A PUBLICATION FOR AND ABOUT THE TOWN OF NAPER, NEBRASKA, PUBLISHED BY THE NAPER HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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.

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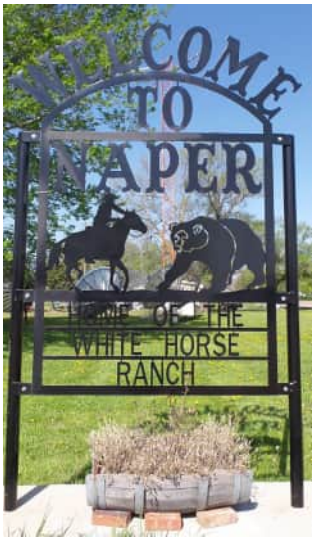

Naper Paper

Volume 24 Issue 1 www.napernebraska.org Spring, 2026

"PUT ME IN COACH, I'M READY TO PLAY!"

By Lois Nicolaus Vogt

By the time this installment of the Naper Paper is issued, it will be getting close to spring. Hopeful baseball fans are gearing up for a new season of one of the nation's favorite summer pastimes. This was typical for me growing up in Naper where the bright lights of the field and the honking of car horns were signs of summers.

As far back as I can remember, softball games were a big part of my family's entertainment during the summer months. My dad, Harley Nicolaus, played on the Naper town team, usually at the short stop or second base position, and they played neighboring teams in this area. Every town had a men's team, some had two. When it was a home game, it was a quick two blocks to the ball field. Away games had us piling into the car and off to watch Dad play and hope for a win. I was either in the bleachers watching the game, listening to the play-by-play from Ted Wentz in the crows nest, being the lucky kid to pass the ball cap to get donations to pay for the field lights, or getting bored with the game and hanging out in the playground right beside the field.

Ball playing wasn't just for Dad. Through the years, my brothers (Loren was in right field, Alan was at second base, and later Merle was first baseman) played on the little league team that belonged to a local league.

Dad helped coach these teams and could be seen in the dugout during the games doling out instructions. There was also a girls' softball team for a short while on which I played (centerfield) and as usual, Dad was there either coaching or helping out with his "advice".

On the 4th of July celebration in Naper, there was also a women's softball game, which was the town gals (including my mom Charlotte Nicolaus) versus the country gals. I'm not sure if Dad helped coach either one of these teams, but probably took his place behind

the plate as an umpire.
Above: At the Winner Ball Park, 1976, Harley is explaining a call to Delores "Pete" Wentz Fuhrer.

Years later, you could find Harley back at the ball field. The boys who played years before were now on the men's team and two of his sons and a son-in-law were playing. For a couple years, Naper had an active women's softball team. I was back in centerfield and Dad was helping with the coaching. More years passed and there he was, along with my brother Merle, working with the next generation of his family playing girls' softball, which included his granddaughters. He didn't make it easy on them just because they were girls, either.

If they didn't listen to the coaching instructions ("Come to practice!" and "Don't come to practice in shorts!") then they would spend time practicing sliding into base in shorts, which is still talked about today, As was the time, in true coaching form, he came out of the dugout, heatedly discussed a call the home plate umpire made, and finished by kicking dirt across the plate to emphasize his displeasure with the umpire's decision.

The home ball field is grown over with grass, the bleachers taken down from disrepair, and some of the fencing removed. There is still the "crow's nest" and the protective fence behind home plate and all the memories of watching or playing a game and hearing my dad calling out his instructions to the players, hopefully coaching them to a win!!

The Case of the Disappearing Trophy

Naper High School has had some outstanding cross country runners and cross country teams. The Butte Gazette of November 12, 1970, tells the story of one such team who ran at Pioneer Park in Lincoln.

"The Naper Cross Country team participated in the state cross country meet in Lincoln last Saturday, October 31 at the Pioneer Park Course, 1.94 miles in length.

Naper earned second place with a total of 71 team points. Naper had been declared the champions in the Class C competition and left for home with the first place trophy when a clerical error was discovered which lowered them to second and moved Raymond Central from eighth into first position with 68 points. Mitchell won third position with 84 points.

There were 13 different schools entered in the meet with 74 runners. The individual places of the Naper boys were Dennis Katzer 16th, Eldon Vogt 18th, Barry Sieh 31st, Doug Allpress 32nd and Bob Allpress 34th. Since there were some unattached individual runners in the race, the team points are better than the individual places."

L-R: Bob, Doug, Eldon, Barry, Dennis

The second place trophy on display at Heritage Hall.

L-R: Coach Voigt, Barry, Bob, Doug, Eldon, Dennis, Coach Vaughn

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Who Needs a Nap? Author Unknown

Back in the 1950s, every kindergarten classroom shared a simple daily routine you could almost set your clock by. After songs, coloring and circle time—and after snacks of graham crackers and milk—the teacher would dim the lights. Soft music would begin to play and twenty small children stretched out on striped mats or colorful rugs, shoes tucked neatly aside, blankets pulled up to their chins. The room would grow still. It was naptime.

For children growing up in the 50s, 60s and early 70s, this was as much a part of kindergarten as finger painting or learning the alphabet. It wasn't just a break—it was an important part of the day. Teachers and researchers believed quiet time helped children grow, giving them space to calm down, imagine and reset before the afternoon's activities. Science agreed. Rest was essential, not a luxury, for young minds still developing.

Teachers became keepers of peace. They spoke softly, walked quietly between rows of small sleepers, sometimes reading in a near whisper or gently fixing a blanket. For many children, this was the only true calm they had all day—a pause between learning, playing and exploring.

Some children drifted off quickly, worn out from the morning. Others stayed awake, watching tiny dust specks float through a sliver of sunlight, lost in the kind of daydreams only a five year old can have. Even the restless ones, the kids who stared at the ceiling or fidgeted endlessly, learned something meaningful—that being still can be just as important as being busy.

But by the 70s and 80s, things began to change. Kindergarten shifted focus from play and social growth to early academics and testing. Parents worried their kids might fall behind and schedules filled up with lessons and structured activities. Naptime started to seem unnecessary.

Soon schools began phasing it out. The mats were stored away and the soft music gave way to overhead projectors, then computers, then tablets. By the 1990s, naps were almost entirely gone from public kindergarten classrooms, surviving in only a few preschools and daycare programs.

Today most kindergartners spend their full day in structured learning—reading groups, math, computer work and maybe a short recess. There's little time for quiet or rest. And we wonder why anxiety in children keeps rising.

For those who remember, the memory still feels warm—the dim lights, the hum of the record player, the faint smell of well-loved blankets and the gentle comfort of being told it's okay to rest. Naptime taught more than we realized. It taught that rest matters, that silence has meaning and that constant productivity isn't the goal.

As adults, many of us now live in a world that never slows down, one that makes us feel guilty for pausing. Yet we once taught children that rest was *p*art of learning. Maybe that's a lesson worth bringing back.

To all the teachers who still fight for moments of calm in classrooms—you're not being soft; you're honoring what science has long shown. To parents, know that your children are being asked to stay focused longer than ever before. And to anyone who feels tired or overwhelmed—remember this—even five-year-olds used to be given permission to stop trying for a little while.

Rest, stillness and quiet time aren't signs of weakness. They're part of what keeps us healthy, thoughtful and human. Maybe it's time to bring a bit of that naptime wisdom back into our lives.

Naper's first kindergarten class 1957-1958 with Mrs. Trueblood, teacher.

Back: Gayle Boucher, Steven Stoltenberg, Allen Cerny, Marlo Broekemeier, Gary Engelhart, Lynn Reber, Gregory Stahlecker, Joey Higgins

Front: Lynette Sieh, Rita Ahlers, Linda Katzer, Kathleen Beem, Lauretta McAllister, Mary Ludemann, Pamela Smith

All the News That's Fit to Print. . .

The Naper Paper "staff" recently received a collection of Butte Gazettes from 1970, 1971 and 1972. They are full of local news, interesting advertisements and nostalgic items.

The July 16, 1970, edition had news of local young men.

"Mike Sterns of Omaha and Doug and Robert Allpress, who are working over at Newport in the hayfields spent the weekend of the 4th in the Glen Allpress home."

"Selected for membership into the Chadron State College Chapter of Blue Key, National Honorary Fraternity were Ed and Bill Peppel of Naper.

Ed was elected treasurer at the election of officers following the initiation."

College students headed off to school as noted in the September 17, 1970, issue. LouAnn Ahlers went to Wayne, Linda Katzer, Roger Ludemann, Shirley Honke and Larry Ahlers to Lincoln to the University. Jim Schmitz, Dean Ahlers, Dale Neumiller, Wesley Fuhrer and Donn Reber were enrolled at Northeastern Technical College in Norfolk. Rita Ahlers enrolled at Chadron and Eddie Higgins attended Northeast Nebraska Junior College at Norfolk. Bonnie Moody returned to Kearney. Gary Engelhart enrolled in an automotive course in Southern State at Springfield, South Dakota.

Included in the collection were a few Gregory Times-Advocate newspapers.

Tilton Motor Company in Gregory had a half page ad in the Thursday, July 30, 1970 edition. They were giving a free tank of gas with any unit sold on Crazy Day.

You could buy a full size custom 4-door Ford with 100% nylon carpet, Courtesy lights, belted tires and undercoated for $2,388. If a Torino GT was more to your liking, you could have one with Select Shift, AM radio, dual rear speakers, full tinted glass, 8000 RPM . TAC and undercoating for only $3,172.

Of course a pickup would be a better choice for almost everyone—and an F-100, LW box, gauges, oil bath, air cleaner, 4-speed, mirror, 1650 rear springs and big rear bumper—$2,431! There were six 1966 pickups for sale for $995 and up.

A news article in the same edition regarding South Dakota's farms was headlined "SD Pig Crop Increase." The number of hogs and pigs on farms in South Dakota as of June 1, 1970, was estimated at 2,432,000 head, an increase of 14% over 1969.

From December 1969 through February 1970, 70,000 sows farrowed and 207,000 farrowed during the March to May quarter, with an average of 7.34 pigs per litter.

In the same edition, the Burke Livestock Auction reported on their July 28 hog market. Julius Vogt sold 230 pound butchers for $25.75 and Wayne Zink had 226 pound butchers for $25.70. The top consignments in Sioux City for the same day were paid $25.75 also. Sows topped at $21.40

The July 25 cattle sale was a "real active market." Dairy cross steers weighing 800 pounds went for $30/cwt to $33.25. Yearling heifers sold for $30-$31 cwt. Good 550 pound steers were selling for $37/cwt.

(Just for fun, let's do the math for those calves—550 x $0.37=$203.50. Last week 550 pound calves were selling for $40 a pound, not a hundred! 550 x $40=$2,200. Wow!!)

And although this isn't a livestock market report nor an agricultural publication, bred heifers sold at Burke, South Dakota, on February 7 for (are you sitting down?) $6100,00 per head.

RECOGNIZING JULIE

December 7, an open house was held at the Naper Post Office to celebrate Julie Nelson's 30 years of service to the United States Postal Service.

Photo above: Tracy Rihanek, postmaster at Spencer, presenting Julie with a certificate recognizing 30 years of service.

Julie started working in North Platte, Nebraska on January 6, 1996. She worked after midnight at the distribution center getting the mail out in the evening and getting it ready for all the small towns in the North Platte area. She also worked the window there.

Julie then went to Gothenburg for about five years where she sorted mail, worked the window and helped carry mail. After a time, she returned to North Platte until 2013 when she and her husband moved back to their hometown of Herrick, South Dakota.

The closest job to Herrick was in Mitchell so she worked there for a year and a half before working in Bristow and then Naper.

She likes working in small towns because she grew up in a small town and people are friendly.

Thirty years and she still keeps Mr. ZIP going.

WHERE DOES THE ACRE COME FROM?

Ever wonder where the acre, so familiar in fields and land deeds, actually comes from?

Well, the answer lies in the soil of medieval England. Back in the Middle Ages, land measurement wasn't about numbers on a map, it was about hard graft.... and rather them than me! An acre was defined as the amount of land one man could plough in a single day using a team of eight oxen (two used at a time while the others rested). Simple, practical, and rooted in the rhythm of the working countryside. But over time, what began as a rough rule of thumb (more on that phrase another day) became standardized. One acre came to equal 43,560 square feet, or about 4,047 square meters. Not just a random figure, it was based on a long, narrow strip of land: one furlong (660 feet) long, and one chain (66 feet) wide.....got that? Why that shape? Well, picture a man walking behind a heavy plough, turning the soil in long, straight lines. Fewer turns meant less time and less effort. The term "furlong" itself comes from "furrow long" the length of a furrow ploughed before needing to turn. It all made practical sense.... sort of!

Of course, as with most things in medieval life, land measurements weren't just about farming. They played a role in taxation, too, because if land could be measured, it could be taxed - naturally. So the acre, born from the furrowed earth and sweat of medieval farmers, became not just a measure of toil, but a unit that would shape economies, borders, and history itself.

Ed. Note: Thanks, Bob Allpress, for sharing this information. Now can you explain how they measure up and down hills accurately.

INDEX TO ISSUES 51-70

Every issue of the Naper Paper can be found on the website napernebraska.org. You'll find lots of other things there also—lots of pictures (including all graduates of Naper High School) and stories about the community.

However, not everyone has access to a computer. Just in case you saved your copies of the Naper Paper and now would like to find a story you really liked but don't know where it is, we are updating that information.

In Volume 8, Issue 1, an index was included for issues 1-20. Volume 10, Issue 4, provided an index for issues 21--31. Index for issues 31-50 was published in Volume 15, Issue 3.

#51, Volume 15, Issue 3
Getting the Alumni Association Going, Alumni Banquet Pictures, Zink Family, Lyle Fuhrer

#52, Volume 15, Issue 4
Siding Heritage Hall, John Ludemann Story, Twin Butte Adventures, Early Naper News, Naper School Memories, Environmental Awareness

#53, Volume 16, Issue 1
1967 Basketball Game, Wilma Rockholm, Luree Barnes, Mello-Tones

#54, Volume 16, Issue 2
Play Ball!, Naper Auditorium, Cemetery Update, Ambulance Crew Fund Raiser

#55, Volume 16, Issue 3
VFW Post 8256, Alumni Banquet, Lovera Reber's Neighbors, Library News

#56, Volume 16, Issue 4
Auxiliary to VFW Post 8256, Library Is Ten Years Old, Naper Paper 1907, Runaway at Threshing Time

#57, Volume 17, Issue 1
Ponca Creek Churches, Little Boy Lost (Dwaine Hoffman), Old Baseball Team

#58, Volume 17, Issue 2
Duck Pins, Down Main Street in 1947, 2019 Flood Pictures, Naper News 1945, Bill's Market Closes

#59, Volume 17, Issue 3
Ray Bentzen Memorial Day Address, Alumni Banquet, Houses that Emma Cleaned

#60, Volume 17, Issue 4
Remembering District 49, Smith Family History, Early Krotters Auto Sales, Velva June Vogt Blum

#61, Volume 18, Issue 1
More District 49 Stories, Other School Memories, Occupational Therapy Tips, Butte Gazette Stories 1934, Park Improvement Project

#62, Volume 18, Issue 2
Remembering 1966-1967, Corona Virus Update, District 40 Story, Henry Kortmeyer Family, WHR Pictures

#63, Volume 18, Issue 3
Park Project Is Done!, Corn Crib Café, Cream Station, Graduate Photos, Class Rings

#64, Volume 18, Issue 4
Main Street Updates, Claus and Daisy Vogt, NHS Class of 1970, Garry and Roma Jeffords, VFW Auxiliary History

#65, Volume 19, Issue 1
Niobrara River Bridge, Box Socials, George and Annie Sieh, Touring Heritage Hall Museum

#66, Volume 19, Issue 2
Bridge Work Continues, Sattler Farm Story, Ludemann Families, Town Hall to Auditoriums, Carl Cunningham "Snowmobile"

#67, Volume 19, Issue 3
More Bridge Work, Evelyn Tanner, Ann Ludemann Anderson Brick, Andersen Family,

#68, Volume 19, Issue 4
Niobrara and Keya Paha River Bridges, Zimmerman History, New Knoll Crest Sign, Jake and Lydia Schmidt, End of the Sod House

#69, Volume 20, Issue 1
Bridges Done!, Otto Bentzen, Coin History, Save Boyd County Story, St. Patrick's Day Explanation

#70, Volume 20, Issue 2
History of Naper High School Sports, Child Disappears in Springview, Evelyn Tanner, Repatriation of Zimmerman Artifacts

The Ol' Homesteader keeps lookin' for news about Naper!

The Naper Paper is your paper. We rely on you, our readers, for support, both financial and "a pat on the back". We count on you for stories and ideas about what we need to write, print, explore, photograph. We appreciate you and want to say "Thanks!"

THE KIDS ARE BUSY . . .

Jaylee Lechtenberg (daughter of Shane and Beth Nelson Lechtenberg, granddaughter of Ivan and Nancy Wentz Nelson, great-granddaughter of Bob Wentz), Ethan and Savannah Zeisler (children of Jesse and Kim Zeisler, great-grandchildren of Sheryl Zeisler), Kaci and Baleigh Koenig (daughters of Kevin and Staci Zink Koenig, granddaughters of Jeff and Rindy Zink, great-granddaughters of Louise Neumiller Zink), Shaedon Polenski (daughter of Trudy Waterman and Guy Polenski), Kinsley Cadwallader (daughter of Lee and Stephanie Whitley Cadwallader, granddaughter of Tim and Bonnie Fuhrer Whitley), Juliana Cline (daughter of Hoyt Cline, granddaughter of Marvin and Judy Hoyt Cline), Emerson Higgins (daughter of Skye and Allison Higgins, granddaughter of LaVern and Brenda Klien Higgins, great-granddaughter of Margaret Vogt Schmitz), and Gage Schochenmaier (son of Joe and Kelsey Zink Schochenmaier, grandson of Jeff and Rindy Zink, great-grandson of Louise Neumiller Zink) were on Boyd County Schools Honor Roll.

Preston Brewer (son of Kip Brewer and Rachel Heermann Brewer, grandson of Jerry and Dorothy Dummer Heermann) is playing basketball for Boyd County.

Grayson and Hadley Vogt (children of Ryon and Emma Vogt) and Jayden and Bergen Higgins (daughters of Skye and Allison Higgins, granddaughters of LaVern and Brenda Klien Higgins, great-granddaughters of Margaret Vogt Schmitz) received awards at the 4-H Jamboree.

The annual Knights of Columbus free throw shooting contest was held in Spencer. Evelyn Alford (daughter of Marcus and Candace Alford, granddaughter of Jim and Becky Alford, great-granddaughter of Lois Alford) was the winner in the 10-year-old girls category.

Grayson Vogt was on the third and fourth grade basketball team that won the Verdigre Booster Club Tournament.

AND ADULTS ARE, TOO!

Emma Vogt was honored at the 4-H Jamboree for her work as a 4-H leader.

Connie McCarthy was featured on Pure Nebraska (KOLN-TV) January 27. She represented Lower Niobrara NRD and presented information on private well testing.

SAYIN' GOODBYE TO OLD FRIENDS

Delwin Carter, a 1959 graduate of Naper High, died February 5, 2023, in Balsam Lake, Wisconsin. He had been a teacher and coach.

Henry Martin grew up southwest of Naper and graduated in 1965. He died October 5, 2025 in Tipton, Iowa.

Thelma Higgins Schmitz died December 18. She and husband Leonard lived on their farm east of Naper and raised their two sons, Douglas and David, there. Leonard, Doug and Dave were all Naper High graduates. Leonard and Thelma's story was told in the Naper Paper Winter, 2016, Volume 14, Issue 4.

Lorraine Bendig Woehl died in Fremont December 28. She graduated from Naper High School in 1957 and after marriage to Bob Woehl, moved to the Fremont area where they raised their family.

Marian Ahlers Ortmeier died in Norfolk on February 13. She was a graduate of Naper High School (1974) as was her mother Virginia Schonebaum (1954) and her siblings.

Have you looked at the Naper Historical Society website? (napernebraska.org)
You'll find every issue of the Naper Paper (photos in color on the website!), photos of all the classes from Naper High School, stories of Naper history, the White Horse Ranch, businesses, cemeteries, and historical photos.

If you need to contact the historical society, you may:
call 402-832-5471,

mail to Naper Historical Society
Box 72
Naper, NE 68755

e-mail at papabear@threeriver.net

LETTERS and more . . .

Thank you for sending the Naper Paper. And thank you for all you do. Keep up the good work!

Rich and Bev Rubel

Sending a donation to use where needed.

A huge thank you to all who work so hard to get the paper ready for mailing. The paper is so interesting. I always enjoy seeing it in my mail box.

Just a note to change my address for the Naper Paper. Thank you.

Mary Schumann

Ed. Note: Thank you, Mary! We really appreciate having notice of new addresses.

Thanks for sending the Naper Paper. We do enjoy it.

Min and Paul Westland

Enclosed is a bit of help for the Naper Paper. Appreciate the time spent to publish the paper.

Carol Ludemann

Enclosed is a little something to keep the Naper Paper going!

So enjoyed this issue as have a lot of good memories of District 50, of Norma and the good times we had, playing on the little lake in Vogt's pasture on rubber ice. We weren't afraid of falling in as it wasn't deep, just kept up with the fun waves the ice was making.

As our lives change, our little towns change. Don't know as many people but try to keep up with the names.

Do enjoy the paper. Keep up the good work. Thank you for your good work.

Lavonne Boes

Please apply this small donation to the Naper Paper on behalf of my mother (Gretchen Hausmann) and myself.

You folks do an excellent job by providing both current and past events in the Naper area.

Thank you for your time an effort.

Gary and Renee Hausmann and Gretchen Hausmann

DONKEY BALL ANYONE?

According to a newspaper clipping found online, 300 attended donkey basketball March 31 (no year indicated, probably early 60s) in the hall.

Kay Putnam, Judy and Marilyn Vogt, Jane Small, Alma and Florence Bendig, Arlene Doty, Fern Vogt, Verne Mills, Rollen Kibby, Dennis Wentz, Marvin Bendig, Darrell Juracek, Jerry Hoffman, Terry Muller, Dennis and Dale Schoenefeld, Douglas Fuhrer, Mike Stahlecker, Orlon Beem, Buddy Davis, Duane Kibby, Bill Schultz, Jim Sattler, Dan Roberts, Harlan Sedivy, Ken Krupicka, Ronnie Boettcher and Marvin Lampman participated in the donkey basketball.

July 23, (again, no year indicated) there was a donkey softball game and another on August 20. The Lions Club sponsored the Fall Festival on August 20 which also included Golden Glove Boxing.

Can any of you riders share some stories about this? One rider was questioned if he had information to share and all he said was, "I got bucked off."

IT'S THAT TIME!

The first alumni banquet was held in 1954 with 143 attending. Duke Stahlecker was the emcee for the event with a centennial theme. (Trivia: Nebraska Territory was established in 1854 as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.)

The 2026 alumni banquet is scheduled for May 23, social hour beginning at 6 and dinner served at 7. Classes from the "sixes" will be honored. See you then!!

The next edition of the Naper Paper will contain news of the alumni banquet and a list of all graduates of Naper High School, 1908-2026.

NAPER PAPER

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Grammar Room, 1948-1949

Back row: Mike Herra, DeLores Putnam, Shirley Kramer, Louise Neumiller, Janis Blakkolb, LaVerna Broekemeier, Lucille Martin, Virginia Schonebaum
Middle row: Ronnie Hunter, Neil Helenbolt, Russell Whitley, Dennis Camin, Winston Stahlecker, teacher Edith Windmeyer
Front row: Nina Bentzen, Marilyn Smith, Carol Bechtold, Mardell Maertin, JoAnn Putnam, Gerald Blum, Delbert Forsch, Donald Swallow, Bobby Cline