



Nemaha County, Nebraska Rodeo

Voices from your Valley

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Rodeo Queen

More Rodeo Photos on page 5, 6, & 7

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Writers this month

Devon Adams
Larry Christy
Merri Johnson
Vicki O'Neal
Karen Ott
Joe Smith
Josh Whisler

Thank You

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The Weather, in Nebraska

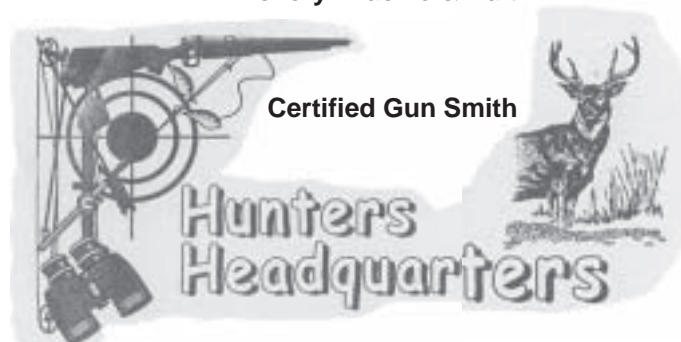
by Joe Smith

The weather in Nebraska is very fickle. Some years are good while some are not. We have been blessed with good weather so far this year. A couple spots got hail and a few tornadoes. But I think last year was worse for twisters. Now, the wheat in Kansas and south is not good at all, too wet and it got rust in it. While parts of Texas are in the second year of drought. Corn is dried up and cattlemen are feeding extra feed to their herds. So we aren't having it too bad up here. I farmed for 50-60 years and have seen both the good and bad as far as weather goes. But the old story goes that if you don't like the weather wait a couple hours. I have seen sand storms ruin a field of young cotton, burnt to a crisp. I was picking some 3-bale cotton, which was really good, with an international cotton picker and a hail storm came in and I had to crawl in the back with the cotton. It took 50% of the crop. Then what was left brought less money. Insurance paid up pretty good so we survived.

In New Mexico we didn't depend on rain. We irrigated it all out of wells. We had cement ditches and used siphon tubes, one in each row. It wasn't hard for a young man like me and a couple kids to help. Once in a while I even got Marta out there. Our well put out about 1000 gallons a minute. A 40-row set would take 7-8 hours to get out the first time through. We listed our ground and watered it, then dragged down the top of the bed and planted right on the ridge. I got a good education in farming down there. I would go out to the neighbor's and see what he was doing, then I would go home and do it. We started out with a farm that couldn't produce one bale of cotton to the acre and when I got through after a couple of years it was making over two bales per acre. A bale of cotton weighs around 500 lbs if I remember right. That has been a few years, like maybe 50 years ago.

You haul the cotton to the gin or mill and they remove the seeds and put the cotton in the bales, then they take a sample of it and you are paid on that price. The length of the cotton and how clean it was, was how they graded it. Hand picked cotton brought more money but cost a lot more to produce. Strict middling was a good grade cotton while low middling was not. Then it was measured. The longer the staple the better the price you were paid. I started talking about weather and ended up talking about cotton farming. That's what you get when you get old and worn out like me. I have a lot of miles on me, been there and done that too. Made a few mistakes at least once, but I learned from most of them. I was lucky enough to marry a real good woman. We have been through a lot together and it is not over yet Joe Smith

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Poetry by Devon Adams

A CUP A DAY

Each morning is new and the same.
I hold the day in my hand,
like a cup of coffee, savoring
the promise of the taste,
and the warmth of steam rising.
Drinking, I ease into the morning,
feeling the shape of the hours.
By evening, I will have swallowed time,
like liquid flowing down my throat,
and only memories will remain,
like a faint aroma lingering
in the corners of the kitchen.

DARK WIND

Out of the clear of the air
a turkey buzzard swooped low,
its sharp edges cutting a shadow
from the light of the day.
It moved like a dark wind across
the landscape, watching for the
stillness of bodies separated
from their former lives, preparing
to proceed with removal and
redistribution of the remains.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Wasn't it snowing just yesterday,
when there was still a week to go
before Christmas day, and I was
going to send out cards on time,
and dinner was almost organized?
Why is my neighbor mowing his yard
when I'm not yet ready for
last year's end and this year's beginning?
How do I get so far behind?
And why is time going faster every year?
Or am I going slower?
Too many questions to consider,
so I'll forget about the calendar
and enjoy today until
it turns into tomorrow.

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The event begins with an optional riverboat cruise Friday evening and concludes at 2:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon with public readings at the Lyceum.

For a complete schedule, visit the Nebraska Writer’s Guild web site – www.nebraskawriters.org or contact Nebraska Writers Guild member Merri Johnson at 402-274-5217. To register, email Charlie Vogel at Charlie_mystery_writer@cox.net.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

“Summertime, and the livin’ is easy, fish are jumpin’ and the cotton is high.” For me, those lyrics from the Heyward-Gershwin classic are the quintessential expression of the season.

Some people might prefer Nat King Cole’s “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer” with their “soda and pretzels and beer,” but I’ve always been more of a nature lover than a partier. No matter what it is about summer that draws you outside, you can’t deny that the time to indulge in it is here.

The fish were definitely jumpin’ for my husband and three fishing buddies on a recent trip to Calamus Reservoir on the edge of the Sandhills. He brought home more fillets this year than from any previous trip. And the cotton – or in my case, ornamental Heavy Metal blue switch grass – is as high as an elephant’s eye. No, wait, that’s supposed to be corn... no matter. Whatever you’re growing, there’s probably an abundance of it in your yard right now.

Our little garden is jam-packed with eight different crops, plus a corner border of peonies and two unintentional day lilies, all elbowing each other for room and stretching for the sun, like a crowd of baby-boomers jostling for a vantage-point at a Billy Joel concert.

My rhubarb, just transplanted this spring, grew leaves as big as an elephant’s ear, and I’m still baking rhubarb custard pie. We ate fresh spinach for a month and just enjoyed our first meal of string beans. Indeed, the sweet corn is as high as an elephant’s eye and getting higher daily, but I’m skeptical it will produce enough ears to justify using up a third of the garden space. I might be saying something similar about the heirloom tomatoes I planted, too, if they don’t start putting a little more effort into blossoms instead of just vine and foliage.

And yesterday, a friend and I each picked a gallon bucket of cherries in her orchard. The trees were loaded with juicy, perfect, ruby orbs. (Can’t you just see them?) Filling our buckets took less than half an hour, thankfully, in the 96-degree heat. Pitting them will probably take longer. Let’s see....shall I do the pitting out on the porch, or in my air-conditioned kitchen???

Last evening, when the air had cooled to a mere 85 and the breeze had picked up a bit, I sat in the darkening screened porch and watched the fire flies come out. You really haven’t experienced summer if you haven’t spent time on a humid night, marveling at their silent show, as magical to me as any 4th of July display.

Speaking of the Fourth reminds me that my husband will soon enter his seasonal funk. That day always marks the downward slide of summer for him, despite the fact that summer is officially only three weeks old then. I guess that’s a hold-over from school days when July 4 meant that summer break was pretty much half over. Somehow, there’s something sweet about a 58 year-old guy who still feels the ebb of waning summer like a school-boy.

Summertime. Enjoy it while it lasts, everybody!



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Hunting Night Crawlers

by Larry Christy

When I was a kid, hunting nightcrawlers wasn't just something we did to catch a few fishing worms for ourselves, it was serious business. And not just for the kids. It was for everybody. I remember those evenings, it always seemed to be on a weeknight after a rain or maybe even during a light sprinkle. That was better. I remember everybody, Grandma, Grandpa, my aunts, cousins, everybody gathering at Grandma and Grandpa's house around 5:30 or 6:00, everyone inspecting the front lawn as they arrived, looking at how many holes there were with little mounds of muddy soil that the worms had pushed out around them from the night before.... anticipating a good haul for the night before going inside to wait for the darkness to fall when the worms would come back out, and to prepare for the hunt.

And there were preparations. Not a lot, but there was ritual. Certain equipment that was needed. The first being a coffee can. Most preferably a three pound coffee can, because it was said that a three pound coffee can topped off level with worms would bring \$15.00 from the bait buyers and we all had that \$15.00 a can jackpot in our minds. They said that 500 (or was it a thousand?), worms would fit in a three pound coffee can. Either way, it was a bonus \$15.00 for your pocket measured out by volume. It was something simple that could be done by anyone, with just the investment of a little time, like picking up manna from heaven or change off the ground.

My cousins and I would project how many cans of worms we could pick up in a night and tally our earnings in advance. By 10 o'clock we'd be rich. Maybe 60 dollars apiece that we could pool together for a new bike to fight over, or a set of walkie-talkies.

The coffee cans I remember best were painted orange and red and tan, with black letters that said BUTTER-NUT. That was the brand of coffee that Grandma and Grandpa always drank, so they always had a lot of cans that they'd saved. Maybe not enough to go around...., there were some small Folger's cans mixed in there, but most often it was the three pound BUTTER-NUT cans.

The second part of the outfit was a flashlight. We all had flashlights. Mostly the ones the kids used were old dented up metal flashlights that Grandpa had discarded, that took two D-cell batteries, with dim yellow light bulbs that flickered on and off so you had to continually beat the flashlight on the side of your leg or jar the batteries around in there with a hit on one end with your palm.

To Be Continued Next Month

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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
(Photos provided by Author)

Fishing:

The Missouri River is running bank full from the recent rains. The Spring rains have been keeping it fluctuating almost weekly. River on the rise means fish are biting. So if you can mud your way there, you're in prime fishing season "right now". I've seen some dandies the last month of all species. The Flatheads and the channels are running now and the Blues have been hitting all the while. The water is now over 68 degrees and the fish are getting ready to spawn and with the spawn comes more feeding. What are they biting on you ask? Chubs and goldfish for the big ones (Missouri River Rules – Big Bait/Big Fish). Crawlers and dough baits for the smaller stuff. Fishermen are getting a lot of action but like I stated before, it's getting to the river because of the rain soaked roads more than anything else right now.

Hunting:

Yes I said hunting! Fall and winter deer permits are available now. New for this year:

From **June 8 to Close of Season** this year - Areas are open to residents and nonresidents to buy any remaining antelope or deer permits and open to residents to buy any remaining elk permits. Just buy your permit at the Game & Parks Web page <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/hunting.asp>

The Fall Deer Seasons are already set so plan ahead and use the flexibility to plan your deer hunt now. Once again there are bonus deer tags for antlerless deer to be harvested to control the Nebraska deer herds. It's a great opportunity to get some venison in the freezer.


Fishing is great now thanks to the warmer weather. Soon the river will be the only place to be to beat the sweltering summer heat. So get out there and get your line wet, you may be surprised what's biting now. Remember I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time, "Happy Hunting & Fishing."




This month's fishing pictures are of the winners of the Old Man River Days Annual Fishing Contest.

First place for Biggest Cat and Most Pounds of fish went to Randy Schroder (Plattsmouth) shown with a 60 pound Blue Cat. First place for Biggest Carp was a tie between Jamie Reeves (Peru) and Mike Gibbs (Neb. City). Their fish weighed an even 10 pounds each.

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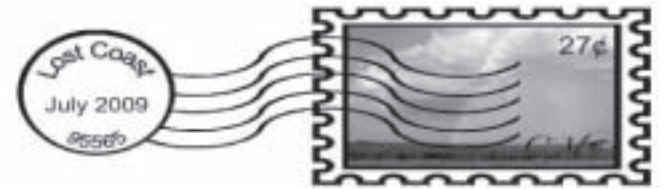
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It has been raining in the Midwest. Cats and dogs. Pitchforks. Tadpoles and frogs. Everybody complains about the soggy weather—wishing it go away.

I remember a few years ago when the opposite was true. Drought was a serious problem. We country folks were desperate for rain. Farmers. Ranchers. Gardeners. God-fearin' folks who depended on the Lord for rain. People of faith and fortitude.

All our lives, we've heard the strange stories that Granny and Grandpa told us about the "olden days". Stories of miracles and answers to prayer. Drenching rains that came just in time to save the crops.

We knew the stories were true. We knew that Truth-is-stranger-than-fiction...That there were too many "non-coincidences" for them to be considered flukes.

Well, folks. Today, I'm going to share a similar story. The only difference is this...it happened in modern times. I call it the *Miracle of the Million Dollar Rain*. You can believe it, folks, because it really happened.

Several years ago, everything was drying up in the drought. The farmers' crops were in jeopardy. My own garden was pitiful.

It was July. Hot. Miserable. It hadn't rained in many weeks, and I was tired of watering my half-dead garden....

One day, I stepped out of the farmhouse and I looked up at the sky. It seemed that the passing clouds were taunting us. They held the rain that we so desperately needed, but they refused to release a drop onto the dry, cracked farmland.

There was no rain in the forecast...Just many more days of continued drought ahead of us.

Suddenly, I felt indignation rise up in me. I realized that I didn't have to tolerate this situation. When Granny and Grandpa prayed for rain, the Lord always met their needs. The Lord could do the same for us, today!

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I knew what the Good Book says. It says we shouldn't fuss and fret. We should take authority over these matters.

So I did.

I looked up at those clouds and I told them in no uncertain terms that I wanted two full inches of rain on our land. And I wanted it on our neighbors' farms, as well...!

(TWO inches! Was I sane? We hadn't had a trace of rain in many weeks.)

I shouted at those clouds and told them that I wanted a nice drizzling rain...Not a crashing thunderstorm that would wash away the farmland.

It didn't matter *who* heard me yelling at those clouds. I hollered in front of our neighbors and God and everybody. I told those clouds exactly what I wanted.

Then I thanked the Lord for answering my prayer.

I walked back into the house. I didn't get down on my knees and pray for an hour. I put it all in God's hands and forgot about it, just like the Good Book says.... Like our Grannies and Grandpas would've done.

Well. Nothing happened.

Not at first. Hours passed. I didn't fuss...I didn't even think about it. I went to bed that night and slept soundly.

At 2 o'clock in the morning, something started happening...A steady drizzle began falling on our parched land. The skies dribbled for eight straight hours. And when the rain got up to TWO inches on the rain-gauge, it stopped abruptly.

We awakened to find a drenched landscape. But the rain had only come down on a five-mile-radius of our acreage. Neither Auburn nor Falls City—the towns to the north and south of us—had received a single drop.

Our nearest farm neighbors were overjoyed. They called it the *Million Dollar Rain*. They rejoiced that their crops had been spared. Miles of dry soybeans. Acres of corn. The rain had come just in time to save our crops.

All it took was desperation and a little old-fashioned faith. Like the Old Timers had in their day.

I've got many more true "Miracle Stories" to tell. In fact, if the Lord hadn't intervened in my life many times, I wouldn't be here. I'd be in the graveyard....

But that's another story.

We've run out of space, my Country Neighbors. Take care, dear friends. Just remember the importance of trusting in God...The value of faith. And the incredible power of praying like your Granny and Grandpa.

It really works.

Vicki O'Neal
www.VickiO'Neal.com

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



It's cold again this morning, and after Wednesday's intense three hour storm some fields are still under water. It's rained every day for two weeks, and whereas a few years ago we received 7.5 inches of precipitation for the entire year, our total for the past two weeks now hovers a bit over 9 inches.

Living, as we do, so low in the valley, the storm caused some minor flooding of our yard when runoff poured over the banks of a nearby drain ditch and ran down the fields, across my parent's lawn, and over mine. From there it crossed over the county road, filled the bar-pit on the opposite side and headed east. When it hit a pasture driveway it backed up into the adjacent corn field.

In a desperate move to drain the field Dale used the loader tractor to tear out the driveway so the water could continue its journey eastward. Eventually it will drain into the North Platte River and I suspect by next week this time a few traveling twigs from my front yard cottonwoods will be bobbing along the banks of Lake McConaughy.

If we had some sunshine things wouldn't look so gloomy, but the rains have been accompanied by continuous overcast skies, day after day after dismal day. The combination of heavy rain and no sun has turned the area's corn crop a sickly yellow, and in some fields, purple. Corn planted the first part of May is a puny 4 to 5 inches tall (a bit shorter after Wednesday's torrential rain and hail), and spends its days shivering in the chilly wind instead of dreaming of warm summer evenings. We began planting 150 acres of beans over two weeks ago, and still have 40 acres to go; a job which should have taken three days has stretched into three weeks.

Along with the daily rains have come tornado warnings, watches, and even the real thing. For the past week or so eastern Wyoming, and the western portion of the Panhandle, have been home to a team of bone-fide Storm Chasers who made one of our local tornadoes into an instant 'Star' when they documented its birth on www.weather.com as streaming live video; we watched Monday's tornado snake across the prairie grass on a tire shop computer screen, alternately stepping outside to anxiously gaze up at the dark clouds swirling over Morrill. Wednesday's multiple funnels caused Team Vortex2 to cheerfully dub Eastern Wyoming and Western Nebraska the new tornado alley.

According to DFW Weather "Verification of the origins of rotation in tornadoes experiment (Vortex2) is the largest tornado study to take place

across the central US. The ten million dollar study is supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Science Foundation, and runs May 10—June 13. During the seven weeks over 100 scientists in more than 40 storm-chasing vehicles will deploy to locations that pose a significant risk for tornadoes."

I don't know about the other 39 storm chasing vehicles but the one used in the local chase was battered into submission by hail the size of soft-balls.

During Wednesday's afternoon storms, the two little boys and I covered in our damp farmhouse storm cellar; they thought it a great adventure to rummage through boxes of 1970/80 era toys while I looked around and concluded I really needed to take a day and clean the place.

The hour or so we spent underground revived a long buried memory of a bygone Sunday afternoon in June 1955 when my parents, along with four year old me, and baby David, were on our way to visit relatives near Minatare. We were driving east along what is now Sugar Factory Road when the sky

turned black and the radio station warned of a tornado on the ground. My father hurriedly turned the car into a farmyard driveway and, along with other families caught in the storm, we ran to the farmhouse to ask the occupants for shelter. I remember leaning back against my father's legs in the dark basement, his hands on my shoulders, the quiet murmur of voices.....and the fear.

I credit that day, and repeated viewings of the Wizard of OZ, for kindling my almost pathological fear of tornadoes.

The Panhandle weather forecast is for another week of cool temperatures, daily rain and cloud covered skies; the pasture grass will love it, the crops will hate it, and we'll do a little of both.

For ten years we've prayed for rain, but we would have enjoyed it more had it fallen over a period of months instead of days.

And that's the way it is...June 12, 2009. Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

Tammy Westhart, Accountant

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