

Profiles of PATRIOTISM

Generations of Nebraskans
answering the call

COMPILED BY ALAN J. BARTELS

SINCE OUR STATE'S earliest days, even before statehood, citizens from every Nebraska community and every branch of the military have answered when our country has called upon them. When the ranks of the 1st Regiment of the Nebraska Volunteer Infantry were filled by frontier patriots from Nebraska Territory during the early days of the Civil War, a tradition of service began that continues today.

Whenever they are called to duty, Nebraskans on the home front appreciate their service and fly their flags high. In honor of every Nebraskan man or woman who has served or is serving – be it in peacetime or war, and to all of those on the home front who support our troops – we offer these Nebraskan profiles of patriotism.

Vincent Thiele, NELIGH ARMY FIRST SERGEANT

The world was a big place during World War II for Vincent Thiele, a small-town boy from Clearwater. No matter how far from home he was during his service, Nebraska, and his home front sweetheart, Marie, were never far from his thoughts.

I got a letter in the mail. It was from the draft board, and it turns out that I was the first in the county to be called up. I thought there was something crooked going on. I'd never been first in anything. Out of 12 children in our family I was

the third born. I was going to protest the draft letter, but then I thought it might not be so bad.

I was supposed to meet the train at 12:30 a.m. in Ewing. The train was late as usual. This car pulls up, and it's this girl I know from South Dakota. I'd been working on a church up there when I heard her scream. I dropped my tools and ran around to the back of the building where these guys were giving this girl a hard time, and one of them was dangling her over this water tank by her ankles. When they saw me, he put her down. A wrestling match ensued, and I put him in the tank and pushed him under. So she must have thought I was pretty swell. She came to see me off. We were a little on the friendly side, and she kissed me. She promised that if I wrote to her that she'd write me back.

I was sent to Missouri where I did mostly shovel work. I hitchhiked home during a three-day pass. I didn't tell her I was coming home, but she showed up the next day, Thanksgiving. We got engaged.

In March, after going to Louisiana and some desert in California, and after the longest train ride on earth, I ended up in Bombay, India. It was a hell of a place.

That following Thanksgiving we marched past this kitchen where women were picking chickens. They would pick them and then toss them on the ground. Those chickens were black with flies. Our meal that night was chicken, and I remember

Stephanie Disney enlisted in the Army and wanted to see action. She was sent to South Korea instead. Eventually the Sidney resident made it to the battle zone where desert sunsets reminded her of her home in western Nebraska.

Christopher Amundson



the maggots. We didn't have anything else so we ate it.

We got on the *USS Hermitage* and went to Iran. The U.S. supplies were unloaded and taken to the Turkish border where the Russians would take it from there. I was in a water purification outfit and one time even helped the Shah of Iran get his well going. I got to be first sergeant.

We were working in a railroad switchyard there. It was huge. Must have been 100 tracks. It was about quitting time when some guys unhitched an engine from a car and drove away. A bunch of hooligans with torches threw gasoline on the train car, lit it and ran. We heard the "pit-pit-pang, pit-pit-pang" of small arms fire and we got down. It was daytime when this happened, and I woke up at midnight. When the train car exploded it flattened the buildings and threw me 40 feet. How could I be thrown that far and still be alive?

I found the guy I was with. He wasn't moving so I slapped him. I was about to leave him for dead when he opened his eyes. We had a few scrapes. Being on the opposite side of a building from the blast probably saved us. My hearing hasn't been the same since.

On account of me being No. 1, I got to go home first. I got called every name in the book by my fellow soldiers. It was a 15-hour flight in a cargo plane with wooden boxes nailed to the floor for seats.

I met General Patton while on guard duty in California. The PX was off limits to soldiers that day, but I needed to mail a letter to my girl so I went and did it. I wasn't the only one who broke the rule to be in there. When I came out I saw some soldiers hiding behind bushes, and then there was the general. I saluted, he asked me what I was doing, and I told him honestly. He told me to proceed on my way and then off he went. California seemed just as far away from Nebraska as Iran, and I wondered if I'd ever make it home.

When I finally made it, Marie was there waiting for me. She died in 2005. We were married for more than 60 years.

Fred Capler, ELGIN **ARMY CORPORAL**

Three years in the Army, including a year in the Korean War, put into perspective for Fred Capler how fortunate he was to be from Nebraska. It is one lesson the patriotic retired teacher from Elgin has never forgotten.

There was no time to miss anything back home. I didn't grow up with a lot, but I saw how poor the Koreans were and realized how good we had it in Nebraska. I was risking my life for \$1.50 a day combat pay on top of 13 cents an hour. I was full of vinegar, took it with a grain of salt and off I went when Uncle Sam said "Go!" They asked what size boots I wore, and I told them size 7. They gave me 9s. I did my time in the Infantry and was proud to do so.

After the war I built a bridge south of Merriman. I got hurt working on a ranch and chose to go to college. It was one of the best things to ever happen to me. I taught at Elgin for 26 years.

A couple years back I flew to Washington, D.C., on a Korean War



Alan J. Bartels

honor flight. I got pretty choked up when I saw my own face and that of my brother carved into the memorial. I don't know how that happened. We were both in Korea and both made it back alive. He lives in Indiana now.

You can bet your combat boots that I'm patriotic. When I see people abusing our flag I get mad as hell.

Richard Zierke, LINCOLN **MARINE CORPORAL**

After graduating from Lincoln Northeast High School, Richard Zierke enlisted in the Marines. He did everything his country asked. His most important contributions may have come to pass after returning home.

I was lucky. My time overseas was very low key. Nothing fantastic. Never saw any action. I served in the Marines for four years and missed Nebraska the most during football season. There were a couple guys in my unit from Oklahoma, so we went back and forth about who'd win the big game – Osborne or Switzer.

The Marines sent me to the Philippines, and to Japan for cold weather training. I was dropped off on Mount Fuji and told to walk back. I don't know what that was for.

I met my wife, Elizabeth, in San Francisco. We were married in 1974 and raised four children back home in Nebraska.



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In 2011, I discovered that Nebraska was one of seven states that didn't have a law on the books mandating the Pledge of Allegiance be said in all Nebraska schools. Not even all classrooms in the state had a U.S. flag. I sent a letter to then-Gov. Heineman. Then I went to the Legislature's Education Committee. In a 4-4 vote it failed to make it to the floor. I learned a lot about politics. I could never be a politician.

Long story short – I went to the State Board of Education. They tied the pledge bill to an accreditation of all schools in the state of the Nebraska, and it made it through.

After that victory, the Veterans of Foreign Wars group in Lincoln stepped up and purchased 150 U.S. flags for Lincoln Northeast High School, my alma mater.

Dwight Howe, ROSALIE **MARINE SERGEANT**

Dwight Howe was raised in Oklahoma by his grandmother, an elder with the Ponca tribe. He joined the United States Marine Corps in 1976 at age 17 and was honorably discharged at the rank of sergeant after seven years of active duty. Today Howe is the cultural liaison and Omaha language instructor at the St. Augustine Indian Mission in Winnebago. While visiting the Omaha Tribe's cemetery at Macy where his mother wanted to be buried, Howe saw a need for improvements.

I'd taken care of veterans' graves in a Ponca cemetery in Oklahoma so I knew the potential. When I saw graves in Macy from World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam and saw that they needed maintenance, I got involved for the sake of the vets and their families. There are 247 veterans buried in the designated veterans' area of this cemetery. Not bad for a tribe with a population of about 5,000 or so. It speaks well of the Omaha tribe that so many have served their country.

Some of the gravestones were falling over or sinking. I'm pouring concrete footings, leveling and lining everything up. To me it's about the veterans and being of service. Maybe our young people will see that and serve our country and our people. That's what I hope for.



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Michael Nordhues, GREELEY **ARMY MASTER SERGEANT**

Michael "Shane" Nordhues suddenly realized just how far from his hometown of Greeley he was when rocks hurled by hidden assailants began hitting his truck during a night operation in Croatia. The year was 1996, and the attack – one of the least severe experienced in his more than quarter century in uniform – was a stark departure from carefree days of cruising Main Street in his rusty Cutlass Supreme only a few years earlier. He'd only been in three states besides Nebraska when he landed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina for basic training in 1989 – an experience he said scared him to death. Now a master sergeant stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Nordhues has seen the world while



Marine veteran Sergeant Dwight Howe of Rosalie tends to veterans' markers at the Omaha tribe's cemetery at Macy.

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Nebraska & NEBRASKANS IN THE MILITARY

TWELVE THOUSAND GERMAN and Italian prisoners were held in 23 prisoner of war camps across Nebraska during World War II.

APPROXIMATELY 2,000 Nebraskan women volunteered for active duty in World War II.

THE FIRST NAME on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. is that of Pender native Dale R. Buis. His name is one of nearly 400 names of Nebraskans engraved into the granite memorial.

AN ESTIMATED 48,000 Nebraskans served in the Vietnam War.

THE U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER *Gasconade* is a 75-foot buoy tender running the Missouri River from Sioux City, Iowa, to Glasgow, Missouri.



...serving three tours in South Korea and facing the enemy during three tours in Iraq, one in Afghanistan, and in Bosnia and Croatia.

I grew up real fast. Luckily the Army prepared me well.

That training came in handy when the Humvee in front of my wrecker broke down and the rest of the convoy unknowingly drove off without us. Armed Bosnian civilians blocked the road. I got on the radio, but there was no reply. I was the highest ranking – a brand new sergeant – and everyone was looking at me to make a decision. I told everyone to stick their M-16s out the windows but only to fire if those civilians did first. They were young kids, probably only 16 years old. Had they shot at us we would have returned fire. Luckily we didn't have to. I took my licks for not engaging the enemy, but all of these years later I'm absolutely happy with the decision I made. I've got two teenagers of my own now. Even though they posed a threat, I'm glad we didn't have to kill those Bosnian kids.

During my first tour in Iraq in 2003 the Iraqis were firing Scud missiles. We didn't know if they had chemical weapons or not, so every time they launched we got into our chemical gear. It was 130 degrees in the desert, and we stayed in those protective suits for hours at a time. Sometimes we slept in them all night when it cooled off to 90 or 100 degrees. Luckily they weren't good with their missiles, and our air defense guys would shoot most of them down. We didn't care about sweating in those hot suits – we just wanted to survive. Our battalion commander didn't make it back. He was our only loss and the highest-ranking soldier lost in the conflict up to that time.

I went back to Iraq from 2007 to 2009. I had been promoted and was in charge of a combat recovery team. My responsibility



Courtesy Master Sergeant Nordhues

After facing the enemy during three tours of Iraq, in Afghanistan, and in other skirmishes around the world, Army Master Sergeant Michael "Shane" Nordhues, third from left, is looking forward to completing his stateside assignment and retiring back to Greeley.

was growing and so was the level of engagement. Whenever our guys were attacked and vehicles damaged, or when there were vehicle accidents, we'd have 30 minutes to assemble and roll out. We usually did it in 20. We were on call seven days a week for 15 months straight. Our weapons were always mounted and loaded, and our radios were on all the time. We'd provide cover and recover equipment. We couldn't leave anything behind.

Roadside bombs and ambushes were daily occurrences. The recovery I remember most involved a culvert under the road that had been packed with 2,000 pounds of explosives. It took out four trucks at the same time, and it was the middle of the night. We got there and set up a perimeter. Tires and trucks were burning. That recovery took 8 hours. Another near the Turkish border took 13 hours.

A semi had broken down and had been left unattended. We got there and had to call in a demolition team in case the truck had been booby trapped. That took a while, and the longer we sit the more likely we are to become targets. I was turning the truck around when I heard incoming mortars. The first explosion was maybe a couple hundred meters away. The next one was only half the distance – I knew they were walking in on us. The next one hit my truck, and the explosion damaged two other vehicles. There were no injuries, but then we started taking small arms fire. I was the convoy commander and ordered the lead vehicle to roll out. The mission was a success, and my

team made it out unharmed. I'd made the right decisions. My team received the Combat Action Badge for that, and I received the Bronze Star. That was only one of 186 incidents we responded to that tour.

When I'm under fire or when things get tough I often think of Nebraska – the slower pace of life and friendly people. When I was a kid all I wanted to do was leave; now all I want is to be back in Nebraska.

I hope to move back to Nebraska after I retire in 2018, unless they get crazy and try to promote me. Then I'd have to stay in at least five more years.

Stephanie Disney, SIDNEY ARMY SERGEANT

When he told her she couldn't be in the Infantry, Stephanie Disney's recruiter suggested she join the Military Police. She'd always respected people in uniform, and being in the Girl Scouts and 4-H had taught her to help people. Being an MP seemed like a good fit. In 2002, at age 17, she enlisted.

I wanted to be close to the action, at least at first. I was disappointed after basic training when I wanted to go to Iraq but ended up in South Korea.

Both of my grandpas, an uncle and three of my cousins were in the military, so it was not a hard decision for me to sign up. My dad



Steve and Bobbi Olson

Bringing the Pledge of Allegiance to Nebraska's classrooms was an important mission for Marine veteran Richard Zierke of Lincoln. Zierke then took on the task of getting veterans' graves in Cavalry Catholic Cemetery in Lincoln properly marked as they deserve.

doesn't express his feelings too often, but my mom admitted they were both nervous – and she was a nervous wreck.

I finally got to go to Iraq in 2006. It wasn't all bad like what makes it on the TV news. I went there without an attitude of revenge, and I met some friendly people there. Not everybody there wanted to blow us up.

As the sun would set, it reminded me of sunsets in my part of western Nebraska where there aren't a lot of trees. Sure, I missed my family and missed home, but truthfully I missed Nebraska most when I was at Fort Leonardwood, Missouri, for basic training. There were so many trees that I couldn't see the stars.

I'm proud to have served. I work in the American National Bank in Sidney now, but even today when my mom introduces me to someone she'll still throw it out that I was in the Army. I guess she's pretty proud, too.

**Kalee Brewer, MURDOCK
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD 2ND LIEUTENANT**

With generations of family service to the United States behind her, Kalee Brewer grew up searching for adventure while hunting deer near her hometown of Murdock. Her first bison kill was with a .45-70 rifle. That weapon pales in comparison to the powerful guns mounted on the war birds the recent ROTC graduate will fly one day.

I grew up around the military. Both of my parents were in and so were my grandfathers. My dad, Col. Tom Brewer, retired after 36 years of service. My mom, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kelli Brewer, retired after 24 years. My brother, Travis, is in the Iowa Army National Guard. My dad and three of my Brewer cousins were all deployed to Afghanistan at the same time.

I went to Chadron State College. I was playing cards one day when I met my future husband, Dalton Boden. We started Facebooking and dating. I had just signed up for ROTC. He was going through the process of enlisting in the National Guard. It worked out. We got married in May of 2014.

At CSC there's a commissioning ceremony during graduation. Each ROTC grad has to receive their first salute during the ceremony, and there needs to be an officer and an enlisted soldier as part of it. My father administered my oath of office. My grandfather, Ross Brewer, was an Army sergeant who earned a Purple Heart during the Korean War. He gave me my first salute as an officer. I was close to tears. My grandfather is a bit of a mountain man type and doesn't show much emotion, but he was beaming with pride that day. He is very proud for sure.

My husband's grandfather, Duane Krajnik, was a captain in the Air Force during the Vietnam War. He read Dalton's oath, and my cousin, Tim Brewer, gave Dalton his first salute. We were in our Class A uniforms, received our first salutes and then put on our black gowns and joined everyone else. We both graduated as second lieutenants.

I'm getting ready to go to flight school to learn either the Blackhawk or Lakota helicopter, whichever the Army needs me to do. I've never been away from Nebraska for more than a month. I'm looking forward to skipping a Nebraska winter while training in Alabama. Dalton will go to infantry school at Fort Benning, Georgia. He'll do his basic officer leadership course and then move on to Airborne and Ranger schools.

After training we look forward to being back at our National Guard units in Nebraska – me in Grand Island and Dalton in Beatrice. Hopefully we'll both get full-time Army National Guard positions.

We'll be apart a lot, and we knew that going into this. We're definitely excited. I'm excited that there's a chance that one day I'll be flying the helicopter my husband is jumping out of. ♡

WEB SPECIAL *Salute*
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Kalee Brewer and her husband, Dalton Boden, both second lieutenants in the Nebraska Army National Guard, each continue long family traditions of military service.

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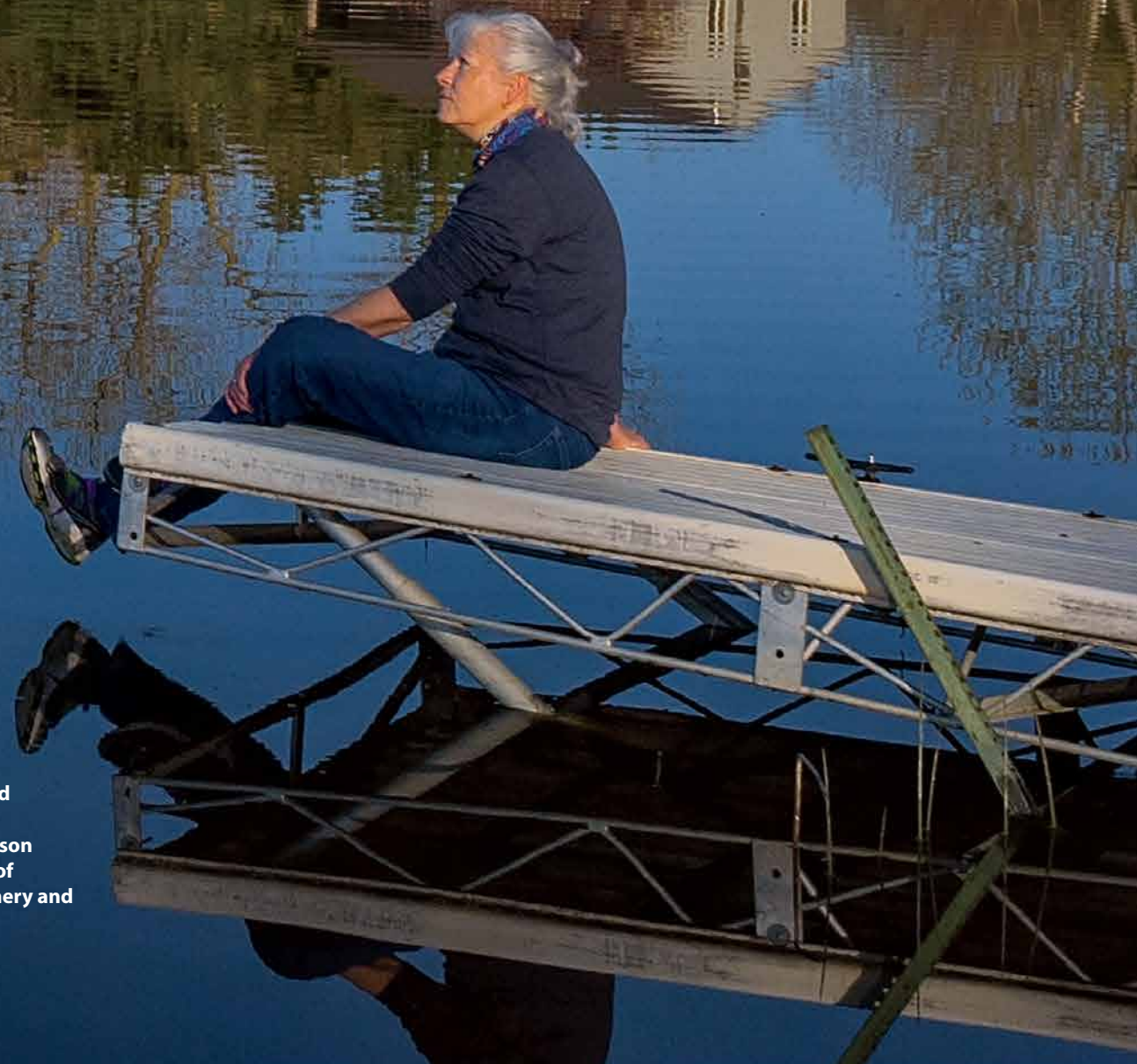
Lake ERICSON

A community of residents and regulars
camp, splash and explore their summer away
at this little Wheeler County reservoir

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN J. BARTELS



Morgan Boden of Ord
charges through the
shallows at Lake Ericson
while Susan Elmore of
Burwell takes in scenery and
wildlife views.



IN THE EASTERN SANDHILLS of Wheeler County, a community of cabins anchors the northeast corner of Lake Ericson. For a century people seeking refuge from the daily grind have strolled along its sandy shore, taken in scenic views and sailed upon its blue waters.

Love has been found here, and people love Lake Ericson, where generations of memories have been forged during family vacations, winter retreats, long weekends and occasional summer Sundays.

“Could you baptize me in the lake?” was the plea Pastor Jerry Schoenenberger heard on the telephone. His reply “What time?” led to the Saturday afternoon ceremony hours later near the Lake Ericson picnic shelter. Today Schoenenberger lives across the street from that holy place with his

wife, Milrae, 16 years and five Lake Ericson baptisms after agreeing to conduct occasional church services when the Sandhills Baptist Fellowship was in between pastors.

“I thought we would fill in for a few Sundays while they looked for someone,” Schoenenberger said. “They offered me the job, but we agreed it wasn’t the right fit for us. We were going to tell them during a church meeting, but at the end of it I stood up and said, ‘We’ll do it.’”

Lake Ericson has a habit of inviting

people to dip their feet in its calm waters and then grabbing hold of their spirit. Schoenenberger sold his thousands of acres to retire as one of the lake’s dozen or so year-round residents, living near his natural baptistry on 2 ½ lake lots.

Retirement is busy for Schoenenberger. He continues writing faithful devotionals for three newspapers, with each one typically including a Lake Ericson fishing report. He has other plans, too. “When people are

Memories of fishing Lake Ericson with his father and camping with his son keep Bruce Florian of Hastings, and his wife, Libby, coming back.



Retired Air Force Command Chief Master Sergeant Ben Heald and his Brittany spaniels are always up for a relaxing boat ride.



at the lake, a lot of them are missing church,” Schoenenberger said. “I think I will start a Bible study.”

A heavenly sand beach on Lake Ericson’s eastern shore attracts sunbathers. Warm-water waders revel in the coolness of the lake’s shifting sand bottom. Kayakers patrol the shore and sail boaters ride the persistent Sandhills breeze. The entire lake is a no-wake zone, allowing anyone

to take in a consistent chorus of summer frogs calling from marshy reaches where the shallow Cedar River joins the lake.

LAUNCHING FROM POINTS upstream, flotillas of families and friends on inner tubes and in livestock tanks spend leisurely summer afternoons spinning toward the lake at Mother Nature’s pace. A misty cloud hangs in the air as

water rushes through the dam and over the rocky spillway.

Early attempts at taming the Cedar River failed. Lake Ericson finally pooled behind an earthen dam in 1916. A hydroelectric generator was installed, and Cedar Valley Electric Company began supplying electricity to surrounding farms and the community of Ericson three miles away.

Ericson is usually a quiet place. The drone of bawling cattle can be heard across town and even as far away as the lake on sale day at the Ericson-Spalding Livestock Market’s sale barn along Highway 91. The



The rewards of time spent in nature include scenic skies and refreshing dips in Sandhills streams. For young boys like Garrick Boden of Ord it includes catching turtles.

volume rises in the community of 85 residents at two local saloons.

The Starving Stallion greets travelers east of town with taxidermy mounts and grilled steaks. Downtown, where parking in the center of Central Avenue is the norm, the Hungry Horse Saloon feels like the Wild West. The storied past of the Hungry Horse includes riders on horseback in the dining room and tanks full of snapping turtles on the dance floor kept at the ready for turtle race challenges. The excitement of fans cheering their favorite reptiles toward the finish line have flooded the community. Ericson quiet? Nah.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK of Osceola offered free stays in its Lake Ericson cabin in the 1930s. When the magic of the place took hold, the bank conveniently had lakeside lots for sale. A

contingent of Polk County residents established itself in what locals called Osceola West. There were nearly 100 cabins, a general store, and if the lake wasn't playground enough, a dance hall and steam-powered carousel soon added to the fun.

Folklore surrounds the carousel that entertained countless children while their parents were boating and fishing.

“Every day spent at Lake Ericson feels like a Sunday.”

— Elaine Norton

One story is that its owner, a man named Conger, would tear down the ride for the winter and mount a pair of the horses to



A cloud of spray erupts from the spillway below Lake Ericson as Joe Wadas of Ord makes adjustments to the dam first built a century ago.

the front of his Model A. Another is that after filing bankruptcy and fearing officials were coming to repossess his amusement park ride – rather than let them have it – Conger dismantled it one last time. Then he chucked the pieces into the lake.

Many believed the story a myth until decades later when the lake was being dredged and carousel components got tangled in the machinery. Derald Watson has the parts and the only known photographs of the carousel.

The Watson name has long been synonymous with Lake Ericson. Leonard Watson loaded his cattle on a train at Gretna in 1936, climbed aboard and rode the rails to Wheeler County. He ranched north of town, moved some old schoolhouses to the lake and rented them to fishermen. Buck

and Mary Watson, Derald's parents, took over the operation in 1965. Eight cabins, two docks and a fleet of rowboats kept the family busy. At age 16, Derald was busy working for the now world-famous Pitzer Ranch, and he worked the family's docks, cleaned fish for customers and guided anglers to bountiful baskets brimming with catfish, bass and northern pike.

The Watsons sold finger-thick night crawlers from their garage for \$1 per dozen. When boys would come knocking with visions of luring lunkers onto their hooks, Mary would take their money, suggest they help themselves and say, “Go ahead and grab a few extra.”

People from every state signed the

ledger book. “I asked some hunters from Kentucky why they stayed with us every year,” Watson said. “We can relax and drink a beer and tell a joke and nobody cares, is what they told me.” Around campfires and cabins, Lake Ericson visitors enjoy those same simple pleasures today.

There was a girl from Grand Island who stayed at a neighboring cabin each summer when Watson was young. He remembers jug fishing at night with her grandfather when that was legal, but most of his memories are of her.

“We knew each other for 22 years before we went on a date,” said the girl, Chris, now Watson's wife of 27 years. “Yep, we fell in love at Lake Ericson.”

In 1986, three years before their engagement, a heavy rain fell, and a wall of water rushed down the river. The lake crested in minutes. The dam was in danger of failing. Buck Watson called people living downstream to let them know officials were going to open the gates. Or try to.

Several men tied a rope to Frank Wietzki. He shimmied over the raging torrent while the men held the rope and his life in their hands. All the while the raging river was eating away at the lake road. Wietzki finally was able to trip the brass hook arm holding the gates closed. Six inches of water flowed over Highway 281 downstream near the Wheeler and Greeley county line, and turbid flood waters topped



Amanda Baker works up an appetite for s'mores during aquatic adventures.

the dam at Spalding. The flood washed out roads and took out bridges, but the dam at Lake Ericson was spared.

The rusted carousel axles and gears found a quarter century later following a flood in 2010 are stored in Watson's former bait shop garage. He hopes to display them near the picnic shelter that stands where the contraption once dizzied children of all ages.

WITH THREE YOUNG GIRLS – Lauren, 3, Ella, 6, and Madison, 9 – Josh and Jennifer Gompert of Albion are looking forward to a lifetime of Lake Ericson getaways. After seven years of searching for just the right cabin, they have one of their own.

“We finally bit the bullet,” said Josh, who gutted the structure and lives in a camper with his family during weekends spent remodeling.

The sinking sun paints Lake Ericson bronze as Charlie and Cheryl Krohn arrive for the weekend. Cabins passing from one generation to the next is the tradition here. Lake Ericson family gatherings are, too, and have been for the Krohns since Cheryl's parents bought their cabin in 1972. “Dad loved being on the lake,” Krohn said. “He would leave the boat out too long, and we would end up chopping it out of the ice.”

“Generations of families have come here. We are on our fourth,” Charlie said. “This is something our kids will have one day. Until then they get to share it with us.”

Jim Norton was a child when his family joined the contingent of early founders of the cabin community in 1935. At 86 years of age his vision is fading, but his memories remain vivid.



Norton's father was a Polk County judge. The family stayed in cabins owned by people from Osceola or in the bank's cabin. “It wasn't much of a cabin, but none of them were,” Norton said. “After the stock market crash, nobody maintained anything. It got run down.”

While Norton fished the lake for bass, his brother caught catfish below the dam. Norton's father gave him a rod and reel when he turned 12. “I learned how to cast it without too many backlashes,” Norton said. He still has the reel.

Other pastimes included playing on the carousel. “It wasn't like the fancy ones at fairs today, but it was big enough for two little Lake Ericson boys to play cowboys and Indians on,” Norton said.

After law school Norton and his wife, Elaine, moved to Washington D.C. A law practice for sale in David City drew them back to Nebraska.

“When we came home, the first thing we wanted was a cabin by the lake,” Norton said. “Dr. Markley from North Loup was selling his, so we bought it. That was the first one here with a flush toilet. We've had the cabin for 52 years.”

The Nortons' children spent many weekends at Lake Ericson, sometimes finishing their school homework while sitting on the dock. Now, their son owns the cabin next door that for several years Elaine ran as a bed and breakfast.

“We're so happy our children enjoy being here,” Elaine said. “Every day spent at Lake Ericson feels like a Sunday.” 🐮

See more photos of Lake Ericson at www.nebraskalife.com

Whether the pursuit is beach combing, chasing northern pike in the lake or catfish below the dam, generations of family memories are hauled in at Lake Ericson.



ART FARM

From New York City to his Hamilton County land,
Marquette 'farmer' cultivates crop of inspired artists



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN J. BARTELS

Hastings College graduate Megan Roswell, Karie Merz of New York and Anna Knecht-Schwarzer of Vermont are artistic alumni from Marquette's Art Farm.



Scotland native Faith Elliott is a musician turned visual artist. On Ed Dadey's Art Farm, she found this bullet-riddled barn cupola, and the inspiration to transform it.

I FOUND THE thing in a ditch. It was bent up. And the bullet holes – they were already there. I didn't shoot it." Faith Elliott was describing the art supplies she works with. At her disposal are tons of twisted steel posts, broken bicycles, tractor and car parts, miles of pipe, televisions and remnants of compressors and piles of rusting machines waiting for an artist's eye to salvage their artistic potential. When planted under the tutelage of "farmer" Ed Dadey, those rusty seeds sprout into inspired artists and unique artistic creations on his 60-acre Art Farm near Marquette.

"LIVING HERE IS like living in a scrapyard," said Elliott, a musician from Scotland who began dabbling in visual art at the urging of fellow Art Farm artists. "You find things and then give new life to this old stuff," she said of her punctured cupola. Originally mounted atop a barn long ago, the grounded and galvanized pinnacle she is painting red, yellow and blue now resembles an oversize child's toy. It seems at home planted in the golden prairie of the farm's Sculpture Pasture.

Elliott is part of the latest crop of artists Ed Dadey is cultivating on his Hamilton County farm. They come from around the world for an artistic experience that gives them the space and freedom to create whatever they want to. Each artist becomes a farmhand for 12 hours each week, learning how to pour concrete or operate power tools while helping improve the farm. How they spend the rest of their time at the Art Farm is up to them.

The cross-pollination of ideas between artists is one of Meghan Roswell's favorite aspects of the Art Farm experience. They hang out on the roof together, mingle in the kitchens and gather around the grill for barbecues. She has taken up poetry since arriving, but

her real passion is working with fabric and fibers. Stitching fan cages into a wild, weaved cocoon dangling from the ceiling of her copper-colored School Studio, one of the few structures sporting a recent coat of paint, Roswell is conscious of the wildlife here. Pheasants, opossums and deer are frequent visitors. As for the family of raccoons residing in the attic, "They look down at me and growl," Roswell said. "I don't think they like me."

The fabrics Roswell manipulates to quench her creative thirst are a larger challenge than territorial masked mammals. "The fibers won't always do what I want them to," Roswell said. "I have to remind myself to step back and let the fabric do its own fabric-ness."

Roswell first toured Dadey's farm as a Hastings College art student. "I came back as an artist-in-residence because I wanted to experience this little oasis in the middle of a vast ocean of corn, soybeans and sorghum."

SPRING, SUMMER AND fall are the growing seasons for the Art Farm artists, who usually stay two to five months at a time. Each winter, Dadey, a graduate of Marquette High School and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, drives to New York City. He spends the season there, growing his three-dimensional art in the shade of city skyscrapers instead of sunny Nebraska farm acres, but he is there to help his Art Farm to grow. Art Farm artists join the farmer in the Big Apple and speak glowingly to the New York art scene of reaping inspiration from fertile Nebraska soil and growing as artists.

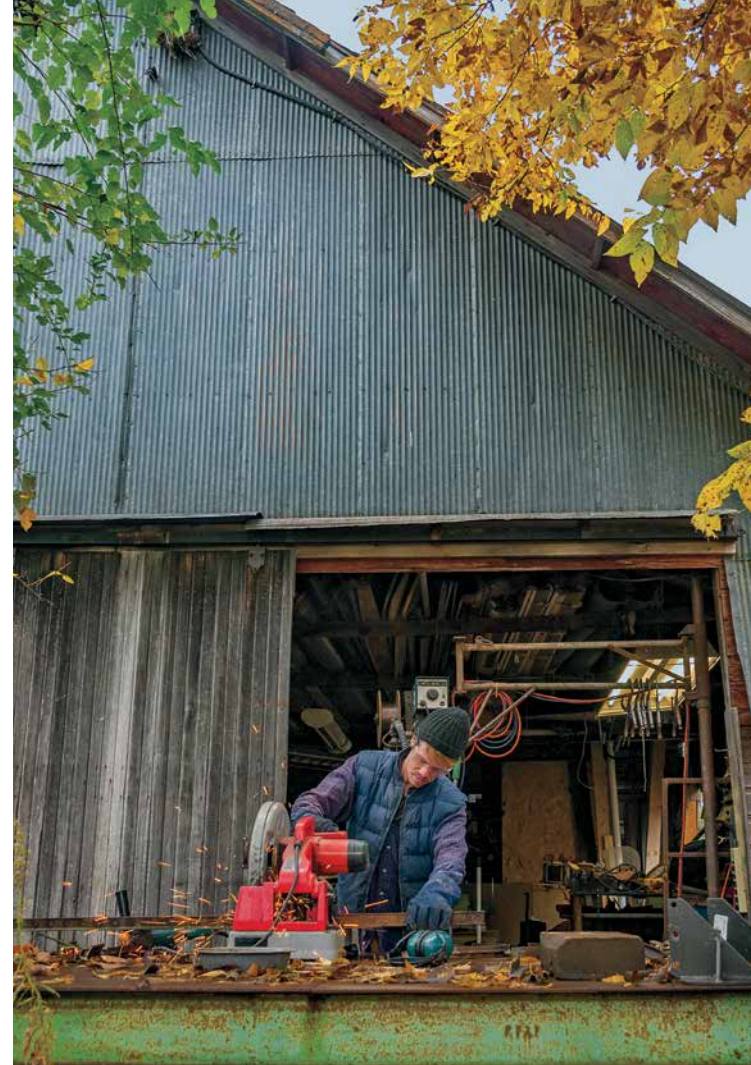
"My work there is an extension of our work here," Dadey said. "After 23 years, this is still somewhat of a mystery to our neighbors." The artists here are not students; most are working professional artists. Past participants have included heads of colleges, major grant winners and writers who have been on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. "In New York City, Art Farm is a household name," Dadey said.

Visiting artists spread out among three residences at Art Farm. One is a 100-year-old farm house. Another is a four-story barn complex. The other home, a three-story house built around 1890, sat abandoned in a cornfield for 55 years before being moved here. Upon seeing the line of cars behind the house as it was being transported down the road, a German artist imagined a string of attendants following a queen and nicknamed the house Victoria.

Plans for this castle include replacing missing floorboards, a paint job and repairing the leaky roof. Dadey hopes someone will donate steel beams that can be repurposed for a planned elevator tower leading to a reading nook incorporating 100 salvaged courthouse windows. Many of the more than 20 buildings here were saved from bulldozers and burn piles on neighboring farms.

The artists grow their own organic produce, take nature walks and spread rumors among themselves of a pending Art Farm subway system. They sometimes take excursions to Marquette to sing a few hours of karaoke at the Don't Care Bar & Grill before returning to their studios.

The farm's labyrinth of structures includes a wood shop, rooms full of salvaged printing presses and sheds used as studios. The "floating barn," so named for its red drapes that flutter in the breeze, is destined to be a performing arts center. Dadey said the barn has perfect acoustics.



A lack of wood forced Colin Chudyk of British Columbia, Canada, to learn new skills and create his art with recycled steel fence posts instead. Art Farm works range from simple to the extreme.



THE SOUND OF metal striking metal echoes across Art Farm after a brief rain. “Ed has plans for all of his wood, but there are lots of metal fence posts, so I learned to weld,” said Colin Chudyk, an architecture student from British Columbia. He spends summers jumping out of helicopters, taking soil samples and filing gold, diamond and copper claims to pay for his schooling. He drove 2,016 miles to Art Farm in an old Buick he calls Mastodon III. The journey took Chudyk a week. The car barely made it, sputtering and limping to Hamilton County. Luckily for Chudyk, his mentor, Dadey, knows a thing or two about keeping old machines running.

Hundreds of artists from around the world apply for the few dozen openings at Art Farm each year. At any given time the roster could include a mix of photographers, musicians, poets, novelists, painters, potters, videographers, sculptors, mathematicians or graffiti artists. Environmental artist Chudyk is inspired by the Hamilton County landscape. “This is beautiful, with a reliable sunrise and sunset each day,” Chudyk said. “The irrigation pivots are like giant creatures crawling across fields. This place is a total

anomaly, like a little parcel of creative chaos surrounded by quiet fields and small towns.”

Art Farm’s annual Art Harvest in October allows curious visitors to learn about the creative commune and lets artists showcase their work. Chudyk’s planned work of art involves a 200-foot channel dug into the earth, traversing the lay of the land and gradually becoming part of it as weather erodes it to ruins.

Artists leaving lasting impressions on the landscape is nothing new for Art Farm. On the grassland Dadey planted 30 years ago with seeds he harvested from prairie remnants along railroad tracks, a mud hut created by a Chinese artist rivals the sky with its blue hue. Acres away, bricks and jars capture the sun in a prism entitled “Prairie Preserve.” The newest addition, Elliott’s bright cupola, will fade into the farm’s artistic landscape.

“This is a postage stamp of earth in Nebraska, and we have opened it to the world,” Dadey said. “I am amazed by how much my life has been enriched by sharing Art Farm. Like food for our spirit and soul, art enriches all of our lives.”

CHECK it out >>>

Art Harvest is scheduled for Oct. 22-23 but is subject to change. Visit artfarmnebraska.org/events to confirm the dates.

In exchange for Art Farm internships, artists – some of whom have no experience in carpentry – help work on the farm’s three unique residences.



“When do you ever have a chance in life to live at a place like this?” said Holly Riddle, an artist from England. “Nebraska is a strange place to an outsider and I didn’t know what to expect. It is windy and the roads are so straight, but in a way, Art Farm and Nebraska feel like home.”



Art Farm director Ed Dadey straddles the boundaries of the art world, with one foot in the New York City art scene, and the other firmly planted in rural Hamilton County farm dirt.



ART FARM GLEANINGS

MEGHAN ROSWELL'S FIRST Nebraska experiences were long car trips on Interstate 80 between home in Wyoming and family in New York. Her immersion in the Cornhusker State began after moving to Hastings. The fiber artist was attending Hastings College when she discovered Art Farm, and has never moved back home. The experience remains with her and her art.

"Art Farm is an adventure. I remember going through all of the clutter and boxes, and then dragging things back to my studio like an animal dragging prey back to its den," Roswell said. "In addition to exploring my creative side, I learned how to mix concrete, lay a foundation and grade a slope. Those are skills that I will always have. Art Farm definitely left me leaner and stronger."

Her husband's Air Force career keeps her on the move, but Nebraska figures into much of her work. "Living in Nebraska taught me a ton about perspective," Roswell said. "You've got those seemingly limitless flat distances where you can watch the telephone poles go off into the distance one by one. The open space and Nebraska sky is a lesson in light. Golden evening light over a field of corn on a clear autumn day is one of my favorite things." 🐾



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Waiting

on **Winter**

Preparations begin long
before the *snow flies*

STORY BY ALAN J. BARTELS



Farmers' thoughts turn to winter once harvest is in the bins. Will there be enough moisture? Or too much, too late? We prepare the best we can, but all we can really do is wait to see what winter brings.

Erik Johnson



Winter roller coaster

A light dusting of snow on a hilly gravel road west of Wilsonville offers little resistance to Nebraskans adept at winter driving. Frosty leaves and grass catch light at Stagecoach State Recreation Area in Lancaster County.

Roxy Lang



Derrald Farnsworth -Livingston

Nebraskans often use words like “dreary,” “lifeless” and “long” to describe winter. Some even threaten to move to warmer climes or sequester themselves indoors until summer.

Winter was a villainous character in the lives of prairie pioneers. The nearly treeless plains challenged their ability to maintain the most basic need – staying warm. The solution was found in “prairie coal.” Settlers stacked mountainous piles of bison and cattle scat in preparation of winter. The continual task solidified their disdain for the season.

Stories of blinding blizzards killing livestock and livelihoods, family, friends and neighbors are still passed to new generations. No wonder so many people claim to hate winter.

Today we look at winter in a less harsh light thanks to modern conveniences and improved clothing, but preparing for winter remains part of life in Nebraska.

Darrel and Ruth Ann Steele are modern-day pioneers. Their winter preparations begin right after the last frost. Large gardens on their former dairy farm near Ainsworth produce onions, green beans, eggplant, rutabaga, beets, turnips, peppers, Swiss chard and other staples. Darrel lugs buckets of tomatoes to the kitchen, and Ruth Ann promptly turns them into gallons of juice. Butternut squash is harvested after the first freeze. There is an orchard of apples, pears and rare Niobrara River Valley wild peaches.

Traditional family corn-canning sessions ended last year after masked bandits sneaked through Darrel’s three-wire electric fence and decimated the crop. “Those dang raccoons. I’m done growing sweet corn,” Darrel said. “And this year the deer got their heads into the wire cages and got to my beans.”

A bumper crop from years past rests in rows of glass jars on wooden shelves in the Steeles’ large cellar. The “cave” was already being used by Darrel’s family when he was born 87 years ago. He has lived in this house his entire life with the exception of two years during the Korean War.

The cellar his father dug stays at a constant 40 degrees during winter, and there is enough surplus squirreled away if the season arrives early or lingers into May. “We’ve probably got enough food in there to last for several years. As long as the jar is sealed,

the food never goes bad. Some of it even gets better,” Darrel said.

“I’ve got 10-year-old sweet pickles in there that I could wash off, sprinkle with sugar, and they would be wonderful,” Ruth Ann added.

Darrel remembers the winter of 1949 as the worst ever. Keeping the snow off the cellar door was exhausting. Well-placed shotgun blasts meant prairie chickens, pheasants and rabbits supplemented the family’s winter diet of the meat and produce his mother canned.

“There was no running water or electricity. Mother cooked on the wood stove,” Darrel said. “The meat had to boil for five hours.”

Winters haven’t been bad for the couple, who married in 1956. They got even better after planting a shelterbelt of cedar, ponderosa pine, Scotch pine and hackberry trees. Sixty years later the Steeles are realizing the full benefits of that living snow fence.

Ruth Ann settles into her recliner and pulls a comforter over her lap as winter winds swirl. Darrel slips a flannel shirt on under his bib overalls and over his tall and lean frame. Bring it on, winter.

WINTER BEGINS IN August for a Hall County man with a round belly and white beard who travels thousands of miles from chimney to chimney. No, the community of Cairo west of Grand Island isn’t the North Pole’s southern outpost, and Lee Echtenkamp isn’t Kris Kringle. His phone begins ringing in late summer with calls from Nebraskans who have winter on their minds. The giant of a man is a chimney sweep.

Echtenkamp racks up 40,000 miles in the four months leading up to Christmas and changes the oil in his work truck every 10 days. His workplace ranges from the South Dakota and Kansas borders to Seward in the east and west to North Platte. He’s swept up a few stories during a 30-year career spent cleaning approximately 8,000 chimneys.

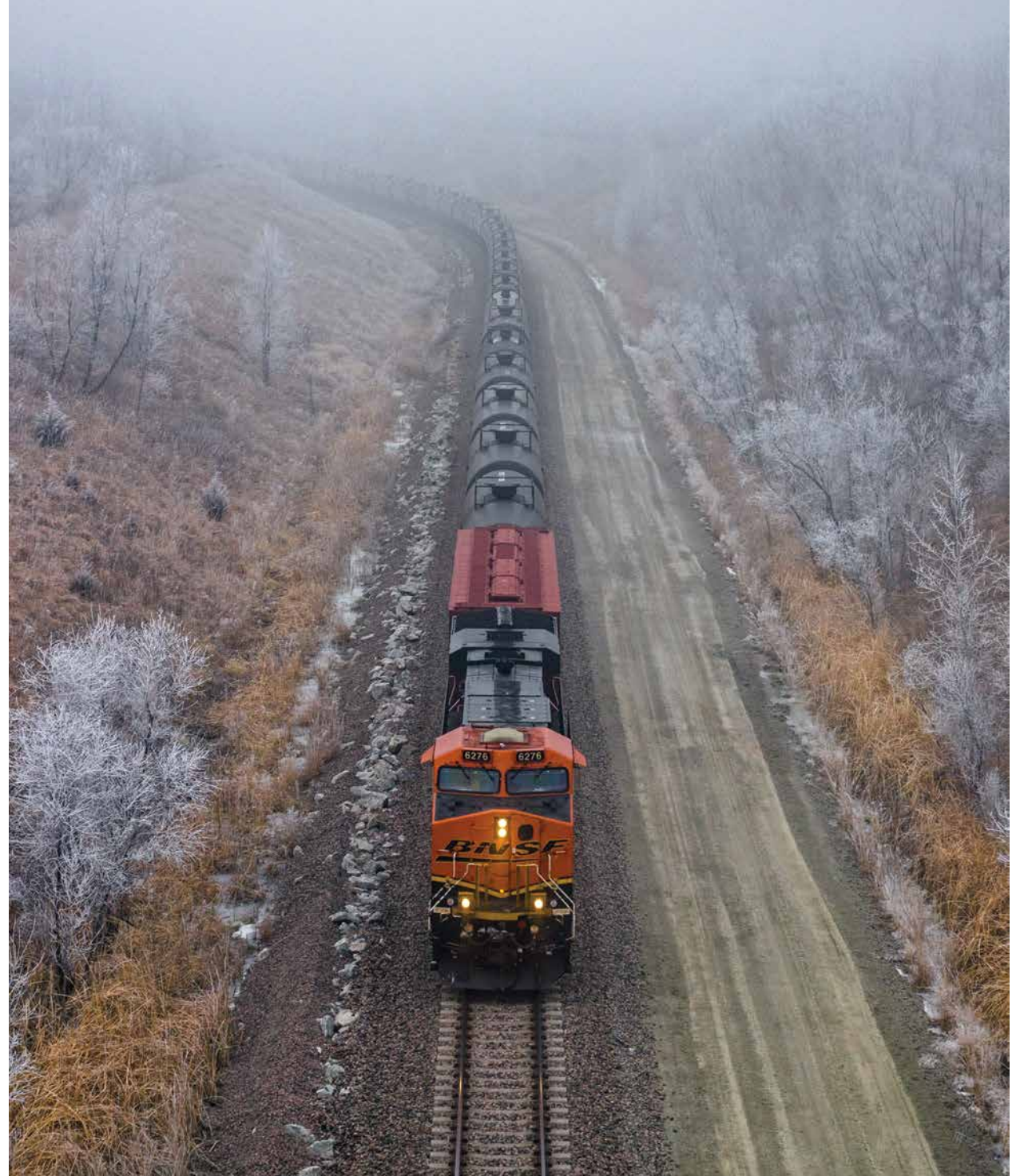
There was the time he was halfway up his 40-foot



Clean sweep

Lee Echtenkamp has spent 30 years knocking the soot from thousands of Nebraska chimneys while preparing for winter. The chimney sweep from Cairo suggests cleaning chimneys once a year. As for this portly, white-bearded fellow slipping down a chimney like St. Nick, "That ain't gonna happen," Echtenkamp said. "That is what the brush is for."

Alan J. Bartels



Erik Johnson

A train emerging from a thick haze of frozen fog is flanked by icy hoarfrost near Firth. As that long train whistle whines, Nebraskans with winters already under their belt wonder about the severity of the approaching season.

ladder when the smooth pavement of a new driveway, wet with rain, caused it to slide. He woke up on his back on top of the ladder. Another time he found something unexpected above the flue.

"I was sweeping this guy's place by Arcadia, and I went inside to clean up," Echtenkamp said. "I stuck my hose up there and hit something. It moved. I slowly put my mirror and light up there. Turns out his daughters were into sports. I had chased down a volleyball."

Echtenkamp once found himself in a small basement full of gunpowder, bullets and a wood burning stove. "In one home I found a wooden crate that said 'U.S. Military Rocket Launcher' leaning on the stove. I suggested he move that," Echtenkamp said.

In 1986 the Wakefield native took a job with a Cairo construction company that installed stoves during slower winter months. Customers began asking if they cleaned them. "I swept chimneys on nights and



Carla Schaffer



Pat Schoenfelder

Evelyn Frisch of Madison prepares for winter while crocheting warm items and sharing time with her grandson, Johnathan. The beauty of a pine-perched dark-eyed junco in Chase County can't chase away winter.

weekends because I needed the money," Echtenkamp said. He bought the company three years later.

"You can't read winter. I used to think that the more calls I got the more severe winter would be. Not true," Echtenkamp said. "When propane and natural gas prices go up, more people burn wood and I get busier. You can't really outguess Mother Nature."

Preparing for winter waits until October at Scotts Bluff National Monument. Rock slides are common until the ground cools. Only then is the heavy equipment retrofitted with snow blades and chains. That doesn't leave much of a buffer considering that the snow could fly any time.

A four-inch snowfall on the valley floor means four-foot snowdrifts and windchills of minus 50 degrees atop the monument. Keeping Summit Road

open is a constant battle for facilities manager Kevin Haberman. "The tunnels are challenging," Haberman said. "Getting rid of the snow isn't easy with a retaining wall on one side of the road and the cliff face on the other. Opening that two-mile road can take four days. People don't like hitting ice patches where they can see over the edge and down into the canyons below."

The eventual passing of winter presents another unique challenge for Haberman's crew. "We have these tumbleweed migrations that sometimes block the road in front of the first tunnel," Haberman said. "They can be 10 feet deep!"

Maybe those pioneering Western workers could burn those tumbleweeds for warmth in a pinch. Don't worry about winter. Spring is just around the corner. ♡



Scenic winter trails

Even the stealthiest of creatures can't cover their tracks after a fresh snowfall. This granary not far from Omaha is attractive to meandering wildlife and wandering photographers alike. Love it or hate it, winter is a beautiful season. We hope you will leave the comfort and warmth of your home for an exhilarating adventure in Nebraska this winter.

Erik Johnson

Winter HARVEST

Valley County Lettuce Farmers
Trade Winter Blues for Leafy Greens

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAN J. BARTELS



With the help his wife, Carrie, and several generations of family, Ryan David nurtures his mother's greenhouse dream on the David farm northeast of Ord.

LONG ROWS OF green crops are nothing new across Nebraska's millions of farm acres. By this time of year, hay has been baled and bins are topped with drying legumes and grains, but harvest never ends northeast of Ord, where a green crop grows all year long at Oak Ridge Farms. Yes, even during the winter.

Thousands of heads of lettuce grow from greenhouse rows in the rolling hills of Valley County corn and soybean country. The David family's hydroponic farm is a four-generation affair that began with matriarch Barb David before her death in 2015.



THE WEATHER IS always perfect inside Ryan David's greenhouse. He has Valley County grit under his fingernails, and he has a green thumb, too. After clocking out from his full-time job of fixing and driving trucks with the Valley County Highway Department each afternoon, Ryan spends three to four hours tending rows of lettuce. Growing a hydroponic farm near scenic Oak Ridge Canyon between Ericson and Ord was his mother's idea.

The family moved back to patriarch Gerald David's Valley County roots when Ryan was 11 years old. Gerald and his wife, Barb, wanted their three children to experience farm life. Working the family cattle herd and raising crops became part of their daily chores.

Ryan attended college in Wyoming after graduating from Ord High School. He stayed to work in fertile lands of another kind: oil fields.

In 2009 he followed family tradition by returning to Ord to begin his own family. "I didn't want my wife and kids to be part of the fast money and 'colorful' characters that come along with the gold rush mentality of oil," Ryan said.

An autumnal rush of soybeans and golden corn kernels grow from the acres the Davids rent to a neighboring farmer. The sandy soil is useless in the greenhouse's two bay gutter-connect system because the 9,600 bibb lettuce plants growing inside don't need any dirt at all.

Ryan schedules his greenhouse work around his "real job." Seeds from the Netherlands are planted in trays of rockwool every Thursday evening. The substance is made by melting rocks and sand and then spinning it into a fibrous mass. The material is sterile and retains water. "We don't have to wash the lettuce when we harvest because none of the plants have ever seen dirt," said Ryan's dad, Gerald, who lives in Wyoming

but makes the trip to Ord every other weekend to help on the farm. The family continued his wife's hydroponic dreams after she died.

There were two things she always wanted to do: raise sheep and have a greenhouse. "We got 600 sheep. She had 20 raised garden beds, too," Gerald said. "We put up the greenhouses after she hurt her foot and could no longer work with the animals."

The first family lettuce harvest was in September of 2013. Barb died on Valentine's Day less than two years later. "She was a farm and ranch girl, and she enjoyed this terribly. I think about her a lot when I am working in here," Gerald said.

GREENHOUSE WORK OFFERS a propane-fueled warm reprieve from winter for Ryan and his wife, Carrie, when other Nebraska farmland is frozen solid. The 44-foot-wide by 130-foot-long round-top building also is a short-sleeve winter

wonderland free of snow and ice for their son Ryker, 2, and daughter, Cadence, 5.

The children zoom around in the greenhouse on bicycles or push toy tractors through the gravel floor while adults from three other generations of the David family tend to the plants. A few hundred heads of red lettuce are planted among the thousands of green ones in what resembles a football field-sized kitchen table covered with salad.

"The children can help for about 20 minutes before their attention span peters out. Next thing you know, lettuce seeds are rolling onto the floor," said Carrie, who lived on a farm three miles from here until she was 7 years old. Her four siblings and mother moved into town after her father was killed in a farm accident. Just west of the greenhouse is her grandparents' farm. She works full-time as office manager for an Ord dentist. During her seven years there she has also swept spinach and seeds from between patients' teeth as a hygienist's assistant.

Wilted Lettuce Salad

Guy Lewis, Ord

Cook bacon in saucepan. Remove bacon from pan when cooked and save grease. Keep drippings in pan on medium heat. Stir in vinegar and sugar. Reduce. While this is cooking, combine lettuce, eggs, onion and bacon. Pour reduction over salad and toss.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 head lettuce, cleaned and chopped
- 6-10 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 1 lb bacon, diced
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 2-4 tsp sugar (to taste)

Serves 4

Tiny lettuce seeds are pelletized by suppliers for easier handling. When the Davids' children help plant the next crop, seeds roll from tiny hands.





Doris David and her son Gerald David help pick lettuce in the greenhouse. The day's harvest of 1,600 heads is delivered by family members, too.

The lettuce seedlings grow quickly and are transferred into larger trays the Tuesday afternoon after they were planted. The young sprouts are placed one-by-one into long, gutter-like trays. A small, square chunk of their rockwool nursery bed comes along. The greenhouse uses very little water, and each plant receives a nutrient-spiked supply until it is plucked from the tray.

A mature head of summer lettuce can be raised in about six weeks, and a typical summer harvest day involves picking 1,900 heads. The growing season is three weeks longer during the shorter days of winter due to less light shining through the greenhouse's translucent ceiling.

Challenges include clogged water lines and occasional insects. Heating the greenhouse is one of the most expensive costs involved with the operation. The greenhouse is not cooled in the summer. Stretching a

cover over the behemoth building to hold in the heat shouldn't be a one-man endeavor. "I've done it, but I don't suggest that anybody try that by themselves," Ryan said.

Weekly plantings mean that the reaping of another batch is always only a week away. The vegetable harvest comes to fruition on Saturday mornings when four generations of Oak Ridge boys and girls gather bright and early on the family farm to gather the fruits of their vegetable labors.

The lettuce is packaged in individual plastic containers for grocery stores and packed in larger boxes for customers at restaurants that use Oak Ridge Farms' lettuce in their menu items. A refrigerated trailer keeps the crop fresh and crisp, and family members crank up the air conditioner in their car and head in every direction to deliver it all. Everything picked from this green winter garden is in

customers' hands by Monday at the latest.

Local businesses like Speed's Apple Market in Ord and the Sandstone Grill restaurant in Burwell get their farm-fresh lettuce the same day the Davids pick it. "The only way to get fresher lettuce in Nebraska is to grow it yourself. There aren't too many people doing that during winter," Carrie said. Schools, hospitals, restaurants and grocery stores in Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney and other communities receive the bulk of the bumper lettuce crop.

CARRIE AND RYAN can barely keep up with the cartfuls of produce Gerald is pushing down the aisles. Doris David, Gerald's mother, is working at the far end of the greenhouse pulling lettuce heads out of the trays. She inspects them, snaps off the silky white roots and fills cart after cart.

Small heads or ugly ones go to the food

bank or homeless shelter. "They taste just as good, but our standards are pretty high. If all you have ever eaten is that flavorless iceberg kind, then you have no idea what you are missing," Doris said.

"We are so busy with all of our jobs that we wouldn't get to see her very often if she didn't work here with us," Ryan said of his grandmother. "She loves doing this, and she won't let me pay her. I love that we have four generations working together in here on the family business my mom dreamed of.

"When my mom and dad and I were setting this up the first year, it was a real learning curve," Ryan said. "During the second year I was asking myself if I could even do this without her here. This is our third year. This was my mom's dream, and now it is mine. With family by my side, I know this is my year to grow." 🍷



Valley County Asian Lettuce Wraps

"We use 40 to 60 heads of Oak Ridge Farms' bibb lettuce each week on our salad bar," said Ashley Summers, dietary manager for the Valley County Health System in Ord. "This lettuce stays fresh and green for up to two weeks. Even better is that our patients, their families and our staff love it."

Rinse lettuce leaves. Pat dry taking care not to tear. Set aside.

Brown beef in large skillet with cooking oil over medium to high heat. Drain grease and put beef in bowl. Cook chopped onion in same skillet until tender. Stir in hoisin sauce, garlic, soy sauce, vinegar, ginger and chile pepper sauce. Then add water chestnuts, green onions, sesame oil and beef, and stir while cooking until onions begin wilting, about 2 minutes.

Place lettuce along edge of platter and scoop mixture into center. Wrap the lettuce around meat in burrito fashion and enjoy.

INGREDIENTS:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 16 | bibb lettuce leaves | 1 | Tbsp rice wine vinegar |
| 1 | lb lean ground beef | 2 | tsp pickled ginger, minced |
| 1 | Tbsp cooking oil | 1 | dash Asian chile pepper sauce (optional) |
| 1 | large onion, chopped | 8 | oz water chestnuts, drained and chopped fine |
| 1/4 | cup hoisin sauce | 1 | bunch green onions, chopped |
| 2 | cloves fresh garlic, minced | 2 | tsp Asian (dark) sesame oil |
| 1 | Tbsp soy sauce | | |

Serves 16