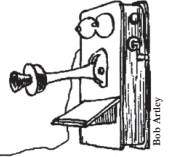


Peoria Partyline



...connecting the extended Peoria community

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A Taste of Home Is Good Business

"You should sell your pies at the Pella Farmer's Market," said a good friend and neighbor of Verna Vander Molen about seven years ago. The comment came as a surprise, but Verna didn't dismiss it. "It would be nice to make a little extra spending money and still be able to be a stay-at-home mom," she admitted to herself. So after thinking and praying about it, she decided to give it a try. Loading up a card table and eight pies, she headed to Pella's Farmer's Market. On the way she thought, "Why am I doing this? Anybody can bake pies. What if nobody buys them?"

She didn't need to worry. The pies sold. It took a couple years to build up her customer base, but gradually more and more pies were needed. Local restaurant owners came anonymously to the Farmer's Market and bought pies too—to sample. They recognized a good product and now several local eating establishments have a variety of pies on their menus—supplied by Verna.

"My kitchen is inspected annually and it is licensed," says Verna. "It doesn't take brand new equipment to make good food. One oven I use is 35 years old, and a second oven (left in the house from the previous owner) is a 1952 model." This year she purchased a convection oven and makes good use of it too. Ten pies can be baked at once, so imagine the good smells in their house as they bake!

Verna also bakes various pastries to sell, such as scones, granola bars, cookies, Dutch letters, bars, and cinnamon rolls. If you drive by and see light in her kitchen at 3:30 a.m., imagine Verna busily heating up her ovens and getting fresh-baked goodies ready for her eager customers. Her children help label and package the products, and later in the day they load and unload the car with supplies. "My family is the reason I do this," says Verna.



Kids (Shelby, Levi, Sophie and Lincoln) and husband Tim are her biggest cheerleaders, support system, and of course—most honest taste-testers! "Tim is my Marketing Manager," says Verna, "since he prefers to work with the numbers. I prefer tweaking new recipes." She also finds it fun to display her baked items at the Market after spending many hours in the kitchen. "Working together as a family and meeting all the people is very rewarding," she adds.

The summer months are Verna's busiest times due to Farmer's Markets, but supplying restaurants and providing desserts for special events keeps her busy year round. One of her first special events was providing pies for dessert at a Rainbow Seeds fall supper. "I don't advertise," says Verna, "but word of mouth from friend to friend spreads the word." Now from receptions, to parties, to lunches after funerals, the calls keep coming in.

There is always a lurking worry however. "What if I forget an order?" That only happened once and her mother was very forgiving! Now she sends herself a voice message reminder to make sure it doesn't happen again. "What if no one buys the pies?" That doesn't happen either, although son Lincoln wishes it would sometime so he could eat them at home. Dutch apple is his absolute favorite.

Verna credits God for helping to build her business. She has enjoyed meeting and getting to know many people through her business and hearing their life stories.

If you would like to order from Verna and enjoy something delicious, call her at 641-780-0540. You'll be glad you did!

-Doris Nibbelink



Courage Helps Country Dream Comes True

Did you know that stories and adventure can be found right in our own Peoria extended neighborhood? My grandson Drew and I recently visited the Stringer farm to see what we could discover, and we were not disappointed.

Matt and Patty Stringer met each other at college in Indiana. They fell in love, married, joined the workaday world in Ohio, and started a family. Three boys later, Matt, an engineer, was given the opportunity to join the Vermeer Corporation in Pella. So the family moved, started a new chapter in their lives, and dreamed of finding a place in the country.

When the Ozinga family put their home up for sale about five years ago, Matt and Patty bought it and settled into country living. Patty worked at a couple of local jobs for a time, and then she decided to try her hand at being Ms. Farmer, along with Matt's help. Their home in the country was a dream, but the idea of animal husbandry was more like an inspiration. They had the courage to give it a try.

And so began the animal menagerie: a peacock, some guineas, rabbits, turkeys (both heritage breeds and meat types), chickens (exotic types and regular birds), ducks, and yes—dairy goats. Neither Matt nor Patty had grown up on a farm, so it was either “sink” or “quickly learn to swim!” They asked questions, read, and most importantly were willing to take some risks. They also learned new recipes and new ways of cooking since many of their animals ended up on their table. What an adventure and,

yes, a lot of work!

While on the farm, we met Sheba and Cleo—the Stringer's two dairy goats. They have to be milked morning and evening, and enjoy attention—like Drew petting them. “I experimented with some products that can be made from goat milk,” said Patty. “I was impressed with the yogurt but not so much with the goat cheese. I didn't like the taste, and when I considered marketing such items, I didn't think that it would really be a feasible undertaking.”

Living life involves accepting change. That has been a reality for the Stringers too. Matt's job now involves more traveling, and their youngest son will be a senior in high school. Wisely Matt and Patty have found it necessary to cut back on their animal collection. Good-bye peacock, guineas, rabbits and turkeys. The goats' days at the farm are also numbered. “We are happy for the experience we had with our animals,” said Patty, “but we also know that it is time to let go of some of the work and responsibility of caring for so many of them.”

“There will still be some animals around to keep us company though,” laughs Patty. And that we could see. A chicken announced that she had laid an egg, the ducks did their familiar waddle for us, and in the barn we found two mother cats sharing the responsibility of motherhood with their two litters. Patty had a lot more to show and share with us, so watch for Part 2 in the next issue.

-Wilma Blom



Thank You!

Feedback from fellow readers

- Keep up the good work! We always look forward to your paper!
- My wife has me “hooked” on the Partyline too! What an interesting and worthwhile effort.
- Thanks for the Partyline! I love the news since I grew up there. Keep it up!
- I have been receiving your Partyline for quite a while now, and I enjoy it tremendously! How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood.
- Thanks for the fine work you are doing! I am still trying to remember where the Flint Ridge school was located.
- Everytime I read the Partyline, it takes me back in time. Thanks for the interesting stories and news of the Peoria area.
- Thank you for putting out the little 4-page newsletter with stories from the past. Every word gets read at this house.

MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATION

A large crowd of over 100 gathered to celebrate Memorial Day in our township. Due to questionable weather it was held in the Peoria gym rather than at the cemetery, but that didn't dampen folks' patriotism and fervor at all.

After a pledge to our flag and several group songs, Mike Mahaffey—an attorney from Montezuma whose father served in WWII—brought the keynote address.

The Bouwkamp family inspired with two special numbers, and Spencer Fynaardt closed out the event with a solemn rendition of *Taps*.

Homemade sweet rolls, juice and coffee were served while everyone visited and renewed friendships.



Flint Ridge School (Part 2)

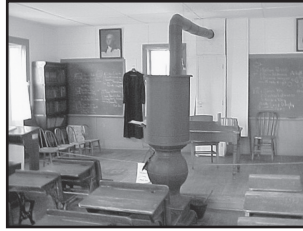
After a difficult first day of school, little Wilma found that she liked school—especially her teacher. He deserved first place in her mind. Her story continues...

My teacher, Mr. Van Arkel, was young and energetic and he must have believed that too much time spent in the books would make us dull kids. On the lines of my red Big Chief tablet he wrote color words such as red, orange, brown, and green—it was my job to color the rest of the line that color. Although Dick, Jane, Spot and Puff were around, somehow I learned to read with Jim and Judy—a system of reading that did not use phonics. Fortunately it worked and I owe my teacher the thanks.

My class consisted of six students—which was an unusually large group for a country school—and the bulk of the teacher's time was devoted to kids in the lower grades. Learning to read and do arithmetic was essential to anything that would come along in future studies. Often the 7th and 8th graders were on "auto pilot" in a way, unless they were called on to help some of the younger kids with their assignments. Of course they needed real teacher time when preparing for the 8th grade examination. Everyone wanted to pass.

We were trend setters in a way at our school. First, I was open enrolled although it wasn't called that at the time. And secondly, we developed a hot lunch program of sorts. In the winter we would bring a raw potato from home, carve our initials in it with a knife, and then lay it in a strategic place on the heater. In time the classroom was enveloped with the marvelous aroma of baked potatoes. Thinking of adding the pats of butter and salt in our lunchboxes made it hard to concentrate as lunch time approached. Other days we enjoyed warm toasted sandwiches thanks to a grill-like gadget belonging to Mr. Van Arkel. Many of us had sandwiches made with home-made bread, and although that sounds wonderful, bread wrapped in waxed paper could be a bit dry. That all changed though with a bit of butter, layers of cheese (Velveeta, of course), and a few minutes on our teacher's grill. Those dry sandwiches

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The 74 children who came to the Peoria Church in July for VBS would probably say the same thing! "We had a great time," says director Tammy Veenstra, "sharing about God's love and His creation with the help of 40 volunteers." On Friday evening families and friends gathered for a short VBS program and then a delicious Hog Roast outside on the church grounds.

Gems for Thought

To get what you've never had, you must do what you've never done.

What could you accomplish if no one told you it was impossible?

Be prepared, or be prepared to fail.

Children are great imitators, so give them something great to imitate.



**Neighbors are much more than just names!
Grab a cup of coffee and let's meet the Carters!**

Thirteen years ago, Jeremiah Carter "stole" his sister's roommate. That's when he met Jozana, who was attending college in Springfield and was visiting Pella's Tulip Time with her roommate, Jeremiah's sister. A year later, Jeremiah and Jozana were married and the big city girl from San Diego and Salt Lake City officially became a rural Iowan.

In 2012 the Carter family—which includes Clayton (7) and Evelyn (5)—bought the homey acreage where they now live. Many of us remember it as the place where Marion and Marilyn Vander Linden raised their family, but it had fallen into disrepair as it passed through the hands of multiple owners and then sat empty for two years. The Carters lived in a camper on their homestead for six months while they completely gutted the house and began reconstruction. The downstairs is mostly finished now, but more work needs to be done on the second floor.

Jeremiah is up to the task however, because after spending several years working at Vermeer and Pella Corp, he is now a self-employed contractor doing home renovations and repairs. His business is named Service Solutions (641-780-1181). He loves his work and has no regrets. "I wish I'd done it a long time ago," said Jeremiah. Born in Oskaloosa, Jeremiah was raised "all over the place" since his father, Dan Carter, was a

minister. Family ties led him to settle down in Mahaska County about 15 years ago. Sadly, his father passed away this past May.

Meanwhile, Jozana is a busy stay-at-home mom who homeschools Clay and Evie. A 2003 graduate of William Penn University in education, she recently started her own in-home business offering workshops and products from Young Living Essential Oils. She didn't set out to turn it into a business, but the natural oils have had such a therapeutic effect on her son's health that she wanted to share her discovery with others.

The Carters love living in the country near family, friends and caring neighbors. They love the fact that their kids can run and play, Jeremiah can hunt and fish, and Jozana has room for a big garden—with 28 tomato plants! Family and faith are their life's priorities, and their heart's desire is to "raise our kids to love and honor God."

Thank you for letting us get to know you, Carter family. Thanks too for rescuing a distressed house in Richland Township and turning it back into a home for a bustling, loving family!

-Deb Bruxvoort





... heard about it on the partyline ...

■ Business Services



Skunk River Restoration

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Flory Construction, New construction, remodels, additions, and decks. Call Luke, 641-629-0357 or 625-4240.

■ For Sale

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Something Out of Nothing (Part 2)

Jerry Van Wyk and his friend Greg Van Dyk felt overwhelmed while helping with harvest on a farm in Ukraine. Winter was setting in and several drying bins—desperately needed—were sitting in disrepair like so much of the other machinery they had been trying to use. After locating a pulley in a junk yard (and buying it for 75 cents) they got the augers going, but then discovered that each of the drying bins was a different model. “We had to rewire them,” said Jerry, “and then—after getting them going—we were told that there was no natural gas to power the driers.”

Long story short, the farm located gas and then Jerry and Greg finally realized what they were being asked to do. About 5,000 bushels of wet beans—at 26% moisture—were piled and starting to rot in a large building. “We brought them to the driers,” said Jerry, “and over several days brought them down to 14%. Corn started out between 27% and 38% moisture but we were able to reduce that to 14% as well.” Thanks to their perseverance, 6,000 to 7,000 bushels of corn and 4,000 to 5,000 bushels of beans were dried and finally acceptable for sale at the sea port.

Perhaps because of Murphy’s Law, the guy’s trials weren’t limited to mechanical nightmares. They stayed in the house of the manager—a nice 4-bedroom house with a living room, bath and kitchen—but soon realized that the food prepared for them did not agree with them. The washer was so small that two pairs of jeans over-filled it, and the water supply for baths, the washer and the toilet was frustratingly not dependable.

After three and a half weeks of what felt like pure chaos, the guys headed home. On the way they stopped at a museum which was dedicated to the memory of those who had died during the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl. The abandoned site was about 13 miles north of where they had been staying.

So would they ever do this again? “I might,” said Jerry, “but never again in the winter!”

-Nancy Van Wyk



- Flint Ridge continued

became a delicacy!

The playground was all about fun and games. We had a set of swings (with wooden seats), and we did what all kids do. We stood up and pumped, then sat down and did the same. Sometimes we had two in a swing, one standing, and one sitting. There were always stories too about someone who had—in the past—pumped so high they went



over the top bar. Such stories were never verified, but it was fun to imagine. Our coal house was just right for *Annie*, *Annie Over*. In *Flying Dutchman* we held hands and made a circle—always hoping the two that were “it” would choose to strike the hands you were holding with your partner. Then you would race around the circle trying to get back to the spot before the “its” did. Other days we

played *Kick the Can*. And of course, we played ball. Our version of softball was called *Workup*. There were no teams. Instead you would work your way up, starting as a fielder, moving to being a baseman, and ultimately the batter. It was a game that required some patience, but fun nevertheless. Our diamond was often across the fence in a pasture. Dried “cow pies” conveniently became our bases.



Mr. Van Arkel was also fond of taking his students on nature walks. I remember how fun they were, but also how the big boys would use those outings to terrorize us little kids. Tune in to the next issue to find out what happened.

-Wilma Blom