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Country Neighbor



June 2006



Central Avenue, Auburn, Nebraska.

June is about...

Summertime!! Well yes, it can be hot, and we can expect it to be. We have been fortunate to have received a respectable amount of rain so far; keep the faith.

Picnics used to be the big Sunday getaway. These days, with luxury automobiles and good roads, camping is the weekend activity of choice, and this area has a desirable selection of camping locations, including *Big Lake* in Missouri, and *Indian Cave* in Nebraska.

Road Trips to small towns; nostalgic visits to variety stores and soda fountains, time travel to events forgotten. A drive by the old highschool, or where it once stood, a pause at an intersection, trying to remember the sounds at the 'sock hop'.



Seneca, Kansas

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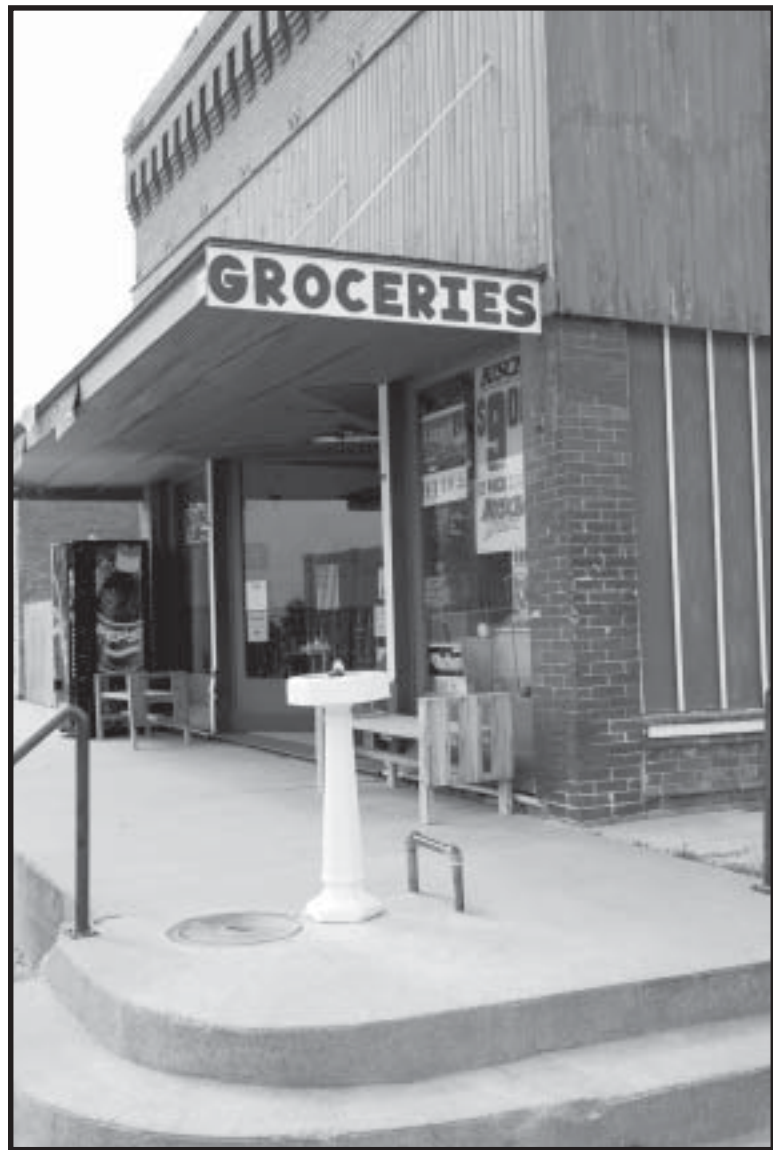
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The fountain is running...it's summertime in Cook.

PEGGY KUSER

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In Missouri: Rock Port, and Tarkio.

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

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

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The following people helped
make this issue possible:

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Thank you!

Your Country Neighbor
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Window on Fifth Street

Often around this time of year, I recall a memory from an earlier time; I must have been in the fifth or sixth grade. I had a dream that I had just woke up and it was the first day of school.

Now, I didn't hate school. School was where and when I got to be with my friends, to socialize, play games, laugh and have fun. I even liked the new ink smell of my textbooks. I didn't care for *English*, I tolerated *History*. I liked *Arithmetic*, mainly because I could finish it quickly and then I could do something leisurely, like page through the encyclopedia. The encyclopedia was the closest thing my school had to *National Geographic* - color pictures from all over the world.

Then I woke up for real. It wasn't the first day of school after all, it was the Saturday after the last day of school, and I had the whole summer ahead of me! Best of all, Sunday was the annual school picnic with baseball games and free ice cream. For a fifth grader who was tired of school and eager for summer vacation, that Saturday felt like the happiest day of my life, and at least up to that point, it may have been. And all things considered, it still ranks in the top ten. So have fun, play ball, it's summertime!




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June 2006

Antique Tractors vs. Redesigned Tractors

by Joe Smith

I have had many tractors that would make good antique prospects. The problem was I needed these tractors to use in my farming work. I modernized all of these tractors. I put 3 points, power steering, live hydraulics, new sleeves and pistons, wide front axles, and 12-volt systems. Why did I do this? The lack of money for one reason, to buy a late-model tractor. The old M Farmalls worked real well to do this work on. I have "modernized" 3 "M"s and one super H. The first one I did was the last one I sold. I traded an old lathe I had for it and proceeded to make a good tractor out of it. Every time I found an "M" cheap I would buy it and give it the whole ball of wax. I had the time and the shop to do the work.

Almost every new tractor has an improvement over the last year's model. And yet if you change an old tractor in anyway, you hurt its antique value. Many of the people that want antiques actually remove anything that modernizes the tractor; they want it just like it was when it came off the assembly line, paint and all. So the antique clubs look down their nose at somebody that improves their tractor. Of course they want them for shows and to play with. You can bet they have a modern tractor to do their farming with. The manufacturing plants did this almost every year to improve the performance of their tractors. That is why the tractors improved so much. A lot of these improvements were done by farmers first.

A year or so ago, I built a tractor out of salvage parts. It turned out to be a darn good tractor. It has an 80 hp diesel I got off a 410 Massey combine that had been retired. The rear end and transmission came from a junked out M Farmall. The fuel tank came from a junked out 400 IHC. The clutch came from a Massey 1105. The front axle was the rear axle of the combine. All the frame and clutch housing was built right here in my shop. The steering wheel assembly was out of the combine, all hydraulic, no mechanical connection. The hydraulic system came off the combine. The rear fenders came off a junked Massey 90 tractor. The radiator came off the combine also. I made the metal work of the hoods. The seat is a combo of Massey and Farmall. The rear wheels came off the combine. I made the hubs for the axles from parts off a 715 combine. Like a lot of the parts of this tractor, I made them in my shop with my lathe and welder. My son calls this a Messy M. It will run near 30 mph on the road and is not short on power, steers great. It may not be an antique but it gets a lot of attention at tractor shows.

I have now sold all the other "modernized" Farmalls, but I still have my "Messy M" and use it a lot, even though I have retired from farming. I have three tractors and used all of them this week. The one I bought for \$300 and did the work on were sold for \$2500, \$2500 and \$2000 for the last one. If I run across another M, I will probably do it all over. These M's were over 55 years old and still in good shape. Everything on them is repairable. I might make an antique out of the next one, who knows? Joe Smith

TAKE THE NIGHT TRAIN

by Devon Adams

Now I lay me down to sleep, but first, I'll have to fix a snack to settle into any empty spots inside my stomach, because they say that rest is deeper if you're not hungry when you go to bed, and I realize that my motivation may not be starvation, but any old anxiety will do when there is chocolate cheesecake calling from the kitchen. Its not enough to sit and eat when there are radio talk shows that don't even come on the air until after twelve a.m., and they become progressively schizophrenic in their subject matter and their guest speakers, not to mention their call-in listeners. When I hear far-flung theories about the universe and how humans got to earth, it makes my daytime problems seem so ordinary and mundane. I think I need to take a hike into some remote wilderness and sit on a log until Bigfoot comes along. Perhaps we could have a discussion about how we both may be descendents from beings who jumped ship from a flying saucer passing through our solar system on a biology field trip.

About the time I've finished eating the cheesecake, I have a burst of energy and decide to wash some laundry and sweep the floor. Later, while the clothes are tumbling in the dryer, my email calls to me to communicate with those who know me best. Still later, as I'm folding clothes, the ticking of the clock grabs my attention and the time is far past my estimate of the mere minutes that I've spent on little things. But I shouldn't be surprised because it happens every night. Those strange people who jump out of bed at five a.m. with lots of energy and coordination and mental clarity are the opposite of my breed of night owl. When they are getting fuzzy brains at nine in the evening and yawning toward their bedtimes, I am getting my second wind. No matter how physically or mentally tired I may be, by ten p.m. I am cooking with ideas and energy and one thought leads to another and one action feeds the next, until I often find myself awake at two or three a.m. Books are more interesting, ideas are fresher, my writing is easier, and brainstorming becomes my default setting. It is fun to be out there on the edge of night, swimming in the sea of brain chemistry that I share with other night owls.

We will never know the pleasures of waking up early in the morning with a clear head, ready to run a few miles, our bodies wide awake. For us, early is a foreign language that we will never learn. Early is a slow awaken-





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ing, a series of careful movements toward a soft chair, and a long sitting period during which we attempt to align our brain cells with caffeine and crossword puzzles. That part, of course, comes after the part where we are once again able to focus both eyes on the same target. I enjoy what some might call a disability, but I have lots of company, and we all can sympathize with each other as we drag our feet through the muddy roads of early mornings. Maybe the early birds and the night owls really do come from different planets.

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A Time to Save, and a Time to...

by Frieda Burston

Went around all week feeling like there was a 10-ton stone in the bottom of my stomach.

Didn't know why.

Then, cleaning up for the Sabbath, I picked up the brochure of the Residential Facility I'm headed for, and there was a twinge in the gut. Ah, YES! my problem started when I showed that brochure to My-Student-the-Doctor, who has just retired. He read it, every word of it, then whipped out his little electronic gismo and started in-putting. In deep silence, with a little head-shaking.

Then he said, "You can't afford to take a one-bedroom apartment. They just raised the rent by a bigger percent than your pensions rose. And extra services like washing your back, cost. At your age, it won't be long before you'll need those extra services. The money will have to come from your savings.. So take a studio apartment, and have money for a back-washer. And buying furniture for one room will cost less than for two. Save your money for when you'll need it." Suddenly, from rich I was poor—

I went into shock. Lulu and D-D had told me that this was what I had saved for so carefully, so that I wouldn't have to be a burden on my children, that the time had come to spend it now, to enjoy it. But if I lifted the lid and really looked at it, I knew I hadn't saved for enjoyment. Not for a back wash, either.

I saved because I was a child of the Great Depression. Saving was a way of life. One saved. To this day I never eat the last piece of anything, I save it because I might be hungry later and find nothing to eat. When I put a new bag of food into the refrigerator, I feel free to eat or throw the last shriveled piece in the old bag. Not until then. I might need it, and then I wouldn't have it. So I save it. The memory of hunger curling up our skinny little tummies at night, curls up my fat little tummy even now.

We lived with fear for most of my young life— not fear of invading armies, of political conspiracies, or of epidemic disease. No. We lived in fear of hunger, of homelessness, of all the terrors of times so poor that a man digging ditches by hand with a broken shovel, prayed every day for a ditch to dig. Factories closed, businesses went bankrupt, stores sold out. People found themselves on the street among their cherished beds and chairs, in winter. People who had cars had no money for gasoline. People who had horses couldn't buy hay. People who had stoves had no wood to burn. (Banks let us live in foreclosed houses without rent, as insurance against people tearing down houses to burn, board by board, at home.)

Anyone who had a yard tried to grow food— then every green leaf vanished in a cloud of locusts. Not just one year. Two. Then there were six years of drought. My brother dug a deep hole in the yard — we dropped a bucket on a rope, and pulled up enough mud to keep the tomatoes alive. The ground turned to dust, the winds blew the dust away, hunger spread. There were days in winter when we gathered around our only coin, a dime, debating whether to spend it on a loaf of bread or a quart bottle of milk. Either, or. There were stores where stale bread and "turned" milk were half-price, but how much shoe leather was worn off, walking to them? A pair of paste-on rubber soles were 19 cents at the Dime Store, but if there wasn't money for food, where would the money for paste-on soles come from? Nobody worried about washing Grampa's back. (People naturally smelled. No deodorants in those days.) We worried instead whether we should take less ourselves, and share our milk or bread with Grampa.

Thirty years later I had silver spoons on my table. Forty years later, a three-level house overlooking a lake. The country outgrew the Great Depression, and so did my generation. Or we thought we did. But I wonder how many of my childhood friends can look at what we so carefully saved for our old age, and now that that old age is here, feel comfortable about breaking into it and spending it off so quickly?

Or do they have, like me, not butterflies in their stomachs— but ten-ton stones, when thinking on it now?

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

By Merri Johnson

This month, for the first time since I started writing this column over a year ago, I'm scrambling for an anecdote or observation that stands out as a topic for my Diary.

Not that things have been slow. Since Palm Sunday, we've either been out of town, hosting guests or attending open houses every weekend. Maybe that's the problem: I've been preoccupied. Probably, lots of noteworthy things happened that I completely missed in my rush to get this or that done before the next weekend's engagement.

Now that I'm forced by the publisher's deadline to submit something, I find myself scrutinizing the past few days for a tidbit to share. I think I've found it.

My husband's sister flew in from Boston on May 19, burning some vacation days before she retires in July. She's lived out East for 40 years, although she comes back every year or two. Still, it's quite a leap from the hustle, congestion and amenities of Boston to the slow-paced, small-town Midwest she grew up in.

We, of course, apologized for the comparative lack of opportunities here to separate her from her money. But in reality, we could have attended a world-class vocal performance at the Brownville Concert Hall, or had our choice of seats at the Auburn Theatre to see *The Da Vinci Code* if we'd been inclined to seek entertainment. But she could do things like that in Boston.

What she couldn't do there was browse a farm yard garage sale, complete with ducks, paddling and quacking their contentment in a stock tank.

Or find the perfect souvenir for a Red Sox fan at Sonia Kistner's shop.

Or get a hand-made bird bath brush at *Country Brooms Everlasting*.

Or admire the rustic charm of *Whiskey Run Creek Vineyard & Winery*.

Or get a great used paperback at the Village Bookstore for the return flight.

Or hit a bucket of balls at the driving range with her brother.

Or watch a papa cardinal feed four newly hatched babies in the nest right outside our dining room window.

Or watch the stars above our house on a perfect May evening, wrapped in an old blanket on a shabby chaise lounge, sipping a glass of Whiskey Run Levi's Reserve, and sharing memories.

Those brief, quiet times together, between the year-long separations, re-stitch the unraveling ties of family in a way that big reunions or special occasions just can't do. And that's worth noting.

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Auburn's Memorial Park
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**Roger Moerer's
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(Photo Taken May 24th.)

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See you soon when I'll be "back on the road again",
and at the
Shell Speedee Mart in Auburn

The Coming Storm

by Vicki Harger

At the time of this writing (May 20, 2006) all is relatively calm and tranquil in the U.S. Storm clouds are on the horizon, but nothing major has yet occurred, no terrorist attacks, no Bird Flu pandemic, no Katrina-type hurricanes, etc. We have no idea when these events will begin to happen, but one thing is certain. The government is warning us to prepare for catastrophic events and to prepare *quickly*.

According to experts, we need to store up food and water and emergency supplies for several weeks, at least. The Katrina Crisis proved that the government can't possibly supply our needs during a full-blown emergency. They are warning us, now, to prepare ourselves ahead of time. If we ignore this warning, we do so at our own peril. We, and our children, will pay the price—just like the Gulf-state victims.

In a full-blown crisis, of course, the important thing is to avoid panic. Stock up on survival supplies before a public panic strips the store shelves bare. Depending on the type of crisis, there may not be fuel for the truckers to re-supply the grocery stores with food. In that case, we're in serious trouble if we haven't prepared beforehand as the officials warned us to do.

If you pay attention to the news, you're already aware of the potential crises looming on our horizon: the rapid decline of the US dollar, the "immigration time-bomb", the "Nuclear Standoff" taking place in Iran, the rising cost of oil and gas, the increasing threats of attack from Al Qaeda, the approaching "record-breaking" hurricane season. (No doubt, many of you are rolling your eyes, right now, but remember this, the Gulf-state victims don't shrug it off when they hear dire warnings. Not any more!)

Suffice it to say, the intense drills underway right now in the U.S. and in dozens of other nations, in preparation for the crises that may occur, will not be enough. The government knows it is unable to handle these burgeoning crises, hence, they warn you through the media, and they hope you prepare.

For anyone interested in this subject, there are ongoing discussions at the *Lyceum* in Brownville, Nebraska. Various speakers discuss Globalization, the Growing Farm Crisis, Survival Preparation, Edible Wild Plants and related topics. From all indications, these meetings are about to become very, very interesting.

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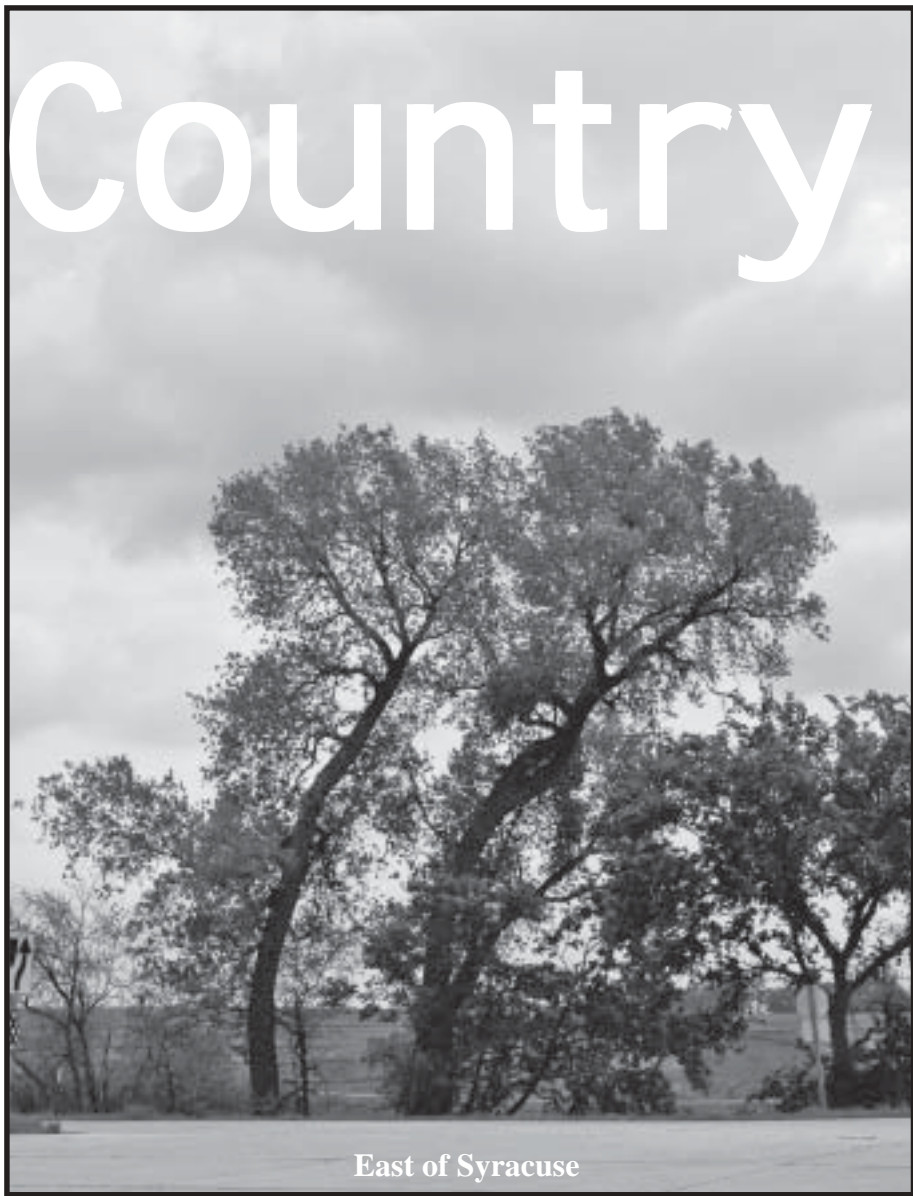
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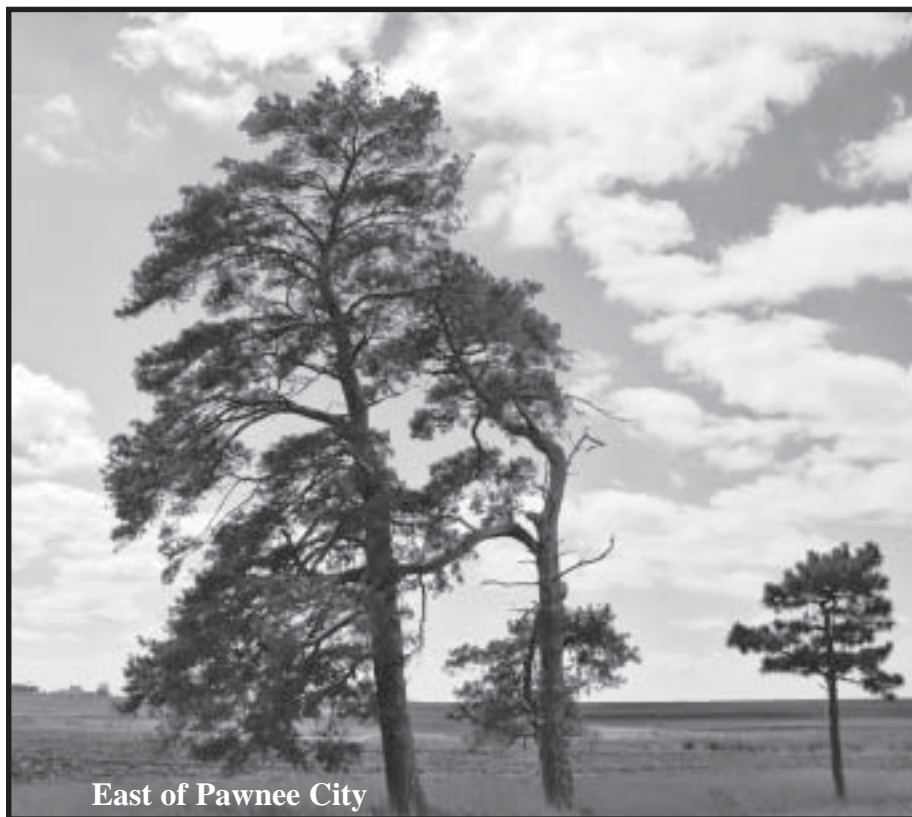


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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
Photos provided by Author

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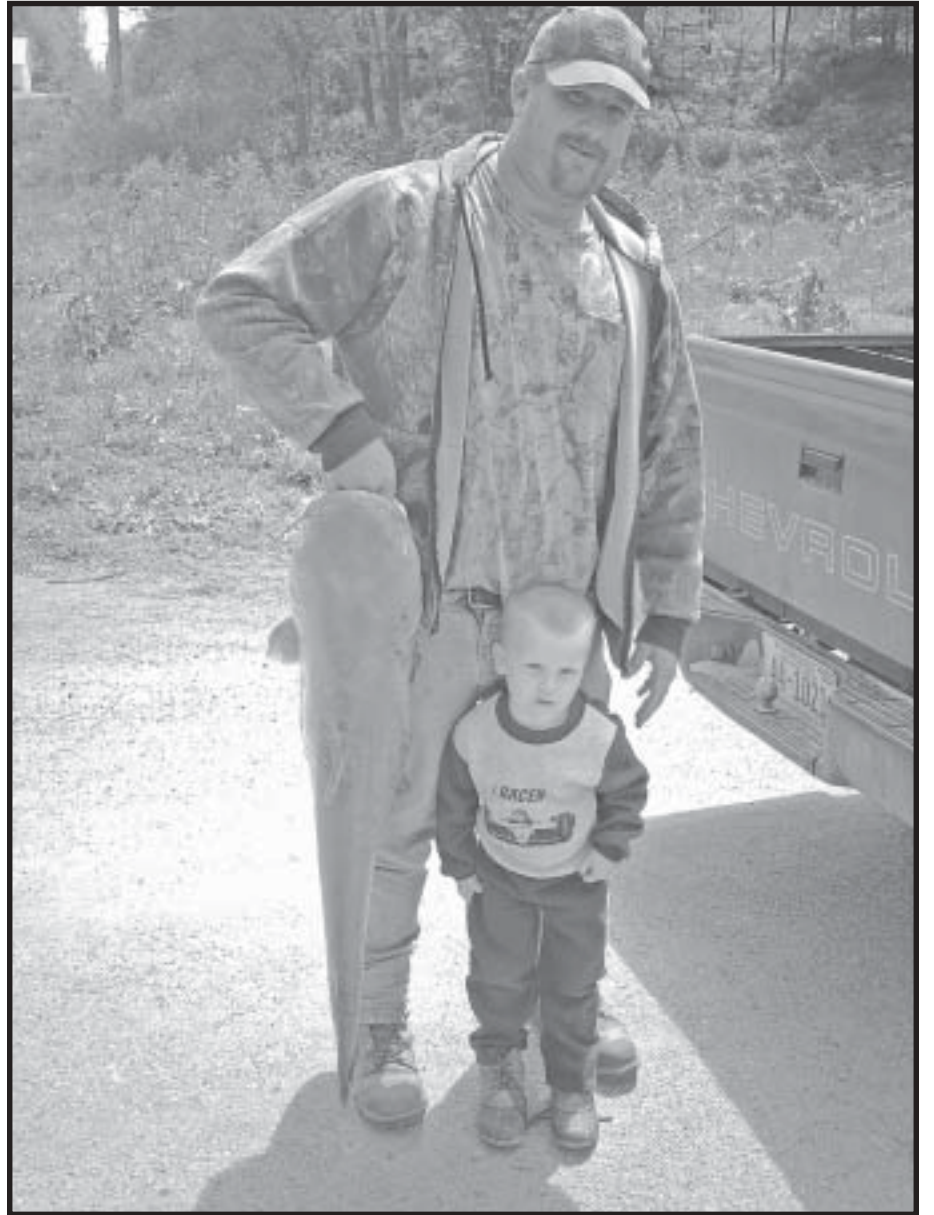
The Missouri River is high and staying high, with the water temperature right at 60 degrees. I don't know how long this is going to last but with the higher water, comes the big fish of Spring. There has been good action for small channels, but what has been coming on are the Big Blues being caught on the latest rise of the river. Several fish weighing well over 30 pounds. That's a handful on a rod and reel. Those lunkers will remind you quickly why you have to get last season's line off your rig and re-string with new line so that you can get them landed without snapping your old brittle string. It's a lesson that only takes one time. Most times you'll get to see the fish and when it makes a roll for another attempt at deeper water - snap goes your line, like a rifle shot, leaving you with nothing but a swirl in the water and a knot in your stomach.

The little ones are biting on crawlers and dough baits. The big ones are hitting chubs, the bigger, the better. Remember, Big Bait, Big Fish on the Missouri. Also a reminder about Blues on the Missouri River, Nebraska limit is 1 bag / 1 possession. That means if you catch one and take it home you have to eat it before you can catch another one.

Hunting:

The 2006 Spring Turkey Season is drawing to a close. And it has been a dandy! I believe I'd say with moderate success. If you remember back in March we had a week of 80-degree days. That split the birds up and started the toms gobbling and the hens laying. Well we haven't had any weather that's helped us out since, at least not on the weekends! We have experienced a lot of rainy, windy days through April and into May. This set the turkeys back a couple of times, making hunting them a little harder than the past few years. And man, are there a lot of hens out there! Several times I called hens into the decoys. That's a little awkward. You can't continue to call because the hens will give you away. So you wait. Meanwhile the tom moves away. I thought it was just my luck, but other hunters have had the same situation arise, so I don't feel so bad. You would think having live decoys would be the ticket to get a big tom in but it didn't work that way with me.

Spring will soon be turning into Summer. That means river time to those who like to get into the Flathead cats. It's the Blues' turn right now in the cooler water but as the water approaches the 70-degree mark, then comes Flathead season. We have got a lot of good fish between now and the real hot weather so get out and get yourself some. 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."



This month's fishing picture is James Reeves and his son, Arthur, shown with a 38-pound Blue Cat caught on the Missouri River near Peru.



This month's hunting pictures are of Randy Perry with a 24-pound tom toting two beards (one 10 inch & the other 8-1/2 inches) and 1-1/4 inch spurs. They don't get any bigger than that around here folks!

2006 Southeast Consolidated Elementary Writing Contest Winners

There were 61 excellent entries this year that made it especially hard to pick the top three winners in each grade and category. According to the judges, they were all winners. Poetry winners are on this page. For Short Story and Plays, go to www.yourcountryneighbor.com and click on the windmill picture.

Third Grade

COOL WATER

By Ryan McMann (1st)

Cool running water
Splashing against the rocks,
Refreshing to drink.

WILD PONIES

By Taylor O'Brien (2nd)

The wild ponies
Gallop across the prairie,
The wind howling.

Fourth Grade

SOFTBALL

By Libbey Anderson (1st)

I've gone out for softball twice,
I think it's really nice,
I love to hit and run,
But pitching's really fun.
I like to hear the crowd scream and shout,
When I throw my third out.
You should also go out
To see what I'm talking about.

DRAGONFLY

By Carmen Alexander (2nd)

Something's soaring in the sky,
I think it was a dragonfly just passing by

Before you start off for the sea,
come down and I'll take you home with me

It's not too far away,
just down there by that hay

So dragonfly, dragonfly stop soaring toward the sea,
Come down and I'll take you home with me.

SPRING BREEZE

By Rachel Herr (3rd)

A bird sits chirping
While I smell the fresh cut grass
And feel the spring breeze.

Fifth Grade

CANDY

By Chelsi Shubert (1st)

Candy.
The word that makes my brain go,
BONKERS!
Fruity, tangy, crunchy,
Sour, chewy, gummy,
Sticky, chocolatey,
And most of all, SWEET!
Words clutter my mind.
My mouth puckers.
My heart pumps faster.
I have the craving for,
CANDY!

KURT

By J. C. McMann (2nd)

Kurt
Is my brother.
He's really short.
So short
My head
Touches his chin.
He may be grouchy
At times.
Even though he's mad
When I'm hurt
He always
Cheer me up.
Now
He's always in his truck.
If he's not in his truck
He's playing a game
On driving monster trucks
On his
Play Station 2.
He's the best brother
EVER!

MONKEYS

By Hayley Huey (3rd)

Monkeys are one of my favorite animals
Sometimes
They love to swing
From tree to tree
All so eating
Things like
Bananas
Mangos
Even bugs
These primates are unique
From their curly tails
To the long nails
Even the easy set off tempers

Poetry, etc.

Sixth Grade

(continued from previous page)

MY BIG BROTHER

By Tanner Petersen (1st)

He is good at all kinds
of things.

He skate boards
and
rides four wheelers
really well.

I will tell you one thing,
he dresses
really nice.

He always pays
too much for shoes
kind of like I do.

He is tall
has brown curly hair
and pierced ears.

All of the girls think he is
HOT!

The reason
I love my brother
is not because
he dresses nice or
because all the ladies
think he is hot,
It is because he is always
there for me.

SHADOW

By Carlee Alexander (2nd)

My adorable

Baby cousin

Shadow is very playful.

She is only

Six months old and

is the loudest thing I

Have ever heard.

She may cry sometimes,

But usually makes faces,

And is

very well behaved.

Shadow

is always playing

Laughing,

And is,

Always trying to hide

From you.

Shadow is really a

Curious person.

She can also bug

Her big sister Desi.

My

Baby cousin is

Very lovable.

EASTER

By Victoria Williams (3rd)

Today is a new
and special day.

It's Easter!!!

I look out my bedroom window

and see the beautiful lilies

that are

unique and original.

I go outside to feel the nice weather

and

start on my Easter egg hunt.

About an hour

has gone past

and I am eating candy

from my eggs!!!

I give all my family an egg

that I decorated.

What a fun, and special day!!!

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Poetry, etc.

X-RAY PIX

by Devon Adams

The x-ray rooms are dark and silent
and technicians move in purposeful
efficiency to snap the pictures
that can change a life from ordinary
into something less than perfect.
Waiting time is short and
patients flow like water through a dam,
leaving through revolving doors
that never stop their circle dance.
Negatives are black and white and gray
with stories written in the ghostly
shapes that speak in languages
only medics can decipher.
Civilians surrender all their secrets
to the cold of metal and machines.
There are no choices here,
only films developed after radiation
reads the bodies with its penetrating eyes.

WAITING ROOM

by Devon Adams

All day the chairs wait
for someone to sit in them.
Patients come and go and
sit and stand and pace.
The magazines that offer escape
are rumpled from people who
turn pages they don't read.
Conversations talk about the weather
and the latest games and scores,
but they never speak of fear
that hangs heavy in the air.
The safer choice is to pretend
that other people are unlucky.

Gooseberry Pie

by Toni Allen

The woods are a room here where we pick gooseberries.
Oaks and walnuts make walls. The tangled reach of old growth,
a thick roof above our heads, keeps the hot sun out.
Morning coolness rises from the hard packed earth floor.

This is the path Jack's cows take to their favorite pond.
Nose to tail they walk and graze and stomp the brush down.
Their earnest snacking on tufts of brome and switch grass
wears all growth to short nubs and makes our walking easy.

We circle the bushes, dive into brambles
for luminous berries, diminutive hot air balloons,
emerald and ruby dewdrops snagged in branches,
the lost earrings of Cooper Creek's wild daughters.

Birds above make little disgusted clicks. We plunder
their favorite food. Soon clouds of mosquitoes will rise
from the creek, lured by our perfumed sweat and the blood
from a hundred wrist-to-shoulder scratches, time-honored
sacrifice of flesh to the god of the wood's wild
berries. We move from bush to bush oblivious
to the gathering heat. Berry season is short,
and our minds' eyes are filled with visions -

gooseberry pie golden in the pan, jewel tone glaze
of ruby filling bubbling through leaf-shaped vents
in fluted crust, gooseberry jam sugared down,
boiled thick, ready for the jars.

Our Father


by Jan Chism Wright
(c) 10/13/02

Our father who art in Houma,
Norbert be thy name.
Thy children come,
thy will be done,
in Houston as it is in Houma.
Give us this day our child support
and forgive us for not visiting more
as we forgive you for never being there.
And lead us not into any more bars
but deliver us from your drunken friends.
For thine is the big beer glass
with the garter and three cherries
For ever and ever. Amen.


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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott

It was just a page of newsprint covered with names...hundreds of names.... listed alphabetically and sorted by cemetery.

In life, men with names like Shultz, Bare, Fitzgerald, Garcia and Tsunemori, would have been separated by age, education, occupation and income. But death had united them, had brought them together on this small-town newspaper page of remembrance.

So many names: farmers, doctors, laborers and lawyers, and behind each name a story. Some died young, calling for their mothers, boys wishing at the moment of death for just one more day, one more minute, one more second of life. Others, fated to become old men, lived to see sons born and daughters married, cradled grandchildren in weathered hands, and gazed with wonder upon the faces of great-grandchildren.

In one cemetery sleeps a soldier who fought in the Spanish American war. He was over one hundred when he died; a man who marched to a different drummer his entire life. He wore his silver hair long, and with his smart goatee he always reminded me a little of General Armstrong Custer, especially when he wore his Stetson. His well-intentioned son once took the notion to move the old man to California, but like a perennial with deep roots Horace didn't transplant well, and he failed to take hold no matter what the son tried. In six months he was back where he belonged. Back to his dry knobby fields, old Cadillac and the comfortable farmhouse where his tiny, soft-spoken wife had died one spring morning from a worn out heart.

In another, a father who served his county in World War Two, and had brought home a good-looking war bride to boot, lies near the son he sacrificed to Vietnam. Their names appear one after the other, forever together. There's the man who cheated death at the battle of Iwo Jima, only to die 40-odd years later when a tiny sliver of Japanese shrapnel pierced his heart. His wife still lives on the little corner of land they bought when he came home from the war. There are American-born Japanese, who, despite the fact their families were interned in domestic prison camps, fought valiantly in the European theater, and men of Mexican descent who could scarcely

speak English when they were sent overseas.

The list grows longer every year.

I've never known a time without war. In my early years of elementary school, boys proudly wore embroidered satin jackets sent home from Korea by uncles, or older brothers fighting there, and a map with push pins marking battles with strange sounding names hung on our schoolroom wall.

A few years later my classmates and I learned to 'duck and cover' in case of nuclear attack; quickly sliding under our school desks at the urgent command of our teacher. I remember wondering what sort of protection my flimsy school desk could offer against such an attack, but our job was not to question why but to obey quickly...and so we did.

In those days we were drilled daily on the evils of communism, and carried home civil defense pamphlets covering topics as diverse as building a backyard bomb shelter, recognizing signs of radiation poisoning, and why it was better to be 'Dead than Red'

I spent my childhood on the lookout for bomb-dropping communists, and in some ways was a little disappointed when the only plane I ever saw up-close was a noisy yellow crop duster piloted by a scruffy guy in a blue ball cap. By the time the military dug the missile silo just a few miles west of our house the fear of dying in a nuclear attack was an old one.

Then came high school, and Vietnam, my generation's war. A time when the girls in my school worried their boy-friends would be sent to Vietnam, and the boys were certain they would die there. It seemed like that war, and the cultural chaos that came with it, would never end....but it did....only to be replaced by skirmishes in the Sudan, war in Bosnia, and now the Middle East.

I've fretted about Dale, fussed over my sons, and now find myself worrying about what the future holds in store for my grandchildren.

It never ends.

The men spent the better part of the week rotary-hoeing in the wake of the hard rain we received last Saturday night. The localized thunderstorm was short and mean, pounding the fields with hard drops and a few soft hail. We were grateful for the rain, which we desperately needed, but the fields were slick as dinner plates when it was all over.

Most irrigation districts are in the process of pulling the water from their canals, ending the early hay runs that in retrospect may not have been such a good idea. It's dry here; the fields powdery or cloddy, depending on the soil type and drought continues to plague us.

Although there will be no picnic here on Memorial Day, I'll fry up some chicken and make a bowl of potato salad for our noon meal. We're simply too busy to take the day off.

Pray for rain and pray for peace. We could surely use a good dose of each.

Karen

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Travelers along Kansas Highway 63 will be pleasantly surprised if they take the time to stop in at the Corning General Store. Whether they stop for a pop or a full home-style chicken dinner, they will find they have stepped into the "8th wonder of the world!"

Small Town Store Offers Big City Selection

by Penny Zeller

Once tagged on a radio commercial as the "8th wonder of the world," visitors to the Corning General Store and Corn Crib Restaurant will themselves 'wonder' how owners Harold and Mary Ann Brokamp stuff all that stuff into one building!

Located in Corning, Kansas, on south Kansas Highway 63, or as the official Corning Store T-shirt says, "Conveniently located in the middle of nowhere," the Corning General Store is what one might call a small community "everything" store.

Greeting cards and gift items share space with nails, nuts, and bolts. Coolers are filled with convenience store items like bottled water and sodas and regular grocery store items like frozen vegetables and meats. Need a toy for a birthday party; or the party plates, napkins and balloons for hosting the party? You'll find it at the Corning General Store. You'll even find the mix and frosting you need to make the cake.

If you're camping at one of the area lakes, it's a great place to stock up on your supplies, be it sunglasses and shampoo, to beverages, canned goods and that ever-popular marshmallow for the campfire!

"We started out about 14 years ago downtown in a building with just a grocery store," explains Harold. "We added the hardware and deli area and just kept expanding."

"Four years ago we knew if the business was going to survive we had to make a change. We built this new building here along the highway for more exposure in hopes of enticing travelers to stop in. At that time we expanded into the restaurant business by opening up the Corn Crib Restaurant."

"I enjoy the cooking," says Mary Ann, who happens to be a home-grown Corning girl. "I have done catering for many years, either on my own or working for a catering company. I have also cooked at a local nursing home and the school. I plan the menus for the restaurant and I have a special marinade I use for most of our meat dishes. Our rolls, pies and deserts are made from scratch every day."

The Corn Crib features 'Broaster Chicken,' marinated and breaded on-site, cooked and ready to eat in ten minutes. "On Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 5 to 8 p.m., we are offering a chicken dinner special complete with the homemade rolls," said Mary Ann. "We serve it 'family style' which means it's all you can eat. We bring out bowls of mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables, the chicken on platters and we keep filling them up until you say you're done!"

The Corn Crib is also open on Friday and Saturday evenings from 5 to 8:30 p.m. and offers the chicken, plus steaks, a fried catfish, and prime rib. Lunch, complete with a daily special or other sandwich menu items, is offered Monday to Saturday from 11:30 to 2 p.m.

"One of our best customer sources is the local farmers," says Harold. "They come into the store for the hardware items they need for the farm and then they grab a deli sandwich and a pop for lunch or decide to stay for the luncheon special. The store fills a void for the community in that we save them a good 30-mile round trip to pick up that same nut or bolt if they had to go further than Corning."

Speaking of the hardware items, you can also find many large overstock items at the Corning General Store.

"I always like to find a better buy and I figure most people do," says Harold. "So I found a way to purchase surplus and returns from the large department stores and stock them here in the back of the store. Much of it is seasonal, for instance next Fall I will have a lot of gardening tools and lawn trimmers. Right now, I do have lawn mowers and a lot of household items. You may be surprised at what you find and the price that we are offering."

So the next time you are within sight of Corning, Kansas, be sure to stop in and shop. Better yet, put the Corning General Store and Corn Crib Restaurant on your list of places to visit this summer. You and your stomach will be glad you did!



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