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October 2006



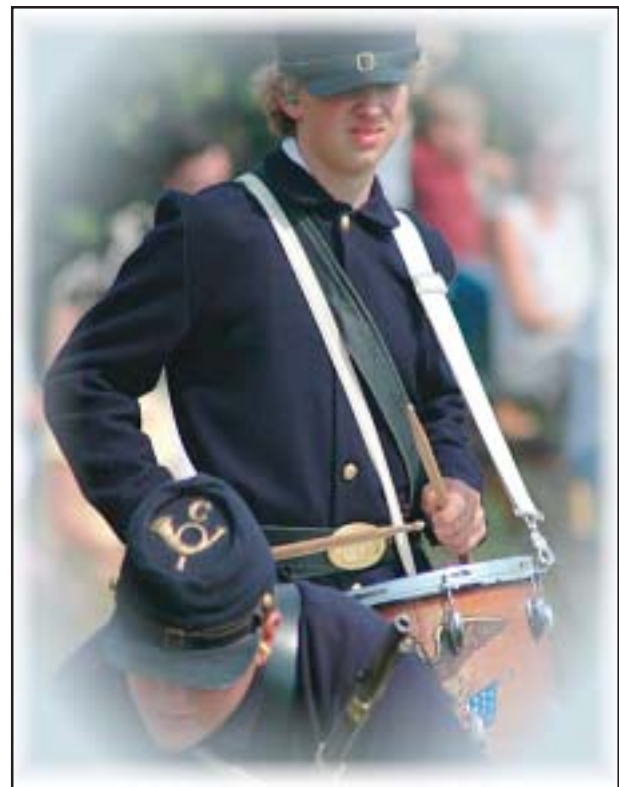
VOICE

This cover photo was taken at the city park in Nemaha, Nebraska on that community's 150th birthday! Part of the entertainment was the United States Air Force Brass Ensemble, which played a variety of familiar and patriotic musical pieces.

October can be the most colorful month of the year. If the wind, rain, and temperatures are close to those of last year, we are in for a beautiful experience!



The 'Marshal' and his family occasionally make appearances at Brownville Events.



Civil War Re-Enactment Battles! Old Time Autumn Days in Brownville, Nebraska

Bluegrass Music
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Vendors • Crafts • Food
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Stage Coach Rides • Quilt Show
Walking Trail • Fun for all!
Saturday & Sunday, October 14 & 15
8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Daily



Country View at Harvest Time

Mini Economic Development

Need to "spark up" your business area? Most of the shopping districts in rural areas have buildings that have landed in the "vacated" category. Mary Kruger of Auburn, Nebraska, has started a "Mini Economic Development" project that, not only is promoting interest in the local Fine Arts talents of Southeast Nebraska, but is cleaning up the windows of vacated businesses.

Mary has been a lifelong resident of Nemaha County and has served on many committees that have resulted in improvements for the area. Observing unattractive windows that were facing our heavily traveled highways through our business districts inspired her "to do something" about it. Since Southeast Nebraska is becoming a great incubator for the Fine Arts, Mary felt this would be a great place to start. A volunteer committee has assisted Mary with coordinating the idea and they presently have 4 buildings to use for the project.

The Art teachers in the schools of Auburn, Johnson/Brock and Pawnee City have all been very cooperative in arranging their student's colorful efforts at designated times. A special display of "What Snowmen do at Night" by the Pawnee City art students was a delightful display through the Christmas season. Deb Kubik, art teacher with the Pawnee City school, hopes to have a sequence ready for this Christmas season.

A "Pottery Workshop" promoted this summer was facilitated by instructor Nancy Fairbanks of Grand Island, Nebraska. The experience of "molding and painting the clay" for the youth, and, for the adults, using the pottery wheel and being active participants in the RAKU pottery firing was well worth the \$20.00 registration fee. Three counties and almost all of the towns in Nemaha County were represented by the over 50 registrations to the workshop. All the stoneware became another attractive window display.

The emphasis for the next 30 days is a "Parade of Homes". Mary has contacted several local artists that have put their talents on canvas and captured the beauty of homes in Southeast Nebraska. Some of the homes no longer exist, and some do—but all will live forever with the likenesses caught by our inspiring artists.

Please make the effort to stop and view the displays (Highway 75, ½ block South of downtown stoplight, West side of street—and Highway 136, ¾ block East-South side of street). There has been great cooperation and interest from business owners, local artists, and residents.. This is a project that could be expanded into each and every town. Just a small "idea" that hopefully, will catch the eye of a traveler who will stop and investigate the rest of the businesses and spend a few dollars in town that might have otherwise been missed.

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Your COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

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Your Country Neighbor

Delivered to Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska!

In Nebraska: Auburn, Avoca, Barada, Brownville, Cook, Dawson, Dubois, Elk Creek, Falls City, Humboldt, Johnson, Nebraska City, Nehawka, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee City, Peru, Shubert, Stella, Syracuse, Table Rock, Tecumseh, Union, Verdon, and Weeping Water.

In Missouri: Mound City, Rock Port, and Tarkio.

In Kansas: Axtell, Baileyville, Beattie, Centrailia, Corning, Fairview, Frankfort, Goff, Hiawatha, Home, Horton, Morrill, Sabetha, Seneca, Summerfield, and Wetmore.

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

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Thinking in the Rose Garden

by Frieda Burston

I sat in the rose garden just thinking, and this little old lady came and sat by me. "I'm a friend of a friend," she said. "I understand. I went through this too. There's nothing left but prayer."

I said, "No. I quit talking to God when my husband died after only three months of cancer, and He didn't do a thing to save him." She said quietly, "Would you rather your husband had suffered for three years, like your daughter is doing?"

That shook me up considerably. I thought about it and I thought about it. Maybe I had done God an injustice. Maybe I should have thanked Him for taking Abe so quickly. I decided I'd go back to services and see what came to me in the congregation. There is a beautiful little synagogue here and a lady cantor who leads the services, and I had avoided it, God and I not being friends any more.

I went. *Now* my argument is not with God but with the prayer book, which is too civilized for me. The ME that went into the sealed room when Saddam threw SCUDS at us, was not the same ME that came out of it. My feelings about War and Peace changed in those hours of huddling by the radio in a gas mask. The ME that went in was a scared rabbit, hoping desperately that the floor wouldn't crumble under my feet and the ceiling wouldn't bury me.

The Me that came out was angry clear through. What right did anyone that far away have, interrupting my life like this? Every time the sirens blew us into the shelter, my fury rose. Why did we just sit there and take it? Our army knew where Saddam's 12 underground palaces were, why didn't the US give us permission to fly through their lines to bomb the air conduits into the palaces?

The Allies said No, we must play the game right. We are civilized people. We might hurt innocent women and children, and what would we think about ourselves then?

Playing the game right is still the way that we civilized Jews are thinking, and I don't know where we picked that up, unless it's the British legacy from World War I, which the generation before us said was The War to End All Wars. We certainly didn't pick it up from the Bible, which tells us page after page, "Choose Life" — if someone comes after you with a rock, choose life and find a club to knock the rock out of his hand. Have to bash his head in to make him drop the rock? Sorry 'bout that.

This prayer book has all the proper Hebrew and Aramaic prayers and hymns that it has had since the tenth century. But the English translations which we recite— not being able to read the original language of the Bible— often don't match their Bible originals at all. I remember thinking how beautiful and inspirational these English renderings were— before I went into the Sealed Room, and before I quit riding buses, and before I worried about rockets falling closer to Rehovot. Opening these same books after twenty years of running from Arab attacks, I find it incredible that we can still be teaching our children such twaddle, when the world has changed so much outside us.

The original prayer books were written at the time of the Crusades. When the body count was in, Crusaders had killed more Jews and other Christians than they

had killed Muslims. Islam spread further, and the Crusaders crawled back home to spread leprosy and intolerance in Europe.

Small wonder that the words we said most often were psalms and hymns expressing the pain of personal loss in the words of 2000 years earlier. Back before King David's time there were prayers that God break the enemy's head before the enemy broke ours, and we used those words. We did not hide our horror at seeing our babies torn apart or our elders tortured. We did not play the game correctly by turning their honest language into the language of diplomacy and soft-speak. Read it.

These translations of sweetness and light were correct in my younger days, because they were part of a general movement to inspire new generations to advance civilization. The League of Nations, the World Court, the UN— all of these things had a place. But that was when the Arabs were just a bunch of poor smelly nomads who wandered above pools of oil they never dreamed of. Now that Iran has a corner on the oil market, and a religious leader who says their Mahdi (their Messiah) is coming right now and is bringing His own Apocalypse with Him in the form of nukes on Israel and the USA, someone ought to look at *all* the prayer books in the civilized world, Jewish, Christian, and other. We may want to change some of our translations back to what they were before civilization set in.

Now that I'm talking to God again, I'll ask about our Choosing Life, or Choosing Civilization. Meanwhile, our time-counting goes on, another year starts. No one knows how it will end, but we say: "May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a year that is All Good." You, too. Regards, Frieda



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Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

By Merri Johnson

Although I'm not a bona fide, biological grandmother yet, a few weeks ago I was invited to "Grandparents' Day" at school by fourth-grader Lauren Wagner.

As it turned out, about half of the students were fortunate enough to have grandparents, including at least one other surrogate, join them for a brief classroom visit, lunch and recess. I say "fortunate" because my own children's grandparents lived too far away to have been able to visit their school. I was glad to have been invited and available to be there with Lauren.

For all the horror stories one hears about kids behaving badly these days, I have to say I was very impressed by those fourth graders. I guess. They sat at attendance without being told. Nobody fidgeted. Nobody poked anybody. Nobody whispered to his neighbor. Nobody snickered when fellow students incorrectly solved simple math equations.

These kids were at least as well-behaved as I remember being. And not just in the classroom. In the hall. In the lunchroom. On the playground. No monkey-business.

When the end-of-recess bell rang, the teacher on duty took a position on the sidewalk facing the playground, while the two sections of fourth-graders – without any prodding – formed two single-file lines. She held her silent gaze until all the students were completely quiet. (My high school English teacher used to whisper when she wanted to get our attention. I guess they're still promoting that technique in teachers' college.)

Back in the classroom, the kids had some downtime while the teacher read to them from "Little Britches." The story revolves around a family that moves to Colorado from somewhere back East in 1906. The protagonist is a young boy dealing with a bully at school and a sissifying mother and strong, silent-type father at home. To make a long story short, the boy finally gets angry enough with the bully to stand up for himself in a fist-fight at recess. The teacher wisely allows the fight to proceed, presumably making sure things don't get out of hand. The bully is put in his place; the boy's father is proud; his mother is horrified; and the boy has his self-respect.

You don't have to go back as far as 1906 to find this philosophy of life at work. Before Columbine, we largely believed, or at least I did, that learning to deal with bullies was part of growing up. It was accepted that some childhood experiences would leave scars, but that they would fade in time. Now we go to ridiculous measures, like zero tolerance for 6-year olds with water pistols in their backpacks, to maintain order and to try to eliminate risks.

When I left the classroom on Grandparents' Day, the teacher was explaining how things have changed since 1906. I didn't get to hear his lecture on bullying, but I'm sure the kids were listening politely.

Yes, good manners are generally preferable to bad. But don't you wish we could just go back to 1906 once in awhile?

Dowsing Club Meeting, September, 2006

by Joe Smith

The Fall meeting of the Mid-Rivers Dowzers met at Macon, a very old and small town in Central Nebraska. The County Board asked the club if they could locate unmarked graves in the Franklin County area. There were some small (by our standards), cemeteries in the area that the county wanted to clean up and keep mowed, but they also wanted to see just how big the area was. That was our assignment: to help them create smaller areas to mow and build new fences around.

It worked in the opposite way they wanted. We discovered a lot of areas that had burials that weren't mowed. One cemetery had an area we figured that was for paupers, and then an area that could have been Native American burials. There are very few records for these old cemeteries, but some of the older people said that the Natives were all buried on one side of the cemetery, and the paupers buried in the back of the area. One of the places was the county burial site. No records at all. There was one marker stating it was a county site for people who had to have the county bury them. No head stone and no other markers at all. By 'dowsing', it turned out that there were about fifty people buried in this small area, many of them women.

In another area, some of the stones were old, around 1860-1880. Many were young children. The whole county has a lot of history everywhere you turn. At one time Jesse James had a hide-out in the area. We went there on another outing. The area was near the Oregon Trail. A lot of folks settled there in dugouts and caves. Most graves seemed to run east and west, something to do with the morning sun, but we did find some laying north and south. There was a lot of moon-shining going on just to survive. One of the fellows there had a granddad that ran a moon-shine still.

We spent most of the day walking and tallying unmarked graves. It was amazing what showed up. There were about 20 dowzers in the group, and they all seemed to agree on what they found. The County man furnished the iced tea and cold pop and some snacks. Some of the ladies also furnished food. A good time was had by all. There were about 20 people out there most of the time. Marta and I went out because we are members of the club and I am regional Vice President of the American Society of Dowzers here in the Mid West.

This is just one thing 'dowsing' is used for. Dowsing is a God-given talent that most people can do if they start out young enough. Our next meeting will be in January of 2007.

Editor's note: For more information about Joe Smith, Dowser, visit Joe's webpage on this publication's website at:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com/starguardiancreations.htm

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King of the River Bluff

by Vicki Harger

His arrival usually creates a stir wherever he goes. The locals hail him gladly whenever he makes his way down from his mountain-top home. "Well! Look who's come down to see us!"

"The Grand Marshal, himself!"

"We're so honored! How are you doing, Albert?"

"Feelin' fresh!" says the 88-year-old gent. "Feelin' fresh and pumpy!"

The locals have known Albert Austin forever. They knew him years ago when he was a youngster, and also many years later when he became the superintendent of the local school district. But ever since he retired to his secluded home on top of the ridge, he's been known as a kindly Alm Uncle, of sorts. There he lived in the home he had built, living in harmony with nature—with the raccoons, foxes, and wild turkeys.

As King of the Bluff, he knew the name of every bird that hovered around his feeders. "There is a Red Bellied Woodpecker," he'd say. "He's the Greedy Gut!"

Greedy Gut...!

Mr. Austin has nicknames for his feathered friends, and for his favorite people, as well. His daughter is "Wonder Woman" and his girlfriend is called the "Pioneer Woman". (Yes indeed. Mr. Austin still has a gal, even at his ripe old age.) My nickname is just plain "Happy". I used to be "Beautiful Lady" till I put on a few extra pounds. Now I'm "Pleasingly Plump".

"Tra-la-la-boom-deeey!" Mr. Austin always shouted whenever I'd walk in the door of his home. Or else he'd start to sing: "Oh what a beautiful day... Everything's going my way!" Then he'd stop and look at me. "You know, Happy. I had this house built...had it hewn outta the wilderness. What do you think of that, Happy?"

I always assured him he was the most brilliant man on earth, of course. Who else would've thought of retiring in such a lovely place? He would nod and lean back in his chair, murmuring to himself. "Hewn-outta-the-wilderness...It doesn't get any better than this."

These were the words he lived by—there on the top of his tree-covered bluff. Although he lived alone, he had dozens of friends who dropped by often. Every November, Mr. Austin threw a wood-chopping extravaganza. Everybody came to his party and helped him cut wood for the winter. Doctors, lawyers, dentists, and plain ol' folk like me.

He told us his wild, but true stories...how he and his little brother tried to swim across the Mighty Mo many years ago. And he told the stories of the later years when he went to battle for our country in World War II.

Then in the evening, when the sun was dropping low behind the bluff, Mr. Austin always sang his favorite song. "When you come to the end of a perfect day, and you sit alone with your thoughts..."

But then slowly, the perfect days began to fade.

Mr. Austin's health deteriorated. He resisted old age valiantly, and he had terrible allergic reactions whenever he came near the convalescent center. "Get me away from here!" he'd shout. "We're too close to the !#*@!*#! nursing home!" But soon, Mr. Austin needed therapy and professional care. Not even Wonder Woman could cope with all of the problems.

The time had come. Decisions had to be made.

When he was placed in the nursing home, Mr. Austin grumbled mightily. So did the locals in his hometown. No one was happy—least of all "Happy". But we all adjusted. We had to.

"It's only for two weeks," Mr. Austin assured me. But we both knew better, I think. The days turned into weeks, then into months. Albert Austin lost his smile, his appetite, and his wit. He wouldn't eat or talk, and he never sang. He ignored his beloved birds outside of his window. Not even "Happy" could make him happy. I knew he was dying—not of disease or old age—but of boredom, pure boredom.

Then came the day that I walked into Room 313 and found Mr. Austin slumped in the wheelchair, his chin resting on his chest. He looked dead.

"Mr. Austin!" I cried shaking his shoulder. "You can't be dead!" No, he couldn't be dead. I hadn't taken him to McDonald's lately, or to his hewn-outta-the-wilderness home on the bluff. And I never did take him for a boat ride on the Missouri like I'd promised him. "Mr. Austin!" I shook him firmly. "You've got to come back for Happy's sake! You hear me?"

He did come back to life. Slowly. Sluggishly. He stared at me with a blank look in his eyes.

"OK, that did it!" I said. "Let me have your cell phone!"

I pulled it out of his pocket and called Wonder Woman. "Today is the day," I said. "We're going to do it!"

Wonder Woman agreed. She arrived within the hour. She didn't tell the nursing home where we were taking him, of course. "A ride..." she told the nurses airily. "We're taking him for a ride."

And we did. To this day, I'm not sure how we pulled it off. I can't even tell you what we did. All I can tell you is that when we finally brought him back to the nursing home, Mr. Austin's eyes were wide open. He didn't look sluggish or half-dead any more. He was saying: "Eight hundred miles an hour! I know we went eight hundred miles an hour!"

Fortunately, nobody believed a word of what he was saying. The nurses went right on with their rituals and charting. Blood pressure, pulse, respiration. Mm-m-m-hmmm, Albert. Mmm-hmmm." The stethoscope was put away. The curtains drawn.

"Bedtime, Albert. Go to bed."

He did. Beneath his starchy sheets, with the covers pulled up to his chin, he went to bed. But he wasn't just another old body lying in a sterile room.

No sir. With windblown hair and starlight in his eyes, he was Mr. Albert Austin. Adventurer. Explorer.

He closed his eyes. Outside the window, the moon rose higher. The stars shone brighter. And the King of the River Bluff slept.

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Bea's Flower Buzz

"The Decorative Weed"

by Bea Patterson

Country Gardeners, it is autumn and that means it is time to go **weed collecting** (as my husband calls it). As sure as geese start their flight south, I begin my fall ritual of harvesting items from not only my own garden (purposely planted there) but mooching cuttings from my neighbors (they know what I'm after), and collecting weeds from the fields (spotted throughout the year so I can return later).

Why? You might ask. Because I have an inner-born **need to prolong the summer** by preserving some of its color and variety. I can create my, for want of a better term, **dried arrangements**, reminders of summer's faded glories. The term more specifically refers to natural organic materials that are now in their dried state (or will become so soon), and no longer requiring water or care to sustain their growth – they are dead.

But "dead" or "dried" can be beautiful, and their decorative touches start at my front porch with pinecones, pumpkins, gourds, pumpkins, and bittersweet filling the now empty pots and planters. Sometimes I intersperse these things with fake (I mean faux) autumn leaves or inexpensive pots of mums. Sometimes, I set out several blue/green insulators or big blue Mason canning jars (with a few rocks in the bottoms to hold them upright) filled with more pinecones or a big handful of my curly grass (or both). I used some apples one year, but that didn't work so well because they rotted rather quickly and drew wasps.

At the front door with its oval glass, I often hang a swag of milo stalks (sprayed with varnish or hair spray to hold in the seeds), bittersweet sprigs, and ears of corn or corn cobs or Indian corn wired together and wrapped with green or natural colored raffia. This year I might add some curly grass to it (we got it dumpster diving years ago) or change out to the purple annual grass that I love so much.

Inside my home, the majority of my weed collection ends up in a tall faded red sap bucket that I purchased at the Brownville Flea Market years ago. I have packed it full of lots of different things over the years: stalks of milkweed pods, dried sunflowers and even field artichoke, zinnias, hydrangea, cattails saved from the previous summer (before they fluff out), pussy willow stems saved from the spring, Belles of Ireland, Raspberry Iris, lotus pods (retrieved from a bog near Weston, MO), yarrow, Money Plant (also called Coin Plant, Moonwort, Honesty, Silver Dollar), a variety of tall grasses and plumes, Bittersweet, Chinese Lantern, hot pink Eastern Wahoo, milo stalks, corn stalks, cockscomb, lots of real weeds that I don't the know names of, and even beautiful blue and/or white peacock feathers – everything but the kitchen sink. Something I found that didn't work well was Baby's Breath – too white, too delicate.

If my collection starts going toward the drab side, sometimes I have spray painted flower heads with earthy yellows, greens, oranges, etc. Zinnias, hydrangea, and yarrow work especially well with this treatment.

If you are eyeing some weeds for your own decorative purposes, go for pleasing color combinations, lots of different textures, and a variety of shapes — lots of strong contrast.

You'll find that your collection will go to tall, bushy, and bold, so choose an appropriately large container in muted-colors — glossy, colorful, patterned probably won't work. You'll want your weeds to be the focal point. New for me this year, I am going to start with the container, a tall antique McCoy vase in soft brown, muted yellow, and light green, and then fill it with a *few* somethings, maybe like curly grass, yarrow, and large rust/red zinnias, the really slender cattails...hmmm... What fun!

In that regard, while Eastern Yahoo is an awesome berried bush, its hot pink color doesn't go with a lot of things. I find pairing it with dark red/purple cockscomb and anything dark greenish to be pleasing. For a container, I'd stick with something soft green or take a sample with me when I went a-lookin'.

One last note, to naturally preserve most stalked "flowers":

1. Cut in the driest part of the day, with plenty of stem, at the peak of their color (avoids mildew)
2. Most leaves aren't pretty and won't make it through the drying process anyway, so, cut them off right away.
3. Hang upside down for a few weeks in a dry spot out of the sun (to avoid mildew and fading) with some air circulation. I make rubber banded bundles and hang them on nails in the garage. If drying indoors, put a pail or newspaper underneath to catch the seeds and/or dry material that gets shed. (Save the seeds: use them yourself later or share with a friend.)
4. When dry, spray lightly with clear craft varnish or hair spray (for interior use) to keep fragile pieces and parts intact.

I'm sure, when you get started down this trail, you'll get plenty of good exercise, as well as even more dried materials and decorative uses than I have mentioned. Let your imagination take over; after all, you're just **recycling weeds and memories of summer**.

Happy Hunting!
Bea Patterson
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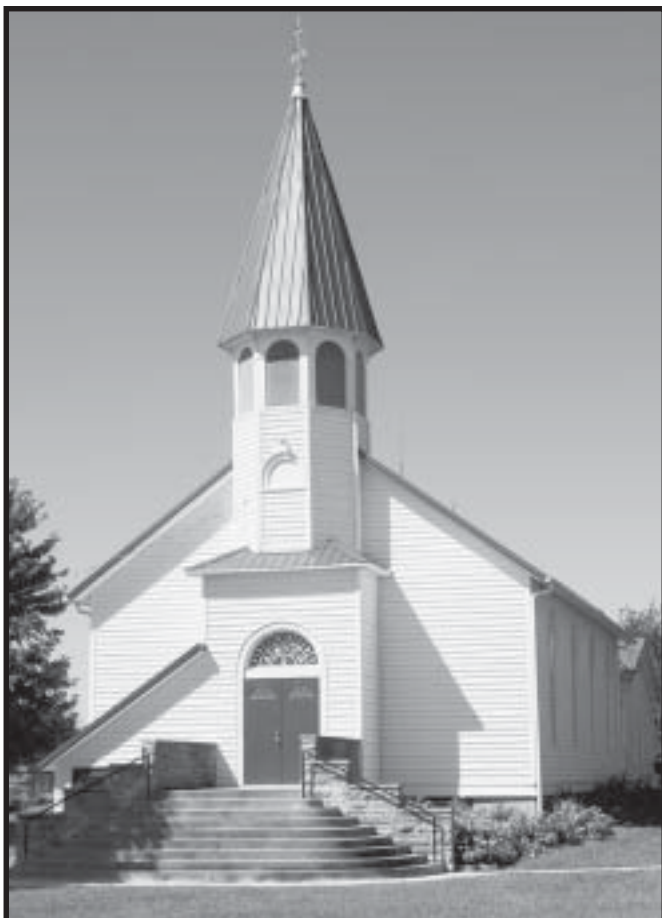
  

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Chiggers and Such

by Joe Smith

When I was going down to Texas to work on our oil fields several years ago, my partner was telling me about the chiggers in that area. He claimed they were big enough to breed a turkey. Every morning we had a sock filled with sulfur powder and would beat it all a round our pants legs to discourage the little bugs. It did help but not all the way. We were drilling a well on the lease and it was hot. There was a dirt reservoir down the hill a ways, and my other partner Hank loaned me his fishing rod to see if I could catch a bass or two. It was on a Sunday afternoon. I went down and started working a beetle spin, no luck. About that time a big bass came up and said that in Texas they have blue laws and fish didn't bite on Sundays. But he said the water's fine, come on in for a cooling swim. Sounded good to me, so I stripped off and went skinny dipping. About the time I got out, balancing myself on a couple of rocks, I heard someone talking on the other side of the dam. There I stood in my birthday suit hearing voices? Now what? I quick put my pants on and peeked over the dam to see what was going on. There were two giant chiggers, biggest I ever saw, arguing over a horny toad, (the ones with horns). One said to the other, "Do we eat him here or take him back and let the big boys beat us out of him?" I ducked back behind the dam, finished dressing and went back to work at the rig. Boy, that was close. Joe



A pleasant country scene north of Seneca.

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Country

Scenes



There was good food and good people at Nemaha, Nebraska's 150th birthday.



Country Scene just West of Peru



This USAF Brass Quintet played "Their Song" with pride.



Charity Lake Northeast of Rock Port




A local volunteer was a temporary 'leader of the band'.



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
Photos provided by Author



Fishing:

The Missouri River has been up and down with each Fall rain. With the cooler rains come the cooler water temperatures, now dipping into the 60's. This really has kicked the fish into feeding up for the winter. They are hitting about anything you throw at them right now. Hooking them is another thing all together though. The channels are tap – tap – tapping - cleaning your hook bare. And the big ones are hitting hard – stripping the bait before you can set the hook. This time of year is really exciting because you never know what you're going to catch. "What are they hitting on??" The big ones are still hitting chubs and goldfish and the little ones on crawlers and dough baits. Remember, Big Bait, Big Fish, so the bigger the bait the better. Be prepared to hold on to your pole though, because when they hit you may be missing a pole if you aren't careful. These fish are big enough to do that easily.

The first of this month's fishing pictures is Mike Tynon from Peru shown with a 23-lb Flathead Cat. And the second picture is a fine pair of 25-lb+ Blue Cats taken Labor Day Weekend. Brian McConnaughey from Auburn is on the left, and Jay Moran from Peru is on the right.

Hunting:

Hunting seasons are here with plenty of success. The Nebraska dove season opened September 1st and there are plenty of birds around despite a few rainy weekends and dropping temperatures. I have been lucky enough to lure a few close enough to bag a mess for a meal. I thought that someone was really having a lot of luck one morning last week when I heard shooting echoing across the Peru Bottom. Come to find out that it wasn't doves they were shooting at, but rather DUCKS. The Fall Teal Season had opened up. Teal are the first duck to migrate through the area and are the smallest duck to boot. That why I stated "shooting at" because they are hard to hit. The area that is in our region of Nebraska is the Low Plain Zone and wss open from Sept. 9 through 24, with limits of 4 Bag (in the

blind) and 8 possession (in the freezer). New for this year when hunting ducks and geese, you must purchase a "NEBRASKA Water Fowl stamp". This is in addition to the Federal Water Fowl stamp. Don't forget – in addition to the stamps to hunt migratory birds you also need a HIP number along with a small game hunting permit.

The leaves are falling and the water is cooling off. There won't be a lot of warm days left if you want to get some fishing in. There are a lot of hunting seasons here and coming up. And it's time to site in those high power rifles too. Seems like we're never completely prepared for the change of seasons but we always seem to make the best of it. I know I do. 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."



Mike Tynon from Peru



Brian McConnaughey from Auburn, and Jay Moran from Peru

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Poetry, etc.

The 22nd of October

by Jan Chism Wright

It is the 22nd of October
and I gaze out my window.
The silver maple leaves fall
like rain on parched ground
where they puddle and pile,
momentarily, before twirling
in a gust of wind as if kicked
up by cavorting children.

Some trees drop their leaves
en masse, all of a color,
as if tossing a throw rug,
decoratively, across some
dreary stretch of road
or drab length of lawn.

It is this constantly changing
kaleidoscope of colors
and Gaudi-esque patterns that
I cannot bring myself to rake
and, if fortune is with me,
a north wind will transport them
like some traveling art exhibit
to Kansas or other places south.

© Jan Chism Wright
10/22/02

Sometimes Summer

by Devon Adams

Sometimes Summer lasts 'til frosting time
with easy days of sunlight slanting
through the heavy green of trees.
and nights that sparkle stars
through air as clear as window glass
cleaned with newspapers and vinegar.
The equinox comes and September falls
into October without a hint of
blizzard breath or icy rain.
Then there are the years when time speeds up,
and the heat-soaked blanket of humidity
is ripped off the bed of the prairie
without any provision for transition
from extremes of temperature.
A day can dawn with breathless, stagnant air
that super-heats with heavy sunshine
until the afternoon is no different
from the inside of a pot of boiling water
and the sky is brassy metal, like the inside of the kettle's lid.
Then across the western and the northern
edges of the distance,
comes a dark gray wedge of clouds
that moves with menace to capture Summer
in a deadly grasp of cold and wind and rain.
We slam shut doors and windows
as we shiver in the chill and reach for socks
and sweaters hiding deep inside the closet shelves.
The rain wears out and leaves behind
a sodden mass of leaves and mud
that stay wet for days and days
under skies that drag the ground
with mean low clouds.
Memories of Summer become rosy and unreal.
Forgotten are the bugs, and clammy, sweaty skin.
We remember only good things as our creaky bones
protest the sudden onslaught of a Winter preview.
Oh, to be in sunny meadows once again
drinking nectar on the wind and
watching billows building thunderheads
in deep blue depths of endless skies.
Even though reality is always waiting
to tap us on the shoulder,
we'd rather dream about the way
that we want our seasons to play out.
Imaginary comforts of a kinder world
are the tools that help us
to endure the wrath of seasons
that we can't control.
We prefer to live on another planet
that is our own invention.

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Breakfast and Blood Sugar Regulation

by Ursula Waln, N.D.

Most of us have been told that eating breakfast is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. I would assert that *when* we eat that first meal of the day may not be nearly as important as *what* we eat to break the overnight fast. This is because our breakfast food choices affect our bodies' blood sugar levels throughout the rest of the day. Over time, our breakfast habits have profound implications for our overall physical health.

I am not advocating skipping breakfast. Waiting until we are ravenously hungry to eat our first meal of the day makes us prone to overeating and is known to be a contributing factor in the increasing rate of obesity in this country. I do think, however, that it is generally better to wait until we are hungry for breakfast than to eat out of a sense of duty even though we are not hungry. A regular overnight fast of eight hours or more helps to rest the digestive system and allows the body to go into a restorative and detoxification mode that is necessary for health maintenance. If we find that we are not really hungry upon rising, rather than let a daily work or school schedule dictate when we "break fast," maybe we should pack some food along so that we can eat when our bodies are ready.

Our bodies strive to keep blood sugar levels within a normal range. (*Blood sugar* is also referred to as *blood glucose*, and *level* in this case refers to the amount of sugar circulating in the blood at any given time.) Too much or too little blood sugar can be dangerous, so we have an intricate hormonal system that helps us to regulate the levels. Carbohydrates, fats, and proteins in the foods we eat are broken down by our bodies and transformed into blood sugar, so our blood sugar levels go up after we eat. When we fast, they go down, so our bodies draw upon stored resources (such as glycogen, body fat, or even muscle protein as a last resort), converting them to glucose to be released back into the bloodstream. It is a wise and elegant design that allows us to store away energy sources in times of excess and bring them out in times of need. Fluctuation is normal. Occasional extreme fluctuations can be managed relatively easily, but extreme fluctuations occurring regularly over time tend to tax the system and eventually lead to problems such as obesity, atherosclerosis, and insulin resistance/diabetes.

Some foods are converted to blood sugar very quickly while others take more time to be broken down for conversion. Dietary sugars such as table sugar (sucrose), milk sugar (galactose), and fruit sugar (fructose) are quickly converted to blood sugar (glucose). Other simple carbohydrates such as refined flour, white rice, and potatoes are quickly converted to blood sugar too. Complex carbohydrates take a little longer. Fats take longer yet, and proteins take the longest of all. How long it takes for a food to be converted to blood sugar is known as the food's glycemic index.

A breakfast high in simple carbohydrates (such as pastries, pancakes, white breads, and most breakfast cereals and cereal bars) introduces lots of sugar into the bloodstream relatively quickly. Such a high spike in the blood sugar level creates a crisis situation in the body. To get the excess sugar out of the bloodstream before it does damage, the body releases a large amount of insulin, a hormone which stimulates the cells throughout the body to take in the circulating sugar. In a person who has not developed insulin resistance, this clears the excess sugar out of the bloodstream fairly quickly and effectively. However, because the insulin was released in a crisis 'dump' response, what generally happens is that there is too much insulin and, therefore, too much sugar is pulled out of the bloodstream. Often, the blood sugar drops so low that it creates another crisis situation in the body. The adrenal hormones then kick in to stimulate the release of glucose back into the bloodstream.

With repetition, we may begin to experience intense sugar cravings, sometimes accompanied by anxiety, irritability, shakiness, light-headedness, heat flushes, perspiration, and/or a sensation of "melting down." Known as reactive hypoglycemia, this unpleasant condition, which often occurs about two to three hours after breakfast, can be remedied by eating again.

When this wild teeter-tottering of blood sugar levels is repeated over time, the body becomes less adept at handling it. Baseline cortisol levels increase to deal with the effects of the stress being placed on the body, and this affects insulin function. The regulatory system is slowly knocked off kilter. The cells throughout the body eventually begin to lose their responsiveness to insulin.

Regardless of what we eat for the rest of the day, if our first meal is high in simple carbohydrates, our blood sugar levels will continue to have higher peaks and lower dips than they would have had without that initial spike. This is borne out by research.

Now, if the high-carbohydrate breakfast has been accompanied by a significant amount of protein, then the sugar spike and insulin dump will still happen, but the body will continue to work on breaking the protein down for blood sugar. The blood sugar derived from the protein will be introduced into the bloodstream slowly and will compensate for the over-release of insulin. (To a lesser extent, complex carbohydrates and fats will provide some backup as well.)

Better yet, a breakfast that includes a good source of protein and minimizes simple carbohydrates will not produce an unhealthy spike in the blood sugar level. The level will rise slowly and remain within a safe and normal range. The body will better regulate the release of insulin so that it does not lead to an unhealthy drop requiring an adrenal response. Then, even if we do eat sweets later in the day, our bodies will be better able to manage the hormonal responses that regulate blood sugar levels and will not be as prone to over-releasing insulin.

Good protein sources to consider for breakfast include nuts and seeds (which can be carried to work or school for those who prefer a later breakfast), peanut butter, yogurt (which is lower than most dairy products in galactose), eggs, and meats. These can be consumed to good effect in combination with complex carbohydrates such as whole grain breads and cereals. Although our American culture conditions us to think of certain foods as breakfast foods and others as anything but breakfast foods, there is nothing inherently wrong with having beans or fish for breakfast – as is common practice in some cultures – and these also offer good sources of protein.

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The Face of Drought

A Report from Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

What happened to Indian summer? Where are the warm, endless afternoons with sunlight the color of clover honey, and those cold, sweet mornings so crisp and full of snap that breathing is like taking a bite out of a red-ripe Jonathan apple?

September should be as bright and shiny as a new penny winking up through the clear water of a three-wishes fountain, not dull and drab as a dirty nickel hiding in the lint-filled back pocket of a pair of ratty old jeans. Curses on Mother Nature's head!

Jack Frost began wandering the valley early in September, brushing a few areas with light frost, leaving others untouched, but it wasn't until a few nights ago that we finally experienced a 'big one'. After curling the top-most leaves of my garden pumpkins Jack went on to blacken every immature bean plant in the valley. We were lucky...except for a few acres at the center of one field our bean crop had finished out, but for many, many farmers in the panhandle he came two weeks too soon.

There was no need for the media to tell us valley beans had been damaged. The news was broadcast on the morning-after breeze. A pungent, sour green stink of death which once inhaled can never be forgotten. Of all a farm's unique collection of odors frozen beans has to be one of the worst.

There's not much to be done in a situation like this other than wait...wait until the moisture in the beans evaporates enough to cut and combine; a month, maybe two. Even then the quality will be poor, the hoped-for return reduced to barely covering production costs...maybe.

Losing a crop in its early stages is bad enough, losing one so close to harvest, after all the production costs have been incurred, is a tragic and bitter experience.

We are planting hard red winter wheat in anticipation of a 2007 short water year; seeding corn fields already cut for silage and the just-combined bean fields as fast as we can. Like a few years ago Dale is baling bean straw for winter feed. Our alfalfa yields, hurt this summer by heat and the lack of adequate irrigation water and timely rains, were poor. If we don't make use of every possible bit of forage we're bound to run short of feed come winter. We are torn between praying for rain to bring up the wheat and hoping for sunshine to dry out the beans. I guess we'll leave it in God's hands...what other choice do we have?

It is birthday week here on the farm. On Wednesday my mother turned eighty and our oldest son thirty three. On Friday his wife will also turn thirty three, and their little girl, Katelyn, three. It seems strange to have a kid over thirty. Inside I don't feel any older than the day he was born, even though the passing years have written their names in the crinkles and creases that line my face.

I seldom worry about wrinkles, or age spots, or grey hair, life's too short to be troubled by unavoidable and inevitable trivialities. Besides, wasting time, energy and money fighting a losing battle just isn't my style.

Like my mother, whose answer to the question "How old are you?" has always been "Today I'm as young as I'm ever going to be." I deal with life as it comes...it's the only sure-fire recipe for happiness I know.

So to all who are celebrating a birthday this week...enjoy. Becoming a year older certainly beats the alternative.

It was Tuesday morning and I was standing in line at the Scotts Bluff county court house patiently waiting my turn behind various other singles and couples renewing license plates or changing titles. The clerks were busy that morning and I expected to be there a while, but after just a few moments of waiting a pretty young girl behind the counter smiled and said, "I can help you here." I sidled past the other customers to her workstation and explained my problem. My car's front license plate had jumped ship and I needed a replacement. "I'm sorry," she replied, "We can't make just one plate. You'll need to purchase two, and the number will be different from the one you have now."

I couldn't have the same number? It couldn't be true! What was I going to tell my 1992 Cadillac? For years she had worn that 21-K769 like a purple heart, a badge of honor commemorating all the mud holes, potholes, sandstorms, and blizzards she'd endured. And besides it was the only license plate number I'd ever been able to memorize: K for Karen, 7 for July, my birthday month, and 69 for the year Dale graduated high school.

I tried a little finagling. "What if I told you I lost both plates...could I get two new ones with the old number?" She hesitated..... And for a moment I thought I had a chance. But it wasn't to be. My cherished set of numbers, like the lost plate itself, was gone forever. Demoralized, I opted for an eight dollar and fifty cent set of used plates; 21-K414, or something close to it.

But there was a problem. Other than a batch of old Wal-Mart receipts, a couple of bank deposit slips, two pennies and a crumpled five dollar bill, my wallet was empty....as bare as Mother Hubbard's proverbial cupboard....and the auto registration department had a strict policy of not accepting checks drawn on an out of state bank, even one as close as Torrington Wyoming.

I glanced around while trying to decide my best course of action, at the other customers lining the counter, at the street outside the front doors, at a woman with long black hair holding a lively cell phone conversation about a 2002 pickup with someone named Butch. Should I drive to a grocery store and cash a check? How about the bank a few blocks down? Maybe I should just leave and come back another day. After all, I had left the two toddlers with my men and every minute I dawdled in town meant some chore or another wouldn't be getting done at home because of my absence. "Of all the luck" I groused to myself. "Could anything else go wrong?"

Then, like a shaft of winter sunlight shooting through a bank of snow filled clouds I heard a voice, "That's OK, I've got it covered." I turned to see a grizzled, jeans clad stranger push a twenty dollar bill down the counter in my direction.

His name was Pablo Sanchez, and last Tuesday he stepped from the pages of the bible and became my Good Samaritan.

I told him I was going to write about him, and laughingly said he'd be famous...at least in my little corner of the world. But more importantly I promised to do a good deed in his name, to multiply his act of kindness a hundredfold.

So this week I'm asking everyone who receives this message to do a kindness for someone.....in honor of Pablo Sanchez. Then tell them this story and ask them to do the same.

Go forth and multiply. By this time next week the world should be a little better place.

And it all will have started in the most unlikely of places; the auto registration counter in the Scotts Bluff county court house.



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