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Country Neighbor



October 2005

YOUR WINDOW WITH A COUNTRY VIEW



Auburn Middle School Band in the Applejack Parade Competition

New YCN Staff Member!

Your Country Neighbor is pleased to welcome Teresa Breazile as our Advertising Representative. Teresa's dedication to her community and knowledge of her profession make her a welcome addition to our country neighborhood.



Teresa Breazile

I have lived in Southeast Nebraska my entire life. I grew up at Indian Cave State Park with my parents, Larry and Connie Cook, a brother and an identical twin sister. My father was the Park Superintendent there for over 30 years. I graduated high school from Southeast Consolidated in Stella. I majored in art/marketing Peru State College. I have spent the last five years in the advertising field. I am excited about the opportunity to work for *Your Country Neighbor* and I am looking forward to working with the local business owners once again. I enjoy being involved in the community and volunteering to help out with projects when I am needed.

My husband, Jerry and I live in Auburn. I have two children, Trent Grooms who is a senior at Auburn High School, and Charlotte Grooms who is an eighth grader at Auburn Middle School. I also have two step daughters, Melissa Ensz and Nicole Breazile.

Your Country Neighbor is a wonderful monthly publication and is a great opportunity for your business to reach thousands of potential customers. *Your Country Neighbor* is a free magazine which is available all month long at several great locations in most Southeast Nebraska communities as well as Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. Please feel free to contact me with your advertising needs.

I would like to thank the businesses who have supported me so far in this new endeavor. I greatly appreciate your business.

A Monthly Magazine

Here's what October's about	2
Window on Fifth Street	3
Frieda's "Lulu's Dragon"	4 & 5
It's all happening on Main Street in Brownville!	6 & 7
Country Scenes	8
Service Directory	9
<i>Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report</i>	10
Merri's Diary	11
Poetry & Winners of Short Story Writing	12, 13 & 14
Karen's <i>The Face of Drought</i>	15
Joe's "The First Dowser"	16



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October is about...

This month is usually covered with red, yellow, copper, and orange colored leaves. October is Red Maples in Hiawatha, the Fall Foliage Tour in Southeast Nebraska, festivals in Brownville and Peru, and Homecoming at Peru State College.

Here in Nebraska I've seen flowers blooming in late October, but I'll never forget the heavy snow in 1996, the first year I moved back to Nebraska! I thought, "All right! I'm home!" And not one winter since then has been particularly harsh, although 2004 - 2005 was respectable.

Josh is hunting and fishing, Roger's garden is still growing, and produce will be available until frost, Devon is poetry prolific, and Frieda remembers another time, circa World War II. Joe offered more than two articles, but I only had room for one this month. Stay tuned. And both Karen and Merri have something to say about Fall and change.

Your Country Neighbor is pleased to bring you life in the country by those who live it. And in case any of the pictures or towns are unknown to you, be advised that everything is within easy driving distance, except Karen, but her words are all around us.

Have a great October, and go ahead and dress up for Halloween!



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Your

COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Editor and Publisher: Stephen Hassler
Advertising Sales and Design: Teresa Breazile

The following people helped
make this issue possible:

Devon Adams
Frieda Burston
Merri Johnson
Lila Meyerkorth
Karen Ott
Joe Smith
Josh Whisler
Ann Yates
Students at S.E. Consolidated

Thank you!

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In Kansas: Corning, Fairview, Goff, Hiawatha, Horton, Morrill, Oneida, Sabetha, Seneca, and Wetmore.



Window on Fifth Street

Well, I could not have asked for a better September. Warm, sunny weather and pleasant, cool nights. And I'm especially grateful considering the hardship of many people from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. There are many advantages of living farther up the river.

Of course, I have repeated many times that the mission of this little publication is to remind anyone who lives in a small town or on the farm of those subtle aspects of this good and wonderful life-style. And I am appreciating the seasons more each year as a mystical fabric patterned with country scenes.

My enjoyment of this time of year isn't just the out-of-doors. Darla and I are glad to have the new TV programming, with our old favorites and the new selection of dramas and sitcoms.

As you read this issue, I am taking photographs of Fall foliage and migrating birds. I'll try to get them on the website so that you can enjoy them in color. I'm expecting to photograph more color now that Northeast Kansas and their Red Maple trees are in my photo and delivery area.

I'm remembering that the Cardinals right here in my yard don't migrate, and benefit from the black sunflower seed in their feeder. They really appreciate my help when snow covers the wild seeds. But selfishly speaking, I just enjoy having them as friends close by.

September was satisfying, but October can be one of the best months of the year if the rain and wind don't cause the trees to lose their leaves too soon. Maybe I'm getting spoiled, but being spoiled is another benefit of living up here where the crick starts, and having a window on Fifth Street.



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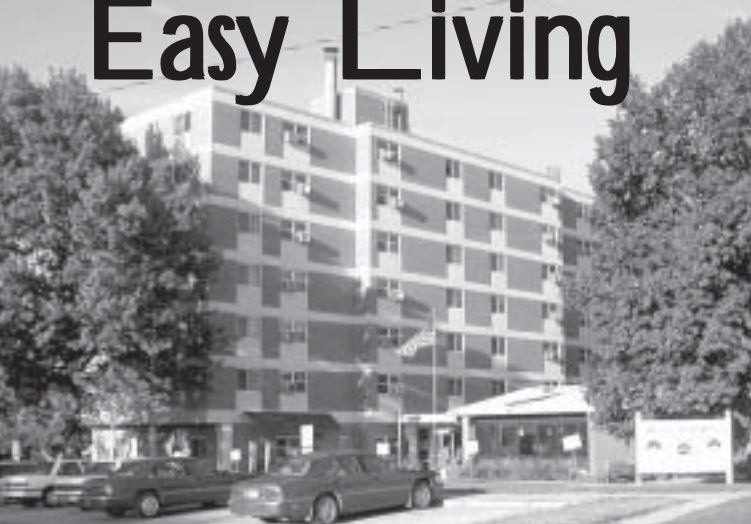
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him. She brought up a special salad dressing she wanted him to try. She wept at the thought of the danger he was going into. She acted like his mother, and he acted like a substitute son. They were best friends. Since he was there only two days, living quietly was no strain on him. He found it very restful, after all the farewell parties he had been to in the past week..

Just before he left, he unzipped his suitcase and gave us his Christmas gift—a big bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey.

We stared at him. “What on earth are we supposed to do with that?” I asked. “You know that we live under the Dragon’s eye. And you know how serious she is about not having loud parties, or entertaining when Lulu should be asleep, and all that kind of stuff. Whiskey? In Altus? Come on! Give it to someone who can use it— we sure can’t!”

“Too late,” he said. “I can’t take it back, and I can’t take it on with me— if you can’t use it, give it to someone who can. It’s a collector’s item— you just can’t get this stuff anymore. It was for the Colonel, but a friend of mine snagged it first—”

And he left.

We looked around for a place to hide it, and finally put it under the gingham ruffles around the sink, with the bottle of bleach in front of it and a big box of laundry soap flakes at the side. We couldn’t think of anyone to give it to, without news of it getting back to the Dragon. We were stuck with it.

Come January, the fruitcake still lay forgotten on the lower shelf, the whiskey still stood under the sink. One dreary day an interesting thought came to me on how to get rid of the whiskey. When I saw the Dragon go shopping, I took out the fruitcake and filled its center with Jack Daniels.

Lulu watched with interest. I was happy that she couldn’t talk clearly yet. I waited until her head was turned, then quickly put the whiskey back under the sink. Then I put the fruit cake away.

When the 3 weeks were over, there was still some whiskey left. I filled the center for a few more days until the bottle was empty, then soaked off the label while Lulu slept. I filled it with water, added cake coloring, and put in a piece of ivy broken off a pot of ivy I kept over the sink. It made a nice vase, and the Dragon noticed it when next she came.

“What’s that?” she asked, and Lulu waved her hands around and said, “Yike f’ower.”

The Dragon wanted to know what Lulu said. I told her “ ‘Like flower’— she means that the ivy looks like a flower.”

Maybe she did, but more likely Lulu meant that we poured the whiskey on the cake just like we poured water from a glass onto the ivy . I had no intention of explaining that—

But Lulu pointed toward the cake, and the Dragon looked at it. “Oh, yes!” she said. “I see what she means. The fruit is in a design. It looks just like a flower. How pretty. You don’t mind if I take it to show the ladies at the meeting today, do you? Some of them make fruitcake too. There’s something different about this cake, I think they’d be very interested in it—”

What could I say? She promised not to let any of the ladies cut into the cake, and off she went with it.

The meeting was at her house, and after about an hour I began to notice a difference in the noise output. The voices were becoming louder, there was a lot more laughing, and a lot of moving around. It sounded more like a party of Captain Harry’s than like the sedate meetings of the stately older ladies who usually came.

The Dragon dropped by with an empty plate just before supper, to apologize. Her face was red and she lurched a little, coming up the steps. “I’m terribly sorry,” she said, “I told the ladies it was just for looking at, that you had made it, and I had wanted to show them the pretty flower design in the center. I don’t know who starting taking just a crumb, but before I could get it away from them, it was half gone, and then, you know, there was no point in trying to keep the rest..... it was delicious, I must say. I do so want that recipe—”

Was that the end of the story? Well, no.

I didn’t see the Dragon for some days. When I did see her, she didn’t come upstairs, she talked to me from the back yard. She didn’t want to come up and take a chance on giving Lulu the bug she had.

Seems like someone at the meeting must have had an infection and come anyhow, because that night all the ladies were dreadfully sick— headaches, nausea, really awful symptoms. The next day or two, some of them were still feeling bad. She didn’t feel so good herself, still. How irresponsible some people could be! It never failed to astonish her, that people would go out even knowing they might spread infection..

Abe’s transfer came through before she had recovered enough to come up and cry over Lulu’s leaving. I let Lulu hug her goodbye anyhow, I was sure Lulu wouldn’t get what the Dragon had suffered from....

We left the gingham ruffles and the rolling screen for someone else to enjoy, and painted the walls white to freshen it up for the next people with a quiet baby.

And me, I gave the Dragon the new ivy plant in the Jack Daniels bottle, to remember us by....

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Saturday October 8 • Sunday October 9

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Country Scenes



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Auburn Middleschool, always a good sound. Marching in the Applejack Parade Band Competition.



Union Line.



The Syracuse High School Marching Band, high stepping with pride, made a fine hometown impression at Syracuse's Annual Germanfest.



The Auburn High School Marching Band made a spectacular appearance in the Germanfest parade, Saturday, September 24.



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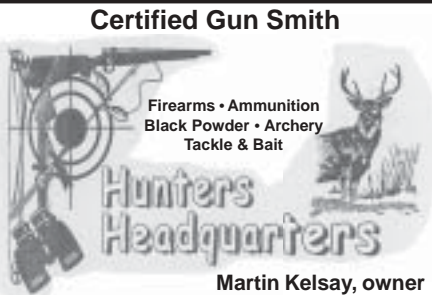
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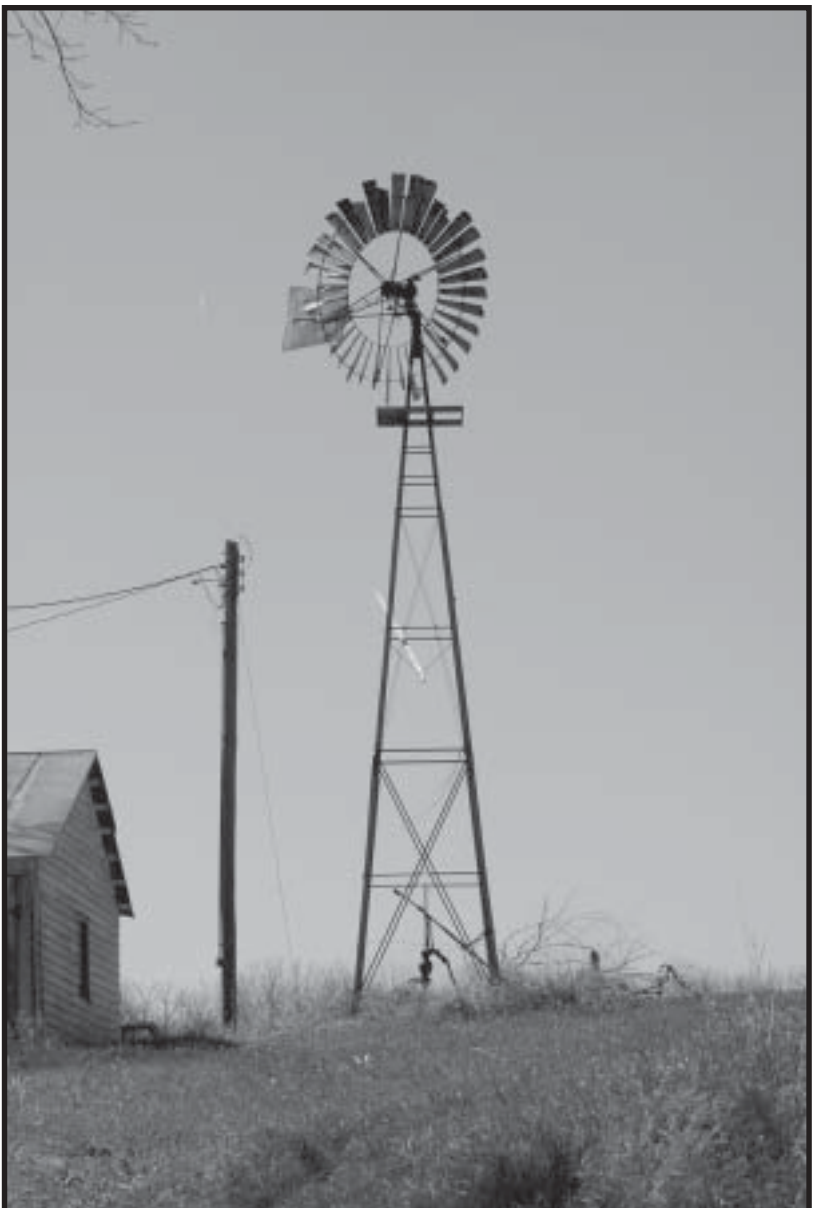
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Table Rock has a new museum. The military display is particularly impressive.



Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
Photos Provided by Author



Fishing:

The Missouri River presented some excellent opportunities last month. The big ones are hitting if you can land them, many going over 30 pounds. Blues and Flatheads mostly but you can't ignore the pan-size channels that are hitting now. As always with the river, "Big Bait - Big Fish". But if nothing is messing with the monster bait, drop a crawler or a grasshopper in and you're in business with the channels. This time of year it is when the fish are in a feeding frenzy. The spawn is over and it's time to feed up for the winter. The sunrises and sunsets on the river are gorgeous this time of year. It's hard to concentrate on the pole when the view is so overwhelming. You have to try it for yourself - words don't give justice to the real thing.

With the cooler days just starting, it's time to hit ponds and lakes for fall crappie action. I remember as a boy, my brothers and I would hit ponds in the fall and slay the slabbers. I know that I'm going to rig up and try my luck soon. It always seems that you catch the bigger crappie in the fall also. And the appeal of twofers is even more inviting. Hope to get into them. I'll let you know how it pans out.

This month's pictures are of Brian and Dave McConnaughey shown with a string of Flatheads and a Monster Blue.



And Dave McConnaughey shows his 45 pound Flathead taken Labor Day Weekend.



Hunting:

Season after season are opening bring all kinds of hunting opportunities. Dove season opened September 1st and unlike normal Nebraska dove seasons the weather behaved and the birds stayed around, giving hunters a bounty of birds to shoot at. Notice I said "to shoot at". Man, they are hard to hit! I managed to get limit one day but I had to work at it, well over a box of shells and lost three birds in the grass. No matter how hard they seem to be hit, they tuck into the grass & weeds when they hit the ground. They are almost impossible to find without a dog. And most dogs don't care for doves because of all the fluffy down feathers that end up in their mouth after retrieval. If you have ever hunted them you know what I'm talking about "They poof when you hit them". Sorry to say I didn't have a dog and I paid for it. It's a little aggravating; it probably bothers me more than most because I have every intention of eating what I harvest. I'm a little more on the hunter side than the sportsman. Kill what I eat and eat what I kill. Dove limits this year are 15 - bag (in the bucket) and 30 - possession (in the freezer).

Upcoming Hunting Seasons:

Cock Pheasant	Oct. 29 - Jan. 31
Youth Cock Pheasant, Quail and Partridge Seasons	Oct. 22 - Oct. 23
Quail	Oct. 29 - Jan. 31
Grouse - East Zone	Sept. 17 - Dec. 31
Grouse - West Zone	Sept. 17 - Dec. 31
Partridge	Oct. 29 - Jan. 31
Rail	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9
Snipe	Sept. 1 - Dec. 16
Woodcock	Sept. 24 - Nov. 7
Dove	Sept. 1 - Oct. 30
Squirrel	Aug. 1 - Jan. 31
Cottontail	Sept. 1 - Feb. 28
Jackrabbit	Sept. 1 - Feb. 28
Archery Deer (Statewide)	Sept. 15 - Nov. 11 & Nov. 21 - Dec. 31
Firearm Deer (Blue Southeast)	Nov. 12 - Nov. 20
Fall Turkey (Archery & Shotgun)	Oct. 15 - Nov. 11 & Nov. 21 - Nov. 30
Duck (Low Plains Late)	Oct. 15-16 & Oct. 22 - Jan. 1
Duck - Teal Season (Statewide)	Sept. 10 - 18
Dark Goose (East Unit)	Oct. 1 - 2 & Oct. 22 - Jan. 22
White Front Goose (Statewide)	Oct. 1 - Dec. 11
Light Goose (Statewide)	Oct. 1 - Jan. 13

Several hunting seasons have opened and others will open soon. You can soon take your pick. And river fishing action is still coming on so get out, if for nothing else, to relax and soak up the scenery. You really need to give it a try - you won't be sorry. Remember I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time, "Happy Hunting & Fishing."

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Recipe of the Month

Salami (Using Venison)

by Ann Yates

The hunting season will soon be upon us. I happened onto some variable ways to make Salami, sausage or bologna from venison. It's all really the same, it's just variations in your seasonings that make the difference.

Basic ingredients (you may have noticed by now that my recipes are not an exact science so feel free to improvise):

- 10 lbs. Deer meat ground to a medium grind (Any meat will actually work)
- 1 1/4 c. real butter, cubed into about 1/4 in cubes (this adds moistness and eliminates the need for fat from another animal)
- 5 T salt
- 1 cup red wine (this is the curing agent that will make your salami solid enough to slice)
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. worchestershire sauce or soy sauce
- 3 full heads garlic, minced
- 2 T. ground sage*
- Black pepper – fresh ground works best – I use a lot of this, about 2 T.
- 2 T. paprika
- 1 T. Oregano*
- 3 t. dry mustard
- 3 t. thyme*
- 1 t. ground cloves*

*The spices can be varied to achieve different products (Sage and red pepper for sausage; leave out the sage, thyme and cloves and increase the paprika for bologna).

Mix all ingredients well. Now you can stuff it into commercial casings, OR Last year I did not have casings so I used cheesecloth. It worked so well that I am just going to use that from now on. Take several layers of cheesecloth and lay out to about 2 1/2 feet long by the width of the cheesecloth. Place the meat down the center and wrap the cheesecloth tightly around the meat, forming a large tube about the diameter of bologna. You can make these tubes smaller according to the end product you would like to achieve. Secure the edges by rolling and basting with needle and thread. With twine tie off the ends, then tie tightly at intervals of about 6 inches to pack the meat tighter (it will shrink upon curing). Leave extra twine at the ends. Now hang your package underneath a shelf in your refrigerator using the twine left at the ends. Leave it hang about two months. When done, unwrap and slice. It should have a slight rind around the outside, and be fairly solid for slicing thin.

The wine makes it solid, so if you want a crumbly sausage, omit the wine and curing. Just mix and freeze into portions for frying.

Happy Hunting!

As always, **have fun and enjoy with loved ones.**

The *Honey Creek Vineyards Bakery* hours are presently 8 am to 1 pm Monday through Friday. During the month of October we are an 'art stop' for the fall foliage tour. We will be open for rolls and lunch on Saturdays from 10 to 4, and on Sunday from noon to 4. We will have open house with free treats and refreshments. Also, beginning the first week of October we will have Mexican food on Thursdays and hand tossed pizza on Fridays. We will soon begin daily specials in addition to the usual soup, salad and sandwich menu. Bakery goods can be ordered anytime by calling (402) 872-4865. Fresh bread will always be on the shelves for take-home. Come in and see us at 1705 Park Ave., Peru, Nebraska (just North of Neal Park, across the street from the water tower).

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

by Merri Johnson

I'm a Libra, astrologically speaking, which means October is my birth month. Autumn has always been my favorite season, and I've often wondered if people naturally tend to prefer the season of their birth. I tried to do a little research on this topic on-line, but the information on all the sites I visited was way over my head, literally. Who knew your Zodiac sign had so many implications for your health, career, personality, and love life, not to mention birth stones! But none of what I read mentioned a connection between birth month and seasonal preferences.

My theory is supported by my husband's preference, however. He was born in July and he definitely likes hot weather. His idea of the perfect temperature is one that allows him to wear shorts and a T-shirt 24 hours a day. Of course that means you have to have relatively high humidity to maintain warm air temperatures overnight. Good for growing corn, but lousy for sleeping or just about anything else, in my opinion.

But my theory on the Zodiac connection to seasonal preference falls apart when you consider that our children were born in December and January and neither one of them is too wild about Winter, except that they both like sweaters. I'm pretty sure that has more to do with fashion and staying warm than with a subconscious affinity for the season of their births.

But back to my preference for Fall. It isn't just the cooler weather and colorful foliage I like. I'm equally inspired by crisp days when bright leaves crackle under your feet as by those softer days when piles of damp, faded leaves hush the atmosphere like new snowfall.

Astrology aside, for me there is an emotional component to the seasons. Just under the surface of the invigorating air of Fall lies the melancholy of the dying time. This, too, appeals to me. I've always had a bit of a pensive side, and Fall brings that out. I used to have a large vegetable garden and as the tomato vines shriveled and the sweet corn stalks turned brown, I'd find myself pondering the passage of time and the brevity of life. Each new empty spot in the garden was like a hole in my heart.

I don't have much of a vegetable garden now, but the season still has the same effect on me. My thoughts turn to Ecclesiastes 3: 1 and 11. "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven...He has made everything beautiful in its time." Sometimes, when you find yourself in a season where everything seems to be dying and failing, you're blessed with a discovery of something new. The volunteer vines that took root behind the shed from last Fall's discarded front porch display produced over two dozen new gourds this year. I plucked them eagerly (perhaps a bit prematurely) and spread them on the porch floor. Every time I see them I'm reminded that decay leads to new life, and I'm glad for the changing season, no matter what it brings.

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Poetry, etc.

THIS OLD HOUSE

by Devon Adams

The village tucks among the folded hills
with steep slopes that make level towns look boring.
City planners could have followed slanted paths that deer prefer
for laying out the streets, but men can't sleep at night
unless their lines are straight, and now
the winters can be scary on those perfect icy streets.
Houses here are old and wrinkled from the years
of wear and tear from families come and gone.
Lonesome lots are missing buildings lost to fire
or other causes such as terminal decay.
Big trees remain from years ago, unless
they blew down or died from bugs or lightning.
Sadness wraps around the bare homes exposed
to the sun that bakes and peels their paint.
Downtown shrinks each year,
but this place is wrapped in natural beauty
and the love of families going back for generations
on the farms and ranches all around. Gravel roads reach fingers
into acres on the hills and bottom lands
that surround the quaint and clustered homes.
Bright wheat straw is gleaming on a golden
summer afternoon across the road from timbered
pasture on bluffs so steep that cattle stumble.
At a lazy intersection is a tiny cemetery
facing west into the fading light of August.
Some stones are thin and old and hard to read.
They tilt and lean like weathered people close to death.
New shiny markers bring the sleeping congregation
up to date, with recent passings noted
in fresh carved words and numbers
that remember each lost life.
But the silence here is soothing and
the wind is soft in passing through the trees.
It is a lovely place to be forever.

Just down the road is a long thin track of driveway.
Here the soil is soft and sandy, a perfect place
for walking barefoot in the summer.
After several ups and downs and ruts from rain,
the tire tracks stop before a heavy gate that's locked
against invasion by those who don't belong.
But the family guardian has a key and
passes into memories of childhood years
as she walks across the farmyard grass.
A barn is set below the house and all around
are trees with arching limbs and hanging canopies of leaves
that are rainproof roofs above the dusty lots.
Its paint has faded from bright red to pink and gray,
but the barn is strong and holds new hay that's fresh
from cutting in the pastures lush with brome.
A renter keeps his horses here and farms the fields.
Behind a sagging fence around the yard,
the house is waiting patiently to die,
surrounded by huge oaks
that were so small when it was built.
Two full stories with a gable roof, it survived
a passing twister that moved it seven inches
off its limestone block foundation.
Grandad planned a scheme of leverage that moved it back in place,
but Grandma was moved by fear to leave. She lived in town
and Grandpa went to visit, but he never left the farm.
Now they lie in peace beside each other
In the quiet country cemetery on the hill.



Prairie Cemetery

Poetry, etc.

PERTINACIOUS

by Lila Meyerkorth

Is there anything more delectable than living in the country and enjoying the Autumn beauty of the countryside while reading the untrammled, *YOUR COUNTRY NEIGHBOR*?

Pertinacity is commendable.

While roaming the virescent earth, watching the animals forage with such freedom under the enchanting azure sky, reveries are created, the very opposite of dealing with intricacies. We study the conifer while the resonant creek makes music irresistible. We become entranced and dreamlike. There is no portentous evil among
This unfettered sanctuary.

We keep moving, and this powerful work of art is textured with outcroppings of hallowed, crystalline, and fragile scenarios. Still others are ravaged and patternless,
Pulverized with imperceptible grandeur.

Even when the capricious steal upon us, deftly obfuscating the more vivacious photography, leaving only a vestigial image, we are stupefied with alacrity at this enigmatic delirium. We are overwhelmingly consumed with the excellencies of a high and noble Creator of all time
And eternity!

JUST YESTERDAY

by Devon Adams

I came upon today as though it were a foreign planet.

Can this be the same location with the same sun shining?

The light has changed and all the fingers of the wind
play different songs among the trees.

The shadows swiftly move from dawn to dusk
and time weighs nothing.

Yesterday was slow and heavy, a wagon full
of worry that mired itself in mud and tears.

Progress was impossible, or so it seemed.

We see the world through glasses tinted by emotions.

The one sure thing to know is that the hours will move
in measured steps regardless of our thoughts,
and tomorrow will leave today behind.

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More Winners of Southeast Consolidated Schools Sixth Annual Literary Contest

This month's short story winners are from the Fifth & Sixth Grades.

MY MEMORIES
by Dean Lewis (1st place)

I have written and told stories before about my dad serving in Iraq, but I want to share an experience of mine while he was gone for that year and a half. Mom and I attended a Purple Heart Ceremony in November 2004 for a fellow soldier in my dad's unit. Spc. Stineman was injured by an Improvised Explosive Device near Samarra, Iraq. This got me interested in the history of the Purple Heart Medal.

George Washington was the designer and creator of this Badge of Military Merit which it was called then. In the Revolution, money was hard to get, and the soldiers were fighting but not getting paid. Washington created two badges of honor. One award was a chevron worn on the left sleeve of their coat recognizing three years of service for bravery, fidelity, and good conduct. The second award for meritorious action was a heart in purple cloth or silk, which was worn on the left breast.

This award was for the Army, but over the years, adjustments were made to include the Navy, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard. President Kennedy added the award to civilians who participated in the armed forces. President Reagan let those wounded in an international terrorist attack get one also.

Master Sgt. Linda Tarango-Griess and Ssg. Jeremy Fischer were killed in this same roadside bombing in which Spc. Stineman was injured. Dad worked with these three soldiers each day. Mom and I were friends to all of these soldiers too. Linda was especially dear to us as she was my pen pal. It was a hard time to go through when that bomb went off in July 2004.

These three soldiers in Dad's unit received a Purple Heart. My pen pal, Linda's family, received a Purple Heart, and Jeremy's family also received one because they had been killed. Spc. Stineman received his medal after his injuries were healed at a ceremony at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln, Nebraska on November 6, 2004. Mom and I witnessed this award being given. This was a heartfelt ceremony to attend, and again the tears came with all the memories that we experienced. I feel honored and proud to be one of the military family members of the soldiers of the 267 Ordnance Company, my dad's unit, to see this award being presented. We shed many tears over those lost, but we were glad that my dad was safe.

OLD MAN PRITCHARD
by Victoria William (2nd place)

Whack!! "Fly Ball," Jamie called. It went over the fence into Old Man Pritchard's yard. "Great now we don't get to play baseball anymore!" Kyle said. "We will go," Jamie, Tosha, and I said. "We will sneak in his yard tonight at 8:00. That way he won't see us." Ding, dong, ding, dong. The clock struck 8:00 and we left the house. We were talking about Old Man Pritchard and Tosha said that he steals little kids and feeds them to his pets. That made us worry. Finally we reached his house and we walked very quietly into his yard. But Jamie accidentally stepped on a branch and it made a loud snapping noise. The front porch light turned on and we ran as fast as we could to the gate but the lock wouldn't open. All of a sudden we heard footsteps and Old Man Pritchard was standing right behind us and he took us inside the house and he asked if we wanted our ball back and he gave it to us. Then he went in the kitchen and brought back a piece of candy for us. He said we may go home, and that we might want to hurry up because it is getting late. We walked outside and then ran home. "What flavor of jolly rancher did you get, Tori?" Jamie asked. "I got wild raspberry." "Tosha what flavor did you get?" "I got green apple." "I got cherry," said Jamie. The next day we played baseball and I told my friends about Old Man Pritchard. They said that they wanted to meet him. I said they probably would.

VACATION TO COLORADO

by Peyton Kuker (3rd place)

Last summer we went on a vacation to Colorado. We visited Estes Park, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Limon Colorado. We rented a Jeep Grand Cherokee to take on our trip. It took about 9 hours to get to Estes Park. We had a motel across from a big lake and it was very pretty. I liked Estes Park the best. We went downtown to all the shops and bought some souvenirs. We drove through Rocky Mountain National Park. We saw several elk, mountain sheep, and a lot of ground squirrels. We went to a park and jumped on a bungee trampoline, drove go-carts and went down some big slides.

A few days later, we moved on to Denver and went to a huge water park called Water World. We rode a lot of big water slides and some other rides in huge tubes. We had a blast at the water park. Next, we moved on to Colorado Springs. We visited Cave of the Winds and Garden of the Gods. We also went to the top of Pikes Peak and it was cold on top. We also stayed in a motel that had an indoor/outdoor pool with a big indoor waterslide. We spent one whole day playing on the waterslides.

After begging my mom the whole trip, I finally got to call my aunt Cheryl, who lives in Limon, and we decided to meet for a visit. She gave us directions to her house and we drove to see her and my cousin Brady. It was a long, boring ride to Limon. We even traveled through a small town named Peyton. I had my picture taken at the city limits sign. We stayed at my aunt Cheryl's and visited for the afternoon before heading back toward Nebraska. We made it as far as North Platte before we decided to get a motel and start driving again the next day. I really enjoyed seeing the mountains, but the next time I visit them, I would like to go skiing.

THE VENTURE

by Cameron Milke (1st place, sixth grade)

One December day in 1873, I wanted some hounds. My name is Scott, I was twelve years old. We lived in Stella on the Nebraska plains. I started to try to earn some money for my dogs. I had two jobs picking up glass bottles and cleaning elders' yards. So three months went by and I had two hundred eighty three dollars. Pa wanted a new wagon so I was afraid he wouldn't let me go to the town to get my dogs. My grandmother thought I was crazy after I told her about it but she said she wouldn't say anything. So the journey began.

The next morning at about three forty in the morning, I woke up and headed to town. I was ready for the twenty one mile journey I was about to take. After three hours I decided to take a break and try to get some food. I looked for berries, mushrooms and animals since I had my gun with me. But I had no luck. Then all of a sudden I saw an Indian boy come running out of the bushes and behind him came a male mountain lion. Next thing I knew, the boy tried to go across the river down below. So I shot the mountain lion right before it went in after the boy. Then all I saw was a glimpse of the boy and he was gone. That night I just stayed there wondering if the boy would come back.

So I pitched camp and made a fire. The next morning I woke up and was scared to death because there was a heart lying beside my head. After the wits got scared out of me, I got dressed and set off again. I finally got to a railroad station to get some food and some water. After I left, I decided I was half way there. Not too long after that, I came upon an Indian tribe and, come to find out, a not too pleasant one. All of a sudden I felt a burn in the back of my arm and my leg. I thought I was done for until the young boy picked me up and we ran to a so called club. Then, come to find out, he could speak English. His name was Jack. Jack's father was a military sergeant. and supposedly died in a war. So he was raised in the village.

I thought I should tell him what I was doing here. He said he would lead me through a short cut to the town. So we started off. We came across many animals and even killed a bison. Then, on the fourth day, we finally reached the town. I looked and looked. Finally, after almost giving up, I found the elder's house with two beagles. One was a rosy color and the other was black, brown and white. We went in and she said she wanted three hundred dollars for both dogs. But since we had come all that way she said she would take what we had. So we started home. Then we saw the tribe. I felt my dogs knew something was wrong.

So we decided to go around. All of a sudden, I swear, I heard an Indian. The next thing I knew, Jack had disappeared. I decided he was probably at the tribe by now. So I decided to go to the tribe and try to get him back even if it killed me. On my way to the tribe, I saw a bluff. So I took my gun out and hid behind some brush. Below was a fire and Jack was tied to a tree. I decided to wait and see what would happen to him. Nothing happened so I went down and got Jack. On the way out, the Chief tried to kill me for trespassing and stealing their sacrifice. So I just walked away. Then the last thing I knew I was knocked over and Jack had my gun. The Chief had shot me in the chest with a bow and arrow.

The next thing I heard was a rifle shot. Jack shot the Chief right between the eyes and he dropped dead. My dogs went over and sniffed the chief. The arrow didn't hurt any arteries so I was fine. Finally, after many mosquitoes and no food, we reached the outskirts of my town. My dogs were still following. We finally reached the house. Ma and Pa were asleep so we just slept on the porch. The next morning I woke up and practically everyone in my family was staring at me. I explained everything, even about Jack, and asked if he could stay with us. They said yes. We named my dogs Lightning and Rosy. Over the years we became great hunters. I loved the Midwest.

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A Nebraska Farm Report from the Western Plains

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott
September, 2005

I heard a meadowlark today, his honeyed spring song sounding out of place in mid-September. What holds him here when his family and friends have been gone for weeks? He must know it's time to leave.... time to fly.....time to follow, but still he lingers, nobly guarding spring and summer's memory against autumn's invasion. He's a brave soul, or a foolish one and his cause, however gallant, is futile. His time has come and gone, and he must move on before winter catches him up in its icy grasp.

Despite the meadowlark's solitary diligence Wednesday was our first day of fall; the cool air held just the right amount of bite, the sky was just the right shade of blue. In the afternoon Mother Nature built a mile-high thunderstorm from passing clouds, then kindly blew it southeast, far beyond our downed alfalfa and just-cut beans. We watched it fade into the distance with a sigh of relief; there would be no hail or rain to spoil the perfect day. Harvest could continue uninterrupted.

She hadn't been quite as polite Monday afternoon. A small, self-centered thunderstorm dumped buckets of rain in Morrill, three tenths in about three minutes. But the storm was short and to the point; it ended as quickly as it had begun with nothing left to show for its short burst of intensity but a few puddles, and a misty-colored rainbow which wreathed the sky above the roof tops of our small town like an angel's halo.

Fall thunderstorms have nasty reputations. I've seen these prairie giants batter beans from their pods, shell corn from their cobs and beat every leaf from beets until only the pale, bare crowns remain, leaving the entire field looking as if someone had recently planted a crop of tiny bald men.

Coming as they do at the end of the growing season the storms inflict damage which can't be mitigated by time or farmer intervention. The crop is injured to the point of no return and a year's worth of planning, money and work is down the drain. So far the valley has been spared, and we're praying our luck lasts.

It doesn't take a calendar to tell our wise old cottonwoods Fall is here. They quietly began dropping leaves a week ago, shaking a few at a time from the canopy and scattering them across the lawn and gardens below. Had the still-green leaves been able to hold on a few weeks longer they most certainly would have ended their days in an explosive glory of gold, but they let go of life too soon, and instead of a bright burnished yellow their vibrant green will fade to a sad buff-tan; an unremarkable and ordinary color more suited to Winter than Autumn. A shower of golden leaves gladdens the heart; a pitiful premature sprinkling of green ones just looks untidy and causes me to grumble over the ever-increasing mess.

Then of course there are the Fall spiders. Big ones, little ones, long skinny black ones and fat round ones the color of French mustard. They're everywhere. Spinning extraordinarily intricate webs of gossamer silk they are the ultimate seamstresses of autumn.

One of the fat French spiders attached her web between a climbing honey-suckle and a painted hosta growing beside my front steps. For two weeks I threatened to take the kitchen broom and brush her away, but for some reason or another couldn't bring myself to do it. So there she sits, like a tiny yellow vulture, waiting for the death struggles of some unfortunate fly to alert her to her next meal.

She had quite a shock yesterday, when instead of a juicy insect one of the dogs tossed a sandbur into the center of her web. She was on the prickly thing like a shot, her thumbnail-size body dancing along the taunt threads with an ease belying her ungainly size. She immediately began to spin out strands of sticky webbing to wrap her prize, but after 40 seconds or so stopped in disgust and scurried off on skinny legs to the edge of her web where she sat and brooded all afternoon.

The next day the sandbur was gone.

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The men are deep into harvest. Today, in an unusual silage-chopper breakdown, a piece of metal augur broke away from the shaft, made its way up through the spout and landed on the pile of silage in Dale's truck. It caused no collateral damage on its travels: no holes in the metal casing, no tears in the spout, no broken bolts, but chopping is on hold until the Morrill blacksmith can weld everything back together. My men know how to weld, but this is a heavy-duty job requiring more expertise than they can muster. They've wisely chosen to rely on Watson welding to do the job right. They were a bit cranky about the delay but breakdowns are as much a part of harvest as poor prices, mature crops and tired farmers.

Although beet harvest is a month away panhandle farmers are growing anxious over the increasing number of truckers who have decided to sit this harvest out because of high fuel prices. It looks as if there won't be adequate hauling capacity in the valley and it has become a real concern to those of us who are already overstressed by plunging corn prices and sluggish bean sales. We're not sure what we're going to do...just like everyone else.

The tire shop has been exceptionally busy, and while I might voice complaints about being stuck indoors when I'd rather be working in the fresh air, the one thing I can't find fault with is the shop's success; it has exceeded our wildest expectations. My spirits were lifted this week when a young farmer, just back from his honeymoon, said, "you're one of us..... we all want to see you succeed." Each morning on my way to work I thank God for the day ahead.....and repeat over and over...I can do this....I can do this....I can do this.

I wear my faith, and the comforting mantra of words, like armor.

I'm not alone in my fear. The farmers I see in the shop are bewildered and angry and just plain scared. The promise of harvest has been broken by high fuel costs and low commodity prices. An undercurrent of restless discontent has been released. There are discordant rumblings of an agricultural apocalypse the likes of which hasn't been seen since in this valley since the thirties; five years of drought-poor crops topped by a 2005 crop worth only pennies of profit (if that) is a pitiful scenario with the potential of producing bank defaults and broken lives. The future of farming looks pathetically bleak.

Every farm family I know is grabbing hold of their destiny and fighting back in one way or another, but they know deep in their hearts we are outmanned and outgunned. We are waging a losing battle; our voices are lost in the storm of change.

We are a dying breed, the last of our kind.

Someday the Meadowlark will sing for us.

Karen

The First Dowser

by Joe Smith

Marta and I had not been married very long and her father wanted a water well on the place he lived near the Berrendo River north of Roswell, N. M. He asked his father-in-law, Milton, to come up and dowse it for him. At that time they called it witching. Milton Sams came up and wandered around the acreage and found a couple of spots. He used a willow branch, one that had equal parts to it to make a Y. I wasn't too convinced that he wasn't making the rods go down. He opened up his hands and the bark was still in his hands and the limbs were bare. This was rather convincing to say the least. He marked a spot near the chicken pens. It wasn't too deep to water so my father-in-law and I decided to drill it with a twist type auger. I cut about ten, 4-ft. sections of 3/4" pipe and we got started the next weekend. We drilled down and then brought it back out and dumped the dirt out and then went back for more. It really didn't take too long 'til we hit large gravel stones. The auger couldn't pick them up. Beings I was a smart young whippersnapper I figured out that we were right on top of the water vein, so to fix this problem we would just let a stick of dynamite down on the electric line that would fire it off and put a little dirt on top of it and blow a big hole in the gravel.

Now you got to admit it sure sounds logical, doesn't it? Well I had my old woody station wagon out there with the hood up. I peeled the plastic off the wires and struck them on the battery post. A small boom and that was it. Back in to clean the hole and find the big hole that we were trying to make. We found the hole but it was on top of the gravel, not in it. Back to the drawing board of my mind, Okay if one stick didn't work I'll just tape three together. We did that and repeated the process of filling dirt on top of the charge and then rolled a large log on top of the hole. It was about three feet in diameter and several feet long. Now is when it gets exciting. Marta and her mother were in the house with our young son when we set off the charge. I'm not sure whether the hood came down and hit me on the head or the car went up and hit the hood with my head. I turned around just in time to see the stump 30 feet in the air, and all the chickens that couldn't fly ten feet off the ground. Marta and her mother came out of the house to see what happened. The house now had a crack in the ceiling from one end to the other. Needless to say, my father-in-law decided to have a well driller come in and finish the hole for him. Oh, that was fun.

Now this first brush with dowsing or witching was 50 years ago and I didn't learn how for another 20 years. But after 30 some odd years I'm about to feel confident with the dowsing. The dynamite is something else though. Joe



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