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South Loup River Valley

The Arnold Sentinel

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

(USPS 032480)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2015

VOLUME 99, NUMBER 24

10th in a Series on Arnold's
"Young at Heart"
Residents

By Darlene Rimpley

From living on an isolated ranch of nine sections in the sandhills north of Tryon, to moving to a home in Arnold with neighbors surrounding her seems like it would be quite an adjustment, but Jean Shimmin had no qualms about doing just that, and she is very happy that she did.

Jean Stevenson was the youngest child of eight, born on April 12, 1926, in Fort Morgan, Colorado. The family lived on a small irrigated truck farm until she was in the third grade, and then moved to a dryland farm near Sutherland, Nebraska. This was the 1930s - dry and a recession - and they had to move again, this time near North Platte.

During her junior and senior year of high school, she was in a work-study program, so went to school half a day and worked half a day, first in a bakery, and then as a telephone operator. After graduation, Jean decided she wanted to get away from her older sisters "offering advice," so she went to Scottsbluff, where she worked first as a telephone operator and then at Montgomery Ward.

After a year, her mother told her she should come back to their home, which by that time was on a small ranch north of Tryon, as, in her mom's words, "there was a boy on a neighboring ranch just back from the service who was pretty cute." Jean went back home, and the neighbor boy was pretty cute and pretty nice.

The neighbor boy, Allen Shimmin, who had just finished a tour of duty with the Army, lived and worked on the ranch that had been in his family since his grandfather homesteaded it. His grandfather had added to the original ranch by trading a team of horses for one section, and gave a dollar an acre for more land. Allen's Uncle Frank and Aunt Jessie had come into ownership of the

They've a Story to Tell

Jean Shimmin relates stories of the Dirty 30's and Ranch Life



Jean Shimmin, with her feline friend, enjoys the home she purchased from Ron and Nancy Cool in 2009. She opens her home to family, friends of friends and SORC drivers. (Kendra Veirs photo)

ranch, and Allen helped work it.

Allen and Jean were married on August 13, 1947, in the Presbyterian church in North Platte.

A non-meeting of minds caused Allen and Jean to move in with her parents just before their first son, Doug, was born on August 10, 1948, and they stayed with them through the winter.

Allen had a romantic side to him, which was proved when he came to see Jean in the hospital just after Doug was born. He brought a dozen roses and a

box of candy for the nurses, and he did the same when their other five children were born.

While they were staying with Jean's folks, the blizzard of '49 occurred. Allen and Jean were caught seven miles from the house when their car quit, and they had to walk. Jean felt like she could not go another step and just wanted to sit down many times, but with Allen's encouragement, she kept going. They also lost half of their herd of cattle in that storm.

In the spring of '49, they

moved to another ranch, but a year later Uncle Frank talked them into coming back to the ranch. Work was done on the basement to finish it up, and although they still received no wages, they could run 14 head of cows.

Jean did the cooking for 20 to 25 workers at branding time, and fed a hired man much of the time. She recalled one hired hand who was picked up in town and came to work for them. He was very dirty, told lies to them, and would not listen to her when she was passing Allen's orders on. She did not like having him in the house with her small children, and the day that he brought a gun with him, she told Allen he had to go. He was taken to town and let out.

Allen and Jean bought two acres of land that held the basement, and in 1957-1958, they built a house above the basement with the aid of a VA loan.

They added five more children to the family: Connie, Mike, Jerri Jean, Sally and Scott. The children's first school was held in a trailer, and when the road to Mullen became "driveable," they rode the bus into town with all six being Mullen graduates.

Jean did not have to work outside much when the children were small, but as soon as they all got into school, she graduated into a full-time hired man, checking windmills, riding fence lines and fixing fence, salting cattle, doctoring cattle and helping calve - all the usual duties that go with ranching. They rode Arabian horses and raised Angus cattle. Besides all of this, she had a large garden and raised chickens for both fryers and eggs. Oh yes, and she got her first driver's license in 1953, so she had the added duty of running her children to school and back while they were still in country school.

One time when Allen was rid-

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"The Basement House"

Allen and Jean moved into a home on the Shimmin Ranch. The basement house was unfinished, with no partitions for rooms, no bathroom, no running water and heated with a wood stove that almost fell apart when the ashes were shook down. They received no wages, but could run seven head of cattle.

AVFD Called to Jim's Bar

The Arnold Volunteer Fire Department was called to Jim's Bar on November 24 at about 4:00 p.m., to investigate the cause of frosty, white smoke pouring out from the vents.

"There wasn't a fire and the smoke wasn't being pushed out," said Dell Cerny, who was called to the scene to determine the cause once volunteers had evacuated the smoke out of the building.

Cerny determined that the furnace's fan didn't kick on, causing it to overheat. Only the furnace's insulation and A-coil drain tray were ignited, causing the smoke.

Upcoming School Events

The South Loup Bobcats will start their winter sports season this week, with games scheduled for both Friday and Saturday (see page 8 for a full schedule).

The National Honor Society will hold its induction ceremony Thursday night, December 3, at 7:30 p.m.

The next regular school board meeting is December 8 at 7:00 p.m.

The State Play production will be held at Norfolk on Wednesday, December 9, starting at 7:45 a.m.

December 10, Grades K-12 will present their annual Christmas concert. The public is invited to attend.

Christmas Around Town is Saturday

A fun day is planned in Arnold this Saturday, December 5, when Chamber hosts its annual Christmas Around Town. Several businesses, including Mills Hardware, Nebraska Farmhouse Antiques, Flower Girl Floral & Boutique, Flowers by Shavonne, Touch of Grace Massage and Sublime Boutique, are planning open houses and will extend their business hours. They will be offering specials, drawings, food tastings and refreshments throughout the day.

While shopping at participating businesses, customers will have the chance to enter drawings for Chamber Bucks with each \$10.00 purchase or more.

Some 30 crafters will set up at three locations, from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., at the community center, American Legion Hall and AEDC office, where wreaths to benefit the Arnold Cemetery website will be on display and for sale.

This year's free movie at the Rialto Theatre is "The Lego Movie," which will show at 3:00 p.m. Free childcare will be provided by the National Honor Society and the National Junior Honor Society during the movie.

Santa will be visiting with the kids and handing out treats bags at the community center from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Chamber's annual free Appreciation Soup and Sandwich supper will be served at the community center from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

"The Peanuts Movie," sponsored by Chamber, will be showing at the Rialto starting at 7:00 p.m. Regular admission will be charged.

The event is held annually to encourage shopping at home and to thank everyone for their patronage throughout the year.

One-Act Play Places Second at Conference

Arnold's one-act play, "Imperfect Proposal," earned second place at the conference meet held at Litchfield on November 24.

"The top four teams were all very close, and we got some fantastic judges' observations for really taking it to the next level," said drama coach Debby Moninger.

Several students received individual acting awards for their performances in the comedy play. Morgan Eggleston and Olivia Furne each earned honorable acting mentions, and Furne earned runner-up actress of all plays, which Mrs. Moninger said is a difficult medal to earn.

The top actress was Marissa Campbell of Ansley; top actor was Aaron Furrow of Anselmo/Merna; runner-up actor was Noah Edginton of Callaway; and runner-up actress was Furne of Arnold.

"Our students also represented Arnold very well through their behavior and the way they worked together throughout the day, both cast and crew," said Mrs. Moninger.

Results of the team's district performance - held December 1 at Ansley - will be reported on in the next issue.

Pinnacle Bank's Holiday Giveaway

Pinnacle Bank is sponsoring its \$1,000.00 Holiday Giveaway again this year. Register at the bank to win \$50.00 in Chamber Bucks. Full details of how to enter can be found in an advertisement on page 2.



Inflatable characters are popping up

Residents - and especially children - will enjoy driving around town to view lighting displays and decorations this holiday season. As evening approaches, characters are inflating all around town. In the yard of Chris and Debby Moninger, a snowman, holding a sign that says B-R-R-R, shivers and shakes, as Santa Claus peeks out, opening and then closing the door to the outhouse, where a roll of toilet paper glows in the dark. (Janet Larreau photo)