

Grandma and the Christmas goose

This Christmas story was told to me by my husband's grandma many years ago. In her own words . . .

Six fuzzball goslings came home in a cardboard box on my lap. The children hung over the front seat and cooed and giggled and poked at them. The goslings gleebed. It was instant love.

I was envisioning financial success, for I planned to sell five geese by Christmas time with one left for a festive dinner. I could sell goose eggs all summer, make a pair of goose feather pillows and feed my family crispy roast goose with raisin cream stuffing and goose gravy.

We put the goslings in the milkhouse for the night until George could get a pen built. The goslings wept. The children wept and be-

seched. At midnight the noisy goslings were brought into the kitchen to sleep near the still warm stove. In the morning the children were found all cuddled in their quilts on the floor sleeping peacefully beside snoozing goslings. George went out to build a pen and coop forthwith. The children helped until they almost sabotaged the entire project. I was forced to bake cookies to keep them out from under his feet.

Weeks went by and the goslings grew and traipsed happily about their pen, losing their fuzz and developing feathers, losing their baby gleeblings and developing penetrating "wonks". The children laughed with glee and grew and prospered with the geese.

The birds were named, of course. Wilhelmina in honor of

Collector Chat Liza Deines



a cousin; Fat Foot for a deformed paddler; Hoot with his raucous voice; Grace for no known reason; Minor was the little one and then there was Schwartzerschnoot, named for a black spot on his beak. He was everyone's favorite, large and loving with a habit of coming up and laying his face against my apron. He also ate off every geranium I planted.

Mrs. Van de Vere came to the house and offered five whole dollars for a young goose to roast for a special dinner. I sold Wilhelmina. The children wept. Every time we saw Mrs. Van de Vere at church she told us again how delicious that goose was and the children burst into tears. She was overheard to say that Sophie's children were certainly a strange brood.

Fat Foot and Grace met their demise one dark summer night when coyotes attacked, leaving a bloody mess in the pen. The children were inconsolable. They tied black bows on the pen posts and held a memorial. Minor was simply gone one morning and we never knew where or how. I told the children he had gone into the wide world to seek his fortune. My visions of fortune were fading fast. Still, Hoot brought a good price at Thanksgiving and provided cash for Christmas gifts. I, however, paid a high price in weeping children.

Christmas morning came and George was sent out early with a hatchet to kill Schwartzerschnoot so I could dress him and get him on to roast before we left for church. Amidst forlorn wailing and fervent pleas for mercy I put bread and raisins to soak for stuffing and baked a pie. No George. No Schwartzerschnoot. No mouth-watering smell of roasting goose. The children followed me out side to search. We found them at the old tree stump in the east yard. George was weeping and I swear to you, so was Schwartzerschnoot. The children wept. I wept.

We had chipped beef gravy on soaked dressing bread for Christmas dinner. The children laughed and talked and ate heartily. George and I smiled at them and each other and held hands under the table. It was the best Christmas dinner we ever had.

EPILOGUE: Schwartzerschnoot lived to a ripe old age and was buried in the east yard with due ceremony. He left as his legacy enough feathers for a pair of wonderful pillows. I planted geraniums on his grave.

Extension: state pushing districts

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family and consumer sciences, and Extension Council members Susan May, Amanda Grafel and Peggy Pratt talked with the commissioners about making the switch to a district.

Statewide, extension officials have been pushing for districts serving several counties, which have the power to levy their own property tax and take spending decisions out of county hands. Commissioners basically would no longer have a say in the program.

The district would be run by a new board with four representatives from each county. In the first year, Mr. Hale said, the board would be named by the commissioners. After that, the members would be chosen at the spring city/school elections.

The district board would set a tax levy for both counties, he said, and both counties would continue to have offices and agents.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he had gotten mostly negative feedback about the idea of an extension district. He said he would have to vote against the plan. Both Commissioners Doyle Brown and Stan McEvoy, who said they had basically no feedback, voted in favor of the switch.

The resolution will be printed in today's *Oberlin Herald* and again next week. After the last publication, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn, there is a 60-day period in which someone can come in and ask to do a petition. The petition needs signatures of 5 percent of the registered voters in either county, which is 101 in Decatur. That would then send the question to an election in the county that petitions it, she said.

The last day to turn in a petition is Monday, Feb. 9, for Decatur County, Mrs. Horn said. There wasn't any discussion on where Norton County is in the process.

Since talking with the commissioners months ago about the district idea, said Mrs. May, extension council members have talked with people and asked them to call

the commissioners to say if they are in favor of joining with Norton County or not.

Mr. Unger said he had one constituent in favor of the district and all the others were opposed because they didn't want a separate taxing entity.

The people who serve on the board will be from Decatur and Norton counties, said Mrs. Pratt, so you have to believe that they aren't going to raise taxes just to raise taxes. They will be paying them, too, she said.

Mr. Brown said he didn't receive any calls. Mr. McEvoy said he did talk to one person from Norton County.

Mrs. May said the board thinks joining with Norton County is "a wonderful idea." The state is heading towards districts, she said, and they would rather be with a financially strong county as opposed to a county they just get stuck with.

Are the four people from each county chosen at-large or is it one from each commissioner district and one at-large person? asked Mr. Unger. Mr. Hale said he wasn't sure, but thought the original board would make those decisions.

One of the major arguments from the people he talked with, said Mr. Unger, is that this is just one step in doing away with counties.

"I think this is a way to strengthen the counties," countered Mrs. May.

The projection from Kansas State University, using the 2006 budget, said Mr. Hale, showed that joining in a district would save Norton County almost \$30,000 and Decatur almost \$40,000.

This is about a more efficient way of doing things and being able to provide more services, not less, said Mr. Hale. The office here will remain open, he said.

It's also about the financial situation the county is in, said Mr. Brown. People have to be asking how many of the programs that are currently offered will be axed. The university is saying there

is more money for districts, he added, but what if that changes? What happens if they say that the state money isn't here to keep it going?

If cuts are made, said Mrs. Pratt, she'd assume it will be done either way.

Mr. McEvoy said he can't see how the university is saving money with the districts. Mr. Hale said money will be saved on training and in other areas.

Mr. McEvoy said he doesn't like the way the election process is set up. If people don't run for the seats, he asked, what will happen?

There are 24 people involved in the committees of the Extension Council, said Mrs. May. They don't all sit on the board, but all have an interest. Surely from that number, there will be people interested in running.

To make this process work, said Mr. Hale, the decision really needs to be made today.

There was some talk about sending the question to an election first, but the commissioners found out the only way for the question to go to an election is through a petition.

It seems like if people are for something they don't discuss it, said Mrs. May. When they are against something, she said, then they discuss it.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch looked up the law on district. He said it does say the four members have to represent a county, but doesn't say they have to live in the county.

An advisory election in the spring was suggested. Mrs. Horn said although an advisory election can be done at the polling places, her workers can't count the ballots and really can't handle it.

It wouldn't be an official ballot, added Mr. Hirsch.

The commissioners then approved the resolution to move ahead with an extension district with Norton County in a 2-1 vote. Each county will continue to have separate offices, 4-H programs and fairs, Mr. Hale said.

Deer: deaths can be reduced

(Continued from Page 1)

of the deaths in vehicle-animal crashes each year, even though registrations of cars, SUVs and pickup trucks outnumber motorcycles on the road 40 to 1.

The numbers of deaths can be reduced by simply wearing seat belts in vehicles and helmets when riding on motorcycles.

Of course, the best way to avoid damage, injury or death is to not hit a deer at all. Sheriff Thomson offers some tips for avoiding hitting a deer:

- Slow down. Reduce your speed while driving, and if you see a deer, slow down. Hitting a deer at 20 miles per hour will do a lot less damage than hitting one at 40.

- Use your high beams whenever possible. The more you can see on the sides of the roads at night, the better your chances of seeing deer before they come onto the road.

- Drive during the daylight hours if at all possible. Deer are out and moving about at dawn and dusk and overnight, when they're most active. Also, it's harder to see deer at night.

- Don't swerve to avoid hitting a deer. Hitting a deer head-on is better than losing control of the

vehicle.

- If you see one deer, there are almost always more nearby. Slow down. Use your high beams.

- If you hit a deer, and the damage is more than \$1,000, it has to be reported to the sheriff's office.

Keep in mind that just because rutting season is over or hasn't begun yet doesn't mean there aren't deer out on the roads.

"Deer accidents aren't as common, but they happen year-round," said Sheriff Thomson. "They don't just disappear when rutting season is over."

The Sheriff's deputies aren't immune from deer accidents, either.

"We've had two deer accidents in my department so far this year," said Sheriff Thomson. "If you drive a lot of miles, you're probably going to hit a deer."

Sheriff Thomson said there have been 93 deer accidents in Norton County this year, which is about 66 percent of the 141 total accidents, and they get about one motorcycle-deer accident per year.

He said there haven't been any deaths from deer accidents in the last few years.

City: owner will get bill

(Continued from Page 1)

and #8-401 regarding the vegetation. If the owner of the property does not clean it up within 10 days the city will have it done and charge the property owner.

Chief Morel said his department gave a presentation at the Norton Senior Center on senior safety, and it was very well attended. He told the city council that if anyone else wants a presentation done, all they have to do is ask him, and he'll be happy to see that it gets done.

Mr. Lawson asked the city council to pass resolution 8-2008, endorsing transportation improvements for the City of Norton, concerning the enactment by the Kansas Legislature of a new statewide comprehensive transportation program. Councilman Briery said he used to work for the Kansas Department of Transportation, and they almost had a grant to fix Highway 36 all through Norton, but that it fell through. Councilman Briery said it's very important to apply for all the grants and programs they can.

The city council passed the resolution unanimously.

Councilwoman Kim Snyder said Don Mordecai, of the Norton Disc Golf Club, requested that the club use Elmwood Park on Aug. 9 for a tournament. The city council approved the request.

The Norton County Community Service Association requested the use of the fair grounds in Elmwood Park for July 20-25 for the Norton County Fair. Attorney Griffith asked that they provide a copy of their liability insurance before taking the grounds. The city council approved the request.

Councilwoman Snyder said she met with the owners of Thunder Promotions, who hold races at the Elmwood Park Speedway, about decreasing the track's size from one-half mile to three-eighths mile. Councilwoman Snyder said she's going to put out ads to see if there are any other promoters who would use the track as it is, and she should have names of promoters interested by Dec. 26.

Councilwoman Snyder set a parks meeting for Dec. 29 to discuss the names submitted.

Councilwoman Elaine Mann set a utilities committee meeting for Dec. 15 to discuss the Norton Correctional Facility using the city's water as a back-up while they're building a new water plant at the facility. There was discussion on if the city's water plant can handle the extra load, and Mr. Lawson said if the facility uses the water to fill their tanks at night when the city's water usage is low, it should be able to handle it fine. Councilman Briery asked if the facility would have to pay double rates like all the other commercial buildings outside city limits that use city water. Mr. Lawson said it is an ordinance, not determined on a case-by-case basis.

Councilman Briery said sales tax receipts are up, and if there is enough money at the year-end meeting, he'd like the city to allocate funds to purchase a jackhammer and a back-hoe for gutter and curb work.

Councilwoman Donna Foley said she attended the Northwest Kansas Renewable Energy Collaborative meeting, and that Buy Local Week will be Feb. 1-7. She said she didn't want Buy Local Week to compete with all the Christmas promotions going on right now, and she's asking other cities in the county to sign proclamations in support of Buy Local Week.

Mayor David Corns said sales tax receipts the city received in October totaled \$19,629.63, the county's October receipts were \$18,008.65, for a total of \$37,638.28 in October. The year-to-date sales tax receipts total \$429,146.34. Last year's sales tax receipts for October were \$18,565.68 for the city and \$15,480.28 for the county for a total of \$35,616.84. Last year's year-to-date sales tax receipts were \$389,684.61.

The council paid bills, and with no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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Disclosure Act report involves time limit

"The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA), requires that holdings, acquisitions, dispositions, leases and land use changes be reported within 90 days by foreign landowners. A person with dual citizenship should also report as a foreign landowner," said Vesta Hobbs, Norton County Executive Director.

A failure to report could result in a civil penalty of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the interests held in the agricultural land.

It is the responsibility of the landowner, or anyone acting on behalf of the landowners, to timely report. Forms to report are available from any local Farm Service Agency office.

For more information, contact the Norton County Farm Service Agency office at 11506 Pineview Drive, Norton 67654, or telephone (785) 877-5156.

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To receive a free CWD test for adult deer harvested in northwest Kansas, complete this coupon and submit it, along with the animal's head to a CWD Test Station by December 16, 2008. (Hunters may have more than one deer tested. Coupon not required, but the information below is needed at the test station.)

KDWP# (license) _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ - _____

Kill location (please fill in as much info as possible):

1) DMU _____ **2) County** _____

3) Distance & Direction from nearest town:
(example: 3 miles north and 1 mile east of Emporia)

Date of Harvest: _____

Weapon Type (check one):

Archery _____

Muzzleloader _____ Rifle/Shotgun _____

(Test Station: Staple this coupon to the CWD Data Card)

CWD Test Stations in NW Kansas

Atwood: James Zeigler 785-626-6042; **Colby:** Great Outdoors Gun Shop 785-626-9100; Tumbleweed Taxidermy 785-462-7943; **Dighton:** The Deer Shop 620-397-2332; **Ellis:** Denise Woodworth 785-623-7945; **Goodland:** Bob's Wildlife Taxidermy 785-821-1207; **Hays:** Pat Riese 785-650-5245; Andrew Pettibone 785-399-8080; **Hoxie:** Elmer Zimmerman 785-675-3226; Paul Babcock 785-675-3686; **Ness City:** South Fork Meat Processing 785-798-3464; **Norton:** David Bainter 785-874-4874; Richard Lindsay 785-877-3178; **Oakley:** Mikes Locker 785-672-9003; **Oberlin:** Dale's Fish N Fun Inc. 785-475-2201; Patrick Inman 785-475-7182; **Phillipsburg:** Phillipsburg Locker 785-543-2312; **Plainville:** Ryan Williams 785-623-8996; **Quinter:** R.W. Leighton 785-754-3625; Phil Mann 785-769-4122; **Sharon Springs:** John Helsel 785-821-0792; **St. Francis:** Cheyenne County Wildlife Inc 785-332-6601

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

For more information, call the KDWP Research Office at 620-342-0658