

Your

Country Neighbor

FREE!



March 2005

A Monthly Magazine



YOUR WINDOW WITH A COUNTRY VIEW

March is about...

Josh is anticipating river fishing, Karen mentions Spring calving, and it's time for *Daffodil Days*. Here and there are hints of green, and we are not just talking about March 17. There will be lots of activity in the fields soon; this is the month when Spring returns...usually! We remember an 8-inch snowfall around 'Spring Break' not too long ago. But the signs so far have been favorable for an early Spring. Let's go with that...until...

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Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Editor and Publisher: Stephen Hassler

The following people helped make this issue possible:

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Karen Ott
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Thank you!

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Daffodil Days, Nemaha County Unit

What does hope mean to you?

To thousands of cancer survivors in Nemaha County, hope comes every year in the form of a simple flower, the daffodil.

Daffodils, the first flower of Spring, symbolize an end to the dark days of Winter, and the beginning of brighter times ahead. To some cancer survivors they represent the accomplishment of having beaten the disease for another year, for others the daffodil is a sign that we are always moving closer to a cure.

Daffodil Days is your opportunity to bring hope into the lives of friends and neighbors facing cancer. We urge you to join us in supporting the American Cancer Society Daffodil Days by ordering fresh cut blooms or by going one step further and taking pre-orders at your workplace, church, school or organization.

This year in Nemaha County, Daffodil Days campaign takes place from March 7 to 13, and Daffodil Sunday is March 13, 2005. The deadline for advance orders was February 21, 2005. The American Cancer Society is now required to pay sales tax on the flowers we sell during Daffodil Days. To cover that cost, and keep donations consistent with the past donations, we encourage you to order 10% more daffodils this year.

Proceeds from the sale go to support the American Cancer Society's life saving programs, so when you participate in Daffodil Days you are doing more than just buying flowers. You are paving the way for revolutionary new cancer research. You are making sure someone can find a ride to his or her cancer treatment. You are working to finally put an end to cancer, and to improve the lives of people who already have been diagnosed.

For more information or to volunteer, please call Ardith Winger at (402) 872-4175 or Charlotte Parenteau at (402) 274-3312. The American Cancer Society provides information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through its toll free number, (800) ACS-2345 and at its website, www.cancer.org. Your support can and will make a difference. Together we will make hope bloom this Spring.

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NEWS RELEASE

THIRD ANNUAL NEBRASKA ASTA
FIDDLE TUNE COMPOSITION CONTEST!
FIRST PLACE: \$100.00 SECOND PLACE: \$50.00 THIRD
PLACE: \$25.00

The first 15 entries received will get a special prize, courtesy of our sponsors.

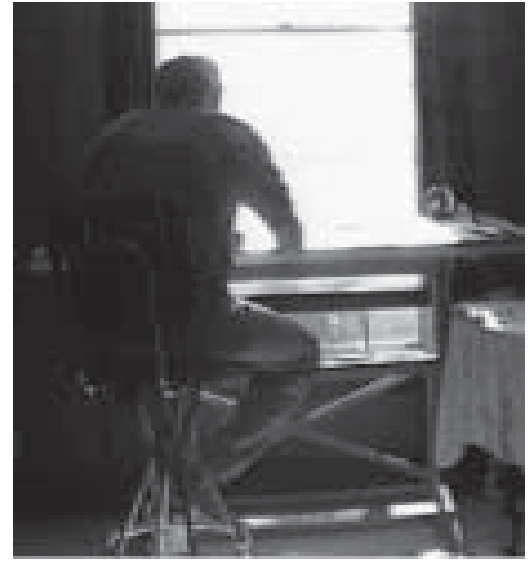
The winners will be announced on May 28, 2005, during the Monumental Fiddling Championship held at the Homestead National Monument in Beatrice, Nebraska. The winning compositions will be performed at the Monumental Fiddling Championship, and printed in *Stringing Along*, the journal of the Nebraska Chapter of the American String Teachers Association. Direct your questions to: Deborah Greenblatt, The Old Schoolhouse, PO Box 671, Avoca, Nebraska, 68307-0671, or by e-mail to g-s@alltel.net.

The 2005 Contest Rules and Guidelines

1. Each submission should be an original composition which must be unpublished and composed after May 29, 2004.
2. Composers may submit more than one tune, but only one prize will be awarded to any one composer.
3. Four copies of the music must be submitted via computer generated sheet music, or hand-written sheet music.
4. The composer should include their name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and the title of the piece.
5. The entry fee of \$20.00 should be sent in at the time of submission. Checks should be payable to Nebraska ASTA.
6. If you wish to receive written evaluation of your tune by the judges, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your entry.
7. Nebraska ASTA assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to works submitted.
8. Entries must be postmarked by March 22, 2005.
9. Send your entry to Deborah Greenblatt, The Old Schoolhouse, PO Box 671, Avoca, Nebraska, 68307-0671. The composer is responsible for keeping a copy of their work, as well as for copyrighting their tune.
10. The composer understands that if their tune is one of the winners, Nebraska ASTA has permission to have the piece performed on May 28, 2005, in Beatrice, Nebraska, as well as permission to reprint the tune in *Stringing Along*, the quarterly newsletter of Nebraska ASTA.

Sponsors of the 2004 Nebraska ASTA Fiddle Tune Composition Contest:

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Window on Fifth Street

Sometimes my television screen is a window that views my world from Fifth Street. I saw a tribute to Johnny Carson while watching the "77th Oscars" and was reminded of how many people I have known who are no longer living. Lately, that list seems to be growing too fast.

I was moved to realize that a milestone in a person's life might be that day when the length of one's list of the living becomes shorter than the list of those who have passed. Who is ever ready for that milestone?

When I was a boy on my father's farm, I would sometimes cross the creek by stepping on rocks that I had tossed into the shallow waters ahead of me. Crossing a stream by stepping from one stone to another, eventually there are more stones behind than ahead. If that stream were a person's life, a clear milestone would be when one passed midstream. But in real life, the shore is in a mist and one never knows for certain when midstream is crossed, nor when one nears the shore.

If one could increase the number of stepping stones, one might feel as if one were increasing the distance to the shore as well.

Perhaps by increasing the number of people you know, you become more alive, increasing the number of stepping stones, pushing the shore deeper into the mist, and expanding, if not actually extending your life, and certainly enriching it.

Think about those people you know who have many friends. Do they seem more alive than most? Don't they seem to be more engaged with living?

Spring is nearly here. Now is a time of renewal, rebirth. Make contacts by phone, mail, internet, or a friendly visit. Add friends to your life...perhaps years.

Can you recognize these locations from *Your Country Neighborhood?*

Locations will be revealed in the April issue.



A relatively new structure near what town?



On which Iowa street-corner?



Hint...this street is in a Missouri town.



This should be an easy one.



In which small town in Southeast Nebraska?



Next to the Caboose.



This location could be a 'tuffy'.

The Face

A Report from Western Nebraska
by Karen Ott,
Morrill, Nebraska
February, 2005

of



Drought

Dry. No relief in sight.

“Difficult corn harvest nearing end” read the January 30th newspaper headline, “With any luck, producers will complete the 2004 harvest by early February 2005.”

You can take it from me...the nearest Lady Luck ever came to the last year’s harvest was in the newspaper article, unless we’re talking about her big sister, Bad luck; we saw plenty of her stingy old hide in 2004. Where on earth did she find the stamina to stick around so long?

The guys spent the last few days overhauling one of the manure spreaders (bottom was rusted out...imagine that), working on an old truck, and generally puttering at a few winter jobs.

We haven’t had our first calf yet but, in anticipation of calving season, Dale bought himself a new ‘quick release’ lariat. He’s not the best roper in the world and to tell you the truth if the cow wasn’t hugely pregnant, and in labor, he’d never be able to get the rope around her neck. I could sell tickets to our corn field pickup rodeos. They’re quite the show.

A farmer may buy a new rope but it doesn’t make him a cowboy.

The biggest news of the week arrived last Friday around noon. Our second grandson surprised us (his mother most of all) with an early appearance but, after the initial scare, both are doing fine...although the new father is still a little on edge. The baby is tiny and blond, darker in complexion than his older brother, which caused his father to remark, “At least he won’t sunburn when we are out irrigating.”

Will any of today’s rural America be here when this little bundle of blankets and appetite grows into a man. The prospects seem pretty darn dim at the moment.

If you leave the interstate and travel down Nebraska’s back roads you’ll find yourself driving through a growing number of failing small towns. The irregular heartbeat of empty main streets and the brittle bones of derelict buildings a sure sign the community is ailing, probably fatally so.

With dental and medical clinics, a new motel, five restaurants, a K-12 school system and several large employers Morrill is holding its own, but exhibiting some serious symptoms of decline. Dwindling population and aging infrastructure are two biggies.

So in an attempt to stave off the ravages of old-age a ‘Save Our Town’ meeting was called for last Thursday evening. As we crowded into the overheated basement room of our library (a red brick structure built during the depression by a public works program) there were the usual greetings: Corn out? How are your newlyweds doing? Heard your mother was in the hospital. Hope she’s feeling better. But after the meeting was called

to order things settled down to the business at hand.

As with any meeting, whether it be a congressional caucus or a local school board, a disgruntled few used the occasion to plow up old grudges and sow a handful of new gripes but, for the most part, the meeting was a positive attempt to define the town’s future.

We spent the time talking optimistically of housing and business growth, of past successes and new opportunities but below the bubbling babble of conversation ran a deep undercurrent of nostalgia, a profound and universal desire to turn back time and remake the town we have into the town that was.

To once again be able to walk into the drug store, order a cherry coke from the fountain, and watch it being made by the latest in a long line of high school soda jerks, to dash around the A&W ‘root beer stand’ on a summer Saturday afternoon in your father’s car to see who was car-hopping, or meet a few friends at the Delmar theater for a weekend movie, but most of all to be young again, able to read the promise of limitless possibilities written on each and every street corner.

Although the memories which surrounded us seemed as warm and comfortable as an old coat they were actually as cold and calculating as a group of slick con-artists. Confusing us with useless yearnings for a past which grows increasingly idyllic the further we find ourselves removed from it, we were hard-pressed to deviate from the poignant, picture-perfect snapshot of small town life we all carried in our hearts. It’s darn difficult to move forward when the past has you hog-tied.

Will we come up with an innovative and wildly successful initiative to transform the sleepy streets of our town into a panhandle ‘must see’ or will we simply spin our wheels until the inevitable catches us up? Can we change our course and convince our young people there is still someone left to be in rural America? I don’t know.

One thing’s for sure... as much as I’d like to take Lydia, Cindy, Anita and Marianne for one more spin around town in my dad’s car it’s not going to happen.....life moves on, dragging us along whether we like it or not.

We can’t go back. All we can do is look forward and hang on tight.

Karen

Bob Lowrey's Commodities Report

Editor's note: *Bob Lowrey is in Austin as we go to press. We look forward to his report in April.*



Iowa Farm Landscape East of Tabor

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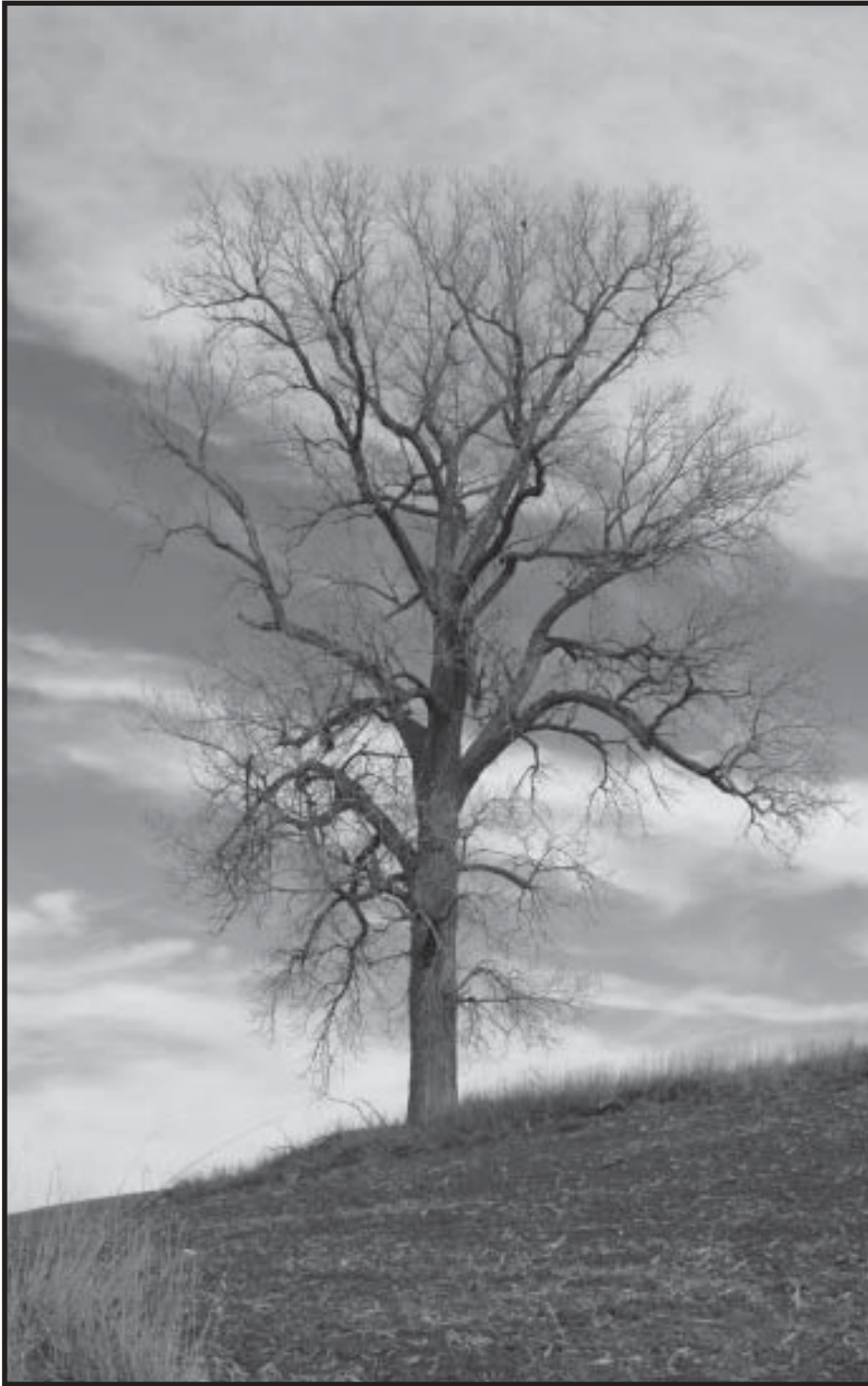
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When the health of the elderly is interrupted, Medicare is a word that offers some peace of mind. Colonial Acres of Humboldt offers Medicare services, including physical, occupational and speech therapies. These services are offered to the general public in their outpatient clinic, along with helping those needing therapies while needing nursing home services. The goal is to help the sick or injured back to their normal life-style as quickly as possible. Colonial Acres is here to help the residents of Southeast Nebraska remain as close to home and their loved ones as possible.

**Questions? Please call Doug Williams (Administrator) or
Mrs. Geier (Director of Nursing) at 1-402-862-3123.**

country

Scenes



This Cottonwood (King) will soon bud out for it's Summer display of tamborine leaves...music in the wind.



South of Farragut.



One of my favorite subjects taken from a different angle.



Hillside on Scenic Byway just west of Sidney.
Almost like a safari.



Cover photo taken from just outside my window on Fifth Street.

Your

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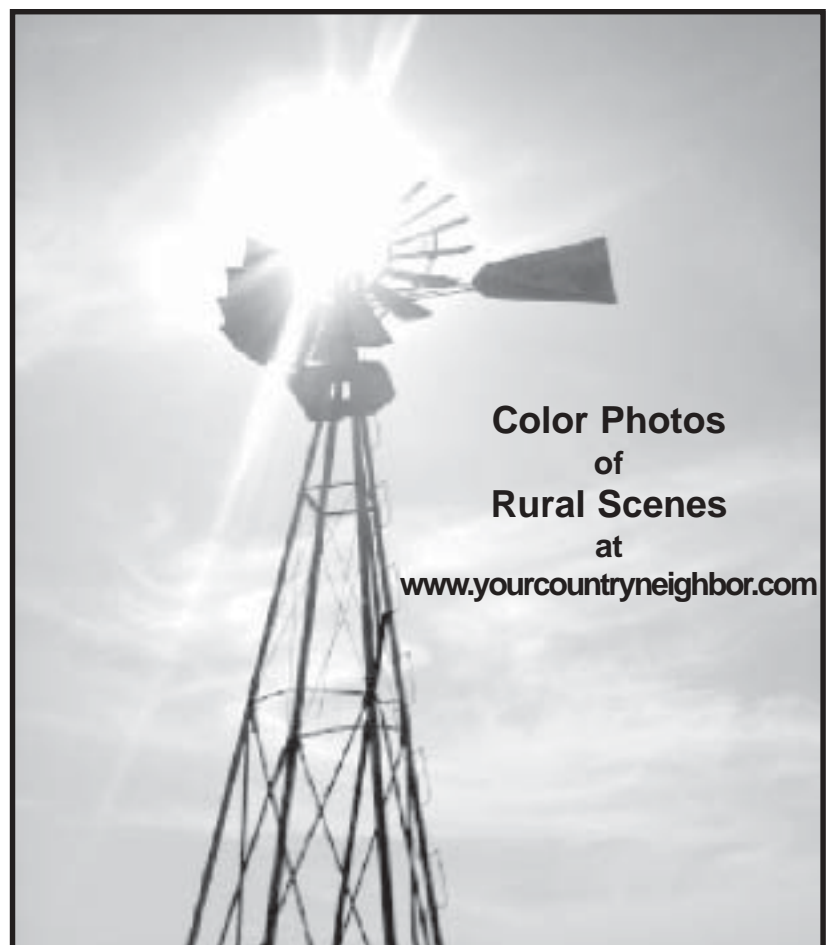
Some pictures from previous issues of this publication, as well as photos never published in *Your Country Neighbor* can be viewed at:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

or take this shortcut directly to photos:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com/photos.htm

In addition to Autumn leaves and Winter snow, there are pictures of barns, farmsteads, scenes from Brownville and other small towns, roadside wildflowers and *Steamboat Trace* flora. I will add wildlife photos in the coming weeks/months, and when I can find the time, I will redesign the site to be more user-friendly.



Whisler's

Hunting

&

Fishing

Report



by Josh Whisler
Photos Provided by Author

Fishing:

The Missouri River will allow some fishing before long but it's low and cold for now. Soon enough you'll hear someone catching a few small channels with stink bait or shad strips, but that hasn't happened yet. I guess the cabin fever hasn't set in yet because soon enough someone will get the itch.

Area ponds made for treacherous fishing in the past month with the unseasonably warm temperatures, near 65 degrees. The places I've checked out had water between the bank and the ice, and the ice is what we call rotten – where it's no longer clear and has a chalky look to it. This is not good. This usually means that the ice has lost its strength and you're taking your chances of getting wet by fishing on it. It can re-freeze hard but usually it's never as strong as it was when the ice was clear. You can usually get out on clear ice when there is three inches. But now that it's been thawed and rotted, I really think six inches is better. On those warm days when it's thawing, the popping and cracking that goes on is enough to make you quit anyway, but you'll be a whole lot safer if you're on the bank waiting for a hole to open up. That way, you can drop your line in it without the risk of getting wet or worse.

Hunting:

The snow has come and gone a couple of times and with the few warmer days in between the frigid days, there comes the hope of spring. And with spring comes a whole new year of hunting seasons.

Spring Turkey Seasons have been set by the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission. And the application period has also been determined (Starting February 14th). This year, as was new for last year, our unit (East Missouri) has unlimited permits. You say what's that mean to me? Well this means "If you want a Turkey Permit – Buy one." You don't have to worry about the 'Draw' as has been the case in recent years. Back then if you missed the 'Draw' you missed the season. The only thing is you have to determine now is what season you want to hunt. Also new this year is the Youth Season to welcome all newcomers to the sport. Youth Season shotgun season starts one week prior to the regular shotgun season and is statewide. Youth can also obtain a bow permit that is the same term as the regular bow season. Youth is considered 15 years old and younger.

The Spring Turkey Seasons are as follows:

Units

Youth Shotgun Statewide	April 9-May 22
East Missouri Early	April 16-April 24
East Missouri Late	April 25-May 22
West	April 16-May 22
Archery Statewide	March 25-May 22

Note - When applying for permits in the East Missouri Unit, hunters must specify "Early" or "Late" on their application or it will be returned.

This month's pictures are of a frozen Nebraska sunrise on the Peru Bottom and a flock of turkeys feeding in the snow.



Frozen Sunrise



Turkey Flock

That's it for me this month. Spring is just around the corner with a lot of fishing and hunting opportunities that go with it. It's time to send in for a Spring Turkey Permit. So plan for your season and get your application in or buy one online. 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(s) of the Month



Share your original recipe. Mail to Box 126, Peru, NE 68421.

St. Patty's Day Noodles The "wearin o' the green" on your dinner plate, with taste.

submitted by Ann Yates

Serves 6

Combine 2 beaten eggs, 4 tablespoons milk, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 cup (or more) finely crushed dried greens (we will cover Spring greens next month, but parsley is easily obtainable for this month). Mix well. Now add enough flour to make a stiff dough, about 1 1/2 cups to start, then add 1/4 cup at a time until the dough is stiff enough to handle. Turn out onto lightly floured surface and knead by folding in half, push out, turn 1/4 turn, fold again and push out. Repeat this, adding more flour as necessary until the dough is quite stiff. Invert a bowl over dough and allow to rest for 10 min. Cut dough in half and roll each half out on a floured surface until it is thin as you like your noodles. Sprinkle with flour as needed to keep from sticking to surface or rolling pin. After rolling sprinkle top with more flour and roll up like a jelly roll. Slice roll the width you desire your noodles, anywhere from fettuccini thin to lasagna thick. Now carefully unroll slices and lay in a single layer on a baking sheet. If your house is dry they can be air dried, tossing lightly about every 15 min. to keep from sticking together. If they cannot dry within 3 hours, then use the oven method of drying. Turn oven on warm, place pan of noodles on an upper shelf of oven. When closing door place a table knife in upper side of door to hold it ajar. This allows moisture to escape. Toss noodles frequently in the beginning, then less frequently as they become drier. When fully dry store in a wide, covered container (a cake keeper works well). The noodles cook up better if dried before use.

To cook: bring a large pan of salted water to a boil, add noodles, stir occasionally and cook till desired doneness is obtained. Do not overcook as this will make them mushy. Serve with butter or extra virgin olive oil.

Taste Variations: Use your favorite spices with the dried greens. These could include garlic or onion powder, oregano, basil, cilantro. Use your imagination according to the theme of the rest of your meal.

Color Variations: Omit milk and add 1/2 cup mashed, cooked carrots for yellow noodles. Use beet juice instead of milk for red noodles. Small children love the fun colors.

Next month: Spring greens right in your own backyard.
So don't spray this year.

Editor's note: You can visit Ann weekdays 6:00 to 9:00 in the morning, and afternoons 4:30 to 7:00 at **Honey Creek Vineyards Bakery** at 1705 Park Avenue in Peru for coffee and pasteries as well as breads and pies.



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Yummy Cheese Ball

submitted by Rose Downing

8 oz. cream cheese (room temperature)
4 oz. cheddar cheese, shredded (1/2 bag)
1/2 medium onion chopped fine
1/2 tsp. worcestershire sauce
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. celery salt

Mix together in a bowl, shape into a ball, roll ball in parsley and chopped English walnuts on waxed paper. Chill 3 hours or overnight before serving.

Nature Center Looking for Volunteers

Nebraska City
February 28, 2005

The River Country Nature Center has begun the installation of exhibits in its new facility at 114 South 6th Street in Nebraska City. Volunteers are needed to assist in the cleaning of the natural history specimens prior to mounting them in displays. Four work sessions are currently scheduled; March 2nd, 3rd, and 4th from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. and Saturday, March 4 from 10:00 – 12:00. Future sessions will be announced as necessary. Volunteers will be given instruction and the necessary tools for the cleaning at the sessions.

Volunteers are also needed for assistance in building the remaining cases for displays, mounting Formica on the cases, and building dioramas. Call Brian Volkmer of the Nebraska City Museum Association at 873-4262, for times and more information.

The Nature Center is tentatively scheduled to open by Arbor Day Weekend.

Contact: Brian Volkmer, Nebraska City Museum Assc.
806 1st Avenue, Nebraska City, NE 68410
402-873-4262 ncma-brian@alltel.net

Poetry, etc.

LOST IN DREAMS

by Devon Adams

Sitting in her room by the garden window,
A young girl holds her cherished cat
And thinks about tomorrow.
For her, time moves slowly and
Hours can take forever.
But for her mother,
Who sees her daughter's contemplation,
Time is moving faster than a falling star.
The baby shoes are wrapped in satin
In the fragrant cedar chest
And next to them are two front teeth
With a kindergarten graduation scroll.
Mom can hold the tiny baby blankets
And still smell her baby's smell.
But sitting there beside the window
In great Grandma's wicker chair,
The baby seems so grown up and mature.
The angles of her face are changing,
And chiseled cheekbones speak of
Family faces that carry through the generations.
Mother is startled to realize that
In her daughter's face she sees her own reflection.
The family album is more than whispers from the past.
The chronicle of traits inherited is a glimpse into the future.
For today, though, in soft light from a summer window,
A young girl lost in dreams
Is asking who she'll be tomorrow.



Roadside Poetry (Red Tail Hawk).

IN THE ZOO

by Lila Meyerkorth

The monkey at Henry Doorly Zoo was contented as could be
Jumping from branch to branch on just one old dead tree.
I smiled at him and he smiled back at me
As if to say, "I hope you are just as happy and full of glee."

The macaw with its beautiful and bright colored coat
Fluttered leisurely around, or sat like an anchored boat.
I said, "Hi pretty thing," and he answered with a shy little note
As I lifted my camera, then all about him I wrote.

Soon I spied the elephant, with that mysterious trunk
I wondered what he'd use it for—maybe just junk?
When oh, he said, "Look!", flipped it up and took a big dunk
Then down it came, grand and enchanting—kerplunk!

The giraffe, how I marveled as he reached up so high
To eat the green leaves that hung high in the sky.
Then as I glanced at the wild-hog, each conceitedly said, "My
'I just drop my snout'—'I just reach up'—and we don't even try."

I listened, not one creature said, "Sooo bored I'm gonna be."
I'm sure they were, sometimes, but not around me.
They happily ate what was given them from a her or a he
Then exclaimed as I turned to go, "this place fits to a T!"

Post Script from Lila: *A few weeks after I had written this, I watched a documentary about macaw's on NPTV. The macaw is a very intelligent bird. In the Amazon River Rain Forest, there are only ten trees with fruit on them within a 40,000 square mile radius, and for only two weeks at a time. Still the macaw finds the fruit!*

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A House by the Tracks

by Frieda Burston
Rehovot, Israel

I was 5 years old when we moved into the house by the railroad tracks, and I quickly became an adept liar on certain subjects.

The house had a little house behind it in the garden, and the little house had a half-moon cut in the door. There was a hook inside the door to hold torn newspapers for wiping, and a Monkey Ward catalogue on the two-seater because I was too small to reach the newspapers. (Our neighbors kept a bushel of corn cobs by the door, but my mother was City People, so our tastes were more refined.) There were spiders dangling from their webs in the corners, and a pungent smell of decaying waste made sitting there, a very unpleasant necessity.

At 6 I opted out of it all. At first I simply said that I didn't need to empty myself, but this only led to my being force-fed like a goose for pate-de-foi-gras—"Eat, eat, my child! You'll die if you don't eat!" Eating only made me uncomfortable, so I began to lie, "I already went, Ma." Lying didn't help me with "I already ate"—that was an inside job, and my mother knew better. I might lie easily, but I learned that lying just makes things worse.

My mother was suspicious when she saw that on the next rainy day that I said that, my only coat was dry. Out came the Senna Tea or the Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin. Down my throat it went, like Tom Sawyer giving medicine to his aunt's cat. Knowing that I was going to have to take a "cure", cured me of lying. I have never been able to lie comfortably since. Lying gives me a stomach ache.

So you can imagine that I was in hog heaven when we moved to a house with indoor plumbing. It was the depth of the Great Depression, and rent was free as long as we kept the place up. We painted, made screens, patched, repaired, brought the house up to date, and turned the large garden into a living. We made everything so attractive that the bank sold it at a profit, Depression or no Depression, and we were left homeless.

Our next house was the most interesting house I have ever lived in. Scary, too.

When I was 13 we moved into a long-empty house that had been the first house on the hillside, built around the Civil War and updated in the 1890's. Originally brick, it had been faced with stucco. A veranda went across the front, a small veranda was in back. A lovely shaped stairway went up from the front glassed door to two lovely big bedrooms; a small utility stairway went up from the kitchen to two small bedrooms.

To my dismay, there was no indoor plumbing. A flush toilet had been put on the back veranda, closed in only by painted boards. There was a water faucet in the yard about 10 feet from the veranda. My brothers set up a big wooden barrel on a box in the kitchen, put a bung in the barrel, and undertook to keep it filled with water for washing, cooking, and drinking. My mother wrapped the water pipes outdoors in old rags when winter came,, and stocked up with the newest torture thing for liars, Ex-Lax. The chocolate flavor didn't fool me—I knew it was designed to freeze me to death as I sat just one board's thickness away from winter snow and ice on the veranda.

There was a spring house near the back of the lot, and the spring never froze. In summer we kept our butter in crocks in the spring, and dodged the tiny eyeless fish when we pulled up the crocks. In winter the spring-house door was blocked with drifts of snow, but who needed it anyhow? Everybody put butter and meat out on the windowsill.

I loved that house in spite of the barrel in the kitchen and the veranda plumbing. I loved it for the history I never could learn—it was there when the neighbors all built by its side, they never knew its story. The most I could learn was from the woman who took care of the owner. (My mother never called her "the lady", and of course I wanted to know why. Mama just looked at me and said, "You're too young to know such things, but I can tell you that she isn't his wife, she's a drummer woman who stopped travelling to stay with him." I thought she must have made a great sacrifice to have left the glorious world of music to stay with an old man in a wheel chair, and I admired her.

She wore black silk taffeta dresses with a bustle, when everyone else wore skimpy cotton dresses. She wore eye makeup and lip color, when everyone else wore only rouge. I imagined her in an orchestra on the concert stage—I was in my 30's before I learned that a "drummer" was a sales rep who went out from big factories, drumming up trade in the boon-docks.

My mother evidently knew, because she refused the drummer woman's offer to cut our rent to \$ 00.00 if Mama would let her live in the front bedroom when the old man died. Mama said politely that she couldn't on account of my being 13, and the drummer woman dropped her head and said, "Of course". This was all very peculiar to me, but I accepted it as part of the Outside World of which I knew nothing, and was sorry I was 13.

I would have loved having her there. I could imagine how that room would look with real furniture instead of our wooden crates and boxes covered with 5-cents-a-yard fabric and the 25 cent chairs from the Second Hand Store. The important rooms in that house had big chandeliers that had once held candles, then had been changed to gas jets, then to electricity. Since we couldn't afford either gas or electricity, like many others at that time, kerosene lamps carried from room to room gave us light. I turned the electricity on in my mind and let the lights shine on her polished furniture, and sighed.

My own small bedroom was in the middle, and I reached it from the kitchen. It was snug and bright, in the daytime. At night everything changed. A chill rolled down the hillside and fell over the whole house. Around midnight I would hear the backstairs steps, creaking one by one slowly rising until the last creak got to the top of the stairs. I panicked when the neighbors told me that a man had died of TB in the next bedroom—I was sure his ghost came back every night, and I began to sleep sitting up dressed so that I could run if I had to.

That was when I was 13. Years later, in my 30's, I mentioned it to my husband as being evidence of spirit survival. Abe was an engineer. He laughed, and explained the change of temperature in wood as related to height differential from ground level, and how when wood reached a certain temperature it contracted and created a creaking noise. As the cold lifted upwards, the next step would creak..... There went my ghost, but I loved that house anyhow, ghost or no ghost, indoor plumbing or just a shell of the past—.

When we went back to St. Joe years later, I wanted to show that house to the kids, and my husband wanted to see the spring-house. We couldn't find it. The whole neighborhood of leisurely built homes sprawling at the foot of the hill, is gone. A smart new development has been there for a long time, and other housing developments parade up the hill behind them. All of them with indoor plumbing, I expect. Oh, well..... I wonder what happened to the spring and the tiny eyeless fish in the spring house?

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The Ranch

by Joe Smith

Years ago when I was just a cowboy wannabe, I went to my great uncle and aunt's ranch to spend the summer. I think mom sent me up there to get me out of her hair. The Ranch was 40 miles northeast of Roswell, N.M. Harvey and Laura Dooley moved there around 1903. The house was built very simply. They raised chickens for meat and eggs and milked several cows for butter sales in town every Saturday. The cook stove was wood as was the heating stove. Mesquite was about the only wood around except for old railroad ties that we got off the railroad tract about twelve miles away with a wagon and team. The mesquite we got the same way with a wagon and team down in the brakes of the Pecos river. Most of the wood on the mesquite was underground. We had a lot of wind so we looked for areas that had blown clear after the mesquite had died. Lots of rattle snakes to watch for. I had a pony with a knocked down hip called Baldy. Good pony for a kid. Dooley would send me after the milk cows sometimes and I would hang behind when they got close to the corrals. I rode bare-back a lot and loved it. This morning I was far enough behind I could strike a lope and come around the corner in the sand just as kids play with cars nowadays, sliding around corners. Well, there was a barbed wire deadman at a 45 degree angle to the corner post of the trap. I hung my boot toe on it and landed face down in the sand. Oh well, live and learn. Old Baldy was my first horse, I must have been around 11 or 12.

One time we needed to collect wood, mesquite wood to be exact. We rode over to Bill Farlander's place a couple of miles north of Dooley's and borrowed a couple of Zebra legged mules. When we got them home we yoked them together so they would stay in the pasture. Next morning Dooley sent me to get the mules. There were no mules. Dooley saddled old Snip, and we went on a search for them. We trailed them to a place in the north fence where they had crawled through still yoked together. We found them back at Bill's place, standing at the gate. We took them back and kept them in the corral 'til we got through with them. We hauled wood for several days. One day we were over by a bombing target. The Air Force had graded a fire guard around the target area. I was driving the mules and Dooley was loading the wood he grubbed out. The wood was all the roots of the bush. Most of

it grew under ground like an iceberg. About that time an AT 11 training bomber from Walker Air Base (in Roswell) came over and dropped one of the practice bombs not too far away. Scared the mules and they started running and I couldn't stop them. Old Dooley come loping up from behind and got on the wagon. He grabbed the reins and put one in each hand and said, "This way," and started pulling one and then the other while cussing the mules. They stopped.

Dooleys had no electricity. For lights they used kerosene lamps and carbide lights. Aunt Laura had a carbide iron also. When I first started going up there they only had an icebox to keep things cold. Later they got a kerosene one. Every night and morning we milked the cows and ran the milk through a separator. That milk would come out with the foam on it and I would drink it warm, loved that stuff. Later in the week I would help make the butter as we hand-churned all of the cream. Most people called my great uncle "Dooley". That was all anybody ever called him. His indoor sport was chewing on me I think. They never had kids of their own.

The wind would sing a mournful song every night and the coyotes would howl and Dooley's dog would bark at them. As I grew older I would love to ride at night and watch the stars and fantasize how it would have been in the "old days". An article on kerosene got me to thinking about the old ranch where I spent many days while growing up. I learned a lot there and will always remember the old house and the simple way they lived. Dooley rode horses every day (except Saturday when they went to town) for his whole life almost. He died when he was 83 and aunt Laura died a few years before that. Dooley was a dowser also, he found the water for all the wells in the county, some over 350 ft. deep. Ahhh, memories are fun. Dooley would tell me stories of when my dad stayed with them also. He told me of the time that he and Dad went to the Capitan mountain with a team and wagon to cut cedar posts and dad's butter jar got broke the first day out. Can you think of driving a team 60 miles to get a load of posts and camping out every night? What a bunch of sissies we are now. Dooleys kinda raised me, and my dad also, at least part of our lives. Joe Smith

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The Graf Vigilantes

by Joe Smith

Several years ago after a cold day with blowing snow I looked out in the driveway and saw a set of tracks coming in the drive. I went out to see what was going on and the tracks were partially blown and hard to see, but they went straight out to the shop as if they were going into the shop. I started out there and Marta hollered for me not to go. So I came back to the house. The tracks came from the west. We talked it over and thought someone was in the shop stealing stuff and someone would come by later and pick them up. I called my neighbor to the north of us and told him to come on over and bring his shotgun. He did, and then we called the sheriff of Johnson County. He started out while my neighbor and I were checking around to see what we could see, both carrying shotguns.

We were out front near the road when the Sheriff stopped down the road with his radio on, crying for the state police to hurry up and assist him. We waved him down to where we were. He never got out of the car. He could see the tracks as well as we could.

About the time we had the plan all figured out how we were going to do this, there was movement out there near the shop. He said, "What is that?" I looked up and there came our robber. One of Gottula's cows had gotten out and wandered into our drive. But you would-be robbers better still worry. We are still out here with our watchful eyes open and our shotgun ain't loaded with sofa pillows.

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