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Country Neighbor

FREE!



May 2007



The green of Spring is beginning to dominate the landscape. This windmill in a pasture on a hillside near Brownville, Nebraska, reminds me of the one we had in our farm pasture near Corning, Iowa. When I was 17, I would lie on the thick, long grass in the shade of a giant tree, watching a hawk circling lazily in the sky overhead. I was surrounded by hillsides of pasture with wildflowers and trees, isolated from the world in a pretend wilderness, with only the sounds of birds and the metallic squeak of the mill in the wind.



One of two Nebraska City School Bands in the Arbor Day Parade. See more pictures on page 8.

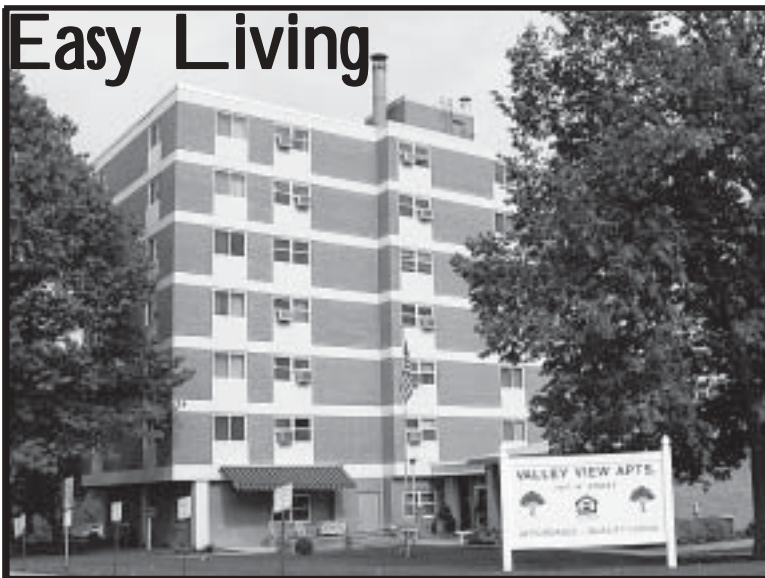


Miss Sidney Iowa in the Arbor Day Parade April 28, 2007, Nebraska City



See Devon's Dandelion poem on page 13

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Friends who live beyond our '4-Corners' region can view *Your Country Neighbor* on the internet, just send them this address:

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(Capital letters optional.)

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

The 5th Street Centre

430 5th Street Syracuse, Nebraska

Among the artworks displayed are two award winning photos by *Stephen Hassler*

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher, Editor & Photographer: Stephen Hassler

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Thank you!

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Dramatic Expressions Photography

by Your Country Neighbor Photographer,
Stephen Hassler

View Pictures of Wildlife and Rural Landscapes from the valleys formed by the Missouri, Nemaha and Platte Rivers.

www.YourCountryNeighbor.com/Photography.htm

Waste Collection

Nemaha County held a very successful drive to collect household hazardous waste on Saturday, April 21st. Mary Kruger, local planner and Five Rivers R C & D representative for the event, said the response by local citizens was outstanding. The collected waste materials represented over 150 households. The collection, held at the Senior Center parking lot gathered 6,140 pounds of paint, 820 pounds of pesticides, 280 pounds of aerosol cans, 120 pounds of acids and 960 pounds of miscellaneous chemicals. Approximately thirty volunteers assisted the Red Willow County HHW team sort and pack the waste for shipment to Kimball, Nebraska, where the waste will be incinerated. The Auburn Fire Department collected batteries at the event as a fund raiser but no figures are available yet as to the number or pounds of batteries they collected.

The collection was made possible through a grant to the Nemaha Natural Resources District from the Department of Environmental Quality Waste reduction and Recycling Program. Five Rivers Resource Conservation and Development assisted the NRD with planning and collection.

Your relatives and friends who live beyond the 4-Corners area can read *Your Country Neighbor* on the internet, if they go to:
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VASES & WINDMILLS IN PERU

Curator Peggy Groff has organized two new shows for Peru's museum (5th & California).

"Windmills Across Nebraska" features paintings, photographs, and written windmill memories of artists Dr. Leland Sherwood, Peggy and Brandi Groff, Bea Patterson, and Stephen Hassler. Also, John Patterson contributed a vintage wind-generator; these types were often used to generate electricity to power radios.

Because Spring turns our thoughts to flowers, "Vintage Vases" is the second display.

Well-known names such as Hull, McCoy, and Roseville are represented, as well as contemporary pieces made by local artists Terry VanGundy and Rod Beyke.

The free Museum shows will be available to view during Memorial Day Weekend (May 26 and 27) and "Old Man River Days" (June 2nd and 3rd).



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MY QUILT

Devon Adams

My life is a quilt
and time is the thread
that stitches together
the pieces of my days.

Dark clusters shade
from grays to blacks,
with textures harsh
in feel and weave.

But then transitions follow,
with subtle shifts
to dusty lavenders and greens
in soft corduroy and cottons.

The change in mood continues
with velvet yellow squares
beside rose silk and blue ice
taffeta that shimmer.

Bright days move into dreams
with embroidered patterns
writing flowers in rainbow
colored stitches.

There are no shapes
that balance here,
no perfect symmetry
of lines and colors

Memories are patches
sewn together day by day,
and my quilt won't be
the same as yours.

When I tie my final knot
and lay my needle down,
I'll sleep forever underneath
the pieces of my life.

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our 'Country Neighbor' territory.
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Mother's Day....

It's a dreadfully wonderful day that makes all of us feel guilty. Mothers—because we feel unworthy of the accolades bestowed on us today—and kids feel guilty because there's no way to adequately thank the person who brought you into the world.

Truth be told, even though it is "our day", we women sometimes feel terrible on this day since most of us are both mothers *and* daughters. A case of double guilt!

I tell you what. I'll make us *all* feel guilty for the sad state of the nation's youth, and we'll all feel blessedly awful together. (Since I'm a Mama, I can do that, y'see? It's my privilege this month.)

It takes a lot of gall to say this, folks, but we're in a real mess. We've got ourselves a generation of moody, undisciplined kids who whine, talk-back, swear—who live in a cyber world of Non-reality and who refuse to eat anything but fast food; and that's the *good* side of 'em. We don't even want to talk about the bad side. The juvenile delinquency, the drug and alcohol epidemic, the gangs, the internet debauchery, the sexual immorality, the rampant venereal diseases, the teen theft and homicide.

What has become of common sense?

What's with the tongue-studs and piercings on every flap of skin on the human body? Why do parents and grandparents allow these kids to listen to the filth that pours forth from rock 'n roll, and hip-hop stations, today? Glorified rape and lust and sadomasochism spewing from the airwaves. Why don't they stand up and say: "Over my dead body will I tolerate such verbal vomit spewing into my home!"

I must be from Pluto or something. I can't fathom why we've allowed things to go so wrong on this planet.

Somehow, we see what other parents are doing wrong with their kids, and we feel obligated to do the same. These little munchkins wrap us around their fingers and make blithering fools of us all. They're the bosses of our homes at the tender age of six years old, and by the time they're sixteen, they are a national disgrace. They make us cower and blush and stammer apologies in front of our friends. We're embarrassed for ourselves and for our offspring, but not ashamed enough to do anything about it.

Think about it for a minute. What would our great-grandparents say about this spoiled generation? They would do more than roll over in their graves if they knew the mess we've made. (Notice I didn't say just plain *grandparents*. Unfortunately, the grandparents of today can do more spoiling of this generation than we do ourselves!)

When did kids go from being respectful children who wouldn't dream of talking back to adults—to these monsters who now swear, fight, sabotage and even kill their parents, teachers, and authority figures? Something has gone horribly wrong. But what?

The answer is simple, really. What went wrong is lack of "tough love" and consistency in the home. As parents and grandparents, we're too busy to give hugs and to look these kids in the eye and to listen to their grievances. We're too busy to give the consistent discipline that is required to produce good kids. We're afraid to trust our parental instincts that tell us common sense things like:

Don't let Johnny shout in your face.

Don't ignore outright defiance in hopes that it will go away.

Don't be afraid to say *No*, or to pull all privileges.

Don't be forever negotiating with the whims and wants of your children and grandchildren. Don't give them pizza every night because they refuse to eat something more wholesome. Don't throw gobs of money and material things at them because you feel guilty over your poor parenting and grandparenting skills. Make them earn those boom boxes and cell phones and i-pods, and sports-cars. Give them chores to do and expect them to do them.

And then most of all, give them what they really need—your time and undivided attention, and the rest will take care of itself. Hold them a lot. Lie down on their beds at night and talk. Spend a Saturday afternoon playing Frisbee. Shut off the blessed noise-boxes about us and listen to what your kids and grandkids have to say.

If it's not too late.

My fear is that it is too late for a lot of kids. It's hard to un-do years of neglect and lack of discipline. It's a sad state of affairs when the nation has to learn how to be good parents, again, by watching TV shows like the *Nanny* and *Dr. Phil*.

But I guess if that's what it takes, then more power to the Nanny. And may God bless Dr. Phil.

And now, I'm getting off my soapbox, folks. I'll leave you with this old anecdote from my archives. I wrote a column almost twenty years ago, and I just recently dug it out of a box of memorabilia. It's odd to read it, today, and to see the changes that have taken place in my oldest daughter's life.

I can't say I was the world's greatest mom. I made many of the same mistakes mentioned above—but my daughter has done me proud. She is a thriving entrepreneur who created her own website designing/maintenance business at the age of 21. She now has clients from all over the U.S. and even overseas.

I couldn't be more proud of her. I know that the roots to her success go back to a day many, many years ago....

Continued on next page >>>>>>

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"Mom," my six-year-old Karissa said the other day. "I want to have a Kool-aid stand so I can make some money."

"Mmm-hmm," I said over my shoulder as I headed down the hill toward my fish pool. I hadn't been down there very long when I saw Karissa round the corner of the house, leading a parade of people toward her tree house—a mom or two, a Grandma, and a half-dozen kids. They were all 'going on a tour' of Karissa's tree house, they said.

"This little girl promised us a free tour if we'd buy her Kool-aid," they told me.

"Kool-aid?" I said weakly. I followed them back to the road. In the driveway stood my organ bench, bedecked with crudely written signs: "Cool-ade + shugar and water. 10 sents."

A pitcher of lukewarm, day-old Kool-aid sat on the bench along with an assortment of dirty-looking cups and mugs.

I swallowed hard and tried to smile.

"Look at all the money I made," Karissa said after we'd told her customers goodbye. "I sold some Kool-aid to the man up the hill, too—but he brought his own cup."

"I bet he did," I said, eyeing the dirty mugs which had obviously been used several times.

"I have my own business!" Karissa said. "I'm so proud!"

I was proud, too—after I got over my embarrassment. I thought the "Cool-ade" stand would satisfy her ambitious little soul. But no. Things only got worse in the next day or so.

"Ma,am? Is there anything you want me to do, today?" Karissa posed the question delicately as I bustled about the kitchen.

"Well," I said, glancing across the room. "I need someone to salt the chicken on the stove. Do you charge for that?"

Karissa thought for a moment, then shook her head. "No. If you say 'Please', I'll do it for free. But," she added quickly, "you can't always say 'Please'...."

She paused. "I'm thinking of starting a business today as a column-typer," she said in her no-nonsense tone. "I'm sending my articles to the newspaper that does your column, and they'll print them for me. Then thousands of people can read what I write about."

Her eyes sparkled and her business-like tone melted into one of childish excitement. "I can type about anything! Cabbage-Patch dolls. Root beer. Light bulbs. Berenstain Bears. Moths getting into Daddy's clothes. Um..." she stopped to think. "Hey! I could even write about you, like you write about me!"

"Uh, Karissa," I said, but she had already scampered off to the word processor.

Sometime later, she came to me flourishing a grubby piece of paper. "Here it is!" she said. "How much will they pay me, Mom?"

I looked down at the sparse words typed crookedly on the page. "Well," I said hesitantly. "It's very nice, but I'm not sure they'll print it in the—"

"Oh, they will!" she said with childlike trust.

I sighed. I knew, then, that I'd be including a few unlikely words at the very end of this month's newspaper column.

"Moon and stors. Stors and the moon. The moon is ver far a way. It lives in the sky.... I want to tipe some columes. My name is Karissa. I am Vicki's dodder."

There! We're all off the hook for now.

Maybe.



West of Verdon, Nebraska

HOW TO OPEN A DVD

Shirley Neddenriep

Our kids gave us a DVD player for Christmas. It is upscale in that it will play a VCR or a DVD. DVD stands for Digital Version of Downloads or something like that. The first step in operating a DVD is to turn on the television (TV) set and select the channel used to play VCRs or DVDs. After that you are on your own. The operating guide was written for football players adept at reading involved play-by-play procedures that repeat themselves.

But first one must open the DVD itself. It is recommended that several DVDs be purchased on any given shopping trip. If the first attempt at opening the DVD does result in failure, and you are left holding a shiny round disc after having removed too many layers of protective covering, use that disc to make a clock and go on to the second one.

Begin by holding the boxed DVD resolutely in one hand (the left one, if you are right-handed). A shiny, transparent sheath covers the entire box. Grasp a dull steak knife with the other hand and firmly place its tip into the fold of plastic.

It is sad to spoil such a neat fold. People shorten their life span in clumsy attempts to make neat folds at Christmas and other stressful gift-giving times. Nonetheless, your intent is to destroy the neat fold.

Insert the tip of the blade with a gentle, twisting motion, lifting a fold until gradually the plastic splits. Then the blade can be run along the edge of the unit to remove the first layer.

Usually the plastic splits about half-way down and tears itself into a coordinate that leaves one-half of the unit freed from the plastic and the other half still tightly wrapped. In that case, the knife must be reinserted and the process repeated.

Once the exterior layer of clear plastic is removed, you might find a second layer. Begin again with the steak knife procedure taking care to keep the point of the knife away from you as by this time one may have become a little apathetic about ruining a perfectly neat and squared fold, and jab at it. Apply Neosporen and a Band-aid to the puncture wound in your left palm and continue.

Once this step is accomplished, discard both clear wrappers, as you will by now be holding in your hand an actual DVD case. Be careful that blood does not drop onto it as the DVD itself is ultra sensitive to foreign matter such as blood, the oil from thumb prints, or drops of sweat.

Or, you may be holding the DVD in a neat cardboard sleeve exactly the dimension of the DVD itself and embellished with descriptive photos. Clear the projected path of the projectile (the DVD) which may emerge from its sleeve at great speed once enough pressure is applied to its end.

It is important to multi-task during your work because if the door is opened by the husband, one can quickly assume a position in front of the sink of unfinished dishes, the ingredients for a dish complete with an open cookbook, or a pile of unfolded clothes spread over the kitchen table. It will then appear that you are busily engaged in acceptable housewife duties that do not relate to 'entertainment' in any sense of the word.

If, however, the coast is clear or (cherish the moment) you are alone for the day, inspect the DVD carefully. It may or may not have further impediments for complete success. On some hard covers small tabs marked "Open" are located on the vertical side of the DVD case.

Once these small tabs are located, make a tenuous attempt to open the case. Probably it will not open. Nothing comes easy in the world of electronics (refer to instructions). It might be that a strip of adhesive labeling the case with the name of the enclosed movie is firmly attached to the top edge of the case. Mop brow with tea towel as needed.

Again use the tip of the trusty steak knife to gouge, uh, carefully loosen the label. Discard the label if you can get it loose from the table or sink. The adhesive is very good on these labels, better than envelope labels that you want to stick firmly. By now it is stuck to your finger or arm or into your hair. A dull paring knife will help here, or scissors. When it is free, slowly fold it in half so it sticks to itself. That is a form of revenge and very satisfying.

At this point the two tabs should release the binding of the DVD so that it opens like a book. Firmly embedded there is the disc itself.

Continued on next page >>>>>>

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Next the disc must be removed from its restricted circular indentation in the black plastic case. The circle is the exact dimension of the disc. This snug fit is a safety feature in the event the DVD is shipped to one of the nations whose language appears in the Instruction Guide; i.e., France, Germany, Spain, China or the International Space-Station. There are English-speaking persons in all those places who can rest assured that their DVD will arrive safely because of its secure tamper-resistant packaging.

To remove the disc from its cocoon place both thumbs on the center button of the circular indentation of the case. By pressing down on the center, the disc should release. It won't until one or both edges (of a circle?) are lifted up slightly by whatever finger is free. Take care not to touch the disc surface itself unless you need a second clock face. When the disc is free, insert your index finger into the center hole and carefully hold it aside for later transfer to the machine.

Find and depress a small round button on the DVD player which when pressed, will cause a little round tray to graciously extend from inside the machine. It is designed to exactly receive the disc. You are on your own here as there are a multitude of little round buttons on the DVD player which was manufactured in a remote place in the world by persons with diminutive fingertips and 20/20 eyesight in dim light using night vision goggles.

Transfer the disc shiny side down into the little round tray in the player. The tray can be manually pushed back into its machine. At that time the TV screen will show that success at opening and installing the DVD has been done. As to viewing the movie, like I said, now you are on your own, or, have a small child or football player at hand for assistance. Either one of them will work for a peanut-butter and jelly sandwich.

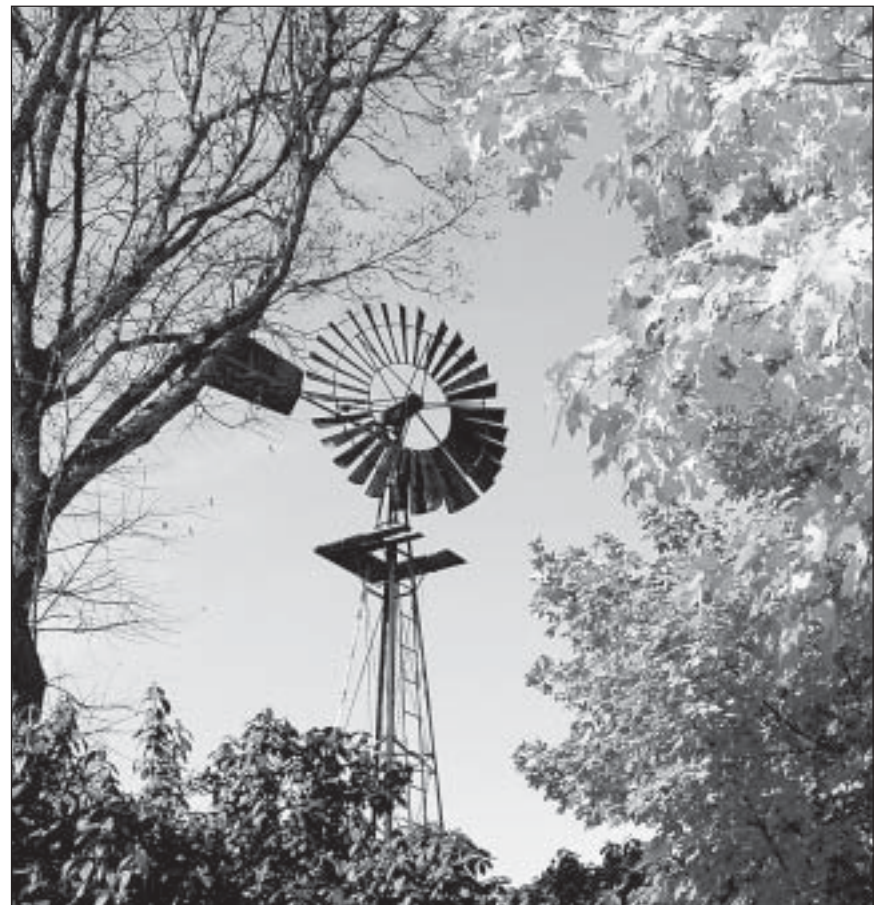


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Country

Scenes



Spring Song



Kansas Barn



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by Josh Whisler
(Photo provided by Author)



Fishing:

River fishing is opening up slowly but surely. It is still pretty cool to get out on the water in a boat but that doesn't stop fishing from the bank. There, you can pick a place, out of the wind, and be pretty comfortable because the sun is pretty warm. This has entirely nothing to do with fish biting itself but, face it, to catch fish you have to put in the time. You definitely are going to spend more time fishing if you're comfortable doing it. Local fishermen have been landing channels for the most part and some larger blue cats. What are they biting on? Chicken livers and night crawlers mostly, with moderate action on dough baits. They aren't hitting the hardest, but the fish are there and reacting to bait. That's good! You just never know what's on the other end when they mouth your bait this time of year.

Hunting:

2007 Spring Turkey Season is in full swing. There are lots of birds and at this point they aren't breaking up the best. When you see them – you see a lot of them. “So what's the problem?” you ask. It's simple: You call the Tom to you with a hen call. If they are with 10 hens why would he come to your lone call? It's tough until they split up a little. When I say splitting up or breaking up I mean eventually the toms will run the jakes off from the flock and, with the hens laying eggs, the groups will get smaller and smaller, thus increasing your chance of luring a tom within shooting range. Again, there are unlimited permits this year (if you want one —buy one). And you can obtain up to 3 permits. The permit is the same as in the past – one male (tom) or bearded hen per permit. Permits can be obtained from now through May 20th over-the-counter or online.

Fall Deer Rifle Season Draw units applications (Residents Only) can be sent in from April 16th to May 4th. Our area is Blue Southeast and if you want an either sex for this season you'll have to draw during this application period. Otherwise if you want to bag a buck in this area you'll have to obtain a Statewide Buck Permit.

Spring is here and it's time to pick your pleasure – fishing or hunting. The cool weather will turn to hot soon enough, so get out and enjoy some of the activities that are opening themselves up this spring. We need to enjoy the Spring while we can. 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.”



Jamie Reeves with a nice 5 pound channel cat.
Look at the belly on that fish!

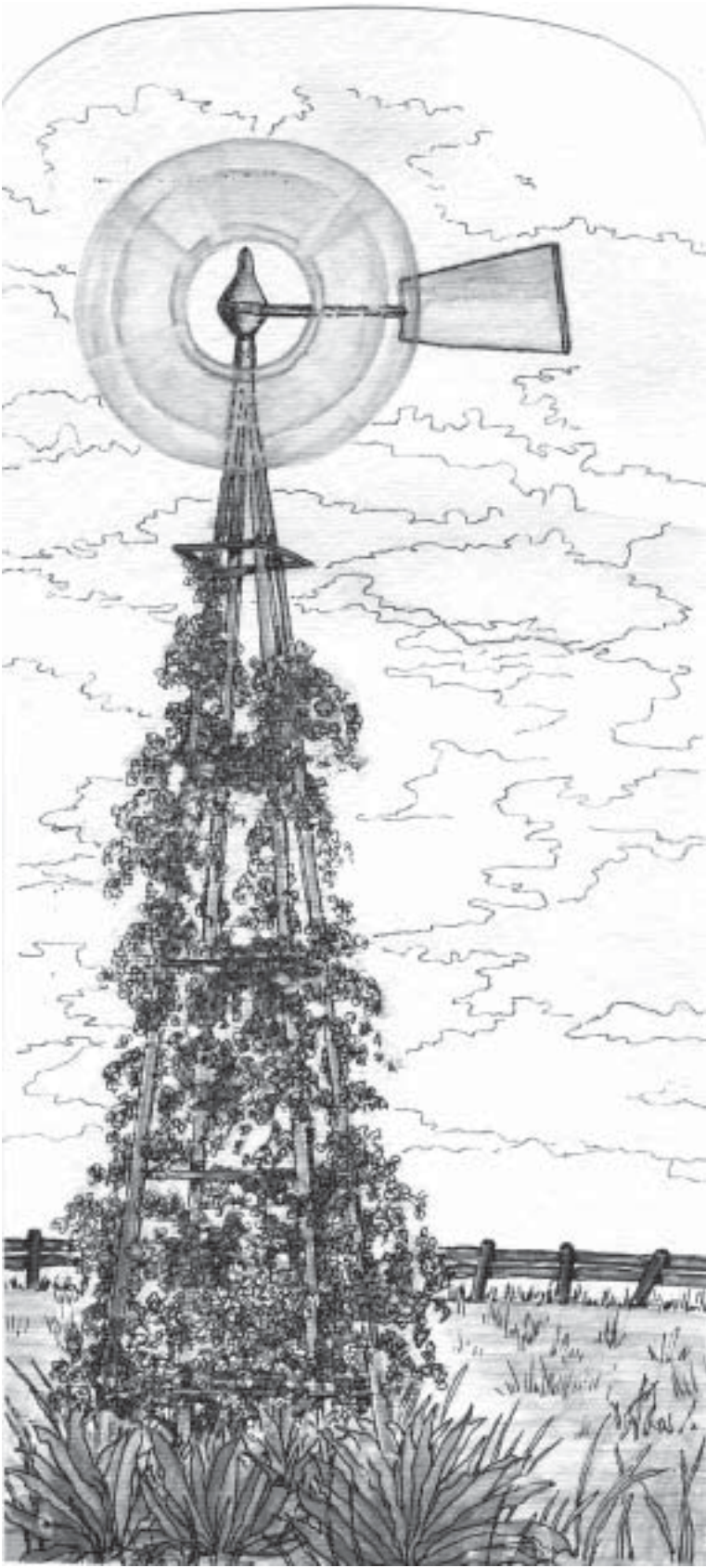


Me, opening weekend of Spring Shotgun Season,
with a 20-pound tom sporting a 9 inch beard.

Bea's Flower Buzz

"Windmill Trellis"

Bea Patterson



At the Peru Museum, a new show features windmills. A variety of artists have submitted paintings, written memories, and photographs on the topic. Even a vintage wind-powered electrical generator is on display.

Being raised in Kansas (where the wind blows most of the time), I am familiar with windmills as important icons of rural landscapes. Obviously, ranchers and farmers depended on windmills to procure life-sustaining water for their livestock and families.

From my potting shed perspective, I came to observe that windmills also served as large trellises for a variety of viney flowers, or backdrops for picturesque gardens.

The most memorable windmill trellis in our area was that of a Mrs. Ricklefs. She not only embellished her extensive yard garden with a decorative windmill, she had a real life windmill, taller than her 2 ½ story home, as the center focus of her turn-about driveway.

As the years spun along, what I know now to have been autumn clematis took over. Metallic windmill legs turned soft green, and eventually all one could see were the fan blades and tail and vane section. In late summer, the towering green trellis would turn into a fuzzy white mass of deliciously fragrant blossoms...and buzzing bees.

Being within easy view from the highway, I got used to looking for the windmill trellis as a road sign directing me home. The trail and vane seemed to wave me by, a steady, friendly, welcoming beacon on the landscape.

Do you have a windmill memory?

Bea Patterson

bp15624@alltel.net

PS: I'm sad to report that the Pick-Me-Up Greenhouse is closed this spring due to a combination of factors. My husband John and I wish to thank the many gardeners who patronized our business over the years.

This Year, Peru is 150!

THE ARMISTICE DAY BLIZZARD

Bob Lewellen

The autumn of 1942 was unusually nice; no freezes nor cold spells — just beautiful days. People in Peru were still wearing their light clothing, and the harvest in the dozen or so orchards around Peru had gone well.

Because so many local men and college men had gone off for World War II, it was difficult to find pickers. Still, rail cars of apples had been shipped.

But, on November 11, Armistice Day, a blizzard surprised everyone. People waded home in deep snow. The temperature plunged. Sap that was still in the fruit trees froze and exploded, ruining the orchards. Again, because of the shortage of manpower and the war, most orchards were not replanted.

Only a few orchard businesses managed to survive to the present day.

FESTIVAL OF A THOUSAND OAKS

Bob Lewellen

The hills were filled with music for two summers in the 1970's. The Omaha Symphony Orchestra held a music camp for high school classical musicians on the Campus of a Thousand Oaks. Tom Broschetti was their conductor and led the camp.

Fashioned after the Timberwolf camp, students received group and individual instruction and an opportunity to blossom on their instruments. Instructors were mostly younger members of the Omaha Symphony, who were able to earn some money in the middle of season. They all lived in the dormitories.

In addition to practice and instruction, students held many free performances to the public. You could sit in on a harp solo, or in the evenings, you could be treated to a chamber orchestra performance. The Omaha Symphonies performed on Friday evenings and went home for weekends.

Many donors helped support the Festival, but it succumbed to lack of funds.

Tom Bruschetti later moved to Perugia, Italy, where he restored an eleventh century home.

CAN I BUY YOU A DRINK?

Bob Lewellen

Not in Peru in the 1860's. The city leaders decided that because it was a college town, alcohol could not be sold in Peru. This was a dry town for a century. Not until the 1960's was that rule changed.

This also helps explain why there were so many drug stores in Peru. You could buy bitters or "other medications" that helped solve the problem.

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

Merri Johnson



Near Paul, Nebraska



Near Ogallala, Nebraska



Near Valentine, Nebraska

Men and women are different. Ever notice that? I know, I know, all you women have read John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. And you probably thought, *Why didn't I think of writing a book about relationship theory and communication advice? Then I'd be a guest on the Oprah show right now, instead of just watching it, wondering where she finds some of these people.* But that's another story.

You've had every misunderstanding, every argument and every heart-to-heart talk imaginable with your husband, your ex, your old boyfriends. You could write a book. Or at least, you could *dictate* a book to someone else who could do the actual writing, because, let's face it, on most people's list of dreaded activities, writing is right up there with public speaking and having a root canal.

The point is, every woman can relate numerous anecdotes about trying to come to an understanding with her man. The topics of these discussions run the gamut from money matters, to home décor, to that classic landmine of male-female conversation: Honey, does this outfit make me look fat?

My husband and I recently made a decision to open a new bank account for the purpose of saving toward a new house. More accurately, *I* made the decision and convinced him to go along with it. We already have two savings accounts at two different financial institutions earning two different rates of return. One account exists to provide an emergency source of funds for instantaneous transfer into the checking account to prevent accidental overdrafts. When you have two people writing checks and using debit cards on the same account you either have to review your transactions every day, or have a safety net in place. I suppose two separate checking accounts might make more sense. But I've always subscribed to the what's-mine-is-ours-and-what's-yours-is-ours theory of marital money management. Having one account reduces the opportunity to keep spending secrets from each other. Call me old-fashioned, but I don't believe in separate finances in marriage. (Of course, my husband has found a way around that. But sooner or later, if longevity statistics hold, I'll get my hands on his mad money.)

The other account is for big-ticket purchases or major emergencies. Since a house is a major purchase, my husband reasoned that we should just put extra savings aside in that account. But a new house is so-o-o-o major, that it just seems like it should have its own account. How would we know what portion of the account was for the house, and what portion was for everything else? I suppose we could keep a running tally of the house portion, but there's something about commingling those funds that just makes me uncomfortable. I imagine the house dollars somehow being cannibalized by vacation spending or the real estate taxes and insurance set-aside, or nibbled away at by the unforeseen car repair bill or occasional wild-hair shopping spree.

Ultimately, my husband gave in and humored my wishes for a separate house savings account. A portion of our income tax refund will make a nice addition to the balance.

I like getting income tax refunds, don't you? My husband would much rather pay in at tax time. It really irks him that the government has been using more of our money than it's entitled to for free all year. But I say, if we hadn't paid in that extra money from each paycheck, it would have just been frittered away on golf. To an avid golfer like my husband, suggesting that money spent on golf is "frittered away" is tantamount to blasphemy. But you get my point: that big refund check is a lot harder to lose track of than an extra \$20 a week.

Obviously, my approach to money management is more psychological, whereas my husband's is more rational. But somehow our different styles have proved complementary over the years. You could say that, in our house, figuratively and financially speaking, Mars and Venus have aligned.

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Ursula Waln, N.D.

Spring is the perfect time of year to renew our connection with nature and to remind ourselves of the vital role that this connection plays in our overall wellbeing. As we go through our daily activities, it is easy to forget that we are part of the greater world around us. We need the natural outdoor environment, and not just for the food and resources it provides; we need to experience it. We need to feel our connection with nature in order to be healthy.

I had been thinking about writing an article on this topic and was recently inspired when I attended a workshop on tree care at Peru State College. Christina Hoyt, a landscape design associate with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, referred to studies demonstrating that seeing and/or being in contact with nature improves mental, emotional, and physical health. Research supports what most of us know intuitively: that we function better and feel better when we can gaze upon plants, breathe fresh air, hear birds singing, etc. Why else would we send flowers to comfort the ill and the grieving? Why else would we build our houses with windows? Why else would we rejoice in a sunny spring day?

There exists a vital healing force within us, and it responds to and is stimulated by the natural environment. Whatever our beliefs about how the world came to be, all of us can appreciate the wonder of nature and derive support through our relationship with it. Recognizing that we benefit from exposure to nature, we can take steps to ensure that we get that exposure regularly, either by bringing it indoors or getting ourselves outdoors.

What better time than Spring to start looking for ways to enjoy nature! When the weather is nice, just sitting outside or next to an open window has a therapeutic effect. The cardiovascular benefits of walking have been well established, so if we are able, why not

get up and walk around outdoors? A few steps taken barefoot through grass sprinkled with morning dew stimulate the immune system and invigorate the psyche. A stroll among trees calms the nerves and clears the mind. For those of us who love to garden, there is no better way to ground our energies and renew our connection with the web of life than to crumble clumps of earth with our hands, place seeds and shoots into rich loam, and pour life-giving water on thirsty plants.

When the weather's not so nice, we can pull back curtains and shades to let the daylight in and rest our eyes upon the outdoor scene. We can surround ourselves with houseplants, which create oxygen and help clear the indoor air of toxins while providing natural beauty year-round. We might buy cut flowers, create some dried flower arrangements, set out some potpourri, etc. We might observe birds, squirrels, and other wildlife through our windows and/or enjoy the companionship of pets.

It's important for children to have regular exposure to nature too, perhaps even more important than for adults. Children's experience of their environment shapes their view of the world. When nature is a part of their everyday experience, children's sensory development and cognitive functioning are enhanced. Through interaction with plants and animals, children develop respect and appreciation for life as well as empathy and compassion. Through outdoor play, children get the exercise they need and enjoy diverse experiences that stimulate their intellectual curiosity and promote learning.

This Spring, let's draw upon the magnificence of nature for strength and regeneration. As we renew our connection with the natural world around us and re-experience our relationship with the world as a whole, may we all find peace and wellbeing.

DAWN

Devon Adams

What is it about the color of the morning?
The sun explodes on the horizon
And obliterates the dark.
We crawl out of our night caves
And are struck by the light of hope,
Which has no boundaries.



Artist Devon Adams has been writing poetry and essays for *Your Country Neighbor* for several years, and now you can have *your portrait* or portraits of your children, grandchildren, or pets drawn by this talented artist. Order your personal portrait by calling 402-209-9377. Or mail your photograph(s) and your check for the applicable amount as shown in the price list below.

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DANDELIONS

Devon Adams

Yellow buttons growing side by side,
painting sunshine on the grass,
popping open overnight,
reaching deep into the soil
with greedy fingers,
dandelions spread the word
that Spring has won the war
against the Winter armies.
Even as the butter faces smile,
their hollow stalks are reaching
for the light and making milky straws
that can be woven into sticky chains
of necklaces that children wear
until their wild imaginations travel
into other fields of wonder.
Soon the color is all gone,
and filmy orbs of fluff deploy
countless tiny seeds that float away
on the rivers in the air.

TRUE WORTH

Lila Meyerkorth

I've been feeling that I would be an ungrateful friend if I did not share with you some appreciated sentiments perceived since experiencing a stroke in February 2007.

First of all, may I challenge you to meditate a few moments about the most important thing I have learned from this: I will always carry the marks of this stroke to remind me that God is Lord of my life.

When alone at midnight, I realized I was having a stroke, the scripture came to me, "The peace of God shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7 He was there all the time.

I may have a stroke tomorrow, and if the outcome is exactly opposite of the last one, I will be just as assured that He has a purpose and plan for every life. May we fit into that plan. "His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts." Isaiah 55:9

The Face of Drought

A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

Karen Ott

Windy, dirty, dry.

My eighty-year-old father blames the Wyoming energy companies for the regional drought. Vaguely pointing west toward the pit-mines, and arguing the probability of altering the weather by releasing of tons of coal dust and methane gas into the atmosphere, he poses the rhetorical question, "How can it not cause trouble?"

In his eyes Wyoming is exporting a bad case of black lung disease to the rest of America by way of thousands of diesel-spewing trains trailing noxious, mile-long ribbons of fine black coal dust.

I don't know if coal and natural gas exploration/exploitation has anything to do with our own personal piece of climate change, but I often wonder why farmers are required to tarp corn trucks while coal cars are allowed to run 'naked' nation wide.

I guess it all comes down to power....the political kind.

Whatever the cause, pit mining or plain old bad luck, we've resigned ourselves to a summer of water allocation. The bureau hasn't announced it yet—and won't until May—but the current state of the North Platte River is pronouncement enough. Shrunken from its mile wide, inch deep, turn-of-the-century glory to a tumbleweed choked shadow of its former self, the broken-hearted river is a painful reminder of what drought is capable of. The water runs so shallow and sluggish a brisk wind from the east could back it up all the way to Torrington.

The Mitchell Ditch has been carrying a bit of river-flow and we've taken the opportunity to soak several alfalfa and winter wheat fields. If the district is lucky and can keep the few acre feet long enough, we'll try to get our prevent plant sorghum irrigated once, but that's a long shot. The sorghum won't go in until the corn is planted and its likely Farmer's Irrigation will have exercised their rights to river flow by then. We'll continue praying for timely rains—and trust God to answer.

The beets are in the ground, but there's a problem. Following planting there's a five day window for the initial herbicide application, and for close to a week now the wind hasn't left us alone. There's no getting away from the smell or the sound; indoors the wailing surrounds you, creeping into every thought, coloring every action, and the irritating tang of dust, which lingers in even the remotest corners of the house, is enough to drive a person crazy.

Three days ago Dale looked at the wind-tossed trees and said, "I've still got time. Yesterday noon he watched gravel skitter across the county road and grumbled, "When it slows down tonight I'll calibrate the sprayer." Early this morning, with the house popping and creaking with every gust, he asked, "Is it ever going to quit?" At noon he joked, "When it calms down to 35 mph I'll head to the field." This evening he surrendered to the inevitable, "I'm not going to make it." I hate wrestling the weather for a living.

For some there's a new sort of sugar beet worry: a hiccup in the expected order of things that has nothing to do with weather.

Great Western (Sugar) investors, who a few years ago purchased beet acres much like shares of stock, had a rude awakening this Spring when corn prices rose to record levels.

Accustomed to renting their acres to farmers with none of their own they suddenly found few takers. Rental prices began to drop: \$25.00...\$20.00...15.00...10.00...then \$0. When that didn't work panic began to set in.

Faced with the prospect of forking over a \$300.00 per acre penalty for every unplanted acre, desperate shareholders began offering to pay \$100.00 per acre to anyone willing to plant. Too bad for us—we'd already agreed to rent 200 Acres at \$0. (Later negotiated down by drought to 100 acres planted—100 acres prevent plant.)

To be fair, it wasn't only corn prices that blindsided share owners; weed control has become difficult as herbicides prove increasingly ineffectual, the weather more uncooperative, and hand labor too expensive. Some farmers are sitting out this year in anticipation of the new roundup-ready beets next spring. It's also likely the 30% 'overplant' option offered by the company last year threw some rotations out of sync. And of course we can't forget the three hundred pound gorilla in the room—drought.

Whatever the reason, the topsy-turvy cash rent situation is certain to become a local legend; an incredible story to be told and retold in warm cafés on cold winter afternoons by rheumy-eyed, white-haired men who once called themselves beet farmers.

Now for the 'real' news, the ordinary, day-to-day farm goings-on which keep us from packing up, selling out, and moving to Omaha to sell shoes.

Once we changed the bait from Imes cat food to Purina dog chow we captured our egg-stealing skunk in less than twenty four hours. At first Dale was unsure what sort of animal was skittering inside the stovepipe-like trap, but after ascertaining the whereabouts of all the cats he was pretty sure it was the Pepe La'pew stinker. And he was right.

Insisting skunks were good mousers Dale released the critter four miles away, near the tumbledown buildings on the Garcia place. Pepe was a bit apprehensive initially, but after sniffing the unfamiliar air for ten minutes or so he ambled from the trap into a patch of last year's weeds. He never looked back.

The wild plums have burst into bloom, the masses of sweet scented flowers garnishing the raggedy, graceless bushes like fancy frosting on a lopsided cake or a good haircut on a homely woman. If a person could preserve and bottle a Nebraska April it would contain the smell of plum blossoms, the sight of a bright blue sky and the song of a meadowlark; a concoction so captivating it could be marketed as a surefire cure for homesickness, loneliness and occasional bad mood to every Nebraskan longing for a simple reminder of the good life.

And finally:

It's a lucky penny." said Dale as he dropped the corroded coin in my outstretched palm. "I found it in the yard." "What's so lucky about it?" I asked; turning it over and over, searching for something—anything—which would have made him think the ordinary cent was something special. He grinned. "It's dated 1970—and that was the luckiest year of my life." It took me a moment to realize he was talking about the year of our wedding.

It's going on 37 years and he's still the romantic I married. There's nothing like a good husband to see a woman through hard times.

Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

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Note from your publisher.

Your relatives and friends who live beyond the 4-Corners area can read *Your Country Neighbor* on the internet, if they go to:
www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Horse-breaking, Now and Then

Joe Smith

When I was a kid my job was breaking horses. It was a lot different then than it is now. For instance, now you buy a horse that has been handled a lot, sometimes to the point of being spoiled. Back then, we went out in the pasture and brought the mares and colts in right off the range. Talk about rank broncs. We didn't have time to baby them and break them the way they do now. I'm not criticizing the way they do it now with exception to parts of it. Most of today's "broncs" have been around people since they were colts, where as when I was breaking horses they were never handled 'til you started breaking them. I have had three-year-old broncs that have never had a rope on them. The ranches didn't have the time or people to train horses the way they do now. That three-year-old was a big dun horse and he was called Buck for one reason. He could buck. One day I was riding him in the corral and he started bucking. Some bawl like a bull and shut their eyes while trying to throw you. Buck was so determined to rid this rider he stuck his head right through the saddle room wall clear up to the swells of the saddle. I think that was the last time he bucked with me.

We taught these horses out on the open range, first in the round corral. We didn't use a whip like they do now, and just run them around the corral. If we had tried that the horse would have jumped right over the top of the fence. In the open range if they threw you it was a long walk back to the barn. That in itself made a better rider out of you.

When we first started with a horse we put a good halter on him and tied him up to a big log or pole. He learned to respect the rope

and learned to stand. We even rode them into a dirt reservoir and then pet them all over. They gentled right down that way. They wouldn't try to kick or jump around while in the water four to five feet deep.

Then we have the new method of using one rein in each hand. That looks silly to me. If you tried that out on the ranches they would laugh you out of the country. I see a lot of that on the RFD programs. They pull the horses around one side or the other. We taught our horses to neck rein. Just the pressure of the rein touching the neck was enough to turn the horse. I have never figured out how you would rope a calf holding one rein in each hand. On the other hand, these new horse trainers like the one from "down under" make a lot of money, so they must be doing something right.

When I was teaching a horse to rope off of, I would swing a rope on him 'til he was used to it, then use a neck rope. Ran the lariat through the neck rope and then tied it to the saddle horn. This made the horse look down the rope when you roped a cow or calf. It only took one time doing that and the horse remembered it. When I was 15 years old, I was working at my uncle's ranch (100 sections). I had a young bronc named Blaze that I was breaking. He was a nice green horse but gentle. I knew where there was a blind cow that had pink eye real bad and needed doctoring. The day before I had seen her but I was riding Buck and I didn't feel he was ready for the rope work. I played with the rope all the way out there, probably five miles from the headquarters. When I found the cow I dropped a loop on her and when the cow hit the end of the rope, the horse had no other choice than to look down the rope. I had to ride past her and flip the rope behind her and throw her on the ground. There was a washed-out trail nearby that I drug her over to. This cow was pinkeye

blind and would fight any thing she could hear. I got her down in the trail with her feet sticking up. I took my medicine bag and treated her eyes and painted her face with Globe 62. That was a screw worm medicine, it was black as night. But it kept the sunlight off the eyes 'til they could heal. Needless to say, this cow was really getting ticked off. I got Blaze to give me a little slack on the rope and I slipped it off her head and put it around both rear ankles. I got back on the colt and pulled the cow out of the ditch. She jumped up and was searching for something to fight. As soon as she got up the rope fell off with slack I gave it and I took off with the cow trying to find me. Oh, to be young again. The chances we took would turn a mother's hair gray.

Back to horse-breaking. I believe time was the controlling factor in the way horses were broke then and the way they do it now. We used raw broncs, some had never been around a man, never seen a rope, or a saddle. Now there is a lot more money in horses, and people spend a lot more time and money on them. It is a completely different ball of wax. But I would think there are still places that use the old methods to break horses out in ranch country.

The RFD programs show people getting on horses with a real loose rein. I never did that. It would be inviting a mouth full of dirt when your horse dropped his head and started bucking. Somebody could get hurt doing that for sure. You have to know your horses and their reactions to different things. RFD shows people saddling horses from the right side. I would hate to try that out on somebody's ranch. I can just picture a cattle cutting contest where the rider is using two hands to rein the horse. Things have changed a lot. Not all to the better, me thinks. Joe Smith

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