

Your

# Country Neighbor

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June 2005

YOUR WINDOW WITH A COUNTRY VIEW



## A Monthly Magazine About the Rural Midwest



**More Pictures in Color**  
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[www.yourcountryneighbor.com](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)

### CONTENTS

What June is 'About' in <i>Your Country Neighbor</i>	2
Real Estate, Insurance, and Finance	3
<i>Window on Fifth Street</i>	4
Where in 'Your Country Neighborhood' is This?	5
Here's What's Happening in Brownville!	6 & 7
Country Scenes	8
<i>Your Country Neighbor</i> Business Directory	9
<i>Whisler's Hunting &amp; Fishing Report</i>	10
Ann's Recipe and 2005 Writing Contest Winners	11
Poetry, etc.	12
<i>The Face of Drought</i>	13
Frieda's "The Real House in Black and White"	14
<i>Diary of an Unemployed Housewife</i>	15
Joe's "This Old Table"	16

## June is about...

This month's issue is about summertime, with pictures, poetry, and country stories.

Speaking of poetry, some students from Southeast Consolidated are contest winners. Their names are listed on page 11, and some of their winning entries will be published in the coming issues of *Your Country Neighbor*.

It's been a cool season, but we've had good rains and Spring blossoms. We've seen the first cutting of alfalfa already in May, and I am looking forward to beautiful wheat fields and roadside wildflowers in June, and more scenes like the cover photo which was taken near Howe, Nebraska. Enjoy your summer, your friends and *Your Country Neighbor*!



A Roadside 'Poem'

"Minimum Maintenance" rural roads often conjure up foreboding memories of experiences that caused a bad day to get worse. Those county paths with dirt surfaces often have more marks of tractors than cars.

I like to pause at these intersections of rock and dirt, reflecting on the present and the past; country locations where I can listen to the sounds and silence form another time, and gaze down the hills toward yesterday.



A winding road, a narrow bridge, a muddy 'crick'. Often, it seems, life is just around the bend.



This landscape 'painting' is near Barada.

Your

## COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Editor and Publisher: Stephen Hassler

The following people helped make this issue possible:

Devon Adams  
Frieda Burston  
Merri Johnson  
Kathleen Livingston  
Lila Meyerkorth  
Karen Ott  
Joe Smith  
Gloria Wellman  
Josh Whisler  
Ann Yates

Thank you!

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(capital letters optional)

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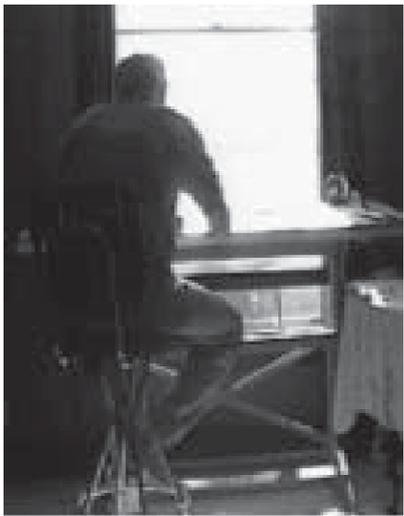
## Mayhew Cabin Opens Memorial Day Weekend

The Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village in Nebraska City will be open for the season beginning May 28. The 1850s cabin is a stop on the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom and was previously known as "John Brown's Cave." The museum's grounds also include a 1905 Missouri Pacific Train Depot, antique farm equipment, and one of the first black churches west of the Missouri River.

Visitors can also view a variety of new displays located next to the gift shop, including a Victorian parlor by Historic Textiles Expert Melissa Jurgena of Nebraska City. A collection of fur wraps and coats loaned by the Otoe County Museum in Syracuse can also be seen, along with Civil War artifacts from the Civil War Veterans Museum in Nebraska City.

Hours are 10-4 Wednesday through Saturday and 12-4 Sunday, through October. Guided tours are available by appointment year round. Call 402-873-3115 or visit [www.mayhewcabin.com](http://www.mayhewcabin.com). Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village was established as a 501c3 nonprofit foundation in 2002. Its mission is to educate youth about the Underground Railroad and American pioneer history, and to preserve and restore artifacts relating to this history.

Grace Johnson  
Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village Foundation  
2012 4th Corso  
Nebraska City, NE 68410  
402-873-3115  
[mayhewcabin@hotmail.com](mailto:mayhewcabin@hotmail.com)  
[www.mayhewcabin.com](http://www.mayhewcabin.com)



### Window on Fifth Street

Not far from my Window on Fifth Street is an abundance of unusual wildlife, particularly during migration. That this Missouri River 'corridor' is part of our geography reminds me of the benefit of rural living, particularly in this Mid-western area.

My backyard attracts wildlife too, and I am planning to add a gallery of photos to my website showing some of the local tree-dwellers you might not see every day, but are not far outside your window on your street.

Here are some of the more unusual scenes I saw in May.



We called these gulls "plow birds" because they would follow the tractor during the Spring, feasting on food turned up by the plow.



These pelicans fly in circles, even as they move away. This photo was taken at Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge.



Each Spring I've seen a Canada Goose family at the Verdon State Recreation area. I noticed this one on my delivery route early in May.

A lone pelican soars over a marsh at the Squaw Creek Refuge east of Rulo near Mound City. It's one of hundreds which stop briefly at this national wildlife refuge during their migration.



I think these are strange-looking birds. Sometimes called "snake birds", only their sleek head and neck can be seen when they are in the water.



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Some of my pictures are in color at: [www.yourcountryneighbor.com](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)

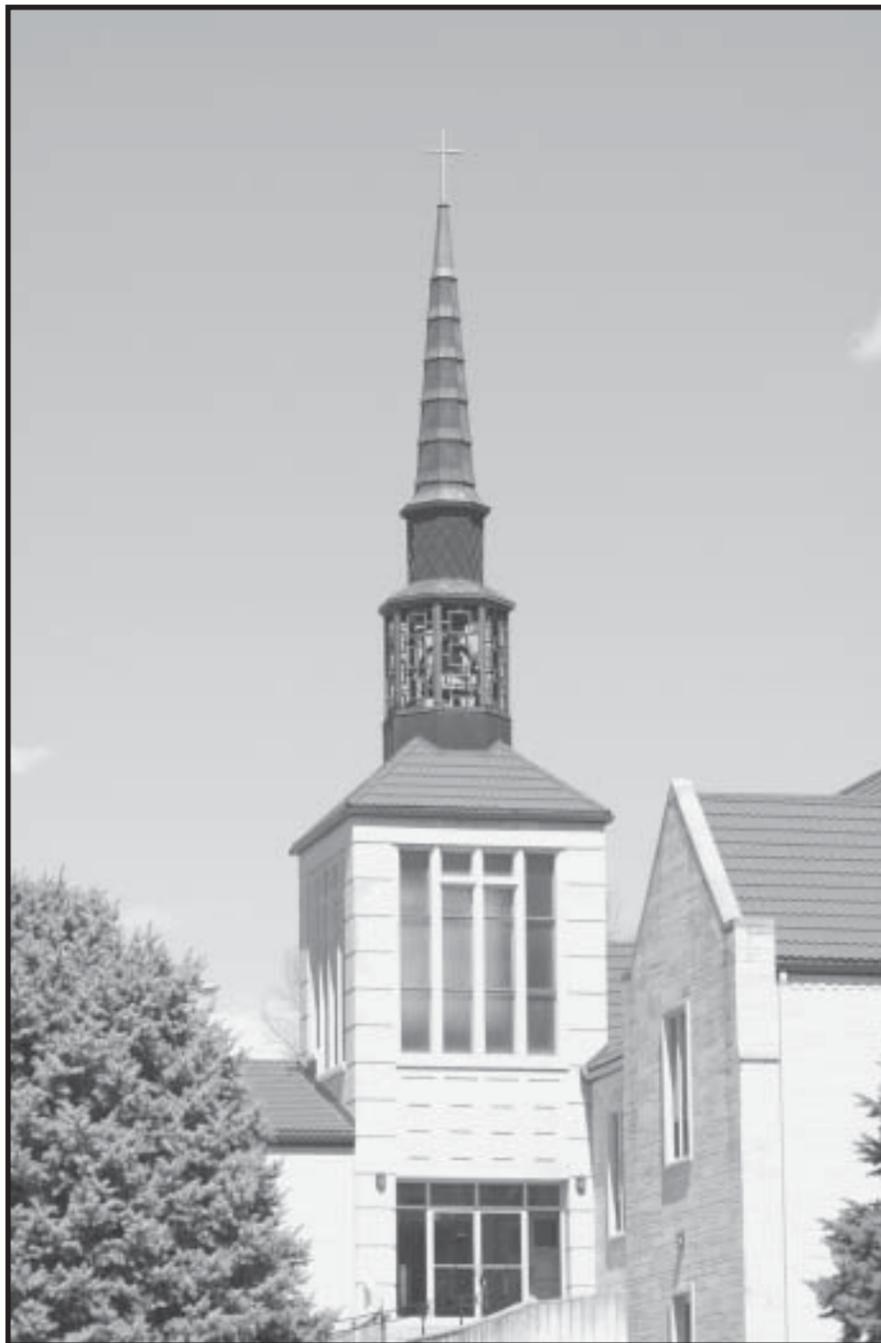
# Do you recognize these locations from Your Country Neighborhood?

These locations will be revealed in the July issue.

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



This should be familiar to people who drive Highway 50.



This view is in a popular city in Southeast Nebraska.



One of the prettiest scenes in Richardson County, not many of you will have seen this little country church.



This mural contains several hints as to its location.



Along the River...in a city represented twice this month.

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## Last month's 'Answers'.

First column: Top, Downtown Shenandoah, IA middle, Arbor Lodge in Nebraska City, NE bottom, Hamburg, IA backyard.  
 Second column: Top, City Hall in Tecumseh, NE bottom, Courthouse and apple blossoms in Auburn, NE.

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Brownville's Annual Spring Flea Market was held the last weekend in May. There were lots of people and lots of things to buy or just to look at.

Coming up will be the Garden Walk June 11, and the July 4th Freedom Day Celebration. The Fall Flea Market will be in September.



The flutists from Ecuador are always popular as are their music and other items of "Native Culture".



There were lots of people!



The Brownville Mills is back there somewhere.



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# BROWNVILLE

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The Artist & Frosty



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There was music.



There were lots of people.

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# Country Scenes



I have driven past this spot dozens of times, and finally noticed it.



A tree-lined lane southeast of Auburn.



Modern farm equipment is amazing!



The sight of a watertower takes me back to the seventh grade when I used to ride my bicycle five miles to town once or twice a summer. The watertower and the windmill, icons of America, sustained family and community.



Horses are the only animals willing to pose for my camera.

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Click on “Photo Galleries,” and select an option from the list. There are photos of Wildlife including Waterfowl, Country Scenes, Wildflowers, and seasonal photos of Winter snow and Autumn leaves. Refer your relatives and friends to the online edition of *Your Country Neighbor*. Just let them know this web address:  
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“Fishing”  
May, 2005  
from the series  
*Wildlife Along Our Rivers*  
by Stephen Hassler

The white bird on the cover and this page is the “Great Egret”.

# Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler  
Photos Provided by Author

## Fishing:

The Missouri River opened up some very good fishing opportunities last month. The recent rains raised the river to flood stages that have not been seen in some time. This high water time brings lots of opportunities for fishermen to not only catch fish but to catch a variety of fish. Not only Channel cats and larger Blue cats, but also what has been keeping the fisherman coming back are the carp swarming during the higher water levels. Carp like to pillage the riverbanks, not normally submerged with water, for insects and worms that were caught by the sudden rise in the river level. You can usually see them working these areas looking for food. Carp are also notorious for spawning (laying and fertilizing eggs) in the shallower waters when the river suddenly raises. This works to the fishermen's advantage by allowing them to see where the fish are gathering. All that needs to be done at that point is placing the bait in the area and waiting for the bite. Then the fight is on to get it to the bank. Carp have been known to pull the fishing rod right out of your hand. Many locals will spear carp in the high water times by simply wading into the areas that the carp are working and gigging them. These fish are taken for harvest and many times it's fish fry time with the large amount of fish taken in this manner. The bait of choice is still night crawlers, with fair action on dough and stink baits. And the live baits are coming on with moderate action. So with that said, you should shake it up a little with several different baits and hit the riverbank because they're biting.



This month's fishing picture is Joe Studebaker from Peru with a German Carp.

## Hunting:

Spring Turkey Seasons are nearing their end. Once again the hunting was slow starting and seems to be coming on right at the end of the seasons. There are plenty of turkeys in the area, which I have explained before is not always good. The spring season only allows you one male turkey and if you can't call them away from the hens you're in trouble. The cooler weather seemed to set the breeding season back a little. The early season

they could be worked fairly easily but it was warm (>70 degrees). Then came three weeks of 40 and 50 degree temps that set them back to the point that they wouldn't gobble in the morning or the evening – don't get me wrong, they were there but just weren't aroused enough to come to a call. That, and I think all the gullible ones were killed in the warmer early season. The ones that are left are pretty shifty and have their eyes and ears open – not much gets by them. So staying still and controlling your calling is the key. I've been told by several local residents & farmers "Those Turkeys are all over, haven't you got yours yet?" Well sometimes that's easier said than done. To the average person a 20-pound tom turkey looks pretty easy to kill waltzing around the roadside or field. But it's harder than it looks because you are hunting them with a shotgun or a bow and arrow. That means you have to have them within 25 yards of you to kill them. Their feathers act as armor for both techniques. With a bow and arrow you aim for the vitals (heart and lungs) and with a shotgun you aim strictly for the head. But one wrong noise or move and they are out of shooting range right now. Basically, that's where the rubber meets the road "get them close, stay still, and let them have it!"



This month's hunting picture is myself with a 19-pound Tom with a 10-inch beard and a nice mess of Morel Mushrooms.

### Deer Permit Reminder:

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 Muzzle Loader 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 muzzle loader. Purchase on-line 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>. That does it for me this month. The exciting thing about fishing The River is you never really know what you're going to catch. You really should give it a try while the fish are biting regularly. 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."

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# Recipe of the Month



## Soybeans

### The Other White Meat

by Ann Yates

Ahh, the venerable soybean. I like to call it "Midwestern Gold", and I'm not even a farmer.

It has been written in many health and vegetarian books and magazines that countries who consume more soybeans have fewer incidence of cancer. Others tout the pseudoestrogens in soybeans for feminine issues such as PMS and menopause. If you have ever read Diet for a Small Planet by Frances Moore Lappe you know that soybeans coupled with any grain (like bread or rice) has the 8 essential amino acids necessary for complete, high quality human protein.

Now for my part, the yummy stuff. Yes, soybeans also taste good, and you don't even have to fractionate it into tofu and soymilk (although these are also yummy).

Let's start with just cooking it like any other bean. Sort, wash, soak overnight and cook till done. It will not get as soft as most beans, just cook till semisoft. Most folks will not like the semisoft texture as bean soup, but there are many things they can be used for. If you leave the beans whole you can fry them up in oil, adding soy sauce the last few minutes, and use them as you would ground beef. Add barbecue sauce if you love a good barbecue. Or you can grind them in the meat grinder and make anything you can make with any ground meat. It's all in the seasonings.

Let's try one:

1 cup cooked, coarsely ground soybeans  
 1 t basil  
 ½ t oregano  
 2 T parsley  
 salt or worchestershire or soy sauce  
 garlic – fresh, chopped 1 t to, well, maybe lots and lots if you like  
 liquid smoke if desired  
 green pepper, chopped, if desired  
 hot pepper, chopped, if desired  
 try some cilantro, curry or any other favored spices  
 Anything your imagination or taste buds desire can be added at this point

Now mix it all up, wrap in foil and bake for 1 hour at 350.

If you add a couple of eggs it will give a more solid texture.

Cool, and slice. It freezes well if packaged between sheets of plastic wrap. Date the packages. It will keep for up to 3 months. Use in sandwiches. Fry slices like you would ham or sausage. Use your imagination. Have fun. Here's to your good health.

---

*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. Otherwise Ann will be at the Nemaha County Farmers Market each Saturday 8 am to noon. Call 872-4865 for favorites or specialty orders. Decorated cakes are now available upon request.*

## SOUTHEAST CONSOLIDATED 6TH ANNUAL WRITING CONTEST

2005 Winners

### Third Grade

#### Poetry

1<sup>st</sup> – Krynn Prater  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jonathan Sailors  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Desirae Hager

#### Short Story

1<sup>st</sup> – Jonathan Sailors  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Libbey Anderson  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Paige Shiley

### Fourth Grade

#### Poetry

1<sup>st</sup> – Paige Watkins  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Haley Huey  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – J. C. McMann

#### Short Story

1<sup>st</sup> – Hayley Huey  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Paige Watkins

#### Plays

1<sup>st</sup> – Chelsi Shubert

### Fifth Grade

#### Poetry

1<sup>st</sup> – Dean Lewis  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Peyton Kuker  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Victoria Williams

#### Short Story

1<sup>st</sup> – Dean Lewis  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Victoria Williams  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Peyton Kuker

#### Plays

1<sup>st</sup> – Dean Lewis  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Peyton Kuker

### Sixth Grade

#### Poetry

1<sup>st</sup> – Steven Hickey  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Dylan Watkins  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jasmyne Strauss

#### Short Story

1<sup>st</sup> – Cameron Milke

### Judges

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade  
 Jan Chism Wright\*  
 4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 Bonnie Hathaway\*  
 5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 Jan McMullen\*  
 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 Jennifer Anandel

\*Members of Brownville Lyceum Writers Guild

# Poetry, etc.

## INDISPENSABLE

by Lila Meyerkorth

We read about The Arts, music, travels and crime  
We watch the evening news, documentaries and sports  
There are funny things, serious stuff, fiction and real  
So much we don't know about, all kinds of sorts.

We take trips, visit relatives, climb mountains and hike  
We ask questions, give our two-cents, argue with such might  
Some things we do are worthy, some things we say are good  
And some probably baseless, while others noble and right.

We usually work hard, we have fun, brave storms, even sing  
Take walks, visit museums, and enjoy Eiffel Tower.  
Reach out to the needy, give speeches, maybe whine  
Gain new friendships, all within our power.

We laugh and we cry, we smile and joke  
We frown, even scold, we tease and we sigh.  
We have stories to tell and lessons to learn  
Take bus rides, horseback rides and fly very high.

We have a whole lot of joys and quite a bunch of blues  
Listening to do as we reach out for more light  
In a small special spot or a large beckoning door  
To let the world know that being cheerful is pure delight.

We have poverty and riches, sunshine and rain  
Hopes and passions that every person on earth  
Will have truth to convey and a strong faith to hold on to  
That all may experience true power of worth.

We have teachers and nurses, naming only two  
Helpful, talented, and most know how to be kind.  
There's been something to write while stumbling through each line  
But nothing so indispensable as a father, can anyone find!

## Created Memories

by Gloria A. Wellman

Did you receive a pretty greeting card?  
Then find getting rid of it, oh so hard.  
From Grandma, signed so bold with Love.  
I bet she is watching from above.

I took the card fronts, oh so pretty,  
Made a wallpaper border, I'm witty.  
If those who see it laugh, so what?  
I'll sit and enjoy what I've got.

There's one that says Get Well,  
It helped cheer me when I fell.  
Happy Birthday dear cousin,  
Of these, there is a dozen.

With Sympathy, Thinking of You,  
From neighbors, aunts and uncles too.  
Many of them include a note,  
I enjoy reading what they wrote.

Yes, they make a beautiful border.  
I put them, yellow, pink, and blue in order.  
Because I could not toss them away,  
On my bedroom wall they'll stay.

## DANCING IN THE DARK

by Devon Adams

They came to the party  
and waited for the music.

Soon the singers tuned guitars

and played some notes

before the sun sat down

outside the windows.

Then the dancing started

as old, familiar songs were

sung by musicians wearing

wrinkles on their faces

and gray hair on their heads.

The dancers danced in wheelchairs,

pulled and spun around by families

holding aged hands and sharing joy.

The talk was all about good times,

and memories came rushing back

of slim, strong bodies gliding

through the fancy steps that

were easy then.

The soft lights dimmed and

suddenly the room was changed.

Time is just a thought that lingers,

and yesterday became as real

as dancing in the dark.

## LIKE DIAMONDS SINGING

by Devon Adams

He came on the early morning train  
and got off at the station  
when the sky turned pale.  
Things looked familiar.  
Trees were as tall as ever  
and barns and houses stood  
in their well-worn places.  
Voices from cows and horses called  
their owners for their breakfast meal  
but grew silent as they heard  
the new arrival sing a prayer  
of thanksgiving to the wind.  
This mockingbird had copied  
songs from other birds  
but made them all his own.  
He flew into the trees and hung  
his notes on all the branches.  
They sparkled there  
like diamonds singing.

# A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

## *The Face of Drought*

by Karen Ott  
May, 2005

Late last week was summer-hot and drought-dry, but Nebraska is famous for the unsettled nature of its weather and for the past few days we have experienced cool, windy, cloudy days. The kind of weather beets love and corn hates. The grass, which grew lush and green a few short weeks ago, is fading to silver grey, its stems withering under pressure of our persistent wind. Before long the local fire departments will find themselves battling prairie fires; quenching the flames with volunteer labor and tanker trucks, fighting smoke, and heat and flames with heroic doggedness and determination.

These men are certainly the unsung heroes of rural America; unpaid and overworked they do what they do from a sense of duty and obligation. Many are not young; the graying of small county towns means men in their fifties are donning heavy fire jackets and lugging awkward fire hoses more suited to a thirty-year-old's stamina and strength. They'd never complain, but their women know how much it takes out of them to fight a midnight fire after they have put in a full day's labor at a 'regular' job. I don't know what we would do without them.

The wind has frustrated Dale attempts to spray beets with a brand of herbicide which requires dead calm and falling temperatures for successful application. The duo is a rare combination in the Wyo-braska area, usually appearing as a precursor to an ugly dry thunderstorm. He has spent the past few days keeping one eye on the thermometer and another on our clothesline pole windsock...not the most scientific calibration method, but it works well enough.

Raising beets has evolved from the 'old days' when hand labor was used to thin, hoe and weed. At one time most farmers in the valley provided houses free of charge to the families who moved here for a few months from Texas or Mexico, but unwieldy labor laws changed all that when the free houses became subject to a long list of rules and regulations rentals weren't required to meet. Most of the small labor houses were abandoned or burned down as farmers' embraced space planting and herbicide weed control. Ultimately the families who relied on the migrant work for a living lost a valuable source of income and stopped coming to the valley.

Our dry edible beans are in and tomorrow we will start replanting 200 acres of corn which is suffering from some sort of genetic defect. The Dekalb seed representatives, along with our crop insurance adjustor, were here today and walked the fields, finally giving the go-ahead to replant. We will plant a short day corn and will pay for someone's mistake with reduced yield. We were already facing a 320 acre cut in corn because of the water situation and this is almost more than we can bear, but there's nothing we can do about it now but forge ahead and salvage what we can. The soil is much drier than it was at first seeding and Dale is concerned the 200 acres may not germinate... pray for rain.



The bureau of Reclamation's May water report prompted some of the irrigation districts to release preliminary 'start dates' for water delivery and it sounds as if we can expect about the same 'days of water' as last year. (Except for the Mitchell ditch which has no storage water at all.)

For the most part we are starting the growing season in better shape than 2004; contrary to last year's dry spring we've had enough moisture to bring up the crops planted thus far, but only time will tell if things will turn out okay. We have survived too many years together, drought and I; I'm less optimistic than I was six years ago, and for the most part have lost the will to speculate on things as uncertain as water and weather. Good or bad I'll take each day as it comes.

Despite our bad luck, the sunset released a little magic tonight; washing the fields and hills in a pale lemony yellow, it stretched the afternoon shadows into long ribbons of twilight the color of black licorice. As a child I saw endless summers in the final sunsets of May, envisioned the months stretching and unfurling glorious wings of freedom which would carry me away from the chains of arithmetic problems and cafeteria food towards days of sunburns and mud pies and evenings of fireflies and fried chicken suppers.

Tonight, for a split second, I gave in to that old feeling, and like a spark which almost, but not quite, kindles a flame, I was a kid again at the beginning of summer vacation. The new cottonwood leaves danced in the evening breeze, a family of geese flew overhead, a robin sang from the aspens, a cow called to her baby in the east pasture, a tractor droned over the hill.

It's a good life....God reminded me of that tonight.

Karen

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# The Real House, in Black and White

by Frieda Burston

I had always had Black friends, although my mother called them “colored folks” and our more courteous neighbors called them “darkies”. It was only after Integration that we learned to say “Black”. In the St. Joe of the 1920’s and 30’s, “Black” and “Negro” were dirty words, and shocked people just as if you had said “underpants” instead of “unmentionables”.

But whatever the name, the process was the same in St. Joe. Whether it was Aunt Mandy and Uncle Tom in the House by the Tracks, or my street-car friends when we lived in the *House With the Garden*, there was always somebody to tell me stories of the Old Days. Some stories were of Slavery Times, other stories were of Civil War Times.

These were like fairy tales to me. I knew St. Joe as it was, not as it had been, a town torn apart by a history of slavery and separated only by the Missouri River from Kansas Free State. I could read “Tom Sawyer” and imagine N-- Jim, but I could not imagine him in St. Joe. He was simply an artifact of Mark Twain, just like a Minstrel Show wasn’t really slave music but slave music through Stephen Foster’s head.

When we moved to the real house when I was almost 14, I found myself in a new situation. Our end of the block was lower-middle-class White. The other end of the block was middle-and-lower-class Black. At the top of the hill in the middle of the block, sat a huge old Victorian mansion with a street light in front of it.

In that mansion lived an upper-class Black dentist and his family of six children. One was a girl my age named Illy. Naturally I talked with her. Since I talked with all the children on our side of the hill, pretty soon all of us were going up in the summer evening to sit on the curb under the street light and swap children’s lies. Pretty soon a lot of the children from the black side of the hill came up to listen to us and pass the evening sociably too.

Nobody’s mother said we couldn’t. Everybody’s mother knew we did. It was a good arrangement for everyone because we were out in the open under the street light, making a lot of happy noise, and everyone knew we were safe and out of trouble. There were problems only once—

Mama asked me, “What are you telling the children? Mrs. Hill says Joe-boy came home and told her that everyone is stuffed with hamburger, and her neighbor’s girl came home and said that we have two different-colored rivers running through us, and she wanted to know if the fish were colored too—”

I was embarrassed. “Mama, Joe-boy skinned his knee and was crying, and I tried to stop his crying by showing him how red his meat was under the black skin, and I told him that all of us look alike under the skin, we’re all red no matter what color the top is—”

“And the rivers?” Mama asked.

“That was Illy, Mama. She brought out her father’s picture book about bodies and tried to explain why our flesh is red, the picture showed the blood going to the heart was red, and coming out it was blue— or maybe that’s backward“

“It’s a good thing the summer is almost over,” said Mama. “You girls are acting like you’re college professors already, and you’re both still dummies—”

When September came, Illy and I walked to school together, picking up my new friend Margaret on the other side of the avenue below us. We walked Margaret to the Convent, then I walked Illy to Lincoln High, then I walked alone to 9th grade at Roubidoux downtown. None of us questioned this. This was the way it was. Illy and I could sit on the curb together, or we could sit together on a streetcar, but we didn’t sit together in school. This was the way of the world, and it never occurred to us to question it.

What Illy and I both questioned was whether public education was as good as parochial school education. Margaret was reading a tragedy about a girl named Iphigenia in Latin, while Illy and I were stuck in Caesar’s war letters home about *Omnia Gallia being Divisa in Tres Partes*. Illy

and I both felt short-changed and abused by this, and wondered if Margaret had other advantages at the Convent that we were being denied.

Margaret, for her part, felt abused because we could wear lipstick if we wanted to, while she had to wait until she was out of sight of the Sisters before she could put it on. This didn’t bother us. Illy said she’d look like a clown with lipstick, and I said nothing.

High school passed, Illy went away to university somewhere in the North, Margaret got a job selling cosmetics at Woolworth’s, I went to Junior College in St. Joe and then down to Columbia to Missouri University. Life went on as it always had, until the spring of 1940. That was when my life went out of technicolor and slipped back into black and white.

Five of our students were sent from MU to a Social Work Conference in Topeka, Kansas. I was one of them. One of the students drove. We stopped for lunch at a small country inn, and waited long enough for them to have slaughtered the cow before we were given the meat-sandwich and potatoes-in-gravy that used to be standard fare before hamburgers became popular.

So we were late getting to the Conference. When we walked in, almost all the seats were taken. There was one seat in the front row, and enough seats farther back for all of us if we were willing to be separated. There was one drawback:

Each empty seat was next to a student of color.

We stood there at the door in dismay and looked over at the audience, and the audience sat there and looked at us. My classmates moved over to stand by the wall. I stood there, rooted to the floor. If I moved over with them, I was saying “I am in enemy territory. I will stand my ground here by the wall, but I will not be a traitor to my upbringing.”

But what had my upbringing been? I heard Mama’s voice echoing through the years, “When in doubt, do the polite thing.” The girl in the front row was looking at me. I did the polite thing. I walked out to the front row, smiled at her, said, “May I?” politely, and sat down. She smiled back and that was it. We didn’t look at each other again, we were both busy taking notes on the big speeches.

I lived through it. Did I feel virtuous? No.

I felt as if I had done something unspeakably dreadful, like going to a party without my unmentionables on. I felt awful. I was a traitor. I had sat in school with a colored person. It was a breach of the way of life in which I had grown up. St. Joe had put a lot of effort into bringing me up properly, and I had betrayed its trust.

The other students didn’t speak to me. I was below their contempt. I had broken the code. I copied my notes and passed them around, knowing they couldn’t have taken notes, standing by the wall. They took the notes, but no one said “thanks”, and no one looked at me. I didn’t exist any more to them. And I didn’t exist to myself, either. I was friendless among my friends.

The school year ended. Life went on. I married and moved to Texas. Had children.. Became a teacher. Moved to California Found California to be another Kansas Free State, but this time I lived there.

Living there made a big difference. I could sit with Black teachers at school, just as I could on the bus. I could sit with them in a cafeteria, just as I could on a garden wall if we waited for someone else. It was the done thing. I could do it because everyone else did it, without having to think about it or apologize to themselves for it.. It did not make me invisible to any of my former friends. I wasn’t being a traitor to my upbringing. No soul-wrenching was involved—

I don’t know what the Black-White situation in Missouri is now. I hope the friendliness that existed in my childhood still exists.

And I hope that the Civil War is finally over....

# THE TIMBER LANE IS BULLDOZED DOWN

by Kathleen Powell Livingston

Two paths formed the lane:  
Wagon wheels—  
Model T—  
Stationwagon—  
Two people holding hands—  
A boy and his dog wide.

The timber lane promised the coming spring  
Even before the prairie's first bluebells.  
Sun dappled and damp it gave forth purple violets.  
Plum blossom sweetness lingered into summer.  
Giant walnut trees sheltered gooseberries and raspberries  
And, poison ivy.  
Bugs and snakes and worms  
Came to the cool leafy darkened depths to rest  
From the trials of hot rows of corn.  
Pioneer elms searched for a place to grow  
Left branches in their wake, good for children  
To hide upon and make bargains with their God.  
There were cow paths deep and worn,  
Coyote holes passed with trepidation of childhood,  
And fishing holes with water bugs too quick  
For catching though the minnow weren't.

Unknowing, I came over the hill, saw  
The timber lane is bulldozed down.

The corporations, the city farmers  
Spoon-fed us progress, a dollar bill for a plate.  
Desecraters of the land. Polluters of the mind.  
When I was a girl I saw a boy in the lane,  
Was struck still by black hair and eyes.  
He says now that we pay taxes on trees.  
These tax losses will be paid  
In another kind.

The timber lane is bulldozed down.  
My father was killed all over again  
And I lost my mother, a pioneer  
In her own time, who fished under the railroad bridge,  
Who was a holdout for trees.

When I die  
Do not trap me  
In a sterile coffin or a cement block  
To moulder upon the rags of rage I lay upon.  
Bury me in a pine box,  
Or better yet,  
Lay me naked  
(Or in a shroud if I offend you)  
Into the damp earth.  
Let me get back to earth fast.  
Plant a cottonwood over my grave,  
Carve my name on it  
Let the roots cradle my bones,  
Let my life flow upward with the tree  
So that I might look at the world  
And protect it on cold nights.  
If, someday, a bulldozer should try to cut me out  
I will not go without a fight  
I will catch his blade with my roots  
Hold fast  
So that he must work to destroy me.  
If I fall  
It will be with a shuddering groan  
That will make him stop inside  
And wonder.

# Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

By Merri Johnson

Everybody has their own activity "personality." Some are do-it-now-and-get-it-done types. Others aren't. I'm in the second category, what you might call a chronic putterer. Especially when it comes to my yard. I've probably moved more plants from one place to another than I've actually planted in the first place. But I have good excuses, make that *reasons*, for my puttering penchant.

First of all, I inherited it from my grandfather. After retiring from farming and moving into town, he could still keep busy all day without resorting to hanging out at the coffee shop or pestering my grandmother. Never mind that he didn't accomplish much of anything you could actually name. The important thing is that he was keeping busy, which is actually a valuable skill to have. People who keep busy live longer and healthier. My grandfather lived to be 89 and he never lived in a nursing home!

But beyond personal style, there's also the practical matter of having flower beds of hostas, iris and day lilies that multiply like rabbits and have to be divided every other year. You can't just let them take over. And then there's the occasional impulse purchase of something that I know in my heart I shouldn't buy. (O.K., I guess we're back to personality again.) But when it's on sale, in July, when I have all that Earl May Fun Money to spend, it's just too much to resist. And in a couple of years, transplanting it will be worth an hour or two of totally free garden puttering!

I hate to admit this next reason, but sometimes I plant something where it just looks all wrong later. The experts recommend a complete garden plan for your entire property. That might work if you actually implement the whole plan at once. Because you know what happens if you don't: every January those nursery and seed catalogs arrive and you give in to the temptation to swap out the planned flowering crab for a new variety of forsythia, but that messes up your color scheme or your sun-to-shade ratio or some other critical design element. Before you know it, you're digging up the tulips bulbs and putting in marigolds instead.

Perfect landscaping makes me nervous, anyway. I've never been a fan of those developments where the character of the neighborhood is predictably uniform. I prefer a little more spontaneity, a little anticipation, a little mystery, even.

Besides, my yard puttering gives my husband something to do outdoors besides golf. He's always willing to help when muscle is required. What man can resist that appeal to his masculinity? Like this spring, when I asked him to help me move a six-foot corkscrew hazel that had been in the ground for eight years. Even though it wasn't a very tall tree, those roots were big and deep. Of course, my husband did most of the digging and prying. My job was to push and pull on the trunk in the appropriate direction at the right time.

That's where working with my husband tends to break down: that matter of anticipating his next move. It doesn't matter if we're maneuvering furniture in a stairwell, putting up the two-story extension ladder, or digging up a tree. We are just not on the same wavelength when it comes to synchronized movement. Even so, after about two hours, we had that tree all situated in its new location near the grape arbor. Of course, we aren't sure yet if it will survive. If it doesn't, I'll just have to figure out something else.

That's the joy of yard puttering. There's always another day, another project, another opportunity to rearrange the landscape. Most of the time it doesn't even cost anything. Unless, of course, you're one of those time-is-money types. In that case, puttering probably isn't for you. But for me, it's the perfect outdoor pastime.

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# This Old Table

by Joe Smith

In the White horse Tavern there is an old round table toward the back of the big room. It has a history. It was bought at a farm sale back in 1964. I hear the buyer paid \$3.00 for it. He evidently took it into the tavern in Johnson. I'm not sure of the name of the tavern at that time. It has had numerous owners since that time, but the table is still there.

I can't imagine how many games of cards have been played at that table, or how many people have eaten off it. It was here when my wife and I first came to visit Johnson in '63.

The top shows wear and the edges of the table show marks of pocket knives where some kids have left their marks. I think there might be some initials carved in it somewhere.

If only that old table could talk, the tales it could tell, the red faces around town. Think of the old fellows that are no longer with us, that used to play cards there. I can think of a bunch without much trouble, and many more whose names I can't remember. Senior moment I guess.

There were many a laugh at that table and there will be many more. Sometimes you can remember one game that was special or maybe one hand that was way out with some of these fellows that brought a lot of laughs, and you still remember it. The old table is scarred and looks well worn but it is still solid. It still has heart. With a little TLC it might last 'til I get to that big card table in the sky where all our old friends are sitting around playing cards, maybe even playing a little solo.

In the early mornings all the farmers come in and have a cup of coffee and lie to each other. The first one doesn't stand a chance; there is a dish in the middle of the table for all the coffee money. If someone forgets their wallet, they pay double the next day. I know, it has happened to me.

The old table serves the young as well as the old coots like me, and never complains, not that I ever heard. I would almost bet that everyone in Johnson has sat down at that old table at least once in their life. It is large enough for seven people to sit around playing cards at the same time. The veneer has worn through in places on the top, very much like the old fellows sitting around playing cards. They are getting a little thin on top also. It is a friendly place to sit. It almost talks to you after the lunch rush is over, saying, "Hey, let's play cards." And if we can find enough players, we sure do.

I'm sure the old table is happy to be in the tavern. One of these days it might just have to go to 'Old Table Heaven' and meet all the old card players up there. But until that day, "Lets play cards." Joe



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