

Your

Country Neighbor

FREE!



July 2007



East of Syracuse. Wheat in the background, golden and harvest-ready. Green rows of soybeans in the foreground. Barns and pond, center.

Your Country Neighbor is a publication that promotes the American value of “rural living”, country and small town life presented in photos and essays from people who live here. Their columns include stories, poems, and an occasional news release.

A notable presence is the photography. Plus there is a website that shows off more photos, and contains an archive of the past two years of this publication. You can check it out at:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com



Just north of Centralia, Kansas; a peaceful country scene.

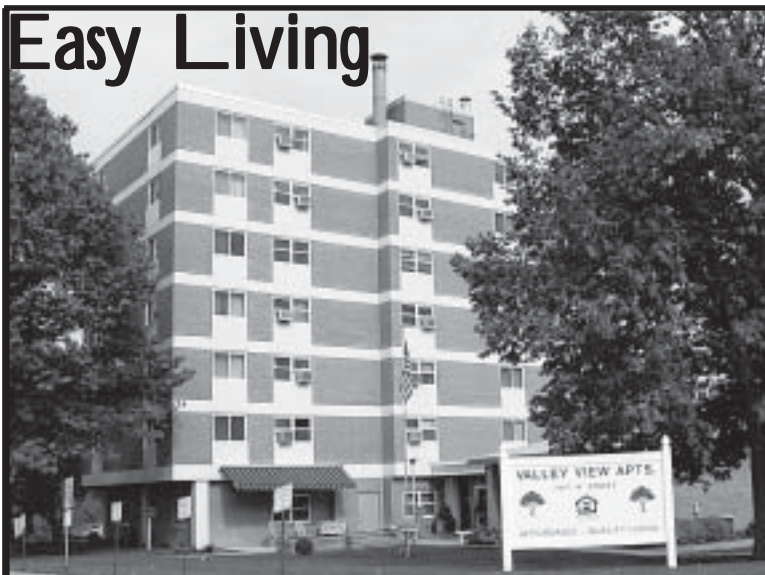
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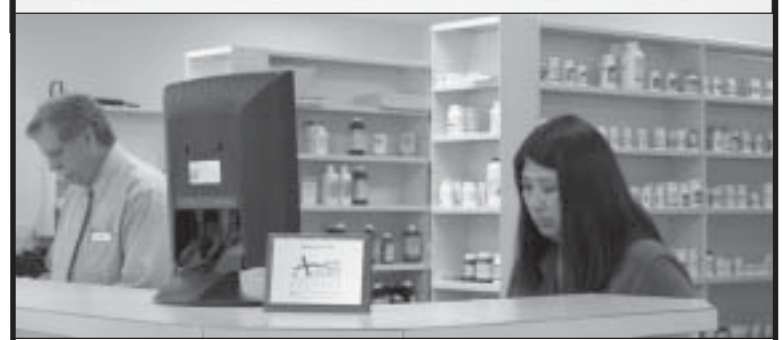
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Red Hatter Alert!

What? "Women With Hattitude II" Red Hatter's Tea (*and more*)
 When? Saturday, August 25th, 2007, Activities 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Where? Seneca, Kansas
 Sponsor? Hotsie Totsie Red Hatters

Register by August 1st. Include chapter and Queen's name, individual's name and \$15.00 per person payable to Jan Bergman. Send to her at:
 1011 Nemaha St., Seneca, Kansas 66538.
 For more info, call Jan at 785-336-2483 or email JanRedHat@yahoo.com.

Your Country Neighbor

Delivered to the 4 corners of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska in the following cities and towns:

In Nebraska: Auburn, Avoca, Brownville, Cook, Dawson, Dubois, Falls City, Humboldt, Johnson, Nebraska City, Nehawka, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee City, Peru, Shubert, Stella, Syracuse, Table Rock, Tecumseh, Union, Verdon, Weeping Water.

In Missouri: Mound City, Rock Port.

In Kansas: Axtell, Baileyville, Beattie, Centralia, Fairview, Hiawatha, Home, Sabetha, and Seneca.

In Iowa: Hamburg, Riverton, Sidney.

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

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Thank you!

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See 'Country Neighbor' Pictures in Syracuse, Nebraska at:

The 5th Street Centre

430 5th Street Syracuse, Nebraska

Among the artworks displayed are two award winning photos by Your Country Neighbor Photographer, Stephen Hassler.

VISIT

Dramatic Expressions Photography

on the 'web'

by Your Country Neighbor Photographer,
Stephen Hassler

www.YourCountryNeighbor.com/Photography.htm

Economic Development and Growth Enterprise

Renee Bauer, Falls City, Nebraska

Falls City EDGE is proud to announce that this summer Bradley P. Griffin will be doing an internship to fulfill requirements of an MBA from Chadron State College.

Currently Griffin is a full time faculty member of Peru State College teaching in the School of Professional Studies with an emphasis on computer management and information systems. This Fall will be his fourth year at PSC, and in the Fall his classes will include Productions/Operations Management, Computer Management and Information Systems, Accounting Information Systems, and Networking Design and Management. Other classes he teaches include Computer Applications and Information Systems Concepts, Database Design and Programming, Web Design and Programming and other information systems specific titles.

Griffin has participated in developing a new option for the Business Management degree that is unique to PSC, a degree in Business Management with an option in Human Performance and Systems Management. This innovative degree combines aspects of information systems management, as well as human resources.

Griffin has resided in Falls City for seven years after marrying Becky Gilkerson, daughter of the late Judy and Dale Armbruster. While he does not always enjoy the commute to PSC, the wonderful small town atmosphere of Falls City always makes it a great drive home. Becky has a son, Kaleb Gilkerson, who will be a senior this coming Fall at Falls City High School, and both Becky and Brad look forward to attending football and, of course, wrestling matches during the school year. Kaleb was the only state qualifier this past year in wrestling, and hopefully will repeat or better his performance as Brad claims that hotel rooms have already been purchased.

“This experience working with the economic development group will be the final experience of my MBA program through a sister college, Chadron State College,” says Griffin. “I chose the option to do an internship with Falls City EDGE rather than a thesis as I felt the experience will be extremely relevant to my future at PSC, but also to give back to the community I call my own. I truly felt a part of this town from the moment I arrived, and my contributions can hopefully enhance our outstanding town.

“PSC has been innovative in the last several years and has begun a new master’s degree program that I hopefully will become more involved with in the future. The new degree is a Master of Science in Organizational Management with an emphasis in Entrepreneurial & Economic Development. My experiences this summer working with Falls City EDGE should prove very useful for feedback, and hopefully I can create a bridge between the college and the community I live in that does not exist now.”

For more information, go to www.fallscityedge.com, or e-mail bauer@fallscityedge.com, or call 402-245-2105 (office) or 402-245-7766 (cell).

Simply Amazing


By Joe Smith

The forty-third Father’s Day Barbeque was an amazing feat. There are so many people working and helping, just a continuous stream of willing hands. I would hope all small towns are this way. I couldn’t begin to tell you what went on, but it was a lot. It involved a lot of planning. I was busy most of the day so couldn’t see all that was going on. It seemed to me to run very good. People would pitch in when needed. The crew that handled the chicken cooking was a good group. The same basic crew every year plus some new ones showing up, but it didn’t change the outcome. The job always gets done.


The ladies get their part done as do the men, and every one has a good time. The big dance went off with few problems that are associated with dances and the refreshment that go along with it. Monday morning found people cleaning up and putting stuff away. Actually, most of it was done Sunday night. That is the amazing part of it, the people all work together. Oh, there are a few chiefs, people that know what needs to be done, but lots of Indians seem to show up to help. My wife and I live in a neighboring county, yet consider Johnson our hometown. I’m sure there are times they feel like running us off, but they haven’t yet. New people move in town and love to pitch in and help. What little my wife and I do to help is just a drop in the bucket when you think of all the planning that goes into this each year. It boggles my mind. Without people working together it would be a disaster for sure. I would like to give my thanks to ALL the hard working people that put this on. The rain that was forecast held off.

If the people of the world could get along this well, it would sure settle things down. There would be no need for war. While watching it all yesterday, I could think of lots of things to put in this article. Today my mind is back to normal and I can’t remember all the nice things I thought to say. The main thing is what a nice place Johnson is to call home. People make a town and we have good people. Joe Smith

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On the Shores of Paradise....

by Vicki Harger

What a vacationland! It was better than Jamaica, better than the Bahamas. There were no obnoxious tourists with their gaudy beach towels and snip-snapping cameras. There was no one here but me.

Just me and the sky and sand and surf!

I'd discovered this out-of-the-way beach in Kentucky, years ago, while exploring a tree-shrouded trail. From then on I'd considered it my own personal paradise.

Today, the blue waters shimmered in the late afternoon sunlight. With a sigh of contentment, I sank to the sand, immersed in the sights and sounds about me: The rusty creak of crickets in the woods. The flip and flash of fish in the waters along the shores. The quiet sunning of turtles on a nearby log.

Ah...life just doesn't get any better than this.

Eventually, I roused myself and set about gathering wood for a campfire. The sun was beginning to sink beyond the distant island. Darkness wasn't but an hour away. I'd need firewood if I was going to camp here tonight. And I *did* fully intend to camp here.

I had no worried relatives looking over my shoulder, telling me this deserted beach wasn't a safe place for a lone woman to spend the night. I had no grumpy teenage-daughter with me to fuss about the lack of a vanity mirror and accessories.

I felt blissfully free of all responsibilities - free of all the trappings of modern life.

There was no tent, but that didn't matter. Tents only block out the moonlight and the view of shooting stars. I had a sleeping bag and a pile of firewood, plus marshmallows, chocolates and crackers for S'mores. I had a scented little candle called "*Aroma Dreams*". What more did I need?

It started getting dark. I knew, then, what I needed. I needed some means to protect myself.

Something big flew by overhead. I watched as a buzzard landed in a dead tree nearby. Another one landed, then another...Buzzards with their black-caped wings and ugly little heads. They stared at me through the dimness, hump-backed and watchful. Their grim presence unnerved me a bit.

With the approaching twilight, uneasiness set in. Here I was at a deserted beach in the wilds of Kentucky. No one knew where I was except for a few scruffy-looking fishermen who had stared at me from their boats earlier in the day. What if those Good Ol' Southern Boys turned into Bad Ol' Boys at night? What if they came looking for me in the darkness?

I stared though the gloom at the pinpoints of light across the cove. They were the only visible signs of civilization around. Except for two little toads playing leapfrog across my campsite, I was utterly alone. Well, not *utterly*. I knew that I had an angel or two hanging around. The Bible says "the Angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear Him!" Surely there were several angels hanging out in this Paradise.

I forced myself to relax. I was Eve in my own little Garden of Eden and I intended to enjoy my vacation.

Striking a match, I held it to my woodpile. Smoke curled skyward and a flame caught on some kindling. I watched it climb higher and higher. Then I fetched my marshmallows and chocolate, and soon the smell of toasty S'mores filled the night air - sweet chocolate breezes and the tang of wood-smoke. Firelight flickered across the beach. Lightning bugs danced in the darkness beyond the camp, like restless stars in their own dark galaxy.

I struck another match and lit the wick of my "*Aroma Dreams*". The candle released a new scent into the darkness. Ah—musky, dusky solitude. It made me feel sleepy. Warm. Dreamy. I curled up in my sleeping bag and soon found myself drifting off. An owl hooted. Frogs croaked. Far away, the voice of a loon echoed across the dark waters.

Drowsiness overtook me, and I slept.

Hours later, I awakened with a start.

My *aroma dreams* ended abruptly. I could see that my candle had gone out. In the darkness to the south, coyotes were howling. A fish flopped in the water. Somewhere nearby I could hear the stealthy movements of something large. Leaves rustled, then were silent.

I sat up slowly and stared into the darkness. The campfire was just embers, and although the moon had risen, it did little to illuminate the tree-shrouded beach. The rustling continued. The sound was big - too big.

Rustling. Silence. Rustling. Silence.

It all seemed surreal. This kind of stuff happens to *other* people, not me. Foolish folks who have no common sense. My eyes strained to see through the dimness. Was the intruder an animal or human? Even a big animal is better than people who *act* like animals. The very thought sent chills coursing through me, and I quietly lay back down, pulling the covers up over my head.

That always helps.

I thought about the lady from Omaha who had visited a deserted cemetery a few months back. She'd been found stuffed in her trunk three days later. She was alive, but dear Lord! What she must've gone through! I'd never survive such an ordeal. Never. I'm claustrophobic. Even this sleeping bag felt like a crypt to me at the moment.

Wide-eyed, I stared into the blackness of my covers, wondering what my angels were doing now. I hoped they hadn't gotten bored and wandered off somewhere. Surely not. They were probably lounging beside the campfire, I told myself. The thought calmed me just a bit.

"...*The angels of the Lord encampeth about them that fear Him.*"

Evidently, angels don't mind camping out. They could surely handle anything in the woods. And what they couldn't take care of, the Lord Himself would handle. I made myself relax and think positive thoughts. Faith. I've gotta have a little faith, here.

Eventually, the rustlings grew less frequent. The silences grew longer. And longer. At last, the intruder was gone. My heartbeat slowed and my eyes closed. My *aroma dreams* returned. I drifted off, back into the sweet oblivion of chocolate breezes with the tang of wood-smoke.

The faint hint of morning came slowly. I awakened to the first twitterings in the treetops. Chit-chat and a lot of bird gossip. Soon, a pale shard of light pried open the eastern rim—the dawn of a new day. Day-break wasn't in any hurry to arrive, however. A rusty-sounding rooster worked on it for awhile from his coop across the cove. Then abruptly, the sun responded and a glorious pink filled the sky.

The gossipers in the tree-tops ceased their chatter and flew off to find their quota of grubs for the day. I stretched and yawned—glad that I had no quotas to fill, no schedules to keep. The buzzards looked down on me disapprovingly from their dead tree, then gathered up their black-winged capes and flopped away to places unknown. I was glad to see them go.

An outboard motor roared to life across the cove, the sound ricocheting across the lake. I crawled out of my sleeping bag.

I had survived the night.

I stretched and yawned and poked at the fire. I lounged. I played. I splashed in the surf. It was then that a thought occurred to me.

I mustn't be selfish. I mustn't lounge about endlessly. There was work to do, and other folks to think about: House-bound invalids. Folks who live in nursing homes, who don't get to go on vacation. People who never get to enjoy S'mores and chocolate breezes and the tang of wood-smoke. Who never get to hear the haunting voice of a loon across dark waters.

I thought about the people who read my columns: my friend Bobby, and my co-worker Rose, and her sister Tressie, and Marj Kinghorn, of course - wonderful folks who escape their routines by adventuring along with me.

And I thought about *you*, my dear reader.

I sat for a moment, staring across the shimmering waters at the little island where the waves danced and played. Then, I pulled out a pen and notebook.

Slowly, carefully, I began to write.

What a vacationland! It was better than Jamaica, better than the Bahamas. There was no one here but me....

Well, actually - just me, and a few thousand friends, perhaps.

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THE LONG HAUL

by Shirley Neddenriep

Had you been at the intersection of "L" Street and 24th in Omaha on a day in March of the early '70's, you might have been witness to this: A farm truck loaded with 9 head of cows heading for the Omaha Stock Yards and driven by a young man with a work permit license. Past the landmark Fire Station he noted with relief the green light and shifted down for the slight incline and for the turn onto "L" Street.

The driver had grown up handling livestock on his dad's farm including loading and hauling. He grew up taking turns with his brothers for the cherished ride to market in Omaha. He learned about calving, ear tagging, castration of bull calves. His chores included the mixing and distribution of limestone, bonemeal and salt to the cow herd.

He had built enough fence to encircle the globe (he felt like) and keep it repaired, so enough said; fact is, he knew livestock. He was aware that day that he hauled a "loose load."

Riding 'shotgun' that day was a fastidious hired hand whose nature caused him to fleck dust from his long sleeves in an effort to stay clean while hauling manure back at the farm.

Dating from 1883, the Omaha Livestock Market, had been the market, THE market, until relocated to Red Oak, Iowa in 1999. The Livestock Exchange Building is the only recognizable bit remaining of 250 acres of cattle yards, alleyways and sheep pens. The once largest livestock market in the world has been converted into an Omaha business park.

In its heyday, a grand ballroom had filled the entire eleventh floor of the Exchange Building. The lower floors housed commission firms where cowboys and farmers alike strode in with manure on their boots to settle sales.

Twenty-fourth Street runs north/south bringing traffic from the south up to "L." "L" Street runs east/west and leads to the turn off to the unloading ramps of the market. Kennedy Freeway was under construction at the time of the accident.

The truck, a 1971 2-Ton F600 Ford with fold-down wooden livestock racks, moved ahead for the turn to enter "L." Across the intersection an Omaha Police cruiser waited at a red light. The police faced west and had a good view of the events that followed.

As the truck rolled ahead its forward momentum caused the worn

lockdown of the truck bed on the driver's side to release.

With the lockdown inoperable, the bed of the truck raised and tilted, the loose load of cows shifted to the right, and the driver's side wheels began to lift free of the pavement. The driver was able to keep upright using only front and rear right wheels for the turn, cramping very slightly to avoid the curb.

At the curb, gravity took over and laid the truck over onto its side spilling cows and dust over the grass in front of a Richmond Goldman store and its surprised customers. The hired hand choked on dust as he and the driver scrambled up and out the driver's side window.

Released from the confines of a small pen, the cows bolted, some toward freeway construction workers, others toward neighborhood yards and gardens.

Startled police watched with amazement and in a later interview, complemented the young driver for his prowess in driving a loaded livestock truck around the curve on two wheels. They examined his work permit, issued no citation and called for help.

Omaha Police arrived enforce driving a fleet of Ford Grand Torinos driven by cops who envisioned themselves as Starsky and Hutch counterparts. There

resulted much action and much achieving of nothing. The driver and his assistant watched as police cruisers sped up grassed slopes and drove their vehicles down cement stairways from private yards in futile attempts to confine the scattered and confused cows. With weapons drawn, lights flashing and sirens whining, the urban cowboys rode rampant through newly planted gardens, iris beds, and trimmed hedges. A TV crew arrived to film the mayhem.

At the farmer's home, the dad of the young driver sat down to relax and watch the news. "Those look like my cows," he remarked. The police called the livestock exchange and the young driver called his dad. "You'll never guess what happened on the way to market," he reported tentatively.

The livestock yard hands brought a wagon, a "dead" wagon, with sides about three feet high. They loaded a cow onto the wagon. She promptly cleared the low side to regain her freedom.

Eventually someone resorted to tranquilizer guns and all the cattle were relegated to underground holding pens with no deaths; only a very forelorn looking bunch of cows. It hurt the sale. A cow can lose a lot of weight in an escapade like that.

The truck was righted by one of the delegation of tow trucks brought to the scene by news of an upset. That truck is still in service as is the farmer, his son and progeny of the cow herd. Life goes on.

(More to come in August Issue.)

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REASONABLY PRICED



1214 Central Avenue \$39,000

Very nice 2-bedroom home with two bathrooms. Great updated kitchen. This home has character in the nice woodwork. Large detached garage, plus nice size yard with room for garden. Very reasonably priced. For your personal showing, call us today.

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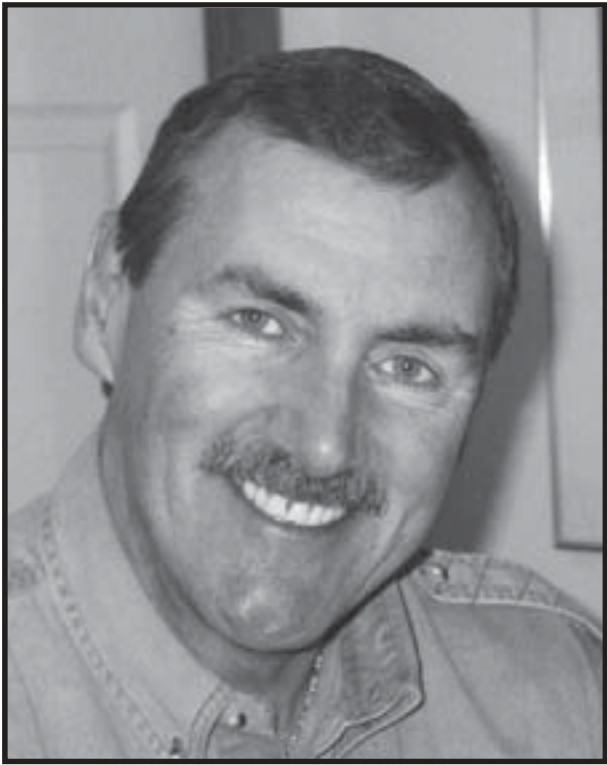


1807 L Street \$69,900

Enjoy the features of this updated 3-bedroom ranch style home. Large living room features carpeting, dining room has oak flooring, and both are tastefully decorated. Kitchen has updated oak cabinets and plenty of storage. Downstairs you'll find a large family room with gas brick fireplace, 2nd bath, and large 11x15 storage room. The exterior is no-maintenance siding and has nice deck off the dining room. One car attached and detached gives you plenty of room for your cars and additional storage. Call us today to see this home.

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A meet-and-greet reception for cartoonist Paul Fell will be held on Friday evening, July 20, beginning at 7:00 p.m. at Wheeler Inn. Fell will present a half-hour program demonstrating his craft, and will then be free to visit with the audience and renew acquaintances from his days as a coach and art instructor at Auburn Public School and Peru State College.

Cartoonist Paul Fell to teach workshop in Auburn July 20-21

Many Nemaha County, Nebraska, residents recognize the name, Paul Fell. His syndicated editorial cartoons appear each week in newspapers across Nebraska, including the Nemaha County Herald. A Massachusetts transplant, Fell began his professional career here teaching art and coaching football in Auburn and teaching art at Peru State College. This July 20 and 21, Fell will return to Auburn to teach cartoon drawing workshops for anyone age 10 and older. More information and registration forms can be obtained from Mary Kruger by calling 402-274-4193.

Fell says that he continues to be amazed that he now gets paid to do the very things that got him into trouble as a schoolboy. He operates his own cartoon studio in Lincoln where he creates humorous illustrations for a wide variety of clients. His editorial cartoons have won a number of awards and appear regularly in several national publications. He is in demand as a speaker and draws caricatures at conventions, trade shows and parties.

In addition, he has produced a number of cartoon books, including the highly popular "You Know You're a Nebraskan..." with Nebraskan and "CBS Sunday Morning" personality Roger Welsch.

Anyone interested in exploring the possibilities for a drawing career, or just a fun hobby, is encouraged to sign up for Fell's workshop by July 16. Space is limited.

"Learn to Draw Cartoons" Workshop

Taught by syndicated editorial cartoonist and former Auburn art teacher Paul Fell

All sessions held at CNS Training Center, 902 Central Avenue, Auburn, NE.

Check the workshop you plan to attend:

- Kids (age 10-13) workshop, Friday, July 20, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. - \$10/person
- Kids (age 10-13) workshop, Friday, July 20, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. - \$10/person
- Teens/adults workshop, Saturday, July 21, 9:30 - 3:30 p.m. - \$20/person
(lunch on your own 11:30 - 1:30)

All participants are to bring along #2 pencils and black fine-tip felt markers. Paper provided.

Name, address, phone number, email (include parent's names for kid's registration)

Enclose appropriate fee with this registration form
(checks payable to Southeast Nebraska Fine Arts Council)
mail to Mary Kruger, 821 - 13th St., Auburn NE 68305
Questions? Call 402-274-4193

Paid registrations must be received by Monday, July 16

Sponsored by Southeast Nebraska Fine Arts Council

THINGS MY MOTHER TRIED TO TEACH ME

by Sheri Mayhew Dowding

Wear clean underwear, you might be in an accident.

She forgot to tell me that they wouldn't be clean after the accident.

Enjoy your kids, they will grow up before you know it.

She forgot to tell me how fast twenty years go by.

She told me if you are going to do a job, do it right.

She forgot to tell me once you get a job, you can never quit.

Doing dishes, laundry, ironing, dusting, and vacuuming - she taught me all of these.

She forgot to tell me they would never all be done at once.

As for cooking, she always said she was a can-opener, not a cook. She taught me to buy the best can-opener I could afford.

After forty years of cooking, I understand why.

Don't be late, be on time.

She forgot to tell me how much longer it takes to get ready the older I get.

Please, thank you, and I love you - she used these words often.

I know how much these words mean now.

Put it back.

After hours of searching for the scissors or scotch tape after my kids had them, I now understand, if you use it, put it back where you got it.

On writing letters, nothing can compare to a handwritten letter in your mailbox.

She forgot to tell me I'd write more than I'd receive.

On giving gifts, she taught me to give and expect nothing in return.

Or the pleasure of giving was gone.

On money, she taught me to pay my bills, don't borrow, charge cards are bad, live on what you have, save for a rainy day.

She forgot to tell me there would never be enough.

On marriage, she taught me to marry once.

I taught her to marry once, but do it right, and if it's wrong, get out, and marry right the second time.

On tolerance, she gave me an older brother and a younger brother.

Growing up with two brothers was enough to teach anybody the meaning of tolerance.

On being deprived, she deprived me of a sister; I'm sure it wasn't intentional.

I learned about sisterly love watching my mom and my aunt, and I know what I missed.

She taught me to have respect for:

Little children, they don't know any better.

The elderly, they have seen and done it all.

Other people's property, it's theirs, not yours'.

Family, they are all you have.

Plants and animals, their life cycle is shorter than ours.

The cemetery, the deceased, and the flag.

She never told me that it would be my dad's grave at the cemetery with his flag in the avenue of flags - and I'd feel such profound loss.

On friends, she taught me there would be many, some very special, others just friends.

She never told me that she would be my best friend as well as my mother.

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

Merri Johnson

Mothers never grow up. Our children do, but we don't. Once you're a mother, you will forever feel that tug of maternal instinct to protect your child. And you'll believe that you actually can.

So naturally, when I recently learned that my daughter was about to embark on a cross-country move on her own, I threw caution to the wind and made plans to accompany her.

Why would I characterize my decision like that? You wouldn't need to ask if you'd ever occupied the passenger seat with my daughter at the wheel. It's not that she isn't a skillful driver. She assured me of that several times on our trip.

But when the Mapquest directions say she'll reach her destination in 15 hours and 20 minutes of driving time, by golly, she's going to. "You can't make up the time lost for pit stops and slow traffic by driving the speed limit, Mom," she explained. Speed limit? The only time we were close to the speed limit was when there was a traffic bottleneck or heavy rain, both of which I began to hope for earnestly as the miles peeled off under our tires. Believe me, pelting rain at 65 mph was soothing compared to our "normal" speed, which shall remain unspecified in case any Highway Patrol officers are reading this and getting any ideas about putting out an APB on her Ford Focus. That's right: a Ford Focus. Not exactly the kind of car to inspire a feeling of invincibility while zooming past everything else that's putzing along at only 75 or so.

The road trip began for my daughter in Wisconsin, where my son-in-law is finishing up his current job before joining her in the South. (I'm afraid to say where, lest those Patrol Officers are serious.) His employer was ready to move their furniture to the new location, but not him just yet, so, my daughter would have to go on ahead without him or find their belongings sitting in the driveway (or not) several weeks later.

I joined up with her by flying into O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where she met me curbside, and we were off. It felt like I'd never gotten off the plane, except that the plane ride was less turbulent. We dashed ahead of slower moving vehicles, zipping right to left to right to left again, as if we were performing a country line dance move in fast-forward. The three-second following rule was condensed to something closer to three yards, and the brakes got a workout more times than I care to remember.

There were a couple of times when other drivers "got in our way," and I'd like to think my extra pair of eyes helped us avoid disaster. But we made it, safe and sound. Well, safe anyway. I'm still feeling the effects of bracing myself and never quite relaxing on the drive. Add to that the unloading and unpacking and landscaping we did, then the return flight, and it may take a few more days of Ibuprofen and a massage to work out the tightness in my shoulders and the sciatica in my left leg.

Was the mental anguish and physical discomfort worth it to see with my own eyes that she's settled into a nice neighborhood? You bet. I'm a mother, remember?



Brownville was a 'campover' for about 200 bicyclists the weekend of June 20. Here a few of the riders check their camping gear brought by one of the vehicles that accompanied the road excursion.

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From the Country Neighbor series,
“Windmills from the Heartland”

by Stephen Hassler



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Inviting spot in Williams Park, Syracuse, Nebraska.

I remember my grandfather mentioning how he liked to walk to the park, sit on a park bench and watch the robins. He always looked forward to seeing the first robin in February or March, because he knew that was a sign Spring was not far off. He worked outside in the Winter and welcomed warmer days.



This shot was taken late in June at the Whiskey Run Creek Winery in Brownville, Nebraska. This is summertime, and many gardens are at their best. If that is true of yours, don't forget to bring some of that outdoor beauty inside for the table. Enjoy the season; this too, will pass.



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
(Photos provided by Author)



Fishing:

The Missouri River has settled down and returned inside its banks. The damage done during the spring flooding seems to have mended and those areas have grown over in vegetation. The river is ready to accept boaters and fishermen. The high waters have cleaned the banks back and removed that old favorite log you tied to last summer. So new landmarks are needed to mark your favorite fishing hole. Do I have a favorite fishing hole? You better believe it! In my opinion it's the location that that you can always get a bite and if you miss it then it's your fault. Fishing was real good this last month. Fishermen were getting the best out of the cool spring water fishing mixed with the warm summer water fishing seasons. The early season's cooler water brings the Blue Catfish success and the later warmer water brings on the Flatheads. Both seasons are sprinkled with Channel Catfish success. And baits seem to vary also with early cool water fish reacting to dough and cut baits and the warmer water fish hitting the live baits. Some big ones have been landed pretty frequently as of late. Make sure you take the bug spray because there are no shortages of mosquitoes. It seems when you're in the shade so are they. The spray will keep them from biting you but it won't keep them from swarming you. The only thing you can do is move to another location or hope for a breeze.

On a bigger note: Old Man River Fishing Contest biggest catfish prize went to David McConnaughey who landed a whopping 80 pound Blue. David reported that the monster bit on a Bluegill and never stopped. The fish spooled out David's reel and if not for his nephew Joel cutting the boat loose from the bank the fish would have surely been gone. Congratulations David!

Hunting:

The 2007 Fall Deer Season DRAW units fist round application have been drawn and the remainder of those DRAW area permits are available on a "first come first serve" basis starting June 11th by Residents and Non-Residents. Check the Nebraska Game & Parks website (<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/>) for permit availability or stop in to a commission office.

Summer is here and so is the fishing season. Flatheads are hitting hot and heavy. And the bait situation seems to be good for this time of year. It's time to get out there - 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."



David McConnaughey (left) and his fishing partner Joel McConnaughey (right) shown with the big 80 pound prize winning Blue Catfish.



The winners of the Old Man River Fishing Contest – Joe Whisler (left) won the biggest carp (6-1/2 lbs) and biggest catfish winner David McConnaughey (right) shown with the "Catch of the Day"- an 80 pound Blue Catfish.

"Trees of Peru"

Bea's Flower Buzz, by Bea Patterson

As are many towns in our area, Peru is celebrating an anniversary this summer - #150. Anniversaries lend themselves to walks down memory lane, and so following that path myself, I started thinking about our little town.

One of the first things I came to appreciate about Peru has been its trees. "The hills of Peru" are covered with trees – lush trees of an abundant variety. From Spring to Winter, from campus to town, trees symbolize Peru.

The City of Peru: Neal Park is awesome in Spring with its flowering dogwoods and redbuds. Downtown, flowering Spring trees shed white drifts of blossoms when March winds blow. Later, they provide welcome shade and add a quaint touch to Peru's block of stores.

Peru State College: The "Campus of a Thousand Oaks" also is a designated Nebraska Arboretum. How many other ginkgo trees can be found in southeast Nebraska and campus has two (male and female). Three champion Jack Pines grow on campus, according to the Nebraska Forestry Service website.*

Missouri River: The river played a prominent part in the establishment of Peru and its early history. Even today, local folks fish and boat the Missouri. Our jewel, the Steamboat Trace hiking and biking trail, allows visitors close up and personal contact with the river and its wetlands. An early memory of the trail for me was its canopy of rustling trees, much of which were and are cottonwoods and willows. Part of the fun along the Trace is identifying the various kinds of trees. Did you know a champion Butternut Tree is located along the trail?*

The timber around here is thick in places with cedars. I remember harvesting many a tree over the years for our Christmas celebrations. North of Peru, a champion Eastern Red Cedar is growing.*

Besides those previously mentioned, other champion trees in the area are: black cherry, Honey Creek south of Peru; Saucer Magnolia, 5th St.; Chinkapin Oak, north of Peru; Eastern Redbud, California St. Include locations within a 30 miles radius of Peru, and the registry lists approximately a dozen more champion trees.* Southeastern Nebraska is certainly great tree country.

I submit then that trees link Peru's various parts together in a unique way, bringing everything and everyone under its green, protective shelter- home.

Bea Patterson
bp15624@alltel.net

*www.nfs.unl.edu/championtree



Artwork by Bea Patterson

GOOD INTENTIONS

by Devon Adams

How could I forget something so important?
I know I should have written it down,
but my pen was dry and
the parking meter popped up red,
and I'd left my reading glasses
by my book at home,
and I only had to drive a block
before I'd be at my desk
with the calendar waiting for
reminders to be jotted on those
big block squares for every day,
and even if I didn't write it down,
it was exactly a week ahead,
which should be easy to remember.
But right then, I skidded to a stop
because a squirrel was trying to
decide whether he would live or die.
He was lucky, and he lived,
but my train of thought was derailed
and never found the track again.
So much for memory,
which is highly over-rated
and easily erased.

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TAKING TURNS

by Devon Adams

It might appear at first glance that birds
are taking turns eating at the feeder.
They are not only beautiful,
but they are also polite,
singing while they bide their time.
However, patience isn't among their virtues,
and each one is a little glutton
who would gladly eat every single seed.
Clearly, that is impossible,
so each one gobbles greedily
until he is pushed away.
Exceptions are parents who bring
their maturing offspring with them
to learn the ropes and taste the goodies.
Beauty isn't necessarily kind,
and tiny yellow finches,
perfect in their plumage,
try to kill each other as they fight
to be king of the feeder and
show off to the ladies at the same time.
The suet is a different can of worms.
Orioles and woodpeckers are busy gulping
greasy chunks, but they have to move
when a blue jay blasts out of the air
and demands possession and gets it.
Maybe it's the raucous squawks
and the in-your-face intimidation,
but it seems to work.
Even with the bullies being nasty,
all of the birds get something,
and I'm the real winner,
because my eyes and ears feast
on so many colors, shapes and songs.

SPILLED PAINT

by Devon Adams

Someone spilled paint
on the fence in the back yard.
I see primary colors – red, yellow and blue.
There are some neutrals too,
in grays and blacks and browns and whites.
But over there is a pale gold next to a purple.
There are spots of orange and olive green,
and some iridescence flashing rainbows.
All these colored spots are moving though,
so maybe they aren't really paint.
Actually they're flying, from branch to branch,
into the sky and back again,
eating luscious mulberries.
The air is full of melodic conversation.
Dawn to dusk is frantic,
but the birds know that
it is the art of living in the music
that sustains the poetry of life.

LOVE THE RAIN

by Devon Adams

Somebody has to love the rain,
even when it won't stop.
The night trees in the spring
are silent until moisture
leaves water shimmering on the leaves
and the tree frogs come to life
with big bass voices making echoes.
Rising rivers and flooding fields
and thunder booming through
the angry clouds are simply
reasons to sing louder.

VISIT

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The Face of Drought

A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

Karen Ott

The wind blows, the fields bake; crops wither and die. By noon the dusty skies turn gunmetal grey along the horizons; a hard 1930's color that encloses the land like a great wall. Come early evening dry thunderstorms raise clouds of dirt from fields which should have long since been covered in green, and farmers, who would give their last dying breath for a rain, stare at the barren clouds with a curse on their lips and a prayer in their heart.

Since the first part of May there's been only a half inch of rain; the people of drought, like the land, are nearly played out.

Men who had assured their wives, "The corn will come back.", rip up their dying fields and replant, pushing seed into the dry soil, working in heat so intense sweat dries in an instant and exposed skin wrinkles and browns to leather. To 'Outsiders' it's clear the men are fighting a losing battle; it's almost the end of June and the average first frost is the middle of September. Safe in their city jobs and suburban homes they ask naively, "Why don't they leave?" unaware that drought lay siege to this land eight years ago, preventing escape to better times, to easier days, to peace of mind.

A week ago we too had prepared ourselves to live with the crop we had left - and despite a few days of vacillation, we still are. But with each sunrise it's increasingly apparent we have less left than we initially believed. In its heroic struggle to survive much of the damaged corn has produced a rope of leaves so tightly twisted the growing point can't emerge. The plants are literally choking themselves to death using their own will to live.

I can identify with the corn's struggle; wounded, we continue to battle, changed in the process from outgoing and gregarious to an introverted people, driven by a single desperate goal: to farm - regardless the cost.

The fields least injured by the frost were those planted after the Mitchell Irrigation district announced they would be able to supply storage water. But those 'lucky' fields haven't enjoyed a single rainstorm since plant-

ing, and in our one-hundred-degree heat the corn leaves curl and turn silver-green by noon. The plants are begging for irrigation water which is still at least a week away.

As farmers we expect, and accept, setbacks and delays as a normal part of doing business, but the combination of the late freeze, wind, drought, and now unusually high temperatures, is almost criminal. Spraying, cultivating and ditching were set back a week-and-a-half by the freeze and because of the delay we now find ourselves simultaneously embroiled in middle-of-spring tractor work, end-of-spring tractor work, and early summer first irrigation. I remember those glorious days when ditching worries centered on crops growing faster than our ability to get the work done. This year we're wondering how to ditch a crop that's only four inches tall without smothering it.

As a friend puts it, "This is going to be one ugly summer."

Now for the boring, everyday news

In the absence of the killer foxes, which seem to have high-tailed it to greener pastures, a mother skunk and her three babies have made themselves at home in my back yard. I stumble across them at all hours of the day: drinking from the chicken waterers; digging in the grass; showering in the lawn sprinklers. I haven't collected an egg in over a week.

Dale insists he's finished with the 'trap thing', so he's spent the past few evenings sitting on an upturned bucket near the hen-house, rifle across his lap. But I'm sorry to say he's such a poor shot I might as well give the four stinkers names and buy them matching flea collars.

And...

One of the five Angus bulls we purchased two weeks ago went missing on Friday. Our neighbor found him yesterday mired in the mud of a small creek - dead as a doornail and stinking to high heaven. Did he succumb to a virus, eat a fatal something, or was he run to death by the neighbor's three bad-tempered bulls? I guess we'll never know.

But really - what else could go wrong?

Finally:

A paraphrased excerpt from the journal of Nathaniel Wyeth who in 1932 led an expedition to the fur country.

"June 9th:arrived at the chimney (rock).....The small streams that here empty into the Platte are frequently dry near the river during the day while above they are running free...at night there is running water entirely to the river."

Please pray for rain - we are in desperate need.

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

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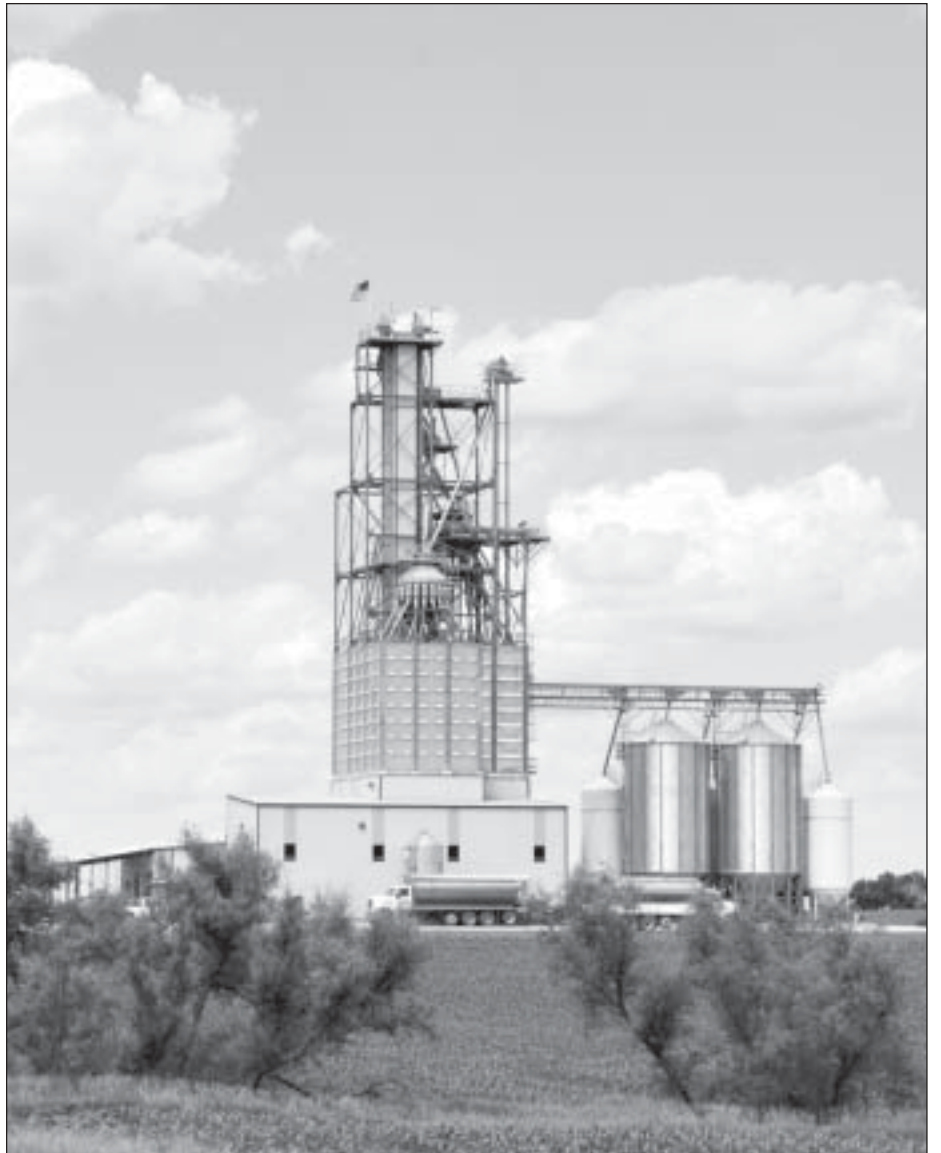
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