



## Just Thought You'd Like To Know

by Wanda Philips

Blackbirds are preening

Spring is here. This year with all the cold temperatures and high winds one wants to complain a bit about the weather. It is a safe conversation topic in which we mostly agree. Much safer than politics. It's a good thing we don't have to vote on the weather. It is fine with me that someone else is in charge of that department.

The birds seem to know when spring arrives. They have their calendars marked and they appear on schedule. In April the blackbirds made their appearance in my yard and what a noisy gang they are! The red-wings mixed in the regular blackbirds and the lawn was full of those raucous, rowdy, proud birds. They are fun to watch as they strut around bobbing their heads as though they know exactly what they are doing.

Most of them are just traveling through but they will stay awhile to check things out. The red-wing blackbirds stay to nest if they can find a shrubby marsh. The bright red patch on their wings appears to determine their rank as if they belong to some great blackbird army.

Our feathered friends are much smarter than we give them credit. I read a true story in the *Nebraskaland* magazine about blackbirds that seems incredible. It seems this fellow in Lincoln, NE was trying to rid the rabbit population in his yard by sprinkling mothballs around. Soon the blackbirds came in drives, picked up the mothballs and preened themselves as though preparing for a big occasion. No other birds but the blackbirds picked up the mothballs.

Was that a strange event? "Not so," says a wildlife professor at the University of Nebraska, "other birds have similar behavior." The flickers preen with ants, other species use millipedes or marigolds. In the bird science world this is known as "anting."

Here is how it works. Ants contain an acid which acts as a fungicide, millipedes have secretions that repel insects and marigolds have anti-bacterial properties. The blackbirds seem to know that mothballs contain naphthalene, an insecticide. They rub the mothball one direction and then the other to get beneath their feathers to soothe their skin irritated by feather replacement or maybe just to get rid of creepy crawlers.

Isn't that remarkable? Nature is filled with many wonders. I've always enjoyed watching the blackbirds but now I can admire their intelligence. I hope you do, too.

## Great books from the Akron Library

by Deanna Boe

### IF YOU LIVED HERE

By Dana Sachs

The author, Dana Sachs, lived in Vietnam in the early 1990s. She obviously fell in love with the country and its people by the way both are presented in this novel. This is a story that tugs at the heart. It is told by two different characters: Shelley Marino and Xuan Mai. Each chapter is told by the other and skillfully weaves their lives together. The story takes place in Wilmington, North Carolina and Hanoi, Vietnam.

Shelley is a 42-year-old married woman who has not been successful in having a child. For over 20 years she believes caring for a baby is necessary to complete her life. It is true she helped to raise her husband's two sons from a previous marriage but this does not feel quite the same. When the opportunity presents itself to adopt a baby from Vietnam, Shelley believes this is her last chance. Her husband, Martin, is 54 and no longer feels he can do this even though he realizes how important it is to her. Up to this point of their lives, they have had what most would consider an excellent marriage. It is obvious they

love each other. It is a shock when Martin tells Shelley he simply can't raise another child. Now what?

Xuan Mai is from Vietnam. What is interesting about this is the fact she is from North Vietnam. We usually think of anyone who escaped Vietnam, by way of a boat, only did so from the south, but in this case it is not true. Mai has lived in the states for over 20 years. She has chosen to live in a city that has few Vietnamese. Why? She is an extremely reserved person who has managed to run a very successful business. Mai was not prepared for someone like Shelley who was quite persistent in gaining her friendship. It is true that Shelley has an ulterior motive, learning as much as she could about Vietnam, but this strange relationship soon blossoms into a unique and satisfying closeness which serves to enhance both of their lives.

The author does an excellent job of creating a believable story. The characters are likeable and you want them to succeed in their journey. It is easy to read and the ending leaves you satisfied; it does not seem far-fetched. Why not check it out and enjoy!

## Peggy's Ponderings

By Peggy Searls



Think this must be the monsoon season. You're almost afraid to take off your shoes and stockings to see if you've become web footed. Bet in another six weeks we'll be praying for rain. Never satisfied, right?

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Life is a great bundle of little things.

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It's been pretty quiet around Nightmare Manor, and that's actually a blessing. Word for you young folks, old age is not for cowards. If I'd known I was going to live this long, would have taken better care of myself.

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Aspire to inspire before you expire. (Just call me the Old Philosopher).

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Don't know about the rest of the people, but I've already had enough political hoopla and we've just begun. Looks to me like if you want to write the story of your life, just run for political office and let someone else dig up your past. And this is only the beginning. My favorite mythical creature? The honest politician.

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Can you handle another rhubarb recipe? Ran across this one in the debris I refer to as my recipe file. Had forgotten about it. It's low in sugar so could be great for folks on diets. I'm always on a diet. Never eat more than I can hold.

### Rhubarb Rumble

3 cups rhubarb

1 small pkg. sugar-free strawberry jello

1 1/2 cups cold milk

1 small pkg. instant sugar-free vanilla pudding.

1- 8" graham cracker crust

Place rhubarb in bowl, cover, microwave on high 6-8 minutes until rhubarb is soft, stirring every 2 minutes. Stir in jello until it's dissolved. Cool completely. Combine milk and pudding, beat 2 minutes. Fold into rhubarb mixture. Spoon onto crust. Refrigerate until firm.

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### Fathers, Then & Now

\*In 1900 a father's horse power meant his horses. Today it's the size of his minivan.

\*In 1900 if a father put a roof over his family's head, he was a success. Today it takes a roof, deck, pool, and four car garage. And that's just the vacation home.

\*In 1900 a father waited for the doctor to tell him the baby had arrived. Today, he must wear a smock, know how to breathe and make sure there's film in the video camera.

\*In 1900 a father came home from work to find his wife and children at the supper table. Today, he comes home to a note: "Jimmy's at baseball, Cindy's at gymnastics, I have a class, pizza's in the fridge."

\*In 1900 fathers and sons would have heart to heart conversations while fishing in a stream. Today, fathers pluck the headphones off their sons' ears and shout, "WHEN YOU HAVE A MINUTE..."

\*In 1900 a father gave a pencil box for Christmas, and the kid was all smiles. Today, a father spends \$800 at Toy's "R" Us and the kid screams, "I wanted Sega!"

\*In 1900 fathers shook their children gently and whispered, "Wake up, it's time for school." Today, kids shake their fathers violently at 4 a.m. shouting, "Wake up, it's time for hockey practice."

*Almost makes a body glad they lived between those times, doesn't it?*



### The New Kid on the Block

by Amy Adix  
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### To Change Is To Endure

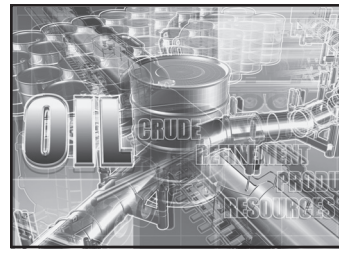
So, the voting's over. I know we are on the other side of the river but we will definitely be affected by the people's decision. Whether we believe the effects will be good or bad or if our thoughts are in the middle, change is inevitable. Are we ready for it? Are we ready for the change in our beautiful scenery we are known for? Are we ready for the new citizens to our community as new jobs are created? Can we handle this change? Well whether we like it or not, change is here folks.

And it's not just the building of a new ethanol plant that's changing. It's the crush at the pump that makes you wonder if you can afford to drive to work. It's worrying if you still have a job each day when you show up due to layoffs. It's trying to keep your head above water with the job you do have.

We are a "wealthy" country. We are supposed to have state and government agencies to protect us from environmental dangers. We are supposed to be doing fine economically according to our president. Our own governor insists that new jobs are being created every day and that our state is the state of opportunity.

Change is here when we tell our children to drink all of their milk, but we have to put less milk in their cup.

When we are older we will have a great story to tell. The one about the times when things were rough and we were able to get ourselves out of it. Or our story will be, the one about the times when our children had to bail us out. Either way it will be written and discussed in classrooms as the times when our communities and country went through great changes. Wait, I seem to recall hearing this story before. Oh yeah, it was told by a 92 year old gentleman that was remembering growing up with much less than we could ever imagine, but the concept was similar. To change is to endure. He and many others like him did, and we will to. Hanging on by the skin of our teeth.



## Oil for Dummies

by Doug Maurstad

### It Ain't Over Till It's Over!

As disappointing as the outcome of the election was on June 3, I would like to quote former baseball great Yogi Berra: "It ain't over till it's over."

Those of us who have been against this refinery issue since it was revealed a year ago knew that there was a possibility we might not win this election. We also knew that when dealing with a company such as Hyperion we would be in for a tough fight. Our predictions are coming true.

There is an old saying that if you tell a lie long enough and often enough, it becomes true. Preston Phillips has been saying since the beginning that this refinery is bringing growth and economic development to this community and that is why we must let them in. Whenever we question him or his cronies about this, we never get a straight answer. If you look at all the news clips and all the news quotes, they always talk around this issue. They keep repeating what it will do but never say how they will do this.

There is one vital question that I have had an issue with since the beginning and this question has never been answered. Why have they not said they are coming to Union County? The day after the election, Corky Frank was quoted in an area newspaper that there are still other sites under consideration. If this isn't an affront to the people of Union County, nothing is. What Mr. Frank is actually saying is that they still don't have the money, resources, and the manpower to build this thing.

They did get the first hurdle out of the way; they got us to vote in a zoning ordinance that is completely flawed and contrary to the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. I won't keep beating that subject to the ground, but this is the basis for the whole thing, and they completely circumvented the process.

I am not a sore loser, I just hate to lose. What I find hard to comprehend is that Hyperion completely ignored the system and convinced our public officials that they knew what they were doing. Our officials believed them; or something to that effect. It will be interesting to see what the Circuit Court has to say about the lawsuit.

I think the problem really is that Hyperion has been planning this for many years, and we have been able to do nothing but react to every step they have taken in this process. They knew from the beginning what was going to happen, and things went exactly their way. Do you remember back a few articles when I was talking about this being a chess game? They have a strategy that is all based on what the ultimate goal is, and this makes me

think when the public hearings start on their permitting process that our laws are so weak that this will breeze through the process, and it may actually become reality on paper.

I honestly don't think we will ever see a refinery built here. Not only are there insurmountable obstacles with the permitting process, the biggest obstacle is bound to be financing. I have a hard time believing that a company with a net worth of \$30-50 million dollars can finance a project that is \$10-12 billion in today's dollars. That seems so unreal that it makes me wonder what is really going on. I've said repeatedly throughout my articles that I love conspiracies, and I think this is a lulu. Do you suppose this could be a giant land grab? After all, Hyperion Resources is a real estate development company.

Don't be surprised if many of the statements made by Hyperion during this campaign process don't come to fruit. Preston Phillips is on record as claiming there will be 1,825 permanent jobs. In the Stuefen Report, Preston is quoted as saying there will be 1,825 jobs however, 80 percent will be imported because we don't have the skills and expertise to fill these positions.

This is not an isolated statement. Many inaccuracies have been pointed out and will be proven when it comes time for Hyperion to substantiate these claims, but for now, the important step was having the ordinance approved.

When I say it isn't over till it's over, think about what hurdle is coming next. In order to get the pipeline and the railroad to the proposed refinery site there is going to be a battle over eminent domain. The state will have no other option but to declare eminent domain because this pipeline/railroad has to go through the very area that is 80 percent against the refinery. If you ever thought people were mad before, wait until someone that is not even close to the site is forced to give up their land to let the pipeline/railroad through. Then we will have big problems.

The democratic process has once again been carried out. I applaud those that voted. Don't ever feel bad because you lost. Be glad that you had the opportunity to vote. This is what it is all about.

Servicemen and women around the world will always say that they don't always agree with what you say, but they will defend to the death your right to say it. This is still the land of the free and the home of the brave. And like I said in my first sentence, "It Ain't Over Till It's Over."