

THE NAPER PAPER

A publication for and about the town of Naper, Nebraska



Fall, 2003 - Vol. 1, Issue 1

The New Naper Historical Society

Welcome! With this letter you'll be introduced to the first communication from a group of individuals who aspire to "hold together" the great community of Naper, Nebraska with "Recollections from the past", for posterity.

Through the unselfish actions of Margaret Ludemann and husband Dennis Jorgensen, who are generously giving a center for a beginning—the old Zimmerman/Daldorf drug store—the first move has been made.

Initiation of the movement toward a museum and Heritage Center began with a meeting of James and Mabel Sattler, Duke and Velda Stahlecker, and Dennis and Margaret.

Since the Naper Public School closed and the actual school building sold, a need does exist for a preservation hall to place trophies, class photos, and other memorabilia. Expanding this movement to begin a museum or Heritage Hall can include articles, heirlooms, interesting collectibles, newspapers or any artifacts of the past. These can be displayed on loan from families or individuals. The intent is to begin a Naper Historical Society!

Through this "New Naper Historical" letter mailed to all Naper graduates, former teachers and students, friends and other interested parties, we'll hope to solicit family stories, family accomplishments, success stories, and any "newsy" items to share. We hope to do this mailing on a quarterly basis. Its success will be helped by all of you. We shall stay in touch.

The basic concept is to form a non-profit entity for grants and volunteer donations to help finance our work. Volunteer help for operation of the museum will be appreciated. The building can be open for special events, occasions, and by appointment.

When you receive this letter, we'll welcome your thoughts, letters, calls, and comments. Will Rogers once said, "An individual without goals is like a blind man in a dark room in the night, blindfolded, trying to catch a black cat that's not even there." Help us to preserve our fine community with the goal of a Naper historical center.

Sincerely,
Duke Stahlecker

The Naper Historical Society Our Mission:

"The mission of the Naper Historical Society is to preserve, interpret, display, communicate, promote and honor the history, original structures, special places and artifacts of the people and culture of Naper, Nebraska, and the surrounding area. The Naper Historical Society intends to accomplish this mission by operating a museum, publishing a newsletter, sponsoring events, and in other appropriate ways. The Naper Historical Society will initially focus on four themes: School Days, Life in Naper Through the Years, White Horse Ranch, and Naper 28 Plane Crash."

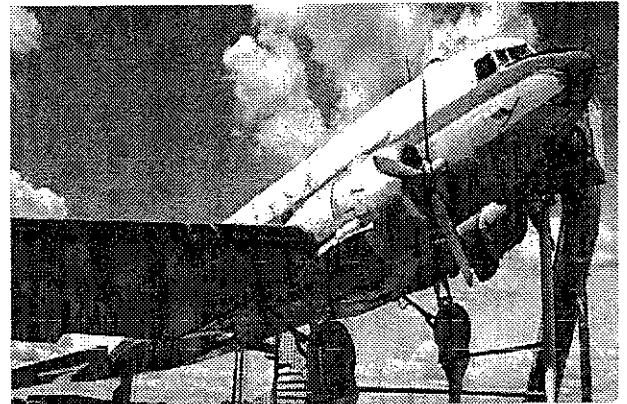
1944 Plane Crash Near Naper

by Margaret Ludemann

Like most people who grew up here, I had heard about the plane crash near Naper that killed a number of military pilots during World War II. However, I didn't know much about it, and I had never been to the site on Jim and Mabel Sattler's land about seven miles southwest of town. I finally got that opportunity a couple of weeks ago when Jim took me there, along with my husband, Dennis Jorgensen and our son, Reo. But first, let me tell you about the crash itself.

What We Know

- The crash occurred at 8:25 pm on August 3, 1944 during a terrible thunder-storm.
- The plane was an Army C-47 motored transport traveling from Bruning Air Base in Bruning, Nebraska to the base at Pierre, South Dakota.
- It carried 28 men, mostly pilots, one Flight Surgeon, and an aircraft crew chief.
- The aircraft apparently caught fire after being hit by lightning, though no one knows for sure.



A C47 plane like this one crashed near Naper on August 3, 1944. All 28 military personnel on board were killed.

(continued on page 6)

In the News...

By Ol' Homesteader

Ol' Homesteader has kindly agreed to write a quarterly report on Naper news. Who is this guy? Well as best we can figure, he was one of the early settlers in the area, and even at 128 years old he loves his town. Some people say he is a ghost, and I suppose he is. All we know is that his column appears in our post office box, and he seems to know what's going on.

You could say that summer officially ended when the kids went back to school. Maybe, though, it was when the Spencer-Naper football team got its big win against Butte. Still, some of you might not have felt like the season was over until the air turned cool and you pulled that old sweater out of the back of the closet. For me, though, it was when Loren Sieh shut down the soft serve ice cream machine... a sad sight indeed.

So Little Rain...

Well, let's visit about the summer just ended, and we'll begin with the subject that's always near and dear to all of us in Naper. RAIN. We didn't get much this summer, and it really shows. After a wet Winter and early Spring everyone had high hopes of a good year for farming. But, it seems like it hasn't hardly rained at all this summer, and that's two in a row. The crops have suffered badly, so this is a tough year for farmers. The bright spot in agriculture has been cattle prices which, at times, have been at

historic highs. That can change pretty quickly, though, so we're keeping our fingers crossed.

So Much to Do

There was a lot of activity in our town this summer. The Alumni Banquet kicked off the start of the season, and it was a great time like they all are. If you don't come to that banquet each year, shame on you. It's fun, and you get to see a lot of old friends that you don't see every day. Not only that, but the food eats pretty good, too.

Speaking of food, the 4th of July saw a hot dog feed on Main Street, as a number of folks took over the empty lot just south of the VFW Hall. The 4th just wouldn't be the 4th without wieners, burgers and lemonade on a real hot day. That's been going on here for a long time.

Do any of you remember when we had a big parade? I bet younger Naperites have at least seen pictures. There's one that I really like. It shows a big crowd, a couple of old Model T's, and that bandstand that used to sit right in the middle of Main Street. Actually I took that picture. Pretty good, huh!

The town has seen its usual number of family reunions, birthday parties, and anniversary celebrations, and that's kept the Hall, VFW, and the cafe pretty busy. The Hall also hosted an enjoyable Sunday
(continued on page 3)

Naper School Closed, Sold



A big crowd turned out for the August 24th sale.

In the beginning there was so much pride. In the end there were only stacks of stuff for sale. The Naper School has closed its doors. Its contents have been sold. And the building itself has also gone to the highest bidder.

A Tough Decision

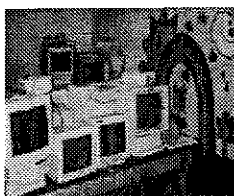
While that sounds like pretty sad news, the fact is that the vast majority of Naper citizens voted to send our grade school kids to the highly regarded Spencer-Naper School in Spencer. We were down to fewer than ten kids of different ages. One teacher, even a great one like Ann Anderson, has a pretty tough time teaching several grade levels at the same time. So, our town made the tough decision to give our kids the opportunity of a bigger school with more teachers, activities and opportunity. It may have been the right decision, but it certainly wasn't easy.

School District Formed

According to the Naper history book published at the time of our Centennial, Naper School District #21 was formed in 1892. The first school house was made of logs, and it was filled with school books and supplies totaling all of \$48. A teacher was hired at \$25 per month to educate about a dozen children of the early settlers in the area.

Many old timers still remember the school house that preceded the current building. It was built in 1903, and it sat just a few feet north of the current school. It welcomed Naper's youth for more than a half-century, with only one addition being made in all that time.

(continued on page 3)



School computers sold to highest bidder.



Even Naper's base drum found a buyer.



Boxes of books went for \$4-\$5 each.

In the News...

(continued from page 3)

afternoon dance, complete with a pot luck supper and music by the accordion band from Tyndall, South Dakota. The Lutherans celebrated the 100th anniversary of their church this summer (see *Church News*), and what a huge crowd showed up! A lot of Naperites received visitors these past few months, mostly out-of-town family who like to come home to see their town and their family.

Good Friends Gone

Sadly, we lost two of our neighbors this summer.

George Higgins passed away, and we'll miss him. George was married to Lelia for 58 years and they had 4 children and many grandchildren. They operated a farm/ranch southwest of Naper. George was active in his church and many community activities.

Paul Honke operated a farm two and a half miles southeast of Naper. Paul served as a pilot in WWII and was a member of many community boards. Paul and his wife Gertie had six children.

Paul and George were wonderful human beings, dedicated and loving family men, and solid citizens of our community. That's the bad part of living in a small town. Whenever we lose a resident, we also lose a friend, and a little bit of the fabric of our town. Other losses of friends and neighbors will be acknowledged in the Jan. year-end edition of *The Naper Paper*.

Businesses for Sale

We've lost some other

old friends this summer with the closing of the school, the Catholic Church, and D&L Grocery Store. You'll find stories about the school and the Catholic Church elsewhere in *The Naper Paper*. As for D&L, it closed its doors in August after many years of service to our town. Hopefully, this story will have a happy ending, as potential buyers have shown interest. At the time of this writing no deal had been struck, though, so if anyone is interested in a profitable little business, now's the time to come forward.

There's other "for sale" news to report. The Naper Cafe and Lounge is on the market. The town never intended to own it this long, according to the town board, and it's time to move ownership to a private party. Now that's another great opportunity! Everyone knows that the cafe is very popular and usually quite busy. If you're interested, the real



estate company handling the sale is Homestead Land & Management Company, 402-668-7400.

Not a Little Club

The formation of the Naper Historical Society is good news for our town. These folks have worked hard to get this idea off the ground. There's a lot of work yet to do, though, so it will take some time. Be patient.

But good news it is. This group prides itself on being non-partisan, non-political, and non-controversial. In fact, they aren't "non" anything... they are PRO Naper, and want to do some positive things for our town. And the really good news is that they want everyone involved. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do, or why you want to help. This won't be a little club. It's intended to include as many people who want to be a part of it.

Well, that's all the news I can think of right now, so I'm going to close.

That's it for the Ol' Homesteader.



SUPPORT OUR LOCAL MERCHANTS

A & M Enterprises

832-5388

Trenching, pump installations, backhoe work, plumbing

Bob's Auto Body

Box 223

Auto body repair

Cline's Bar

Beer, wine, spirits & munchies

Curl Up & Dye Beauty Shop

832-5573

Haircuts, styling, coloring

Goodman Farm & Ranch and

Lynn's Upholstery

832-5461

Covering chairs, couches and other furniture

Naper B & B

Lodging & breakfast

Naper School Closed

(continued from page 2)

Naper's "New" School

Planning for a new, larger Naper School got started in 1954. The old school was cramped, so the new building was designed to offer much more space. The 14,516 square foot building was built in 1956, and it formally opened for business in January, 1957. Total cost... just over \$100,000.

A merger in 1988 sent our older children to Spencer, and now our younger kids are going there, too. We hear that they enjoy Spencer-Naper School very much, and everyone in Naper is happy about that.

No Plans Yet

The Naper School was sold to the highest bidder, Jim Alford, for a little more than \$5,000. At the time of this story, he has not announced any plans for the building. All of the contents of the school were also sold, and many people around town have nice souvenirs of the last Naper School. The Naper Historical Society hopes to display the class photographs, trophies, and many other artifacts of our school.

Naper Cafe and Lounge

832-5272

Breakfast, dinner, supper & bar

Naper Gas

832-5381

Propane, sand and gravel

Naper Super Service

832-5321

Gas, oil, auto repair, & limited groceries

Naper Supply & Repair

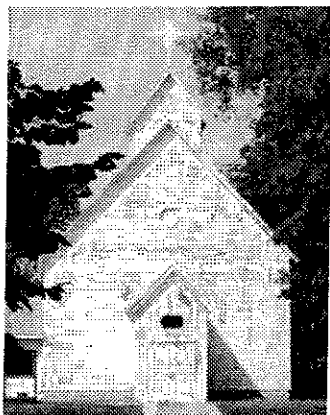
832-5833

Tire dealer, warehouse outlet

U.S. Postal Service

832-5977

Church News



The beautiful and stately Sacred Heart Church

Sacred Heart Closes

After nearly a century of service to the Catholics of Naper, sadly, Sacred Heart Catholic Church has been closed. The beautiful and stately building has stood on the west edge of town for 96 years, creating a picturesque view for Naperites looking west from Main Street. The building was constructed in 1907. A wing was added to the south in 1974 to serve as the parish hall, and it also housed a kitchen. Numerous other improvements have been made throughout the years.

As the population of Naper has declined, so has the membership and attendance at Sacred Heart. Still, the members of the church were stunned and saddened when the decision was made to close it down. There are three other Catholic churches in Boyd County: Spencer, Butte, and Lynch. Apparently the decision was made because it was too difficult and costly to staff and serve so many churches, particularly as membership has declined. Naper Catholics now attend Mass in the other parishes.

As of this writing, no decision has been made as to the disposition of the church building itself. Inquiries have been made of the Bishop by those hoping to save the building and put it to use for the community.



Saint Paul's turned 100 this year!

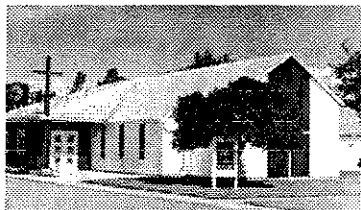
Lutheran Church

The members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church celebrated an important milestone this past summer. The Centennial Celebration marked the founding of one of Naper's earliest places of worship. According to *A Continuing History of Naper Nebraska*, St. Paul's was organized in 1903 to handle the overflow of Lutherans who were attending Zion Eve Lutheran Church southwest of town. The current building, shown in the photo, was constructed in 1962.

More than a hundred current and former residents of Naper joined in the Centennial festivities. Participants enjoyed worship services, a reception, and a fine meal. Most of all they took the opportunity to remind each other of the miracle of a hundred years of service to the people of Naper. A great deal of discussion centered on how life has changed since early settlers of this area founded St. Paul's Church. For instance, 1903 was the year that the Wright Brothers flew a primitive airplane at Kitty Hawk. The first World Series was played that year. Bob Hope was born. The Ford Motor Company was founded. And the U.S. and Panama signed a treaty to build a canal. The town of Naper was only 11 years old that year, so it's fair to say that our town and St. Paul's church have grown up and grown old together.

A grand time was had by all who attended the celebration, and much pride was demonstrated in their church and the achievement of a century of service.

Everyone is very proud of three church members who have gone on to become Lutheran ministers. Two of them, Wayne Vogt and Greg Stahlecker, attended and gave sermons at the centennial celebration. The third, Bruce Ahlers, is currently a missionary overseas, but was with us in spirit.



UCC's Dinner well attended.

United Church of Christ

It's been a busy time for the congregation of the United Church of Christ. On Saturday, September 20th, church members put on their annual supper and sale. The celebration took place in the Naper Auditorium, and more than 150 people attended. A lot of great food was available, as the event was a pot luck dinner. The fried chicken seemed to be especially popular!

One of the highlights of the celebration was the surprise singing of Happy Birthday to UCC's pastor, Wilbur Bullock. Pastor Bullock came to UCC three years ago, and he also ministers in Fairfax. This was a very special birthday, as Pastor Bullock turned 70 years old. He was quite surprised that people knew how old he was, apparently forgetting how many times he had mentioned the impending big date in his sermons! The congregation surprised Pastor Bullock again the next day with a huge birthday cake after the service ended. The congregation enjoyed the cake, coffee and fellowship. Pastor Bullock took the leftover cake home to his family in New Underwood.

Where Did That Old Saying Come From?

A Potpourri of Facts from the Naper Historical Society

A long time ago...

> Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell again so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. **Hence, the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.**

> Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children; last of all, the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying **"Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."**

> Houses had thatched roofs, thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm so all the dogs and cats and other small creatures (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained the straw became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, **"It's raining cats and dogs."**

> There was nothing to keep things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and animal droppings could really mess up your nice clean bed. So a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. **That's how canopy beds came into existence.**

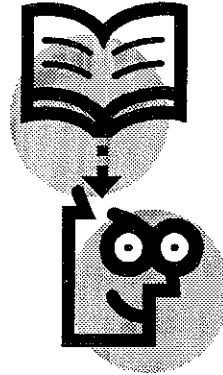
> The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence, the saying **"Dirt Poor"**.

> The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As winter wore on, they kept adding thresh until, when the door was opened, straw would start to slip outside. A piece of wood was placed across the entranceway. Hence, the term **"Thresh Hold"**.

> In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that was always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight, and start over again the next day. Sometimes the stew had food in it which had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme:

*Peas porridge hot
Peas porridge cold
Peas porridge in the pot
nine days old*

> Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show it off. It was a sign of wealth if a man **"could bring home the bacon."**



> Then they would cut off a little to share with the guests and all would sit around and **"chew the fat."**

> Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle and guests got the top or **"upper crust"**.

> Lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination would sometimes knock fellows out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait to see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of **"holding a wake"**.

And that's the truth...

Whoever said that history was boring?

SUGGESTED READING

*Isn't It Romantic:
An Entertainment*
By Ron Hansen

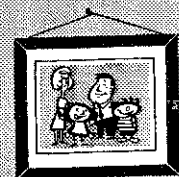
Parisian elite meets down-home Middle Americana when a French bride-to-be and her philandering beau abandon their tour bus in a small Nebraska town. Hijinks, lowjinks and plenty of jinks-in-between as the bickering couple get their first taste of Nebraska culture.
From Harper Collins



SHARE YOUR HISTORY!

The Naper Historical Society is looking for old photographs and historical memorabilia about the town. If you have any materials that may be of historical significance (photographs, letters, news clippings, signage, antiques/artifacts, or whatever, we'd love to hear from you. If the item is too big to mail, then send us a description.

Please send to:
The Naper Historical Society
PO Box 72
Napier, NE 68755



Plane Crash

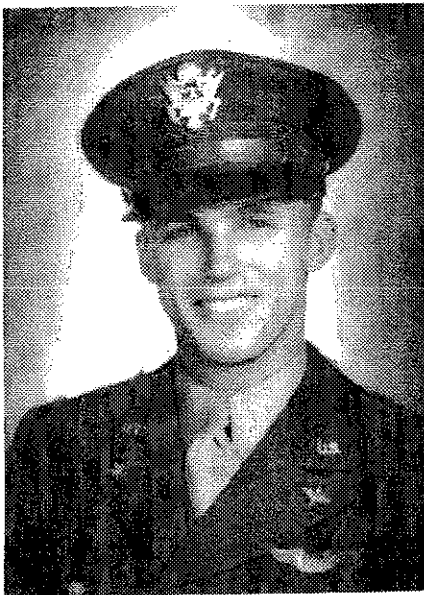
(cont'd from Page 1)

- The plane hit the crest of a hill very hard, then bounced and slid about a half mile down an embankment, finally coming to a stop in a gully.
- No one survived the crash.

What People Saw

From local news accounts at the time and first-hand accounts from people who still remember it well, here is what I've read and heard.

People in Boyd County were taking cover from the violent storms passing through the area. Many in and around Naper could hear a plane trying to navigate its way through the rough weather, and it sounded very low to the



Lt. Robert Kenneth "Bud" Bohle of Chicago, Illinois was one of 28 US military personnel lost in the crash of a C-47 transport plane on August 3, 1944.

For those of you who would like more information about this story, there is a wonderful website with many photos and additional detail. On the Internet, log on to: www.angelfire.com/ks/phxbrd, or type "Naper 28" in your search engine, and it will find it for you.

ground. Velda Stahlecker was a young girl at the time, yet she remembers vividly seeing a ball of fire falling from the air. The *Bonesteel Enterprise* reported that Mrs. Helen Durham, Mrs. Connie Sattler, Connie Jr., and Natalie Sattler heard a "terrible explosion", which occurred either shortly after the plane was hit by lightning precipitating the crash, or when it actually crashed into the muddy Nebraska soil. Jim Sattler's father told him that, upon hearing the crash, he rode to the site on horseback. He found a burning plane and bodies strewn throughout the area, some as much as 100 yards from where the plane ended up. Art Martin was one of the first people to arrive at the site, and he reports seeing numerous burned bodies everywhere. Duke Stahlecker recalls seeing carts hauling bodies from the area.

The News Spread Fast

News of the accident spread quickly around Naper. These were the days of party lines, you may recall. For those readers too young to remember them, party lines were shared phone lines among many families. In other words, all of your neighbors could listen in on your conversations!

According to the *Bonesteel Enterprise*, one Mrs. Fee, along with Mrs. Sattler, called authorities to report the crash, and from these calls the word spread throughout town, causing many people to come to the site of the disaster.

The Aftermath

The Sheriff took charge of the area until Army officials arrived a few hours later. The bodies were identified, many still wearing dog tags, and were removed. Over time the plane's wreckage was also removed, and a rather vague report was filed by the Army inspector.

As was the custom during the war, very little was made of the accident by the government. In fact, even family members of those who died learned next to nothing about what happened.

The Sattler family provided more information to family members who have written to them over the years, a courtesy much appreciated by the wives and children of the brave pilots who lost their lives here in Naper, Nebraska.

You Can Feel the Place

When I was getting out of Jim's pickup, having arrived at the crash site nearly 60 years later, I could literally "feel" the place. My husband mentioned this, too. I'm not trying to be melodramatic, but there is a serenity here... a quiet sense that something important happened, and that it is a place to honor and respect.

Jim pointed to the top of the hill where the plane first hit, and he showed me its path as it bounded down to a spot now marked by a large metal cross. The cross was placed here in 2001 so that the men who lost their lives would be forever honored and remembered. It replaced a simple, decaying wooden cross that had stood at this site since 1946.

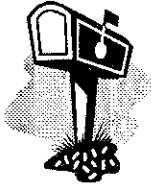


Chris Sattler, Ryon Vogt, Jim Sattler, Monte Cahoy, Jenny Sattler, and Bryon Vogt replace the old historic monument to the 1944 crash victims. The inscription reads, "28 young pilots crashed here..." (Picture by Sharon Vogt obtained from website - see article.)

Quiz

The History of Naper, Nebraska (answers on page 7)

1. When was the territory, that included Naper, first opened up for settlement?
2. Naper had its beginnings in what year?
3. When was the town incorporated?
4. What was the first name of the town of Naper?
5. Who donated the land that became the town of Naper?
6. How much land was donated?
7. What is the team name for Spencer-Naper School?
8. What was the team name of Naper School?



Letters to the Naper Paper

Dear Naper Historical Society:

Congratulations on the formation of your new historical society. Sounds like you're on the right track with your endeavors - It takes a lot of work and initiative to take on a grass-roots effort like this. If you ever need any input or help, let Barb or me know, and we'll be glad to lend a hand.

As past president of the Gregory County Historical Society for five years, I know how difficult - and rewarding - preserving your past can be. More recently, Barb and I have been working on our personal historical project, restoring the last remaining Herrick elevator. The sheer size of the building makes it a somewhat daunting task, but we've already crossed a lot of hurdles. The elevator was placed on the National Register of Historic Places this past summer, opening up avenues for pursuit of grants and other programs to renovate the exterior and to put together interpretive signage and displays inside. We've also almost completed the renovation of our "bed in a shed" in the steel shed adjacent to the elevator.

I haven't visited with you yet about individual projects or goals, but the formation of a historical society is a great place to start. That you have a group of people interested in being members speaks well of the Naper community. It sounds like you've done a great job putting this together.

Again, congratulations and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Bill White

Send your cards and letters to:
Letters
The Naper Paper
PO Box 72
Naper, NE 68755

Sports News

(Scheduled home games ALL CAPS)

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

<u>September</u>	
9	Butte
12	Winside
19	NEWMAN GROVE
26	OSMOND
<u>October</u>	
3	LUTHERAN HIGH N.E.
9	Bloomfield
17	ROCK COUNTY
24	Hartington

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

<u>September</u>	
4	Rock Cty.
11	S-N INVITE
15	N-O Invite
19	O'Neill Invite
26	Crofton Invite
<u>October</u>	
3	West Hold Invite
10	Bloomfield Invite
16	Districts
24	State

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

<u>September</u>	
4	Stuart Tourney
5	Butte
6	Ainsworth
8	Niobrara Tri
13	Dodge Tourney
16	S-N TOURNEY
25	Chambers Tourney
30	Lynch Tri
<u>October</u>	
7	Ewing Tourney
14	BOYD CO TOURNEY
16	TRI-COUNTY TRI
21	Rock County
27-28, 31	NVC
<u>November</u>	
4	Sub-Districts
7	District Finals

BOYS' & GIRLS' BASKETBALL

<u>December</u>	
5	ROCK COUNTY
12	Orchard
13	Burke/Bonesteel
16	EWING
20	Keya Paha
29-30	Creighton Hol' Tourney
<u>January</u>	
6, 8	BOYD COUNTY
9	VERDIGRE
16	O'Neill St. Marys
20	NIOBRARA
23	Lynch
29	Stuart
Jan 31,	
Feb 2-3, 5	NVC
<u>February</u>	
7	NVC Finals
10	Chambers
13	BUTTE
16-17,	
19	Girls Sub Districts
20	CLEARWATER (boys only)
23-24, 26	Boys Sub-Districts
27	Girls Districts
<u>March</u>	
2	Boys Districts



Heard 'Round Town



The Official Naper Dictionary defines "fast food" as hitting a deer on Hwy 12 at 80 mph.

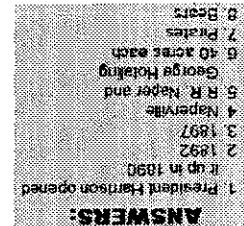
Conversation heard at the Naper Clinic, when the doctor put the stethoscope on an elderly patient:

Doctor: "Big breaths."

Patient: "Yes, they used to be."

According to the Boulder Gazette, last week a tornado touched down in the football stadium at Colorado University where, according to Nebraska sources, it caused \$100,000 in improvements.

Conversation heard at the Super Service:
Q "What's your pickup worth?"
A "Depends on how much gas is in it."



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**THE
NAPER PAPER**

Naper Historical Society

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