

Your

Country Neighbor

FREE!



October 2007



The leaves are just beginning to turn along the Missouri River bluffs, and so has the harvest just begun. Country scenes like this one help make this season one of the most scenic times of the year.



The PSC Bobcat Marching Band is back! They are pictured here in the Homecoming Parade as it passes my window on Fifth Street. Homecoming this year was graced with good weather and a good win for the home team.

Most of September was a fine month in our country neighborhood for Fall flowers and beautiful days. October is the best month for viewing Fall foliage, and with continued good weather and a little luck, the wildflowers will bloom for several weeks, and we'll have color from the ground up.



Enjoy the sights and sounds of "Old Time Autumn" in Brownville the weekend of October 13th and 14th. More details on page 5.

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Through a hole this big, you can see all the way to the goal line.



Waiting here for the AppleJack Parade. See the battle of the bands at:
www.yourcountryneighbor.com/bands.htm

Your Country Neighbor

“Your Country Neighbor” is a publication that promotes the American value of “rural living” by presenting country and small town life in photos and essays from people who live here. Their columns include stories, poems, and an occasional editorial or news release.

A notable presence is the photography. Plus there is a web site that shows off more photos, and contains archives of the recent two years of this publication. You can view it at:
www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher, Editor & Photographer: Stephen Hassler

Writers for this month

- Devon Adams
- Vicki Harger
- Merri Johnson
- Karen Ott
- Joe Smith
- Josh Whisler

Thank you!

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NEW LISTINGS!



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Auburn

Awesome older home with all the size and space you'd need. The woodwork has NOT been painted over and really gives the home a warm feel. Kitchen has had updates, and all the rooms have been painted in the last few years. Two of the upstairs bedrooms have built-in dressers in the large walk-in closets. Hardwood floors throughout. Enclosed front and back porches extend the width of the house. A small tool/garden shed right out the back door has a fully cemented fruit cellar/tornado shelter. The garage is extra long and has room for tools. Here's the place you can be close to town and still get that rural feeling without that long drive on the country roads.



63085 730 Road

Johnson

This wonderful home has been loved and cared for. The main floor features a large living room/dining room and all updated kitchen, with most of the appliances staying in the home. The 3 upstairs bedrooms all have walk-in closets, 1 bedroom has 2 closets. The main bath has a full wall of built-in linen closet right outside the door. The full unfinished basement is ready for the project room, storage or a big family room. The large garage with full blacktop drive will easily hold two vehicles with room for the toys. Enjoy the family-sized deck with built-in seating on the east side for the shady evenings.

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Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

Merri Johnson

My husband and I are building a new house, something I never imagined doing, but here we are. We're going to be living in rental quarters for a few months during construction. So, I've begun cleaning cabinets and closets, tossing the superfluous, broken and otherwise useless, and boxing the nonessentials that still have value, but can be stored until we make our final move.

So far I haven't filled a whole lot of garbage bags, partly because I've never been much of a collector or saver of the kinds of things many people hang onto. My taste is too eclectic to accumulate multiples of this and that, and I'm not fond of clutter. Besides that, we've never had a walk-up attic or unused basement space to tempt me.

I admit to feeling a twinge of lost nostalgia when I see movies or hear about people coming across their childhood mementos or family heirlooms in the attic or garage, or in the case of the upper crust, out in the boat house by the lake. I can't think of a single childhood possession I still have, except for the watch my parents gave me for eighth grade graduation. My daughter has my copies of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland*. (Note to self: steal those back when you visit her in Georgia at Thanksgiving.)

I suspect that my toys - mostly hand-me-downs from older sisters - were either demolished by my three younger siblings or were tossed out by my mother when our family moved from the farm into town just before I started junior high. The latter is likely the reality. I imagine her pragmatically adopting the attitude of a pioneer woman cramming her household goods into a Conestoga wagon - sayonara to the piano and the china cabinet!

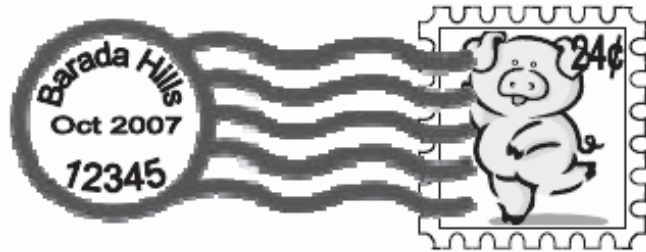
Except that in my mother's case, the piano and china cabinet made the move at the expense of the small stuff. I guess I can't blame her: imagine her task of packing up possessions for a family of eight! Of course we had a whole lot fewer possessions in those days, but still.

Perhaps that explains why I've kept some of my own children's toys, letters, books and school papers. I'm not really keeping them for the sake of my children's memories; I'm keeping them to preserve my *own* memories of my children's childhoods.

Since I've just convicted myself of saving stuff for the sake of sentimentality, I guess I'll have to cut my husband a little slack when it comes to packing the garage. I know he still has "farm stuff" in there that hasn't been used since we left the farm twenty years ago. It isn't like he's ever going to need greasy six-inch bolts that weigh two pounds each, or five used-oil buckets, or that corn knife held together with duct tape. That thing is downright dangerous.

But the recollections aroused when you come across those things are more precious than the few dollars you might get for some scrap metal, or for the extra storage space you'll have for *new*, but equally unnecessary, stuff.

Time marches on. Families move from one house to another. Styles change. Out with the old, in with the new. Embrace the future, but be careful to keep enough of the past, no matter what form that takes. Simon and Garfunkel expressed it well: "Preserve your memories; they're all that's left you."



"Potbelly Pigs and Pink Pajamas"

by Vicki Harger

They've got it all backwards, you know.

City slickers think that country folk are odd and uncouth. Downright peculiar. They watch our comings and goings with disdain—shaking their heads like bobblehead dogs.

Trust me. If we seem strange, we have good reason.

Take the other night for example. It was 2:00 am. The world was sound asleep. I was alone, trudging from the farmhouse across the barnyard toward the pig hut, carrying a newborn potbelly pig.

Well—I wasn't really carrying the piglet. The critter had crawled up my shoulder and gotten beneath my hood. There he rode, squealing horribly while trying to nurse my earlobe. I couldn't stop him, since my hands were full of a flashlight and pig paraphernalia. By the time I fumbled my way into the hog pen, I was nearly deaf from the piglet's ranting.

The sow grumbled at me from the corner of her shed, but soon quieted as I pushed the piglet up against her to nurse. She didn't lunge at me like I expected. Sows can be fiercely protective and I wasn't sure how this one would react, but I knew that for the sake of her baby, I had to try something new. I pulled out a small container and showed it to Mama. She grumbled, again, clearly questioning my sanity.

"Come now," I said reasonably. "If we can milk cows, we can milk sows."

She wasn't so sure.

"If we store up your first milk for your baby, he won't die like all your other ones-- You understand?"

She didn't.

But I was done trying to talk sense into her. I had a job to do.

The sow rumbled at me some more, at last agreeing at my insistence. A stream of milky colostrums shot from her like the stream of a water pistol, narrowly missing my eye. I soon got the knack of it, and a flow of milk began drizzling into the small bucket.

As I milked the sow, the piglet nursed away, shivering fiercely. I felt sorry for him—but barely.

"If you're cold, it's your own fault," I told him. I had fashioned him a nice little sweater out of my sock, but he wouldn't wear it. Had a fit, he did. A little piggy temper tantrum—throwing himself onto the floor with his legs extended. He screamed and shrieked for two full minutes until I finally relented and took the little sweater off of him. I'd ruined one of my best socks—for nothing.

The ungrateful porker!

And now, to keep him from freezing to death like his siblings, I had to carry him into the house every night. It was getting to be quite an ordeal. I sighed. That's what happens when piglets are born out of season.

The piglet seemed to be about finished, now, so I wrapped him up and carried him and the milk back into the house. Warily, I went to bed, but was up early to tend to the piglet.

At times, I took him to nurse from his Mama so she wouldn't forget about him, but the rest of the time I fed him milk from the bottle. My goal was to raise the fragile fellow to be a good size before turning him back over to his Mama—so she wouldn't trample him beneath her feet.

But alas—it wasn't meant to be.

The crisis occurred one evening, just before I went to my town job (where I care for an elderly lady, overnight). Putting my suitcase in the van, I was heading out the driveway, when I heard a commotion coming from the pig hut.

"The Mama stepped on the piggy!" my daughter shrieked from the doorway of the hog hut.

I stopped the mini-van and ran to the hog pen. The piglet was lying on his side, with his head cocked at a weird angle. He was still alive, but was squealing pitifully. I could tell at a glance he was in trouble.

"Take him to the house," I told my daughter. "Then get Granny to help you. You've got to put him out of his misery or something. I have to get to work right now. I'm going to be late!"

Crying and broken-hearted, my daughter carried the piglet away. I drove off down the driveway. Drat! Why did this have to happen just when I was leaving! Neither my daughter, nor her tender-hearted Granny would be able to handle this situation well. But what could I do? I had no cell phone with which to monitor the situation. I'd have to think of something else.

I was several miles down the road when it occurred to me. I knew just what to do. I'd flag down my country neighbor, Lila, who should be coming home from work any minute, now. She'd be glad to help out with the piggy crisis.

But first, I'd need a good flag.

My hand fumbled in my overnight bag, and came out with some pink pajamas. Not the best choice for a flag, but it was certainly better than a brassiere or pantyhose.

I pulled out the pajama bottoms and held them by the window, watching the approaching cars intently. Drivers and motorists peered at me just as intently as I was staring at them. Every car seemed just like my neighbor's, so I ended up flashing the pajamas at more than one startled driver. But at last my diligence paid off. I saw my friend's car coming down the road.

At the moment, we were passing through town, and there happened to be a busload of people behind me. But business is business. And I had to do what I had to do. I unfurled my pink pajamas and flapped them out the window. My friend, Lila, took notice. So did a lot of the townsfolk, and the busload of people.

Lila slowed her car and came to a halt...right outside the Quick Stop. Right there by the post office.

Everybody stared.

Tucking my pink pajamas back inside, I got out of the mini-van. No one seemed impressed with my performance, nor with the urgent nature of my request—except for my country neighbor, Lila. She was all sympathy. She'd weathered a few farm crises, herself, and had seen a few pigs die and a few kids cry. Farm folk always know just what to do.

"Don't you worry," Lila said. "I'll take care of things!"

And I knew she would. You can count on Country Folk in a pinch. They don't stand there with their eyebrows up, shaking their heads in disdain. They get things done.

Ignoring the gawking townsfolk, I bid my country neighbor goodbye and got into my mini-van. With pink pajamas back in my suitcase, I headed on down the road, leaving the city-slickers in my exhaust fumes. I looked at them in my rearview mirror, making note of their poor mental state.

Sure enough. It was happening again.

They can't help themselves, the unfortunates. Their heads were wobbling about like bobblehead dogs.

Mmm-hmm. I always knew it. City-folk are downright peculiar.

Editor's note: You can read previous articles by Vicki online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" when you go to:

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Country Scene not far from the Barada Hills; just north of Indian Cave State Park.

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What is Dowsing?

by Joe Smith

There are numerous definitions for the term dowsing. Not bothering to mention that it is actually a way of life. People who get into dowsing for other people or just for themselves learn to depend on the tools or whatever they use. Dowsing becomes a knowing, like a lie detector or a weather forecaster. They use dowsing for the stock market, trip planning, testing their cows to see which ones are bred, and even which watermelon is the best one for them. Which vitamins do they need and how many? Is this prescription safe for me? If so, how many do I take each day? There is no end to the ways dowsing is used every day.

For years, the name "water witching" was used to describe the dowsing art. People used forks of tree limbs and some still do. There was the idea that you needed a different type tree for a different need. Did it work? Yes, it did work because the fellow believed it would. The answer is not in the tools you use, it is in your mind. Don't discount anybody's ideas, because for them it works, and you can't beat success.

Dowsing has been around for centuries. There is nothing new about it. Story after story of things the experts pooh-pooh have happened and have been recorded. But really, who cares what the so-called experts think as long as I know it works, that is all I need to know.

My wife and I teach dowsing and have for a number of years. Every time we teach a class, we learn something new from the people in the classes. We don't claim to know it all.

There is always somebody that comes up with a new or even an old method that we hadn't tried. We then mark

that down in our memory book, which ain't as good as it once was.

There is a whole other phase of dowsing; dowsing detrimental energy and finding it. This is just one more way you can use dowsing. It might just save your life some day. All of these methods can be learned very easily if you just make up your mind that YES, it can work.

A dowser will go out of his way to help people, find water, lost dogs, lost cats, (which is a hard job), lost planes, people, and anything else he thinks he can. There have been some amazing things happen because of dowsing. I learned some new methods for searching for lost items from an old friend, just today, and they made good sense when I

thought about it. The American Society of Dowzers is trying to find a good definition of what dowsing is. Me, I think it is just a way of life, something you learn to depend on in your entire decision making. If you can come up with a better one, be my guest.

Dowsing can be used for healing yourself. Of course, they don't teach that in medical school. It doesn't make the doctors and the drug companies any money. My wife and I have been doing this for a long time. The power of the mind is an amazing thing. A doctor can give you a sugar pill and you get well, because you believe you will. The pill didn't do anything, but you thought it would, and that was all it took to get you well.

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The Bobcats scored on this play at home (Sept. 29th) against Bacone.



See more of the "Battle of the Bands" at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com/bands.htm



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See More of the colorful 4-corners area at
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Some varieties of sunflowers were just about bloomed out by the end of September. Others, like the one shown above, are flooding the banks and fence rows along our highways and county roads.



Yellow is not the only color along the roads. A sharp eye will find the blues, as did this little fellow.

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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
(Photo provided by Author)



Fishing:

The Missouri River looked good all last month, making it perfect for Fall fishing. The fish are hitting on just about anything you throw at them. They know that the cool weather is coming and it's time to feed up for the long Winter. Many of the fish that are caught now are pretty filled out. With the spawns over, there is nothing for them to do but feed up in preparation for next year. What are they biting on? They are hitting chubs and goldfish hard right now. Leopard frogs seem to be drawing the attention of the big ones as of late too. If you want to see the big ones on the bank or in the boat, now is the time to bait for them. 'Big Bait - Big Fish' is policy for sure. The mosquitoes are trying to get their last bites in but Fall fishing always seems to be the best for several reasons: 1) You always seem to bring fish home, 2) It's enjoyable to kick back while you're doing it too, and 3) The smell of Fall on the river is like no other. You need to get out and see what you're missing – soon enough the hunting seasons will be coming and it's "So long," river.

Hunting:

A lot of the doves moved out with the latest cool shot of weather. But if you got out the first weekend of the season they were there in droves. You could go almost anywhere to hunt them then, but they are in isolated areas now. Hunters are still having fair luck near creeks and ponds where they go to water. Season is over October 30th and limits are 15 bag and 30 possession.

The 2007 Fall Deer Season permits are still available on a "first come first serve" basis for Residents and Non-Residents. Check the Nebraska Game & Parks website:

<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/>

for permit availability or stop in at a commission office.

2007 Fall Turkey Season permits can still be bought. All permits are available online at www.outdoornebraska.org, by mail through the Lincoln office, or over the counter at any Commission Permitting office.

2007 Fall Turkey Season Dates are:

Shotgun: Oct. 14 - Nov. 10 and Nov. 20 - Dec. 31.

Archery: Oct. 1 - Nov. 10 and Nov. 20 - Dec. 31.


You can kind of pick your preference right now between "fishing" or "hunting". It's cooling off and time to get the rifles out for sighting in. Also time to sharpen up those shotgun skills for pheasant and quail seasons just around the corner, by shooting some blue rock. But all those choices are what make this time of year fun. 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 sports a thick, 8-pound flathead.
Look how wide that fish is.

Editor's note: You can read previous articles by Josh online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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NO CERTAIN PROMISE

by Devon Adams

The lawn was emerald velvet
with an applique of ruby leaves
fallen from the maple tree.
Walnuts plopped and rolled
in the lazy sunshine morning.
Indignant blue jay squawks echoed
through the quiet air as busy bodies
jumped from limb to limb to ground
to snatch the nuts and hide them.
From high in the blue, a red tail hawk
watched everything that moved,
hanging by his wings on flimsy breezes.
Suddenly, the chatter stopped and
squirrels fled for shelter.
A mulberry thicket wavered in the shadow
as crashing twigs shattered stillness.
Suddenly two bodies hurtled from cover.
A young doe jumped a fence
with a buck so close behind her
that he knocked her to her knees.
They ran across the clearing
toward the rugged creek side slope.
The chase is on again,
and autumn gives us time to savor
mellow apple cider as we contemplate
the frantic lives of animals who live
by nature's rules.
We think we're insulated from raw edges
by our technological improvements,
but that is a delusion that lasts
until the power is killed by storms,
or wind destroys our kindling forts,
or blizzards smother us with death,
or floods drown our hopes and dreams.
Those are just reminders that luxuries
aren't free, and that we're only rich
when we can hold the moment
and know it's all we have.
There is no certain promise of tomorrow
that gives us permission to waste today.

WIND SURF

by Devon Adams

I thought I was dreaming
when I heard voices
whispering outside my window.
But sleep was deep and
pulled me under.
Then the sounds
were there again,
and they were calling
me to listen.
Like surf rolling in and out
on a midnight shore,
the rhythm rocked me
until I was awake.
Through the open window,
I could see the silver sighing
of the trees that danced
beneath the moon.
They bent and swayed and
talked among themselves,
tossing in the heavy
breathing of the wind.
It wasn't long before
the prairie seashore
sounds sang me back
to dreams once more.

RED DRESS


by Devon Adams

The sumac is waiting for the frost
to bring her a brand new dress.
She's tired of green, and dreams
of bright red cloth that will shimmer
in the angled shafts of sun.
She will dance in the wind
as light falls through her leaves
and makes them glow like embers
breathing fire across the prairie.

*Editor's note: You can read previous articles by
Devon Adams online in
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The Face of Drought

A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

It's not quite five a.m.; the sky's still black as velvet and Dale's been cutting beans for a couple of hours; there's a thin fog and the fields are finally damp. We went six days without dew, the dry mornings burdened by leftover dust from the night before, but Dale, like our neighbors, cut regardless... knowing he shouldn't.... but doing it anyway.

I doubt many people fully appreciate how desperately dry it is here, how hard the ground, how dusty the air. The casual observer rarely looks past the green disguise of irrigation, but those of us making a life on the land know the real truth because we're part of the masquerade. We conceal a desert with our watered fields and blue-grass lawns, and hide the land's real face behind a veil woven of reservoirs, wells and a stubborn determination.

We're drilling winter wheat in the corn fields we chopped for silage, and once the beans are harvested we'll plant those fields to wheat also. There's no guarantee of water next year so wheat seems our best option, at least at the present. Wheat is a gamble though, our erratic springs have proven that time and again, but what other choice do we have?

Next week Dale will water the beets for the last time. Since a dry field builds sugar and a wet one tonnage farmers walk a thin line when scheduling the final irrigation. Rain works better, but since we've only received two real rains since May we're not about to wait around for something that probably won't happen.

The other day, in the few hours between cutting and combining, Dale hauled a trailer load of cows to the sale. Some were long-toed, smooth-mouthed grandmas; others were attractive young gals with the mothering instincts of a rock. We spent the summer fattening them up and they sold well... except for one small glitch.

Like a sailor tattooed with the name of every girl he ever dated...except his wife's.... one old Hereford trotted

into the sale ring wearing every brand but ours.

It wasn't that she didn't belong to us, it's just that in the ten years she roamed our pastures and fields the guys never found time to brand her. The sale barn will hold the money she brought until Dale has time to take her papers to the brand inspector's office for verification.

The 'brand papers' are a map of her life...they show who owned her before she got to us. They're all we need to prove she's ours...even without our lazy J backward 7.

And now for the henhouse news.

On Monday I moved the rooster and the five young females saved from this summer's chopping block from the brooder house to the hen house. As always it was a traumatic experience for all involved. The old red hens didn't take kindly to the male intruder, and thought even less of the young pullets. On the other hand the rooster took one look at those old gals' sunburned, featherless rears and sagging combs and took off like a shot with his youthful harem trailing close behind. The two groups spent the afternoon warily eyeing each other, and working out a new pecking order.

Just after dark I peeked inside the house to make sure the young rooster and his girls had settled in, and, as I had expected, the conceited old hens had segregated themselves at the far end of the roost.... except for one brazen hussy which had shamelessly pushed aside the new hens and snuggled up next to the rooster.

Even a chicken knows it's good to have a man around the house.

Karen

Editor's note: You can read previous articles by Karen Ott online in Your Country Neighbor archives; just click on "publications" at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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