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Voices from your Valley

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Consult this publication monthly for
Summertime Events in Southeast Nebraska!



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Grand Old Lady

by Sheri Mayhew Dowding

I knew something was wrong the minute I drove up in front of the house. She wasn't there to wave at me. Then I saw her, lying on the ground. I gathered her up and took her inside. I brushed her off and laid her on the couch.

About that time my husband came in and asked what had happened. I told him that it was all his fault that if he had fixed the board on the porch like I had asked this would never have happened. Now it's too late, she's fallen onto the ground. He turned to me and said, "A little dirt won't hurt her, she's been through a whole lot worse. She's survived more than we can imagine."

In a little while I could hear the sound of a hammer pounding. Soon my husband stuck his head through the door and said "Its safe for her to be on the porch again."

Gently I picked her up and took her outside. I brushed her off and straightened her hem. Don't worry you'll never fall again. Then I stood back and gazed at her. Once again she waved in the breeze. You see, she's a grand old lady, red, white, and blue, she always waves at me and you.

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

Devon Adams	Merri Johnson
Frieda Burston	Karen Ott
Sheri Mayhew Dowding	Joe Smith
Vicki Harger	Josh Whisler

Thank You

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A Note From Your Publisher

There are more color photos online at www.yourcountryneighbor.com And two framed enlargements are hanging in Sue's "Flower Country & Gifts" in Auburn. Sue's ad is on the back page if you need her address.

PEGGY KUSER

Certified Public Accountant

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VISIT

Dramatic Expressions Photography

on the 'web'

by *Your Country Neighbor* Photographer,
Stephen Hassler

www.yourcountryneighbor.com/photoblog.htm

Country

Scenes



A Lone Sentinel on the Prairie



Holsteins in Pasture



Roadside 'Wild' Flower



Riding and Roping

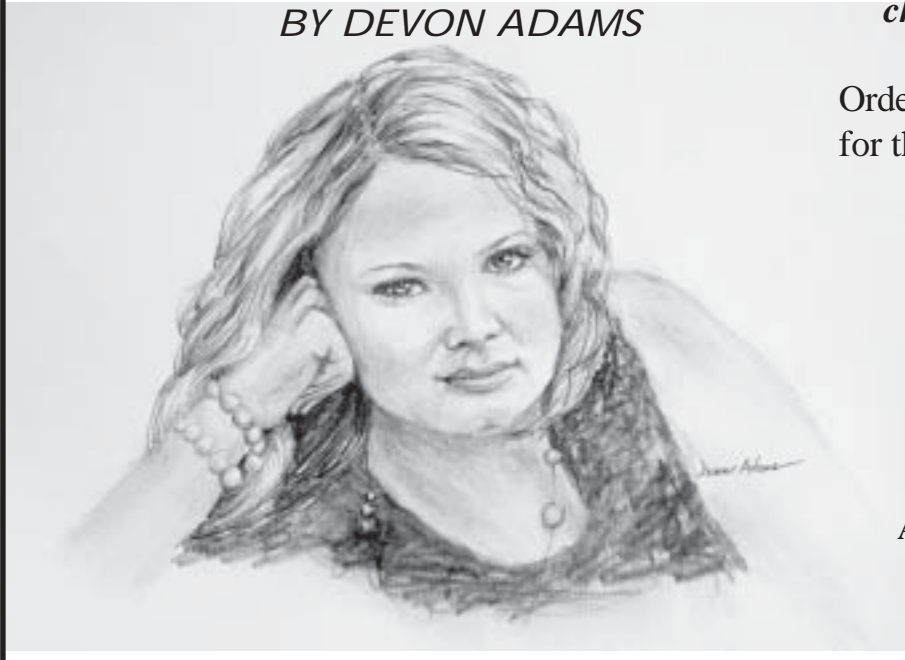


East of Peru at Sunrise

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BY DEVON ADAMS



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SAYING GOODBYE

by Devon Adams

It's time for one of us to go,
and I'm lonesome already.
It's hard to say goodbye
to part of myself.
I know I'm being selfish
for wishing you could stay,
but I can't imagine tomorrow
without your presence.
Save a seat for me
when you get there,
and I'll walk in the wind
for you, and smell the rain,
and feel all the textures
of the days and nights
until my time is near.
Then I'll wait for you
to come and hold my hand
as we walk into forever.

NEIGHBORHOOD GOSSIP

by Devon Adams

We all know individuals who
can't keep their mouths shut.
They repeat everything they hear
and add embellishments of their own.
By the time a tale
gets back to where it started,
it is often a brand new entity,
entirely unrelated to the words
spoken by the original speaker.
I have a friend who is the author
of many convoluted stories
that started by eavesdropping.
He makes a big production of repeating
what he's heard, going so far
as to sing the words, as in an opera.
He always changes the order
of his words, so that I hear
a never-ending, changing concert.
Maybe you've heard him too.
He's the mockingbird who hangs out
in the tallest tree on the block.

NIGHT TEARS

by Devon Adams

Night tears fall in the grass
and turn to diamonds
in the rising light
of the sun.

BLUE FLASH

by Devon Adams

All the blues in heaven
fell to earth,
like sapphires flashing,
and touched the feathers
of the indigo bunting.

TWINKLE TWINKLE

by Devon Adams

Thunder from a distant rolling star
crashes through the universe
and comes to rest as faint light
blinking in the night
above our puny earth.

Editor's note:

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

I recently saw a TV program purporting to explain why Americans drink very little wine in comparison to beer and hard liquor. Turns out that our northern European ancestors used to imbibe the fruit of the vine quite lustily until the climate turned against grapes in favor of hops-based alcoholic beverages. Apparently our ancestors embraced the change wholeheartedly and never looked back.

I don't know about the climate-connection explanation for Americans' propensity to drink beer, but I do have my own theory. It may not be scientific, but it's more fun, I think you'll agree. It goes like this.

In days of old, sharing a common beverage was a great equalizer. Lord or serf, high-born or lowly, everyone drank wine. That is, until a frustrated, out-of-work English major took a job at the local winery and began composing flowery phrases to describe the nuances of the various wines. The practice caught on and soon all the wineries were hiring English majors to write ever-more esoteric descriptions of their wines. Soon, the literate elites were taunting the uneducated masses about their inability to read and discuss the latest wine label.

The masses being what masses are, they thumbed their noses at the wine connoisseurs and started drinking beer instead. End of story.

If you doubt my theory, read the label on most any bottle of wine.

My husband and I were eating, or should I say *dining*, at Vincenzo's in Lincoln earlier this summer. At our table was a flyer touting Montes Malbec "intense ruby red" wine for its "full-bodied, round, soft and generous...yet strong and spicy character." Sounds like a description of a calendar pin-up girl. But not to worry: the "spiciness" is in check, being "totally integrated with hints of vanilla from the oak aging." Oh, and you'll want to be sure to note its "fruitiness" with "plummy and blackberry hints."

No less than 14 adjectives – some of whose exact meaning in relation to wine escapes me – were employed on that flyer. I couldn't help but wonder if my husband could compose a comparable endorsement for his own culinary passion: beef. Grilled steak, to be precise.

My husband would be the first to tell you that creative writing is not really his thing. But, when I challenged him to describe the perfect steak, he had no trouble coming up with the words to express his love. Gazing thoughtfully into the distance, pondering the attributes of his favorite food, he spoke with reverence and conviction.

"Number one," he said, "is that it has to be juicy."

In beef parlance, "juicy" *could* be translated "greasy," but juicy sounds so much better.

"Next," he pronounced, "is tenderness. It has to be aged three weeks to be tender and to develop aroma. You can definitely smell the difference between aged beef and beef that was butchered and packaged right away."

I'm sure some people, who obviously don't hold the aging process in the same high esteem as my husband, would agree. But they might refer to the "aroma" by another word.

I asked, "What about preparation method? What's the steak lover's equivalent to the vintner's oak barrel?"

Now the purist in him really came out. "Two words: charcoal grilling. Charcoal gives the meat a 'woody' taste. There's no substitute for it. Gas grills just don't cut it."

"And what about appearance?"

No hesitation on this answer. "You want to have distinct char lines from the grate on that piece of meat. And it has to be rare. If it's not at least pink, it's overdone."

By then he was practically drooling, picturing a sizzling T-bone, which, by the way, he can distinguish from a sirloin just by the smell – I mean *aroma* – from a block away.

Like I said, my husband doesn't generally put much value on possessing a broad vocabulary or the ability to turn a flowery phrase. Indeed, describing a steak in terms other than simple and down-to-earth ones would be silly.

Which brings me back to wine. I still don't know for sure why we Americans prefer beer. But perhaps the people who write wine labels aren't really trying to sound snooty. Maybe if their subject was as appealing as a charcoal-grilled steak, they wouldn't have to invent such fanciful descriptions to get people to try it.

Note to all local wineries: I actually prefer wine to beer. It's just the descriptions that drive me crazy!

Editor's note: *You can read previous articles by Merri online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com*



"My Life & Times as Harve Bodine"

by Joe Smith

If you like the stories I write, you would love this story. Harve Bodine was in the Confederate Army, riding for the Quantrell Raiders. He didn't like anything that guy was doing so he and another fellow left before the end of the war and went out West. It seems he turned lawyer.

The story has a lot of human feeling in it, honest emotions, true love (sorry, no hot sex scenes). The story takes place in an area I am somewhat familiar with. Other parts came from Harve himself. I had no idea where it was going. I just wrote it down like Harve told me to. Whether it actually happened or not is for you to decide. Joe Smith.



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THE FOURTH ANNUAL TRUCK AND TRACTOR PULL
 July 19, 2008
 by Joe Smith

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I put my little tractor in there but was way out-classed. There are people that come with loads of tractors to compete in this contest. It is always well run and well attended. They draw from a large area. Lots of people enjoy doing this. A lot of dollars are spent on these rigs, but there are a lot of tractors that come right out of the field also. So there is something for everybody. Even good food for you to eat. Now you can't beat that.

The money raised after expenses from these projects goes for a Scholarship, and community things like fire and rescue. It is a worthwhile event and another way to watch Johnson grow. Let's support them and have a lot of fun while we do it.

And then on August 2, we have the Third Annual Mud Drag. It will be in the evening under the lights. BUT DURING THE DAY they are hosting a Mud Volleyball Tournament. That is something NEW! It should be fun to watch.

Then on Aug 16, there is the OFF ROAD CHALLENGE, featuring hills, mud holes, logs to cross, and more.

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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
(Photos provided by Author)

Fishing:

The Missouri River is running wide and high, from levy to levy, well over flood stage. The recent severe thunder storms dumped and dumped and dumped rain on the Missouri Valley. With the thunder storms came strong winds and tornados in the area also. So it hasn't been the greatest fishing conditions as of late. You sure don't want to get a boat out in that kind of weather. It seemed the boat wasn't even safe on dry ground with the weather we've been having. But if you managed to get out Memorial Day Weekend you found the weather cooperated pretty well, and after that weekend the weather turned horrible. The fishing as of late has been limited to taken by spear or by bow and arrow rather than hook and line. This kind of fishing in the flood waters is pretty challenging and not always successful, but it's still pretty fun to see what's moving around foraging for food. And yes, the big one usually gets away, or should I say out of range.



The fishing picture this month is of Jack and David McConnaughey from Auburn with an 85 pound Blue Cat caught near Peru on the Missouri River Memorial Day Weekend.

Hunting:


DEER HUNTERS – There are fall rifle season deer permits left! NEW this year - all rifle season permits will have a BONUS doe permit with it. Starting June 9th, deer permits left from the Draw Units and all other units will be open for application for Nebraska Residents and out of state hunters. Permits are on a first come first serve basis. Contact the NGPC and get yours now.


Summer fishing is upon us. Soon the river water will warm up for the Flathead Cat run, and there will be fish on. So get loose from the Summer mowing and ballgames and get out to 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."



The hunting picture this month is myself with a nice tom taken the last week of Spring turkey season. He's sporting a six inch beard weighing in at 19 pounds.

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California Capers and the Country Girl

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California Capers and the Country Girl by Vicki Harger

I love it here, folks, but I really don't fit in very well. There's a culture-clash in Northern California, and somehow I don't fit in anywhere. I fall between the cracks.

NorCal has always been a lovely place—no doubt about it... towering Redwoods... historical little towns...an incredible coastline. Most of the folks here are friendly—even overly-polite and helpful...

But then there's this new influx of folks from Southern California... Oh my! They've taken over the place...Purple-haired people with tongue-studs, dreadlocks, and full-body tattoos.

When I first arrived here, my fiance, Steven, took me on a tour of downtown Eureka. I stared at everything with my mouth hanging open. The purple-haired people were scary—but the buildings, themselves, were even more startling. Inside the historical shops were signs that said: "Earthquake Warning—these old buildings are NOT reinforced and could collapse. Enter at your own risk!"

Oh yeah. Welcome to California.

I'd been here just a short time when my new world suddenly went ka-BOOM. The whole apartment started to shake. I was rattled out of my senses.

"Help...dear God... Help!" I fled outdoors onto the sidewalk. "Oh, somebody help!"

The neighbors watched with interest as I trotted about in my stockingfeet. I knocked on various doors till at last someone came outside to reassure me.

It was a small quake—just a 4.5—hardly a hiccup to Californians, but it felt like the end of the world to me. I went to sit in my duct-taped little Saturn until the aftershocks subsided. I didn't want to go back inside.

The neighbors thought I was peculiar.

Steven, himself, seemed to think I was odd. He didn't say so, but I know it was true. Somehow, I didn't fit into this city-livin'-California-life-style as well as he'd hoped.

One day, Steven took me to a new beach—a wild and wonderful place—full of raging waves. The heavy surf washed colorful rocks onto shore.

"Look at all the striped rocks!" I said. "Even a few agates...!" I snatched them up before the waves could carry them away... hoarding them like a squirrel storing nuts for a long hard winter. Soon my pockets were bulging.

Steven was aghast. "Darling, what are you going to DO with all those rocks?"

"DO with them!" It was my turn to be incredulous. "How can anyone pass up these kinds of rocks? Look at the colors...and look at all the shells and driftwood! This beach is incredible."

I promptly filled Steven's car trunk with rocks and shells and twisted piles of driftwood. Being a gentleman, Steven humored me, but there was a worried look in his eyes that said: What the dickens have I gotten myself into?

In the following days, my penchant for collecting Nature's Treasures grew worse... and so did my countrified longings. A farm gal needs a garden plot, but I had nowhere to plant one.

Every time I went shopping, I found myself yearning after the tomato and squash plants in the garden center.

"I really must have them!" I told Steven one day, while shopping. "I can plant them in pots on the balcony." He didn't bother arguing, just sighed and hoisted a bag of potting soil onto his shoulder while I trotted on ahead, carrying my Early Girls and Zukes and Crook-neck squash.

My balcony garden grew with gusto, and I settled down amongst the plants and rocks and driftwood, trying my best to feel content. I bought myself a real-looking Alligator to keep me company. Together, Al and I sat soaking up the sunshine, listening to the tinkling fountain... staring longingly over the rooftops at the distant mountains and the bay.

It was all very lovely...but I needed something more.

I needed acres of countryside and miles of freedom. I yearned for some real garden dirt to dig around in...lots and lots of it. My squash and tomato babies were yearning to stretch out, as well... They needed re-potting.

We all needed dirt.

I went searching the coastal country for good black dirt, only to discover that this was a Land of Sand...and sand...and more sand. Not much else. With mounting frustration, I drove the highways and byways, watching for rotting vegetation and decent dirt.

Suddenly, I saw some. Piles of it on the side of the road.

Stopping the car, I jumped out and started scooping like mad, filling up plastic bags and depositing them in the back. I was still scoop-

ing when a passing driver pulled over. A helpful Californian. Just what I needed.

I hid my bags of dirt as best I could, and waved the gentleman away. "Um...you're so kind, but I think I've got it. Thanks!"

He drove off with a wave and a Good Samaritan smile, and I rushed back to my scooping. Putting the last bag in the car, I jumped inside and drove on down the road, feeling just a bit smug. I'd pulled it off without mishap...the Great Soil Heist.

Heading across the long Samoa bridge, I came upon a traffic jam. I pulled over to let the traffic clear out, and my car stopped abruptly. I didn't mean to hit the brakes so hard, but when I did, everything in the car went flying forward.

The dirt from my plastic bags went all over the place.

My suitcase popped open and contributed to the chaos. I found myself strangling in piles of underwear and debris... brassieres and panties and hose and good black soil—all mingling together sociably.

Passing cars slowed. People peered at me oddly... This crazed gal with Nebraska license plates... Pantyhose and brassieres and undies everywhere... Are they all like that in the Midwest?

The Californians shook their heads and drove on.

I slumped lower in my seat. Dear Lord...! My humiliations and mortifications had hit a new low. It was more than I could bear. Somehow, I always ended up being the weird one in this Land of Wackiness.

What trials I've endured!...the trials of a country gal, trying to live in the city.

When will it end? Tell me, Lord—when will it end?

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

*Vicki Harger*



Cottonwood in the Corn



# The Face



A Farm Report from  
Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

## of Drought

Did you know United States meteorologists consider May 1st to be the first day of Summer, and June twentieth, (the Summer Solstice) to be Midsummer, as in Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer's night dream"?

Even though the Panhandle-of-Nebraska is a long way from England's Stratford-upon-Avon I prefer the more romantic 'Midsummer' to the plain and ordinary word 'summer', although I suspect if William Shakespeare had been a Nebraska farmer, instead of an English poet and playwright, he would have entitled his fanciful romantic comedy "Too Tired for Romance."

Regardless of your occupation there's a lot to love about a Nebraska June.....the heavy perfume of flowering Russian olives, thunderstorms crowned by double rainbows, the dark green of growing corn... but as with all things June has a downside; the annual miller-moth invasion, an annoying and aggravating event against which mankind stands nearly defenseless, tops the list.

A fly swatter works if you catch one of the little devils catnapping on a kitchen wall, but a swat hard enough to kill leaves a dirty smudge of miller-dust behind, a substance with the staying power of lead-based paint. Insecticide would seem a viable solution if not for the schizophrenic miller-method of flying. Zeroing in with a can of raid on an insect with no discernible flight pattern takes stamina, perseverance, and a steady trigger finger...and even then the outcome is iffy. It seems to help if your youth was spent honing your hand/eye coordination on blow-em-up video games.

The preferred western Nebraska method relies on a large bowl, fresh water, and dishwashing detergent. The directions are simple: whip the water and soap into a frothy mass of bubbles; switch off all lights except one; stand under it holding the bowl above your head and.....wait. Soon every miller in the house will be circling the light like a fleet of 747's on a holding pattern over the Los Angeles airport.

Then, suddenly, for some unknown reason, they'll nose-dive straight down into the bubbles. If your arms hold out you can capture most, if not all, of them, but unfortunately the ritual must be performed nightly until the moths migrate to the mountains.

The valley's miller infestation seems to have a direct correlation to the amount of Spring moisture; the wetter the year the more millers....and cutworms, which can be a serious threat to young crops. Some beet fields have already been sprayed, and, like most area farmers, we've begun scouting the edges of our alfalfa and corn fields for signs of the destructive caterpillars.

A Wednesday night rainstorm, full of lightning and thunder, left the morning air fresh and sweet-smelling; the home-place rain gauge measured three-tenths, the Morrill farms just a trace. Thunderstorms arrive every afternoon like clockwork, sometimes bringing a brief shower, other times just wind... but always carrying the threat of hail. So far we've been spared the gut-wrenching ordeal of watching our crops pounded into the mud by Mother Nature, but are acutely aware that every

storm holds the power to wipe out an entire year's crop in an instant.

Dale was late for supper tonight and blamed his tardiness on a couple of neighbors who, after seeing him changing water, stopped to chat about the general state of the economy. One of the men, a manager of a 5000 head feedlot vented his frustrations at the beef packers who refuse to pay more for fat cattle even though the price of corn is nearing eight dollars a bushel. "You got rid of the little guys," Rick told a packer recently, "now you're pushing out the four and five thousand head feeders. Who do you think is going to raise the cattle we need in this country?"

The packer apparently replied, "Somebody will."

To anyone who has been following the vertical integration of the beef industry those are prophetic words.

Watch the price of meat....it's about ready to explode.

Happy 'Midsummer' from all of us here at Horse Creek Farm.

*Editor's note: You can read previous articles by Karen Ott online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at: [www.yourcountryneighbor.com](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)*

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## Another Dowsing Trip

by Joe Smith

Monday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 08, my wife and I left home around 7:45 a.m. We drove 90 miles to get to the job site. It was a mile or so out of Hebron. We loaded all the extra tools that the customer wanted. We met her and proceeded out to her farm. All-in-all we made good connections. On the way out I found out I had forgotten my address book with her phone number, and hoped she had our mobile number. She called about that time and I found her number again.

This has been a long drawn out process, just coming to a head. She told us again where to meet her and we actually found it right off. A new town and all, it was the first time we had ever been in Hebron. We went on out to her farm west of town. It was probably close to 160 acres. We found several possible locations for wells and we checked the building site out. It will be a nice place when they get it built. I suggested that they drill the well site first just to make sure they had a well for water before they built the house. I have heard of people that built a big house before they found out there was no water to be found on their property.

On the way home we stopped at the Pony Express Station east of Fairbury to check out a site for a dowsing club meeting in August. It is a very interesting place, a lot of history there. Joe Smith

## ANNIVERSARY TIME AGAIN

by Joe Smith

My wife and I will have our 56<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary July the first this year. We have had an up and down life together, some good and some bad times. But come hell and high water we are still together, and still love each other very much.

The first time I remember meeting my bride to be I was probably a sophomore in high school. During the summer a friend and I rode horses and went out to the Berrendo River northeast of Roswell, N.M. We ran up on two gals riding burros so we traded with them and played cowboy and Indians on the burros. With in a couple of years we started dating some, then we went to the same college together. We went one year of college and got married. I was working out on a ranch west of Roswell and Marta came out one day and visited with me and asked about when we would be married. By that time we had gone together steady for two years or more. I told her, "Okay, any time you want, I don't have anything better to do. Lets get married." Marta thought that was 'so romantic', hah, hah. So we set the date as July 1, 1951.

We got married at the Methodist church in Roswell. All our friends told us it would never last. Marta was 18 and I was 19. We went to Colorado for six months and then back to Roswell; we lived in Roswell for several years and then moved to Deming, N. M. area to farm, 20 miles south of town near Columbus. We moved into a small mouse infested house and then built a new adobe house. We lived ten miles from the Mexican line for seven years, and decided we wanted to go to Nebraska. Marta was born here in Auburn. That didn't work out at that time, so we bought a small farm in Tukumcari, N. M., and lived there three years. During that time I started a welding shop which put groceries on the table. We got quite an education in what life was all about. We had a chance to move to Nebraska in 1966. Marta's uncle died and her aunt wanted us to come and farm her place. So we sold out at Tukumcari, and have been here ever since. What a move that was. More like nightmare. We decided that would be the last cross-country move for us. We moved to our present home in the Winter of '71.

We had four children, and have lost three of them, but have one left and a wad of grandkids and some great-grandkids. So even with our problems we still have had a good life, have a lot to look forward to, and more time left to live with each other for many more years. We ain't dead yet. Joe and Marta Smith

## Johnson's Library Open House

by Joe Smith

The library had their open house Saturday, the 31st of May. It took a LOT of hard work to get this done and the tornado didn't help any either. But now it looks real good and will be a nice addition to the town of Johnson. They have a lot of books. It is a nice place to sit and read, even a place to have meetings at. But all I can say is it was very impressive open house, and a big improvement to our town. The hours haven't been decided on yet. They are thinking on three days a week but nothing has been decided yet. Cheryl Gerdes and her crew deserve a big hand for all the work they have done. If you haven't been down there to see it or check it out, now is a good time to do it. There are all kinds of possibilities for this fine addition to Johnson. Cheryl will be looking for some volunteers to help with the everyday work. And they do have a coffee pot on for the people like the Red Hatters. Just might have a place for some card players, who knows. I haven't played any Solo for years, or Huckle Buck either. Just a thought. Time will tell just what the community wants and how much the town supports it, and what is needed. I will say this, I am really impressed with the library so far. Joe Smith

Editor's note: *You can read previous articles by Joe Smith online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at: [www.yourcountryneighbor.com](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)*

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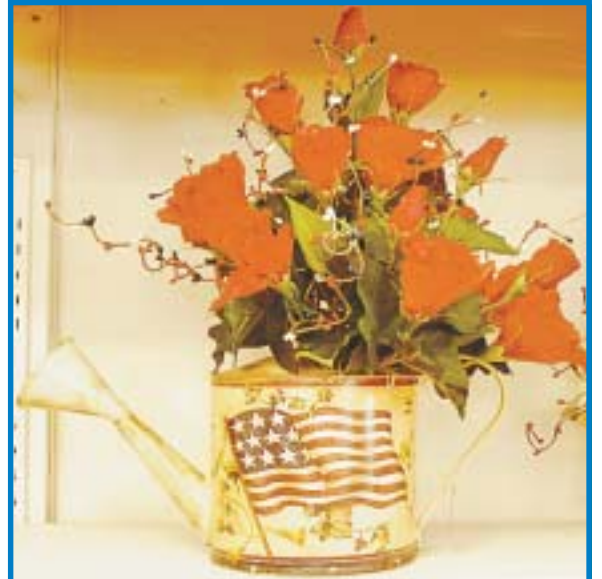
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