

HUMBOLDT NOW!

Volume 17 • Issue 4 • April 2026



! EZ Animal Products
! MORITZ RETIRES FROM BANK IOWA
! Bertha Wagner supports public library

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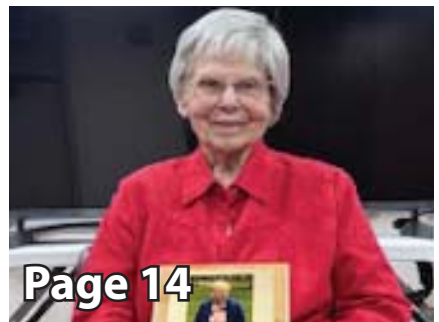
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On the cover: Buck and Karen Wheeler are shown here with a package of milking products made at their company in Humboldt.

See more inside! —Photo by Phil Monson

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THE BOOKWORM!



Time to Plant

By JULIE LARSEN, Humboldt Public Library Director

Spring is in the air! Step outside and you can feel it and hear it. Whether you are a flower gardener, vegetable/herb gardener, container gardener, raised beds, an in-ground gardener, or perhaps a combination, the right books can be a guide and an inspiration. Our library's gardening collection opens the gate with a wealth of information for the beginner to the experienced gardener.

"A Year in the Edible Garden" by Sarah Raven is a month-by-month guide to growing and harvesting vegetables, herbs and edible flowers. With beautiful pictures, this book celebrates the endless possibilities of vegetable gardens and showcases that edible gardening can be both productive and stunning. The author showcases her favorite varieties along with descriptions. I enjoy adding a few new varieties every year, sometimes I find a new keeper.

Create, cultivate and care for garden – look no further than "Gardening Know How: The Complete Guide to Vegetable Gardening," which offers detailed information for success. Other highlights include soil building, seed starting, fertilizing, composting along with preserving and storing your harvest. Included is a spotlight on creating seasoning mixes with dried herbs.

Filled with know-how and encouragement to help you succeed is Jessica Sowards (Of Roots and Refuge Farm), "The First-Time Gardener Growing Vegetables". You'll read about steps to reduce weeding, watering and other garden tasks. Filled with practical and easy-to-follow advice, you'll want to read this book cover-to-cover.

Sometimes finding time to garden seems impossible. On the days I am working, I like to do a walk through my garden twice a day. I may stop and pick, or I take a row or two and do some weeding and hoeing. Nicole Johnsey Burke's "The 5-Minute Gardener" guides you through the various stages of the gardening season with minimal methods to keep your gardening thriving, seasonal garden plans and garden-to-table dishes you can quickly prepare.

For simple tips and tricks to grow your best garden, check out "Vegetable Gardening Made Easy" by Resh Gala. The tips and tricks in the book will help elevate your garden from good to great. Chapters are quick and easy to follow from the start of the season to the end.

Did you know the library offers a seed catalog? It's located near the circulation desk. We started the season with over 500 packages of vegetable, herb and flower seeds. Seed packets are a limit of 10 packages per month. Simply fill out

a Seed Check-out Form with the plant name and variety (Ex: Cucumber – Muncher). Utilizing the Seed Catalog is an opportunity to try a new variety of seed. Do you have extra seed packages at home to share and add to our collection? Stop in or call us if you have questions.

There are no rules to gardening. Just find a way that suits you and works with your schedule. Growing your own food, or having some beautiful flower containers on your patio can give you a sense of accomplishment, especially when you take a small seed, nurture it and watch it flourish.

Gardening is a learn-as-you-go adventure. It can be small or large. Gardening offers benefits that reach far beyond the soil. Cultivate a more active life and visit the Library today...opening a gardening book on a rainy day will have you dreaming of the sunny days to come.



What's Happening April NOW!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
EVERY MONDAY Board of Supervisors - 8:30AM			April Fools Day April 1	World Autism Awareness Day	No School	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 5	Adams Post 119 meeting At VFW in Dakota City at 7PM Humboldt City Council - 5:30PM		Dakota City City Council 7PM			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		Crafts & Crafts Free event by HAAC Bring your own craft! At Night Owl 5-8PM Wildcat PTO Mease Library - 5:30PM	Early Out HAPPY EARTH DAY APRIL 22 ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY	NATIONAL Orchid Day APRIL 16 Choir: 1st Grade Music Program (Elementary Concerts) 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm HHS		PROM
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
national library week	Humboldt School Board Meeting 5:30PM Admin office Humboldt City Council - 5:30PM			Book Sale 24th - 3-6PM 25th - 9-Noon At Methodist Church Fellowship Hall		Sip, Sparkle, Stem and Shop FORT DODGE ALL DAY
26	27	28	29	30		
		Early Out				See all Humboldt Comm. School District's events for April., scan this QR code!

To submit items for the Community Calendar please email faith@humboldtnews.com or call 515.332.2514

Community Calendar Sponsored by:

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HUMBOLDT IN THE '50S AND '60S

BY TOM SWEARINGEN

THE DRIVE

Editor's Note: The Kelle-Sande Addition was platted with a tear-drop shaped median in the southwest corner. The houses the author talks about surround this median.

The Kelle-Sande Addition was built around 1949 and included 46 homes, today known as Rainbow Drive in Humboldt. Many families called the subdivision their dwelling place over the years. I knew everyone who lived there in the 50s and 60s, as I had the Des Moines Register paper route for about five years. The whole neighborhood was a congenial place of "Ozzie and Harriets" and "Leave It To Beavers" but the nine houses overlooking the Tear Drop were especially close over those years - We were more like family than anything else.

#35. The Hulls - Harry, Jean, Terry, and Chip - lived in the first house up the hill to the left. Harry's parents owned the local department store, Hull's, on Sumner Avenue in downtown Humboldt, and Jean worked for years at Stow-Skow Equipment Company. They always had a pet Beagle howling in the yard. I would often go over to their house to read the Fort Dodge Messenger, since we didn't take it; it was an afternoon paper then. My mom and Jean were best friends, going back to their HHS days in the 30s. Terry was a year behind me in school and Chip was about four years younger.

#36. The Packers lived right across the street from us. Jim and Milly had six kids: Corky, Janine, Mary, Tom, Anne and Joe, all living in that small house. My sister and Mary were, and still are, good friends. Corky and I would often get up in the middle of the night and meet in the street to view the stars and planets through his telescope. I remember going over to their house one time to participate in the Rosary, something foreign to me as a Protestant. After the Packers moved away, Jack and Jody Bennett lived there with their two kids, Jeff and Jackie. Jody loved horses and still does.

#37. The Winds - Duane and Donnie, lived next door to the Packers with their five kids: LaVonne, Rick, Ken, Ron and Va Loyce. They owned the shoe store in downtown on the corner, Wind's Bootery, and eventually built a house down by the river. Donnie was very active in the community and lived to well over 100. The Albertson Family bought the house and Kelly and Mollie brought along their five boys: Jeff, Shane, Tom, Casey

and Mike. Kelly was in sales and Mollie a nurse.

#38. The Larsons - Bud and Thelma, lived at #38 with their four children: Jeff, John, Doug and Diane. Bud worked for Corn Belt and Thelma stayed home, eventually working for the school system in the lunch program. She was a great cook who was a whiz at making Norwegian goodies, especially kringla. Most of Thelma's family, the Fevolds, lived in Humboldt County.

#39. Bob and Sarah Bybee had three daughters: Patsy, Cheryl and Carolyn. Bob worked at Corn Belt and Sarah was a stay-at-home mom. Their gentle black dog, Tippy, would often visit our surrounding area.

#40. The Nybys both grew up in Humboldt. My mother knew both Betty and Nyb in school. They were always camping and taking trips to Colorado where they eventually settled. Their three girls were Becky, Barb and Sue. Becky and I were a year apart and eventually met again when I was at the University of Wyoming, where I watched her play in a softball game while she was at Colorado State. Nyb worked for Dekalb Seed Company and Betty was a stay-at-home mom. The Sheets moved in after the Nybys vacated. Maurie and Donna had two boys: Ronnie and Rick. They, too, eventually moved to Colorado. We visited them one summer, driving all the way up Mount Evans on a rainy, foggy day in July, never to see a view. Donna grew up in the same Iowa town where Johnny Carson lived and knew him. The Berkas followed the Sheets at #40. Marv was in sales and Donna eventually had a number of different jobs in the community. They had four children: Randy, Marci, Lori and Mary.

#41. The Worthingtons, both Humboldt natives, lived nearby. Bob worked for Sande's and Betty was a stay-at-home mom. I was between Mike and Lisa in school. After they moved down closer to the old football field, the Baileys moved in. Mel had the State Farm Insurance Agency in town, and Audrey was a stay-at-home mom. Ronnie, Jerry and Dennis

were all older than I was, and Marlys was a year younger. I remember Jerry lifeguarding at the pool. He was a terrific diver and often showed off his ability during rest period for all to watch. Eventually, he was a landscape architect responsible for landscaping the “new” high school. I remember Dennis’s ’56 Chevy always parked at the curb in front of their house. Marlys had a horse that she kept at my grandparents’ property, riding often with my sister, Carol.

#8 The Reasoners lived next door to us on the right. They were the grandparents of the neighborhood. Harold owned the casket company and had a green thumb, cultivating a beautiful yard and garden. He was the uncle of Harry Reasoner of television fame. After Mr. Reasoner passed away I shoveled and cut grass for Mrs. Reasoner. They went to our church.

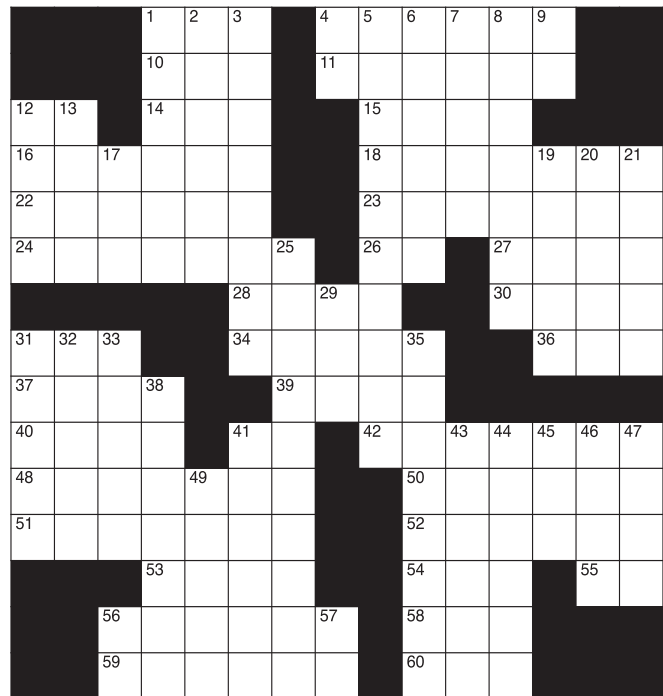
#9. I lived at #9 Rainbow Drive with my family from 1953 until I left for college. In 2022, the house was sold after my mother passed away. Our house was directly across the street from the Tear Drop, and I would frequently mow it when the grass got too long, as did others. Our home’s claim to fame was the large sycamore tree in the front yard, the only one in town at the time. My mother, Madalyn, a widow, stayed home until I was in the ninth grade, and then went back to teaching kindergarten in Livermore for 20 years. My sister, Carol, was three years younger than myself. All of my seven cousins, aunts and uncles and grandparents on my mother’s side lived in Humboldt County; my great-grandparents came to Humboldt County from Denmark and Norway in the 1870s and 1880s.

Our neighborhood never used door locks. When we visited each other, we just walked right in with a hearty, “Hello, anybody home?” Kids organized games, played together in the snow, celebrated Valentine’s Day, ran after each other on May Day, rode bikes together, had Fourth of July breakfast annually at Gotch Park, etc. Families had neighborhood picnics in each other’s yards and ate together informally, an extra plate added at the kitchen table. We suffered losses together (and still do) and celebrated joys. Some were Methodists, Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists and Congregationalists.

Families’ dogs and cats roamed the area and were treated as everyone’s pets, often coming into the house for a visit. We kids were in the same schools, sometimes in the same classes, following the ups and downs of Humboldt High School wins and losses together.

All of the families who once lived in these nine homes moved away from the area long ago. Today, all of the parents are deceased, except for Betty Nyby and the Bennetts. The kids who grew up there became businesspeople, teachers, doctors, pharmacists, landscapers, government workers and more. They live from Minnesota to California to Florida to Illinois, with Iowa still the favorite of many.

The lower fourth of Rainbow Drive was a great place to grow up in the 50s and 60s. The memories linger. It was an idyllic place then, a real-life Bedford Falls!



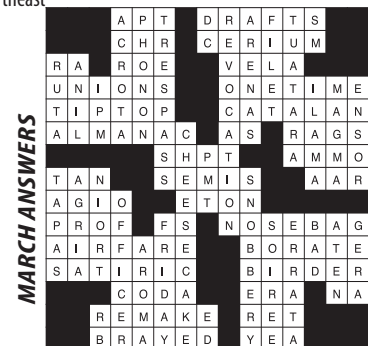
CLUES ACROSS

1. Health care pros
4. A person inhabiting Benin
7. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
10. Split pulses
11. Frozen water
12. Small constellation
13. Perennial mountain rice
15. Pick up
16. Japanese historical period
19. Suggesting the horror of death and decay
21. Unattached
23. Fishing port in SE France
24. Products for dogs
25. One point south of southeast
26. Having the skill or resources to do something
27. Involve oneself deeply
30. Immobile
34. ___ pai dong: Hong Kong food stall
35. Move quickly on foot
36. Gathered
41. A way through
45. Another name for Thor
46. Sharp dueling sword
47. The supreme commander of a fleet
50. Seasoned sausages
54. Path
55. Christian hermit
56. Ancient region of Asia Minor
57. Where wrestlers go to work
59. Roman statesman
60. Explosive
61. Licensed for Wall Street
62. Where golfers start

63. Grow old
64. Autonomic nervous system
65. No seats available

CLUES DOWN

1. A legally binding command
2. General feeling of discomfort
3. Dribble
4. Soft touch
5. South American plant
6. Clouds of gas and dust in space
7. Warm-blooded vertebrates
8. Lines created by folding
9. Strong belief
13. Senior officer
14. Adult
17. Joint entrance examination in India
18. Passports and drivers' licenses are two
20. Those who go against an accepted authority
22. One point east of northeast
27. Journalist Tarbell
28. One's mother (British)
29. Nowhere to be found
31. A way to save for old age
32. Fall behind
33. Midway between northeast and east
37. The work of a sailor
38. Mark with striae
39. Energy, style and enthusiasm
40. Sticky situation
41. Monetary units of Spain
42. Three-banded armadillo
43. Chooses
44. More disreputable
47. Defensive nuclear weapon
48. "The Partridge Family" actress Susan
49. Livestock owners assn. in Spain
51. Duplicating machine (abbr.)
52. OJ trial judge
53. Politician
58. Airborne (abbr.)



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From left, CEO of Bank Iowa, Jim Plagge and Humboldt employees Lynn Kellner, Emily Knight, Tara Cran, Sheri Moritz, Kari Evans, Cindy Diehl and Trisha Menke, Retail Banking Director/Bank Security Officer, were on hand to help Moritz celebrate her 31 years with Bank Iowa. Moritz's last day was Friday, March 13.



Sheri Moritz – from teller to retirement

By APRIL KELLEY

Sheri Moritz didn't grow up dreaming of working in a bank. She actually wanted to be a nutritionist. Fate had other plans and now, more than 30 years later, Moritz is leaving a career she had never planned for but has loved, nonetheless.

After Moritz married her high school sweetheart, Gary, in 1982, they moved to Humboldt from Remsen. Following the move, she started her adult life working at various entry-level jobs like many others. She had an in-home day-care, worked at the school in the lunch program and then finally settled in at Smith Insurance as an office assistant before receiving an offer she couldn't refuse.

"Jerry Howard came into Smith Insurance where I was working and talked to Bill Merris and Eric Sime (previous owners of Smith Realty and Insurance) and told them he would like to interview me for a bank job," Moritz said.

Howard was the president of what was then Humboldt Trust and Savings which later became Bank Iowa. He knew the Moritzs well because of working with them through their business, Gary's Menswear.

"After the interview he said, 'well I better go over and tell Bill and Eric that

I'm going to hire you away from them,'" Moritz said.

Moritz accepted the position and started at the drive-up location on Highway 169 as a teller in January of 1995 and never looked back.

"Jerry was a great boss. I keep saying that he took this shy little redhead and gave me the courage and confidence to talk to people. He had that trust in me," Moritz said.

Moritz loved the job and the fact that the hours worked well with their family. Gary and Sheri have two children, Kari and Adam.

Moritz worked full-time, but since she worked on Saturday, she had Thursday off.

"With Gary having the clothing store, he was open on Saturday so it wasn't a big deal and then I was able to have Thursday off to do housecleaning or errands when things were open," Moritz said.

Moritz remembers those first years working at the drive-up window.

"We didn't have automatic teller machines and everything inside was done manually so we had to write the debit and credit slips. Counting cash was also done by hand. I remember a client once told me that I should take a job in Vegas because of how fast I could count cash,"

Moritz said.

She also remembers that many things had a delay to them.

"Transactions were posted three times a day as opposed to real-time processing as it is today," Moritz said.

Because everything was done manually, payday for employees at certain businesses could get pretty busy.

"I will never forget, I would be the one to open on Friday morning and one of the business's night crew would come through (to cash their checks). We had two lanes and they would be backed up all the way to the street," Moritz said.

Rather than be frazzled, Moritz found it exhilarating.

"I love that because it was busy work and it was an accomplishment. After you cash all those checks and you balance at the end of the day, it was just wonderful," Moritz said.

Banking began to change a lot while Moritz was at the drive-through location.

"We didn't have automatic teller machines (ATM) or debit cards, automatic cash counters, online banking, direct deposit or any of those things then," Moritz said.

While she loved the drive-through location, her children were starting to grow up and began participating in ac-

tivities that required Moritz to attend. When she was offered a position downtown, where her hours were Monday through Friday, she decided it was time to make a change.

"I was able to make it to the softball tournaments and volleyball tournaments and all the other activities. We are huge Iowa State fans so we like to go to games. It was nice to be able to take off on weekends," Moritz said.

After moving to the downtown location, Moritz was promoted to customer service, then to regional supervisor and then finally to regional retail banking manager.

As a Regional Retail Banking Manager, Moritz is responsible for overall leadership and management of regional retail operations, client experience, business development, community leadership and teller functions. She implements, trains and monitors policies, processes and procedures for all retail deposit products and services including but not limited to loan and deposit development activities and strategies to promote growth. She also provides onboarding and training for new employees.

Retail banking is the frontline people who take care of the customers. They deal with cash transactions, online banking questions, debit card issues, deposits and withdrawals. That kind of thing.

While many of the things happening in this new age of banking have made life easier for both employees and the public, it has also led to some serious issues.

Because of the ease of moving money around, frauds and scams have become a much larger issue than they have been in the past.

"Scams are the most challenging. Having a conversation with a customer who has been a customer for a long time who might be dealing with a scammer or who may have already been scammed is very difficult," Moritz said.

Now with the advent of AI, it has made it much easier for scammers to take advantage of people, especially the elderly.

"With the debit card fraud, the person gets a text message impersonating the bank saying did you do this on your debit card? And they say in the message it's the fraud team and the person says 'Oh gosh, I have to fix this.' Pretty soon they have given them all the information needed to use the card and the person being scammed did it innocently,"

Moritz said.

She agrees that while the elderly are targeted the most, anyone can be a victim of fraud.

While those moments when things go wrong are heartbreaking, luckily, they are not the norm and Moritz has had several wonderful things happen while working at the bank.

In 2019, Moritz was awarded the "Be People Centered Award".

"I was nominated by my peers and I didn't know I was getting it. It was an awesome experience, very heartwarming. When something like this comes from your peers, it means so much," Moritz said.

Moritz admits that those same co-workers are what made the decision to retire difficult.

"I will really miss my co-workers and customers. People I have been in contact with for over 30 years. I have developed a lot of good relationships with people through work who have become good friends," Moritz said.

While she knows the friendships will remain, there is a difference when you are not in constant contact.

"They become like family and it's a little like moving away from home," Moritz said.

Moritz has also enjoyed working with the children to help them see money and banking as a positive thing.

"One little girl came through the drive when I was working there and she said 'I really like your house'," Moritz remembers.

She has also volunteered at many functions that center around children such as the Humboldt Area Arts Fest, the Humboldt County Fair, the Cy-Hawk Rivalry showdown and parades.

"I like to get the kids involved with banking and thinking about saving money. With everything online, it's different now for kids," Moritz said.

While she will miss working with those kids and being with her work family, she is definitely looking forward to being able to be with her own children and family.

Moritz's father lives in Remsen and she is the oldest of four siblings, three of which live in Iowa and one in Kansas City.

Her daughter Kari and husband Chuck Radack live in Baltic, SD and have five children and her son Adam and his wife Stephanie live in Gretna, NE and have one child with another due in May.

"I want to stay active. My friend said 'Oh please tell me you aren't going to just stay home and clean out closets' and I said well maybe just the first couple of weeks," Moritz joked.

After that however, she has a long list of things she would like to do.

"I love to read and I don't do that much anymore so I want to do that. I used to cross stitch and I would love to again. I want to make a quilt for each of my grandchildren," Moritz said.

She also enjoys golf, biking, walking and attending her grandchildren's events when possible.

"It will be nice to be able to go to the things I have had to say no to in the past because of work," Moritz said.

"I've really enjoyed working at Bank Iowa, and I have learned so much and made great connections but it's time. I feel ready for this next part of my life," Moritz said.



The Be People-Centered award went to Sheri Moritz from Bank Iowa's Humboldt office. Moritz was recognized for her ability to lead with compassion while celebrating effort as often as outcomes. Moritz has a true open-door policy and sets ambitious, yet attainable goals that empower her team. Her commitment to prioritizing the needs of others sends an important message to the community Bank Iowa serves.

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A photograph of a bathroom with white subway tile walls, a patterned floor, and a small wooden table with a plant.A small inset photograph showing a custom shower with a glass door and a tiled interior.

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Band



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HUMBOLDT

NEWS FROM YOUR CITY

SPRING CLEANUP

**DROP SITE: CITY'S STREET SHOP
LOCATION 1000 LEWIS ST., HUMBOLDT**

NO CURBSIDE PICKUP

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6TH • FROM 7:00AM TO 7:00PM

SATURDAY, MAY 9TH • FROM 8:00AM TO 3:00PM

Appliance stickers
available at City
Hall! - \$10.00

NO BAGS OR BOXES OF JUNK ALLOWED!

- Small items that can be placed in a garbage bag will not be accepted.
- City of Humboldt residents only. Have ID available.
- ALL appliances and electronics must have an appliance sticker.

Drop-Off Prohibited Items:

Waste oil	Wire
Tires	Batteries
Items w/Freon	Paint
Shingles	Cement
Steel	Chemicals
Construction/Demo Materials	

Any items may be rejected at City's discretion.



SPRING CLEANUP SCHEDULE FOR CITY OF HUMBOLDT RESIDENTS

BURNING PROHIBITED

Open burning of yard waste and garbage is prohibited within the city limits of Humboldt. Violators may be fined up to \$100.

The City Code designates the following date between the hours of 8AM and 6PM as open burning to dispose of yard waste only.

This date will be April 25, 2026

Recreational fires are permitted for cooking, heating, recreation & ceremonies.

BRUSH ONLY – (NO JUNK) · Week of Monday, April 27

Items should be placed at curbside by 6AM

COLLECTION SCHEDULE: Items to be collected should be placed by the curb no later than 6AM, Monday, April 27, 2026, even if your normal collection day is other than Monday.

PREPARATION OF ITEMS FOR COLLECTION: A one truckload limit per residence will be observed. All appropriate items will be collected by Friday, May 1, 2026.

Branches and other brush must be cut in lengths of 7 ft. or less, and placed parallel to the curb. The maximum diameter of branches to be collected is six inches. Grass and leaves will be collected as usual if contained in city yard waste bags on Fridays.

ITEMS NOT TO BE COLLECTED: No commercial collection is provided. This service is for City of Humboldt residents only. The City reserves the right to reject all items if the above guidelines are not followed. The City shall not be responsible for the collection of items left by the curb, which are not intended for collection. Your cooperation is necessary to ensure that this remains a cost effective and available service in the future.

BRUSH SITE OPEN 24 HOURS – Nothing over 6" in diameter. **Compost site open daily 7AM-7PM**
For more information, please contact the City Clerk's office at 515-332-3435

Hazardous Material Drop Off Event · Sat. May 9th

Drop-off at 1000 Lewis Street, Humboldt - From 8AM-12PM

Items Accepted: Oil Based Paints, Household Cleaners, Yard & Bug Sprays, Pesticides/ Herbicides/Insecticides, Light Bulbs, Batteries, Stains and Paint Removers/Thinners, Aerosols, Poisons, Pool Chemicals, Windshield Fluid and other Car Cleaners, Floor Care Products, Glues & Adhesives, SHARPS ** Needles & Syringes**

ITEMS NOT TO BE ACCEPTED: Latex Paint, ** Latex paint can be dried out and thrown away in regular trash.**, Used oil & Anti-Freeze, Medications, Joint Compound & Cement Mixes, Business or Farm Chemicals Asbestos, Trash, Radioactive Material, Ammunition & Explosives, Fireworks, Smoke Detectors, TV's or Electronic, PFAS Chemicals

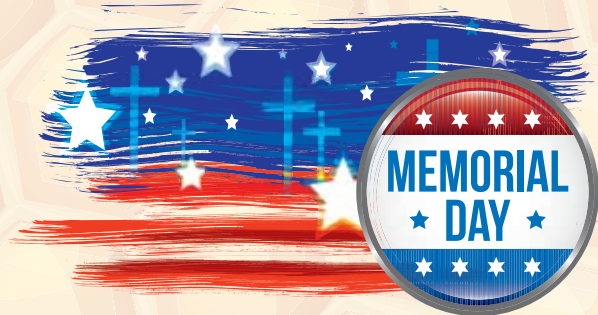
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for all Baseball/
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104-year-old Bertha Wagner inspires family donation to Humboldt library

By KYLIE PORTZ

When the Smart board at the Humboldt Public Library stopped functioning, one family knew just the person to honor by donating a new TV – their matriarch, Bertha Wagner.

Traditionally, donations are made in honor of a loved one *after* their passing, but in this case, Wagner is alive to see her lifelong servitude to the library live on through her children, grandchildren, her great-grandchildren and even her great-great-grandchildren.

The 104-year-old may not move as fast as she once did, but she still reads just as much (if not more) as when she was younger. And her dedication to her love for literature and libraries remains just as fierce.

Wagner lives in Long Term Care at the Humboldt County Memorial Hospital, where she jokes that she is “spoiled” by the care providers. It is there that Wagner sat down to share her love of books, accompanied by her grandsons and their wives. Kyle (Morgan) Olson and Cody (Marta) Olson. Both couples live in the area where Kyle and Cody are dentists at NorthPark Family Dentistry.

Born in 1922, Wagner was raised in Ayrshire along with her 12 siblings, eight girls and four boys, on a family farm. Wagner graduated from high school in 1939 before traveling to Mason City, where she attended a beauty school.

Wagner said, “That didn’t last very long. I wasn’t very fond of being a beautician. I did have a shop for a while, but I left to do other things.”

Over the years, Wanger has had many different careers.

Wagner’s daughter, Pam Olson, shared that Wagner worked as a telephone operator at the Prisoner of War Camp in Algona and was there when the Nativity Scene was being built in 1945.

Olson said, “My folks owned a grocery store for many, many years and she would work eight to six, six days a week and raised five kids.”

According to Wagner, longevity is a familial trait. She said, “My mother was a little over 100 when she passed away and my dad was 80, so we have good genes.”

Like all good love stories, Bertha met her husband, Gene, on the dance floor. The Surf Ballroom dance floor to be exact.

Bertha said, “I met him (Gene) on the dance floor and he had a girlfriend. We did a lot of dancing and so pretty soon the other girlfriend was gone. I shouldn’t tell the kids this, but we eloped. It was during the war, but we didn’t elope very far. We went from Humboldt to Fort Dodge.”

Bertha and Gene moved from place to place, living in Algona and Spencer before ultimately settling in Corwith, where they raised five children and Bertha served on the library board.

Pam Olson said, “She was a busy mom. You know, my dad was on the road so he was gone most of the week, but she found the time (to read) she really had a passion for reading and I think that continues down to our grandkids because my boys (Kyle and Cody) are really avid readers and their wives are too.”

Gene Wagner worked as a traveling salesman, so he was gone often throughout the week.

Pam Olson said, “I think as you get older, you really appreciate the sacrifices that your parents give, but Mom especially, keeping the family going and working, probably before not very many moms worked, she was always working.”



Bertha Wagner poses with her plaque in front of the TV her family donated to the Humboldt Public Library in her honor. Submitted photo.

She said, “I’ve been reading out of the library here (Humboldt) for 43, 44 years. Ask Marta, it’s kind of hard to pick for me now, but there’s a lot to pick from. I still read probably six or eight books in 10 days.”

“I think we’re very fortunate. We have a really good library here.” Wagner said, “I’ve been in other libraries and I’ll put ours first above any of them. They do stay current, that’s the good thing, because I’ve been in libraries where the books are old, which is nobody’s fault I’m sure, but we’re very fortunate. I think we have a good library and they make good choices and they have good board members.”

Marta Olson is a member of the board for the Public Library, which is how the family learned about the need for a new TV.

Wagner said, “She (Marta) knew they needed the TV in the Children’s Department and I think the grandsons and their wives here, got their heads together and got the thing going and then all the family pitched in.”

“They needed it (a TV) now and they couldn’t wait until I was gone to get the money. So we did it just in reverse. I’m still here and the TV is very nice. I have seen it so I’m sure they’re enjoying it but it isn’t everybody that has something in memory of them done while the person’s still living.”

Kyle Olson said, “It’s really special to be able to do this for her and especially, like she said, while she’s still here and can appreciate and see the joy that brings. We’re lucky to still have her around.”

His brother, Cody, shared, “Grandma took us to the library a lot when we were children, we went there quite often and then we took our boys to the library when they’re little and that room where the TV is at is where we all spent a lot of time growing up, so we’re happy to have a TV there that’s in memory of grandma.”

Marta Olson added, “The Children’s Library has a program every

Wednesday in the morning and when we were raising our kids, I stayed home with them and we literally went every single Wednesday and they sing and they dance and they do little videos on the screen and everything. And so it was really important to have that for Ashley (Wittrock) to have a way to show YouTube videos for the children, because they do little dances and stuff. So our kids grew up in that library and so it's really fun, it's kind of made it full circle and now they have a TV in honor of grandma."

Wagner said, "I've been with Cody and Kyle since day one. I'm so fortunate to be here to watch the boys grow up, so they have helped me stay young. I'll tell you. They've been a joy and now they have families too I enjoy all that to."

According to Pam Olson, Wagner lived with her family for 40 years.

She said, "She loved it. We have a lot of wildlife, and she loves wildlife and flowers. We still get her flowers and she keeps them alive longer than anybody."

Caitlynn Haack, who is the Assistant Director and Teen Librarian at the Humboldt Public Library, said, "A television might seem like a simple item, but in a public library it plays an incredibly important role. For several months, we felt its absence deeply, from children's Story Time, where visual elements bring stories, songs and learning to life, to community gatherings and events that rely on shared screens to connect and engage our patrons."

Haack said, "Educational screenings, programming and events that once drew our community together had to be scaled back or reimagined entirely. When this family stepped up and donated a replacement, they didn't just give us a piece of technology; they gave us back a tool that serves every age group and every corner of what we do."

She said, "It's a gift that the whole community will benefit from for years to come and it's a perfect example of what happens when patrons truly invest in the place they love."

She said, "Dedicated patrons are truly the heartbeat of a public library. When a family makes the library a regular part of their lives such as Bertha's family has, whether it's a parent bringing in young children for Story Time, a teenager discovering a love of reading, a grandparent finding community through our programs or a home-bound patron such as Bertha who cannot come to us, it reminds us why this place matters."

She said, "It tells us that the library isn't just a building where books live; it's a space where generations connect, curiosity is nurtured and neighbors become friends. That kind of loyalty inspires everything we do, and it's a powerful reminder that public libraries remain one of the most vital gathering places a community can have."

Cody Olson said, "I just think through the years, the library staff has been amazing to work with. They pick out books for grandma, they deliver them. They're always trying to find new things. So I think that personal touch they have will never go away."

Pam Olson shared, "It was the right thing to do, the library is a big part of all of our lives and they needed it and so why wait when she could be here and say, 'yeah that was something I wanted to do for the library'."



Bertha Wagner with two of her grandkids and their families. (l-r) Kyle, Morgan and their kids, Leo and Lily Olson, Bertha Wagner, Cody, Marta and their children, Marcas and Lucas. Submitted photo.



Bertha Wagner and her great-grandchildren (l-r) Lucas, 13, Lily, 8, Marcus, 11 and Leo, 10, Olson. Submitted photo.

She said, "I hope that you know how much we appreciate the library. They're amazing at picking out books for Mom and they always have them ready when I call. They would deliver them if I'm gone, it just has made her life so much more full because she has the new books and sometimes they hardly get them on the shelf and they'll give them to Mom first because she reads them so fast."

Reading for Bertha is more than just a pastime, it is her way to see the world without having to leave her home.

She said, "You know, it's different with the young people because they travel and they see things. For me, growing up, the world wasn't very big, so my traveling is in the books. If I'm reading a book in Paris, I go to Paris and if I'm reading one in Maryland, I go to Maryland. So I guess it's my traveling world as far as I'm concerned."

Wagner is not selective in the genre of books she reads, as long as it isn't a mystery, because otherwise she has to skip to the end to see who did it.

She said, "I tell everybody, bring me happy books. I don't read mysteries; I cheat on those. When they start killing people, I go to the end and see who's still alive. So they don't bring me mysteries. But I just like adventure, and now that's my world because I can travel with a book. I can sit down with the book, and they'll tell you this, they come in the room and almost up to me because I'm so wrapped up in the book that I don't even know they're there."

Kyle Olson shared that Bertha keeps a notebook where she keeps track of the books she has read to avoid rereading books.

He said, "I always enjoyed that you (Bertha), have a notebook where you write what books you've read, because it's frustrating if you get into a book that you've realized you've already read. When you read hundreds or thousands of books, it's hard to keep track of them all. But the library does a good job of keeping you with new

books."

Wagner said, "Well, we had a library club at one time, I think there was around 20-25 members and it got down to four and then we didn't meet at the library anymore. But that's what we did, was we'd write down the titles so everybody just reported on what they read. It was not reading one book and then discussing it."

Reading is a family affair, Wagner said, "I think Cody and Kyle were born with a book in their hands."

Both Cody's wife, Marta, and Kyle's wife, Morgan, are avid readers themselves. Marta shared that she read up to 86 books last year.

Kyle said, "Morgan's on her Kindle all the time reading the digital books and when I'm in the car, I listen to the audiobooks through the library as well. That's been really a nice feature, to be able to check out books and listen to them while in the car."

He said, "I write down the books that I read too, because I don't want to start up one I've already read."

But, when you've read as many books as Bertha, sometimes it's nice to dive back into a book you read decades ago.

She said, "I do (reread books) now, because some of these books are books that I've read 20-30 years ago and it's like a new book and I think, 'oh gosh, I've got to see how much of that I remember.' But not too many. Most of them are current books."

Marta Olson said, "At this point, when I go to the library and get books for grandma, I tell them, if it's within five years that she's read it, I'll take it because she's just read so many. It's really impressive. And I've been throwing some crazy genres at you (Bertha) lately, just finding some crazy books and giving them to grandma."

One of Wagner's favorite authors of all time is Ellen Hildebrand, who she has read a lot of books from. Hildebrand even signed a book for Wagner.

She said, "My daughter-in-law and granddaughter were in Nantucket, where she (Hildebrand) was, and it was a weekend spa thing that the girls went to and when they told her my age she said, 'you mean she's still reading my books?' and the girl's said 'yes' so that's when she autographed a book and she said, 'take this to your grandma'."

Wagner said, "You just keep reading. Wherever you read. You can go there. Enjoy it. I don't know what I'd do without books and I'm so fortunate. My eyes are still so that I can read. If they go, I'm in trouble."

Wagner said, "I guess, I never feel old, although, and I always tell the joke, one of the CNAs – and she's going to kill me for this – one morning she came in and I said, 'Oh, I'm felling old today' and she said, 'Grandma, you are old,' and I don't let her forget it. Every once in a while, I say, 'I guess I'm old, you told me so.'"

She shared, "I guess I've always looked ahead. I don't look back. You can't change what's past. So yeah, every day is a good day. I wake up thinking, what are we going to do today. So I stay positive."

A part from reading and spending time with her family, Wagner enjoys attending church services at the care center and sharing a table with her friends.

Wagner said, "We have a very good bunch at the table. There are five of us and we make the most noise in the dining room. And just this morning we laughed, always somebody pulling something, so it's a good group."

She said, "We decided, if they want to move us and they move, we're not going to and anybody they bring to our table, they have to have a sense of humor. Our biggest thing is we don't complain. We just comment and we do a lot of that."

"It's a good bunch here, well taken care of by staff. I think they have me a little bit spoiled, but we're not going to tell anybody

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that.”

Wagner said, “I’ve got a good family, I’m just blessed. Even the out-of-state ones get her at least once a year, sometimes twice, and they call every week and the four of them here (Cody, Marta, Kyle and Morgan), they’re in and out all the time. And If I need anything, they’re here.”

Those wishing to see the library’s new TV and the accompanying dedication plaque can visit the Humboldt Public Library during its business hours. On Monday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The library is closed on Sundays.

Humboldt Library Director Julie Larsen and Assistant Director and Teen Librarian Caitlynne Haack shared some of the ways you can get involved at the Humboldt Carnegie Library.

“There are so many ways to get involved with the Humboldt Public Library and we truly welcome everyone. One of the things we love most is hearing from our community, if there’s a program or event you’d like to see us offer, we want to know! Your suggestions directly shape what we bring to this space.”

For families with young children, the March and April Story Time is held on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. There is no registration needed and any child from newborns to preschoolers are welcome.

“Summer is one of the busiest times, and our Summer Reading Challenge will make a return in June.” They said, “A beloved tradition that keeps kids and readers of all ages engaged over the summer months.”

According to the library, last year there were 444 patrons registered for the Summer Reading Challenge. The library held 60 events, had 732 participants, and gave out 636 prizes.

The library said, “Our challenge is to surpass that number this year and we couldn’t do it without the generous help of our community.”

“There’s always something happening at the library! We offer a Book Club called “Humboldt Reads” that you can join; we meet from March to November. In the colder months, we offer coffee, tea and socialization on Mondays.”

Two years ago, the library added a seed catalog, which it said boasts over 700 packages of vegetables, herbs and flowers. The library hosts gardening workshops throughout the year.

According to the library, there are various programs held throughout the year, from author visits to crafts, health and wellness workshops, music and comedy shows are just a few.

“Beyond attending programs, there are several meaningful ways



Cody (left) and Kyle (right) pose with their grandma Bertha Wagner (center), whose family came together to donate a new TV to the local library to replace the broken Smart Board in the Children’s section. Independent photo by Kylie Portz.

to support the library. Donations, like the generous gift this family recently made, go directly toward improving the experience for every patron who walks through our doors.”

“The Library and our Humboldt Public Library Foundation, which plays a vital role in supporting library initiatives and building community, welcomes donations. And if you’re looking to give your time, we encourage you to check in with us about current volunteer opportunities.”

“So how can you help? Start by showing up, attend our programs, bringing your family and let your presence be a statement that this library matters. And if you are able, donate — every contribution helps us continue serving this community, regardless of what is happening at the legislative level.”

“At the end of the day, the library belongs to this community — and the more people who get involved, the stronger it becomes for everyone. Come learn, explore, create and connect. Stop by to see what’s happening next. We can’t wait to see you,” said Larsen and Haack.

To keep up to date with the library and all its activities, you can follow them on their Facebook page at Humboldt Carnegie Library, Instagram and TikTok at “humboldtlibrary” or their website www.humboldtpubliclibrary.com.

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By PHIL MONSON

Name a 31-year-old Humboldt company with less than five employees that's been selling its innovative products all over the United States and the world?

EZ Animal Products.

Located at 1301 9th Avenue North in Humboldt, EZ Animal Products is yet another small industry gem in a community known for its wealth of small business.

Buck and Karen Wheeler and their son, John Morrison, keep the company going along with their employees, Ben Konecne, Crystal Rashedi and Kevin Grebner.

They make a horse restraint product called a *Stableizer*, which has been a huge game-changer in the industry. In 2004 they unveiled a hand-held Vacuum pump, *Udderly EZ*, which is a safer and smoother method of collecting colostrum from mares.

In 2010 they introduced the *Ultimate EZ Bottle and Bucket Milker*. The innovations didn't stop there. To make their electric kits completely portable, they added the option of a 300-watt inverter which allows the milker to operate anywhere with no power cord, using only the battery of a power tool.

To complement the milking products, they invented the *EZ Milker Cart*, which holds everything you need for milking.

Buck Wheeler, who was born and raised on *Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation* in North Dakota, is the source of all the inventions. Wheeler, a Hall of Fame horse trainer, has been training horses for 45 years.

"All I cared about in those days growing up was horses. My mother took a photo of me riding a horse bareback out in the middle of the pasture. Nothing but the rope on the horse," Buck said. "I think my dad was too cheap to buy a saddle. I've been riding horses ever since I could walk."

"We were resourceful. Back then if something broke, you fixed it. There was no running to the big box store to buy a new one. When you were out many miles from anywhere, you had to fix it. If you couldn't fix something, you made a new one," Buck said. "Those experiences growing up shaped my philosophy into adulthood."

"I was around master carpenters and welders. That's the way it was back then," Buck said. "Growing up I was around Native Americans who knew horses and how to train them."

EZ Animal Products has been in Humboldt for 15 years. The business previously ran out of the garage of the Wheeler residence in southern Minnesota (Albert Lea).

"Our growth has been slow but steady each year," John said. "We started with



Buck Wheeler is shown here with a cart he designed to carry the milking products his company in Humboldt manufactures and sells around the world.

the *Stableizer* product, which is the restraint. We went into the milking side of things. The whole dairy end of our business happened by accident. That's been our bread and butter ever since," John said.

"A key to our success is not being so large that you can't have a good relation-

ship with your customers, dealers and distributors. Listening to them and trying to come up with products that they are looking for and they need. And quality, it's always an issue. We keep good quality products on hand," John said. "We strive to work really hard to do that."

"Among the challenges we face are general growth issues like learning the shipping industry and foreign shipping. That's been a big challenge because there's paperwork and rules involved. Sourcing quality products at a decent price is something we have strived to do to keep our prices low and affordable," John said.

"These days, everything is so volatile with tariffs and import fees. Shipping times are a big one. Keeping inventory on hand to ship out across the country and overseas. It is a constant challenge," John said.

"We have our main line of milking systems and we are focusing on items that go along with that, items to support what the product does," John said.

"We have a catalog that we have come out with over the past year and our orders have really jumped up since that time," John said.

"We work pretty efficiently here with a staff of three people. It's myself, another full-time employee and a couple of part-timers. Our busy season runs from February to June or July. In our off-season we can spend time building up our inventory," John said. "Buck and Karen handle the order taking and the sales."

"We don't do a lot of sales in the Humboldt area. Most of our products go overseas and all over the country. But I wouldn't want to be anywhere else than Humboldt. It's got the nice smalltown feel," John said.

Restraint

Buck, who grew up working with horses, knew that holding a twitch on the horse's upper lip acts as a temporary and effective restraint, aiding veterinarian treatment or grooming. It spurred him on to invent the mechanism which they call the *Stableizer*.

"Back in 1993 Karen and I were training horses at Remington Park in Oklahoma City. We were working with a filly that we were getting ready to sell. While I worked on the back end of the horse, Karen was holding the twitch on the lip. The filly knocked Karen down and she refused to ever hold it again," Buck said.

"There was nothing on the market that you could use to restrain a horse by yourself. With my background on the reserva-

tion and ideas from the old Indian war bridle, I came up with the *Stableizer*," Buck said.

"The restraint releases endorphins in the horse which act like a natural painkiller and calms the horse," Karen said with a smile. "He got that thing to work and I never had to hold a twitch on a horse ever again."

Karen, the former Karen Friesth, grew up in the Humboldt area and graduated from Humboldt High School.

"We've been married for 35 years. We met through horses. At the time I was a single mom with three boys and I owned horses. My first husband and I lived in Humboldt for 10 years or more. He worked at Hormel in Fort Dodge before it closed, forcing us to transfer to Minnesota. Eventually I became single and a few years after that I met Buck in the late 1980s. We got married shortly after that," Karen said.

"On our farm in Minnesota we had race horses, colts, cows, cats, dogs and puppies. Now we don't have any animals. My sister and I still own the family farm south of Humboldt," Karen said.

"I served in the military in the 101st Airborne Division in Germany, as a combat medic. After that I got back into training horses after my military service," Buck said. "I actually moved back the first year that Canterbury Downs opened up. That's when Karen and I met because I bought horses and didn't have a place to put them in the Austin (Minnesota) area," Buck said.

"One year we met a veterinarian at the American Equine Practitioners Convention in Dallas, TX. He said 'if you ever get to Brussels, look me up.' We did when we went to Europe after making the *Stableizer*. We caught the shuttle from London to Brussels and I conducted a clinic at the equine surgical hospital in Brussels," Buck said.

"At that time the only product we had was the *Stableizer*. We were putting those things together in our garage in Minnesota. About four days after we applied for the patent on it, Grindstone won the Ken-



John Morrison (right), who heads up EZ Animal Products in Humboldt, is shown here with employees Ben Konecne (left) and Crystal Rashedi in the production room.

tucky Derby in 1996 and Editor's Note won the Belmont Stakes that year. They are among the many horses which used the *Stableizer* in their training," Buck said.

"A veterinarian, respected around the world, was putting on a clinic and he came up to me and said people needed to see this thing. He has published four books on acupuncture. We are in the last two issues of his books which he made before he passed away," Buck said. "We have been endorsed by the top veterinarians in the world."

Milking device

"In 2004 we came out with a milking device that we called the *Mare Milker*. A little hand pump," Buck said.

"We used to pull the colostrum from the Mares by taking a 60cc syringe and cut the bottom off of the syringe, aspirate it and then turn around, put it on the bag and pull the colostrum. When you put the *Stableizer* on the animal, you didn't get kicked," Buck said.

"Consequently, today we are 376,000-plus customers in 76 countries. And we had no idea at the time what we invented would take off. You see, a horse man isn't going to buy a sheep milker. And vice-versa. So we make a sheep milker, a cow milker, the horse milker and the camel milker," Buck said.

"It's all the same thing but we just changed the bottles a little bit and the label on the box. It's something that you can't find anywhere. We felt that we had already developed the *Stableizer*, then we can figure this milker product out as well," Karen said.

"We didn't know anything about sheep or goats, but we had to quickly learn because they wanted a product to be able to milk the sheep and the goats," Karen said. "We felt we could do this."

"Each package people buy of the milk-er has everything they need. Colostrum is called the 'mother's milk.' Animals have to have it when they are born. I invented everything on this milker. It has an extractor tube with our logo on it. I spent a few days with some engineers in Texas and they tapered down the pieces. There's three different sizes. Everything fits every animal there is," Buck said.

"A lesson that we've learned is if there is something out there you need but can't find, maybe you can invent it," Karen said. "Buck is always thinking up ideas of how to make something that is useful."

"We've been to every goat-roping event or rodeo out there. We've loaded horses at 11 at night. We've had people come up and ask, 'I hope that thing works because we can't get this horse into this trailer.' I put on the *Stableizer* and we did it. From one corner of the United States to the other," Buck said.

"Around the world we are established, but not here in town. Not many people have a clue what we do in this building, but we are known around the world," Karen said.

"Over the years we've had people take a run at us. We've had four major lawsuits against us. People have made something similar and then tried to take us out of business," Buck said. "A large veterinary supply chain came after us. That was the biggest one."

"At the time we got sued, we had been selling the *Stableizer* for \$29. You know what lawsuits cost. We weren't prepared for the cost of lawsuits that would come about," Karen said.

"Many years before I got sued by someone on the west coast for impersonating a trainer. I was the leading trainer in the nation for three years in a row for Appaloosa Racing. Later on I got inducted into the Hall of Fame with 230 champions," Buck said.

"A big veterinarian company wanted our company. They came at us and the legal cost nearly broke us. It brought us to our feet," Karen said. "But we won. We won!"

"There's no quit in Karen and me both," Buck said.

"We decided at that point that we couldn't trust anybody but our family. That is when John came on board and he's been with us ever since," Karen said.

"When we won the case against the big company, by that time our patent had been approved. You live and learn," Buck said.

"That was a nightmare. It was four or five years before all of those suits got settled. I don't know how much money we had to spend to defend ourselves. Then we had to scale back," Karen said.

"On a lighter side, we've had some tremendous gigs. I had the opportunity to go into Arlington National Cemetery as a disabled veteran and instruct the troops. They do eight burials a day. That was an unforgettable experience," Buck said.

"The Amish have been a tremendous asset to us since we got into the milking business. They kept perking my inventive juices because there are certain things they

require. They can't have electricity. But there are Amish who can have batteries. And if they can't have batteries, they've got to have air. We put a 300-watt converter on our pumps where you can use your DeWalt, Makita or Milwaukee power tool to run it. And I also designed a cart which can hold all of the buckets," Buck said.

"It's been a gradual process of coming up with new accessories. It's been about a year since we got into the milk-cooling business. Our products we use to make that are made in Greece. We can't afford to make them here in this country," Buck said.

"Our sales have been steadily increasing, about 8 to 10 percent each year, ever since the COVID-19 pandemic. There's something to be said for not being too big. It's been a small but steady growth," John said.

"I'm happy to have the business in town and the people around to work with," John said.

"Nowadays when you call up a business, you will get a recording, or you will get somebody on the line who cannot answer your question. When they call into our business, they will get one of the three of us on the phone," Buck said.

"Our phone keeps ringing. That's a good thing. Any products we handle, we have a full understanding of how it operates because if we are going to handle it, we have to have the parts. And we have to be able to fix it," Buck said. "John has been an integral part of our business."

"It's been a long struggle over the past 31 years but like anything else, we have a good handle on it now," Buck said.

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Karen's Quips!

By Karen May



The ever-popular garage sale benefitting the Humboldt County libraries has been set. The annual event is scheduled for Friday, April 24 from 3-6 p.m. and Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall at Faith United Methodist Church at 107 4th Street North in Humboldt.

Donations are being accepted ahead of time, up to that day. For further information phone Kathy Eck of Dakota City at 515-368-4769. This is a wonderful way to recycle books, puzzles and like items that you no longer use or need. Last year I attended the event at the Methodist Church and found some very reasonable puzzles and books!

Our weather in Iowa is similar to other places across the country - good for a few days and then it takes an abrupt forward (up) or backward (down). I can't remember a recent year when there have been so many drastic changes. I do hope when Mother Nature takes the next turn it will stay that way awhile. But I assure you, SPRING WILL COME!

I have enjoyed my stay in Florida, but I have missed my meetings, my neighbors and my church friends. Change is good, but it has good and bad sides both. I haven't been able to visit people in the hospital, so writing cards or calling is the next best thing. I will make up for this during the summer months.

I attend church services, but again, it's a change and I don't get to keep track of ones who sit in front of me or who are also away for part of the winter. I talked to one of my club members today and she was calling to see if I was home yet. I am fortunate to be able to travel and see family in Florida at the same time.

One granddaughter is excelling in soccer, a sport I know nothing about other than you usually advance the ball with short kicks and the other is in cheerleading. When I heard that I thought I was a cheerleader for six years. But it is different now and I am no help, other than to watch her practice. I am lucky to see grandchildren and be with them at holiday time and watch them grow up.

Florida has had its ups and downs this year weather-wise. Luckily no hurricanes and the flooding that came with them last year left a mess, but most of that has been cleaned up. I tell my neighbors be careful what you wish for. You may wish for rain, but when it starts, often it doesn't know when to stop.

Have you been checking out your spring catalogs for gardening and pretty new plants? Wow, I want to start digging, but often times we get the cart ahead of the horse and get our plants

and seeds too early and have to wait for Mother Nature to cooperate. I enjoy seeing the new varieties and love planning what my garden is going to look like. Good luck with your plans.

Spring is on its way. Whenever March arrives, I know that winter is on its way out. Isn't it funny how most of us are always looking forward to the next season? I don't care which it is, I am always looking forward. This winter has not been bad for most areas of the country. I have spent part of the year in Florida, which usually means sunshine, but often we have gloomy rainy days also. However, we never have had snow or below freezing temperatures where I live.

When my late husband, Myron May and I were looking for a place to escape Iowa winters, we looked in Texas where his parents had wintered and Arizona, where our granddaughter and many friends spent several months. But when another granddaughter and family moved from Las Vegas to Florida, they invited us to try that area. After one winter in our fifth wheel trailer, we decided this was a place to try.

I am now spending my 30th year here. Yes, we've had storms, hurricanes and floods, but nothing like the other places. I live in a small (400 units) mobile home park with mostly double-wides, no garages, but carports to protect our vehicles from the hot sun. It's like a small city. I imagine there are 20 or more similar parks within the city limits population under 10,000. After this many years here, I feel it's ideal, except no newspaper. I haven't figured this out yet. Perhaps it's because Tampa and St. Petersburg are so close and have newspapers.

Our mobile home park has about 400 units, with each lot rented out. Right now, there are less than 30 empty. As with any city or mobile park, there is always something for sale and there are always lookers, but each person has different wants on their wish list. Price, location, age, trees, are some of the main things one looks for.

I lived in three different mobiles before I found the right one. The first was a starter, not very large, a single wide with two tip-outs, no central air and further away from the main clubhouse and activities. It suited our needs when we purchased it. Five years later the neighbor next door had to return to Michigan so we had a chance to purchase the double side unit. I was sure this was my forever winter home. Shade trees, a nice parking area, twice the space.

Over a 10-year period we improved the parking area, painted and remodeled a bit. Then a friend asked me to go with her to

look at another double wide that had just come up for sale here that had three or four others wanting to look. I went with her and the home faced north so no hot sun. It had central air, nice appliances and only two blocks from the clubhouse and activities and swimming pool.

Luckily for me, she didn't like the gas stove or blue carpet. She turned down the opportunity to take it and I jumped at the chance. Four others were on the list to look at it. I liked the blue carpet and bought an electric stove. I am still in that home. I remodeled the spare room into an extra bedroom and half bath, extended the carport to full size and made it a comfortable home. It was strange how one thing just led to another.

Our park has a clubhouse for activities and a swimming pool. Included in the rent is garbage pickup, the swimming pool and use of clubhouse activities. I have made use of all of these.

It has been interesting to me to discuss with other friends who winter in Arizona and Texas and other states. Each person has a reason for selecting their location, but if you are thinking of being a snowbird, don't wait to start looking to find the right place for you at the right time.

It will probably take a few years, but it's a learning experience. I love where I get away from Iowa's snow and cold but after I am here a few months, I miss my home, friends and activities and look forward to returning home. Like the old saying goes, wherever you wander, wherever you roam, there still is no place like home!

I look forward to returning home to church activities, clubs and friends and neighbors. The countdown has begun. I hope to see you soon!

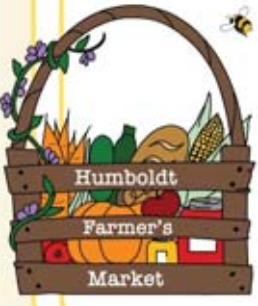
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My love affair with aprons

By Phyllis Johnson

The word “apron” evolves from the French word, *napron*, meaning small piece of cloth. That can be debated, since most aprons cover more area than that. But the French like their attire more skimpy, I think.

I have always loved aprons. Maybe it gave me a feeling of domesticity, or maybe it was a quick fix for keeping my clothes spot-free when throwing together a quick meal. I think I inherited it from my mother and my grandmothers. I doubt if I ever saw either grandma without one. They were the big, flowy kind that could wrap around a kid sitting in her lap.

My mom sewed her own aprons, as most women did in those days. They were usually styled with a big bow on the top, fitting around the neck with a narrow band that kept the apron on straight. The lower part could be used for various purposes; she used it for carrying clothespins, gathering eggs, or picking up toys, or whenever she needed a quick “basket” if there was not one handy.

It didn’t take her very long to sew an apron. Often, she would make a duplicate for my sister and I if she had leftover material. I remember one of the first ones I had, it was brown, flowered (I think) and it had orange bias tape around the edges. Do you remember bias tape? That was the era of rickrack too and both were used mostly as decorative edgings on dresses or aprons. The orange bias tape was the trimming around the edge and it extended around my waist to form a tie or belt – mom’s had a real tie. It was fun to be dressed like her.

Doing some research on aprons, I found that during the 1920s, ladies wore long aprons to the bottoms of their dresses, usually white with maybe some embroidery. During the depression in the late 20s and 30s, and for several years after, material was scarce. Wives had to be resourceful, so aprons were made from feed sacks.

Feed sacks were available from merchants who sold feed for chickens or other animals. Sometimes they were printed flour sacks. They came in patterns and different colors. The fabric was coarser than the more expensive cloth. The feed sacks era extended well into the 50s, after I was married, so I had several aprons that I sewed myself. They weren’t fancy, but I liked wearing them. Now feed sacks are collectors’ items.

In the 30s and 40s, the aprons had full-length pockets and were still long. The pinafore aprons became popular about this time, too. They were bib aprons with ruffled

strips that went over the shoulders. They required starching and careful ironing, but oh, so pretty. They were fashionable and I liked wearing them.

The 50s brought half aprons. They tied in the back and were quick to put on. It was easy to grab one from a hook and tie it on, probably taking less than half a minute. They were my favorite and I loved them. We didn’t have to fight with a noose getting tangled in the fashionable hairdos, as it was brought over the head.

Little fancy aprons were also popular. If a wedding were to be held in a church, usually a reception would be held in the church basement. Food was always served, requiring some waitresses to attend to the bridal table and see that guests were served.

The waitresses flitted around busily doing their duties, sporting little organdy aprons with ruffles. That was my experience when we were married in the early 50s. I had several girl cousins who were chosen to help with the serving. It was customary for the bride to gift the fancy aprons to the girls as a token of appreciation for a job well done. My mother had made the aprons for this and I remember they were of dotted Swiss material, ruffled and the size of a man’s handkerchief.

The girls loved them. They were so pretty, I even kept one for myself. I had accumulated a few from the times I was a waitress at some weddings and found them folded carefully in my cedar chest not long ago.

About this time there was the dish towel era, where a towel folded diagonally into a triangle would tie around a lady’s waist and tie in the back for a quick apron.

In the 60s and 70s, aprons fell out of favor. Still, some housewives used them and the styles were checked gingham with cross-stitching for decoration. I remember getting some as teachers’ gifts at Christmas time. I still marvel at the time it must have taken these mothers to cross-stitch rows and rows of decorations on each apron. They were pretty and a welcome gift, I liked them so much I still have two or three.

In the 80s, aprons were even less used and in the 90s, when outdoor grilling became popular, men began to wear aprons. Adorned with barbecue pictures and clever captions, men used them as a suburban status symbol. Usually, they are of a coarse material, holding up to much laundering.

Now, aprons aren’t usually found in stores but are avail-

able online. They still don't fit the category of expensive clothing but are effective for their purpose.

In my experience, after the initial wanting to be domestic craze left me, I didn't use aprons much, especially during my school and college years. I still prefer the "smock" type that has holes for the arms and covers most of the dress underneath. My current favorite has fastener snaps made of plastic and they have become less effective in closing very easily. Maybe it's heat from the clothes dryer, or simply wearing out, but the warped snaps don't work well at all. Now, usually after trying for several minutes and having no luck, I resort to a big safety pin. It doesn't look great, but it serves the purpose.

Sometimes, during busy days now, I'll still use my trusty apron. I'll grab it from its hook and quickly slip it on. I think back on those early days when I was a kid, donning my apron and helping with the cooking.

I think of all the aprons I have used and remember them with fondness. I think of my grandmothers who always covered their dresses with aprons and I think of my mother who sewed some and usually wore them. If she could know how her influence has affected me in so many ways, even as insignificant as aprons, I think she would be pleased.



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