arm, weighted down by glittery candles...plastic swans, and Bridal-bubble-blowers. Lord. What a mess.

We had no time to quibble. We paid for it all and crammed the stuff into my car, gingerly shutting the door.

There were only a couple things left to do...but they were rather crucial.

"You've gotta do your dress and hair!" Leah said. "We're running out of time."

We were stumped momentarily, but only for a minute.

"Look, Vic!" Leah said. "We're right here by my friend's beauty salon. Let's go inside."

We did. The hair-stylist took one look at my fly-away-curls, and said she didn't do *up-do's*. Not even for weddings.

I retreated to the restroom and stared into the mirror. My dress looked fine, but my hair was a disaster. I didn't have enough *poof* for the front of my hair. Did I forget my *hair-rat*?

I dug frantically through my purse. Eventually, a pair of Knee-high pantyhose rose to the surface. But no hair-rat.

Pantyhose would just have to do.

Balancing the Knee-highs on top of my head, I pinned them in place, arranging my curls to hide the hose. I looked in the mirror. Not bad. Not bad at all. I hair-sprayed the *'do*, then took myself to the front of the beauty salon.

"How lovely your hair looks," said the beautician. "And your dress, too."

Her assistant agreed. "You'll make a pretty bride...A bride extraordinaire."

Extraordinaire, indeed. Knee-highs and everything.

Leah and I departed, hurrying to the Oriental Buffet where everyone was waiting. We were only ten minutes late, but those ten minutes were our undoing. We never did catch up. We were late for

the photos. Late for the licensing. Late for the ceremony and the reception.

But it was okay.

The day was sunny and warm. My groom was patient...And I—in spite of my poof-less hair—felt lovely. Quite lovely.

After a rough start, everything was turning out fine. The glittering candles and plastic swans looked splendid. The balloons and Bridal-bubble-blowers were a hit, as well.

Somehow, the knee-high pantyhose never fell out of my hair...Not once. But best of all, there were no tears shed at our funeral... Um, I mean our *wedding*. Nothing but smiles and joy and happiness.

At the Redwood reception, I read from my *Pages of Foolishness* that I'd worked on so hard...Heart-felt words about our love. A love as patient and enduring as these ancient trees.

Flames in the stone fireplace crackled. The river murmured to itself. A breeze wandered through the twilight, stirring the branches of the redwoods.

Then...just as the day came to an end, a song came on the nearby car radio and drifted across the darkening forest...A song so appropriate for the moment, it couldn't have been coincidence. It was one of those unplanned incidents that the Lord arranges, somehow.

"It was no accident...Me finding you..."

"Someone had a hand in it...Long before we ever knew..."

Beneath the emerging stars, Michael and I slow-danced together...dancing to the words of the song:

"I tip my hat, to the Keeper of the Stars..."

The moon rose higher. Venus and Jupiter winked at us from the heavens. The wind sighed through the trees, and I sighed, too.

It had turned out to be a wonderful *funeral/wedding*. Wonderful, indeed.

Now, I thought to myself...If only the Honeymoon can turn out even half as nice—never knowing, of course, what was in store for a scatterbrained bride....

And her unfortunate groom.

~~~~~To be continued~~~~~

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