

Epistles from Esmond

By Bonnie Alexander - 249-3238

Oh dear, January has not been in a good mood. It has definitely thrown some very nice days at us. For all of us who have lived here a long time, we know those are the days to get things done outside or do any distant driving that needs to be done. Especially this year, it seems like on the tail end of those nice days, January starts dropping rain and a winter mix on us. Too often the result has been icy roads, walkways and steps. Ice in those situations is not our friend. Then comes a big temperature drop, high winds, blowing snow and blizzard warnings. This was the case of late, meaning people were staying home if they could and Esmond news is light this week.

Helen Arnold said daughter Ann came to visit Thursday. Ann had planned to drive back to her home in Minnesota Sunday, but Mother Nature changed her plans. She was stranded in Esmond. No matter how old parents and their children get, parents still worry about their kids. So Helen didn't have to worry about Ann being out in horrible driving conditions Sunday. Instead she got to enjoy Ann for another day. By Monday the North Dakota and Minnesota road condition maps showed nice green roads and good driving for Ann all the way back to her home.

This post on Facebook during the storm this weekend made my sister Yvonne smile. It simply said, "I-29 is closed between Grand Forks and the Canadian border. Canada is not open today."

Roger and Karen Hill had planned on going to a funeral in Minnewaukan Friday, but decided not to attend due to weather conditions. Saturday, Zach and Jordan Hill and six-week-old Lennon stopped by to visit them. Karen said Lennon is such a little adorable bundle of stretching and yawning. Karen got to hold her for a while, but Roger was sitting in a comfortable chair where he could hold Lennon and rock her. Roger got to hold her for about 45 minutes and enjoyed every moment of it. Karen's sister Sheri Tuchscherer came to visit the Hills last Monday. She came bearing gifts. Sheri brought them two plants, a poinsettia and an amaryllis. Flowers do brighten up one's day, especially in January.

Speaking of amaryllis plants: My St. A's across-the-hall neighbor Pearl has this amaryllis plant that fascinates me. It is a couple of bulbs in a bag and you never have to water it. It produces several beautiful flowers. As those flowers die off, new sprouts pop up and soon new flowers appear. So it is basically producing continuous blooms. I want one of those.

Many friends and relatives attended Darlene Norman's funeral Wednesday afternoon in Maddock. Darlene's daughters, Janelle Meier and Leslie Beckmann, had many cousins there to support them. Arkie (Norman) Rieger was Darlene's sister-in-law. Almost all of Arkie's family was there to say goodbye to their Aunt Darlene. In attendance: Mary and Everett Hoffner of Esmond, Delilah and Vern Thingvold, Barb Solway, Janice Engen and Arkie's grandson, Jon Rieger. All from Grand Forks. Darlene's sister-in-law, Helen (Norman) Johnson, and daughter Penny Johnson came from West Fargo and Hunter. Other cousins there were Keith Wachtel, Tom Wachtel, Paul Erickson and Linda Sorlie. Norma Swanson was there. An added

plus was she got to spend time with Helen Johnson. The two are the last first cousins from their generation of the Domer family. Dorothy Brown rode over from Esmond with Roger and Karen Hill to attend Darlene's funeral. They said there was a nice reception just a short walk down the street and upstairs at Harriman's Restaurant. It consisted of a nice variety of hors d'oeuvres and a good place to visit. They also served Darlene's favorite . . . brownies. I remember her always ordering a brownie when she was at the Esmond Café. Diane Streifel would warm it up for her and top it with whipped cream if that was Darlene's wish for the day.

Alice Wack felt bad that she didn't get to Darlene's funeral Wednesday. She had an appointment scheduled that overlapped the funeral and it was one of those you had to keep. I really felt bad that I didn't get to attend either.

Dorothy Brown and Karen and Roger Hill also attended the senior citizens meeting Tuesday. Or as Karen likes to call it, the 55 Club. After the meeting they had lunch, played bingo and socialized. There were not a lot of seniors there, but lunch still consisted of a nice variety of foods. It all tasted good. Dorothy Brown brought her delicious German potato salad, so Karen got to have one of her favorites again.

Richard Monge was also at the seniors' meeting and people said he is looking really good. He is back home in Esmond after a stay in the hospital and then staying with his brother for a while. Welcome home, Richard! It is good to have you back.

Despite our storms, Dorothy Brown did make it to Devils Lake to get her shopping done. No hair appointment, though. (Dorothy, you look good, so it's okay to miss one here and there.) Dorothy also made it to church Sunday morning. It is way easier to get to church on a stormy weekend if you live in town. Not so much if you live way out in the country. Trinity Lutheran Church decided to cancel its service due to the weather.

Another busy week here at St. A's has made the time fly quickly. It is so nice to no longer have to use a lift to get out of bed. That has opened up a whole new world for me. Changes are happening for the good. I walked 100 steps Friday. They did suggest that I take a pain pill to help with the pain in my feet. It definitely worked well. Wednesday I had a My Care meeting, which sister Cindy Wilhelm also attended. The staff said they are really pleased with my progress, along with my willingness and attitude to work hard to get better. Also my food intake, which has helped with weight loss. Figuring out what new shoes will work best for me is next on the list.

Sister Cindy also visited me Tuesday. I was in my wheelchair, so she pushed me down to the Tasty Tuesday Kitchen. They do different things on those days like baking cookies. One day we had a tea party. This past Tuesday they made quesadillas. What a treat. They were so good. Pastor Cassie Borges from Trinity Lutheran Church was standing by the doorway, so Cindy waved her in to join us. I ate while they chatted. What a nice lady she is.

After Cindy left here after our meeting and visit Wednesday, she went to the movie *Song Sung Blue* at the theater here

in Harvey. First State Bank of Harvey had invited their customers to a free movie and refreshments. Cindy said she ran into so many people she knew. The movie was really good and the whole event was fun. From the sounds of it, anyone who has seen that movie has said it is really good and worth going to.

Prior to Cindy coming to Harvey, she had set time aside to go to the Maddock Book Club's meeting. Author Barb Solberg was their featured guest and she spoke about her book, *What We Leave Behind*. It is a book about her Norwegian heritage. Cindy knows Barb from living in Minot and going to the same church for many years. That was the reason she had planned on attending this event. Penny Leier was also there. Cindy didn't get to stay for very much of Barb's presentation because of the My Care meeting getting scheduled for that day. During the time that Cindy did get to listen to Barb speak, she asked if there were any writers in the audience. Someone Cindy didn't know said she was a writer. Then a man spoke up and said that he writes. It was Darrell Hovland. If you read the *Benson County Farmers Press*, you likely know who Darrell is and have read the stories he has had printed. His stories always touch so close to home for me. He is such a good writer and I really enjoy his stories. He needs to publish a book someday.

With Darlene Norman passing and her funeral also being that Wednesday, Cindy called Helen and Penny Johnson to see if they were planning on attending the funeral. With Helen being Darlene's sister-in-law and Penny being able to see her cousins, they were definitely planning on coming. Our first cousin Dick Johnson was married to Helen, thus our connection to them. Helen and Penny came even earlier than planned and joined Cindy at Harriman's for lunch. It wasn't a really long visit, but a good one.

I had a surprise visitor this week, and what a surprise it

was. Ironically, it was a Hovland. As in Brad Hovland, Darrell Hovland's brother. He was there visiting his mother-in-law over in Unit A and came over to say "hi." Brad said, "I bet you don't remember me." I said, "Of course I do." Our connection is a mutual aunt . . . Aunt Ruth, who was married to my mom's brother Conrad. Aunt Ruth's sister Lorraine is Brad and Darrell's mom. They lived very close to my Uncle Conrad and Aunt Ruth's farm, so often if we were there visiting, the Hovland crew came over to visit also. Their sister, Alyssy, was my age and I really enjoyed it when she came over. Brad was around my sisters' ages, so they have fun tales to tell about Brad. I had such a nice long visit with Brad and I really enjoyed it. We talked about all sorts of things and he told me that he and his wife had been married for 51 years. Wow, does time fly. Fifty-one is a big number and it makes one step back and say, "Dang, I am getting old."

I got a call the other night from cousin Darla Obenchain. I had been calling her, but another woman kept answering. Obviously I was doing something wrong, but could swear I had dialed the correct number. Turns out Darla is rehabbing in a facility just as I am. Right around Christmas, she had a nasty fall and broke her left wrist and her left hip. She ended up at Altru Hospital in Grand Forks. They didn't hesitate and did a complete hip replacement right away. She is so glad they did. She is recovering beautifully and rehab is going well. She should be able to go home soon. As of now you can see her buzzing up and down the hallways pushing her wheelchair. You go, girl!

Since winter storms have been a subject matter this week, I want to salute all of you who still have to get to work during our rough winter storms, and especially those who have to be out in the elements working. You keep our world going. Have a good week, everyone!

National Radon Action Month observed in January

During National Radon Action Month, the ND Department of Environmental Quality reminds residents that cold weather months are a great time to test their homes for radon, a leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

Radon-related illness claims more than 21,000 lives in the United States annually. In North Dakota, 63 percent of homes have an elevated radon level above the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Action Level of 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L). The EPA lists North Dakota as Zone 1, meaning it has the highest potential for elevated radon levels. Because of this, the EPA and Environmental Quality encourage North Dakotans to test their homes for radon and address any elevated levels.

"Radon is a cancer-causing, naturally occurring radioactive gas that you can't see, smell or taste, found throughout the soil in North Dakota," said Justin Otto, Radon Program coordinator for Environmental Quality. "Although radon harmlessly disperses in outdoor air at low levels, when trapped in buildings, it can be harmful, especially at high concentrations."

"Radon test kits are simple to use and come with easy-to-

understand directions," says Otto. Environmental Quality is giving away a limited number of free radon test kits to ND residents. To receive a free radon test kit in the mail, please visit deq.nd.gov/wm/radon and click on the button titled 'Click here for a free radon test kit.' After completing the required information, select 'Request radon test kit.' Kits will be mailed while supplies last. Test kits can also be purchased at most hardware stores, building supply stores and online.

"The good news is radon mitigation systems can manage high radon levels," said Otto. By installing a mitigation system, homeowners can effectively lower the level of radon in their homes. These systems use many conventional building materials and require few specialized tools to install. These systems may be installed by a homeowner or a radon mitigation contractor. Once in place, a properly installed system will reduce radon gas and safely vent it to the outside.

Visit deq.nd.gov/wm/radon for a list of radon mitigation contractors, information on how to test for radon, what radon results mean, and how to address elevated radon levels.

Sunshine from Sheyenne

By Patti Clifton - 996-2481

The Open Season Lodge hosted another quilt retreat last week. Quilters from all across the region came to Sheyenne to spend days and nights sewing in the former school building. Attendees say they loved it!

Joanna and Patti Larson attended a North Central Grocers Collaboration meeting held in Minot January 14. Three committees are forming: grocers, producers and meat packers, for the purpose of forming a food hub in Velva. Anyone interested can reach out to the Larsons or the Rural Electric Cooperative office.

Jan Loe attended the funeral for Clifford Johnson in Minnewaukan January 12.

Several Sheyenne neighbors attended the Eddy County Zoning Commission meeting at the Eddy County Courthouse Tuesday morning. The public hearing portion of the meeting will need to be rescheduled as the attendees learned that morning that sufficient public notice time was not met according to ND Century Code. The zoning board held their regular meeting. Robert Hanson and Levi Rue are Sheyenne members of the zoning commission.

Peter and Joanna Larson marketed one dozen replacement heifers at the special sale featuring Salers Genetic females Monday in Napoleon.

District 14 Democratic Chair Christie Jaeger of rural Esmond organized a happy hour at Dakota Farms in Rugby January 15. It was a chance for people in District 14 to get to know each other and visit ahead of the upcoming district and state conventions. Several people from across the very large district got together for supper. The Larsons were there from Sheyenne. The district convention will be in Harvey February 5 at 4:30 p.m. State convention is March 6-7 in Bismarck.

Joanna Larson helped art teacher Charlotte Erickson set up the Bulldog Bucks Store at the Oberon school Thursday. The innovative store allows students to shop for fun prizes with Bulldog Bucks they earn for achievements throughout the semester. The kids were very excited!

Wednesday, Jan Loe, Rhoda Stenberg and Bonnie Deegan were in Carrington. Rhoda kept an appointment while they were there.

Patti Larson was among friends, neighbors and relatives of Dr. Gail Carlson at her cele-

bration of life service at Trinity Lutheran Church in Minnewaukan Friday afternoon. She was buried at Riverside Cemetery, Sheyenne.

First Lutheran held a 9 a.m. church service January 18. Grandfield was to worship at 11 with potluck and annual meeting to follow, but due to the weather it was postponed to a later date to be determined. Attendees at First enjoyed coffee, goodies and fellowship hosted by Dianne Hanson, Kathy Albrecht and Jan Loe following worship.

Lacey (Grann) Wirth was the guest of honor mom-to-be Sunday afternoon at her baby shower at Ostby Hall. All enjoyed visiting, homemade goodies, games and the gift opening.

Saturday, Jan Loe and Steph drove to Jamestown for the day. They enjoyed some shopping and lunch while there.

Joanna Larson and Ian Gilley signed up for an online art class taught by Piper Bloomquist Saturday. Joanna invited Josslyn and Jacoby Hager as well. The three-hour session focused on Scandinavian art -- *dala* -- flowers of winter, a Nordic canvas folk art beginning class using acrylics.

If you are wondering why a person in a gray car with Illinois plates was taking pictures of buildings all around Sheyenne last week, she is an architectural historian hired to conduct research documenting historic buildings and cultural resources to ensure historic preservation laws are followed by the wind project developers. Her report will be available when complete.

Gavin Brown got the old Coke machine in working order last week and he had fun placing some vintage signs and memorabilia inside as he was finishing trim work and flooring at the old Sinclair station. Several town council members saw to it that the new curb stop successfully brought water to the building Wednesday.

All are invited to the 11 a.m. worship and potluck to follow at Grace Lutheran Sunday, Jan. 25. Their annual meeting will follow the meal.

Greg and Cindy Hegland picked up Patti Clifton the evening of January 17 and they drove on to Minnewaukan. They were joined for supper by Joe and Kelli Clifton at Old 281 Tavern. The evening was in celebration of Patti's birthday.

Suicide prevention webinar planned for February 23

Addressing the wellness needs of those working in agriculture or related areas will be the focus of the upcoming "Question, Persuade, Refer" suicide prevention webinar sponsored by NDSU Extension. It will take place Monday, Feb. 23 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

The 90-minute webinar will address concerns of high stress levels in agriculture-related jobs and the toll they take on mental and emotional well-being.

Research indicates the suicide rate is significantly higher for those working in agriculture. The QPR training will provide participants with skills to recognize warning signs of a mental health crisis or suicidal thinking and to respond in an appropriate and supportive way.

"Ongoing farm and ranch stress takes a toll on health, including mental and emotional well-being," says Sean Broth-

erson, NDSU Extension family science specialist. "We say, 'Sometimes you need help, and sometimes you are help.'"

NDSU Extension Agents Katie Henry (Cavalier County) and Jill Sokness (Cass County), and Madeleine Smith, NDSU Extension pesticide specialist, will facilitate the webinar.

Although the training will focus on people working in and around agriculture, anyone interested in the topic can register. There is no cost for the training, which is supported by a US Department of Agriculture grant.

Registration is limited to the first 30 participants per webinar. Register at ndsu.ag/QPR-NDSU-Feb2026.

For additional information, contact Adriana Drusini at adriana.drusini@ndsu.edu or Sean Brotherson at sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu.

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