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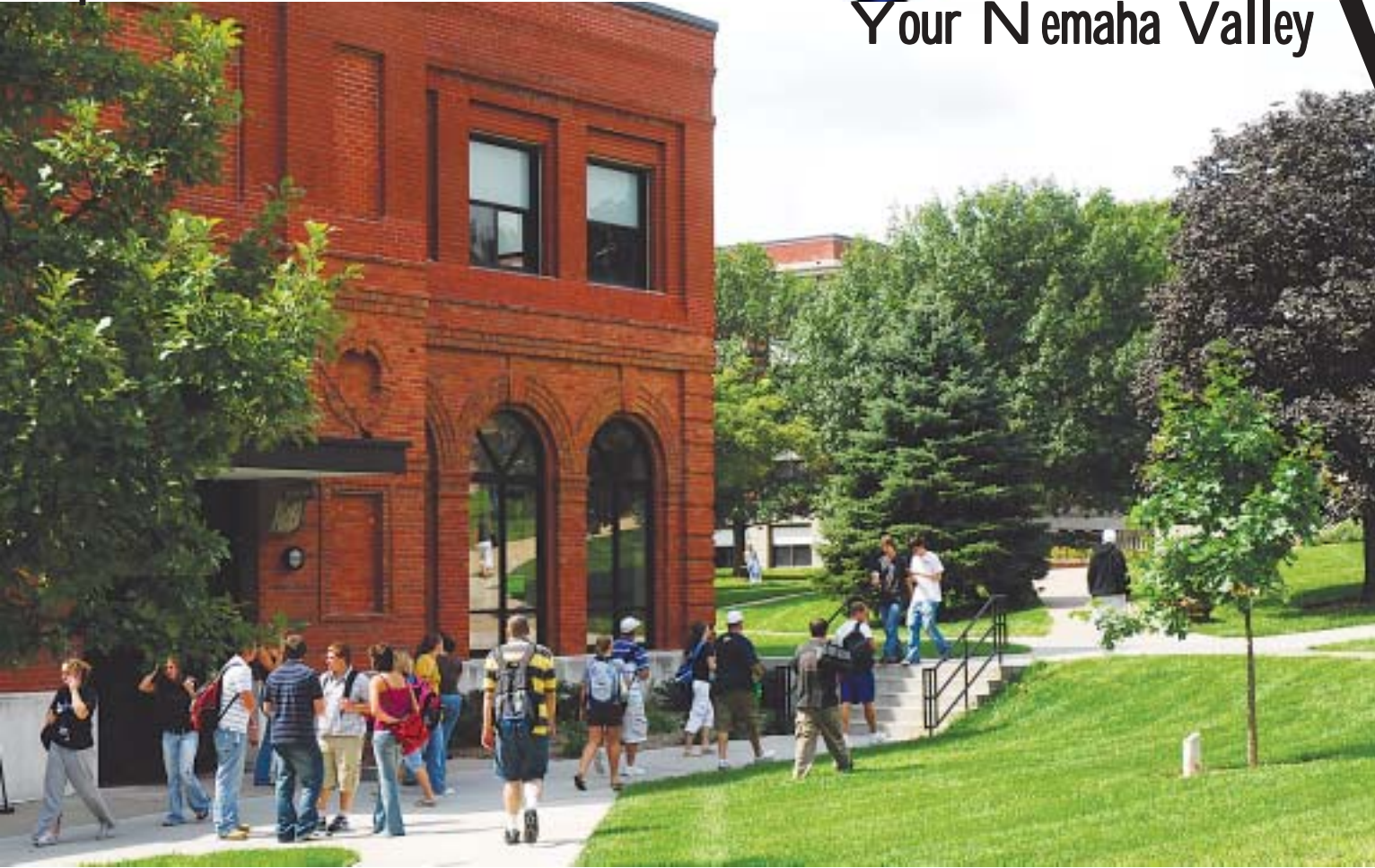
# Country Neighbor

FREE!

September 2006

Your Nemaha Valley

# Voice



This cover photo was taken on the first day of school on the Peru State College campus.

September means good-bye to summer, and hello to cooler weather. Relief from the heat, coupled with the anticipation of cold months approaching results in mixed feelings that often accompany transition. That's life.

First Day of Classes, Peru State College.



'Fishing' at the Nemaha County, Kansas, Wildlife Area Between Seneca and Corning

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Early September days are the fleeting days of Summer; Greens give way to gold and rust.



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## Your Country Neighbor

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**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:** Rock Port, and Tarkio.

**In Kansas:** Axtell, Baileyville, Beattie, Centralia, 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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Your

## COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Your **Voice** of the Nemaha Valley

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### Your Country Neighbor, LLC

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## Nemaha Valley Museum Celebrates 30 Years

Sunday, September 10, 1-5 P.M.

The museum at 1423 19th Street, Auburn, NE, will be celebrating 30 years of being open as well as celebrating the completion the "new" brick patio with the horse drawn implement display.

There will be living history demonstrations including, but not limited to: antique tractors, small engines, toy tractors, rope and shoestring making, butter churning, Maytag washing machine demonstration, and a blacksmith.

Hands-on demonstrations include water pumping, seed corn grading, shelling corn, flour grinding. Try some home-churned butter on home-made bread. Have a cooling snow cone or ice cream cone. Come join in the fun.

For more information please contact Lonnie Neddenriep 868-6615, Dennis Norvell 274-3203, or Maxine Schatz 274-3735.

# Heave Ho!...on the Mighty MO

by Vicki Harger

She's an angry, vengeful river—that's what I've always heard. Dangerous as all get-out! She's full of logs, barges, and monstrous jumping carp...not to mention the mangled bodies of foolhardy fishermen, of course.

"A heck of a gal!" say the Old Timers. "She's got a mean streak in her. You'll stay away from her if you've got good sense."

I remember the day I lost my good sense—the day I first stepped into a boat cradled in the bosom of the Missouri. She seemed calm enough. No angry waves, or white-capped fangs. She looked almost peaceful. Seeing her pleasant mood, I dared to venture out on her dark waters.

Truth to tell, we seldom saw a floating log that day, and we never did see a barge, or a bloated body—not that day or in the days to follow. In the ensuing months, I became a bit complacent about the Mighty MO. I nearly forgot the dire warnings of the Old Timers....

Till one fine day this past summer.

It was a day like any other. The air was fresh, the Jon boat was stable and the river stretched before us like a long and winding pathway. With each bend in the river, another vista slid past...the swelling heights of the Barada Hills, the staunch cliffs of Indian Cave, the sprawling flats that lay between the bluffs.

There wasn't a hint of trouble on the breeze. I leaned back and yawned. "I wish we could have a little excitement," I said to Skipper Dan. "This is almost boring. I'd love to have a real adventure!" Poor choice of words as I soon found out. You just don't say things like that. Not when you're at the mercy of the Mighty MO.

Trouble set in almost immediately. From around the bend came a great hulk, churning up the water and making monstrous waves. A boat-crushing barge! The first I'd ever seen up close. I could feel my pulse pounding in my veins as I watched the dark waters being sucked beneath the bow. In an instant, it could bury our little boat in a watery grave. We gunned the outboard and scooted out of the way as the barge rumbled past. Enormous. Unstoppable.

Soon, another object hove around the bend—much smaller, but definitely powerful in its own way. It was bloody and bloated. The stench was unbearable and only got worse as it drifted past. "What is it?" I asked, "A dead fisherman?"

Skipper Dan said no, but even if it was, he sure wasn't going after it.

I didn't argue. I had other things to worry about. We were heading into strange waters where the surface seemed to boil. A moment later, the river erupted with flying fish. Russian carp began hammering the boat with a vengeance. I screamed and tried to get out of the way, but there was nowhere to go. Then, something massive launched itself into the boat, thrashing wildly and scattering things about.

"I don't believe this!" I shrieked. "We're being torpedoed!"

We headed out of there and made for a nearby shore. I felt better once I was on firm ground, again, but I'd hardly caught my breath when I was spotted by one of MO's little minions. An angry bumblebee dive-bombed me repeatedly, following me up and down the bank. My screams echoed across the river as I thrashed my way through thistles and poison ivy. Panic-stricken, I headed back to the boat at a gallop.

"Help me, would you?" I shouted at the Skipper. "Don't just stand there laughing! Help me!"

He did try. When he took aim at the bee with his fist, he nearly took off the top of my head. The bumblebee departed and I collapsed in the boat. "I've had enough adventure for one day," I said, holding my head. "I'm starting to think that boring is beautiful. What else could possibly go wrong?"

I shouldn't have asked.

When we headed into the river, again, the outboard started to sputter. It coughed, then died. Silence descended upon us and we could hear nothing but the low murmur of waves against the bow. "Out of gas," Dan sighed. "We are out of gas."

"This can't be happening," I said. "How can so much go wrong in one day? What if a barge comes along, now, and runs us over?"

We began to drift down the river—at the mercy of the Mighty MO and more of her minions. Wily currents began pulling us toward a tangle of driftwood. Soon, we found ourselves crashing through low-hanging branches along the shoreline. Branches whipped our faces and scattered everything across the deck, raining mulberries all over the boat. Amid the hailstorm of berries, we grabbed for the fishing poles and nets just before they sailed into the river. The boat's depth-finder beeped out dire warnings while the fishing tackle clattered across the deck.

I got banged in the head, again. Amid the ruckus, I could hear MO's deep murmur—almost a chuckle, it seemed.

We survived that day, somehow. With the good Lord's help, we made it safely back to land. But I'd learned my lesson. I was never tempted to become complacent, again, nor was I reckless with my words when I was anywhere near the Mighty MO.

Although it had taken me a while to discover the truth about the Missouri, I can assure you of one thing. The Old Timers knew what they were talking about. There are, indeed, boat-bashing barges and torpedo fish and bloated bodies in the MO. Her shores are guarded by angry bumblebees, poison ivy, and slap-happy trees, as well. She's a mysterious, sometimes vengeful river, who doesn't like being insulted, or taken for granted.

So—a word of caution to any cocky young whippersnappers out there. You'd best stay away from that muddy, moody river.

For if you should offend the Mighty MO and her minions, believe me; you haven't got a prayer.

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## Window on Fifth Street

I have been writing this column monthly for almost five years, and truthfully, I have not always been inspired. Sometimes I am pleased with the words, especially when a friend is grateful for the message. Sometimes the words assembled reveal a picture through my hand that previously was blurred through my eyes. But some months, like this one, my “Window on Fifth Street” is the only missing piece of the puzzle that becomes *Your Country Neighbor*.

And so I think this is a good time to remove the monthly restriction that this column can be sometimes, thereby allowing the message you deserve to flow more freely, albeit less frequently.

However, I will consider reprinting “Window” articles from years past, especially if I can introduce new readers to old thoughts that may still have value. Reading an old article can be like going through old photographs, fond memories in black and white.

But I don’t intend to give up my “Window” when I have something to say. A picture may speak a thousand words, but sometimes an image must be pictured with words.

So if my camera is at a loss for “words”, and if I am moved to share, I’ll let my keyboard do the work rather than my camera. One way or another, I’m always eager to share the view through my window on Fifth Street.

## Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

By Merri Johnson

I’ve had a few reminders recently of how cushy my life is. Of course, we all know intellectually that our lives are pretty cushy, but I’m convinced that very few of us grasp that reality experientially.

Take the heat wave we’ve had this summer. Haven’t we all said a million times, “Boy, I sure am grateful we have air conditioning.” Have any of us intentionally gone without it for more than a nasty day or two? Air-conditioner breakdown or a power outage might force discomfort on us, but it’s a pretty low-income household that can’t find a way to keep the old A.C. running.

Or consider something as seemingly inconsequential as soft water. Our water softener has been out of commission for nearly three weeks. Annoyance at having to wait *three weeks* for repairs is just part of the evidence of my reliance on modern convenience and instantaneous results. Doing without the benefits of soft water has been an eye opener. Automatic dishwasher detergent does not rinse off well in hard water. So, I’ve been hand-washing – gasp! – my dishes all this time. Mineral deposits on my new stainless steel sink are unsightly, too. Ironically, if it weren’t for the beastly humidity, my skin would probably be itchy from the hard water residue of daily bathing.

Air conditioning and soft water are pure creature comforts that we could all do without, as the bulk of humanity does. Yes, we’d miss them and no doubt complain interminably until we got them back.

But what if we *all* had to endure continual discomfort and even danger every day just to acquire food and shelter? To be sure, many people do perform physically demanding labor. Construction and slaughter house workers come to mind, as do miners and migrant farm workers.

I spent an afternoon harvesting grapes in August. The temperature was bearable enough, but it didn’t take long for my hands, arms and bare legs to turn sticky. And then to turn gritty with small insects, bits of leaves and dirt stuck to my skin. And the bees! They generally didn’t sting, but they did land on me and do a lot of buzzing. Grape picking is not for bee-phobes.

At the end of my five-hour stint in the vineyard, I returned to my air-conditioned home and took a shower, albeit in hard water. And I knew I didn’t have to go back to the vineyard, or a lettuce field, or an apple orchard the next day.

I don’t know much about the lives of migrant farm workers. But a couple of years ago, while traveling to Alabama, we pulled up behind a pickup with a topper. The hatch was open and inside I could see two women and a couple of kids riding on top of what looked like all their worldly possessions. A middle-aged man and a younger one rode in the cab.

I made brief eye contact with one of the women, and in that instant, “migrants” became real people to me; not just cohorts of a particular ethnic group tallied in Census data. This was a three-generation family living out of the back of a pickup. Perhaps they were on their way to a permanent home. Even if that was so, it’s probably reasonable to assume that their lives would still be a lot less cushy than mine.

I don’t feel guilty for having an easy life. That could change in the blink of an eye. But the next time I’m tempted to whine about a little hardship, I hope to remember the family in that pickup, and bite my tongue.

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## Waiting for News

by Frieda Burston

I lean against the back wall of the café at Heritage Pointe. The postman comes in, slings his boxes of mail onto the floor, and tells me to move out of the way. The joking Turkish desk man says he has put me there to watch the postman work. The postman scowls. I say, no, I am only there to hold the wall up while we watch the TV news. Half a dozen of us are watching, but really we are waiting impatiently for letters from home, like homesick kids at summer camp.

The postman pours himself a glass of iced tea from the big jug on the counter, while he too watches Kofi Anan announce a cease-fire between Hezbollah and Israel. The boxes of letters sit on the floor. I say to the man next to me, "Nothing has been said about the two kidnapped soldiers." The postman throws his empty paper cup into the trash barrel, and snorts, "Hah! Is two kidnapped soldiers what all these dead babies are about? Two soldiers? Crazy, crazy!"

Nobody answers. Our eyes swing back to the TV. Everyone recognizes that he carries his mind-set with him like a snail shell and pulls back into it when the world gets threatening. He is one of the Pacific Rim peoples, and has not grown up with the notion that a sovereign state is responsible for the protections of all its citizen, nor that a central government must be stronger than the various parts of its government. Democracy, to him, means only that each man has the privilege of expressing his opinion once every few years without getting his head cut off for it. It has nothing to do with what happens in the real world before or after that.

The closed mind-set is reasonable in an outlander. Changing countries is difficult and sometimes dangerous. New customs, new slang, new ideas— you can rush out to embrace them all, and be laughed at. Or you can retreat into your closed mind-set and be comfortable.

I can understand this of an outlander. I cannot understand it of a this-lander, of someone who grew up with society's permission to question everyone and everything before making up our minds. When I met with this here, it struck me as being out of place.

A friend took me to an open forum on Current Events. She expected that it would allow me to comment my share on the Israel-Hezbollah war, and that my report would be welcomed because I was so newly arrived from the area.

No.

The forum was run by an alpha-male with a bristly mustache and personality to match. There were two sub-alpha-males who locked horns on every issue. And there were about twenty omega females who said nothing. When the debate was raging about whether Israel should nuke Hezbollah and be done with it, I raised my hand. The bristly-mustache brought the mike to me.

I said, "Before we talk about dropping a nuke on anyone, we ought to know what's said in Israel about the nukes. Israel has never said that it has a nuclear bomb. It has simply refused to join the nuke treaties. Israelis tell me that we can't afford to stockpile bombs that become obsolete every New Year's Day, so we just keep the ingredients handy while we use them in medical or scientific research, and we update only our technology every day. Everyone says it will take 3 or 4 hours to put something together, but the average Israeli believes that since the deterrent effect is just as good for the rumor as for the reality, it's cheaper not to stockpile nukes. And it explains why Israelis are upset about Iran threatening us now— by the time we put it together, we're into half-life already...."

Silence. The bristly mustache came back for the mike. I handed it to him. He said loud and clear into it: "I don't believe a word of it—" and stomped back to the center of the circle.



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Well, Bristly-Mustache might not have learned anything from my speech, but I did. I learned that even this-landers believe what they want to believe, and there's no use trying to persuade adults who know what they want to believe, who carry snail shells to pull back into if some threatening thought comes near. Like Lulu wrote me when I told her, "Daddy would have said under his breath, 'Don't confuse me with facts, My mind is made up.'"

That's the last time I try to shine my little light into corners. Maybe I'll try the class in line-dancing, that sounds about right, right now.

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## From Lines Hung on Hedge Posts to DSL

by Penny Zeller

Alexander Graham Bell patented the first telephone in 1876, and the first regular telephone line in America was completed between Boston and Somerville, Massachusetts in 1877. From this point on, it took the rest of country some time to catch up.

By the early 1900's, most American's living in cities had a telephone in their home or business. Across rural America, small "farmer mutual" or "small town" telephone companies cropped up to provide this new service.

"Back in those days," commented Terry O'Neil, general manager of Blue Valley Tele-Communications in Home, Kansas, "farmers hung lines on hedge posts, calls went through a switchboard operator, and people shared their phone line with as many as 15 other rural homes.

"Most of these small companies used volunteer labor and lacked the capital for maintenance or improvements."

In 1949, "The Telephone Amendment" was added to the Rural Electrification Act (REA) and the meaning of telephone service in rural areas would change forever.

"This amendment allowed for telephone cooperatives to acquire low interest government loans to provide telephone service to rural America," said O'Neil.

The incorporation of the Blue Valley Telephone Company in Marysville on May 23, 1956 was one of the companies formed as a result of the amendment. The member-owned cooperative would lead the way to the modernization of telephone service in Northeast Kansas.

In May, 1960, the company purchased seven small rural phone companies; the Centralia Telephone Company, the Home Telephone Company, Oketo Mutual Telephone Company, Summerfield Mutual Telephone Company, Vermillion Telephone Company, and the Force Telephone Exchange of Wheaton. In December of 1961, the Axtell Telephone Company and the Vliets Mutual Telephone Company were purchased. These eight companies were consolidated into seven exchanges and were provided with dial telephone service.

"The company has always been on the 'bleeding' edge of technology," said O'Neil, who has been with the company since 1980. "We immediately brought modernization into the mix by burying phone lines, and party lines became obsolete right off the bat."

In the 1970's, two rural companies were acquired and modernized: the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company of Beattie and the Palmer Telephone Company. In 1980 came the addition of the Linn Rural Telephone Company. More recently, in 2005, the Onaga and Westmoreland exchanges were added.

Blue Valley Tele-Communications, with offices located in Home, Kansas, currently provides services to 3,500 patrons through 4,500 access lines spread over 1,000 square miles in five counties. Along with what is now considered "standard" phone service, the company offers competitive long distance service, High-Speed Internet, computer repair, web hosting, Alltel Cellular Service, key systems, and its newest endeavor, Blue Valley Television, commonly known as "BVTV", in which customers receive video through the telephone infrastructure.

"It operates a lot like dish TV, and offers a new choice not only to our customers in our towns but also to our rural customers that do not have cable television," explains O'Neil.

O'Neil likes to tell the story of when the Vermillion exchange was purchased, the manager of the company at that time had to sign a personal note because it was felt that the company did not have enough collateral.

"We have grown from that to a \$50 million dollar company with 35 employees," boasts O'Neil.

Another branch of the company that has brought both job growth and \$2 million in annual economic growth to the area is the tele-marketing division, with call centers located in both Home and Linn.

In September, the company will host a celebration marking its 50th year of service to its patrons. In light of this, O'Neil reflected on his time with the company.

"It's been fun. I wear my patron hat quite a bit. I take my job of representing these owners very seriously. They put their trust in me – a board of directors hired me – but we all really represent the owners, the people we serve. When Larry (Lord, past general manager) hired me to help out with the accounting, I said I was not going to stay; I just never got out of here!

"Blue Valley Telephone Company has always operated on the basis that the customers, the owners of this company, always come first and what is right for them is right for the company. What better legacy can we leave for those that will come after us?"

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## Border-to-Border Sale on U.S. 36 Highway

Treasure hunters of all ages, seeking treasure of all sizes, shapes and genres can gather anywhere along U.S. 36 Highway that runs through the state of Kansas on Sept. 15, 16, and 17 and then travel and shop along the highway to their heart's desire!

The first Great U.S. Highway 36 Treasure Hunt, a 392-mile-long "garage sale," will take place that Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Taking in the towns from St. Francis to Elwood, it promises to make successful "buyer's and seller's" markets, adding also to the economic and tourism health of the area.

The idea of the sale came from the U.S. Highway 36 Association and is based on a similar event called the "World's Longest Yard Sale," in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. That event takes in close to 450 miles and runs for four days in August. To help coordinate the sale, local tourism, pride, and chamber of commerce offices were contacted.

Residents along the highway have "registered" their sale with a "sale chairperson" in each county, and county maps will be available for those coming to shop. According to Nemaha County, Kansas Chairperson Penny Zeller, she and Lynsey Wanklyn, Economic Development Director for Marshall County, are working to coordinate maps in those two counties to help keep traffic flowing between the two. Maps will be available at local convenience stores and in several area restaurants.

Many of the towns along 36 are also hosting city-wide garage sales that weekend. In *Your Country Neighbor's* distribution area, these towns include Beattie and Seneca. Many sales will also be found at Baileyville, Axtell, and Home, Kansas.

"Area motels and restaurants are also gearing up for the event to welcome travelers and in the Seneca area, maps will include coupons for restaurants to coax travelers to dine with them," said Zeller.

"So mark your calendars, save your change, and get ready to spend a grand treasure-seeking weekend on Kansas Highway 36!"



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## Tractor Talk...Part III

by Jon Oliver

To be right honest, I never saw the first hill coming. I was rolling along examining the tops of fence posts when I heard my tractor governor stop opening up and the wind in my face start to get faster. This particular hill is probably to this day one of the steepest and most treacherous for all tractor-goers. At mid-hill I lowered the bucket down to about an inch and braced for impact. I could barely hang on to the Roll-o-matic front end as it wobbled in the fine gravel. I finally felt the curve peter out and with my teeth unclenched, climbed the opposing side only to find a longer but less steep hill waiting for me on the other side; small problem. Two trucks were parked at the bottom on each side of the road; big problem. I re-clenched my teeth and settled further down into the seat with my John Deere hat pulled down tighter. My tractor sped and I missed both trucks, thankfully, even waving to the two gentlemen as I passed, them obviously admiring my fine tractor.

The water bottle I kept near the operator's tower boiled in the heat of the afternoon. I had rolled up my T-shirt sleeves when the temperature started to rise and I could feel my shoulders and neck burn. I poured water over the burns. They were bad; small problem. I was traveling so far, so long in one direction, that half of my face was burned: big problem. I actually ended my trip around Lincoln by going through a final construction zone of two signal people in the middle of nowhere, trafficking absolutely no one but my dad and I. I waved, then saw the Eagle water tower up ahead. I worked my way around a small cluster of houses outside of Eagle. I turned onto the most eastern street of Eagle, then onto Highway 34, and headed east. I filled up my tank with the little red gas can once more.

Dad and Mom met me somewhere between the Eagle and the Elmwood corner. Mom said, "Yeah, it's pretty," nodding in approval. Then they both went home. I was about six miles away from the Weeping Water spur. I was happy to wave to truck drivers as they waved to me and honked their horns. I still to this day don't know why they did that, but I guess it helped relax my aching muscles and gave me a sort of "homecoming." It always seems like the quickest part of any trip you take, no matter what you are in or where you are coming from is always the last few miles. It was a good feeling to be that close to home after so many life-threatening events. As I turned onto my hometown road I felt like I had just won a marathon. That was a long distance! I drove from fifteen miles west of Lincoln, around Lincoln on the north side, and to home on Highway 34.

When I got off the tractor, I stepped back and looked at my new purchase like a racer looks behind him, beyond the finish line to the place he started and looks at how far he had come. I was proud...proud of my sunburned shoulders and my half-sunburned face. Those small problems healed and I received my new set with the tractor. It sits between the shop and my brother's fence line. With new seats, new brakes, three-point and a few other odds and ends it is a well-groomed tractor. I am currently looking for a factory John Deere three-point for it. I covered it with the tent from our old foldout Applebee camper. I think my tractor likes it there, under that old tent. I might go pat it on the tin once last time before I call it a night.

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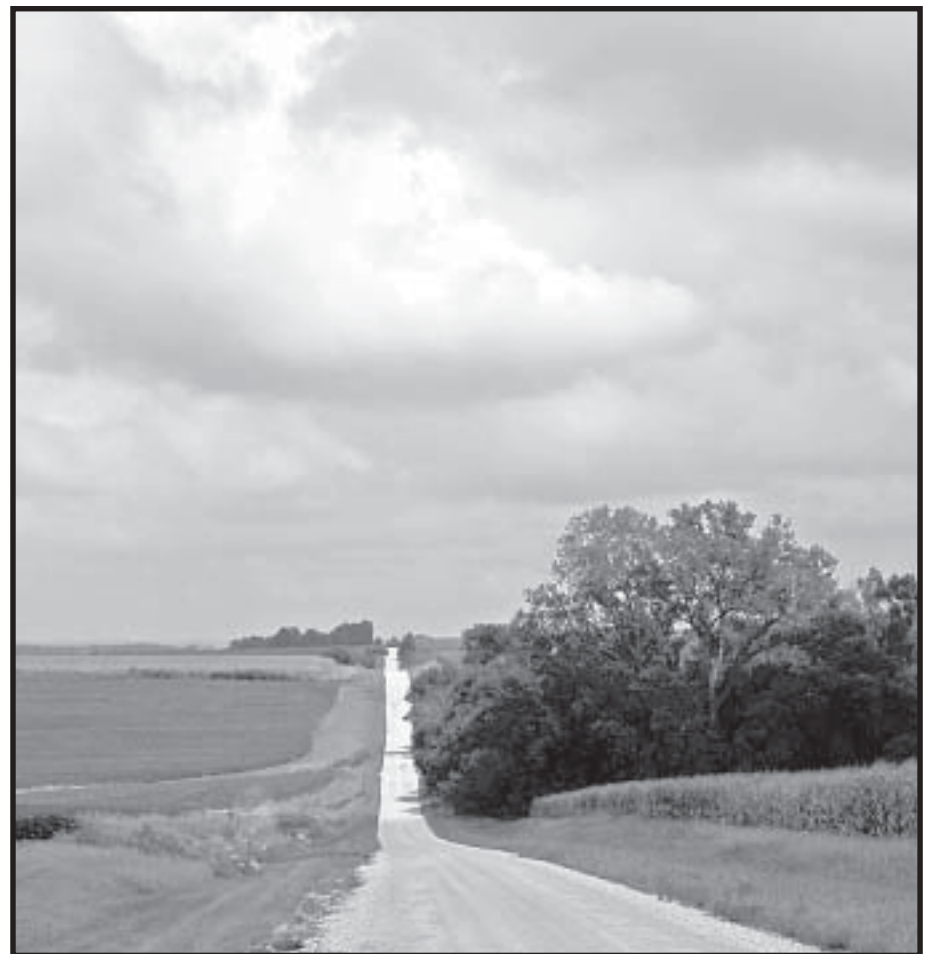
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# Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler  
Photos provided by Author

## Fishing:

The Missouri River is up with the recent rains – some areas near Omaha received as much as four inches in one night. Sounds more like spring rains than fall rains. The high temperatures are still hanging in there but the water has cooled off with the influx of rain run off in recent weeks. The temperature of the river in Late August was 79 degrees and you wouldn't think it was very much of a difference from July's 85 degrees but the fish are moving out of the deep holes and feeding a lot more during the daylight hours. What's hitting? Big Blues and Flatheads mostly, with small Channels still hanging in there. "What are they hitting on?" The big ones are hitting chubs & gold fish and the little ones on crawlers and dough baits. Remember Big Bait, Big Fish, so the bigger the bait the better if you want to test your tackle. I think the fish are feeling the pressure of the summer's end and are starting to feed up for the long winter ahead.

The first of this month's fishing pictures are of Jim "The Whis" Whisler with a 45-lb Blue Cat. And the second picture is of a 42-lb Flathead landed by Papa Joe Whisler and his fishing partners Colton & Dillon.

## Hunting:

What can I say? Hunting time is here. And it's time to sharpen up your shotgun skills on some blue rock in preparation for the up-and-coming dove season. I can report I witnessed several groups of doves, some with over a dozen birds grouped together in August. So the migration is



on, although I have seen and heard plenty of local birds this summer. The recent rains seem to group them up and drive them out of the grass to the roadsides so you can really get an idea how many there are just by driving around. Water and hemp are still the main attractions when it comes to hunting doves and with the recent rains there seems to be plenty of water puddles to hunt around. Don't forget – to hunt doves you need a HIP number along with a small game hunting permit.

Attention!! Nebraska Residents can still apply for fall deer hunting permits.

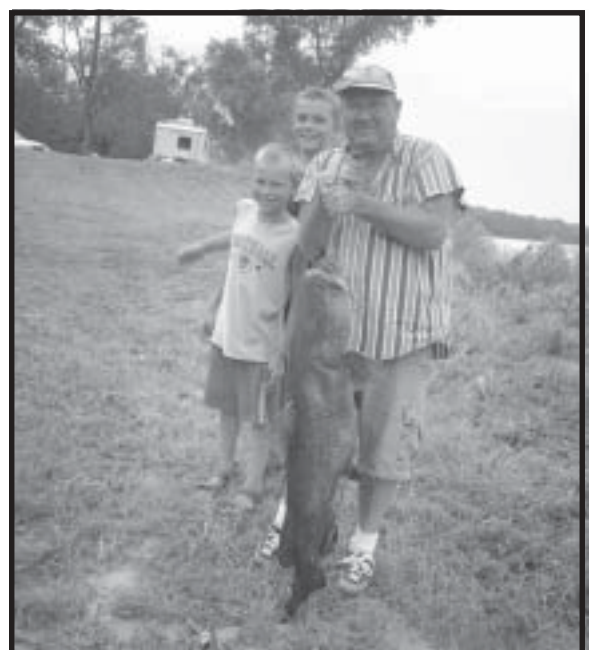
Permits may be obtained by stopping at NGPC Offices, Online (<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/guides/biggame>), and/or by mail at:

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Summer is winding down, but not without a few more hot ones. But fall is coming and all the hunting seasons that go with it. There is still a lot of good fishing to be done and you'll soon have to choose between fishing or hunting. That's not all bad – what a choice! 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."



Jim "The Whis" Whisler with a 45-lb Blue Cat.



Papa Joe Whisler and his fishing partners Colton & Dillon with a 42-lb Flathead.

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## WATCHING YOU LEAVE

by Devon Adams

There was a time when I followed  
everywhere you went, and you  
carried me when my tiny legs grew tired.  
You cooked and cleaned and made your family  
the center of the world as you held us close.  
Then you taught us how to leave  
and make our own way in the world.  
Through the years we leaned on you  
for support and reassurance,  
knowing without any doubt  
that comfort was as close as  
the sound of your voice.  
We still need you every day  
although we're growing old ourselves.  
But there is something missing now.  
You no longer recognize our voices  
and we are strangers when we meet.  
You still look the same and so do we,  
but in your eyes there is a fog  
and your mind is cloudy and confused.  
You tell us that you'd like to see  
your children, but they never come,  
and you're tired of staying in a big hotel,  
living with people you don't know.  
Each time we visit you are more distant  
than before, and we see you  
walking down a path away from us.  
Watching you leave is the hardest  
and the saddest thing we've ever done.  
But until forever comes,  
we'll hold you close even when  
you wonder who we are,  
because we know that someday  
love will bring us back together.

## HEADS UP

by Devon Adams

The broken egg shells and errant feathers  
fallen to the ground, not to mention  
other splattered droppings,  
are evidence of life in nests  
of plastered mud built on ledges  
in places mostly inconvenient  
for the human occupants inside.  
They are near the doors where  
swooping wings and beaks take aim,  
and with malice aforethought,  
the swift bombers dive with precision  
at their targets and take another divot  
out of someone's head.  
Mom and Pop have babies to protect  
and they recognize the enemy  
walking on two legs  
or prowling through the bushes  
on four furry legs attached to a switching catty tail.  
The acrobatic flying skills  
that make them awesome  
insect vacuums also give them  
capabilities to wage military strikes.  
No one could argue with the fact  
that barn swallows are  
exactly suited for their job  
of sweeping bugs from the air  
and saving other living things from  
the agony and itch of insect bites,  
but their words are sweet and soft,  
and they share with us  
the joys of raising babies  
right outside our doorways.

## September 11<sup>th</sup>

by Jan Chism Wright

Shocked by the frayed end  
of a live news wire.  
Jolted and thrown to  
a ground no longer firm.  
Reeling from moving images  
of monumental death.  
I sit in stupor on the porch swing  
of a hundred year old farmhouse.  
To save myself from drowning  
in waves of radios and satellites  
Only to be awash in raging seas  
of my own engulfing emotions.

Slowly my senses begin to belie  
my soul-felt fundamental change.  
A woodpecker hammers  
for his daily dinner.  
The horned owls in the bog  
have again begun to hoot.  
The crickets chirp with  
the self-same insistence.  
The corn stands, still,  
still ready for harvest.  
It occurs to me how easily  
this earth could do without us.

Jan Chism Wright  
(c) 9/19/01

## TAKE THE LONG WAY HOME

By Devon Adams

Take the long way home,  
and find the roads  
that follow hills until  
a view explodes across  
your dusty windshield  
and you hit the brakes  
so the moment won't be lost  
in haste and hurry running  
to catch up with work  
that is never done  
and never will be done.  
You'll have time to see  
and contemplate the passing  
of the hawk as he circles  
through the stunning blue of sky  
that has no end and  
where distance is an abstract concept  
measured only by refracted light and air.  
It only takes a moment  
for your mind to disengage  
from mundane stress and pressure  
and let your heart take over,  
as peace and wonder come  
to rest upon your shoulders  
and you lay your burdens down  
beside the sweet wild roses  
growing in the ditch.  
Across the valley shines a river  
that wanders through the trees  
like a satin ribbon lost and  
looking for a home.  
It is the river of time,  
and it never stops, or pauses, or turns back.  
You must choose to savor life  
before its gone, because tomorrow  
won't stay any longer than today and  
memories are all that's left of yesterday.

## FIRE AND ICE

by Devon Adams

The time has come when hot winds  
burn away the grass and  
fences sag and vanish in the  
dunes of dirt and ancient glass  
that came to rest here in the past  
and now are on the move again.  
Wildfires spark from lightning  
in the rampant growth of cedars  
that have spread like fungus.  
Flames will take away the trees,  
and the rolling hills of sand  
will waken from their nap  
and return to sculptured folds  
that creep across the plains.  
The heat that sears the prairie  
is also turning Greenland back  
to green again, from frigid ice  
to mud to grass.  
Water from the melted cubes  
that cover polar regions  
raises ocean levels until  
a rising wall of water covers  
coastal real estate developments.  
Somewhere down the road of time  
the extra water vapor that evaporates  
from the seas will meet  
cold rivers of air in the atmosphere  
and freeze into the fragile flakes of snow  
that build glaciers growing  
into sheets of ice that cut  
their way into the land  
and reassemble mountains, lakes  
and rivers until a gentle warming trend  
takes over once again.  
It's quite a show and it's a pity  
that we won't be here for the end.

## FLIGHT INTERRUPTED

by Devon Adams

The perfect wings were flashing  
in the sun and bobbing on the wind.  
Echoes of that flying shape  
were repeated in a cloud  
of color drifting through the fields.  
Complex patterns drawn in iridescent scales  
defined each species by their colors  
and their spots and stripes and tails.  
These butterflies were happy just to seek  
the fragrant nectar calling from  
hearts of blossoms glowing in the sun.  
It was their destiny to eat and reproduce  
and then to migrate over endless miles,  
with navigation systems designed  
exclusively by forces far beyond our human  
knowledge and our understanding  
of the basic building blocks of life.  
But here, along a country road, the flight  
was interrupted by a mass of moving metal  
that slammed into a pair of fragile wings  
that will never go to Mexico.  
Now they're plastered to the smiling grill  
of the bright red Chevy truck  
that was speeding on the dusty road.  
Some will stay and some will go,  
and the wonder of it all  
is how such tiny critters  
beat the odds at all,  
and live to sun themselves  
along the beach and drink  
sweet margaritas made from flowers,  
and dance to mariachi bands  
of bugs in bushes by the sea.



# HOT CASTOR OIL PACK

Ursula Waln, N.D.

The growing market for patches that provide transdermal (through the skin) administration of hormones and other medications has changed public perceptions about the skin and its permeability. As a result, many consumers are becoming more attentive to the ingredients in skin care products. Oils are more readily absorbed through the skin than water, and what makes “moisturizers” effective is the oil rather than the moisture. Castor oil is a highly beneficial topical application, but be forewarned that it is kind of thick and sticky as oils go. (Note that while castor ‘beans’ are indeed the source of ricin, a substance widely known to be a deadly poison, castor oil does not contain ricin.)

The healing properties of the hot castor oil pack are thought to be due to the effects that the oil has when absorbed into the underlying tissues, particularly the lymphatic tissues. It is probably a relatively small amount of oil that actually makes its way into the bloodstream, so the effects can be expected to be more local than systemic. Heat stimulates enzymatic processes and promotes blood flow through the local tissues, making eliminatory and immunologic functions more efficient. Castor oil increases lymphatic flow and reduces inflammation, so the combined effect of the heat and castor oil really promotes movement of fluids and tissue cleansing. Therefore, hot castor oil packs are particularly useful for conditions in which there is congestion and/or toxic buildup. The most common application of hot castor oil packs is liver detoxification, but they are also used for chest congestion, gall bladder irritation, intestinal conditions, uterine complaints, ovarian cysts, bladder irritation, pelvic pain, arthritis, and other conditions.

Hot castor oil packs can be administered as needed for occasional complaints. For chronic conditions, the recommendation is generally two to three applications per week. For periodic liver detoxification, one application per day for two to three consecutive days is usually sufficient. Hot castor oil packs should not be used on acute injuries, open infections, or cancers because the heat can aggravate these conditions.

## Supplies:

Castor oil  
Cotton or wool flannel  
Oil cloth (or plastic wrap)  
Heating pad (or hot water bottle)

## Procedure:

Fold or cut the cotton or wool flannel into 2 - 4 layers of a suitable size to cover the chosen body area (usually 12" x 13" or larger to cover the abdomen).

Saturate the flannel with castor oil and gently warm this ‘pack’ in the oven on a cookie sheet at a low temperature. (You can use your microwave oven, but heat only a few seconds at a time, as you can easily overheat the oil and burn yourself with it or scorch the pack.) You want the pack warm, but not hot enough to burn your skin!

Apply the pack to the body area you wish to treat.

Place the oil cloth (or plastic wrap) over the pack. This is to prevent oil from ruining your clothing and linens.

Place the heating pad (or hot water bottle) on top of the oil cloth (or plastic wrap). Keep the temperature tolerable. Turn down the heating pad (or place a towel beneath the hot water bottle) if too hot.

Treatment should continue for 30 minutes to one hour. Longer treatments are not harmful, though it is not advisable to fall asleep with the heating pad on.

To complete treatment, remove the castor oil pack, and cleanse your skin with a solution of baking soda in water (or leave the oil on to be absorbed into your skin and wear “old rag” clothing).

The pack should be stored in an air-tight container. Because castor oil is very resistant to oxidative damage (i.e., doesn’t get rancid very easily), a castor oil pack can be reused indefinitely, unless it becomes soiled, in which case it should be washed or replaced.

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# Herbal Remedies

Part Three of Four  
by Jeffrey G. Meade, MD

Once again we are in quest for herbs that work or don't work to maintain our restore our health. Remember in my last column that the #1 dietary supplement in U.S. sales was ginkgo biloba at an estimated \$151 million annually. Third on the list was ginseng at \$91 million, and sixth place was kava at \$17 million. Today I would like to wrap up my discussion of medicinal herbs with these three.

Ginkgo (AKA Ginkgo biloba, maidenhair tree, kew tree, fossil tree, ginkyo, and yinhsing,) is one of the oldest types of tree on earth. Traditional Chinese doctors have used its fruits and seeds for thousands of years to treat asthma and chilblains (redness swelling and burning of the face and extremities caused by exposure to cold). Today it is used mostly to improve blood flow to the brain. Because of this, ginkgo is said to improve memory and concentration and be a benefit in dementia such as Alzheimer's disease. Most studies have shown a small but significant benefit in Alzheimer's, but recently published studies have proven no help with memory. It is also used to treat intermittent claudication, (poor circulation in the legs causing painful calf muscle cramping with walking) and has been shown to work as well as the drug Trental. However, regular walking exercises were more effective. Lastly, ginkgo is used to treat tinnitus, (ringing in the ears) but only a few studies have shown moderate benefit and the jury is still out. Most studies used standardized extract of ginkgo leaf at 120 mg to 320 mg a day. Some people brew the leaves into a tea but I recommend standardized pill and liquid forms. Do not use ginkgo seeds or fruit pulp as these have been shown to be toxic. Also, do not handle the ginkgo fruit pulp as severe skin reactions of redness, swelling, blistering and itching lasting a week or more have been reported. Also, do not use ginkgo if you are on blood thinners without first talking to your doctor.

You name it, and ginseng has been used to treat it. There are more than 400 species of ginseng root. Some of the ones used in herbal products include American ginseng, Korean ginseng, Sanchi ginseng, Siberian ginseng, Chikusetsu ginseng, Himalayan ginseng, zhuzishen, and dwarf ginseng. It is also known as devil's shrub, eleuthero, touch-me-not, and wild pepper. It is used mostly today to improve energy and stamina. Herbalists mostly use the panax type that comes from China and Korea. A study published in the December 1999 issue of the *International Journal of Sports Nutrition* showed faster reaction times but no better endurance in a group of soccer players taking 350 mg of panax ginseng a day. Russian Olympians and cosmonauts have traditionally used Siberian ginseng. One of the most comprehensive reviews of Siberian ginseng was published in *Economics and Medicinal Plant Research* in 1985, and showed increased ability to work under stress. American ginseng has hardly been studied at all, but one small study suggested that taken with meals might lower the after meal increase in blood sugar. And finally, a Korean study showed that people who took ginseng had significantly lower risk of cancer. But by itself, this study proves nothing and more research is needed. Side effects are uncommon and may include insomnia. Allergic reactions may include the sometimes-fatal Stevens-Johnson syndrome. You should stop taking ginseng if you develop a rash! A massive ginseng overdose has been reported to cause the "Ginseng Abuse Syndrome" which is characterized by sleeplessness, muscle tension, and swelling or fluid retention. What's the bottom line? Panax gin-

seng might provide some short-term stimulation, much as a cup of coffee does, and Siberian ginseng might help you work under stress.

This brings us to kava, (or kava kava,) a medicinal root found on the South Pacific islands. It is brewed into a mildly intoxicating beverage and used to treat anxiety, insomnia, menopausal symptoms and muscle tension or spasms. Kava is also known as Piper methysticum, awa, kava-kava, kew, tonga, ava, ava pepper, intoxicating pepper, and kawa. Kava's effect in reducing anxiety has been shown and it may be used as an alternative to the benzodiazepines (Valium and Xanax, among others). It also has been shown to promote deep sleep without interfering with restful REM (rapid eye movement sleep, where dreams occur). It is standardized in terms of milligrams of kava lactones – the active ingredients. In Germany where kava is widely used, 70 mg to 80 mg is given three times a day for stress, and 60 mg to 70 mg once a day for low-level anxiety. The maximum recommended dose noted in the medical literature is 200 mg three times a day for muscle spasm. Does it work? The answer on this one is yes. Is it safe? The answer here is a little muddier. Long-term users of high dose kava drinks develop flaky, dry, yellowish skin with hair loss and partial loss of hearing. These side effects usually go away when the herb is stopped. However, in March 2002 the Food and Drug Administration reported 25 cases of serious liver damage in Germany and Switzerland among users of kava and both of these countries have banned kava products. The FDA has issued an alert telling those who use kava to check for symptoms of liver damage and warns against its use until further studies can be done.

Whether herbal remedies work well or not, all have effects on your body. Always tell your doctor which ones you are taking, no matter how safe they may seem. Next month I will wrap up my four part series with a look at homeopathic medicine. This was invented in the late 1700s by German physician Samuel Hahnemann, who believed that the weaker the solution, the more effective the medicine. Could there be something to this? You will have to wait until the next issue to find out. Until then, stay healthy!



The creations of participants in the pottery classes held recently in Auburn are on display in a downtown Auburn store window (near former Avenue Grill). Forty-four children and adults took the class. The adult works pictured here reflect a range of skill and style. They achieve their glossy finish through a special firing process known as raku. The children's pieces (not pictured) were painted after kiln drying.

Mary Kruger, the initiator of the project as well as a participant, credited artist/instructor Nancy Fairbanks with generating enthusiasm among all the participants.

The workshop was sponsored by a partnership of the Southeast Nebraska Fine Arts Council and the Nemaha County Development Alliance.



# The Face of Drought

A Report from Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

Drought! Heat Wave! Prairie Fire!

Words so old fashioned, so eighteenth century you wonder why someone hasn't boxed them up by now and filed them away alongside detailed instructions for churning butter and rendering lard.

This is 2006 America for Pete's sake, a wondrous place of instant information where the most intractable of mankind's problems are tackled by twenty-five-year-old computer geeks entering raw data into the collective consciousness of a super computer while eating Ben and Jerry's organic ice cream and sipping a Starbucks preservative-free Latte. We're a hip and sophisticated people accustomed to shaping the universe we live in, of bending life to suit our own personal needs. We don't have time for heat waves, droughts, and prairie fires. Those belong between the pages of dusty history books, or in primitive third world countries where people are backwards, governments corrupt..... and no one knows any better.

And yet here we are, living a seventh year of drought, suffering though one-hundred degree days, breathing in acrid, wildfire smoke and watching the landscape change in ways we never thought possible. The hard truth is that weather is the real final frontier...not space.

The words meteorologists use for what we've been living is 'climatic hardship', a fancy term for bone dry and hot as you-know-where. In California it meant thousands of dead dairy cattle, cooling centers for the elderly, and buying chunks of ice to throw in overheated swimming pools. Here, it's the dust storm we had this afternoon, a monster wall of dirt we could see coming from ten miles away, and a dried up lake on the Kiowa wetlands. A glaring white, alkali crusted, deep-cracked circle of dirt where ducks and geese used to raise their babies. Its dying cattails and flat-lined rivers, and women friends who look me straight in the eye and say, "I'm sick of farming, of working part-time in town so we can pay a hired man to help raise a crop that doesn't cover our bills." It's hoping the farmers of the Pathfinder and Gering-Ft Laramie Irrigation districts will sell the Mitchell district enough water to keep our fields irrigated through the next three weeks, and praying they have sufficient water to see their own crops through the season. It's selling off herds for want of feed and getting a job in town to put food on the table. It's burned out pastures and burned out lives and wondering how many tomorrows are left for the small, independently owned farms and ranches.

Those are the real stories of climatic hardship, most of which will never make the nightly news.

This week the men busied themselves with finishing up the hay, fixing fence (yes, the cows were out again) and mowing weeds. We've been looking for a crew to weed the beets but for some reason the labor pool has dried up this year. The three groups working the panhandle have been charging farmers \$100.00 an acre...\$50.00 over last year...and that's too steep for the majority of farmers.

As a result guys are resorting to the darndest weed control methods. Some are rigging up combine wheat-heads to run just above the tops of the beets, cutting off the weeds halfway, while others are using a contraption to wick the tops of the weeds with a herbicide solution. Dale continues to hold out for a human crew but unless a few of those south-of-the-border immigrants the media proclaims are standing on every street corner of America looking for work appear, I think he is out of luck. We had the beans sprayed for bean beetle two days ago and are on the lookout for spider mites. A few corn fields around Torrington have seen heavy infestations so it won't be long before the tiny bugs make their way to Morrill....if they're not already here; just what we need, more bills.



Chimney Rock, on the Oregon Trail

The vegetable garden looks great...for the end of June. I've picked a few cucumbers, about five zucchini and two ripe tomatoes. The hail storm certainly set it back. I'm hoping for a late frost...preferably around December first. We began eating sweet corn last Sunday and if the coons don't get it all tonight I'll be putting some in the freezer tomorrow. That's if I can find the time.

Our three-year-old grandson fell yesterday breaking his collarbone; a traumatic experience for all concerned. In the way of falls it didn't amount to much. It wasn't as if he toppled head first from the tractor steps, tumbled from the top of the corral gate, or rolled his tricycle down a pile of rocks...all of which he has done with little consequence. He simply slipped while climbing on a chair. It was only after he bawled bloody murder for about forty-five minutes that we hustled him to the Morrill Medical Clinic for an x-ray. The poor kid is cinched up in a contraption that looks like a cross between a straight jacket and a back-pack....and he has to wear it for three weeks.

It's eleven p.m. and our resident skunk just sprayed one of the dogs....again. Phew! If I owned a gun, and knew how to use it, that critter would be history.

Have a good week....and pray the skunk gets hit by a car...or something equally fitting.

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## Flying

by Joe Smith

Strange as it seems (or once seemed) people do fly with the help of some type of aircraft. It is hard to imagine that these planes can even get off the ground as much as they weigh. They weigh tons and with all the passengers and their luggage, that really brings it up. Amazing to say the least.

Sixty years ago, we lived on North Hill in Roswell, New Mexico. I went out to our little airport and watched the planes sometimes. I asked the fellow that ran the airport what it would cost to get a ride in a plane. He owned several and did take people up for a spin around the town. He told me if I would sweep out his hanger he would take me up. Every afternoon after school I would ride my bike out and sweep on the hanger. That was a never-ending job. They would leave the doors open and the sand would blow back in. But come Saturday the owner came in and said, "You want that ride?" He had a passenger to take up and there was room for me. Just barely, the fellow was big, but I didn't care. It was quite a ride for a 10-year-old kid. It lasted about an hour. I was on Cloud Nine for sure. I rode home and that evening my mother asked me where I had been all week. I told her about the hanger and the plane ride, which she was very doubtful about. When dad got home she told him what I had said. He knew the fellow that ran the airport and he called him. So he found out that indeed I had been up in a plane.

Next time was in Deming New Mexico where I farmed for seven years in the late 50's. I had a good friend that ran that airport and he asked me if I wanted to fly to Albuquerque to a cattleman's convention, I said sure. He had a nice 4-passenger low wing Piper of some sort. As we got near the Rio Grande Valley, we hit a big down draft. My head hit the ceiling and my butt hit the seat real hard when we hit the bottom, we probably fell a couple hundred feet in a few seconds. The FAA man came on the radio and said, "Watch for downdrafts near the hills coming into the valley." Kenny picked up the mike and said, "We found them Okay." He took Marta and our son with me one time just to look at the farms from the air. Jason made the comment that "Mom you are the prettiest shade of green." She wasn't sure about those tight turns in the plane.

The next experience was when I was living in Nebraska. My dad had a stroke and it looked bad, so my brother said I had better get down there. Boyd Wakelin took me up to Omaha and put me on a plane early one morning. I flew through Dallas and got on one of those little planes that stopped every 100 miles. It was 5:00 in the evening when I finally got to Roswell - just about 11 hours. I could have driven it in that time. Dad passed away and Boyd brought Marta down for the funeral. What would you do without friends? This past week, I flew down to Austin Texas. Took less than four hours. Took longer coming home because of a 2-hour layover in Dallas, but still it wasn't bad.

I flew on an oil-dowsing trip several times to Kentucky, Canada (really North Dakota, but the dowsing was in Canada). First time I flew to Kentucky, I flew through Atlanta Georgia. Now I'm scared of big airports and that one was big. But I made it. I'm 74 now and still get nervous around big airports. Not as bad as I used to though.

Planes are a fast and comfortable way to go long distances in a hurry, much better than they used to be. What is fun is visiting with different people from different places. You can meet somebody in a way-off place and he lives just 40 miles from you. That has happened several times. Joe



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