

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Purcell siblings recall memories of family barn that symbolized childhood.

Do you see what I see?



By Janet Larreau

Traveling south of Arnold on Highway 40, passersby only took a glance at the deteriorating barn situated near a humble farmhouse. Some didn't give it a second thought; others would think, "Why don't they tear that thing down?" But for the four Purcell kids who grew up on that farm in the 50s and 60s, the old barn symbolized their childhood together and the many life lessons that were learned there.

Built in 1930 by the Purcell kids' great uncle, Henry Purcell, the memories began when Ed and Barbara Purcell moved to the farm in 1947.

"I believe the barn would have been the big attraction, as the house had no indoor plumbing and only a pitcher pump for water," said Gene Purcell, who splits some of his time between the farm and his home with wife Becky in North Carolina.

The barn was where the family spent most of its time, tending to horses and baby calves, feeding, and, most importantly, milking the cows. This assured a good income of selling about five gallons of cream a week in Arnold, generally to Watson's grocery.

Ed and Barbara did all the milking until the kids - Linda, Debbie, Gene, and Lane - came of age to help. They were broke in around age 8-10 to do all the milking, relieving Barbara to

build a big breakfast.

"We usually had about 24 or so milk cows and each of us had the ones we liked to milk for whatever reason. Milking with dad and all four of us kids gave us a sense of family and working together. Routine, consistency, common experience all bound us together and even today serves to keep us close. I'm sure every family has that kind of experience somehow, but a lot of ours was tied to the barn," said Linda Zoucha, who now lives in Flat Rock, North Carolina.

Debbie Fajardo, who lives in Mililani, Hawaii, said her dad was about one of the last farmers around to keep milk cows and why not; he had four kids to do all the milking for him! She recalls a lot of clowning around while milking.

"As all four of us kids were milking, we would stick our heads around the cow and squirt each other trying to get it in our mouths or squirt the cats until we got caught by Dad and he would tell us to quit wasting milk," she said.

Gene says the list of lessons learned in the barn was long... how to work, how to milk, how to solve problems, how to get along, how to plan a day, and even how to cuss!

The barn was also where they learned to sing and their favorite was, "You Are My Sunshine."

"We would always sing songs while we milked. That would make us milk faster and keep

the milking rhythm going," said Linda.

Gene and Lane (who now resides in Kansas and also frequents the farm) said the haymow was a favorite spot and a great place to hide when Ed was yelling for the kids to come to work.

"There was lots of hay and straw piled in there. It was soft enough to take a nap with a new puppy or the litter of kittens born up there. We spent a lot of time there when neighbor kids would come and play tag and hide-and-go-seek," he said.

Linda recalls, "When we were in grade school, Donnie and Lloyd Olson and Jay Peterson would ride their horses over and we would spend the afternoon riding and being sheriff or bad guys. We would climb up the wall at the west end of the haymow and jump over to the first rafter. We would have contests to see who could swing the longest before we had to let go and fall into the hay bales. It always smelled so good up there and the sun would shine through the cracks in the walls. It was a fun, almost magical place."

There were a lot of friends through the years who helped with the milking chores so the Purcell kids could go have some fun.

"When mom was sick and in Omaha for treatments and Dad was there with her, I remember one Friday after school, several boys came home with Debbie

and I and helped us do chores so we could make it to the football game that night. We were so grateful and surprised, as I don't think some of those kids had milked cows before," said Linda.

During their high school years, Gene and Lane really liked getting their town friends out to help milk so they could

make it to the Friday night dance in Callaway or Broken Bow. Gene fondly remembers those boys...Mark Cole, Russ Garrison, Bill Moss, Dean Harwager, and there were others.

So the Purcell kids have wondered, "Do you see what we see and have seen as we looked at that barn as it began to sag and lean and lose its footings?" To them it was much more than just an old, deteriorating building.

The barn has now been torn down and an empty spot is all that remains of their years growing up.

"That barn symbolized our childhood together," said Linda. "The good times when we were innocent and felt safe in our home and in our community. It was hard to let it go even though it demanded to be allowed to crumble. I will miss the smell of years of cow manure, warm milk, warm cow bellies that I could rest my head upon as I milked."

Debbie says, "I feel blessed to have been raised on the farm with a great barn. I'm so happy that I do have some of the wood from the barn that I made into shelves and I tell my children and grandchildren great stories about it."



Pictured by the farmhouse they grew up in, the Purcell "kids" (from left: Lane, Linda, Debbie, and Gene) reunited for their father Ed Purcell's auction some ten years ago. All are A.H.S. graduates.

Memorial Day Services

Monday, May 29, 10:00 a.m. - Arnold Cemetery

American Legion Post 130 and VFW Post 6157

(In case of inclement weather, the program will be at the Baptist Church)

Following is the program schedule:

9:45 a.m.Honor Guard Commanded by Mike Harvey

10:00 a.m.Post Colors at Memorial Monument

Welcome.....John Phillips

National Anthem

Address.....Mary Beshaler

Presentation of Wreath.....Max Smith

Salute to Fallen ComradesHonor Guard

Taps

Benediction.....Chaplain Gary Halstead

Presentation of Memorial Wreath to those

who died at sea at Loup River.

Salute to Our Fallen ComradesHonor Guard

Dismiss Honor Guard

A.H.S. Alumni Reunion Set for This Weekend

Arnold High alumni will reunite this Saturday, May 27, for the annual banquet and program. This year's president, April Mills Tickle, Class of 2009, will welcome everyone and introduce co-emcees Dallas Beshaler and Ty Phillips, Class of 1992, who are life-long friends and are good at clowning around.

"It should be an entertaining program," said Tickle.

Dallas currently works for Ne-

braska Public Power District (NPPD) as the Vice President of Human Resources & Corporate Services. He and his wife Shelley (Doty) live in Columbus. The couple has four children, with three who have already left the nest.

Ty currently works for Parker Hannifin - Baldwin Filters as a Continuous Improvement Specialist. He and his wife Sandra (Naylor) live Kearney as empty nesters, with both adult chil-

dren now living and working in Kearney.

The meal will be served from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., and the program will follow at 7:30 p.m.

Honored classes have planned their own individual reunions, which can be found on page 6.

Meal tickets may be purchased in advance at the Rialto Theatre on Friday from 9:00 to 5:00 and Saturday, 9:00 to 12:00.



Photo/Debbie Connelly

Targeted Blocks and Streets Getting New Coat

Street improvements in the Village began last week, as Tri-State Paving started work on the block of West Lincoln Ave. from Carroll St. to Walnut St. The proposal for \$62,630.00 to double armor coat and fog seal an additional four blocks and two streets, was accepted at the Village Board's April meeting. Residents are asked to be aware of where Tri-State will be working in the coming weeks, including: East Madison Ave. from Carroll St. to Haskell St., West Jefferson Ave. from Carroll St. to Walnut, West Adams Ave. from Carroll St. to Walnut St., South Haskell from Hwy. 92 to East 1st Ave., and Cedar Street between West Jefferson and Tyler, and Hillcrest between East Lincoln Ave. and East Madison. The street improvements are especially needed this year, after a very long and hard winter caused damage to the existing asphalt.