

Your

FREE!

Country Neighbor



July 2005

YOUR WINDOW WITH A COUNTRY VIEW



A Monthly Magazine About the Rural Midwest



The best lemonade stand I ever stopped at was in Peru south of Fifth Street.

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In Nebraska: Auburn, Avoca, Barada, Brock, Brownville, Cook, Dawson, Elk Creek, Falls City, Humboldt, Johnson, Lorton, Nebraska City, Nehawka, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee City, Peru, Shubert, Stella, Syracuse, Table Rock, Talmage, Tecumseh, Union, Verdon, and Weeping Water.

In Missouri: Rock Port, and Tarkio.

In Iowa: Emerson, Farragut, Hamburg, Malvern, Riverton, Shenandoah, Sidney, and Tabor.

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Editor and Publisher: Stephen Hassler

The following people helped make this issue possible:

Devon Adams
Frieda Burston
Merri Johnson
Lila Meyerkorth
Karen Ott
Joe Smith
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Ann Yates

Thank you!

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Look for Your Hometown
at:
www.YourCountryNeighbor.com
(capital letters optional)

July is about...

Midsummer in the Midwest! Roadside flowers and backyard gardens...Farmers Markets and wheat harvest.

Visit our website regularly this month for new photos of roadside wildflowers and other seasonal pictures. And there are more photos of farms like the one on the cover.

This cover photo was taken just west of Otoe.

Some students from Southeast Consolidated are contest winners. Their poetry is published in this issue and their short stories will be in following issues. If you can't wait, you can read them all right now at yourcountryneighbor.com. Just click on the windmill.

It's been hot after a cool Spring, and it feels like Summer now. I visited the best lemonade stand ever, right here in Peru. I hope you enjoy your Summer and this issue of *Your Country Neighbor!*



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The June 2005 "Swap Meet" in Brownville was more fun than a petting zoo!



There were bunnies!



There were pony rides!



And 'kids' (baby goats).



And puppies, of course.



There were fancy fowl (chickens, geese, parrots).

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Do you recognize these locations from Your Country Neighborhood?

These locations will be revealed in the August issue.

Last month's locations are at the bottom of this page.



Window on Fifth Street

An early idea for this publication was to offer a reminder to country neighbors to appreciate the beauty around them which may be taken for granted, and to provide a window with a country view to those living far away who miss home. So I am reminded in this beautiful month to share some of my recent observations while driving and appreciating.

The scenic farmsteads whose beauty rival any city mansion, the deer at the wood's edge, the black and yellow Swallowtail butterfly on the wild phlox in my backyard, the wooden cross-pole fence along the highway, children enjoying America's greatest expression of freedom...summer vacation!

Picnics and outings and the fourth of July parades and fireworks. Iced tea and conversation on the porch.

Golden wheat ready for harvest, emerald leaves on corn stalks knee-high (and well before the fourth of July), purple alfalfa blossoms.

Small town lake, a fishing pole, a roadside lemonade stand, ribs at a backyard barbecue, hot dogs over a campfire.

Roadside wildflowers, horses and cattle grazing on green sloping pastures.

Flowers for the table, strawberries, black raspberries, green apples, tomatoes, and zucchini.

Keep your up your awareness and have a great summer!



Now where might you see a Pelican crossing in Southeast Nebraska?



A boulevard-like stretch of road near what little city?



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Last month's 'Answers'.

First column: Top, Country Church south of Tecumseh and west of Elk Creek, NE.

Middle, Country Church east of Barada, NE. **Bottom**, Nebraska City's 'elevators' on the Missouri River shore.

Second column: Top, Church Steeple near Arbor Lodge entrance in Nebraska City. **Bottom**, Mural in Shenandoah, IA.

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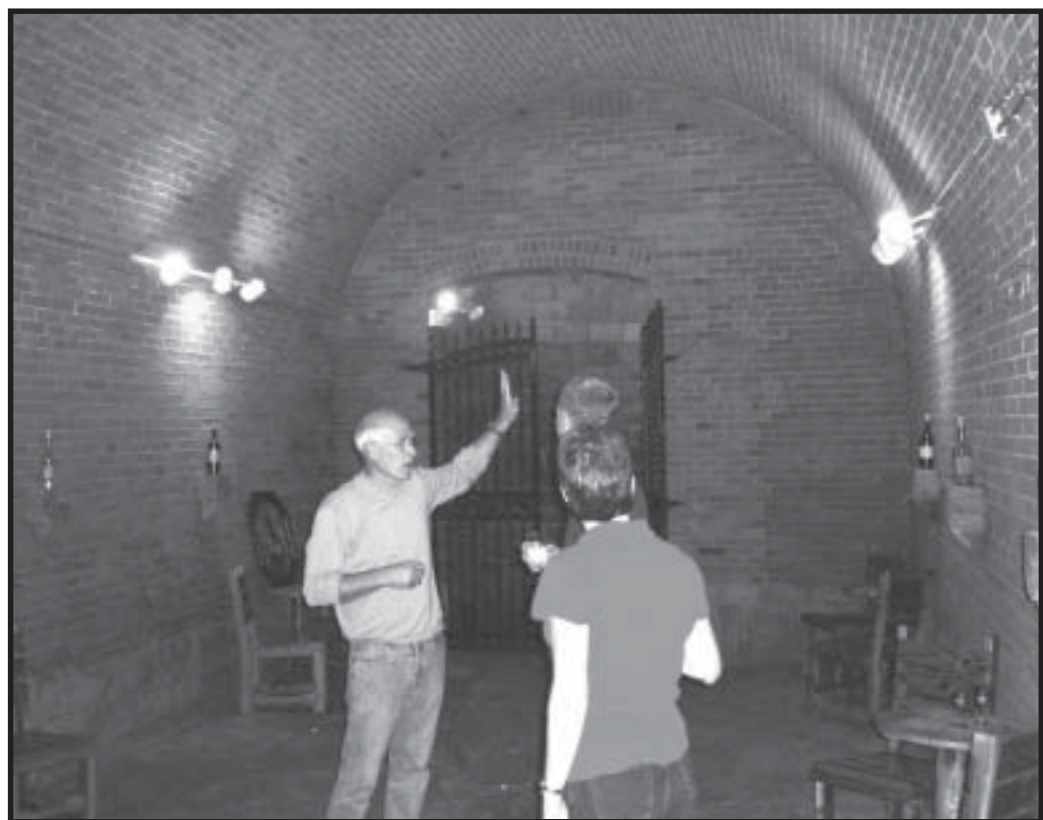
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Country Scenes



The end of June was a time for golden grain. By now you have probably noticed the harvesters in the wheat fields. This is a picture of Joe Smith's crop west of Johnson. In color at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com



Blue skies, white clouds, and a little church make for a pretty country scene. Northeast of Auburn.



Curious in Missouri.



Congratulations Nemaha, Tree City USA!



We surprised each other, but my camera was ready.



A Great Blue Heron at Verdon State Recreation Area.

Some of my pictures are in color at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Your

Country Neighbor



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Pictures in Color

at

www.yourcountryneighbor.com



This Tiger Swallowtail butterfly appreciates my backyard wildflowers and I appreciated its visit.

Click on "Photo Galleries," and select an option from the list. There are photos of Farms and other Country Scenes, Wildlife including Waterfowl, Wildflowers, and seasonal pictures of Autumn leaves and Winter snow.

You may refer your relatives and friends to the online edition of *Your Country Neighbor*. Just give them this web address:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
Photos Provided by Author

Fishing:

The Missouri River has been up and down more times in the last month than I care to count. With the high water comes the "Trash." Trash basically is the sticks, corn stocks, weeds, and grass that wash in the river or off its banks during a heavy rain. My kids and I have always thought that every tennis court in the state must be near a creek that floods during storms due to the large amount of tennis balls that we would find floating after a gully washer. Then along with basketball courts, I know that at one time we had around 20 basketballs at home. The kids would have me pull along side with the boat and salvage the balls from the river while the other trash was flowing. It's kind of funny but if you can keep a line in during those times the fish are biting the best. It's not the greatest fun to keep cleaning the grass off your line but more times than not the fish on the other end does it for you. So while the kids are looking for another ball, I'm catching fish.

The 2005 *Old Man River Days* Fishing Contest May 22nd seemed to bring the fishermen out. It was a sunny warm Sunday contest and the conditions made for a lot of good fishing. My wife and I judge the contest every year, and this year like all others had its surprises. We weighed in over 150 pounds of fish. The bait of choice this day was night crawlers. And the 2005 *Old Man River Days* Fishing Contest Winners are: Dave McConnaughey with the most pounds of fish with 17 total pounds. Jeff Meyers with the biggest Carp at 9 pounds. And the Biggest Catfish went to Glen Mellage with a 5 pound Flathead cat.

There were several other flatheads caught that day but none of any size. But to see some flatheads caught is always encouraging anyway. This means the flatheads will be hitting soon. Their run usually starts with the small one hitting early and the bigger ones coming on a few weeks later as the water warms up. June in my opinion is still the month for the flatheads. So get out there and hook into one, you won't soon forget the experience of a Flathead pulling on your line. It's like no other! Jamie Reeves proved that The Flatheads are starting to run with his 53 pound Flathead Catfish caught Memorial Day Weekend.

Hunting:

Deer Applications

Starting June 13th Residents who do not yet have their FIRST permit, including those who were unsuccessful in obtaining a permit in a Draw unit, can purchase their FIRST permit. Permits that remain in Draw units are available at this time. This also includes Statewide Archery, Statewide Muzzleloader and Statewide Youth.

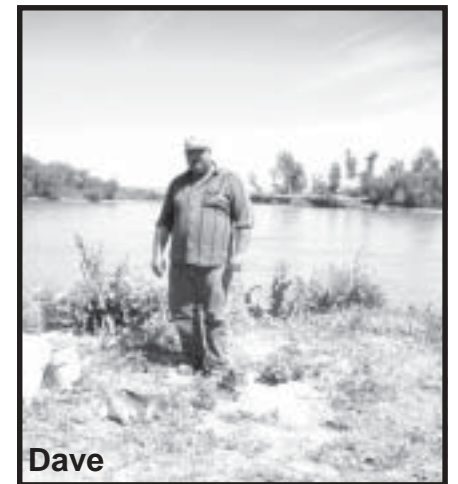
Starting June 27th Nonresidents and Residents who do not yet have their permit, can purchase their permit, in any unit subject to availability, including statewide archery and muzzleloader. Purchase online or by mail through the Lincoln office. Contact the Nebraska Game & Parks web page today at <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/guide/hguide.html>.

A change from last year that is worth noting is our area for Season Choice Area is once again Area #21. You have to denote this on the application when applying. Season Choice allows you to bag two antlerless deer during the 2005 Deer Seasons (archery, regular rifle, muzzleloader, & late rifle seasons). This allows you to bag two does when you have the time – you choose the season. Also your 2005 Habitat Stamp is good for the Late Rifle Season (January 2006).

The river will eventually settle out providing some good cool fishing opportunities. And if you want to hunt deer this fall, it's time to get moving on getting an application in before it's too late. Summer is here and the time is right for some good outdoor activities. You need to get out there and give it a try. You won't be sorry. 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."



Glen



Dave



Jamie



Jeff

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Recipe of the Month



Old Fashioned Fruit Leather Commercially Referred to as “Fruit Roll-ups”

by Ann Yates

This takes a little effort, but my 31 year old child remembers it from her childhood and argues with my 12 year old grandchild as to who is boss over the fruit leather jar. That makes it all worthwhile.☺

Use any of the meatier fruits like strawberries, peaches and apricots. I'm going to try paw paws this year (we'll see). Save the cherries and grapes for jelly and popsicles. You can sweeten a tart fruit with sugar but cooked apples and pears make better sweeteners. If you have canned or frozen apples and pears you need to use up from last year, this would be a good time to use it.

Puree the fruits in your blender and pour it into a shallow container. I prefer glass because it will not react with the fruit acids and it is easier to loosen the final leather away from the surface. Make a layer about ¼ inch thick. Now dry it. My dehydrator does not get hot enough to dry fruit before it molds so I use the oven. Turn the oven on to “warm” and place a table knife in the door to hold it ajar so moisture can escape. During the earlier parts of the drying process stir it about every ½ to 1 hour. It is good to start this in the morning when you can stir it once in awhile. It can burn, so be careful. When it has gotten as thick as apple butter stop stirring and allow it to dry on the surface (by the way, this is a great way to cook down apple butter without as much danger of scorching). When it is dry enough to handle, loosen the edges and pull away from the pan. Turn it over and allow to dry completely. To store, simply roll up in waxed paper and place in a clean, airtight jar. If some of the edges feel crispy they will soften upon storage as the moisture left in it will equalize. If they break off simply leave in jar and use in breads or cakes like you would raisins or any dried fruit.

These are just the basic directions. Your imagination takes over here. Try cinnamon with apple, or mix the fruits up. Paint one side with chocolate or melted caramel for a gourmet delicacy.

Now back to the cherries and grapes. If you have never made jelly, I urge you to try. It is easy and delicious. I recommend the low sugar pectin formulation because it has more fruit than sugar, which gives a wonderful flavor. The traditional methods have more sugar than fruit and it shows in the taste. Pectin can be found in most grocers, ask a clerk where they keep the canning supplies. The low sugar formula is marked and comes with great instructions. Follow them carefully.

As always, **have fun and enjoy with loved ones.**

Editor's note: *Honey Creek Vineyards Bakery* is open for call-in orders only, until August 22 when Ann hopes to have a grand opening for the coffee shop. Call 872-4865 for favorites or specialty orders. Decorated cakes are now available upon request. Ann is at the Nemaha County Farmers Market each Saturday 8 am to noon. Beginning July 12, the market will also be open Tuesdays 3 to 6 pm.

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

By Merri Johnson

Three sheets to the wind pretty much describes the capacity of my new single-strand, poor-excuse-for-a-clothesline retractable model. It can't hold a candle, much less a load of wet jeans, to my previous clothesline. Now that was the genuine article: three 25-foot lengths of vinyl coated wire supported by cast iron T-bars anchored in concrete. You could count on that line to hold whatever you could carry in a laundry basket.

However, finding a place for this 50-foot retractable line nearly scuttled the project. The only level, sunny exposure required mounting one end of the line on the house, spanning the patio, and attaching the hook end to one of the grape arbor posts. Fifty feet of line may seem like a lot, but when you have to hang items to avoid entanglements in the grape vines and the patio furniture, it really limits your hanging options.

So, you're asking, why did I give up my genuine clothesline for a namby-pamby piece of string? Pure aesthetics. I finally gave in to my husband's urging to remove the old one on the grounds that it was unattractive. He may have gone so far as to refer to it as an “eyesore.” To be fair, our children had also commented more than once that it just didn't look right in front of the shade garden under the spreading maple, which is more-or-less the focal point of our back yard. Then again, hanging laundry across the patio isn't exactly a landscaping design coup, either. But with the retractable line, it's all visible for only a couple of hours at a time.

My husband is right about the old line being an eyesore. But you have to understand that clotheslines are a part of my makeup. Where other people have sinews, I have clothesline wire. I grew up on a northwest Iowa farm in the fifties, so naturally my mom hung laundry outdoors. Our line was situated in its own dedicated strip of grass that separated the new-house yard from the old-house-turned-machine-shed yard. My strongest memory of that clothesline involves the unmentionables of Mrs. Yarke, who stayed with us when new babies arrived. (I was the third and three more followed.) She was a short woman, and as the years passed, her width ultimately came close to matching her height. Anyway, Mrs. Yarke's unmentionables were a source of comic interest to me and my older sisters. We compared them to sails on ships and had a hard time stifling our snickers as those gigantic briefs flapped in the breeze next to our teeny-weeny ones. I suppose that was rude, but we were just little kids then.

I've always had a clothesline. When we were newlyweds in California, our apartment didn't have laundry facilities, but it did have a clothesline. I actually carted wet laundry home from the laundromat to hang outdoors. When we first moved to Auburn and lived briefly in an apartment that had no clothesline, my husband nearly died of embarrassment when I had the audacity to ask the next-door neighbors if I could use theirs. They graciously agreed. I suggested asking our current neighbor for the same favor, as he never uses the line in his backyard. My husband suggested not.

Besides, hanging out laundry is part of my outdoor puttering repertoire. I'd just have to think up some other reason to get out of the house if I didn't have a clothesline. I do observe proper “town” clothesline etiquette, of course: if you must hang undies, they go on the middle line so they're out of sight. Of course, now with only one line, undies will be totally taboo, although an occasional nightie might make an appearance. And I'm not a complete glutton for punishment; I don't line-dry items that will then have to be ironed! I pretty much stick to bedding, grubby clothes, rags and throw rugs.

So, you see, giving up the clothesline altogether is simply out of the question. Call me old-fashioned; I'll consider it a compliment. I plan to keep hanging out laundry for as long as I can lug a basket of wet clothes outside.

Poetry, etc.

I LOVE AMERICA

by Lila Meyerkorth

The land of the free and the home of the brave. Independence Day! There have been bad years, and there have been good years since the signing of that formal statement written by Thomas Jefferson and adopted July 4, 1776, when thirteen American colonies were declared free and independent of Great Britain. The bad years having taught us more valuable lessons than the good ones.

On December 7, 1941, in the calm of a sun-drenched Sunday, a holocaust begins on Ford Island in the center of Pearl Harbor. Eight of the nine battleships were enjoying a quiet day of rest. The California, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, West Virginia, Arizona, Nevada and Pennsylvania. The ninth, the Colorado, was undergoing work in the Navy Yard at Bremerton, Washington.

Then came an important date in history when our daughter, Pam, was born on July 4, 1953. Her veteran Dad insisted all along that she would be our firecracker—wow, how right he was!

As my sister and I visited Oahu in Hawaii in 1995, and stood among waving palm trees at Pearl Harbor dock waiting for the boat that would carry us to the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, we sensed the deepest respect for our veterans and nation that we had yet felt up to this time. Husbands, brothers, brothers-in-law, uncles, cousins, and many friends were among those who served in World War II.

On the 17th day of May, 2005, we attended the Locust Grove country school Spring program. The years of making American history was portrayed in song, skit, instrument, and enthusiasm. Truly a patriotic tribute to our great American heritage. It was awesome!

GOD BLESS AMERICA!

MY QUILT

by Devon Adams

My life is a quilt
and time is the thread
that stitches together
the pieces of my days.

Dark clusters shade
from grays to blacks,
with textures harsh
in feel and weave.

But then transitions follow,
with subtle shifts
to dusty lavenders and greens
in soft corduroys and cottons.

The change in mood continues
with velvet yellow squares
beside rose silk and blue ice
taffeta that shimmer.

Bright days move into dreams
with embroidered patterns
writing flowers in rainbow
colored stitches.

There are no shapes
that balance here,
no perfect symmetry
of lines and colors.

Memories are patches
sewn together day by day,
and my quilt won't be
the same as yours.

When I tie my final knot
and lay my needle down,
I'll sleep forever underneath
the pieces of my life.

THE EXAMINERS

by Devon Adams

The winter sky was silent
without their wordless shapes.
Though death is hard and often visible,
lying on the unforgiving sheets of snow,
its many shapes and sizes
belonged to other eaters.
Coyotes talked in song
about the frozen deer
beside the ice.
They looked across the field
and down the creek
before they searched the air
above them that was arctic cold.
Hawks were there,
but black shadows with long fingers
were nowhere to be seen.
The prize was theirs for dining,
without vulture interference.
In time the sun grew lonesome
for the spinning earth
and leaned in closer
with warm breath
that melted winter.
The message was received
by the squadron dressed in black.
They fell upon the thermals
and rode them north
along the mighty river
that drains the plains.
On a sun clear day
with warm air rising
from the river bottom,
the examiners arrived.
They hung in silent spirals
over coyote's run and
dropped in low and mean
to survey the population.
Like evil accountants
they tallied limps and coughs,
And waited.

Poetry Winners of Southeast Consolidated Schools' Sixth Annual Literary Contest

Third Grade

IF I LIVED ON THE MOON

By Krynn Prater (1st place)

If I lived on the moon,
I would see you every night.
If I lived on the moon,
I would be best friends with the North Star.
If I lived on the moon,
I would drink from the big dipper.
If I lived on the moon,
I would sleep all day and stay up all night.
If I lived on the moon,
I would ride a shooting star.

THE DAY I GOT A MOUSE IN MY SWEATER

By Jonathan Sailors (2nd place)

I was sitting by the heater
When a mouse ran up my sweater.
It made me cry critter, CRITTER, CRITTER
Dad asked what's the matter.
I said a CRITTER!
Then out plop came not
A critter but a mouse.
Dad stepped on the mouse
Causing the mouse to flatten out
And die.

SNOWFLAKE SEASON

By Desirae Hager (3rd place)

Once flowers were blooming
And birds were chirping.
Now snow is on the ground
And the sky is cloudy,
But there is one thing
That has not changed,
LIFE.

Fourth Grade

BASKETBALL

By Paige Watkins (1st place)

Basketball
So big and round
Dribble dribble
Touch the back of the rim
SWISH!
3 points
Awesome
5 to 8
Mustangs lead
Nice snatch, Carlee
5 to 11
MUSTANGS ROCK
BOOM
In your face Sioux City
Mustangs win the championship
Big Trophy
COOL!

Fourth Grade (continued)

SPIDERS

By Hayley Huey (2nd place)

Spiders,
Some are scary,
Some not,
Creepy eight legs,
Fuzzy little bodies,
Silk webs,
Some have poisonous bites,
A a a a a a a a a a !

FLUFFY

By J. C. McMann (3rd place)

Fluffy is a rabbit
Living
Under my
Front porch.
Furry and cute
You'll think so too.

Fifth Grade

MY GAME

By Dean Lewis (1st place)

Yu-Gi-Oh is my date
A special, clever playmate
I could study to create
Better homework which I hate.

I'll get to my homework soon
Yu-Gi-Oh is my doom
My cards are in my room
My homework waits till noon.

Yu-Gi-Oh is in my head
After all that has been said.
Mom wishes Yu-Gi-Oh was dead
My homework is still on my bed.

I should put these cards away
And play with them another day
I'll do my homework and obey
Make my mom happy, today.

Fifth Grade (continued)

MOVING UP IN YEARS

By Peyton Kuker (2nd place)

I started Southeast six years ago,
With a class of girls and boys.
In Kindergarten we learned our letters,
And played with lots of toys.

In time we moved to first grade,
And learned to subtract and add.
We learned that playtime was over,
And that made us kind of sad.

Next we went to second grade,
With a move across the hall.
We learned that we were growing up
And getting very tall.

Third grade came upon us fast,
We had to write instead of print.
The school year went by very fast,
We wondered where it went.

Then we went to fourth grade
Writing reports was what we learned to do
We had to work hard to get them done
But we learned a lot from them too.

Now we are in fifth grade,
We're learning the capitals of each state.
We have a lot of homework now,
And it's not good if you do it late.

Next year I'm going to a new school
I'll really miss my class,
Cause we were all like family
And we always had a blast.

FRIENDS

By Victoria Williams (3rd place)

Friends are always there for you.
Friends will always care for you.
Friends will never let you down.
Friends will never make you frown.
Friends are the ones who will share.
Friends are the ones who will always be there.
Friends are the most important care.



Roadside poetry

Old Maid Hill

by Frieda Burston

They lived in a “row house” across a side alley from us, facing away. Six small houses were side by side, a common wall with each neighbor in the row, but a separate mailbox at the bottom of the shared stairs. The Hills lived in the end house: Mr. Hill, Mrs. Hill, and Old Maid Hill, who was about 10 years past marrying time.

Mr. Hill didn’t talk to himself, but he had what I recognized— even at ten years old— as being an exaggerated idea of his own importance. He had been a streetcar conductor, and still wore dark pants and a dark jacket with a white shirt, even around the house. He always looked as if he was going to church, but he stayed home most Sunday mornings. I could see him across the alley, reading the Gazette to his wife, out in the back garden when the sun was warm. And always his last comment was as he folded the papers, “Well, we must remember that these aren’t our kind of people.”

Mrs. Hill was a prissy lady who simpered and acted younger than her daughter. She liked talking to me and telling me about her social victories of 30 years ago, and about beaux that Miss Hill had had— but unfortunately, each one turned out to be “not our kind of people, you know” and I slid out of our conversations as soon as I could.

Old Maid Hill was probably pretty at the time I was born, but by the time I knew her, her shoulders drooped and she looked discouraged. She reminded me of a bird who wished she could raise her wings and fly a little but didn’t realize that what held her back were cage bars. I went over and talked to her whenever I saw her out, because I never saw anyone else ever talk to her.

Mama said that maybe the Hills didn’t want their daughter to grow up because then maybe she could marry and leave them, and then who would clean the house and cook supper and iron their clothes? So they treated her like a child, and she had never had a chance to grow up. And she stayed at home because home was the only place she had ever been after eighth grade was over.

It was too bad, said Mama, it was too bad that the Hills didn’t go to church. Church was a great place for meeting nice people.

So the next time I was over there, I asked her about church. Well, yes, they went to church when Daddy was still working, but after they moved here they quit. Daddy felt that it was too tiring for Mumzy and her to go, but Daddy went once in a while by himself.

Well, couldn’t she go by herself to a church around here? There wasn’t a church around here, she told me.

“Oh yes there is!” I said. “There’s an old store across the street on the next corner, and a church moved into it. The boys at school said it’s a Holy Roller place, and people get excited and roll around on the floor and cry and scream in different languages, and they call up the Devil— only that’s all lies. Sylvia and I skated past there one Sunday morning just to see them roll around, but they were all sitting in chairs listening to the preacher, and we didn’t see anywhere they could roll around, anyhow. Sylvia’s father says they’re from a church down on Hickory Street, and they’re rebuilding, so they’re meeting here for a while. But it’s a church, all right.”

“Mumzy and Daddy wouldn’t let me go!” said Old Maid Hill, looking almost alive as she thought about it.

“Oh well, yeah, they might,” I told her. “I heard you cough one day when I went down the alley. Miz Scott said that old Mr. Scott died of The Consumption a couple of years before we moved here— did you know him? People say that Consumption is real catching, maybe even from across the street— maybe you caught it, and maybe you need to go and pray that it won’t take you away? Lots of people go to church to pray for miracles— if they were afraid of losing you, maybe they’d let you go.”

Two weeks later Sylvia and Piggy and I were skating around the block. We were in front of the row houses and a man stood there looking around. He stopped us to ask hesitantly, “Young ladies, do you know if a family named Hill lives here?” I looked at him. His overalls were faded and rough-dried, but they were clean and he was clean and smelled like soap.

His shoes were worn-down and patched, but his hair was combed carefully, and his face was clean-shaved. He wasn’t exactly a Handsome Prince type, but he looked sturdy and dependable. I decided that I liked him. “Yes,” I said.

He lit up with a smile and said, “And is there in the family a very nice young lady with a pretty face?” Piggy and Sylvia both started to shake their heads but I pinched their behinds and we all said, “Yes.”

But when he asked where they lived, I had to say, “I can’t tell you. Mama says never to tell where anyone lives because you might be talking to a bill collector. But all the row houses have names on the mailboxes at the bottom of their stairs.” And we skated on and didn’t look back until we turned the corner. He was knocking at the right door.

I knew what would happen, and it did. The next time I saw Old Maid Hill, I asked her. She shook her head unhappily. “Daddy and Mumzy say he isn’t our kind of people.”

I had a little hissy on that. I could feel my hair frizzing up just like a cat when it’s getting ready to scratch. I told her, “You know what I think? I think Daddy and Mumzy aren’t your kind of people either— I don’t know what their kind of people is, but I think they’d like for it to be rich people. But they aren’t that kind of people either, or they wouldn’t be living here on a poor people street. Anybody who wears overalls isn’t going to be their kind of people. My father wears overalls. So does Piggy’s. Sylvia’s father wears a butcher apron. I’ll bet that if we were your age, Daddy and Mumzy wouldn’t let us talk to you either. That man was clean and polite and he thinks you’re pretty. If you don’t go back to church again, you’re crazy!”

Her head went down lower and she whispered, “I can’t. They wouldn’t like it.”

I frizzed up more. “It’s like Cinderella’s fairy godmother tells her, ‘There’s a ball with a handsome prince, I just made you a new dress and some glass slippers—’ and Cinderella says, ‘Thanks, but it’s so cozy, sitting here in the ashes—’”

“If you want to sit in the ashes all your life, go ahead. You’ve got no more gumption than a rabbit. Not even a real rabbit, a stuffed rabbit. And I’m not going to do any more for you. From now on, I’m not going to talk to you anymore, neither will Piggy or Sylvia. You’ll have to talk to yourself, or else you’ll go back to that church and find someone who WANTS to talk to you. And if he’s not Daddy’s kind of people, Daddy doesn’t have to marry him, does he? And maybe you could be his kind of people— but I give up on you!” and I flung off in a fit of temper. Mama wouldn’t have liked what I said or how I looked, either. I stayed away from home all morning, until I could unsnarl my face again.

We lived in the house with the garden for another two years, but the Hills didn’t. I never went back across the alley again, I was so mad at Old Maid Hill. So it was Miz. Scott across the street who told me the news— Miss Hill had married and they were all moving out to the edge of town below Hickory Street, where her husband had added on to his big old house to hold Mr. and Mrs. Hill too.

Miz Scott looked at me curiously and said, “She tol’ me to give you thanks for the glass slippers— now where would a young’un like you get glass slippers?”

“Oh, not real, just a joke we had,” I told her. Then I licked my fudgey fingers and told Miz Scott that she made the best brownies on the street, and she gave me another one, and one to take to Piggy.

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A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott
June, 2005



Hot, windy and dry. A few scattered mud holes still dot the area, but the warm weather has left any standing water stagnant and smelly and slick with slime and mosquito larvae. Even the uncouth blackbirds find the water too ripe for bathing, preferring to immodestly shower in the dance of the lawn sprinklers.

Summer arrived right on schedule this week....in fact, I think it might have made a trial run on Sunday; the day was uncharacteristically hot and humid. We groaned and complained and drank gallons of cold water, positive we would end the sweltering day melted into an untidy puddle like the Wizard of Oz's wicked witch of the east. (or west)

The days that followed turned blisteringly hot and the valley's air conditioners sucked power like it was going out of style. The local plumber had sixty-seven air conditioner calls on Monday; he and his crew managed to get to twenty two of them. I suppose the other forty-five households spent the day sweating and swearing, or vice-versa. I'm ashamed to admit it but we're really a bunch of wimps when it comes to humidity.

The men are cultivating corn and beets and will begin ditching the fields for flood irrigation early next week. Dale has been especially busy. Like most farmers with first cutting hay on the ground he has been baling at night, usually finishing one day's work in the early hours of the next one. He's living on nervous energy, too tired most of the time to think beyond his next few hours. I'm not much help, my hands are full caring for grandbabies and running the tire shop; we rarely see each other during the day, unless it's by happenstance or prearranged appointment. We're tough...and accustomed to hard work and we'll get by...but I'd be lying if I told you it's been easy.

Valley corn is finally changing color, slowly turning from yellow to chartreuse to green. Our replanted corn is only about five inches high, most of the remaining acres about mid-calf. Our only good-looking crop is the beans; we planted pintos this year. As a result of major crop failures in the bean growing areas of Nebraska and states north, the price spiked last fall, but the 2005 price will certainly drop back to the normal \$14.00-\$20.00 per bushel range.

And speaking of beans: An old farmer came into the tire shop on Tuesday and sat down in what I privately call 'The Story Chair'. "You Sam Kraus's girl?", he asked...I nodded, and chuckled inwardly at the word 'girl'. He was dressed in dark green work pants, matching shirt and grimy seed-corn cap, and every so often he would pull a red handkerchief from his pocket, tilt back his cap, wipe his perspiring forehead, and then the back of his neck. He'd been young once; maybe even handsome in that wholesome way farm boys have about them, but hard work and harder weather had furrowed his face as neatly as a plow fur-

rows a field. This was his first year of retirement; he had turned his operation over to 'the boys' this past spring, "I'm not so sure I did the right thing." he said quietly...pausing with a sigh..." I love the life, but farming's not the same, there's no money in it anymore. You know, when I was in Korea I remember reading a letter from my father about harvest back home. It must have been about 1953.... he had just sold his pinto beans for \$16.00 a bushel."

And, as if the fifty-two year stagnation in bean price wasn't bad enough, he went on to tell me his father bought a new tractor with that bean check. Now days you couldn't even make a decent down payment.

Farmers with wells have fired up their pivots and the huge metal monsters are sweeping, or circling, the fields with pretend rain. You've got to love a machine (even if it is as ugly as sin) which can beat Mother Nature at her own game. Most irrigation districts will begin delivering water in the next week or so; it won't be long before it is trickling down thirsty rows of corn and beets and beans.

While the pressure to irrigate isn't as intense as it was last summer, one look at the piddling Platte river is a sobering reminder that drought might be down, but it isn't out...not by a long shot; walking from Horse Creek into the Platte was just as easy this Father's Day as it was three years ago, and like three years ago the water was ankle deep and bathwater warm.

Maybe next year, if we're lucky, the water will return.

Karen

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Birds have a 'Heart'

by Joe Smith

The other day as Marta and I were coming home from Auburn, we saw a dead dove that had been killed by a car, lying in the street. Right next to the dove was another dove sitting about two feet from the downed bird. Another car came by and the dove that was still alive got it then. Stop and think about that for awhile. This dove loved the other one so much that he would die trying to protect it from a car. How many of us would give up our own life trying to protect a loved one? Sure we would, you say, but when the time came, wouldn't we side-step just enough to have the danger pass us by? I probably would.

It was an eye-opener to me to see the dove trying to protect his mate. I didn't realize that birds were capable of a love like that. Seems the older I get the more things I find out. I hope I hurry up and find out some more things as I'm running low on years to go.

This proves to me that animals are capable of love as deeply as any humans are. The love dogs have for their master, that may be a little different, but still, it's a heart-felt thing for the dog, the look on his face when you scold him.

I know that some birds are mates for life, like us humans are supposed to be. I believe eagles mate for life, or so I've heard. Kinda strange how 'God' set this up; some animals have many mates while others "should" only have one. I'm sure he has his reasons. I'm way past my knowledge on that subject so I'll sign off now. Joe



Watch Roger's Garden Grow!

And buy his fresh, homegrown produce now, at the Farmers Market in Auburn, Saturdays. (Plus Tuesdays 3 to 6 pm, beginning July 12)

Roger Moerer's *NEMAHA GARDENS* is presently producing red and white onion, green beans, beets, turnips, zucchini and summer squash. By the time you read this, the tomatoes are likely to be ready. Color photos of the gardens are online.

The Farmers Market is in Auburn at the Nemaha County Fair Grounds 8 am to noon. Roger sometimes "sells out" by 9:00 am. Find Roger's booth for the best produce!

See Roger's garden at www.yourcountryneighbor.com
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