

**Michael Smith's
"Hill Valley" Model City**

OTC

Otter Tail County

**Spring
2019**


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Take a Hike!**

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8 Cover Story: It's Springtime...Take a Hike!

Look for signs of spring along the bike trail at Glendalough (cover photo) and Pam's other favorite places. She found these yellow Lady Slippers on the Central Lakes Trail.

STORY & PHOTOS BY PAM LARSON

COVER PHOTO: BIKE TRAIL, GLENDALOUGH STATE PARK

OTC

Otter Tail County

Spring 2019

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Otter Tail County
Spring 2019
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Otter Tales

I'm sure as you read this, you all have had enough of old man winter this year. I'm hoping in the couple of weeks it takes to finish up the magazine, the weather has turned toward spring and my reminder of winter is just a memory ... at least that is my hope. I heard on the radio that a good thing comes out of the coldest winters: the bugs take a hammering, which hopefully means less irritation this summer. However, it also said that the pesky mosquito has adapted to this fact over the years and it really has no effect on them buggers. I'm hoping the report is wrong.

Spring is a great time of year to feel the sun again, watch the snow melt and green start to show up everywhere. This issue has a teaser for all of us: spring flowers in local state parks. Just looking at the pictures was a nice vacation for me.

If you still want to reminisce about winter, we have a great story about a snowmobile racing family from Dalton that has generations of winners. If you own a snowmobile like me, you really appreciated all the snow we got this year. It was the best snowmobiling conditions in the several years. I hope you got your money's worth.

If you stayed tucked inside your house all winter, then having a hobby like Battle Lake's Michael Smith, who built an entire city in 1/87th scale, could keep you very busy. Our story has pictures of the family farm with all the animals, an elaborate railway track system, multi-story buildings, a race track, and much more. The attention to detail is something to see.

For more history of places in Otter Tail County, this issue has a very interesting story of how Wee Town and Weggeland came to be. You may even recognize some of the places and names from over the years. I often think about what these hardy folks went through back in the late 1800s, coming here in covered wagons trying to make a life in outstate Minnesota.

This issue, as usual, has much more good stories to read. I hope you enjoy it ... and if the weather is not better by then, just cozy up to a fire and enjoy the read. Spring has to get here soon!

— Ed Pawlenty, OTC Publisher



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Thanks for reading OTC!

Fall 2018

"Win to Dine" \$25 Gift Card Winners

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It's Springtime... take a hike!



Prairie Smoke flower,
Glendalough



Prairie Smoke seed head

The crisp whiteness of winter is refreshing, but when spring turns slushy gray, it is like a treasure hunt to discover new growth in the warming soil. We are so fortunate to have many wonderful places to hike and explore in our area.

As the snow begins to melt off Prairie Hill at **Glendalough State Park**, we begin our spring-time search for wildflowers. The lovely pale purple **Pasque Flowers** are among the first ephemeral plants to appear. The name comes from the blooming season, which is around Easter—*pasque* being the French word for *paschal* or *Passover*. The flowers aren't big or bold, but they grow all over the hill and are a good sign of more growing things to come.



Pasque Flowers,
Glendalough

Prairie Smoke (shown at top left), also found at Glendalough, is an interesting flower that turns to a wispy seedhead of pink fluff. It blooms a month or so later than the pasque flower, but right along the trail as you continue up Prairie Hill. There is an informative sign to help you identify some of the plants and birds along the path. Glendalough has a paved bicycle/pedestrian trail (cover photo) and many miles of great hiking trails.

STORY & PHOTOS BY PAM LARSON

Maplewood State Park is the next place we visit in very early spring. On the Woodland Trail, we find **Round-lobed Hepatica** plants pushing their delicate purple flowers through the leaf litter along the path. **Maple Syrup Demonstration Day** is on April 6 this year, so plan to check out the sap collection network and the great new Sugar Shack building.

The ponds on the drive into Maplewood often have a few trumpeter swans and we saw a family with cygnets in early June.



Round-lobed Hepatica



Sap collecting

**Maplewood
State Park**



Sugar Shack



Trumpeter swans with cygnets at Maplewood

Along the trail, one can also observe wildlife such as turkeys, deer, turtles and waterfowl.



Mallard pair along the Central Lakes Trail



The **Central Lakes Trail** offers the chance to see some of Minnesota's beautiful wild lady slipper orchids. The **Yellow Lady Slippers** bloom in profusion along the path northwest of Dalton. If you look carefully in the same area you can spot the much smaller **White Lady Slippers**. Each flower is smaller than a thumb.

Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC)

is a wonderful place to go hiking. I was excited to find a wild **Camas Flower** that I hadn't seen before, but a little disturbed to realize that it is very poisonous—it is also known as a mountain death camas. **Blue Flag Iris** is another striking spring plant that can be found at PWLC.



White Camas



Blue Flag Iris



White and Yellow Lady Slippers

Central Lakes Trail



Early June 2018, we journeyed to southern and eastern Minnesota State Parks to find new-to-us wildflowers, especially the endangered **Dwarf Trout Lily**. This tiny rare flower has probably always been endangered, as it grows only in three Minnesota counties—in the whole world! We were so glad that the Friends of **Nerstrand Big Woods State Park** were there marking them for the official annual count, or we would have missed them entirely. They were just in the budding stage and the bud is only about the size of a grain of rice. We visited other southern state parks as well, including **Carley, Sakatah Lake, Whitewater** and **Minneopa**. It was a good time to see many other flowers, including **Spring Beauties, Sharp-lobed Hepaticas, Blood Root, Dutchman's Breeches, Rue Anemone, Virginia Buebells,** and **Jack-in-the-Pulpit**. **Whitewater State Park** attracts many birds with numerous feeding stations at the Visitor Center where we saw indigo buntings and orchard orioles.



Dwarf Trout Lily



Rue Anemone

**Nerstrand
Big Woods State Park**



Spring Beauties



Sharp-lobed Hepatica



Dutchman's
Breeches



Blood Root

**Sakatah
Lake
State
Park**



Jack-in-the-Pulpit



Waterfall,
Minneopa
State Park



Virginia Bluebells,
Carley State Park



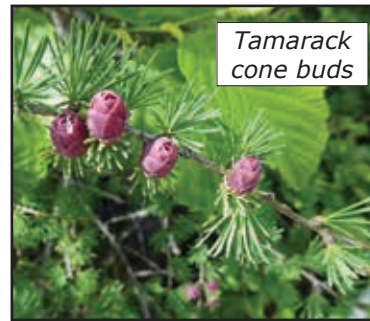
Indigo
Bunting

Orchard oriole
and
Baltimore oriole



Whitewater State Park

We continued our spring wildflower hunt in northern Minnesota state parks: Savanna Portage, Big Bog, Lake Bemidji and Itasca. **Big Bog State Recreation Area** has a 500-square-mile peat bog—the largest in the lower 48. There is a one-mile-long boardwalk you can take into the bog without damaging the plants. The early spring flowers we saw included **Tamarack cone buds**, **Cotton Grass**, **Bog Laurel** and **Arctic Raspberry**.



Tamarack
cone buds

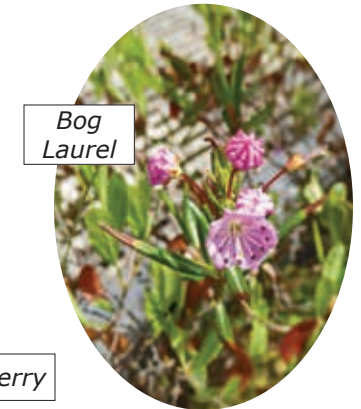


Cotton Grass

**Big Bog State
Recreation Area**



Arctic Raspberry



Bog
Laurel

We discovered **Savanna Portage State Park** in the fall a couple years ago with magnificent fall colors, but it also holds spring wonders. Among other plants, we saw **Labrador Tea**, **Bunch Berries** and **Wild Calla**. We were entertained in the evening by a Canada goose family on the lake by our cabin.



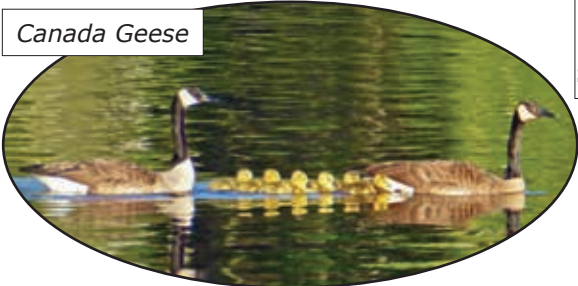
Wild Calla



Labrador Tea



Bunch Berries



Canada Geese

Savanna Portage State Park

Itasca State Park is our favorite to search for the state flower, the **Pink Showy Lady Slipper** and we are not usually disappointed. We had lunch at Douglas Lodge, wild rice hot dish & wild turkey sandwich, and headed down to Dr. Robert's Trail along Lake Itasca. Often plants sort of shift around where they bloom, but we encountered a lovely group of the gorgeous orchids. A great way to end our search for spring wildflowers.

I agree with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who said, "The spring came suddenly, bursting upon the world as a child bursts into a room, with a laugh and a shout and hands full of flowers."

Lake Bemidji State Park has a great bog boardwalk where we viewed the rare **Dragon's Mouth Orchid**, as well as **Marsh Marigolds**, **Large-flowered Trilliums**, **Pitcher Plant**



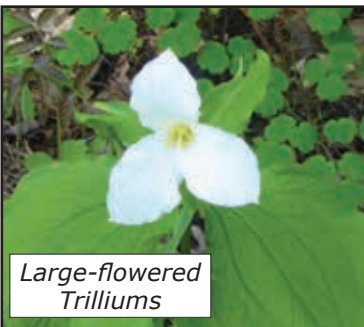
Marsh Marigold

flowers and **Pink Stemless Lady Slippers**. Pitcher Plants are carnivorous, trapping insects in tubular leaves filled with water where enzymes digest the bugs.



Pink Showy Lady Slippers

Lake Bemidji State Park



Large-flowered Trilliums



Dragon's Mouth Orchid



Pink Stemless Lady Slippers



Pitcher Plant



It is refreshing to the soul to just take a walk along one of these trails, but it would be a bonus this year if I can see a Ram's Head Orchid or a Western Prairie Fringed Orchid!



A Mechanical Engineer in the Making

STORY BY REBA GILLIAND

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SMITH

The year is 1958. Picture a six-year-old boy at the newly-opened Disneyland in Anaheim, California. The boy was drawn to the *City of Tomorrow*, an incredible world of miniatures – a world that fascinates Michael Smith still today. The family venture, which includes traveling from Omaha to Los Angeles through the mountains on the Union Pacific railroad, also sparks in Michael a passion for trains.

The two fascinations come together in 1963 when Michael's parents give their kids a 4 slot-car set. The kids begin building a model city called *Hill Valley* to showcase HO scale slot cars and trains. Michael, 14 and the youngest child, does much of the work over the next few years to create and maintain the miniature city located on the third floor of his parent's home in Pipestone, Minnesota.

You might remember Hill Valley as the city in the movie Back to the Future. You'd be right, but THIS Hill Valley just coincidentally has the same name—Michael named his city years before BTTF came out in the 1970s. Michael pays tribute to the movie with a BTTF museum and steam engine, however.

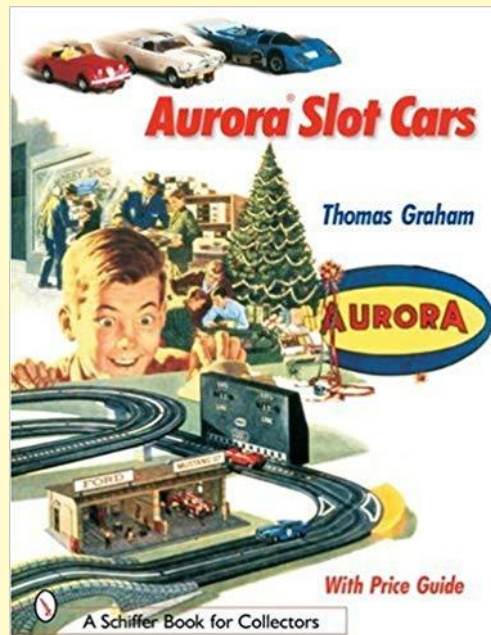
Fast forward thirty-two years.

In 1998, Michael and wife, Barbara, take on the challenging task of moving the model city from his family home in Pipestone to their home in the Twin Cities.

Before the original model can be moved, however, their Twin City home needs work to accommodate the many thousands of pieces of this miniature city. Michael, Barbara and her brother, Steve, remodel and paint an unfinished basement room to make a home for the miniature city.

Back in Pipestone, the couple disassemble and box buildings, trains, cars and tracks for the trip to the Cities. Unfortunately, the Plaster of Paris scenery cannot be moved and will have to be rebuilt at the new location.

Slot cars were introduced in England in the late 1950s by inventor Derek Brand, who developed small motorized cars to be used with model railroads. They are powered miniature autos guided by grooves or slots in the track on which they run. The 4 slot-car set the Smith kids received was Aurora Corporation's first year release of Thunder Jet slot cars.



*Aurora Corporation:
1963 Release of Thunder Jet Slot Cars*

3,500 Hours to Rebuild Hill Valley

Michael begins the painstaking job of recreating Hill Valley.

Building the Base: He builds a 16-leg table of half-inch plywood that pushes up to the back two walls of the room. Ingenuously, the table top rests on Teflon gliders and slides away from the walls so he can work on the back of the table, airbrush scenery onto walls, and clean the room.

Building the City: Michael builds mountain scenery; builds shops and buildings; lays roads and tracks; reconditions his 50-year-old model slot cars and trains so they'll run on updated tracks; and wires the entire set to make the model city run.

Adding Finishing Touches: Working under a magnifying lens, he paints over 900 little people and builds 125 custom LED brass street lights. Finally, he airbrushes mountains and clouds onto walls against which the table rests and adds trees, shrubbery and lawn to complete Hill Valley. [See photo at right.]

The miniature model city, Hill Valley, is created in HO scale, which is 1/87 real size or approximately 1/8-inch equals one foot.

Hill Valley Today

Michael continues to upgrade Hill Valley as technology advances and passion dictates. Today's miniature city boasts 120 available train cars, including 21 working train engines, his 1963 vintage slot car raceway built into the set - now with 16 operating slot cars, LED lighting on the buildings, micro-dot LED lights on a 14-story tower and the table edge, a *Back to the Future* museum with an 1880 steam train (from *BTTF Wild West Episode 3*), a truck lift elevator, operating stop lights at the intersections, road signs and mail boxes for the houses. Underneath it all is over half a mile of wire running under the table to power everything.



Michael says of his creation, "Yes, maybe it is a little over the top, but I have lots of fun working on it. It's still not done and probably never will be totally complete like *City of Tomorrow* that first inspired me at Disneyland."

Michael is certainly evidence that the man is in the boy. That young boy mesmerized by Disneyland's miniature City of Tomorrow and a Union Pacific railroad trip out west grew into the man he is today.

About Michael Smith

Home on West Battle Lake:

In addition to their home in the Cities, Michael and Barbara have a home on West Battle Lake, where they enjoy swimming, fishing, boating and the joys of nature. Both have served many years on the West Battle Lake Lakeshore Association (WBLA) Board of Directors. Michael is in his 16th year as webmaster and public relations liaison for WBLA. In addition to this website, he donates time to maintain four other websites.

Education: Michael graduated from Pipestone High School in 1971, after



which time he moved to the Twin Cities to attend college and work. He has two degrees, one in Mechanical Engineering and the other in Applied Management.

Career: His career spanned 40 years, during which he first worked as a designer, then an engineer, and finally in mid-level management at large defense corporations. While working Research and Development for Lockheed Martin, he was awarded ten U.S. Patents.

Interests: One would think Michael wouldn't have time for anything other than working on his model city, but not so. He enjoys biking, astronomy, fishing, swimming and snorkeling, woodworking, music (he's a drummer), travel, photography and video creation, and custom cars. He still owns his first car, a 1973 Camaro (highly modified with custom-crushed mother of pearl paint and 6-71 supercharger set up). It has been featured in two world class automotive magazines: *Hot Rod* and *Street Machines*.



Creating mountain scenery is not for the faint of heart. The process is multi-step consisting of: 1) building a wood frame; 2) covering the frame with crinkled aluminum screen, 3) covering the screen with multiple layers of Plaster of Paris to which small rocks and sand are added on the final layer to create a realistic rock-face surface; and 4) applying nine layers of water-based latex paint in shades of dark browns, grays, greens and white to create depth and simulate landscape.



Main road race grandstand area with many fans waiting for the race to start.



Smith family farm complete with 1/87 scale farm animals .

See the model city video,
Lights-Camera-Action – Hill Valley 2018, at:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/os6vmng37d1h1kx/Lights%20Camera%20Action.MOV?dl=0>



Reba Gilliland: As someone who puts up my Dickens village before Christmas and doesn't take it down until March, I'm fascinated by miniatures too. I would love to see Hill Valley in person!



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Drawing held on ?? ! ~ Fall 2018 Winners listed on page 6!

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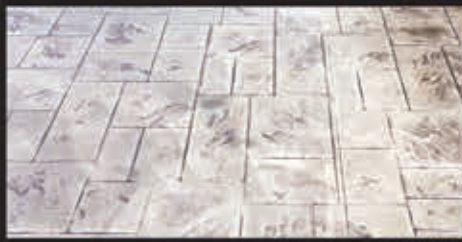
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St. Patty's Day Shepherd's Pie

Traditionally a comfort food made with lamb and a few vegetables, this pie's alternate lifestyle uses ground beef for convenience.



St. Patty's Day Shepherd's Pie

- 1# ground beef (could use lamb or turkey)
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 bag frozen mixed vegetables
(corn/peas/beans/carrots)
- 2 T. tomato paste
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 T. freshly ground ginger root
- 2 T. flour
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 1 1/2 cups low-sodium beef stock
- Paprika

Brown the ground beef in large skillet. Drain and set aside. In same skillet, sauté onion and mixed vegetables until heated through. Drain and set aside. In same skillet, add 1 tsp. olive oil and "fry" the tomato paste about 30 seconds, until it releases some aroma. Add the garlic, ginger, and saute for about 1 minute. Add beef, salt, pepper, and flour. Fry for a couple minutes until flour is absorbed, then add stock and cook until thickened. Add vegetable mixture, stir until combined and heated through. Put this mixture into casserole dish (or divide between individual ramekins). Top with mashed potato mixture (at right) by piping or simply spreading. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake at 400° for 35-40 minutes until golden brown. If you wish, you may put under the broiler for a few minutes to enhance browning.

Mashed Potato Topping

- 1 1/2# Yukon Gold potatoes
- 6 oz. soft "French type" goat cheese
- 1/2 - 3/4 cup half and half
- 2 T. butter
- Salt/pepper to taste

Boil or steam the potatoes until fork tender. Drain, then return to pan over low heat for a few minutes to get rid of any remaining water. Add butter and goat cheese, roughly mash. Add 1/2 cup half and half, whip with mixer — add remaining half and half as needed to create creamy mashed potatoes that will spread or go through a piping tube.



Ready to be finished with the whole Polar Vortex scenario? Me too - looking to celebrate St. Patrick's day with a comfort food that will make you feel warm all over. We need that. Sandra Thimgan lives on Silver Lake with her husband/photographer/taster, Dan.



Grateful Hearts

BY LAKE REGION HEALTH CARE

PHOTO BY VICKI TRITES

A flu shot saved Vicki Trites' life, but not in the way you might think.

Trites and her husband, Jim, live 30 miles east of Fergus Falls, but they were in town on that October day last fall to cast early votes for the 2018 election and to get their flu shots.

They were just driving out of Fergus when it happened: Vicki stiffened, stamped her feet on the floorboards and suddenly slumped over. Jim grabbed her hand and called to her. She turned her head and tried to talk, but only gurgling sounds emerged.

In a panic, he turned their vehicle around and headed back to Lake Region Healthcare. "We got about three or four blocks from the hospital and she was gone," Jim recalls. "She was slumped in her seat and was in cardiac arrest."

So Vicki would remember nothing about her heart attack. Jim racing up to the ER door while blasting the car horn. A nurse opening the car door and immediately starting chest compressions. Other ER staff rushing outside to bring Vicki into the building. An ER doctor issuing orders as the medical staff shifted into a well-choreographed life-saving mode.

"She was in code blue," says Abby Stadum, a registered nurse who was part of the ER crew that day. As director of LRH's Emergency Medicine department, Stadum has seen her share of female heart attack victims, but she says Vicki's case was atypical in that she had no symptoms. Vicki would later recall experiencing a slight headache and a little heartburn earlier that day, but it was nothing out of the ordinary.

"She just all of a sudden arrested," Stadum says. "Unfortunately, women do tend to have more discreet symptoms, such as nausea, indigestion and jaw pain. They may not have the big chest-clutching pain that everyone talks about."

After 40 minutes of CPR and defibrillations, the team detected a pulse. Vicki was breathing, but it was very shallow, so she was intubated and kept sedated. She was rushed to Fargo for surgical intervention. Doctors there did an angioplasty and found she needed a quadruple bypass: two of her coronary arteries were completely blocked, and two



December 8, 2018.

*Vicki and Jim with their three grandkids:
(back, l-r) Jim, Vicki and Isaac,
little guys in front are (l-r) Elijah and Levi*

were 70 percent blocked. The plan was to lower Vicki's body temperature and induce a coma as a way to protect her heart before surgery. After 24 hours, they would return her body temperature to normal, bring her out of the coma and then prepare to operate.

But it didn't work out that way. Despite numerous attempts, Vicki would not rouse out of her coma. "It was horrible," Jim remembers. "Each day, they tried to wake her and she wouldn't wake up."

Over a week later, Vicki began to regain consciousness. She heard her daughter's voice telling her that she'd had a heart attack. It was the first real memory she'd had since her cardiac arrest eight days earlier.

By now, she was too weak to undergo surgery. Her surgeon, Dr. Roxanne Newman, sent her home to build up her cardiac strength enough for the bypass. As an added precaution, Vicki wore a defibrillator vest, which monitored her heart continuously and, if needed, would deliver an electrical shock to restore her heart to normal rhythm.

Fortunately, Vicki was able to do her rehab right in Fergus Falls. Her ER nurse Stadum, who also happens to be director of LRH's Cardiac Rehab Center, was delighted when she first saw Vicki walk through the doors.

"I had to instantly go over and hug her and tell her I was so happy to see her there," Stadum says.

Cardiac rehab consists of strength-building and cardiac-strengthening exercise, which is tailored to the individual patient's fitness level and monitored by EKG. Vicki also received education on stress factors and nutrition.

After a month of rehab, Vicki had built up enough cardiac strength to return to Fargo for her bypass – which went smoothly. So smoothly, in fact, that Dr. Newman gave her permission to go home for Thanksgiving.

Vicki and Jim returned home to the perfect holiday surprise: their grown children were there, along with their grandchildren, and had prepared Thanksgiving dinner.

"It was a miracle," Vicki says. "All my loved ones were there."

Since then, Vicki's recovery has been steady, as she continues to monitor her diet and is working to get back to the 3 ½ miles per day she was walking before the heart attack.

Stadum says her improvement has been dramatic: "On her initial few visits, she looked worn out," she says. "But the last time I saw her, she was a brand new woman. It was amazing. I told her she was walking faster on the treadmill than I could. It was just very cool to see the full loop from her entering the ambulance bay to briskly walking on a treadmill."

The couple still marvels over the lucky timing that made it possible for Vicki to receive help before it was too late. If they hadn't been in town for flu shots and errands, Vicki would have gone into cardiac arrest at home – miles away from medical intervention.

They also feel deep gratitude for the LRH staff, whose quick and professional response to her heart attack and subsequent rehabilitation made surgery possible.

"Lake Region's ER staff saved my wife's life," Jim says. "I am a very lucky and blessed man."

"Miraculously, I've survived – thanks to a lot of wonderful people," adds Vicki.

HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS FOR WOMEN

(can be different)

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- 1 Cold Sweat
- 2 Dizziness
- 3 Shortness of Breath
- 4 Strong Feeling of Weakness and Nausea
- 5 Vague Discomfort, Pressure, Squeezing or Ache in the Chest, Upper Back, Right Arm, Abdomen, Shoulders, Neck or Jaw



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Snowmobile Championships Run in the Revering Family

STORY BY JERRY BEGLEY

PHOTOS BY JERRY BEGLEY, REVERING FAMILY & AARON KENNEDY

A legacy of snowmobile championships tracks through the Revering family from Dalton, MN. John and Arlene Bosek started the tradition, winning the 500-mile, three-day cross country race. Son, Johnny Bosek Junior, also raced and still holds the record for most laps on the one-mile oval track.

It is no wonder that John and Arlene's daughter, Debbie (Bosek) Revering started racing at age 13, and became a championship racer from 1996-2001. Many awards followed, including twice winning the prestigious 500-mile, 3-day cross country race from Winnipeg to Bemidji. She also captured the Women's Highest Point Total Championship in 1997 and 2000. How did she accomplish that? In addition to superior racing skills, she had a top-notch mechanic: husband, Charlie Revering.



Debbie approaching a ditch

Charlie remains the chief mechanic for the REV Racing Team. Debbie has retired from racing, with driving skills handed off to sons Dan and Charlie Junior. It had to be Debbie's fiercely competitive spirit that won her races, because it is readily evident in her two enthusiastic, highly motivated sons. While they both have other professions, snowmobile racing is their passion.

Snowmobile technology has changed since John Bosek created a windshield by cutting up a diaper bucket. Each year the REV racing team purchases three Polaris machines, this year 2019 Polaris Indy Cross Country models retailing at \$13,000. Their USXC racing classes dictate only factory stock machines and parts be utilized.

Following their principle of "You have to cross the finish line to win", they don't rely upon new machines to win races. They immediately disassemble each unit to determine reliability and weak links. Everything but the engine is examined and spare part inventory determined.

Since different race conditions dictate suspension and track setup, each Sunday afternoon is usually spent modifying the machine for the next week's track conditions. Following the "stock" rule, they continue to legally explore areas that can give them a winning edge. Every opportunity is examined when race times are won and lost by fractions of a second.



Debbie with some of her trophies



Debbie's 1st place trophy 2000, 500-mile race

Debbie's 1st Place trophy 1997, 500-mile race





I-r: Charlie Sr., Charlie Jr. and Dan Revering. Currently there is not a fourth generation in the picture, but you can be assured the offspring of Dan and Charlie will continue the legacy.

The discussion in January was a special product and innovative application that remains a team secret. Technology is prevalent in the list of team sponsors, which they greatly appreciate.

While machine reliability and innovation help with success, they feel the mental, physical and safety aspect of today's racing is equally important. Trying to follow their second racing principle, "Keep it within your capability", is probably exceptionally hard for two young men with racing in their blood. One can only imagine the excitement and stress of competing in 500-mile races, averaging 60-70 miles per hour and top speeds of 90-100 for three consecutive days. To keep physically sharp they compete in summer motocross racing.

Their strategy produces results. Dan placed 1st and Charlie 2nd in the 2019 Goodridge-Grygla 250-mile race. With Debbie winning two previous championships, this makes Debbie and Dan the first mother/son team in the event's history to win 1st place. This year's race was shortened to a two-day event and the course consisted of two 125-mile laps through ditches and slushy rivers. Dan finished the run in 7 hours, 20 minutes. Charlie overcame equipment issues to finish 2nd in the Semi-Pro category.



Dan Revering



The REV racing team proudly acknowledge their sponsors



#187 Charlie Jr.



REV team shop



Charlie in a drift



#101 Dan
Photo courtesy of
Aaron Kennedy

2018 Team Award



Reliable equipment, a trusted mechanic, and mental/physical conditioning are apparent in their United States Cross X-Country Snowmobile Racing Association standings. Dan finished the 2015-2016 season in ninth place. In 2017-2018 Charlie Jr. finished second and Dan third. In this year's Pine River event, Charlie beat Dan by four seconds. Dan and Charlie Jr. felt proud and honored to receive the 2018 USXC Team of The Year Award. As of February for the 2018-2019 season, Dan is ranked #1 and Charlie #2, out of 46 competitors.



Jerry Begley is a retired Regional Director for a telecommunications company and resides with his wife Diane on Stalker Lake. While he enjoys all outdoor activities, he is returning for the first time to utilize his journalism major in college.



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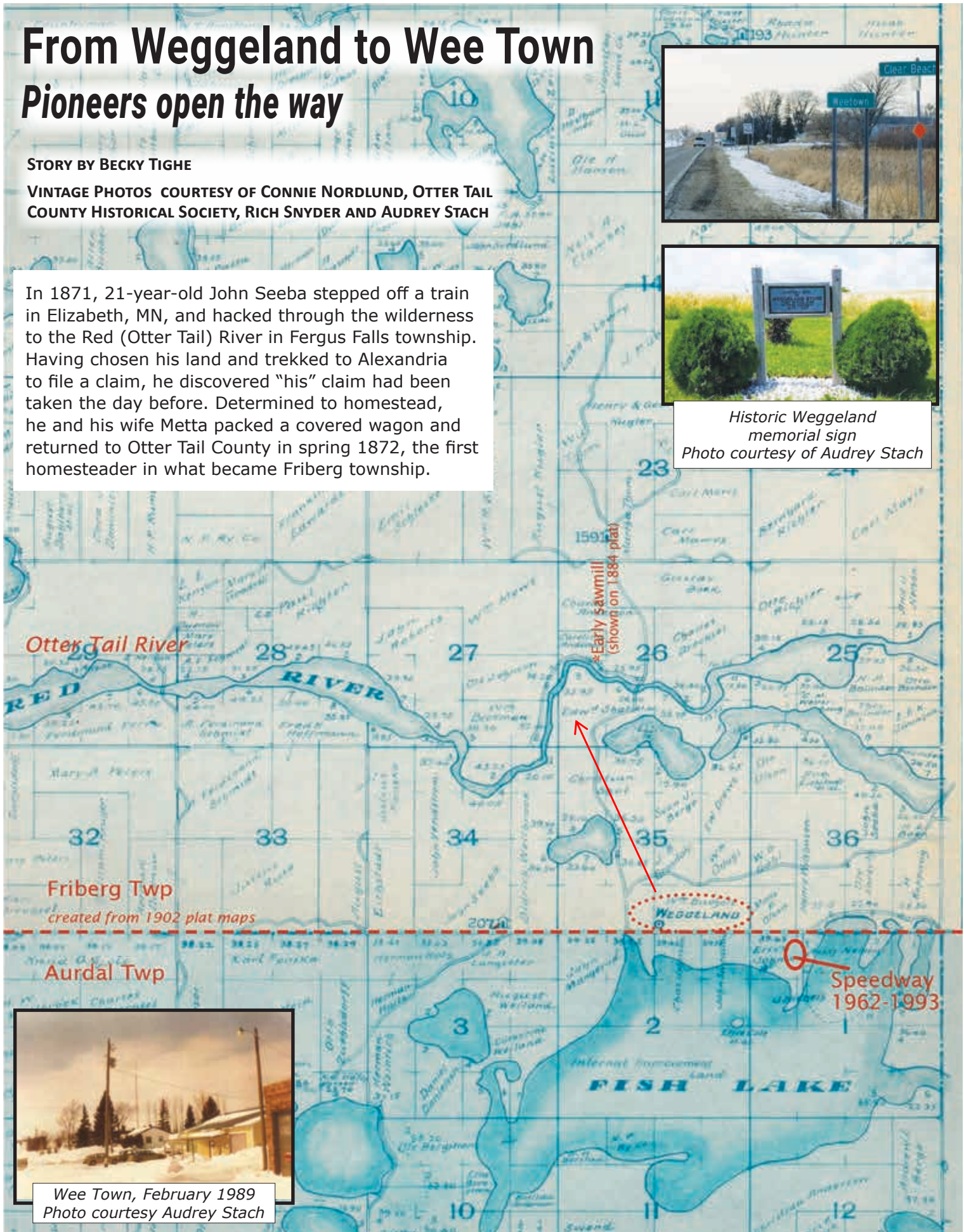
STORY BY BECKY TIGHE

VINTAGE PHOTOS COURTESY OF CONNIE NORDLUND, OTTER TAIL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, RICH SNYDER AND AUDREY STACH

In 1871, 21-year-old John Seeba stepped off a train in Elizabeth, MN, and hacked through the wilderness to the Red (Otter Tail) River in Fergus Falls township. Having chosen his land and trekked to Alexandria to file a claim, he discovered "his" claim had been taken the day before. Determined to homestead, he and his wife Metta packed a covered wagon and returned to Otter Tail County in spring 1872, the first homesteader in what became Friberg township.



Historic Weggeland memorial sign
Photo courtesy of Audrey Stach



Wee Town, February 1989
Photo courtesy Audrey Stach

First known as Hartford, Friberg township's proposed name was changed to Florine, Florence, Woodland and finally Friberg in June, 1874. John Seeba's name appeared on the petition for its organization, along with Schmidt, Duenow and Wenstrom, names still familiar in Friberg today. As the township changed, its post office was named "Friberg," then Rumsey, Edwards, Beaver Dam and Weggeland.

Seeba emigrated to New York from Germany in 1868 and worked in a factory. He then moved to Red Wing, Minnesota, and worked on a farm until settling in Otter Tail County and helping form a community about a mile up today's CR 43 from present CR 1. It was called Weggeland, apparently after Axel Weggeland's store.

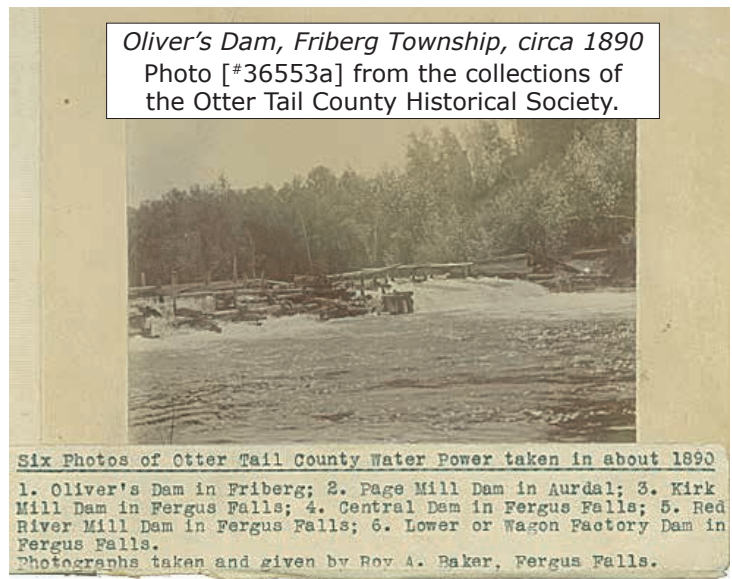
Seeba plunged into community life, built five bridges over the Otter Tail and, as road supervisor, established nearly all the roads in Friberg township. (Mason) Completion of a road to Otter Tail was cause for celebration. It ran from Fergus Falls through Aurdal, Friberg, Weggeland, across the river, through Amor to Otter Tail. Over his lifetime, Seeba was justice of the peace, postmaster, member of the town board and served 40 years on the school board (School #207 was called "the Seeba school"), helped found the German Lutheran church, and served as trustee for 10 years.

School District #207 "Seeba School" organized in 1886 and dissolved in 1971. (It became #1495 in 1957.)
Photo [#FR24] from the collections of the Otter Tail County Historical Society.



Vision, hardship, life and death

Others saw promise in Weggeland. Paul Shol bought the store and became Weggeland postmaster shortly before disaster struck: the store burned down on June 23, 1904. Though merchandise and mail were lost, his wife and new baby survived. William Oliver built a dam to power "the first lumber mill on the Red (Otter Tail) River (Mason). The dam later powered a feed mill until it collapsed in 1905.



Oliver's Dam, Friberg Township, circa 1890
Photo [#36553a] from the collections of the Otter Tail County Historical Society.

Six Photos of Otter Tail County Water Power taken in about 1890
1. Oliver's Dam in Friberg; 2. Page Mill Dam in Aurdal; 3. Kirk Mill Dam in Fergus Falls; 4. Central Dam in Fergus Falls; 5. Red River Mill Dam in Fergus Falls; 6. Lower or Wagon Factory Dam in Fergus Falls.
Photographs taken and given by Roy A. Baker, Fergus Falls.

John Deist (1846-1925), another pioneer, left Germany at age 15. He mined diamonds, operated a store in South Africa, hunted lions, and clashed with Zulus and Hottentots. After 28 years he married in Germany, moved to North Dakota, then to Friberg. There he bought the Weggeland store from Paul Shol. Eventually he operated a store on the corner of CR 43 and Otter Tail Lake Road.

Prohibition was law from 1920-1933, but people still got alcohol. Deist's business received liquor, secretly delivered to woods near the junction of Otter Tail Lake Road and Brekke Road. Multitudes of discarded bottles remained there in the 1970s. After Deist died (1925), his daughters ran the store.

Orlyn Pederson's grandparents had run the Weggeland store. He grew up in Fergus Falls. As an adult, he bought the land where Weggeland had stood. There he crafted a memorial which reads: "Historic site of WEGGELAND STORE, POST OFFICE AND CHEESE FACTORY 1897-1927".

Churches

New immigrants established churches where they could worship in their "mother tongue." Emmanuel German Lutheran, Friberg's first church, and Vang Norwegian Lutheran in Aurdal both burned down, but the cemeteries remain.

Weggeland fades; Wee Town is founded

Weggeland had been built near a near the west end of Schmidt Lake, but as time passed, perhaps the road to Fergus Falls became more important than proximity to the river. Weggeland businesses gradually relocated near Friberg's southern border. The old town ceased to exist.

A smithy known as "John Seeba's shop" had long claimed the title of first business. A shop still stands on CR 1 by the Seeba farm. Nearby, Wee



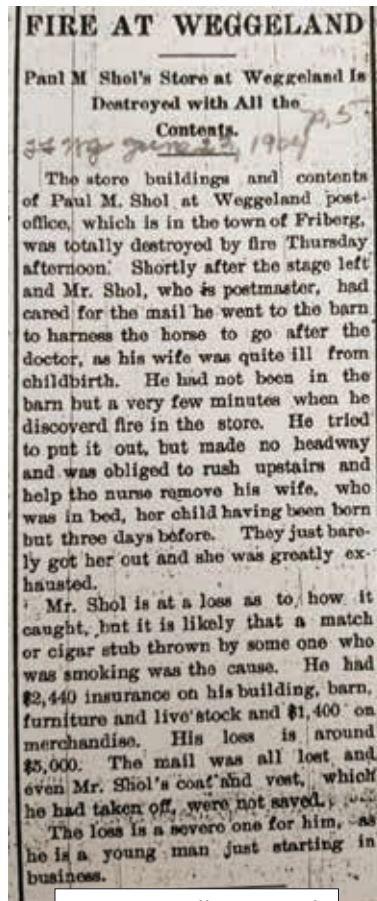
Weggeland store

Photo [#3702] from the collections of the Otter Tail County Historical Society.

Town grew. In 1946, Walt Shol moved his business, Walt's Repair ("I fix anything but broken hearts"), to Wee Town, adjacent to "the store," as most locals called it. Audrey (Shol) Stach remembers living in a house behind Walt's shop, and her father Walt naming Wee Town. Observing the businesses, houses and post office, he commented, "We're getting like a little wee town here." The name stuck. Walt let local boys work on their cars in his shop. The adjacent store was known for selling delicious ice cream. Passed from owner to owner, it burned down in about 2003.

The coming of the speedway

If you lived near Wee Town between 1962 and 1993, you may remember the roar of stock car racing. Built by Ray Krog and operated as Lake Region Speedway from 1962-1967, it featured a 3/8 mile oval dirt track and was a popular destination from May to Labor Day.



Fergus Falls Journal
June 23, 1904

The track was renamed and re-opened in 1976 by Don Eggen and partner LeRoy Brenaman as West Central Speedway. There were high-water problems in '86. Closed from 1987-89 due to being under water, the speedway was re-opened in 1990 by Eggen and new partner, David Beckner, as Wee Town Outlaw Speedway. Due to constant high water levels, it closed permanently at the end of the '93 season.

In his July 21, 2007, story in the *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, local writer Tom Hintgen quotes Don Eggen: "... it was a sad day when things shut down for good. Simply put, we just had too much water to deal with. ... It's hard to believe what one sees today (2007)."

... and continues:

"Kent Van Meter, famed stock car racer from the 1950s fairgrounds races, watched with pride when his son-in-law raced cars at the Lake Region Speedway ... Eggen recalls Herb Svare becoming another top racer and Ron Krog being a great announcer ..." (adding), "It was great to see such good turnouts, especially Sunday evenings under the lights."

Gone but not forgotten

In September 2012, Scott Sailer of *The Racing Life* posted this message: "Take a lap back to the old Wee Town Outlaw Speedway near Fergus Falls, MN this Sunday at 2:00pm. Join *The Racing Life* as we visit the overgrown ghost track and take a look back at the past..."

Hope it was a great farewell.

Rich Snyder (right) posing for a photo on his 4th birthday, the highlight of his night. The '32 Plymouth with a 6-cylinder Chevrolet engine was being repaired to go back into the race.

Photo courtesy of Rich Snyder



Walt's Repair



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The staff of East Otter Tail Historical Museum

Kristin at the Alexandria Public Library and
Katelyn at the Fergus Falls Public Library

Marcia Pederson on whose land the Weggeland
memorial stands

Audrey (Schol) Stach who provided both
information and photos

Richie Snyder and Connie Nordlund for
Speedway information

and others who helped.

Note for internet users: Bygone days will not return, but if you'd like to get a feeling for what the speedway meant in its glory days, visit www.ghostsofminnesota.com/2012/09/23/-Wee-Town-Outlaw-Speedway/ where author Troy Larson has posted haunting photos of how the track appeared in 2012, along with a long-form video featuring racing at the Wee Town Outlaw speedway in 1990. (per his notation, "jump" to the 1:35:00 mark.)

Driver Of The Week



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Driver Of The Week



RAY GAARELAND



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76	Curly Toft	
20	Harlan Klumpp	28.6
31	Neil Quonworth	27.2

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Becky Tighe left advertising to volunteer with Christian non-profit ministries in Romania and Austria for 7 years. Returning to Minnesota, she settled in Battle Lake. She likes spending time with her 10 grandkids and living among BL's wonderful people.



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