

Farmer shopping for seed

My neighbor, Alvin, called me the other morning. He was going shopping. Did I want to come along?

I'm always up for shopping, and I needed some dog food from the farm store. My husband, Daryl, needed a new pair of fencing gloves. Sure, I would go along.



Denise Andersen

He picked me up, and off we went. We got about three miles down the road when he pulled over and stopped. I looked around. There was nothing but cornfields.

"Do we have a flat?" I asked.

"Nope," Alvin replied as he picked up a notebook. "I just want to look at this corn."

We got out and walked over to the corn. It was Pioneer corn, according to the signs, and there were several hybrids.

Alvin examined the corn that was setting on the stalks. He looked at the roots and the stalks of each variety and made notes in his notebook. I pretended to examine the corn, but the only difference I could really see was the height of the plants. Some were taller.

"OK, that's good," he said. We got back in the pickup, and off we went.

We weren't more than half a mile down the road when he stopped again. This was a Northrup King field. We got out, and Alvin did the examination routine. I decided I should learn more, so I started asking questions about the difference the height made, the size of the stalk, the color of the silk.

Alvin answered all of my questions patiently and thoroughly. When we were done, we got back in the pickup and headed off down the road.

The next field we stopped at was a Fontenelle plot.

"Isn't this all pretty much the same?" I asked. "I mean, corn is corn."

"Not at all," Alvin said. "Look at how much more developed this ear is than the ears on that plot with the different number. Not only do the companies vary, but so do the individual hybrid numbers."

It was like shopping for a dress, Alvin said. If I wanted a black dress, then I could look at all of the black dresses in one store. Did I want short sleeves or long? A dress that went to my knees or all the way to the floor? Did I want a collar or a V-neck? Which brand did I want, and how much did I want to pay? How did it fit?

Maybe the shade of black was different, and if I went to another store I would have to look at all those choices again.

We visited about a dozen corn plots that morning, and as we turned to go back home I pointed out that we had never made it to the farm store.

"I was only really shopping for corn seed this morning," Alvin said, "but I guess we can swing by the farm store."

We headed that way, and I sat silent for a while. I was amazed that we had spent three hours looking at cornfields that weren't Alvin's. I was even more amazed that he knew that much about shopping for dresses.

Denise Andersen of Fairbury is a columnist for the Tribune. Contact her at 402-461-1264 or tribune@hastingstribune.com.

FACES OF BUSINESS: Bart and Judy Hultine



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Bart and Judy Hultine hold up photographs of a trip to Egypt and of their restored British cars at their home Wednesday.

Global adventures

HULTINES HAVE TRAVELED
WIDELY FOR BUSINESS
AND PLEASURE

TONY HERRMAN
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A conversation with Bart and Judy Hultine leads to stories from across the globe. In their home office, the Hastings couple, who grew up in Sutton and have been married nearly 44 years, have family photos taken everywhere from Egypt to Jamaica.

There's a photo of them with their children, Marc and Michelle, and the four classic British sports cars the family has rebuilt. There also are several model boats as reminders of their sailing days.

"It exposes you to a different group of people who have totally different interests and careers than you have," Bart said of their various experiences. "Consequently, I think you can get a good cross-section of successful people and how they got there. It broadens you terrifically in terms of what you can do."

He said by traveling and by exposing themselves to "non-traditional" experiences, the family has tried to avoid building stereotypes.

"I think we've always had this passion for learning and this passion for doing things that are a little off the wall," he said.

Bart, 63, is a private-practice vocational expert and rehabilitation economist who holds certification in several different organizations.

Judy, 64, is a therapist with the Hastings practice Midland Counseling she runs out of their home.

Their two adult children both live in Hastings and run Western Vocational Services and Western Alternative Corrections.

The family's current business ventures comprise the Hultine Business Consortium.

Bart and Judy have two grandsons.

The couple bought their first sailboat while still in high school. Bart remembers paying Bob Foote about \$50 for a plastic foam boat used as in Kool cigarettes display at Big G Ace.

"Five boats later, we were sailing a 30-foot Buccaneer," he said. "It was a nice cruiser we picked up in San Francisco. We've sailed it in the Atlantic, Pacific, Caribbean and Gulf (of Mexico)."

Owning that last boat led to competing, with a crew of about five, in the Governor's Cup sailing competition at Lake McConaughy. They sold that boat in the late 1990s.

No one from Nebraska ever has won the Governor's Cup, the Hultines said, although they are proud of the third-place finish they had one year.

They've driven motorcycles all over North America.

For a while, Bart even owned a plane.

"After I sold the boat, I wanted to learn to fly, so I became a pilot and flew

for about five years," he said.

Spurred by a desire to have marble fixtures in their home, the Hultines established Custom Marble & Design in Juniata in 1975. They expanded the business offshore, opening a Custom Marble & Design factory in Jamaica in 1980.

They sold both factories in 1986.

"The experience in Jamaica was very eye-opening because everything is on the take," Bart said. "To get the telephone, you need to bribe the right person. To get a tire for your truck, you need to get the right person. To get something off the docks, you need you need to bribe the right person."

Problems with work ethic from the locals and an inability to repatriate earnings from Jamaica led them to sell a large portion of their ownership in that factory to a native Jamaican.

While they did run that factory, they spent a lot of time in Jamaica.

"One of us spent at least a week every month down there," Judy said.

This was especially beneficial for their children, she said. It allowed them to be minorities and get a different sense of the world.

Their children were 5 and 8 years old when the family began traveling to Jamaica.

"They did a lot of growing up down there," she said.

The Hultines still own 52 percent of the marble plant down there, but take a passive role in running the business.

"We've made a business of taking people to Jamaica during the last 10, 15 years," Bart said. "We've probably taken well over 1,000-1,200 people to Jamaica."



Editor's note: This is part of an ongoing series that profiles business owners within Hastings. To submit ideas, contact business editor Erik Buderus at 402-461-1257 or ebuderus@hastingstribune.com.

Times sour for dairy producers

Maybe this is what Willie and Waylon were thinking when they warned American "mommies" to not let their "babies to grow up to be cowboys."

Anyone with a dairy cow this year will lose, on average, \$70 per month feeding and milking it; more if the cow is also packin' debt.



Alan Guebert

That means, in the Great White Washout of 2009, a moderately-sized dairy farm — say, a family operation with 200 cows — will lose nearly \$170,000 making milk. If the family has a banker as a partner, as 70 percent of all U.S. dairymen do, the family will likely lose more \$1,000 per cow, or \$200,000, this year.

The catastrophic losses mean people and cows are running, not walking, out milking parlors nationwide. Vermont, where cows are as hallowed as their owners' flintiness, has already lost 40 of its 1,000 dairies with hundreds more at risk. Pennsylvania officials estimate the state will lose 25 percent of its 7,400 dairy farmers before prices turn.

All of this calamity comes just two short years after farm milk prices made record highs, over \$21 per 100 pounds, or cwt., the farm unit all milk is sold by. Today, prices are half that.

In fact, in July 14 testimony before the House Ag Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry, Jim Miller, undersecretary of agriculture for farm and foreign ag services, estimated this year's on-farm milk price will average just \$12.15 per cwt., the "lowest annual price received by farmers for milk since 1979."

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NRCS offering money to fight invasive plants along rivers

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Landowners along the Platte and Republican rivers who spray to control invasive weeds on their property may be eligible for cost-share funding from the federal government.

In a news release July 9, the Natural Resources Conservation Service announced it is offering \$1.5 million in cost-share assistance to landowners who recently have sprayed riparian corridors sprayed for invasive weed control or who soon will have such spraying completed.

Landowners in the North and South Platte river basins, the Platte River Basin to the eastern Polk County line, all of the Republican River Basin and the Niobrara River Basin have until Friday to apply to be considered in the first awarding of contracts. The funds are being provided through the NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program or the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

The five river basins were selected for targeting because they have been declared as fully appropriated or overappropriated for surface and/or groundwater.

Steve Chick, NRCS state conservationist, said his agency is working in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and seven regional weed management areas to enhance weed control actions.

The \$1.5 million in cost-share funding is coming to Nebraska as a new option in the 2008 Farm Bill, called the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, or CCPI.

Please see NRCS/page C2

Bicycle racks added downtown

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For almost 10 years, Tom Neutzman has ridden a bicycle to work nearly every day at Brown Shoe Fit in downtown Hastings.

One problem for Neutzman was that he never had a place to safely store his bike during the day.

Now, Neutzman has a clear view of one of the new bike racks installed in downtown Hastings. It sits just outside the store at 600 W. Second St.

"As a person who has had two bikes stolen from downtown, I can appreciate having someplace to lock them up," he said.

The Hastings Business Improvement District recently addressed the issue of no bike racks by installing 20 dome-shaped metal bike racks throughout the downtown area.

"I think we saw more people either riding through the downtown on their way to work or just taking their bike instead of



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Hastings' Business Improvement District recently installed numerous small bicycle racks in the downtown area.

jumping in their car," said Randy Chick, BID director.

One end of the city's Pioneer Spirit Trail is in the downtown area, which, Chick said, brings a lot of bicyclists downtown.

He said many downtown

business owners noticed more bicycle traffic and there was nowhere to park them.

He said some people were leaning bikes against some of the newly remodeled and renovated business buildings, which

became another reason he believed it was important to get bike racks.

The first nine racks were installed on July 3, followed by the nine more on July 11. Two racks are left to be installed downtown at some point in the future.

"And if they work out well and people are using them, we may buy some more," Chick said.

Tana Seymour, owner of The Well-Read Book, 706 W. Second St., said she loves having a rack just outside her store's front door.

"I think they're great," she said. "I've actually heard several people complain there were no bike racks downtown, so I was thrilled when they said they were going to put them in."

Seymour said these smaller, more modern-looking racks are a good fit for downtown rather than the larger racks. The smaller racks don't take up the space that the larger ones did, yet serve the same purpose, Seymour said.

"I realize these only hold a

Please see BIKES/page C2

Guebert: Business sour for dairymen these days

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Contrast the price received for milk to the prices paid for making it. In his House testimony, Miller reported that feed costs alone — mind you, no labor, energy, insurance, land or taxes — in California, the nation's largest milk producer, in May were \$12.19 per cwt. That makes dairying a less-than-zero profession.

More importantly, says dairyman John Bunting, the folks exiting dairying because of today's absurdly low prices are its younger, more-likely-to-be-indebted generation.

"In short," he opines from his New York dairy barn July 15, "this nation currently seems to have public policy that favors dairy farmers over age 70 than those younger than 50. How do you think that's going to work out in the coming years?"

It will be a disaster — "an absolute calamity," is how Bunting describes it — for consumers, processors and farmers because today's sustained crushing prices will force younger farmers and older bankers alike to leave the dairying forever.

Miller, despite his bleak House testimony, believes milk prices will rebound to an average \$15.60 in 2010.

In the meantime, he suggests, USDA's current tools — government purchases of butter, cheese, and non-fat dry milk to boost support prices and fatten food aid programs, and MILC, the Milk Income Loss Contract program that will pay farmers an estimated \$900 million this year — will, hopefully, give many farmers enough cash to make it through 2009's train wreck.

Bunting, who maintains a lively blog at <http://john-buntingsjournal.blogspot.com/> and writes for The Milkweed, a Wisconsin-based monthly dairy newspaper, ain't buying it. This crack-up's swiftness and severity, he says, shows U.S. milk policy for what it is: totally inadequate and completely opaque.

"No one in Washington knows how milk is priced anymore," he says, "or how easily those prices are manipulated by the very few, very big dairy co-ops and processors. And because they don't know, they can't fix it."

Under the present policy, Bunting notes, dairy farmers have only two avenues when low prices strike — leave dairying or get more cows. The former is usually unacceptable, the latter "certainly shortsighted."

He's right; dairymen like him "got milk;" too much, in fact. What they have a shortage of, however, is leadership.

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NRCS: Agency will help fight invasive plants along key rivers

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The initiative allows federal funds for individual landowners to be leveraged with partner agencies, organizations or tribes to address natural resource concerns.

The \$1.5 million is for this year. Similar amounts are expected to be available in each of the next two years of the three-year project.

In future years, a continuous sign-up will be available to landowners and producers.

For more information about CCPI, contact any NRCS office or county weed manager. Information also is available on the state Department of Agriculture Web site, www.agr.ne.gov.



JOHN HUTHMACHER/Tribune

Above: Fennell Preddy III (left) shows owner Dave Worrell some battle scars on his skateboard Tuesday at the KNK Skate Shop. Below: Worrell and Billy Ellis make some adjustments on a skateboard Wednesday at KNK Skate Shop.

Shop caters to skaters

VENTURE AN EXPERIMENT
FOR NOW, BUT BUSINESS
IS LOOKING GOOD

JOHN HUTHMACHER
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Kopz-n-Konz Tattoo and Body Piercing Studio owner Dave Worrell readily admits he's no expert on skateboards. So why did he open KNK Skate Shop at the former Urban Ragz location at 838 W. Second St. earlier this month?

For starters, he likes kids. So when he saw the chance to give those of them who ride skateboards and their parents a break from having to travel out of town to purchase equipment, he thought, "Why not?"

And so, after meeting with 15 area skateboarders for input, he decided to give the new venture a spin, strictly on a temporary basis.

The store is run by three volunteers, who have pledged their service to the experimental project for the duration of the 90-day lease. If it's successful, two of them will become employees. Otherwise, the doors will close.

"We want the kids to make a go of it," Worrell said. "It's up to the kids in the skate community to make that shop work so they won't have to go to Lincoln, Omaha or Kearney for equipment. If they support the place and put the time in, it'll be there for them."

"I've got the bare necessities covered. I've got rent, utilities and a business phone in there as an initial investment. If the kids in town keep it going, then the skate shop is going to stay around. If not, there's no need to keep a business they don't want."

Already Worrell has found a supply house in North Carolina, Eastern Skate Supply, to supply name-brand boards. The plan is to carry decks, wheels, trucks, bearings, hardware kits, safety equipment, tools and skate apparel. The shop also will buy and sell used skateboards.

Raleigh Kelsey, head tattoo artist at Kopz-n-Konz, is partnering with Worrell on the new operation. He will put his artistic renderings on customized decks that will be offered exclusively at the



shop, Worrell said. Plans are also to include a line of DC skate shoes in the shop, as well.

Worrell's vision is to create enough of a buzz locally to inspire the addition of an indoor skate park in the community at some point to complement the city-run outdoor skate park, he said.

"Hopefully the city will see the need," he said. "Our goal is to get an indoor skate park, something the kids can go to year-round to get them off their couches and give them something to do."

"We've got the swimming pool and water park, why not have a little skate park to have when the water park

isn't in use? There are plenty of times in the summer when it's too hot or raining where kids could be at the indoor park."

Based on early returns, Worrell is optimistic the youth of Adams County will do their part to keep his fledgling skate shop project afloat, he said.

"There are a lot of kids into skateboarding, believe me," he said. "The day we got our first shipment there were 40 kids waiting outside for us to open the doors. It was ridiculous. It was a really good feeling."

Store hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1-6 Sunday. For information, call 463-0022.

Bikes: Racks added by BID for cyclists' convenience

Continued from page C1

couple bikes but, truly, how many more do you need? When there was a standard bike rack out there, you would only see one or two bikes anyway," Seymour said.

Bernie Tushaus, owner of Prairie Books and Gifts, 641 W. Second St., said he thinks the racks will even serve a good purpose in the winter when most people aren't riding bikes.

"In the winter when older people are trying to maneuver, I think they are a good addition to help people get up curbs," he said. "I thought that's what they were originally before we figured out what they were."

Tushaus said the bike racks should get plenty of good use with more people riding bikes in the summer.

"Just about every day there's a bike or two hitched up there," he said. "They're a good addition to the downtown."

Advertisement

Business Briefs

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TRACY HOEFT- HOFFMAN EARNS CASC

The Nebraska Association of Independent Ambulatory Center has received notice that Tracy Hoeft-Hoffman has earned the Certified Administrator Surgery Center (CASC) credential by passing the April 2009 CASC Examination. CASC individuals have demonstrated that they have knowledge found important to administer an ambulatory surgery center. To obtain the credential, an individual must meet certain eligibility requirements and achieve a passing score on an examination designed specifically to test the knowledge considered relevant to be an ambulatory surgery center administrator, delivery of patient care, quality management, human resources, financial and regulatory and legal issues. The credential is administered by the Board of Ambulatory Surgery Certification. She joins an elite group of only 492 certified individuals across the United States. Ms. Hoeft-Hoffman is the administrator at the Hastings Surgical Center.

Builder' outlook improves in June

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The National Association of Home Builders says its housing market index climbed in July to the highest level in nearly a year, as low interest rates and other incentives helped builders woo homebuyers.

The Washington-based trade association said Thursday the index rose two points to 17, its highest reading since it was 17 in September.

Index readings lower than 50 indicate negative sentiment about the market. The last time it was above 50 was in April 2006.

The report reflects a survey of 484 residential developers nationwide, tracking builders' perceptions of market conditions.

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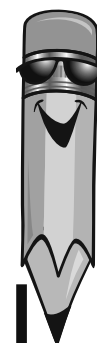
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